

THE ST. JIM'S PAGEANT.

The

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VOL. 4

and Long
Complete
Tale

A Tale of the Terrible Three.

by
MARTIN
CLIFFORD.



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THE ST JIM'S PAGEANT



A Splendid,
Long, Complete
School Tale of
TOM MERRY
& CO.

By Martin
Clifford.

CHAPTER 1.

The Alarm!

"I SAY, chaps, what is that red glow?"

Jack Blake had made the same remark before. Arthur Augustus, the swell of the School House of St. Jim's, turned from the table and screwed his monocle thoughtfully in his eye.

"The settin' sun, deah boy——"

"Ass!"

"Weally, Blake——"

"Double ass!" muttered Jack Blake. "Can you see it, Dig?"

"Gweat Scott! Of course Digbay can see it, but it's only the settin' sun wectin' its last ways on the mist; and it weally does not mattah, deah boy. The point we have to considah is whethah a pale yellow waistcoat will go with my new Hawwis tweed suit, or whethah a light blue would be bettah. Blake, deah boy, nevah mind about the settin' sun; let's get on with the important biznay of decidin'——"

"Duffer!"

"Weally, Blake, I must wequest you not to address me in that wough mannah!"

"Shrieking ass, then! The sun set about a week ago."

Digby grinned.

"That's a fact, Gussy, and even then it did the trick in the west; not the south-east."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus waved his arm loftily.

"Pewhahs you are wight, deah boys, and it isn't the settin' sun attah all. Howevah, it does not mattah, because it can only be the wisin' moon instead. Hewwies, as a man of the world, which do you considah would suit my new Hawwis tweed suit the bettah!"

And Arthur Augustus pointed anxiously towards three

new waistcoats of the fancy type which he had just spread out on the table.

Herries glanced at the creations, and turned to the window again.

"I wouldn't let Towser sleep on any of them, Gussy."

"Gweat Scott, deah boy——"

"Oh, ring off, ass. My aunt, Blake, it's a funny sort of light, anyway!"

"Sort of glow you get from a bonfire in a fog, isn't it?"

"What on earth can it be, chaps?"

"The settin' sun——"

"Cackling lunatic!"

"I mean the wisin' moon. But weally, Blake, I must wequest you not to address me in that extwemely wough and weady mannah."

"Go and eat coke!"

"I wufuse to—— Pway don't be widiculous, Digbay——"

"Don't cackle, then."

"My hat, kids, it does look rum!"

"Looks almost as if there's a fire somewhere——"

"Wot!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, with dignity.

"Wot!"

"I said it looks almost as if there's a fire somewhere, kid."

"Wot!"

Herries turned in exasperation.

"Silly ass! He's taken to being deaf as well as mad now. I said, it looks almost as if there's a fire——"

"Wot, deah boy! Wats!"

Herries went pink as the others chuckled, but it was not for long there was laughter in Study No. 6.

The strange red glow, low down in the sky, certainly was rather startling. Jack Blake was ready enough to admit that you get some strange effects after the sun has set on a misty evening such as this was, but there was something about that red glow he had never seen before.

A DOUBLE-LENGTH TALE OF TOM MERRY NEXT THURSDAY.

No. 118 (New Series.)

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The three stood staring out of the study window anxiously. Arthur Augustus retired to the table and tried to make up his mind on the vexed question whether a pale yellow or a light blue waistcoat would go the better with his new suit.

Suddenly Jack Blake uttered an exclamation. "I'm certain that was a streak of flame, kids!" "Looked jolly well like it!" "My hat—"

Jack Blake wheeled round. Somebody was hammering at the door.

"Come in, ass!"

"Weally, Blake, deah boy, undah the cires, it is imposs. for him to come in, because the doah is locked."

"Unlook it, then. All right, kid; don't get ratty."

The knocking went even more excitedly than before, and Digby unlocked the door. Tom Merry burst into the room.

"There's a fire in Rylcombe, Blake!"

"My aunt! Is that what it is?"

"Rather—"

"Weally, Mewwy, I wegwet havin' to disagwee with you, but if you are wewefwin' to the wed glow ovah there, it is only the settin' sun—"

"Rats!"

"Weally, Mewwy! It's only the settin' sun or the wisin' moon—"

"More rats, dotter!" exclaimed Tom Merry crisply. "I tell you there's a fire all right."

"Great Scott!"

Jack Blake was across the room in a flash.

"Do you know any particulars, Merry?" he exclaimed.

"Any chance of our getting leave—"

Tom Merry grinned.

"Ask me that in about ten seconds. Manners has gone to see Kildare about permits."

"Come on, kids! We'll do the same!"

Tom Merry chuckled, completely barring the way with his sturdy young form.

"No need, Blakey; Manners won't forget you four. I told him to get permits for the lot of us."

"Good kid!"

"Yaas, wathah! Mewwy, undah the cires, I must say I wegard your conduct as sportin' in the extweme."

"Do you, ass?"

"Yaas, wathah! Only I must request you not to address me in that wough mannah—"

"Ring off, Gussy!"

"Here comes Manners!"

"What luck, kid?"

Manners came along the corridor, panting. He was surrounded instantly.

"Can we go?"

Manners nodded breathlessly.

"Yes, all the lot of us, only we aren't to tell the others," the Shell fellow exclaimed breathlessly. "My hat! Do you know what it is that's on fire?"

"No."

"Wathah not, deah boy! As a mattah of fact, I still considah the wed glow may only be due to the wisin' moon—"

"Utter duffer!"

"What is it, Manners?"

"The hospital, Kildare thinks!" exclaimed Manners quickly. "It must have got well alight before the alarm was given."

Instantly very serious expressions flashed into the faces of the St. Jim's juniors.

Of all places, that it should be the little hospital to catch fire! The chums of Study No. 6 seized their caps.

"We'll get the grids out, Merry; we may be of some use."

"But it is wainin', deah boys!"

"Bother the rain!"

"Yaas, wathah! Is Kildare coming with us, Mannahs, deah boy?"

"Of course! You don't think he'd give us permits to go to a fire by ourselves, did you?"

"Bai Jove! No, I suppose not. Still, if he had known that I was goin'—"

"He'd have lent me a dog collar and a chain—exactly!" said Manners. "Here comes Lowther and Kildare."

"And some of the prefs, as well."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Are you youngsters ready?" Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, called out briskly.

"Right-ho!"

"Yes, we're ready, Kildare!"

"Humph! Well, only those of you whose machines are in condition have permits. Come on Monteith!"

The two chiefs of the respective Houses of St. Jim's moved away at a run. The juniors followed.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 118.

Kildare had not said why it was he allowed that special seven to accompany him to the fire while he had refused applications from many other fellows, but there was a reason all the same.

Not long before, the captain had inaugurated a voluntary fire drill amongst the juniors at St. Jim's, and Tom Merry & Co. and the chums of the Fourth had entered into the thing with their usual keenness. They were reaping a reward now if they never reaped a bigger one.

Once outside the college, a rush was made for the bicycle shed. Figgins & Co., the leading juniors of the New House, were already there, waiting with more or less patience, according to orders.

Monteith had granted permits to Figgins & Co. for the same reason Kildare had granted them to the others. It was a grave face Figgins turned to his great rival as the School House party rushed up.

"Pretty hefty blaze, Merry, I am afraid."

"I'm afraid so. We thought we even saw the flames as we came across the quad."

Figgins nodded.

"So did we."

"Ready?"

It was Kildare's voice again. The answer came as crisply as the question.

"Right away, then!" sang out the captain.

And the party dashed off through the drizzling rain without a thought for a possible side slip.

There was work to be done.

That thought was enough for juniors and seniors alike that night.

CHAPTER 2.

Fighting the Flames.

"FIRE! Fire!"

The word was being taken up and repeated by the few pedestrians about, as the St. Jim's party pedalled along the country road, but in spite of the previous alarm, they were amongst the first to gain the scene.

The hospital—quite a small building, a great deal of structure being wood—stood back from the high road, about equidistant from the college and Rylcombe Village. When Kildare's party dashed up breathlessly on their machines, the west wing of the little building was a mass of flames.

Arthur Augustus was off his machine in a flash.

"Gweat Scott! Is any one inside, deah boy?"

The swell of St. Jim's had addressed his remark to a very old man staring up at the hospital in dazed sort of amazement.

Tom Merry caught him by the arm and shook him.

"Is anyone inside, Sam?"

The old man, porter and general sort of handyman at the hospital, tried to pull himself together.

"There may be; then, again, there mayn't be," he said in broad Sussex. "I be just comin' home from Rylcombe—"

Kildare and the seniors did not wait for the old porter to finish his sentence. He appeared in too dazed a condition to be able to furnish useful information.

"The door!"

Almost as Kildare uttered the word he ran for the door, followed by Monteith. An exclamation from the New House prefect told them that it was locked.

"Bai Jove! Bweak it down, deah boys!"

"Don't be an ass, Gussy!"

"Weally, Mewwy—"

"Round to the back, Kildare!" exclaimed the Shell junior.

"If we smash down this door the wind will take the flames all over the building, won't it?"

The captain nodded as he ran round the small building. Tom Merry, at any rate, had profited by the fire-drill which had been started at St. Jim's.

So had Jack Blake and Figgins apparently, for they had already discovered the water main. Jack Blake had the small iron flap raised instantly.

"Get the hose out first of all, Kildare."

"Does any one know where it is? I believe the place is empty."

"Yaas, wathah, Digbay, deah boy—"

"Who is that there?"

The figures of two ladies—one young, and the other elderly—rounded the building at that moment. They, with Sam, the porter, formed the staff employed at the hospital, there being no resident doctor.

The matron hurried up.

"No, there are no patients, thank goodness!" she exclaimed.

"Good!"

"Yaas, wathah! Is there a fiah-hose inside, madam?"

"Yes, but it will be impossible to get it—"



Long tongues of flame were licking round the balusters, and the stairs themselves were alight in places; but without a word Jack Blake and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy followed Tom Merry.

"Pway where is it, please?"

"At the top of the stairs. Stop! The staircase is in flames!"

But Arthur Augustus did not stop. He dashed for the door, followed by Tom Merry and Jack Blake.

Kildare barred the way.

The juniors were breathless with excitement.

"We must get the fire-hose, Kildare! Figgins has found the main!"

"Yaas, wathah! The place will be burnt to the ground in anothah moment."

"Please let us go, Kildare!"

The captain hesitated.

A glance round told him that even if the west wing were doomed, there was quite a good chance of saving a portion of the main body, and the other miniature wing.

He flung open the door.

"Take care, then, youngsters!" he exclaimed. "I must get that broken window boarded up!"

Kildare had not heard the matron explain that the hose was kept at the top of the staircase. Figgins had, though, and the leader of the New House juniors rushed up to join his rivals.

Tom Merry caught his arm.

"We don't want too many, Figgy, old man."

"But—"

"You get the ladders, and if there is a crowd, keep 'em away from the main."

Figgins nodded.

He would like to have borne some of the brunt of obtaining the fire-hose, but he was a hard-headed fellow. They were all working to save the hospital.

The three who were already in the hospital could be relied upon to do their best to get the hose. His part was to get the ladders, so that the very best possible use could be made of the hose when it did come.

He ran towards the shed, and crashed into the door with the full force of his wiry young frame.

Manners and Lowther understood, and followed him, while Kildare and Monteith were working like Trojans boarding up the broken window to keep out the draught which would have fed the flames like oil.

Inside the building Tom Merry, Jack Blake, and Arthur Augustus had gained the stairs, but the spectacle which met their eyes caused them to stop involuntarily.

Long tongues of flame were licking round the balusters—the stairs themselves, even, were alight in places. About half-way up the flight the flame had come right through from below, and the updraught was causing a roar like a small furnace.

The three looked ahead anxiously.

How to get up those stairs!

Tom Merry buttoned his coat.

"No good the lot of us doing it, Blake," he said shortly.

"I'll go—"

"Rats!"

"On the contwawy, deah boy, it would be bettah if I went!"

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By
MARTIN CLIFFORD.

NEXT
THURSDAY:

"THE LEADER OF THE NEW HOUSE."

Tom Merry did not answer—he had started up the stairs instead.

Without a word, Jack Blake and Arthur Augustus followed him.

Each step they took was a nerve-racking one, for the charred wood beneath their feet cracked, and sometimes gave way. What would happen if they fell through none of them knew. They did not even know what was beneath the stairs, but whatever was there was well alight.

Perhaps it was the kitchen.

Tom Merry rather thought it must be; then he forgot about that. He had gained the gap where the flames had burnt completely through.

"My hat! We ought to have waited for the ladders, and come in by the window!"

"But the hose is just at the top of the stairs," said Blake hoarsely, the smoke and fumes from the burning wood almost choking him. "The hose may even be burnt now."

"Yaas, wathah! Jump for it, deah boy!"

It was reckless advice, but it was what Arthur Augustus would have done himself, and Tom Merry took it.

He jumped across the gap—a difficult, upward leap.

There was an unpleasant crack as the half-charred wood gave, but the Shell fellow was clear. Half-blinded, he stumbled on up the stairs, and Jack Blake took the jump.

"Come on, Gussy!"

"Wight-ho, deah boy!" And Arthur Augustus leapt in the air.

Jack Blake wheeled round. That last crack the stairs had given when he had jumped had frightened him.

He saw Arthur Augustus spring in the air, then there was a loud crash.

The stairs had given way at last.

"Merry!"

Jack Blake's voice rang out in horror, but he did not lose his head. He had obtained a grip on his chum's elegant coat which would have taken a lot of shaking off.

With his other hand he grasped the smouldering baluster-rail.

His hand must have been painfully blistered, but he scarcely noticed it in the excitement of the moment.

Then Tom Merry joined him, and together they wrenched Arthur Augustus clear. His clothes were sadly scorched, but otherwise the swell of St. Jim's was unharmed.

"Howevah, it was a neah thin', deah boys," he said quietly, glancing back at the staircase, which was now a mass of flames; "a vewy neah thin' indeed."

"Never mind that! Where on earth is the hose?"

"Yaas, where is the hose, Blake, deah boy? We can discuss the othah mattah latah."

"It'll be along the wall somewhere."

"Or rolled up somewhere, more likely. Phew!"

The heat on the landing was stifling, and the smoke so dense that for a moment they almost despaired of finding the hose before they were driven into the other wing.

At last, however, Tom Merry uttered an exclamation.

"There it is!"

"Yaas, wathah, deah boys! Hooway!"

"I have it!"

Jack Blake wrenched the heavy coil of fire-hose from its fastenings, and slung it over his shoulder. Tom Merry's keen eyes noticed something else.

"Half a minute, chaps!"

There was a patent fire-extinguisher on the wall, and he had it down from its stand in a flash.

It was rather late in the day for a patent fire-extinguisher to be of much service, but it might help a little in preventing the fire spreading.

The drill Kildare had started at St. Jim's had taught him how to use most of the patent extinguishers, and so there was no need to waste time reading instructions.

He just banged the knob at the end down on the floor, thus freeing the acid. Then he dropped the thing in the centre of the passage, leaving the gas which the acid and carbonate the extinguisher contained would generate to escape.

Anyway, the non-combustible gas would retard the flames for a time.

Tom Merry turned away.

"Now for it—as hard as you can!"

"Bai Jove! We shall nevah get down the staircase again, deah boys!"

"No, fear!"

"Rather not! We'll drop out of a window instead, kid."

"Bai Jove! I nevah thought of that! I say, deah boys, what about closin' the doah?"

"Good for you, Gussy?"

Jack Blake slammed the passage-door to. That would also help to keep the flames back.

That was the idea—to limit the area of the fire. It was useless trying to save the west wing—that was doomed—but it was well worth trying to prevent the fire spreading.

"This way!"

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"Yaas, wathah! This way, deah boys!"

At a rush, the other two followed Jack Blake into the main ward—a large room, containing about a dozen beds.

Jack flung up the window.

In the dull red glow with which the fire was lighting up the mist, he could see Figgins & Co. shouldering a ladder, anxiously watching the windows.

"Cheer-ho, Figgy!"

"This way, deah boy!"

Figgins & Co. looked round.

"Hooray! There they are, kids!"

With praiseworthy promptness the ladder was run up against the wall, just reaching the window. Figgins had chosen his ladder with care.

Jack Blake leaned well out of the window.

"Stand clear! The fire-hose is coming!"

There was a thud. Jack had flung the hose from the window, and the moment it touched the ground Manners and Lowther seized it.

"Unroll it as you go, youngsters."

It was Kildare's voice. It was the first mistake he had noticed the juniors make.

To carry the fire-hose to the main rolled up would mean a waste of time.

Then Jack Blake slid down the ladder, stopping when near the bottom. Arthur Augustus followed, to stop about half-way, while Tom Merry stayed at the top.

Kildare nodded.

"That's the style!" he shouted. "The hose will want plenty of support! Are you at the right window, Merry?"

"I think so. The flames are beginning to break through the wall."

"That's right, then. Hurry up at the main!"

Manners and Lowther were working with desperate haste.

CHAPTER 3.

The End of the Fire.

"READY, Merry?"

"Right-ho!"

Hastily the hose was run up the ladder from hand to hand; then Tom Merry's voice rang out.

"Let her rip, Manners!"

A powerful stream shot into the ward. Tom Merry knew there must be a good pressure of water, from the curious trembling of the fire-hose. He directed the stream on the wall, and instantly there was a loud hissing.

But the Shell junior had another difficulty to contend with now, for the ward was soon full of steam, and he could not see where he was directing the water.

But he stuck to his post, staying at the top of the ladder until Kildare called him down.

"Try this other window, Merry."

"Yaas, wathah, only it's my turn, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus. "Turn off the watah, Manners!"

The water was turned off instantly, and Arthur Augustus took the hose. Tom Merry would have been willing enough to go on, but the rest did him good.

He had been a good many minutes now in the steam-laden atmosphere at the window, and it had not been without an effect upon him.

Good service was done at the other window, and Kildare was thoroughly satisfied.

Perhaps the juniors would have liked to have seen the flames abate a little under their attentions, but Kildare knew they could not hope for that.

They had checked the advance of the fire, and that was as much as he had ever hoped for.

Presently there was the rattle of horses and harness along the road, and the excited voices of a large crowd. Tom Merry glanced round.

"The Rylcombe fire-engine, chaps!"

"Hooray!"

"Now we shall get the flames under all right!"

But a bigger task lay before them than they expected. The main in the road was quickly found, and the long fire-hose of the Rylcombe fire-engine rigged.

The engine itself was already sending showers of sparks up into the night air. Arthur Augustus could hear it throbbing and panting even above the roar of the flames.

Rylcombe did not boast of anything very elaborate in fire-engines and appliances. However, what they had was in splendid order.

But they were short handed, and the help the St. Jim's fellows were able to lend probably made all the difference.

Jack Blake and his chums from Study No. 6 worked at the upper window with the small fire-hose they had rigged up themselves, and the others joined the firemen from Rylcombe. In a very short time the volume of smoke and steam which came from the burning hospital increased wonderfully, but there was less flame.

They were gaining the upper hand in the fight with the fire.

Kildare, drenched to the skin, and his hands painfully scorched, glanced at the captain of the fire brigade anxiously.

"We sha'n't save much of the main building, after all."

The fireman shook his head.

"No; most of it's doomed right enough, I'm afraid. The building is made of wood, isn't it?"

"Looks like it."

"Humph! You and the youngsters have saved the other wing, sir, and that's something. There's plenty of work to be done yet, though."

The fire brigade captain was right. It would be a long time yet before it would be safe to leave the building.

But more aid was at hand, for most of the masters, including Dr. Holmes and his wife, came upon the scene before long.

The doctor seemed quite upset, as he raised his hat to the white-faced matron of the hospital.

"What a pity, Miss Harper! Is the whole building destroyed?"

"No; they will save one wing, they say," answered the matron, in a voice that was anything but steady. "We cannot think how the outbreak occurred."

"No; it is always difficult to trace the cause. Have my boys been of any service?"

"They have worked splendidly."

Dr. Holmes smiled. He knew without being told that the seniors and juniors alike would have worked hard, but whether to effect, was another matter.

However, the fire seemed to have been got under control in good style.

Then the doctor opened the door of his carriage. Miss Harper, the matron, and the other nurse of the hospital staff would accompany the doctor and his wife back to St. Jim's to spend the night there.

In silence the occupants of the carriage watched the firemen and schoolboys at work, but an hour had passed before Kildare called his party together.

Tom Merry showed his disappointment.

"Hain't we better wait a bit longer, Kildare?"

"Yaas, wathah! A smoulderin' piece of timber might burst into flame, and start the flash all over again, deah boy."

"I scarcely think that is likely, D'Arcy."

"No, perhaps not; but you nevah know."

And, in any case, the Rylcombe fire brigade are going to remain on the spot. I really think there is no need for us to stay longer, doctor."

"Pway excuse me, Kildare, but I wathah think you are wunnin' a wisk."

"No, it's all right, D'Arcy," laughed the captain, glancing at Arthur Augustus's very dishevelled attire. "Come on! Wire in for St. Jim's!"

"Yaas, wathah! Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus had been in the act of mounting his bicycle. He stopped with one foot on the pedal.

"What's the matter, Gussy?"

"What's up, kid?"

"Gwent Scott!"

The seniors were already on their machines, but the juniors stared at Arthur Augustus in astonishment.

"Off your rocker, Gussy?"

"Weally, Mewwy—"

"Oh, you are, are you? Well, get on your bicycle to balance things."

"My only toppah!"

Tom Merry wheeled round again.

"Is there anything the matter, young ass?"

"Yaas, wathah! That is to say, I have been stwuck by a bwiliant ideah."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Mewwy, I fail to see what there is to laugh at in my bein' stwuck by a bwiliant ideah."

"My only hat!"

"Come on, Gussy, you ass!"

"I wufuse to come on. I wish to think this mattah out. Do you considah—"

"Oh, yank the young burbler into the saddle!"

"Right-ho!"

"Blake, wesease me! Wesease me instantly, deah boy!"

"The other arm, Manners!"

"Collar his legs, Monty!"

"Mewwy, wesease me! Wesease me instantly, or I shall have no othah course open to me but to administah feashul thwashin's all wound!"

"Now we have him!"

"Get ready!"

"Go!"

And Arthur Augustus was lifted into his bicycle saddle,

and pushed off in rare style. The other juniors sprang on their machines, and crowded round the swell of St. Jim's so as to prevent him dismounting.

To their surprise, Arthur Augustus did not utter a single word until the college was gained.

He had lapsed into an excited sort of silence.

CHAPTER 4.

Arthur Augustus's Idea.

"HERE they come, chaps!"

It was Harry Noble's voice which sounded along the corridor, and it was answered by a chorus.

"Yes, here come the kids!"

"Cheer-ho, Merry!"

Tom Merry and the other juniors came briskly along the corridor. A whole crowd of Lower School fellows were there to meet them.

"What sort of fire was it?"

"How did it happen?"

"Was the place burnt to the ground?"

The questions came at a tremendous pace, and Tom Merry & Co. did their best to answer them. Arthur Augustus showed his impatience.

"Yaas, wathah, of course there were flames, Dane."

"Ring off, Gussy!"

"I wufuse to wing off, Tom Mewwy. In fact, I wufuse to considah wingin' off until I have explained my bwiliant ideah."

"Rats! No, there wasn't an explosion, Mellish. They don't keep gunpowder in a hospital, ass."

"It has occuwved to me, deah boys—"

"Lie down, Gussy!"

"I wufuse to. Pway don't be widiculous, Glyn."

"Get on with it, Merry."

"Well, I've told you about all," exclaimed the Shell fellow quietly. "I'm afraid the little hospital is about done for. It'll have to be almost entirely rebuilt."

"Yaas, wathah; but it has occuwved to me—"

"Oh, gag him, someone!"

"I should wufuse to be gagged, Blake, deah boy, and, undah the cires, I am wathah supwised at your suggestin' it. As I was saying when you all vevy wudely intewwupted, a bwiliant ideah has occuwved to me."

"Give it to Towser, then."

"No fear!" grinned Herries. "I'm not having Towser worried at this time of night."

"You w'etched wottahs!"

"Never mind, Gussy."

"It has occuwved to me that it would be a wippin' ideah if we—"

"Rotten idea, you mean."

Arthur Augustus rose to almost a shriek.

"On the contwawy, Lowthah—"

"It came out of the ark, kid."

"Pway what came out of the ark, deah boy?"

"Your idea," grinned Lowther. "Did you come with it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wottahs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wegard you all as wagging wottahs!" shouted Arthur Augustus warmly. "I doubt whethah I can wegard any of you as fwiends in the future."

"Hard luck, Gussy."

Arthur Augustus did not answer. He turned on his heel and stalked away instead.

He made straight for the doctor's private room.

Arthur Augustus did not mean his "bwiliant ideah" to be lost to the world this time.

For quite a long time he remained in the doctor's room, chatting with the kindly head of St. Jim's, and when he came out at last it was to repair to the Hall for the evening prayers.

He walked to the Fourth Form row of seats, and took his own particular chair, then he jammed his monocle well in his eye.

"Hallo, Gussy!"

Arthur Augustus looked up frigidly.

It was Jack Blake who had spoken, taking his place between Digby and Herries. Arthur Augustus glanced at him, then half turned his back on him.

"Cheer-ho, Gus!"

Digby's salutation was treated in the same distant manner. Digby grinned.

"Anyone got a cold-water bandage, chaps?"

"No. Have you got a cold-water bandage, Merry?"

"No. Blakey—Lowther, have you a cold-water bandage handy?"

Arthur Augustus allowed himself to thaw as he heard the question being asked on all sides.

"Pway, Digbay, deah boy, have you burnt yourself?"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 118.

By
MARTIN CLIFFORD.

NEXT
THURSDAY:

"THE LEADER OF THE NEW HOUSE."

"I— No, I'm all right. By Jove, we must get a cold-water bandage somehow!"

"Rather!"

"Pway, what do you wequiah a cold-water bandage foah, deah boy!"

"For a swelled head," said Digby solemnly.

"Yes, for a poor kid we know who has a touch of swelled head," added Blake.

Arthur Augustus went pink, and lapsed into silence again. The chuckles of the others were cut short by the entrance of the doctor and other masters.

Prayers were gone through in the usual quiet manner at St. Jim's, then Dr. Holmes prevented the fellows from filing out by holding up his hand.

"By this time," he said, "I expect you have all heard of the regrettable fire at the small local hospital."

There was no answer. They had all heard the details, of course, by now.

"As you know," went on the head-master, "a hospital, in a scattered, agricultural district such as this is, becomes a necessity. Statistics prove that our little hospital has done splendid work in the past; I am sure a moment's reflection will convince you that it must go on doing its splendid work. Boys, it has been suggested to me that St. Jim's undertake the financial responsibility of rebuilding the hospital."

There was a moment's silence, then a loud cheer.

"Hooray!"

"Rather!"

"It can be called the St. Jim's Hospital!"

There could be no doubting the sincerity of the remarks, but most of them were coming from the junior Forms.

The seniors were looking rather doubtful, and the doctor understood.

"Of course, it would be almost impossible to raise sufficient funds for the work in the school," he explained; "that was not the suggestion made to me at all. The suggestion is that the college inaugurates some extensive scheme through which the money can be raised."

"Hooray!"

"Rather, sir!"

The cries were coming from all Forms now.

Amongst the School House Fourth-Formers, Arthur Augustus was the only junior who was not excited. Jack Blake thumped him on the shoulder.

"Cheer up, Gussy! Downright ripping idea, I call it!"

"Pway do not wumple my collah! Gweat Scott, I haven't changed my clothes, deah boys!"

"Bother your clothes! What do you chaps think of the idea, Tom Merry?"

"Great!"

"How will the money be raised, though? What sort of scheme, I mean?"

"Goodness knows! I say, Gussy, it's a ripping idea, and I'll wager anything it came from Mrs. Holmes."

"No, deah boy!"

"Yes, it did, kid; it's a brilliant notion."

Arthur Augustus chuckled.

"Wathah!" he said. "That's what I wemarked; it's a brilliant ideah, deah boy. Ha, ha, ha!"

Jack Blake stared at Arthur Augustus in amazement. The swell of St. Jim's was still chuckling loudly.

He stopped presently, because Dr. Holmes commenced speaking again.

"I do not want this important matter undertaken in a moment of enthusiasm, boys," he said gravely. "If we decide to accept the responsibility we must be prepared to go through with it. You understand that?"

"Yes, sir."

"Rather!"

"And you understand it will mean hard work, because a large sum will have to be raised."

"We'll raise it, sir!"

"Trust St. Jim's!"

The doctor smiled.

"Well, yes, I think we can trust St. Jim's," he said, not without a trace of pride in his voice. "You are all in favour of accepting your individual share of this responsibility?"

Hands went up in the air without a moment's hesitation. There was not a single fellow present who did not put up his hand.

Even Mellish, the cad of the Fourth, did so. Kerruish, the Manx junior, saw to that.

"Then the matter is settled!" exclaimed the doctor, with obvious pleasure. "The next point to decide is some scheme to raise the funds."

There was silence now.

That was a big point indeed.

The doctor went on, with a smile.

"Of course, I do not expect you to be able to propound a scheme this evening," he smiled. "There is no very great

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 118.

"THE EMPIRE" LIBRARY

hurry; although, of course, the sooner we get to work the better. I will give the school until to-morrow evening to think it over. I would propose that you form yourselves into committees, as many or as few as you like, and seriously discuss the ways and means. Then, if each committee carefully writes down its suggestion, and hands it to me to-morrow evening, the papers shall be carefully considered and the best idea adopted."

"Hooray!"

"Yes, sir!"

"Ripping!"

It was the junior section of the school which were making all the noise again, but the doctor did not stop them at once. The head-master of St. Jim's never objected to enthusiasm in a good cause.

He had to put up his hand at last, though.

"There is only one other remark I have to make," he said quietly. "The very excellent suggestion that St. Jim's should rebuild the hospital came from a St. Jim's boy."

There was instant silence. Tom Merry and Jack Blake glanced round, looking puzzled.

"Kildare?"

"Or Monteith?"

Tom Merry shook his head. The two seniors in question were obviously as puzzled as they were.

"The suggestion came from a junior Form boy, I might add."

Tom Merry, Jack Blake, and Figgins glanced at their respective chums anxiously. Then they looked at one another.

About the only junior who did not undergo a suspicious scrutiny was Arthur Augustus.

The swell of St. Jim's was sitting uneasily, engaged chiefly in taking his monocle out of his eye, and putting it back again.

"A Fourth Form boy," went on Dr. Holmes. "It was D'Arcy major who made the suggestion to me."

Instantly every eye was directed towards the crimson countenance of Arthur Augustus.

CHAPTER 5.

The First Committee.

"BOYS, you can go!"

The dismissal came before any of the juniors could recover from their surprise. They filed out, surrounding Arthur Augustus the moment the passage was gained.

"Gussy, was—was it really you?"

"Yaas, wathah, Blake, deah boy! But, undah the cires, there is nothin' to wave about. It was a brilliant ideah, I admit, and it occurred to me when I was mountin' my bicycle. I wathah fancy, howevah, it isn't the only brilliant ideah I have had—I mean— Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus was becoming flustered.

Jack Blake, Tom Merry, and Figgins were all thumping him on the shoulders at the same time.

"Bravo, Gussy!"

"Good old one and only!"

"Three cheers for Gussy, chaps!"

"Gweat Scott! Pway westwain yourselves, deah boys!"

"Hooray!"

"Three of the best!"

"Figgys, deah boy, undah the cires, I suppose it is impos- for me to administah a feahful thwashin', but unless you westwain yourself, I feel certain I shall lose my tempah—"

"Good old Gus!"

Jack Blake grinned.

"Yes, don't slay the young ass."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Oh, if he wants to be slain, then, don't mind me!"

chuckled Jack. "Trust Study No. 5 to furnish all the ripping ideas, Merry. Not much chance for you Shell-fish, when Study No. 6 fellows get going."

"What's that, young Blake?"

"Didn't you hear, kid? You might have known that the suggestion would have come from Study No. 6. Don't you feel fit, Figgy?"

And before the others could answer, Jack Blake, Digby, and Herries bore Arthur Augustus off to their study.

Jack Blake was chuckling loudly.

"The Shell-fish and Figgins & Co. won't forget this, Dig," he grinned.

"Rather not."

"Gussy is a great man—Gussy, you are a great man!"

"Yaas, wathah! I mean, pway don't be ridiculous!"

"I say, why didn't you tell us about the idea, ass?"

"Weally, Hewwies, undah the cires, I am wathah suw- pised at your wemark. As a mattah of fact, I tried to tell you, only you would wot so."

Jack Blake coughed

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"Anyway, the idea came from Study No. 6, and that's good enough to go on with. The thing is to back it up now."

The others looked at him without understanding.

"Pway, Blake, deah boy, I fail to follow—"

"Must be an ass, then!"

"Weally, Blake, on the contwawy—"

"You must be a shrieking ass, I mean. Didn't the doctor say we were to form ourselves into committees?"

"Yaas, wathah! A sort of Form committee, or House committee—"

"Rats!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Anyway, the doctor didn't say they were to join Form committees, or House committees, or anything like that, did he?"

"Not that I wemembah, deah boy, but I wathah fancy he wished to imply—"

"Oh, we can't help what he wished to imply," grinned the chief of Study No. 6, throwing open the door of that famous room. "It's what he said that concerns us."

"Yaas, wathah, but—"

"Never mind the 'buts.' The doctor said we were to form ourselves into committees—well, here's one of the committees to start with."

"Bai Jove!"

"Like the idea, Dig?"

"Rather! If you mean we four are to be the only members of this particular committee, kid?"

"That's what I do mean, anyway."

"Hooway! Blake, deah boy, I wegard that as a wippin' ideah!"

"It is. All my ideas are ripping. It's a compact then, chaps, that we don't join any other committee?"

"Rather!"

"Bai Jove, yaas, deah boy!"

"Then shut the door!"

"Yaas, wathah!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "Bai Jove! We weally shall waise the dig. of Studay No. 6 this time. There's only one thin' to be done, deah boys."

"What's that, Gussy?"

"I thought there were a good many things—"

"Get 'em off your chest, kid."

"Yaas, wathah! I wish to pwopose, deah boys, that the mattah be left entirely in my hands."

"In your—what?"

"Hands, Hewwies, deah boy. It was I who pwoposed the brilliant ideah to the doctah, and I wathah think it stands to reason that it should be I who must follow the mattah up. If you will remain quiet for a couple of minutes, I will think out a scheme for waisin' the necessary funds."

"I don't think."

"Weally, Blake—"

"We are all in this, kid."

"Yaas, wathah, only it would be bettah if you three were to remain sleepin' partnahs, as it were—"

"Oh, would it?"

"Yaas, wathah, Dig—"

"I don't think."

Jack Blake laughed.

"Not much, Gussy. You've done rippingly in proposing that we should rebuild the hospital, but it's up against all of us to think out the scheme for raising the money."

"Well, of course, I do not object to you twyin', deah boys, but it would save time to leave the mattah entirely to me. However, if you would like to have a hand in the mattah, I offah no objection. Pway let us get on with the cashin'."

"Yes, that's the idea."

"Get on with it, chaps; I'll take the chair."

"You, Herries?"

"Yes, I, Blake," grinned Herries, taking the chair at the head of the table. "Order, please!"

There was silence.

For about three minutes there was not a sound. Then Herries ventured a remark.

"Any—any suggestions, gentlemen?"

There was no answer, and silence reigned again. Rather a grave expression showed on Jack Blake's face now.

To think of a scheme to raise a sum of money sufficient to rebuild the hospital, was not going to prove the easy matter they had thought it would in the enthusiasm of the moment.

All four racked their brains in desperation.

CHAPTER 6.

The General Adviser.

"ROT, Manners; piffle!"

"Is it, my son?"

"Yes, it is!" exclaimed Tom Merry warmly.

"How can we have a six-a-side competition, and charge a gate when football is over?"

"And how much money do you think we should raise if it weren't, ass?"

Manners did not explain.

"Anyway, it's a suggestion, and that's more than any of you have made, and chance it," he said indignantly. "We've been sitting here for about ten minutes looking at one another. What—what about a raffle?"

"Rot!"

Manners flared up.

"You keep saying my ideas are rot, Merry; let's hear some of yours."

"Yes, fire ahead, Merry; you're in the chair!"

Tom Merry coughed thoughtfully.

"We—we might have a subscription list pinned up on the notice-board—"

"Or we might collect used postage-stamps," said Lowther pointedly. "I believe about a million are worth half-a-crown. Ass!"

"It's not an original idea, I know, and I doubt if it would raise anything like enough money unless the fellows' paters came down handsomely."

"And that's what we don't want, kid."

Tom Merry nodded.

No, it would not do to collect subscriptions from the home people. St. Jim's and St. Jim's alone has to work this affair."

Presently Tom Merry got up.

"Anyway, we've settled two things—we've agreed to refuse to join any other committee, and we've made up our minds to beat young Blake and his kids."

"It's easy to make up your mind, Tom, but how are we going to beat them?"

"By getting hold of a better idea, of course."

"Yes, but—"

Tom Merry waved his hand loftily.

"Oh, there's plenty of time yet. We've got all to-morrow, and—"

A gentle tap sounded at the door.

Manners rose to his feet and turned the key.

"We're busy, kid—"

"So I perceive!" exclaimed a slimly-built junior with a curious, bumpy face, adorned with glasses. "I have already knocked three times at your door."

"Hard cheese! Go and knock at someone else's now."

"Dear me! Why should I knock at someone else's door, when it is Merry I wish to see?"

"For the fun of the thing."

Herbert Skimpole, the brainy man of the Shell, blinked thoughtfully.

"You appear rather more incoherent this evening than usual, Lowther," he said. "I entirely fail to follow the drift of your observations. However, that does not matter in the least. Merry, have you decided upon the scheme for raising the money for rebuilding the hospital yet? Ah, I see that you have not."

And Skimpole came into the study, and sat down.

"I suppose you three have decided to work alone, as usual," he said, blinking more thoughtfully than ever. "Figgins & Co. have, of course, decided to do so, and I rather fancy Study No. 6 have the same idea."

"Trust them!"

Skimpole rubbed his bony hands together, and fixed his eyes upon Tom Merry.

"At first it was my intention to form a committee myself, but I discovered that I could get no one to join in with me, and the idea of a committee consisting of one—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Really, Lowther, I fail to see what there is to laugh at in my observation. There is no doubt that I should be able to work out a scheme single-handed, which the doctor would at once adopt; but that is scarcely in keeping with my views on co-operation as a sincere Socialist."

"My hat!"

"What's he babbling about, kids?"

Skimpole glanced from Manners to Lowther, in surprise, then went on.

"In consequence," he exclaimed, "I have now come to the conclusion that I shall not form a committee nor shall I join one."

"Good!"

"That's the style, Skimmy."

"You go in a home, instead, old man."

"Dear me! I fail to understand. Ah, you mean your observations as examples of humour. Merry, is this an occasion for humour?"

"No."

"Rather not."

"Turn the funny merchant out, chaps."

"Dear me."

The Terrible Three were advancing grimly towards the brainy man of the Shell. Skimpole got up.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 118.

MARTIN CLIFFORD.

NEXT
THURSDAY:

"THE LEADER OF THE NEW HOUSE."

"Please listen to me, Merry. I have a very important suggestion to make."

"Why didn't you tell us before?"

"Fire ahead, ass!"

"Yes, certainly. My idea is, instead of joining any of the various committees, I constitute myself adviser to all of them impartially."

"What?"

"Impartially, Manners, without bias."

"My only hat."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Skimpole looked puzzled again.

"You consent, Merry?"

"My only Aunt Jane, what do you think you are going to advise us about, kid?"

"About the scheme for raising money."

"Fire ahead then!"

"W-what? I fail to grasp!"

"Let's have it, old chap."

"Dear me, have what, Lowther?"

"The advice," said the humorist of the Shell. "Let's have the advice as to how the money can be raised, Skimmy."

"Ah, I see! Well, I haven't had time as yet to thoroughly go into the matter, but of course I can give you suggestions."

"Get on with the washing, then."

Skimpole coughed. Then he blinked thoughtfully, and coughed again.

"Have you thought of a fancy bazaar, Merry?"

"A—a what?"

"A bazaar," repeated Skimpole. "A great deal of money is raised each year for the churches by means of bazaars and—"

"Ass!"

"Dear me, Manners!"

"Frabjous lunatic, where should we get the things to sell?"

"Humph! Well, of course, it would be useless to buy them, because we shouldn't make enough."

"More likely lose, you duffer."

"Yes, possibly we should. No, we could not buy the things; we should have to have them given to us."

"By whom?"

"Yes, Skimmy!" grinned Lowther. "Who'd give us the things? Remember, it's a whacking big sum we want."

Skimpole thought for a moment or two, then waived the question.

"Well, I will admit I haven't thought the details of my idea out as yet; but that can wait. It is settled that I am to be general adviser, I understand?"

"General adviser to lunatic asylums, you mean."

"Don't be frivolous, Lowther. You had better think my suggestion of a bazaar over."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We don't want to be too original, Skimmy."

"No, of course there is that. Dear me!"

Tom Merry and Manners were on their feet, and taking a firm grip on Skimpole's arms, they led him to the door.

"Dear me, I am not going yet. I have other suggestions to discuss—"

"Open the door, Monty."

"Right-ho!"

"Really, Merry! Dear me! How extraordinary of them!"

And Skimpole found himself out in the passage, blinking reflectively at the closed door.

He stood where he was for a moment or two in doubt, then hurried away.

Skimpole had many visits to pay before the dormitory bell sounded.

CHAPTER 7. Skimpole's Rebuffs.

TAP-TAP!

Gently Skimpole's knuckles rapped on the door of Study No. 6.

There was no answer.

Skimpole looked thoughtfully at the closed door.

"Dear me, I trust they are not out. Blake!"

"What is it, ass?"

"I've got something of importance to tell you—"

"Go and tell it to someone else, then!" growled Jack Blake's voice. "We're busy."

Skimpole reflected again for a moment or two. There was nothing overwhelming about the reception offered him.

ANSWERS

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 118.

"THE EMPIRE" LIBRARY

Still, he was used to that.

He tapped gently again.

"Blake!"

There was a muttered exclamation, a chair was overturned as if someone had got up in excitement, and the key in the door clicked.

"Who the, what the—?"

"It's Skimmy, deah boy!"

"Yes, D'Arcy, it is I—"

"Well, weally, deah boy, we must wequest you to wetiah, as we have important biznay on hand—"

"Ah, you are discussing the hospital scheme!"

"Yaas, wathah! And undah the cires, we must wequest you to wetiah."

"Yes, clear out of it, Skimmy!"

"You are in the giddy way."

"On the contrary, Herries, I have arrived at a most opportune moment," corrected Skimpole. "I have to inform you that I have just been elected general adviser to the hospital committees."

"The who—to the what?"

"General adviser—"

"Gweat Scott!"

They stared at Skimpole in astonishment. Skimpole walked towards a chair.

"Now, Blake, have you discussed the pros and cons of levying a tax on every fellow in St. Jim's?"

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus gasped. Jack Blake and Herries were approaching Skimpole from behind.

"Ah, I see you have not! Can you give me any logical reason why a hospital tax for the time being should not be levied on St. Jim's, those who have much to pay much, and those who have little, like myself, to pay little? As sincere Socialist, I consider— Dear me! O-oh!"

Skimpole had been in the act of sitting down, and Jack Blake had pulled the chair away.

With a yell the Shell fellow found himself falling.

"How's that?" grinned Herries, catching Skimpole's weedy form just before it struck the floor. "What's the verdict, kids?"

"Boot him out!"

"Well, weally, Digbay, if we wequest him to wetiah—"

"Out with the young burler, Herries!"

"Dear me, Blake—"

"Out with him!"

"Yes, Blake; but as general adviser to the hospital— dear me!"

Skimpole was bundled into the corridor, the door was slammed, and the key turned. For a moment the amateur Socialist of St. Jim's was too astounded at his reception to think clearly. He was half inclined to knock again, then thought better of it.

"Dear me, no, I will not do that!" he mused. "Blake appeared to be in a very anti-Socialistic mood, and the others were very little better. No, I will talk to them later. Dear me!"

Skimpole straightened his jacket, rearranged his collar, and after some little time, recovered his tie, which had got round to the back of his neck. Then he hurried down the corridor.

He stopped again before the study sacred to Cornstalk & Co., and cautiously opened the door.

"Is Noble here—?"

"Yes, Noble is!" exclaimed Kangaroo for himself. "What do you want, Skimmy?"

"I want to see you for a moment."

"Well, now you've seen me, you can clear!"

"Dear me; but—"

"Clear!"

Skimpole blinked rapidly.

"Dear me, Noble, there is no need for you to raise your voice. I am not in the least deaf, and, as general adviser to the hospital committees—"

Noble was out of his chair in a flash.

"Skimmy, are you going to clear?"

"Yes, certainly, Noble, if you wish it. As a sincere Socialist, I have no right to refuse to leave this room; you wish me to leave it; but before I go I should like to point out that I am general adviser to the committees. I am discussing the question of how to raise the necessary funds. My suggestion is that you three amalgamate with Merry and his friends, and with Figgins & Co. You all go to Study No. 6, and demand that D'Arcy defrays the cost of the hospital scheme—"

"Are you going to clear?"

"Yes, certainly. D'Arcy is the scion of a degenerate family, a family which commenced to degenerate the moment they acquired wealth. D'Arcy has robbed his fellow creatures—"

"My only Aunt Jane!"

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"Gweat Scott!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "This will absolutely wuin my clothes!"

"Oh, do boot the young ass out, Noble!"

"Dear me, what for? As I was remarking, D'Arcy has robbed his fellow-creatures, and therefore— Dear me!"

Harry Noble, Bernard Glyn, and Clifton Dane were approaching him with a deliberate tread. Skimpole retreated.

"If you will listen to me, Noble, I feel certain— Good gracious!"

In retreating, Skimpole had forgotten to take into account the fact that the corridor wall would limit his retreat. He brought up against the wall with a thump which displaced his spectacles until they rested on the end of his nose.

Cornstalk & Co. did not even smile. They were still approaching.

Skimpole thought for a moment or two; then he remembered what had happened in Study No. 6, and decided that discretion was the better part of valour.

He ran along the corridor at his best, and was still running long after Cornstalk & Co. had retired to their

study and locked the door. He was even running when Figgins & Co. came round the bend in the corridor, and only stopped when he brought up against Fatty Wynn with a thud which nearly winded the Falstaff of the New House.

Figgins and Kerr yelled with laughter.

Skimpole blinked vigorously, and clasped his knees, which had collided with Fatty Wynn's knees.

"Dear me, Figgins, I fail to see what there is to laugh at in the undoubted fact that I am severely injured. Wynn, why did you not get out of my way? You must have seen I was in a hurry."

"You utter ass, Skimmy!"

Fatty Wynn was groaning loudly, trying to regain his lost breath. Skimpole went on indignantly:

"As a sincere Socialist, I have a perfect right to run along the corridors, especially when it is necessary for me to do so in order to escape bodily injury."

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NEXT
THURSDAY:

"THE LEADER OF THE NEW HOUSE."

By
MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 8.
The Elusive Idea.

"BAI JOVE!" Jack Blake took his hands from his pockets testily.

"Oh, do dry up, Gussy!"

"Weally, Blake, I must wefuse to dwy up. Bai Jove, though, deah boy, I agwee that this is wotten in the extreme."

Digby and Herries nodded gloomily.

Jack Blake was even gloomier.

"Bother it all, there must be something that would do the trick!" he exclaimed. "Why don't you kids think of something, Dig?"

"Why don't you?"

"Yaas, wathah! Bai Jove, I wondah if a smokin' concert would ansah?"

"Ass!"

The chums of Study No. 6 were strolling across the quadrangle discussing the one topic which was being discussed at St. Jim's that morning.

It was the day after the fire, and although the dismissal bell had just sounded after morning school, Jack Blake & Co. had not solved the problem.

Presently Jack Blake stopped.

"Here come Merry & Co., kids."

"Yaas, wathah! Bai Jove, they are gwinnin', deah boys!"

The Fourth-Formers stood where they were, and watched the Shell juniors pass.

They certainly were grinning and whispering excitedly to one another.

Jack Blake looked after them suspiciously, then commenced to rack his brains again.

It also happened that changes flashed across the faces of the Terrible Three the moment they were past their rivals. They ceased laughing, for one thing.

Tom Merry sighed wearily.

"Whatever we do, we mustn't let the other kids see we're floored."

"Rather not!"

"They looked pretty down at the mouth, too, I thought," said Lowther, "and I'm pretty sure Cornstalk & Co. are as strawed as we are."

"Here comes Figgins."

"And the giddy Co. walking behind in single file."

"Y-yes!"

Tom Merry began to grin again, and Manners and Lowther backed him up. They both agreed that, whatever happened, the rivals must not get a hint as to the state of themselves.

In fact, the Terrible Three were grinning in such a pronounced manner that Figgins & Co. eyed them suspiciously.

Tom Merry returned the glance with even more suspicion; but before either set of juniors could speak, an exclamation sounded behind them.

"Bai Jove!"

They all turned hastily.

"What's up, Gussy?"

"What's the matter, Gus?"

"Gweat Scott!"

The swell of St. Jim's was screwing up his face in an extraordinary manner, and was shading his eyes with his hand. Jack Blake thumped him rather suddenly on the shoulder.

"Pins and needles, Gussy?"

"Bai Jove! You wottah—you uttah wottah!"

"I thought you had pins and needles, kid."

"I wefuse to believe that you thought I had pins and

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Figgins held his sides, and choked.

"He was escaping bodily injury, Kerr."

"My only Aunt Jane! You hear that, Fatty? Skimpy was escaping bodily injury, and to do it he ran into you."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Fatty Wynn recovered his breath then.

"Lemme get at him," he said. "Kerr, lemme get at him!"

Skimpole again retreated.

"Pray do nothing of the sort, Kerr," he said hastily. "It is only by chance that I have eluded Noble, who appears in a very excited state. Dear me, I have recovered now, so there is no harm done."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ask Fatty Wynn about that, kid."

"Dear me! Of course, if I have caused Wynn any inconvenience I apologise. As a sincere Socialist, I cannot help apologising. However, it really does not matter, as I have something very important to tell you."

Skimpole stepped forward and seized Figgins by the top button of his waistcoat.

"Very important news indeed," he repeated.

Figgins grinned.

"Found another comet, kid?"

"Certainly not, Figgins, although I certainly intend challenging some of Sir Robert Ball's theories on our solar system in the near future. No; the news I have to tell you is about the hospital fund."

The smile died out of Figgins's face.

"You can go, then!" he growled. "We've got headaches thinking about that already!"

"Ah, that is because you have not come to me in your difficulty!" exclaimed Skimpole.

"Ass!"

"Dear me, Figgins, what a ridiculous observation to make. As general adviser to the committees, I was the proper person to come to."

Figgins & Co. stared at the amateur Socialist in amazement.

Skimpole took their glances as signs of their being impressed.

"Now, what is your particular difficulty?" he said, in his well-meaning way. "I have already straightened the paths of Merry, Blake, and Noble—at least, I trust I have. You are trying to think of some plan to raise the necessary funds—well, have you discussed the pros and cons of the snowball system?"

"The what?"

"The snowball system, Figgins. You offer Merry sixpence, provided he finds twelve other people to send you in one penny in addition to his own. Then you give the twelve sixpence each on the condition that they each find twelve other chaps to also send in a penny—that is one hundred and forty-four pence—and you go on like that."

"My—my hat!"

Figgins & Co. gasped.

Skimpole continued:

"You work that out, Figgins," he said. "I am confident it is the plan the doctor will adopt. Perhaps it would be better if the sums were raised to shillings, as more money would be raised that way, and, of course, everyone gains. I mean, if the thing is carried on to infinity everyone must receive a shilling from you while you receive twelve shillings. Dear me, it is rather a startling thought."

"You howling, utter ass, Skimpy!"

"Really, Figgins—"

"You shrieking lunatic!" gasped the leader of the New House juniors. "How can anything be worked out to infinity, when infinity is a bit further off than the furthest off thing you can think of?"

Skimpole blinked. He was considering the point.

"No; of course, there is that difficulty. Still, I am confident my plan would work. We will discuss it carefully, bearing in mind—Dear me!"

The tread of feet sounded in the corridor.

Skimpole relinquished his grasp on Figgins's top button.

"Figgins, is that Noble approaching us?"

"Yes, kid."

"Ah, then I regret I shall have to leave you! Noble is in a very excited state this evening. I—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Skimpole had again fled.

Figgins & Co. walked on, laughing. They nodded to the Cornstalk and his chums, but neither party offered to stop.

The dormitory bell would ring in a few minutes now, and there were worried expressions on the faces of the six as they passed one another.

The problem of raising the funds to rebuild the hospital was not going to turn out the easy thing they had expected in the excitement of the moment in Hall.

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"THE EMPIRE" LIBRARY

needles!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, with rising indignation. "I am not in the habit of havin' pins and needles. However, is my collah cwumped in any way, and is my necktie stwaight?"

Jack Blake stared at him suspiciously.

"Ass, what's happened!"

"Look ovah there, deah boy!"

Jack Blake looked, and uttered an exclamation. Then he hastily gave his own coat a tug, and arranged his own necktie, and Jack Blake did not think a great deal about matters of attire as a rule.

Figgins also looked; then coloured slightly, and wished he had put on a clean collar that morning.

The next instant there was a general rush across the quadrangle.

Coming through the gateway was a pretty girl of about Tom Merry's own age. She was smiling pleasantly, and somehow her pretty, girlish figure, in a spring frock, seemed to add a daintiness to the sombre old quadrangle, which even a fellow like Mellish could not help appreciating.

Figgins appreciated it before any of them, perhaps, and he was the first to be near enough to raise his cap. He was rather red as he did so, but then he had to run briskly.

"How do you do, Cousin Ethel?" he exclaimed awkwardly. "It's—it's ripping to see you at the old coll. again!"

"Yaas, wathah! How are you, deah gal?"

"Going to stay with the doctor?"

"Oh, you must stay until the holidays, Cousin Ethel!"

Cousin Ethel laughed, and shook hands with them all in turn.

"The answers to your questions are yes!" she laughed.

"At least, I think so. I have forgotten the questions, though, now. I am awfully glad to see you all."

"And you are goin' to stay, aren't you, deah gal?"

"Yes, Arthur, for a few days—"

"Hooway!"

"Rather!"

"We'll have some ripping times on the river."

"Wathah, deah boys—"

Cousin Ethel shook her head.

"Of course, we shall have some ripping times on the river—later on!" she said. "But there is something else to be done before then."

"Somethin' else to be done, deah gal?"

Cousin Ethel nodded.

"Yes, Arthur," she said quietly. "The hospital has got to be built before we can think about ripping times on the river."

The juniors' faces became grave again. It was like their girl chum to speak so seriously about the rebuilding of the little hospital.

Arthur Augustus thoughtfully replaced his monocle in his eye.

"Yaas, wathah; the mattah had slipped my mind for a moment."

Tom Merry looked even more thoughtful.

"Yes, of course the hospital must be rebuilt. I heard through Taggles this morning that a lot of the farm labourers' children have whooping-cough, and—well, they won't be anything like as well looked after at home as they would be at a hospital, will they, Cousin Ethel?"

"No, of course not."

Jack Blake ran his fingers through his curly hair wearily.

"We St. Jim's fellows have undertaken to rebuild the place, Cousin Ethel," he said gloomily. "It was Gussy's idea."

"Yaas, wathah! I considahed it a wippin' ideah at the time, but—"

"But what, Arthur?"

"Er—nothin', deah gal!"

His cousin laughed, her pretty, girlish tones echoing amongst the ivy which had clung to the black walls of St. Jim's for centuries.

Arthur Augustus looked at her, a puzzled expression on his face.

"Weally, deah gal, it isn't a laughin' mattah, because we have pwomised to waise the funds—"

"I know all about that, Arthur!"

"Bai Jove, do you weally, now—"

"Yes, of course. Mrs. Holmes wrote to me last night and told me about the splendid idea. I think it is simply ripping of you all!"

"Yaas, wathah—that is to say, not at all, deah gal—"

"And the really ripping part is that you have all to think out some plan to raise the funds," went on their girl chum lightly. "Of course, you have some wonderful ideas."

A dead silence greeted her words.

She went on quite coolly.

"But there, of course, I know you have, Arthur, for instance, is dyin' to tell me all about his plan, aren't you?"

"Gweat Scott—I mean, yaas—well, that is to say—"

"Yes, Arthur?"

"I mean—"

Arthur Augustus was floundering hopelessly. Jack Blake at once attempted to come to his rescue.

"We—we were just discussing the matter when Gussy saw you, Cousin Ethel!"

"Discussing your own plan, you mean."

"And the Terrible Three—were you also discussing your idea when I came, Tom Merry?"

Tom Merry started.

"Y-yes!" he ventured.

"Figgins?"

"We—we were talking it over, you know—"

"And Kangaroo?" laughed Cousin Ethel, turning to the young Australian.

Harry Noble did not laugh back.

"We've been discussing nothing else since last night," he said. "You see, Cousin Ethel—"

"Good! I am awfully glad you are taking the matter up so seriously," said their girl chum, seating herself on the garden-roller which had just been brought from the doctor's private garden. "Now, each of you must tell me your special plan."

"Gweat—Scott!"

"What did you say, Arthur?"

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus.

Cousin Ethel laughed, and sat, obviously waiting for them to begin.

The juniors stared thoughtfully away from one another.

CHAPTER 9.

Cousin Ethel to the Rescue.

"JACK BLAKE, I do not believe you have a single plan!"

Jack Blake started.

"Really, Cousin Ethel—"

"Tom Merry, I don't believe you have one, either!"

"Really, Cousin Ethel—"

"And Figgins I am sure has not!"

Figgins went very red.

"Really, Cousin Ethel, I have a plan, but—"

"And so have we, bai Jove!"

"Well, what is it, Arthur?"

"Bai Jove, well, you see—fish ahead, Blake, deah boy!"

"Rotter!" muttered Jack Blake. "If Study No. 6 couldn't think of a better plan than Tom Merry & Co—"

"No, they couldn't!" said Tom Merry.

"Oh, couldn't we? You'll see when this evening comes."

"What shall we see?" asked Figgins.

Jack Blake did not answer. As a matter of fact he did not know what Figgins & Co would see, but it wasn't in the nature of things that he should say so.

Cousin Ethel laughed again.

"Now, you may as well own up!" she exclaimed severely.

"None of you have plans worth calling plans, have you?"

"You see—"

"You see, Cousin Ethel—"

"No, I do not see!" exclaimed their girl chum. "What I want to know is, have you plans to raise the funds for rebuilding the hospital?"

There was another pause, then Tom Merry laughed in his hearty way.

"Not a single decent plan amongst the lot of us," he said candidly. "We're trying to bluff one another that we have, but we haven't—beyond back-number sort of ideas like issuing a subscription list, and so on."

"Yaas, wathah; it's no good beatin' about the bush, Cousin Ethel. Of course, I shall be able to think somethin' out before this evenin', but—"

"Indeed! You ought to have thought something out before now!"

"Yaas, wathah, deah gal, but—"

"I am ashamed of you!" went on Cousin Ethel gravely; "and I have a good mind to take my own idea to Mr. Kildare, or one of the other seniors!"

"Oh, Cousin Ethel!"

"Yes, I have!"

"Bai Jove, you mustn't do that, deah gal—I mean—"

"Rather not!"

Their girl chum appeared to be deciding the question in her own mind. The juniors watched blankly.

They all knew what Cousin Ethel's ideas were worth, and to have to stand by while she gave them to the Upper School fellows was something not to be thought of.

However, she suddenly jumped down from the garden-roller and faced them all.

"I am very disappointed in you," she said; "but I suppose it is not your fault. Boys are dreadfully silly at making plans. Have any of you thought of a pageant—a St. Jim's pageant?"

"A—a pageant!"

"Bai Jove!"

"I see you haven't thought of it. Pray why not?"

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By
MARTIN CLIFFORD.

NEXT
THURSDAY:

"THE LEADER OF THE NEW HOUSE."

Jack Blake gasped.

"My hat, Cousin Ethel, do you mean a real pageant?"

"I should have thought anything that came from St. Jim's would have to be real."

"Yaas, wathah! Gweat Scott, what a wippin' ideah, deah gal!"

In an instant the juniors' previous gloomy silence gave way to wild confusion.

A pageant at St. Jim's!

It was a thing no one had ever thought of. No one ever could have thought of it except Cousin Ethel.

Tom Merry flung his cap in the air in spite of the usual restraint he put upon himself when in the presence of their girl chum.

"My hat, Cousin Ethel, could it be worked?"

"Why not?"

"Yaas, wathah! Why not, Mewwy? Bai Jove, do you know deah boys, I weally believe the ideah was about to occur to me—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Kangawoo, I fail to see any cause for wibald laughtah! I feel certain the absolutely wippin' idea was about to occur to me—"

"Rats!"

"Who said wats? Ethel, did you heah who said wats—"

"More of the same rodent, Gussy," whispered Tom Merry excitedly. "Cousin Ethel, I believe you have made the one suggestion that will raise enough money. About everything else has been thought of—"

"Of course, mine is the only idea!" laughed their girl chum. "Now, what I propose is that all you small boys—"

"Weally, Ethel—"

"All you very small boys, I mean, at once write the word 'pageant' on a piece of paper and hand it up to Dr. Holmes, asking him to consider it at once. If he accepts the suggestion—"

"Bai Jove, there isn't much doubt in the mattah, deah gal!"

"Rather not?"

"Well, if he does you must at once form a committee and plan the whole thing out carefully. It will mean a frightful lot of work, you know!"

"Bai Jove, you can twust us!"

"Can I? Not for thinking out ideas, though!" laughed Cousin Ethel. "But you mustn't waste time."

"No, wathah not!"

"And you ought to thank me for giving you the suggestion, and not taking it direct to Dr. Holmes," added the girl gravely. "You see, after all, it will be the Lower School's idea, and not the seniors'."

"Wathah—"

"Ripping of you, Cousin Ethel!"

"Bai Jove, yaas; only wippin' isn't the word. I pwopose from the chair—I mean, I pwopose thwee cheers for Cousin Ethel!"

"Hooray!"

The cheers were given with the full vent of thirteen school-boy lungs. They were so prodigious that Cousin Ethel fled. She could even hear them when she had gained the doctor's garden.

Then Tom Merry glanced at Jack Blake. Jack Blake was looking at Figgins, and the New House rival was glancing from one to the other.

All were possessed of the same thought.

It was Tom Merry who gave it words.

"There's one part of Cousin Ethel's plan that won't do, though," he said quietly. "Won't do at all!"

"My hat!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Won't even begin to do—" went on the hero of the Shell.

"Of all the giddy cheek!"

"Yaas. Weally, Mewwy, I must say—"

"Must you, kid?" grinned Blake. "Get on with it, Merry!"

The Shell junior went on coolly:

"Won't begin to do, kids?" he repeated. "I mean, Cousin Ethel said we were to hand in the idea as our own."

"My hat!"

"Bai Jove, I nevah thought of that! Of course, it is quite imposs., deah boys."

"Of course."

"What's to be done, though?"

"Why, just scribble the word 'pageant,' as Cousin Ethel told us to," explained Tom Merry quietly, "and add at the bottom that Cousin Ethel suggested the whole thing. Then if we all sign it—well, there you are!"

"Yaas, wathah! I considah that a bwight ideah, deah boy."

"Carried?"

"Rather!"

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And Tom Merry scribbled with Jack Blake's pencil for a moment or two on a sheet torn from Figgins's notebook. Two minutes later they were scudding across the quadrangle again, chuckling at the shock which was awaiting the Upper School fellows.

CHAPTER 10.

Arthur Augustus's Part.

"BAI Jove!"

Arthur Augustus uttered the exclamation in suppressed excitement.

There was to be a pageant at St. Jim's. Dr. Holmes, in a few words after dinner, had spoken very highly of the scheme, and the matter had been settled there and then.

A general sort of rush had at once been made for Tom Merry's study, and all sorts of juniors were attempting to push their way in.

"Bai Jove, deah boys, I wegard this as wippin' in the extreme!"

Fatty Wynn groaned.

"Do you, Gussy! You wouldn't if you were squashed up against a beastly bookcase, and felt faint through hunger."

"I mean, I considah the whole ideah as wippin' in the extreme!"

"Rather!"

"Who knows anything about pageants?"

"Who knows anything about this part of the county?"

"Where's Skimmy?"

A rather breathless voice answered from the vicinity of the fireplace:

"Here, Merry! Dear me, I almost think this meeting ought to have been held in the gymnasium. May I request you to take your elbow out of my ribs, Kerr?"

"If Digby'll get off my feet—"

"Never mind your feet! You always know everything, Skimmy, so you ought to know the history of Sussex."

Skimpole blinked thoughtfully.

"Dear me, Merry, I shall be pleased to help you, only I am really more interested in the future than in the past. History, after all, does not matter, because it is history."

"Ass!"

"Turn him out if he's going to babble!"

"Don't you know anything about your own county, Skimmy?"

"Yes, of course! Let me see, the battle of Hastings was fought not very far from here. I once visited the site in a waggonette—"

"Then you can tell us all about it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Really, Merry, I fail to see why you should laugh. Dear me, surely you are not coming into this room as well, Blake?"

"I am, kid!"

"And so am I!" chuckled Figgins. "I've got a history of Rylcombe, kids!"

"Good!"

"And Blake has a guide to the past or something of all the surrounding country."

"Ripping!"

"Yaas, wathah! Fiah ahead, deah boys!"

There was dead silence as Figgins and Blake turned over the pages of their respective books, then the School House fellow's voice rang out.

"In 1066, after the battle, William the Conqueror and a large section of men came along the road which is now known as the High Road, in a snowstorm—"

"No, he didn't, Blakey!"

Jack Blake looked up.

"I tell you he did, Figg! It says so here."

"Yaas, wathah, Figgay, deah boy! William, the Conqueror weally did come along the High Road—"

"Of course he did!" chuckled Tom Merry. "Gussy remembers the incident quite well."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pway don't be widiculous, Mewwy! It says so in Blake's book."

Figgins grinned.

"And it says in mine he used the other road."

"Bai Jove, that's awkward, deah boys!"

"Well, get on with it, kids. Doesn't matter which road it was. What happened?"

Jack Blake found his place with difficulty, because Harry Noble unintentionally jabbed him in the back every moment or so.

"In a snowstorm," continued Jack Blake. "Just as he gained the bridge, traces of which can still be seen, a number of Saxons attacked his forces, and were annihilated—"

"Wrong again, my son!" grinned Figgins. "They

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escaped almost without a casualty, and captured a quantity of baggage."

"Look here, Figgins, if you're going to keep interrupting—"

"Well, stick to the true version, kid."

"Ass! It says distinctly—I say, Kildare, for goodness' sake don't try to come into this room. We're packed like sardines!"

The captain laughed.

"Don't trouble!" he exclaimed. "I am not coming in. What do you think you are doing?"

"Arranging about the pageant."

"Yaas, wathah! Selectin' our parts, et cetera, deah boy."

"Well, of all the cheek! But you are too late in the day, youngsters; it has all been arranged."

"Bai Jove!"

Kildare laughed heartily at the blank expressions on the faces turned to him.

"You surely didn't think the doctor intended allowing kids to run this thing, did you?" he said good-naturedly.

"And you wouldn't want to if you knew as much about getting up pageants as I do."

"Bai Jove, I weally considah it is wathah a fag, deah boys!"

"A life work to be done in a few days, you mean. Still, the groundwork has all been done for us this time, because we are going to present the same episodes Captain Cleveland wanted to present some time ago. They are all written."

"Good!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Then the only thing for us to do is to choose our parts," exclaimed Figgins.

Kildare laughed again.

"Well, we have even saved you that trouble. Your parts are already chosen."

"Bai Jove! Who am I, deah boy?"

"A silly ass, old man!"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"What part have I, Kildare?"

"Am I—"

"By Jove, you don't think I can remember all your parts, do you?" exclaimed the captain. "I assure you I can't. You'd better slip along to the notice-board and—"

"Hooray!"

"Come on, kids!"

And with a rush the juniors dashed from the room.

Fatty Wynn was badly squashed in the doorway, and Kerr had to travel the whole length of the corridor backwards because the press was too great for him to turn.

Then Skimpole fell at the critical moment, and that brought about half a dozen other fellows down, but somehow they all managed to arrive at the notice-board at about the same time.

Tom Merry was a few feet in front, and so, of course, was at once flattened against the board. He was so near, in fact, that his nose was almost touching it.

Kerr was also as near as possible, only he was backing it, and, struggle as he would, he could not turn.

"Bai Jove!"

"Steady, you ass!"

"Weally, Mannahs, I wefuse to be called an ass. Bai Jove, Lowthah, do you wequiah a feahful thwashin'—"

"My only Aunt Jane!"

The crowd swayed gently from side to side.

"Read the names out!"

"Yaas, wathah! Wead the names out, Mewwy, deah boy! Bai Jove, I know my collah will be cwumped!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Get on with the washing, Merry!"

The hero of the Shell got his knees and his hands against the wall, and pushed the crowd back a little. Fatty Wynn, who was directly behind, cried out in anguish, then trod on Figgins's foot.

Figgins also cried out in anguish.

"My hat! You're a giddy Saxon foot soldier, Blake!"

"Good!"

"Bai Jove! Am I William the Conqueror, deah boy?"

"Can't see your name, Gussy!"

"Pway have anothah look, deah boy. Pewhahs I am Hargest or Horsah, in which case I shall wive Badgah—"

"No; you're a dead body!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gweat Scott! A—a what, deah boy?"

"A dead body, kid!" fairly yelled Tom Merry. "There are a whole heap of dead bodies, and you are one of them. There's a note saying the dead bodies are required to lie about the place to mark the path of the Conqueror."

Arthur Augustus gasped.

"Weally, deah boy, you must be waggin'."

"Look for yourself then, kid."

Arthur Augustus, by a praiseworthy effort, managed to

jam his monocle in his eye. The expression on his face made Kerr yell with laughter.

"Pway, what is there to laugh at, deah boy? The whole mattah is a mistake."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Not much, Gussy!"

"I shall, of course; uttably wefuse to be a dead bodday"

"You'll have to be."

"I wewget to say I shall have to wefuse fiwmly. I should considah it vewy much below my dig. to be a dead bodday. It is uttably imposs."

"Yes, I expect the part is a bit too much for you."

"Weally, Mewwy, I am westwainin' myself, but if I lose my tempah, I shall administrah a feahful thwashin'. I wish it to be undahstood—"

"What am I, Merry?"

"Yes, what is Fatty Wynn?"

"Wynn! Oh, an awfully fat old chap who used to bring the Saxon prisoners their food."

Fatty Wynn's face wreathed in smiles.

"Good! That is an excellent part; it is really a more important part than William the Conqueror."

"Who is Bill, by the way?"

"Kildare!"

"My hat, that's good biz. He's just the chap—"

"Weally, deah boys, I wish you would let me get a wotten word in edgewise," exclaimed Arthur Augustus, who was a good deal flustered. "It does not mattah in the least who William the Conqueror is. The point is that I wefuse to considah the ideah of my wewwesentin' a dead bodday—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There are heaps more dead bodies, Gussy."

"Kerruish is one, for instance."

"And Figgins for another."

"Am I! I don't think!"

"Yes, you are, kid. The dead body of Harold."

Figgins was mollified instantly. After all, Harold was a jolly fine fellow. There was that picture, too, "Edith finding the body of Harold." That was bound to be presented.

Figgins was struck with an idea.

"Who—who is to be Edith, Merry?"

"My hat, Cousin Ethel, old man!"

Figgins grinned with pleasure, and the others looked at him enviously.

There was not a fellow there who would not have liked to have exchanged parts with the long-limbed leader of the New House juniors.

Before any more questions could be asked Kildare came along with another slip of paper and some more drawing-pins.

"Another notice, chaps."

"What is it this time—"

"Bai Jove, I know, deah boys! It's about the widiculous ideah of my being a dead bodday. You have found out your mistake then, Kildare, deah boy? My name was entahed in swor."

"What's that?"

Kildare answered absently as he pushed his way through the crowd.

"About the dead bodday ideah, deah boy—"

"Oh, you are a dead body, are you?"

"Accordin' to that widiculous papah; only, of course, I shall have to wefuse—"

"Oh, yes, of course, you're a dead body!" laughed the captain. "The part'll suit you down to the ground."

"Weally, Kildare—"

"What's it now?"

"Weally, Kildare, it is pwepos. about my bein' wasted as a dead bodday. I ought to be Horsah, and then I could wive Badgah—"

"Ha, ha, ha! But Horsah didn't come here, D'Arcy."

"Gweat Scott, I nevah thought of that! Howevah, I will be William the Conqueror, or Hawold, instead—"

"I don't think!"

It was Figgins who spoke, and he spoke firmly.

Arthur Augustus could be anything under the sun except Harold, as far as Figgins was concerned. The swell of St. Jim's fixed a withering glance on him.

"Weally, Figgay, I twust selfishness is not goin' to entah into this mattah. If Kildare has decided that I am to be Hawold, I shall have to be Hawold—"

"But Kildare hasn't decided anything of the kind," smiled the captain. "In fact, Kildare hasn't had a great deal to do with it. It was all arranged by the committee with the doctor in the chair, and if you are down for a dead body, a dead body you'll have to be, D'Arcy."

"But it is widiculous—I pwotest—"

"That won't do any good. I don't mind if you can arrange an exchange with some other junior, and that it is all settled before this evening. Mind you, it will have to be an exchange the committee will approve of."

"Yaas, wathah!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus in great relief. "I will effect an exchange as soon as poss., deah boy—"

"Well, mind, there are to be no rows—Blake, Figgins, and Merry are excused afternoon school."

"My hat!"

"Bai Jove, what foah, deah boy—"

"To arrange about the advertising," answered the captain crisply. "The preliminary placards are already being printed at all the printing works in the town, and the three I've named are to go down and get as many as are done, and spend the afternoon posting them up. You'll have to arrange about paste, and so on yourselves. We are going to keep the expenses down as far as possible."

"My hat, yes, Kildare!"

"And the doctor thinks the principle of the thing will be better maintained if we do every bit of possible work ourselves."

"Hooray!"

"You leave the advertising to us, Kildare."

"Rather!"

Tom Merry, Jack Blake, and Figgins spoke together, their eyes sparkling with excitement.

If the seniors of St. Jim's had not been instrumental in introducing Cousin Ethel's suggestion to the doctor, they were playing their share of the work in splendid style.

There was to be no letting the grass grow under their feet.

Kildare had pinned up his notice now, and turned to go.

"Come to my study, you three," he said to Tom Merry.

"I'll tell you what's to be done."

"Right-ho!"

"You have to ask permission of the owner of every wall before you stick a single bill."

"Yes, rather!"

"And the doctor has written a letter asking for that permission," added Kildare. "You're to take that."

And the juniors followed the captain, listening attentively to every word.

The others watched them go in wild excitement.

There was a hustle about the plans that met with approval in the eyes of the juniors of St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 11.

Skimpole's Generosity.

"Bai Jove, what luck!"

Harry Noble looked after the retreating figures of the captain and the juniors enviously.

"Yaas, wathah! I considah they are wemark-able luckay, deah boys; but there is a more pressin' mattah than Tom Mewwy's luck—"

"I wonder when the first rehearsal will be, chaps?"

"Weally, Glyn—"

"Will they have a rehearsal?"

"Weally, Dane, I made a wemark just now, deah boy."

"Hard cheese! I suppose the costumes will have to be sent for to London."

"Rather!"

"It'll be an awful rag and no mistake."

Arthur Augustus rammed his monocle in his eye and glared at the chatting juniors.

"Weally, Weally, when one gentleman makes a wemark to anothah gentleman, I considah it is the second gentleman's duty to listen—"

"What was that, Gussy?"

"Bai Jove, Weally, your mannah is vewy exaspewatin', not to say in w'etched bad form."

"Hard luck—"

"I might even say, it is wotten taste. Howerah, undah

the cires. I am weaday to ovallook your wudeness as vewy important biznay has to be discussed."

The juniors stopped talking and glanced at the swell of St. Jim's.

"Get on with the washin', then, Gussy."

"What's the trouble?"

"About this weally wemarkable mistake the committee have made, deah boys," answered Arthur Augustus. "The ideah of my bein' a dead bodday is wicidulous in the extreme. I shall have to change parts with you, Noble."

"You'll have to—which, kid?"

"Change parts, deah boy. Pway what are you to be?"

"A Norman soldier, my son—"

"Bai Jove. A mounted soldier? Gweat Scott, though; I don't suppose the Normans bwought many horses ovah with them—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"No, I don't suppose they ran to a Signor Tomsonio's circus, Gussy."

"Pway don't wag. I will gwant that it is poss. the Normans did not bwing horses with them to Wylcombe, but I see no weason why some of the soldiers could not have wushed the Saxons and seized their mounts. As a mattah of fact, I considah it vewy pwob. that they did so, and so I shall be able to wide Badgah attah all."

"What's that?"

"A dead bodday wouldn't be expected to ride Badger, ass."

"Weally, Dane, I must wefuse to be addressed in that wough-and-weady mannah. I was not wefewwin' to myself as a dead bodday; I am goin' to change parts with Kangewoo."

"Eh?"

"Yaas, Kangewoo, deah boy—"

"No, Gussy, dear ass!"

"Weally—"

"Yes, really," grinned the Australian junior. "A Norman soldier suits me down to the ground, thanks!"

"Bai Jove, I considah—"

"It doesn't matter what you consider, kid."

"On the contwawy—"

"I'm going to keep my part," almost shouted Noble. "If you don't ring off I'll ride my giddy charger over your dead body when the time comes."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, I see no weason for wibald laughtah. Kangewoo has made a wicidulous wemark; I should uttably wefuse to have my dead bodday wun ovah by his wotten chargah—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus glared witheringly at Harry Noble for a moment or two, then strode away.

The juniors had been leaving the notice-board in groups, and the swell of the School House hurried after Manners and Lowther.

"Mannahs, deah boy—"

"Oh, go away, Gussy, we're busy!"

"Weally, Mannahs, that is wathah an abwupt way of ad-dwessin' a gentleman. In fact—"

Manners stopped.

"What's the matter, then?"

"I wish to change parts with you—"

"Sorry! Can't be did."

"Weally, I ask you as a favah—"

"Can't help how you ask me. A Saxon noble suits me rippingly."

"Bai Jove! Are you a Saxoa noble, deah boy?"

"Rather!"

"Gweat Scott, and I am only a dead bodday! It is wicidulous. I insiat upon your changin' parts, deah boy—"

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"O—oh! Oh!" yelled Arthur Augustus as a large piece of turf caught him on the side of the head.

"Rats!"
 "For the good of the pageant, deah boy——"
 "More rats!" grinned Manners. "You'll create a sensation as a dead body, kid."
 Lowther grinned.
 "Yes, shouldn't wonder if the papers say you acted the part to the life."
 "Weally, Lowthah—Mannahs, as one gentleman to anothah—Mannahs! Bai Jove, the wottahs have gone!"
 Arthur Augustus looked hot and flurried.
 Then he caught sight of Skimpole and his face brightened. If there was one junior in St. Jim's more unselfish than another, Herbert Skimpole was that junior.
 He stopped quite willingly when Arthur Augustus raced up and caught his arm.
 "Dear me! You wish to speak to me, D'Arcy."
 "Yaas, wathah, on a mattah of gweat importance, deah boy——"
 "Ah, about Determinism!"
 "Gweat Scott, no; about the pageant, Skimmay!"
 "Good! You have come to the right person. You are

aware, of course, that I was general adviser to the committees?"

"Bai Jove! Howevah, we will not wemark on that point. The twouble is, deah boy, Kildare and the doctah have made a tewwible mistake and decided that I am to take a part which it is uttaly imposs. for me to take."

"That is unfortunate. But is it impossible? Is anything impossible? And even if it is, how do we know that it is? Is it possible to prove or know anything——"

"Gweat Scott!"

Arthur Augustus gasped. Then he plunged ahead.

"I wathah think we shall save time, deah boy, if we do not stway fwom the mattah in hand. Under Socialistic conditions, I undahstand that I should have a perfect wight to demand anythin' I should need, if it were for the good of the community at large?"

Skimpole's eyes glistened with pleasure. He often discussed Socialism with the fellows, but usually against their will.

It was very seldom, indeed, that anyone came up to him and willingly opened the subject. The amateur Socialist of

St. Jim's seized Arthur Augustus by the top button of his coat.

"This is very refreshing, indeed, D'Arcy. I am doubly pleased to see that you are at last taking a more or less intelligent interest in the great social questions of the day. To quote Professor Loosetop—"

"Pway do nothin' of the sort, deah boy. Let's be wational and get on with the biznay in hand."

"Yes, but—"

"Let me see if I undahstand the situation pwoperly. When Socialism comes in force, I shall be able to wequest you to do all mannah of thin's for me—"

"Undoubtedly, always, of course, understanding that—"

"Nevah mind, that, deah boy!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, enthusiastic at the ingeniousness of his plan.

"You are a Socialist, Skimmay?"

"Of course. I am clever, therefore—"

"Then, if I ask you to do something for me, you will gwant my wequest?"

"Certainly, if possible, and for the common good."

"Bai Jove! Skimmay, as one gentleman to another—to a Socialist, I mean, I ask you—"

"Request me, you mean."

"Bai Jove! Yaas, wathah! I wequest you to change parts with me for the pagent."

Skimpole blinked in surprise through his glasses.

"Certainly, D'Arcy. I will do so with pleasure."

"Hooway! Wippin'! You are a jollay fine bwick, deah boy! I will wun and tell Kildare!"

"Dear me! Yes, of course. What part were you originally taking, D'Arcy?"

"I was to be a dead bodday, deah boy."

"Dear me! How extraordinary!"

"Pway, why is it extraordinary, Skimmay? It is widiculous of the committee, but—"

"But—but I was also to have been a dead body."

"Gweat Scott!"

Skimpole looked more puzzled than ever.

"Of course, you know what part will suit you best, D'Arcy," he said thoughtfully; "though, personally, I should have thought it as simple to act one dead body as another. Am I to understand that we change parts?"

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus was gasping.

Skimpole blinked at him.

"Is anything the matter, D'Arcy?"

"My only toppah! Yaas, wathah—at least— Why on earth didn't you tell me bofoah that you were also a dead bodday?"

"Dear me! I don't believe you asked. Did you ask?"

"I—I— Gweat Scott!" And Arthur Augustus walked away.

Skimpole stood looking after him, as puzzled as ever.

"What an extraordinary request to make!" he muttered, half-aloud. "I am beginning to fear that the degeneracy in these rich and ancient families is so far advanced by now that nothing short of allowing them to die out can help civilisation. Dear me, I must see what Professor Loosetop says about the signs of degeneracy in the young!"

And Skimpole also walked away.

CHAPTER 12.

Skimpole Does Some Billposting.

"HALLO, deah boys!"

Tom Merry, Jack Blake, and Figgins started. The voice which rang out breathlessly behind them was well-known to all three.

"Hallo, deah boys! We've been cyclin' like anythin' to ovahtake you!"

"Dear me, yes! And the bicycle I had to take is several sizes too small for me!" panted Skimpole. "I believe it must belong to D'Arcy minor, and his legs are considerably shorter than mine!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yaas, wathah! I considah it weally funnay myself, and I twust Skimmay will excuse my laughtah. Why didn't you highah the saddle, deah boy?"

"Dear me! I was not away that they could be highered. Still, it does not matter now we have overtaken Merry and the others."

Tom Merry grinned.

"Well, now you have overtaken us, what's the trouble?"

"Dear me! There is no trouble!"

"No, wathah not—merely a mistake, deah boys! The people who were pwintin' the postahs were undah the impression that they were to be forwarded to St. Jim's. Kildare sent us wacin' aftah you, deah boys."

"Good! I suppose you are going back now, Gussy?"

"Weally, Mewwy, on the contwawy, deah boy. We are goin' to wemain with you all the aftahnoon, and wendah help with the postahs."

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"Yes, of course," agreed Skimpole. "Dear me! I wish I had borrowed someone else's bicycle! Blake, I must request you to change with me, as D'Arcy minor has apparently shorter legs than I have."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Change legs, Skimmay?"

"Dear me, don't be so frivolous! I was referring to the bicycle. Will you please change before we mount?"

"I don't think."

"Dear me, that is very un-Socialistic of you, Blake! Merry, I must request you to change, as it is no good my asking Figgins."

Figgins grinned.

"No, kid, it isn't."

"I mean it would not benefit me in any way, as your legs are as much too long as D'Arcy minor's are too short. Merry, do I understand you to say you refuse?"

"You do, old son."

"Dear me, but—"

"Oh, ring off, and let's get on with the washing, aa!"

"Yes, Skimmay; if you're coming with us, you'll have to give Socialism a rest."

"Socialism will never rest. Things will go on—"

"Good!"

"Lucky things will go on, kid. But we've got some serious biz. to attend to this afternoon. They are making some paste for us at the bill-poster's over there."

"Bai Jove, that is wippin'!"

Tom Merry glanced at his watch.

"And it ought to be ready by now. We've been hanging about waiting for the giddy stuff, and we've got all the posters that weren't sent up to the coll."

"Yaas, wathah! And I have the othahs!"

"That's the style." Tom Merry nodded, and twisted the pedal of his machine so that it would stand against the curb.

"I'll slip along and get the paste."

"Right-ho!"

The juniors were talking quickly. After all, the advertising was very important.

They awaited Tom Merry's return in suppressed excitement.

"Heah he comes, deah boys!"

"My hat, yes!"

"Ha, ha, ha! They've made us enough paste, anyway!"

Tom Merry grinned.

"Rather! And they wouldn't take a penny for it when they knew what we wanted it for."

"Good!"

"Yaas, wathah! I considah it wippin' of them in the extreme, bai Jove! Pway, deah boys, how are we goin' to cawwy the stuff?"

"My hat!"

"Oh, it'll have to be tied on someone's handle-bars! Who'll have this tied on his handle-bars, kids?"

"Dear me! I have no objection, Merry, provided it is securely tied."

"Oh, that will be all right!"

"Bai Jove, yaas—wathah! Skimmay, deah boy, you'll have to wide carefully—"

"I always ride carefully."

"Yaas, wathah! Only you will have to wide extwa carefully this aftahnoon, deah boy!"

"Yes, we can't go about wasting good paste on account of Skimmay's reckless riding. Ready, chaps?"

"Wight-ho!"

"Where do we go first?"

"What about the old mill? The owner will let us put up a few bills there most likely, and they'll be seen rippingly."

"Bai Jove, yaas, wathah! Figgay, deah boy, I considah that a wemarkably bwright ideah."

"Get on with the washing, then."

A start was made, and Skimpole only fell off twice in the first hundred yards. As no paste was upset, Tom Merry said it really did not matter much.

"Think of the Socialism, Skimmay," he said severely.

At the moment the amateur Socialist of St. Jim's was thinking more of a barked shin, but as the others were riding on, he had no one to explain to.

The mill was reached without further mishap, and when the miller had read Dr. Holmes' letter, he gave the juniors a hearty welcome to paste as many bills as they wished on his walls.

Arthur Augustus rammed his monocle in his eye and chuckled.

"I wegard that as wippin' of the millah, deah boys—absolutely wippin'!"

"Yes, he's a jolly good sort!"

Tom Merry whipped off his coat and nodded.

"Rather! Now, the point is, how many bills shall we post?"

"Yaas, wathah! I wegard that as the point myself, deah boy."

"One of each sort, kid."

"Yes, that's about it."

"Dear me! How many sorts are there?"

Tom Merry counted.

"Six—one each, and one over."

"Good! Get on with it!"

Tom Merry seized a vivid green poster, which was folded in the usual fashion for pasting, and Arthur Augustus a yellow one. The others selected theirs, and Skimpole put the large paste-can down on the grass.

Arthur Augustus made a sudden grab at something which was protruding from Tom Merry's pocket.

"I twust you have all got bwushes, deah boys," he chuckled.

"Wathah an ovahsight if you haven't, bai Jove!"

Tom Merry clasped his hand to his pocket.

"Rotter!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"He's sneaked the giddy brush!"

"Hah, hah, hah! Twust me, deah boys! But I shall not be long!"

The others growled, and watched the swell of the School House clamber up on an old wheelbarrow. Then he carefully pasted one side of the huge poster, and gingerly gripped the handle of the brush with his knees while he straightened out the sheet.

"Bai Jove! This is wathah twyin', not to say fatiguin', deah boys. It is weally wemarkably difficult to get the postah flat!"

"Look alive!"

"Weally, Mewwy—oo! You wottah! You uttah wottah, Skimmay!"

Skimpole had been awaiting his opportunity. He had just caught sight of the handle of the paste-brush standing out between Arthur Augustus's knees at the back, and he gripped it.

"Under Socialistic conditions, all paste-brushes would be nationalised, D'Arcy!" he exclaimed. "I have a perfect right to this, because I need it for the common good. Dear me!"

"You wottah! You uttah outsidah!"

In wrenching the paste-brush through Arthur Augustus's knees, Skimpole had left most of the paste behind. It was sticking to the Fourth-Former's trousers in large lumps.

"Bai Jove! Gweat Scott!"

"Look out, ass!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

In his excitement, Arthur Augustus had forgotten all about the partially pasted poster. He had removed his supporting hand, and the result was that the poster was slipping down. It fell over Arthur Augustus's head and enveloped him.

"My only hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Look at the young ass!"

"My aunt!"

Skimpole turned from the tin of paste and blinked thoughtfully through his large glasses.

"Dear me! What an extraordinary thing to do!"

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus was free again, but paste was still adhering to him at various points. He sprang down from the wheelbarrow.

"Gweat Scott! My clothes are wuined! Bai Jove!"

Skimpole was alternately blinking and stirring the paste.

"Dear me, D'Arcy! I trust I was not the cause of your accident?" he said anxiously. "If I were—"

The swell of the School House fixed a withering glare on him.

"I wegwet to say, deah boy, I shall have to wequest you to put your hands up."

"Put my hands up! Dear me, why should I put my hands up?"

"I intend to administah a feahful thwashin', Skimmay."

Skimpole glanced at Arthur Augustus's wrathful face, then tightened his grip on the paste-brush.

"Do I understand that you propose attacking me with intent to do bodily harm, D'Arcy?"

"Gweat Scott! I intend to administah a feahful thwashin', Skimmay!"

"Then I regret to say I shall have to defend myself," said Skimpole firmly. "I should regret causing you any inconvenience, but under Socialistic conditions defence of one's person would be allowable."

"Bai Jove!"

"Of course, I regret that I was the cause of your slight accident, D'Arcy," went on the amateur Socialist of St. Jim's, and I apologise—"

"He apologisees, Gussy!"

"As one gentleman to another!" chuckled Jack Blake.

Arthur Augustus turned down his cuffs again.

"Then, deah boy, undah those eires, I have no othah course but to offah you the olive-bwanch," he said. "A gentleman can do no more than apologise. But pway hand wath the paste-bwush, deah boy!"

"Certainly! I have already finished with it. Merry, you will notice that the correct method of billposting is to

paste the back of your folded poster, to place it on the wall while still folded, and then to gradually flatten it out—

Dear me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove, deah boy, you have got it the w'ong way wound!"

"Upside down, ass!"

"Dear me, so I have!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"How extraordinary! I wonder how the mistake arose? Oh! O-oh!"

Something had struck Skimpole at the back of the neck, and had covered his shoulders with mould.

It was a large piece of not overdry turf.

"Bai Jove, deah boys—O-oh! Oh!"

Another large piece of turf had caught Arthur Augustus on the side of the head. Arthur Augustus uttered a despairing shout.

Tom Merry, Jack Blake, and Figgins wheeled round.

At the top of the hedge a few yards to the rear appeared the grinning faces of four or five village youths.

"My hat, it's Pilcher!"

"And Craggs!"

"Yaas, wathah; and old Gwimes!"

"Yes; Grimes is there! My aunt!"

Such a shower of turf was flying towards them now that the air seemed dark with it. Tom Merry & Co. buttoned their coats.

"If that's the game, we'll take a hand!"

Tom Merry nodded.

For the honour of St. Jim's they would have to make a fight for it, but the hero of the Shell was puzzled.

It was not quite like Grimes & Co. to attack them when engaged in such work as billposting for the cause of charity.

CHAPTER 13.

A Brush with Old Foes.

"Bai Jove!"

"Let the rotters have it, chaps! Fire!"

"Yaas, wathah, deah boys! Wush them!"

Tom Merry caught Arthur Augustus by the arm.

"No, kid; we can't do that yet!" he gasped. "We should never get near them. Turf the outsiders!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Plenty of rough turf grew round the old mill, and the juniors began wrenching this up in handfuls. They were good shots—much better than the villagers, and so they held their own, in spite of the fact that they carried a passenger on their side.

At the onset Skimpole flatly refused to return the fire.

"Dear me, it is very unpleasant; but I must refuse to throw pieces of turf at them! As a sincere Socialist, I do not hold with war or personal conflict in any form—"

"Ass!"

"Fiah, Skimmay, you uttah duffah! They'll wush us in a minute if you don't!"

"I am sorry, D'Arcy, but I really think this is a matter for arbitration. Ow!"

A particularly large piece of turf caught the amateur Socialist in the face, and filled his mouth with soil. While he was choking this out, another root of grass struck him on the ear.

Skimpole forgot Socialism and brotherly love for the moment then.

He picked up the piece of turf which had hurt him so, and flung it wildly in the air. It hit Arthur Augustus at the back of the neck.

"My only toppah! A weah attack, deah boys—a weah attack!"

"Dear me, I am sorry, D'Arcy!"

"Gweat Scott!"

Arthur Augustus gasped.

Then he moved away and took up another position. Nothing would have induced him to stand in front of Skimpole again.

"Fiah, deah boys!"

"Is that how you like it done, Grimey?"

"Good shot, Merry, kid! Let them have it!"

Volley after volley was received and returned. In less than a minute it was almost impossible to tell one junior from another, so covered with damp mould were they all.

And the villagers were suffering quite as badly, if not worse.

Tom Merry did not fire often, but he seldom missed, and the particular victim he had selected for his attentions was Grimes, their usually friendly rival from the town.

Jack Blake had also marked out Grimes for the choicest pieces of turf, and the same thought was actuating both juniors.

Grimes & Co. were not acting up to their usual standard

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with this attack. All things taken into consideration, it wasn't quite the game.

"Keep on fishin', deah boys! Bai Jove!"

"Look out there!"

"Yaas, wathah! Wush them, deah boys—wush them, whatevah happens!"

Tom Merry glanced round.

"Wait a minute, Gussy!" he whispered. "Get decently armed, and wait until I give the word!"

"Yaas, wathah! Get weady to wush, Skimmay, deah boy!"

"Dear me! I shall do nothing of the kind! I should not think of attempting to rush them!"

"Ready?"

"Wight-ho!"

"Come on, Blakey!"

"Hooray!"

With a wild rush, the juniors made a dash for the hedge.

Tom Merry had chosen his moment well, and the rush took place just after Grimes & Co. had fired a volley. The consequence was they were unarmed for the time being.

They stooped down for a fresh supply of turf, and then Arthur Augustus shouted the word of command.

"Fish, deah boys—fish like anythin'!"

"Come on, chaps!"

The juniors had gained the hedge.

Grimes & Co. made a valiant stand for a moment or two, but it could not last long. Their marksmanship was at fault, and they were becoming flurried.

"Now we have them!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Is that how you like it done, Grimey?"

Tom Merry had got home with a beautifully-timed shot. Grimes gave ground.

Figgins chuckled loudly.

"Ha, ha, ha! Hear me smile?"

"Good for you, Tommy!"

"Another wush, deah boys! Hooway!"

The St. Jim's juniors were through the hedge, and an energetic rush gave them possession of the enemy's ammunition-ground. That proved to be the beginning of the end.

Grimes & Co. retreated in confusion.

One more volley!" shouted Jack Blake. "Ready?"

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy! Fish!"

And fire they did, getting home with some parting shots which gave them a complete victory.

Grimes and his lieutenants disappeared into the road, and scudded towards the village as hard as they could run.

Arthur Augustus gasped, and tried to get mould from between his collar and his neck.

"Bai Jove, deah boys, what a wemarkably wotten affair!"

"Rotters to attack us, I say!"

"Yaas, wathah! I must agree, I am surprised at Gwines! When I meet him latah I shall wemonstwat with him on his vewy wewpwehensible behaviour!"

"Give him a thick ear, more likely!"

"Yaas, wathah, Figgay, deah boy, I considah a feahful thwashin' would be onlay what he deserves!"

"Well, we'll get on with the posing now and leave that until later!" growled Tom Merry. "The rotters have spoilt some of the posters, too!"

"Bai Jove, yaas; and almost wuined the paste!"

Jack Blake did not answer, but there was a wrathful expression on his face as he endeavoured to scrape turf out of the paste.

The chief of Study No. 6 was always ready for an attack from their village rivals in ordinary circumstances, but they were engaged on really serious business that afternoon.

Grimes & Co. would have to look out when they met again.

"Let's get on with the business, chaps!" he exclaimed. "There isn't a great deal of harm done."

"Yaas, wathah; and I pwopose there's no more waggin' about the w'etched bwush, deah boys!"

"No; get on with it!"

The juniors set to in earnest now, and, working in harmony, they soon had the wall of the old mill plastered with posters.

Then they moved on to a wall near the church, and as before, permission was instantly granted by the owner, they were soon at work. Later on they met the vicar, and he promised to put one of the posters in the window of the vicarage, which pleased the juniors immensely.

The vicar of Rylcombe at that time was one of the most popular men in the village, and his support would mean a lot.

Not for a moment did the juniors stop working, and by the time the hour for their return to the college came, there was scarcely a wall in the village that did not boast of some poster or another.

If the pageant failed to raise the funds for rebuilding the hospital, it would not be for lack of advertising.

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"THE EMPIRE" LIBRARY

"But I wathah think it is not goin' to fail, deah boys!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, as they wended a tired way back to St. Jim's. "It is goin' to be a wippin' success!"

"Rather!"

"Trust St. Jim's!"

Tom Merry looked a little thoughtful.

"There's one thing, kids," he said. "We mustn't get at loggerheads with Grimey again!"

"No, wathah not; although I shall have to wemonstwat with him; if not administah a feahful thwashin', deah boy, when we meet latah!"

"You won't have to do anything of the kind, Gussy!"

"Weally, deah boy, on the contwawy—"

"No, you won't, kid!"

"I twust, Mewwy, that, as it is a mattah of personal dig."

"Blow personal dig!"

Arthur Augustus gazed at Tom Merry in horror.

"Weally, Mewwy, I twust I did not heah awight!"

"I don't know what you heard. Blow personal dig, if it has anything to do with japing, Grimes, that's what I said!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Don't you see, ass? Whatever happens, we mustn't rile the villagers. We shall want every one of them to turn up at the pageant for the sake of the hospital."

"Bai Jove, I nevah thought of that, deah boy!"

"Well, think of it now, Gussy!"

"Yaas, wathah! Undah the cires, I shall wefwain fwom administahin' a feahful thwashin' to Gwines; I shall not even wemonstwat with him!"

"No; that's it! Hallo!"

"Bai Jove!"

"That's Grimes & Co. ahead, kids!"

Arthur Augustus jammed his monocle in his eye.

"Yaas, wathah; sittin' on the wall, deah boys!"

Jack Blake looked puzzled.

"What's to happen if there's another attack, Merry?"

"Blessed if I know! Hallo!"

Grimes, Pilcher, and Craggs were approaching them.

They had their hands in their pockets.

CHAPTER 14.

Grimes & Co.

"Bai Jove!"

Grimes, Pilcher, and Craggs were approaching steadily, and behind them were the other village youths who had taken part in the attack at the old mill.

The advance certainly looked rather formidable.

Skimpole blinked thoughtfully.

"Dear me! I almost think we had better run, Merry!"

"Wun! Gweat Scott! Did you say 'wun', Skimmay?"

"I certainly did! Don't you agree with me, Merry, that we had better run rapidly in the opposite direction?"

"Pway don't be wicidulous, Skimmay, deah boy! I should wefuse to wun fwom Gwines! I would not considah the ideah of wunnin' fwom him for a moment!"

Tom Merry laughed.

"Of course not!"

"If Grimes is going to goat, he'll have to take the consequences!"

"Heah, heah!"

"Only give them a chance of passing us without a row—I mean, don't rag them!"

"That's it!"

"Yaas, wathah; only, of course, if they wag us, I shall have to administah a feahful thwashin' all wound! It would be a mattah of dig, with me!"

"A matter of a funeral, you mean!"

"Weally, Figgay—"

"Oh, don't cackle, ass! Wander past as if we didn't recognise them, kids."

"Yaas, wathah! That's the ideah, Mewwy, deah boy. Wandah past as if you didn't wecognise them. Bai Jove!"

Grimes & Co. were coming along in the centre of the road, and their chums were on each side of them, a little to the rear. How it would be possible to walk past pretending not to see them, Skimpole could not understand.

"It is impossible!" he exclaimed. "My plan of running rapidly in the opposite direction is infinitely the better plan."

"Wing off, Skimmay!"

"Come on!"

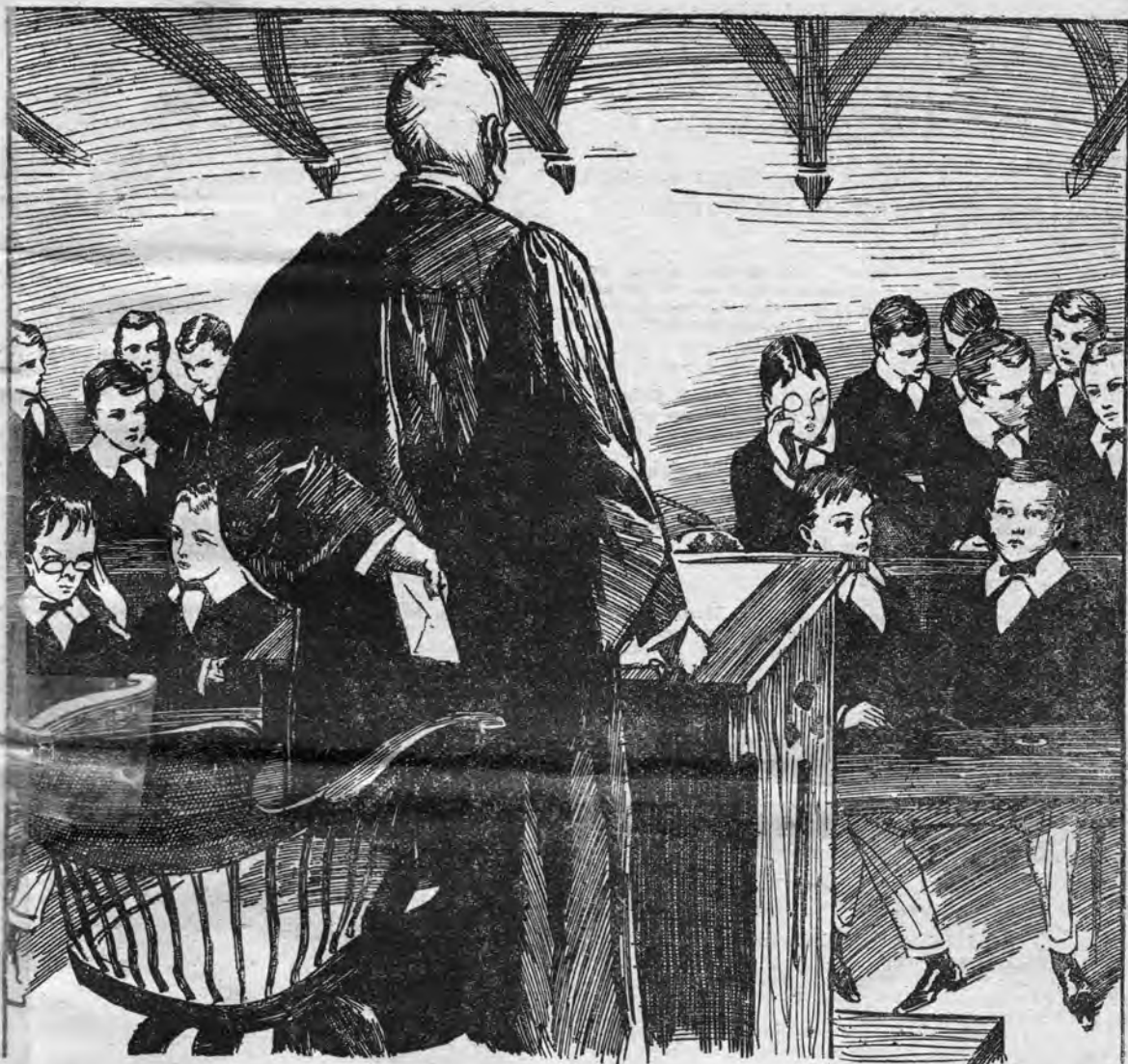
The juniors walked on steadily.

Grimes & Co. still had their hands in their pockets, but then they were still in the centre of the road. Arthur Augustus promptly forgot about his previous determination not to notice the villagers, and waved his hand.

"Pway excuse me, Gwines," he said, with dignity, "but I must wequest you to allow me to pass."

"Ass!"

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"The very excellent suggestion that St. Jim's should rebuild the hospital came from a St. Jim's boy," said Doctor Holmes. "It was D'Arcy major who made the suggestion to me."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Howling, shrieking ass!"

Skimpole caught Arthur Augustus by the sleeve.

"It is not too late now, D'Arcy."

"No, deah boy; about foah o'clock, I should think."

"Dear me! I was not referring to any special hour. I meant that it was not too late for you to adopt my idea of running rapidly in the opposite direction."

"I should have to wefuse to entahtain any such wotten idea, deah boy."

Tom Merry pushed ahead.

"Out of the way, Grimes," he said pleasantly, "that is, unless you are looking for a thick ear."

"It's not that—"

"A dot on the nose, then."

"Or a feahful thwashin!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus.

"Personally I considah you deserve a feahful thwashin' all round for your extremely wotten twick this aftahnoon."

"Oh, come on, Gussy!"

"Yass, wathah!"

Grimes & Co. still stood in the centre of the road. They were very red, and were looking at one another uncomfortably.

"Go on, Pilcher!"

"You, Craggs!"

Arthur Augustus rammed his monocle in his eye.

The other juniors had walked on, going out of the path to round the villagers. Arthur Augustus was in the centre of the road, and he refused to turn aside.

"Gwimes, I should wegwet havin' to use force, but unless you wemove yourself fwom my path, I shall have no othah course but to stwike you."

Grimes grinned, for the first time since the rival contingents had met.

"Don't do that, Master D'Arcy."

"No, I would wathah not, but unless you wemove fwom my path, I shall lose my tempah, and—"

"But I've got something I want to say to you, Master D'Arcy—you and the others."

"Bai Jove, honour bwright?"

"Yes, rather, honour bwright."

"Mewwy—Mewwy, deah boy, Gwimes has something to say to us!"

Tom Merry and the other juniors turned back. Grimes was still very red.

Pilcher and Craggs were digging him in the ribs.

Arthur Augustus waited expectantly.

"Fiah ahead, deah boy!"

"Yes, get on with it, Grimes; we can't stay here all night."

"Anything happened?"

"Well, yes, Master Figgins, in a way something has happened. Pilcher, Craggs, and I have made a mistake, and we'd like to—to explain."

"Bai Jove, that's all wight, then!"

"What is, Grimey?"

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By
MARTIN CLIFFORD.

NEXT
THURSDAY:

"THE LEADER OF THE NEW HOUSE."

The village youth grinned uncomfortably.

"We've been waiting here for about an hour to catch you to explain, and now you've come, I can't find the words," he said. "It's about that row we had at the old mill—"

"Bai Jove! Yaas, wathah! I wemembah!"

"Good gracious, I should think we did remember, D'Arcy!" exclaimed Skimpole. "The point is, shall I ever forget—"

"Get on with the washing, Grimes."

"Well, it's like this, Master Blake," added the village youth. "None of us knew you—you were putting up posters about a pageant, and—"

Tom Merry started.

"You didn't know, Grimes?"

"Of course we didn't know," said Grimes, almost aggressively. "Is it likely we'd have turfed you if we had known? We were too far off to see what the posters were about. It was only afterwards, when we slipped back to see what you had been doing, that we found out."

"Bai Jove, that atahs the cires, wathah a lot, deah boys!"

"Yes, rather! We couldn't make it out at first, Grimes."

"You ought to have known we wouldn't have attacked you if we'd have seen what you were doing," said Grimes indignantly.

"Bai Jove, I wathah think old Gwimey is wight, deah boys!"

"Of course he's right."

"Yaas, wathah! We nevah thought of that, you know, Gwimey, and as no damage was done—"

"Didn't we do any damage, then?"

"Nothin' to speak of, deah boy!"

Grimes & Co. brightened up.

"That's good hearing, and no mistake, Master D'Arcy. I suppose there—there isn't any chance of our doing something to help the pageant along, is there, to sort of make up for the mistake?"

"Bai Jove, I considah that a wippin' wemark!"

Grimes went red again.

"It would only be helping ourselves!" he exclaimed. "It's us village-chaps that'll use the hospital, not you. We'd be awfully glad to do something, if we could."

"Bai Jove, there'll be some stands to put up!"

"Rather!"

"And flag poles. Oceans of work."

"Yaas, wathah, deah boys! I will give your names to Kildare, Gwimey. We shall be greatly honahed by your help."

"Not to say, gratified!" grinned Tom Merry. "Next time we meet you, Grimes, we'll wipe the ground with you."

"That's so."

"Not to say administah feahful thwashin's all wound—"

"And thick ears galore."

"In fact," chuckled Figgins, "with Skimmey's aid, I shouldn't be surprised if we massacre the lot of you. That'll be after the pageant, though."

"Yaas, wathah! And in the meantime I shall considah it a great honah if you, Pilchah and Cwaggs, will shake hands with me, bai Jove!"

And in some surprise the villagers shook hands with the juniors.

Then the rival parties separated, rather glad than otherwise that the mistake at the old mill had arisen.

CHAPTER 15. The Rehearsal.

"MY hat!"

The five juniors had been walking in silence for some little time, and had left the road in order to cross the fields.

As they came to the large, enclosed recreation-grounds belonging to St. Jim's, they all stopped dead.

"Bai Jove!"

Skimpole blinked anxiously, peering through the rails.

"Dear me, I believe it is a mass meeting!" he exclaimed. "I really believe it is a mass meeting of all the Forms, Merry."

"Ass!"

"Please do not be frivolous! I feel certain it is a mass meeting. Dear me, I wonder if the Third Form have decided to again help the Socialistic cause on, and have succeeded in convincing the Sixth Form of the great truth."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Really, Merry, I fail to see why you should laugh—"

"Gweat Scott, deah boy! Bai Jove, I believe they are holdin' a wehearsal—"

"My hat, yes, that's it!"

"Come on, chaps!"

The juniors pelted through the gates, and across the grounds.

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"THE EMPIRE" LIBRARY

In front of the pavilion from which so many splendid games of football had been seen in the season just finished, Kildare was standing, a large bundle of manuscript in his hand.

"Bai Jove, deah boy!"

"Is that D'Arcy?" exclaimed the captain, turning. "All five of you, eh? We're just holding a review, as it were. You are just in time. First episode."

The first episode was the finding of the body of Harold. St. Jim's connection with this portion of history was more or less legendary, but it was supposed that the body of the Saxon king was taken to the school—a monastery in those days—and remained there for a night.

"Ready, Figgins?"

The New House junior chuckled, and lay down on the grass.

"Right-ho!"

"Come on, D'Arcy, and you others; plenty of dead bodies about—all round him."

"Weally, Kildare, I have already informed you that it is impos. for me to be a dead bodday. Gweat Scott!"

The captain caught the swell of St. Jim's by the arm, still reading from the manuscript.

"Down you get, youngster! This isn't for amusement."

"Weally, deah boy, it is impos. I pwoest!"

"Die protesting, then. Good gracious! What do you think you are doing, Wynn?"

"I'm the old Saxon who brought food from St. Jim's—the St. James's Monastery, I mean—to the soldiers."

Tom Merry yelled with laughter.

"My only Aunt Jane! Harold doesn't want any grub, ass!"

"But—"

"Ha, ha, ha! Kildare, Fatty Wynn is trying to alter history by reviving Harold with grub."

Fatty Wynn waxed indignant.

"Ass! I wasn't doing anything of the kind. I was practising crawling about the ground—"

"Gweat Scott!"

Arthur Augustus sat up, and chuckled loudly, then Figgins also sat up.

"How long was Harold dead before Edith found him, kid?"

"We're trying to find Edith, ass!" grinned Jack Blake.

"What about Skimmey for the time being, Kildare?"

"Yes, anyone will do until we get ship-shape enough to ask Miss Cleveland to come down."

"Come on, Skimmey!"

"Dear me; but—"

"There's no but about it. You've got to find Figgy, ass!"

"Dear me; there he is, Blake."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You uttah ass, Skimmey! You have to find the body of Hawold, deah boy! Hah, hah, hah!"

Skimpole walked over to Figgins's very stiff body, and stood over it.

"Dear me! What do I do now, Merry?"

"Say something, duffer!"

Skimpole blinked in a puzzled manner at nothing in particular.

"It appears to be a very ridiculous proceeding, to say something to a dead body, Merry."

"Ha, ha, ha! What's the young ass to say, Kildare?"

"It doesn't matter about what is said to-day," returned the captain. "It's no good Skimpole learning a part which he isn't going to take. Just stay there so as to give us an idea how to arrange the scene. Better kneel down."

"Dear me!"

Skimpole knelt down, and Harold, who defended the shores of Britain so valiantly, uttered a loud yell.

"Ass! Duffer!"

"Dear me, Figgins! What is the matter? Good gracious!"

"Ha, ha, ha! You are kneeling on his hand, kid. My only Aunt Jane! This is about the silliest thing I've ever seen."

"Dear me!"

Skimpole looked at Tom Merry in surprise.

"Really, Merry, I fail to see what there is to laugh at, the fact that I have unwittingly caused my friend Figgins unnecessary pain. I apologise, Figgins, and—"

"If I weren't a dead king, I'd dot you one on the nose!" growled Figgins, nursing his damaged hand under his arm.

"Ha, ha, ha! I wegard that as wathah funnay, deah boy!"

"Do you, ass?"

"Yaas, wathah! Only I must wequest you not to address me as an—address me in that vewy widical mannah—"

"Not so much talking, there!" exclaimed Kildare. "What on earth do you think you're doing, D'Arcy?"

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"I'm a dead bodday, deah boy, although I have pwotested

"Well, dead bodies don't squirm like conger eels. Do you think that'll be all right, Monteith?"

The New House prefect glanced critically round.

He knew a good deal about private theatricals, and he had the seeing eye for "situations."

"A few more dead bodies about, I should say."

"More dead bodies here—D'Arcy minor—all you Third-Form youngsters. Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy minor had answered the call with praiseworthy promptness.

He allowed himself to fall to the ground in very realistic fashion, and lay across his brother's legs. Arthur Augustus groaned, but Monteith and Kildare laughed heartily.

"Yes; that's the style."

"We will have plenty of that. If we must have dead bodies lying about, let's have them placed gracefully. Next episode."

"Yaas wathah, deah boy!"

Tom Merry looked up from the manuscript Kildare had placed on one of the seats.

"Hallo, what are you jumping up for, Gussy?"

"The next episode, deah boy."

"But you take part in it, ass!"

"Yaas wathah!"

Tom Merry grinned.

"Yes, kid, although it isn't exactly a speaking part—well, it's another dead body, Gus."

"Gweat Scott! I wefuse—I uttably wefuse to be two dead bodies wunnin'! Kildare, I weally must considah my dig."

It was impos. for me to be a dead body twice wunnin'!"

"Who ever heard of a dead body running, Gussy?"

"Weally, Lowther— Bai Jove, what is the ideah now?"

It was the episode where William the Conqueror was supposed to have passed over the bridge spanning the Ryll.

He stops in a meditative way to address his men, while his fugitives are crouching in imaginary hedges.

Kildare glanced round.

He saw the youngsters—dead bodies all over the place. I saw the idea of D'Arcy minor falling anyhow, half across the stage. Looks quite well, don't you think, Monteith?"

The New House prefect nodded.

The way those two once great enemies were working together was something worth seeing.

Jack Blake came into this scene as a Saxon foot soldier, and offered to put the gloves on with Tom Merry for shrieking with laughter.

Most of the juniors were laughing, but Kildare did not come that. He merely wanted to get an idea of how the episodes would work out, and as all the speaking parts had been given to the seniors, of course, the juniors would be all right when the day came.

He made them run through the various episodes roughly, and made notes; then he glanced at his watch.

"That'll do for to-night," he said briskly. "I'll let you youngsters know when the next rehearsal is. Don't forget that dead bodies will have to be very dead when the time comes."

"Yaas, wathah! But, personally—"

"Personally, you make quite a good dead body, D'Arcy."

"Yaas, wathah! But, Kildare—Kildare, I have a remark to make! Bai, Jove, I believe he has gone!"

Arthur Augustus was sitting up on the ground. He examined his monocle in his eye, and looked after the retreating seniors.

"Bai Jove, Kildare has wetiahed while I was in the middle of makin' a remark!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pway, Mewwy, where does the humouah of your captain behavin' in a wough-and-weady mannah, come in? I ask you, ah—"

"One dead body to another," chuckled Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah, I wegwet to say that I have made up my mind that I can no longah be a dead bodday."

"You'll have to be!"

"But I wefuse—I uttably wefuse! I have been a dead body all the wotten evenin', and I wefuse to wetain the part. Kildare will have to get anothah actah!"

"You hear that, kids?"

"My mind I can no longah be a dead bodday."

"Oh, Gussy!"

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"You'll wreck the whole show, kid."

Tom Merry chuckled.

"Of course he will! Kids, ought Gussy to be allowed to wreck the whole show?"

"No!"

"Weally, Digbay, I am not in the wotten habit of w'ekin'—"

"No!"

"Weally, Digbay, I am not in the wotten habit of w'ekin'—"

"No!"

"Weally, Digbay, I am not in the wotten habit of w'ekin'—"

"No!"

"Weally, Digbay, I am not in the wotten habit of w'ekin'—"

"He has been selected to play the difficult part of a dead body," said Tom Merry severely, "and now he threatens to withdraw! Oh, Gussy!"

Arthur Augustus allowed his monocle to fall from his eye. The circle of juniors were closing round him.

CHAPTER 16.

Arthur Augustus is Instructed in His Part.

"B AI Jove!"

Arthur Augustus was still seated, but he attempted to rise to his feet now.

"Bai Jove, deah boys, pway don't come any closah, as I am all in a fluttah!"

"Gussy says he won't be a dead body."

"Weally, Blake, deah boy—"

"Gussy must be shown how to act a dead body properly."

"Bai Jove, Mewwy, deah boy—"

"And we must teach him," concluded Tom Merry solemnly. "Kildare said he liked dead bodies to lie jumbled up."

"Bai Jove! Gweat Scott!"

To Arthur Augustus's horror, Figgins just pushed him down to the ground again when he had succeeded in gaining his feet, and then had deliberately sat upon him.

Arthur Augustus gasped.

"Bai Jove, Figgay, if you don't wise to your feet instantly, I shall administah a feahful thwashin'!"

"That's the style, Figgay!"

"Gently does it."

And, chuckling hugely, Jack Blake sprawled over Figgins, making quite a pile of dead bodies.

"You wough wottahs!"

"Come on, Monty!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Mewwy—Blake, you uttah wottahs! Wesoue—wesoue!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jack Blake's laugh died away suddenly, and a shout took its place.

"Look out, Merry, you ass!"

"Well, take your knee out of my ribs!"

"Who has got his knee in your ribs?"

Tom Merry did not know. Someone had, and his consequent exertions to struggle free were the result.

Under the heap of juniors Arthur Augustus was gasping loudly.

"Bai Jove, I shall administah feahful thwashin's all wound! Gweat Scott, I am all in a fluttah!"

"Get up, some of you!"

"Utter ass, Figgins!"

"My only Aunt Jane!"

There must have been nearly a dozen juniors scrambling about over Arthur Augustus's form now. Skimpole stood apart, watching in utter amazement.

He had seen the "jape" started, and knew that it had been intentional in its inception, at any rate.

"Dear me! Good gracious, someone will be smothered!"

"You uttah wough wottahs!"

"My hat! Shure, and it's a thick ear you're looking for, young Blake!"

"Is it, young Reilly? My only aunt's hat!"

Those who were on top were enjoying themselves immensely. As soon as one junior scrambled to his feet, he was instantly pushed down again, and, in the middle of it all, light footsteps sounded on the pathway.

No one heard them, of course, not even Skimpole, although the footsteps were hurried ones.

Cousin Ethel was coming upon the scene.

The expression on her face as she approached was one of intense amazement.

"Merry—Blake!"

She could not see her cousin, Arthur Augustus.

"Good gracious, whatever are they doing, Skimpole?"

"Dear me! Trying to smother D'Arcy, I think. Dear me!"

"Noble—Noble!"

"No, you don't, kid!"

"No getting up this journey. Ha, ha, ha!"

"It was your wheeze, Merry; and I hope this is how you like it done!"

Cornstalk & Co. were the three on top, and they were enjoying themselves more every moment.

Those beneath them were so entangled that the three really held the key to the situation, and they looked like keeping it.

"Noble—Dane!"

Harry Noble glanced round then, and a startled expression flashed into his face.

He instantly clambered from the top of the struggling juniors, attempted to straighten a tie he had long since lost, and went very pink.

"How—how do you do, Cousin Ethel?"

"Come on, Kangaroo!"

"Kangaroo's slacking!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Clifton Dane and Bernard Glyn were struggling to keep the pile of juniors compact, and were succeeding much better than would have been expected.

Dane was deliberately holding Figgins down.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Dane—Dane!"

"This is ripping! This is what I like! This is——"

Dane stopped speaking. Then he released Figgins, and rose slowly to his feet.

He put up his hand to raise his cap to the girl chum.

As it happened, the cap was reposing on Arthur Augustus's left foot, the only portion of the swell of the School House to be seen.

Noble stooped down, and jabbed Glyn violently in the ribs.

"Cousin Ethel, ass!"

"What? Come on, you slackers! They're getting up! Ha, ha—Ahem!"

Glyn had also caught sight of Cousin Ethel.

He was on his feet in a flash.

Cousin Ethel glanced at him once, and the amateur inventor turned a brilliant crimson.

"We—we didn't know you were here, Cousin Ethel."

Their girl chum took no notice. She stood very stiffly on one side, and watched the juniors disentangle themselves.

"My hat, what a rumpus!"

"You lunatic, Blake!"

"Ha, ha, ha! My—my hat!"

Jack Blake's first glimpse of Cousin Ethel was through Tom Merry's arm, where his head had accidentally got into chancery.

Then Arthur Augustus's voice sounded again:

"You uttah, wavin' lunatics! I shall administrah feahful thwashin's all wound. Nothin' will pvevent me administrahin' feahful thwashin's—Bai Jove!"

One by one the juniors caught sight of Cousin Ethel, and one by one they scrambled to their feet.

Then they all stood still, looking at one another.

CHAPTER 17.

Cousin Ethel's Second Idea.

"GOOD gracious, Arthur, whatever were you all doing?"

"Bai Jove! You see, Ethel——"

"No, I do not see!" exclaimed their girl chum frigidly. "I took the trouble to come down to the ground to make another suggestion about the hospital scheme, and I find you all rolling on the ground like—like excitable Third Form boys."

"Bai Jove, I am inclined to agree with you, Cousin Ethel, that it was wotten in the extreme! Mewwy, I blame you entially."

"What's that?"

"I blame you entially, Mewwy, deah boy, for the affair."

"My hat, Gussy——"

"Well, I blame Blake, then. Blake, I considah that it was entially your fault that we gweeted Cousin Ethel in that extremely wough and weady mannah."

"Of all the cheek, Gussy——"

"It must have been Figgay, then."

Figgins was very red, redder than any of the others.

"Then you're wrong, Gussy."

"Bai Jove, was it you, Mannahs, who started the abolutely wretched wag? Lowthah, then?"

"Nothing of the sort!"

"Kangawoo——"

"What's that?"

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy. It must have been you——"

"I am waiting for an explanation, Arthur," said Cousin Ethel, with very pronounced gravity. "I want to know why you were all rolling about on the ground like Third Form boys."

"Bai Jove, I hardly think we were doin' that, Cousin Ethel."

"You were certainly rolling about on the ground."

"Yaas, wathah, and I was undahnneath, bai Jove! Skimmay, was it you who started the wag?"

"Dear me, certainly not!"

"Gweat Scott, it must have been one of you, deah boys. Pway own up, as Cousin Ethel wants to know the parties, of the mattah."

Jack Blake looked at Tom Merry, and Tom Merry looked back. Figgins was gazing intently at his own boots.

"As a matter of fact——"

"As a matter of fact——"

"Yes, Merry?"

"Blake wants to explain——"

"No, you go on, Merry."

"Well, you see——"

They stopped dead, and Cousin Ethel waited. Skimpole blinked severely at Tom Merry.

"Miss Cleveland, I can explain in a very few words," he said. "D'Arcy was sitting on the ground, when the others suddenly ran towards him, and—pushed him down. Then they piled themselves on top of him. I should imagine the motive was to partially smother D'Arcy."

"Gweat Scott!"

"Ass!" breathed Tom Merry, conscious that the brainy man of the Shell had not decreased the ridiculousness of the affair. "You see, Cousin Ethel——"

"As I remarked before, Merry, I do not see."

"No, of course not. Well——"

"Yes?"

Tom Merry suddenly grinned.

"Well, it was all Gussy's fault, really, Cousin Ethel."

"Bai Jove!"

"Yes, it was, Gussy. You see, he refused to be a dead body——"

"Yaas, wathah; but it was a mattah of dig. with me, deah boy."

"Of course, we couldn't help that. Kildara said he was to be a dead body, and—so we were instructing him in his part. It was all Gussy's fault, Cousin Ethel."

"Bai Jove! Gweat Scott!"

Cousin Ethel laughed prettily.

"Well, I am very shocked that Fourth Form and Shell boys should behave so ridiculously!" she exclaimed. "I am rather afraid none of you are responsible enough to carry out the real ripping suggestion I have to make."

"Bai Jove, deah gal——"

"No, I am afraid it would be a waste of time to give my suggestion to you. I think I had better go to the Third Form."

"Bai Jove!"

"Cousin Ethel——"

"Weally, Cousin Ethel."

"But it is such a very ripping idea," went on their girl chum reflectively. "It would be a pity to have it spoilt by a lot of boys who spend most of their time rolling about on the ground."

"My hat!"

"Weally, Cousin Ethel, I wegwet to say you are not quite cowweet there, deah gal. I wathah think we do not spend most of our time wollin' about on the ground. As a mattah of fact, we nevah woll about on the ground——"

"Dear me! That is exactly what you have just been doing, D'Arcy."

"Pway wing off, Skimmay, deah boy! I was wefewwing to our genewal mannah of passin' the time——"

Tom Merry looked anxious.

As Cousin Ethel was a girl, of course the hero of the Shell did not pretend to understand.

"I say, you might tell us, Cousin Ethel."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We'll work the idea like anything."

"Wathah! As your cousin, deah gal, I wathah think you might explain the ideah."

"Please!"

The girl laughed as the juniors waited anxiously.

Then she turned to Tom Merry.

"It is really a splendid idea."

"Rather!"

"All your ideas are ripping, Cousin Ethel."

"Yes, of course they are, Figgins. Well, if you will promise not to roll about on the ground, instead of considering the suggestion, I will tell you."

"Hooway! Wippin'!"

"First of all, I hear that the pageant is to be carried out principally by the seniors."

"Yes, that's so."

"They've taken all the speaking parts."

"Wathah! They won't even let me be anythin' but a dead bodday, bai Jove."

"I thought that was the case," went on Cousin Ethel. "I wonder some of you did not at once try to work out another scheme for the honour of the lower Forms."

"My hat!"

"Bai Jove, we nevah thought of that!"

"You ought to have thought of it."

"You see, we've been so jolly busy with the pageant, ideah," explained Jack Blake. "We haven't had much time."

"Excuses are no good, Blake; you ought to have made time."

"Yaas, wathah! But it is vewy pwob. that an ideah would have occuwred to me befoah the day was out, deah gal."

"And it is very probable it would not!" exclaimed Cousin Ethel.

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Ethel. "You would have spent all your spare time rolling about on the ground."

"Bai Jove!"

"Yes, you would," continued Cousin Ethel. "However, we will forget that. Why don't you juniors organise a boxing tournament?"

"Gweat Scott!"

"A boxing tournament."

"How do you mean, Cousin Ethel?"

"You see what rolling about on the ground does, Figgins!" exclaimed their girl chum severely. "It prevents you thinking clearly. I mean a boxing competition, for which about half a dozen of you enter, there to be semi-finals and a final, planned on cup-tie principles, of course."

"Bai Jove, what a wippin' idea!"

"Great!"

The juniors were becoming excited.

"Wippin' in the extweme!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus.

"My hat, yes!"

"But how would it be worked, Cousin Ethel? I mean, how should it help in raising funds for the hospital?"

"Dear me! How very silly boys can really be when they like!" exclaimed Cousin Ethel, tossing her head. "I should have thought you all knew more about boxing than I do. Couldn't you gain permission to use the gymnasium, and charge sixpence for admission?"

"Bai Jove, yaas! I nevah thought of that."

"And perhaps Kildare would referee."

"Yes, I dare say he would," said Cousin Ethel; "but if I were getting this up, Manners, he wouldn't be offered the chance."

"Bai Jove!"

"No, I should manage everything myself. I would make it entirely a juniors' affair, and keep it very dark."

Tom Merry's face sparkled with pleasure.

"Yes, that's the idea, Cousin Ethel. We'll find our own roll, and time-keeper and every one."

"Dear me, yes, of course. I will organise the whole affair for you if you like, provided you will instruct me in the rules of boxing beforehand."

"I don't think, Skimmay!"

"Yes, but a fellow of my intelligence—"

"Would be bound to make a hash of it!" laughed Tom Merry. "This is simply great of you, Cousin Ethel, and we'll make a terrific success of it."

"Yes, rather. Do—do you think you could come and watch, Cousin Ethel?"

Figgins made his suggestion rather doubtfully. He was not quite certain whether it was correct to ask a girl chum to watch a boxing tournament.

Cousin Ethel laughed.

"Of course I shall come!" she exclaimed. "And Mrs. Holmes will come with me. You must have all the masters you know."

"Yaas, wathah, and the seniors as well."

"Of course. The only other point is when can the tournament take place? It ought to be as soon as possible."

"To-morrow."

"In the afternoon; it's a half, chaps."

"Yaas, wathah—to-morrow aftahnoon, deah boys!"

Cousin Ethel nodded.

"I was going to suggest to-morrow afternoon myself," she said thoughtfully, "only I thought you might have a more pressing engagement on hand."

"Oh, Cousin Ethel—"

Arthur Augustus bowed gallantly.

"A more pwessin' engagement than working out one of your ideas, deah girl? Imposs.!"

"Yes," said Cousin Ethel, turning to go. "I really did. I thought you might want to spend your half holiday rolling about on the ground like other small urchins. Good-bye!"

And she walked away coolly.

CHAPTER 18.

Kildare is Surprised.

"HUMPH! Funny, Monteith!"

The New House prefect nodded. He agreed with Kildare that it was very funny.

The captain went on thoughtfully.

"And whichever junior put up the notice, he must have obtained permission from a prefect or one of the masters."

"From a master, then!" exclaimed Monteith. "I've asked all the prefs. about it, and they know nothing. One of young Merry's japes, that's what I say."

"Notice.—A very important announcement will be made in this space before dinner to-day."

That was the notice which was puzzling the group of boys who had gathered round the notice-board, the following morning.

Apart from the team sheets, juniors were not allowed to use the notice-board without permission at St. Jim's, and it was not likely any of them would have dared to run the risk now, when the board was so much in requirement for the announcements concerning the pageant.

Kildare could not make it out.

He glanced at his watch.

"Well, it's pretty near the dinner-hour now!" he exclaimed. "Perhaps—Hullo!"

"Young Merry—"

"And Blake and Figgins—"

"Oh, the usual crew!"

A small crowd of juniors were coming towards the notice-board, so Kildare and his seniors stepped aside and began chatting about the pageant.

It would not do to let the juniors see that the Sixth Form were interested in their plans. As Arthur Augustus would have said, it was a matter of "dig" with them.

Tom Merry came up coolly.

"Got the notice, Figgy?"

"Rather!"

"Up with it, then!"

And a sheet of foolscap was pinned to the board.

Kildare glanced at it, and the expression on his face altered instantly.

Any plan, if it were good, had the approval of the captain of St. Jim's, and, personally, he did not mind in the least whether it emanated from senior or junior brains. For preference, he rather liked to see the juniors show up well, as that augured well for the future of the grand old school.

He caught Tom Merry by the arm just as the Shell junior turned to go.

"What's this idea, Merry?"

Tom Merry pointed to the notice.

"There it is, Kildare," he grinned. "Starts this afternoon at two-thirty sharp. The doctor and Mrs. Holmes have promised to attend."

The captain glanced at the notice again.

"But what's this—'Boxing tournament for solid silver shield, presented by Captain Cleveland.'"

"That's all right!"

"Yes, but—"

"D'Arcy had a wire from the captain, and he insists upon our accepting a shield. Captain Cleveland is going to bring it with him this afternoon."

"Admission sixpence," read Kildare thoughtfully.

"Yes; we thought we'd better make it sixpence so as to give the juniors a chance."

"That's right—"

"Yes; only there'll be a box handy for those who would like to give more," added Jack Blake.

"Will you chaps come?"

"Of course! Who is boxing?"

"Oh, a crowd of us! There'll be a good many bouts, I expect!"

Kildare dropped his hand on Tom Merry's shoulder.

"That's the style, youngster," he said quietly. "You are on the right lines, Merry."

Tom Merry coloured.

Praise from the stalwart captain of St. Jim's was not obtained easily.

"Oh, it wasn't my idea, Kildare!"

"Blake's, then?"

"No, rather not! Cousin Ethel's, of course!"

"Ah, Miss Cleveland's! And it was Miss Cleveland who suggested the pageant! Still, you seem to have worked the idea up well. I don't think there are many in St. Jim's who will forget to come to your show."

"Thanks, awfully, Kildare!"

"Yes, rather!"

The juniors pelted away, and a few minutes afterwards the gong for dinner sounded.

The moment the meal came to an end a general rush was made for the gymnasium by the greater portion of the juniors of both Houses. Tom Merry & Co. hurried to the Shell Form study.

Arthur Augustus was unusually excited.

"Bai Jove, we are goin' to have a wippin' cwoyd, deah boys!"

"Yes; and some ripping boxing!"

"Yaas wathah, Tom Mewwy. I considah I shall have little difficulty in gettin' into the second wound, deah boy."

"Yes; if you don't find your way to the hospital instead."

"Weally, Mewwy—"

"Ring off, you two!"

"Let's get on with the washing!"

Tom Merry's study was packed.

Fatty Wynn and Kerr were writing out the list of events, duplicating them at a furious rate on the machine used for publishing "Tom Merry's Weekly," while Manners and Lowther were attending to all the available boxing-gloves.

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Presently Arthur Augustus stepped to the window.

"Bai Jove, deah boys—"

"What's up now, Gussy?"

"Gweat Scott, there's a twemondous cwoyd wound the gym. alweadday! And Mr. Wailton, and dozens of seniors!"

"My hat, that looks useful, young Blake!"

"It does, young Merry."

"Yaas, wathah! Only pway let's get down. I am all in a fluttah!"

"Nothing like what you'll be after a few rounds with me," said Manners cheerily.

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"Yes; you've got a future before you, and no mistake, Gussy!"

"Bai Jove, Lowthah! As a mattah of fact, I am not contemptin' any twouble with my affair with Mannahs. Thwee wounds—"

"Two will be enough, kid."

"Weally, Mannahs— Howevah, we shall see—"

"Come on, chaps!"

The boxing-gloves were ready. Tom Merry thought that nothing had been forgotten.

"We've even got a sponge to dab up the claret," he chuckled, leading the way across the grounds. "I— My hat!"

"What's up?"

"What about a ref., Figgy?"

"Pheh!"

"Forgot all about a ref. Reilly is going to be the time-keeper. Perhaps Kerruish will take it on."

"Bai Jove— Hallo!"

"Captain Cleveland, kids!"

"Yaas, wathah! Pway how do you do, sir?"

"How much longer are you going to keep us, begad?" exclaimed Cousin Ethel's finely-built brother, shaking hands with the juniors in turn.

"We're nearly ready now, sir."

"Yaas, wathah! Only Tom Mewwy has forgotten to awwange about a wef."

"Has he, begad! Will I do, Merry?"

Tom Merry's eyes sparkled with pleasure.

"Will you, sir? It will be ripping if you would!"

"I'm ready, begad!" exclaimed the captain heartily.

"Haven't refereed in a boxing tournament for an age, but I think I remember a bit about it, begad!"

"Hooway!"

"Ripping!"

"No chance for Gussy to do any hitting about below the belt now."

"Rather not!"

"Bai Jove, Figgy, I wathah think I am not in the wotten habit of hittin' below the w'etched belt! As a mattah of fact—"

"Well, hitting a man when he's down, then!"

"Gweat Scott—"

"Or putting a horseshoe in your boxing-glove for luck."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

Captain Cleveland laughed heartily at the expression on his cousin's face.

"Never mind, D'Arcy, begad; take it out of them with the gloves!"

"Bai Jove, I shall certainly administah feahful thwashin's all wound! I twust, Mewwy, that we meet in the final wound."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Mannahs, I fail to see any cause for wibald laughtah!"

"No; you won't after the first bout, Gussy," chuckled Manners. "I've set my heart on that shield."

"Let's hope the best man gets it, begad!"

"Yaas, wathah! But as I considah vewy few, if any, are bettah with the gloves than— Heah is Skimmay, deah boys!"

Skimpole came up, blinking furiously.

"Good-afternoon, Captain Cleveland!" he exclaimed hastily. "I wish to speak to you, Merry—"

"Fire ahead, then, kid."

"I wish to say that, as a general rule, I am not in favour of fistic exhibitions, because they tend to encourage that military spirit latent in human nature, and which we should all contrive to stifle rather than—"

"Hear, hear! What did you say, Skimmy?"

"Dear me! I said— However, that does not matter for the moment, as I have dealt exhaustively with the subject in chapter one hundred and six of my work on Socialism. What I wish to say is that I am quite prepared to referee, having learnt all the rules of boxing with D'Arcy minor—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You are too much of a back numbah, deah boy."

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"Dear me! From that I deduce that you have already filled the post of referee. I will act as timekeeper instead."

"I don't think!"

"Too late again, Skimmay."

"Dear me! Is that so? Never mind, I will accept the responsible position of doorkeeper instead."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And you will be wanted to sweep up a bit, too, Skimmay."

"Dear me! Sweep up?"

"Yes," grinned Manners. "We shall have to have someone to sweep up the pieces after I have finished with Gussy here."

"Bai Jove—"

"Ring off, kids!"

The group of juniors, led by Captain Cleveland, had gained the crowd round the gymnasium now, and were pushing their way through.

The crowd was swelling every moment, but they made a path for Tom Merry & Co.

There was a good deal of excitement in the air, because no one really knew what type of entertainment awaited them.

Tom Merry unlocked the door of the gymnasium, closing it again after the thirteen and Captain Cleveland had passed into the splendidly-appointed building.

CHAPTER 19.

The First Bout.

"READY, chaps?"

"Yaas, wathah! The clock has just stwuck, bai Jove!"

"Good! Open the door, Skimmy!"

Skimpole flung open the door, and instantly there was a rush of juniors. Everyone appeared to be trying to enter the building at once.

Sixpences were forced into Skimpole's hand.

That first rush told Tom Merry that there was little doubt about the affair being a financial success.

Forms and chairs had been borrowed from the school and arranged in neat rows. Harry Noble stood guarding the front row.

"Reserved, Hancock; masters and ladies."

Hancock grinned.

"All right, Kangaroo. There's going to be a fearful row if it's a rotten show."

The Cornstalk grinned back.

He knew there were not many fellows in the gymnasium who would consent to have their sixpences returned, even if there were no show at all.

A buzz of voices went round the building, but suddenly they became subdued. Doctor and Mrs. Holmes had just come in, followed by Cousin Ethel.

Harry Noble found their seats in the front row, showed the other masters where to sit; then vanished into the dressing-room.

Kildare came in then, with a whole crowd of seniors, and glanced critically at the well-made rope ring which had been erected.

"All right, you know, Darrel!"

The second prefect of the School House nodded.

"Young Glyn's work, for a pension. I say, they must have fagged a trifle to get this set out."

"The whole thirteen of them were up before daylight this morning, old man."

Darrel looked thoughtfully at his captain.

"There's stuff there, Kildare," he said; "not bad stuff, either. What time do you make it?"

"Another three minutes yet."

Darrel glanced round.

There was scarcely a yard of room left. On the slightly-raised platform at the other end of the gymnasium the Third-Formers were packed so tightly that Darrel wondered any of them could breathe.

"Like sardines in a small tin, Monteith."

"All except D'Arcy minor."

"Ha, ha, ha! I didn't notice the young rascal."

Wally was perched up on the window-sill, a good dozen feet from the ground. How he got there was a mystery to the prefects.

"Oh, let the young rascal stay!" laughed Kildare. "If he does fall it will only be on the top of Gibson and Jameson."

"Hallo! Here they come!"

"Manners and D'Arcy, isn't it?"

"Yes. Manners strips well for a kid, Kildare."

Kildare nodded.

Manners was by no means a badly-built youngster, and when you come to look at Arthur Augustus there was a wiriness about his limbs which many a far bigger fellow might have envied.

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Then Reilly stepped to the side of the ring with a huge stop-watch, the face of which he had even opened so that fractions of seconds should not be lost.

Captain Cleveland stepped upon the platform and consulted a list of names Tom Merry thrust in his hand.

"Manners—D'Arcy, first bout, begad! Two-minute rounds in every case—minute rests. Three rounds to a bout."

"Hooray!"

The juniors shouted encouragingly, and Arthur Augustus removed his monocle.

"Pway take care of that, Weilly, deah boy. I wegwet to say I nevah weah my monocle when boxin'."

"My only hat! I should think not!"

"Ready?"

Captain Cleveland asked the question crisply, and Manners and Arthur Augustus slipped off their long mackintoshes. The sight of athlete's vests and shorts raised the interest of the Third-Formers to boiling-point. This was not to be a hole-in-the-corner affair, anyway.

"Time!"

Manners and Arthur Augustus approached one another and shook hands, then Manners led off.

He had a favourite trick of leading rather tamely with the left, then making a great effort to get home with the right.

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus gasped.

Manners' right had got home, and the swell of St. Jim's knew it, but that was only the beginning. Arthur Augustus refused to accept it as an omen, and drove neatly with his left.

Points were even once again.

Then the two friendly rivals went at it for all they were worth.

Four-ounce gloves were in favour at St. Jim's, because they are heavy enough to prevent damage, but not so heavy that clean boxing is out of the question. Well made four-ounce gloves are difficult to beat.

"Go on, Gussy!"

"Manners—Manners!"

"Fourth Form!"

"Shell, you mean! Hooray!"

Arthur Augustus and his opponent were boxing in rare style. They did not wait for openings, they tried to make them instead, and Captain Cleveland had all his work out of so keep up with them.

At the end of the first round he would not have cared to say who had had the better of it.

"Bai Jove! Wathah warm work, Mannahs, deah boy!"

"Warm's not the word, kid!"

"No, wathah not! I hardly considah warm is the word atbah!"

Tom Merry and all the other principals of the future bouts were breathless with excitement.

They watched Jack Blake attending Arthur Augustus and Lowther looking after Manners in dead silence. Only once did Figgins glance away from the ring-corners.

Cousin Ethel's pretty face was rather pale.

She was as excited as the inkiest young fag of the Third, though her excitement was of a different nature.

Presently Reilly's Irish brogue rang out.

"Time!"

The two principals stepped into the ring again. There was scarcely a sound to be heard anywhere.

CHAPTER 20.

Arthur Augustus's Guests.

THIS time it was Arthur Augustus who opened the attack. He got home with a clever left, and guarded the counter so coolly that Jack Blake at first thought it must have been by chance.

"My hat! The one and only can box, Merry!"

The Shell fellow nodded.

"And Manners isn't a rabbit!"

"No, rather not! Well hit, Gussy!"

"Good, Manners!"

Round and round the ring the two circled, for both were boxing with their heels, as they used to say in the old days. Manners was having just a trifle the better of the exchanges now, but there was little in it. Suddenly he slipped. He went right down on his knee, but was up again in a flash.

Arthur Augustus promptly lowered his hands.

"No huwvy, deah boy. Weady?"

"Yes, thanks, kid."

"Don't mention it, deah boy."

Arthur Augustus put up his gloves again, and the rest of that round was boxed out at a furious pace.

Captain Cleveland's face wore a perplexed expression.

"Begad, I don't believe there's three points difference!"

he muttered, as the two went back to their respective corners.

"Hope to goodness something definite happens this round, begad!"

The last round opened at as a great a pace as ever.

Both suffered a little from quick lefts, because the attack was better than the defence, and before long Manners was driven to the ropes.

Captain Cleveland's face lighted at that.

The cause had been a really fine counter from Arthur Augustus's right.

Reilly was trying to do two things—watch the match, and keep his eye on the watch. On the raised platform at the end of the building, the Third-Formers were gazing open-mouthed.

"My only Aunt Jane! Your brother can box, kid!"

Wally grinned.

In his heart, he was just a little proud of his brother's exhibition.

Then Manners was driven towards the ropes again, and the moment he had recovered a couple of body-blows made him gasp, and gave Arthur Augustus a slight lead in points.

Then Reilly called time.

There was dead silence for a moment or two.

No one could feel really certain which of them had won, but Captain Cleveland gave his verdict decidedly enough.

"D'Arcy wins on points," he said. "Nothing in it, begad."

"Hooray!"

"Good old Gussy!"

"Shout up, kids!"

The Third-Form youngsters were cheering at the tops of their voices. It was not that Manners was in any way unpopular—he was as well liked as any fellow in the school, as a matter of fact—but the Third felt that they had a family interest in Arthur Augustus.

He was Wally's brother.

"Bai Jove! I hardly considah I ought to have won, deah boy!"

Manners laughed cheerily.

"Rot, kid!"

"Weally, deah boy, when I make a wemark, I must wequest you not to descwibe it as wot!"

"Piffle, then."

"Bai Jove, Mannahs, I should wegwet havin' to administah a feahful thwashin'—Gweat Scott, my nose is bleedin', deah boys!"

"Hooray!"

"You uthah wuffian, Mannahs! You wough wottah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus did not answer. He dashed from the gymnasium by the side door. It would have been simply impossible for the swell of St. Jim's to join Cousin Ethel in the front row with signs of the fray still showing on his face.

He ran hard for the tap outside, and held his head under the stream of water.

"Gweat Scott! I weally believe my nose is swollen as well!"

He bathed away gently, and tried to gain a reflection of himself in the gymnasium window.

"Bai Jove! I wondah if it is the wotten glass, or whethah my nose is weally cwooked! Hallo!"

Arthur Augustus had caught a glimpse of some figures moving about outside the grounds. Arthur Augustus pelted across to the railings.

"Pway stop, deah boys! It's Gwimes, isn't it?"

Grimes, with Pilcher and Craggs, came back. Arthur Augustus held out his hand.

"We are havin' a boxin' tournament, deah boys—"

"Yes, we know."

"Do you weally? Bai Jove!"

"Rather! Heard through Binks, so we thought we'd come along to see whether Mr. Figgins, Mr. Merry, or Mr. Blake won the shield. We shall be able to tell from the shouts, you know." And Grimes grinned.

Arthur Augustus flung open the gate.

"Pway come in, deah boys!" he exclaimed loftily. "There is plenty of woom—at least, there is a little woom. Come along, Gwimes!"

"But—"

"Not—not inside the gym., Mr. D'Arcy."

"Bai Jove, where do you think I am takin' you then, deah boy—into the doctor's pwivate studdy? Hah, hah, hah!"

Arthur Augustus had gained the small side door of the gymnasium now, and he pushed it open.

"This way, deah boys!"

Caps in hand, and not over comfortable grins on their faces, the village youths followed the swell of St. Jim's into the packed building.

Grimes nudged Arthur Augustus in the ribs.

Arthur Augustus jumped.

"Pway don't do that, deah boy—it puts me all in a fluttah!"

"Aren't you charging for admission?"

"Yaas, wathah—only not for my personal guests, deah boy!"

Grimes did not answer, but he dropped a penny into the box as he passed. Pilcher and Craggs did the same. It was all they could afford, so it was enough.

Then, to their embarrassment, Arthur Augustus led them to three chairs in the front row.

"You will have a wippin' view fwm heah, deah boys!"

With faces a deep red, Grimes & Co. sat down, wondering whether Dr. Holmes would come across and say anything.

But the doctor did not come across. As a matter of fact he only glanced once their way, and there was a nod of welcome on his face on that occasion.

He had seen Arthur Augustus bring his guests in, and Dr. Holmes liked that sort of thing.

A moment or two later Grimes & Co. forgot about Dr. Holmes—forgot about everything, except that their staunch rivals Kerr and Tom Merry had stepped into the ring.

The second bout was to begin.

There was a grin on Kerr's face, although he did not quarrel with the chance that had given him Tom Merry as an opponent for the first round. The Scots junior could scarcely hope to beat his School House rival without a good deal more than his share of luck, but he could put up a very good fight.

He did that with a will, and the applause was tremendous.

Tom Merry had all his work cut out to finish the first round ahead in points, and right up until the end of the second round he never really mastered the hard, wiry Scots junior.

The third round, however, his greater knowledge of glove-work stood him in excellent stead, and he ran out a fairly comfortable winner.

Kerr held out his hand instantly.

"You're too good for me, Tommy!"

"Not a bit of it, kid! Blessed if I didn't think you were going to massacre me in the first round! I shall be over in the New House to-morrow, to learn how you work those half-arm jabs!"

"Yaas, wathah! I considah Kerr put up a weally excellent fight, deah boys! Bai Jove!"

Figgins and Blake were stepping into the ring.

That would be the biggest affair so far, and for Arthur Augustus it had a double interest.

He was, of course, hopeful that the School House junior would win in a way, but he was drawn to meet whichever won in the next round.

Arthur Augustus screwed his monocle deep in his eye, and watched anxiously.

CHAPTER 21.

The Final.

"MY hat, this will be something like a match!" Wally D'Arcy nearly slipped from the window-sill in excitement. Everyone in the gymnasium watched the two great rivals step into the ring.

Then Reilly gave the word.

"Time!"

Right from the commencement the pace was furiously fast, for each felt that he was boxing for the honour of his respective House.

Blow after blow was delivered and guarded, and sometimes not guarded. Neither were sparing themselves.

If Captain Cleveland had found it difficult to decide which showed the better form in the previous bouts, he must have been very perplexed over this one. For two and a half rounds there was scarcely a difference of a point.

In fact, neither knew who was getting the better of it, and Figgins became anxious. Every time he worked round the ring he caught sight of a pretty, girlish face, white with excitement, in the front row, and the leader of the New House juniors gritted his teeth.

He felt he must do his very utmost to win, and he could box.

But, then, so could Jack Blake, although there was one thing in Figgins's favour which really meant a lot. His reach was nearly two inches longer than his friendly rival's.

Working strenuously, each struggled to gain the advantage in points, and the bout came to an end without either of them knowing which had won.

They spun round and faced Captain Cleveland.

"Yours, I expect, Figgy."

"Not much, kid."

"Figgins, begad!" exclaimed the captain. "Only just."

"Good old Figgy!"

"Another time and the verdict would just as likely be reversed, Blake, begad! Never saw such even boxing in my life."

Jack Blake grinned, and held out his hand.

"Good, Figgy, my son, but you haven't won the shield yet. That's coming to the School House, and don't you forget it."

"I don't think! Merry has Fatty Wynn to face yet, and Fatty isn't a light-weight, I can tell you."

"Here they come!"

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NOW
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"THE EMPIRE" LIBRARY.

ONE
HALFPENNY.

The Third Form juniors roared with laughter as Fatty Wynn stepped into the ring to uphold the honour of the New House; but the laughter did not last long.

The Falstaff of St. Jim's could use the gloves, and he had a style of his own which was enough to spoil anyone's pet tricks.

He simply stood still, and hit out with the regularity of a punching-machine.

But Tom Merry was the better man, for he was far quicker, and Captain Cleveland was never in doubt this time. The School House junior had the verdict, and grinned breathlessly as he acknowledged the cheers.

Arthur Augustus jumped to his feet.

"Bai Jove!"

"Knock old Figgy out, Gussy!"

"Yaas, wathah, Blake, deah boy! That is to say, I will endeavour to do my best, bai Jove!"

But Arthur Augustus's best was not quite good enough this time.

Figgins was just that trace too good for him all through, and although he got home with some beautiful left-handers, there was never any great doubt as to which would win on points.

Arthur Augustus himself was the first to admit that when the verdict was given against him.

"Howevah, when we meet again, deah boy, I wathah think I shall be able to administah a feahful thwashin'. I intend to pwactise weguhlahy."

"Don't cackle, Gussy."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Get the sponge, ass, and another towel. If Tom Merry doesn't win the shield for the School House, we'll slay him in his own study this evening."

"Yaas, wathah, or, at least, we will wemonstwate with him," exclaimed Arthur Augustus excitedly.

"Rats!"

"Weally, Kerr—"

"Well, Merry hasn't an earthly," grinned Figgins's loyal lieutenant. "Figgy will massacre him."

But the wish was father to the thought with Kerr. There was no doubt about it, the match would be wonderful even.

Tom Merry opened in grand style, getting in under Figgins's guard within the first few seconds; but he was not quick enough in breaking away. The New House junior's long arm shot out, and a heavy body blow made Jack Blake look grave.

"Many like that, Gussy, and Figgy will win."

"Yaas, wathah! I considah— Bai Jove!"

Tom Merry was making amends for his slowness now, for he was boxing quicker than Figgins even. It was every trace as close an affair as the Blake-Figgins bout.

Time after time they forced each other back to the ropes, hitting and guarding with a rapidity which made it difficult to follow. All through the tournament Kildare and the other seniors had been surprised at the form shown by the juniors, but the final was something which none of them had ever expected.

Captain Cleveland was as astonished as they were.

"Begad, they both deserve to win!" he muttered to Reilly as the first round came to an end. "Best style I've ever seen with youngsters."

In dead silence the spectators waited for the second round to open, and when it did the pace was just as fast.

As Captain Cleveland watched he came to a conclusion Kildare had come to while watching some of the other matches—that a fairer test of the rivals' prowess would have been half a dozen rounds instead of three.

But three was the recognised number, and three it would have to be. The only thing was to get as much done in the short time as possible.

Both Figgins and Tom Merry had this one idea in mind, and they acted up to it. But it was not until the third round that the really exciting work came about.

Soon after Reilly had called them back into the ring for the last time, Figgins began to rush. He used good judgment, too, and Tom Merry tried every trick he knew to keep him away.

Once he stepped aside, and landed out neatly with his right. Figgins staggered, but he was round on his heel again, and in a flash had got home with a splendid left. Then the Shell fellow tried close fighting to make up for Figgins's extra length of reach, and in this he was the more successful. Twice he got home on the "mark," but when he attempted a third blow, Figgins was prepared.

He drove Tom Merry back with right and left in quick succession, then lost his advantage with a slow guard.

"By George, that was pretty, Kildare!"

"They are boxing finely."

"Who will get it, old man?"

Darrel asked the question breathlessly, but the captain

did not answer for a moment or two. When he did he spoke quietly.

"Merry—just. Prettier footwork, and that's about all there is in it."

And Kildare proved to be right, for directly the bout came to an end, Captain Cleveland pointed to the Shell fellow.

"Merry, begad!"

The cheers which rang out were deafening—so deafening that Dr. Holmes decided to conduct his party from the gymnasium without attempting to subdue them.

Tom Merry hurriedly slipped on his coat.

"No time for slacking, Figgy!" he exclaimed. "We've got a lot to do yet."

"My hat, yes!"

"Wathah! We have all the money to count, deah boys.

Skimmay! Has anyone seen Skimmay?"

"Dear me! I am just behind you, D'Arcy."

"Bai Jove, so you are, deah boy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Don't cackle, let's get on with the washing!" exclaimed

Jack Blake. "Where's all the money, Skimmy?"

"Fork out, Skimmy!"

Skimpole waved his arm loftily.

"I have already counted the money, Merry," he said,

and I have handed it over to Dr. Holmes to take care of.

Under Socialistic conditions—"

"Nevah mind about Socialism, deah boy. How much

money did we raise?"

"Dear me! Twenty-three pounds exactly."

"Bai Jove!"

It was easy enough to guess where those two five-pound notes came from. Dr. Holmes and Captain Cleveland would probably have the numbers in their respective pocket-books.

In great glee the juniors went to their respective studies, for they were not to be left long to themselves.

Kildare came in to see them about future rehearsals; and they knew that the next few days would be very busy ones.

Kildare and Monteith took command of everything connected with stage management, and the way those two juniors produced order from the wildest confusion which

had been present at the first rehearsal was astounding.

Long before the gates were opened on the great day

there was a large enough crowd to make the idea of rebuilding the little hospital assume practical shape. People from the other side of the county were amongst those waiting to gain admittance.

And the pageant itself was a great success.

Then, when it was all over, the money raised put all doubt about the practicability of building the hospital on one side. With the twenty-three pounds Tom Merry & Co. had made, the doctor did not hesitate for a moment.

He made up his mind to write for contracts from the various local builders that very evening.

The moment the entertainment was over, four of the "actors" raced for the college.

"Bai Jove, thank goodness I have finished bein' a dead bodday!" panted Arthur Augustus. "Have you got per-mish, Mewwy, deah boy?"

"Rather!"

"Wippin'!"

The others, including Figgins and Jack Blake, grinned. They raced into the old school, and hurriedly changed into flannels, then pelted out again.

A few moments later Arthur Augustus sent a neat little note to the doctor's house, and the four waited impatiently, their new summer blazers—worn for the first time—showing up brightly against the old grey walls.

"Heah she is, deah boys!"

"Will you come, Cousin Ethel?"

"It will be simply wippin' on the wivah, deah gal."

Cousin Ethel laughed.

"Dear me, I believe you all become sillier every day!" she exclaimed. "What do you think I have put my hat on and brought my new sunshade for if I am not coming with you? It will be simply ripping."

And Tom Merry & Co. chuckled softly.

An hour's row, and there would be another surprise for their girl chum, for a splendid tea had been ordered at a little cottage well known to them all.

It would be at tea, too, that the juniors would thank Cousin Ethel for what she had done for the new St. James's Hospital.

THE END.

(Another splendid tale of Tom Merry & Co., entitled "The Leader of the New House," by Martin Clifford, next Thursday.)



IN THE SERVICE OF THE KING

*A Thrilling
Old Time Sea Story*

By Lieutenant Lefevre.

READ THIS FIRST!

Oswald Yorke, a youth of eighteen, whom peculiar circumstances have forced to become a highwayman, one night holds up the carriage of Admiral Sir Sampson Eastlake. He is overpowered, however; but the good old admiral offers him a chance of serving the King in the Navy instead of handing him over to justice. Oswald, therefore, joins the frigate Catapult as a midshipman, under the name of John Smith.

Driven to fury by the tyranny of the captain, the crew of the Catapult mutiny, and there is a terrible fight on board. The mutineers are defeated, but such is the loss of life on both sides that a storm takes the frigate unprepared, and she springs a leak. "She cannot float an hour," says Mr. Pringle, the master. "Then we are doomed!" cries the captain hoarsely, the words bursting from his throat in a scream of terror.

(Now go on with the story.)

Lowering the Boats.

Even Pringle took pity on the cowardly captain. "We will see what can be done," he said hopefully. "The sea may go down—it is going down."

"There is no hope. The sea will not go down for hours yet. My heavens, we are doomed!"

Captain Burgoyne stood there, clenching and unclenching his hands, and the perspiration rolling down his face.

"We will do all that can be done—we can do no more. For the rest, we must leave ourselves in the hand of Fate," said Mr. Pringle.

"And One who is Fate, and greater than Fate," said a voice behind him.

They turned to see Dr. Telford standing there.

"The Catapult is going down," he said calmly. "The water is in the cockpit. Nothing can save her!"

Mr. Pringle shook his head.

"Nothing," he said quietly. "To try would be but to waste precious time."

NEXT
THURSDAY:

"THE LEADER OF THE NEW HOUSE."

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 118.

By
MARTIN CLIFFORD.

Almost as he spoke the frigate gave a heavy lurch, and seemed to settle perceptibly in the water.

"We have less time even than I thought," he cried quickly. "Our one chance of life is to launch a boat."

All who remained alive on the Catapult had now gathered together on the main-deck. They consisted of Mr. Pringle, Lieutenant Armstrong, the captain, Mr. Brabazon, Fid, Dr. Telford, Benton, Maxwell, Oswald, and Babbington. Of the others who had been with them there was now no sign.

"We will bring Mr. Fryer up on deck," Dr. Telford said. "Pringle, can you spare me Smith?"

Mr. Pringle nodded. Even in that moment of anxiety it struck him as peculiar that all should look to him, and ignore the captain, who stood by helpless and half senseless with the terror of threatening death.

Oswald hurried below after the doctor. Even during the few minutes the latter had been on deck the water had risen considerably, and when they reached the bottom of the companionway they had to splash through it as it rose above their knees.

They found Mr. Fryer in his bunk, quite sensible of all that was going on.

"The frigate is sinking," he said, in a weak voice. "What are you going to do, Telford?"

"Take you on deck, and get you stowed away in a boat," said the doctor cheerily.

"You are not going to carry me?" cried Fryer, with a note of alarm in his voice.

"By Jove, we are!" said the doctor.

He hastily wrapped a large coat around the invalid; then, making a bundle of a couple of blankets for Mr. Fryer's further comfort, if he was ever got into the boat in safety, he motioned to Oswald to take the lieutenant's feet while he took him under the arms, and in this manner they carried him on deck.

Mr. Pringle, with the assistance of Fid, Benton, and Lieutenant Armstrong, had at last managed to get a boat hoisted over the side.

"Wait till I give the word," cried Mr. Pringle, "and then lower away altogether; not too hastily—now!"

For a moment they paused.

"Lower!" he cried quickly, and the boat descended to the sea.

It was afloat. Mr. Pringle heaved a heartfelt sigh of relief.

"We have no time to provision her, no time for—"

He paused. A huge wave came racing towards them like some ravenous beast—the white foam its gleaming teeth. It caught the frail boat up in its irresistible embrace, and dashed it against the frigate's side, crushing it into nothingness. Captain Burgoyne dropped on his knees, and hid his face in his hands.

"No hope! Nothing can save us!" he wailed.

None of the others spoke for a moment, and in the silence they could hear Mr. Brabazon's teeth chattering together.

Pringle was the first to rouse himself from the momentary apathy that had fallen on them all.

"Batten down all the hatches again," he said hoarsely. "It will give us a few more moments of life."

Leaving Mr. Fryer in Dr. Telford's charge, Oswald hurried after Maxwell to carry out Mr. Pringle's orders, while Pringle and the others essayed to launch a second boat.

Again they succeeded in getting the boat afloat; again their hopes rose, and once again the boat was crushed to pieces against the frigate's side when they thought safety was almost in their grasp. Mr. Pringle and Lieutenant Armstrong looked straight into each other's eyes, and read nothing but hopelessness there.

"Third time's the time for luck!" sang out Fid. "There's the big cutter left; the rest have gone overboard." It was true. There was still one boat left

—only one. If that failed them their last hope, their last chance of life, was gone.

Meanwhile, Oswald and Maxwell were batten down the last hatch, and so imprisoning the air under the decks, and giving all the buoyance to the now water-logged frigate that they could manage.

"It is our last chance," said Pringle.

Afloat.

Tired and weakened as they were, it was no easy matter for the three men, assisted now by Maxwell and Oswald, to lower the boat. At last they got her swung out from the frigate's side.

"Listen a moment!" said Mr. Pringle earnestly. "Directly the boat touches the water, not a second of time must be lost. Sink or swim, we must tumble into her and get away from the frigate's side. Telford, you hear?"

Benton, stand ready, the moment the boat touches the water, to help the doctor with Mr. Fryer. Captain Burgoyne, you hear? No time must be lost."

The captain nodded dumbly.

For a few seconds the boat swung in mid-air, while Mr. Pringle watched the sea.

A huge wave came rolling towards the ship, and broke against it heavily. It was what Mr. Pringle was waiting for. The moment the wave had broken he gave the word, and the boat went swiftly down into the water.

Quick as thought, Fid and Armstrong leaped into it, and held out their arms for Mr. Fryer. Captain Burgoyne and Brabazon sprang in, then Benton, Dr. Telford, Maxwell, Babbington, and Oswald.

Mr. Pringle was the last to leave the deck of the Catapult. In less time than it takes in the telling, they were afloat.

"Pull for your lives!" screamed Pringle.

A huge wave was racing towards them. If it caught them before they had put off, destruction was certain. They would be smashed against the frigate's side, and they would be beyond all earthly aid.

"For your lives!" shouted Mr. Pringle.

The muscles on the men's arms stood out as the oars creaked in the rowlocks. Yet, for an instant, it seemed to them that the boat scarcely moved an inch from the dangerous neighbourhood of the sinking ship.

Capped with foam, the great black wave was racing down upon them.

Mr. Pringle, at the tiller, steered straight for the watery monster as it rose above them.

They could see now that it was not black, but a dull, deep green. Right over their bows it reared up like a huge, semi-transparent wall. They could not pass through it; it seemed impossible they could pass over it.

For a moment all held their breath, except the two men straining at the oars.

Then, heavily weighted though it was, the boat rose. It seemed to be flung into the air. For an instant it was swept backwards towards the sinking ship.

Benton's oar flew out of the water, and he himself almost fell backwards; but, with a marvellous effort, he regained command of himself, and drove the oar deep into the back of the wave.

That instant seemed an eternity to them all. The muscles on the backs and arms of the two men at the oars stood out, knotted and gnarled, as they put forth all their strength; and then, just as, with a mighty boom, the wave broke against the shivering ship, the boat shot forward down the shining slope of water.

Though really they had but little way on the boat, it seemed to them they were racing onwards through the dark, angry waters as the green wave surged past them.

(Another long instalment of this great adventure serial will appear next week. Be sure to order your next copy of the "Gem" in good time. Id., as usual.)

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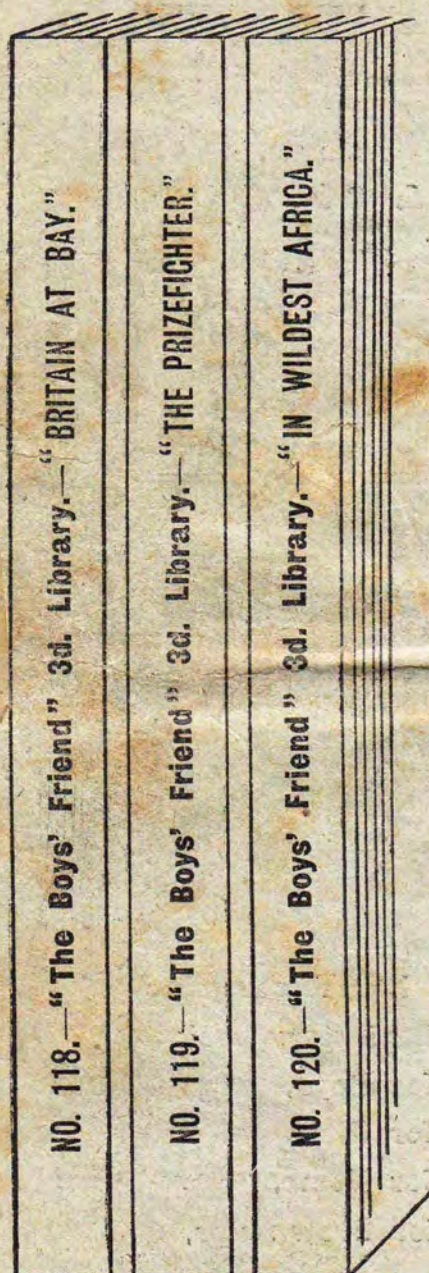
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