

NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

"ONE AGAINST THE SCHOOL!"

By
MARTIN CLIFFORD.

Every

Wednesday



Complete Stories for All, and Every Story a Gem



THE SCHOOLBOY SCOUTS!

A Splendid, New, Long, Complete Tale
of Tom Merry & Co at St. Jim's.

.. BY ..

MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1. On the Scent.

"BAI Jove! You seem awf'ly busay!"

D'Arcy of the Fourth made that remark as he looked into Study No. 6, his study in the Fourth-Form passage.

The fellows in the study certainly did look busy. Blake and Herries and Digby of the Fourth were seated upon the study chairs. Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther, the Terrible Three of the Shell, were sitting on the table. Reilly was sitting on D'Arcy's hat-box and Kangaroo of the Shell was on the coal-locker. And they were all busily engaged in tearing up paper into tiny fragments. Old exercise-books, old impot-sheets, old newspapers, and all sorts and conditions of papers were being reduced to atoms, and the study carpet was liberally strewn with them. The fragments were being thrown into a couple of large baskets, but a good many of them missed the mark, and littered the floor. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy jammed his famous monocle into his eye, and surveyed the busy scene in the study with some surprise.

"What's the little game, deah boys?" he asked.

"It isn't a game," said Tom Merry; "it's work! Suppose you come in and lend a hand."

Arthur Augustus came in.

"There's room for you on the window-sill," said Jack Blake glancing round.

"I am not goin' to sit down, deah boy."

"Going to stand to tear up the paper?"

"I'm not goin' to tear up the papah, Blake. I am othah-wise occupied," explained D'Arcy. "But you chaps can wun on; don't mind me."

"Lend a hand, you slacker!" exclaimed Tom Merry indignantly. "The paper-chase is to-morrow afternoon, and I suppose you want to join it?"

D'Arcy nodded.

"Yaas, wathah! If you're goin' to have a papah-chase, you'll need all the good wunnahs," he remarked. "Pway go on teawin' up the papah, deah boys. I dare say a gweat deal will be wequired. I am wathah busy just now; I'm doin' my article for the 'Weekly.'"

"Never mind that," said Tom Merry. "The 'Weekly' isn't coming out this week, and the paper-chase is. It's a special paper-chase, with all the Boy Scouts of St. Jim's taking a hand in it for training. Have you done any of the article yet?"

"Yaas, about half. It's a weally wippin' article, on the subject of the latest fashion in twousahs, for the fashion column in the 'Weekly.' I think it will pwove to be wathah intewestin'."

"I'll tell you what!" said Tom Merry. "Don't finish the article. Tear it up, and add it to this little lot. It will be more useful that way."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"We're running short of paper," said Blake. "We've been tearing up back numbers of the 'Weekly' as it is. Your article will come in quite handy, Gussy."

"I wegard you as an ass, Blake!" Arthur Augustus jammed his eyeglass a little tighter into his eye, and looked round the study, as if in search of something. "Have any of you chaps seen my article?"

"What kind of an article was it?" asked Monty Lowther, with a gleam in his eye which showed that he was going to be humorous. "Definite or indefinite?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pway don't be an ass, Lowthah. I left my article on the studay table here, when I went down to see Figgins," said D'Arcy anxiously. "Are you sittin' on it, you fellows?"

The Terrible Three did not move. They filled up most of the table, and the valuable article intended for the columns

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"ONE AGAINST THE SCHOOL!" AND "BIRDS OF PREY!"

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of "Tom Merry's Weekly" might very well have been concealed under their persons.

"I'm sitting on an article," said Lowther.

"Then pway get off it."

"But it's a wooden article," Lowther explained. "A table, in fact."

"Weally, Lowthah, I wish you would not make these wotten attempts at humah on a sewious subject. I have witten about a thousand words of that article, and I want to get it finished. I will take it into some other study to write; I couldn't do liteway work with you fellows chat-tewin' wound me. Where is it?"

"Gussy, old man," said Jack Blake, with a solemn look, "I'm awfully sorry. Was the article written on impot. paper?"

"Yaas," said D'Arcy anxiously. "Have you seen it?"

"Yes, I've seen it. You see, I was looking round the study for rubbish to tear up, and I found it, among the other rubbish."

Arthur Augustus looked alarmed.

"Blake, you feahful ass! You don't mean to say that you have torn up my article?"

"I'm awfully sorry—"

"Bai Jove! You uttah ass—"

"How was I to know that it was any good?" said Blake argumentatively. "I did look at it, but it didn't seem to be any good."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you wuffian! You have destroyed my article!" shrieked Arthur Augustus. "I spent two hours thinkin' out that article."

"Well, you see, I saw it on the table—"

"You uttah ass—"

"And I was looking for rubbish—"

"You fwightful duffah—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus pushed back his cuffs. Blake looked at him out of the corner of his eye.

"Will you kindly awise, Blake?" said D'Arcy, with elaborate politeness.

"What for?"

"I am goin' to give you a feahful thwashin'!"

Blake shook his head.

"Haven't time for it, Gussy. We're awfully busy—got to get all this stuff torn up before tea. Don't interrupt the circus."

"If you do not wise, Blake, I shall have no wresource but to dwag you up," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, trembling with excitement and indignation. "You have destroyed my article, and I am goin' to thwash you!"

Blake yawned.

That yawn was too much for Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's patience. He was a most good-tempered and equable fellow as a rule, but any literary man will understand his indignation at the destruction of his literary efforts. Arthur Augustus was a great authority upon the subject of clothes, and he had expended much original thought upon that valuable article upon the subject of trousers. The whole of St. Jim's might have been enlightened upon that important subject, through the medium of the columns of "Tom Merry's Weekly."

Arthur Augustus rushed at his chum, and seized him by the shoulders, and whirled him off his chair.

"Now, you feahful wottah—"

"Order!" shouted Kangaroo. "No time for ragging, Gussy. We've got to get all this stuff torn up."

"Wats! I am goin' to thwash Blake—"

"Help!" gasped Blake. "He's dangerous! Help!"

"Hands off, you wottahs!" shrieked D'Arcy. "Blake, I insist upon thwashin' you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The whole crowd of paper-tearers suspended their occupation to close round the indignant swell of St. Jim's. Hands seized upon Arthur Augustus from all sides, and in a second

he was whirled off his feet, and the said feet were flourishing wildly in the air. D'Arcy was lowered gently to the floor.

"Now, order!" said Tom Merry severely.

"I wefuse to ordah—I mean—"

"Perhaps it will keep him quiet if we chuck the paper over him," Reilly suggested in a thoughtful way.

"Hear, hear!"

"Bai Jove! Oh! Ow—gwooh!"

The juniors seized the huge baskets of torn fragments of paper, and up-ended them over Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. In a second the swell of St. Jim's disappeared beneath clouds of paper. He seemed to have been obliterated by a sudden snow-fall. Paper, and paper, and paper descended upon him in clouds and heaps and piles, till he was covered up from view, and only strange and unearthly motions from below agitated the mass.

Figgins of the New House looked into the study from the passage. He had come to lend a helping hand in preparing for the paper-chase, but he was arrested in the doorway by the remarkable scene that greeted him. On the floor was a mass of paper-fragments which seemed to be endowed with life.

"M-m-my hat!" ejaculated Figgins. "W-w-w-what—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A head came up through the mass of fragments, and a breathless and flushed junior glared round the study, with paper "scent" fluttering all around him.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Figgins. "Gussy, by Jove! What's the game, Gussy? What are you doing for?"

"Ow, you fwightful ass, do you think I'm doin' it on purpose?" shrieked D'Arcy. "I have been tweated with the gwosset diswespect."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy scrambled to his feet, fragments of paper flying wildly all round him. The study was thick with them. The swell of St. Jim's breathed fury as he gazed round at the grinning faces. Jack Blake picked up a chunk of impot. paper that the Shell fellows had been sitting on, on the table, and held it out to the swell of St. Jim's.

"This what you were looking for, Gussy?" he asked blandly.

Arthur Augustus jumped.

"You—you said you had destroyed it, you uttah ass!"

Blake shook his head.

"Oh, Gussy, I didn't! I said I saw it on the table, and that I was sorry."

"What were you sowwy for, then, you ass?"

"Sorry you should write such piffle, I meant," Blake explained cheerfully.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You uttah ass—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus clutched the precious manuscript, and dusted down his clothes with the other hand. He seemed undecided whether to take the valuable article away while it was safe, or whether to give the whole company a fearful thrashing all round. Tom Merry pushed him into a chair.

"Fire away, Gussy!" he said. "That's your little bit. Tear it up as small as you can."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus stalked to the doorway. He turned in the doorway, to adjust his monocle in his eye, and bestow a glare of withering scorn upon the juniors.

"I weward you as a set of uttah asses!" he said crushingly.

"I shall wetire from asinine company at once."

"You can't!" chuckled Lowther.

"Eh? Why not, you duffah?"

"Because you must go wherever you go," explained Monty Lowther laboriously. "Wherever you go, you go—so how are you to get away from asinine company?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus did not attempt to solve Lowther's problem. He retired from the study, and slammed the door with a slam that was heard the whole length of the Fourth-Form passage, if not of the School House. And Tom Merry & Co. chuckled and went on tearing up scent.

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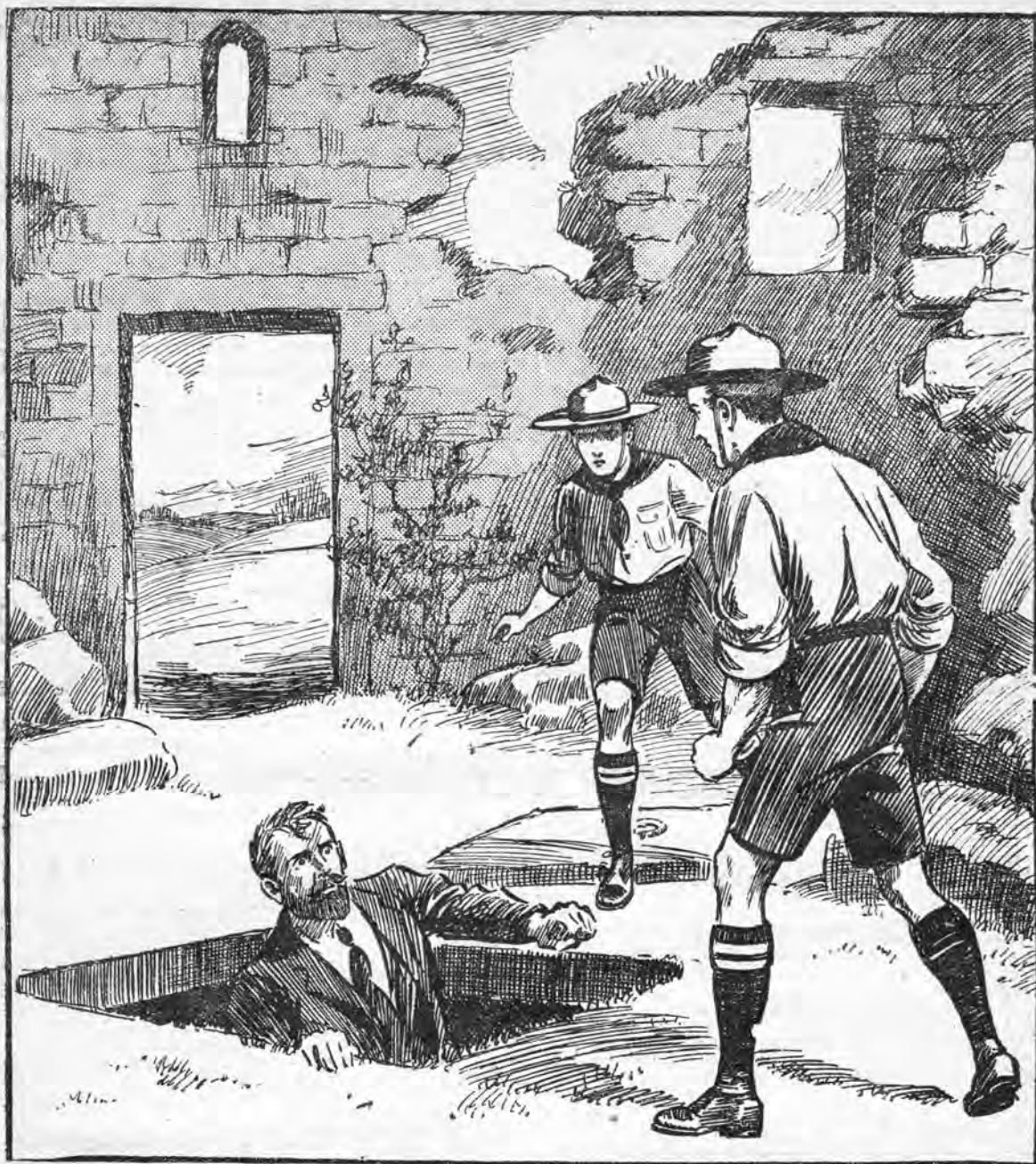
CHAPTER 2.

Pat for Pat.

ALL the juniors of St. Jim's were interested in the coming cross-country run. There had lately been bad weather—in fact, villainous weather—round about the old school. St. Jim's had been flooded out, and the very Form-rooms had been under water. The rainy weather had lasted long. But it was gone now, and there was a burst of hard and fine weather, and the juniors rejoiced in it. Tom Merry's suggestion of a paper-chase to begin with was hailed with enthusiasm. Monty Lowther remarked that there might be time for one paper-chase before they had rain again.

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NO. 2. OUR NEW COMPANION PAPER, "THE PENNY POPULAR" OUT ON FRIDAY.



The head and shoulders of a man rose from the opening. "Thank you," he said, "I think you have saved my life. I might have died from hunger in that death-trap!" (See Chapter 5.)

During the rainy weather the fellows had chafed indoors very unwillingly, and they were glad of the smallest chance of stretching their legs on the countryside.

School House and New House were joining cordially in the matter. Figgins & Co. and Redfern & Co. and other New House fellows were tearing up paper for scent that evening, so it was likely that the hares would be well supplied.

As to whom the hares were to be, that was a question not yet settled. Tom Merry had decided upon a junior from each House, but not which juniors. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy considered that, so far as the School House representative was concerned, the matter might be looked upon as settled. The best runner would be wanted; and in the common-room that evening Arthur Augustus offered himself for the post. The juniors, however, affected to misunderstand.

"The best runner!" Tom Merry remarked. "Well, you see, I was thinking of running with the hounds this time."

Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass witheringly upon the captain of the Shell.

"I was not thinking of you, Tom Mewwy," he said.

Tom Merry looked astonished.

"Not thinking of me?"

"Certainly not."

"But you said the best runner."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Oh, you were thinking of Lowther, then," said Tom Merry. "Monty is pretty good, I admit. Yes, it would do for Lowther."

"I was not thinking of Lowthah."

"Blake, I suppose? What do you say, Blake? Gussy suggests that you should run as hare, because he thinks you're the best runner in the School House."

"I don't mind," said Blake. "I'll run if you like, and I'm much obliged to you for your good opinion, Gussy."

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"I was not wewewin' to Blake!" shrieked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Never mind; it's settled now."

"I regard you as an ass. I was wewewin'—"

"Blake will fill the bill all right, I guess," said Buck Finn, the American fellow in the Shell, "though I wouldn't mind taking it on myself."

"Wats, deah boy! As a mattah of fact, I am willin' to wun."

"The spirit is willing, but the head is weak," murmured Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Well, we've settled on Blake now, owing to D'Arcy's recommendation," said Tom Merry. "The question now is about the other hare."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Have you another good suggestion to make, Gussy?" asked Tom Merry blandly.

"I was goin' to suggest myself—"

"Eh?"

"I was goin' to suggest myself to wun for the School House."

"This isn't a time for joking, Gussy," said Monty Lowther, with a shake of the head.

"You feahful ass, I am not jokin'. It is necessary for the hares to be good wunnahs, and I should be able to make the New House wunnah buck up, too."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If Blake cares to wesign it to me—"

"Rats!" said Blake promptly.

"You should make your suggestions a bit clearer, Gussy," said Tom Merry, with a shake of the head. "You said the best runner, so how was I to know that you were referring to yourself. I can't guess these things."

"Weally, you ass—"

"Leave it to Figgy to decide who runs for the New House," suggested Kangaroo. "Another question is, what clobber are we going to run in? Gussy, of course, will wear a frock-coat and a silk hat—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Kangawoo, I shall do nothin' of the sort—"

Tom Merry laughed.

"As it's a Scout run, we shall be in Scout clobber," he said. "The run really isn't a game, but a training for the Scouts of St. Jim's. Of course, the other fellows who haven't joined the Boy Scouts can come, too."

"Everybody welcome; early doors sixpence extra," murmured Monty Lowther.

"Every chap ought to be in the Scouts," said Kangaroo, with a shake of the head. "I punched Levison's head to-day because he said we ought to have a procession on the Fifth of November. They're not going to check the Scouts while I'm around."

Levison of the Fourth came into the junior common-room while the Cornstalk was speaking. He had a very disagreeable look upon his face. The cad of the Fourth was not popular in the House. He cast a suspicious glance at Kangaroo.

"Talking about me—eh?" he exclaimed.

"Yes," said Harry Noble cheerfully. "Talking about you. Might have found a pleasanter subject, too, don't you think so?"

The juniors grinned, and Levison scowled.

"And what were you saying about me?" he demanded.

"Only that I punched your head to-day," said Kangaroo.

"Oh!"

The juniors yelled. Levison, looking as if he wished he had not asked the question, retired with a black look upon his face. Tom Merry made a movement towards him. Tom Merry was a victim of good-natured impulses, and he sometimes tried to get on good terms even with fellows like Levison and Mellish.

"You'll come for the run to-morrow, Levison," he said.

Levison sniffed.

"I'm not one of your giddy First-of-April brigade," he said.

Tom Merry smiled.

"But you can come in ordinary running clothes, you know. Half the fellows will. It will be a good run—we're going by the wood, round the old castle and across the moor, and home again by the bridge of the Ryll."

"Rotten lot of fag for nothing," said Levison.

"More good for you than smoking cheap cigarettes in the woodshed," retorted Tom Merry.

"What do you want me to come for?"

Tom Merry smiled again.

"I don't know that I want you to particularly," he said.

"But it will do you good, you know; and the more the merrier."

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Levison nodded.

"All right; I'll be along," he said.

"Good!"

Levison left the common-room, and Tom Merry turned away. Monty Lowther and the other fellows had been whispering together, and grinning among themselves. As Tom Merry returned towards them, Monty Lowther stepped forward and gently patted his Form-captain on the back.

"Hallo!" said Tom Merry, in surprise.

Manners stepped forward in turn, and patted him on the back.

"What's the little game?" demanded Tom Merry.

There was no reply, but Kangaroo, with a solemn demeanour, stepped forward, and patted him on the back as Lowther and Manners had done, and in the same place. Tom Merry stared at the chums of the Shell in amazement.

"Look here—"

Jack Blake patted him on the back. Tom Merry swung round, and as he did so Herries and Digby patted him on the back simultaneously.

"You silly asses!" roared Tom Merry. "What are you up to?"

Reilly patted him on the back. Clifton Dane and Bernard Glyn reached forward at the same moment to do so, but Tom Merry dodged away. As he dodged, however, Gore, of the Shell, reached out from another direction, and patted him on the back—rather hard.

Tom Merry gasped.

"If you're not all gone dotty, what does this mean?" he demanded, backing up against the wall for safety.

"Patting you on the back!" Monty Lowther explained.

"What for, you chump?"

"For being a good little Samaritan!" explained Monty Lowther innocently. "You have made it up with Levison, like good little Philip in the story-book; and after making it up with the naughty Dicky, good little Philip is always patted on the back. Therefore—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry turned red.

"You silly fathead—"

"It touches us, you see," said Lowther plaintively. "It reminds us of 'Eric; or, Bit by Bit.' Come and be patted!"

"No; I'll do some of the patting," said Tom Merry cheerfully.

And he rushed at the grinning juniors.

Biff, biff, biff!

"Yow! Ow-o-o-o-ow-w!"

And Tom Merry walked away smiling, leaving three of the four practical jokers sitting on the floor. Monty Lowther caressed his nose.

"Ow!" he grunted. "This isn't in the picture at all! Eric never did that! Ow!"

CHAPTER 3.

Hare and Hounds.

AFTER school the next day—which was a half-holiday—there was a big gathering of the Boy Scouts of St. Jim's in the old quadrangle. School House and New House juniors, in their various patrols, gathered together, and a very handsome band they made in the natty garb of the Boy Scouts.

Blake and Redfern, of the Fourth, had been selected as the hares, and they had big bags of scent slung upon their shoulders. Kildare, of the Sixth, the captain of St. Jim's, had come out to start them.

"Six minutes' start," said Blake. "We don't really need it, of course—do we, Reddy?"

Redfern, of the New House, grinned.

"Not at all," he said. "But, as a matter of form—"

"Just so; as a matter of form! We'll give you kids a good run," said Blake condescendingly. "Mind you don't over-exert yourself, Gussy!"

"Wathah think I shall catch you in the first two hundred yards, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus.

Monty Lowther shook his head.

"Can't be done!" he said.

"Why not, Lowthah?"

"Private property is barred. The hares are not allowed to enter any yards or gardens!"

"Weally, you ass—"

"That reminds me," said Monty Lowther, who was very difficult to stop when he started being humorous. "There was a hedgehog once who swallowed a foot-rule—"

"Imposs., deah boy!"

"Well, that's how the story goes—"

"Then it is a wicked stow!" said D'Arcy. "I wefuse to admit the possibility of such a thing, Lowthah!"

"Look here—"

"It is no good tellin' me that a hedgehog swallowed a foot-wule!" said D'Arcy obstinately. "I decline to ccredit the statement!"

"Ready!" said Kildare, looking at his watch. "You hares ready?"

"Quite!" said Blake.

"Ready and Reddy!" grinned Redfern.

"Start, then! Don't throw out the scent till you're out of the gates."

"Right-ho!"

And the hares started. The crowd of Boy Scouts watched them disappear from the gates, and waited. Some of them watched the big clock in the clock-tower of St. Jim's, and some of them kept their eyes on Kildare. Monty Lowther went on with his funny story. There were six minutes to wait, and surely six minutes was ample time for the funniest story. Monty Lowther thought so. But there were difficulties in the way.

"When that hedgehog got the foot-rule down—" he began.

"I wefuse to wegawd it as poss., Lowthah!"

"His owner thought—"

"His owner couldn't have thought he'd swallowed a foot-rule, Monty," said Manners, with a serious shake of the head. "It couldn't have been done!"

"Perhaps it was a tape measure," said Herries thoughtfully. "Are you sure it wasn't a tape measure, Lowther?"

"Make it a tape measure," said Figgins.

"I'm sure it was a foot-rule!" yelled Lowther. "Who's telling the story, you silly asses? The hedgehog swallowed a foot-rule—"

"Imposs.!"

"Draw it mild, Lowther!"

"His owner," said Lowther, glaring, "thought that he would die by inches—"

"Oh!"

"Bai Jove!"

"But he didn't," said Lowther. "He crawled to a hill, and died by the foot."

Some of the juniors laughed, but Arthur Augustus D'Arcy assumed a very perplexed expression. He rubbed his aristocratic nose thoughtfully.

"What foot was it he died by, Lowthab?"

"The foot of the hill, ass!"

"Then it had nothin' to do with the foot-wule he had swallowed—not that I believe for a moment that he could weally swallow one, mind?"

"No!" groaned Lowther. "Oh, dear! Gussy, old man, the only way to get a joke into your head would be with a pick-axe!"

"But I want to undahstand, deah boy. You say he died by the foot of the hill. In that case, it had nothin' to do with the foot-wule he had swallowed? Then I should like to know what he died of!"

"Quite so!" said Tom Merry, grinning. "What did he die of?"

"What did he die of, Lowther?"

"I don't know," said Lowther. "Perhaps he saw a tailor's dummy with an eyeglass stuck in his face, and died of shock!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"By Jove! Weally, Lowthab, if you are alludin' to me—"

"Speaking of shocks," resumed Lowther, "that reminds me—"

"Oh, don't!"

"—of a shocking discovery—"

"Bai Jove! What was that?"

"The discovery of electric batteries."

"Eh?"

"You see—" began Lowther.

"Six minutes!" said Kildare. "Start!"

And the Boy Scouts started.

They streamed away towards the school gates, with Tom Merry & Co. in the lead. Most of the juniors of St. Jim's had joined the pack. Wally—D'Arcy minor, of the Third—had come along with a choice band of fags. Wally had confided to Frayne and Jameson and Curly Gibson, of the Third, that it would be simply ripping to catch the hares, and to make the Fourth and the Shell look small, and his comrades had fully agreed with him.

Out in the white high-road the scent was thinly scattered, and at the stile, half-way to Rylcombe, the fragments of torn paper crossed into the footpath through the wood.

The whole crowd of Scouts went down the footpath at a rush.

The scent lay thick upon the fallen leaves in the footpath, but suddenly Tom Merry halted. A crowd of the fellows went rushing ahead, but the knowing stopped as Tom Merry stopped. The scent led off into the trees, mostly stripped bare of leaves now by the winds of autumn.

"This way!" shouted Tom Merry.

He blew a blast on his bugle, and the scattered hounds gathered in.

Through the wood they went plunging, careless of thorn and bramble.

The trail led them to the banks of the Feeder, the little stream that ran through the heart of Rylcombe Wood, to empty into the river near the village. The trail ended abruptly on the bank.

"They've taken to the water!" shouted Figgins.

"Try along the bank!" said Kerr.

"Good!" said Fatty Wynn, of the Fourth, sitting down breathlessly on the grass. "Call me when you've found the scent."

Figgins glared at his fat chum.

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

"I'm going to have a sandwich!" said Fatty Wynn.

"No good getting hungry on a run, you know. I've always noticed on occasions like this that it's better to lay a solid foundation."

"Get up!" roared Figgins.

"Besides, I got so jolly hungry in this October weather!" said Fatty Wynn.

Figgins prodded the fat Fourth-Former in the ribs with the end of his staff, and Fatty Wynn bounced up with a yell.

"Ow! Chuck it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"No slacking!" said Figgins severely. "Buck up! Have you found the scent, you fellows?"

The juniors had spread up and down the stream. They were quite prepared to find that the hares had waded some distance, and doubled back through the wood. But there was no "sign" on the shore.

"Can't see it here," called out Lawrence.

"They've crossed the stream," said Kangaroo. "Wade in!"

"Bai Jove, we shall make our feet wet, deah boy!"

"Go hon!"

"Wrap them up in your pocket-handkerchief," said Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you know, I object to makin' my feet wet. It will wuin my socks."

I wegard it as wisah, undah the ciros, to jump ovah the stream."

"Too wide, fathead," said Manners.

"With the aid of a pole, deah boy, it is quite easy to jump distances which are othahwise quite imposs.," explained D'Arcy.

"You can't jump this," said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, by plantin' my staff on this side, and takin' a good jump, you know, I shall go wight acwoss," said the swell of St. Jim's confidently.

"No good planting your staff there," said Lowther, with a shake of the head, "you couldn't expect it to grow."

"Pway don't be funnay, Lowthab. You fellows watch me, and do as I do, and we'll get acwoss without wettin' our feet."

"Hear, hear!"

"Go it, Gussy!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, taking a firm grip upon his scout's staff, retreated from the bank of the woodland stream, and took a little run. He intended to plant the end of the staff upon the edge of the bank, and with its assistance to take a flying leap which would land him clear across the water, in the reeds on the other side.

But, somehow, it did not quite work out according to calculations.

The swell of St. Jim's came down to the bank with a wild rush, and planted the pole, and leaped.

But he planted it in a bed of rushes which did not form a firm support. The pole, instead of resting on solid earth, slid through the rushes into the margin of the water, and the support failed the jumper at the critical moment.

Arthur Augustus flew wildly through the air, and came down with a terrific splash in the centre of the stream.

"Oh!"

Splash!

"Gwooh!"

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CHAPTER 4.

Wet!

"**H**A, ha, ha!" A yell of laughter rang out from the pack as the swell of St. Jim's vanished in the middle of the stream.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good old Gussy!"

A drenched and dripping head rose from the middle of the stream. Arthur Augustus's pole remained sticking in the reeds. Arthur Augustus himself stuck in the mud at the bottom of the shallow stream, only his head and shoulders rising out of the water. His eyeglass and his hat were gone, and his face was streaming; and he blinked at the juniors in a way that made them shriek.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove!"

"We've watched you," howled Monty Lowther; "but we're not going to do as you do! No fear!"

"Not good enough, Gussy!"

"Bai Jove! I'm wet! Ow!"

"The water's wet, you know," explained Lowther. "That's how it is! Fellows who tumble into wet water generally get wet. You should have chosen a dry river."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You uttah asses!" gasped D'Arcy. "There is nothin' whatever to cackle at. Pway help me out of this wotten fix. My feet are stuck in the mud."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Will you lend me a hand, you feahful chumps?" shrieked the swell of St. Jim's. "I am stuck in the wotten mud. My clothes will be ruined."

"But we can't reach you!" gasped Tom Merry, with tears of laughter rolling down his cheeks. "You're too far."

"Poke out a stick to me, and I will get a gwip on it, fathead!"

"Right-ho!" said Lowther.

Lowther advanced to the verge of the stream, standing knee-deep in trampled rushes, and extended his staff to D'Arcy. Arthur Augustus made a clutch at it, and the humorist of the Shell jerked it back, and Arthur Augustus fell face forwards upon the water. For some moments there was a most terrific splashing and gasping, as D'Arcy beat the stream with his arms. The juniors yelled. Some of them were already crossing the stream at the ford further up, risking wet feet; but most of them were staying to see D'Arcy through. Even catching the hares was not so interesting as the aquatic performances of the swell of St. Jim's.

Arthur Augustus came up again, in his former position, gasping and puffing. His feet were firmly embedded in deep mud, and he was unable to drag them out. He recovered the perpendicular, and panted, and glared at Lowther as if he would have eaten him.

"You fwightful ass!" he spluttered.

"What's the matter? I'm helping you!"

"You pulled that wotten pole away just as I was goin' to take it, you awful ass!"

"Well, here you are, Gussy."

Lowther gently lunged the end of the pole into D'Arcy's

"Owl. Bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Stop it, you fwightful duffah!" yelled D'Arcy, as Lowther gave him another poke. "I wufuse to be the victim of wotten pwactical jokes! I shall give you a feahful thwashin', you silly chump! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy made a wild clutch at the pole as Lowther poked him again, on the chest this time, and succeeded in catching it with both hands. He gave a sudden drag on it, and Lowther was not braced in time against the pull. He was dragged forward, and he let go the pole, and threw out his hands wildly.

Splash!

Monty Lowther disappeared into the stream head first.

The juniors shrieked as his dripping head came up out of the water.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Even Arthur Augustus cackled.

"Bai Jove! That was funny! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Grooh!" gasped Lowther. "Owl! What are you cackling at, you silly chumps? Yow! Lemme a hand to gerrout! Grooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"One good turn deserves another!" chuckled Owen.

"Let's see you do that again, Lowther."

"We're wasting time!" said Herries. "I'm off!"

And Herries rushed, for the ford, followed by most of the hounds.

Tom Merry and Manners stayed to help the others out of the stream. Monty Lowther was nearer the shore, and he

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was soon landed, and he stood shaking himself like a Newfoundland dog and gasping. Tom Merry and Manners then extended both their staves to D'Arcy, who seized one in each hand.

"Now, steady, deah boys!"

"Come on!"

"Steady—ow!"

"All together!" shouted Tom Merry. "Heave ahead, my hearties!"

The chums of the Shell dragged on the poles, and Arthur Augustus's feet were persuaded at last to leave the clinging embrace of the mud. The swell of St. Jim's was hauled out, and he sank, gasping, on the bank.

"Bai Jove, I'm in a howwid state!"

"What about me?" hooted Lowther. "You clumsy ass!" "Serves you wight, deah boy, for playin' wotten pwactical jokes! I say, Tom Mewwy, do you think you had bettah call a halt while I go back and change my things?"

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

"I sha'n't keep you waitin' more than half an hour, deah boy."

"You won't keep me waiting half a minute, old son," said Tom Merry. "Come on! They've found the scent on the other side, and we shall be left out of the catch."

"Undah the cires—"

"Tally-ho!" shouted Tom Merry; and he ran on.

"But I say—"

But what Arthur Augustus had to say was not listened to. The Terrible Three ran down to the ford and plunged through the shallow water and disappeared in the trees on the opposite bank.

Arthur Augustus cast a dismayed glance down at his dripping clothes and muddy boots. His staff was stuck in the mud, his hat was floating down the stream.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "I wegard this as wotten! But a D'Arcy nevah hangs back."

And, hatless, and squelching out mud at every step, the swell of St. Jim's dashed on the track of the hounds.

The whole pack now were far ahead of him in the trail of torn paper; the youngest fag had got ahead while the swell of St. Jim's was causing delay on the bank of the stream. Arthur Augustus was tail dog now. But, in spite of his elegant ways, the swell of St. Jim's was an athlete, and one of the best junior sprinters in the school, and he was soon up with the pack again.

His muddy appearance elicited a yell of laughter from the hounds as he rejoined them.

"Here comes the mud merchant!" roared Lawrence.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you fellows—"

"My only Aunt Jane!" ejaculated D'Arcy minor. "This is a bit too thick, Gussy! What would the girl in the bunshop say if she could see you now?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wally, you young wascal—"

Arthur Augustus made a rush at his minor, who fled, laughing. It was easier to follow the trail of Arthur Augustus than that of the hares. He shed great chunks of soft mud as he ran, and collected up a great deal of the torn paper upon his sticky boots.

The pack laughed breathlessly as they swept on. Tom Merry forged ahead, with Lowther and Lawrence and Arthur Augustus at his side, and they were soon leading the pack. Tom Merry came first out of the wood on the Wayland side, still on the scent.

Far away down the white road he caught a glimpse of two figures in Boy Scout costume, and he halted by the roadside to wind his bugle. The pack burst forth into a breathless cheer. The quarry had been sighted!

CHAPTER 5.

A Strange Adventure!

TA-RA-RA-RA!"

The bugle was answered by a shout from the wood, as the pack came streaming out into the road.

"Sighted them, Tom Merry?" shouted Lawrence.

"Yes—down the road!"

"Hurrah!"

"Bwavo! This way, deah boys! Follow your leadah!"

"By Georgel! What are the silly asses at?" exclaimed Monty Lowther, staring down the white Wayland Road at the two figures of the hares.

Blake and Redfern were standing in the road, and Redfern could be seen offering Jack Blake toffee. They were not a hundred yards away, and a quick run by the pack would have collared them in a minute or two. They certainly must have seen the pack, for Redfern, having handed Blake the toffee, took off his hat and bowed ceremoniously to the pursuers. But the hares did not make any movement to run.

"They're giving in!" growled Owen, in disgust.

"My hat! Chucked it already!"

"Hold on," said Kerr, grinning. "Don't be in a hurry, Gussy—"

"Weally, Kerr—"

"Can't you see—"

"I can see the hares, deah boy, and I am going to capture them!"

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy started down the road at top speed. With a rush the hounds followed him. Kerr put his hands to his sides and roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What's the joke?" demanded Thompson of the Shell.

"The scent—ass—the scent!"

"My hat!"

The scent did not lie down the road. It wound away across the road, and over the moorland on the other side. Tom Merry blew the bugle, the rallying call.

"Come back, Gussy!" roared Herries.

"You're off the track!"

"This way!"

The trail lay across the moor, among the brambles and furze. It wound away out of sight of the road, and it was impossible to guess what distance the hares had covered before doubling back to the road. It was a strict rule in the St. Jim's paper-chases that the scent should never be abandoned for sight; and the hares were therefore quite secure. They grinned at D'Arcy, who paused in the road, realising that he was off the trail.

"Come on!" yawned Redfern.

And the two hares started on again.

They plunged into the wood, and made for the ruined castle in a roundabout way, scattering the scent as they ran, with a liberal hand. Their bags were growing lighter now, but they had plenty of it left.

Tom Merry's bugle rang in the distance on Wayland Moor. Redfern and Blake reached the slope of the hill where stood the ruined castle; a favourite spot for picnics with the St. Jim's fellows in the summer days, but generally deserted in the later season. The great masses of masonry stood out against the sky, swept by the sharp October wind, as the two juniors ran up the ascent to the shattered gateway.

"We'll have a breather here," said Redfern. "They're a good twenty minutes behind, I fancy."

"Quite that!" panted Blake.

And the two juniors entered the old ruin, scattering scent with liberal hands as they went, and sat down to rest on one of the mossy fragments of the old wall.

"Jolly old place this," Redfern remarked, glancing round with interest at the moss-covered ruins.

Redfern had not been long at St. Jim's. Blake nodded, with the manner of a fellow who knew every crack and cranny for miles around the school.

"Yes; dates from the reign of King Somebody-or-Other," he said lucidly. "Most of this damage was done by Cromwell and his johnnies. They battered it down, because the Royalists went to earth here. There's vaults under the castle; Gussy was kidnapped once, and kept a prisoner there by a gang of rascals on the make, before you came to St. Jim's."

Redfern whistled.

"Must have been exciting," he remarked.

"Very exciting for Gussy," grinned Blake. "His clothes were ruined. It's pretty dirty and damp down there."

"How do you get in?" asked Redfern, with interest.

"That stone slab lifts up," said Blake, nodding towards a great slab of stone, with an iron ring in it, near where they sat. "There's a stone stairway underneath, leading down into the vaults."

"No other way out?" asked Redfern.

Blake shook his head.

"Not that I know of—why?"

"Might lay the trail through the vaults, if there were."

"Can't be done; there's only the one entrance," said Blake, "and if that slab got closed when you were underneath, you wouldn't get out again, either. It can't be moved from underneath, you know. I'm blessed if I know who's taken the trouble to close it; it's generally left open, and it would need a jolly strong man to shift it."

Tap!

The two juniors jumped simultaneously.

"What on earth—" began Blake.

"It was somebody knocking."

"They're not up to us yet—"

"No fear!"

Tap! Tap!

Blake gasped.

"Holy smoke! It's under the slab!" he exclaimed excitedly. "There's some silly ass got himself shut up in the vaults."

"Phew!"

Tap! tap tap!

There was no mistake about it. As they listened, they could locate the sound clearly; it came from beneath the great stone slab with the iron ring in it.

Jack Blake tapped on the stone with the end of his staff.

Knock! knock!

From below the answer came:

Tap! tap!

The tapping sounded faint, through the thickness of the stone.

"Somebody there, and no mistake," said Redfern. "I suppose we'd better get that slab up, and let him out. We've got time."

Blake grinned.

"Well, I fancy we should have to let him out, whoever he is, whether we've got time or not," he remarked. "A man might be suffocated under there. How on earth did the chap shut himself in? It's not easy to move that stone."

Tap! tap!

"All serene!" shouted Redfern. "We're coming!"

"He can't hear you," said Blake. "He must be knocking jolly loud, for us to hear that. Lend a hand with this giddy stone."

"Right ho!"

The two juniors bent over the stone, and grasped the iron ring. They tugged at it with all their youthful strength, but the heavy slab refused to budge. After some minutes of effort that made the perspiration stream down their faces, the juniors succeeded in raising the edge a couple of inches. But then their strength was spent, and the stone fell back with a dull thud into its place again.

"Groo!" gasped Redfern. "It's heavy!"

"My hat, it is!"

The juniors panted from their exertions. From below came a hurried signal—tap, tap, tap, tap! It showed that the prisoner of the vault knew that they were there, and was anxious to spur them on to the work of rescue.

"We can't do it alone," said Redfern. "What about waiting till the hounds come up?"

Blake grunted.

"That means mucking up the run."

"Yes; but—"

"Look here, try again, and jam your stick in as soon as we get it up an inch or so. Then we may be able to prise it up."

"Good egg!" said Redfern.

They bent to the heavy task again. Exerting their strength to the uttermost, the two sturdy juniors dragged at the iron ring. Slowly, slowly, but surely, the heavy slab rose—and Blake succeeded in pushing the end of his scout's staff under it. Then they let it sink on the staff, and rested, to recover their breath. A muffled voice came from below, audible now that the stone was no longer jammed in the opening.

"Help!"

"All serene!" shouted Redfern.

"Don't leave me."

"No fear! That's all right!"

"Who are you?"

"Schoolboys of St. Jim's."

"If you cannot raise the stone, get help from the police-station in Wayland," came the muffled voice. "Tell them that Inspector Fix, of Scotland Yard, is shut up here, trapped here by a criminal he was following."

"Great Scott!"

"We'll have you out, never fear," said Blake. "It's all right."

Having rested a few minutes, Blake and Redfern pulled at the iron ring again. The stone rose more easily now, and they guessed that the man below had his shoulders under it, and was helping them by pushing. Higher and higher it came, till they succeeded in rolling it upon its side, and the aperture was free.

The juniors released the great slab, panting.

The head and shoulders of a man rose from the opening. A short, stout, thick-set man, with ginger-coloured beard, and very keen, light-blue eyes, stepped out. His face was very pale, and his clothes covered with dirt.

He stood in the sunlight, blinking after the darkness. He drew in deep, deep breaths of the fresh, keen air. The juniors of St. Jim's looked at him curiously.

"Thank you," said the gentleman from Scotland Yard.

"I think you have saved my life. I might have died of hunger in that death-trap!"

ANSWERS

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NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

"ONE AGAINST THE SCHOOL!"

A Splendid, New, Long, Complete School Tale of the
Chums of St. Jim's. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"You might, by Jove!" said Blake. "Many people don't come through these ruins, excepting in the summer. Have you been in there long?"

"What is the time now?"

"Four o'clock."

"What day is it?"

"What day?" repeated Blake, staring.

"Wednesday," said Redfern.

"Ah, it seemed to me as if I had been days and days in that horrible hole!" said the rescued man, with a shudder.

"But it is only six hours. I was shut up there about ten o'clock this morning."

"Six hours in there!" said Blake, shivering. "My hat, you must have had an awful time!"

"I have!"

"And a man shut you up there, sir?" said Redfern.

"Yes."

"Must have been a jolly strong man to heave that stone by himself," said Blake, with some admiration. "Jolly big athlete, I should say."

"He is a strong man," said Mr. Fix, snapping his teeth. "Stronger than I am. There are very few criminals stronger than Colonel Jim!"

"Colonel Jim!" repeated Blake.

Mr. Fix smiled.

"He is not a colonel, any more than I am," he explained; "but he has been in the Army, and that is a nickname he has in his gang. I thought I had him for sure, and I had the darbies all ready for him when I traced him here, and he pitched me into the vault there, and closed the stone on me. I might have starved there, for all he cared. Colonel Jim's not particular."

"The awful rascal," said Redfern.

"You haven't seen anything of such a man, I suppose?" said the inspector. "Tall, soldierly-looking, with a big moustache, ruddy complexion."

The juniors shook their heads.

"No; I don't suppose he would remain in this quarter," said Mr. Fix. "What beats me is what he came down to this country place for; but he had his eye on something, you can bet. I'm much obliged to you, young gentlemen. Lend me a hand to put the stone back, will you?"

"It's usually left open, sir," said Blake.

"Yes; but if Colonel Jim should happen to have stayed about here, I want him to see it closed, if he should come to look."

"Oh," said Redfern admiringly, "then he won't know you're still after him, sir!"

"Exactly."

"Right-ho!" said Blake. "Buzz it down, Reddy. Then we shall have to hop it. The pack will be along here jolly soon."

"You are paper-chasing?" said Mr. Fix.

"Yes, sir."

"Very lucky for me. Now, then, all together!"

The stone was heaved over, and it sank into its place with a thud. And then, taking a hasty leave of the man they had rescued, the two juniors ran out of the ruins, leaving the trail of torn paper to mark the way they went.

In five minutes or less, there was a bugle-call in the lonely ruins, and the hounds dashed in. Tom Merry & Co. came streaming in through the shattered gateway of the old castle, and they scattered among the old masonry to pick up the trail. But they saw nothing of the hares, and they saw nothing of Inspector Fix. That gentleman was gone; and the pack had no suspicion of the strange adventure that had befallen the hares in the ruined castle.

CHAPTER 6.

By a Hair's Breadth.

TOM MERRY & CO. left the ruins behind, and trotted down the hill, and followed the scent over the moor. On the open moor the wind was brisk, and here and there it scattered the scent, and made the trail more difficult to follow. The run was a long one, and by this time a good many of the hounds had tailed off. Wally & Co., of the Third, had stopped in the wood, deciding that, after all, they wouldn't rob their elders of the glory of catching the hares.

Fatty Wynn had stopped in a wayside place of refreshment on the Wayland Road, and Figgins and Kerr had been constrained to leave him there, bolting sandwiches and jam tarts at express speed, and washing them down with ginger-beer. Levison, of the Fourth, had dropped out; his good resolutions not lasting very long. Still, there were a goodly crowd of hounds still following the lead of Tom Merry. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was running with the best. He had shed most of his mud by this time, and he had run himself nearly dry.

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"They're giving us a good run," panted Tom Merry.

"No sight of the bouncers yet!"

"The twail is blowin' away," remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I fancy they are cressin' the moor by Bwooke's place, you know."

"I'll jolly soon see!"

Tom Merry clambered up a tree, and, standing upon a high branch, holding on by another, he swept the moor with his keen glance. On the moor, near the road which ran into Wayland, was Brooke's house, and Tom Merry could see the rambling old building, partly in ruins, with the big gardens round it. Brooke, of the Fourth, was a day-boy, and this was his home. Brooke was in the pack below, as Tom Merry scanned the moor.

The captain of the Shell uttered a sudden exclamation.

"See them?" demanded Figgins from below.

"Yes, rather."

"Where are they?"

"Standing at Brooke's gate, and Brooke's sister is giving them something to drink!" shouted Tom Merry.

"Come on!" said Brooke, laughing.

Tom Merry scrambled down from the tree, and joined in the run again. Some of the juniors were ahead of him now; but Manners and Lowther had waited. The Terrible Three were soon in the lead again, however. They came sweeping up to the house on the moor; but the hares were gone. Amy Brooke was at the gate, and she smiled at the sight of the stream of Boy Scouts panting up.

"They are gone, Dick," she said.

Brooke laughed.

"Yes, I know they have," he said. "Give us something to drink, Amy."

"Yaas, wathah," said Arthur Augustus, putting up his hand to raise his hat to Miss Brooke, forgetting for the moment that there was no hat there. "Bai Jove!"

"There's a well in the garden," said Dick Brooke. "You can help yourselves, you fellows."

"Hear, hear!"

"Good egg!"

And the St. Jim's juniors streamed into the garden, and were soon drinking from the clear, cool, well water. Arthur Augustus entered into an apparently interesting conversation with Miss Brooke, and he was not finished when the pack began to stream out of the garden.

"Come on, Gussy!" exclaimed Herries, clapping the swell of St. Jim's on the shoulder.

"No huwuy, deah boy."

"We're starting."

"It's all wight. Bwooke is stayin', you know, and I'm stayin' with him for a bit. He is goin' to lend me a cap."

"My dear chap, you can't chuck it like this," said Digby.

"Don't you want to be in at the death?"

"Not at all, deah boy. I'm goin' to give you fellows a chance," said Arthur Augustus generously. "I shall come along lath, you know."

And Arthur Augustus stayed with Brooke as the pack went on, though whether it was Brooke, or Brooke's sister, that formed the attraction, we cannot undertake to say. Tom Merry & Co. ran off across the moor towards the Ryll, and later on they picked up the trail on the bridge. The scent led them through the village of Rylcombe, and from Rylcombe home to St. Jim's was a clear run down the lane.

Ta-ra-ra-ra!

Tom Merry's bugle rang out as he sighted the hares.

Blake and Redfern, all their scent expended now, were making straight for home. Tom Merry and half a dozen others, well ahead of the pack, came sweeping out of the village, not thirty yards behind the hares. Blake looked back.

"My hat, Reddy! Put it on!"

The hares dashed on at top speed. They had been trotting, but now they put it on for all they were worth. The pursuers put on a spurt, too, and went down the lane at a pace that could not last, for all of them. Manners lagged, and then Reilly and Dane and Glyn dropped behind. Tom Merry was well ahead, with Herries and Kangaroo and Lowther level; but Lowther dropped, and then Herries, and slacked down behind.

Without a pause, Tom Merry and Kangaroo tore on.

They were yards ahead now, and gaining on the hares; and the intervening distance lessened inch by inch as the chaso swept on to the gates of St. Jim's.

The school gates were in sight now, and a crowd of fellows stood there to greet the returning harriers.

Fifty yards more—forty—thirty! The school gateway was home; but the two pursuers were very close now. Only one yard separated the two couples as they ran. Redfern gave a panting gasp.

"I—I'm done, Blake, old man!"

Blake set his teeth.

"You're not!" he muttered, and he gripped hold on Reddy's arm, and simply yanked him on. Tom Merry's grasp behind just missed Redfern, and Tom stumbled. That stumble saved the hares.

Blake and Redfern, breathless, spent, staggered in at the gateway, and loud cheers from the crowd there announced their safe arrival. Tom Merry and Kangaroo were in the next moment, but just one moment too late.

"Done you!" gasped Blake.

"Hurray!"

"Hip-pip!" panted Redfern. "Done you in the eye, old son! Yah!"

Tom Merry laughed breathlessly.

The race was over, and the hares had escaped; but, as Monty Lowther said afterwards when he had recovered his breath sufficiently to perpetrate a pun, they had won by less than a "hare's-breadth."

CHAPTER 7.

How Arthur Augustus Came Home.

"GENTLEMEN—"

"Hear, hear!"

"Here's to the hares, the hounds, and the Boy Scouts of St. Jim's generally—in short, to us!" said Tom Merry.

"Hear, hear!"

Quite a merry party were gathered in Study No. 6, in the Fourth Form passage. Blake and Herries and Digby were doing the honours. The Terrible Three, and Figgins & Co., and Redfern and Owen and Lawrence, and a good many other fellows, had come in to celebrate the first run of the season. And Tom Merry's toast was drunk with acclamation, in various liquids—ginger-beer and lemonade and tea and coffee.

The study was crowded, and many fellows had come, and looked in, and gone again.

At first there had been, as Lowther put it, standing room only, but the standing room was full up now, and the late comers departed disappointed.

The hounds had come in from the run one after the other, and all the pack were at home now, with the exception of Brooke and D'Arcy. Brooke, being a day boy, was not coming back to the school, and Arthur Augustus was evidently staying late at Brooke's. If D'Arcy had come in just now, he would hardly have found room in his study.

"Gentlemen!" said Tom Merry.

"Hear, hear!"

"As head-cook and bottle-washer of the Scouts of St. Jim's, I am satisfied with the performance of to-day."

"Bravo!"

"The Scouts have run well—very well, indeed!" said Tom Merry. "If an enemy should ever land upon these shores, may the Scouts do as well as they have done to-day!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a roar in the study.

"Faith, and it's a bull intirely!" grinned Reilly. "Sure, when the enemy comes, the Scouts won't be running!"

"Ahem! I mean—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"May the enemy run as well as the Scouts!" said Tom Merry.

"Ha, ha!" roared Blake. "But the Scouts won't run!"

"I don't mean as well as the Scouts, I mean as well as the Scouts!" said Tom Merry warmly, and getting rather mixed in the intricacies of the English language. "That is to say, may they run as hard as the Scouts have run to-day!"

"That's better!" grinned Figgins. "Hear, hear!"

"I dare say that you have heard about the Scouts over at the Grammar School," continued Tom Merry. "The Grammarian Scouts have been reviewed by a distinguished officer, who has seen service in Indian and Africa. That's what I should like to see done here—it would give the St. Jim's Scouts a leg-up. We could have a review of it in 'Tom Merry's Weekly'."

"A review in the paper?"

"Yes. A review of the review, I mean—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You're getting mixed, Tommy," said Blake. "The ginger-beer is getting into your head! The English language is a wonderful thing when it gets going."

"The British language, you mean," said Kerr.

Jack Blake bowed gracefully.

"I stand corrected," he replied. "I mean the British language. I—"

"Speaking of that," remarked Lowther, "reminds me—"

There was a general groan. It was evident that a funny story was coming. But Monty Lowther went on cheerfully.

"There was a French chap who thought that 'c-o-u-g-h' ought to rhyme with 'b-o-u-g-h,' and he pronounced it 'cow.' And he had read in a dictionary that a chest and a box were the same thing. So when he had a cough in his chest, he said—"

"Pass the jam-tarts!" said Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Fathead!" said Lowther. "He said—"

"Where's the lemonade?"

"Shut up!" roared Lowther. "He said he had a cow in his box—"

"Yes; and he said it a jolly long time ago, too!" said Redfern. "My dear chap, I was brought up on that story!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here—" said Lowther warmly.

"By the way, where's Gussy?" exclaimed Digby. "It's time he was in. It's a long way past looking-up."

"Oh, he's playing duets with Brooke's sister!" said Manners. "He goes over there to help Brooke with his work, and plays duets with Amy. He won't notice the time."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"By Jove, though, he'll get rowed, if he doesn't come in!" said Blake. "It's past eight. He ought to have started home before this. I hope nothing's happened to him."

"Why, what could happen to him?" said Tom Merry.

Blake and Redfern exchanged a glance. They knew something that was not known to the rest of the fellows.

"Dangerous character in the neighbourhood," explained Blake.

"Well-known criminal!" added Redfern.

"How do you know?"

"We had a little adventure at the old castle this afternoon," said Blake. "It was a case of beauty in distress. Not exactly beauty, though! I remember, he had ginger whiskers."

"Who had?" demanded Tom Merry, in bewilderment.

"The prisoner."

"What prisoner?"

"The giddy prisoner we rescued. He was shut up in the vaults of the old castle," Blake explained. "We let him out. He had been bunged in there by a giddy criminal he was tracking down."

"Oh, cheese it!"

"Fact!" said Blake. "Honour bright! Name Inspector Fix, looking for a cheerful criminal named Colonel Jimmy—johnny with black moustache. Must have been a pretty desperate kind of johnny, too, to shut up an innocent policeman in a vault. He must have known how hungry policemen are."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But we rescued him," said Redfern. "That's a feather in our cap, and one up for the Scouts of St. Jim's. We ought to have a medal or something."

"But if the giddy criminal is hanging about, and Gussy meets him in the dark lane, there may be trouble," Blake remarked. "Gussy goes about loaded with money and gold watches, even in his Scout rig. I hope he hasn't dropped on him."

Tom Merry looked serious.

"Well, he's jolly late," he said. "It wouldn't be a bad idea to go and meet him, if we can get leave. It's a jolly lonely way home here from Brooke's across part of Wayland Moor and through the wood."

"Well, tea's about over—the grub's finished, at any rate," said Kangaroo. "Let's go and look after Gussy."

"We'll ask Taggles if he's come in, and, if he hasn't, we'll go and hunt for him," said Tom Merry. "Come on!"

And the crowd of juniors left Study No. 6, and went out into the dusky quadrangle. The deep autumn night lay upon the old school, and stars were glimmering in the clear dark sky.

The juniors marched across the quadrangle, and Kangaroo delivered a terrific bang at the door of Taggles' lodge.

Taggles looked out with a grunt.

"Has Gussy turned up?" asked Tom Merry.

"Has D'Arcy come in, Taggy?"

"Have you seen the one and only?"

"I hain't seed Master D'Arcy," said Taggles. "Which it is."

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A Splendid, New, Long, Complete School Tale of the Chums of St. Jim's. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"Will be my dooty to report 'im when he comes in! These goings hon—"

"Ting-a-ling, ting-ling!"

"Hallo, there's a bell!" said Blake. "Ten to one that's Gussy! Speak of angels, you know, and you hear the rustle of their giddy wings!"

And the juniors streamed down to the gates, followed in a more leisurely way by Taggles, with a clinking bunch of keys.

Outside the gates, in the dimness of the road, appeared a strange figure. It was a figure in Boy Scout costume, and the juniors, looking through the bars of the gate, recognised Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of the Fourth Form. But the swell of St. Jim's had a very unusual and peculiar aspect. His hands, for some reason, were behind his back, and he was covered with mud. His face, where it was not hidden by splashes of mud, was crimson with exertion.

"Bai Jove!" he gasped. "Open the gate, deah boys!"

"Buck up, Taggy!"

"What's the matter, Gussy?"

"Gweat Scott! I've had a feahful time!"

Taggles unlocked the gate, and swung it open. Arthur Augustus hopped in. The juniors watched him in blank amazement. Instead of walking in the usual way, D'Arcy hopped in with both feet, his hands still behind his back.

"Gone dooty?" yelled Blake.

"Bai Jove! Pway welease me, deah boys!"

"Why, what—?"

"Untie these howwid cords!"

"Great Christopher Columbus!" ejaculated Lumley-Lumley, of the Fourth. "He's tied up!"

"My hat!"

Arthur Augustus certainly was tied up. His feet were shackled, so that he had to hop instead of walking, and his hands were tied behind his back.

The juniors stood round him in an amazed ring, gasping.

"What on earth—?"

"What are you doing that for, Gussy?"

"Is it a new game?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove, I'm uttably exhausted, you know! I've hopped home all the way fwom Wylcombe Wood!" panted Arthur Augustus.

"My only aunt!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's not a laughin' mattah, you asses!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, deah boys—?"

"But what did you do it for?" shrieked Blake.

Arthur Augustus groaned.

"Do you think I did it on purpose, you feahful ass? I've been wobbled!"

"Robbed!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Poor old Gussy!" said Tom Merry, feeling for his pocket-knife. "It's all right. I'll have you loose in a jiffy!"

"Bai Jove, I've had an awful time, deah boys!" gasped the swell of St. Jim's, as Tom Merry sawed away at his bonds with the pocket-knife. "I've been wobbled! My gold watch!"

"The gold ticker?" exclaimed Blake.

"Yaas, and all my money, a fivah that I had fwom my govahnah this mornin', and a soveveign, and some silvah—all gone."

"Great Scott!"

"Who was it, Gussy?"

"A howwid wobbah, deah boys. He pounced on me in the footpath in the wood—an awfully stwong beast. Of course, I should have been a match for any ordinaway man; but this feahful villain was fwightfully stwong. He stwuck me—"

"He would," said Lowther.

"Eh?"

"He very likely thought you were a match for him," explained Lowther. "And the proper thing to do with a match is to strike it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Don't be funny, now, Lowther, old man," said Blake. "Cheese it! Gussy has been through a bad time, and there's no need to add to his sufferings."

"Why, you ass—"

"I have had an awful time, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus pathetically. "The feahful villain was as stwong as—anythin'. He stwuck me down, and put his howwid knee on my chest while he wobbled me. I told him I would give him a feahful thrashin', but it didn't make any difference. He cleahed me out of my property, and then he tied me like this, so that he could have time to get away, you know, before I could thrash him."

The juniors chuckled.

"Before you could get help, you ass!" said Blake. "I THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 245.

don't suppose a man of that sort was much afraid of your thrashing him."

"Weally, Blake, I suppose I ought to know, as I was there."

"What did he do, then?" asked Redfern.

"He left me in this howwid state, and bolted. I think he was wathah fwightened."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I do not see anythin' to cackle at. Anyway, he bolted, and I had to get here in this extremely awkward condish," said Arthur Augustus. "I did not meet anybody in the lane, and I have had to jump along all the way like a wotten kangawoo. I wegard the whole affair as howwid. I twust the police will be able to capchah the wottah!"

"Did he have a black moustache?" asked Blake excitedly.

"He—he had a big beard, and that was all I could see. I don't think he had a moustache," said Arthur Augustus. "I wemembah I gave him a blow on the mouth, and I don't wemembah hittin' a moustache. But he had a beard—a vewy wuff beard."

"Not Colonel Jim, then," said Redfern.

Tom Merry finished cutting the cords, which had been tied very securely, and the unfortunate swell of St. Jim's stood free.

"Pway lend me a hand to get to the School House, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus. "I am feelin' uttably exhausted, you know. This unpleasant occuwrence has thwown me into a fluttah."

"No wonder," said Blake, as he took his chum's arm, Tom Merry taking the other. "I hope the police will get hold of the cad. This way, Gussy."

And, leaning heavily upon Tom Merry and Blake, the swell of St. Jim's was marched into the School House.

CHAPTER 8.

No Solo!

MR. RAILTON, the Housemaster of the School House, met Arthur Augustus D'Arcy & Co. as they came in. The Housemaster looked at the swell of St. Jim's in astonishment. Arthur Augustus presented a very pitiable appearance.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Mr. Railton. "What has happened to you, D'Arcy?"

"I have been wobbled, sir."

"Chap cleared him out of cash and gold watches, sir, in Rylcombe Wood, as he came back from Brooke's," said Blake.

"Only one gold watch, Blake, deah boy."

"And a fiver and a quid," said Monty Lowther.

"A fivah and a soveveign, Lowthah."

"A quid!" said Lowther.

"A soveveign, deah boy."

"This is very serious," said Mr. Railton. "Come into my study, D'Arcy. You shall give me a description of the man, and an account of the whole matter, and I will telephone at once to the police-station in Rylcombe."

"Yaas, sir."

Tom Merry and Blake walked into the Housemaster's study with Arthur Augustus. He was in a very fatigued state, and needed their assistance. Mr. Railton rang up Rylcombe Police Station and asked for particulars. Arthur Augustus described the robbery once more, and gave a description of the man.

"Tall, with an overcoat, and a black beard, very bushy," repeated Mr. Railton. "It was not a common tramp, then, like the two footpads who were arrested the other day for attacking a gentleman on the footpath?"

"Oh, no, sir; he looked quite respectably dwessed," said Arthur Augustus. "I should not have taken him for a twamp at all."

"Very well," said Mr. Railton, as he hung up the receiver. "The police will look for him at once, and I hope they will recover your property. You should not have come back through the wood at such a late hour, D'Arcy. You had not a pass for staying out, I believe?"

"No, sir. I've been helpin' Bwooke with his work, sir."

"You will take fifty lines for missing call-over."

"Bai Jove!"

And Arthur Augustus left the Housemaster's study. Tom Merry & Co. marched him up to the dormitory, and helped him to rub down and change his clothes. Arthur Augustus's elegant Boy Scout costume was in a dreadful state. The swell of St. Jim's breathed more easily when he was in clean clothes once more. Then the juniors took him down to Study No. 6, where Digby had been busy making coffee for his refreshment. Arthur Augustus drank hot coffee, and revived considerably.

"Thank you vewy much, deah boys," he said. "It's vewy good of you to look aftah me like this. I have had a wotten time."

"This is what comes of staying behind to play duets, instead of finishing the run with the others," said Monty Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah, I have played only thwee duets with Miss Bwooke."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"She is a vewy good playah," said D'Arcy. "She can accompany wippingly. I sang two of my tenah solos at Bwooke's."

"That's what you ought to have done when the chap in the wood was robbing you," said Monty Lowther. "He would have bolted."

"You uttah ass!"

"You should have given him 'La Donna e Mobile,' or 'Am Stillen Herd,' in your well-known style," said Lowther blandly. "Then we should have seen something like this in the papers next morning: 'An unknown man, with a black beard, wearing an overcoat, was discovered dead in Rylcombe Wood.'"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus, forgetting that he was tired, rose to his feet, and made a clutch at the poker. Monty Lowther retired gracefully from the study and slammed the door. D'Arcy sank into his chair again, and regarded his grinning chums with a frowning brow.

"I wegard Lowthah as an ass," he said. "I twust the police will find that wottah, you know. That gold watch was a pwsent fwom my patah on a birthday, and I don't want to lose it. I've lost it before and wecovahed it."

"More than once!" grinned Tom Merry. "I've got an idea, kids. The police most likely won't be able to find that footpad. What price the Boy Scouts?"

"Bai Jove!"

"We'll hunt him up, or track him down," said Tom Merry. "It's up to us to find him, and get Gussy's gold watch back. And there's the fiver and the quid!"

"The soveveign, deah boy."

"The quid!" said Tom Merry. "If we recover that, we can use it to stand a feed to all the Boy Scouts. We'll let Gussy have the watch."

"Yes, that's only fair," agreed Blake heartily.

"Weally, deah boys—"

"It's a good idea," said Herries thoughtfully. "We'll take Towser with us. You know how Towser follows a scent."

"Bai Jove! It's a good ideah; but we won't take Towser," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "That beastly bulldog has no wespect whatevah for a fellow's twousahs. I'll lead you to-morrow to look for the wottah, deah boys!"

"That you jolly well won't," said Tom Merry promptly.

"I'm patrol-leader."

"Oh, wats—"

"It's worth trying," said Blake, with a nod. "Though I expect we shall have to follow the trail to a pawnbroker's if we want to find Gussy's watch."

"Ha, ha, ha! Very likely!"

"Bai Jove! I feel evah so much bettah now," said Arthur Augustus, stretching himself comfortably in the chair. "I sang 'E lucevan le stelle' at Bwooke's this evenin', deah boys!"

"Any casualties?" asked Tom Merry.

Arthur Augustus glared.

"I could sing it without an accompaniment," he remarked.

"Time to get our prep. done!" said Blake hastily.

"It's a wippin' solo!"

"Yes; help me clear the table, Dig."

"I shouldn't mind singin' it to you chaps now—"

"You're too tired!" said Blake.

"Not at all!"

"Well, we are, then!" said Blake. "Take a rest."

"Weally, you ass—"

"If Gussy sings a solo, Herries, you accompany him on your cornet."

"Right-ho!" said Herries.

Arthur Augustus did not sing the solo.

CHAPTER 9.

Not for Gussy.

THE next day Tom Merry & Co. carried out their idea, and after morning school the Scouts of St. Jim's set out to track down the mysterious black-bearded person who had robbed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. Pressure was brought to bear upon Herries to leave Towser behind.

Exactly what the schoolboy Scouts expected to find when they began the search for the footpad they could not perhaps have told themselves. At all events, they did not succeed in finding the man. Arthur Augustus led them to the spot where the robbery had taken place, and they found his handkerchief there, which he had dropped in the tussle. But there was no trail that was discernible to the Boy Scouts, and

after roaming in the wood until dinner-time, they gave up the search. Whether the local police would succeed or not in finding the rascal was a question; but it seemed pretty certain that Tom Merry & Co. would not succeed.

Most of the Scouts had lines for being late for dinner when they came in, and that was the net result of the search.

Whether the man who had robbed D'Arcy, and the man who had shut up Inspector Fix in the vault below the old castle were one and the same was an interesting question, which the juniors could not decide. The rascal at the old castle had been a man with a moustache and without a beard, according to Inspector Fix's description, and the man who had robbed the swell of St. Jim's was a man with a beard and without a moustache. But, as Blake remarked, moustaches and beards could be used in disguise, as the amateur dramatists of St. Jim's knew very well. Both the men concerned had been big and powerful men, and in that respect the description tallied.

"Well, we sha'n't see either of them—or him—about here again," Monty Lowther remarked. "Never mind, Gussy; watches were made to go, you know. And yours has gone."

Arthur Augustus frowned.

"It's wotten!" he said. "It was a birthday pwsent fwom my governah, and I don't like losin' it. And then there was the fivah and the—"

"Quid!" suggested Lowther.

"The soveveign," said D'Arcy stiffly.

"The quid—"

"The soveveign—"

"And we sha'n't have that feed, as we haven't recovered Gussy's money," said Blake regretfully. "You'd better make it a point of playing duets in the daytime in future, Gussy, old man."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Pity you didn't take Towser, after all," said Herries sarcastically. "I'll guarantee that Towser would have nosed the man out, and chance it."

"There would have been a lot of chancing it certainly," agreed Monty Lowther. "I remember that Towser tracked down a kipper once splendidly. The question is, did the man who robbed Gussy have any kippers in his pockets?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Otherwise," said Lowther argumentatively, "I don't see what Towser could have done in the matter."

Herries did not argue the point. He snorted and walked away. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was wearing a very thoughtful expression.

"I'm in wathah a difficult posish, deah boys!" he remarked. "I don't want to tell my patah about that wobbery, so long as there's a chance of gettin' the watch back. But I am stony bwoke now. While the police are lookin' into the case—"

"Are they looking into the case?" said Lowther.

"Yaas, you know they are, Lowthah."

"Then they must have found the watch?"

"Eh?"

"Unless they've found the watch, how can they look into the case?" asked Lowther.

"Oh, pway don't be funnay, deah boy. 'I am wefewwin' to the case of the wobbery, not the case of the watch, you ass. While the police are lookin' into the case, I can't go on without any money. But if I wite to my governah, I shall havé to explain to him how the fivah's gone. But I can't get any more tin without communicatin' with him. I wegard that as a vewy difficult posish."

"Wire to him," suggested Blake.

"Why a wire?" murmured Lowther.

"What do you mean by wire-wire, you ass?"

"I didn't say wire-wire; I said why a wire—"

"Oh, pway wing off! It's not a bad ideah to send my patah a wire," said Arthur Augustus thoughtfully. "That will save goin' into explanations, as a chap can't explain at a halfpenny a word without wunnin' up the expense feakfully. How shall I word it?"

"Dear pater,—Please telegraph cash immediately!" suggested Blake.

"That would be wathah abwupt. He will wondah what has become of the fivah, and will vewy likely waise some objection to sendin' me anothah."

"Very likely," grinned Tom Merry. "I know I should if I were your pater."

"Suppose you wire: 'Cash wanted for a very meritorious object?'" suggested Lowther. "'To feed the hungry.'"

"Yaas; but I don't want it to feed the hungry, deah boy."

"Yes, you do; you can stand us all a feed. We shall be hungry after lessons."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I am afwaid that would be a pwevawication, Lowthah."

"Go hon!"

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A Splendid, New, Long, Complete School Tale of the Chums of St. Jim's. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"Pewwaps I had bettah be quite fwank about it, and say that the money is lost," said D'Arcy thoughtfully. "If I say it in a telewgam, I needn't mention the watch. Anybody got a telewaph-form?"

"There's one in the study."

"Vewy good."

The juniors accompanied Arthur Augustus to Study No. 6 to help him write the telegram. Arthur Augustus took a form and a pen, and proceeded to gnaw the handle of the pen.

"Dear Pater," he wrote, at last.

"That's all right for a beginning," said Monty Lowther. "It will cost a penny, but something is due to filial affection."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Please send me another fiver," wrote D'Arcy.

"Good!"

"I am stony bwoke, owing to an unfortunate occurrence."

"Oh, good! That's really diplomatic," said Tom Merry.

"It's quite true, too."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"That's not quite enough, though," said Blake, with a shake of the head.

"What else is wequired, deah boy?"

"You can add: 'Please send Blake a fiver, too.'"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Blake, you ass—"

"He's sent you a tenor already, and you're not pleased with him," remarked Monty Lowther. "Suppose you write to him. 'Please send me a fiver, and we'll send you your tenor back.'"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus sniffed. He finished writing his telegram, and departed in search of Toby, the House page. Toby solemnly promised to take the telegram to the post-office and despatch it, and then Arthur Augustus went in to lessons.

When the school was dismissed the swell of St. Jim's hurried out of the Fourth Form-room to inquire for his telegram. But the answer had not yet arrived. Arthur Augustus frowned a little as he stood at the door of the School House and looked out into the quadrangle, in the hope of seeing the telegraph-boy from Rylcombe. But that ever-welcome youth was not in sight.

"It's wotten," D'Arcy remarked. "The governah has had heaps of time to weply, and he must know that I am hard up, after my wire."

"Might be hard up himself," Monty Lowther suggested sympathetically. "You must give him time. He may have run out to pawn some of the family plate."

Arthur Augustus did not deign to take notice of that suggestion. He fixed his eyes upon the distant gates. Then he uttered an exclamation.

"Bai Jove! Here he is!"

The telegraph-boy had entered, and he was crossing towards the School House. A smile of satisfaction wreathed the aristocratic features of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"It's all wight," he exclaimed, "the governah is playin' the game this time, at any wate. He has telegwaphed me a fivah, deah boys."

"Hear, hear!" said Blake. "Mine's ginger-pop and jam tarts."

"Mine's champagne and oysters," murmured Monty Lowther.

Arthur Augustus extended his hand for the telegram as the boy from the Rylcombe Post Office mounted the steps of the School House.

"It's all wight," he remarked.

"You'll take it in, sir?" asked the lad.

"Yaas, certainly."

Arthur Augustus slit open the envelope without glancing at the superscription. He unfolded the telegraph-form inside, and looked at it, and a puzzled expression overspread his face.

"Bai Jove, this is vewy wemarkable!"

"No cash?" asked Blake.

"No. But I don't undahstand this. The governah must have sent me the w'ong telewgam," said Arthur Augustus, in amazement. "Wead it."

He held out the telegram, and the juniors read it. It ran:

"Arriving early morning to review Boy Scouts.—Colonel Rake."

"You ass!" roared Tom Merry.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"That telegram can't be for you."

"Eh?"

"It's for somebody else."

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus looked at the torn envelope. The address upon it was, "Dr. Holmes, Headmaster, St. James's."

"B-b-bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "It's for the Head!"

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CHAPTER 10.

Levison Has an Idea.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY looked at the other fellows in dismay, and they looked almost equally dismayed.

It had never even occurred to the swell of St. Jim's that this telegram might not be the telegram he was expecting.

He had opened a wire addressed to the Head, and he had a very painful explanation to make to the Head of St. Jim's.

He jammed his eyeglass into his eye, and fixed a glare upon the telegraph-boy, who had been regarding his action open-mouthed.

"You young ass!" he exclaimed. "You've given me the w'ong wiah!"

"I—I—"

"Give me my wiah at once!"

"There ain't another one, sir."

"Bai Jove! Haven't you a wiah for me at all?"

"No, sir. That's the only one."

"What did you give it to me for, then, when it was addressed to Dr. Holmes?" demanded Arthur Augustus severely.

"You took it, sir. You said you'd take it in," stammered the boy, "I didn't know you was going to open it."

"It's a case of being too much in a hurry, Gussy," grinned Monty Lowther. "You should try to cultivate the repose that stamps the caste of Vere de Vere, you know."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"It will be a bit difficult explaining to the Head," said Tom Merry. "You'd better take it in to him at once, Gussy."

"Ya-a-a-as, I suppose so."

"It will be all right," said Monty Lowther consolingly.

"The Head knows what an ass you are, Gussy."

"Oh, wats!"

Arthur Augustus carefully folded the telegram, and replaced it in the envelope. He signed to the telegraph-boy to follow him, and made his way to the Head's study, in a very uneasy frame of mind. Accidents will happen, of course, but the accidental opening of a communication intended for another person was a very unpleasant accident to have to explain.

Arthur Augustus tapped timidly at the door of the Head's study.

"Come in!" came the deep voice of Dr. Holmes.

D'Arcy entered, followed by the telegraph-boy. Dr. Holmes glanced at them. Mr. Railton, the Housemaster of the School House, was in the study with the Head.

"What is it?" asked Dr. Holmes.

"Telegram for you, sir," said the post-office messenger.

"I am sowwy, sir—" began D'Arcy.

"Dear me, it has been opened!" said Dr. Holmes, as Arthur Augustus laid the telegram upon his writing-table.

"Yaas sir. I am vewy sowwy—"

"Did you open it, D'Arcy?"

"Yaas, sir. I am vewy sowwy, I opened it by mistake," said Arthur Augustus penitently. "I was expectin' a telewgam fwom my patah, sir, and I opened this one thinkin' it was for me. I wead it before I discovahed the mistake, sir."

Dr. Holmes frowned.

"You should be more careful, D'Arcy," he said.

"Yaas, sir."

"However, it does not matter. You may go."

"Thank you, sir!"

Arthur Augustus quitted the study. Dr. Holmes glanced at the telegram, and a look of surprise came over his face.

"Thank you; there is no reply!" he said to the messenger-boy.

Then he turned to Mr. Railton.

"Read it," he said.

The School House master did so.

"Dear me! Colonel Rake!" said Mr. Railton. "I have heard the name—a retired officer, who has served in South Africa, and takes a great interest in the Boy Scout movement."

"And he is coming here," said the Head.

"To review the school Scouts," remarked the Housemaster.

"It will be necessary to allow the boys freedom from lessons to-morrow, if you consent to this, sir."

Dr. Holmes nodded.

"I shall certainly consent," he said. "I hope the boys will make a good show, and satisfy the colonel. I approve very strongly of the Boy Scout idea, and I am glad it has caught on so thoroughly at St. Jim's."

"This will encourage the lads very much," said the Housemaster.

"Perhaps you will be good enough to put a notice on the board, Mr. Railton, to this effect," said the Head.

"Certainly, sir; I will do so at once. The boys may as

well have time to prepare for the review. It will be a most interesting sight."

And Mr. Railton left the Head's study.

Meanwhile, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had rejoined his comrades. They looked at him inquiringly as he came up, expecting to see him rubbing his hands.

"Licked?" asked Blake sympathetically.

"Wats!"

"Not licked?"

"Certainly not. Dr. Holmes accepted my assurance, of course, that the telegram had been opened entirely by accident," said D'Arcy stiffly; "but, I say, deah boys, as I read it I can't help knowin' what's in it—"

"No; even you couldn't help that," remarked Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pway don't be an ass, Lowther! What I was goin' to say is, Colonel Wake is comin' down to review the scouts. Have you evah heard of Colonel Wake?"

Tom Merry nodded.

"I know the name," he said; "he's an officer who's served in South Africa in the war. He's been mixed up with Boy Scouts in Cape Colony, and takes an interest in the thing. I think he has only lately returned to England."

"It's an honour for the school Scouts," said Blake. "I wonder what he will think of us?"

"I twust all you fellows will play up, and make a good impression upon him," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I tell you what, I had better put you through your paces to-night, as a kind of rehearsal."

"You!"

"Yaas. At a time like this, we cannot afford to waste time, you know; and Tom Mewwy won't mind steppin' aside, in ordah to give me a chance of lickin' you into shape a bit, weady for the colonel to review you."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you fellows—"

"It's a good idea to get ready," Tom Merry remarked. "Of course, Gussy couldn't review a corps of white mice—"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"But I can. I suppose the Head will let us know about the telegram. We can't very well act upon it while we're supposed not to know what's in it. We can't take advantage of Gussy's surreptitious ways of getting information."

"Weally, you ass—"

"No lessons to-morrow morning," said Herries, rubbing his hands, "this will be ripping. The chaps who have kept out of the Scouts will be ready to kick themselves."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I expect they'll be forming new patrols this evening," grinned Tom Merry. "There will be a rush on the Scouts, if it means a half-holiday to-morrow morning, to belong to them."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What's that?" asked Levison, of the Fourth, pausing as he passed. "A review of the Scouts to-morrow morning?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Who's going to review them?"

"Colonel Rake."

"My hat! Is he here?"

"Coming to-morrow morning," said Tom Merry. "If the Head consents—and he's certain to—all the Scouts will have to be let off morning lessons."

"Good egg! I'll join your patrol, Tom Merry!"

Tom Merry laughed.

"Full up," he replied.

"I'll join yours, Blake."

"Full up!"

Levison granted.

"Then I'll jolly well make up a patrol myself!" he exclaimed.

"I can suggest a name for the patrol," said Monty Lowther blandly. "The 'Rat Patrol,' or the 'Worm Patrol,' or the 'Rotter Patrol!'"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" said Levison.

And he walked away, full of his new idea. If there were any half-holidays going, Levison did not mean to be left out of them.

A quarter of an hour later a crowd of fellows were gathered before the school notice-board, reading a notice pinned up there, in the handwriting of Mr. Railton. A similar notice had been posted up in the New House:

"NOTICE TO THE SCHOOL SCOUTS!"

"The Boy Scouts of St. Jim's will be reviewed in the quadrangle to-morrow morning by Colonel Rake, V.C., D.S.O. All members of Boy Scout patrols will be excused lessons."

"H. RAILTON, Housemaster."

CHAPTER 11.

Levison's Lions.

MR. RAILTON'S notice caused considerable excitement at St. Jim's, especially among the fellows who were members of the numerous patrols.

The name of Colonel Rake was talked up and down the House.

"A real giddy colonel!" said Tom Merry. "It's a honour to the school Scouts, and we've got to play up and make a good impression."

"A V.C., too," said Blake. "That's Victoria Cross. I wonder what he's done?"

"And a D.S.O.," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "That means Distinguished Service Order. An uncle of mine is a D.S.O. He saved the guns somewah, I think, or saved somebody's life or somethin'. It's a gweat distinction."

"I wonder what he's like?" said Manners.

All St. Jim's wondered what the colonel was like.

The Scouts compared notes on the subject—many of them had heard the name of the famous officer, only recently returned from South Africa. To be reviewed by a gallant officer who had won the V.C. and a Distinguished Service Order was a great honour to the schoolboy Scouts, and they fully appreciated it.

That evening the Scouts were excited and busy.

Scout clothes that showed signs of wear and tear were renovated equal to new, so to speak, by industrious juniors, who left over their preparation for that purpose.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy seriously debated whether it would be possible to telegraph to his tailor in town, and get down a brand-new uniform in time. Blake's assurance that Colonel Rake wouldn't see him among the others did not satisfy him at all.

"Distinguished chaps are always seen among the othahs, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus sagely. "In all pwoability Colonel Wake will notice me at once. And, besides, we shall have to make wathah a fuss of him, and pewwaps it will be necessary to make a speech to him, and, in that case, of course, I shall be called upon. If there is a speech to be made, you fellows had better do the sensible thing, and leave it to a chap like me, who has some tact and judgment!"

"If you got making speeches to the colonel, Gussy, you'll get scragged!" Blake promised him.

"I should wewuse to be scawgged, deah boy!"

Having decided, with great regret, that there was not time to get a new uniform from his tailor, Arthur Augustus furnished up his old one, and spent most of the evening in making it presentable.

The adventures he had been through in the paper-chase and afterwards had certainly not improved it. But careful dusting and brushing and stitching worked wonders, and Arthur Augustus was pretty well satisfied with his efforts. He had lost his Scout hat in the paper-chase, but, fortunately, he had another; and he did not deign to reply to Monty Lowther's suggestion that, upon such an occasion, a topper would be the proper caper.

Other fellows were busy as well as D'Arcy. Levison, of the Fourth, did not mean to be left out, and the existing patrols did not want to take in the cad of the Fourth; but Levison was equal to the occasion. He intended to form a patrol by himself, and Mellish, of the Fourth, was his first recruit.

Mellish, certainly, was about the last fellow in the world to take up scouting, or any other manly occupation, and he received Levison's suggestion at first with a sniff.

"I'm going to form a Scout patrol," Levison announced, coming into the study which he shared in the Fourth Form passage with Mellish and Lumley-Lumley.

"What rot!" said Mellish.

"You!" said Lumley-Lumley, in surprise.

"Yes. Why not?"

"I guess it's a new departure for you," said Lumley-Lumley. "But better late than never!"

"I want you fellows to join," said Levison.

Lumley-Lumley shook his head.

"I'm a member of the Wolf Patrol already," he said.

Mellish shook his head more emphatically.

"Rot!" he replied.

"Look here, Mellish—"

"Rats!"

"There's a half-holiday to-morrow morning for all Boy Scouts!"

"Oh!" said Mellish.

"And you can chuck it afterwards, if you like!"

"Oh, I see!"

"You'll join?"

"What-ho!"

"Good!" said Levison. "You're a member of the Lion Patrol. Nothing like having a good name. I want four more chaps."

"You won't get 'em!" said Lumley-Lumley. "I guess you're not built for a patrol-leader, Levison, old man!"

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"We'll see," said Levison.
"Besides, this is a rotten thing you're doing," said Lumley-Lumley. "I guess you oughtn't to take up the thing at all, unless you mean to stick to it."

"Rats!"
"If you're only doing it to get a half-holiday, I guess it's pretty mean!"

Levison yawned.
"I didn't come here for a sermon," he remarked, and he quitted the study.

He made his way to Crooke's study in the Shell passage. Crooke, of the Shell, was not doing his preparation, as he should have been. He was reclining gracefully in his arm-chair, with his feet on the table, smoking a cigarette. That was one of the favourite amusements of the cad of the Shell.

He started as the door opened, and the cigarette slipped into his mouth as he jumped suddenly up. If a prefect had caught Crooke smoking, it would have been very bad for Crooke, and the sudden opening of the door alarmed him. He gasped and spluttered wildly as the cigarette went into his mouth.

"Yow-w-w-w gro-ro-ro-ro-o-oh!"
Levison stared at him in astonishment.
"What the dickens— Crooke—"
"Gro-ro-ro-ro-ro-ro-ro-ro-o-o-oh!"
"What's the matter? What—"
"Grug-grug-ug-g-g-g-h!"
"My hat!"

Crooke spat out the cigarette into the grate, and gasped.
"You silly fathead!" he roared. "You made me jump!"

Levison grinned.
"Sorry," he said. "I say, Crooke—"
"Oh, go and eat coke!" growled Crooke, still coughing.
"Have you seen the notice on the board?"

"Yes. Groo-hoo!"
"What do you think of it?"
"Lot of rot! Buzz off!"
"You're not in a patrol, Crooke?"
"And I don't mean to be!" growled Crooke. "No tramping about the country with a broomstick for me! Rats! Gro-o-oh!"

"I'm making up a patrol—"
"More fool you!" said Crooke politely.
"And I want you to join."
"Piffle!"

"Half-holiday to-morrow morning for all the Scouts at the school," Levison explained. "We don't want to be left out while all the other fellows are having a holiday. Needn't keep up the Scout bizney any longer than the holiday, you know."

Crooke chuckled.
"Oh, I see! That's all right! I'm on!"
"Good!" said Levison. "That makes three—Mellish, you, and me! I'll try Gore next. He isn't a Scout, but he'll take it on for a holiday, I expect."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
Levison called upon Gore, of the Shell. Gore and Skimpole were in their study, and there were loud voices proceeding therefrom, announcing an argument. They were both talking at the top of their voices as Levison came in recruiting.

"You silly ass!" roared Gore.
"My dear Gore," said Skimpole, blinking at the bully of the Shell through his big spectacles. "If you listen patiently—"

"Shut up!"
"I am sure that a chapter from Professor Balmyscrumpet's great book on the subject of Determinism, and the Inherent possibility of Impossibilities, will improve your mind—"

"Shurrup!"
"And you must admit that it needs improving, my dear Gore," said Skimpole, wagging his forefinger at his study-mate in a reproving manner.
"You burbling fathead!"
"My dear Gore—"

"Hallo, what's the row?" asked Levison.
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"This chortling chump wants to read aloud a lot of gurgling rot from a fatheaded book on some silly scientific subject!" howled Gore. "I'm going to slaughter him if he does. That's all!"

"My dear Levison, I am seeking to improve Gore's mind."
"I'll improve your features if you begin!" growled Gore.
"Yes, cheese it, Skimmy!" said Levison. "I want you two fellows to join my patrol—the Lion Patrol. I'm getting up a patrol of Boy Scouts."

Gore snorted.
"The Liar Patrol, did you call it?" he demanded.
"No, I didn't!"

"Well, you should have; it would be suitable, if you're leader of it," said Gore, who was evidently more given to being truthful than polite.

"Half-holiday to-morrow morning for all Boy Scouts," Levison explained, unmoved. "This is your last chance."
"Oh, count me in!" said Gore.

"You, too, Skimmy?"
Skimpole shook his head.

"I am afraid that my scientific investigations do not leave me time to take an interest in more frivolous matters, my dear Levison," he said. "Otherwise, I should be glad to take charge of the matter for you."

"I don't want you to take charge of it," said Levison.
"I want you to join the patrol, that's all. It means a morning off."

"My dear Levison—"
"As patrol leader, I shall excuse you from duty, and you can take the morning off in any way you like," said Levison.
"Ah, that alters the case, my dear Levison! I will certainly join you."

"Good! I want another chap. I'll ask Lorne. He's a new kid, and hasn't joined any patrol yet," said Levison.
"I want you to turn up in the common-room. We want to show Tom Merry & Co. that we can form a patrol quite as well as he can, and have a whack in what's going."

"Good egg!" said Gore.

Lorne, the new boy in the Fourth, was willing to join; he was the only member of Levison's precious patrol that took the matter seriously. Later in the evening, Levison of the Fourth appeared in the junior common-room with his patrol. He found most of the juniors there, all busily discussing the review of the morrow morning.

"Sorry for you chaps," Blake remarked, as Levison & Co. came in. "You should have joined a patrol while you had a chance. You'll be left out of this now."

"Who's going to be left out?" demanded Levison.
"Why, you are!" said Blake in surprise. "Only Boy Scouts are going to be reviewed. The other fellows will go into the Form-rooms as usual."

Levison sniffed.
"But I'm a Boy Scout!" he said.

"You are?"
"Certainly. Here's my patrol—the Lion Patrol!"
"My hat!"

"I suppose we're as good as any other patrol," said Crooke, with a sneer.

"What about clobber?" said Monty Lowther. "You haven't got any Boy Scout duds?"

"That's not essential," said Levison. "If a chap hasn't the clobber, he can wear his ordinary clothes."

"Course he can," said Mellish.

"I fancy we're as good as any other giddy patrol, and we're jolly well taking our whack in the half-holiday!" said Levison.

Tom Merry frowned.
"That isn't playing the game," he said. "You're only taking this up for the sake of the half-holiday, and you don't mean to keep it up."

Levison nodded coolly.
"No fear!" he agreed.
"But we're Boy Scouts all the same, and we're jolly well going to have the morning off, same as you fellows do!"

"What-ho!" said Gore.

Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, came into the common-room.

"Bed-time, you kids!" he said in his pleasant voice. "All

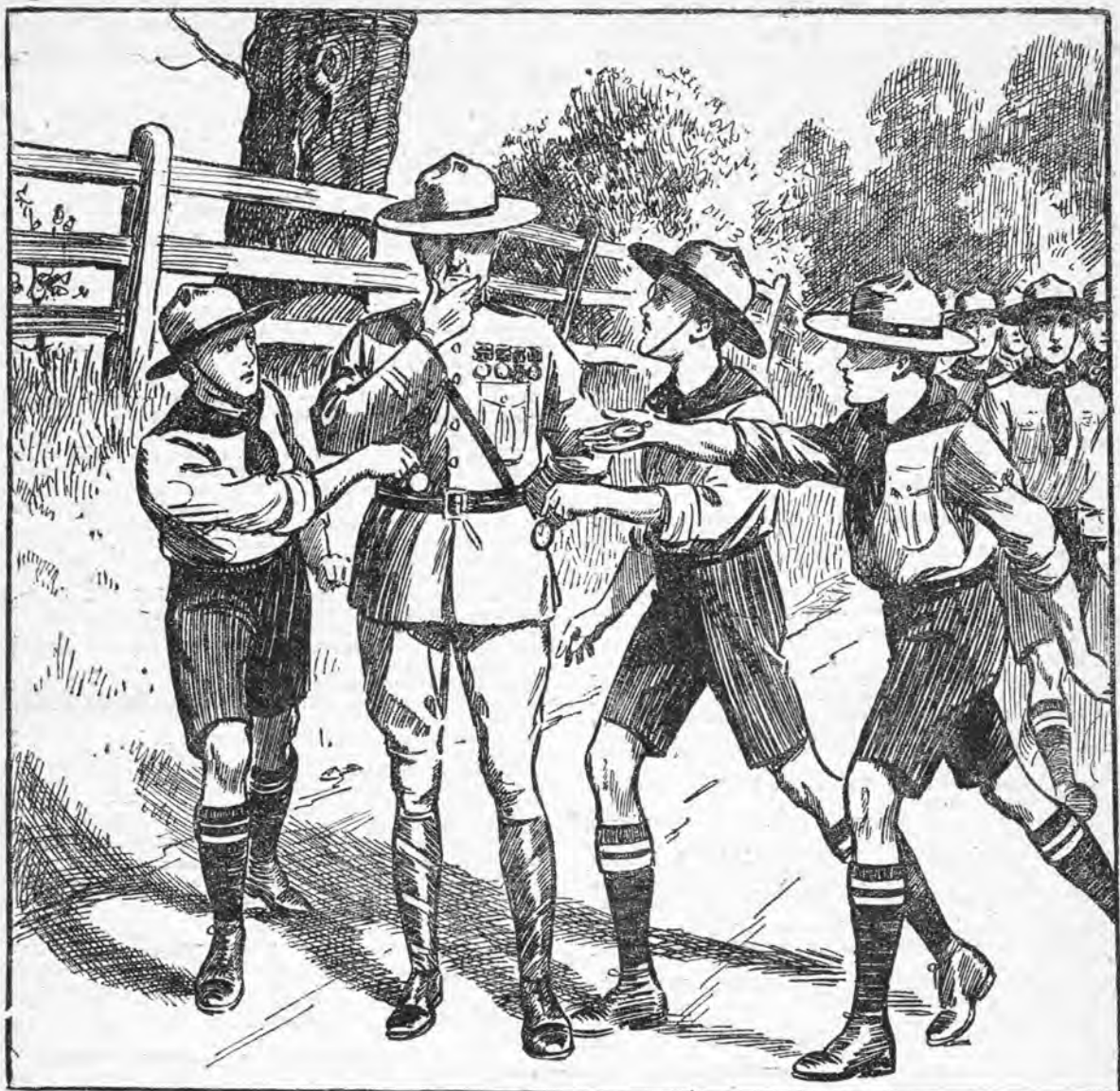
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"I wonder whether one of you lads could lend me a watch until we return to the school? I do not want to be late." Three watches came out at once. "Pway take mine, sir," said Arthur Augustus. "Mine, sir," said Figgins. "Mine, sir," said Tom Merry. (See Chapter 14.)

Boy Scouts can get up in the Scout-rig to-morrow morning. They won't be wanted in classes."

"Fellows who haven't got Scout-rig will wear everyday clothes, of course?" said Levison.

Kildare looked at him.

"All the St. Jim's Scouts have Scout-clothes," he said.

"Not the newly-formed patrols."

Kildare smiled grimly.

"Oh," he said, "there are newly-formed patrols, are there? Formed when?"

"I've formed one this evening."

"Then you can uniform it again, as soon as you like," said Kildare. "No patrols formed since Mr. Railton put the notice on the board will be allowed to take part in the review. And all boys who do not take part in the review will turn up in the Form-rooms as usual."

Levison's jaw dropped.

"Look here, Kildare—" he began.

"That's enough."

Kildare strode away. The juniors chuckled as they prepared to go up to the dormitory. The expression upon Levi-

son's face was distinctly amusing. The members of the Lion Patrol looked most unpleasantly at their patrol leader.

"You ass!" said Gore.

"You fathead!" said Crooke.

"You silly chump!" said Mellish.

"My dear Levison, you appear to have made a singular mistake," said Skimpole, beaming benevolently at Levison through his spectacles. "You have evidently laboured under a misapprehension."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake. "A little too clever, as usual, Levison. Ha, ha, ha!"

"The silly fathead," said Gore, "bothering us for nothing! He might have guessed this. Bump the silly ass!"

"Look here— Oh—ow!"

Bump!

The patrol leader of the Lion Patrol descended heavily on the floor and yelled, and the Lions walked away grinning. No more was heard of Levison as a Scout after that. The short career of the Lion Patrol had come to a very sudden end.

CHAPTER 12.

A Stitch in Time.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY was still very busy in Study No. 6 when the Fourth Form went up to bed. Blake and Herries and Digby called for him on their way to the dormitory. Arthur Augustus was laying out the Scout uniform on the study-table, and surveying it with considerable satisfaction.

"Bedtime, Gussy," said Blake.
 "Yaas, deah boy. I'm finished. I wathah think this will look all wight," said Arthur Augustus. "I want to make a good impression upon Colonel Wake, you know."

"Of course, he will single you out at once," agreed Blake sarcastically. "Immediately he starts the review he will ask Raitlon, 'Who is that distinguished-looking ass?'"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Weally, Blake—"
 "Bring your clobber with you, Gussy," said Monty Lowther, looking into the study; "we've got to get up as Scouts to-morrow morning."

"Thank you, deah boy!"
 And Arthur Augustus carefully folded up his clothes to carry them up to the Fourth-Form dormitory.

He had succeeded in making them look very neat and clean. Monty Lowther glanced at the clothes, with a grin, as they went upstairs.

"Sewed up all the holes?" he asked.
 "Yaas, wathah!"
 "You haven't sewn up the bags so that you can't get into them, I hope."

"I should not be likely to do that, deah boy."
 "I shouldn't wonder if you did. I'll bet you a feed at the tuck-shop that when you come to put on your bags to-morrow morning you'll find that you can't get your tootsies into them!" said Monty Lowther.

"Wats!"
 "I'll bet you—"
 "Wats, deah boy! I decline to make bets, as I wegard it as a wotten pwactice. But I am willin' to stand you a feed at the tuck-shop if it should pwove to be as you say, and, if it doesn't, you stand me the feed."

"Done!" said Lowther. "You're witnesses, you fellows. Gussy bets—"

"I do not bet, Lowthah. I wufuse to bet."
 "Well, wagers, then—"
 "Not at all. I wegard a wagah as bein' as wotten as a bet."

"Well, you undertake to stand me a tuck-shop feed if you can't get your feet into your bags to-morrow morning because they're sewn up," said Lowther.

"Yaas, wathah!"
 "Right-oh! And all these chaps are witnesses. I shall have rabbit-pie and jam-tarts and ginger-pop!" said Lowther.

"Wats!"
 Arthur Augustus carried his garments into the Fourth-Form dormitory and folded them carefully upon a chair beside his bed. The Shell fellows went on to their own dormitory, and Tom Merry and Manners looked inquiringly at Lowther.

"You'll lose that wager, Monty," said Tom Merry.
 Monty Lowther shook his head.

"But Gussy can't have been such an ass as to sew up the legs of his trousers!" exclaimed Manners.

"I didn't say he had," said Lowther coolly.
 "But if he hasn't—"
 "If he hasn't, that's no reason why anybody else shouldn't."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Needles can be borrowed, and cotton is cheap," Lowther remarked. "And a stitch in time saves a feed at the tuck-shop."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, quite unconscious of the scheme that was working in the mind of the humorist of the Shell, went to bed and slept the sleep of the just.

It was a good hour later that the door of the Fourth-Form dormitory opened slowly and cautiously, and a dusky figure appeared.

Steady breathing came from all the beds. The Fourth Form were all asleep.

Monty Lowther entered on tiptoe.

In a couple of minutes he had captured the carefully-folded clothes on the chair beside D'Arcy's bed. He took them under his arm, and retired into the passage. By the glimmering light at the window at the end of the dormitory passage Monty Lowther began to sew, putting in plenty of stitches with double cotton.

It did not take him long.

In ten minutes he returned to the Fourth-Form dormitory, and the clothes, carefully folded once more, were replaced upon the chair.

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Then Monty Lowther returned to his own dormitory. He groped his way to his bed in the dark, and turned in.

"It's all right!" he announced.

Only steady breathing answered him. The Shell were all asleep, including Tom Merry and Manners.

Lowther grunted.
 "It's all right!" he repeated.

No answer.
 "Tom Merry, you ass!"
 "Grooh! Hallo!"

"I've done it."
 "Done what?" asked Tom Merry sleepily.
 "The sempstress job."

"Oh, good!" mumbled Tom Merry. "Good-night!"
 "Oh, fathead!" growled Lowther.
 "Good-night!"
 "Br-r-r!"

And Monty Lowther settled down to sleep himself. He dreamed of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy trying to drive his feet through the sewn trousers, and a beatific smile overspread his face in his slumber.

Clang! Clang!
 The rising-bell, in the grey of the October morning, roused the St. Jim's fellows to a new day. Jack Blake sat up in bed in the Fourth-Form dormitory and yawned.

"I believe that ass Taggles gets earlier and earlier with the giddy rising-bell every beastly morning!" he growled.

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus, rubbing his eyes.
 "But we're goin' to have a wippin' mornin' to-day, deah boy. I'm sowwy you're out of it, Levison, old chap."

"Oh, go and eat coke!" said Levison gratefully.
 "Weally, Levison—"
 "Oh, rats!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stepped out of bed with the intention of inflicting summary chastisement upon the cad of the Fourth. But he relented, as he remembered that Levison had to turn up at classes that morning, while the other fellows were being reviewed by a distinguished officer.

Instead of going for Levison, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy reached for his clothes, and sat on the bed to pull on the short lower garments.

He succeeded in getting them on as far as his ankles, and there they stuck.

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus.
 Jack Blake burst into a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha! You've sewn them up, after all!"
 "Gweat Scott!"

Arthur Augustus made a great effort to drag on the bags. But his feet would not go through, and he had to give it up. He examined the bags with a keen and critical eye, while the Fourth-Formers roared with laughter.

"Bai Jove!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"

"This is a wotten joke!" howled D'Arcy. "Somebody has sewn up my bags while I've been asleep!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Rats!" said Levison. "You sewed them up, of course!"

"I did not—"
 "Bosh!"

"It is a wotten pwactical joke! Some wottah—"
 "Piffle!"

"Weally, Levison—"
 "Rot!" said Levison.

"Bai Jove! I know who it was!" shouted Arthur Augustus, jumping up. "You uttah wottah, Levison! I shall show you that you must not meddle with my clothes!"

"What? I—ah—oh!"
 Arthur Augustus rushed straight at the cad of the Fourth. Levison dodged round his bed in alarm, but D'Arcy pursued him. Levison put up his hands desperately, but his defence was not of much use. Arthur Augustus let him have it left and right, and Levison rolled back across his bed.

"Get up!" roared D'Arcy.
 "Ow!"

"Gewwup! I am goin' to give you a feahful thwashin'! I will teach you to play twicks with my bags—I mean, not to play twicks with my bags! Gewwup!"

"Yow! Oh! Yah! Grooh!"
 Arthur Augustus brandished his fists, and yelled to Levison to get up and have some more. Levison apparently did not consider it good enough. He remained where he was.

The Fourth-Formers were yelling with laughter. The dormitory door opened, and the Terrible Three looked in on their way down.

"Hallo!" said Monty Lowther cheerfully. "Did you find the bags all right, Gussy?"

Arthur Augustus swung round.
 "No, Lowthah, I did not. They have been sewn up."

"Then I win the feed!"
 "Bai Jove! No—yaas, I suppose you do. But I did not sew them up; they have been sewn up in the most weckless

way by this wottah for a wotten pwaactical joke! I am givin' him a feahful thwashin'!"

"Who?" roared Lowther.

"Levison. Gewwup, you wottah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Lowther. "Who told you Levison did it?"

"I guessed it, deah boy."

"Oh, my hat! Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus gazed at Lowther, as a sudden suspicion shot into his mind.

"Gweat Scott! Was it you, you feahful wottah?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" sobbed Lowther. "I cannot tell a lie. I did it with my little hatchet! Ha, ha, ha!"

The Fourth-Formers yelled. Arthur Augustus stood petrified for a moment, and then rushed towards the door.

Lowther backed into the passage.

"Mind, I've won that feed!" he smiled.

Then he beat a retreat.

It was impossible for Arthur Augustus to follow him in the present airy state of his attire. He shook his fist after Monty Lowther, who kissed his hand in return from the end of the passage.

Arthur Augustus turned back into the dormitory, breathing wrath. He frowned majestically at the shrieking juniors. Levison sat up on his bed, rubbing his nose with one hand, and his eye with the other, and groaning.

"Bai Jove, I'm sowwy, Levison!" said Arthur Augustus, realising that he had been a little hasty. "I was actin' undah a misappwehension."

"Ow!"

"I am weally sowwy. Between gentlemen, I twust that an apology is suffish."

"Yes—that will reduce Levison's nose to the right size again!" grinned Blake.

"If Levison had not made wude remarks I should not have fallen into that unfortunate misappwehension," said Arthur Augustus. "I wegard it as bein' your own fault, Levison. Howevah, if you are not satisfied with my expweasion of wegwet, I am willin' to meet you in the gym. aftah bweakkah, with or without gloves."

And as Levison did not accept that generous offer it was only to be concluded that he was satisfied.

CHAPTER 13.

The Colonel.

"THE colonel!"

"Here he is!"

"Here's the giddy V.C."

"Here's the noble D.S.O."

"Hurrah!"

The schoolboy Scouts had come out from breakfast, and the first person they saw as they streamed out of the dining-room was a tall, soldierly-looking man talking to Mr. Railton in the hall.

They did not need telling who it was. Colonel Rake, V.C., D.S.O., had evidently arrived, and the juniors looked at him with great admiration.

He was not exactly the man they had expected to see. He was not sunburnt, and there were no scars upon his face from the swords of foreign foemen. He was a very powerfully-built man, clean-shaven, with keen, piercing eyes—but if he had not been Colonel Rake, V.C., D.S.O., fellows might have thought that his eyes were shifty. But, of course, that was impossible in the V.C., and the juniors were determined to make a hero of him, whatever he was like.

He was speaking to Mr. Railton in a deep voice, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gave a little start as he heard it.

"Bai Jove! I've heard that chap speak somewah, before!" he exclaimed.

"Rot!" said Herries. "He's only lately in England."

"Yaas; but it seems to me—"

The colonel turned towards the crowd of Scouts with a smile.

The Scouts saluted him.

He acknowledged their salute, and then followed Mr. Railton to the Head's study. The Boy Scouts crowded out into the quadrangle.

Arthur Augustus was still looking very puzzled. Tom Merry clapped him on the shoulder as he stood with wrinkled brows.

"Thinking of your instructions for the review, Gussy?" asked Tom Merry, with a grin.

Arthur Augustus started out of his reverie.

"No, deah boy. I'm thinkin' of Colonel Wake."

"Fine-looking chap!" said Tom Merry.

"Yaas!"

"What's the matter, Gussy?" asked the Shell fellow, looking curiously at the swell of St. Jim's. He could see that something was working in D'Arcy's mind.

"It's a wemarkable coincidence, deah boy."

"What is?"

"About his voice."

"Whose voice?"

"The colonel's."

"What's the matter with his voice?" asked Tom Merry, in amazement.

"It is vewy like anothah voice I have heard."

"Well, such things have happened before," said Tom Merry. "I've known chaps who had noses alike—"

"And I know two chaps who had bicycles of exactly the same make," said Monty Lowther solemnly.

"Pway don't be an ass, Lowthah. If his voice had wesembled some othah person's, it would not have been so wemarkable, but—but—"

"Well, whose does it resemble?"

"The chap's who wobbled me in the wood."

"My hat!"

"It's most wemarkable," said D'Arcy. "The voice is wemarkably like that of that black-bearded bounder who wobbled me! Of course, it is only a coincidence."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Ha, ha, ha! Yes, I suppose it is, Gussy. They could hardly be relations, could they?"

"No; I pwesume not."

And Arthur Augustus dismissed the matter from his mind; though it puzzled him very much. Meanwhile, the distinguished officer was speaking to the Head in his study.

Dr. Holmes greeted very cordially the big, soldierly man who had won so many distinctions on the field of battle.

"I hope I am not causing any inconvenience here," the colonel said. "The fact is, my time is limited; I am making a tour of the schools where the Boy Scout movement has been taken up; these reviews are of great use to the movement, I think."

"I am sure of it," said the Head cordially. "You will find the whole school will give you a most enthusiastic welcome, Colonel Rake. All the members of the Scout patrols are free from lessons so long as you require them."

"Good; very good, sir!"

Mr. Railton left the study; he discerned that the gallant colonel had something to say to the Head alone. Colonel Rake coughed.

"A most singular thing occurred on my way here," he said, his hand toying idly with the V.C. on his broad breast. "It would hardly be believed that a man who has been through my experiences in India, Afghanistan, and South Africa would fall a victim to a common pickpocket—but such is the case."

"I am very sorry," said the Head, looking very much concerned.

The colonel smiled.

"It is easier to guard against the wiles of the Pathan or the Boer than to keep on the alert against a clever pickpocket," he remarked. "At all events, I have found it so. In the train coming to Rylcombe, I was cleared out—pocket-book, watch, and everything. They have not even left me my return ticket to Aldershot."

"Dear me!"

Colonel Rake coughed again.

"It is very unfortunate," he said. "I am reduced to the necessity of borrowing a small sum for my needs, until I get back to my quarters. I hardly like to ask you, Dr. Holmes, a stranger to me—"

"Not at all," said the Head cordially. "No stranger to your reputation, at all events, colonel. I shall be most happy to oblige you in this little matter; it will be a pleasure to me."

"Of course, I shall send you a cheque the moment I reach my quarters," said the colonel. "If you could lend me five pounds until then, my dear sir, I should take it as a very great obligation."

"With pleasure, my dear colonel."

And the Head immediately did so. Colonel Rake slipped the money into his pocket with an embarrassed smile.

"It is a most ridiculous occurrence," he said. "I—I would rather that it was not mentioned to anyone. My brother-officers would chaff me about it a little too much, if it got about the mess."

"Not a word, of course," said the Head, smiling.

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A Splendid, New, Long, Complete School Tale of the Chums of St. Jim's. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"Could you lend me a watch while I am here?" asked the colonel. "That, of course, I shall return to you when the review is over. I do not expect to keep the boys more than an hour."

"Most certainly!"

And the Head detached his own watch, and handed it to the colonel.

"Thank you very much, sir. You will be able to see the review from your window here," said the colonel.

And Colonel Rake proceeded to the quadrangle.

CHAPTER 14.

Under Review!

TOM MERRY & CO. were all in the quad. now, and all in their garb as Boy Scouts, ready for action. They looked a very handsome and fit crowd, as they mustered in the middle of the old quadrangle. Colonel Rake came out upon the steps of the School House, with Mr. Railton, and stood in the shadow of the porch, looking out over the scene.

"A very fine set of boys, Mr. Railton," said the colonel.

Mr. Railton nodded, gratified by the praise from so good a judge as Colonel Rake, V.C.

"Yes, I think the St. Jim's patrols compare very well with others," he said. "Probably you will see the Boy Scouts of Rylcombe Grammar School while you are down here, sir?"

"Yes, undoubtedly. But, may I mention a most embarrassing matter to you, Mr. Railton. In the train, as I came down this morning, my pocket was picked."

"How unfortunate," said the Housemaster unsuspiciously.

"Yes, it was most unlucky. After escaping the ambushes of the Boers, to fall before a pickpocket at home is a little too humiliating," said the colonel, with a smile. "I do not wish the matter to become known; I feel very sensitive about it. But I am placed in something of a difficulty by the occurrence. If it is not asking too much, could you make me a small loan, to be returned, of course, as soon as I reach my quarters in Aldershot? A couple of pounds would see me through. The rascal even took my return ticket, as well as my watch."

"I should be only too happy," said Mr. Railton; and two sovereigns changed hands.

"Perhaps you could lend me a watch, to use during the review," suggested the colonel. "That, of course, I shall return to you as soon as the proceedings terminate."

"Pray take mine."

"Thank you very much. Now we are ready."

And the colonel descended into the quadrangle with his clanking stride.

The Boy Scouts of St. Jim's greeted him with a ringing cheer.

"Hip, hip, hurrah!"

The colonel acknowledged the cheer with a smile and a nod.

The Boy Scouts were arrayed in the quadrangle, and they really presented a very businesslike appearance, and fully deserved the encomiums of the distinguished visitor.

There were more than a hundred fellows at St. Jim's in the garb of Boy Scouts, most of them juniors, but some in the Fifth.

Envious fellows tied down to lessons in the Form-rooms, wished that they, too, had joined the patrols.

Colonel Rake greeted the boys with a few cheery words; and then proceeded at once to business.

That he knew his business was soon clear.

He rapped out short, sharp orders, and put the Boy Scouts through their evolutions with great precision. The Scouts showed, too, that they knew their business. Dr. Holmes looked on from his study window; but Mr. Railton retired into the School House, where he was needed in the Sixth Form-room.

After about half an hour the colonel approached the Head's window, the Boy Scouts standing at attention.

Dr. Holmes pushed up the window, as he saw that the colonel wished to speak to him.

"A very fine set of young fellows, sir," said the colonel, in his deep voice. "They would do any school credit, doctor."

"I am very glad to hear you say so, colonel."

"I should like to take them out into the wood, with your permission, sir, to go into the thing a little more thoroughly," said the colonel. "I am curious to see whether they have made the same progress in actual scout-craft."

"Exactly as you like, my dear sir."

"Then I will bring them back in an hour or so."

"Quite so; and then I hope you will lunch with me."

"Thank you, I will!"

The colonel turned back to the waiting Scouts.

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"My lads," he said, "I have your headmaster's permission to take you out into the woods for an hour or so. I shall divide you into two corps, and put you through regular manoeuvres, and you shall show me what you are made of."

"Bravo!"

"Bai Jove! That's a wippin' ideah," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"March!"

The Boy Scouts marched.

They formed in column of fours, and marched out of the schoolgates into the long white road that ran past the wood to Rylcombe.

Colonel Rake signed to Tom Merry and Figgins and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy to walk with him at the side of the marching column. Greatly pleased at the distinction, the two leaders of the Scouts, and the swell of St. Jim's, walked along beside the striding officer.

Arthur Augustus bestowed a lofty smile upon his comrades. Tom Merry and Figgins were entitled to the distinction from their rank; but Arthur Augustus had apparently been selected only for his distinguished appearance.

The colonel chatted in a very cordial way to his three companions as they walked beside the steady column of Scouts.

"I had a very peculiar adventure as I came down this morning," he remarked. "I am afraid I shall sink in your estimation when I tell you that I have been victimised by a common pickpocket."

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Is it possible, sir?" said Tom Merry.

"Yes, indeed," said the colonel, smiling. "I was cleared out—completely cleared out—in the train by a pickpocket, who got away with the plunder. Rather an unhappy experience for a man who has been through three wars in different parts of the Empire. I did not expect to meet my Waterloo in a local train in Sussex."

The juniors laughed.

"Must have had an awful nerve to tackle you, sir," said Figgins.

"Yaas, wathah! I wondah if it was the same chap who wobbled me?" said D'Arcy.

The colonel glanced at him quickly.

"You!" he said.

"Yaas, sir. I was wobbled on Wednesday evenin' in this vewy wood by a disgustin' wuffian with a black beard."

The colonel started.

"Pewwaps it was the same chap, sir," said Arthur Augustus.

"A black beard, you say?" said the colonel thoughtfully.

"Yaas, a big, wuff, black beard."

"Very likely; there was a man in my carriage with a black beard," said the colonel. "What was he like, otherwise?"

D'Arcy shook his head.

"I don't know, sir. You see, he tackled me in the dark. But he was a big, powahful chap—much stwongah than I am."

"Indeed."

"Yaas. A chap about your build, sir."

"Oh!"

"And the wemarkable thing is, sir, that his voice was somethin' like yours, too," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

The colonel laughed.

"That is rather unflattering to me," he said. "But I think it was probably the same man who robbed me; there certainly was a passenger in my carriage, with a big black beard, and he was a tall, strongly-built man. I did not notice that my property was missing until after he had left the carriage, unfortunately."

"The awful rotter!" said Figgins.

"Yes; it is very unfortunate," said the colonel, in his easy way, "because he took my watch, and my return ticket to Aldershot. I wonder whether one of you lads could lend me a watch until we return to the school, as I do not want to be too late."

Three watches came out immediately. Arthur Augustus's was his second best; the famous gold ticker being still in the list of the missing.

"Pway take mine, sir!"

"Mine!" said Figgins.

"Mine!" said Tom Merry.

Colonel Rake glanced at the watches. Figgins's was a big, silver watch of the turnip variety, which kept excellent time, but was not worth more than a pound at the most. Arthur Augustus's was also silver, though more valuable. Tom Merry's was a gold watch, presented to him by his old governess, Miss Priscilla Fawcett. Tom Merry generally wore a serviceable gun-metal watch; but he put on the gold one on special occasions. This was a special occasion.

The colonel accepted the loan of Tom Merry's watch. The fact that it was a gold one could not be supposed to appeal to a practical soldier; but, after all, he could not take all

(Continued on Page 20.)

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three, so he had to decide upon one. He slipped Tom Merry's handsome watch into his pocket.

"This one will do," he said. "Thank you very much. Remind me to return it to you when we get back to the school, my lad, in case I should forget."

"Certainly, sir."

"But I say, sir," said Figgins diffidently. "How are you going to get home, sir, if you've lost all your money and your return ticket to Aldershot?"

"That is a difficulty," said the colonel. "I shall have to ask your headmaster for a small loan. Only I feel so really absurd at having allowed my pocket to be picked that I hardly like to mention the matter to him."

"Pewwaps you would allow us to make you a tempoway loan, sir, and then you needn't mention it to the Head," suggested Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "It would be a great honah to us, sir."

The colonel hesitated.

"You are very kind and thoughtful," he said; "but—perhaps—"

"Pway say the word, sir!"

"Well, if you should have some cash with you—"

"I had a tip fwom my govannah this mornin', sir," said Arthur Augustus. "I had wiahed to him for a fivah, because I had been wobbled by that howwible wascal, you know, and instead of sendin' me a fivah, he sent me two pounds. I wegard that as wathah stingy of the govannah. Howevah, here it is, at your service, sir, if you will do me the great honah to accept a loan fwom me."

"Thank you very much."

"But that won't be enough, sir," said Tom Merry. "I have a quid. What have you got, Figgy?"

"Ten bob," said Figgins.

The sovereign and the ten shillings disappeared into the colonel's pocket.

"Thank you," he said. "That will see me through; and when I get back to Aldershot this afternoon, I will send a cheque immediately to your headmaster, and he will return this to you. Is that satisfactory?"

"Quite, sir."

"Yaas, wathah, sir."

The Scout column had reached the stile that gave access to the footpath through the wood. The Scouts halted.

"This is where we get into the wood, sir," said Monty Lowther, saluting.

"Good!"

And the Boy Scouts plunged under the old trees, tramping in the thick, fallen leaves.

CHAPTER 15. Foiled at the Finish!

THE schoolboy Scouts were in great spirits.

To study scout-craft, under the experienced eye of a distinguished officer who had won the V.C. on the field of battle, was an honour that did not fall to the lot of every corps of Boy Scouts.

And Colonel Rake entered into the thing as keenly as the boys themselves.

He divided the Scouts into two parties, assigning them their positions. The juniors had informed him of the distinction between School House and New House at St. Jim's, and he seemed to understand, and to enter into their feelings, immediately. A contest between School House and New House was exactly after the boys' own hearts, and the colonel arranged it upon those lines.

The School House brigade was placed in possession of a section of the wood, and the New House fellows had to surprise them. School House Scouts, detached from the main body, had to get through the New House lines to warn the main body of the intended surprise. It was the business of the New House to prevent them from getting through, and Figgins posted his men very carefully for that purpose.

Tom Merry was in command of the main position. The detached Scouts were Lowther, Glyn, Kangaroo, and Reilly, of the School House.

Colonel Rake led them away to the road, while Figgins was posting his men in a long circle through the wood to keep guard.

"Now, you understand what you've got to do," said the colonel. "One of you, at least, must get through the attacking party's lines, and warn the fort."

"Right-ho, sir!" said Monty Lowther.

"It is a Scout's duty never to be taken by surprise," said Colonel Rake. "Not that I have much right to preach on that subject, as I have been taken very much by surprise this very morning."

"You, sir," said the four juniors together.

"Yes. I had a most unpleasant adventure in the train coming down," said the colonel. "My pocket was picked—purse, watch, return-ticket, and everything taken."

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"Oh, sir!"

"How rotten!"

"You saw me borrow Merry's watch, perhaps," said the colonel calmly. "He has kindly lent it to me. Unfortunately, I have made the discovery that it does not go. I suppose accidents happen to junior boys' watches at school. Will one of you lads lend me one?"

Four watches came out in a twinkling.

Glyn's one was a very valuable one. Bernard Glyn, the Liverpool boy, was the son of a millionaire, and he had a very valuable watch. Colonel Rake selected that one, and thanked Glyn for the loan as he slipped it into his pocket.

"How will you get home, sir, if you've lost your ticket and your money?" asked Kangaroo.

"Really, I had not thought about that," said the distinguished officer, with a smile. "I shall have to borrow a few pounds from someone. Very awkward for me to have to mention the matter to your headmaster, too."

"No need for that, sir," said Bernard Glyn promptly. "We should be delighted, sir."

"Faith, and it's delighted we shall be!" said Reilly.

"Thank you, my lads. You are very good."

"Not at all, sir."

"Sure, I've only got a shilling myself," Reilly remarked.

"But Glyn is rolling in money."

Bernard Glyn laughed, and took out a leather purse. He rolled half a dozen sovereigns out of it into his palm.

"Please take it, sir; you can send it to me when you get home."

"Thank you; that will be excellent."

And six sovereigns disappeared into the colonel's pockets, where he must have been accumulating quite a collection by this time.

Then, after giving the Scouts some further instructions, the colonel bade them set to work.

"You have an hour to work in," he said. "I shall wait for you by the stile, and you will join me there at twelve o'clock."

"Yes, sir."

And the Scouts plunged into the wood, to carry out their difficult mission of penetrating the New House lines and reaching Tom Merry's position.

Colonel Rake walked away towards the stile.

He disappeared from the view of the juniors.

The distinguished officer reached the stile, and stepped over it into the road. He gave a glance back into the wood; the trees had swallowed up all the Scouts of St. Jim's from sight.

He smiled.

The expression upon his face was very different now, and it might have surprised the Scouts of St. Jim's if they had seen it. They might have been surprised, too, if they had known that he was striding away at a good rate towards the village, instead of waiting at the stile as arranged.

The colonel was, in fact, walking so fast, that it was almost a run.

He took out one of the watches—it was Tom Merry's watch, and it seemed to be going excellently now—and glanced at it.

"Just time to catch the eleven-fifteen," he murmured.

"Good!"

And he hurried into the village.

He reached the railway-station, and as he entered it a stout gentleman with ginger whiskers looked at him fixedly, and made a slight movement.

It was Inspector Fix, of Scotland Yard, the gentleman whom Blake and Redfern had rescued from the vault under the old castle.

The inspector smiled to himself under his whiskers, and followed the distinguished officer into the station.

Colonel Rake took a ticket for Wayland Junction, and hurried upon the platform.

The train was just coming in.

Inspector Fix followed him, stopping a few moments to whisper to the porter of the station, who regarded him with an open-mouthed stare.

The train rushed in, and stopped.

Colonel Rake opened the door of a first-class carriage, and was stepping in, when the stout inspector made a sudden spring forward from behind a slot machine.

The colonel was taken entirely by surprise.

The inspector's fat hands grasped the back of his collar, and he was dragged back upon the platform with a heavy hump.

The sudden fall dazed him for the moment.

As he lay gasping, the stout gentleman from Scotland Yard bent over him, and there was a quick, metallic click.

The next moment the colonel leaped up furiously. But his hands were fastened together; the handcuffs were tight on his wrists, and he was helpless.

Inspector Fix smiled sweetly, and clapped a hand upon his shoulder. The colonel's face was convulsed with fury. He did not look very much like a distinguished officer at that moment.

"The game's up!" said the inspector calmly. "Better take it quietly."

The colonel made a last effort at dignity.

"How dare you?" he exclaimed. "Are you aware that I am an officer in His Majesty's Service. My uniform should have told you as much!"

The inspector chuckled.

"I don't think I'm aware of it, Colonel Jim!" he replied.

"Sir, I am Colonel Rake!"

"Good—and Colonel Jim, and Pete the Dandy—and Major Hunt—and Clobber Bill—and several other persons," said the inspector. "I arrest you, Colonel Jim, on the charge of attempted murder!"

"Sir!"

"That's what it comes to, shutting a detective up in a vault, and leaving him there to starve," said Mr. Fix, with a nod.

"You are making a mistake—"

"No; you made the mistake when you thought I had stayed there," said the inspector agreeably. "I have been looking for you ever since, Jim. I saw you leave the train here this morning, and you gave me the slip; but I've been waiting for you. What little game have you been up to here?"

"This is a mistake—an absurd mistake; if you gave me time, I could—"

"You could have chucked me half the length of the platform and bolted," smiled the inspector. "I know, Colonel Jim; I'm not giving you the chance a second time. Better shut up, my man, and take it quietly. Anything you say may be used in evidence against you, you know. You are coming with me to the local police-station now, and when I've found what you've been up to down here, I shall take you to London. The game is up!"

The man burst into a laugh.

"You've got me, Fix!" he said. "All serene!"

"Yes," said the inspector cheerfully. "I've got you."

"You may as well take these things off—"

"Not this afternoon," said the inspector—"some other afternoon."

"I'll go quietly."

"I know you will; I'm going to keep the darbies on to make you," said the inspector. And with a cheery smile he marched his prisoner off.

CHAPTER 16.

A Surprise for the Scouts.

TOM MERRY put his hand to his watch-pocket, and, remembering that he had lent Colonel Rake his watch, withdrew it again.

"What's the time, Glyn?" he asked.

The scouting was over. The School House scouts had not succeeded in penetrating the New House lines; one after another they had been captured by Figgins & Co. as they attempted it; and then the New House had assailed Tom Merry's position. In that, however, they had been worsted, and most of the New House fellows were prisoners by the time twelve rolled over the woods from the church steeple in Rylcombe. At twelve the Boy Scouts were to meet Colonel Rake at the stile to return to the school, and in ten minutes they were there.

But they did not find the colonel.

They clustered round the stile, and in the road and the footpath, and waited; but the colonel did not appear.

Such unpunctuality on the part of the distinguished officer surprised them, and they watched the road to and fro in vain for his returning figure. The juniors were getting hungry now; it was near their dinner-time. They wanted to report to the colonel, and they wanted to get back to dinner, and some of them grew restive as the minutes passed on, and the great officer did not appear.

Glyn shook his head as the captain of the Shell asked him the time.

"Can't tell you," he replied.

"Why not?"

"I've lent my watch to the colonel. He lost his—had his pocket picked in the train down."

"Why, I lent him mine."

"Yours didn't go."

"It was going all right when I gave it to him," said Tom Merry. "So he's told you fellows about the pickpocket? I thought he wanted to keep it dark."

"I suppose he needed the cash to get home," said Glyn.

Tom Merry stared.

"The what?" he exclaimed.

"Cash for his ticket home."

"But you didn't lend him that?"

"Yes, I did."

"You!"

"Yes, why not?" asked the Liverpool lad, in surprise.

"He must have wanted a jolly lot to get home, then," said Tom Merry, in astonishment. "He borrowed some of us—two quid of Gussy, a quid of me, and ten bob of Figgins."

"Two sovereigns, dear boy," said D'Arcy.

Bernard Glyn whistled.

"Seems to be a borrowing sort of johnnie," he remarked.

"He borrowed six quid of me."

"Bai Jove!"

"And my watch," added Glyn.

"He seems to have a fancy for gold watches," remarked Kerr. "I suppose there's nothing fishy about the colonel, is there?"

"Fishy!"

"Well, it's jolly queer his borrowing money of two different chaps for the same purpose and not turning up here," said Kerr. "It's past half-past twelve now; he's over half an hour late. I don't like the look of it."

"But he's a distinguished officer!" exclaimed Blake.

"Yaas, wathah—a vewy gweat officah, dear boy!"

"With a voice very like that of a footpad, and the same build," remarked Kerr.

"Gweat Scott!"

"Oh, dash it all, Kerr, what are you thinking of?" exclaimed Tom Merry warmly.

"Rot, Kerr, my boy!" said Fatty Wynn. "He's all right; only I do wish he would come, I'm frightfully hungry!"

"Faith, and it's quare, though!" remarked Reilly. "I don't see what he wanted so much money to get him back to Aldershot for. Three pound ten would have done it, without collaring six pounds from Glyn!"

"Nobody at St. Jim's knew him, either, excepting by name," Kerr remarked. "It seems that there was nothing but his telegram to show that he was Colonel Rake. Anybody can send a telegram. Looks fishy to me."

"Bai Jove!"

The Scouts looked at one another in doubt and dismay. They searched along the road with their eyes, but there was no sign of Colonel Rake. Fatty Wynn grunted.

"I say, it's dinner-time," he said. "You fellows can wait for the giddy colonel, if you like; I'm going back."

"Same here," said Redfern. "We'll leave our giddy leaders to wait for him; and the rest of us can go back and feed. Two will be enough."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Some of the Boy Scouts were already starting down the road towards the school. Others followed them. It seemed useless to wait for the colonel; he was nearly an hour late already. Tom Merry and Figgins stayed, and Jack Blake and D'Arcy stayed with them. The rest departed, and were soon lost to sight down the road.

Tom Merry, and Figgins, and D'Arcy walked to and fro to keep themselves warm as they waited for the missing colonel. If he had been delayed by some accident, it was too bad if he should find nobody at the rendezvous when he returned. Figgins looked at his watch. It was half-past one.

"He can't be coming," said Figgins.

"Bai Jove, it's weally remarkable!"

"Perhaps something happened to him," said Tom Merry.

"Suppose we go to the police-station in Rylcombe and inquire? If there's been an accident, they'll have heard of it, and—"

"And if there's something fishy," said Blake, "the sooner the police know about it the better."

"Yaas, wathah, dear boys; let's go!"

And the four juniors walked away slowly towards the village, still keeping their eyes open for the colonel. They did not see him. They entered the village, and stopped at the little police-station in the High Street. The first person they saw when they entered was Inspector Fix, speaking to the officer in charge. The inspector glanced at them, and gave Blake a nod, recognising one of his rescuers.

"Mr. Fix!" exclaimed Blake.

"Yes," said Mr. Fix, with a smile, "I am still down here, and glad to say that I have found my man."

"Found the man who shut you up in the vault, sir?"

"Yes," said Mr. Fix, rubbing his plump hands. "He has been up to some rascality in this quarter. I arrested him at the station, and when he was searched here, we found his pockets full of money and gold watches. Where he got them seems to be a mystery."

The juniors looked at one another.

"Gold watches!" murmured Tom Merry.

"And money! Bai Jove!"

"M-m-may we see the watches, sir?" asked Blake. "We—we've come here about something of the kind."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Was—the man got up as an officer, sir?" asked Blake.

"Yes," said Mr. Fix. "He had a colonel's uniform, and seems to have been calling himself Colonel Rake—"

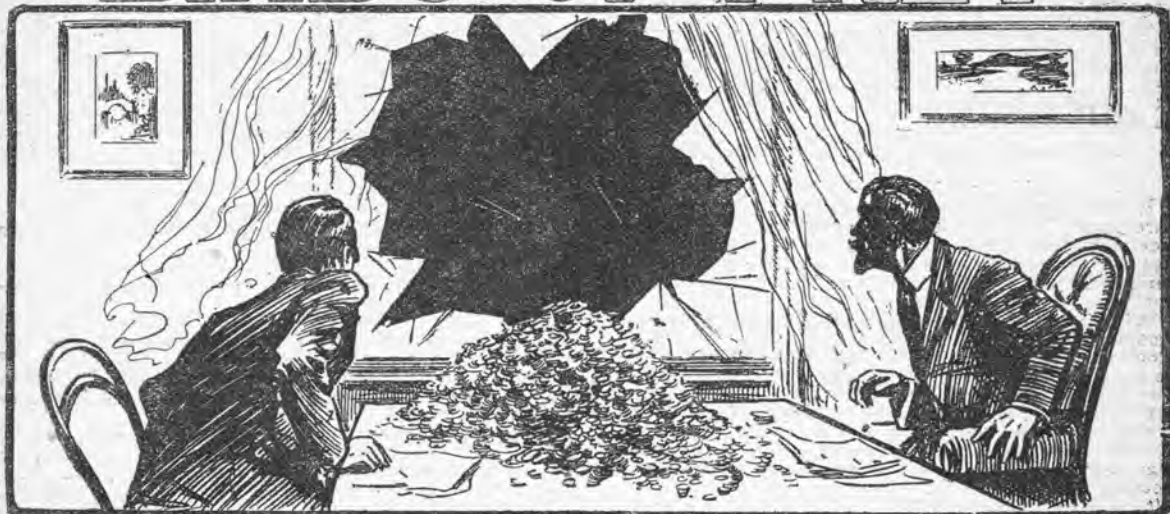
(Continued on page 26.)

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 245.

A Splendid, New, Long, Complete School Tale of the Chums of St. Jim's. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

OUR SPLENDID NEW SERIAL.—2nd INSTALMENT.

BIRDS OF PREY



A Thrilling Story Dealing with the Adventures of Nelson Lee, Detective.

By MAXWELL SCOTT.

THE FIRST INSTALMENT BRIEFLY RE-WITTEN.

On the bleak November afternoon when we first make the acquaintance of Jack Langley, the famous consulting electrical engineer, he is sitting in his office, writing out a report, when his clerk ushers in a man dressed entirely in black, who tells Jack that he is a member of the Sheffield Town Council. Something has gone wrong with the electric machinery, and he asks Jack to accompany him to the town to attend to the matter.

Jack Langley agrees, and the two enter the Sheffield train. A little while before the train is due to steam into Sheffield Station, the Man in Black offers Jack a drink from his flask. Suspecting nothing, Jack drains it off at a single draught; but the moment he has swallowed the stuff he knows that he has been drugged, for numbness begins in his legs, and mounts rapidly towards his head.

"What have you given me? You've drugged me, you—

you—"

The rest of the sentence dies away in an inarticulate moan, and, after swaying to and fro like a drunken man, Jack sinks back on to the seat, and lapses into unconsciousness.

The Man in Black then quickly opens the carriage door, and flings the insensible body of Jack Langley out on to a

tarpaulin held by four masked men stationed on the side of the line.

When the young engineer recovers consciousness, he finds himself in an enormous coiners' den—a miniature Royal Mint. He is told by the man who successfully duped him, and who appears to be known as the Squire in this infamous den, that if he repairs one of the coiners' dynamos he will be allowed to go free. Jack agrees, and the moment he finishes his task he faces the Squire.

"There. Thank goodness that's done!" he exclaims. "Now, will you be so good as to order a carriage, and allow me to go?"

"Well, no," answers the Squire, with a mocking laugh. "I'm afraid I can't oblige. In fact, if I had my own way, I would shoot you forthwith, and have done with you. But I'm not exactly my own master in the matter, and my orders are to offer you your freedom on condition that you consent to throw in your lot with us—to become one of ourselves, in fact. In return for this, you will not only—"

"Enough!" cries Jack, facing him with flashing eyes. "Your proposition is an insult! Sooner than purchase my freedom on the infamous terms you have named, I would rot in this vault for ever!"

(Now go on with the story.)

Jack's Bid for Freedom!

"But it isn't a case of rotting," said the Squire drily. "It's a case of dying."

"Then, I will die!" said Jack, clenching his fists, and folding his arms across his chest. "But I won't die without a struggle," he suddenly exclaimed. And almost before the words had crossed his lips, he unfolded his arms with lightning-like rapidity, and flung them straight out on each side of him.

The result of this effort will be readily understood when the reader remembers that the young engineer was between the Squire's two accomplices. Neither of the men was as tall as Jack, and the consequence was, that when he suddenly straightened his arms, his right fist landed on one man's mouth and loosened most of his teeth, whilst his left fist found a resting-place on the other man's eye, and made him see more shooting stars in one half-second than he had ever seen in his life before.

Both men staggered, with howls of pain, and one of them dropped his revolver. Quick as thought, Jack stooped to pick it up, but ere his fingers could close on the prize, the Squire snatched up a mallet and dealt him a sledge-hammer blow on

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NO. 2, OUR NEW COMPANION PAPER, "THE PENNY POPULAR" OUT ON FRIDAY.

The Squire snatched it out of his hands with ill-concealed impatience. As soon as he had read it a savage oath burst from his lips, and he glared at Jack with an air of baffled malignity.

"Hang it! Why didn't I shoot him ten minutes ago?" he muttered to himself.

He thrust the telegram into his pocket, and turned to the man who had brought it.

"Help these two to bind Mr. Langley hand and foot," he said. "When you've made him secure we'll carry him into the bullion-room and leave him there."

This sudden change of front amazed his two confederates as much as it astonished Jack. But the Squire was not in the mood to offer any explanation, and as soon as Jack had been bound hand and foot, he was thrust into a small room at the end of the vault, and was there locked in and left to his own reflections.

The Order of the Ring.

It would be impossible to describe the mental agonies through which Jack Langley passed in the course of the next few hours. It was not that he was afraid of death, but the horrible uncertainty which surrounded his fate, the terrible suspense in which he had been left, filled his mind with torturing thoughts, and well nigh drove him mad.

Why had the Squire spared his life? That was the question he asked himself again and again, as he lay on the cold stone floor of the bullion-room. What were his captors going to do with him? Were they going to torture him in order to force him to join their ranks, or were they going to keep him a prisoner for the rest of his life? Torture or slavery—which?

For seven long, weary hours he was kept in this suspense; then two men came and removed the cords which bound his legs, leaving his arms still pinioned to his sides. Having bound a handkerchief round his eyes, they led him into the lift, escorted him through another bewildering maze of rooms and passages, and finally pushed him into a chair.

"You may leave us now," said a strange voice.

He heard the two men leave the room and close the door. Then the strange voice spoke again.

"If I liberate your arms," it said, "will you give me your parole that for the next half-hour you will neither offer resistance nor try to escape?"

"I will," said Jack. "But it must be clearly understood that my parole is limited to the time you have named. At the end of the half-hour I shall hold myself free to act as I please."

"Agreed!" said the voice.

His bonds were thereupon unloosed, and the bandage removed from his eyes. He then discovered that he was seated at a table in the room in which he had recovered consciousness the night before. The Squire was sitting by his side, and at the head of the table was a tall, distinguished-looking man whom he had never seen before.

Daylight was streaming through the long French windows of the room, which were carefully screened with white cotton blinds, and a clock on the mantelpiece pointed to half-past eight.

"I understand that you have been rather roughly handled since you entered this house," said the man at the head of the table. "Will you believe me when I say that I am very, very sorry? I feel sure that if I'd been here when you arrived I could have persuaded you to join us without resorting to violence. Unfortunately, however, I missed the train by which I had intended travelling; but as I knew that the Squire would probably make short work of you if you proved obstinate, I wired to him that I was coming by a later train, and that nothing was to be done to you until I arrived."

"Then you're the man these people call 'the Chief,' I suppose?" said Jack, remembering that the man who had brought the telegram into the vault had said that it was "from the Chief."

"I am," said the stranger, inclining his head, "the Chief of the Order of the Ring!"

"The Order of the Ring!" said Jack. "What's that? I've heard of the Order of the Garter, and the Order of the Bath; but what on earth is the Order of the Ring?"

"It is the most wonderful secret society that the world has ever seen," replied the Chief. "It was founded by myself six years ago, and is governed by a Council of Three. At the head of the council is myself, the Chief, the second in command is the Squire, and the third is the Doctor, whose acquaintance you have yet to make."

"And what are the objects of this wonderful Order?" asked Jack.

"E s. d.," said the Chief, with a low, musical laugh.

"In other words," said Jack, "your precious Order of the Ring is nothing more nor less than a rascally gang of coiners?"

"Pardon me, it is more than that," said the Chief. "It

is an up-to-date confederation for the execution of every kind of crime that pays. We organise and carry out extensive burglaries; we dabble in forgery, arson, and blackmail; we manufacture counterfeit coin, and we have an establishment in France for the turning out of spurious bonds and bank-notes. If a person wishes to have another person removed, and is able and willing to pay the price, we perpetrate every kind of crime that pays, and we divide the plunder amongst ourselves in the form of quarterly dividends.

"The headquarters of the Order are in London, where the members meet to discuss their plans, and where most of our burglaries and so forth are arranged. This branch of the Order's business is entrusted to me—that is to say, I select the particular men for each particular job, and supervise their preparations. When the burglary has been committed, the plunder is brought to me, and if it consists of jewellery, or banknotes, or anything else which it would be unsafe to dispose of in this country, I take it abroad in a small steam-yacht belonging to the Order, and dispose of it on the Continent."

"My friend the Squire has charge of the mint, which you have seen. I am only giving him his due when I say that he is one of the most skilful coiners in the world; but he has one great drawback—he knows nothing of electricity. So long as Sir Henry Porritt was alive this did not matter very much—"

"Sir Henry Porritt!" cried Jack, for the name was that of one of England's most famous electrical engineers, who had died but a week ago. "Was he one of your members?"

"He was," said the Chief. "You appear to be surprised, but I could give you the names of a dozen other men quite as distinguished as the late Sir Henry Porritt who have been members of the Order of the Ring since the date of its formation. But as I was saying, so long as Sir Henry was alive, the Squire's ignorance of electricity did not matter very much. Last week, however, as you know, Sir Henry died, and two days later something went wrong with the electric apparatus of the mint. What were we to do?"

"The Squire came to me to seek advice. As I knew that you were one of the most brilliant electrical engineers of the day, I advised him to entice you down to the mint, to compel you to repair the machine which had broken down, and then to offer you the choice between joining us or being shot. This he did; but I understand that he didn't take the trouble to explain the matter as fully as I have done, and the consequence that you were merely being invited to throw in your lot with an ordinary gang of coiners. Now that you know the truth, however, I have every hope that you will reconsider your decision."

"Never!" said Jack, in a firm, low voice. "What you have told me only strengthens me in my previous determination. A gang of coiners is bad enough, in all conscience, but a league of thieves and murderers is a thousand times worse. I know I am in your power, but nothing that you could ever say to me would ever persuade me to purchase my life at the cost of my honour."

"Then you won't join us?" said the Chief.

"Never!" said Jack once more.

"I think you will," said the Chief, with a curious smile. "You are engaged to a certain Miss Ethel Aylmer, I believe?"

"What has that to do with it?" demanded Jack.

"A great deal!" said the Chief significantly. "Miss Aylmer is an heiress. Sir Philip Aylmer is her uncle. He is also her guardian, and if she should die before the age of twenty-one the whole of her fortune would go to Sir Philip. Have I not stated the facts correctly?"

"You have," said Jack. "But what has all this—"

"Pardon me!" said the Chief, interrupting him. "Allow me to finish. The Order of the Ring is the owner of a magnificent steam pleasure-yacht, which is called the Firefly, and which is ostensibly used for the purpose of conveying invalids for a short sea voyage for the benefit of their health. The captain and crew are members of the Order, and the Doctor, of whom I have already spoken, is the surgeon aboard."

"Every trip the Firefly makes there is one passenger at least who never returns. For instance, if a husband grows tired of his wife, and wishes to marry somebody else, he pays the Order a certain sum of money and sends his wife for a cruise in the Firefly. By means of subtle drugs, the Doctor makes her ill, and a few days later she dies and is buried at sea. No one suspects foul play, of course, and—"

Before he had time to finish his speech Jack staggered to his feet, his face transfixed with horror.

"At last I see what you are driving at!" he exclaimed, in a choking voice. "Miss Aylmer wrote to me last week, and told me that her guardian had arranged for her to go for a three-months' cruise in the vessel you have named. Do not—do not tell me that Sir Philip has bribed you to murder her!"

"I am bound to tell you the truth," said the Chief calmly.

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"Sir Philip has paid a thousand pounds, and in return for this we have pledged our word that Miss Aylmer shall die and be buried at sea. The Firefly sails, with Miss Aylmer on board, at ten o'clock this morning. It is now two minutes to nine. Swear that you will join us, and I will wire to the Doctor that Miss Aylmer's life must be spared. Refuse, and she goes to her doom!"

Jack sank back into his chair and buried his face in his hands. So long as it had only been his own life which had been at stake, it had been easy for him to choose death in preference to dishonour. But now it was the life of the girl he loved which was trembling in the balance, and his lips refused to utter the words which he knew would seal her doom.

"Well, what is your answer?" said the Chief at last. "Will you join us, or must Miss Aylmer die?"

He had scarcely finished speaking ere the clock on the mantelpiece struck nine. As its silvery chimes fell on Jack's ears a thrill of fierce excitement shot through his frame. At half-past eight he had given his parole that for half an hour he would make no attempt to escape. And now it was striking nine. The half-hour was up. His promise no longer held good.

He raised his head and took stock of his surroundings. The table at which he was seated was a square one. At one end sat the young engineer, at the other sat the Chief. At the right-hand side of the table sat the Squire, at the left-hand side there was nobody. Behind the Chief was the door, and behind Jack was the fireplace. Behind the Squire were two French windows, screened with cotton blinds.

Having taken in these details, the young engineer rose slowly to his feet.

"You want to know if I will join you?" he said, speaking slowly and deliberately. "I will not—not even to save the life of the girl I love!"

The Chief choked back a venomous oath. He had not expected such obstinacy at this.

"Do you realise what your refusal means?" he asked.

"I do," said Jack. "I also realise that it's nine o'clock!"

As he uttered these words he suddenly kicked away his chair and sprang towards the nearest window. So completely were the two men taken by surprise that for quite a second neither of them stirred. Then the Chief leaped wildly to his feet and whipped out his revolver, whilst the Squire shot out his arm as Jack darted past his chair, and grabbed him by the coat-tail.

With a smashing back-handed blow Jack knocked the Squire head over heels, and wrenched himself free. At the same instant the Chief let fly with his revolver, but the bullet merely grazed Jack's cheek, and before the scoundrel could fire again Jack sprang to the window, tore down the blind, and vanished in an avalanche of broken glass.

Flight and Pursuit.

The house to which Jack Langley had been lured was an old-fashioned country mansion, dating from the days of Queen Elizabeth. In front of the window through which he made his escape was a sloping bank of smooth, green turf, at the foot of which was a stone-flagged terrace. On that side of the terrace which was farthest from the house was a broad flight of steps, at the bottom of which was an undulating lawn, thickly studded with trees and shrubs. On the far side of the lawn, extending as far as the eye could reach, was an extensive and well-wooded park.

When Jack tore down the blind, and smashed his way through the window, he saw at a glance that if he could reach the park before he was overtaken he would have more than an even chance of giving his captors the slip. And if he could manage to give them the slip, he had only to go to the nearest telegraph-office and wire to Scotland Yard, and Ethel's life would be saved, Sir Philip's treachery would be unmasked, and the Order of the Ring would be wiped out of existence.

Fired by these hopes, he sprang down the grassy slope in front of the window, and landed on his feet on the terrace below. As he paused to recover his balance, the Chief and Squire rushed up to the window, from the inside of the room, of course, and the latter once more levelled his revolver.

At the same instant as he fired, Jack sprang down the steps which led to the drive, and the bullet whistled through the air an inch and a half above his head. A moment later he had cleared the second flight of steps, and was scurrying across the lawn, in and out between the trees and shrubs, with the fleetness of a hunted hare.

In the meantime, the two revolver shots had attracted the attention of the other inmates of the house, and almost before the echoes of the second shot had died away an excited crowd of men burst into the room.

"Quick! Sound the alarm! Our prisoner has escaped!"

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cried the Chief, addressing one of the men. "The rest of you follow me!"

The man addressed immediately rushed from the room, and a few seconds later a bell began to toll. The rest of the men, headed by the Squire and the Chief, set out in pursuit of Jack, who by that time was half-way across the lawn and well out of range of revolver shots.

If the young engineer had had nothing harder to accomplish than to shake off his pursuers, his escape would have been comparatively easy. Neither the Chief nor the Squire was particularly fleet of foot, and the half-dozen men who accompanied them were puffing like grampuses before they had covered two hundred yards. Jack, on the other hand, was one of the speediest cross-country runners in the kingdom, and on more than one occasion had assisted his Club—the Northgate Harriers—to win the Southern Championships. The consequence was that every stride he took increased the gap between himself and those who were pursuing him, and the longer the race continued the farther they were left behind.

But, unluckily for Jack, pursuit was not the only thing he had to fear. In response to the warning notes of the alarm-bell, excited men were closing in upon him on every hand. Some of them had been felling trees in the park, and others had been at work in the stables. Some had been digging in the ornamental garden, and others had been repairing the fence which encircled the paddock. The instant they had heard the bell begin to toll they had ceased work, and now, in groups of twos and threes, they were racing towards the house from all points of the compass.

In blissful ignorance of this fact, Jack rapidly forged ahead, and at last arrived at the low, stone wall which divided the lawn from the park. His pursuers were then between three and four hundred yards astern, and, pressing his elbows to his sides, he cleared the wall with a single flying leap. As he landed on his feet on the other side, a cry of dismay burst from his lips, and he had barely time to fling himself face downwards on the ground ere a woodman's axe came whirling through the air, and struck the wall behind him!

He had almost run into the arms of three of the men who had been engaged in felling trees.

Needless to say, he did not remain in this position long. Almost before the axe had struck the wall, he was on his feet again. Undaunted by the threatening attitude of the men in front of him, he charged into their midst, and sent the foremost of the three to grass with a crashing blow between the eyes. The other two attempted to grapple with him at close quarters, and one of them even succeeded in fastening his hands on Jack's throat. But the young engineer could use his fists as well as he could use his legs, and in less time almost than it takes to tell, he felled his would-be captor to the ground, threw the third man on top of him, and once more took to his heels.

In the meantime, short as the delay had been, his pursuers had been rapidly overhauling him, and almost before he had got into his stride again, the Squire and the Chief, who were somewhat in advance of the rest, came scrambling over the low stone wall.

"Hurrah! There he is!" yelled the Squire. "Shoot him! Shoot him before—"

The rest of his sentence was drowned by the crack of the Chief's revolver; but the breathless scamper across the lawn had robbed the scoundrel's hand of its customary steadiness, and his bullet merely carried away a fragment of Jack's coat-tail. The next instant the young engineer had plunged into a thickly-planted shrubbery, and was lost to view.

Revolver in hand, the Chief dashed after him with the Squire at his heels. By the time they reached the shrubbery, however, Jack had dropped on his hands and knees, and had crawled into the very heart of a clump of rhododendrons. Here he remained, scarcely daring to breathe, till the Chief and the Squire and the rest of his pursuers had passed, when he leaped to his feet and resumed his flight.

Scarcely had he started when a party of men who had been engaged in repairing the fence on the other side of the park came racing towards the shrubbery at breakneck speed. One of these men caught sight of Jack, and instantly raised an alarm. Headed by the Chief, the whole gang then set out in hot pursuit once more; but, by dodging in and out amongst the trees, first in one direction, and then in the other, he managed at last to give them the slip and throw them off the scent.

"This is all very fine," he muttered to himself, as he flung himself wearily down at the foot of an enormous beech-tree, the branches of which were still thickly clothed with golden-brown leaves. "It's easy enough to elude pursuit in a jungle like this—I could keep it up all day—but whilst I'm playing at hide-and-seek, the time is slipping away, and unless I wire Scotland Yard before ten o'clock, the Firefly will have sailed before my message arrives, and Ethel's fate will be sealed. I wonder how far this beastly park extends, and in which

direction the turnpike lies. Suppose I climb this tree and take a bird's-eye view."

Suiting the action to the word, he swarmed up the tree, and perched himself on the highest branch that would bear his weight. From this position he was able to command a fairly extensive view of the surrounding country, and although he could see neither village nor town, he was amply rewarded for his climb by the highly-important discovery that a broad and well-kept turnpike skirted the park about six hundred yards on his right.

Having taken the bearing of this road, he was about to descend from his perch when his quick ears caught the sound of approaching footsteps. A moment or two later the Squire and the Chief, accompanied by the rest of his pursuers, filed into view, and came to a halt at the foot of the tree.

"He can't be very far away," he heard the Squire say. "See! Here are the marks of his boots! Is it possible that he is hiding in this tree?"

Twenty pairs of eyes were immediately raised towards the spot where Jack was concealed. He held his breath in an agony of apprehension, expecting every instant to hear an exultant yell of "There he is!" But the leafy screen effectually hid him from their prying eyes, and his presence remained unrevealed.

"He's not the kind of man to waste his time in hiding," said the Chief. "He would be far more likely to make for the road as quickly as possible, in the hope of meeting somebody who would direct him to the nearest telegraph-office!"

"If that's your opinion," said the Squire, "don't you think it would be wise to set a watch on the road? It will only need two men. If one takes his stand at the north end of the park, where it joins the road, and the other takes his stand at the south end, he'll be bound to pass one of the two if he takes to the road, whichever way he goes."

"That's a good idea. See that it is carried out at once," said the Chief. And then, to Jack's intense relief, they moved away and disappeared from view.

He waited until the sound of their retreating footsteps had died away in the distance, and then, with infinite caution, he slid down the tree and struck out for the road. When he came in sight of the boundary-wall, he perceived that the Squire had already carried out the Chief's instructions, for a man was standing on the park-side of the wall, with his back towards Jack, and his eyes fixed in a watchful gaze on the road.

With noiseless, cat-like steps, Jack glided towards the unsuspecting sentry. Whilst he was yet some three or four yards away, he trod on a piece of rotten brushwood, which gave out a short, sharp snap, and, in the twinkling of an eye, the fellow spun round with a gasp of alarm. Upon seeing Jack he opened his mouth to shout for help, but ere the shout could crystallise into sound, Jack leaped upon him with a single, panther-like bound, and gripped him by the throat.

So fierce and violent was his onslaught that the man was carried off his feet, and went floundering to the ground with the young engineer on top of him. The effect of this was to



Jack held his breath in an agony of apprehension, expecting to hear every second the exultant yell of "There he is!" But the leafy screen effectually hid him from their prying eyes, and his presence remained unrevealed. (See this page.)

cause the latter to relax his grip for a second or two, but the fellow's fall had winded him, and before he had time to recover his breath and raise an alarm, Jack clenched his fist and dealt him a blow behind his ear that temporarily stunned him.

"There! That will keep him quiet for the next half-hour, at any rate!" he muttered, as he vaulted over the wall and took to his heels down the road.

"And now to wire to Scotland Yard!"

Another thrilling instalment of this splendid new serial story in next Wednesday's issue of "The Gem Library."

NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

"ONE AGAINST THE SCHOOL!"

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A Splendid, New, Long, Complete School Tale of the
Chums of St. Jim's. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

The Schoolboy Scouts

(Continued from page 21.)

"He had a V.C. and several orders on his chest," grinned Mr. Fix. "He has been swindling somebody."

"Bai Jove! He has been swindlin' us!"

"You!" ejaculated the inspector.

"Must be the same man," said Tom Merry.

"You'd better tell me all about it," said Mr. Fix.

Tom Merry did so. Inspector Fix listened to the story of the telegram, the review of the Boy Scouts, and the borrowing of the watches and the money; and when Tom Merry had finished, he burst into a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha!" The inspector wiped his eyes. "Excuse me, young gentleman, but this is very rich, even for Colonel Jim! He has passed himself off as an Army man before, but I never heard of his reviewing Boy Scouts before. You had better see if you can identify the watches."

The juniors looked at the stolen property. Tom Merry knew his own watch at a glance, and he knew Glyn's. But to their amazement the juniors recognised also the Head's watch and Mr. Railton's watch, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy uttered a cry of amazement and satisfaction at the sight of his own gold ticker.

"Bai Jove! Did you find that on him?" he exclaimed.

"Yes," said Mr. Fix.

"It is mine! I was wobbled in the wood on Wednesday night, and that watch was taken, and a fivah, too, and a soveveign."

"There's a five-pound note among the stuff," smiled the inspector. "It's all clear now. Colonel Jim has made quite a haul; and he would have got clear away with it all, too, if he had left me shut up in that vault as he had intended. Your paper-chase, young gentlemen, and two of you happening to get me out of that trap, knocked his little game on the head—I have been waiting and watching for him ever since—and now I've got him."

"Bai Jove!"

"I'm very glad your property has been recovered," said the inspector. "I cannot hand it to you now; but it is safe, and will be returned in due course. I shall want some of you to give evidence against our friend in the cells." He broke into a laugh again. "This was really too rich, even for Colonel Jim! But it is his last little caper for a very long time, I think."

Tom Merry and his comrades had amazing news to tell when they arrived at St. Jim's.

Colonel Rake was no more Colonel Rake than Tom Merry was. With extraordinary impudence, he had sent the telegram, and depended upon his uniform, his sham medals, and his nerve to carry him through—and they had done so.

When the story was out the Head and Mr. Railton compared notes; and they understood why the colonel had been so anxious that his little loans should not be mentioned. He had made a very good haul at St. Jim's; sixteen or seventeen pounds in money, and four gold watches, to say nothing of what he had stolen from Arthur Augustus in the wood, on the occasion when the swell of St. Jim's had returned home in such ridiculous guise.

But for the circumstance that Blake and Redfern had rescued Inspector Fix from the vault under the old castle, during the paper-chase, the impostor would certainly have escaped with his plunder. Whether he would have left the inspector to perish, or whether he would have sent information where he could be found, when it was safe to do so, was a question that it was difficult to answer.

The man was certainly a cool and unscrupulous rascal; and he fully deserved the sentence he received in due course.

St. Jim's had been taken in; but as Blake pointed out, the chap was captured—and he wouldn't have been captured if Mr. Fix hadn't been rescued from the vault—and he was rescued by Boy Scouts out on a paper-chase; therefore, it was demonstrated that the arrest of a dangerous criminal had been brought about by the Scouts of St. Jim's. And Blake's logic was admitted as conclusive by all the Schoolboy Scouts.

THE END.

Admirers of Tom Merry should buy our new Companion Paper THE PENNY POPULAR, Now on Sale, and read the splendid tale dealing with the famous junior's early schooldays. It is one of three magnificent complete tales contained in No. 1.—EDITOR.

THE SCHOOL UNDER CANVAS!

CONCLUDING CHAPTERS.

Othello I. is Kidnapped.

Scene: Venice—a Street.

"Bravo!" called out Punter of the Fifth generously, before they started.

Then the play began.

"Venice—a Street" was successfully negotiated, and they proceeded to the second scene, "Venice—Another Street." Then came "Venice—a Council Chamber," and by this time the audience were quite keen.

There was no doubt that Othello, Iago & Co. were doing very well.

The Head was seen to nod approval.

And when Othello came to those famous lines which everybody knows by heart, Gordon Gay delivered them with wonderful effect.

The audience cheered his moving accidents by flood and field; and Potty Benson even yelled out "Encore!"

Ladies being wanting in the Fourth Form Dramatic Society, Jack Wootton was playing, the part of Desdemona, and his smooth, handsome face made up very well. He spoke his part with a soft and winning voice, quite in style.

When the first act closed, the audience cheered most enthusiastically, and the curtain came down—half-way—and rested a few minutes, and then finished its descent—as so frequently happens in amateur performances.

Behind the scenes Gordon Gay & Co. congratulated one another.

"It's gone swimmingly!" said Harry Wootton. "Simply ripping!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Bravo us!" said Gordon Gay, laughing. "Hallo! What's that?"

Lane put his head round the flapping canvas.

"Can I speak to you a minute, Gay?"

"Go ahead!"

"In private, if you don't mind—it's rather important," said Lane mysteriously. "How long is the interval?"

"Quarter of an hour."

"Then you've got lots of time."

"Right-ho!" said Gay.

The idea crossed Gordon Gay's mind that Lane's mysterious communication was something to do with the discovery of the German spies, which had so lately excited the school under canvas. He followed the junior outside, throwing on a coat over his costume.

"What is it, Lane?" he asked.

"This way!"

They passed behind a hillock of sand; and two dark figures sprang upon Othello. In a second he was on his back, a handkerchief was stuffed into his mouth, and a noosed cord was drawn over his hands and pulled tight and knotted.

The astounded Cornstalk struggled violently, but in vain. He could not call to his comrades, and he was bound hand and foot in a couple of minutes.

Then the gasping Grammarians burst into a breathless chuckle.

"Got him!" said Lane.

"Oh, quite!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Gordon Gay blinked up at his captors in amazement. Two of them he knew—Lane and Carboy—but the third was an almost exact reproduction of himself—Othello.

Othello the Second bent down over him, grinning.

"All serene, Gay, old man?"

Gordon Gay glared—he could not speak.

"We're going to give that nigger show, after all, you know," explained Othello II.

Gay gurgled.

"But as you've bagged the night and the audience, we shall have to work the show in with yours," explained Frank Monk. "I suppose you don't mind if I go on as Othello for the second act, and do a coon song and a dance."

"Groooh!"

"If you don't like the idea, say so at once," said Monk.

Lane and Carboy chuckled joyously. It was quite impossible for Gordon Gay to say so, with the handkerchief stuffed in his mouth.

"Nothing to say, Gay, old man?"

"Groooh!"

"Silence gives consent. I take it that you don't mind, Gay?"

"Good, then I'll go. I'll borrow your coat, if you don't mind."

"Huh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Gordon Gay was despoiled of his coat, and Monk, after a few final touches to his disguise, disappeared in the darkness. Lane and Carboy followed him.

Othello the Second was gone. Othello the First lay on his back on the sands, tied too carefully for any hope of escape.

He listened.

Gay writhed with fury, and strained at his bonds, as he heard a burst of cheering from the distance, which announced that the curtain had gone up for the second act.

But he could not get loose. And he could not eject the handkerchief from his mouth to call for help. As he lay writhing, however, he heard a humming voice in the distance, in the direction of the boats that were drawn up on the beach. A gleam of hope came to the discomfited Othello; he knew that it was a fisherman at the boats. He rolled over, and "grooohed" as loudly as he could. There was a startled exclamation from a dim figure beside the boats.

"My heye! Wot's that?"

It was old Peter the boatman.

"Groooh!"

"My heye!"

"Huhuhuhuhuh!"

Gordon Gay had gnawed away part of the handkerchief, but enough was remaining in his mouth to make his articulation sound extremely weird. Old Peter blinked at him, as he turned the glare of a lantern upon him, in amazement and alarm.

"Oh! Crumbs! Who—what— Oh!"

"Groooooooh!"

"It's a nigger!" murmured the boatman. "A nigger tied hop! My heye!"

His alarm subsided, and he jerked the stuffed handkerchief out of Gordon Gay's mouth. Gay gasped for breath.

"Cut me loose, Peter—quick!"

The boatman gasped.

"I know that voice—"

"I'm Gordon Gay—this is a trick—cut me loose, quick, for goodness' sake!"

"Well, I'll be blowed!"

Old Peter, with provoking slowness, opened a knife, and severed the Cornstalk's bonds. Gordon Gay leaped up, and without even waiting to thank his deliverer, darted away in the direction of the canvas theatre.

Othello II.

"Where's Othello?"

Wootton major asked that question, when it was time for the second act. But Othello was not to be seen. Othello II. did not mean to appear until the last moment, in order to avoid any scrutiny. It would quite have spoiled Frank Monk's little plan if he had been collared in the wings.

"The ass!" said Jack Wootton. "He's jawing with Lane somewhere, and he's forgotten the second act. But it's all right—the scene opens without Othello, and there are yards of jaw before he comes in. We can give him five minutes at least."

"Zab is so."

"Better get on," said Tadpole.

And the curtain was rung up.

The audience looked with much interest at the new scene—a more or less realistic representation of a seaport in Cyprus.

Montano and Two Gentlemen kept the audience occupied for a time, and then Cassio-Wootton entered, and then a Fourth Gentleman, and then Desdemona, Emilia, Iago, Roderigo, & Co.

Othello was not in the wings yet, and Cassio had got to "Lo, where he comes!"—and then Othello appeared.

The difference between Othello I. and Othello II. was very slight; and in the hurry of the moment nobody noticed it. The black face and the uniform of the Venetian general were enough.

"Oh, here you are, you ass!" murmured Cassio, under his breath.

"Oh, my fair warrior!" said Othello, addressing Desdemona.

"Got your cue all right, anyway!" grunted Wootton major.

Othello looked round the stage.

"'Tis now ten thousand million weary years,
Since last we met upon this spot again!"

The audience jumped. So did the actors.
(To be concluded.)

A NEW FREE CORRESPONDENCE EXCHANGE.

The only names and addresses which can be printed in these columns will be from those readers living in any of our Colonies who desire Correspondents in Great Britain and Ireland.

Colonists sending in their names and addresses for insertion in the columns of this popular story-book must state what kind of correspondent is required—boy or girl, English, Scotch, Welsh, or Irish.

Would-be correspondents must send with each notice two coupons. One taken from "The Gem," and one from the same week's issue of its companion paper, "The Magnet" Library. Coupons will always be found on page 2 of both papers, and requests for correspondents not containing these two coupons will be absolutely disregarded.

Readers wishing to reply to advertisements appearing in this column must write to the advertisers direct. No correspondence with advertisers can be undertaken through the medium of this office.

All advertisements for insertion in this Free Exchange should be addressed: "The Editor, 'The Gem' Library, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C."

E. Leslie, Weston, Ontario, Canada, wishes to correspond with a girl reader living in Ireland, age between 16-19.

J. Brennan, c.o. Mr. J. M. McKenzie, Churchville, Monerroe County, New York, U.S. America, wishes to correspond with a reader of "The Gem" and "The Magnet."

B. E. Johannes, age 19, of Sea View Hotel, Tanjong Katong, Singapore, Straits Settlements, wishes to correspond with readers of "The Gem" living in the British Isles. Boy Scouts preferred.

N. W. Foulkes, 6, St. John's Lane, Kingston, Jamaica, British West Indies, wishes to correspond with an English or Scottish girl reader, age about 14.

W. Fair, P.O. Box 1029, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, wishes to correspond with a girl reader, age 18, living in England.

A. Alexander, age 20, wishes to correspond with a girl reader. Address, 29, Mackay Avenue, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

G. A. Smith, c.o. Oshawa Post-office, King Street, Oshawa, Ontario, Canada, wishes to correspond and exchange picture-postcards (views) with a girl reader, age 19, living in England.

W. Pennell, c.o. P.O. Box 486, St. John's, Newfoundland, wishes to exchange picture-postcards (views) with a boy reader living in Killarney, Ireland (age 16½).

Miss L. Roberts (age 17), 2, Hou Fok Terrace, Shanghai, China, wishes to correspond with, or exchange picture-postcards with, some girl readers in England.

G. Holliday, 12, Tourmin Avenue, Montreal P.Q., Canada, wishes to correspond with a Scottish girl reader, age 17.

H. Edwards and A. Sawyer, 217, Hallam Street, Toronto, Canada, wish to correspond with girl readers, between 14 and 15 years old.

W. F. Blake, C.E.'s Dept., Naval Yard, Hong Kong, China, would like to correspond with a girl reader (age 17) in England. Photo to be enclosed with each first letter.

J. Haugh, 2325, St. Urbain, Annex, Montreal P.Q., Canada, wishes to correspond with a boy or girl reader living in England or Scotland (age 15-17).

C. Lyons, 48, Davis Street, Doornfontein, Johannesburg, South Africa, wishes to correspond with a girl reader living in any part of the British Isles.

H. B. Fisk, 384, Commissioner Street, Fairview, Johannesburg, Transvaal, South Africa, wishes to correspond with an English chum (age 13).

R. Roberts, c.o. the China Import and Export Lumber Co., Ltd., Shanghai, China, age 17, wishes to correspond or exchange postcards with any girl reader of "The Gem" or "The Magnet."

L. C. Park, 3, Torrance Street, Montreal, Canada, wishes to correspond with a girl reader (age 16-17).

The Editor specially requests Colonial Readers to kindly bring the Free Correspondence Exchange to the notice of their friends.

OUR SPECIAL WEEKLY FEATURE—



For Next Wednesday.

"ONE AGAINST THE SCHOOL!"

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

is the title of next Wednesday's capital tale of school life at St. Jim's. Jerrold Lumley-Lumley is the victim of a strange plot, and he is placed in a terrible predicament. For once Tom Merry & Co. prove to be at fault, and they fail to stand by Lumley-Lumley just when the one-time outsider is in great want of a friendly helping hand.

However, Lumley-Lumley finds a friend in Grimes, the village grocer-boy, and together they clear up a baffling mystery, and Tom Merry & Co. are forced to admit they are wrong.

"ONE AGAINST THE SCHOOL!"

is a splendid tale, and you must not miss reading it, so order your copy of "The Gem" Library well in advance.

TOM MERRY'S FRIENDS AND "THE PENNY POPULAR."

No more convincing proof could be wanted that Tom Merry is the most popular schoolboy character in the world of fiction than that shown by the enormous sale of number one of our new companion paper, "The Penny Popular."

In nearly every town in the United Kingdom it was sold out in the first three days, and there is not the slightest doubt hundreds of readers were disappointed in not being able to get a copy at all.

I have received a huge number of postcards and letters from my reader-friends—all complimentary—some with suggestions for improvements, but all satisfied with the excellence of the three splendid long, complete stories it contains. In fact, the enthusiasm shown on all sides is most pleasing to me, and now that the success or fate of our new companion paper is in the hands of its readers, there is not much more to be said.

"THE PENNY POPULAR."

is a success, but I appeal to all my friends—girls, and boys, and grown-ups—to do all they can by still further increasing the circulation of our new venture.

"THE PENNY POP."

is the paper readers would have, and I sincerely trust that now they have got it they will not spare any effort in obtaining for it a huge new circle of readers.

Will all my staunch supporters, therefore, get a new reader for No 2? Out on Friday. The stories this grand number contains are entitled:

"A FIGHT TO A FINISH!"

A complete tale of Tom Merry's early schooldays at Clavering.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"THE PHANTOM CHIEF!"

A long, complete tale of the famous comrades, Jack, Sam, and Pete.

By S. CLARKE HOOK; and

"SEXTON BLAKE, FIRE-FIGHTER!"

A grand long, complete story of the famous detective.

Replies in Brief.

"Sub."—Many thanks for your very interesting letter. The query you ask is a very common one, and the following remedy has been well tried by many of my readers. You should stand your boots in a deep dish containing boiled linseed-oil, placing them so that the linseed-oil just covers the soles, and allow them to stand there for a few days.

"Scottie."—The answer to the question you ask is the course of your interesting letter, for which I thank you, is this: It appears that we owe the phrase, "Showing the white feather," to the days when cock-fighting was in vogue. A well-bred gamecock had no white feathers. A white feather was a proof that the bird was not game. Later, the term grew so general that when a person showed cowardice in any way, he was said to "Show the white feather."

A. P. (Bradford).—Thank you for your very interesting and appreciative letter. In answer to your query, I am afraid it is impossible for you to make the toes of your football boots really stiff once they have become soft. In your position on the field I do not think it is really necessary to have them extra hard, as a forward does not have so much hard kicking to do, as, for instance, a back, whose boots should be as stiff as possible.

Profitable Pastimes for Winter Evenings—II.—Decorative**Work with Sealing-Wax.**

Yet another profitable employment for the evenings, which is very easy and cheap, is decorative work with sealing-wax. If properly finished, it will pass for enamelled work, but its two great advantages over this are its cheapness and the easy manner in which it is carried out. Practically anything can be decorated in this manner, and readers of "The Gem" who are footballers might find it handy if the enamel has come off their badges. Photo-frames, brooches, cases, and a hundred and one other articles can all be done in the same way, cheaply and quickly.

The tools that are required for the employment are four brushes, four bottles (small size), four sticks of the very best sealing-wax, and some methylated spirit. It is important to notice here that unless the best obtainable sealing-wax and methylated spirit is used, the work is likely to prove a failure. Good sealing-wax will cost you from fourpence per stick. It is made in various colours, but four will be sufficient to start with—scarlet, green, brown, and mottled. Of course, these colours need not be rigidly adhered to.

Crush each stick up to a fine powder, and place sufficient in a bottle to quarter fill it—note, one bottle one colour. Now fill up each bottle with the spirit, taking care to keep it away from any naked light, then cork and shake vigorously. In a few seconds the wax will be dissolved and ready for use.

Take the object and trace upon it the design with which it is to be decorated. If possible the article should have a slightly rough surface, the melted wax settling better on this than on a smooth surface. The colouring will have to be carefully planned out beforehand, of course. When the design has been traced, take up a brush and dip it into the colour required. Then paint over evenly the part to be covered with this colour. Remember that a separate brush should be used for each different liquid. It is not necessary to put the article away on finishing one part until the colour is dry, but when working the second colour, take care not to let it run into the first. Leave each portion alone as it is finished, when the spirit will quickly evaporate, leaving the wax in a thin coating. When the whole is dry, it will be found to have a smooth, shiny surface.

One coating will not be sufficient, as it is so thin; but when putting on the second covering, take care not to press too hard or the spirit is liable to soak through the first coating and make it peel off. In this second coating, try to lay the wax on instead of merely brushing over the first coat.

If a mistake in the colouring should occur, the wax can easily be removed with a little methylated spirit.

Things decorated in this manner are very pretty, and can easily be sold to friends.

THE EDITOR.