

"THE ST. JIM'S FOOTBALLERS."

The

GEM

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Robert Blythe.

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VOL. 4.

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Tale.

A Tale of the Terrible Three.

by
MARTIN
CLIFFORD.



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THE ST. JIM'S FOOTBALLERS.

An Extra Long, Complete Tale of the Chums of St. Jim's.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1. A Double Fixture.

"I WANT you chaps to keep next Satahday aftahnoon open."

"Eh?"

"I want you chaps to keep next Satahday aftahnoon open."

"What?"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, you must have heard my wemark quite distinctly. Howevah, I will wepeat it. I want you chaps to keep next Satahday aftahnoon open."

The "chaps" whom Arthur Augustus D'Arcy addressed all stared at him in a rather disconcerting manner.

There were a group of them chatting together in the quadrangle at St. Jim's, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of the school, and the ornament of the Fourth Form, had strolled up and joined them, and shot his remark into the midst of the conversation.

"You want what?" said Tom Merry.

"What?" said Jack Blake. "You want what?"

"Say it again," said Digby. "You want what?"

"Sing it over again to me," implored Monty Lowther.

"Now, what is it that you want, Gussy?"
D'Arcy jammed his eyeglass into his eye, and looked round at the circle of faces. He appeared to be a little puzzled.

"I want you to keep next Satahday aftahnoon open," he said. "I twust I make myself cleah. I have an engagement for you—an important engagement."

"Go hon!"

"It is the twuth, Monty Lowthah, and I object to havin' my wemarks weceived in that fwivolous way."

"Saturday afternoon, hey?" said Manners.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Saturday afternoon!" repeated Tom Merry.

"Certainly, deah boy. I fail to understand the widiontous way in which you are all wepylin' to my wemark," said Arthur Augustus, with a great deal of dignity. "I weally cannot help suspectin' that you are all off your wockahs."

"Saturday afternoon!"

"I object to havin' my words wepeated in that pawwtol-like fashion, Hewwies."

"Ass!"

"Eh?"

"Duffer!" said Tom Merry.

"What?"

"Chump!"

"Weally, Blake——"

"Lunatic!"

"I decline to be chawactewised as a lunatic. I think you are all wavin'!" exclaimed the astounded swell of the School House. "What do you mean by it?"

"Hallo, what's the trouble here?" asked Figgins, of the New House, coming up and joining the group of juniors, who seemed to be growing excited. Kerr and Wynn, his inseparable companions, were with the great Figgins.

D'Arcy turned his eyeglass upon Figgins.

"I am bein' tweated with the most unpawalleled widence by these wottahs," he said.

"Go hon!"

"The ass suggests that we should keep next Saturday afternoon open for him," said Tom Merry, in measured tones. "He has an engagement for us."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Tho dummy!" said Figgins.

"Weally, Figgins——"

"The frabjous ass!" said Kerr, with emphasis.

"Kerr, deah boy——"

A DOUBLE-LENGTH TALE OF TOM MERRY NEXT THURSDAY.

No. 102 (New Series).

Copyright in the United States of America.

"T'wix giffing duffer!" said Fatty Wynn.

"Weally, Wynn—"

"And what's the important engagement you've got for us?" demanded Tom Merry. "You had best tell us that before we bump you in the mud."

"I should uttably wufuse to be bumped in the mud."

"What's the engagement?" roared Jack Blake.

"It is a most important one. I have been ovah to Highcliffe School on my bike to see a chap I know there—a wela-tion of mine in the Fourth."

"Well?"

"I had tea with him and some fellows. They were talkin' football, and the Highcliffe juniors think that they could walk all ovah St. Jim's juniors."

Blake snorted.

"That's nothing new. Highcliffe are a cocky set, and they think they can do anything. They've never been seen to do it."

"Yaas, wathah! But weally the way their junior captain, Ponsonby, was talkin', made me feel watty, you know. He seemed to take it for granted that we couldn't play footah. When I told him we could walk all ovah Highcliffe and not half t'wix, he patted me on the shouladah and gwinped. Yaas, it's a fact, deah boys—he gwinped in my face."

"I suppose you slew him on the spot," said Monty Lowther solemnly.

"Pway be sevious, Lowthah. The long and the short of it is that I assumed the wight of issuin' a challenge to the Highcliffe juniors. I am aware that not holdin' any official posish in our junior club I was exceedin' my wights to a certain extent, but I could not help takin' the bwaggin' wottahs on, you know."

"Oh, that's all right," said Tom Merry. "We'll meet them with pleasure, and walk all over them."

"What ho!"

"Yaas, I thought you would appwove my action, deah boys. That's why I asked you just now to keep Satahday aftahnoon open."

"Saturday afternoon!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You ass!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Do you mean to say that you've challenged Highcliffe to meet us this week, and on Saturday afternoon?" roared Tom Merry.

"Yaas, deah boy. You see, Highcliffe have no othah date open the whole season. Ponsonby said they were booked right up. There's a fixture fallen thirough for Satahday aftahnoon, howevah, and he could let us have that day, so I took it."

"You frabjous dummy."

"I wufuse to be called a fwabjous dummy."

"We can't play them on Saturday afternoon."

"We must, deah boy. They'll think we're funkin' the match if we don't meet them."

"All your fault!" howled Blake. "We can't meet them!"

"We must!"

"Ass!"

Ponsonby already thinks that we shall send some excuse instead of meetin' them," said Arthur Augustus. "He thinks we shouldn't have the ghost of an earthly against them, you know. He fully expects us to ewawl out, somehow. If we do, the way they will bwag will be soineethin' feahful."

Tom Merry grunted.

"Yes, you ass, and it's your fault."

"But we're goin' to meet them and give them a feahful lickin' at footah, Tom Mewwy."

"We'd give them a lickin', right enough, if we met them," said the hero of the Shell; "but we can't meet them on Saturday afternoon."

"But they have no othah date open."

"Then we shall have to scratch."

"Imposs, deah boy. There would be no holdin' them if they had a chance of swankin' like that."

"Can't be helped."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, I shall insist upon meetin' them on Satahday aftahnoon. What is your objection?"

"Ass!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"We're meeting the Grammar School on Saturday afternoon!" roared Tom Merry. "It's a regular fixture, and we can't possibly put it off."

"Bai Jove!"

D'Arcy's face fell considerably. It was evident that, in the excitement of that football chat at Highcliffe, he had forgotten all about the Grammar School fixture.

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

"Of course, you wouldn't," said Lowther. "This is what comes of lettin' you go out without a chain."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

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NEXT THURSDAY:

"SKIMPOLE THE THIRD."

MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"We meet Frank Monk's team on Saturday, and we can't possibly put it off," said Tom Merry, with a frown. "Highcliffe will have to crow, that's all."

"Bai Jove! That will be awfully wotten."

"Yes; it was like you to get us into this sort of a fix."

"Weally, deah boy—"

"I suppose nothing can be done?" said Figgins. "It wouldn't do to raise a second eleven to meet Highcliffe, would it? They're mostly swank, you know, and don't really play much of a game at footer."

Tom Merry pursed his lips thoughtfully.

"Well, if we broke up the eleven, and filled out two teams with recruits, we should send out two weak elevens instead of one strong one," he said. "The result would be, I expect, that we should get licked by the Grammarians and licked by the Highcliffe set as well."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"If we scratch Highcliffe, they'll never fix another date—they'll be too glad of the chance to crow," said Lowther. "Besides, if they have all their dates full, they couldn't meet us. Ours are full up to the end of the season now."

"And so are Monk's, I expect," said Tom Merry, frowning. "There's a chance, though, that Monk may be willing to postpone. He may have another date open."

"Well, it's a chance."

"To-day's Wednesday," said Tom thoughtfully. "It's a bit late to give notice, but I think I'll spin over to the Grammar School on my bike before tea and speak to Monk."

"Yaas, wathah, and I'll come with you," said Arthur Augustus. "I have weturned fwom Highcliffe wathah earliar than I intended, and I have nothin' to do."

"Rats!"

"Weally—"

"You've caused enough trouble for one afternoon," said Tom Merry. "You can stay here. Blake can come with me, and two of us will be enough."

"But it may be necessary to weseon with Fwank Monk, and put it to him stwaight, you know. What you wequire is a fellow of tact and judgment. I weally think I had bettah come."

"Oh, go and eat coke."

And the juniors stalked off, discussing the unfortunate situation as they went, and leaving Arthur Augustus looking after them through his monocle. The swell of the School House shook his head decidedly.

"I wathah think I can't let them go alone," he murmured. "They will make a mess of things, I expect. I will get out my bike again, and wun ovah to the Gwammah School and explain mattahs to Fwank Monk before they awwive."

And in two minutes Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was pedalling away up the muddy lane.

CHAPTER 2.

Unfortunate for Arthur Augustus.

"MY hat!"

"The cheek!"

"The nerve!"

"Look at him!"

"Phew!"

The exclamations burst from a group of juniors in the playground of Rylcombe Grammar School, in various tones of surprise, astonishment, and indignation.

They were caused by the sight of a cyclist pedalling coolly in at the open school gates.

It was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

D'Arcy might have been riding into the quad at St. Jim's, to judge by the perfect nonchalance of his manner.

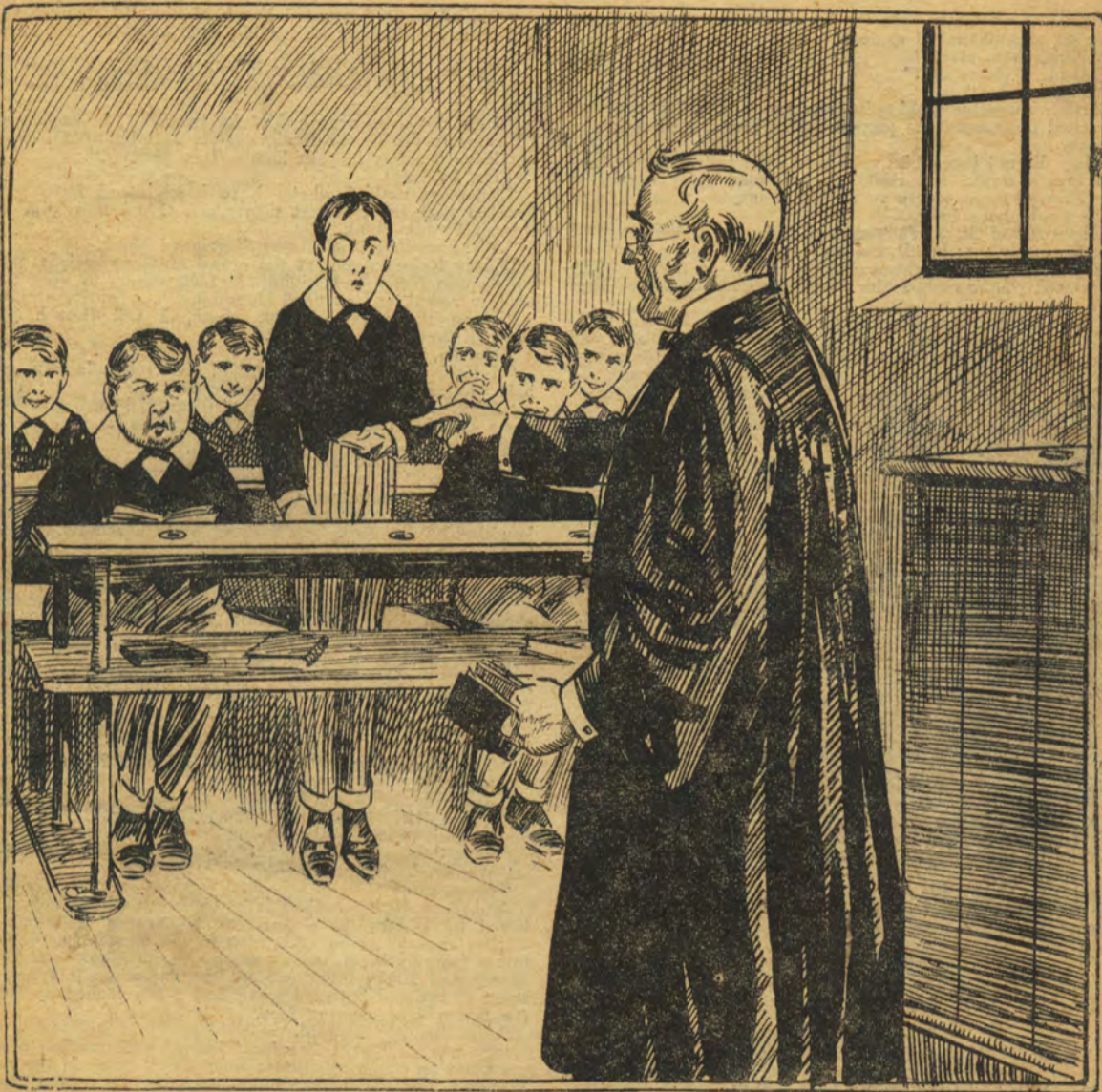
He seemed to have forgotten that he was upon hostile ground. As a matter of fact, the swell of St. Jim's was so busy thinking about the football fixture, that he had forgotten everything else. He was in a hurry to be ahead of Tom Merry and Blake, to explain the matter to the Grammarians with the necessary tact and judgment.

Between St. Jim's and the Grammar School the war was never ended—at least, among the juniors—and rows were never ceasing, though sometimes a truce was called, for the purpose of transferring the rivalry to the football or cricket-field.

At football and cricket and hockey the two schools claimed to have wiped each other practically out of existence, and certainly both claims could not be correct. The probability was that honours were divided.

The forthcoming football-match was looked forward to with eagerness by both sides, each team being quite certain that it would rush the other off the field, and add to the list of triumphs.

But until the Saturday afternoon upon which the teams were to meet, the rival schools were on the same terms as usual, and a Grammarian who should have been reckless



"What is that you are passing to Wynn, D'Arcy?" asked Mr. Lathom.

enough to venture into the St. Jim's quadrangle, would have expected to be frog's-marched, at least.

Hence the astonishment of the Grammar youths when Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was seen coolly pedalling on his bicycle through the gateway.

"The cheeky worm!" said Carboy, in amazement. "He has come here to look for trouble, of course."

"He will find it, whether he's looking for it or not!" chuckled Lane.

"What-ho!" said Frank Monk, the junior captain. "Let him come in, and yank him off his bike as soon as he's inside. We'll show him that he can't swank around on our ground in this way."

"Right-ho!"
 Ting-a-ling! Pong!
 "He's ringing his bell!"
 "The check!"
 "The nerve!"

Arthur Augustus was actually ringing his bell for the Grammarians to get out of the way. It was too much!

With one accord the Grammarians rushed upon the cyclist, and seized him in the grasp of many hands, and jerked him off his machine.

The cycle curled up, and reposed on the ground, and

Arthur Augustus was whisked away in the hands of the Grammar juniors.

"Ow!" gasped D'Arcy. "Oh!"

"Collar him!"

"Bring him along!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now, then, you St. Jim's worm——"

"Ow! Welease me at once!"

"Yes—I don't think!"

"If you do not immediately welease me, Lane, I shall stwiks you. Fwank Monk, I shall give you a feahful thwashin'. Do you hear?"

"Yes, I think I hear," said Frank Monk, chuckling. "I'll risk it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You uttah wottah!"

"Bring him along!"

"I came here to tell you——"

"Shove him this way!"

"I came here to——"

"To have the frog's-march!" grinned Carboy. "Take his other ankle, Laney!"

"Right-ho!"

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NEXT
THURSDAY:

"SKIMPOLE THE THIRD."

By
MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"Ow! I wefuse to have the fwog's-march! I wegard you as a set of wuffians! I came here to explain——"

"Now, then, start!"

"Ow! Wefease mei!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus could only gasp now, as the Grammarians marched him round the playground in the delightful frog's-march.

They did not bump him very hard, only sufficiently to take his breath away, and ruffle and disorder his garments—a punishment more severe to Arthur Augustus than physical pain would have been.

The swell of St. Jim's struggled furiously in the grasp of the Grammarians; but it was useless.

He had not the slightest chance against so many. The Grammar youths rushed him round the quad at a breathless rate.

"Cheeky young bargee!" growled Frank Monk. "We get all sorts of cheek from Tom Merry and Blake and Figgins, and the rest, but I really think this takes the cake—buzzing in here, under the eyes of the whole lot of us."

"Yes, rather!" said Lane. "Bump him!"

"Hurray! Bump him!"

"Ow! Weally, I pwotest! You are makin' my twousahs howwibly distay! You are wufflin' my hair, and soilin' my collah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Help! Ow! Groo!"

"Give him another!"

"Come on, right round the quad!"

"Hurray!"

And right round the quad, went the unfortunate swell of St. Jim's; right round, till he was opposite the gateway again, at the point where the frog's-march had started.

"Now, then!" exclaimed Frank Monk. "Stop minute!"

"Oh, give him another round!" exclaimed Hanks.

"Stop, I tell you. Gussy!"

"Ow! Yow!"

"Are you sorry for your cheek?"

"You uttah wottah!"

"Are you willing to go on your knees, and beg pardon of the whole company here assembled?" demanded Frank Monk, with great solemnity.

"Certainly not, you wottah!"

"Then round you go again!"

"I wefuse to go wound! I——"

"Bring him along!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hallo! Look out!"

"St. Jim's rotters! Look out!"

And the frog's-march suddenly ceased as two St. Jim's caps were seen in the gateway.

CHAPTER 3.

D'Arcy is Not Consulted.

TOM MERRY and Blake had arrived. As they rode up to the gate of the Grammar School, they heard the uproar from within, and guessed that something was on, but what it was they were far from guessing.

"Seem to be enjoying their little selves," remarked Blake, as he jumped off his machine, and leaned it against the gate.

"What a fearful row!"

"I wonder what's on?"

They looked into the quad.

For the moment they could see only an excited crowd of Grammarians, who appeared to have some struggling object in their midst.

Then there was a yell.

"St. Jim's rotters! Look out!"

The Grammarian crowd opened, and a rush was made towards the gate. Then the two juniors from St. Jim's could see what it was that had been the centre of the struggle.

It was a disordered, dusty, dishevelled figure, which was scarcely recognisable as that of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the elegant junior of the School House at St. Jim's.

Tom Merry and Blake stared at it blankly.

"Gussy!"

"My hat!"

"Help!" gasped D'Arcy. "Wescue, deah boys!"

"Phew! What a figure!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Collar the cads!" shouted Frank Monk.

Tom Merry held up his hand.

"Pax!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, rats!"

"Pax, Monkey! We've come over on business, about the football-match."

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"SKIMPOLE THE THIRD."

By
MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"Oh, all right!" grunted Frank Monk. "I thought you had come over looking for trouble, as D'Arcy did. He found it."

"Ha, ha, ha! He looks as if he'd found it."

D'Arcy groped for his eyeglass, and jammed it into his eye.

"I did not come ovah lookin' for twouble!" he exclaimed.

"I came to discuss the footah match, as I felt that I could not leave it safely in your hands, Tom Mewwy."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There is nothin' whatevah to laugh at. I have been tweeked with the gwosset diswespect. I am now goin' to thwash Fwank Monk."

"Want another frog's-march?" grinned Monk.

D'Arcy looked round at the crowd of Grammarians, who were quite ready and willing—in fact, eager—to give him another round, and changed his mind.

"Upon the whole, Fwank Monk, I will thwash you anothah time!" he exclaimed.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I have been tweeked bwutally! My collah is torn, my hair wuffed, and my clothes weally wained."

"Well, what could you expect?" demanded Carboy. "You came sailin' in as if you owned the place, and never explained."

"You didn't give me time to explain."

"Oh, rats!"

"If you say wats to me, Carboy——"

"Oh, you'd better get home, Gussy," said Tom Merry, laughing. "By Jove, you'll make quite a sensation when you return to St. Jim's in that state."

"What-ho!" chuckled Blake.

"I wefuse to return to St. Jim's in this state."

"That's all right," grinned Monk. "You can come and clean up in our quarters. Now, if you chaps have come over to talk business, you can come into my study, while Gussy is cleaning up in the dorm."

"I weally think the mattah ought to be left in my hands, Tom Mewwy. You wequire tact and judgment in a case like this."

"You've been so jolly successful, so far, too," remarked Blake.

"That was due to hastiness and a silly misundahstandin' on the part of these Gwammah wottahs."

"These what?" asked Carboy.

"These Gwammawians," corrected D'Arcy. "Now, if you leave it to me——"

"Rats!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"More rats!"

And Tom Merry walked into the house with Monk, followed by D'Arcy in a state of simmering indignation. Carboy showed Arthur Augustus to the dormitory, to lend him a friendly hand, and Lane and Frank Monk took Tom Merry and Blake into their study. There was a fragrant smell of tea and buttered toast, and a boy looked up from the fire with a glowing face.

"Just ready!" he said.

"So are we," said Frank. "Bumping Gussy has given me quite an appetite. Shove some more water in the pot, Plunkett, and make some more toast, there's a good chap. You kids will join us, of course?"

"What-ho!" said Tom Merry.

And they sat down to tea.

When they had been provided with big cups of tea and plates of toast, Frank Monk came to business.

"Now, what is it?" he asked.

"Ripping!" said Blake.

Monk stared at him.

"Eh? What!"

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"It's ripping!"

"What's ripping?" demanded the perplexed Grammarian.

"The toast," said Blake innocently.

"You ass! I meant, what is it you've come over for—the business? I thought everything was settled with regard to the footer match."

"Well, yes," said Tom Merry, setting down his teacup. "But the best laid schemes, you know, go rocky at times, as the poet remarks."

"I don't think the poet puts it exactly like that," grinned Frank Monk. "But I understand. What has gone wrong?"

"We're booked to come over here and play you at three o'clock Saturday afternoon," said Tom Merry, consulting his notebook.

"That's it."

"Well, we've got another match on Saturday afternoon, owing to Gussy's beautiful management. You know Highcliffe School."

"Yes; a cocky set of bargoes," said Frank Monk. "They think they're the salt of the earth, and look on themselves as a brigade of Bloomers on the footer field, but as a matter of fact they're pretty soft."

"Well, Gussy was over there to-day, and they made him waxy with their swank, and he challenged them for Saturday afternoon, of course forgetting all about our fixture," said Tom Merry. "Now, if we make excuses, Highcliffe will crow fearfully, and there will be no holding them in."

"I imagine so."

"Now, if you could help us out, I know you would," said Tom. "What do you say? Could you possibly put the match off to another date, old chap?"

Frank Monk wrinkled his brows thoughtfully, and shook his head.

"I can't," he said honestly. "I would if I could, but we're booked right up, and we've refused matches because we had no dates open. We would scratch if you liked, of course, but—"

"But that's not to be thought of," said Tom Merry quickly. "I don't mean that at all. We wouldn't miss the match with you for anything, if Highcliffe crowed like a whole farmyard. I thought something might have fallen through, perhaps, and you might have a vacant date—"

"I wish we had; but we haven't."

"Then the only thing we can do is to play both matches on Saturday somehow," said Tom Merry. "Gussy has agreed to play Highcliffe on their own ground, and we shall have to go over there. The fixture with you is to come off here at three. Could you alter it?"

"Right-ho!" said Monk instantly. "Anything you like! We'd make it two if that would suit."

"With pleasure," said Lane.

"What about coming over to our ground?" said Tom Merry.

Frank Monk nodded.

"Certainly. We'll start immediately after dinner on Saturday, and get to your ground in time to kick-off at two."

"I say, that's awfully good of you, Monkey," said Tom Merry gratefully. "If we save the journey over here, it will be a lot, as we have to make the trip to Highcliffe. It's no joke to play a football match immediately after another the same afternoon, and the less travelling we have to do, the better."

"We'd do anything we could, of course. But look here. You're easily top of Highcliffe in form, but after playing us you won't be fit to meet them. It stands to reason your men will be blown."

"We shall have to risk it."

"Highcliffe will lick you," said Monk, with a shake of the head. "Then they'll crow worse than if you scratched."

"I don't think so. We'll win if we burst a boiler," said Blake. "And if we lick them just after playing your team, even Highcliffe will have to sing small."

"Well, yes, that's so; but—"

"We shall have to take our chance," said Tom Merry. "If we kick off at two with you, we shall be finished at three-thirty. We shall get to Highcliffe by four, or earlier, and kick off at four there, and finish by half-past five. I hope there will be light enough."

"There jolly well won't," said Frank Monk. "You must make it earlier. Look here, we could get over to St. Jim's and kick off at half-past one if we tried. That would allow you to finish by three."

"Jolly good!" exclaimed Tom Merry heartily. "It's awfully decent of you to meet us in this way. We'll give you a good game."

"And we'll give you a good licking if we can," grinned Monk.

And the discussion and the toast being finished at the same time, the juniors rose to depart. It was at this moment that Arthur Augustus came downstairs, looking much the

better for his clean-up, and Tom Merry and Blake met him as they quitted Monk's study.

"I'm weady now," said D'Arcy. "We'd better talk the mattah over with Fwank Monk, deah boys, and see if we can make an awwangement."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I fail to see any cause for laughtah."

"Well, you see, as a matter of fact the matter's discussed and settled," explained Tom Merry. "It's time to get back to St. Jim's now."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Come on!"

"But what have you awwanged?"

"I'll tell you as we go along."

"That is hardly satisfactory, Tom Mewwy. It may be necessawwy for me to wevise the awwangement, you know."

"Go hon!"

"Pway do not huwwy off like that, Tom Mewwy!" exclaimed D'Arcy, following the hero of the Shell from the house. "Weally—"

"Good-bye, Monk, old man, and many thanks!"

"Not at all. Good-bye!"

"Tom Mewwy—"

"Here's your bike, Gussy."

"Yaas, but—"

"Jump on, then," said Tom, mounting his machine and pedalling away. "It's time we got back."

"Stop, you wottah!" bawled D'Arcy. "I may have to wevise the awwangement—"

"Come on, Blake!"

"Right-ho!"

"You wottahs—"

Tom Merry and Blake were riding away cheerfully. D'Arcy gazed after them for a moment, and then gazed at the grinning Grammarians. Then, with an air of extreme dignity, he mounted his machine and pedalled after the departing juniors.

CHAPTER 4.

Arthur Augustus is Not Easy in His Mind.

"I 'VE been thinkin', deah boys—"

"Oh, draw it mild, Gussy!"

Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass upon Jack Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Well, you know, you shouldn't put such a strain on a chap's credulity," expostulated Blake. "What I say is, draw it mild."

"I wufuse to weply to that uttahn fwivolous wemark," said D'Arcy, with dignity. "I have been thinkin'. You awwanged with Fwank Monk yesterday—"

"Exactly. Is that kettle boiling, Dig?"

"Nearly."

"You awwanged with Fwank Monk yesterday to have the match earliah on Saturday, and to go ovah to Highcliffe aftahwards."

"Precisely. Where's that tea canister?"

"Now, I've been thinkin'—"

"The tea canister!"

"You are intewwuptin' me, Blake."

"Yes, I suppose I am. Where's the tea canister?"

"I don't care a wap where the tea canistah is. I wufuse to take the slightest intewest in the tea canistah."

"But I want to make the tea."

"I was speakin' about the footah match on Saturday—"

"Yes; but the tea canister—"

"Here it is," said Herries. "I remember putting it in Gussy's hat-box for safety, as that worm Mellish was scoutin' round for tea when he was fagging for Knox."

"What!" exclaimed D'Arcy. "In my hat-box!"

Herries nodded.

"Yes; and the marmalade, too. I knew Mellish would collar them if he had half a chance. Knox always licks him if he doesn't get a good spread at tea-time, and he hardly ever gives him the tin to get the things."

"You—you uttah ass—"

"Well, I suppose you didn't want a beastly prefect to scoff our marmalade?" said Herries indignantly, as D'Arcy tore his hat-box open.

"Hewwies! I wegard you as an uttah ass! Bai Jove!"

D'Arcy dragged the tea canister out of his silk hat. Then he grabbed the marmalade jar. Unfortunately, it had been overturned, and half the marmalade was deposited in the silk lining of the hat.

D'Arcy stared at it speechlessly.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Herries. "Where's the rect of that marmalade?"

"You feahful ass! It's in my hat!"

"My hat! Your hat!"

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"SKIMPOLE THE THIRD."

By
MARTIN CLIFFORD.

NEXT
THURSDAY:

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh, hang!" said Herries. "I stood it carefully upright. You must have been shifting that hat-box, or something. Now half the marmalade's wasted."

"You—you uttah ass! I wasn't thinkin' of the marmalade. My hat is ruined!"

"Well, we didn't want your hat for tea, and we did want the marmalade," growled Herries. "It's a curious thing that your silk hats are always causing trouble of some sort. My dog Towser was caught in the house the other day, because he was worrying one of your toppers up and down the passage."

"Hewwies!"

"See if you can scrape the marm. out. I don't think it ought to be wasted. It will do for you, anyway."

"I don't know whether to wegard you as a dangerous lunatic, Hewwies, or to give you a feahful thwashin'."

"Take your choice," said Herries. "Scrape out the marmalade first. We haven't any too much to go round."

"This was the silk toppah I bought in Pawis—"

"Then it's time you had a new one," said Blake. "You've had that for weeks. Tea's made; squattez-vous, mes amis."

The juniors sat down to tea, with the exception of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. He was scraping the marmalade out of his silk topper—not to save the marmalade.

"I shall have to have a new linin' put in that hat," he said, at last, as he took his place at the table. "I wegard Hewwies as a dangerous lunatic."

"Good! Pass the cake."

"Speakin' about the Gwammah School match—"

"I wasn't speaking about the Grammar School match," said Blake. "I was speaking about the cake. Shove it over this way."

"There it is. Now, about the match—"

"Pass the bread-and-butter, Gussy."

"Certainly, Dig. About the Gwammah School match—"

"Pass that knife."

"Here you are! Now, about the—"

"Pass the sugar."

"The sugar is on your side of the table, Blake."

"Dear me, so it is! Pass me a plate, then."

"I wegard these continual intewwuptiuns as fwivolous. I wefuse to pass you anythin' more. Now, about the Gwammah School match, I've been thinkin'—"

Jack Blake gave a groan.

"I suppose we're bound to have it. What is it?"

"I hardly wegard that as a pwopah spwrit in which to weceive my wemarks, Blake. Howevah, to wesume. I have been thinkin' that it's not a good wheeze to play two footbah matches in one aftahnoon. Of course, I could stick it out all wight, but you chaps would be bound to get feahfully fagged."

"Br-r-r!"

"That is not an intelligible remark, Blake. I've been thinkin', therefore, that it would be a good ideah to waise a second juniah eleven, and I will captain it."

"Go hon!"

"And take it ova to Highcliffe to beat Ponsonby."

"My dear ass—"

"I wefuse to be called an ass—"

"Tom Merry is junior football captain. Tom Merry decides. He's decided to play the two matches in one aftahnoon, and—there you are."

D'Arcy rose from the table.

"Then I had bettah speak to Tom Mewwy about it."

"Yes, rather."

"Vewy good. I will speak to him."

And D'Arcy departed from Study No. 6. Blake thoughtfully helped himself to D'Arcy's cake, which the swell of St. Jim's had forgotten in his interest in the football match. He chuckled softly as the door closed behind Arthur Augustus.

"It's Gussy for wheezes!" he remarked. "I think I can guess the reception he'll get in Tom Merry's study!"

And Herries and Digby said: "What-ho!"

CHAPTER 5.

Two Generous Offers Declined.

"BAI JOVE!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had nearly reached Tom Merry's study, when a junior came very quickly out of the adjoining room, bolted along the corridor, and ran right into him outside Tom Merry's door. It was Skimpole, of the Shell, the junior who was very short-sighted, and always in a hurry, and extremely dangerous to meet in a passage or on the stairs.

Arthur Augustus staggered against Tom Merry's door.

"Dear me!" said Skimpole, blinking at him through his spectacles. "I am sorry! Oh!"

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The door was ajar. D'Arcy's weight, as he fell against it, hurled it open, and the swell of the School House rolled headlong into the study.

There was a yell within.

Monty Lowther and Manners were playing chess, and Tom Merry was sitting on the corner of the tea-table, watching them. Manners gave a jump as D'Arcy rolled in, and his sleeve swept pieces and pawns from the board.

"You ass!" roared Lowther.

"It wasn't my fault!" shrieked Manners. "That duffer—"

D'Arcy jumped up.

"Bai Jove! I'm sowwy, deah boys!"

"You shrieking ass!"

"I wefuse to be called a shwiekin' ass. I have apologised for my unintentional intwusion, and between gentlemen that should be sufficient," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with a great deal of dignity.

"You frabjous cuckoo!"

"You burbling idiot!"

"Weally, deah boys—"

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

"Not that it really matters," said Manners calming down a little. "I had you mate in three, Lowther."

"Oh, don't be funny!" growled Lowther. "Unless you're as blind as you are silly, you must have seen that I had you mate in two."

"Well, of all the duffers—"

"Of all the idiots—"

"Didn't you see that my queen—?"

"Didn't you see that my rook—?"

"Blow your rook!"

"Well, blow your queen!"

"Look here—"

"Look here—"

"Oh, shut up!" bawled Tom Merry. "When you start arguing about chess, I can't stand you."

"I had him mate in three—"

"I had him mate in two—"

"Bosh!"

"Rot!"

"Yes, you're both right, it's all bosh and rot," agreed Tom Merry. "Now shut up. The game is over, and you can massacre Gussy for upsetting it."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"I was going to call in on you chaps," said Skimpole, blinking into the study. "A sudden idea struck me in connection with the Grammar School football match."

"Bai Jove! That's what I've come here to speak about, you know."

"Well, go into Skimpole's study, and you can talk to each other about it," said Tom Merry. "I consider that a good suggestion."

"Weally, deah boy—"

"Not at all, Merry. I have a good suggestion to make. It appears that you have arranged to play two matches in one afternoon."

"Yaas, wathah! Now, I considah—"

"I think it would be better to form two teams, and send one over to Highcliffe, the other to the Grammar School."

"Yaas, wathah! That's what I was goin' to say."

"I have not played very much football," said Skimpole, blinking round the study. "I am perfectly willing, however, to captain the second team to play Highcliffe."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Skimpole, you are an ass!"

"Really, D'Arcy, that remark is almost rude. You see, although I have practised football very little, I shall play the game well, because it really depends upon the intelligence, and I have always maintained the mastery of mind over matter. The mastery of mind over matter is shown as much in football as anything else."

"Go hon!"

"I shall therefore be perfectly willing to captain a second team against Highcliffe, and I have no doubt you will jump at the offer."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I see no cause for merriment in my remark."

"Well, I'm not a good jumper, so I shan't jump at the offer," grinned Tom Merry. "But if you want to be really obliging, I'll tell you what you can do, Skimpole."

"Yes. As you know, I wish to be always obliging. It is the duty of a sincere Socialist, as I am, to be always obliging."

"Well, perhaps it would be asking too much, though," said Tom Merry thoughtfully.

"Not at all, Merry."

"Well, if you would like to do me a favour—"

"Certainly—"

"Well, then, go straight down the passage—"

"Yes."

"Downstairs—"

"Certainly."

"Across the quadrangle, as far as the gates——"

"That is easy enough. What else?"

"Nothing else."

"Eh?"

"Stay there," explained Tom Merry. "That's all."

Skimpole blinked at him in perplexity. He could not catch on. He was a deeply-serious youth, and had never been known to see a joke. The other juniors in the study were all grinning, and Skimpole blinked round from face to face in search of a clue to the general merriment.

"I hardly think I understand you aright, Merry," said the genius of the Shell slowly. "As a sincere Socialist, it is my duty to be obliging, and I should be very happy indeed to do you any little favour. Pray explain. I am to proceed along this passage, and descend the stairs——"

"Ha, ha! Yes."

"And then cross the quadrangle from the School House to the gates——"

"Exactly."

"And then——"

"Stay there."

"But what purpose would that effect?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ho, ho, ho!"

"I fail to see in what that would oblige you, Merry," said Skimpole, perplexed. "I fail to see the cause of this laughter also."

"Oh, I can show you that," said Lowther, taking the genius of the Shell by the back of the neck, and marching him towards the glass. "Look in there."

"I am looking in."

"Can't you see the cause of the laughter, then?"

"Certainly not," said Skimpole, blinking at his own reflection. "I fail to see the drift of your remarks, Lowther."

"My only hat! Look! Can't you see the face of a silly idiot?" howled Lowther.

"I can see your face over my shoulder, if that is what you mean."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry. "Good for Skimmy!"

"Bai Jove, I wegard that as funnay, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Monty Lowther turned red.

"What's all that silly cackling about?" he demanded.

"Ha, ha, ha! Look in the glass!" yelled Manners.

"You'll see the cause of the laughter, you know. The face of a silly idiot! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, you chumps——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Really," said Skimpole, "I cannot help thinking that you have taken leave of your senses. I fail to see any cause for these cachinnations."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"To come back to the original subject, are you perfectly willing for me to form a second eleven to play Highcliffe?"

"No! Ha, ha, ha!"

"You do not refuse?"

"Yes, I do, old chap!"

"Then, as a sincere Socialist, it will be my duty to resist tyranny," said Skimpole. "I shall form the second eleven, and play Highcliffe on my own account."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The rights of the individual must always be maintained. Professor Loosetop says in his book on Determinism——"

"Outside!"

"Nothing of the sort. He says——"

"Travel!"

"He says——"

"Chuck him out!" roared Manners.

Three pairs of hands were laid upon Skimpole. He struggled, but he had no chance. The strong grasp of the Terrible Three was upon him, and he was hurled forth. He rolled along the linoleum, sliding along the passage on the smooth surface, and blinking in a state of great astonishment.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I quite approve of curlin' out that feahful bore. Fancy any chap talkin' Determinism without bein' paid to do it. But to come to biznay, deah boys, about that football match——"

"Oh, that's all settled!"

"Not at all. I have decided to waise a second eleven to play Highcliffe on Satahday. I do not considah that we ought to wisk the school colours by playin' two matches in one atfahnoon."

"Are you junior football captain, by any chance?" asked Tom Merry blandly.

"No, but natuwallly you will, as a weasonable human bein', yield to supewiah judgment."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wegard it as a wippin' wheeze to waise a second juniah

eleven, undah my lead. Then I should wesign my place in your eleven, of course."

"Well, that would give us a better chance against the Grammarians, certainly," Tom Merry remarked, in a thoughtful way.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"But I'm afraid I couldn't trust you to lick Highcliffe, Gussy. Your offer is, therefore, declined with thanks. Good-bye!"

"But——"

"Fare thee well."

"Pway don't be widiculous. I will explain my views on the subject fwom the vewy beginnin'——"

"That you jolly well won't," said Tom Merry promptly. "Go and explain them to Blake."

"He wefuses to tweat the matlah with pwopah sewiousness."

"I'm not surprised. Still, he's bound to stand it. Itun away and play!"

"My opinion is——"

"Order!"

"I considah——"

"Rats!"

"Undah the cires——"

"Outside."

"I wefuse——"

"Chuck him out!"

"I wefuse to be chucked out. I absolutely—ow—you wottahs! Lowthah, wewease me at once, or I shall lose my tempah and stwike you. Maunahs, you are wumplin' my collar, you howwid wuffian! Tom Mewwy—— Ow!"

Arthur Augustus was ejected, and the door slammed behind him.

The swell of St. Jim's picked himself up in the passage, a little dishevelled and extremely indignant. He rushed at the door of the study; it was locked. A chuckle came from within.

D'Arcy put his head down to the keyhole.

"Tom Mewwy, I wegard you with uttah contempt!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I look upon you as a wank outsidah! I—ow—ow—ow—gerroooch!"

Fizz!

A stream of ink from a squirt came through the keyhole, and it caught Arthur Augustus fairly in his open mouth.

He staggered away from the door, spluttering and muttering, with the ink running down over his chin and streaming upon his immaculate white collar.

"Ow! Yow! Yaroooh! Groo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You howwid wuffianly wottahs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And D'Arcy, bestowing a final kick upon the door, rushed off in search of a bath-room and a toothbrush.

CHAPTER 6.

Two Goals for Skimpole.

SPLASH! Splash! Splash!

Tap, tap!

Splash!

Tap!

"Are you in this bath-room, D'Arcy?"

"Yaas, wathah! Cleah off!"

"I want to speak to you!"

"Br-r-r-r!"

"Dear me! I have a most important communication to make, you know. Pray open the door."

"I'm twyin' to clean this howwid ink out of my mouth."

"Dear me! What have you been drinking ink for?"

"Br-r-r-r!"

Splash! Splash!

"Hallo!" said Harry Noble, coming along the passage, and giving Skimpole a playful dig in the ribs. "What's the matter, Skimmy?"

"I want to speak to D'Arcy, and he has been drinking ink, and is washing the taste of it out of his mouth," said Skimpole. "I regard it as a most remarkable thing for D'Arcy to do."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I have had fears for D'Arcy's sanity at times," said Skimpole, lowering his voice. "He fails to understand the simplest principles of Determinism when I explain them to him."

"Amazing!" said Kangaroo.

"Yes. For instance, take the clear and convincing exposition of Determinism in Professor Loosetop's wonderful book. Everything being what it is, is exactly as it is, and is evidently the outcome of the forces which had combined to produce it. Dear me! How extremely rude of Noble to walk away while I am talking."

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NEXT
THURSDAY:

"SKIMPOLE THE THIRD."

By
MARTIN CLIFFORD.

Skimpole rapped on the door again.

"D'Arcy! D'Arcy!"

"Go away!"

"It is very important. I——"

"Br-r-r! Grool!"

"You see, D'Arcy——"

The door flew open, and a hand appeared with a wet sponge in it. The sponge swept through the air, and came upon Skimpole's nose with considerable force. Water from it splashed all over him.

Skimpole staggered back and sat down.

"Dear me! This—this is almost rude! Really, D'Arcy"

The door slammed again.

Skimpole mopped his face with his handkerchief, and drifted along the passage. He took up his stand patiently at the end window, and waited for D'Arcy. The swell of St. Jim's emerged at last, looking very rosy and fresh.

"Ahem! D'Arcy——"

D'Arcy put up his eyeglass and stared at the genius of the Shell.

"Weally, Skimpole, I wegard you as an ass."

"I regard you as a rude-person."

"I am sowwy I was dwiven to hurl the sponge at you, deah boy. I was in a most exasperated state by bein' unable to get that wotten ink out of my mouth."

"But why did you drink it?"

"You uttah ass! I didn't! One of those Shell wottahs squirted it into my mouth with a beastly squirt!"

"Oh, I see! As a sincere Socialist, I do not bear malice, D'Arcy. I am willing to offer you my help in the matter of the football match."

D'Arcy's eyeglass glimmered over Skimpole's large head and glistening spectacles and weedy form, and he smiled.

"Thank you vewy much, Skimmay, deah boy, but I feah you will not be of much use in a footah match."

"I wish to play in the match, D'Arcy, to demonstrate the mastery of mind over matter. I have a football here, as you see. I have never kicked a goal in my life, but I will demonstrate to you that the intellect is superior to mere practice. Come into the wide passage."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Now," said Skimpole, as they came into the Form-room passage. "You stand there, as if you were the goalkeeper. I will place this football at this end of the passage, and kick it clean over your head."

"Bai Jove! I think I should pwefer to stand at the side of the cowwidah, deah boy, in case it didn't go wight ovah my head."

"Oh, very well, but I assure you——"

"I pwefer to stand here."

"Very good!"

D'Arcy stood up to the side of the passage. Skimpole placed the ball, blinked at it, and retreated a few steps. Then he took a little run, and launched out one of his feet.

The ball flew, but Skimpole's kick was by no means a fair and square one. The ball swerved off to the side of the passage, and there was a wild roar from D'Arcy.

"Ow!"

Skimpole blinked at him.

"What is the matter, D'Arcy?"

"Yow! You uttah ass!" yelled D'Arcy. "The beastly ball has biffed me on my beastly chin! Ow! Ow!"

"Impossible!"

"What?"

"Absolutely impossible," said Skimpole, shaking his head. "This must be the effect of imagination. You see, I calculated carefully before I kicked and the ball can only have described a certain trajectory, which would miss you by two yards at least. It is quite impossible for the ball to have touched you."

Arthur Augustus rubbed his chin, which was aching from contact with the football.

"You feahful ass!" he said.

"It is simply a freak of the imagination," said Skimpole patiently. "The ball cannot have touched you."

"It banged me on the chin, you fwabjous ass."

"Impossible!"

"But my chin is hurt."

"Mere imagination!"

"You uttah ass!"

"I hope you will not be so obstinate as to maintain that the ball really struck you, D'Arcy. If there is anything in scientific calculation, it missed you by two yards at least. Now, I will try again—where are you going, D'Arcy?"

Arthur Augustus did not reply. He walked off at a good speed. Skimpole blinked after him in great surprise.

"Dear me! It is almost rude of D'Arcy to leave me so abruptly," he murmured. "What an obstinate fellow he is! I clearly demonstrated that the supposed injury to his chin was a delusion, and merely the effect of imagination. There

is no respect for science in our days. However, though D'Arcy declines to remain, I think I had better practise a little more, now that I have the passage to myself. My success is a remarkable proof of the value of purely scientific calculation."

And Skimpole placed the football again, and calculated, and kicked, and sent it whirling on a zigzag course past the door of the Shell Form-room.

It was just Skimpole's luck that the door should open at that moment, and that Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell, should come out just in time to catch the football with the side of his head.

There was a roar from Mr. Linton.

The astounded master staggered in the doorway, and clapped his hand to the side of his head, catching at his glasses with the other hand, while the football bounced and rolled at his feet.

"Great heavens!" exclaimed Mr. Linton.

Anybody but Skimpole would have dodged away at top speed, and escaped discovery. But Skimpole came blinking along the passage to see what had become of his ball.

"Have you seen my football, sir? Oh, here it is!"

"Skimpole!"

"Yes, sir!"

"Did you throw that ball at me?" demanded Mr. Linton, in a voice that made even the amateur Socialist of St. Jim's quake a little.

"Oh, no, sir! I was practising a kick."

"You—you were practising a kick here—indoors—here, in the passage!" exclaimed Mr. Linton, scarcely able to believe his ears.

"Yes, sir. You see, it is dark in the quadrangle, and——"

"Follow me, Skimpole."

Mr. Linton, with a grim face, turned back into the classroom.

"With pleasure, sir," said Skimpole, picking up the football and following the Shell-master in. "I trust you were not greatly disturbed, sir, by the impact of the leather sphere upon the side of your occiput?"

"Hold out your hand, Skimpole," said Mr. Linton, picking up a cane off his desk. "I acquit you of deliberately hurling that ball at me, but your impatience in playing football indoors, and your gross carelessness, I must severely punish."

"Really, sir——"

Skimpole blinked dubiously at the master of the Shell. He was thinking of beginning an argument, proving that a fellow had a right to play football wherever he liked, and that under Socialism all Form-room passages would be nationalised, but the expression on Mr. Linton's face made him change his mind.

He held out his hand instead.

Skimpole blinked energetically as he received three severe cuts on each hand. Mr. Linton then pointed to the door with his cane.

"You may go, Skimpole. I shall detain this ball. Perhaps I may return it to you later. Leave it on my desk."

"But, sir——"

"You may go."

"Certainly, sir; but——"

"Go!" exclaimed Mr. Linton, grasping the cane again; and Skimpole darted out of the Form-room. He blinked doubtfully as he went down the passage.

"I am not surprised at Mr. Linton's being irritated by the impact of the spheroidal missile upon his occiput," he murmured, "but it is really most unjust of him to detain Tom Merry's football. However, I suppose it is of no use arguing with him about it."

And Skimpole did not argue, for once. He left the master of the Shell severely alone.

CHAPTER 7.

Fatty Wynn Loses the Toffee.

"GUSSY!"

Jack Blake whispered the name in the Fourth Form class-room. It was in the morning—the morning after Skimpole's demonstration of the mastery of mind over matter. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sat very silent and thoughtful in his place in the Fourth Form. Whether he still felt the effect of Skimpole's demonstration in his chin, or whether he had something else on his mind—certain it is that a shade of intense reflection was upon his aristocratic brow.

As a matter of fact, the boys were supposed to be silent and thoughtful in the class-room. But this, as Blake would have said, was mainly supposition. Mr. Lathom was a patient, good-tempered, and short-sighted Form-master, and the Fourth Form were not kept in strict order, by any means.

"Gussy!"

D'Arcy made no reply.

His eyes were fixed upon the blackboard, upon which Mr. Lathom was making mysterious inscriptions with a piece of

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Three pairs of hands were laid upon Skimpole. He struggled, but he had no chance. The strong grasp of the Terrible Three was upon him, and he was hurled forth from the study.

chalk. But he certainly did not see either the blackboard or Mr. Lathom. He was thinking.

"Gussy!"

The Fourth-Form master turned his head a little.

"Dear me! I am sure someone is talking."

Blake snorted softly.

"Do pinch Gussy, somebody," he whispered.

"Certainly," said Hancock, who sat next to the swell of St. Jim's; and he did.

D'Arcy came out of his reverie with a gasp.

"Ow! Bai Jove! What was that?"

"Shut up, you ass!"

"Weally, Hancock——"

Mr. Lathom turned round again.

"I must insist upon silence in the class," he said mildly.

"D'Arcy, I am certain that I heard you speak."

"Yaas, sir. I—I felt a sudden pain, sir."

"Indeed! Are you ill?"

"Oh, no, sir!"

"Dear me!" said Mr. Lathom, quite concerned. "What sort of a pain was it, D'Arcy? I trust it was nothing serious."

"Oh, no, thank you, sir! It is quite gone now."

"Where was it?"

"In the leg, sir," said D'Arcy.

"H'm! Was it anything like rheumatism?" asked Mr. Lathom, who sometimes had twinges of that himself, and naturally felt sympathetic for others in like case.

"I—I don't know, sir."

"Was it a very sharp pain?"

"Yaas, sir."

"Ah! It was probably rheumatism. You must have been getting your feet wet, perhaps, and neglecting to change your boots afterwards."

"Oh, no, sir!"

"You are sure your feet are not wet at the present moment, D'Arcy?"

"Quite sure, sir."

"Very well. Tell me, however, if you feel this pain again, and I think it will be better for you to have medical advice."

"Ya-a-a-as, sir."

Mr. Lathom turned to the blackboard again. Arthur Augustus was crimson, and the whole class were trying to suppress their giggles.

"You uttah ass, Hancock!" whispered D'Arcy, as soon as the Form-master's attention was taken away again. "What did you pinch me for?"

"Blake wants to speak to you."

"Weally, Blake——"

"I asked him to wake you up," explained Blake.

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thought you were going into a trance, or something of the sort."

"I wufuse to cwedit that you believed anythin' of the sort."

"You see, I wanted you to pass this toffee on to Fatty Wynn, who is dying of hunger. I couldn't make you hear."

"I will pass on the toffee, Blake, but I twust you will not botham me with any more of your wemarks. I was thinkin'," said D'Arcy, with dignity. "The mattah of the new eleven is weighin' on my mind vevy much."

"The which?"

"The new eleven, which is going to meet Highcliffe."

"But no new eleven is going to meet Highcliffe!" said Jack Blake, in amazement.

"You are mistaken, deah boy. As you, and Tom Mewwy, and Figgins fail to see weason, I have decided to take the mattah into my own hands."

Blake could only stare.

"I am formin' a new juniah eleven," said D'Arcy. "I shall take it ovah to Highcliffe and liek the Ponsonby cwowd. You othahs can play the Gwammah School, as originally awwanged."

"You cheeky young ass!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Are you going to pass that toffee, or are you not going to pass that toffee?" asked Fatty Wynn, in a sulphurous voice.

"Bai Jove! I'm sowwy," said D'Arcy, who had been absently holding the packet of toffee in his hand all the time.

"Here you are, deah boy!"

Mr. Lathom turned round.

"What is that you are passing to Wynn, D'Arcy?" he asked.

"Bai Jove!"

"Give it to me at once!"

"Oh, deah!"

Mr. Lathom took the toffee.

"Ah! You have been warned before of devouring sweetmeats in class, Wynn. D'Arcy, I am surprised to see you encouraging Wynn in his gluttonous habits in the class-room. This toffee will be confiscated, and you will take twenty lines each."

"Bai Jove!"

Fatty Wynn did not say anything, but his looks said volumes and volumes.

CHAPTER 8.

D'Arcy Means Business.

WHERE'S that dummy?"

Fatty Wynn asked the question as the Fourth Form came out after morning lessons. The fat Fourth-Former was looking decidedly warlike.

"Steady on, Fatty," said Figgins, grinning. "Gussy didn't mean it, you know. It was only the little way he has."

"I'm going to squash him!"

"Weally, Wynn—"

"Oh, here you are! You utter lunatic! You frabjous burler! I was perishing with hunger, and the toffee would have saved me!"

"Well, you see—"

"I had hardly any breakfast," said Fatty Wynn, with a glance round for sympathy. "Only eggs, and a couple of rashers, and a pork-pie, and a slice of cold pudding, and the tarts, and a chunk of cake. I was famishing in the class-room, and—"

"You must have been," said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And that idiot—"

"I wufuse to be called an idiot!"

"That howling jackass—"

"I decline to be chawactewised as a jackass!"

"That frabjous ass—"

"I uttahly wufuse—"

"That shrieking dummy gave Lathom the toffee! I'm going to squash him!" And Fatty Wynn pushed back his cuffs in a very businesslike way.

"Vevy well, Wynn. Undah the cirs., I do not see that I have any wesource but to thwash you," said Arthur Augustus.

"Oh, collar him!" said Figgins.

"Weally, Figgins—"

"Loggo!" yelled Fatty Wynn.

"Rats!" said Figgins cheerfully.

Figgins and Kerr seized Fatty Wynn by the arms and marched him off forcibly. Blake and Digby did the same for the vainly-protesting Arthur Augustus.

"You uttah asses!" said D'Arcy, when they released him at last, Fatty Wynn having been marched into the New House. "I shall have to thwash Wynn. It is a mattah of dig. with me now. I wufuse to let the mattah dwop."

"We'll jolly well let you drop if you don't!" said Blake.

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"Wats!"

"Stop him!" roared Blake, as the swell of St. Jim's rushed off towards the New House, evidently bent upon avenging his offended dignity upon the plump person of Fatty Wynn.

"Stop him!" shouted Digby.

The Terrible Three were strolling out into the quad., and they saw D'Arcy running. They strolled into his path.

"Stop him, Tom Merry!"

"What-ho!" said Tom Merry.

D'Arcy halted as Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther lined up to dispute his further progress.

"Pway get out of the way, deah boys!" he exclaimed. "I am goin' to thwash Wynn!"

"Rats!"

"It is a question of dig."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Got him!" gasped Blake, coming up breathlessly, and inserting two fingers into the back of D'Arcy's collar. "Got the duffer!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Now then, you'll agree to keep the peace, or down you go into the mud!" said Blake warningly. "What is it to be?"

"Upon the whole, I will let Fatty Wynn off," said D'Arcy.

Blake released him with a chuckle.

"Good!"

"But I am afwaid that, undah the cirs., it will not be possible for me to wegard you as fwiends," said D'Arcy, putting up his eyeglass. "You are a set of boundahs! Howevah, I have to speak to you on the subject of footah."

"Why, that's all settled!" said Tom Merry. "It was all finished when we chucked you out of the study last evening."

"It was not settled! I have decided to waise a second eleven."

"Go hon!"

"And play Highcliffe!"

"Rats!"

"You can play the Gwammah School without me. I will take my eleven over to Highcliffe. Are you agweeable?"

"Not much!"

"And why not?"

"Well, you'd be licked, you see. The Highcliffe chaps are not first-chop form, but they're strong enough to liek any second eleven we could raise out of the junior Fornis here. We've got all the best players in the junior team now. And, as a matter of absolute fact, Gussy, you're not an exactly ideal football captain. If it were choosing a necktie or a silk hat, I'd rely on you to the last shot in the locker. But footer—"

"I wegard your wemarks as fwivolous! As I wemarked, I have decided!"

"Nobody else has a say in the matter, I suppose?" suggested Lowther.

"No, deah boy; I have made up my mind!" said Arthur Augustus. "As I bwought ovah the challenge fwom Highcliffe, it is my place to find an eleven to liek them. I am goin' to do it. Howevah, I don't want to have any wov on the subject. I suppose that if I waise an eleven that can beat yours, Tom Mewwy, you will be willin' to agwee to my takin' it ovah to Highcliffe to meet Ponsonby?"

"Ha, ha! Yes."

"That is agweed, then?"

"Certainly!"

"Vevy good! I shall now pwocceed to wecwuit the eleven," said D'Arcy, with a great deal of dignity.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I see no cause for wibald laughtah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy swept the juniors with a scornful glance through his eyeglass, and stalked away. He left them chuckling.

"Gussy's in earnest," remarked Manners. "My only hat! I shall be glad to see the second eleven when he raises it."

"What-ho!" grinned Blake. "There are some chaps w keep as reserves, and they can play footer, but I don't think they will play for Gussy."

"Ha, ha! No."

"Lemme see," said Tom Merry thoughtfully. "We have Merry, Manners, Lowther—the pjck of the bunch—Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn; Blake, Herries, Digby, Kangaroo, Dane—as Gussy is leaving himself out. Dane will be glad to play in his place."

"I should think so."

"There are some good players left—Glyn, and Reilly and Macdonald, anyway. Not enough to make up an eleven to play Highcliffe. Besides, we want Glyn and Reilly and Macdonald as reserves. I shall make some changes in the team before it goes over to Highcliffe. Any fellow who is

damaged or fagged will be replaced, so I can't let Gussy have my reserves," grinned Tom Merry.

"Not much!"

"Hallo, Skimpole!"

The genius of the Shell came up, blinking in the bright winter sunshine.

"I should like to know, Merry, whether you have decided to adopt my suggestion?" he began. "I tried my plan yesterday, with most gratifying results. I have clearly demonstrated the mastery of mind over matter. I would undertake to captain a team against Highcliffe with the fullest confidence in myself."

"I'm afraid I shouldn't share the confidence, Skimmy."

"I suppose it is no good arguing with absolutely stupid persons?" said Skimpole, with an air of resignation.

"Not a bit; I've tried it with you! But Gussy is forming a second eleven, and you're just the recruit he wants for it."

"Oh, good! Where is he?"

"Over yonder, under the elms. Buzz off and get first chance," said Blake encouragingly.

Skimpole blinked at him.

"I think I will, Blake. By the way, Tom Merry, will you be wanting your football to-day?"

"What-ho!"

"You can get an old one in the gym. to practise with," said Digby.

"I was not thinking of that, Digby. I borrowed Tom Merry's football yesterday—"

"Oh, you did, did you?" exclaimed Tom Merry. "I wasn't aware of it!"

"No; you were not in your study at the time. And, besides, what was the use of going through the absurd form of asking your permission?" said Skimpole. "I borrowed the ball. Under Socialism, of course, all footballs will be nationalised. But what I was going to say is, that while practising in the passage last evening I had the misfortune to knock the football against Mr. Linton's head, and he has confiscated it. I am sorry, if you require the ball. That is all."

Skimpole walked away, and was gone before Tom Merry could recover his breath.

CHAPTER 9.

D'Arcy is Shocked.

G LYN, dear boy!"

Bernard Glyn, the lad from Liverpool, did not look round. He was busy in his study—the end study in the Shell passage. Glyn was a youthful inventor, and the contrivances he originated in the end study had caused a great deal of amusement—and some trouble—in the School House. His electric walking-sticks, and chairs that closed like a vice upon the sitter were well known among the juniors, though strangers were sometimes taken in by them still.

"I say, Glyn!"

"Get out!"

"Eh?"

"Buzz off!"

"I want to speak to you."

"Br-r-r!"

"It's important."

"Boosh!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy felt for his eyeglass, jammed it into his eye, and surveyed Bernard Glyn with a disdainful expression. The manner of the Liverpool lad could not be said to be either polite or encouraging.

Glyn was busy. He had what appeared to be an oblong box, covered with American cloth, on the table, and from the box two handles protruded. An insulated wire connected the box with a battery under the table.

"Weally, Glyn, I must wegard you as a wude beast!" said D'Arcy. "I came to offah you a gweat distinction!"

"Go and offer it to somebody else, then!" howled Glyn. "Can't you see I'm busy?"

"It's about the footah on Satahday."

"Rats!"

"I am waisin' a second eleven to meet Highcliffe while Tom Mewwy's eleven goes ovah to the Gwammash School."

"Poof!"

"I offah you a place in the team."

"Go and eat coke!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy grew crimson. He advanced into the study, and pushed back his beautiful white cuffs.

"I shall be sowwy to intewwupt you, Glyn, but I am goin' to thwash you! Will you kindly stop that wot—"

"Outside!"

"Wats!"

"Get out, you idiot!"

"I wefuse to be called an idiot! Are you goin' to put your hands up?"

"You utter duffer!"

"That's a beginnin'!" said D'Arcy, giving the Shell fellow a gentle tap on the ear. "Now pway put your hands up, deah boy!"

Bernard Glyn gave a roar.

"You fearful ass! I can't leave this now. Here, hold this handle for a minute, while I connect the wire!"

"Certainly, deah boy!" said D'Arcy, who was always obliging, even in his most hostile moments. "With pleasure!"

"This handle! Quick!"

D'Arcy grasped the handle. The next moment a wild yell rang through the study, and Arthur Augustus was dancing convulsively.

"Ow! Ow! Leggo!"

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

"Ow! Yow! Bai Jove! Yah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus tried to let go the handle. But he could not. His hand clung to it, in spite of himself.

"Ow! Ow! Ow!"

He understood now that Glyn had made him take hold of that handle, and had then turned on a powerful current of electricity, to punish him for his interruption of the experiment, whatever it was.

And he could not let go!

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Glyn.

"You howwid wottah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! Help! Wescue!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! Yow! Grooh! Yaroooh! Help!"

"What on earth's the matter?" exclaimed Harry Noble, rushing into the study.

And then he saw D'Arcy clasp the handle and dancing, and he yelled:

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Kangawoo—"

"Oh, my only hat!" gasped the Cornstalk. "This is funny! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Help! Yaroooh! Wescue!"

Half a dozen fellows were looking into the study now. They roared with laughter at the curious antics of the well of St. Jim's.

"Wescue!" yelled Arthur Augustus.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shocking thing, ain't it?" gasped Hancock.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Will you get out of the study, make it pax, and not come back again, if I let you go?" demanded Bernard Glyn.

"Certainly not! I am goin' to thwash you!"

"I'll turn it on a little stronger, then!"

"Ow!"

"How do you like that?"

"Yow!"

"A little more?"

"Yaroooh!"

"Are you going to clear out, then?"

"Yow—yaas, wathah!"

"And not come back?"

"Groo—yaas."

"Make it pax!"

"Yaas!" wailed D'Arcy. "I'll—I'll do anythin', only shut off that feashful thing. Pway don't be a beast!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Glyn shut off the current. D'Arcy let the handle go, and staggered to a chair, and collapsed into it. There was perspiration in big drops on his aristocratic brow. The fellows in the doorway were shrieking.

"Perhaps you won't interrupt an experiment again, Gussy," grinned Glyn. "I'm making a new dodge for my mechanical man, and you came in at the wrong moment, you see."

"I wegard you as a wank outsidersah."

"Well, you're an insider at present, but please get outside. You're an awfully nice chap on the other side of a door with the door locked," said Glyn.

"Weally, Glyn—"

"Outside, Gussy. I'm busy."

"I wegard you with uttiah contempt. I uttiahly wefuse to have you in my eleven, Glyn," said Arthur Augustus, and he stalked out of the doorway of the end study, shaking the dust of that apartment from his feet, so to speak.

Bernard Glyn grinned, and went on with his work. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy walked away in search of recruits. His first attempt towards recruiting the second eleven had not panned out very well; but he was not cast down. In the passage a bony youth ran up to him, and caught hold of a button with bony fingers. It was Skimpole, of course.

"Ah, I've been looking for you, D'Arcy. I hear that you

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are forming a second junior eleven to meet Highcliffe," exclaimed Skimpole breathlessly.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I am taking up football—not from any predilection towards childish games, you understand, but because I wish to demonstrate in my own person the mastery of mind over matter," explained Skimpole. "I suppose you are willing to let me captain the eleven?"

"Bai Jove!"

"Have you any objection?"

"Well, yaas, wathah," said Arthur Augustus, with heavy sarcasm. "I fancy that if I thought the mattah out vewy carefully, I could find a slight objection somewhere."

"I do not see why. However—"

"As a mattah of fact, Skimmy, I'm captainin' the team myself, and that's settled."

"Oh, very well. Will you be playing centre-back?"

"Centre which?"

"Centre-back," said Skimpole, who had not devoted as much time to studying football as to studying Determinism and other varieties of nonsense. "I think I should be able to play best as centre-back."

"Bai Jove!"

"Well, do you accept me as centre-back?"

"You uttah ass, there are only two full backs, and how can one be centre?" demanded the swell of the School House. Skimpole rubbed his nose thoughtfully.

"I suppose I have made an error. I do not pay much attention to these foolish games. Perhaps what I was thinking of is the half-forward."

"The what?"

"The half-forward. Will you play me as half-forward?"

"You shwickedin' ass, there isn't such a thing. Pway go back to Determinism, Skimmy—it's a thing that suits your vewiety of intellect—and leave football alone."

"Nonsense. What place will you take yourself?"

"Centah-forward."

"Well, I will be with you—say, next-to-centre forward."

"That would be inside wight or inside left, stupid."

"I am willing to take the inside right, if it is left to me."

"Eh! If it is wight, it won't be left, you ass."

"I mean if it is left to me. However, I am quite willing to take the left wing, and that will be all right."

"I am afraid you are gettin' wathah mixed, Skimmy. In any case, I sha'n't play you in the second eleven. When I waise a team to play Colney Hatch or Bwoodmoor, I will give you a place with pleasure—as centre-back, half-forward, or three-quarth goalkeeper. But until then you can stick to Determinism."

"Really, D'Arcy—"

But D'Arcy marched on.

Skimpole blinked after him through his glasses, and shook his head sadly.

"Dear me," he murmured, "this is really shocking! I cannot attribute D'Arcy's conduct to personal jealousy—it is above that. My doubts as to his sanity are strengthened. How sad—how very sad—his brain seems quite gone."

And Skimpole shook his head again.

CHAPTER 10.

Recruiting.

"GOAH, deah boy!"

Gore of the Shell looked round. He was standing on the School House steps, apparently waiting for something or somebody, when Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came up.

"Hallo!" he said.

Arthur Augustus wasn't on particularly good terms with Gore. The fellow who had always been called the cad of the Shell was certainly much improved lately. D'Arcy, however, though he never bore malice, could not forget caddish actions in a hurry. Still, he was ready to "tolerate" Gore, as he expressed it; and as he caught sight of the big Shell fellow, it struck him that he would make an excellent recruit, for D'Arcy's eleven. Gore had lately taken very kindly to football.

"Goah, deah boy, I'm goin' to make you an offah."

"Good," said Gore, with a grin. "If it's a fiver, I'll take it. If it's a gold watch, I'll think about it. If it's one of your tenor solos, you can keep it."

"Weally, Goah—"

"Have you seen Tom Merry?"

"He was in the quad some time ago, Goah."

"I'm waiting for him," said Gore. "I want to speak to him. What is it you've got on your mind, though? You can go ahead."

"You've heard that I'm waisin' a second eleven to take Gore chuckled.

to Highcliffe."

"I think the whole school has," he remarked.

"Vewy good. Will you join it?"

"Join what—the eleven?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"What for?"

"To play Highcliffe, of course."

"Ask me again on the fifth of November," said Gore. "Hallo, here's Tom Merry! Merry, I say, Merry, I want to speak to you."

"Weally, Goah—"

"Merry! I say, Tom Merry!"

"Hallo!" said Tom Merry, halting by the School House steps. "What's the trouble?"

Gore descended the steps.

"I want you to put me down as a reserve for the Grammar School match," he said. "I hear you will be making some minor changes in the team after playing the Grammarians before going over to Highcliffe. Do you think I'm good enough?"

It was very different from Gore's old way of talking to Tom Merry. The hero of the Shell nodded with a smile.

"Certainly," he said. "We have four good reserves—Reilly, Glyn, Pratt of the New House, and Macdonald. I'll put you down too. I may make five changes, though I expect there will be only two or three. It's according to how the Grammar School match works out. I'll do my best for you."

"Thanks."

And Tom Merry strolled on in one direction, and Gore in another. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy looked after them alternately, and his very eyeglass seemed to glitter with indignation. Tom Merry suddenly turned back.

"Gussy, old man."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"We're going to practise together shortly, the whole team. Are you in the team for the Grammar School, or are you out of it?"

"I have informed you, Tom Mewwy, that I am captainin' a new team to meet Highcliffe, and therefore shall not be able to play in the Gwammawian match."

"You've fully decided?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Very good."

And Tom Merry walked away whistling.

Arthur Augustus remained on the School House steps thinking deeply. He would have been glad of both Glyn and Gore in his famous eleven, but they were evidently not to be had. The time was short, and he had not secured a single recruit so far for the new team.

Pensonby, of Highcliffe, was coming over to visit St. Jim's on Friday evening, and D'Arcy wanted to have his team in readiness then for the Highcliffe skipper to see. At present, however, the team consisted wholly and solely of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Mellish came up the steps, and D'Arcy signed to him to stop. Mellish wasn't much of a footballer; but if he would join, it would be a beginning, and others might follow his example.

"Mellish, deah boy, I want to speak to you."

Mellish grinned.

"How many have you got so far?" he asked.

"Eh?"

"I'm not joining any amateur teams, thank you."

"Weally, Mellish—"

"I'll tell you what, though," said Mellish. "If you like to stand a big feed, you could get the fellows to join, especially if you promise them another after the match."

"Bai Jove!"

"I'd join myself on those terms."

"I should not like the fellows to back me up from bare motives like that," said Arthur Augustus, with a great deal of dignity.

Mellish shrugged his shoulders.

"Then I fancy you won't get a team," he said.

"Of course, I should wish to treat my men generously," said D'Arcy. "There's weally nothin' mean about me, you know."

"Now you're talking," said Mellish heartily.

"I should be most happy to meet the fellows over a decent feed, and talk the mattah ovah with them," said Arthur Augustus. "It would be a pwopah and suitable occasion for a discuss."

"Good!"

"Pewwaps you would be good enough to help me wewuit on those terms, Mellish."

"Yes, rather. A feed when we meet, and a specially big one after the match, whether we win or not."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Good. You could get half the Fourth Form to join on those terms, to say nothing of the Shell," said Mellish heartily. "Suppose you go and see to the grub. It will take

some time. I'll speak to the fellows. I'll guarantee that after afternoon school we'll have a mass meeting—say, in the woodshed."

"Vewy good."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy felt in his pockets for the latest fiver from his "governah," and strolled away towards the school shop. A fat Fourth-Former saw him go in, and followed in his footsteps.

"Going to try the new tarts, D'Arcy?" asked Fatty Wynn cordially. "They're prime! I've had some, but I'm getting stony. They're very nice."

"I'm not goin' to twy them, Wynn."

"The plum cake, I suppose? It's very good."

"Not at all."

"Then what on earth do you want in here, any way?" demanded Fatty Wynn indignantly.

"I'm goin' to lay in a supply for a feed."

The New House Falstaff's eyes glistened.

"Jolly good! A sort of general feed, I suppose—all the chaps invited?"

"Nothin' of the sort. I'm standin' a feed to my team."

"Your—your what?"

"I'm meetin' my team after school in the woodshed, and I'm standin' them a feed," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "No othahs will be admitted. Of course, if you wished to wesign fwom Tom Mowwy's eleven, and join mine, I should be vewy pleased to welcome you and any friends you cared to bring."

"Oh, I see! Couldn't you invite me as an honorary member?" suggested Fatty Wynn anxiously.

"Honoway membahs are not allowed."

"Of course, I'd be glad to play for you if I could," said the New House junior. "But you see, I'm in the junior eleven, and they want me to keep goal."

"Then I am afraid I cannot ask you to the feed. Yaas, Mrs. Taggles, you can send in fifty of the cream puffs."

Fatty Wynn's eyes almost started from his head.

"Fifty cream puffs!" he murmured. "Fifty cream puffs! My only hat! Fifty—fifty cream puffs! This is something like! Fifty!"

"And two dozen lemonade, and two dozen of gingah-beer, please, Mrs. Taggles."

"My hat!"

"And a couple of those vewy big plum cakes."

"Great Scott!"

"And two dozen pork pies, and two dozen ham patties. And plenty of tongue."

"Phew!"

"A dozen whole pineapples—"

Fatty Wynn's mouth watered.

"A canister of biscuits, mixed, and fifty tarts."

"D'Arcy! I say, D'Arcy, old man, I'm going to join your team."

D'Arcy turned his eyeglass upon Fatty Wynn.

"I should be vewy pleased to have you keep goal for me, deah boy, against the Highcliffe fellows," he said. "If you weally intend to join the D'Arcy Eleven, pway turn up at the meetin' in the woodshed at a quartah to five. The feed will be wendy."

"You see—"

"I'm standing a weally big feed after the match, on Saturday," said Arthur Augustus. "This is only a sort of pweliminawy cantah, you know. Yaas, Mrs. Taggles, you may put in six pounds of ham, and six pounds of cold beef, and as much wolls and fwesh buttah as you like. The deah boys will want somethin' solid to lay a foundation."

"That's what I always say," said Fatty Wynn eagerly. "It's always best to lay a solid foundation. I always said so."

"Six pots of stwawbewwy jam, too, and three of wasp-bewwy."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"And fifty of those nice wipe pears—"

"I—I say, D'Arcy, wouldn't it be a good idea to have a bit of a snack now, and not wait till after school?"

"Certainly not, deah boy."

"You see, I—I may have some difficulty with Figgins about resigning from Tom Merry's eleven," said Fatty Wynn, with a look of distress. "Of course, I shall do the best I can, but if they won't let me go—"

"You must take your choice, of course, deah boy. Only membahs of the D'Arcy Eleven are admitted to the woodshed. I expect quite a crowd; I shall easily fill up the eleven, and put down a dozen names as weserves."

"Ye-es, I should think so, with a feed like that. I—I—I'll run off and speak to Figgins now, I think."

"Vewy good, deah boy."

Fatty Wynn made a movement towards the door, and then turned back. There was doubt and distress in his plump face.

"I—I say, D'Arcy, suppose Figgins won't agree to my leaving the team?"

"And six dozen marmalade tarts, Mrs. Taggles."

"Yes, Master D'Arcy."

"I—I say, Gussy, suppose Figgins won't—"

"Eh? In that case, deah boy, I should advise you to administrah a feafhul thwashin'," said D'Arcy. "Put in twenty wipe owanges, Mrs. Taggles."

"But—but Figgins may—may—"

"If he cuts up wusty, deah boy, give him a feafhul thwashin'. I think that's about all, Mrs. Taggles, thank you."

Fatty Wynn took a good look at the mountain of excellent things piling up on the counter of the little tuckshop, and then rushed forth, with determination in his heart, in quest of Figgins.

CHAPTER 11.

Fatty Wynn Changes His Mind.

"FIGGINS!"

"Figg!"

"Figgins! Figgins! Figgins!"

It was a voice heard in the New House—even the voice of Fatty Wynn, calling upon the name of his long-limbed chum.

"Figgins! Figgins! Figg! Figg!"

But the voice of Figgins answered not. Figgins was deaf to the calling.

"Figgins! Figgins!"

Fatty Wynn looked into the common-room. He went to the study, and found that Figgins was not there. The passages were drawn blank. But in the hall Fatty Wynn ran into Kerr, and he grasped the Scottish junior by the shoulder.

"Kerr! I say, Kerr!"

"Hallo!" ejaculated Kerr. "What on earth's the matter?"

"Where's Figgins?"

"In the gym, with Tom Merry, practising a new kick. What's the matter?"

"Nothing!"

Fatty Wynn was rushing off, when Kerr caught him by the shoulder and swung him round and back again. Fatty's weight was great, and the swing brought him spinning round Kerr, and Kerr let go, and Fatty Wynn went on spinning like a humming-top, till he crashed upon the wall and slid down to a sitting position.

There, gasping for breath, he stared dazedly at Kerr.

"What the—what the dickens!" gasped Fatty Wynn.

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Kerr.

"You—you—"

"I only wanted to speak to you," grinned Kerr. "I didn't know you were going to do this ballet dancing trick."

"You—you idiot—"

"Let me help you up," said Kerr consolingly, grasping Fatty Wynn by the collar, and dragging him up. "You're all right. What do you want Figgins for?"

"To speak to him, idiot!"

"But what's on? What's the excitement about?"

"I shan't be able to play on Saturday, that's all, and I want to tell Figgins."

Kerr gave a jump.

"Not play Saturday! Off your rocker?"

"No," gasped Fatty Wynn. "But I think you must be to send a chap spinning like that. You've knocked all the breath out of me."

"But what are you doing to-morrow, then?"

"Playing in D'Arcy's eleven."

"What!" yelled Kerr.

But Fatty Wynn was darting out of the House, seeking Figgins. Kerr gave one long whistle of astonishment, and followed him.

"Playing in Gussy's eleven—eh?" said Kerr. "We'll see, you duffer. We'll see, you fearful ass. I suppose there's a feed at the bottom of it. Wynn! Stop! Stop!"

But the fat Fourth-Former did not stop.

Plump as he was, Fatty Wynn had a good turn of speed, and he covered the ground quickly, and he burst into the gym, at top speed.

Figgins and Tom Merry and Blake were there, kicking a football to hit a certain spot marked on the wall of the gym, for practice.

The ball had hit the mark, from Figgins's foot, as Fatty Wynn came in, and it bounced back, Tom Merry catching it.

"Good!" said Tom. "I always said you were a good kick, Figg. We'll make the Highcliffe dandies look sick on Saturday."

"What-ho!" said Blake emphatically.

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NEXT
THURSDAY:

"SKIMPOLE THE THIRD."

By
MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"I say, Figgins—"
 "Hallo, Fatty! You're just the chap we want!" said Figgins, as he sighted the New House junior goalkeeper. "Come and stand against the wall here, and see if you can stop this ball. I'm going to pelt you."

"I—I want to speak to you."
 "Go ahead!" said Figgins tersely.
 "It's about the match to-morrow."
 The three juniors looked anxious at once.
 "Don't say you're not fit!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "We could play Glyn in goal, but he isn't a patch on you. You're all right, Fatty!"
 "Keep off the grub for a bit, and you'll be as right as rain!" exclaimed Blake, with an encouraging dig in Fatty's ribs which made the plump junior gasp again.

"Look here, Blake—"
 "He was all right half an hour ago, and talking about the match, and the licking we were going to give the Grammarians!" exclaimed Figgins. "What's the matter, Fatty?"

"I'm sorry I sha'n't be able to play the Grammar School."

"What!"
 "Rot!"
 "Bosh!"
 "It's a fact, Figgy. I'm sorry, but I think you'd better play Glyn as goalkeeper," said Fatty Wynn. "I thought I ought to tell you at once."

"But why?" howled Figgins. "You're not ill."

"N-n-no. I'm not ill."
 "Then what is it?"
 "I—I—I've got another engagement."
 "You—you've got the cheek to tell us you've got another engagement, and can't goal for a junior match!" exclaimed Tom Merry, scarcely able to believe his ears.

"Yes. You see—"
 Kerr came into the gym. The three juniors stared at him inquiringly.

"Do you know anything about this, Kerr?" Figgins demanded. "Fatty says he can't keep goal against the Grammarians."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "What are you cackling at?" demanded Tom Merry wrathfully. "This isn't a laughing matter. What's the matter with Wynn?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "What the—"

"You see, he's going to play for Gussy."
 "Gussy!" howled Tom Merry, Blake, and Figgins together.

"Yes."
 "You see, I've been asked by D'Arcy, and I thought I ought to strengthen his team for him," said Fatty Wynn apologetically. "I—I've got a lot of sincere friendship for Gussy, you know. You all admit that he's one of the best."

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Kerr.
 "What are you sniggering at?" demanded Figgins, exasperated. "And what do you mean by this sudden friendship for Gussy, you fat oyster?"

"Look here, Figgins—"
 "You're not going to play for Gussy's guy eleven; you're going to play for St. Jim's juniors. What's your little game?"

"Well, D'Arcy's an awfully decent sort. I like him."
 "Especially when he's standing feeds!" shrieked Kerr.
 "What!"

"Gussy's standing big feeds to everybody who joins his eleven!" yelled Kerr. "You see, that's where Fatty comes out strong. He's going to play for Gussy for the sake of the jam tarts. He'd play for Germany for a German sausage, or for Egypt for the fleshpots. He's thinking of the grub."

"Look here, Kerr—"
 "So that's it," said Figgins wrathfully. "That's it, is it? You—you porpoise! You're going to leave the school in the lurch, and sell your blessed birthright for a mess of pottage, are you?"

"It isn't a mess of pottage!" said Fatty Wynn indignantly. "It's about the most stunning feed that's ever been stood at St. Jim's."

"You—you oyster—"
 "It won't be leaving the school in the lurch, either. If I play Highcliffe for Gussy, that's playing for St. Jim's, ain't it?"

"This isn't a case for argument," said Figgins, getting between his plump chum and the door. "This is a case for persuasion. Collar him!"

"Oh! Look here—"
 "Collar the blessed grub-destroyer!"
 Fatty Wynn made a rush for the door, but Figgins intercepted him.

In a moment he was in the grasp of four strong pairs of hands.

"Quiet, now."
 "Look here—"
 "Are you going to play for Gussy?"
 "Yes," said Fatty Wynn defiantly.
 "Good! Bring him out under the pump!"
 "Ha, ha! Good egg!"
 "What—how—why—leggo! Oh! Ow! Yow! Leggo! Groo!"

"Bring him along."
 "Ha, ha, ha! Shove him!"
 "Leggo! I—I—"
 "Here you are!"

Fatty Wynn was hustled at amazing speed to the pump behind the gym. Figgins let go him, and seized the handle of the pump.

He began to work it up and down, and there was a gush of water. Fatty Wynn eyed the flowing stream with great alarm.

"Look here, you chaps—"
 "Shove him under!"
 "Ow! Ow! Oh!"
 "Now, then," said Figgins, with a firm grasp on the handle of the pump. "Will you promise, honour bright, not to play for Gussy to-morrow?"

"No!" roared Fatty Wynn.
 Creak—grind—gush!
 A flood of water descended upon the writhing junior.

"Oh! Groo! Yaroo!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Are you going to play for Gussy, Fatty?"

"Ow! Yes! No! No!"
 "Honour bright?"
 "All right!" gasped Fatty. "Don't be an idiot. Keep that thing still."

"You're going to play for us?"
 "Groo! Ow! Yes."
 "Honour bright?"
 "Yes."
 "Good!"

Figgins let go the handle of the pump. Fatty Wynn, running with water, shivered and gasped and gaped.

Figgins shook a warning forefinger at him.
 "Now, let that be a lesson to you, Fatty!" he exclaimed severely. "Don't think so much of grub in future. We've let you off lightly, because we want you to be in good form for the match. Buzz off!"

And Fatty Wynn buzzed off, to change his clothes. He was wet to the skin. He met D'Arcy as he crossed the quadrangle.

The swell of St. Jim's put up his eyeglass, and stared at him in blank amazement.

"Bai Jove! You look wet, Wynn, deah boy!"
 "I am wet," grunted Fatty Wynn.

"Yaas, wathah, you certainly are wet! You had bettah change your garments, deah boy, or you will catch cold and not be fit to play in my eleven to-morrow."

"I'm not playing in your eleven."
 "Eh?"
 "I've promised Figgins to stick to him."

"Weally, Wynn—"
 "Br-r-r!"
 And Fatty Wynn buzzed off, to change his clothes. He leaving Arthur Augustus D'Arcy staring after him through his eyeglass.

CHAPTER 12.

D'Arcy's Eleven.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY had counted upon Fatty Wynn for his goalkeeper, but the defection of the fat Fourth-Former did not weigh on his mind. He felt that he would have plenty of other recruits. In fact, before afternoon-school a great many juniors had come up to him with the announcement that they were willing to play in his eleven.

During school in the afternoon, too, a number of notes were passed along the desks, addressed to D'Arcy, with the information that the writers were anxious to attend the meeting in the woodshed, and that they were very willing to join the new eleven.

Arthur Augustus's bosom swelled with pride. He had often felt that he was a born leader of his fellows, and here was his secret conviction being borne out at last by proofs.

It really seemed that he had only to exert his natural genius for command, to take the leadership of the juniors away from Tom Merry and Blake and Figgins.

But Gussy would not do that.



Tom Merry and Blake stared at the dusty, dishevelled figure blankly. "My hat, Gussy!"

So long as he succeeded in raising an effective eleven to meet the Highcliffe team, he would be satisfied, and after a glorious victory he was prepared to retire modestly into the background again.

He was thinking more of his new eleven than of his work that afternoon, with the result that Mr. Lathom gave him fifty lines, and the German master fifty more.

But little cared the swell of the School House for lines.

He had already received the names of twelve adherents, and Mellish had whispered to him that there were a crowd more all ready to join.

Eagerly D'Arcy waited for the hour of dismissal to come; and even more eagerly his followers waited.

D'Arcy was anticipating forming his eleven, and getting them some combined practice in the gym, under his own masterly leadership; and the recruits were anticipating a feed in the woodshed, which was much more important in their eyes.

As it was necessary, as a preliminary, to beat Tom Merry's team, before they would be allowed the responsibility of meeting the Highcliffians, the recruits took the football part of the matter more or less as a joke; but the feed was a serious business enough. They were all ready to take that seriously.

When the welcome dismissal came at last, D'Arcy was the richer by a hundred lines, but he did not give the circumstance even a thought.

He hurried out of the class-room, and Blake & Co. watched with a grin how his followers gathered loyally round him—prepared to march anywhere under his leadership, especially to the woodshed.

Arthur Augustus adjusted his eyeglass to his satisfaction, and glanced over the gathering crowd of juniors.

"I think we're all here, deah boys," he remarked.

"Yes, here we are," said Mellish.

"Pway follow me."

"What-ho!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Good!"

Arthur Augustus walked on with stately steps, putting on his silk hat as he went, and the recruits for the D'Arcy eleven followed him.

Blake nudged him in the ribs as he passed.

"All are welcome, I suppose?" he asked affably.

D'Arcy shook his head.

"I am sowwy to say no, Blake," he replied. "On the

present occasion, I am entertainin' only the membahs of my eleven."

"Is that the kind of arithmetic you learn in the Fourth Form?" asked Tom Merry. "You've got twenty chaps in your eleven."

"The west are weserves, of course."

"Of course, it's a joke about other fellows not being admitted," said Lowther.

"Not at all, deah boy. I am quite sewious." D'Arcy turned his eyeglass upon the grinning footballers of the junior eleven. "If any of you fellows like to play in my team instead of Tom Mewwy's, you can come along."

"Rats!"

"Vewy well. By the way, you wemembah your pwomise to withdraw your objection to my team playin' Highcliffe, if—"

"If your team licks mine," said Tom Merry, laughing.

"Exactly."

"Well, you haven't much time," said Tom Merry. "It's too late for a match to-day, and to-morrow's Saturday, and we're too busy to-morrow."

"Better ask the Head to let us off morning-school to-morrow," suggested Blake. "He would be sure to do it if Gussy asked him."

"Pway don't be fwivclous, Blake. I was thinkin' that we might play in the gym. We should have plenty of woom there, and it would be all wight for puttin' the match to the test, at all events."

"Oh, I don't mind," said Tom. "A little practice in the gym. will do us no harm."

"Vewy well. We'll meet you at seven."

"Good."

"Ponsonby is comin' ovah fwom Highcliffe, you know, to settle about those new awwngements, and he can see the match. It will amuse him."

"My hat! It will—if he has any sense of humour," grinned Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy gave Lowther a glance of disdain, and marched off with his followers, who were showing signs of impatience. That impatience, however, was by no means displeasing to Arthur Augustus. It showed that they were keen, he thought. So they were—about the feed in the woodshed.

They marched straight to the woodshed. D'Arcy took out his watch.

"The gwub will be here in five minutes, deah boys," he remarked. "I ordered it to be delivered after we had awvied, in case any of the wottahs should waid it."

"Good biz!"

"Awfully thoughtful of you, Gussy," exclaimed Kerruish. "Hallo, here's one of the bounders hanging round the door now."

Fatty Wynn was looking in round the corner of the door. The juniors were lighting candles, stuck in bottles, for the interior of the woodshed was very dusky.

Fatty Wynn's expression was quite pathetic.

"Wynn! What do you want?" asked D'Arcy.

"No need to ask him what he wants," chuckled Mellish.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I thought I'd just give you a look in," said Fatty Wynn, with a sickly smile. "If you had any cooking or anything to do, I'd lend a hand."

"There won't be any cookin', deah boy."

"You see," went on Fatty Wynn, "I wanted to keep goal for you. They put me under the pump, and made me promise not to."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! That was awfully wuff!"

"Keep goal for us all the same," said Mellish.

D'Arcy frowned.

"Weally, Mellish, I twust you will not tempt Wynn to wweak a pwomise," he said. "I should wegard Wynn as a cad if he played for me aftah pwomisin' not to. But come in, deah boy; we'll take the will for the deed, you know, and we'll be very glad of your company."

Fatty Wynn came in with great alacrity.

"Hallo, here's the grub!"

Taggles the porter came in with a large box on his shoulder. Taggles was looking amiable for once. The school shop was kept by Dame Taggles, and Taggles the porter was suspected of expending a certain amount of the profits on gin and water. Hence a good customer to the tuckshop was agreeable to Taggles. However, he grunted as he put the box down.

"It's eavy!" he remarked.

"Yaas, wathah! Open the box, deah boys."

D'Arcy slipped a shilling into Taggles's horny hand, and the school porter departed.

The recruits opened the box willingly and readily enough. The array of good things within made every mouth water. It was close upon tea time, and the juniors had a whole THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 102.

afternoon's hunger stored up, as it were, and ready to be let loose on the contents of the box.

"By Jove!" said Mellish. "This is good! I think D'Arcy is about the best football captain the Fourth Form could possibly have."

"Or the Shell either!" said French.

"What ho!" said Kerruish. "This is ripping! My only hat! There's enough to cut and come again, and no mistake. Now, then, Wynn, easy with the tarts!"

"Pway go ahead, deah boys!"

The dear boys accepted the invitation.

They went ahead.

D'Arcy had certainly not done things by halves in laying in the provisions for that memorable feed. There was enough for everyone—even for Fatty Wynn—in fact, too much! In a few moments there was only one sound heard in the shed—the steady munching of active jaws.

CHAPTER 13.

A Great Feed.

"GOOD!"

"Ripping!"

"Pass the tarts!"

"Shove the patties over this way!"

"Jelly for me—try the jelly!"

"These pineapples are ripping!"

"Spiffing!"

"First chop!"

Such were the remarks that punctuated the silence of the woodshed, as the juniors began to find time for talk.

Arthur Augustus surveyed the scene with beaming smiles. He ate very little himself. He was not a great eater. But the others did enough for him. Fatty Wynn, especially, distinguished himself. Large as the supply was, it showed a considerable diminution in the course of ten minutes.

"I twust you find ewevythn' to your satisfaction, deah boys," said D'Arcy.

"Yes, rather!"

"What ho!"

"Absolutely ripping!"

"Vewy good! Now about the football—"

"By George, yes; I'd forgotten the football!" said Kerruish, with frankness. "You were saying something about a second eleven, or something, weren't you?"

D'Arcy jammed his monocle into his eye, and gave Kerruish a look which certainly ought to have withered him up. But Kerruish was exploring the mysteries of a pork pie, and did not even see it.

"Weally, Kewwuish—"

"This is a ripping pie!"

"About the football, deah boys, I am goin' to form up the eleven aftah the feed, and we are goin' to play Tom Mewwy's eleven in the gym, at seven."

"Good! Beef this way."

"And ham!"

"Tart! Tarts! Tarts!"

"I twust that we shall form a weally wippin' eleven, and give Tom Mewwy's team a feahful thwashin'," said Arthur Augustus.

"Yes, rather! Pass the pineapples."

"It is uttah wot to say that there is no matewial in the form to make up a team vewy nearly as good as the regular juniah team—"

"Ham this way—and beef."

"Butter!"

"Cake!"

"Pway listen to me, deah boys—"

"Certainly. I was asking you for cake, Mellish."

"Here you are! I'll try those puffs, I think."

"They're ripping, and there's plenty of them. Were you speaking, D'Arcy?"

"Yaas, wathah, Hancock, I certainly was speakin'! I was goin' to say that, though the new eleven would not be quite up to the form of Tom Mewwy's team, still with me as skippah I think things will turn out all wight."

"Ha, ha!—I mean, yes, of course!"

"When you have finished the feed, I will allot the places in the eleven," said D'Arcy. "All those who cannot get places will be kept on as wesewes."

"I hear there's to be another feed after every match."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I suppose the reserves join in it, as well as the players."

"Oh, yaas!"

"Pray don't be so particular on those points, young Yates," said Mellish, with a shake of the head, "you'll make D'Arcy think that we're thinking more of the feed than of the football."

"Oh, no!" said Yates, shaking his head in his turn. "I'm sure D'Arcy would not think anything of the sort of us."

"He knows how keen we are," said Kerruish.

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy, in the innocence of his heart. "I know I can wely on you chaps to back me up like anythin'."

"Ha, ha! Rather!"

"When you have finished—"

"Well, I think I'm done," said Mellish.

"Yes," said Hancock, with a sigh. "These things can't go on for ever—except with a chap like Fatty Wynn. He won't be done while there's anything left, I suppose."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus rose to his feet.

"Now, jump up, deah boys, and we'll awwange about the team."

The juniors showed no great alacrity in jumping up. However, they rose slowly, one by one, to their feet.

"Now, I think I shall wely upon you to keep goal, Kewwuish."

The Manx lad shook his head.

"Really, D'Arcy, you're awfully good, but I'm a bit out of practice. I don't want to shove myself forward in any way. I think, perhaps, it would be safer to have me in the reserves."

"Vewy well; you ought to know," said D'Arcy. "Pway stand aside."

Kerruish sat down on a bench, and grinned. As a matter of fact, the juniors were all keen to get into Tom Merry's eleven; but when it came to D'Arcy's eleven, they were equally keen to get into the reserves.

"You will be inside-left, Smith."

Smith shook his head.

"I will if you think so, D'Arcy; but I think I should be better in the reserves. You see, I don't want to put a better man out."

"Vewy well, go aside with Kewwuish."

Smith minor sat down beside the Manx junior. They grinned at one another.

"You will be centah-half, Mellish."

"Put a bit out of condition," said Mellish. "I really think I ought to be in the reserves. I shouldn't like to let the side down, you know."

"Oh, vewy well!"

Mellish joined the reserves. D'Arcy's eyeglass glimmered over the grinning juniors, and rested upon Hancock.

"Hancock, deah boy, I shall put you down as outside-wight."

Hancock looked alarmed.

"I say, D'Arcy, I hardly think I'm up to that," he exclaimed anxiously. "I think you had better take me on as a reserve."

"Weally, Hancock—"

"You see, it would be very painful to my feelings to think that perhaps I was keeping some better player in the back-ground," explained Hancock.

"Oh, all wight! Perkins, I shall make you outside-wight."

"Better make me a reserve," said Perkins, shaking his head. "I want to play, ever so much, of course, but am I quite up to it, do you think?"

"But I can't make you all weserves," said D'Arcy, with a puzzled look. "A football team can't consist wholly of weserves, you know. There must be eleven playahs."

"Yes, that's unfortunate," said Yates.

"I know I'm jolly well not going to be one of them," murmured Mellish, slipping out of the woodshed, "I'd rather risk missing the next feed."

"Mellish! Mellish!"

But Mellish seemed to be deaf.

"Pway don't leave the meetin' till the mattah is settled, deah boys!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, looking a little anxious. "You see, it's an awfully important mattah, because I have awwanged to meet Tom Mewwy's team in the gym at seven o'clock, and Ponsonby, of Highcliffe, will be lookin' on."

"Perhaps it would be better to postpone the whole matter," suggested Smith minor.

"Yes, a good idea," corroborated several voices.

"Weally, deah boys—"

"In a few weeks' time, you see, D'Arcy—"

"We have to play Highcliffe to-morrow, deah boys. I shall now proceed to select the teams, and I trust you will not bothah your captain by any more false modesty," said the swell of the School House, with great dignity.

And D'Arcy proceeded to make his selection. The elegant junior could be firm when he liked. He picked out ten fellows for the team, and the rest breathed great sighs of relief when they found that they were to be only reserves.

The members of the team exchanged rueful glances.

After the feed, and with the prospect of more to come, they could not for very shame's sake refuse to keep to their bargain. But they were not happy.

Fatty Wynn rose to his feet.

"Thanks, awfully, Gussy!" he said. "I've enjoyed it immensely. I'll put some of this cake in my pocket, if you don't mind, and some of the apples and tarts. Thanks! Good-bye!"

And Fatty Wynn departed in a more contented frame of mind than any of D'Arcy's eleven.

CHAPTER 14.

D'Arcy's Team Does Not Win.

TOM MERRY looked round the gym.

There was a smile upon the face of the hero of the Shell.

It was close upon seven o'clock, and he was expecting D'Arcy to turn up with his eleven any minute now.

Tom Merry had been doing the honours of St. Jim's for a visitor.

It was Ponsonby, of the Fourth Form at Highcliffe—the Upper Fourth. He was the same age as Tom Merry, and a little taller and slimmer. He had a languid air, which reminded one of Arthur Augustus; but a good look at Ponsonby revealed the fact that he had not, as D'Arcy had, the sterling stuff under his outward graces.

Ponsonby evidently had an excellent opinion of himself, but it was probable that he shared it with no one.

"So this is the gym," said Ponsonby.

"Yes," said Tom Merry. "There will be something worth seeing in here soon. We've got an indoor football match going."

"Really?" said Ponsonby.

"Yes. If you care to see it, you'll have time before you have to get back to Highcliffe," said Tom Merry.

"I should like to see it, awf'ly," said the Highcliffe fellow. "I haven't seen any of you chaps play footer."

"This will be something extra special," said Monty Lowther solemnly. "It will give you an idea of what we shall show you to-morrow."

"Really!"

"I think we've made all arrangements about the match to-morrow," Tom Merry remarked thoughtfully. "It's understood that we get over to Highcliffe at three-fifteen."

"And we'll be quite ready to kick-off," said Ponsonby. "But really, you know, you'd do better to scratch the match."

"Not at all!"

"It will be a hopeless licking for you!"

"We shall wriggle a bit at first, though, I suppose," Manners remarked sarcastically.

"Really, you know—"

"Here they are!" shouted Blake. "Here's the new eleven!"

They all glanced towards the door. Tom Merry and his men were all in football garb, ready, and the ground—somewhat reduced, of course—had been marked out with chalk lines on the floor of the gym.

D'Arcy and his merry men marched in, also clad for football.

The swell of St. Jim's had his monocle in his eye, of course. He spotted Ponsonby, and came over towards him.

"How d'ye do, deah boy?" he said languidly. "Glad to see you! I'm weady for the match, Tom Mewwy, if you are."

"Quite weady!" said Tom Merry, laughing.

"Pway twot out your men, then! I suppose Ponsonby is goin' to see the match?"

"Really, yes," said Ponsonby.

"Vewy good! You will see somethin' of what you have to expect to-morrow," said D'Arcy. "Pway who is goin' to wefewe, Mewwy?"

"Lefevre, of the Fifth, says he will."

"That's right," said Lefevre, coming up; "I'll do it for you. That's what I say. I don't mind if I do."

"Thank you vewy much, Lefevre!"

Tom Merry and D'Arcy solemnly tossed up for choice of ends. Tom Merry won, and awarded the kick-off to his elegant rival.

The elevens ranged up. Tom Merry's eleven looked decidedly businesslike, though they all had smiling faces. D'Arcy's eleven seemed somewhat uneasy. Some of them looked at the door of the gym, as though they would have liked to bolt.

Lefevre blew the whistle, and D'Arcy kicked off.

"On the ball!" sang out Blake.

Arthur Augustus followed up the ball gallantly. There was a rush of Tom Merry's team, and the swell of St. Jim's was surrounded. His backers were sent whirling in all directions.

Smith minor sat down, and Robinson sat on him. Grey fell across both of them. Yates caught hold of another fellow round the neck, and clung to him. Arthur Augustus was shifted off the ball in a twinkling.

Tom Merry rushed it goalward.

The fellows standing about the walls of the gym. shrieked with laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha! Goal!"

"Goal! Ha, ha!"

"My only hat!" gasped Lefevre, of the Fifth. "What blessed sort of a match is this I'm refereeing?"

Tom Merry had sent the ball in with an effort.

Hancock had not been able to stop him. Indeed Hancock did not know the ball was coming till it was in the net.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Goal! Goal!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Really," said Ponsonby. "Is this what you call football at St. Jim's?"

Tom Merry overheard the remark.

A gleam of fun came into the eyes of the hero of the Shell.

He spoke in a low voice to his followers as they lined up after the goal.

"Gussy's duffers can't touch us kids! Keep a goal ahead so that they will be licked, and otherwise play the giddy goat. Ponsonby wants to take back a funny account to Highcliffe! Let him! We'll undeceive them on their own ground to-morrow."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good wheeze!" grinned Figgins.

"What-ho!" agreed Blake.

And the juniors proceeded to "play the giddy goat."

D'Arcy's eleven could have been swept off the floor in a few minutes if Tom Merry & Co. had wanted to do it.

It was not that they were particularly bad players. They were all right in their way, but the official junior team naturally included all the best players in the lower Forms, and what were left were naturally nowhere up to their form.

Besides that, they knew they had no chance, and that alone was enough to take away any wild hope they might have entertained of victory, and to make them fumble the game.

Moreover, they were not in good training, and Tom Merry's eleven were trained to the very highest pitch.

Naturally, the beginners were walked over.

But Tom Merry had mercy upon them.

So long as they took no goals, he was willing to allow them to amble up and down the gym., and kick the ball in all sorts of impossible directions.

Which they proceeded to do!

The Merry players, too, performed all sorts of wild antics, falling over one another, skying the ball without rhyme or reason, getting into one another's way, and falling down with loud bumps, and so forth.

Ponsonby looked on with a curling lip.

It never crossed his mind for a single instant that he was being "rotted."

He took it all seriously.

And his politeness could hardly restrain him from audible expression of his scorn for the fumbling football of St. Jim's juniors.

This was the team he was to play on the morrow.

These were the fellows who had the astounding nerve to suppose that they could come over to Highcliffe and meet his team, after playing one match with the Grammar School in the afternoon.

It was astounding—unheard-of!

Ponsonby wondered whether he could scratch the match. It was really too humiliating to have to meet such players on the football-field.

If he did meet them, he mentally promised them such a licking as they would be a long time in recovering from.

The match did not last the full time.

Before the first half was over two-thirds of D'Arcy's eleven were on the sick-list, and the rest were staggering about like fellows in a dream.

Only one goal had been scored, the goal taken by Tom Merry in the first few minutes of the match.

At half-time Lefevre was not visible. He was disgusted with the display of the players, and he walked off and left them to themselves.

D'Arcy was quite keen to go on, but even D'Arcy could not fail to see that his followers were more fit to go to bed than to go on playing.

"I resign the match, Tom Mewwy," he said. "I am wathah afwaid that my men are no good, you know. It's no good goin' on."

Tom Merry laughed.

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"Just as you like, Gussy. We're enjoying this, and we'll play it out to a finish, if you like."

"Thank you vewy much; but, upon the whole, I think this will do."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Jack Blake.

"Weally, Blake, I see nothin' to cackle at! I have not had time to twain my men, you see; that is the weal explanation. If I had had time to twain them, it would have been all wight!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Howevah, under pwesent circs., it is evidently no good twain' to play Highcliffe to-morrow with a wotten team like this!"

"Go hon! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Upon the whole, I will take my place in the eleven, Tom Mewwy, and we will play the Highcliffe fellows after the Gwammah School, as owiginally awwanged," said D'Arcy, as he walked off the ground.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"Can't be did, Gussy!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"You see, I've given your place to Dane now. Unless Dane chooses to give it up, I can't possibly turn him out to make room for you again."

"Of course, Dane will be willin' to give it up."

"Of course Dane won't do anything of the sort!" said Clifton Dane cheerfully. "I'm in the eleven, and I'm stickin' in it, thank you!"

"Weally, Dane—"

"Dane will play the Grammar School," said Tom Merry decidedly; "but you shall take his place for the Highcliffe match, Gussy. I shall make several changes for the second match, and that will be one of them."

"I do not see how it would be consistent with my dig, to allow Dane to keep my place for the Gwammah School match, Tom Mewwy!"

"Well, as a matter of absolute fact, I wasn't thinking of your dig, but of the game," said Tom Merry cheerfully.

"Yaas, but you see—"

"I intended to play Dane for the first match, and one of the reserves in his place for the second. You can have the place for the Highcliffe match, if you like. It's a good offer, and you can take it or leave it."

"A fellow has to consider his dig, howevah. What do you think, Blake? Do you think I can accept Tom Mewwy's offah consistently with my dig?"

Blake nodded solemnly.

"Well, it's an important matter, and really requires thinking out," he remarked; "but, offhand, I should say that it would be all right."

"What do you say, Dig?"

"I fully endorse Blake's remarks on the subject."

"And you, Hewwies?"

"Eh?" said Herries.

"You are lookin' extremely thoughtful, deah boy," said D'Arcy, noticing the heavy frown on Herries' brow. "Have you thought it out?"

"Yes," said Herries.

"And what do you think?"

"I think it must be the fish."

"Eh, what? I fail to comprehend, Hewwies."

"I think it must be the fish. As for the rabbit, half of that was given to young Wally's mongrel, and he is all right after it. It must have been the fish."

"What on earth are you falkin' about, Hewwies?"

"Eh? Towser, of course!"

"Towsah!"

"Yes. He's been seedy to-day, you know. You asked me if I had thought it out," said Herries, in wonder. "I was just turning the matter over in my mind when you spoke."

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

"You uttah ass, Hewwies!" said D'Arcy. "I wasn't askin' you about the wotten health of a beastly bulldog! I asked you whethah I could accept Tom Mewwy's offah with wegard to the football match, consistently with my personal dig."

"Eh? Oh, blow your dig!" said Herries.

And he hurried away to see Towser. D'Arcy cast an expressive glance after him, and then looked round at the grinning faces of Tom Merry & Co.

"Upon the whole, deah boys, I think I will accept Tom Mewwy's offah," he said. "I will allow Dane to retain my cap for the Gwammah School match, and will play Highcliffe afthahwards. I am doin' this for the sake of the side."

"Good!" said Tom Merry. "Well, Ponsonby, did you find the play interesting?"

"Very," said Ponsonby. "I say, are you bent on playing us to-morrow?"

"Certainly!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh, vewy well! It's time I was off now, I think," said

the Higheliffe skipper, looking at his watch. "I'll get my bike."

And a few minutes later Ponsonby was pedalling home to Higheliffe, firmly convinced that the morrow's match with St. Jim's would be a farce, and that Tom Merry & Co. would be knocked sky high or higher.

CHAPTER 15

The Great Day.

SATURDAY afternoon was bright and keen and cold—an ideal day for football. The juniors of St. Jim's thought of little but the coming matches during the morning. Two football matches in one afternoon was a tall order, as Blake described it, but the junior team of St. Jim's were quite keen to undertake them. The real struggle would be with the Grammarians. If Frank Monk and his men were once safely beaten, they had little doubt about Ponsonby & Co. Though it was no light task to undertake playing even a weak team, directly after a struggle with a strong one.

Frank Monk had done everything he could to meet Tom Merry's wishes. He had agreed to get his team over to St. Jim's, instead of Tom Merry & Co. making the journey to the Grammar School. And he had said that he would get there as early as possible, and warned Tom to be ready for him. The St. Jim's footballers were ready the moment they had eaten their dinner, making a sparing meal on purpose. Fatty Wynn was consoled by the assurance that there would be ample opportunity for another feed in the train going to Higheliffe. Monk did very well, for at one o'clock the brake containing the Grammar School team rolled in at the gates of St. Jim's.

It was crammed with Grammar youths, eager for the tussle, and confident of victory—just as confident as the Saints were, in fact.

Tom Merry greeted his old enemy cordially, and no time was lost in making the preparations for the match.

Kildare of the Sixth, the captain of the school, having nothing particular on for the next hour, had consented to referee the match. This was an honour that the juniors could fully appreciate. A goodly number of fellows gathered round the ground to watch, and among them was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

D'Arcy, in spite of his elegant ways and his wonderful taste in ties and waistcoats, was a keen footballer, and he had always had a place in the junior eleven; and had deserved it. It was not very agreeable to the swell of St. Jim's to be a looker-on on this occasion. He turned the matter over in his mind, and then strolled up to the St. Jim's team, who were standing in a group waiting while the Grammarians changed.

"Dane, deah boy!"

Clifton Dane looked round with a grin. He knew what was coming.

"Hallo, Gussy!"

"I've been thinkin', Dane——"

"What with?" asked the Canadian, with an air of gentle interest.

"Eh? I fail to undahstand you, Dane. With my bwain, of course."

"Oh, I didn't know you had one!"

"Weally, Dane——"

"Well, I only judged by appearances, of course," said Dane.

D'Arcy allowed that remark to pass without comment.

"I've been thinkin', deah boy, that it's a bit wisky leavin' me out of the team for this match. Tom Mewwy gave you my cap for the eleven."

"Yes. Now, if he had given me your silk hat——"

"Pway don't be fwivolous. Undah the cires, Tom Mewwy would not feel justified in turnin' you out and puttin' me in again."

"Exactly!"

"Upon the whole, I shall not insist upon his doin' so."

"Thank you for nothing."

"Howevah, I've been thinkin', and it has occurred to me that you might pwefer to give up the place to me again, for the good of the side."

"Go hon!"

"You see, you take as much intewest in the honah and glowy of the school as I do, and you want us to beat the Gwammah boundahs, you know. Now the Gwammahs pointed it out to you, I twust you will see the pwopriety of yieldin' the point."

"Strange as it may seem, Gussy, I don't."

"Weally, Dane——"

"I'm freezin' on to this cap," said Clifton Dane, laughing. "But look here, I'll tell you what. I don't like you bein' left right out of it, so I'll tell you what you can do. You can look on, and cheer whenever I get a goal."

"Weally——"

"Hallo, they're ready!"

And Clifton Dane walked away, leaving D'Arcy shaking his head sadly. He walked back to his place, and found himself between Gore and Mellish, in the crowd. Gore looked at him with a grin.

"So you're not playing?" he remarked.

"No, I shall be playin' Higheliffe aftahwards, howevah."

"Good! I hope I shall have a chance, too," said Gore.

"It's according to how this match pans out. Reilly and Mac and Pratt are looking for chances, too."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Dane ought to have given up the place," said Mellish ingratiatingly. "It is caddish of him to keep it."

D'Arcy turned his eyeglass on Mellish. He did not even guess that the cad of the Fourth was trying to please him.

"Mellish, deah boy, did I hear you wemark that Dane was guilty of a caddish action?"

"Yes, I did."

"I twust you will withdaw that wemark, Mellish. I wegard Dane as bein' a peculiahly obstinate chap, and quite blind to weal facts, but he is incapable of anythin' caddish. Will you withdaw that wemark, Mellish, or wevire to a quiet spot with me, and weceive a feahful thwashin'!"

Mellish smiled a sickly smile.

"I'm waitin' for your ansawah, Mellish," said Arthur Augustus, in his most stately way.

"It's all right!" muttered Mellish.

"Does that mean that you withdaw your offensive wemark wespectin' my twiend?"

"Ye-es."

"Vewy good. You should get out of the habit of back-bitin' and detwactin' in this way, Mellish. It is wotten and weasally, and some day it will lead to your weceivin' a feahful thwashin' fwom somebody."

Mellish gritted his teeth and was silent.

"Hallo, Monk's won the toss," said Gore.

"And we're kicking off," said Hanececk.

"Good!"

"I don't know about being good," said Kerruish. "There's a pretty good bit of wind, and we're playing against it."

Phip!

It was the whistle.

The ball rolled from Tom Merry's foot, and in a moment more Saints and Grammarians were mingled in a keen tussle.

CHAPTER 16.

Honours Divided.

BWAVO!" So shouted Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, as a fine rush against the wind by the Saints finished in Figgins slamming the ball into the net.

"Goal!" roared the crowd.

"Hurray!"

"Bai Jove! Bwavo! Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus clapped his hands till his lavender gloves split.

There wasn't a trace of ill-feeling in the heart of the swell of St. Jim's. If he couldn't be kicking goals for St. Jim's himself, the next best thing was for somebody else to be kicking them, and he cheered and clapped with his whole heart.

It was first blood to St. Jim's.

But the Grammarians looked as if they meant business when they lined up again.

Kildare blew the whistle, and they kicked off, and were at it again, hammer and tongs.

If Ponsonby of Higheliffe had been present, he would have seen some football that would have made him open his eyes; something very different from the farcical display in the gym the previous evening.

St. Jim's juniors were playing up like a League team.

Tom Merry was a born leader, and he had trained his men splendidly, and they were in a condition of absolute fitness seldom attained by a junior team.

The Grammarians were in fine form, too; but, upon the whole, a keen observer would have said that they were outclassed by St. Jim's.

"Goal!"

It was a goal by Frank Monk, this time.

Then the whistle went for half-time, and the players retired for a brief rest, with the score level.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy strolled round during the interval. He gave Tom Merry a pat on the back, and Tom turned round and stared. He was digging a penknife into the side of a lemon, and he suspended that operation for a moment to stare at D'Arcy.

"Jolly good, Mewwy," said Arthur Augustus.

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"Eh?"

"You're playin' up well."

"Well, if you're not disappointed with us, Gussy, we haven't lived in vain," said Tom Merry solemnly. "You're sure you're satisfied."

"Yaas, upon the whole, pewhahs there is some slight improvement I could suggest. It could only be cawwed out by permish, of the Gwammah skippah and the wefewwee, howevah."

"Oh, go ahead. You know how valuable your suggestions are."

"Yaas, wathah! I was thinkin' that pewhahs Dane might pwefer to wretire now, and allow me to take his place for the second half."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I fail uttably to see any weason for wibald laughtah. It is a sewious mattah, I think, considewin' that it is an important match."

"My dear ass—"

"I wefuse to be called an ass."

"Dane, what do you think of Gussy's suggestion?"

"Oh, rats!" said Dane.

"If you say wats to me, Dane—"

"Rats!"

Arthur Augustus began to push back his cuffs. At the same moment a squirt of juice from Tom Merry's lemon—whether by accident or design—caught him under the chin.

There was a shriek from D'Arcy.

"Ow! Groo!"

"Why, what's the matter now?" asked Tom Merry innocently.

"Groo! My neck's wet, and my collah! You careless ass!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I shall have to go and change my collah now," said Arthur Augustus wrathfully. "Pway do not commence the second half till I come back."

And he dashed off towards the School House.

Tom Merry chuckled at the idea of delaying the second half of the match till D'Arcy returned in a clean collar. The whistle went after a short five minutes, and the teams turned in to their work again.

It was ten minutes before D'Arcy came back. His collar was irreproachable. He turned his eyeglass upon the field and frowned.

"I wequested Tom Mewwy to wait till I weturned," he remarked. "I wegard this as wathah uncivil of him. How is the score, Goah?"

"Same as ever," said Gore.

"Good!"

The score remained the same as ever, too, for some time. The Saints were trying hard to get ahead, but the Grammarians were on their mettle, too.

The struggle was very keen for some time. First in the St. Jim's half, and then in the visitors' half, up and down the touchlines, it swayed and ebbed.

With the wind behind their backs now, the Saints had a better chance, but the Grammarian defence was splendid.

And the Grammar lads were soon attacking, too, and they found their way through the St. Jim's defence, and Fatty Wynn was called upon again and again to save.

But Fatty Wynn was quite equal to the task.

Humorous fellows had declared that Fatty Wynn was played as goalkeeper because it was impossible for a ball to pass between the posts while he was standing there. This was a libel, for Fatty, plump as he was, was far from filling up the width of the goal. But all the same, it seemed almost impossible to pass him. He seemed to be all hands, feet, or head, as the occasion required. The most difficult shots, hard or fast or slow or anything else, were stopped with the same accuracy by the imperturbable Welsh junior. There was a good-natured grin on his chubby face all the time.

The struggle swayed back to the Grammarians' end of the field.

Tom Merry & Co. made a combined attack upon the visitors' goal, and pressed it home heavily and hotly.

Again and again the ball was rushed in, and at last it found a weak spot, and lodged in the net.

Then St. Jim's yelled.

"Goal!"

St. Jim's juniors were two to one.

After the display that had been given all through the second half, it seemed very unlikely that the Grammar School would equalise.

But Frank Monk and his followers made desperate efforts when the game restarted. There remained only ten minutes to play, and they ticked away rapidly. More than one glance went up to the great clock of St. Jim's, visible to all on the football field. Kildare was seen to glance at his watch.

Prudence would have suggested to Tom Merry to pack his goal, leave matters where they were, and simply prevent the

Grammarians from scoring till the finish. That he could easily have done.

But Tom Merry was a sportsman to the finger-tips.

It was not a League match, with points in a great competition depending on a victory; and even had it been, Tom Merry would have been a sportsman all through. He did not need the yells of exasperated spectators to tell him to "play the game."

The St. Jim's team played hard for more goals, and they looked like getting them. But fortune was smiling now on the Grammarians at the finish.

Carboy got away with the ball, and streaked through the St. Jim's juniors like lightning. For once Fatty Wynn was found wanting. The ball grazed his finger-tips as it shot in.

"Bai Jove!" gasped D'Arcy. "Goal!"

"Goal!"

"What's that?" exclaimed Gore. "The whistle?"

Phip!

The whistle it was.

The match was over.

The Grammarians had equalised, after all, at the finish, and the match was a draw.

Tom Merry clapped Frank Monk on the shoulder as they walked off the field. Monk looked at him with a cheerful grin.

"Jolly good, old man," said Tom Merry. "Jolly good."

"Same to you," grinned Monk. "It was one of the best matches we've had, I think. It was a fight to a finish, and no mistake. I say, how do you feel about playing a second footer match this afternoon?"

Tom Merry laughed.

"Oh, we shall be all right. The Highcliffe crowd are not your mettle. It's a big order, but I think we shall carry it through. We're going to try hard, anyway."

CHAPTER 17.

Off to Highcliffe.

TOM MERRY had made all his arrangements beforehand, and he always made his arrangements too carefully for anything to go amiss in any matter of importance. As soon as the match was over, the St. Jim's juniors changed, packed up their football gear, and boarded a brake that was already in waiting. The Junior Eleven and the reserves all got into the brake. The changes in the team could be made en route. The Grammarian brake rolled out of the gates after them, and accompanied them down the road towards the village. When it turned off towards the Grammar School, the Grammarians all stood up in the brake to wave their caps and give their late opponents a parting cheer.

"Good luck!" shouted Frank Monk. "Good-bye!"

And they parted.

The St. Jim's brake rolled on rapidly to the station, arriving in good time for the train.

Tom Merry took seventeen third-class tickets, and the crowd bundled into the train in adjoining compartments.

"Well, we're off!" exclaimed Tom Merry, settling down with a sigh of relief in a corner as the train buzzed out of the station.

"Yaas, wathah."

"I say, I hope you haven't forgotten it!" exclaimed Fatty Wynn anxiously.

"Forgotten what?"

"The grub?"

"What grub?"

"Look here, Tom Merry, don't be funny. You know we were going to have a meal in the train going to Highcliffe. We can't play Highcliffe in a state of hunger. I ate hardly anything at dinner."

"Ha, ha! I was watching him," said Kerr. "He ate only enough for three."

"Well, that was moderate for Fatty," said Tom Merry. "Didn't you think of bringing any grub yourself, Fatty?"

"Only a couple of dozen sandwiches and a bag of tarts," said Fatty Wynn. "I hadn't time to get any more. Figgins rushed me into the brake so quickly."

"Well, I've got a bag of sandwiches I asked Mrs. Mimms for," said Tom Merry. "We only want a snack all round. Feed after the match. I rely on you to see that Fatty doesn't blow himself out, Figgy, and get out of form."

"What-ho!" said Figgins. "I'll keep an eye on him. I'm going to stop him at the sixth sandwich."

"Look here, Figgy—"

"The sixth sandwich, my boy," said Figgins firmly. "You can gorge when we get home to St. Jim's. Six now is the limit."

"But I'm hungry."

"Well, that ought to take the edge off your appetite, anyway," grinned Monty Lowther. "I suppose you'd want a

whole bakery and a couple of bullocks to make you feel really full."

"I'm hungry," repeated Fatty Wynn. "I'll tell you what I had for dinner—"

"Oh, don't, old chap; life's too short to hear the list," said Lowther.

"There's your six sandwiches," said Figgins, jerking the bag away from Fatty Wynn, and allotting the provisions. "Not a bite more."

"Look here, Figgins—"

"I'm looking after you, my son. I'm standing in loco parentis on this occasion," said Figgins. "That's Latin, and settles it."

Fatty Wynn grunted, and started on the sandwiches. The other fellows had a couple each, but six seemed all too few to the Falstaff of the New House.

He made them last as long as he could, but they were long gone before the train rolled into the station at Highcliffe.

"Here we are!" exclaimed Tom Merry at last.

The train stopped.

Tom Merry & Co. poured out upon the platform, and Tom led the way to the exit.

Highcliffe was only a few minutes walk from the station,

as he knew. Fatty Wynn lingered behind on the platform, Figgins looked round for him.

"Fatty, come on."

"All right!" called back Fatty. "I'll catch you up in a minute."

He had stopped at an automatic-machine.

Figgins darted back.

"You'll jolly well catch us up now," he exclaimed. "No blessed chocolates till after the match."

"Look here, Figgins—"

"Come on."

"I tell you—"

"Come on!" roared Figgins.

He rushed Fatty Wynn along the platform at a speed that made the plump junior's head swim. He rushed him right out of the station, and did not release him till they were in the High Street of Highcliffe.

"Now, march right on!" said Figgins severely. "If you stop at a grub shop or an automatic-machine, mind, you'll get it where the chicken got the chopper."

"I'm jolly well going—"

"Exactly. Go."

And Fatty Wynn went.

BOOM!

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The juniors, carrying their bags, walked quickly along the road towards Highcliffe School. On the way, Tom Merry apportioned the places of his team. All the members of the team, and the reserves as well, had come along, for those who were not to play were eager to witness the match.

It did not take Tom Merry long to decide what changes he would make.

Dane, Digby, and Manners were left out. D'Arcy and Reilly and Macdonald taking their places. These were the only changes Tom Merry made. The three juniors dropped had been most fagged by the previous match, and it was an advantage to put fresh men in their places. And they acquiesced cheerfully.

There were quite a crowd of Highcliffe fellows at the gate of the school as the juniors of St. Jim's walked up.

They greeted their visitors with smiles.

"Glad to see you," said Ponsonby, as he shook hands with Tom Merry. "So you've come."

"Come!" said Tom Merry. "We arranged to come, didn't we?"

Ponsonby laughed.

"Yes; but I half expected a wire."

"A wire!" said Monty Lowther. "Why a wire?"

"You see," said Ponsonby, without even seeing the pun, "we thought you might think better of it. However, I'm glad to see you, and we'll try to show you what Highcliffe football is like. Mind, you mustn't blame me for results. D'Arcy challenged us, and we accepted, and you backed him up. That's all there is about it."

"We won't blame you," said Tom Merry, with a twinkle of amusement in his eyes. "That's all right. If you give us an awful licking, we'll take it cheerfully."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We're ready for the licking," said Kangaroo. "When is the licking to begin?"

"We're ready," said Ponsonby.

"Bai Jove, here's my cousin Monson!" said D'Arcy, as a slim Highcliffe fellow tapped him on the shoulder. "Are you playin', deah boy?"

"Yes," said Monson languidly. "I'm inside right."

"Inside right," said Lowther. "That reminds me of a story. There was a chap—"

"This way," said Ponsonby.

"There was a chap—"

"Come on," said Tom Merry, and they followed Ponsonby into the football field. Monty Lowther passed his arm through D'Arcy's, determined to secure one listener at least.

"There was a chap—"

"Yaas, you've said that before," said Arthur Augustus. "I am quite willin' to take your word for it, Lowthah. I haven't the slightest doubt of your statement."

"There was a chap who—"

"This is a jolly good ground, isn't it?"

"There was a chap—"

"I say, Lowther," muttered Fatty Wynn, digging the Shell fellow in the ribs. "You don't happen to have any milk chocolate about you, do you?"

"No!" snapped Lowther.

"Or a stick of toffee?"

"No."

"Oh, all right!" And Fatty Wynn sighed and walked on thoughtfully.

"There was a chap—" recommenced Lowther.

"Bai Jove, you remind me of a gramophone!" said Arthur Augustus. "Don't you think it's about time you changed the record, deah boy?"

"Look here," said Lowther warmly, "there was a chap who had been shot in the chest with a cannon-ball."

"Bai Jove! Was he hurt?"

"You utter ass!"

"I decline to be called an ass, Lowthah. I—"

"Do you think you could be shot in the chest with a cannon-ball and not hurt?" howled Monty Lowther.

"Weally, deah boy, I have nevah turned the mattah ovah in my mind."

"Well, this chap was shot in the chest with a cannon-ball," said Lowther. "He was one of the forwards, you understand, in the regimental football-team. They had to amputate part of him, you know, and they made a clean sweep."

"I have nevah seen a clean sweep," said D'Arcy. "They all look decidedly black and grimy to me."

"Eh? Who do—what do?"

"The sweeps."

"Sweeps! Who's talking about sweeps?" exclaimed the unhappy story-teller.

"Why, you were! You said somethin' about a clean sweep, and I remarked that I had nevah seen one," said Arthur Augustus innocently.

"You utter ass! I wasn't talking about chimney-sweeps!" howled Lowther, beginning to wish that he hadn't started on THE GEN LIBRARY.—No. 102.

that football-story. "I mean when they amputated him they made a clean sweep of his interior. You see?"

"Bai Jove!"

"And after that they had to play him at outside-right," said Lowther.

"Why?"

"Because he had no inside left."

And Monty Lowther paused for a roar of laughter. But D'Arcy did not roar. He assumed a perplexed expression.

"Let me see," he remarked. "You say that the chap was shot by a cannon-ball—"

"Don't you see the point?"

"Wats! A cannon-ball is wound, and not pointed. Pew-waps, howevah, you mean one of those conical balls. Is that what you mean?"

"You shrieking idiot!"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"You frabjous burlber!"

"I wefuse to be called a fwabjous burlblah! I—"

But Monty Lowther was stalking away. Arthur Augustus gazed after him through his eyeglass for a moment, and then shook his head and followed. Manners clapped him on the shoulder.

"What's the matter with Lowther?" he asked. "He's looking excited."

"I weally do not compwehend. He's been tellin' me about a chap who was stwuck by a cannon-ball, and played football aftahwards, and of course the whole thing was imposs., you know. I was careful not to show any doubt of Lowthah's wewacity, but I cannot help thinkin' he was womancin', you know."

Whereat Manners chuckled. He knew that old story of the inside-left—he had heard Monty Lowther work it off a dozen times at least—and he felt a certain satisfaction in the fact that the joker of St. Jim's had met his match in Arthur Augustus.

CHAPTER 18.

Something Like a Surprise.

PONSONBY & CO. wore superior smiles. They did not mean to be exactly discourteous to their visitors—far from it. But they were self-assured and cocky by nature. And Ponsonby had brought home a glowing account of the football he had seen at St. Jim's.

And so the Highcliffe team could not help regarding the coming match as a farce. And they showed it in their manner.

Tom Merry noted the superior smiles, and he smiled too. He felt that there was a surprise in store for the Highcliffians, and he meant to make that surprise as surprising as possible.

It would be distinctly amusing to see the change that would come over the Highcliffe countenances when they found out what sort of a team they really had to tackle.

A junior master of Highcliffe was refereeing the match, and he seemed smitten, too, with the idea that the thing was to be a walk-over.

"Bai Jove," Arthur Augustus remarked, as he changed into his jersey. "I am beginnin' to feel quite exasperated by these silly asses, you know! One would think, fwom their looks, that nobody else evah played a game of foottah!"

"It will be their turn to be exasperated soon," grinned Kangaroo. "They don't look to me as if they were in form to play a slogging game."

"Nor to me either," said Tom Merry. "Mind, we're going to play hard from the start. Don't give 'em a second's rest. Rush 'em off their feet, and keep them going till their heads spin. That's the wheeze."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I want to watch their faces," grinned Tom Merry. "I like and respect a chap who is licked after a hard try, but these cocky duffers want taking down a peg, and want it badly. I don't believe they can play football for toffee, with all their swank."

"Same here."

"I have seen their play," said Arthur Augustus; "I regarded it as wotten, you know. I offahed to put Ponsonby up to a few points, both in dwibblin' and kickin', but he wefused in a way that I could only considah wude."

"Well, we'll put him up to a few points now. No rough play, of course, you fellows—everything perfectly fair and above-board—only let it be hard and fast, and don't give the swankers a moment's rest."

"What-ho!" said the whole team heartily.

Ponsonby looked in.

"You fellows ready?"

"Quite." And they went out into the field.

Tom Merry smiled as he noted the crowd round the ground.

Nearly all Highcliffe seemed to have turned up, seniors as well as juniors. They all wore smiles. It was perfectly clear that they fully expected to see Tom Merry's eleven swept off the field in the course of the first ten minutes after the kick-off.

"I wegard it as iwuitatin'," said Arthur Augustus. "I shall be vewy pleased to give these swankahs a feahful lickin'."

The St. Jim's juniors won the toss, and Tom Merry chose to kick-off against the wind. Ponsonby looked at him, and they all looked at him, and then the Highcliffe junior skipper spoke:

"I say, Merry! If you don't mind my mentioning it——"

"Certainly. Go on."

"You've played football before, I suppose?"

"Several times," said Tom innocently; and his followers chuckled. Tom Merry had played more football than Ponsonby had ever thought or dreamt about.

"Well, about the kick-off. You are playing against the wind."

"Oh, yes!"

"It would be an advantage to have the wind behind you," and it's your choice," urged Ponsonby.

"Oh, never mind!"

"But you're giving the game away."

"Well, the fact is, I want to give you chaps a chance," said Tom Merry. "The wind against us won't make much difference to us, you know."

Ponsonby gasped.

"Really, Merry——"

"We're ready, if you are."

"Oh, all right!" said Ponsonby. "Kick off!"

The Highcliffe players exchanged grins. Tom Merry fumbled with the ball purposely, in order to give them something more to grin about. He knew that they would not be grinning soon.

Ponsonby captured the ball, and the Highcliffe forwards got away in line. They ran the ball right up the field, amid cheers and laughter from the big crowd round the ropes.

Fatty Wynn was in goal, with twinkling eyes.

He had looked over the Highcliffe crowd with the glance of an experienced goalkeeper, and he was pretty well satisfied that there was no fellow there who could send in a shot that he couldn't save.

And so it proved. The ball came in from Ponsonby, and then from Monson, and then from another Highcliffe forward, and Fatty Wynn saved it with ease and grace, hardly troubling to stir himself.

From the third attempt he sent the ball out to the St. Jim's forwards. Tom Merry thought it was time to begin business, and he captured the ball, calmly taking it away from the foot of a Highcliffe half, and dribbled it away towards the home goal.

Ponsonby & Co. raced after him. They might as well have raced after a Derby winner.

Tom Merry simply walked away from the Highcliffe forwards and halves, and dribbled the ball round the feet of the backs, and slammed it into goal.

The goalkeeper wasn't quite prepared for that shot. As a matter of fact, he had been lounging about his goal, exchanging joking remarks with the fellows behind concerning the St. Jim's style of play.

He woke up too late to the fact that there was danger.

The ball was in the net!

"My hat!" gasped Ponsonby.

The crowd looked curious. The Highcliffe team looked at one another oddly. The St. Jim's juniors grinned.

"One up!" said Blake, as they walked back to the centre of the field. "Look at Ponsonby's face. It's as good as a picture!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Ponsonby kicked off.

Again the Highcliffe forwards were allowed to get away with the ball, but they did not get it as far as the visitors' goal this time. Herries, at back, stopped it, and sent it out to midfield, where Monty Lowther took possession of it.

Lowther's long legs covered the ground in fine style, and if he had made a run for goal he would have reached it with perfect ease. Highcliffe had neither back nor half-back that could have stopped him. But Lowther was in a humorous mood.

He dribbled the ball towards goal, and the backs rushed in, and then he swerved and dribbled it towards touch.

The Highcliffians rushed upon him, and he dribbled the ball round them, and kept on with it along the centre-line, towards the other side of the field.

His antics were so incomprehensible that the Highcliffians stared in blank amazement, and Tom Merry burst into a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jack Blake threw himself on his back on the ground and roared.

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "I wegard this as decidedly funny."

Funny indeed it was.

Lowther, having reached the opposite touch-line, without the Highcliffians having been able to deprive him of the ball, centred to Tom Merry, with a cheerful grin.

Tom received the pass, and sent the leather whirling into the net before the Highcliffe goalie knew what was happening.

"Two up!" gurgled Blake. "Oh, my only chapeau!"

The Highcliffe fellows were looking decidedly serious now.

It began to dawn even upon Ponsonby that the St. Jim's team had been rotting them, and that the visitors, as a matter of fact, outclassed them hopelessly.

And then the Saints had their anticipated amusement of watching the faces of the Highcliffe swankers.

It was, as Blake said, as good as a cinematograph.

The swank was all gone now.

The Highcliffe fellows played the game seriously and sedulously enough now; but at their best they were not in the same street with St. Jim's.

The crowd of onlookers were serious too. The mocking smiles had quite faded away. All Highcliffe seemed to realise that it was looking an ass, as D'Arcy put it.

The first half was played out, and it finished with St. Jim's five goals to nil. The Highcliffians had never had a look in from the first.

The juniors chuckled in the dressing-room.

The Highcliffe fellows had been so openly cocky that it was impossible to feel much sympathy for them now that they were taken down a peg.

The teams lined-up for the second half; and the difference in the Highcliffe looks was quite remarkable.

There was no swagger now.

Indeed, they looked a great deal as if they were going to execution.

The second half of that terrible match seemed to the Highcliffe team, afterwards, like some evil dream.

The first half had been rough on them. It had disillusioned them in the most cruel way. It had taken the gas out of them. But the second half!

St. Jim's simply walked over them. They were rushed and whirled in all directions, till their very senses were swimming, and they had left off counting the goals piled up by Tom Merry & Co.

Goal after goal fell to the St. Jim's score, and the faces round the field were growing longer and longer, while Ponsonby & Co. gasped and puffed, and puffed and gasped, and laboured in vain after the nimble-footed fellows from St. Jim's.

Three or four of the Highcliffe players were standing about the ground, too fagged out to take another step, and the fellows who were still playing were only putting up the feeblest of struggles.

Goal after goal was taken, the Highcliffians being quite unable to stop them, till at last St. Jim's ceased scoring out of sheer good-nature.

The whistle went at last, and a burst of heavenly music could not have been so welcome to the Highcliffe ears as that shrill blast.

They staggered off the field.

The score stood at eleven goals to nil—a score that made the Saints shriek with laughter as they looked at it.

There was something strained in the manner of Ponsonby & Co. as they said good-bye to the visiting team. It was not to be wondered at.

"You must give us a return match, you know," said Tom Merry affably.

"Oh—er—yes!" said Ponsonby.

But inwardly he registered a vow that wild horses should not drag him upon a football field with Tom Merry & Co. again.

The St. Jim's juniors returned home in high spirits. Fatty Wynn was made happy with a big bag of sandwiches and a dozen tarts in the train. St. Jim's took a keen interest in that match, and half the school was waiting to hear how it had gone. Tom Merry & Co. were bombarded with questions as soon as they arrived. And when they answered, yells of laughter arose that could be heard all over St. Jim's.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Eleven goals to nil!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And it was a long, long time before St. Jim's ceased to chuckle over the Highcliffe match.

THE END.

(Another splendid complete tale of the boys of St. Jim's next Thursday, entitled "Skimpole the Third," by Martin Clifford. Order in advance. Price One Penny.)

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By

MARTIN CLIFFORD

NEXT
THURSDAY:

"SKIMPOLE THE THIRD."

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BRITAIN'S REVENGE

THE PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS ARE:

AUBREY VILLIERS, nicknamed Sam Slick. A lad who has performed wondrous service for his country in her time of need, during the terrible invasion by the Germans.

STEPHEN VILLIERS, his brother. He is Sam's companion in all his exploits.

The two boys are on their way to Luneville, in France, in a wonderful airship, the Condor, invented by John Carfax, a friend of theirs. The combined British and French forces are cornered at Luneville by the Germans, and there are rumours of a great disaster to the allies. By the Condor's aid, however, the battle ends in a great victory for the allies.

Sam and Stephen are then commissioned to reconnoitre the Vosges Mountain district, which is being terrorized by a band of German Uhlans under a Colonel Hunde, known as the Black Hound.

The two young scouts ride into the mountains, where they fall in with the Seigneur of Malmaison, who is waging guerilla warfare against the Germans. His castle is attacked by the Uhlans, but with the exception of the seigneur himself, all the occupants escape.

As the two young scouts with their mountaineer guide take to the woods, they hear the roar of an explosion, and the castle of Malmaison, with the old seigneur and his enemies, is blown to pieces.

The boys rejoin Carfax, and they return to Paris on the Condor, in order to attend a meeting of great importance.

(Now go on with the story.)

A Treacherous Ally.

"Wouldn't have done to land anywhere near and attract attention," said Carfax. "Now, we shall spend as little time as possible, but the fate of the British Empire may hang on the decision."

He entered the great building—not by the main gates—and was soon taken in charge by a discreet official, who ushered him and the boys to a sumptuous ante-room, whence, after a very short wait, they were let into a small but very snug and neatly-furnished room beyond.

At a bare table, on which were writing materials, sat three men. One was the gold-master, Harrington Carfax, as wizened and as keen-looking as ever.

He nodded to his brother and to the two boys.

The other two were Lord Conybeare—a tall man with a

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THURSDAY:

bald head and a white moustache—and Monsieur le Brun, who was thin and dapper, and wore a pointed beard. They rose, and greeted the new-comers courteously.

"Let me present Lieutenant and Sub-Lieutenant Villiers," said Carfax.

The French statesman bowed, but Lord Conybeare looked very supercilious.

"Is not our council becoming rather large?" he said coldly.

"Do we need boys at this meeting?"

Carfax flushed slightly, and his eye kindled.

"Pardon me!" he said emphatically. "These young gentlemen have been my agents and helpers, and have seen the biggest sort of diplomacy. They have been in all the chief events of the past months, and were with me when I held up Berlin. I wish them to be present."

Lord Conybeare paused for a moment, and then agreed quite graciously.

"I beg your pardon!" he said, with a smile. "We have to be careful in this matter, you know. This is an irregular affair at the best, and only my confidence in you induces me to agree to it. Let us get to business."

Both the inner and outer doors were securely locked, and no one was allowed in the ante-room.

The councillors took their seats at the table. It was evident the statesmen were depending on the two Carfaxes. "We can put the case very briefly," said Monsieur le Brun.

"The danger is that Russia and Germany may combine against us, and in twenty-four hours the harm may be done beyond our power to prevent. Germany makes the offer."

"That means that four and a half millions of trained soldiers and five thousand guns will be thrown into the scale against us," said Harrington, who had the figures of every army and navy at his finger-tips.

"Exactly. Enough to swamp us, or, at any rate, to increase the sum of bloodshed and suffering a hundred times," said Le Brun gloomily.

"It will wreck half Europe."

"Never mind about half Europe. Britain and France are what I'm concerned about," said Conybeare briefly. "We had always supposed Russia to be the ally and friend of France, and the enemy of Germany."

"That's true," replied Harrington; "but would you trust the Russian rulers as far as you can throw them?"

"No!" said the Frenchman bitterly. "The Russians are

"SKIMPOLE THE THIRD."

By
MARTIN CLIFFORD.

Asiatics, for all their white skins. They will join with the winning side, or that which offers most profit, whatever their promises may have been. I wish I knew what Germany is offering them."

"Where is the Tsar?" asked Conybeare.

"At his country place of Elsaft, in the mountains, at present," said Harrington.

"Ah, so you know that?" exclaimed Le Brun. "I was just going to tell it you. The Tsar is altogether in the hands of his advisers."

"We must convince him that he had better not listen to them," said Harrington.

"How?" said Conybeare, staring.

"One moment!" replied the gold-master. "What is the very latest news you have?"

"Our Secret Service is no match for that of Russia," said Le Brun. "But all we know is this. The offer has already been suggested to the Tsar."

"Well?"

"And we know that a special messenger will leave Berlin to-night for St. Petersburg, bearing with him the full terms of the alliance, which he will communicate to the Tsar either verbally or by despatches. That is fairly certain. But what it is exactly that he is empowered to offer the Tsar for his aid we do not know."

"Just so," said Harrington. "And that's what we have got to find out. To-night, you say? Then he must leave by the 4.50 train in the afternoon—the Imperial mail. There is no other fast-through train that will get him to St. Petersburg in time. Let me see," said the gold-master thoughtfully. "The train stops at Virkutsk at eleven p.m. to take in water. Very good! There is nothing like going to the fountain-head for information, and we will get it straight from the German special messenger."

"What?" exclaimed Conybeare.

"Knowledge is power," said Harrington. "Until we know what Germany is offering, we are working in the dark. We must know it before the Tsar himself does. Gentlemen," said the gold-master, rising, "it is time I left you."

"How on earth do you expect to get information from the messenger, even if you could reach the place in time!—which is impossible!" cried Le Brun.

"I think I shall contrive it," said Harrington coolly. "When it is done, the Tsar must be obliged to listen to reason, quite apart from his advisers."

"But you won't dare tackle the Tsar, monsieur? He is guarded like no other sovereign in the world!" said Le Brun, looking bewildered.

"I dare a good deal when the British Empire is at stake," said the gold-master drily. "Brother, how soon can you put me on board the Condor? I am coming with you."

"In thirty minutes," said John Carfax.

"We will make it fifty, and that will give me the time I need for one or two details. Let us go at once."

"But we must know what you are going to do, sir!" exclaimed Lord Conybeare anxiously. "The council—"

"Ah, I will leave you to settle the affairs of the council, if you will leave the Tsar and his messenger to me," said Harrington, in his suavest tones. "Have I a free hand?"

The two ministers looked at each other.

"Yes, monsieur," said Le Brun, as Conybeare nodded. "We have no hope of doing much to stop this disaster that I can see. We may communicate with St. Petersburg?"

"You had better not do that until I've had my look in," said Harrington. "It will be all over, one way or the other, by to-morrow."

"Very well," said Le Brun, with rather a hopeless shrug. "Good luck attend you, monsieur. You have a free hand."

"I'm glad of that," said Harrington, to his brother and the two boys, as they left the building after a dignified farewell to the ministers, "for if they hadn't given me a free hand, I should have taken it. Where is the Condor going to pick you up?"

"At the old well in Meudon Woods," said Carfax. "You know the place?"

"Yes; meet me there in forty-five minutes."

Harrington hailed a motor-cab, and went off by himself. The others made their way at once to the rendezvous, the boys full of eagerness to know what the next move was to be.

"I think I've got an inkling of what Harrington means to do," said Carfax; "but he will soon make it clear enough."

"By gum, I wouldn't ask anything better than to go campaigning on the Condor, with the gold-master aboard!" said Sam. "He's never sailed with us before. There's some sport ahead."

"I feel rather in the dark myself as to what it's all about," said Stephen, three-quarters of an hour later, as they stood at the appointed spot in the woods. "These politician chaps talk so much, you can't get at what they mean. But I'll put my money on Harrington Carfax."

"Quite right," said a dry voice; and the gold-master himself quietly joined them as they turned round, carrying a good-sized bundle bound with a strap. "They do talk too much, my lad. That's why we've cleared out, and are going to act instead. Condor coming, John?"

"High up to the westward," replied Carfax. "They've spotted us with their glasses by now, and will be here quickly. I suppose it will be a journey to Virkutsk as fast as ever she can take us—eh, Harrington?"

"Quite right," said the gold-master. "I'll take charge as soon as we're there."

"What is it you're going to do, sir?" asked Stephen, overpowered by curiosity.

"Tackle the Holy Russian Empire, my boy," said Harrington, as the aeroplane swooped down swiftly as a thunderbolt and alighted. "Get aboard."

Away they whirled into the sky long before any gaping sightseers could locate the spot where the airship had come to earth, and, turning, the Condor put out her best speed, and travelled straight as a swallow in the north-east.

The Secret Messenger.

Hour after hour sped on, while Carfax and his brother, in the deckhouse, consulted quietly. Hugh had the steering of the airship.

Presently Harrington came out.

"I shall need the help of both you boys," he said to Sam and Stephen, "though I warn you the risk is an unusual one. If anything goes wrong, it will mean either death or worse—a Siberian prison."

"Never mind what the risk is, sir," said Stephen; nor would he have believed that any danger could overtake such a man as Harrington Carfax.

"Very good. We have to get into the company of this secret messenger, who will be on the 4.50 St. Petersburg mail."

"I was wondering how it's to be done, sir," said Sam.

"That's simple enough. The Condor will be over the Russian frontier long before dark. She will voyage high up, well out of sight, and will drop me within easy distance of Virkutsk. The train the messenger is in will stop there to take in water at eleven o'clock. I shall be disguised as a Russian officer of the Corps of Guards, who is too highly placed for suspicion or questioning by the police—not that they will be given any opportunity. It will be necessary for me to enter the same carriage with the messenger."

"I think I know the very man who will be sent; but if not, it won't be hard to decide which he is. There will be a few travellers, and he is certain to have a compartment to himself. Any difficulty about entering it must be overcome. And once I am travelling with him," said Harrington grimly, "he will soon impart to me the terms which he is carrying to the Tsar, and on which everything hangs."

The boys glanced at each other, and remembered well how Harrington had wrung from the German spy at Andover the news of the plot for the Kaiser's escape.

"He'll stand little chance once you get your eyes on him, sir," said Sam, with something like a shiver.

"I shall take you two with me," said Harrington, "for I am not a strong man physically, and I want active and powerful help at hand, in case it is needed. Probably it won't be; but we must leave nothing to chance—the stake is too great. You, Sam, will travel as my gentleman-in-attendance, and your brother as my orderly. I have the dress and uniforms here."

He opened the strapped bundle he had brought from Paris.

"When the Condor has put us down," he continued, turning to Kenneth, "you will take her on ahead at full speed under my brother's orders, well out of sight, and you will land again and stop the train twenty miles farther on, in the open country."

Kenneth nodded, listening attentively.

"A rail across the line and a red flare set burning upon a stick will force the engine-driver to stop. When you have arranged it, you will hurry back to the Condor, just before the train comes up. It will need some management, for they guard the line fairly well. You will then mount aloft again, and keep a sharp look-out for my signal, descending quickly and picking me up as soon as you see it—a triple flash from an electric torch somewhere to the southward of the line."

"You can rely on Kenneth for the stopping of the train," said Carfax. "I'll attend to picking you up, Harrington—if there's anything to pick up."

"There will be," said Harrington, "for we've still sharper work ahead of us, if this comes off."

"Get some sleep, then, you boys," said Carfax. "You've had a heavy day of it, and there's nothing more to be done till Harrington needs you."

The young scouts were glad enough to turn in, and they were as well able to sleep on the Condor as aboard a ship, or

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better. They did not turn out again till it was quite dark, and, coming out on to the deck-platform, they found the aeroplane was travelling at slightly slower speed, but at a great height, over a low, flat country, that showed scarcely any lights of cities or villages, but seemed bare and desolate—simply a waste of blackness.

"Russia," said Harrington to them, with a nod. "We left the frontier behind half an hour ago."

The boys felt a curious thrill, and seldom had they realised so fully the Condor's freedom from all earthly control. Below them was that great, half-savage land, whose police and spy system is a byword to all the world. They knew how all but impossible it is for a man to cross the frontiers without everything being known about him and his business, and that every stranger is watched from the moment he sets foot on Russian soil.

But here was the Condor carrying the most dangerous little crew in the world right into the heart of that closely-guarded country, quite unknown to anyone but themselves. Unless the police and spies had wings, they had little chance of discovering her.

Harrington beckoned to the boys, and they entered the deckhouse and changed their uniforms for the Russian clothes. This dressing was a very precise business indeed. After they had got the clothes on, Harrington was immensely particular about the way they were to be worn, and how details must be arranged. It seemed as if he would never be satisfied.

"Yes, that will do now," he said, at last, looking at them critically. "You see, Russians wear these uniforms in a particular way, and the smallest detail out of place would arouse instant suspicion, for every fourth man, and woman, too, is a spy in this charming country."

"We are within two miles of Virkutsk," said Carfax, from without. "It's about half-past ten."

"Very good," said his brother.

"The less time we're on the ground, the better. It's a dark enough night, and nothing to be seen skywards from the ground, and at any height; so hold her poised until you see the lights of the train to the westward. Keep watch down the line with your night-glasses."

It was wonderful enough to anybody who did not know the delicacy and precision of the instruments by which Carfax navigated his airship that he should be able even to tell where he was. A faint glow, far below, and perhaps half a mile in the slant, he declared to be the little water-taking station of Virkutsk.

"They didn't use to allow passengers to join the train there," said Harrington; "but they do now. See anything of her yet, Kenneth?"

"Yes," said Kenneth presently, for he was using the powerful night-telescope. "I can see the headlights of her engine."

"Down we go, John," said Harrington. "Stand by to jump for it, boys; this has got to be done quickly."

The Condor swerved earthwards with a downward motion that made even the boys, seasoned as they were, feel as if they had left their bodies a mile up in the air, and that only their clothes were descending. A moment or two later they were standing on a bare, windy plain, and the airship was out of sight again in the darkness.

"No one in sight—good!" muttered Harrington, stepping out briskly. "If any peasant had seen us we should have had to silence him. Lonely spot this! Come on! Walk as quick as your clothes will let you. Feel up to the job—eh?"

"Yes," said Sam, "though the game's rather more like spying than I care for."

"Spying, you donkey? This is secret service—a very different thing. We have to meet craft with craft, that's all. The fate of empires is often sealed this way. Now, you keep quiet, and don't open your lips, whatever happens. In the carriage, watch me for the signal, in case I give it. We must have those despatches."

Had not the boys known Harrington's capabilities, they would never have believed in his even finding his man. It looked, too, as if they would be too late, anyhow, for ahead was the station, and before they reached it, the train had drawn up.

The gold-master knew what he was about, however. Making his way imperiously through a knot of men round the outside door, he entered the ticket-office. A gendarme, seeing his uniform, made a respectful salute, and brutally thrust aside a peasant who was in the way of the supposed officer of Guards. Harrington was a small man, but he seemed to fill out the gaudy uniform wonderfully.

In a commanding voice, and in perfect Russian, of which he was a master, Harrington himself took three tickets to St. Petersburg, and paid for them in Russian rouble-notes. Thrusting these into Sam's gloved hand, he strode on to the platform as if in a hurry, and walked rapidly down past the train, as if looking for a compartment.

"Here's our man," he said, under his breath, though he

had gone some distance past before stopping. He turned back, just as the whistle blew for the train to start, and turned the door-handle of a compartment, where a man, muffled up in furs, sat alone in the far corner.

A porter came running up to open the door for him, for the train was beginning to move.

"Not that carriage, Excellency!" cried the guard, who had evidently been tipped to keep the compartment for its owner.

Harrington paid no attention, but, finding the door locked, whipped a train key out of his cuff and opened it. Bundling Sam and Stephen in with him, the door was slammed, and away sped the express.

"What is the meaning of this ill-bred intrusion?" said the man in the furs angrily. "Do you not see, sir, that this is a private carriage? You have no business to bring your servants into a first-class carriage!"

Harrington made not the slightest reply, but, with insolent unconcern, relit a cigarette, though it was not a smoking compartment. He was playing his part well, for no military Russian, especially of the Corps of Guards, would deign to answer a rebuke from a mere civilian. The man, who was thin and dark-faced, became more annoyed and excited at the intrusion, for he was a personage used to power and his own way.

"I will show you whether you will ride rough-shod over me!" he said angrily, rising to his feet. "I prefer to travel alone, rather than with such bears!"

He reached for the communicator, actually intending to stop the train, for he knew there was no help for his travelling right on to St. Petersburg with the intruders unless he did so; but Harrington turned, and as his cold, steely eyes met those of the German, that person stopped short with his hand half-way to the cord.

"Leave the communicator alone, meinheer!" said the gold-master coldly. "I will now trouble you for the despatches you are carrying in your breast, and the news which you bear to his most high Majesty the Tsar!"

How the St. Petersburg Express Was Held Up.

A long sigh escaped the messenger. It would be hard to say whether he heard Harrington's words or not, for he looked quite rigid, and his eyes were glassy.

The gold-master's gaze seemed to burn right into his brain, and those terrible, mesmerizing eyes held him in their spell.

"Sit down," said Harrington quietly. "I want a little conversation with you."

The man gave a shudder, as if he felt suddenly chilled. He was evidently trying to resist the spell, and was calling up all the power of his will. Twice more Harrington repeated the words, bringing his eyes nearer to the man's.

It seemed as though the gold-master were going to fail; but at last the messenger sank back into his seat, and seemed to shrink visibly among the rich furs that enveloped him.

Sam and his brother watched breathlessly. The elder boy did not quite like what was going on, but he knew what great issues hung upon the result. He almost wished Harrington's power would fail, and that he would be called upon to take from the messenger by force the needed despatches, rather than witness the gold-master's uncanny powers. But he soon learned that to do so would not solve the problem at all.

"He's got a tough job there," muttered Stephen.

The messenger, though he had sat down, made an effort to rise again, and his hand once more moved towards the communication-cord. Harrington did not move a finger to prevent him, but the boys could see the gold-master was feeling the strain himself, and perspiration glistened on his forehead just as if he were in a tough, physical fight. But he conquered, for the German fell back again, dropping his arms, and now remaining stiff and rigid.

Harrington drew a breath of relief, and seated himself opposite, still keeping his eyes on those of the messenger.

"Now," said the gold-master, in a dry, quiet voice, "before going into the despatches, you will tell me what your verbal instructions are?"

The reply came, word by word, as if it were wrenched out of the man, and hardly audible.

"I will—not—tell—you!"

"Oh, yes, you will!" said Harrington, in the same easy, voice, bending forward. "Who gave you the messages you are carrying to the Tsar?"

Slowly came the answer, after a struggle between the wills of the two men:

"Count Von Malkenberg."

"The German Minister for Foreign Affairs," said Harrington. "Very good! Besides the despatches you

carry, the most important part was entrusted to you by word of mouth, was it not?"

"Yes," was the reply, a little quicker this time.

The messenger's face looked like that of a man petrified, and only his lips moved.

"Very good. You were to offer Germany's terms to the Tsar, so that Russia should join Germany against Britain?"

"Yes."

"What are the terms?"

The boys strained their ears to catch every word, for the mesmerised man spoke very low.

"If Russia—helps Germany—to defeat Britain now——"

The man paused.

"Yes; go on!"

"Germany binds herself—afterwards—to help Russia—re-conquer Manchuria—and take her revenge—upon the Japanese."

"Ah!" said Harrington drily. "Well, what else?"

"Also, when Britain is defeated—the British Empire—to be broken up. Russia—is to have India."

The voice stopped.

"Very good terms!" said Harrington grimly. "Anything more?"

"Germany will take over the British Colonies in Africa, and also the French territories in that country. Africa is to be German—and Asia Russian."

Sam drew a long breath, and Stephen listened attentively to every word. It was strange, in that lonely railway-carriage, to hear the fate of empires coolly decided and continents carved up. Yet, with the huge powers that lay behind, it might all prove quite possible and likely.

The messenger was lying back, looking as limp as a chewed rag, his eyes still held and fascinated by Harrington's. He was quite unconscious of what he was saying or doing.

"Is Russia to throw her whole forces into the field?" asked Harrington slowly.

"Yes; four million men, and five thousand guns."

The gold-master paused, and thought for a moment.

"Is it expected in Berlin that Russia will agree?" he asked.

"Yes; it is considered certain that she will agree."

"When would Russia take the field?"

"Her troops, now ready—about eight hundred thousand—will march within three days to join the Germans. The remaining millions will soon be ready. Russia expects our offer."

"Treacherous brutes!" muttered Stephen.

"Are you to see the Tsar himself, in person?" was the next question.

"Yes, in person."

"Where?"

"At the Palace of Elsaft, in the hills, where he now is."

"You will also hand him the despatches which you carry?"

There was no reply to this, and Carfax beckoned to Sam with his finger.

"Unbutton his coat and take out those despatches, Sam. Do not come between me and him, so as to guard him from my sight, you understand, while you are doing it."

Sam could no more have disobeyed the gold-master than the messenger could. He unbuttoned the man's fur overcoat, and opened the coat inside. Following Harrington's instructions, he found on the inner side of the vest a thin leather case, buckled to the lining. From this he drew a despatch written on light, fine paper, with a curious mark on it, but no seal or signature.

"Open it," said Harrington. "Can you read the contents?"

"Yes," answered Sam. "They are quite plain, written in German. They are the credentials of the messenger, proving who he is; and there's a queer sort of sign at the bottom, but no name or initials."

"Quite so. Nothing else?"

"Yes; here's a sort of postscript of a few lines, but it's written in cipher, and I can't read it."

"Do you know what the cipher message is on your despatches?" asked Harrington of the messenger.

"No."

"You have not the key?"

"No."

"Who will be able to read it?"

"The Tsar alone."

"Then it was thought best not to trust the terms themselves on paper, even in cipher? They know you are trustworthy," said Harrington grimly. "Well, I know it, too. You will come to no harm, and that is more than can be said if you had your own Secret Service against you. We are each serving our countries—you and I. However, you

do not understand what I am saying, so let it be. Sam, put those despatches back, and button him up."

Sam drew a pencil from his pocket, and broad across the face of the despatch he wrote the words "Dieu et mon droit," the motto of the Royal Standard of Britain. Then he replaced the paper.

"There was no need for that," said Harrington, who had glanced at the words. "However, it will do no harm. So Russia is to be well paid for her services, lads?" he added, glancing at the messenger, who still sat as if dreaming. "India and the East—a just reward. Make ready, youngsters. It can't be long before——"

A loud, hissing, grinding noise was heard, and the train began to pull up with bumps and jerks.

"There it is!" said Harrington.

"They've clapped on the emergency brakes. Kenneth's danger-signal has held us up."

Sam let down the window, and thrust his head out.

"Yes," he said; "there's a red flare burning on the line, and some men are hurrying to the place."

"Out with you, boys!" said Harrington. "I'll follow. Mustn't leave the fellow like this, or they'll know too soon that something's wrong."

The young scouts turned the door handle, and stood ready. They cast a glance back at the German, but what Harrington was going to do to him they could not quite see. Next moment he had joined them, and all three jumped lightly down upon the permanent way just before the train came to a standstill, Harrington shutting the door behind him as he left the footboard.

"Get back there!" cried an angry voice in Russian from near the brake-van. "No leaving the train!"

"Over the fence with you, and smart about it!" said Harrington, surmounting the wires that hedged the line in, and taking no notice of the shout. "We're seen!"

Somebody came running along the sleepers, but the three companions had left the line, and darted away into the darkness before the pursuer arrived.

Down the track, not far ahead of the engine, was still burning a bright red flare, and an iron rail lay across the lines, around which were several railwaymen. Not a glance did the three comrades spare for this, however. They dashed away as quickly as they could, for a shrill, piercing whistle went up behind them.

"That's a police whistle!" said Harrington. "There's always a spy on the train. I was hoping we should not be seen leaving, but they may have reached our friend in the railway-carriage too quickly."

"Why?" panted Stephen as they ran.

"The fellow would come to his senses in about three minutes by the way I fixed him. It wouldn't have done to leave him in that state too long; but if they've found him before he comes to, there's something wrong. We shall have to look uncommonly nippy."

"The Condor will pull us out of it, won't she, sir?" said Stephen.

"We can't signal her till we get a clear field. It's, above all, important she shouldn't be seen. That would spoil all my plans. Just beyond the belt of trees yonder will do very well, if there's nobody about."

They knew the Condor, though invisible in the dark sky, was waiting and watching somewhere far overhead, and would come instantly to the signal. Harrington, though hurrying, made his way with much caution.

"We've left the train people well behind," said Sam, as they reached the trees. "They're not likely to catch us up."

"It's in front we have to fear most. That whistle will have set any agent who's out this way on the look-out for strangers. Kenneth's flare will have stirred them up. Ah, I thought so!"

A big, burly Russian, exclaiming harshly, "Halt, there! Who goes?" appeared from somewhere, and darted to intercept Harrington, seizing him by the arm. In an instant Sam's revolver was out, and crashed upon the man's head, felling him like a log. Without waiting to give him a glance, they dashed on through the grove of trees, and came out on the other side. Harrington looked keenly over the heathery moor, to see if anyone were in sight.

"They're coming up behind us fast," said Stephen.

It was true. The sounds of the pursuers passing through the woods could be heard plainly.

Harrington pulled a powerful little electric torch from his pocket, and pressed the button. Three bright momentary flashes it gave, and hardly was the last one doused before there was a whir and a rush, and the Condor came swooping down beside them like a great eagle from the night sky.

"Aboard with you!" cried Harrington. "Let her go!"

Away went the Condor with one mighty swing. Heath, train, and pursuers were left far behind in the twinkling of an eye, and the Russian secret police had a puzzle to solve that would last them many a day.

Preparation for a Capture.

"How has it gone?" cried Carfax, coming down from the bridge.

"Excellent," replied Harrington coolly; "though we had a narrow shave at the last. But that fellow in the train was all I could manage."

"I thought he was giving you trouble, sir," said Sam.

"Trouble! He was harder to get under control than any average twenty men put together! It happens like that sometimes, but very rarely. Some men are bad subjects to hypnotise, even to such science as I use."

"Confound the science! What have you discovered?" cried Carfax impatiently.

"I beg your pardon, John!" said his brother. "I forgot you were anxious to know the result. All's well, and we have the information we want. By the way, keep her as straight for the Elsaft Palace as possible. We must get there before morning."

He informed his brother and Kenneth, who listened eagerly, what had happened in the railway-carriage.

"Great guns!" said Carfax. "So that's the bait—India for Russia's prize, and the breaking up of Japan's power? The sharing up of the British Empire! We're dealing in big figures."

"They might very well do it, too, if they did combine," muttered Sam.

"Just so," Harrington replied. "And what we have to do is to prevent them. The Condor will do it on her own account, and the Foreign Offices of our respected allied countries can do the talking afterwards. We must tackle the fountain-head."

"What's that?"

"The Tsar."

"That will take some doing, won't it, sir? Is he the real power at the back of it all?"

"No; but he has the final word," said Harrington. "Left to himself, I do not think the Tsar would throw his country into a war with Britain and France. But he is weak, and in the hands of a circle of unscrupulous advisers."

"The grand dukes and all those Johnnies. I've heard of them," said Stephen.

"They pull the strings, and the puppet dances!" said Carfax grimly.

"We shall pull a string that will fix the puppet in his place, and show him why this allegiance against Britain will be a bad thing for him," Harrington answered, with his dry smile.

"But if he's a puppet, can he make all that difference, sir, even if he's shown?" asked Sam.

"He's enough of a king to make that difference," said Harrington, with a nod. "Once he's—"

"Scared into it," put in Carfax.

"By gum!" said Sam, with wide-opened eyes. "But how's he to be got at? His advisers take care he never sees anybody they don't want him to, I'm told. Even if you interviewed him at Elsaft, would he agree? He's obstinate as the old gentleman himself, if all's true that's said about him at home."

"Quite so—at home. But here, on the Condor, or farther afield, he might see reason."

"Great whiskers!" said Stephen, startled. "Do you mean to kidnap the Tsar, sir?"

"Oh, not kidnap!" said Harrington, smiling. "Persuade him to accompany us, you should say. How soon can you reach Elsaft, John?"

"By four in the morning. I must say, it beats me how you'll bring this job off, Harrington. The palace and castle are moated—though, of course, that's nothing to the Condor. But he's guarded night and day by spies, watchmen, police, and soldiers. Gentlemen-in-waiting sleep in the ante-room of his bed-chamber, and a great Dane dog as big as a pony sleeps on the outer mat."

"Tell me something I don't know!" said Harrington impatiently.

"That's not easy, brother. You'd better tell me something I don't know instead, for I'm quite in the dark, and don't see how the game's to be played."

"Of course I will. I had to keep it till we got our news. Item No. 1 you do not know. The Tsar, at Elsaft, has three different bed-room suites, and sleeps in a different one each night. This is Thursday, and he will be in the west-room in the central wing."

"How on earth do you know that?"

"Never mind how I know. My sources of information are pretty correct, as a rule—aren't they, John?"

"Absolutely!"

"Well, then, the windows of the rooms he sleeps in are all strongly barred, although they're seventy feet from the ground. The Tsar's well looked after, you see. Of course, those bars are no obstacle. They will give way in a few minutes to the electric fuser."

"What's that, sir?" asked Stephen.

"A little device of mine. You will see it at work presently. All I want you to do, John, is to hang overhead, and to let Sam and me down on to the sill of the window by a rope. It won't do for you to bring the Condor right alongside the window till we're ready for you to take us off again. Then you can."

"You're going to take Sam Villiers with you?"

"Yes; in case he's needed. I don't know that I've got muscle enough to carry the Tsar," said Harrington, smiling. "You don't mind laying those big hands of yours on a crowned monarch, Sam?"

"Not a bit," said the young scout—"when he means any harm to Britain!"

"Any job for me, sir?" asked Stephen.

"We must leave you behind this time, youngster. I want someone that's sharp and active with me, but I can't take two."

"Is there a Mrs. Tsar?" asked Stephen. "Will she be in the palace?"

"The Empress, you mean? She is at St. Petersburg."

"She'll get her old man back when we've finished with him," chuckled Kenneth.

"There's only one more thing, sir," said Sam. "What's the word of Russia worth, even if we get the promise we want?"

"Very little. But the Tsar's word is good, if it is once given. I can say that for him. Besides, he'll see it won't do to backslide."

Harrington would say no more, and the boys wondered greatly how the most powerful and, at the same time, most obstinate monarch in the world was to be made to do anything he didn't want to do. For evidently they were not going to use force nor to keep him long as a prisoner.

Hour by hour the Condor flew onwards, passing over cities that were mere glows of light far below, and over endless dark plains and wildernesses. The night was nearing its end when, slowing speed gradually, Carfax brought the airship to the confines of a range of low, rolling mountains.

"I'm not quite sure of my bearings here," he said. "I don't know this district at all; but by navigation according to the charts we ought not to be far off our goal."

"Your calculations were quite right," said Harrington, who had the powerful night glasses to his eyes. "Yonder is the Elsaft Palace, just ahead to your left."

The leaders reconnoitred the position carefully with their glasses. They were able to make out the details of the building, which was a sort of combination of palace and castle, whereas Sam could only make out the general dark mass of the edifice.

Harrington explained quickly to his brother, who at once saw what he had to do.

"The quicker the better," said Harrington. "Get a thirty-foot rope over the side, Hugh. Sam, stand by to follow me at once. We shall not be long over this job, if it's to be done at all."

(Another Instalment next week)

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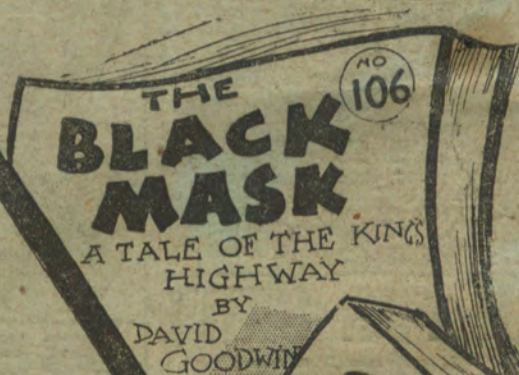
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