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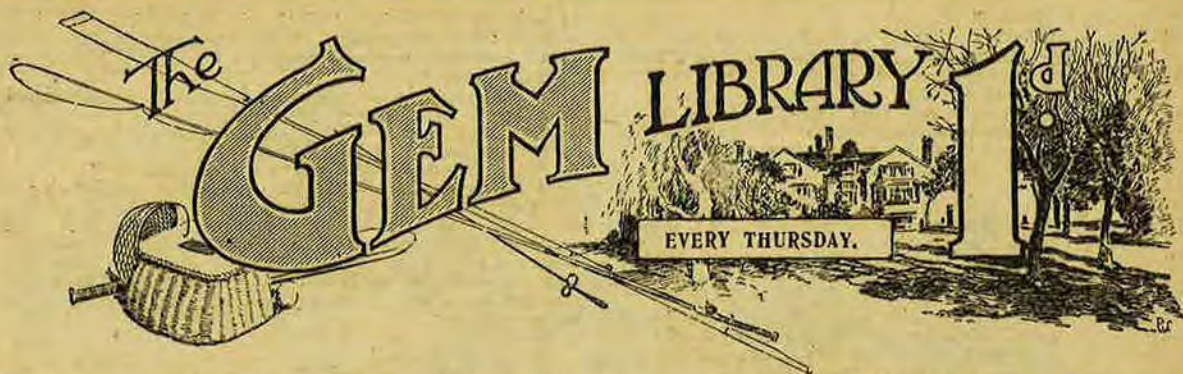
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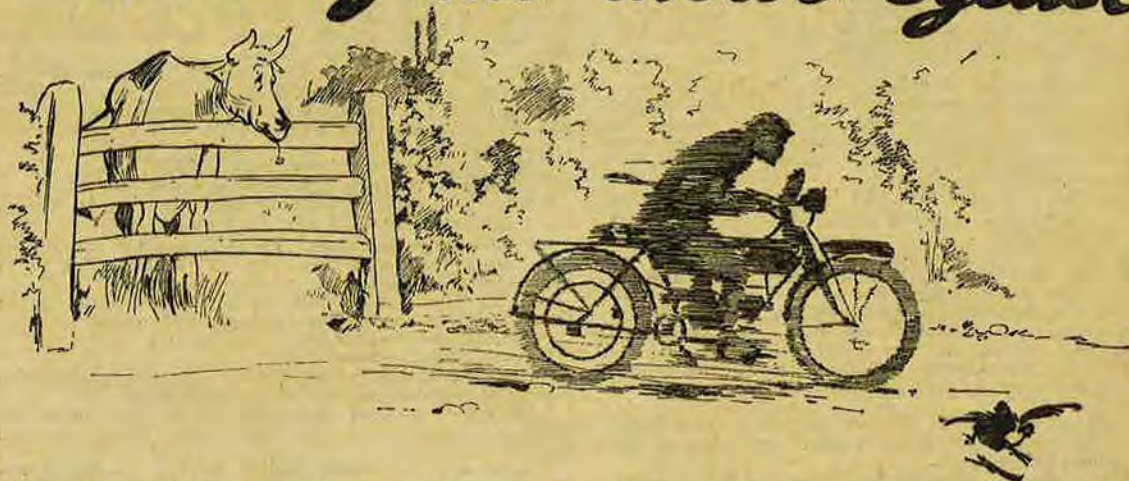
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The St Jim's Motor-Cyclist



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

CHAPTER 1.

A Discussion.

DINNER was just over at St. Jim's. Tom Merry & Co., or the Terrible Three, as Tom Merry, Manners and Lowther of the Shell were usually called, walked out of the School House into the Close to join Blake, Herries, Digby and D'Arcy, of the Fourth Form, commonly known as Blake & Co.

The faces of all the chums wore expressions of gloomy discontent, for their favourite and invariable recreation on a half-holiday, cricket, had been expressly forbidden to-day by Kildare, the school cricket captain, owing to the sodden state of the cricket grounds caused by the heavy rain of the past few days.

"Well, this is rotten!" Blake was growling. "Quite a fine afternoon, a half-holiday, and no cricket! Blessed if I know what there is for a chap to do. I think Kildare might have let us play on the lower field, at any rate, though the ground certainly is a bit sloppy."

"I should have refused to play cricket to-day, in any case, Blake," remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of St. Jim's. "My white boots would be certain to get muddy. Then there is the risk of a fall in the beastly miah, you know, dear boy!"

"Oh, rats to you, dummy!" said Blake rudely.

"Weally, Blake—"

"More rats!"

"I must ask you, Blake, to withdraw that extremely opprobrious expression immediately," said Arthur Augustus, with deadly coldness, regarding Blake, who appeared quite unmoved, with a fixed stare through his monocle. "Othahwise, I shall pwoceed to give you a fearful thwashing!"

"Now, Gussy, don't be so quarrelsome," interposed Herries. "I never knew such a chap for quarrelling as you are. Always wanting a fight, and trying to bully poor, harmless chaps. It's an extraordinary thing," went on Herries thoughtfully, apparently addressing the Close in general. "It's an extraordinary thing how fond that chap D'Arcy is of fighting. He deals out fearful thrashings like—like peppermint-drops!"

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I pwotest—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Never mind, Gussy, we'll overlook it this time," said Blake magnanimously. "But you must promise not to let it occur again."

A DOUBLE-LENGTH TALE OF TOM MERRY NEXT THURSDAY.

No. 81 (New Series).

"Weally, Blake——"

"Hallo, you Shell-fish!" went on Blake, as the chums of the Shell came up. "What do you want? If it's a thick ear or two, we're always ready to oblige."

"Hear, hear!" said Digby.

"Peace, my children!" said Tom Merry. "Let's have a confab. The question is, now cricket's off, what shall we do this afternoon? Shall we go for a run round the woods?"

"Too warm," said Herries promptly.

"Well, a walk via Rylcombe and Uncle Clegg's tuckshop, then."

"Too dull," said Herries.

Tom Merry looked at Herries expressively.

"Look here Herries," he said, "perhaps you'll suggest something yourself instead of playing the giddy wet-blanket."

"Well, let's have a game with my bulldog, Towser," said Herries, with the air of one propounding a brilliant scheme. "One of us might hide somewhere—we might put Towser on his trail and track him down. How's that for a ripping idea?"

"Rotten!" said Tom Merry.

"Piffling!" said Lowther.

"Idiotic!" said Manners.

"Look here——" began Herries wrathfully.

"My dear ass," said Blake. "To start with, Towser couldn't track down a red herring, much less one of us; and, anyway, who do you think wants to be tracked down by a fearful brute like that? Why, he'd eat you if by any chance he happened to run against you."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My dog Towser is a ripping dog, and a splendid tracker," said Herries obstinately. "And I think it's a splendid wheeze to let him track one of us down. He'd do it like one of Major Richardson's bloodhounds."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Hewwies, I should atwongly object to participatin' in any such game as you suggest," said Arthur Augustus, surveying Herries with disapproval through his monocle. "I vegard Towser as a savage beast, with even less respect for a fellah's twousahs than my young bwother Wally's mongwel Pongo!"

"Well, that's because you will look at him," growled Herries. "Towser doesn't like being looked at. It always makes him savage."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, shut up, you cackling fatheads!" said Herries crossly. "I'm going to feed Towser now, anyway. You can think of something to do for yourselves, if you cackle at a chap's ripping suggestions," and Herries walked off in high dudgeon, leaving the chums still cackling.

"Well," said Tom Merry, grinning, "as Herries refuses to give us any more help with his valuable suggestions——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I suppose we must do the best we can without them. Hallo! Where are you chaps going?" he broke off, as three juniors hurried past.

They were Bernard Glyn, Clifton Dane, and Harry Noble, the Australian chum, and the three together formed the latest Co. at St. Jim's, Cornstalk & Co.

The three were study-mates in the new study at the end of the Shell passage, and although they were all comparatively new boys at St. Jim's, they had already proved themselves to be a force to be reckoned with among the School House juniors.

Cornstalk & Co. hurried on their way without taking heed of Tom Merry's question, or, indeed, appearing to notice the group of juniors at all.

Tom Merry glared after their retreating forms as they disappeared in the direction of the school gates.

"I wonder what those cheeky rotters are up to?" he remarked. "I bet they've got some wheeze up their sleeve." And they had, too!

"Now, deah boys, powhays you will listen to my ideah of the best way of spendin' this afftahnoon," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "If Tom Mewwy will kindly leave off glawin' affah those Cornstalk wottahs, and attend to my wemarks, I have a suggestion to make which I wathah think will be chawactahwised as wippin'."

"Don't trouble to make it, though, Gussy," said Lowther. "We'll characterise it as 'wippin' without hearing it, and then we can get on with something sensible."

"Weally, Lowthah, if you intend that wemak as dis-pawagin'——"

"Oh, I didn't intend it as disparaging, Gussy!" said Lowther solemnly. "Good gracious me, no! Whatever could have made you think that!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"Oh, let him get it out, Monty!" said Blake, with an air of resignation. "It'll soon be over!"

"Weally, Blake, undah the circumstances I shall wefuse

to make my suggestion at all!" said Arthur Augustus, in a tone of great indignation. "You have tweated me with gweat diswpect and wudeness, and I shall withdraw from your pwesence!"

"What, and ruin the afternoon for all of us?" exclaimed Tom Merry in a tone of pained surprise. "Leave us to wander sunk in despondency about a Close that no longer has any attractions for us, without your company!"

"Well, Tom Mewwy, if you put it like that——"

"I do, Gussy, I do," said Tom, with intense solemnity.

"Well, then, deah boys, what do you say to us all getting our cycles, and havin' some pwactice on the track? It is quite dwy there, while on the woods it is feahfully muddy. We could get Figgins & Co., of the New House, to come, too, and we could get up House waces and things. It would pass the afftahnoon pleasantly and keep us in twainin' at the same time."

"Good!"

"Good old Gussy!"

"Bravo, Beau Brummell!"

"Why, Blake, Gussy has his uses after all, then?" said Manners, with an air of great surprise. "I always wondered what you kept him in the study for."

"Weally, Mannahs——"

"Come along, my children," broke in Tom Merry. "I presume that the proposal of spending the afternoon on the cycle-track is adopted."

"Rather!"

"Then let's get in and change, then. I'll just run over to the New House and tell Figgy. Hallo, here are those bounders back again!"

Glyn, Dane, and Noble were sauntering towards the group from the direction of the gates with an air of exaggerated carelessness which at once aroused the suspicions of the School House chums that a "wheeze" of some kind was on.

"Hallo, you beggars, what have you been up to?" inquired Blake, when Cornstalk & Co. were within hailing distance. "What do you mean by dashing past when we yelled to you, eh? You seemed to be in a precious hurry about something."

"Hurry? Were we in a hurry, Glyn?" said Harry Noble, turning to Bernard Glyn inquiringly.

"Were we, Dane?" inquired Glyn, turning to Clifton Dane, the half-Indian lad from Canada.

"I don't remember, quite. I'll think about it and let you know later," answered Dane. "Ow!" he added, as Blake grabbed him by the collar. "Leggo, there!"

"Well, what's the little game, then?" said Blake threateningly, releasing the Liverpool lad's collar.

"Little game?" asked Glyn innocently.

"Little game," echoed Dane.

"Little game, did you say, Blake?" inquired Noble, with the air of one desiring important information.

"Oh, rats!" growled Blake, looking for a moment very much inclined to go for the bland trio. "Come on, you chaps!"

"What are you fellows going to do?" asked Noble blandly. "Mayn't we come?" he added as the group of juniors turned grinning towards the School House entrance; Tom Merry alone sprinting off to the New House across the Close.

"We're goin' to spend the afftahnoon on the cycle track," said D'Arcy. "We can have House and Form waces, you know, deah boys. Are you comin'?"

"Why, yes," said Noble, exchanging glances with his study-mates. "We'll come if we may, won't we chaps?"

And the "chaps" answered heartily:

"Rather!"

CHAPTER 2.

Cornstalk & Co. v. Figgins & Co.

A QUARTER of an hour later, as fine a collection of athletic juniors as could be found in any school in England had assembled, with their machines, at the fine concrete cycle-track at St. Jim's.

Figgins and Kerr, of the New House, looking very athletic and fit in their shorts and jerseys, wheeled up on their tandem, nearly running down the group of School House juniors who were collected on the turf in the middle of the track.

"Hi, there!"

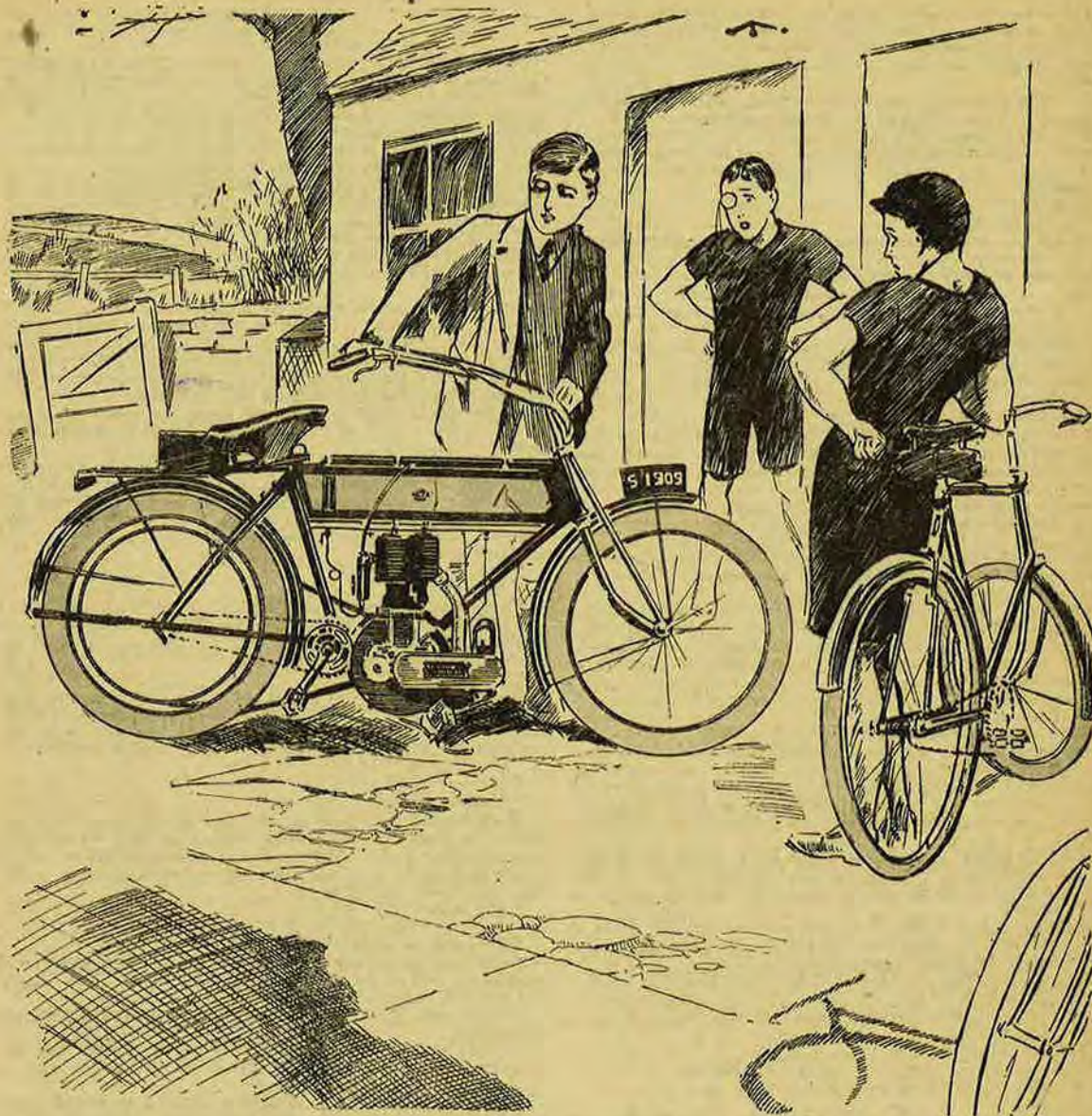
"Look out, you asses!"

"Steady, duffers!"

Figgins and Kerr jumped off their machine.

"Sorry, you chaps!" said Figgins airily. "But you should get out of the way, you know. Accidents will happen."

This explanation was received with glares by the School House juniors. Any more violent measures, however, that might have been resorted to were forgotten in the interest



"Bal Jove, deah boy, I think I must get a motah-cycle, you know," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, examining the glittering machine with interest.

created by the arrival of Harry Noble and Clifton Dane, also pedalling a smart tandem.

"Hallo, there, where's Glyn?" sang out Blake, as the Australian and the Canadian sprang to the ground. "Isn't he coming?"

"Oh, yes, he's coming right enough!" answered Noble.

And Clifton Dane laughed.

"Now, deah boys," said D'Arcy, "who will accept my challenge to a wace twice wound the twack? I am willin' to concede half a lap start to anyone who thinks himself good enough to wace with me."

And D'Arcy, looking a picture of elegance in his neat cycling clothes, wheeled his magnificent machine on to the track in readiness to start, in the event of anyone being so bold as to accept his challenge.

D'Arcy set no limit to his powers as a cyclist; and in the matter of machines he had the advantage of every junior there. But whether he could afford to concede half a lap start to anyone remained to be proved.

"You had better get Fatty Wynn to take you on," remarked Blake. "He's about your mark, Gussy."

Fatty Wynn was the Welsh partner in Figgins & Co., of the New House, and was more famous for his gastronomic feats than for ability to ride cycle-races.

"Weally, Blake, I should wefuse to wace with Fattay," returned D'Arcy, favouring Blake with a withering stare. "I should wegard Fattay Wynn as a foeman unworthy of my steel, you know."

"I rather think Fatty Wynn would 'wefuse' to race with you just now, too," laughed Figgins. "When I asked him if he was going to bring his machine out, after Tom here had asked us to come, he remarked that he had not had much dinner, though he had eaten enough for a regiment of soldiers, and that, anyway, he always got extra hungry this September weather, and thought he would run along to the tuckshop and have a snack."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good old Fatty!" grinned Tom Merry. "Trust him to be 'extra hungry' always, whatever the weather."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I notice that no one has taken up my challenge," remarked Arthur Augustus; "though that is, of course, hardly surprisin', I suppose. Still—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, deah boys, I fail to perceive any cause for mowmiment in that remark," said the swell of St. Jim's, in surprise. "I do not undahstand what you want to cackle like a lot of beastly geese for at nothin'."

No. 81.

NEXT
THURSDAY:

"TOM MERRY'S TRUST."

By
MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"Ha, ha! Why, Gussy, you ass, a blind duck with only one leg on a bone-shaker could give you fifty yards in a hundred on your fifteen-guinea racer, and then beat you!" roared Figgins, slapping Arthur Augustus boisterously on the back.

"Ow, Figgins, you long-legged wottah, don't be such a wuff beast. You have put me in quite a fluttah!"

"Oh, rats! Stand out of the way, Gussy, there's a good dummy. The first item on the programme is a race between the Cornstalks and Dane on their tandem, and Kerr and I on ours."

"Good!"

"On the ball!"

And the juniors cleared the track for the struggle between the two tandem teams, who were old rivals.

Tom Merry acted as starter.

"Now, then, get level here, you two tandems!" he said. "Blake, you get ready to shove Figgy off, and, Monty, you start Noble."

"All right!" grunted Blake. "Get on with it, you Shell-fish. Not so many giddy orders, please!"

"Are you ready?"

"Rather!"

"Are you steady? Go!"

At the word "Go!" Blake and Lowther frantically started to run along pushing the tandems, to enable them to get under way quickly. Blake pushed so energetically and long that his feet slipped from under him, and he held on desperately to the back saddle of Figgins's tandem, and was dragged struggling along the track.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let go, you ass!" shrieked Figgins and Kerr, wobbling furiously, and nearly coming to a standstill. "Leave go, you shrieking dummy!"

"Ha, ha!" roared the juniors. "Go it, Figgy! You're winning easily!"

Blake gave a last frantic struggle to regain his feet, and, failing, let go of the saddle of the tandem, and fell in a heap on the track.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well done, Blake!"

"Well started, sir, indeed!"

Figgins and Kerr gave a last desperate wobble, coming right off the track on to the grass, and then, regaining their balance, shot off after Noble and Dane, who, unaware of their rival's mishap, were pedalling along at a spanking pace by this time, and had gained a useful hundred yards' lead.

Monty Lowther, who was coming back along the track, red and perspiring from his exertions, stared at Blake, who was sitting up in the middle of the track, looking dazed, in astonishment.

"Resting a bit, Blake?" he asked pleasantly. "It is a bit warm, isn't it? But I should get off the track if I were you. They'll be round again presently."

Blake glared, first at the bland Lowther, and then at the chuckling juniors.

"You asses!" he growled. "My foot slipped."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My foot slipped, and—"

"Yes, old chap, we saw it," said Tom Merry.

"We noticed some slipping going on."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Blake grunted, and picked himself up off the track, and the grinning juniors transferred their attention to the two tandems, which were now rapidly coming round.

The Cornstalks were still a long way ahead, but Figgins and Kerr were working like Trojans to catch them up, and looked as if they might do it, too.

There was a roar as the tandems swept past.

"Go it, Noble!"

"Back up, Figgy!"

"Stick to it, New House!"

"Hooray for the School House!"

The tandems whirled past, and the juniors followed them with eager eyes.

The race was over two laps, and the teams were both putting all they knew into it now, on the last lap.

Excitement grew to fever-heat when it was seen that Figgins was slowly but surely creeping up to the leaders. Slowly, slowly the two New House juniors, pedalling as if their lives depended upon it, decreased the distance between them and their rivals.

"Go it, Figgy! Buck up, New House!"

The words came in a terrific yell from the side of the track, and all eyes were turned on a fat figure which was running frantically towards the finishing post.

CHAPTER 3.

A Good Race.

It was Fatty Wynn! The Welsh partner in Figgins & Co., on his way from the tuckshop laden with eatables—inside and out—had noticed the race, and had taken in the situation at a glance. He saw that Figgins and Kerr were making a great race of it, and came running up, waving a bag of tarts over his head in his excitement, to encourage his study-mates in their uphill task.

Fatty Wynn dashed up to the group of juniors at the winning-post, gasping and puffing like a grampus.

"Go it!" he yelled. "Pedal, Figgy! Buck up, Kerr!"

The New House tandem was very close to the School House team now, but the winning-post was very near.

Could Figgins do it, or had the Cornstalks still a bit up their sleeves?

There was a tense silence as Figgins and Kerr, straining every nerve, crept up to within two tandems' lengths of the Cornstalks. Then a roar went up as Noble and Dane, putting on a desperate spurt, passed the post, still ahead.

"Noble and Dane—two lengths!" was the verdict of Tom Merry, who acted as judge as well as starter.

There was a roar of cheering from the juniors. It had been a great race and an exciting one, and both teams had cycled splendidly.

The Cornstalks had made the most of their lead, and the New House pair had made a splendid though unavailing effort to pull off the race. The juniors were pleased and excited at having witnessed such a great contest, and they cheered both teams to the echo.

"Bravo!"

"Ripping race!"

"Hurrah!"

Fatty Wynn especially was beside himself with excitement. As the teams dashed over the finishing line, Fatty Wynn yelled and waved his arms, with the bag of tarts in one hand, frantically above his head.

Crack!

There was a tearing sound, and the paper bag of tarts burst in the air. Fatty had forgotten the nature of the parcel he was holding in his excitement, and the paper had burst under the strain of being waved about so wildly.

"Ow! Oh-h!"

"B-r-r-r! Ugh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A shower of jam-tarts of the most sticky kind descended upon the heads of the tandem teams as they dashed over the finishing line. Tarts rained upon the riders' heads, upon the track, and upon the surrounding juniors. The sky positively hailed tarts.

"My tarts!"

"You fat rotter!"

"Careless porpoise!"

"Oh, my tarts—my nice tarts! Now, they were, with raspberry jam in, too!" wailed Fatty Wynn. "Now they're all spoiled. My tarts!"

"Blow your tarts, you fat porpoise!" roared the juniors in unison.

"Clear that mess of tarts off the track, Fatty, you gormandiser, and shut up!" said Tom Merry. "We want to get on with the washing!"

With many growls the juniors proceeded to scrape themselves and each other as clean as possible from the sticky tarts, while Fatty Wynn, with many lamentations, cleared the track of the messy comestibles, gathering the ones in the best state of preservation carefully into the remains of the bag for future consumption.

The tandem teams, breathless with their exertions, came walking their machines back along the track. They were received with pats on the back and handshakes. They, too, had a few tarts adhering to them, and these were carefully picked off for them by the attentive juniors.

"Phew! That was a tussle, Figgins!" remarked Harry Noble, wiping the perspiration from his streaming face. "I was almost afraid at one time that you were going to catch us up."

"So we did—nearly," replied Figgins cheerfully. "If that ass Blake hadn't made a mess of our start, we should have had a walk-over!"

"Rats! We had enough up our sleeves to do you in, anyway! We didn't want to win by too much, eh, Dane?"

"That's right," said Dane readily. "We didn't want to discourage you New House kids too much, you know!"

"Why, you cheeky young rotters—" began Figgins.

"Now, then," interrupted Tom Merry laughing, "don't start scrapping, you chaps. It was a ripping race. If Blake hadn't started you with unnecessary vigour, Figgy—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here," shouted Blake. "My foot slipped, you ass, and—"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 81.

By
MARTIN CLIFFORD.

ANSWERS

NEXT
THURSDAY 12.2.20

"TOM MERRY'S TRUST."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If Blake hadn't fallen over himself in starting you, Figgy," went on Tom Merry, disregarding Blake's protests, "you might have won. As it was, though, Noble and Dane won, and handsomely, too. You'd better make a match of it some other time again."

"Right-ho! We will!" said both tandem teams in chorus. "Good! Now, next man in—I mean, let's get on with the washing, chaps."

"If anyone would care to take up my challenge now, Tom Mewwy, I shall be pleased to wenev it," said the swell of St. Jim's gracefully. "Half a lap start in a wace of two laps. Suahly someone is sportin' enough to take me on. I am afwaid it would exhaust me too much to concede more than half a lap to my opponent."

"Ha, ha! Ring off, Gussy, you ass!"

"I refuse to be addressed as an ass!"

"Dummy, then!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Hallo, what's that you were saying, D'Arcy?" said a voice, interrupting. "Do you want to make a match with someone? Because I'll take you on."

The voice belonged to Bernard Glyn, who had just sauntered up to the cycle-track. He was in knickers and Norfolk jacket, but had no bicycle with him.

"Yaas, wathah! I'm willin' to concede two laps in a wace of half a lap—I mean half a lap in a wace of two laps, deah boy, if you feel capable of takin' me on."

"Ha, ha! I mean, very well, Gussy!" said Glyn, checking himself. "I'll try and give you a good race, just for the fun of the thing."

"Good! With Gussy giving you half a lap, you might, perhaps make a good race for it!" said Kerr gravely. "Still, I hae ma doots!"

"Ah!" said Glyn, shaking his head with equal gravity. "Well, D'Arcy," he added, "what are the stakes? I presume, in a match of such importance, we must put up a good stake?"

"Weally, Glyn," said D'Arcy, a little taken aback, while the juniors chuckled. They thought they saw Glyn's little wheeze now. "I could not consent to wace for monay, deah boy!"

"Well, race for a feed, then—I mean race for the honour of not standing a feed. That is, let the loser stand a feed to all present."

"Good!" chorussed the juniors heartily. They could see themselves benefiting considerably, whichever way the race went. Not that they had much doubt of the result, anyway.

"Now, Gussy, that's what I call a sporting offer," said Tom Merry gravely. "I think it's up to you to take it on. Of course, if you're afraid of having to stand the feed—"

"Wats, I pwesume you do not intend to accuse me of bein' unspartin', Tom Mewwy? Of course I will agree to your pwoposal, Glyn. But where is your machine, deah boy?"

"My father has just sent me a new machine," explained Glyn. "It has only just come, and Taggles is just finishing unpacking it in his lodge. I suppose you have no objection to my riding a brand-new bicycle, Gussy? It looks a fast machine."

"Certainly not, dear boy!" said Arthur Augustus promptly, glancing at his own splendid racer. "You can wide anythin' on two wheels. I wathah think my own wacah will take a lot of beatin'."

Glyn chuckled. He looked across at Noble and Dane, and they chuckled, too.

It was plain to everyone but D'Arcy that the Liverpool lad had some wheeze on.

"Right-ho, then!" said Glyn. "I won't be a minute. I'll just go and fetch my jigger."

And, favouring the company with a grin and a wink, the Liverpool lad ran off to the porter's lodge.

The juniors waited with grins of expectation. Glyn was the son of a millionaire Liverpool shipowner, who had recently taken a house in the neighbourhood of St. Jim's, and he was allowed money enough to indulge most of his fancies. He was perpetually "messing about," as the juniors termed it, with mechanical and electrical devices, and the odours he produced with his chemical experiments had been the subject of numerous complaints from his unfortunate neighbours and study-mates in the School House. He was a born engineer, and never happy except when inventing or handling some apparatus or machinery. The juniors of St. Jim's had been provided by Glyn with a variety of surprises since he had come to St. Jim's, and never knew what might happen next when dealing with him. It was extremely unsafe to meddle with anything in his study, however harmless its exterior might look, as it was certain to either fold up, give the visitor an electric shock, or explode.

Consequently, the group of juniors on the cycle track

waited with every expectation of seeing something startling.

Nor were they disappointed.

But the St. Jim's juniors, though they were looking out for surprises, were not quite prepared for the surprise Glyn actually gave them.

Pop—pop—pop—pop!

The juniors looked at one another.

From the direction of Taggles' lodge, into which Glyn had disappeared, came the muffled sound.

Pop—pop—pop! Bang! Pop—pop!

The juniors stared over towards the porter's lodge.

There was nothing to be seen, and the popping ceased suddenly.

After a moment's silence there was a yell.

"Here he is!"

Glyn was seen to emerge from the little yard attached to Taggles' lodge, pushing a bicycle. There was a glitter of bright nickel and enamel, as might be expected from a new machine.

The juniors looked a little disappointed. They had expected they knew not what, and as far as could be judged from that distance, there was nothing very extraordinary about Glyn's machine.

The next instant there was a general gasp.

Once clear of the lodge, Glyn was seen to give a little run, pushing the machine along, and then, leaping into the saddle by way of the pedal, give a few vigorous strokes of the pedals.

Immediately the peculiar noise recommenced, this time more sharply and louder.

Pop—pop—pop—pop—pop!

"My hat!" yelled Blake. "It's a motor-bicycle!"

"Poor old Gussy! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good gwacious me, so it is!" gasped the swell of St. Jim's. "It's a motah-bicycle!"

"My hat!"

"Great Scott!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors simply yelled.

The idea of D'Arcy conceding, for a wager, half a lap's start in two laps, to a motor-cyclist on a brand-new machine, seemed to them decidedly comic.

CHAPTER 4.

D'Arcy Does Not Win.

G LYN rode up to the shouting group with a grin on his pleasant face, and jumped off his machine with almost monkeylike agility.

"Well, chaps," he grinned, "what do you think of my new bicycle?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good old Liverpool!"

The juniors gathered round the Liverpool lad and his machine with great interest. Every healthy boy has an in-born love for things mechanical, and Glyn's splendid new motor-cycle would have attracted the attention of anyone, whether mechanically inclined or not.

It was a really magnificent machine, of the best make, and the juniors examined it with curiosity and interest, not unmingled with envy.

"Jove, Glyn, you were lucky in your choice of governors!" exclaimed Jack Blake. "I wish mine would send me a motor-bike or two!"

"Yes, it certainly was ripping of the gov., to send me this. I am awfully keen on motors, and drive the pater's in the holidays sometimes. But it will be ripping to drive my own motor now!"

"Rather!"

"Bai Jove, deah boy, I think I must get a motah-bicycle, you know," said Arthur Augustus, examining the glittering machine with interest, through his monocle. "I nevah thought of that befoah. I would just like a few pwactice spins on yours first, howevah, to see how I like the sensation. You would have no objection to that, I suppose, Glyn?"

"Rather not—I don't think!" chuckled Glyn.

"Weally, Glyn, I suppose you do not want me to get a motah-bicycle of my own befoah I know whathah I like the sensation, or not?" said Arthur Augustus, turning his monocle upon Glyn. "Besides, I should want some pwactice. If I got a new machine without having had any pwactice, I might fall ovah or somethin' and damage it, you see."

"So you want to borrow my new motor-cycle to practise on, in case you might spoil yours?" said Glyn, in measured tones.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Certainly, deah boy."

"You—you tailor's dummy! You fearful fathead! What about spoiling my bike?" roared Glyn indignantly.

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"Weally, deah boy, I nevah thought of that!"

"You—you shrieking lunatic! Let me catch you riding my motor-bike, that's all! I'd bung you in the eye with a sparking plug!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Glyn—"

"Oh, rats! Now, how about that match? Are you still game?"

"I suppose you do not expect a D'Arcy to go back on his word?" said the swell of St. Jim's, glancing at the grinning juniors. "Of course I shall pwoceed with the match, as awwanged. But I must confess, Glyn, that you did not lead me to suspect that your new machine was a motah-bicycle! I am not suah that I can concede you half a lap start with much hope of success undah the cires!"

"Go hon!"

"Howevah, I am pwepared to make the attempt unless you would agree to start level with me. I should say that would make the match more excitin', deah boy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pway stop that widiculous cacklin'! You will disturb my nerves with that wow, and I shall not be able to make a good wace of it."

"Well, Gussy, I will let you off the half-lap's start, and start level with you," said Glyn gravely. "We want to have an exciting finish, I suppose?"

"I wegard that as vewy handsome of you, Glyn. Now, clear off the twack, you fellahs. Tom Mewwy, will you kindlay start us."

"Right ho!"

The grinning juniors cleared off the track as Glyn and D'Arcy wheeled their machines to the starting-line. The motor-cycle gave a series of gasps and wheezes as Glyn wheeled it along, "like a blessed grampus," as Blake said.

"We are weady, Mewwy," said D'Arcy, standing gracefully by his machine at the starting-line, and looking a picture of elegance and grace. Glyn was bending down doing something to some part of his machine.

"Flooding the carburetter," as he explained to Tom Merry, preparatory to the start.

"Now then!" cried Tom Merry. "Look out! I'm going to start you."

"Wight-ho, deah boy!"

"Are you ready?"

"Wathah!"

"Are you steady—"

"Hold on a minute, deah boy!" broke in Arthur Augustus, just as Tom Merry was on the point of saying "go." "I perceive my shoe-lace is undone. Just tie it up for me, please."

Tom Merry glared at the unconscious swell of St. Jim's. "You dummy!" he said, breathing hard. "I thought you said about a dozen times that you were ready!"

"I ovahtlooked my shoe-lace bein' undone," said D'Arcy, with dignity. "I suppose you do not want me to start without bein' pwopeely dwessed?"

"You—you ass! Do your shoe-lace up then, quickly. Buck up! We don't want to be here all day!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, how can I tie up my lace when I am holdin' my bicycle? Pway do it up for me. You are keepin' me waitin', deah boy!"

"Rats! Do it up yourself, dummy! I'll hold your jigger. But buck up, for goodness' sake!"

Tom Merry grasped D'Arcy's bicycle and waited impatiently while the swell of St. Jim's stared down at his foot through his monocle.

"Pway do up my shoe-lace for me, Blake," he said, after a moment's pause.

"I don't think!" said Blake, with a grin.

"Hewwies, kindlay do up—"

"Rats!" said Herries promptly.

"Dig, will you?"

"More rats!" said Digby.

"Oh, you—you unspeakable ass!" roared Tom Merry. "You fatheaded dummy! Here, hold this! We shall be here all night at this rate!" And Tom slung the machine he was holding over at D'Arcy, and, kneeling down, rapidly tied up the erring shoe-lace.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"There you are, ass!" said Tom Merry, springing up again. "Now get ready to start again, dummy! You'll be the death of me one of these days, I know you will, Gussy!"

"Weally—"

"Now, are you ready?" called Tom.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Are you steady? Go!"

There was a yell from the onlooking juniors as the rivals started, mingled with derisive cheers and remarks.

"Go it, window-pane!"

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"Go it, puff-puff!"

"Buck up, both of you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy got away first. He jumped gracefully on his machine and pedalled away in fine style, at once getting several yards' lead of Glyn, who had a different way of starting.

Glyn, at the word "go," began to run along the track, pushing his heavy machine. Having run about twenty yards he released a handle on the handlebars of the machine, and the engine at once started.

Pop, pop, pop, pop!

When the motor-cycle was well under way, Glyn took a flying leap into the saddle, and started away in good earnest after D'Arcy. As Glyn afterwards explained to the juniors, you have to be a bit of an athlete to mount a motor-cycle at all.

When once Glyn was fairly started, he began to overhaul D'Arcy rapidly. The swell of St. Jim's, who was in reality no mean performer on the cycle track, was going well. But he could not hope to compete with a motor-cycle, capable of going, perhaps, at forty miles an hour.

When the Liverpool lad on his noisy machine was four or five yards behind D'Arcy, and gaining at every beat of his engine, the swell of St. Jim's looked round and waved his hand gracefully.

"Buck up, deah boy!" he called. "Put a spwint on! We must make it a good wace, you know!"

Glyn grinned. He touched a lever, and the motor-cycle shot past Arthur Augustus as if he was standing still.

"Buck up, dear boy!" yelled Glyn, as he passed the dismayed Fourth-Former. "We must make it a good race, you know! Ha, ha, ha!"

And with a yell of laughter Glyn forged ahead along the track.

The motor-cycle buzzed along at a splendid rate. Glyn could not let her out at full speed, as the banking of the track was not sufficiently steep to make it safe. But he went at a fine pace, all the same.

The juniors gave him a rousing cheer as he came by them.

"Hurrah!"

"Good old Liverpool!"

Glyn dashed on. He had to complete the two laps to win the wager, and he meant to try and do so before the swell of St. Jim's, who was riding easily along still, had completed one lap.

"Look out, Gussy!"

"He's catching you!"

The juniors yelled the warning to D'Arcy, who looked round. He saw at once what Glyn was trying to do, and took up the challenge immediately.

He put on a terrific spurt, his legs positively flew round, and his racing machine seemed to bound along the smooth track.

The juniors yelled delightedly at the effort.

"Buck up, Gussy!"

"You'll do it yet, old man?"

In the excitement of seeing a close finish, the juniors appeared to forget that D'Arcy was one lap behind Glyn. The prospect of a close race, or what looked like one, drove all minor considerations out of their heads. All their interest was centred on the one question, whether Glyn would catch D'Arcy the right side of the winning post.

And if the onlookers had almost forgotten the real positions of the competitors, what of the competitors themselves? One of them, at any rate, seemed to imagine that the result of the race hung in the balance.

Glyn, of course, knew he was safe. But, like a true sportsman, he meant to make the finish as exciting as possible in spite of that. He put down his head, and set his teeth, and flew round the track, gaining on D'Arcy every second.

The swell of St. Jim's strained every nerve. It was obvious that he had totally forgotten that Glyn was a lap ahead. The expression on his face, and the gleam of determination in his eyes made that clear. An onlooker might have been given the impression that the world's championship would be decided in the next few seconds!

Nearer and nearer came Glyn! It soon became obvious to the onlooking juniors that if he did not overtake D'Arcy on the finishing line, he would do so within two seconds of crossing it. And they yelled again in their excitement.

"Buck up!"

"Stick to it!"

The finishing line was not twenty yards away from the leading cyclist, D'Arcy, when there was a yell of wrath, mingled with derisive cheers from the group at the side of the track.

"Oh, the ass!"

"Chucked his race away!"

"The dummy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Of course, it was D'Arcy!

At that crucial point, twenty yards from the finishing line and with his opponent not five yards behind, the swell of St. Jim's looked round! And it was this that caused the simultaneous roar from the onlooking juniors.

Instead of keeping up his spurt till the last foot of the race, Arthur Augustus, at the most critical moment, calmly glanced round, leaving go of one of the handles of his machine as he did so, and naturally slackening his pace perceptibly! No one can ride at their fastest pace looking over their shoulders towards the rear!

"Weally, Glyn—" he began, and then broke off in dismay as the motor-cyclist passed him with a rush and crossed the finishing line five yards ahead.

CHAPTER 5.

D'Arcy Gets a Bad Shock

THE great match, which D'Arcy had been so eager to make, was over, and D'Arcy had been beaten, after an exciting finish, by exactly one lap and five yards.

Now that the race was over, the juniors saw the absurdity of it again, and as the perspiring swell of St. Jim's and the laughing Glyn came walking their machines back along the track, they yelled with laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, deah boys!" expostulated Arthur Augustus languidly, fanning himself with a handkerchief. "I fail to see the slightest cause for your ridiculous cacklin'. I am feelin' vewy fagged aftah my close wace with Glyn, and suahly it is not my fault bein' beaten by five yards by a motah-bicycle!"

"You ass, you were beaten by one lap five yards!" shrieked Blake. "Glyn had been round once before you'd started nearly! You were hopelessly beaten to the wide, wide world, you fathead!"

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed D'Arcy, with an expression of utter dismay on his face which was almost idiotic. "Bai Jove, you know, I nevah thought of that!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Never mind, Gussy!" grinned Glyn. "I'll take you on another day, if you like, and give you another chance. I'll trouble you to stand that feed, though, old dear!"

"Yaas, watah! We will all assemble in the woodshed at six o'clock this evenin'," said D'Arcy, waving his hand round in a graceful gesture, which embraced all the juniors present. "I will provide a wepast with pleasuah. I will certainly take you on again some othah time, Glyn, deah boy. I was feeling a little off my form this aftahnoon, and pewwaps I was not able to do myself justice, you know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Following D'Arcy's great match, there were several more very interesting races. The scratch race of one lap was won by Tom Merry, who beat Jack Blake by ten yards or so, and the handicap two-lap race was won by Digby, of the Fourth Form, after a very exciting struggle with Monty Lowther.

Glyn did not enter for any more of the races. But he went round the track once or twice, at the urgent request of the juniors, at a spanking pace, and proved himself a very skilful rider.

His machine was immensely admired, and he had to give a little lecture, explaining the working of it, to the group of juniors, who gathered round and fired innumerable questions at him.

His machine was a 3½-h.p. Imperial—one of the best makes, and it was equipped regardless of cost. It was a machine anyone might be proud to own.

"You see, kids, this is the cylinder—it's a single-cylinder engine, you know. Gas is drawn into the cylinder—"

"What's this?" asked Blake, pointing to a kind of closed metal-cup, with several pipes running from it.

"Wait a minute, ass! I'm just coming to that. Now, you chaps, gas is drawn—"

"I say, what's this?"

"Shut up! Gas is drawn—"

"I say—"

"Will you asses stop interrupting?" shouted Glyn wrathfully. "How the dickens can I explain if you keep on interrupting! Blessed if I'll explain at all to such a set of fatheads!"

"Get on with the washing!"

"Well, gas is drawn into the cylinder from this metal cup, which is the carburetter, by the suction-stroke of the piston."

"Go hon!"

"The gas is compressed into this space here at the top of the cylinder—the combustion-chamber, it's called—and then ignited by an electric spark from this sparking-plug here, set in the top of the cylinder."

"Bai Jove!"

"The gas explodes, and drives the piston downwards, revolving the pulley here, which is connected, as you see, by a rubber belt to the back wheel! And there you are. This little machine here is the magneto. It is a little dynamo, you know, really, and makes the electric spark which explodes the gas."

"Bai Jove! You know this is weally vewy intewest'in'," said D'Arcy, surveying the motor-cycle attentively through his monocle. "But where is the electric spark, deah boy?"

"You can't see it, ass, but you can tell it's there!" said Glyn.

"Bai Jove! How can you do that, deah boy?"

"I'll show you!" said Glyn, with a lurking grin, as a sudden thought struck him. He jacked up the motor-cycle on its stand, and got into the saddle.

"Now, take hold here, where this high-tension wire is connected to the sparking-plug, and watch me carefully!" he said.

As D'Arcy obeyed, with a look of expectation on his aristocratic countenance, Glyn, with a wink to the grinning juniors, who had tumbled to his idea, began to pedal the back wheel round.

"I don't see anythin'! Ow—wow—ow—ow! Yow—wow!" yelled D'Arcy, leaping up in the air, and dancing about wildly, shaking his fingers, in which he had received a shock from the full force of the magneto machine.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared his chums in unison.

"You—you wottah, Glyn!" said the incensed swell of St. Jim's. "I am severely injuahed! My arm feels all numb from the beastly shock! I wegard you as an unfriendly beast!"

"Sus-sorry, Gus!" gasped Glyn. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"You shwiekin' ass! I shall be compelled to dwpow your acquaintance in the futuuh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ho, ho, ho!"

"I shall immediately cease to wegard all you unfeelin' and cacklin' wottahs as my fwends!" went on the indignant Arthur Augustus. "Kindlay wemembah to wefwain fwom addwessin' me in futuuh!"

And with a final freezing and furious glare at the yelling juniors through his monocle, Arthur Augustus wheeled his machine off in the direction of the cycle-house.

"My—my hat! What a prize fathead you've got in your study, Blake!" gasped Figgins, who looked after the retreating figure of D'Arcy. "If he'd been in the New House we should have quietly suffocated him years ago!"

"Oh, well, he saves us going to the expense of buying a gramophone to amuse us!" replied Blake airily.

"Look here, you chaps!" said Tom Merry, with a twinkle in his eye. "You've got to remember that Gussy has announced his intention of ceasing to 'wegard us as fwends!' Consequently, if, by any chance, he provides a banquet for us this evening—in the woodshed, for instance—it would be imposs. for us to go. We can't feed with a chap who has dropped our acquaintance, I suppose?"

"Ha, ha! Rather not!"

"Then let's all meet in the field—not too far from the woodshed, though—at five minutes to six, and we can go for a stroll round together, unless, of course, Gussy likes to apologise. What do you say, chaps?"

"Ha, ha! Good! We'll be there!" grinned the chaps.

And the group moved off with their cycles to the cycle-house, thence dispersing to their different Houses.

Blake, Digby, and Herries, the chums of the Fourth, made their way to Study No. 6, in the Fourth-Form passage, composing their faces, as they went in, into expressions of owlish gravity. They entered the study quietly, and proceeded to remove their cycling shoes, studiously taking not the slightest notice of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who favoured them with a chilly glare through his monocle, as he passed out of the study in his stockinged feet, on his way to the bath-rooms.

As the door closed behind his dignified form, the three solemn juniors broke out into chuckles.

"What a giddy icicle it is!" chuckled Jack Blake. "But come on, we must get a sluice down and change. There's a quarter-past five just striking!"

The three chums left the study, and made their way to the bath-rooms. D'Arcy was already splashing about in one of the baths, and they passed him by with the same solemn faces as before.

Blake, Digby, and Herries did not hurry. They wanted to let D'Arcy keep ahead of them, but it was exasperating work. The swell of St. Jim's was so fearfully particular about his toilet that he took more than twice as long as anyone else to dress. But at last he was finished—he was quicker than usual, as a matter of fact—and left the dormitory.

His three chums waited five minutes, and then went along

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to the study again, to find, as they expected, that D'Arcy was not there.

"I suppose Gus has gone to get the feed ready?" grinned Digby. "He couldn't fail to stand it after promising like that!"

"It must be a bit of a strain on the D'Arcy politeness, though!" chuckled Blake. "But I have no fear of our Gussy not coming up to the scratch."

"I hope not, anyway!" said Herries, picking up a copy of the current week's "Magnet." "I'm jolly hungry, for one, and we have missed tea in Hall now. If we don't get that feed after all, I'll brain Tom Merry!"

And peace and quietness settled down on Study 6 for a quarter of an hour or so.

At the end of that time, the three chums of Study 6 repaired to the playing-fields, and found the rest of the juniors in the plot already assembled. All were there, each one looking fresh and neat after his rub down and change. And by the number of clean collars in the party, one would almost have imagined that they were prepared to attend a feed, instead of to firmly refuse to accept an invitation to one!

As the chums of the Fourth joined the group, the whole party moved off, as if going for an evening stroll round the fields. The circumstance, however, of there being such a number of them together, and the air of extreme innocence and unconcern which all tried to adopt, attracted the attention of many of the fellows who were walking about in the playing-fields.

"Shure, an' is it a mothers' meetin' yere's after hould-in'?" inquired Reilly, the Irish junior. "Or is this a procession? I see ye've washed ye're faces, some of ye, anyhow!"

Some of the juniors turned pink, but they all walked on, pretending not to hear Reilly's pleasantries.

Tom Merry kept up a desultory conversation with Blake about the weather prospects, and Figgins and Noble were having a somewhat heated argument on cricket questions, but the rest of the juniors maintained a solemn silence. The whole affair was very unlike an ordinary evening stroll.

As the clock in the old tower struck the hour of six, the figure of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy emerged from the School House door, and advanced towards the group of juniors. The swell of St. Jim's was dressed like a fashion-plate. From the crown of his new topper, the glossiest at St. Jim's, to the toes of his natty patent-leather boots, he was a perfect picture. He advanced towards the solemn party of juniors, with an agreeable smile wreathing his aristocratic face.

It was evident that he was prepared to let bygones be bygones, and re-admit the erring juniors to his select circle of acquaintance. Having given his word, he was bound to stand the feed in the woodshed, and he was determined to do it with as good grace as he could.

"Come along, deah boys!" he said genially, as he came up to the party. "I have pwepared the wespast in the woodshed, and—" He broke off suddenly, as he became aware of the chilling silence with which his words were being received.

"Who is this person, Blake? Do you know?" said Tom Merry, halting, and looking at D'Arcy curiously. "He seems a bit familiar for a perfect stranger, don't you think so?"

"I do, Merry," said Blake gravely—"I do! I think he is thrusting himself forward in a most unseemly manner."

"Weally, Blake—" "Ha, ha!—ahem!—I mean, quite right, Blake. He hasn't even told us his name yet," put in Figgins. "Bad form, I call it."

"Weally, Figgins, I must wequest you to—" "Run away, little boy, we're busy," interrupted Blake. "We don't know you here; you must have mistaken us for friends of yours, I suppose."

"Weally, Blake, don't be such a wottah! How can you pwetend you don't know me?"

"I used to know a chap something like you," said Blake thoughtfully. "D'Arcy, his name was. An awful ass, too! But he dropped my acquaintance some time ago."

"Weally, Blake, don't be so widdlewile! I was acting undah extreme pwovocation when I dropped your acquaintance, and, undah the cires, I am now willing to wewen it again. I twy to keep my circle of acquaintances select, not to say swaggah, so I am obliged to be wevy careful, you know. But dwop all this wottin' now, deah boys, and come along to the woodshed."

In response to this appeal, Fatty Wynn, of the New House, who was present with the other members of Figgins & Co., was observed to drag at Figgins's sleeve, and murmur something about the joke having gone far enough now. He voted that they went in to tackle the feed at once, as he was sure they must be all very hungry. He himself was, anyway, as he always got extra hungry this September weather.

There was a slight titter at this, which was, however, instantly suppressed, and Fatty Wynn was reduced to silence by combined and concentrated glares.

"My dear chap," said Blake, in a tone of patient explanation, "you can't expect us to accept invitations to feed with total strangers. You say you are willing to renew our acquaintance. The point is, though, it seems to me, whether we can include you in our circle of acquaintances, which we endeavour to keep select, not to say swaggah, after having been dropped in this light-hearted way."

"Hear, hear!"

"But weally—"

"Of course, if you choose to make ample apology for the way you have treated us, we might possibly consider whether to come and eat up your feed—eh, kids?" went on Blake, with the resigned air of one making a great concession.

"That's so!" chorussed the "kids."

"But weally, Blake, I am pwovidin' the feed, and I was certainly tweated with gwoss diswespact by you wottahs, and now you expect me to apologise!" exclaimed the swell of St. Jim's plaintively.

"Oh, well, just as you like, of course, Mr. D'Arcy!" replied Blake, shrugging his shoulders. "Come on, kids; we can't spend the whole evening talking to perfect strangers like this."

"Weally, Blake, if you put it like that, I will consent to apologise, I suppose. I apologise, then, to you wottahs, though I pwotest that I do not see the necessity for it."

"Can we accept an apology couched in those terms?" asked Blake doubtfully, turning to the juniors. He was willing to bring Arthur Augustus more completely to his knees, if he could do so without fear of losing the feed.

"Of course, if you fellahs don't see your way to acceptin' my apology," remarked Arthur Augustus carelessly, as a sudden brilliant idea struck him, "I dare say I can wake up enough fellahs fwom the common-woom to finish up the feed."

"We'll accept it all right, Gussy," said Blake hastily; and the juniors joined in with a yell of laughter and assent.

"Rather!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good gracious, Blake!" gasped Fatty Wynn, as the laughing crowd of juniors ran off towards the woodshed, with the good-natured D'Arcy beaming in their midst. "Good gracious, you made me feel quite bad! If you'd caused us to miss that feed for the sake of carrying a jape too far, I'd have—I'd have—"

And words failed Fatty at the mere contemplation of such an overwhelming disaster.

The feast in the woodshed was a very merry one, and lasted till the bell summoned the feasters to prep., when the jolly party broke up in high good humour, unanimously voting D'Arcy "a jolly good fellow."

CHAPTER 6.

Lowther Has a Brilliant Idea.

"I SAY, you chaps!" said Tom Merry, as the chums of the Shell entered their study in the Shell passage after morning school on the following Wednesday, which was a half-holiday at St. Jim's. "I say, you chaps, have you heard anything about a whole holiday next Saturday?"

"Eh?"

"What's that?"

"Deaf?" inquired Tom pleasantly. "I said, have you heard a rumour about a whole holiday for the whole school next Saturday?"

"Why, no, of course we haven't, ass, or we should have mentioned it," said Manners. "Have you heard such a rumour?"

"Because if so, why the dickens didn't you tell us before?" added Lowther warmly. "If it's true, fathead, tell us, and we'll yell about it."

"I only just heard Kildare mention to Knox that it had been proposed, you asses, so how could I mention it before, or know whether it's true or not, dummdies?"

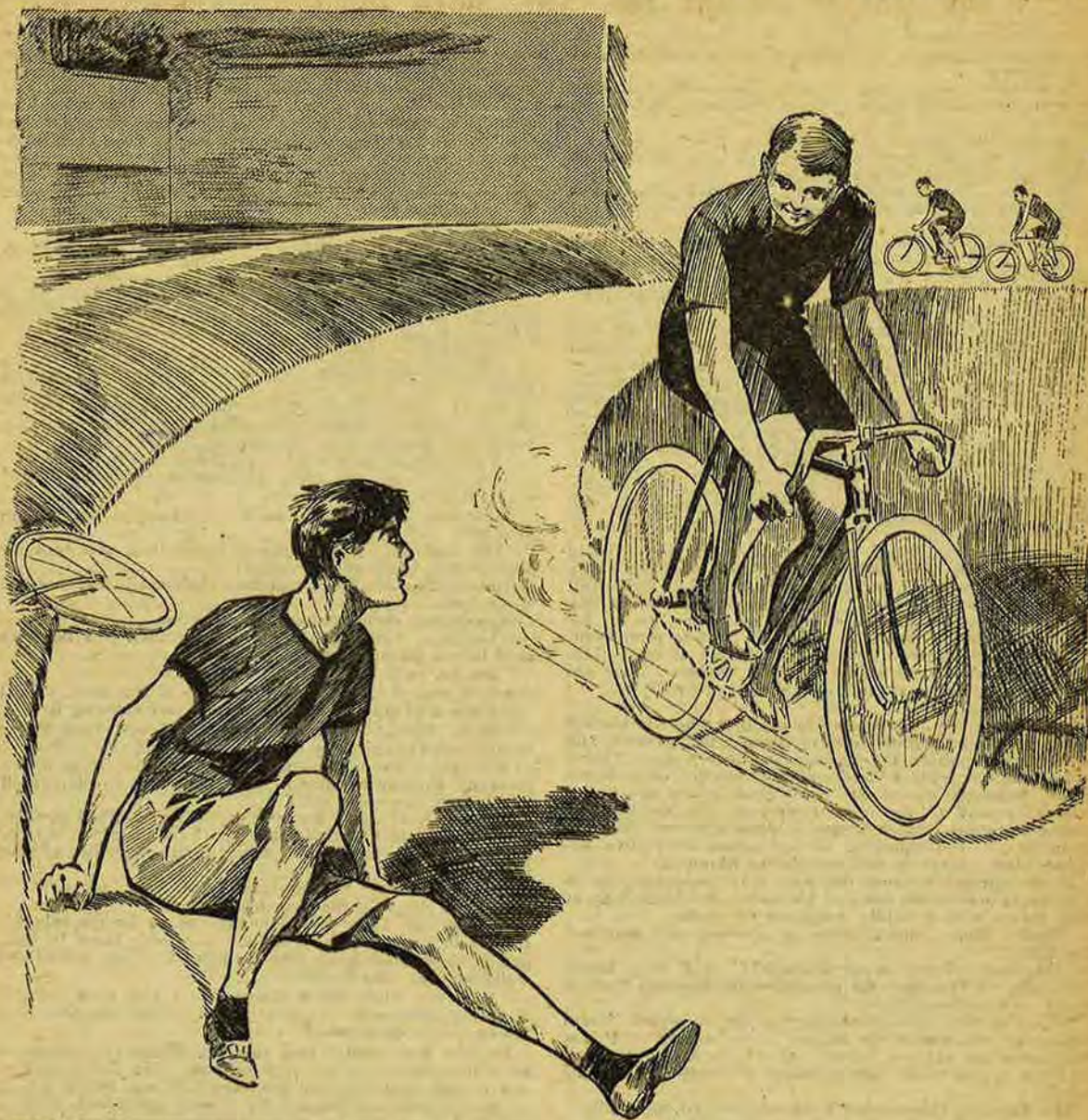
"What's it for, anyhow, if there is one?"

"Why, the vicar of Rylcombe's great church bazaar is coming off on that date—you know he is making great efforts to raise enough money to restore the old parish church—and I suppose he thought it would be a good wheeze to get us a whole holiday so that we can go down there and buy a lot of things we don't want, shall never use, and would rather be without."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm afraid if we did get the whole day off, not many of us would go to the bazaar," grinned Lowther. "We should all play cricket, or go out somewhere for the day."

"That's just what I was thinking," said Tom Merry.



"Resting a bit, Blake?" asked Monty Lowther pleasantly. "It is a bit warm, isn't it? But I should get off the track if I were you."

"The Head could not force us to go down and buy the lot of gimcrack things—work-bags and babies' shawls—usually sold at bazaars."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, I hope we do get the whole day off, anyhow," said Manners. "But in the meantime, what shall we do this afternoon?"

"Why, we must cycle over to Highfield Hall, of course, to see the First Eleven play Colonel Lacy's house-party. It's not so very far, and we are bound to back up the School team," said Tom.

"That's all very well, but it's a beastly hot day," objected Manners, "and Highfield Hall's over fifteen miles away. It will be a bit of a grind getting over there."

"Bosh!" said Tom Merry. "If you can't cycle fifteen miles, Manners—"

"It's thirty there and back, ass!"

"Well, thirty, or fifty, for the matter of that," said Tom. "You must be in jolly bad training, that's all. Perhaps you will be too tired to play in the next junior House match against the New House rotters?"

"You ass, of course I shan't! If you leave me out of that, I'll—I'll suffocate you! But—"

"Look here," broke in Lowther excitedly, struck by a sudden idea, "why shouldn't we cycle over there?"

"That's what we've got to do, ass!"

"Wait a minute! Why can't we cycle over there without pedalling? We've got free-wheels, haven't we? We can free-wheel all the way."

"What a brilliant idea!" commented Manners sarcastically. "The only drawback is that we shouldn't get on very fast, as it isn't downhill all the way. In fact, it's mostly uphill. How do you propose to free-wheel uphill, you lunatic?"

"Easily!" said Lowther calmly.

"What!"

"You ass, I believe you've gone doffy!" said Tom Merry, staring at Lowther. "I suppose it's the sun. Here, lie down a bit, old chap."

"What price Glyn?" said Lowther, in a tone of triumph. "About eightpence, I should say. But what's that got to do with it?" asked Herries, staring.

"Why—"

"There, there!" said Tom Merry. "Lie down a bit, old chap, just—"

"You ass!" shouted Lowther. "Can't you see? We can hang on to his old puff-puff!"

"Hurrah! Why, of course!"

"Good old Monty!"

And Tom Merry and Manners rushed at Lowther, and

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seizing him between them, waltzed him round the study, to the great detriment of the furniture, which went flying in all directions.

"Here, chuck it, you two lunatics!" gasped Lowther, as the three brought up against the wall at last with a bump that shook the room.

"Wodger playing at? Leggo!"

Tom Merry and Herries released their gasping chum so suddenly that he sat down with a bump.

"Ow-wow! You shrieking asses, what did you do that for?" yelled the unlucky Lowther.

"You told us to."

"You—you dummies! Blessed if I'll tell you any more of my brilliant ideas! Why, I—I feel as if I'd been through a mangle!" growled Lowther.

"Ha, ha! Never mind, old chap. Come on, and let's find Glyn."

And the Terrible Three marched out of the study and down the Shell passage arm in arm towards the end study, where the Cornstalk chums lived and had their teeing.

There was no one else in the Shell passage, and the Terrible Three were marching cheerfully along, when suddenly one of the study doors was flung violently open, and the form of a skinny youth with a pair of enormous spectacles perched on his huge forehead was precipitated into the passage, and landed with a terrific bump right at the feet of the startled chums. The next second a heavy volume came hurtling through the door after the skinny youth, and then the door was closed with a violent slam.

"Why—what—who— Ha, ha, ha!"

The chums of the Shell burst into a laugh. They could not help it. The sight of the skinny youth, with his entire very much disordered, and his huge spectacles perched all awry on his bony forehead, sitting staring at the ceiling with an expression of almost idiotic bewilderment on his face, was enough to move the proverbial cat to merriment.

"It's—it's Skimmy!" gasped Tom Merry at last. "Do you always leave your study like that, Skimmy? Or are you practising doing a quick exit in case of fire?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was Skimpole. Skimpole was a junior who was imbued with a very much inflated idea of his own brain-power, and he took up Socialism, Determinism, and every other "ism" under the sun with a determination worthy of a better cause. Skimpole was always ready to deliver a two-hour's oration on any of these great subjects, but he was not always fortunate enough to find anyone who was ready to listen to it. Consequently, his harangues were often unappreciated, and there was trouble for Skimpole.

At the present moment he was very uncertain as to whether he was on his head or his heels. He blinked up at Tom Merry with a mildly indignant expression.

"Really, Merry, this laughter is unseemly and heartless. I'm hurt."

"Ha, ha! Never mind, Skimmy!" said Tom Merry cheerfully. "You have the consolation of knowing that we aren't—not in the slightest."

"That is very little consolation to me at present," said Skimpole, who was never known to see a joke. "Please help me to my feet, my friends. Gore is a beast. It seems that any appeal to his higher nature is utterly wasted upon him."

The Terrible Three grinned as they helped Skimpole to his feet. Gore was the cad of the Shell, and his temper was never of the best, and Skimpole had the felicity of sharing a study with him. The chums of the Shell guessed that Gore had had something to do with Skimpole's hurried exit from the study. Nor were they mistaken.

"Yes," went on Skimpole, with an aggrieved air. "I invited him to discuss Socialism with me for an hour or so, in the hope of converting him to the great cause, but he refused with some rudeness. However, observing that he was only engaged upon the trivial task of writing a German imposition, I proceeded to read out to him some of the pithy observations contained in Professor von Dummkopf's magnificent volume on 'Determinism.' He interrupted me several times, but as a true Determinist, I ignored his ignorant remarks. I had just got to where the professor conclusively proves that every effect is the inevitable result of a cause, which is in its turn produced by an effect, when Gore suddenly arose, and, laying violent hands on me, ejected me in the rough and rude manner witnessed by you."

"Ha, ha, ha!" shouted the Terrible Three.

"Really, I see no cause for laughter in anything I have said," remarked Skimpole in mild surprise. "Gore's conduct to me is inexplicable. But I suppose I must put it down to the combined influence of heredity and environment."

"I suppose so," grinned Lowther. "But Gore's conduct is not absolutely inexplicable to me. How anyone could do a German impot. with you gassing your rot at the same time I don't know."

"Really, Lowther, you would force me to believe that your

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intellect, which I know is not great, is of an even lower order than I have always imagined. But I suppose such gross stupidity must be put down to the influence—"

"Shut up," roared Lowther, "or I'll put you down, you babbling ass!"

And the Terrible Three went on their way down the passage grinning, and leaving Skimpole staring after them with a grieved expression on his face.

On reaching the end of the passage the chums of the Shell knocked at the door of the last study, which was occupied by Cornstalk & Co.

"Don't trouble to come in!" said Harry Noble's voice.

The Terrible Three looked at one another, and, opening the door, put their heads into the study.

"Hallo! Glyn there?" inquired Tom Merry pleasantly.

"Yes, I'm here," said Bernard Glyn, looking up from a test-tube, in which he was boiling some greenish liquid over a Bunsen burner. "Want anything?"

"No-o, not exactly. We only wanted to know—"

"Thought you didn't want anything!" grinned Clifton Dane.

"Rats! We're going to cycle over to Highfield Hall to see the First Eleven match this afternoon. We were just wondering whether Glyn was coming."

"Yes, we're all going over," said Harry Noble.

"Are you—are you going on your motor-cycle, Glyn?" inquired Tom Merry demurely.

"Certainly!" answered Glyn, looking hard at Tom's innocent face. "Why?"

"Oh, nothing! We thought it would be a nice spin for you, though, that's all. So long!"

And the Terrible Three withdrew their heads and shut the study door.

Outside they exchanged triumphant grins.

"That's all right, then!" grinned Lowther. "I hope we shall have a pleasant ride this afternoon."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

At the end of the passage the chums of the Shell walked right into a group of juniors who were just entering it.

"Hallo, Blake! Fancy meeting you!" said Tom Merry to the leader of the party, who were the occupants of Study 6 in the Fourth Form passage. "What are you doing in our passage? Coming to call on us, I suppose? You can run off home, then, 'cos we're out."

"Rats! You aren't the only people in the Shell passage, I suppose," said Blake, "unless you have bought it up and evicted all the other chaps? Stand aside, Shell-fish, and let four gents pass!"

"Yaaa, wathah! Kindlay stand aside, Tom Mewwy!"

And the chums of the Fourth stalked on.

The Terrible Three looked inclined to go for the calm intruders in their passage, but they were only three to four, and prudence bade them hold their hand. They sniffed and walked on out into the Close.

"I wonder where those Fourth Form kids were going?" remarked Manners. "Hallo, hallo! What are you New House loafers doing here?"

Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn, the New House Co., sauntered up with agreeable smiles on their faces. The Terrible Three saw at once that they had not come with any hostile intent. As a matter of fact, Figgins & Co. were particularly anxious to avoid a row just then, as they had important business on hand in the School House—in the heart, as it were, of the enemy's country. There was constant, though perfectly good-humoured, warfare between the juniors of the rival Houses at St. Jim's.

"It's all right! We haven't come to lick you!" exclaimed Figgins amiably. "It's pax! We're just going to call on a chap in your old—in the School House, that's all. No rows!"

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"There will be rows unless you are more respectful to your betters!" said Tom Merry darkly. "You kids have got to try and behave yourselves on our side of the Close, you know!"

Figgins & Co. chuckled and walked on, while the Terrible Three sauntered on towards the gates, where the First Eleven was just embarking in the brake which was to take them over to Colonel Lacy's place for the afternoon match.

CHAPTER 7.

A Study "Scrap."

"WONDER what those chaps were driving at?" grunted Bernard Glyn, as he turned to his test-tube again on the departure of Tom Merry & Co.

"Ha, ha! Pretty plain, I think!" grinned Harry Noble. "I should say they have got some scheme of letting your motor-bike tow them over to Highfield Hall this afternoon. Of course, they're slightly off the track."

"Of course!" assented Glyn, still busily watching the green liquid boiling in his test-tube.

"Because, as a matter of fact, you are going to tow Dane and I over," pursued Noble calmly. "That's understood."

"Certainly!" said Dane.

"Rats! I never said—"

"No, but you meant it, my son."

"More rats! I can't turn the motor-bike into a giddy traction-engine! I— Hallo! Get out!"

The latter remark was addressed to four heads which made their appearance suddenly round the study door.

"Hallo, my sons! Nice weather, isn't it?" sang out Jack Blake pleasantly.

"Ripping day for cycling!" said Digby.

"Especially motor-cycling!" added Horries.

"Yaas, wathah!" was D'Arcy's contribution to the, as yet, somewhat one-sided conversation.

"Did you take all the trouble of coming here to tell us that?" asked Harry Noble grimly. "Because if so, now you've told us, we'll excuse you. Git!"

"Half a mo, my son! Don't be so impetuous!" grinned Blake. "We just looked in to let Glyn know that we're going to cycle over to Highfield Hall this afternoon to see the First Eleven match, and to know if he's coming."

Noble, Glyn, and Dane exchanged significant glances.

"You'll be pleased to hear," said Glyn deliberately, "that I am going over to Highfield Hall this afternoon to see the First Eleven match, and, moreover, I'm going on my motor-cycle. Is there any other information I can supply you with?"

"Not just now, I think, thanks!" rejoined Blake coolly.

"I think we'll trot along now. Glad you're coming, Glyn. So long!"

"So long! Glad you're going!" said Glyn, as the chums of the Fourth closed the study door and walked away down the passage, very well pleased with themselves.

Half-way down the Shell passage the chums of the Fourth met with Figgins & Co. of the New House. The Fourth-Formers at once threw themselves into a warlike attitude, under the impression that the presence of the New House juniors in the School House could mean nothing else than a raid. Figgins & Co., however, advanced with their hands in their pockets and grins on their faces.

"It's all right! It's pax!" said Figgins amiably. "Don't be afraid!"

"Afraid, you long-legged waster! We'll wipe the ground with you for two pins, pax or no beastly pax!" shouted Blake wrathfully. "Of all the nerve! You New House rotters take the giddy bun! Coming into our House and telling us not to be afraid!"

"Yaas, wathah, Figgins! I regard your remark as a base insinuation, calculated to wound our iah!" put in Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, surveying Figgins with an expression of extreme disapproval.

"I'm sorry you should regard it in that light, Gussy," said Figgins, with unaccustomed humility. "And pray don't excite yourself, Blake. We are not looking for a row."

"You'd better be a bit more careful how you address Fourth-Formers, then," said Blake darkly, "else you'll get what you aren't looking for. Where are you going, anyway?"

"We're just going along to call on a friend of ours," said Figgins blandly. "Any objection, Blake?"

"Yes, I object to New House wasters being in the School House at all!" growled Blake, secretly wondering whom Figgins was so anxious to see. It was plain his business was important, as he was so obviously avoiding a row. "However, I suppose it's no business of ours. Come on, kids!"

And the chums of the Fourth Form strolled away and out on to the cricket field.

Figgins & Co. went on their way down the Shell passage quite unruffled. They were determined to avoid a row at all cost—at any rate, till their purpose was accomplished, and so far they had been very successful without having had to eat any undus quantity of humble pie. They felt quite proud of themselves.

They walked jauntily along to the end study, and knocked politely.

"Come in, fathead!" roared a voice, and the New House chums cautiously opened the door and looked in.

The three juniors in the study met the three new-comers with ferocious glares.

"Here's some more idiots come to tell us that it's suitable weather for cycling," observed Harry Noble, with heavy sarcasm. "Especially for motor-cycling!"

"Let 'em all come!" murmured Clifton Dane.

Glyn merely glared. He emptied his test-tube into an acid bottle which he took from a shelf, and extinguished the Bunsen burner. It seemed useless to him to attempt to continue his experiments with so many interruptions.

Figgins & Co. stared at Cornstalk & Co. in genuine astonishment. Being New House fellows, they had not expected a great show of warmth from the occupants of the School House study they were honouring with a visit, but such depth of feeling as Cornstalk & Co. were displaying astonished them.

"Anything the matter with you chaps?" asked Figgins pleasantly. "You don't seem as pleased to see us as you might be."

"We aren't! Get out!" roared Harry Noble.

"All in good time, my son!" said Figgins blandly. "We just want to know something first. We're cycling over to Highfield Hall this afternoon, and we want to know—"

"Bunk!" roared Noble again, picking up a ruler.

"We want to know—" continued Figgins, keeping a wary eye on the ruler.

"Get!" shouted Glyn, seizing a cricket stump. "Scout!"

"Whether Glyn's coming?" finished Figgins, unheeding.

"Yes, aas, I am, and now you're going!" roared Glyn, leaping up and making a rush at the importunate Figgins with the cricket stump.

Noble made a rush at the same time, brandishing his ruler, and Clifton Dane, who was grinning broadly, hurled a Latin dictionary at the three New House heads.

Figgins & Co., having found out what they wanted, saw no reason for dallying any longer. They slammed the door to and bolted inconspicuously down the passage, chuckling to themselves as they went.

Glyn and Noble arrived at the door together, just as it was slammed to in their faces. They biffed against each other and rolled over on the floor, while the Latin dictionary crashed against the door and dropped right on to the struggling mass of wildly waving arms and legs.

"Ow! Wow!"

"Yow! Wow!"

"You—you ass!"

"You fatheaded idiot!"

Noble and Glyn sat up and glared at each other. Their clothes were dusty and their collars torn. Their hair was rumpled and their ties awry; and altogether they presented a very dishevelled appearance.

To Clifton Dane they also seemed to present a very comical appearance, for that youth sat on the edge of the table and roared and roared again with laughter as he looked at them.

The incensedfortunates looked expressively from one another to the hilarious Dane as they slowly and painfully rose from the floor. And as they endeavoured to adjust their attire somewhat, their thoughts seemed too deep for words.

"Blessed if I knew I was sharing a study with two howling lunatics before," remarked Noble at last, in measured tones.

"But of all the senseless dummies—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Dane.

"Of all the shrieking idiots, you two are about the shriekiest," growled Glyn. "Blessed if I see how chaps can be such shrieking fatheads!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Dane.

Noble and Glyn exchanged glances.

Exasperated as they were with each other the laughter of Clifton Dane, who was by this time quite helpless with mirth, was more than they could possibly stand. Both came to the conclusion that their difference with each other could wait till this common annoyance had been disposed of.

Noble and Glyn advanced upon Clifton Dane with grim looks. But as they put out their hands to grab him and bump him on the floor, Dane suddenly left off laughing and skipped off the edge of the table round to the opposite side of it.

"Here, keep off, you chaps!" he said, looking a little alarmed. "Hold on! What are you going to do?"

"We are going to bump you till all desire to laugh at us has left you, together with most of the breath from your body," said Noble grimly. "That's what we're going to do."

"We are," said Glyn.

"Oh, rats, you chaps!" protested Dane, dodging nervously round the table, as the two closed inexorably round him. "It was only a joke; besides, you did look funny sitting there glaring at each other—Ha, ha!—h'm! I mean. I sincerely sympathise with you. Ow! Leggo!"

His two study-mates seized him firmly, one by either arm, and led him to the centre of the study where there was a little floor-space. There they solemnly proceeded to bump him, in grim silence, till the unfortunate Dane had no breath to protest with.

When they had finished with him, he sat in the centre of the study and gasped for breath for a full minute. By this time he was looking considerably more dishevelled and feeling considerably sorer than the two who had originally moved him to such paroxysms of mirth.

"You—you rotters!" he managed to gasp at last. "What—what did you do that for? I—I feel as if there had been an earthquake, or a tidal wave, or something. Every bone in my body is broken!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was the turn of Noble and Glyn to laugh. In the satisfactory disposal of their common enemy, they had forgotten their own differences, and all sense of enmity between them was now gone. In the greater discomfiture of the once-hilarious Dane they could afford to smile at their own little mishap. It was only another illustration of the old saying:

"He laughs loudest who laughs last."

"Funny sensation to sit down on the floor hard, isn't it, old man?" grinned Noble. "Hear us smile. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" echoed Bernard Glyn.

"Don't sit there gasping all day, old chap!" added Glyn, holding out his hand towards the seated Dane. "Up you get! That's it!"

Dane grunted, and gasped Glyn's outstretched hand, and pulled himself up. He looked round him in a slightly dazed way.

"Nice mess you lunatics have made the study in, I must say!" he grunted. "Looks as if a tornado had dropped in to see us. I suppose we had better start to clear up a bit."

"I suppose so," assented Noble and Glyn, a little ruefully, surveying the study, which was, indeed, in a state of considerable disorder. "Come on! Let's get it done before dinner."

And the three chums set about getting things to look a little more shipshape and orderly. They worked with a will, and in perfect good humour with one another. They had occasional "scraps" among themselves, but all in a perfectly good-natured way. It was not the way of the juniors of St. Jim's to bear malice. It was give-and-take and no ill-feeling with them, as it should be with all decent and right-minded British boys. Only here and there, maybe, a "bad egg" was found, who nourished ill-feeling and revengeful thoughts, thus causing himself to be cordially disliked by the majority of decent fellows. Such a one was Gore, of the Shell; and Mellish, of the Fourth Form, must also be mentioned in this connection. But there are black sheep in every flock, and St. Jim's was no exception to the rule obtaining, unfortunately, in all other big public schools.

But if St. Jim's had its share of black sheep, it also had its share or more than its share of the kind of boy who is a credit to his school and his up-bringing. Juniors such as Tom Merry & Co., Blake & Co., Figgins & Co., Cornstalk & Co., with many another sound, healthy-minded boy, were never likely to do anything to disgrace themselves or their school.

Glyn and Noble only reckoned that they had "got their own back" on their chum for laughing so heartily at their misfortunes, and Dane himself viewed his somewhat severe bumping in the same light.

It was somewhat rough reckoning, perhaps, but one easily understood by schoolboys, and perfectly in accord with their own code of laws. It never crossed the mind of one of the three that there was anything to excite permanent ill-feeling in the incident, which was taken as being, as it were, all in the day's work.

Glyn, Noble and Dane worked with a will at putting their study straight, and to such good purpose that when the dinner-bell rang, the little apartment was looking almost itself again, and not, as Clifton Dane expressed it, "as if a tornado had dropped in to see them."

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CHAPTER 8.

Some Unexpected Meetings.

IMMEDIATELY dinner was over at St. Jim's this fine Wednesday afternoon, there was a rush of juniors from the Hall to their studies to prepare for the cycle ride over to Highfield. Nearly all the juniors who had bicycles—and these were the great majority—had conceived the idea of riding through the pretty country lanes to Colonel Lacey's fine old country house, to see the First Eleven play the House-party. It was considered bad form at St. Jim's not to turn up and support the School Eleven from the boundary flags at near matches. Besides, how could the pleasant summer afternoon be better spent than in reclining on the green turf under shady trees after a pretty cycle-ride, and cheering on the champions of the old school to great feats of derring-do in the grand old game? What English boy could resist the powerful attractions of such a prospect? Certainly not our friends of the junior Forms at St. Jim's. Keen cricketers and athletes as they were, they meant to turn up at Highfield in full force.

There was a great bustle throughout the old school. Parties were being made up, chaff was flying about in all directions, and laggards were being hastened by their respective parties by yells of "Buck up!" "Get a move on, there!" and other similar exhortations, not always couched in the most polite language.

There was a constant stream of juniors riding or wheeling their cycles across the Close towards the school gates, and with this stream Tom Merry, Lowther, and Manners, who had been rushing about apparently labouring under considerable excitement since dinner, soon found themselves and their machines carried along.

On arriving at the gates, the Terrible Three wheeled their machines aside from the throng of outgoing juniors, and, leaning on the handle-bars, remained waiting and watching the crowd with anxious expressions on their faces.

Presently, however, Monty Lowther gave a growl. "Where is the beggar?" he exclaimed impatiently. "I suppose he's coming. He said he was."

"Give him a chance, Monty," laughed Tom Merry. "It's early yet, you know. Hallo!" he added suddenly. "I wonder what those wasters are waiting there for?"

Monty Lowther and Manners followed the direction of Tom's glance, and saw Blake & Co. on the opposite side of the gate. The Fourth-Formers, like the Terrible Three, were leaning on their bicycles, and intently watching the gates, scanning every face in the crowd as it streamed out.

"Like their cheek! Why don't they buzz off?" growled Manners. "Hallo, there goes Figgins & Co.!"

Pushing their way in breathless haste through the now rapidly thinning crowd, came the famous New House Co., Fatty Wynn gasping and puffing like a grampus as he hastened along in the wake of Figgins and Kerr.

Seven pairs of eyes, namely those belonging to Tom Merry & Co., and Blake & Co., followed the New House juniors as they pushed their way out through the gates and into the wide road. There Figgins stopped, and looked round. His eye at once noted the two parties of juniors waiting at opposite sides of the gate, and a lurking grin overspread his rugged features.

Something seemed to amuse Figgins.

He signed to Kerr and Wynn, and the three of them wheeled their cycles over to where Blake & Co. were still silently regarding them.

Figgins gave the Fourth-Formers a pleasant nod.

"Hallo, you chaps!" he sang out cheerily. "All the family here, I see. Nice day for cricket, isn't it?"

"Very," answered Blake, staring hard at him.

"We shall have a good ride over to Highfield, too, I should say!" continued Figgins, carelessly affecting not to notice Blake's fixed gaze, and coming to a halt with Kerr and Wynn, who proceeded to lean on their bicycles and compose themselves for a wait.

"Ah!" said Blake, still staring at the unconcerned Figgins.

"Hallo, you beggars! All here, I see," said Tom Merry, strolling up with Manners and Lowther. "Fine weather, isn't it?"

"Fine weather? Of course it's fine weather! We aren't blind! We can see it's fine weather without a lot of fat-heads buzzing round telling us so!" said Blake, a little warmly, transferring his steadfast gaze to Tom Merry, who, likewise seemed quite unmoved by the circumstance. "This long-legged New House waster has just been drumming it into us that it's fine weather. We know it's fine, and we don't want a lot of lunatics coming round cackling to us about it."

"Keep your wool on, Blakey, old dear!" said Tom Merry blandly. "Don't let your angry little passions rise. I suppose you're going over to Highfield this afternoon, eh? And you, too, Figgy?"

"Yes," said Blake shortly, beginning to watch the gates again.

"Certainly!" said Figgins blandly.

There was a short pause. All the juniors looked at each other, and then towards the gates, which were now almost deserted.

"Well—er—are—aren't you going to start, then, Blake, old man?" said Tom Merry at last, in a somewhat diffident tone.

Blake turned his gaze on Tom Merry again in a stony stare.

"Certainly," he said coldly; "aren't you?"

"Er—yes, yes, certainly! Of—of course we are. We're going to start, aren't we, chaps?" stammered Tom Merry, in confusion.

"Certainly we are!" said Manners.

"Of course," assented Lowther.

"Well, why don't you, then?" demanded Blake.

"Well, why don't you?" retorted Tom Merry with spirit.

"What are you hanging about for, eh?"

"Oh—er—we're—we're just waiting a bit, you know!" said Blake, turning rather red. "We're—we're going very soon now."

"And what are you hanging round for?" demanded Tom Merry, suddenly turning round on Figgins, who had been careful not to take any part in the foregoing conversation. "I suppose you're going over to Highfield Hall this afternoon?"

"Oh, yes, we're going!" said Figgins amiably. "We're just waiting to see you and Blakey off, you know. We thought we'd give you a good send-off before starting ourselves. We want to do the proper thing by the School House, you know."

Tom Merry sniffed.

"We don't want you hanging round spoiling the scenery," he said. "So you can get on. We'll give you a shove off, if you like."

"Not at all," said Figgins with a gentle smile. "After you, Tommy. Children first."

"Look here—"

"We are?"

"Oh, rats! I— Hallo, here he is!" And Tom Merry hastily wheeled his bicycle on towards the gates. All the assembled juniors immediately trooped after him.

Glyn, Noble, and Clifton Dane were just coming through the gates. Noble and Dane were wheeling ordinary bicycles, while Glyn was pushing his motor-cycle, puffing and gasping as it went.

Noble had a coil of thin rope slung on his handle-bar.

Cornstalk & Co., viewed the approach of the ten juniors, led by Tom Merry, with anything but cordial looks. They had purposely delayed their departure, in order to let most of the crowd of cyclists get on. But they had not reckoned on the ten juniors' determination of purpose. Each one of the ten was firmly determined to allow Glyn's motor-cycle to do all the work of transporting him and his cycle over to Highfield Hall.

The views of the hopeful ten did not accord in any way with those of Cornstalk & Co., though.

"What do all you cripples want?" asked Noble, eyeing the crowd with disfavour. "Clear out of the way there! We want to get off!"

"Hallo, Noble, is that you?" said Tom Merry, with apparent surprise. "Why here's Glyn as well, and Dane. And, I declare, Glyn's got his motor-bicycle with him! Just fancy that now, you chaps!"

"Just fancy!" chorussed the "chaps."

"That's very fortunate," pursued Tom Merry, with enthusiasm, disregarding the grim looks of Cornstalk & Co. "Very fortunate, indeed. I hope the machine is in good going order, Glyn?" he added politely.

"Excellent, thank you! And so are we," replied Glyn grimly. "So kindly let us go."

"Certainly," said Tom Merry amiably, at the same time making a sign to the juniors, who promptly closed round Cornstalk & Co., so that further progress was impossible for them. "Certainly, Glyn! What's that coil of rope on your handle-bars for, Kangaroo?"

"Never mind!" granted Noble.

"Oh, all right, old chap! But I was just thinking that it would be the very thing for me to tie on to Glyn's motor, so that he could tow me along by it," said Tom Merry, as if struck by a sudden brilliant idea.

"You were, were you, you—cheeky bounder?" roared Noble. "Just you let me catch you trying that game on! This rope's for Glyn to tow me over to Highfield with. Don't you make any mistake about that!"

"It's you who are making the mistake, old man," said Tom Merry, in a tone of patient expostulation. "Glyn's going to tow me over."

"Well, of all the nerve!" gasped Noble. "You— you—"

"As a matter of fact, Tom Merry, Glyn's towing me over to Highfield this afternoon!" said Blake coolly. "Me and Herries, and Dig, and Gussy. So you're making a mistake, too."

"Yas, wathah!" assented Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Oh, rats to you, Blake!" broke in Figgins warmly. "We're being towed over to Highfield by Glyn this afternoon, and—"

"Rats to you, Figgins!"

"Look here—"

"More rats!"

"What I say is—"

"Rot!"

"Weally, deah boys!"

"Rats and rot!"

The argument was growing decidedly warm now, and was being joined in by all the ten juniors one after another. It looked as if fistcuffs were imminent when there was a sudden roar from several voices:

"Look out!"

"He's got away!"

CHAPTER 9.

A Terrific Smash-up.

BERNARD GLYN, finding the argument was distracting attention from him, had been quietly fumbling about with the mechanism of his machine for some time. Now, seeing an opening in the crowd of juniors in front of him, he made a sudden dash, and, running alongside his machine, dodged the arms outstretched to stop him, and jumped into the saddle just as the engine began its pop—pop—pop.

In an instant all was confusion. The juniors sorted themselves out in furious haste, and made a rush for their machines. Harry Noble, who had been standing all the time ready to mount, was first away. He leaped into the saddle, and pedalled vigorously on after Glyn.

Glyn was not far away. He only had a few seconds' start, and his machine was not yet properly under way. But he was gradually getting up speed. At present, however, Noble was gaining on him rapidly. Inside of half a minute the Australian's hand was grasping the shoulder of the Liverpool lad.

"Ah, would you!" he said. "You don't get away from me, my lad!"



A Complete Tale of this Charming Chum of Jack Talbot's appears in

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No. 81.

By
MARTIN CLIFFORD.

NEXT
THURSDAY:

"TOM MERRY'S TRUST."

And, settling his hand to a firmer grip on Glyn's shoulder, Harry Noble free-wheeled and was drawn along by the motor-cycle.

A very little way behind Harry Noble, came Clifton Dane, the half American-Indian lad. Scarcely was Noble's grip firmly established on the Liverpool lad's shoulder, when a hand grasped his own shoulder, and Clifton Dane's voice exclaimed breathlessly:

"Good! I've got you all right! You can go ahead now, Glyn, as hard as you like!"

Glyn grunted expressively, and moved his levers slightly, and the motor-cycle began to move a little faster. But Glyn's burden was not yet quite complete.

Clifton Dane, who had now settled down to a comfortable free-wheel, nearly released his grip on Noble's shoulder as a hand fell suddenly and heavily on his own, and a voice gasped in his ear:

"Got you, my beauties! Now, off we go!"

Tom Merry had joined the "tail!"

And now, like the oysters to the walrus and the carpenter, "Thick and fast they came at last, and more, and more, and more."

The juniors had sorted themselves out by this time, and were now scorching along in a crowd just behind the motor-cycle and its tail, which were moving at an ever-increasing pace.

Jack Blake was the next to catch up, and he fastened a vice-like grip on Tom Merry's shoulder, just as Figgins seized his coat-tail, nearly pulling Jack off the saddle of his cycle on to the back mudguard.

"Gottim!" breathed Figgins, in a tone of great relief, shifting his grip to Blake's shoulder, and free-wheeling along at his ease.

"You—you ass! You nearly had me off, you long-legged waster! Nice bust up there'd have been then!" exclaimed Blake heatedly. "Your clutch is about as gentle as a grizzly bear's, too!"

"That's all right, my son! Don't worry! I'm quite safe now, thanks!" said Figgins cheerfully. "Ow!" he added suddenly. "Oh, help!" And he gave a desperate wobble.

Kerr, who was pedalling along behind almost at his last gasp, made a frantic clutch at his chum, and just managed to catch hold of the back of the saddle, thus upsetting Figgins's balance, and nearly bringing him over.

Figgins gave a fearful wobble, and only just managed to save himself by dint of bearing very heavily on to Blake, who, in turn, wobbled in what seemed a highly-perilous manner.

There was a fearful yell from five throats in unison, as the wobble communicated itself to each one of the line in turn down to Glyn on the motor-cycle, who wobbled worst of all.

"Who the—"

"What the—"

"Why the—"

"Where the—"

"What the dickens are you playing at?" roared Blake, as the line righted itself in what seemed an almost miraculous manner.

"Let go, there, you asses! Five in a line is quite enough!"

"Rats!" retorted Figgins and Kerr together.

"We're here for keeps, my buck!"

"And try not to wobble so, Blake," added Figgins, in a tone of severe reproof. "Blessed if you don't want some bicycle lessons!"

Blake's only reply to this cool remark was a grunt, which was, however, very expressive.

At this point Manners joined the happy throng, fastening his grip on Kerr's shoulder like a leech.

After him in turn came Fatty Wynn, Digby, Lowther, Herries, and, at the end, D'Arcy.

Glyn's motor-cycle was not going very fast by this time. But the task of pulling twelve bicycles with their owners "up," was not too much for it. It was a powerful machine, and, being new, was, of course, in perfect order. It puffed and popped, but it struggled gamely on, and soon the string of thirteen juniors was bowling down the road at quite a fair pace.

The high road running past the gates of St. Jim's was perfectly straight and level for about a quarter of a mile, and as the twelve bicycles ran very easily when once they were well under way, the motor-bicycle train was travelling at some fifteen miles an hour by the time it reached the rather bad corner in the road on the way to Rylcombe, where the footpath short-cut to the village begins.

"My hat!" said Tom Merry, over his shoulder, to Blake, as the line of juniors approached the corner at a gradually-increasing pace. "My hat! This is ripping! But that corner!"

"Yes, my son, you're right!" grinned Blake.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 52.

"That corner! Look out for squalls in about another two seconds. I'm blessed if I'm going to let go yet, though!"

The same thought was in the minds of all the juniors. Each was wondering what was going to happen at the corner, but one and all were determined not to let go until the last possible moment.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy nearly brought disaster to the whole train before they reached the corner at all.

"I say, Hewwies!" he called to Herries, whose shoulder he was gripping. "I think Glyn is goin' too fast, as there is a cornah comin' vewy soon. I think I will jam on my brake as hard as I can to twy and slow him down a bit!"

"You ass!" roared Herries, looking round so quickly that he nearly lost his balance. "You'd better not do anything of the sort. Why, you'd pull the lot of us over, dummy! And he glared ferociously at the amazed swell of St. Jim's.

"Weally, Hewwies, I am surprised at your violence," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "I also wegard the expressions 'ass' and 'dummy,' as opprobrious and vulgar, and I must request you to immediately withdraw them, othahwise, I shall have no resource but to administrah a feaful thwashing immediately on our awwival at High-fell Hall."

For answer Herries gave his shoulder a sudden, tremendous jerk, nearly upsetting himself as he did so, and causing Lowther, in front of him, to give vent to a howl of protest.

The effect of the jerk was to cause Arthur Augustus to lose his hold on Herries' shoulder exactly as Herries intended it to.

The swell of St. Jim's gave a yell.

"You wottah, Hewwies! What did you do that for? Heah, your hand, deah boy, quick! You uttah wottah!"

Instead of stretching out a helping hand to D'Arcy, who was struggling to keep up, Herries shrunk away from him, drawing himself as near to Lowther as he could, and thus keeping out of reach of D'Arcy's clutching hand. The swell of St. Jim's fell behind out of reach, and Herries resumed his normal place with a satisfied grin.

He looked round over his shoulder at D'Arcy, who had given up the futile chase.

"See you at Highfell, Gussy!" he called.

"You uttah wottah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Herries.

And then the crash came.

Glyn, with clenched teeth, and clinging to his handlebars like grim death, had just managed to take the corner, and almost on his right side, too; but there, crawling on its wrong side round the corner, came the little trap drawn by the sleepy old pony of the Rev. Septimus Short, the short-sighted old vicar of Rylcombe.

Glyn gave a gasp, which was echoed from behind him. There was no chance of stopping, for the weight behind him, and the impetus the train of cycles was giving the motor-cycle, made that impossible.

"Let go!" yelled Glyn to Noble, and Noble, seeing it was the only thing to do, let go at once. Glyn went plunging on, gave a violent wobble, just grazed the wheel of the trap, and finally, after an erratic career of a few more yards, ran into the bank at the side of the road, and collapsed in a heap with his machine.

Noble, as soon as he had let go of Glyn's shoulder, jammed on his brakes as hard as he dared; but it was too late to save a collision. He charged the vicar's trap amidships, and was shot right on to the seat of it, landing with his arms clasped round the astonished little vicar.

"Good gracious!" gasped that gentleman, too astonished to do anything but gasp. "Good gracious me! We shall all be killed!"

And he clung to Noble, who was clutching him round the waist in a desperate embrace, without realising in the slightest what he was doing.

The rest of the juniors had come to grief in various ways. Most of them, on seeing the trap in the middle of the corner, had immediately let go of the shoulder in front, and clutched the handlebars with both hands; but, in spite of all that brakes and skill could do, there were some alarming collisions. Blake, Figgins, Manners, Kerr, and Fatty Wynn all ran into one another in their efforts to avoid or stop short of the trap, and riders and machines went to earth with a devastating crash, raising a cloud of white dust in the road.

Digby and Monty Lowther had to turn their machines into the side of the road in order to avoid running full tilt into the medley of waving arms and legs partly visible in the dust-cloud, and they took the bank with a couple of dull crashes and shocks which jarred every bone in their respective bodies. Herries, by a series of desperate wobbles, managed to avoid the fallen riders and the bank as well, and, by jamming on his brakes hard, just succeeded in stopping short of the pony's head.



Arthur Augustus D'Arcy would have given a good deal to have changed places with Bernard Glyn.

CHAPTER 10.

A Lucky Escape.

CLIFTON DANE and Tom Merry had, fortunately, been able to avoid the trap into which Noble had charged with such force, and, just missing Glyn and his fallen machine, had stopped themselves some twenty yards down the road.

They immediately jumped off, and leaving their bicycles in the road, ran back to the trap and went to the pony's head just in time to prevent its bolting, which event might have had serious consequences. The pony was not a young one, and it did not look at all underbred. In fact, it looked decidedly overfed. It was also, apparently, more than half asleep when the cyclists rounded the corner on their erratic course.

But such a succession of startling happenings as occurred, one upon the other, in the short space of time between Glyn's first appearance and his disappearance to the rear of the trap, was enough to upset the equanimity of any equine mind, and the vicar's old pony woke up with great suddenness, and began to prance and shy like a two-year-old.

The vicar, though he was too dazed to know what he was

really doing, mechanically kept hold of the reins and tried to check his aged pony's exhibition of feeling until Noble's sudden arrival on the seat of the trap.

Then, however, partly to prevent himself from being shot headfirst into the road, and partly in the desperation of his bewilderment, the Rev. Septimus Short let go of the reins with both hands, and clutched Noble, who was embracing him round the neck, as if he had been his long-lost son.

The pony, freed thus from all control, began to frisk more vigorously than ever, and had just seriously made up his mind to make a bolt for it, and get out of the dust and noise, when Tom Merry and Clifton Dane arrived, and induced him to alter his mind in the nick of time.

By alternately coaxing and tugging at his head, they had reduced him to a much more settled state of mind, when Herries, by coming to a standstill suddenly some two feet from the pony's nose, made him start so violently that Tom Merry and Dane were nearly pulled off their feet, and Noble and the Rev. Septimus Short nearly fell over the back of the trap.

Herries allowed his machine to fall over sideways, and dropped to his feet with a gasp like escaping steam.

"My only hat!" he said. "What a bust up!"
 "Mind, you ass! You nearly had us over then!" panted Tom Merry. "Get out of the way. Can't you see you're frightening the pony?"

"How could I help it, duffer?" said Herries indignantly, propping up his machine against the bank at the side of the road. "Blessed if I don't think I'm lucky to be alive at all. My only hat! What a bust up!"

By this time some of the fallen juniors were beginning to sort themselves out. Several dusty figures staggered to their feet, dragging dilapidated-looking cycles with them, which they surveyed ruefully.

Noble and the Rev. Septimus Short, in the trap, had released each other now, and were looking round them with dazed expressions.

"Bless my soul!" gasped the vicar, mopping his brow with a large handkerchief. "Good gracious me! What an extremely unfortunate occurrence! I hope none of the boys are hurt much. Dear, dear! This is unfortunate!"

And the kindly old vicar climbed out of the trap with Noble, and approached the group of juniors who were just struggling to their feet.

Fortunately no one was hurt—at least, not seriously—though complaints, loud and varied, were sounding from all sides.

The dusty and gasping juniors scrambled up out of the road slowly and painfully. As they did so, a well-known voice interrupted their groans, and D'Arcy rode slowly up and alighted gracefully from his machine.

"Hallo, dear boys!" he exclaimed. "Have you had an accident, or what? You look fearfully dusty and untidy."

"I dare say we do, ass!" grunted Figgins fiercely. "So would anyone after what we have been through."

"But what have you been doin', dear boy?" asked D'Arcy, with an air of interest.

"Doing!" howled the exasperated Figgins. "What have we been doing, dummy? Can't you see, lunatic? Isn't it plain that we have just been practising dismounting when going at sixty miles an hour, fathoms? Don't you see we have just alighted here for refreshments, ass?"

The dusty juniors chuckled. In spite of their bruised shins and barked knees and knuckles, they chuckled audibly.

"Well, Figgins!" said Arthur Augustus, recoiling a pace or two from Figgins's vehemence. "Kindly restrain your violent and opprobrious remarks. I regard you as a rude person. I was really seekin' for information."

"Well, now you've got it!" growled Figgins. "Buzz off!"

Any retort from Arthur Augustus was prevented by the voice of the vicar of Rylcombe, who came up at that moment, breaking in on the conversation.

"My dear boys, I sincerely trust that none of you are injured. This is a most distressing affair! A most unfortunate occurrence!" And the little vicar took off his spectacles and wiped them vigorously with his large handkerchief.

"No, I think we're all right, sir," said Blake cheerily, glancing round him at the grimy crowd of juniors, which Lowther and Digby had now joined. "We're a bit dirty, and we've got a few bumps and bruises, I dare say, but it's nothing serious, sir. We're used to things like that."

"Well, my boys, I am very glad to hear it—very glad indeed. I think it is a matter to be thankful for. It looked at one time as if the accident must be attended with serious consequences. Ah, my lads!" he added, turning to Tom Merry and Clifton Dane, who had just brought the pony trap up at a sedate walk. "I am very much obliged to you for your promptitude in running to my pony's head. He would certainly have bolted otherwise. I am afraid," continued the little vicar, still vigorously polishing his glasses—"I am afraid that I did not keep my head quite as I ought to have done under the trying circumstances. Also I may not—er—ahem!—have been exactly on my right side—"

Here the juniors exchanged glances in which more than one smile lurked. The smiles instantly died away, however, as the Rev. Septimus resumed his remarks.

"I may, as I say, boys, not have been exactly on the correct side of the road for traffic going in my direction, and I am much to be blamed for my negligence. The truth is, I was so engrossed in my thoughts, which were running on my projected church bazaar, that I—er—scarcely observed which side of the road my pony was taking. At the same time, my dear boys, I cannot help thinking that you scarcely seemed to have your machines under sufficient control when approaching such a corner; in fact, you appeared to be proceeding in a most reckless fashion."

The juniors coughed a little uneasily.

The Gen. LIBRARY.—No. 81

THURSDAY:

"You—you see, sir—" began Tom Merry.

"Yes, my boy?" said the little vicar inquiringly.

"You—you see—" said Blake. "We—"

"That's it, sir! We—er—we—"

"Well, my dear boys, proceed!"

"You—you see—"

"As a matter of fact, sir, we were bein'—"

"Yes, that's it! We—"

"Pway allow me to explain to Mr. Short, Tom Merry! As I was sayin', sir, we were bein' towed by a motah-cycle—that is, sir, these kids heah were—"

"Why, so were you, Gussy!" put in Herries. "You know you were!"

"Yass, but I suspected there would be an accident or somethin' of the kind, so I bwoke off fwom the tail, you see!" said Arthur Augustus, with an air of lofty superiority.

"Why, you know I—" began Herries excitedly.

"Pway don't intewwupt, Hewwies!" said the swell of St. Jim's severely, looking at Herries through his monocle with a frown.

And Herries, with a gasp at D'Arcy's coolness, subsided.

"The motah-cycle was towin' us—or, rather, these kids, sir—as I was sayin'," continued D'Arcy; "and, well, sir, the twain of cycles was not vowy easy to contwol, you see, and—"

"The fact is, sir," broke in Tom Merry, "we were getting round the corner all right, and we did not think of anything being in the way. Directly I saw you in your trap I knew there would be a smash, sir. It was our fault, sir, entirely," added Tom frankly, "and I hope you will forgive us for giving you such a fright. I hope you aren't hurt at all, sir?"

"No, my lad, thank you, I am quite unhurt, fortunately, and I do not think the pony or trap have suffered much damage either. I thought I heard a strange noise as you approached, and now you mention it I think it sounded like one of these motor-bicycles. So you were being towed by one of those noisy, dangerous things, were you? Most dangerous, my dear boys—most dangerous!" And the good old rector shook his head solemnly. "And where," he added—"where is this—this engine of destruction, so to speak?"

CHAPTER 11.

An Igominious Home-coming.

THE juniors looked at each other blankly. Where was Glyn and his machine? They had been too busy with their own troubles, which had been sufficiently pressing, in all conscience, to think of what Glyn's fate with his heavy machine might have been. The Liverpool lad was not in sight, and the juniors stared at one another in momentary dismay.

"I expect he's just round the bend, or a little further on," said Tom Merry, in a somewhat apprehensive tone, however. "I hope he isn't hurt at all."

Two or three of the juniors darted forward towards the bend, which hid the road some fifty yards down the hill from where the group was standing; but before they had moved forward many steps, a puffing and hissing sound became audible, and round the corner came Bernard Glyn himself, accompanied by his chum Harry Noble. Both were pushing away to get the heavy motor-cycle up the hill. Glyn was looking a bit gloomy, and his clothes were dusty and torn, and he walked with a bit of a limp. But his appearance was welcome to the juniors, who had suddenly become filled with anxiety concerning him.

"Hallo, kids!" he sung out, with a wry smile. "Still alive, all of you! My only Aunt Jane, what a bust-up! Oh, I beg your pardon, sir!" he added hastily, observing the vicar in the group, and colouring slightly. "I hope you aren't hurt at all, sir?"

"No, I am quite unhurt, thank you, my lad," said the Reverend Septimus, leaving off polishing his spectacles, and putting them on his nose, in order to get a better view of the dishevelled Glyn. "So you are the possessor of one of those—those infernal machines? Why, it's young Glyn, of Glyn House, is it not?" cried the vicar, in a changed tone of voice, as a look of recognition came into his eyes.

"Yes, I'm young Glyn, Mr. Short," said Bernard quietly. "And I'm very glad to see you are not hurt, sir. We were fool—foolish to come round that corner like that, sir; but, of course, I hoped there would be nothing in the way, you know."

"Well—well, it can't be helped, boys! Accidents will happen," said the vicar. "But I'm afraid you are hurt, Master Glyn, are you not?" he added, in a tone of solicitude.

"TOM MERRY'S TRUST."

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

The vicar, who was an exceedingly kind, good-natured old gentleman, was more disposed than ever to pass over the accident now that he had recognised Glyn as the son of the millionaire ship-owner from Liverpool, who had recently taken a house in his parish, and had proved himself to be a liberal subscriber to all the vicar's numerous charities. And now that funds were so urgently needed for the restoration of Rylcombe Parish Church, the Rev. Septimus Short specially desired to keep on good terms with all his wealthy parishioners.

As a matter of fact, before he had known the identity of the owner of the motor-cycle, the Rev. Septimus had been disposed to consider him as responsible for the accident. He had a great objection to motors, and more especially to motor-cycles, and he had intended to administer a reproof to this happy-go-lucky motor-cyclist. The appearance of Glyn, however, caused the worthy vicar to forget all this, and he was quite ready to find excuses for the juniors now, though their conduct, as a matter of fact, had been anything but excusable.

"I have twisted my ankle a bit," said Glyn, in answer to the vicar's inquiry. "And I have a few cuts and bruises. But it's nothing at all serious, sir. What I was thinking about more is my poor motor-bike. It was quite new, you know, and now it's looking decidedly worse for wear!"

It certainly was. The pedal-cranks and foot-rests were badly bent, and one of the pedals was off. The handle-bars were also knocked out of shape, and the front wheel was slightly buckled. And all over the once-glittering machine large chunks of enamel had been chipped off.

"Never mind, old chap, there's nothing serious the matter with the bike, either," said Harry Noble consolingly. "The engine is not damaged at all, and it will go all right. After a week in a repair shop, you won't be able to tell it from now again."

"Well, my lads, I think we are all very fortunate to have got so well out of what might have been a serious accident!" said the vicar. "And, now, if you are sure none of you are seriously hurt, I will leave you, as I have to attend a meeting of the bazaar committee this afternoon. I should advise you all to go straight back to the school for liniments—sticking-plaster. I shall not say anything of this to your head-master. Make your minds easy on that score. Good-bye, my lads!"

And the kindly old gentleman climbed into the little trap, stirred the old pony up with the whip, and drove off at quite a fast trot. The juniors waved their caps, and sent a hearty cheer after the little trap, which the Rev. Septimus acknowledged with a smile and a wave of his whip.

"What a ripping old sportsman he is!" exclaimed Tom Merry, with enthusiasm, replacing his cap on his head. "I wish we could show him, in some way, what we think of him. We were fearful asses to go round that corner like that, and the old gentleman might easily have made an awful row about it."

"Still, he was absolutely on his wrong side," put in Lowther. "And he wasn't looking, either. But, of course, it was all our own fault."

"Of course," assented Figgins. "But our jiggers have got it in the neck rather."

There was a chorus of rueful assent to Figgins's remark, and the juniors all fell to examining their bicycles. The machines all looked very dilapidated, but when the damage was summed up, it was not very serious, after all. Bent pedals, broken mudguards, and here and there a buckled wheel constituted most of the damage, and most of the machines, after a little tinkering, were capable of being ridden, at least as far as the school.

It was soon seen, however, that Monty Lowther, Digby, and Fatty Wynn would have to walk back, as the wheels of their machines were too badly buckled to allow of their being ridden. Fatty Wynn's machine was damaged worst of all, due, as Monty Lowther explained, to Fatty having fallen on top of it, and flattened it to earth.

Fatty Wynn did not seem to mind much. He drew a packet of squashed sandwiches from his pocket, and seating himself on the bank at the roadside, proceeded to take a snack.

"I'm sorry I did not bring any more sandwiches, you chaps," he murmured. "There's really not enough here for me. You should have been more thoughtful, and brought some of your own. Cycling in September always gives me a good appetite, and accidents always make me extra hungry, too."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, Fatty," said Tom Merry, with a laugh, "I don't know how long you are going to sit by the roadside guzzling. Personally, I am going to take the vicar's advice, and make a break for home; that is, for St. Jim's."

"And I."

"And I."

All the juniors elected to go straight back to St. Jim's.

Indeed, to go on to Highfield, now that themselves and their bicycles were in such a state was not to be thought of. Glyn sat on the saddle of his motor-cycle, and was shoved along by half a dozen juniors till the engine began to fire, and then he popped slowly along. His ankle was paining him a good deal, but he said very little about it. That was Bernard Glyn's way. The rest of the juniors also mounted their machines, and rode slowly back towards St. Jim's, with the exception, of course, of Lowther, Digby, and Fatty. They walked slowly along behind, half-pushing, half-carrying their damaged bicycles.

And so the procession wound slowly along, in a manner very different to that in which they had started out.

Just as Glyn, who was about a hundred yards ahead of the other cyclists, was about to turn into the school gates, he suddenly looked up, and gave a gasp of dismay.

Coming out of the gates was an open carriage, and Glyn knew that carriage.

It belonged to Dr. Holmes, the Head of St. Jim's!

Glyn gasped again the next minute, as he saw that his worst fears were realised. Dr. Holmes was in the carriage alone, doubtless on his way to the cricket match at Highfield Hall, and now he was looking straight at Glyn.

"Dear me!" he exclaimed, staring hard at Glyn through his glasses. "That looks like Glyn, of the Shell. And on a motor-cycle, too! Good heavens! What next, indeed! And—why, goodness gracious, what has the boy been up to? Here, William—William, stop a moment, please!"

William, the coachman, who had also been staring at Glyn in amused astonishment, pulled up at once. The doctor leaned over the side of the carriage with a frown on his brow. Glyn stopped his machine reluctantly and slipped to the ground on his uninjured foot, and raised his cap politely. "Here's a go!" he breathed to himself.

"Why, Glyn, what is the meaning of this, sir?" said Dr. Holmes, regarding him and his battered-looking motor-cycle. "And how do you come to be in this disgraceful state, sir? Explain at once!"

"I—I—I've had a bit of an accident, sir!" stammered Glyn. "Nothing serious!" he hastened to add, as the doctor gave a start. "Only a bit of—a spill, sir."

"But—but what are you doing with that—that machine, Glyn?" asked the doctor, his amazement getting the better of his sternness.

"Please, sir, it's—its mine!" stammered Glyn. "My father sent it to me."

"It's yours! Do you mean to say you keep a motor-cycle at the school without my knowledge, Glyn? Surely you do not imagine for one moment that I would allow such a thing if I knew it." And the doctor's brow became very stern again at the mere thought of anything so preposterous.

"I didn't know there was any rule against it, sir," said Glyn demurely, recovering his presence of mind. "It—it's only a kind of bicycle after all, sir."

The doctor coughed.

"Really, Glyn," he began, and then broke off in absolute astonishment. He had just caught sight of the group of downcast, dusty cyclists, who had just ridden slowly up, knowing there was no escape for them, and silently raised their caps.

For a moment the doctor could only gasp.

"Why—what—good gracious me! What's all this?" he said at last. "What in the name of fortune can possibly be the meaning of all this!" And he stared at the abashed juniors in absolute dismay.

"If you please, sir, we—we've had a bit of a spill," ventured Tom Merry. "We were going along, and—and we had a bit of a spill, sir!"

"So I see," said the doctor grimly, recovering himself. "So I observe, Merry. But I shall require more information concerning this affair later. There seems to have been an extraordinary, I may say, amazing number of spills this afternoon. I trust none of you have hurt yourselves. Apparently not. You had better go on in at once, and remove the very noticeable marks of your—er—spills from your persons. I shall want to see you all"—and Dr. Holmes ran his eye over the group—"all, please, in my study at half-past seven this evening. All right, William, you can drive on."

And Dr. Holmes leant back in the seat of the carriage, adding a curt "And you, too!" to Lowther, Digby, and Wynn, who arrived at that moment with their battered machines.

CHAPTER 12.

Tom Merry Has a Bright Idea.

THEY were thirteen very disconsolate juniors who drifted into the school grounds, wheeling dilapidated-looking bicycles, as the doctor's carriage rattled away down the road in a cloud of dust.

They felt that their return thus early was ignominious. After starting out so gaily for Highfield Hall, here they

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were back again already, having only got about a quarter of a mile from the school gates. To add to their troubles, too, there was an interview, likely to be a painful one, with the doctor looming up in the near future. Well might the juniors be downcast.

Fortunately, the school grounds were practically deserted, and the thirteen juniors were spared the remarks which otherwise would certainly have been levelled at them by their unsympathetic school-mates.

The only witness of their discomfiture, besides Dr. Holmes and William, the coachman, was Taggles, the school porter. Taggles had been standing at his lodge-gates during Dr. Holmes's interview with the doughty cyclists, and he had heard all that had passed. On the departure of the doctor, Taggles stepped forward to indulge in a little wit at the boys' expense.

"Let's see," he observed thoughtfully. "'Arf parst seving, 'e said, didn't 'e? Ah, I 'specs 'e wants to get up a good happittie for 'is dinner by a little 'ealthy hexercise. I always says as 'ealthy hexercise is a wonnerful fine thing to give a cove a happittie."

"Do you really, Taggles?" said Tom Merry, with an air of interest. "Then I suppose you must take a terrific lot of exercise, judging by your appetite for gin and water. I suppose it's exercise makes your nose so red, too—eh?"

"Which I dunno what yer mean, Master Merry!" growled Taggles, not relishing the turn the conversation had taken. "For twenty mortal years 'ave I bin a stric' testotaller, as ev'ry honest, 'ardworkin' man should be. A glarse of lemingnade of an evenin' is wot I allows myself. As I says to the missus, I says, 'Drink is the curse of this 'ere nation,' I says!," "And don't you never give way to it, Maria," I says!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The expression of virtuous indignation which had come over Taggles's red and bloated face struck the juniors as extremely funny when they took into consideration the amount of gin and water he was known to consume. But their laughter had the effect of annoying the porter very much.

"Young rips!" he growled. "Young himps! A-mockin' of a honest man! A good 'iding's wot they want. And I 'opes as they gets it, too!"

And the porter, growling, turned back to his lodge again. "Ha, ha, ha! Taggy will be the death of me one of these days!" said Blake. "Any reference to gin and water or red noses always draws him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the juniors moved on in a body towards the cycle-house, where they stowed their battered mounts. Glyn also shoved his motor-cycle in as well.

"Look here, you chaps," said Tom Merry thoughtfully. "I've got an idea. Let's ask the Head if we can't help old Septy's bazaar on in some way—get up a cricket-match with the Grammarians or something. I think it's up to us to show him that we think he is an old brick for not making any fuss about that accident!"

"Good!"

"Ripping idea!"

"You see, my idea is that we want to get up something that will attract the chaps from St. Jim's and the Grammar School as well, perhaps. If the Head gives us a whole holiday, as it is rumoured, most of the chaps will go off for a whole day's excursion, or something, if there isn't some special attraction for them at the bazaar. Now, if we could get up a cricket-match or some sports or something with those Grammar cads, and make it a regular inter-school affair, the chaps would roll up in hundreds to back us up. If we charged a small entrance-fee, say a tanner each, to include admission to the bazaar and the match or whatever it is, the chaps would flock in, and when they were once inside, they'd be done; the stall-holders could sell 'em anything they liked."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Jolly good wheeze!"

"Well, when the Head has—er—finished with us this evening, let's put it to him."

"Right-ho!" assented the juniors heartily. And the group broke up, and the juniors wended their different ways to their House and thence to their studies.

Glyn was helped up to his study by Noble and Dane. His ankle was now very painful, and it became obvious that it wanted proper treatment at once. Noble had already settled that point in his mind.

"Look here, old chap," he said seriously, as Glyn sank into a chair in the study with a white face. "I'm going along to the House-dame at once, and get her to look at your ankle. You'll have to lay up for a bit, that's certain."

"Oh, rats, I don't want to lay up! I'll be all right in a minute. It's only getting up those beastly stairs gave me beans. Besides, you ass, if I go in to the House-dame she'll want to know all about it, and then the whole thing'll have

to come out. There'll be an awful row, and we shall all get a licking. Don't be an ass, old chap!"

"I don't care," said Harry Noble resolutely. "I'm going to the House-dame."

"Here come back, you duffer!" shouted Glyn, as Noble opened the door to go out. "Don't be an ass!"

"Rats!"

"Come back!"

"More rats!"

And Noble went out and shut the door.

"Silly duffer!" growled Glyn. "I don't want to get the whole lot of us licked. But I expect that's what'll happen now."

Dane made no remark. He thought that Glyn was probably correct in his supposition, but all the same, he thoroughly agreed with Harry Noble that Glyn must have immediate attention. He would have gone for the House-dame himself had Noble not done so.

In a few minutes the door opened, and the House-dame bustled in, followed by Noble.

"Dearie me!" she exclaimed. "What's this I hear, Master Glyn, you bad boy? Dear, dear!" she added, feeling and examining Glyn's ankle. "It's quite a nasty sprain. You must come down to my room, and I will bathe it for you. Will you carry him, Master Noble and Master Dane?"

"Certainly!" said both juniors promptly. And they grasped Glyn's chair in a powerful grip. "But I say, Mrs. Minims, that's all very well, but—"

"Now then, Master Glyn, don't make a fuss, there's a good boy," said the kindly House-dame soothingly, interrupting Glyn's protests. "We'll soon get that foot well if we take care of it for a day or two."

"But—"

"Shut up, old chap; you've got to come," grinned Harry Noble. "So you may as well come quietly." And he and Dane gave a powerful heave, and swung the chair easily between them.

"Steady on!" growled Glyn, resigning himself to the inevitable.

"Right-ho!"

And Noble and Dane bore their chum along to the House-dame's little room, Mrs. Minims herself following anxiously.

"That will do, thank you, young gentlemen," she said, as the two bearers set Glyn's chair gently down in the little room.

And, with a parting grin at their chum's woe-begone countenance, Noble and Dane departed.

CHAPTER 13.

An Interview with the Head.

JUST before half-past seven the whole of the party which had set out for Highfield Hall so gaily in the afternoon, met in the passage outside the Head's study. Their faces were all a little gloomy and anxious, as they were very uncertain as to what fate awaited them on the other side of the Head's green baize-covered door. The fact of Glyn being in the hands of the House-dame made their outlook very gloomy, as it was probable that the Head would have heard the whole story by now. The juniors feared, too, that Dr. Holmes would be more likely to take a serious view of the escapade now that it had been shown that its consequences were not altogether trivial.

A whispered conversation was in progress as Figgins & Co., who were the last to arrive, came up.

"Afraid we're in for it," Jack Blake was saying ruefully. "I wish I'd brought a copybook or two with me now. A copybook between you and the cane's a useful thing to have."

"Yes. And I don't see how we could have the nerve to suggest having a cricket-match, or anything at the bazaar, if the Head rags us much, either. It would mean asking for a whole holiday for us, anyway, whether the whole school get one or not. I don't see how we could ask for that under the circumstances."

"You would do well to leave that to me, Tom Mewwy. It would be a delicate mattah, but I wathah think a fellah with tact and judgment could put it to the doctah as one gentleman to another, so that he could not wefuse our waequest."

"Couldn't he!" said Tom Merry. "He probably would, and give you a worse licking than ever into the bargain, you ass, Gussy!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, I should absolutely wefuse to woeceive a worse lickin' than evah," retorted D'Arcy, with dignity. "I wogard the suggest, as vadic, in the extreme."

"Lot of good your 'wefusing' would make to the Head," grinned Blake. "As a matter of fact, Gussy, the less you say, the better. You would only mess the whole thing up."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Look here, Gussy," said Tom Merry suddenly. "What did you come here for at all? You weren't in the accident at all. Cut back! The Head only wants to see the chaps who were in what he called a 'disgraceful state.' As a matter of fact, when he said that, you were looking as neat as—a tailor's dummy, as usual."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Why, yes, that's right enough. I never thought of that till now. Of course, you aren't wanted here, Gussy. Clear off!" said Blake.

"Weally, Blake, if you think that a D'Arcy could clear off, and leave his comrades in such a doocid awkward posish, as this, you are makin' a gweat mistake. I absolutely wufuse to clear off."

"Bunk, you ass, while there's time!"

"I wufuse to bunk!"

"Scoot! Skedaddle!"

"I wufuse to scoot or skedaddle!"

"You—you ass!" said Blake, half laughing and half vexed. "What do you want to come for? You aren't wanted."

"Wats! I—"

Half-past seven boomed from the clock-tower as D'Arcy was speaking, causing him to leave his sentence unfinished. Blake gave up trying to induce him to make his escape, and there was a general movement towards the green-baize door leading to the Head's study.

The juniors held their breaths as Tom Merry knocked firmly on the door.

"Come in!" said a deep voice. And the twelve juniors shuffled uneasily into the presence of Dr. Holmes.

That dreaded personage, however, was quietly reading a book. He raised his eyebrows somewhat at seeing so many forms crowding into his study.

"Well, my boys," he said, in a pleasant voice. "What is it?"

The juniors looked at one another and gasped. The Head had actually forgotten all about them and their misdeeds, while they had been tormenting themselves with thoughts of what he had been preparing for them all this time.

They gasped, and then expressions of relief came over their faces. Perhaps the Head was not going to take such a serious view of the matter, after all.

"Please, sir," said Tom Merry boldly, "you told us all to come to you at half-past seven."

"Ah, yes, of course!" said Dr. Holmes hastily, frowning slightly and laying aside his book. "I intended to have an explanation from you; but, as a matter of fact"—and a slight smile flitted across the grave face—"I am already in possession of the full facts. I have had an interview with Glyn, and also with Mr. Short."

The juniors looked at one another in consternation, but the Head apparently noticing nothing, continued:

"I met the latter gentleman at a meeting at Rylcombe, and by chance I mentioned to him the—extraordinary sight I had seen as I drove out of the school gates. To my astonishment, my friend Mr. Short appeared to know all about it, and proceeded to describe what seems to me to have been an alarming accident, caused, I regret to say, by the extreme and gross carelessness of some of the juniors of St. Jim's. I made up my mind," continued the Head sternly, "to give those boys good cause to regret their recklessness immediately I returned," and the Head's eye travelled towards the corner where a goodly pile of long, limber canes rested; "but Mr. Short begged me to overlook the matter, and finally persuaded me to promise not to—ah—proceed to extreme measures."

The juniors sighed with relief. They had thought that the storm was about to burst about their devoted heads—or persons, rather—and they were mightily relieved to see it—for the time, at any rate—averted.

"I could not, however," continued the Head, "allow such reckless conduct as you have been guilty of to go entirely unpunished. I shall require each of you to write two hundred lines of Livy, to be shown up to me by this time to-morrow evening. I must add, that had it not been for Mr. Short's kindness of heart, nothing could have saved you from severe punishment. The accident might have been attended with very serious consequences. As it is, Glyn has sprained his ankle badly. Such reckless tricks are quite inexcusable on the public road, as involving danger to other road users, as well as to ourselves."

The juniors hung their heads. When looked at like this, in cold blood, as it were, their action certainly appeared inexcusable.

Noticing their penitent looks, the Head went on more kindly.

"Of course, I am sure that you all acted without reflection as to the possible consequences of your action. Your chief fault was thoughtlessness, of that I am convinced; but thoughtlessness cannot be considered an excuse in such matters. However, I am sure nothing of the kind will

happen again. I have forbidden Glyn to keep his motor-cycle at school. It was very wrong of him to introduce such a machine into the school without my knowledge. I cannot have my boys—at any rate, the juniors among them—careering over the country in such a fashion," said Dr. Holmes heatedly, indignant at the thought of such a thing. Then he went on more calmly, and, with a slight twinkle in his eye:

"I have said nothing to Glyn about punishment, as yet. We will leave that question over till he is about again. At present I think he has been punished enough. You may go now, boys."

"If you please, sir," ventured Tom Merry. "If you please, sir, would you—"

"Pway leave this to me, Tom Mewwy," interrupted D'Arcy. "I wathah think that I—"

"Shut up, ass!" whispered Blake, dragging the swell of St. Jim's back.

"I wufuse to shut up, Blake," said D'Arcy loudly, tearing his sleeve out of his chum's grip. "Pway allow me to put it to Doctah Holmes as one gentleman—"

"Shut up, idiot!" hissed Blake, catching hold of his chum's sleeve again.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Silence D'Arcy, if you please!" said Dr. Holmes sharply. "Well, Merry."

"But, sir, pway allow me—"

"Silence! Another word, D'Arcy, and I will cane you! Go on, Merry, at once!"

Tom Merry, who had been glaring at the swell of St. Jim's, who now at last subsided, took his courage in both hands.

"If you please, sir, I—I wondered—that is, we thought—er—would you allow us to organise a cricket match, or—or something to—to help on Mr. Short's Church Bazaar, sir?" he burst out. "We should like to do something for Mr. Short, sir, and it would attract the fellows to the bazaar, especially if—if—"

"If what, Merry? Go on!" said the Head kindly.

"If—if—er—if—"

"Really, Merry, I can see no cause for this diffidence," said the Head a little testily. "Please go on!"

"If—if the chaps—I—I mean the fellows, sir, had a whole holiday on Saturday."

"Oh!" said the Head, a little taken aback. "I—I see!"

"You see, sir, we could challenge the Grammar School cad—I mean fellows—and make an inter-school affair of it, and that would bring the fellows from both schools to the bazaar, sir!"

"Well, well, Merry; this is a—somewhat bold request for you to make at the present time, but I appreciate your motive, and I think it does you credit. As a matter of fact," continued the doctor, "I was thinking of giving the school a whole holiday on Saturday, in order to give the boys an opportunity of supporting the Church Bazaar, as it deserves to be supported. However, it has struck me that many of the boys might—er—might possibly make use of the holiday in some other way, in which case the whole holiday would defeat its own object. Your idea of providing an attraction beyond the—er—usual features of such bazaars is certainly a good one, and I am inclined to allow you to carry it out. Yes, you have my permission to organise a cricket match or other contest with the Grammar School lads, and I have no doubt Dr. Monk, their head-master, will regard the matter in the same light as I do. But I must remind you, boys," and Dr. Holmes's voice had a warning note in it as he glanced over the dozen juniors, "there must be no kind of riot or disturbance at the bazaar. I shall regard anything of the kind as a most serious offence."

The juniors looked virtuously indignant. They looked at each other in grieved amazement as who should say, "Can anyone possibly suspect us of being likely to make any kind of riot or disturbance?" But Dr. Holmes did not seem impressed. He looked at them a little grimly, though there was a latent twinkle in his eyes, and waved his hand towards the door.

"You can go!" he said shortly. "Don't forget those lines."

And the twelve juniors trooped out of the study.

CHAPTER 14.

A Study Meeting.

AFTER leaving the Head's study, the juniors had no time to discuss further details of their plan to give Mr. Short's bazaar a "leg-up" that evening. The visit to the study had interrupted preparation, and the juniors had to return at once to their respective quarters in order to finish it before bed-time. They had time, however, to arrange to meet in Tom Merry's study after morning school on the following day.

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Punctually at 12.30, therefore, on the Thursday, twelve juniors assembled in the somewhat confined space of the Terrible Three's study in the Shell passage. Glyn had not been into school that morning, as he was resting his ankle on a sofa in the House-dame's little room, so he was not able to be present at the meeting. But Noble had promised him a full report of the proceedings afterwards. There was a buzz of conversation in the little apartment, which was crowded to suffocation. The juniors had taken up positions where they could. The coal-locker, the table, the book-shelf, and the window all had more than their full complement of roosting juniors.

Tom Merry, who by right of being by common consent chairman of the meeting, was occupying a chair, banged on the table with a cricket-stump.

"Order, order, gentlemen, please!" he yelled, making his voice heard with difficulty above the din. "Order, you asses!"

He prodded those gentlemen nearest to him with the cricket-stump in order to further attract their attention, and this measure at last began to produce some effect. The din quietened down, and those juniors who had had the benefit of Tom Merry's cricket-stump, left off their heated arguments, and turned wrathfully to the chairman.

"Look out, you utter dummy!" roared Blake, who had been engaged in a fierce controversy with Kerr, of the New House. "If you jab that stump into my ribs again, you Shell-fish, I'll—I'll jump on you!"

"Yaas, wathah," put in Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who had been loudly remonstrating with Monty Lowther about something or other, and had been the recipient of some of Tom Merry's prods. "I considah you are a wuff boundah, Tom Mewwy. You have pwodded me till I am all in a fluttah. I considah you have exceeded your authority as chairman of this meetin', and I put it to the meetin'," continued D'Arcy, raising his voice—"I put it to the meetin' that Tom Mewwy be wequird to wesign fwom the chair, his place to be taken by Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, Esquire."

"Rats!" said Tom Merry, flourishing the cricket-stump. "I'm chairman of this meeting, and I'm going to stay chairman of this meeting. Now—hallo! What's the matter now?"

Tom in flourishing the stump to give emphasis to his declaration had caught D'Arcy a sounding crack over the knuckles, and the swell of St. Jim's had instantly given vent to a fiendish yell.

"Ow! Wow! Ow! You shwiekin' duffah! Oh—oh! Ow!"

"Sorry! You should get out of the way, though, when a chap's talking, Gussy," said Tom calmly. "Now, gentlemen, to business, please!"

"You howlin' wottah—"

"Ring off, Gussy, please; you're interrupting," said Tom Merry, looking at D'Arcy severely. "If you call it good manners to come into a chap's own study and interrupt every word he says, I don't."

"Woally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Ring off! Now, gentlemen—"

"But I must pwotest—"

"Ring off!" howled eleven voices in unison. And D'Arcy boiling with indignation "rung off."

"Now, gentlemen—" resumed Tom Merry.

"Hear, hear!"

"We have met together to consider how best to give Mr. Short's bazaar a leg up—"

"Hear, hear!"

"In recognition of his being a—a—an old sport!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Let the proceedings proceed!"

"I propose that a message be sent to Frank Monk, the leader of our esteemed friends the juniors of Rylecombe Grammar School, challenging him to a cricket match."

"Good!"

"We will explain the circumstances of the case to him, and ask him to get the chaps from the Grammar School to come in crowds. He would have to get Dr. Monk's permission, of course."

"It must be a regular, properly-arranged, inter-school match."

"Rather."

"We might just mention what the Head said about ragging, too; in case he gets up to any of his little games. You remember the rotters ragged us on our own ground when we played the Grammar cads—I mean our esteemed friends—not so very long ago."

"Ha, ha, ha! Good wheeze!"

"Now, the question is, what else shall we challenge them to? We might arrange a boxing-match, as well."

"I second that suggestion," said Jack Blake. "I'll be pleased to meet Monk, or any other Grammar School junior, with gloves or without."

"We don't want a prize-fight, Blakey!"

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NEXT THURSDAY:

"TOM MERRY'S TRUST."

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"Who's talking about a prize-fight?" said Blake indignantly.

"Well, if we wanted to charge tuppence admission to see you and Monk scrapping without gloves—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The Reverend Septimus Short might not like the idea," said Tom Merry. "But we might arrange for you to box any one of the Grammar rotters they choose. We could get a senior to referee, and arrange it properly, and charge a little extra admission. But it must be a proper, dignified contest, not a desperate scrap."

"Hear, hear!"

"Well, put me down for a boxing-contest," said Blake. "I'll take the beggars on!"

"Good! That's settled, then. Now—"

"I'll challenge any one of 'em to a bout of single-sticks," put in Digby. "I've been practising a good bit lately, and I rather think I'm pretty hot stuff at it."

"Well, if you say so yourself, Dig, I suppose it's all right!" remarked Tom Merry. "Nothing like being modest, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, look here," began Dig, warmly. "I'll take you on, and—"

"Rats! You won't! All right then, we'll put you down for a bout of single-sticks, Dig. We'll jam that in with the boxing without extra charge, then perhaps we shall get a few fatheads to come in and watch."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here—" began Blake and Digby together, with equal heat. Both considered it a distinct reflection on their athletic prowess to have it insinuated that there would be the slightest difficulty in getting a full house for the boxing and single-stick contests.

"Now, don't jaw," said Tom Merry, pacifically. "We shall never get on with the business if you two will go on jawing so much."

"Jawing? Why, we've hardly said a word!" shouted the incensed Blake.

"It's you do all the jawing, you—"

"Order! Order!"

"Order rats! I—"

"Order! If you interrupt, Blakey, you'll get chucked out!"

"Why, I'll—"

And the exasperated Blake made a rush at the chairman, who promptly threw himself into an attitude of defence. Strong hands, however, grasped the struggling chief of Study 6, and he was forced to subside, muttering dark threats of what he would have done had he reached the chairman.

Tom Merry, quite unmoved by Jack Blake's fulminations, rapped on the table with his trusty cricket-stump.

"Now, that's arranged, then, gentlemen. Our esteemed friend Jack Blake having now been prevailed upon to cease from interrupting the proceedings for a few minutes"—there was a growl from Blake—"we will proceed. Blake is to box, and Dig to fence, or single-stick, rather. Now—"

"I have another contest to suggest, Mr. Chairman!" called out Monty Lowther.

"Well, out with it, Monty. We could do with one more contest, perhaps. What is it?"

"An eating match," said Lowther—"a gormandising contest!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We could put up Fatty Wynn," continued Lowther, with a grin, "and challenge any two of the Grammarians together to gorge as much as him in a given time!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the juniors.

"I'll punch your head, Lowther, when I get at you!" growled Fatty Wynn. "We don't want any of your rotten jokes. Besides," added Fatty plaintively, "I don't know why you insinuate that I eat a lot! I've got a healthy appetite, I admit, especially in this September weather, but you can't say I eat much. You know what I had for breakfast, Piggy. You couldn't call that much for a healthy appetite."

"Yes, I think I remember what you had," grinned Figgins. "Half a dozen eggs—"

"No; only five, Piggy!" put in Fatty, in a tone of remonstrance.

"Well, five eggs, a dozen rashers of bacon, half a rabbit-pie, and marmalade, I think it was," said Figgins. "That's right, isn't it, Fatty?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yes, that's all, old man, except that little bit of cold tongue and the rest of the sardines, you know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you young cormorant!" gasped Tom Merry, wiping his eyes, from which tears of laughter had been streaming. "Blessed if I know how it is you don't burst. You will,

one of these days. And when you do, don't forget that I warned you."

"Oh, really, Tom Merry!" said Fatty Wynn, in an injured tone.

"No," went on the chairman, when the meeting had recovered its composure; "I think an eating match, though our side would certainly win, would be too expensive. Why, it would cost about ten guids' worth of solid grub to satisfy Fatty!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Fatty Wynn grunted.

"Look here, Tom Merry, that's all rot, you know," he said; "and, of course, Monty Lowther was only trying to be funny. But the idea's not bad, you know. We might have a competition to see who could eat two or three dozen tarts—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the juniors again. "Ha, ha!"

"What is there to cackle at in that, you lunatics!" demanded Fatty Wynn indignantly. "I would go in for a contest where you had to eat, say, two or three dozen tarts—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Two or three dozen tarts, and—"

"Ha, ha! Ring off, Fatty, or you will be the death of us!" gasped Figgins.

Fatty gave a grunt.

"You cackling rotters—" he began wrathfully.

But his indignant tirade was cut short by a well-known and welcome sound.

It was the sound of the dinner-bell.

Fatty Wynn hastily broke off in his remarks, and began to elbow his way towards the door.

"Come on, you chaps!" he exclaimed. "Buck up! We don't want to be late. I'm hungry!"

And he forced a passage through the crowded study to the door, and disappeared.

There was a yell of laughter.

"My hat!" gasped Tom Merry. "What a Falstaff! I'm glad I don't have to pay for his keep! Well, you chaps," he added hastily, "I'll write to or call on Frank Monk, and tell him what we propose. He'll agree like a shot, I know."

"Right-ho!"

And the meeting broke up, and the juniors trooped off to dinner.

CHAPTER 15.

The Great Day.

THE following Saturday broke clear and bright, a cloudless September morning, and all St. Jim's woke in a good temper.

Tom Merry had completed the arrangements with Frank Monk, who was only too ready to enter into all the contests proposed, and an attractive programme of events had been arranged. Dr. Monk, the head-master of the Grammar School, had followed the lead set by Dr. Holmes, and had granted the Grammarians a whole holiday in lieu of the usual half.

The Reverend Septimus Short was delighted with Tom Merry's scheme. The boys of the two big schools, many of them accompanied by their sisters and their cousins and their aunts, would swell the numbers of the bazaar patrons considerably, and would make an appreciable difference to the receipts of the stallholders, and that, in the eyes of the Rev. Septimus Short, was the main thing.

This scheme of restoring the ancient parish church of Rylcombe was one he had had very near his heart for years, and for years he had been steadily accumulating a fund to be devoted to that purpose. This fund had now reached a point some £150 from the sum which it was deemed necessary to obtain before the work of restoration and repair could be begun on the old church. The good vicar had, therefore, determined to hold a monster bazaar, as a supreme effort, to try and swell the fund at one blow to the necessary size. He had secured the support not only of the whole parish, which was a very small one, but of a large part of the surrounding district, comprising a considerable section of the county, and everything pointed to the bazaar being a huge success.

The weather, of course, was the one thing the vicar of Rylcombe could not arrange for beforehand, but he absolutely refused to discuss the possibility of its being wet. In vain his helpers had urged him to try and make some provision for holding the bazaar indoors, in case of a deluge of rain. The vicar's invariable reply had been:

"My dear ladies, it will not be wet. I feel positively assured that the day will be brilliantly fine."

And the weather for once had justified the confidence placed in it. A finer day than the Saturday of the great event could not have been wished for by the vicar's most enthusiastic supporter.

Tom Merry & Co. were up early for a run down to the rippling Rhyl and a dip before breakfast, as were many of the other juniors of both Houses at St. Jim's. The morning was so fine that it compelled all but confirmed sluggards to rise early.

"Feeling fit, Figgy?" asked Tom Merry, as the Terrible Three trotted back from the bank of the Rhyl, with their towels over their shoulders, by the side of Figgins and Kerr. Fatty Wynn was puffing away in the rear.

"Rather!" answered Figgins. "Fit as a fiddle!"

And he looked it, too. With his spare, hardy-looking frame, long, lean legs, brawny arms, and rugged face, Figgins looked the picture of healthy boyhood.

And Tom Merry looked as fit as Figgins.

"How's Fatty?" grinned Lowther. "You mustn't let him injure himself by over-eating to-day, you know. We shall want his bowling in the match this afternoon badly. I hear Frank Monk has got a jolly good team up against us."

"Oh, Fatty's all right!" replied Figgins, with a grin. "We'll look after the young cormorant and see that he does not eat more than enough for six or seven."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, Figgy, old man," came a gasping voice from the rear—"I say, Figgy! Have you got such a thing as a chunk of toffee on you? I do get so hungry after bathing, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Terrible Three. "Talk of angels! Good old Fatty! Well, so-long, Figgy! See you after brekker!"

And the Terrible Three sprinted across the quad to the School House, while Figgins and Kerr turned to wait for Fatty Wynn, who was still loudly calling for some where-withal to appease his raging hunger.

Immediately after breakfast the twelve juniors who had formed themselves into the St. Jim's Bazaar Committee, met in the quad, and started off down to the village on their bicycles.

The bazaar did not open, properly speaking, until half-past ten, but there were still a few minor details of the boxing and cricket matches, etc., to be settled by the St. Jim's juniors, with the Grammarians, and, anyway, there was plenty of work to be done by willing hands.

The rectory glebe-meadow, in which the bazaar was to be held, presented an animated scene. An army of ladies, young and old, and middle-aged, were rushing about, full of excitement, and a babel of chattering voices rose from the throng. A number of harassed men, with hammers in their hands and tacks in their mouths, were being hunted from one stall to another by the excited stall-holders, with insistent requests to nail up pieces of coloured cloth and Chinese lanterns, and all other paraphernalia of the Charity Bazaar. An air of bustle and good humour prevailed everywhere, and the twelve juniors grinned cheerfully at one another as they jumped off their cycles at the gate of the rectory meadow.

"There's some talking going on," remarked Tom Merry. "If the row is anything to go by, this bazaar's going to be a howling success."

"Ha, ha! Rather!"

And, leaving their machines in the ditch under the hedge, the juniors strolled in amongst the busy throng.

Frank Monk had not yet turned up, apparently, and the juniors were strolling round the stalls, to which the finishing touches were now being put, when suddenly Figgins gave a violent start, and stood stock still, staring over in the direction of the stall presided over by the vicar's daughter.

"My-my hat!" he gasped. "Look there!"

And a flush of pleasure mantled his rugged face, and his eyes sparkled.

The juniors all stopped and stared intently in the same direction.

"What's up, deah boy?" drawled D'Arcy, languidly putting up his monocle.

"Can't you see, dummy?" exclaimed Figgins breathlessly.

"Weally, Figgins, I—"

"Why, hurrah! It's Cousin Ethel!" broke in Tom Merry excitedly, and waving his cap.

"Cousin Ethel! Why, so it is!" exclaimed several voices simultaneously. "Hurrah!"

"Weally, deah boys," said D'Arcy, staring in vain through his monocle in the direction of the vicarage stall, "you must be mistaken! Cousin Ethel is stayin' at East-wood House at present, I know. She would have let me know if she was comin' ovah to-day. You have made a mistake, Figgins."

"Mistake, you ass! As if I should have made a mistake! Why, I'd-I'd know Cousin Ethel in a 'mill'!" exclaimed Figgins indignantly.

"Weally, Figgins, it seems to me—"

"Oh, come on! Don't stand there jawing all day, Gussy! Let's go over and see Cousin Ethel!" said Figgins.

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impetuously, grasping D'Arcy by the arm, and urging him forward at a run.

"Weally, Figgins—Heah, welease me, you wuff wottah! Welease me immediately!" cried Arthur Augustus, wrenching his arm free from Figgins's grip, and dropping into a slow walk. "I should be sowwy if I had to mar the gwoccedin's by givin' you a feahful thwashing."

"Yes, you would, Gussy," said Figgins grimly—"jolly sorry!"

"Unless you tweat me with more wespect, though, I shall have no other wesource," continued D'Arcy.

"Is my tie stwaight, Tom Mewwy?" he added.

"Beautiful!"

"And my collah?"

"Clean as a pin!"

"Then I think I will wun ovah and see my cousin," said D'Arcy complacently, "if it weally is Ethel. You fellahs can go on lookin' wound for Fwank Monk. I may be too busy to join you till the cwicket match starts! So long, deah boys!"

And D'Arcy waved his hand gracefully, and started to walk off in the direction of Cousin Ethel.

The juniors stared at one another, and gasped. It was true that Ethel Cleveland was D'Arcy's cousin, but all the juniors present were great friends of hers, and she was immensely popular with them. They all called her Cousin Ethel, and, to a man, would have done anything for her.

And Cousin Ethel knew it, and regarded them in the light of true chums. It was rather rough, then, for D'Arcy to calmly assume, by right of his relationship, that he was the only member of the party that his cousin would care about seeing at present. D'Arcy, however, was absolutely alone in his views. Every other member of the party differed from him entirely, and they had not the slightest intention of submitting to his cool suggestion that they should "go on looking round for Frank Monk," what time he himself was "doing the polite" to Cousin Ethel.

Tom Merry and Figgins stared at one another, and then they glared after the form of the elegant swell of St. Jim's.

But not for long did they remain thus.

With one bound they sprang after D'Arcy's retreating form, and, grasping his arms on either side, jerked him violently back.

"Ow—wow!" yelled the unlucky swell of St. Jim's. "Ow! You wottahs! What are you doin', you wuff boundahs? You have put me in quite a fluttah!"

"You—you fatheaded ass!" said Tom Merry, in measured tones. "You chuckle-headed dummy! Do you think we're going to trot on round like good little boys while you are boring Cousin Ethel to death with your idiotic burbling? No, sir! I don't think!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—" said Arthur Augustus indignantly, struggling to free his arms.

"I should think not, indeed!" said Figgins, with great heat. "This tailor's dummy must be going off his dot in his old age! As if Cousin Ethel could possibly want to see him! If he likes to go on round looking for Frank Monk, we will go on and see Cousin Ethel!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Wats! Welease me, you feahful asses, or I shall lose my tempah, and stwike you!"

"Go hon!"

"Welease me!" yelled the unfortunate D'Arcy.

"Welease—"

"Now, Gussy, don't make such a fearful row!" said Jack Blake severely, wagging a reproving forefinger at his study-mate. "Everybody is looking this way. You'll get turned out of the bazaar grounds in a minute. I'm quite ashamed of you!"

"Weally, Blake, I am bein' tweated with gwoss dis-wespect! I—"

"Now, come on Gussy, and don't jaw!" said Tom Merry; and, keeping tight hold of D'Arcy's arm, he and Figgins, followed by the rest of the juniors, led the swell of St. Jim's firmly over to where Cousin Ethel was already standing up and looking with a smile in their direction.

When they got to within a few yards of the vicarage stall, Figgins and Tom Merry released D'Arcy's arms, and walked demurely by his side, knowing full well that D'Arcy would never make any fuss now that they were in Cousin Ethel's presence.

As they approached, the juniors all raised their caps, and Cousin Ethel gave them a sweet smile.

"Isn't this jolly!" she cried, with sparkling eyes. "How do you do, Arthur, and you, Tom Merry, and you, Figgins, and all the rest of my friends? I thought I would give you all a surprise by coming to the bazaar. Elsie Short, here"—and Cousin Ethel turned to a smiling girl who was busy arranging some fancy work on the stall—"invited me to come and help at her stall at the last moment, as she was a bit short-handed. You know Elsie, don't you, boys?"

The juniors took off their caps again. They all knew Elsie

Short, the vicar's daughter, quite well. Elsie gave them a nod and a bright smile, and then went on with her work of arranging her wares. Elsie was a most energetic worker, and the life and soul of the various parish charities and working societies. She was a good deal older than Ethel Cleveland, but the juniors liked and respected her very much.

"I didn't let you know that I was coming, Arthur," pursued Cousin Ethel, "because Elsie told me you were all helping, and I should see you here, and I wanted to surprise you. And so I did, didn't I?" she added, with a merry laugh.

"Yes; and a jolly fine surprise it was, Miss Ethel," said Figgins, in such a tone of deep earnestness that Cousin Ethel blushed slightly.

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus, looking at Figgins a little curiously through his monocle. It struck D'Arcy, too, that Figgins spoke with more earnestness than was his wont; and D'Arcy wondered many things.

"Hallo," sung out Jack Blake suddenly, looking round, "there's Monk looking for us!"

"Blow Monk!" muttered Figgins, under his breath.

"I beg your pardon, Figgins. 'Did you address me?'" asked D'Arcy absently.

"No, I didn't, Gussy!" said Figgins, turning very red. "I—I was only—er—thinking that perhaps we—that is, some of us, ought to go and see Monk, and—and finish making the arrangements, you know!"

The juniors who were standing nearest to Figgins, and had caught what he had murmured, grinned broadly, and Figgins went redder than ever.

"Yaas, wathah! I wegard that as a good ideah!" remarked Arthur Augustus. "You fellahs had bettah wun off at once, I think. You will excuse them, Cousin Ethel, I hope? They have to finish makin' the awrangements for the contests, etcetewa."

"Certainly," said Cousin Ethel. "I have a good deal to do, too."

The juniors glared at D'Arcy in silence, but they could make no protest. Any altercation in the presence of Cousin Ethel was bad form and out of the question. So the juniors had to go.

As they slowly and reluctantly turned to go, Tom Merry, with a sickly smile, said:

"Are—aren't you coming, Gussy? You're on the bazaar committee, you know."

"Oh, that's all wight, deah boys!" said D'Arcy airily. "You must twy and get on without me. I am goin' to stay and help Ethel to awrange her stall, you know."

"Oh, I couldn't think of allowing that, Arthur," said Cousin Ethel seriously. "You must not let me keep you from your meeting. Please don't stay for me. I shall be very busy, you know."

"Nevah mind, deah boy—I mean, deah gal, I can help you, you know."

"I am afraid you could not be much help, Arthur," said Cousin Ethel, with a smile. "I don't suppose you have had much experience in setting out fancy work."

"But I can twy, Ethel, deah gal. I would wathah stop heah!"

"No, really, I cannot allow you to neglect your duties for me," said Ethel firmly. "You must go along with your friends, Arthur. I shall see you all again later."

"But, weally—"

"Now, Arthur—"

"Vowwy well, if you insist, deah gal—"

"I do insist!" smiled Cousin Ethel.

And Arthur Augustus had no more to say. He raised his cap politely, though he looked rather blank, and walked off with Tom Merry, after the others.

"You bounder!" said Tom Merry, grinning at the Fourth-Former's rueful face. "I was determined that you should not pack us all off while you stayed by Cousin Ethel! I was thinking of Cousin Ethel, you see."

"Weally, deah boys—"

"Now, Gussy, don't start jawing! Here's Monkey!"

And the St. Jim's juniors joined Monk and his friends, Lane and Carboy, and plunged into business forthwith.

CHAPTER 16.

The Bazaar.

PUNCTUALLY at half-past ten, Lady Millborough, wife of Sir John Millborough, the M.P. for the Wayland division of Sussex, drove up in her motor, and formally declared the Rylcombe Church Bazaar to be open. She made a few remarks relative to the worthiness of the object of the bazaar, and having been thanked by the vicar in a few well-chosen and—may we whisper it—well-rehearsed words, her ladyship proceeded to fulfil her duty, which was to purchase a good many pounds' worth of more or less desirable goods at the stalls in the bazaar.

This accomplished, her ladyship speedily drove off again to the accompaniment of lusty cheers, leaving everybody charmed with her graciousness and condescension.

The St. Jim's boys had turned up in full force, as had the Grammar School youths, and the bazaar had not been open very long before it was thronged with the seniors and juniors of the two schools, their brightly-coloured caps or handbands standing out conspicuously amidst the white of the ladies' dresses.

A considerable crowd largely consisting of the school-boys, paid their threepence admission to the enclosure where the boxing and single-stick contests were to be held, and as the hour of eleven approached, considerable excitement became manifest, especially amongst the junior members of the audience. It was obvious that the inter-school character of the contests had proved, as Tom Merry said it would, a great "draw," as rivalry between St. Jim's and the Grammar School, though quite friendly, was very keen.

There was a yell from the crowded benches as Jack Blake and Frank Monk, clad in shorts and thin vests, and looking very handsome and athletic in their scanty garments, stopped together into the ring.

"Go it, Jacky!"

"Sock it to him, Monkey!"

"Hurrah for the Grammar School!"

"St. Jim's for ever!"

Various and conflicting cries rang out from all quarters of the audience as the two boxers faced each other, and at the call of "Time!" from Kildare, who had consented to referee, shook hands, and began to spar cautiously for an opening.

"Mind your eye, Monkey!" whispered Jack Blake, with a grin. "I'm going to hit it in a minute!"

"Right-ho!" grinned Frank Monk in reply. "I'm ready! Come on and do it!"

And Jack Blake did!

Both juniors were very fair boxers, and they were very evenly matched. Frank Monk had the advantage of height and reach, but on the other hand, Jack Blake was the sturdier of the two; both looked very tough customers, as indeed they were.

But Monk was not, in spite of Blake's fair warning, quite prepared for such a sudden and violent attack as was launched at him.

Blake made two or three rapid feints, and then, ducking his head to avoid a blow from Monk, at the same time landed a terrific right-hander fairly and squarely between Monk's eyes. It was a real Yorkshire blow, like the kick of a horse, and Frank Monk went down like a felled ox, with myriads of gorgeously-coloured stars flashing across his vision.

There was a terrific roar from the crowd at this sensational development. It was doubtful which side was the most surprised, but both gave vent to their feelings by means of yells—the St. Jim's boys of triumph, and the Grammarians of defiance and dismay.

There was a sudden silence as the timekeeper's lips were seen to be moving, and everyone listened with bated breath.

"Seven, eight—"

Would Frank Monk rise before he was counted out? Or would the fight be finished there and then?

"Nine—"

There was a general gasp, as Monk made a slight movement, and then suddenly sat up with a jerk, looking round him with dazed eyes.

The timekeeper snapped his watch shut, and the Grammarians gasped with relief. Monk had saved his bacon so far.

Jack Blake stood quietly by, watching his opponent with something like anxiety. And when Monk staggered to his feet, Blake made no attempt to hit him. He would not think of taking his man at such a disadvantage, though he would have been quite within his rights in so doing.

The call of time came to Monk's relief a moment later, and the combatants retired to their seconds, to come up for the second round both as fresh as daisies, apparently.

After that the fight was extraordinarily even, though at times very exciting. Once Monk laid Blake out with a magnificent upper-cut just on the call of time, thus levelling accounts up with his opponent.

The two fought on with bulldog courage and determination, the thud of glove meeting glove making itself heard even above the excited chatter of the lookers-on.

After the tenth round the two were beginning to breathe rather heavily, though each was far from being beaten. Neither dreamed of giving up, and they were so evenly matched, that it looked as if the contest would go on till the contestants were overcome with exhaustion; and, seeing this, Kildare stopped the fight after the eleventh round, declaring the result to be a draw.

The announcement of the result was received with vociferous cheers. Everybody was satisfied, the champion of neither side had been beaten, and a magnificent exhibition of skilful, scientific glove-fighting had been witnessed. As Blake afterwards said, "What more could you expect for threepence?"

But more was to come!

Digby and Lane appeared, clad in leather jackets, wicker masks, and gauntlets, and armed with single-sticks.

They were greeted with further hearty cheers, and each was eagerly and noisily backed up by his respective school-fellows.

The spirit of partisanship was actively kept up, and St. Jim's fellows and Grammarians proclaimed, in decidedly audible tones, that their man would prove an easy winner. As a matter of fact, neither of the competitors proved an easy winner. The struggle was a very tough one indeed.

Three bouts were fought, and first blood was scored by Digby, who, cleverly getting past his opponent's guard, caught him a sounding thwack on the shoulder, to the delight of the St. Jim's boys.

"Good for you, Dig!" they yelled. "Give him socks!"

"St. Jim's for ever!"

Digby and Lane, encouraged by the cheers, fought on merrily, exchanging lusty blows with lightning rapidity. They, too, were evenly matched, and gained one bout each, Digby winning the first and Lane the second after a prolonged struggle. The third and final bout fell to Digby, who fenced in a wonderful manner, to the delight of the St. Jim's gym. instructor, who had taken a lot of trouble with him before the event.

The spirited exhibition was loudly applauded, and all agreed both had put up an excellent show. The St. Jim's boys were jubilant, and did not omit to show it, while the Grammarians did not feel that their man had disgraced them in any way.

The show ended with a gymnastic display composed of equal numbers of St. Jim's and Grammarian juniors, who carried out many difficult evolutions in a manner creditable to themselves and their instructors alike. This item also evoked hearty applause, and the crowd streamed out of the canvas-walled enclosure with the feeling that they had had their full money's worth.

The schoolboys now dispersed all over the bazaar, visiting the stalls and side-shows according to their individual fancies.

The sweet stall, presided over by Ailsa Macgregor and Flora Bell, two members of Cousin Ethel's corps of Girl Scouts, who were well known to the St. Jim's boys, of course was the centre of a goodly crowd. Fatty Wynn was there, giving orders right and left, while the laughing girls fulfilled with alacrity. They knew they had only to hint at the delights of any of the boxes and packets of good things, and Fatty succumbed at once. It was obvious that every penny of Fatty's money would find its way into the till of the sweet stall, as Ailsa and Flora roguishly determined that it should.

Fatty Wynn had just ordered his third large box of chocolates to be wrapped up for him, and was reluctantly paying over the last of his money, when Figgins joined the crowd round the sweetstall.

He noticed the grinning crowd round his fat chum, and pushing his way through it, Figgins grasped Fatty by the arm.

"Come away, Fatty!" said Figgins severely, giving his arm a jerk. "If you're going to give a gorging exhibition you ought to charge for admission, for the benefit of the bazaar, instead of giving a free performance here. Chuck it, you cormorant!"

"Really, Figgins, I was only purchasing a few necessities—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the crowd.

"What are these rotters laughing at?" said Fatty Wynn, turning round to glare indignantly at the crowd round him, whose presence he apparently noticed for the first time. "I was just getting a few necessities—"

"Oh, rats!" said Figgins ruthlessly. "Come on, you fat porpoise! We want you to bowl this afternoon, and at this rate you won't be able to walk even!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bazaars always make me extra hungry—"

"Oh, come off!" grinned Figgins. "You will excuse Fatty now, Miss Bell and Miss Macgregor," he added, shooting a laughing glance at the two girls, who had been watching the scene with much amusement. "I think you have about cleared him out."

"All right. He's been a good customer," laughed the girls.

And Figgins marched Fatty Wynn, protesting feebly, away from the sweet-stall, leaving the crowd round it still grinning broadly.

The peculiar, shrill, sing-song squawk of a Punch and Judy show had drawn a goodly crowd to another canvas-walled enclosure, and thither Tom Merry & Co. and Blake and D'Arcy, who had left the boxing enclosure together, were rapidly making their way, when they were accosted by Skimpole.

The genius of the Shell buttonholed Tom Merry in the peculiarly irritating way that he had, and blinked up at him through his enormous spectacles.

"I presume you are going to the concert, Merry," he said. "I also wish to go, but, unfortunately, I have not got any money with me."

"Go hon!" said Blake.

"It is a fact, Blake," said Skimpole. "Surely you do not doubt my word? As a sincere Socialist—"

"It's all right, Skimmy," said Blake, grinning. "I don't doubt you for a moment. What do you propose to do, though, under the circumstances?"

"Why, naturally, I decided to accompany you. I suppose one of you, at any rate, has enough money with him to defray the trifling cost of my entrance fee."

"Ha, ha! I suppose so, Skimmy!"

"I was, as a matter of fact, well provided with money when I started out from St. Jim's to come to the bazaar," pursued Skimpole. "But an unfortunate man accosted me in the road, making the astounding statement that he had tasted neither food nor drink for over a week, so—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake. "Did he look starving, Skimmy?"

"Really, Blake, I see no cause for merriment in the misfortunes of a fellow-creature! But, as a matter of fact, he did not look exactly like a starving man. Appearances are, however, often deceptive. Of course, as a sincere Socialist, I immediately presented him with the whole of the money in my possession, agreeing with him that he needed it more than I did. It must be very unpleasant to go without food or drink for a whole week!"

"I should think so, Skimmy!" grinned Tom Merry. "But if the chap who met you was the same as the chap we saw along the road—a big, fat, red-faced tramp, with a bushy beard and a jolly expression—"

"Yes," said Skimpole, nodding his head thoughtfully, "that would be the man, Merry. He certainly seemed to be making a brave attempt to bear his fearful adversities cheerfully."

"Ha, ha! Well, I shouldn't say that gentleman had been without food for a month—"

"A week he said, Merry."

"Well, a week, then," said Tom Merry, with a grin. "More like five minutes, I should say!"

"Really, Merry—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the chums, in unison.

"As a matter of fact," pursued Tom Merry, "he was coming out of the Jolly Farmer when we first saw him, wiping his mouth with his sleeve."

"But he told me himself that he was starving," said Skimpole seriously. "Surely you do not doubt his word?"

"Rather not—I don't think!" grinned Blake. "I am afraid you have been done, Skimmy. How much did you give him?"

"About three-and-sev'pence, I think it was," answered Skimpole gravely. "Then I also gave him that flask which Gore received as a present from his aunt last week. I had borrowed it and filled it with lemonade, and it will no doubt be a great comfort to the poor man on his weary journey."

"Certainly!" said Skimpole, with an air of mild surprise. "He will need it more than Gore, I suppose."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My—my hat!" gasped Tom Merry. "What will Gore say? Ha, ha!"

"Surely, Merry, Gore will not be selfish about the matter?" said Skimpole mildly. "I shall explain to him that, as a sincere Socialist, I could take no other course. I hope Gore will not be unreasonable. Besides," added Skimpole, "it will be too late to do anything, in any case."

"I am afraid Gore will do something, though," said Tom Merry. "You may find it hard to convince him that you did the only proper thing under the circumstances."

"Ha, ha! Rather!" gasped the chums.

"Never mind, Skimmy. You haven't met Gore yet. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof, now, where is it you want to go?"

"Why, to the concert, Merry. I suppose that's where you were going?"

"The concert?"

"Yes, the concert!"

"I didn't know there was a concert on."

"Certainly," said Skimpole.

"There isn't," said Blake. "I was looking at the notice just now. The only concerts are at four o'clock and half-past six."

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 81.

NEXT
THURSDAY:

"TOM MERRY'S TRUST."

By
MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"But, surely, Blake, you cannot be so deaf as not to hear that a concert is now in progress?"

"A concert on now?"

"Why, certainly! Can you not hear the tones of the—the soprano or—the treble, or something, quite plainly?"

"The—the soprano!" gasped Blake.

"The—the treble!" said Tom Merry.

"Yes! Listen! Can you not hear it?"

"Why—ha, ha, ha! The ass means the Punch and Judy!" roared Blake. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the juniors. "Ha, ha!"

"The Punch and Judy!" said Skimpole, in surprise. "Did you say the Punch and Judy, Blake?"

"Yes, ass! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Dear me, is that the Punch and Judy? I must say, I thought it was a concert. Dear me, how stupid of me! Still, on reflection, I think that I would prefer a Punch and Judy to a concert! Let us go in!"

And the chums, still gasping with merriment, went in to the Punch and Judy, D'Arcy having the privilege of paying for Skimpole.

CHAPTER 17.

The Cricket Match.

AS the morning wore on into afternoon, the fun at the bazaar became fast and furious.

Many of the St. Jim's fellows and Grammarians stayed and had lunch in the refreshment-tent, especially those who had their people with them. The refreshment-tent was managed by a number of ladies, who dispensed first-class refreshments at quite moderate prices, and all the waiting was done by the fairest damsels in the parish, dressed in charming Dutch costumes. Even Fatty Wynn admitted that you got your money's worth at the refreshment-tent.

Tom Merry & Co. and their friends made up a jolly party for lunch. There was Ethel Cleveland and Miss Short, whose fancy-work stall had, needless to say, been largely patronised by the juniors, although they had not much use for fancy work. Then Monty Lowther had his uncle down, and Manners his father, while Miss Priscilla Fawcett, Tom Merry's old governess, was also there, having turned up just in time for lunch. The rest of the party was made up of juniors, Figgins & Co., Blake & Co., and Cornstalk & Co., with the exception of Glyn, being present in full strength.

At the last moment, young Wally D'Arcy, Arthur Augustus's younger brother, calmly joined the party, and in spite of the glares of his major, proceeded to make himself very much at home. There was nothing shy about D'Arcy minor, the rowdiest and most untidy of all the fags of the Third Form, and the greatest contrast to his elder brother it was possible to imagine. In fact, Wally's cheek had become a byword at St. Jim's.

The lunch passed off with the greatest jollity, and was prolonged until it was time for Tom Merry and those of the lunchers who were members of the team, to run off and change for the cricket-match.

The match, which was to be decided on a single innings, attracted large crowds, as it was certain to. The St. Jim's boys and the Grammarians turned out almost to a man, and very many of the older folk were delighted to be able, by payment of a very small sum as an entrance-fee, to sit on the seats under the shady trees at the far end of the huge meadow, and watch a really first-class cricket-match, even though the players were but boys.

A very fair pitch had been prepared, and on looking over the two teams, it was plain that an excellent match might confidently be expected.

Tom Merry lost the toss, and Frank Monk, electing to bat first, as the wicket was in good condition and more likely to deteriorate than improve, Tom led his team out on to the field punctually at half-past two, which was the time fixed for the start of the match.

A fine team the St. Jim's juniors looked in their spotless flannels and brightly-coloured cricket-caps, as Tom Merry led them out on to the smooth green turf. And a fine team they undoubtedly were.

There were, besides Tom Merry, Blake, Digby, D'Arcy, and Herries, of the Fourth Form, Figgins, Kerr and Wynn, representing the New House, and Noble, Clifton Dane, and Reilly, the boy from Belfast. Lowther and Manners had elected to stay on the boundary-line with their uncle and father respectively, and watch, their decision making the task of selecting the team much easier for Tom Merry.

Bernard Glyn, of course, could not play, but he came down in a carriage with his sister, and remained an interested spectator throughout the match. A good many envious glances were shot at him as he sat in a deck-chair with his injured ankle supported on a cushion, talking cheerfully with his pretty sister. A good many fellows would have given a good deal to change places with him.

Monk sent in Lane and Gibson first. They were both pretty sound bats, though in different ways. Lane being a mighty hitter, and Gibson being a stone-waller of the most pronounced type. Monk sent them in first in order that, between them they might break the back of the bowling for the rest of the side.

And that's what they proceeded to do.

Kerr and Harry Noble shared the bowling. Both were very fair bowlers, with medium pace, but they could not get rid of the two Grammarians. It was true that both bowlers experienced bad luck. Lane, who was swiping away like a young Jessop, was missed off both of them—hard catches, it is true, but still chances. Fatty Wynn and Reilly were the culprits, and though nothing was said, there were a good many glares directed at them.

At last, when the Grammarian score stood at 55 for no wickets, and the St. Jim's fellows were looking decidedly glum, Tom Merry signed to Fatty Wynn to take the ball. Tom had been reluctant to put him on before, although he had lately developed into a most tricky bowler, as Fatty Wynn had to be used sparingly. His was not exactly an athletic frame, and he could not, like some bowlers, go on throughout the whole innings without a rest. Fatty required frequent rests.

As he took the ball in his hand, Fatty Wynn's eyes gleamed determinedly. The St. Jim's fellows who were looking on, began to look a bit more cheerful, and shouted encouragement to their champions.

Fatty Wynn clenched his teeth and took a deep breath. He determined to "show those Grammar rotters round," as he afterwards expressed it.

Gibson, the stone-waller, faced the bowling of the Welsh junior first. Gibson was grinning, as he watched Fatty Wynn's preparations. He felt himself fairly set now, and he did not mean to move for Fatty. While Lane had been making forty-two, Gibson had made nine. And he felt like staying at the wicket now.

But Gibson had never faced Fatty Wynn's bowling.

Fatty Wynn took a little jerky run, doubled himself up at the end of it, and the ball left his hand like a shell from a four-point-seven.

Gibson made a desperate dab at it with his bat when it was almost past him, and just managed to turn it aside—right into the hands of Tom Merry at point.

There was a yell.

"How's that, umpire?"

And Kildare, who was umpiring with Mr. Railton, the School House-master, held up his hand.

"Out!"

"Hurrah!" came in a great shout from the St. Jim's fellows. "Good old Fatty! Hurrah!"

Fatty had dislodged the obstinate stone-waller with his very first ball, and he beamed round on his delighted chums with a pleased expression on his fat, jolly face.

"How's that?" he said, in tones of pardonable triumph.

And the team answered with one voice, as they advanced to pat the bowler on the back:

"Ripping!"

CHAPTER 18.

A Splendid Success.

THE smile had faded from Gibson's face as he walked away from the wicket, and by the time he reached the tent which was doing duty as a pavilion, his expression was very discontented, indeed.

"Look out for that fat rotter, Monk!" he growled to his captain, as he met him at the door of the tent. "He's—he's a rotter! I don't believe he bowls fairly!"

"What do you mean, Gibson?" asked Monk, with a frown. "You were out fairly enough!"

"I—I believe it—it was a no-ball, or something," growled Gibson. "That chap Kildare ought to have called it."

"Rot! Don't be an ass! Kildare would be absolutely fair, and you know it. Don't be a cad, Gibson, if you can help it!"

And Frank Monk strode to the wicket with a frown on his handsome face, leaving Gibson, who was not a very pleasant youth at any time, to growl away to himself about the cheating of umpires in general, and of Kildare, than whom no one could really be more upright and honest, in particular.

While Frank Monk was on his way to the wicket, in place of Gibson, Miss Priscilla Fawcett, who had been watching the game attentively from a deck-chair under a big, shady oak, was asking some questions about the game of Cousin Ethel, which Cousin Ethel found very difficult to answer.

Cousin Ethel was keenly interested in cricket, and understood the game as well as any boy, and she had slipped away from the fancy-work stall, for half an hour, leaving it in charge of Elsie Short, just to see how the game was going. Seeing Miss Fawcett under the trees, she had slipped over

to her, and sat down beside her, and was now beginning to regret it.

"Why is that boy leaving the field?" asked Miss Fawcett, as Gibson retired after Tom Merry's catch. "I hope he has not been guilty of any serious misdemeanour."

"Oh, no, Miss Fawcett," said Cousin Ethel, with a laugh, as she ceased clapping her hands. "He's out! Tom Merry caught him out, and a splendid catch it was."

"Dear me!" said Miss Fawcett. "I did not observe Tommy darling take the catch. But I am glad that boy is out. He seemed to me to be attempting to cause the ball to strike poor little Tommy. Fortunately, however, Tommy, like the clever little fellow he is, warded off the cowardly blow, and protected his face with his hands."

"That was the catch, dear!" said Cousin Ethel, with a merry laugh. "Here comes Monk, now! I wonder how he will get on against Wynn!"

Frank Monk took centre carefully, and having had a good look round, prepared to take his first delivery from Fatty Wynn.

Again Fatty took his jerky little run, and doubled himself up, and the ball flew from his hand with a whizz.

Frank Monk just managed to snick the ball through the slips for a single, and he and Lane changed ends. Lane looked far from comfortable at having to face Fatty Wynn, but he pulled himself together, and made a furious hit at the next ball as it came down.

But, somehow, Lane's terrific hit was wasted on the desert air. The ball curled somehow round the bat, there was a clack, and Lane's wicket was scattered.

There was another yell from the delighted St. Jim's spectators.

"How's that?"

"Out!"

And the mighty Lane retired to the pavilion, after one sorrowful glance round at his wrecked wicket.

Things did not look so bad now for St. Jim's. Fifty-six for two was much better than fifty-five for no wickets. The Grammarians began to lose their jubilant expressions.

The next man in was Carboy, and he and Monk together made another stand. Fatty Wynn was taken off after another over without a wicket, and Figgins went on to bowl in his place. Tom Merry did not want to give the batsmen time to get used to Fatty, and it was not until Monk and Carboy had put on another thirty runs between them, and the Grammarians began to grow jubilant again, that Tom chucked the ball over to Fatty again.

"Have another shot, Fatty!" he said. "We want these chaps shifted!"

"Right ho!" answered Fatty determinedly, and he set to work to "shift" them. Again success crowned his efforts!

That over he bagged both Monk and Carboy, and his next over he dismissed three more of the Grammarians with four balls!

The St. Jim's fellows yelled themselves hoarse with joy, and the Grammarians looked at the smiling Fatty with a sort of fearful awe.

Five men in two overs! It was absurd!

But absurd or not, Fatty did it!

Kerr got one of the remaining wickets, and Tom Merry himself clean bowled the other two, and the Grammarian innings closed for ninety-eight runs.

After what they had expected, judging by the start, this total did not dismay the St. Jim's juniors at all, and they set to work to get the runs with light hearts.

It was not such an easy task though, after all.

Blake and Figgins opened the innings, and were doing very well when Blake was caught by Lane right on the boundary from a tremendous smite. It was a magnificent catch, and both schools cheered it heartily, but it was a bit of bad luck for Jack Blake. As he remarked afterwards, had he hit the ball a little lower down on the bat, it would have been a sixer.

Blake had made twelve, and Figgins six, and the score was now twenty for one.

The next few minutes, however, were fraught with disaster to the St. Jim's team.

Digby, who followed Blake, was clean bowled two balls later, and Kerr, who succeeded Digby, was stumped by Carboy, who was wonderfully smart behind the sticks.

"Look heah, Tom Mewwy, this will nevah do!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who was sitting on the grass by Cousin Ethel and Miss Fawcett with his captain. "You had better send me in now. You must do somethin' to stop the wot, you know!"

"Yes, Gussy, you're right! And that's just why I can't put you in!" grinned Tom Merry. "Noble's going in now. I rather think he and old Figg will show 'em how to bat!"

"I hope so!" said Cousin Ethel enthusiastically. "How well Figgins is playing to-day!"

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy carelessly. "But wait till No. 31.

I go in, you know, deah gal. There is no compawison between Figgy's battin' and my own, you know. I think I may say that, without boastin', as you will agwee, Tom Mewwy!"

"Certainly, Gussy! There cannot be the slightest comparison in the world between your batting and Figgy's!"

"I was suah you would agwee with me, deah boy!"

"Of course! Why, if Figgy couldn't bat better than you

"Weally Tom Mewwy, I— Hallo! Good gwacious, what a feaful disastah!"

The cause of D'Arcy's exclamation of dismay was not far to seek.

Harry Noble had been given out leg-before off his first ball!

Tom Merry looked glum.

The score was now twenty-six for four, which was very bad, considering that the first wicket alone had put on twenty.

D'Arcy sprang to his feet.

"You will suahly put me in now, Tom Mewwy! Ethel says she will have to go in a minute or two, and she is anxious to see me bat."

Cousin Ethel smiled slightly, but made no remark. She was looking at the batsman still at the wicket, which was Figgins. But D'Arcy did not seem to observe this.

"Very well then, Gussy!" said Tom Merry gloomily. "Get along in now! I don't suppose you will do the slightest good, but you can't possibly do any worse! In you go!"

D'Arcy already had his pads on, and taking his glove and bat, he bowed politely to his cousin and Miss Priscilla, and marched to the wicket with a slow and stately stride, putting on his batting-gloves as he went.

"Go it, Window-pane!"

"Buck up, Algernon de Vere!"

The howls of impatience and exhortation to "buck up" and "get a move on!" which proceeded from beyond the boundary-flags, perturbed the swell of St. Jim's not at all, and before he finally took his stand to receive the bowling, he fished out his monocle and took a long stare all round the field.

Monk was bowling, and he sent down an extra swift one for D'Arcy's especial benefit.

It was the last ball of Monk's over, which had already seen the fall of four wickets, and Monk made it a special one.

The ball whizzed down like lightning, and D'Arcy made a wild swipe at it, and it flew from his bat.

D'Arcy had no idea where it had gone, but he knew that he had hit it hard, so he started off up the pitch like a racehorse.

"Wun, Figgins!" he yelled in wild excitement. "Wun like anythin'!"

And Figgins, though he was grinning broadly, did not stop to argue, but ran.

There was a yell of laughter from the crowd, and then a tense silence.

D'Arcy had hit the ball with the edge of the bat, and it had whizzed up in the air almost straight above his head to a tremendous height.

Carboy stepped to the block and stood under the ball, waiting with his gloved hands ready to catch it, while D'Arcy, quite unconscious of his impending fate, tore up the pitch. Figgy, of course, could see everything from his end, but he ran on the off chance of Carboy dropping the high catch.

But Carboy did not drop it. He had a safe pair of hands, and that ball dropped right into them—and stayed there!

And D'Arcy, with a very dismayed expression on his aristocratic countenance, walked out.

"Well caught, sir, indeed!"

"Hard luck, Gussy!"

Tom Merry groaned.

"You ass, Gussy," he said, as D'Arcy throw down his bat on the grass, while Cousin Ethel murmured a sympathetic "Hard luck, Arthur!" "You ass, what did you want to go and do that for? Fat lot of good you are as a batsman!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, I—"

"Oh, scat! I'll go in myself now, I think!"

And Tom Merry, with a smile for Cousin Ethel and Miss Fawcett, walked briskly to the wicket.

He and Figgins then proceeded to give a fine exhibition of batting. The deadly Monk, who had actually secured five wickets in one over, bowled in vain now. The score rose steadily to 60, and then to 70, but at 74 Figgins was caught in the slips, and retired in favour of Herries.

Figgins had played a most valuable innings of 28, and he was greeted in the tent by loud applause, in which both sides joined heartily.

THE GEN LIBRARY.—No. 81.

He took off his pads, and made a bee-line for the oak-tree, in the shade of which Miss Fawcett and Cousin Ethel were still sitting.

Herries, who was a stone-waller, was put in to keep his wicket up while Tom Merry knocked off the runs, but unfortunately he fell a victim to Carboy's vigilance behind the sticks very soon after his arrival.

Reilly who followed Herries was bowled for 2, and Fatty Wynn only managed to last out one of Monk's overs before being bowled too, so that when Dane joined Tom Merry, St. Jim's were still behind, their score being 81.

The question which was agitating the minds of Grammarians and St. Jim's boys alike, now was, would Dane manage to last out? Tom Merry seemed set now, and looked as if he could go on for ever. But could the half-Indian lad keep his wicket up while his captain made the runs?

But the question was soon decided. Clifton Dane, in a quiet and unassuming way, played splendid cricket, and astonished the members of both schools by his coolness and judgment. He not only kept up his wicket in a masterly manner, but he also scored himself freely. And the delight of the St. Jim's juniors knew no bounds when the Grammarian total was passed, and the two batsmen were still unbeaten.

St. Jim's had won, with a wicket in hand!

The latter part of the great day passed off as successfully as the first part. In the evening there were concerts and sports and bicycle races, and many other attractions, and when it got dusk, the Chinese lanterns and fairy-lamps were lighted, and dancing was indulged in on the grass. Everybody enjoyed themselves thoroughly, and they had the comforting feeling that their gaiety and happiness were helping on a good cause into the bargain.

The vicar went round the bazaar all day, beaming.

He trotted from one amusement to another, enjoying himself immensely, and greeting all comers with a cheery word or two.

Towards the close of the bazaar, when the dancing was beginning to flag, and the Chinese lanterns were burning out, one by one, with flares that made the subsequent darkness seem blacker than ever, the good vicar, who had been trotting round for the last hour gathering figures of their receipts from the various stall-holders and entertainment stewards, mounted on to a chair, and made a short speech.

After thanking everybody present for their assistance and patronage that day, the worthy old vicar made the announcement, with a catch in his voice, that though the receipts had not yet been counted, yet he was able to state, from the rough figures he had collected, that they would amount to considerably over two hundred pounds. The work of restoration and repair of Rylcombe could at once be started on, and two hundred pounds was considerably in excess of anything the Rev. Septimus Short had ever dared to hope for.

This proof of the magnificent success of the bazaar was received with volleys of cheers, and when all was over, everybody dispersed feeling that they had done their duty nobly and pleasantly that day in assisting a work which was so near to the heart of the good vicar and his worthy parishioners.

The vicar attributed, as he told Tom Merry himself, the success of the bazaar in a large measure to the efforts of the St. Jim's and Grammar School juniors. But those efforts, as Tom Merry remarked afterwards, were in their turn entirely due to the troubles and trials of the St. Jim's motor-cyclist.

THE END.

(Next Thursday another long, complete school tale, entitled "Tom Merry's Trust." Please order your copy of "The Gen" Library in advance.)

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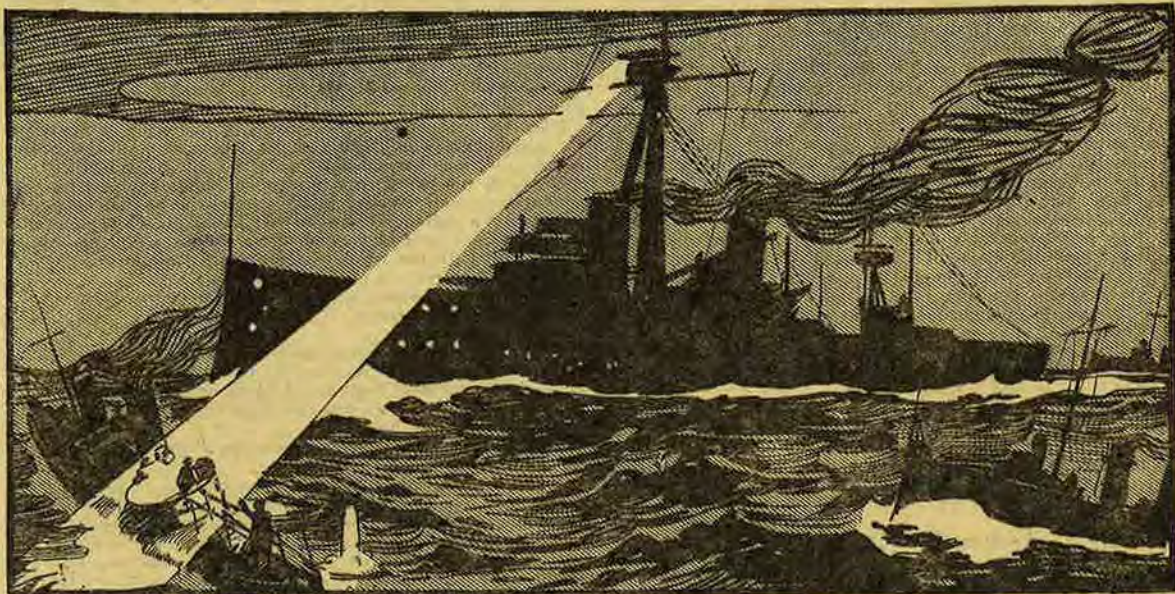
"TOM MERRY'S TRUST."

By
MARTIN CLIFFORD

NEXT
THURSDAY:

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 are with a Lieutenant Cavendish, who is in charge of a captured German war-ship named the Furst Moltke. In capturing this vessel, however, it was slightly damaged, and Cavendish and Sam don diver's suits and go down to investigate the extent of the injury. They are both impressed with their first experience under the waves.

(Now go on with the Story.)

Touch and Go!

The strangeness of that under-water journey impressed Cavendish, but he had no time to attend to it. The state of the ship was his chief anxiety, and presently, being well down her side, he saw the bent plates and pulled on the life-line, checking his descent.

The young captain made a keen and rapid inspection of the damage, and, to his great relief, saw it was not very serious.

"This needn't stop her!" he thought. "She can go to sea at any moment safely—the needn't be dry-docked at all! It's a time for emergencies, and there's no real danger to her from that!"

He made signs to Sam, conveying that the damage need not stop them from going out, and Sam, who had been examining for himself, nodded assent, being very glad, indeed, to have Cavendish's favourable opinion. The latter was just about to signal to the surface when he felt Sam's rubber-gloved hand clutch at his arm, and turned.

Sam, his face looking strangely white through the glass front of the helmet, was pointing with his other hand to a

dark shadow that seemed to be approaching through the depths.

A thrill shot through every nerve in Cavendish's body as he saw it. The shadow resolved itself into a moving monster—a huge, cigar-shaped, iron-plated form, studded all over with rivets, a torpedo-tube in its nearer end, a conical structure on top, and a barred pane of glass near its front, behind which showed a grim, clean-shaven face. Twice the uncanny thing circled slowly round the ship, and came back opposite where the comrades were.

It was a submarine! And a German one at that. One glance was enough to warn Cavendish of the truth, as the thing came gliding gently forward, and the thought shot through his brain at the same moment. The Germans had had news of the Furst Moltke's capture. This invisible enemy had been sent to steal into Sheerness and sink her with her captors on board, lest the British should make use of her. It needed no thinking about, nor was there time.

Cavendish remained motionless, filled with fearful anxiety for his ship, and secondly, for himself. His utter helplessness before that deadly craft as it steadily approached was manifest. A hundred thoughts flashed like lightning to his brain. What could he do?

Sam shook him by the arm, and, pointing upwards, jerked his own life-line violently. It was impossible to speak or utter any warning—that was the horror of it. Sam was immediately hauled rapidly upwards through the water, but Cavendish did not signal in his turn, nor lift a finger.

Suddenly he saw the submarine swerve, and swoop upwards rapidly, hurling itself after Sam, as if the danger of letting either of the unlucky witnesses escape to the surface had just occurred to it. Frozen with horror, Cavendish expected to see his comrade struck and smashed by the great darting bulk of the steel monster. High overhead, against the light, the chase looked as though some huge shark were pursuing its human prey.

For a moment it was touch and go. Then the cigar-shaped vessel's bow just missed the diver by a couple of yards, and as Sam was hauled to the very surface, the submarine dashed beneath him harmlessly, and, swerving like some disappointed monster, dropped rapidly into the depths again in a long slant.

"It's got him!" thought Cavendish. "No, by gum! He's hauled clear! Sam's safe!"

Every instinct of his self-preservation—which is the first No. 81.

NEXT
THURSDAY

"TOM MERRY'S TRUST."

By
MARTIN CLIFFORD.

law of all nature—urged Cavendish to signal swiftly, and get himself pulled out too, while there might yet be time.

But he did not do it. Before his own safety, even down there in the depths, the young commander placed the safety of his ship. And the thought flashed through his mind that, if he saved himself, he would leave her utterly at the mercy of this submarine death-dealer. Long before he could quit his diving helmet, and assume command on deck again, the stranger would have laid the Furst Moltke low.

What use could there be in remaining, and throwing away his life? Cavendish could hardly have told, but an idea had come into his head, and he would not leave till he had seen the submarine do its worst.

These thoughts passed quicker than an electric current in his brain. The strange vessel had disappeared, for the moment, sweeping away a long curve towards the bottom. Cavendish, gripping the life-line in his fingers, began to signal swiftly in the dot-and-dash Morse code, praying that those on the barge would understand without fail and act upon the message he sent. He bade them be ready to slack away tube and lines, and let him go down unhampered, when he gave the sign.

It was in Cavendish's mind that he had seen the unmistakable pointed head of a Schwarzloopt torpedo in the submarine's tube when she first appeared. Now she came into view again, heading towards the cruiser's hull; yes, there it was, its vicious-looking head just visible in the tube's mouth.

The submarine was some twenty yards away, and quite fifteen feet deeper in the water than Cavendish, and there it poised for a second or two, while the young diver watched with a beating heart. The craft pointed in a slightly slanting direction towards the most unprotected part of the Furst Moltke's side, below Cavendish.

Suddenly the torpedo shot out of the tube, and with a steady, swift pace came darting at the cruiser's hull. At the same instant Cavendish set his teeth, and jerked twice at the life-line.

He felt himself falling fast through the water, the lines and tube paying out as he went, and the leaded boots dragging him down. Towards him, as he sank, came the torpedo.

It was a last hope, the final effort of despair. He had chosen to launch himself and meet the deadly thing, rather than let it do its murderous work unchecked.

Would the cap strike him and the charge blow him to atoms, or would he be hurled aside—or merely miss it altogether? There was no time for thought—the answer came next moment, when, having timed his descent luckily, he came down right astride of the long swift missile, and fell across it, clutching it convulsively. There was a floundering swirl, and the torpedo, with its propeller whirling rapidly, bore him onwards steadily through the water.

The Unseen Enemy.

What Cavendish expected to do he hardly knew himself.

In cold truth, he could do nothing—he was completely in the power of the force which was driving the torpedo, and it carried him onwards as if he had dropped astride of a runaway horse.

Two things happened which made a big difference, however. His weight not only made the torpedo go much slower, but also pressed it down out of its proper course. Instead of charging straight at the battleship's side, it made a slanting swoop towards the bottom. The next thing Cavendish knew, he was bumped fairly hard against the keel of the great ship, and the same instant the torpedo passed from under him, swooped beneath the keel itself, just clearing it, and vanished from sight.

The jerk that followed nearly pulled the air-tube and life-line away from the young diver's helmet, for he had been carried down faster than they could be

paid out. His first thought was that he was torn adrift, and would perish inside the suit that encased him; but instantly he felt himself being hauled swiftly upwards without any warning, like a fish at the end of a line. Those above were dragging him out.

"I've saved her for the moment," was the thought that flashed through his brain with a thrill of exultation that the danger could not quell. "It's missed her, and passed under her keel!"

Up he went through the water like a rocket, though he had made no signal, and, in fact, had lost hold of the cord. He was nearly at the surface when he caught sight of the submarine again, coming straight for him below. The iron-studded body, the gaping, shuttered torpedo-tube, and the porthole, with the grim, clean-shaven face behind it, all came into view again.

The vessel swooped at him just as it had done at Sam, but its movements were just a shade too slow, and the young commander was hauled out before the thing reached him.

On each side an arm was slipped under his as he broke the surface, and he was fairly yanked on to the low-sided barge like a gaffed salmon. Swift hands unlocked the catch of the helmet, and Cavendish gave a great gasp, as, white-faced, and with the veins swelling on his temples like cords, he tasted the free air once more.

One breath he drew, and then gave a hoarse shout.

"Slip the moorings! Cut her adrift! Full speed ahead!"

He rushed for the Furst Moltke's gangway, nearly falling on his face as the heavy, leaded boots hampered him, and he had to unbuckle them and kick them off before he could mount the steps. Sam was there, as white-faced as himself, and followed close behind.

"Gun-crews to the after casemates!" gasped Cavendish, hardly able to speak.

He ran up the gangway as fast as he could, panting painfully. On the battleship's bridge Elcombe had passed on the order instantly, the crew were already casting loose the moorings which held the Furst Moltke, and her screws began to churn the water swiftly. Cavendish rushed up on to the bridge, and as he reached it the cruiser was already forging ahead with gathering speed.

"What course, sir?" exclaimed Elcombe.

"Straight for the new dock!" cried Cavendish, darting to the side of the steersman. "Cast off the diving-barge—turn her loose! Nordenfeldts there, fire as straight down past our stern as you can! Rake the water!"

Sam was as astonished as anybody while these orders were being given. His face showed the strain he had passed through no less than Cavendish's. The latter, cool enough now, had pulled himself together, and was directing the cruiser with the most watchful care.

"Sam, what on earth is it? Did you say submarine?" exclaimed Stephen, who had mounted the bridge.

"Yes, I never expected to see Bob alive again!" said Sam, under his breath. "I don't know what happened under water. Sit tight, an' don't bother him now!"

"Great Jupiter! Aren't we likely to get the torpedo at any moment?"

"No doubt of it. I wonder she hasn't—"

"They've discharged one torpedo, an' missed," said Cavendish, overhearing Sam, and taking the wheel himself from the quartermaster. "It's one of their Hartmann submarines, and it takes them a good three minutes to get a fresh torpedo laid and discharged. If we can only reach the dock—"

The crashing of the quick-firers drowned the rest of his words, but the boys understood.

Down there in the depths the unseen enemy was preparing for his second shot. That he would miss again there was not the smallest chance; but a submarine, especially of the Hartmann class, cannot set and discharge torpedoes with the rapidity of a floating vessel. Her tubes are much more complicated.

(Another long instalment next week.)



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