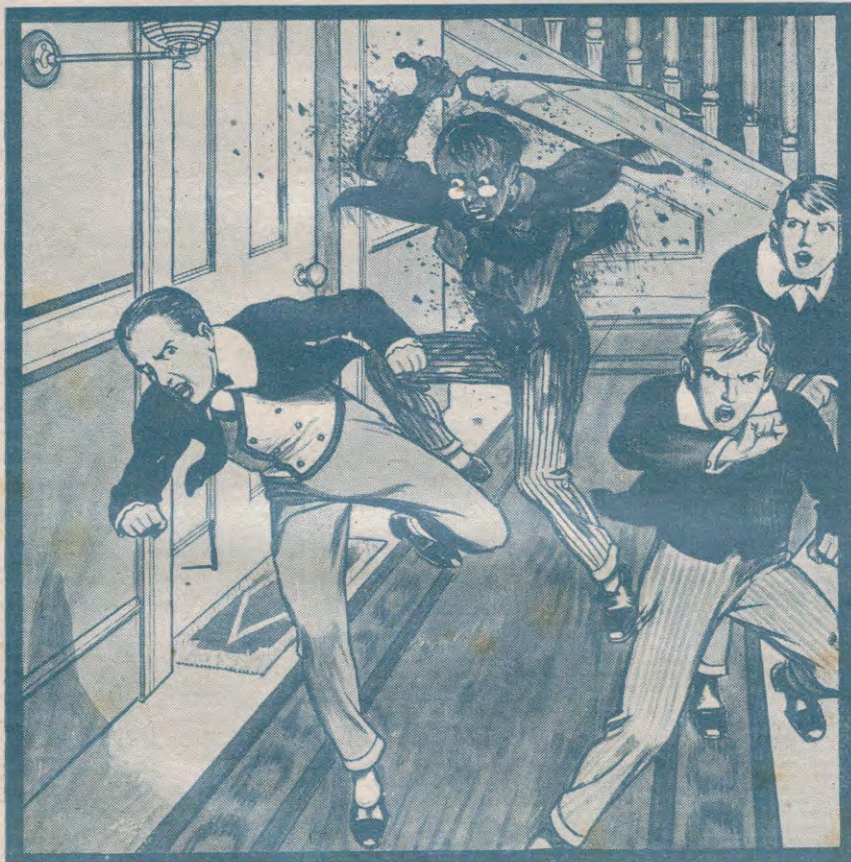


THE ST. JIM'S PACIFIST!

A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co.



THE EXTREME PACIFISM OF SKIMMY!

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A MAGNIFICENT, NEW, LONG, COMPLETE SCHOOL STORY
OF TOM MERRY & CO. AT ST. JIM'S.

THE ST. JIM'S PACIFIST!

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1.

Trouble in the Form-Room.

"SKIMPOL!"

Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell at St. Jim's, spoke in a voice that resembled the rumble of distant thunder.

When Mr. Linton adopted that tone the Shell fellows were accustomed to assume their most respectful and attentive manners.

Even Grundy, the most truculent fellow in the Shell, looked quite meek and mild.

Tom Merry, who was surreptitiously scanning a football list under his desk, slipped it hastily out of sight. The responsibilities of the junior footer captain of St. Jim's were great. But it would have been of no use explaining that to Mr. Linton.

Tom Merry tried to look as if he thought of such things as footer never crossed his mind during lessons.

"Skimpole!"

Most of the Shell fellows glanced round at Skimpole.

He did not seem to hear.

Monty Lowther made signs to him, but Skimpole did not see. Manners ventured upon a warning cough, but Skimpole heeded not. Talbot was reaching out his foot to give Skimpole a gentle kick, when he found Mr. Linton's eye upon him, and coloured, and drew it back hastily.

"Skimpole!"

For the third time the Form-master pronounced that name, and his tone was growing more thunderous. And still Herbert Skimpole did not hear, and did not heed. There was quite a feeling of tension in the Form-room. The fellows felt that something was going to happen.

Mr. Linton picked up a pointer from his desk, and came towards the class, his eyes fixed on Skimpole.

That youth sat unconcerned.

He had a paper spread on his knees, on the cover of a Latin grammar, and he was jotting notes on it with a pencil. His brows were knitted in thought, but certainly he was not thinking of Mr. Linton, or of early Roman history, upon which the minds of the Shell were supposed to be fixed just then.

Skimpole was quite an unusual youth in many ways. He had mastered such subjects as Socialism, Determinism, Evolution. Books that made other fellows' heads ache to look at them were Skimpole's favourite reading. Skimpole had read the "Origin of Species," and solemnly declared that he understood it. He had invented an airship, which would do everything but rise from the ground. He was a very scientific youth.

Skimpole often took up a new "jam." When he did, he was devoted to it with the keenest enthusiasm. He would explain it at great length to any fellow who would listen. At such times Skimpole found lessons a worry.

This was one of the times, evidently. Buried in great thoughts, Skimpole was deaf to the voice of the Form-master.

He did not look up, even when Mr. Linton, pointer in hand, towered over him. "SKIMPOL!" thundered Mr. Linton at close range.

Then Skimpole gave a jump.

"Dear me!" he said, looking up, and blinking at Mr. Linton through his big spectacles. "You—you startled me, sir!" "I have spoken to you four times, Skimpole!" said Mr. Linton in a rumbling voice.

"Have you really, sir?"

"I have, Skimpole! You are not paying attention to the lesson! You are scribbling something, apparently."

"I was unaware that you had observed my occupation, sir," said Skimpole, who had a flow of language that was quite his own. "Otherwise I should not have devoted my mind to the consideration of this somewhat abstruse matter within the precincts of the Form-room."

There was a whistle from the Shell fellows.

"Silence!" rapped out Mr. Linton. "This is not a laughing matter, Skimpole, how dare you be impertinent!"

"Such was not my intention, sir," said Skimpole, thinking at him. "If I have inadvertently transgressed—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence! Skimpole, kindly do not use such ridiculous expressions. What is that paper you are scribbling?"

"My speech, sir."

"What?"

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Tom Merry.

"This evening, sir, I intend to call a meeting of the Lower School, and address a few remarks to them," said Skimpole.

"I have lately been devoting my attention to a subject of the very greatest importance—a matter of the first magnitude, sir. I should be obliged if you would excuse me from the remainder of this afternoon's lessons, in order to enable me—"

"Skimpole, give me that paper at once."

"Certainly, sir."

Skimpole passed the paper to the master of the Shell.

The Shell fellows looked on breathlessly.

Mr. Linton knew that Skimpole was a somewhat extraordinary youth. But probably he did not know that he was a Socialist and an Evolutionist and a Determinist. He was about to make a discovery of the remarkable intellectual powers of Skimpole of the Shell.

The Form-master stared at the scribbled paper.

His eyes opened wide.

As he read, his brow grew more and more thunderous, till at last his look was simply terrific.

The juniors almost held their breath—excepting Skimpole! He was smiling cheerfully, quite unaware that a tempest was about to burst.

"Skimpole!" gasped Mr. Linton at last. "How dare you write such outrageous nonsense as this?"

Skimpole blinked at him in astonishment.

"That is not nonsense, sir."

"Are you out of your senses?" thundered Mr. Linton.

"Not at all, sir. I hope you are not, either," said Skimpole, with concern.

"What at?"

"It is a fact well demonstrated in the annals of science, sir, that a person of weak and feeble mind is liable to suspect insanity in others—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Shell fellows, quite unable to repress their merriment at that reply.

"Silence!" shouted Mr. Linton.

Sudden silence fell on the Form-room.

"Skimpole, you—you—you are the stupidest boy in the Shell! If I were not aware of that fact, I should take you to the Head for a flogging. Hold out your hand!"

"My—my hand, sir?"

"Yes, at once!"

"Oh!"

Swish!

"Varoooh!" roared Skimpole. "Oh, crumbs! Yeh! Oh!"

"Cease that ridiculous noise, Skimpole!"

"Yow-ow! You have caused me considerable physical anguish, sir, by the violent impact of that pointer upon my hand."

"Hold out your other hand, Skimpole!"

"Oh, dear!"

Swish!

"Yogooooop!"

"You will go and stand in the corner of the room, Skimpole, for the remainder of this lesson," said Mr. Linton. "You are a stupid boy—a foolish and impertinent boy! Go at once!"

"Yow-ow-ow!"

Skimpole left the class, and toddled to the corner. Mr. Linton, with a frowning brow, jammed Skimpole's valuable manuscript into the waste-paper basket.

Then the lesson was resumed.

The unfortunate Skimpole stood in the corner, blinking dolorously at the grinning Shell fellows.

It was a severe punishment for Skimpole. Not that he minded the humiliation of being stood in a corner like a naughty boy. Skimpole's mighty brain was far above such small considerations.

But his legs were aching. Nature had been very generous to Skimpole in the matter of brains—so far as size was concerned, at least. But though Skimpole's head was a couple of sizes too large, his limbs were very weedy. His lofty contempt for such trivial things as cricket and football had something to do with that.

Skimpole shifted from one aching leg to the other, and back again. In half an hour he had aches all over.

At last he ventured to lean on the wall for support. But Mr. Linton's eagle eye was upon him at once.

"Skimpole!"

"Yeees, sir."

"Stand up!"

"A perpendicular attitude, sir, causes

me considerable fatigue in my lower extremities," said Skimpole mildly.

"Do you hear me, Skimpole?" "Certainly, sir! There is no imperfection in my articular organs, sir."

Mr. Linton gasped. He came towards Skimpole with the pointer.

"Hold out your hand!"

Swish!

"Now obey me!"

"Oh, dear!"

Skimpole stood first on one leg and then on the other in turn till he was ready to collapse. Indeed, Skimpole would certainly have crumpled up on the floor if the lesson had not come to an end. Fortunately, the Shell was dismissed before it came to that, and Skimpole limped out of the Form-room after the others, gasping.

CHAPTER 2.

Skimpole's New "Ism!"

"**B**A! Jove! What's the mattah with Skimmy?" asked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth Form.

The Fourth had been dismissed a minute or so before the Shell, and the corridor was crowded with Fourth Formers when Tom Merry & Co. came out.

Skimpole was limping along with many gasps. Arthur Augustus extracted his celebrated monocle from his pocket, adjusted it in his eye, and surveyed the genius of the Shell with sympathetic commiseration.

"Got a pain somewhah, deah boy?" he asked.

"Yow-ow! Yes."

Skimpole sank on a seat under a window, and gasped.

"Bai Jove! Awfully sowwy, old chap!"

"Been licked?" asked Jack Blake.

"Awfully! Yes. My legs are aching dreadfully."

"Great Scott! You haven't been thrashed on the legs, suahly, deah boy?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, in surprise.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you fellahs, it is not a laugh-in' mattah, if poor old Skimmy's legs are damaged. He hasn't much of them, you know. It is wathah dangewous to whack such skinnay legs as Skimmy's—they might break."

"He's been stood in the corner," said Tom Merry laughing. "It wouldn't have hurt anybody else. You should do some exercises, Skimmy, old scout. Why don't you take up footer?"

"I have no time for trivial occupations of that kind, Merry," said Skimpole. "My intellect would hardly descend to it."

"Bai Jove!"

"Silly ass!" grunted Herries of the Fourth. "Let's run him down to Little Side by the neck! It would do him good."

"Jolly good idea!" chimed in Digby. "Take hold of his ears, you fellows—there's plenty of room."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pray do not incommode me with pleasantry of an objectionable nature, my dear fellows," said Skimpole.

"Oh, crumbs! Where does he get those words from?" murmured Arthur Augustus, almost overcome.

"Been scoffing a dictionary, I should think," grinned Levison. "What did Linton stand you in the corner for, Skimmy?"

"From an inability to grasp the true inwardness of the outpourings of my intellect, Levison."

"Great pip!" gasped Levison.

"What was it you were scribbling?" demanded Tom Merry. Most of the



Herr Schneider Does Not Understand!
(See Chapter 6.)

Shell fellows were curious on that point.

"Was it Socialism?"

Skimpole shook his head.

"No, my dear Merry. For the present, I have decided to give Socialism a rest. There are matters of even more transcendent importance—"

"Determinism?" grinned Monty Lowther.

"I don't know what that is, but I've heard you burbling about it."

"No, my dear Lowther! Even the great truths of Determinism pale into insignificance at the present juncture."

"Help!"

"My dear fellows," said Skimpole, who was evidently recovering. "Look around you! What do you see?"

"Gussy-and Blake-and Dig-and Cardew—"

"I do not refer to your immediate surroundings, my dear Merry. Look about you with the mind's eye, and what do you see? There is a war—"

"A which?"

"A war—"

"Just heard of it?" demanded Blake.

"No, my dear Blake. I have been acquainted for a considerable time with the fact that war is progressing. The subject of the meeting this evening, my dear friends, is the war."

"Oh, my hat! But Linton wouldn't have been so waxy with you for scribbling patriotic stuff, even in lesson-time," said Tom Merry, puzzled.

"I was not scribbling patriotic stuff, my dear Merry! Patriotism is out of date."

"What?"

"To a fellow of my intellectual powers, my dear Merry, patriotism is a small and foolish thing, beneath notice."

"Bai Jove! You uttah ass, Skimmy!"

"I do not resent that expression, my dear D'Arcy. A person of an asinine nature very frequently makes the mistake of regarding his intellectual superiors as asses."

"Oh!"

"Pray do not think that I resent it,"

said Skimpole benevolently. "Your remarks are on a par with your unfortunately weak intellect, my dear D'Arcy."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You uttah ass!" shouted Arthur Augustus wrathfully. "I have a great mind to give you a fearful thrashing for your wotten cheek."

"My dear D'Arcy, I trust I have not offended you in any way!" said Skimpole, in surprise.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"So you've given up patriotism, Skimmy?" grinned Monty Lowther.

"That's one ism gone, at any rate."

"Such paltry considerations, my dear Lowther, are hardly likely to appeal to me. Our German friends—"

"Our German comrades—"

"K-k-kik-comrades!"

"Certainly! Our German brothers!"

"Are you quite potty?" demanded Tom Merry.

"My dear Merry, so far from being potty, I am probably the only person here with a well-developed intellect. Our German brothers—Yaroochoo!"

Skimpole broke off, as Grundy of the Shell seized him by the collar, and shook him. Grundy was glaring. Grundy of the Shell certainly hadn't any German brothers.

"You silly ass!" roared Grundy.

"What do you mean?"

"Grooogh!"

"You thumping clump—"

"Gug-gug! You are cheek-chook-choke me! Gerroogh—"

"I'll chook-chook-choke you, and no mistake, if you say I've got any German brothers!" roared the indignant Grundy.

"Gerrogh!" Skimpole jerked his head away, gasping. "Pray do not be violent, my dear Grundy. As a Pacifist, I am unable to chastise you as you merit!"

"What? A-a-a what?"

"A Pacifist," said Skimpole, blinking at the juniors. "My dear fellows, after

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very deep and earnest consideration, I have come to the conclusion that the Pacifists are the only sane and really patriotic persons in the country, and therefore I say— Yarooooooh!"

Bang! Grundy had Skimpole's collar again, and was banging his head on the wall. Skimpole roared as his mighty brain came in contact with hard wood.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Oh, dear! Pray release me, Grundy, or— Yaroooooh! In spite of my pacifistic principles, Grundy, I shall strike you— Yaroooo!"

Tom Merry seized Grundy, and dragged him off. The genius of the Shell was in danger of having his powerful intellect seriously damaged.

"Hold on!" gasped Tom. "It's against the law to brain lunatics. Now, Skimpole, you utter idiot, what do you mean?"

"Groogh!" Skimpole rubbed his head. "I mean what I say, my dear Merry. It is time for the war to stop, and I hope to stop it— Groogh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"And how are you going to stop it?" yelled Clive of the Fourth.

"First of all, my dear Clive, by propaganda in this school," explained Skimpole. The new Parliament should afford me opportunities, and it is exceedingly fortunate that I have secured election. After I have brought all you fellows to see reason, I shall endeavour to spread the light further. I shall send articles to the papers, and attend the peace meetings in Wayland. I am also thinking of calling on the Prime Minister and arguing the matter with him."

The juniors yelled.
"The propaganda like charity, begins at home," said Skimpole. "I shall extend the right hand of fellowship to Herr Schneider, our German master."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"I shall hold meetings in the Common-room, and explain to you the great principles of Pacifism."

"Will you be gone?"
"Certainly! When I have reasoned you out of your foolish prejudices—"

"Out—out of what?"
"Foolish prejudices, my dear fellows," said Skimpole cheerfully. "Then I expect you all to rally round me and support my propaganda—"

"Mad as a hatter!" said Wilkins.
"But Jove! Don't be wuff with him, dear boys! He is quite cwickled!"
"I trust, my dear fellows, that you will all attend the meeting this evening," said Skimpole, rubbing his bony hands. "I hope to gain your assistance."

"You shall have it without the bother of a meeting!" said Blake. "I know you can't help being petty, but we always bump lanatics. Collar him!"

"My dear fellows— Yah! Yooop! Oh!" roared Skimpole.

A dozen pairs of hands were laid on the Pacifist.

The fellows had guessed that the genius of the Shell had a new "ism." They were surprised to find that it was Pacifism. And their opinion was that an "ism" of that kind ought to be recognised— forcibly. Skimpole was whipped off the seat, and he went along the corridor in the frog's march.

Bump, bump, bump!
"Yoop! Help! Yah! My dear fellows— Yooop!"

Bump, bump, bump!
"Oh, dear! You are causing me— yow-ow!— considerable— yooop!— discomfort— Yow-ow-ow!"

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"Are you still a Pacifist?" roared Blake. "Have you still got any German brothers?"

"Certainly, my dear Blake! Yow!"
"Bump him for his German brothers!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Bump, bump!"

"Got any German comrades now?" demanded Grundy.

"Yow! Yes! Yow!"
"Bump him for his German comrades!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Have," yelled Julian of the Fourth, as Mr. Linton appeared at the end of the passage.

Skimpole was dropped suddenly, as the juniors fled. The master of the Shell came along the passage, and paused to look at the genius of his Form, who was sprawling on the floor and gasping for breath.

"Skimpole!"
"Groogh! Yes, sir? Groogh!"

"Get up immediately! What are you doing on the floor, you utterly ridiculous boy?"

"Groogh!" Skimpole staggered up. "It was not my intention—grooh!—to assume a horizontal attitude, sir— Groogh!"

"Take a hundred lines, Skimpole!"
"I owe you, sir— Groogh—"

"Go!" snapped Mr. Linton.

And Skimpole went.

CHAPTER 3.

A Very Useful Speech.

TOM MERRY & CO. chuckled over Herbert Skimpole's new "ism." They charitably hoped that its reception would cure Skimpole, and that he would decide to return to his earlier "isms," such as Determinism and Darwinism, for which his mighty brain was so excellently adapted. But Skimpole was a stickler.

When Talbot and Gore, who shared the great Skimpole's study, came in to tea, they found the table covered with papers, and Skimpole very busy, with a pen in his hand, a thoughtful wrinkle on his brow, and a smear of ink on his nose.

He blinked up at them through his big spectacles.

"I am sure you fellows would not mind missing tea," said Skimpole. "I cannot spare a moment from this important work—"

"Take that rubbish off the table!" growled Gore.

"My dear Gore—"

"We want the table, Skimpole," said Talbot mildly. "We must have tea, you know. We get hungry after foster practice."

"I am surprised, Talbot, that you should waste time on such trivial matters as football! It is not so surprising in Gore's case, as he is a fellow with practically no intellect—"

"What?" roared Gore.

"Pray do not be annoyed, my dear Gore, by a plain statement of a somewhat obvious fact. But I really had hopes of you, my dear Talbot. You had a somewhat chequered experience before you came to this scholastic establishment, and it should have developed your intellectual powers—"

"Are you going to clear that table?" demanded Gore.

"Certainly not! Owing to Mr. Linton having destroyed my speech, I am compelled to remind my lucubrations—"

"Then I'll jolly well do it!"
"My dear Gore— Oh! Ah!"

George Gore seized the table, and upended it towards Skimpole.

An ocean of written sheets shot over

Skimpole, accompanied by the inkpot and several other articles.

Skimpole sprawled back over his chair, with a roar. The inkpot landed on his neck and deposited its contents there.

"Oh! Oh, dear! Gore, you are a grooh!—ruffian! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Gore.
"Yow-ow! If I were not a Pacifist, Gore— Ow—ow—ow! Yow!"

"A Pacifist is a chap who turns the other cheek, isn't he?" grinned Gore.
"Well, I'm a good-natured chap; I'll give you a chance of carrying out your merry principles."

Smack!
"Yaroooo!" roared Skimpole, staggering across the study as Gore's heavy hand caught him on the side of the head.

"Well, I'm waiting for the other cheek," said Gore.

"Draw it mild, Gore!" said Talbot quietly.

"Rats! Skimpole's a Pacifist, isn't he? Why shouldn't he be treated as one? Buck up with the other cheek, Skimpole! I'm waiting!"

Skimpole leaned against the wall, and gasped. He took off his spectacles, and laid them on the mantelpiece, and pushed back his cuffs. This did not look like a very pacifistic proceeding. Gore watched him with a grin. The burly Shell fellow could have licked half a dozen Skimpoles.

"You are a ruffian, Gore!" gasped Skimpole. "For the moment I shall lay my principles aside and thrash you, Gore!"

"Go it!" yelled Gore, in great excitement.

Skimpole rushed at him, his bony fists thrashing the air. Gore knocked up his clumsy blows, and drew back his right to knock Skimpole fairly flying. If that blow had landed, Skimpole would probably have wished that he had remained true to his pacifistic principles. But Talbot caught Gore's arm just in time, and jerked him back.

"Let go!" exclaimed Gore. "I'm going to smash him!"

"You're not," said Talbot quietly. "Don't be an ass, Gore! Skimpole can't help being a bit cracked."

"Look here—"
"Oh, chuck it!"

Talbot had his way. The burly Shell fellow grunted, and gave in. Talbot pushed Skimpole back.

"You'd better go and wash that ink out of your neck, Skimpole," he said. "And for goodness' sake, go easy on the 'isms.' You talk a lot of awful rot, you know, old chap."

"My dear Talbot, that remark shows that I erred in supposing that you were less astute than Gore. It is very hard on me to share a study with two fellows who are practically idiots, is it not?"

"Now you're getting it, Talbot!" grinned Gore.

Talbot laughed.
"I don't mind! Ring off, Skimpole, and let's have tea!"

"I have no time for tea, Talbot, as the meeting is at seven. I have to finish preparing my speech. I trust you will come to the meeting."

"I'll come, if it's a Pacifist meeting," said Gore. "I'll jolly well bring a cricket-stump with me, too!"

"My dear Gore—"
"Oh, dry up!"

Talbot and Gore went on getting tea, and Skimpole collected his valuable papers, and left the study with them, shaking his head sorrowfully. Skimpole had had hopes of Talbot, who was always kind and patient with him. But he was disappointed now. Even Talbot's intellect, apparently, did not rise

to the great heights of pacifistic principles.

With the sheaf of papers in his hand, Skimpole drifted down the passage, and looked in at the doorway of Study No. 6, in the Fourth. Blake and Herries and Digby and D'Arcy were there. Blake and Herries and Dig were getting tea, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sat in the armchair, with one graceful leg crossed over the other, and watched them doing it. He looked round as Skimpole's big spectacles glimmered in the doorway.

"Hallo, Skimmay! Still pottay, deah boy?"

"I trust you fellows are coming to the meeting in the Common-room at seven," said Skimpole. "The matter is most important—to arrange to take measures for stopping the war."

"I regard you as an ass, Skimmay, and I refuse to come to your silly meeting!" "Buzz off!" said Blake tersely.

"My dear fellows—"

"The wah has got to go on to the finish, Skimmay, and any wot you talk won't make any difference anyway. Don't be an ass, you know! The beastly Prussians are not smashed up yet."

"I should like to argue that point with you, my dear D'Arcy. It is easy to talk of smashing the Prussians, in an arm-chair. But would you hold the same views if you were up to your knees in icy water in a trench?"

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus warmly. "Do you think I am a slackah, you wottah? Of course, that would be howwid, and would wuin a fellow's trousers, but I should be vevy pleased to take a hand in givin' that wassally old Kaiser the kyboosh. You are an ass, Skimmay! I vevard your insinuations as wotten, and I am goin' to punch your silly nose."

Arthur Augustus jumped up to suit the action to the word, and Skimpole hastily withdrew. Blake slammed the door after him.

Skimpole moved along to No. 9, where he found Cardew and Clive and Levison. They were all engaged in an attempt to light the study fire, which obstinately refused to come alight.

"My dear fellows—"

"Buzz off!" snapped Levison.

Cardew jumped up.

"Good man, Skimmay!" he exclaimed.

"That's awfully thoughtful of you!"

He jerked the bundle of papers from Skimpole's hand.

"I am glad you are interested in my speech, Cardew."

"Immensely!" said Cardew. "It's exactly what I want just now!"

"You are quite welcome to peruse it, my dear fellow. It is entirely at your service!"

"Thanks!"

Cardew returned to the grate, and jammed a goodly portion of the speech under the sticks. Skimpole's eyes almost started through his spectacles at this proceeding.

"My dear Cardew, what—what—"

"Got a match, Clive?"

"Ha, ha! Yes!"

Skimpole rushed forward, and Levison caught him by the collar and held him back. The match was applied, and the speech roared away merrily, Cardew feeding the flames with the remainder of the sheet.

"That's awfully good of you, Skimmay!" smiled Cardew. "We've got the fire going at last. You're the right man in the right place, old chap!"

"Cardew, you—you—you—you have burned my speech!" yelled Skimpole.

"Wasn't that what you meant?"

"Certainly not! It was a ridiculous misapprehension on your part, Cardew! You are little better than an idiot!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Levison led Skimpole to the door, and

pushed him out, and closed the door after him. The chums of Study No. 9 sat down to tea, chuckling. Skimpole's speech had come in useful, after all.

CHAPTER 4.

No Offence Meant.

MR. SELBY, the master of the Third Form at St. Jim's, stood before the notice-board in the hall, frowning angrily.

Among the papers pinned on the board was a new one, in the sprawling hand of Skimpole of the Shell.

It was that paper which aroused Mr. Selby's wrath. A good many fellows had seen Skimpole's notice, and grinned over it. But Mr. Selby did not grin. He frowned. The notice ran:

"STOP THE WAR!!!!"

"Great Pacifist Meeting in the junior Common-room at seven p.m."

"Chair will be taken by H. Skimpole, of the Shell, who will address the meeting on the important subject of bringing the War to a close at the earliest possible moment."

"THINK OF YOUR GERMAN COMRADES!!!!"

"Seniors as well as juniors are invited, and masters will be welcome."

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Selby. "What impertinence! What crass stupidity! What—what insolence!" He snatched the paper down from the board.

Mr. Selby frowned still more darkly, and started for the junior Common-room. As Skimpole was not in Mr. Selby's Form, that gentleman ought really to have reported him to his Form-master, or to the Housemaster, if he was dissatisfied with his proceedings. But Mr. Selby was rather an interfering gentleman, and he determined to take the matter into his own hands.

There was quite a crowd in the Common-room when Mr. Selby entered. A large number of fellows had gathered there, not to listen to Skimpole's pacifistic eloquence, but to suppress Skimmay as soon as he started. Skimpole, ignorant of that intention on their part, was very pleased to see so many fellows come in. He blinked at them benevolently through his big glasses. He blinked with still more satisfaction at the sight of Mr. Selby. Skimmay's impression was that one master, at least, had accepted his invitation to be present at the meeting.

"Skimpole!" rapped out Mr. Selby.

"Yes, sir!" said Skimmay cheerfully.

"You are very welcome, sir. I hope, sir, that you shall be able to enlighten me."

"Dry up, you ass!" whispered Tom Merry, in alarm.

"What?" shouted Mr. Selby, glaring at the cheerful Skimpole.

"I am aware, sir, that you are very keen on the war, like so many gentlemen over military age," went on Skimpole brightly. "But I hope to bring home to your mind, sir, that—"

Even Skimpole faltered as he caught the terrific expression on Mr. Selby's face.

"Skimpole!" stuttered Mr. Selby.

"You—you insolent young rascal—"

"Pray do not be offended, sir," said Skimpole. "I assure you, sir, that I did not intend to give offence. But you will remember, sir, that when it was rumoured that the age would be raised, you showed very great alarm—all the fellows noticed it—and—"

"Please do not tread on my foot, my dear Talbot; it causes me considerable discomfort."

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Of all the howlin' cuffers—"

Mr. Selby seemed stricken dumb.

"Moreover, sir," pursued Skimpole cheerily, "the fact that you do not join up, although voluntary enlistment is now possible at your age, indicates that you are, perhaps, unconsciously, in favour of Pacifism." Skimpole broke off with a yell. "You—ou— You have hurt my foot considerably, Talbot!"

"Will you shut up?" hissed Talbot in Skimmay's ear. "You utter ass!"

"Certainly not. You dear Talbot! I am explaining to Mr. Selby—"

Mr. Selby found his voice at last.

"Skimpole! You utterly impudent young rascal! How dare you! You shall be flogged for this!"

"It was not my intention to be impudent, sir, in pointing out these facts, which seem to have escaped your consideration—"

Skimpole got no further. Mr. Selby rushed on him, and grasped him by the collar, and shook him furiously.

The juniors looked on, grinning. If ever a fellow had asked for it, Skimpole had; and now he was getting it.

"Gug-gug-gug!" giggled Skimpole.

"My dear sir—gooooo—mummrh—"

Shake, shake, shake!

Skimpole's spectacles slid down his nose as he wriggled in Mr. Selby's angry grasp like a bundle of bones.

"Merry!"

"Yes, sir!"

"Fetch a cane from my study!"

Tom Merry hesitated.

"Do you hear me, Merry?" thundered Mr. Selby.

Tom Merry did not stir. Skimpole was an exasperating duffer; but the Third Form-master had no right to cane the Shell. Form rights were a much more important matter than Pacifism.

"Merry, will you obey me?"

Tom Merry left the Common-room with a frowning brow. But he did not go to Mr. Selby's study. He went to his own.

Mr. Selby waited, still grasping the breathless Skimpole by the collar, for Tom's return. But the captain of the Shell did not return.

The juniors were grinning more than ever now. The situation was growing ridiculous.

"Lowther!"

"Yes, sir!" said Monty Lowther, with a demure smile.

"Go to my study and fetch me a cane," snapped Mr. Selby.

"As well as the one Tom Merry has gone to fetch, sir?"

"Do as I tell you, Lowther!"

Monty Lowther meekly left the Common-room. He did not return. He joined Tom Merry in the study in the Shell passage.

Mr. Selby released Skimpole's collar after a few minutes more. He was beginning to realise that he was cutting an absurd figure.

"Manners!" Mr. Selby's voice was very stern now. "Manners, go to my study, and bring a cane here!"

Manners left the Common-room without a word.

Mr. Selby waited.

But the Terrible Three were all in their study now, getting on with their preparation, and Mr. Selby waited in vain.

His cheeks were growing very pink.

He did not order another fellow to fetch a cane. He collared Skimpole again, and marched him to the door. Skimpole wriggled.

"My dear sir, you are causing me discomfort—"

"Come!" snapped Mr. Selby. "I am going to cane you, Skimpole, for your impudence! I shall punish you severely."

"I protest, sir!" said Skimpole. "I shall appeal to the Housemaster, sir!"

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Mr. Linton is my Form-master, not you! This interference, sir—

"What?"

"As a Pacifist, sir, I am bound to resent interference and bullying—"

"Bullying!" gasped Mr. Selby, hardly able to believe his ears.

"Yes, sir! I regard your proceedings as bullying; in fact, as extremely Prussian, not to say Hunnish—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Selby fairly dragged Skimpole out of the room before he could express his views further. The genius of the Shell was rushed along in a breathless state, and a roar of laughter followed.

"Bai Jove!" chuckled Arthur Augustus. "That duffah gave it to Selby wathah straight! didn't he? I weally enjoyed Selby's face."

"And now Skimmy's going to enjoy himself!" grinned Levison.

"Blessed cheek of Selby to interfere with our Form!" said George Alfred Grundy warmly. "Of course, Skimmy's mad, but it's not Selby's bizny. Why can't he mind his own bizny?"

"Never could!" said Wilkins. "Any-way a licking won't do Skimmy any harm."

"Hallo! What's that?"

There was a rush into the passage at the sound of Skimmy's voice there, raised in indignant tones. Mr. Selby, whisking him along, had almost run into Mr. Railton, the School House master. And Skimpole immediately appealed to his Housemaster, as he had every right to do.

"Mr. Railton! I beg you to intervene—"

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed the Housemaster, stopping in astonishment. "Is anything the matter, Mr. Selby?"

Mr. Selby released Skimpole's collar, looking a little sheepish. He was well aware that he was exceeding his authority as a step which the Housemaster was not likely to approve.

"This boy has been guilty of the most unheard-of impudence, Mr. Railton—"

"I am sorry to hear that!"

"It is quite a mistake, sir," gasped Skimpole. "I did not intend to offend Mr. Selby in any way. He quite misunderstood me."

"Indeed! Perhaps the matter can be explained," said Mr. Railton.

"It was not a misunderstanding," said Mr. Selby irritably. "The boy deliberately insulted me."

"Not at all, sir! I was simply stating some well-known facts, without the slightest intention of insulting Mr. Selby. The fact that he was alarmed by the rumour that the age was to be raised—"

"What-a-at?"

"All the fellows noticed it, sir, and made jokes about it," said Skimpole fatuously. "I drew the natural conclusion, sir, that Mr. Selby was of Pacific tendencies. Otherwise, sir, why does he not join up, now that his age is to do so? He is not a cripple, and though, perhaps, a little mentally deficient—"

"Skimpole, how dare you!" gasped Mr. Railton. "You may leave this boy in my hands, Mr. Selby."

Mr. Railton took Skimmy's collar, and walked him away to his study. There he selected a cane.

"Hold out your hand, Skimpole!"

"I object, sir!"

"What?"

"In the first place, sir, I regard corporal punishment as brutal. In the second place, I am unaware of having committed any infringement of the rules and regulations of this scholastic establishment."

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"Bless my soul!"

"I am sure, sir, that if you consider the matter—"

"Skimpole, you have failed to treat a master with proper respect, and I am going to punish you. Hold out your hand!"

"Under the circumstances, sir—"

Mr. Railton did not wait to hear anything about the circumstances. He took Skimmy by the collar once more, twisted him round, and laid the cane about him. There were loud yells from Skimpole.

Whack, whack, whack, whack!

"Oh, crumbs! Oh, dear! Yaroooh!"

"There, you utterly stupid boy!" said Mr. Railton, releasing him. "Now, go, and do not let me hear anything more of your impertinence!"

"Yow-ow! I assure you, sir—"

"Go!"

"But under the circumstances—"

Skimpole was bundled into the passage, and the door closed on him. He limped back to the Common-room.

"Licked!" asked Cardew, with a chuckle.

"Ow! Ow! Mr. Railton seemed annoyed about something, and he certainly castigated me with considerable severity. Perhaps it was because I expressed my disapproval of corporal punishment—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"However, we will now proceed with the meeting," said Skimpole, mounting on a chair. "Gentlemen—Yarooooooop!"

The chair was kicked from under Skimpole, and he collapsed. Then about a dozen fellows tried to take seats upon him. As soon as he could, Skimpole scrambled up and fled.

He did not return to the Common-room that evening. The meeting was off, and the School House juniors remained unenlightened by the brilliant theories of the genius of the Shell.

CHAPTER 5.

Figgins & Co. Are Not Taking Any!

"ANY sugar?"

"Of course not!"

"Anything else?"

"Not much!"

"Oh, dear!"

Fatty Wynn said "Oh, dear!" in tones of the deepest melancholy.

Figgins & Co. of the New House had gone in to tea after football practice. And the tea-table did not have an inspiring effect upon Fatty Wynn.

Figgins and Kerr did not seem to mind very much. But the fat Fourth-Former was woeiful.

Fatty Wynn was as patriotic as anybody. But the food regulations hit him hard. He bore them, but he could not help growling a little. After all, growling let off steam, but it did not particular harm.

"You've had tea once, Fatty!" said Kerr.

"Only tea in Hall," said Fatty Wynn. "And a fellow can't get enough when it's allowed, and old Ratty watching a chap all the time. I say, it is getting thick, isn't it?"

"Getting thin, I should say," grinned Figgins. "Leave off mourning for the fleehpots of Egypt, Fatty, and grin and be it!" Suppose you were a German! Think of what you'd be going through then!"

Fatty Wynn shuddered.

He had much to be thankful for in having been born in gallant Wales, and not in the Hun Fatherland. But he would have given a great deal for an old-fashioned study spread.

"Of course I want the Huns to be thoroughly licked," said Fatty doborously. "But—but think of steak-and-

kidney pies, Figgy, and—and jam-tarts, as many as you could eat, and—and doughnuts!"

"What's the good of thinking of them when you can't have them?" said the practical Kerr. "Thank your lucky stars there's enough war-bread, and some sardines."

"All very well for you, skinny boundaries," said Fatty Wynn. "I've got an appetite. What's a tin of sardines to me?"

"There was a tap at the door, and a pair of large spectacles glimmered in.

Figgins & Co. stared at Skimpole of the Shell.

"Travel!" said Figgins. "No School House dogs admitted! Buzz!"

"My dear Figgins—"

"Keep on your own reputable side of the quadrangle," said Kerr. "We don't want to bump you, Skimmy. I believe you'd break. But—"

"Pray do not indulge in absurd practical jokes, my dear Kerr! As you know, I have no time to participate in House rags," said Skimpole. "I have come here on a friendly mission."

"Bow-wow!"

"Hold on, you fellows," said Fatty Wynn. "House rags are off. If Skimmy's come to ask us to a feed, I don't see why we should refuse. I don't believe in keeping up these House rows all the time."

"My dear Wynn, my intention is to ask you to a glorious feast—"

"Oh, good!"

Fatty Wynn brightened up, and looked quite affectionately at Skimpole.

"Where?" he asked.

"Here, my dear Wynn—"

"In our study? Oh, all right! Can I help you bring in the tuck?" asked the fat Fourth-Former briskly.

"You misunderstand me, Wynn. There is no tuck to bring in."

"Oh—"

"This glorious feast I alluded to, Wynn, is not of a mundane character. I was referring to the feast of reason and intellect—"

"You silly idiot!" roared Fatty Wynn, while his chums chuckled. "Get out, you School House clump! Br-r-r-r!"

Skimpole did not get out; he came in.

"My dear fellows, I have come to see you, because I am persuaded that you have more sense than the School House fellows—"

"Hear, hear!" said Figgins.

"Right on the wicket," said Kerr heartily. "Even Skimmy talks sense at times."

"And I trust that you will give me your support in my new campaign," said Skimpole. "Especially Wynn, who, I am sure will agree that it is time the war came to an end, and the food regulations along with it."

"Oh? What's that?" said Fatty Wynn.

"I am sure, Wynn, that you are tired of short commons—"

"What-ho!" said Fatty Wynn, with deep feeling. "I dream of grub at nights and wake up in awfully low spirits."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There's nothing to laugh at, you dummies!" said Fatty Wynn wrathfully. "Only last night I dreamt of a Christmas pudding, and when I woke up—"

"The food regulations will disappear when peace arrives, my dear Wynn. Surely you will be prepared to work with me to prepare the public mind for that great event. As a Pacifist—"

"As a what?" ejaculated Figgins & Co. in chorus.

"A Pacifist, my dear fellows."

"Oh, you're a Pacifist, are you?" grunted Fatty Wynn.

"Certainly. If I were old enough, I

should be a conscientious objector," said Skimpole, beaming. "I regret exceedingly that I am not of sufficiently advanced years to testify in public to my faith. But in my own way I hope to do a great deal of good, and I am going to start a new society in the school—the Y.C.O."

"What the merry dickens does that stand for?" demanded Figgins.

"The Youthful Conscientious Objectors!" said Skimpole. "Can I enrol you fellows as members?"

Figgins & Co. looked at Skimpole. He had taken a little notebook from his pocket, with a pencil, and was evidently prepared to put their names down as members of that new and very distinguished and honourable society.

"The subscription," continued Skimpole genially, "will be one shilling. This will be expended upon a button bearing the initials of the society, so that everyone will be able to tell at a glance that you are a Youthful Conscientious Objector. Shall I put down your name, Wynn?"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Fatty Wynn. "And yours, Figgins?"

Figgins breathed hard through his nose.

"I've heard that it's no good arguing with conscientious objectors," he remarked. "They can walk all round you in argument."

"That is because they are in the right, my dear Figgins—"

"Or because they've got the gift of the gab," said Figgins. "I think that's more likely."

"Such a remark, my dear Figgins, is a deplorable indication of an encfebled state of the intellect—"

"I'm not going to argue with you, Skimmy. I'm going to rub your nose in the fact unless you buzz off at once! You're a bore, old chap. I know you can't help it, but there it is. You're a silly idiot, old scout! You're a howling ass! Would you mind closing the door after you?"

"Not at all, Figgys, when I depart; but I am not going just yet. Let me explain the matter. I will endeavour to choose simple expressions suitable to your somewhat undeveloped intelligence. Our German comrades—"

"What?" yelled Figgins & Co.

"Our dear German brothers—"

Three pairs of hands were laid on Skimpole, and he was swept off the floor. Before he knew what was happening, he was rushed down the passageway to the stairs. He went down the stairs with a series of bumps.

"My dear fellows," spluttered Skimpole, "I— Oh! Ah! I assure you— Yoop! My dear fellows, I came over here to rouse the New House to support the good cause— Yaroooh! I should be glad— Yoop! To enrol the whole house as members of the Y.C.O.— Gurring!"

Skimpole landed in the quadrangle at last.

Figgins & Co. returned to their study. Fatty Wynn eyed the chunk of war-bread, and the few sardines, in a thoughtful way. He was no longer looking discontented.

"Make the best of it, Fatty," said Figgins.

"Oh, it's good enough for me," said Fatty Wynn. "I'm not going to grumble."

"Bb? You've done a good bit of grumbling."

"I take it all back!" said the fat Fourth Former. "Chap oughtn't to grouse. It gives an idiot like Skimmy a chance of saying that we're fed up. Grin and bear it, you know, and so long!"

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as the Tommies stick it out, don't let 'em think that we don't want to what!"

And Fatty Wynn sat down, and munched his war-bread with an expression of determined satisfaction. So Skimmy had done some good by his visit to the New House, though not exactly in the way he intended.

CHAPTER 6.

Herr Schneider Does Not Understand!

"GERMAN this afternoon!" growled Monty Lowther.

"Oh, blow!" said Tom Merry.

There was no enthusiasm in the Shell when the German lesson came along. The juniors did not enjoy German.

And Herr Schneider, the German master, was growing very Hunnish.

Unlike most Huns, Herr Schneider had a real regard for the land of his adoption, and in the early days of the war, he had expressed deep sorrow at the dreadful fate that was to overtake the unhappy British Isles. It had been his benevolent intention to intercede when the Prussians arrived at St. Jim's, and save the old school from being burned to the ground.

Somehow or other, the war had not gone the way Herr Schneider expected. His benevolent intercession had not been needed. St. Jim's still stood where it was, and the Prussians were farther off than ever.

When it was forced upon the German master, somewhat stodgy brain at length that the Prussians were not going to arrive at all, and that it was much more probable that British troops would march into the Fatherland, his benevolence faded away. His temper was growing worse, and it had never been good. There was hardly a fellow at St. Jim's who did not consider that a serious mistake had been made in not interning Herr Schneider.

Indeed, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had suggested a deputation to the Head on the subject, a suggestion which, however, met with a plentiful lack of support.

"The beast will be ratty as usual," said Monty Lowther. "And German is a bit thick at any time. What about hooking it?"

"Can't be did?"

"We could explain to Railton that we cut German from patriotic motives," said Lowther. "Railton's been out fighting the Huns, and that ought to appeal to him."

"Pathead!" said Manners. "After all, it's worth while learning German."

"You're welcome to my whack," grunted Monty Lowther. "Somebody has suggested sticking Russian into the curriculum instead of German. I think that's a good idea."

"My dear fellows—"

"Hallo, Skimmy! Still potty?" asked Tom Merry.

Skimpole blinked solemnly at the Terrible Three. It was a couple of days since the great Skimmy had taken up pacifism, but he had been rather quiet on the subject since its reception at the hands of the juniors.

But Skimpole had not given up his new "ism" by any means.

"My dear fellows, I trust I shall receive your support this afternoon," he said.

"Expecting to be stood in the corner again?" asked Lowther. "My dear man, Linton wouldn't let us stand there supporting you!"

"You misapprehend me, Lowther! I am referring to your support in my new propaganda. You are doubtless aware that there is a German lesson this afternoon."

"Don't we know it?" groaned Lowther, with deep feeling.

"It is an excellent opportunity," said Skimpole, rubbing his bony hands. "My idea is, to stand up and cheer when Herr Schneider comes in—"

"What?"

"In order to testify that we are not sharers of the vulgar prejudice against individuals of the German race," explained Skimpole. "I shall then address a few remarks to Herr Schneider, pointing out that, in spite of the crimes committed by the Germans, I still regard him as a man and a brother. I shall mention that I consider it my duty to overcome the loathing with which a Hun inspires me—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My remark was not meant to be of a comic nature," said Skimpole. "I fail to see anything to cause this ebullition of risibility. We are all human, my dear fellows, and naturally have our weaknesses, but it is our duty to combat and overcome them. The conduct of the Prussians naturally inspires us with loathing; but this is a feeling we must combat. Otherwise, how could we regard the Germans as our brothers and comrades?"

"How, indeed?" grinned Tom Merry. "Hasn't it dawned on your fat-headed brain, Skimmy, that nobody is especially keen to regard the Germans as our brothers and comrades?"

"Mere prejudice, my dear fellow; doubtless what one must expect of unthinking youths," said Skimpole heavily. "May I depend upon you fellows to back me up, in my little address to Herr Schneider? I am sure that it will relieve his mind considerably to know that he is not regarded with aversion and disdain. You will back me up?"

"Certainly!" said Lowther, with great heartiness. "Here goes!"

The humerist of the Shell seized Skimpole by the shoulders, and backed him up against a tree, with a bump.

Skimpole spluttered.

"Grough! Wharrer you up to?"

"Backing you up!"

"Yow! You misapprehend me—"

"Wasn't that right?" demanded Lowther.

"Certainly not! I meant—"

"Then I'll try again!"

Bump!

"Yaroooh!" roared Skimpole, as he crashed on the trunk again. "You silly ass, bego! Yah!"

Monty Lowther let go, and Skimpole crumpled up, and sat at the foot of the tree, gasping for breath.

The Terrible Three sauntered away, and left him there. Skimmy had received all the backing-up he was likely to receive from them.

But when the bell turned up to afternoon lesson, there was a determined gleam behind Skimpole's big spectacles.

Unsupported by the Shell fellows, who were not even trying to combat and overcome the loathing with which the Huns inspired them, Skimpole intended to go ahead on his own. It was his pacifistic duty, and Skimmy was going to do it. Skimpole was, as yet, the only member at St. Jim's of the new society of Youthful Conscientious Objectors; but he was a most enthusiastic member.

When Mr. Linton handed over his class to the German master, and left the room, a good many of the Shell fellows glanced at Skimpole, and grinned. His intentions were well-known in the Form; but certainly only a benevolent youth like Skimmy would have thought of addressing those few remarks to Herr Schneider that afternoon.

For the Herr was in an even more irritable temper than usual, and his fat nose was glowing red—always a danger-signal to his class.

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Skimpole coughed slightly, and the juniors exchanged delighted grins. The genius of the Shell stood up in his place, and coughed again. Herr Schneider's eyes were on him at once—not amiably.

"Skimpole, sit town!"

"I have a few words to address to you, sir," said Skimpole, blinking at him. "I feel it my duty, sir, to make a few remarks."

And the sublime Skinny walked out before the us.

Herr Schneider glared at him. He certainly did not guess what was coming. The German-master's glance wandered to the pointer on the desk. But Skimpole was not thinking of pointers.

"Herr Schneider, in spite of the fact that the war is still raging—"

"What?"

"And seemingly will never come to an end," continued Skimpole. "In spite of that unhappy circumstance, Herr Schneider, I consider it my duty—"

"Go pack to your place, Skimpole!"

"To assure you, sir, that there is, at least, one individual within the walls of this scholastic foundation, who does not elude in the general hatred and disgust felt towards your countrymen—"

"Va-a-a-at?"

"It is true, sir, that the crimes committed by the Huns, and more particularly by the rascally Kaiser, sir, inspire me with a disgust I find considerable difficulty in overcoming. But I regard it as my duty to overcome it," said Skimpole nobly. "I refuse to yield to these weaknesses of the spirit. And I assure you, sir, that although you belong to a barbarous and revolting race, I do not at all look upon you as something below the level of the human species—"

Astonishment seemed to transfix the German-master. But at that point, he woke up, as it were.

"He made one jump at Skimpole. Skimpole's flow of eloquence ceased abruptly, as Herr Schneider grasped him by one of his large ears.

"Yohohow!" roared Skimpole. "My dear sir, I—"

"Gum mit me, you pad, rascally poy!"

"Yarooch!"

Herr Schneider strode towards the Form-master's desk, and as he had an icon grip on Skimpole's ear, the Pacifist had to go with him. With his right hand, Herr Schneider grabbed up a cane.

"Now, you impertinent young rascal—"

"My dear Herr Schneider—yarooch—my German comrade—oh, my hat!"

Whack, whack, whack!

Skimpole danced round Herr Schneider, who still held his ear, while he laid on the cane round Skimpole's bony person.

They revolved in the middle of the Form-room. Skimpole making frantic efforts to dodge the lashes of the cane, but without success. His German comrade was laying it on with great vigour.

The unfortunate Pacifist's yells rang through the Form-room.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Shell, in chorus.

"Yarooch! Help! You German beast—yaroooooooh!"

Whack, ha, ha, ha!"

Whack, whack, whack!

"Dere!" panted Herr Schneider, at last. "Now you go pack to your place, Skimpole, and if you speaks yon vord more, I giffs you anoder trashing, isn't it? Go!"

Yow-ow-ow-ow-ow!"

Skimpole fairly crawled back to his place. He manifested the German lesson with groans; and, judging by the looks he cast at Herr Schneider, his feelings towards his German comrade that afternoon were the reverse of pacifistic.

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CHAPTER 7.

A Very Valuable Recruit!

"SEEN Skinny?"

Baggy Trimble, of the Fourth Form, asked that question, after lessons that day. He addressed Blake & Co., who were chatting by the window at the end of the Fourth-Form passage in the School House.

"Bother Skinny!" said Blake.

"And bother you!" said Herrie politely.

"Go and eat coke!" said Digby, with equal courtesy.

Trimble, of the Fourth, was not a "persona grata," so far as No. 6 Study were concerned. But Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who would have been polite to the Crown Prince of Prussia himself, turned his eyes upon Baggy, and answered urbanely:

"I wathah think Skimmey is in his study, Twimble. I heard somebody gwooin' there as I passed a little while ago."

"Thanks!" said Trimble. "I say, Gussy—"

"Pway do not addres me as 'Gussy, Twimble.'"

"Oh, really, old chap! Could you lend me a bob?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh, guss! Shell out then!"

Baggy Trimble held out a fat hand.

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"If you have come here to indulge in merriment at the contemplation of my sufferings, Trimble, you will afford me considerable pleasure by immediately taking your departure."

"Sorry!" said Trimble. "I'm awfully sympathetic really! The fact is, Skimmey, I've been thinking about—about—about your ideas, you know, and I've come to the conclusion that you're—ahem!—quite right; right on the wicket, in fact!"

Skimpole brightened up.

"Fire, such a disciple as last!"

True, such a disciple as Baggy Trimble was not likely to do his leader much credit. Still, it was a beginning.

"My dear Trimble, your observations afford me immense gratification!" exclaimed Skimpole. "Would you care to enrol yourself as a member of the Y.C.O.?"

"That's exactly what I've come about," said Trimble.

"I am delighted, my dear fellow!"

Almost forgetting his aches and pains, Skimpole jumped up, and produced notebook and pencil.

"I shall put your name down as the first member of my own Trimble. This is a source of undiluted satisfaction to me. I am convinced that the truth will spread, and that in the efflux of time all St. Jim's will rally round."

"I think it's a cert," said Trimble unblushingly. "The way you put it, Skimpole, is—is so convincing. The conscientious objectors are—splendid chaps, and, after all, a chap can't help being funky 's he's born that way, can he?"

"You misapprehend, my dear Trimble. The conscientious objectors are not funky. If their conscience called them to the trenches, they would go immediately—"

"The other way?" asked Trimble.

"Certainly not! They would go where conscience called. It is merely a very unfortunate coincidence that their conscience happens, quite by chance, to keep them out of danger."

"Yes, exactly; that's what I meant to say. Now, about the subscription—"

"One shilling," said Skimpole. "That sum will be expended upon a button bearing the initials 'Y.C.O.'"

"Owing to having lent my last bob to D'Arcy, I haven't a shilling at the present moment," said Trimble.

"Never mind. The subscription can stand over. So long as you enrol in the glorious ranks of the conscientious objectors, that suffices."

"But I'd rather pay my sub," said Trimble, watching Skimmey's suspicious face very keenly. "Look here, Skimmey, suppose you lend me a shilling to pay the sub? Then I shall really be a member of the Y.C.O.—see?"

"But it is really not necessary—"

"I'd much rather," urged Trimble.

"I shouldn't feel that I was a real genuine Y.C.O. without a shilling. If I didn't, I'd be a fake."

"I am glad to see that you are developing a meticulous exactitude in money matters, my dear Trimble—so unlike your usual customs. I shall lend you a shilling with great pleasure for this worthy purpose."

"Shall I, then?"

Skimpole yelped in his pockets, and produced a shilling. Trimble's fat fingers closed on it eagerly.

"Good!" said Trimble. "That's all right! I'm much obliged, Skimmey!"

"Not at all! You now hand me that shilling as your subscription to the Y.C.O."

"If you don't mind, Skimmey, I'll leave my subscription over till to-morrow, on second thoughts."

"Eh?"

Eat less Bread

"I'm expecting a remittance from Trimble Hall to-morrow morning, and I'll pay up my sub then. See? Just as good, you know!"

"But—but I have lent you a shilling—"

—said the puzzled Skimpole.

"Yes; awfully good of you! Ta-ta!"

"But my dear fellow—"

But Baggy Trimble was gone. Skimpole blinked after him, and rubbed his bony forehead in a thoughtful and perplexed way. He was quite puzzled.

"I am truly delighted that Trimble is joining in the movement!" he murmured. "But undoubtedly he is a very stupid fellow. If he did not intend to pay his subscription immediately, there was no occasion to borrow my shilling for the purpose. This peculiar conduct certainly indicates very feeble powers of reasoning."

And Skimpole shook his perplexed head, and put away his notebook, with Baggy Trimble's name in it. And Baggy Trimble, with a grin on his fat face, scuttled out of the School House, and bore down upon the tuckshop. And in a few minutes more that shilling was expended in refreshments—liquid and solid—much to the satisfaction of Baggy's infer Trimble.

CHAPTER 8.

Locked in!

"FOOTER, old scout!" said Tom Merry, looking into Talbot's study on Wednesday afternoon. Talbot's handsome face wore a rather worried look.

"Hold on a minute, Tom! Come and help me talk to Skimmey."

"Oh, dear!"

Tom stepped into the room.

"What's the trouble?" he asked.

"Skimmey's still potty, I suppose? What does it matter?"

"My dear Merry, your suspicions regarding my mental state are simply an indication of incipient insanity of your own—"

"Dry up!" growled Tom. "For goodness' sake, don't jaw, Skimmey! You'd jaw the hind leg off a mule! What is it, Talbot?"

"The howling ass wants to go to Wayland this afternoon!" said Talbot.

"Well, let him go!"

"There's going to be a peace meeting," said Talbot. "It's pretty certain to be rushed by the crowd. Skimmey will get scalped."

"Oh, the ass!" grunted Tom Merry.

"Stay inside gates, Skimmey."

Skimpole shook his ponderous head.

"Impossible, my dear Merry! It is most likely that the Pacifists at the meeting will be treated roughly. I am, therefore, bound to afford them any assistance in my power. There will be several women speakers, and it is my duty to help to protect them from roughly usage."

"And what could you do?" demanded Tom. "A kid of ten could knock you out. You'd make a pretty figure with a big variegated mop on your head!"

"I should think out to the bargee, my dear Merry, that if his ferocious instincts were beyond his control, he would be better occupied in fighting the Germans than in breaking up meetings."

"Oh, you ass!"

"The meeting is to demand the immediate cessation of hostilities," said Skimpole, rubbing his hands. "Probably its effect will be great, and may lead at once to peace by negotiations—"

"Fathead!"

"Think of the relief of wives and mothers, my dear Merry, when all the boys come home from the Front! It is my duty to hasten this happy event. I



Skimmey is Rejected!

(See Chapter 11.)

shall probably get knocked about very roughly."

"You will, you chump!"

"But if I should seek to avoid this personal inconvenience, my dear Merry, it would give colour to the insinuation that Pacifists are lacking in physical courage. Let me make a suggestion. Give up your football this afternoon, and come with me."

"I don't think!" grinned Tom Merry.

"You could help me protect those good women, my dear Merry, from the ruffianly violence of the war-mongers—"

"Oh, do cheese it!" said Tom. "I wish they'd stay at home and keep quiet. No decent man would hurt a woman, anyway. You won't be wanted, Skimmey. Look here, you're not going!"

"I insist upon going, my dear fellow!"

"What's to be done with the howling ass?" asked Talbot. "We can't let him go there and be bashed by the roughs."

"Well, it would serve him right!" growled Tom. "Look here, Skimmey, can't you give up Pacifism for this afternoon, and stick to some other rot, such as evolution and the origin of species?"

"Your question betrays such a low order of intellect, my dear Merry, that—"

"Shut up!" roared Tom Merry.

"You're not going! Come on, Talbot; we'll lock him in the study!"

"Good egg!" said Talbot. "I hadn't thought of that."

Tom Merry changed the key to the outside of the lock, a proceeding that was watched by Skimpole with great indignation.

"I refused to be locked in!" exclaimed Skimpole. "You are presuming to treat me, Merry, as if I were not responsible for my actions."

"Right on the wicket!" said Tom.

"You are not going to get your silly head bashed in by hooligans, I know that. And we've got to play a House match

this afternoon, and we can't bother about you, fathead. Come on, Talbot!"

Talbot laughed, and stepped into the passage. Skimpole rushed forward and caught hold of the door as Tom Merry was closing it.

"Let go, fathead!" yelled the captain of the Shell.

"I distinctly refuse to let go, my dear Merry! Yaroooh!"

Skimpole staggered back as he received a shove, and sat down on the study carpet. Tom Merry shut the door, and locked it, and put the key in his pocket.

"That settles Skimmey!" he remarked.

"Ha, ha!"

There was a thump on the inner side of the door.

"Merry, I insist upon this door being unlocked at once! Otherwise, I shall raise my voice and summon aid!"

"Go home! If you let the Housemaster know where you're going, Skimmey, you will be detained for the afternoon. You'd better shut up!"

"You are taking an unfair advantage of me, Merry, owing to the probable unreasonable action of Mr. Ralston if he became aware— Are you there, my dear Merry?"

There was no answer. Tom Merry and Talbot were going downstairs, smiling. They felt that they had done the great Skimmey a good turn. Skimpole's weedy person was not designed by Nature for a rough-and-tumble scrap in an excited crowd, and he was much better off behind a locked door, if he had only known it. But the great Skimmey did not know, and he was very angry—as angry as it was possible for a Pacifist to be.

He thumped on the door—but not too loudly. It was only too probable that if a master or prefect learned of Skimmey's intentions that afternoon he would be detained within gates. He hoped to attract the attention of some fellow who would let him out.

"Bai Jove!—What's that feathery The Gem Library.—No. 509.

now?" It was the voice of D'Arcy of the Fourth. "Anythin' w'ong in there?"

"Pray let me out, my dear D'Arcy! I shall be late for the peace meeting in Wayland unless I am immediately released from this unjustifiable detention."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Please open the door—"

"The key is missin', deah boy," chuckled Arthur Augustus.

"Perhaps you could find another key to fit the lock, my dear D'Arcy, if you expended a sufficient length of time in the search for such an article."

"Pewwaps! I shouldn't wondah, deah boy. But I'm going to play footba. Good-bye!"

And Arthur Augustus's footsteps died away down the passage.

Thump, thump!

"Hallo, who's in there?" This time it was the voice of Aubrey Racke of the Shell. Racke was not playing footer. Footer was not in his line.

"Is that you, Racke? Tom Merry has unjustifiably confined me to my study in order to keep me away from the peace meeting in Wayland."

"Ha, ha, ha," he roared Racke.

"My dear Racke, some of the other keys fit this door, I think. Will you try the key of your own study? I shall be exceedingly obliged to you. If the meeting is a success, it may end in the stoppage of hostilities, my dear Racke. Think of that!"

Racke chuckled. The stoppage of hostilities did not appeal to Racke very much. Racke was the heir of Messrs. Racke & Hacke, the war-profiteers, and he was down on Pacifists from interested motives.

"I'll do my best for you, Skimpy," said Racke. "Keep your pecker up! Wait till I came back."

"Certainly. I will improve the interval by perusing the great works of Professor Balmvcrumpet."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Racke lounged away to his study, where he found Crooke and Melish. The black sheep of the School House had a little banker party for that afternoon. Scrope and Piggett came in to join them. Skimpoole waited for Racke to return, and he waited in vain. Fortunately, Skimpy was buried deep in the enthralling lucubrations of Professor Balmvcrumpet, and he forgot the peace meeting in Wayland as he followed the reasonings of that delightful author.

But Racke had not forgotten Skimpoole. When the delights of banker palled upon the young rascals, Racke rose and yawned, and threw away his cigarette.

"Let's go and have a lark with Skimpy," he said. "All the fellows are out of doors, and we can make him fairly sit up. I'll give him Pacifism!"

"Lot of rot!" remarked Crooke. "The war will be over before Skimpoole's of military age, so what has he got to worry about?"

"There'd be some Pacifists in this study if they put the age down to fifteen," grinned Piggett of the Third.

"None of your cheek, you scrubby little rotter!" growled Racke, who may have felt that there was some truth in Piggett's remark.

"All serene, Racke! I'm down on 'em, same as you are!" said Piggett cheerfully. "Why, if those blessed Pacifists had their way, you wouldn't be able to stick us these rippin' cigarettes. There'll be an end of merry war profits when peace breaks out!"

"Shut up!" roared Racke.

Piggett grinned and left the study. Melish followed him. But Scrope and Crooke remained, to join Racke in his lark with Skimpoole. Racke took the key from the door, and they went along to

Skimpoole's study. The key fitted the lock, and Racke turned it, and opened the door.

Skimpoole blinked up from Professor Balmvcrumpet's entrancing volume.

"My dear Racke, I am exceedingly obliged to you!" he exclaimed. "I certainly think that you are by no means the wholly unpleasant rotter most of the fellows believe. This is very kind of you!"

"It's my intention to be kind," said Racke. "We're going to help you dress for the peace meeting, Skimpy."

"My dear fellow, that will not be necessary. I do not intend to wear any special garb."

"That's for us to settle," grinned Racke. "Collar him!"

And the next moment the Pacifist of St. Jim's was wriggling in the grasp of the ragers.

CHAPTER 9.

A Pacifist on the War-path!

SKIMPOOLE wriggled, but he wriggled in vain.

Scrope had his right arm, and Crooke had his left, and the weedy genius of the Shell was powerless.

He blinched at the grinning Racke more in sorrow than in anger.

"My dear Racke, I regard this proceeding as ruffianly, and, indeed, treacherous. Pray release my arms, Crooke. You are seriously incommending me—"

"Hold the silly idiot!" said Racke. "I'll give him Pacifism! You mustn't resist, Skimpy. You're bound to take it smiling, as a giddy Pacifist!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Crooke and Scrope.

"I shall only appeal to your better nature, my dear Racke—"

"Haven't any, old scout. Take that jacket off him!"

Skimpoole's jacket was whipped off, and then his waistcoat. His jacket was turned inside-out and replaced, and his waistcoat hung round his neck. Skimpoole bore this indignity with quiet stoicism, as a Pacifist was bound to do. Then Racke picked up the inkpot, and Skimpoole looked rather apprehensive.

"Wha-a-at are you going to do with that inkpot, my dear Racke?"

"Wait and see!" chuckled Racke.

He borrowed Skimpoole's handkerchief, and soaked it with ink. Then he dabbed Skimpoole's bony features with it.

"Groooh! Groggug!" came from Skimpy during that operation.

"Now for some soot!" remarked Racke.

"Groggh! Mum-mum-mum dear Racke, this is most unpleasant! Groggh! If I were not a Pacifist—groggh—I should assault you violently! Groggough!"

Racke chuckled, and raked down soot from the chimney. A shovelful of soot was ladled over Skimpoole's head.

"Ha, ha, ha! What a picture!"

"Groggough! Atchoo—atchoo—choo!"

"I think there's some gum here somewhere," remarked Racke. "Yes, here it is. Hold the idiot steady!"

"Groggh! I protest! Yurrgrg!" Racke spluttered wildly as Racke poured the gum over him. With ink and gum and soot mixed, the unhappy Pacifist looked a most extraordinary object, and the ragers chuckled with glee.

"Oh dear!" moaned Skimpoole. "Ow, ow, ow! You are a beast, Racke—a cowardly beast! Ow, ow, ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I quite understand your objections to Pacifism, Racke. I fear very much that you are afraid—groggh!—that war profits will cease when—groggough! The war is brought to an end. Yow-ow! But—groggh—"

"Now we'll wallop him with a fives-bat

til he retracts his conscientious objections," grinned Racke. "Shove him across that chair!"

"Good egg!"

"Oh, dear! My dear fellows—I protest. I appeal to your better feelings!" gasped Skimpoole.

"Ha, ha!"

Evidently it was not much use appealing to Racke & Co.'s better feelings. It was evident, even to Skimpoole, that there was something wrong somewhere with the theory of Pacifism.

According to Skimpoole's sublime principles, non-resistance ought to appeal to the higher nature of the aggressor, like the soft answer that turneth away wrath. But when the aggressor hadn't any higher nature, the Pacifist was likely to be left in a rather awkward position. Skimpoole was dealing with Racke & Co. as he proposed dealing with the Prussians. But so far, at all events, it could not be considered a success—for him!

The unhappy non-resister was plumped down over a chair, and held there by Crooke and Scrope, while Racke wielded the fives-bat.

Thwack, thwack!

"Oh, dear! Help! Yaroooo! Leave off!" roared Skimpoole.

"We'll give you a chance," chorried Racke. "Do you withdraw your conscientious objections and things?"

"Yow! Never! Ow!"

Thwack, thwack!

"Oh, crums! Oh, my hat! Racke, you are a beast! Ow!"

"Are you still a Pacifist?" roared Racke.

"Yow-ow! Yes! Certainly!"

Thwack, thwack, thwack, wriggled, while the ragged beast, with laughter. Never had the unhappy non-resister been placed in so unpleasant a position. And it was evident that so long as poor Skimpy remained a non-resister, he was going to be ragged. The genius of the Shell, as he wriggled under Racke's castigation, was already revising his principles.

"Give him some more!" chuckled Crooke. "We'll give him Pacifism. Lay it on!"

Racke laid it on.

Skimpoole struggled desperately, and kicked out with both feet. There was a howl from Crooke as a boot caught him on the waistcoat and hurled him backwards. Skimpoole rolled to the floor, yelling.

"Ow, ow, ow!"

"Hold him, you duffer!" shouted Racke.

"Yow-ow!" came from Crooke. "I'm winded! Oh, dear! Yow-ow!"

"Collar him, Scrope!"

Scrope bent over Skimpoole. But the Pacifist had a surprise ready for him. A bony fist lashed out, and caught Scrope in the eye.

Scrope staggered back, and collapsed into the fender, with a howl. Skimpoole jumped up.

"Yow-ow!" he gasped. "You rotters! Under the circumstances, I feel that Pacifistic principles will not meet every case. On certain occasions it may be necessary to depart from them! Ow, ow."

Racke rushed at Skimpy, swiping with the fives-bat.

Skimpoole made a jump for the fender, and sent the tongs.

Evidently Pacifism was off.

A slash from the tongs knocked the bat from Racke's hand, and another slash would have done Racke-himself considerable damage, if he had not jumped back just in time.

"Here, look out, you mad idiot!" howled Racke, in alarm.

He dodged through the doorway as Skimpoole bore straight at him. The

tongues lunged in his back as he went, and Racke gave a roar of anguish, and fell on his hands and knees in the passage.

Skimpole spun round at Crooke and Scrope. They dodged out of the way with great celerity.

"Here, hold on!" shouted Crooke, quite scared. "You'll do some damage with those tongues! Oh, crumbs!"

Crash! Crooke saved his head, but caught the tongues with his shoulder. He gave a howl of pain, and leaped for the door. Scrope leaped after him, catching the tongues on the side of his head as he went. There was quite a jam in the doorway, the ragers were in such a hurry to escape.

But Skimpole was not done with them yet. Having given up Pacifism—for that occasion at least—Skimpole seemed to have flown to the other extreme. He rushed in pursuit of Racke & Co., lunging and lashing with the clanging tongs.

The three Shell fellows bolted down the passage. They were not of the stuff of which heroes are made; and they did not like tongs at close quarters.

Skimpole, pursued them along the passage, breathing wrath and vengeance. "He—he—he's mad!" panted Crooke. "Back up! He'll brain us!"

"Yaroon!"

"Yow! Keep off! Yah!"

The terrified ragers bolted into Racke's study; and Racke slammed the door, the tongs crashing on it at the same moment. Racke hurriedly turned the key in the lock. Skimpole kicked ferociously on the panels.

"Come out, you funks! Come out, you rotters! Yah!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Racke, sinking into a chair. "The dangerous maniac! He's jolly nearly brained me!"

"What a lark!" groaned Crooke.

"Oh, crumbs!" mumbled Scrope. "I'm jolly well not going to rag a Pacifist again! More like a wild tiger, if you ask me."

"He's gone!" said Racke, greatly relieved, in spite of the locked door, as he heard Skimpole's footsteps receding down the passage.

"May be trying to trick us," said Scrope nervously. "I'm not going out of this study till the fellows come in!"

Skimpole had gone to the dormitory, to remove the soot and ink and gum with which he had been adorned. He was still in a state of vengeful indignation. But by the time his ablutions were finished, Skimpole had calmed down, and his conscience was at work. When he came downstairs, he paused outside Racke's study and tapped at the door.

"My dear Racke!"

"There he is again!" gasped Crooke.

"Don't open the door!"

"You may open the door with perfect security, my dear friends," said Skimpole. "I regret exceedingly yielding to the weakness of the flesh, instead of following the dictates of the spirit. I am very sorry that I trounced you so soundly, and I assure you that, now I have had sufficient time for reflection, I adhere more resolutely than ever to my Pacifist principles. You may come forth without the slightest danger."

"Go and eat cake!"

"I regret to hear that ribald reply, Racke. I assure you that I am speaking with the most absolute veracity!"

"Buzz off, you silly rotter!"

Skimpole sighed. Evidently Racke & Co. suspected that he still had the tongs in hand, and did not mean to risk it. Skimpole returned to his study, and as it was too late for the peace-meeting, he settled down to enjoy Professor Balmyn's trumpet till tea-time. And it was some time later that Racke & Co. left their

study, and when they did, they passed Skimpole's door cautiously on tiptoe. They did not want any more dealings with the Pacifist!

CHAPTER 10.

The Daylight Raiders!

"GOAL!"

"Well kicked, Talbot!"

The House match was going strong.

In the first half the struggle had been keen, and Higgins had scored the only goal for the New House. Fatty Wynn's defence between the posts had baffled all the attacks of the School House forwards.

But as the second half wore on the School House had better luck; and Talbot of the Shell put the leather in at last, beating Fatty Wynn by a hair's breadth.

Loud cheers from the School House crowd greeted Talbot's success.

"That was wathah good, deah boy," Arthur Augustus D'Arcy remarked, as the players walked back to the centre of the field, and he patted the Shell fellow encouragingly on the shoulder.

"Go hon!" said Talbot, with a snide. "Yaas, wathah! I am sewious, deah boy. I could not have beaten that myself!"

"That you jolly well couldn't, old scout!" said Tom Merry, laughing. "You couldn't even have got within a mile of it!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Line up!"

The footballers lined up for the restart; and just then the actions of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy became most peculiar. Instead of taking his place, he stood quite still, extracted his eyeglass from some recess of his garments, jammed it in his eye, and gazed through it at the sky. The footballers simply blinked at him, and Blake gave him a powerful lunge in the ribs.

"You silly ass, what are you star-gazing now for?" demanded Jack Blake, wrathfully.

"Gwooooh!"

"Line up, D'Arcy, you ass!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "What's the matter with you?"

"Ow! That wuff ass, Blake, has poked me in the beastly ribs! Ow!"

"Get into line, fathead! Are you going to keep us waiting all the afternoon?" demanded Levison.

To the astonishment of the footballers, Arthur Augustus turned his celebrated monocle skyward again.

The juniors followed his glance.

"Only blessed aeroplanes!" said Tom Merry, as he spotted half a dozen graceful machines in the blue. "Haven't you ever seen aeroplanes before, ass?"

"Not German ones, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus quietly.

"What?"

"Germans?"

"They are not British 'planes," said Arthur Augustus.

"Great Scott!"

All eyes were on the sky now. From above, there came a steady droning sound, growing louder every moment. It was as though an army of billions of bees was approaching.

"My only hat!" said Figgins, with a deep breath. "Gussy's right! They're not our planes! There's a difference!"

"Huns, by gum!"

"Another daylight raid!" said Tom Merry, and his face was very grave.

In the roar that had followed Talbot's goal, the droning of the planes had not been observed. But it was clear enough now and deepening in sound every moment as the air-raiders came closer. From the course they were following, it

looked as if they would pass directly over St. Jim's.

The crowd round the field were aware of the danger now, and every eye was fixed on the blue spaces above.

"Yaas, they are Huns wight enough," said Arthur Augustus calmly. "Howevah, it would be beneath our dignity to take any notice of them. Let us wessume."

"Can't go on, ass!" said Blake.

"Take cover!"

"Wate! We haven't beaten the New House yet!"

Kildare of the Sixth came hurrying down to the football ground. The hostile planes had been spotted from the windows of the School House.

"Indoors, all of you, sharp!" called out Kildare.

"Unfinished match!" grinned Figgins. "We'll beat you on Saturday instead, Tommy."

"Bow-wow!" said Tom Merry pointedly.

"Clear off!" shouted Kildare. "Get a move on, there! Take cover at once!"

The fellows were already clearing off towards the houses. But Arthur Augustus D'Arcy did not stir.

"Weally, Kildare—" he began warily.

"Get a move on, you young ass!"

"We are playin' football, Kildare!"

"Do you want to play footer with bombs dropping on your silly head?" exclaimed the captain of St. Jim's.

"It is vewy impwobble, Kildare, that the Huns will waste their bombs on a school, I considah. But in any case, I wessufe to allow the wascally Kaisah to intewupt me!"

"Take him in!" said Kildare. "Mr. Ralston has ordered everybody indoors at once!"

"Oh, that altahs the case. Mr. Wailton's wishes must be wesspected," said Arthur Augustus gracefully. "I will wettiah from the gwound if our House-mastah wishes it, Kildare."

"Come on, fathead!" roared Blake.

"I wessufe to be call'd a fathead, Blake!"

"Get a move on!" shouted Tom Merry. "Can't you see they're nearly over us, you howling ass? And they'll drop a bomb or two as they pass, safe as houses!"

"Pewwaps," assented Arthur Augustus.

"Where's my muffiah?"

"Yonah what?" shrieked Blake.

"My muffiah!"

"Blow your muffler, you clump!"

Jack Blake seized his elegant chum by the arm, and fairly dragged him off the field. Arthur Augustus' voice was raised in loud protest. He had caught up his coat, but he wanted his muffler.

The fellows were springing for the School House and New House at good speed. Nobody wanted to stop the bombs, if they fell, with his head.

"Hurry up!" hissed Blake.

"I wessufe to hawwy, Blake!"

"You—you—you—"

"Pway do not wear at me, Blake! It throws me into quite a fuffah when a fellow wears at me!"

"Take his other arm, Lowther, and hank him along!" yelled Blake.

"I decline to be hanked along, Blake! There is such a thing as a fellow's personal dig to be considahed. I absolutely wessufe to wun from a Hun! I will wessufe, if you like."

Arthur Augustus walked. But as Blake grasped one arm and Monty Lowther the other, his walk became a run, in spite of his regard for his personal dignity. Much against his will, the swell of St. Jim's had to run from the Huns.

"Welcome me, you uttiah wiffians!"

shouted Arthur Augustus, as he was rushed towards the School House. "I weepat that I wrefusa to wun from the wascally Huns! I decline to allow a sneakin' Kaisah and his sneakin' muidewahs to disturb my wepose! I insist upon walkin'!"

"Kim on!" said Blake.

And in most undignified haste Arthur Augustus was hanked up the steps of the School House, and into the crowded doorway.

The playing-fields and the quadrangle had been cleared in a very short space of time. The big doorway swarmed with fellows gazing skyward. Tiny as the hostile aeroplanes looked in the upward distance, the deep, steady drone of the engines was loud to the ear, and seemed to fill the whole school with buzzing sound. From somewhere in the distance a gun was booming.

Mr. Railton strode up to the doorway, frowning.

"Close the door at once!"

Reluctantly the juniors closed the big door, and shut out the sight of the enemy planes, though the drone was as loud as ever.

"Keep away from the windows!" added the Housemaster. "It is dangerous to stand near a door or a window!"

"Yes, sir," said Tom Merry.

"May I go out and fetch my muffah, sir?"

"Certainly not, D'Arcy!"

"Oh, wewy well, sir!"

Mr. Railton hurried away, to see that curious fellows were not looking from the windows. He was more concerned for the St. Jim's fellows than they were for themselves.

Buzzzzzzzz! came steadily, unceasingly, from above.

"Blake, you ass, my muffah will be wained if they drop a bomb on it, and it will be your fault," said Arthur Augustus severely. "I disapprove wewy strongly of allowin' Huns to throw a fellow into a fluttah."

"Fathead!"

"I—I—I say, are they—are they very near?" It was Baggy Trimble's quivering voice. "I—I say; s-s-suppose they k-k-kill us! Ow!"

"Keep your pecker up, Baggy!" said Talbot.

"B-b-b-but—"

"Look out, Trimble!" yelled Monty Lowther. "There's one just behind you!"

Baggy Trimble spun round with a yell of terror.

"Yaroooh! Keep it off! Oh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! You are a silly ass, Twimble! How could there be one behind you, you fwabious duflah!"

"I—I'm going down into the coal-cellar," gasped Trimble. "Oh, dear! I—I think the Pacifists are right, after all. This kind of thing ought to be stopped! Ow!"

"Wats! You ought to be vewy pleased to see the Hun aeroplanes heah, Twimble," said Arthur Augustus sternly.

"Pleased!" howled Trimble.

"Yaas, wathah! It gives you a chance of sharin' the dangah of the boys at the Fwont."

"You—you—you silly ass!" gasped Trimble.

"Wecally, Twimble, if you are not villin' to share the dangah of the boys at the Fwont, you are not fit to wank even with the conscientious objectahs!"

"Oh, you dummy!" said Trimble.

But Baggy did not wait to argue the point. He scuttled away in search of a coal-cellar.

"Bai Jove! Those Huns are makin' a beastly wot!" remarked Arthur Augustus. THE BEST LIBRARY.—No. 509.

thus, as the dull droning of the planes intensified. "It is wathah inconsiderate of the Kaisah to send them in the afternoon when a fellow's playin' footah. I fear that that old wascal is totally lackin' in wupoh feelin'! However, I am vewy glad to see them heah!"

"Glad!" hooted Blake.

"Yaas, wathah! You see, deah boy, the Germans do not make bombs for the purpose of buyin' them in their back gardens. They make them to drop on chaps' nappahs. Well, they are bound to drop them on somebody. If they did not drop them on us at home, they would be droppin' them on the fellows at the Fwont, wouldn't they?"

"I—I suppose so," admitted Blake.

"Pweecially, deah boy. Therefore, ewery patriotic chap ought to be vewy glad to see the silly Huns wastin' their bombs heah. I am suah the fellows at the Fwont have quite enough of them. So long as they are idiots enough to waste their bombs killin' civilians, they can't be killin' soldiers with them, can they? It is wecally helpin' us to cawwy on the war."

"Oh!"

"It's against the rules of the game to kill civilians," said Kerruish.

"Wats! We are all at war with the Germans—I know I am, at all events. Why shouldn't I be in as much dangah

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111, Rue de Valenciennes,
PARIS.

as my bwothah Conway at the Fwont? If they drop a bomb on my nappah, they can't be droppin' it on old Conway's nappah. I weepat that I am vewy glad to see the wothahs comin' heah, and I trust all you fellows are wewojicin'."

"Oh, let us be joyfal!" said Monty Lowther, with a chuckle. "But there's one thing you've forgotten, Gussy."

"What is that, deah boy?"

"If they drop a bomb on your napper it will ruin your ewegless."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You utah ass, Lowthah—"

"Get along, you 'fags!" called out Knox of the Sixth. "You're to get down into the vaults. Head's orders!"

"Oh, ewumbus!"

"Are we all here?" asked Tom Merry, looking round. "Everybody was out, I think—Oh, my hât! Skimmy! I looked the silly ass in his study to keep him away from the peace-meeting."

Tom Merry made a frantic rush up the stairs, while the other fellows were shepherded down the steps into the old vaults below St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 11.

Skimpole Chucks It!

SKIMPOLE was in his study, deeply engrossed in the pages of Professor Balmyncrumet. Tom Merry arrived breathless at his door, and, to his surprise, found it unlocked. He hurried it open and rushed in.

"Skimmy, you fathead!"

Skimpole blinked up at him.

"My dear Merry—"

"Come on! It's an air-raid!"

"Indeed! I have for some considerable time been aware of an unaccustomed disturbance of the usual atmospheric re-

pose," remarked Skimpole. "Doubtless it is caused by the—"

"Come!"

"I cannot accompany you at present, my dear Merry, as I am deeply interested in this exceedingly interesting volume—Yaroooh!"

Skimpole was dragged away from his exceedingly interesting volume by the ear. Tom Merry waltzed him out into the passage.

"My dear Merry—Yaroooh! Please do not hurry. I am a little short of breath—Groogh! It is ridiculous, my dear Merry—you-ow—to allow a mere air-raid to disturb your equanimity in this manner—Yooop!"

Skimmy was rushed down the stairs.

"Down to the vaults!" called out Kildare.

"Right ho, Kildare!"

"The delay, a moment, my dear Merry! Are we likely to be detained in the subterranean refuge for a considerable period of time, Kildare?"

"Very likely, ass!"

"Then I will fetch my volume, and I can peruse it by candle-light, and thus avoid a useless waste of time—Yaroooh! Leggo my ear, Merry! Oh!"

Still grasping Skimpole's ear, Tom Merry led him rapidly down the stone steps into the vault. There, by dim candle-light, all the School House were gathered.

Skimpole arrived in a breathless condition. He grabbed at his spectacles, which were sliding down his bony nose, and bumped into Racke of the Shell in the gloom. There was a snarl from Racke, who was pale as ashes, and in a state of nerves.

"Keep off, you foot!"

"My dear Racke—"

"Ach! Dis is dreadful!" came a murmuring voice, recognisable as Herr Schneider's. "If zose bombs are drop here, we are all bury alive, isn't it?"

"Please do not alarm the boys unnecessarily, Herr Schneider!" said Mr. Railton sharply.

"We're not alarmed, sir!" came the bull bellow of Grundy of the Shell.

"We're not blinkin' Germans!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!"

The heavy door of the vaults shut off the droning of the enemy planes. There was a low buzz of whispering in the crowded vaults. Had the Germans passed? Were they over St. Jim's at that moment.

Crash!

Even in the deep recess, behind thick stone walls and oaken doors, there came the sound of a terrific explosion. It echoed through the vaults like thunder.

"Ow-ow! We're all killed!" came a howl from Trimble.

"Shut up, you silly ass!"

"Good heavens!" stuttered Mr. Selby.

"A—a—a bomb has fallen! Oh, dear! Good gracious! Ow! Ooooh!"

"Selby will be a merry Pacifist after this!" murmured Monty Lowther in Tom Merry's ear.

"There is no danger here, my boys," came Mr. Railton's deep, steady voice. "Keep calm! Remember you are British boys!"

"We are quite calm, Mr. Wailton, I assuah you! And we are all vewy glad to get the bombs instead of the boys at the Fwont, sir."

"That is a very proper sentiment, D'Arcy."

"Silly chump!" muttered Racke.

"Wecally, Wacke, yewot do not agree with me. I can only regard you as a low, conscientious objectah!" said Arthur Augustus sternly.

"Or an objector without a conscience,"

chucked Monty Lowther. "I think Racke belongs to that variety."

"My dear fellows," said Skimpole, "under the present circumstances you may be disposed to reflect upon the unassailable truth of the Pacifist position—"

"These it!"

"Dry up, Skimmy!"

"Consider, my dear fellows! Even the Government will perceive, in the fulness of time, that the only way to win the war is to invade Germany with a gigantic fleet of aeroplanes. Think of the sufferings of our dear German comrades and brothers when that comes to pass—Yooosooop!"

Skimpole found himself suddenly sitting on the floor, with a bump that knocked all the eloquence out of him. The juniors were not feeling brotherly towards the air-raid, and they were fed up with Pacifism. And Skimpole's voice was silent.

It was half an hour later that the St. Jim's fellows marched out of the vaults. The air-raid had vanished into the blue, and the fellows came streaming out of the houses.

They were glad to find that St. Jim's had passed through the ordeal untouched. But in a field within a dozen yards of the school wall there was a hole large enough to build a cottage in, where the bomb had fallen.

The St. Jim's fellows gathered round the huge excavation, gazing into it in awe. The school had had a narrow escape.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus. "If that howid thing had dropped on the School House, dear boys, it would have been blown to fragments! We have got off with some broken windows, but—"

"The next one may drop on our nuts,"

said Racke, with a sneer. "Are you still glad that they come this way?"

"Yaas, Wacke! It is very much betah, from every point of view, for the bombs to drop heah instead of on the trenches in Flanders!"

"Oh, you're a silly idiot!" snarled Racke.

"Pway hold my eyeglass, Blake, while I give Wacke a fearful thrashin'!"

But Aubrey Racke walked away hurriedly.

"My dear friends, this is a dreadful sight!" said Skimpole, blinking at the havoc wrought by the falling bomb. "We might all have been killed. It is certainly a somewhat barbarous proceeding on the part of our German brothers."

"Oh, shut up!" growled Grundy savagely. "There have been people killed in Wayland—bombs on the market square. If the peace meeting had been an hour later, the whole blessed gang of Racke would have got it in the neck. I've just heard that a bomb dropped exactly where the meeting was held."

"Dear me!" said Skimpole.

Skimmy's mighty brain was working. A little later, when the Terrible Three were in the study, Skimmy's big spectacles glimmered in at the door.

"Will you fellows come with me—"

he began.

Lowther picked up a cushion.

"Another peace meeting," he asked. "Not at all, my dear Lowther! Upon reflection, I have considerably revised my opinions on that subject. My present conviction is that the Huns are somewhat too barbarous to be regarded as comrades and brothers, and that undoubtedly the best method of dealing with them is to give them a good hiding. I was reading the other day of a boy of sixteen who enlisted. I am going down to the recruiting office in Wayland—"

"What?" yelled the Terrible Three. "It is true that I am only fifteen,"

said Skimpole, blinking at them. "But the recruiting-officer may have sufficient intelligence to comprehend that my unusual intellectual powers will be of great utility in the Army. I have very little doubt that he will accept my services, and that in a short time I shall rise to a position of high command. Then let the Huns look out! If you fellows care to come, you may also be accepted—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Terrible Three did not go with Skimpole. He left them yelling.

Skimmy was back in time for calling-over, which seemed to indicate that the recruiting-officer at Wayland had not recognised how useful his remarkable brain powers might have been in the Army.

"Well, what luck?" grinned Tom Merry, as the one-time Pacifist came in.

"My dear Merry, I have been treated with an amount of extraordinary risibility, for which I can conceive no adequate explanation—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The recruiting-officer did not appear to realise that the matter was serious, and when I remarked that this must be due to his intellectual incompetence, he actually took me by the ear—Skimpole rubbed his ear—and led me out. It was really inexplicable."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

So Skimpole of the Shell did not become Private Skimpole, but at all events—which was a great relief—he was no longer Skimpole the Pacifist.

THE END.

(Don't miss next Wednesday's Great Story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's—"THE SHADOW OF THE PAST!" by Martin Clifford.)

The Editor's Chat.

For Next Wednesday:

"THE SHADOW OF THE PAST!"

By Martin Clifford.

OUR GREAT CHRISTMAS NUMBER!

In spite of the fact that we have not so much space as in the big double numbers of the days before Christmas, our war cut short paper supplies, I feel sure that next week's fine issue—price twopenny—will be acclaimed by all readers as among the best, if not the very best, of all our Christmas Numbers.

Do you remember that fine story, "The Mystery of the Painted Room"? Some of you have told me that you consider it the best long story we have ever published. If I say that the long yarn which appears next week is on the same lines it will hardly do it justice, for to say that would not take into account the freshness of the story, the fact that there was "Nobody's Study"—great value that, eh? But

"THE SHADOW OF THE PAST!"

is as good as either of them. In it you will read how his St. Jim's friends meet again Valentine Outram, alias George Perkins, a boy whose amazing physical strength had been the means of getting him shut up in a reformatory, and how Ernest Levison tries to repair a wrong done in the days when his methods were of a different kind or type. Present. You will read of Frank Levison's trick, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's tact and judgement—really seen to advantage this time, if seldom before—of how three juniors lay their host, and how Grundy waited for the fellows to attend a meeting. You will find Monty Lowther offering unappreciated humour, and Cardew clapping him. Binks plays his part, Tom Merry and Tibbot are in it, and Blake and Herries and Digby. We hear little of Racke & Co., and I, for one, am not sorry—they don't belong to Christmas, in any sense, do they?

OTHER ATTRACTION!

Without making the long story shorter than it ought to be, I cannot give you in this number quite so much variety as I gave you last year, when we had more pages. But I think the long instalment of

"THE TWINS FROM TASMANIA,"

and another very special feature of which I have already told you something, will satisfy you. That feature is

"THE GEM WHO'S WHO,"

which tells you something about all the characters of any note in Mr. Clifford's great story series.

TO THE LADS OF NORTH-EAST LONDON.

I have been asked by the Rev. Kenneth Ashcroft, the honorary secretary for Clapton and Hackney of the Bishop of London's Committee for Work Among Elder Lads, to give notice in these columns of a meeting to be held at

THE KING'S HALL, HACKNEY,

at 8.30 p.m.,

ON TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 15th,

when the Mayor of Hackney will take the chair, and the meeting will be addressed by

THE BISHOP OF LONDON.

All of you fellows between 14 and 18 are invited to attend, and I hope there will be a goodly muster of Gem and "Magnet" readers. You are not asked there to be preached at and told about your faults. The bishop wants to talk to you as a friend. You are among those who are in his pastoral charge, and he feels his responsibility for you. Apart from his high office the bishop is a man of wide experience and sympathies, and I know you will find he has things to say to you that are worth your hearing. I shall take it as a personal favour to me if you will go along and hear him.

In writing to me, Mr. Ashcroft speaks of our papers—yours and mine—in a manner that I know would please you. I have not

room to quote his words this week—I am only getting this in by cutting out something else—but I hope to do so in next week's "Magnet."

GOOD WISHES!

As you will be reading this when November is only half-way through, it would be a trifle early to talk of the compliments of the season. But good wishes are never out of season, and I want you all to know that you are in my thoughts, and that I am with you. The schoolboy, the man in the trenches, the munition worker, the lad in shop or office, the boy who carries the parcels, and the girl who does not forget them, they are all in my thoughts, and I am glad to believe that you look upon me as a friend. Some of you grumble now and then, well, that is the British way! I don't really mind. Some of you are rude and abusive at times. I do mind that; but rather for your sakes than my own. It is not worthy of you. If you don't like the paper, you may not say it or look at it, but I don't think that is the true reason of your conduct. I think it is that you have a feeling of dislike for me personally, as you probably dislike your schoolmaster or your boss—simply because you don't like him and I am dealing with you from a standpoint that may be called one of superiority. I don't like the word, and I have so wish to pose as a superior person; but in the interests of disliking some must be above and some below. But this is my message to all who have offended in this way—let bygones be bygones, and start fair on a friendly footing! I am willing if you are.

Your Editor



THE TWINS FROM TASMANIA

Our Great New Serial Story.



THE CHIEF CHARACTERS OF THE STORY.

PHILIP DERWENT	..	..	The twins from Tasmania—Philip (Flip) at Highcliffe, Philippa (Flap) at Cliff House.
PHILIPPA DERWENT	..	..	The leader of the Highcliffe nuts.
PONSONBY	..	..	One of the nuts, and Flip's enemy.
GADSBY	..	..	Another of them—an empty-headed swell—hand in glove with Gadsby.
VAVASOUR	..	..	Yet another—sulky—disposed to the Gadsby faction.
MONSON MINOR	..	..	Two more of the nuts—chums of Flip's—they share No. 6 Study with him.
MERTON	..	..	Captain of the Fourth at Highcliffe—a fine fellow.
TUNSTALL	..	..	His chum, known as the Caterpillar.
FRANK COURTENAY	..	..	For further information see the "Magnet."
REUBEN DE COURCY	..	..	Cliff House girls and friends of Flap.
THE GREYFRIARS FELLOWS	..	..	A little red-headed Cliff House junior—knows Merton at home.
MARJORIE HAZLEDENE	..	..	Gadsby and Vavasour, with the aid of Hazledene, of Greyfriars, have stolen Flip's cockatoo, and the bird has been set loose. Flip and his chums go to look for Cocky, although they are due on the beach for a five v. five conflict between Highcliffe and Greyfriars.
CLARA TREVLIN	..	..	
PHYLLIS HOWELL	..	..	
MOLLY GRAY	..	..	

(Now read on.)

Flap and Her Friends.

"WHAT'S the matter, Flap, old girl?" asked Phyllis Howell.

It was a lovely afternoon, bright and sunny, though the month was October, and the four girl chums of Cliff House were not spending it in a promenade as part of a "crocodile." They were out together on the breezy cliffs.

"Nothing, Phyllis—at least, nothing much." "But you're worried about something. I can see that with half an eye."

"Then there's no need to look at me so hard with both?" replied Phyllis almost irritably. "It isn't me that's worried, really, it's Flap."

"Oh, bless Flip!" said Phyllis. "He can take care of himself. And I must say that I didn't look much the matter with him this morning. If he said he was worried, he must have been pulling your innocent leg, my dear."

"He doesn't do that. And he didn't say anything. I feel it in my bones. No, that isn't right. But I'm sure of it! Something's gone wrong since he went back to Highcliffe, I know."

Phyllis laughed. "Don't, Phyllis! That hurts. I know, you see. You may not believe. But I know."

Marjorie and Clara, who had been a little ahead, stopped.

"Sorry, dear!" said Phyllis contritely. "I remember now. It's jolly queer, that twin business; but I believe all right. I won't say anything to the other two—unless you like."

"Oh, I don't mind their knowing: it isn't a secret. Clara may laugh, but Marjorie won't."

"That's one for me, Flap."

"I didn't mean it that way."

"I know you didn't. But it's quite true that Marjorie's got more sympathy than me and Clara together. Why, what's that?"

"Philip—Cocky wants a pe-a-unt!"

It was the voice of Cocky, but the bird was not visible, and they could not tell whence it came.

"Why, that sounded like your bird, Flap!" cried Marjorie.

"It was! I know now what was the matter with Flip! He'd be no end cut up if Cocky were lost."

"Then he ought to know better than to let Cocky come for an airing up here," said Clara Trevlin, with her pretty little nose

at an angle farther from the horizontal than was its wont. "But that's like a boy! I've no patience with the silly creatures!"

"Poor old Cocky!" came the answer. Cocky spoke as if he pitied himself extremely, though there scarcely seemed sufficient reason for it.

"Cocky!" called Flap gently. "Where's my Philip? Where's Algy? Where's Tun?"

"Where are you, you crested rascal!" demanded Miss Clara.

"He seems quite fond of Merton and Tunstall," retorted Marjorie. "Oh, yes! You will be finding good points in the nuts now! It's just like you, Marjorie!" snapped Miss Clara.

"Merton and Tunstall are all right. If they were that, they would not be Flip's chums," said Flap. "Cocky! Come along, old boy!"

"Ponsonby's a chum of Flip's, isn't he?" said Miss Clara, with false sweetness.

Flap went scarlet.

"Not really! I mean, Flap may think he is; but he isn't," she said.

"Flip may think Algy and the other one are," said Miss Clara.

"So they are! Cocky knows! Come along, Cocky!"

"Not this afternoon, Philippa! Sn't other afternoon, Philippa! Poor old Cocky! All alone at the sea!" came the voice of the crested rascal.

"The wretch!" said Miss Clara. "He is worse than—a boy!"

Phyllis laughed merrily. Clara's objection to boys was not a very real one, as she knew.

"But where is he?" asked Marjorie, puzzled.

"Ah, now, wouldn't you like to know?" said Cocky.

"He is in one of those gorse clumps. That one, I think," said Phyllis, pointing to a big one twenty yards or so away.

"There are so many of them," said Flap. "I don't think it's that one."

"It ain't," said Cocky decidedly.

"That means it is!" said Miss Clara.

"You're a—another!" sang out the rude bird Cocky.

"Really, Flap, you ought to have brought him up better! I'm scandalised! But wherever he is, he isn't out at sea!"

Flip's eyes had wandered away to the edge of the cliffs. Below the sea lay sparkling like a silver shield in the bright sunshine.

But it was not at the sea Flap looked. "Aren't they Greyfriars caps, Marjorie?" she asked.

"Of course! I didn't see. What a crowd of them!"

"I wonder what they're all going down to the beach for?" said Phyllis.

"No good, my dear, you may be sure," returned Miss Clara.

"Well, it doesn't matter much, does it?" said Flap. "I think they have livelier times than we do, though."

"I shouldn't wonder if they are going to have a lively time this afternoon," remarked Phyllis thoughtfully. "Look that way, Flap! Those are Highcliffe caps, and they're going down to the beach, too. Of course you know that there's a row whenever Greyfriars and Highcliffe meet—I mean the nuts, of course. It's different with Courtney and De Courcy and those fellows."

Flap's eyes were the keenest there, and they had been used to longer distances than those of the English girls.

"Ponsonby's one of them," she said, "and Vavasour's another. Flip and Algy—oh, I mean Merton—and Tunstall are not there."

"So it is quite all right, and we may turn our attention back to Cocky," said Clara, with a touch of sarcasm.

"I wonder—"

"Don't you begin, Marjorie! The Greyfriars boys are able to take care of themselves, anyway."

"So is Flip," said Flap.

"Yes, it's rather a pity he doesn't take into cover with Cocky better."

"Clara," said Marjorie.

"Oh, I'm not in the conspiracy to pretend that Flip is a perfect character, my dear! Not more that I should like him as well if he were."

Flap laughed merrily. And, as if attracted by the sound, Cocky showed himself.

Only for a moment. Then he dodged back into cover with a shrill cry:

"Saw yer, Flap!"

"Cocky, you're very naughty!"

"Don't mention it, my dear!" returned Cocky mockingly.

"I've a scheme, Flap," said Miss Clara. "Keep on talking to him, and I'll creep up to the clump he's in."

"But he won't let you catch him. And, if he does, he'll peck you!"

"If he pecks me I shall slap him—hard! And he isn't interested in my conversation,"

so it's no use my trying to talk to him. Phylis might do better."

"Is that a compliment, Clara, or—"

"Otherwise, my dear—quite otherwise! Don't you know I never pay them?"

Now Miss Clara ceased to talk, and began her staking of Cocky, Marjorie and Phylis stood by, interested spectators, and Flap spoke to the wifful bird.

"Aren't you coming, Cocky, old chaps?"

"—Jolly—coming—feet—Flap!" said Cocky.

Miss Clara stole nearer. She was talking the chase quite in earnest. Now she was down on her hands and knees, creeping straight up.

"Where's Flip, Cocky?" asked Flap.

It really was not so easy to make conversation with a cockatoo when three people were listening to you.

"Ah, I wonder!" said Cocky.

"Would you like a peanut?"

"No, half!"

"No, a whole one. But I'm sorry. I haven't got one here."

"Got you?" shrieked Clara.

And so she had—during the space of perhaps three seconds!

Then Cocky pecked. It was not a very hard peck, but Miss Clara was so little hands and it hurt. If it had been four or five times as hard it might actually have fetched blood.

"Oh, you monster!" screamed Clara. She looked at her hold, and Cocky fluttered away.

"Here's a jolly row about nothing!" he said scornfully.

"Oh, does it hurt, Clara?" panted Marjorie.

"Yes, of course! No, it doesn't, really! And if I hadn't been a funk—Miss Clara threw inexpressible self-scoorn into that word.

"I should have held on! Only let me get my hands on you again, my boy!"

"What's he?" said Cocky.

Then he fluttered towards her. She grabbed. He gave a shrill scream of delight, and fluttered away again, straight on to Flap's shoulder.

There he sat, with his knowing old head on one side, and very gently and quietly Flap put up a hand to him.

"But now, where there rang up the bull a long-drawn shout of—

"Cocky!"

"Flip, that's Flip!" said Cocky.

The Three Are Mysterious!

"COOEE-EE-EE!" came the long-drawn call again—the sound that every Australian bushman knows, that

in all of us seems to conjure up in a word all we know of those far lands of the Southern Continent—blue-gum and she-oak and wattle, mopoke and kangaroo and diago, the salt-bush plains and the forests, dry rivers and crawling rivers, the days of drought, creeks running a banker in the rains, camp-fire and verandah station, sheep and cattle, and wild horses tossing their manes in glorious freedom, lonely shepherd and lonely stockman, Australia!

"Cooee-ee-ee," answered Flap; and the call was as shrill and far-sounding as her brother's.

"Oh, Clara tried to imitate it; but her attempt only caused Cocky to say:

"Now then, don't be silly!"

"There they are!" cried Phylis. "But I can't see who they are, though I can guess."

To Marjorie and Clara that looked like a walk through the juniors were as specks in a far distance. But Flap said:

"That's Flip without a cap. And the other two are Merton and Tunstall."

"Is his collar fastened, my dear?" asked Miss Clara slyly.

"I can't see that. Why?"

"Because, for anything I can tell, those three might be Miss Primrose taking a walk with Mr. Mobbs and Dr. Voysey—that's all."

"She wouldn't," said Flap; and the other three broke into peals of silvery laughter.

"I'll admit she's not going this time," said Clara. "I can see now that they are boys of course, they have seen us, and are coming this way—though I really don't know why they should."

"We've been looking for Cocky."

"Poor old Cocky!" said the bird pathetically.

"Do you mean that they have given up the search to come to us?" Miss Clara asked.

"Of course not!" said Flap. "They have seen Cocky by this time, you know."

"He must have wonderful eyes," said Marjorie.

"Who? Of course, they're good enough, but not wonderful."

The three drew nearer quickly, mounting the slope at a pace that probably sent Flip better than it did the languid Merton or Tunstall.

"Let's go to meet them," said Flap.

It is doing them too much honour. But I consent," said Clara demurely.

"If you didn't you would have to stay here alone," Phylis said, in her downright boyish way. "I want to know how Cocky got away."

"For my part, I'm quite out of love with Cocky. He pecked me, the monster!"

"Show me the place, Clara," said Phylis.

Miss Clara held out a plump and dimpled hand.

"Oh, you—you spoofer! It was the other hand!"

"So it was! I'd quite forgotten. What a memory you have, Phylis! Almost as wonderful as Flip's eyes!"

"Don't talk—dashed—rot!" said Cocky, very politely and emphatically.

"Hallo, Flap! My word, I am glad to see that old villain!" shouted Flap.

"Don't let him go!" he said to Flap.

"Don't let him go! He ain't to be trusted!" called Merton.

"He wants to go to Flip. But I'll hold him."

"Poor old Cocky! Rough on old Cocky, this is!" The crowd said the bird.

"The three came up, and two of them lifted their caps. Flip's brown hair was all ways with the breeze, and there was a gleam in his eyes."

"You old sinner!" he said, as he took Cocky from his sister. But it was spoken affectionately, and the girl would not have been surprised if he kissed the bird.

"Philip! Cocky want a peanut!"

And, of course, Cocky got one. But he only had one, for Merton brought out almonds, which he ate.

"How did he get away?" asked Flap.

His brother frowned.

"I wish I knew," he said. "But I'll find out, and then someone may look out for himself."

"Ask Cocky," said Miss Clara.

"But he can't!"

"He could if he chose! I'm not ever going to believe again that he talks at random."

"Has he been getting at you, Miss Trevlyn?" asked Flap, his eyes twinkling.

"He told me I talked 'dashed rot.' I don't know whether you call that getting at me!"

"No. Of course, he was talking it then," replied Flap.

"And he pecked my hand when I caught him," panted Clara.

"Yes, by the by," said Cocky solemnly.

"Now, don't try to show the wound, because you don't know which hand it was," said Phylis.

"I don't know, then. You told me. If it wasn't my right, it must have been my left!"

"What made you bring the cage, Flip?" asked Flap.

"Yes, that's it. I found it in the garden at your show."

"What, at Cliff House?" exclaimed Marjorie.

"But how could it—"

"Consequence of which," said Merton, "Flippy has made a conquest of Miss Primrose, and we've all been asked to tea! What do you think of that, by Jupiter?"

"I think that I have another engagement for that day," said Miss Clara. "Whip it!"

"There isn't any day," said Flap. "Alzy's talking out of his hat. He didn't see her even."

"I'm didn't, either," said Merton.

"At! That explains it," said Clara slyly. "Our dear mistress did not bar you, because you are so like Flap, and she thinks Flap an angel—which is incorrect. But if she had seen you, she'd have said—"

"Really, Clara?"

"Oh, we like it, Miss Hazelcote!" said Tunstall, grinning.

Flap was attending to the fastening of the cage.

"Can I leave this with you?" he asked.

"Do you mean that I'm to take him now?" asked Flap.

"Not altogether. No, it wouldn't do. He's got used to Alzy and Tun, you know. But for the afternoon."

"There's no hurry, Flippy, by Jupiter!" said Merton, who certainly did not appear to be in a hurry.

"No hurry? What are you thinking about?" returned Flap, with a jerk of his head towards the sea.

"I've clean forgotten!" said Merton ruefully. "Of course, we must go."

"Yes, we must go," Tunstall said. "But it's a pity, too!"

"May we inquire where you are going?" asked Miss Clara sweetly.

The three looked at one another. They were not minded to tell that.

It was Flip who answered.

"Awfully sorry!" he said. "Can't tell you, really."

"Then I think you had better take that bird with you. He will spoil our afternoon. We must either sit still, which will be chilly, or carry him about. And the cage is heavy."

"I don't mind carrying him a bit!" said Flap.

"For I!" chimed in Marjorie and Phylis together.

"No, you're right, after all, Miss Trevlyn," said Flap, without a touch of resentment. "I can take him home easily enough, and it will be best, I think. I might not—well, have time to call for him after—the later on, I mean."

But what Flap was thinking was that he might not be exactly in a state to visit Cliff House—later on!

"We must really be going," said Merton regretfully.

No one asked questions. No one said anything about what they had already seen. Perhaps air four of the girls wanted to ask and to tell; but none of them liked to begin.

And now the three had gone, hurrying down the slope towards a path which led to the beach below.

"They're very mysterious," said Miss Clara. "But I can see through them!"

"You needn't have grumbled about Cocky, Clara," said Flap.

"My dear, it wasn't really Cocky I objected to. It was the cool cheek of that other fellow who said 'dashed rot.'"

"You needn't have mentioned to me so many words; but what it amounted to was that we might hold his bird while he went off to fight."

"Clara! You don't know—"

"But do, Marjorie! I'm not Peter Todd's Herlock Sholmes; but I'm not deaf and blind and stupid! What else can it be?"

"It must be that," said Phylis.

Flap nodded.

"I'm pretty sure of it now," she said.

"You don't seem to be much worried, Flap," said Marjorie.

"Oh, no! Not worried. Of course, I'd rather sit and watch a fight. But he doesn't unless he thinks he is right. And he isn't afraid of getting hurt."

"I should worry if it were my brother," said Merton.

"Ugh!" said Miss Clara involuntarily.

Clara Trevlyn's opinion of Hazel was one of the few secrets she kept from Marjorie.

"He is his queer—all that crowd!" said Phylis.

"And it must be one of the Greyfriars boys Flip's going to fight," Marjorie said. "Oh, I wish they wouldn't!"

"I wish they wouldn't! I did so want your brother to be friends with them, Flap!"

"He won't be, any the worse friend with the one he fights, if that one's any of your chums, Marjorie, because they're all decent sorts, and that sort doesn't bear malice."

"Do you know, Flap, I don't think it's just a single fight?" Miss Clara remembered. "I fancy there's a great deal more than that in it."

"What makes you think so?"

"Nothing very definite, but several little things. Am I a bit of a Herlock Sholmes after all?"

"We could see it from the top of the cliff," said Phylis.

"I don't want to see it!" replied Marjorie promptly.

"Well, it's horrid, I suppose, but I'm afraid I do," Flap confessed.

"Clara doesn't, anyway. If you two go, we shall."

"Sorry, Marj, old dear, but I'm afraid Clara does," said Miss Trevlyn.

And they went, though Marjorie went unwillingly.

Five Against Five!

THE Greyfriars crowd found the place of combat vacant.

"Just like that Highlife crew!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Shouldn't wonder they didn't turn up at all," said Frank Nugent. "They'll claim that they have spoofed us. Pon & Co. never had any notion of playing the game, or of what a decent spoof was."

"The Highlife crew, I feel sure," said Squiff, smirking the way by which they might be expected to arrive.

"If they don't we'll go and rout them out!" snorted Bob Cherry.

Wharton said nothing. But he felt much

as Bob did, in spite of all his attempts to silence Bunter's larm.

"The extreme and ludicrous rosters are perhapfully detainfully kept," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "I opionfully think that they are certainly coming, soonfully or latefully."

"They'd no right to keep us waiting!" Nugent said.

There was not one of the Famous Five who felt quite as he had felt when he left Greyfriars. They would not have put it in that way, perhaps, but all felt that they wanted to take vengeance on the presuming puns.

"Here come some of them," said Delacroy.

"Bon and Merton," Bunter added.

"Vavasour and Drury. But they don't count."

"More waiting," said the Bouncer. "Hang them! They can't be up to time? I suppose none of you fellows feels like standing down and letting me in?"

"Cheese that, Smithy!" rapped Squiff. "If any of them did, you don't come in before me."

"But we don't," said Harry. "And I don't think they'll want to take on a second five. If they did it might give you, Smithy, and Toddy, and the three Columbiads a chance."

"You're so confounded keen on getting licked, we might fix that up for next week," said Vernon-Smith.

"They won't want any more for six months after we've done with them!" said Bob again.

Now Ponsonby came up with his satellites. The greetings which passed had the sort of frigid civility that might have been expected between duellists.

"Sorry you have to wait," said Pon. "It isn't my fault, by gad! Derwent an' Tunstall and Merton are sure to be along directly."

"Can't be too dashed sure of that, Pon!" said Vavasour, in low tones.

"Well, Vav, it's going to be a trifle un-healthy for you if they can't put in an appearance."

"Pon, satisfactorily, 'for you will have to take the place of one of them, y'know, an' Drury an' the next chap that turns up will have to take the line, by gad!'"

"I don't mind putting myself in a bit of a lather," said Vavasour.

"I don't mind," said Vavasour.

"Not if it can be helped," returned Pon nastily. "You're no confounded one, but you'd be out of it inside five seconds. But you can't refuse at a pinch."

"Oh, can't you jolly keen, Drury, you're welcome to my place," Monson said, calmly.

"I didn't," said Mon. Are you?"

"Monson did not reply. He looked sulkier than ever. Perhaps he was not exactly linked. He had been put in by Vavasour, and he was far from keen. He wanted it all over. He had told Gadsby that he did not mean to stick it after he had a fair excuse for dropping out; and Gadsby knew that in general he did not take much to make a sufficient excuse for Monson.

The Highlife four sat apart on the rocks and waited.

The Greyfriars crowd stood in little groups, and waited also.

Temper did not improve on either side. Pon was fuming. Bob Cherry's usual soundness did not return. Even outside the Famous Five there was a suspicious air. Last Squiff, after a word with Wharton, went over to Pon.

"It doesn't look as if you could depend upon the rest of your lot," he said bluntly.

"I don't like," said four of the five will take on you four. But Cherry don't want to be left out."

"Does Wharton, by gad?" sneered Pon.

"None of 'em do, but Cherry bars it especially. Look here, and you can see what's coming for this afternoon. There are four of you, Smithy and I and any two others you like—say Bunter and a few crawlers of that sort—will take you with pleasure."

"This was an impudently unauthorised offer, but it mattered little whether Squiff had warrant for it. Pon was not taking any."

"Thank you for nothin', Field, by gad," he growled. "We aren't scrappin' with all Greyfriars. Why are you so longer?"

"But that's just what we don't cotton to," replied Squiff.

"Can't have it all your own way, y'know," said Pon.

"Not at present. What's why we want to make a start, by gad?"

"By gad, here they come!" said Monson.

And Monson spoke like one not over-pleased. But Vavasour looked quite chilly and bright.

The three came. Flip swung Cocky's case, and, though he showed signs of having hurried, showed no sign of hurry. But Merton and Tunstall felt uncomfortable. But Cocky had been nervous, and he began to wonder whether it really had been necessary to find him before turning up at the rendezvous.

"Sorry, Pon!" said Flip. "Some rotten lot with Cocky, let him loose, and chucked the cage down in the Cliff House garden."

Bunter made a movement that aroused the suspicions of one or two of his friends. Skinner and Snooty looked at him significantly. And Piet Delacroy said:

"Why, you were that way before dinner, Bunter! I hope you weren't in it."

Skinner and Snooty, whose selves were always ready to suspect others, but Delacroy would not have said that but for Bunter's own gossiping.

"I don't, Oh, really, Rebel, I didn't even know Derwent had a cockatoo!"

Flip did not hear that. He would have known it for a lie, of course. Had not Bunter devoured Cocky's pea-nuts on the journey down?

Flip was facing Pon-Pon, with a look on his face such as the new fellow had never seen there before. The thin lips were drawn back from the even white teeth in a snarl like a wolf.

"This is about the thinnest excuse I ever heard in all my life, Derwent!" snapped the leader of the nuts.

"It isn't an excuse at all," replied Flip coolly. "It's only an explanation. Take it or leave it, as you like. Come to that, it's the Greyfriars crowd we owe an apology to, rather than to you."

"Oh, don't get me down, by gad!" said Tunstall.

"I can't see that there's any latin down in the binkie. If you fancied a bit of backed and you were wrong, y'know—there. And if you had—"

"We shouldn't have let you down half as badly as we should ourselves, by Jupiter!"

ent in Merton. "We're not finks. It hasn't hurt anyone to let it had an' that Merfion's impertinence!" growled Monson. "They're in a regular paddy."

"Absolutely," said Vavasour.

"Well, it didn't come here for them to love us exactly," grinned Tunstall.

Pon could not understand it, and did not like it. Flip's independent attitude was no more than he had expected; but that Merton should take the same line

angered him more than ever. And Drury was grinning, too. Drury might shake off the shackles also.

Now up came Gadsby with the remainder of the Greyfriars. Gadsby had seen from afar the thin lips down the cliff-path, and had made up his mind to go and witness the fight.

Flip had crossed over to the Greyfriars crowd. He came back now with rather a displeased look.

"They weren't very civil," he said. "But it's no odds. I told them I was sorry that we kept them waiting, and that's all they had any right to expect."

"More grovelled Pons! What's the good of asking Pons to come when you mean to knock the stuff out of it? I never apologise. It's a sign of a grovelin' spirit, by gad!"

"I don't do much 'grovelin' myself," answered Flip good-temperedly.

"I don't like," said Pons, "a decent enemy, believe me, but not a rotten one."

"The chaps aren't Huns."

"Oh, aren't they?" said Gadsby, devoutly hoping that Derwent might find the enemy very Huns indeed.

Flip looked very hard at Gadsby, and before that he had glared Gadsby's eye fell.

"What's the good suspect? He had got the wretched bird back, Gadsby saw. After all, the trick had not been a success; and it had been decidedly expensive."

But Flip turned away, to put off his upper clothing and pull on his gloves. Drury had brought five pairs of gloves along.

Bunter added up to Gadsby.

"I haven't let on, by gad," he said mysteriously. "I'm going to keep your secret, old pal!"

"Go away, you fat fool!" hissed Gadsby.

"Oh, really, I consider you might be more polite. You're not careful."

"You let it out, that's all! Your prize prizes will lay you alive for being such a rotter, an' I'll attend to what they leave!"

Bunter rolled away again, and was glad to find that Gadsby was not in a friendly mood.

He could not quite see why, but supposed it

might be, partly because the yard had been recovered.

The last began to wonder whether it might not put him to get into touch with Derwent.

"We're lookin' to you for a good deal, Flip, old pal, by gad!" said Ponsonby, as the five lined up.

And now his tone was his ordinary, which was usually rather more friendly to Flip than to anyone else.

"For all I'm worth, Pon!" answered Flip.

Five faded eyes, striped to their teeth, gazed, ready for the fray?

(To be continued next week in a special long instalment.)

NOTICES.

Football—Matches Wanted by:

BRENSWICK JUNIORS—15-4 mile radius—J. L. Lancelotti, 207, Grogan Street, Everton, Liverpool.

BROMLEY JUNIORS—15-17. H. L. Wilson, 27, Apollo Street, Liverpool.

BROOMSLEIGH UNITED—14-15. Thos. Cadley, 25, Broomsleigh Street, Mill Lane, West Hampstead, N.W.6.

CITY STARS—15-5 mile radius—H. Forster, 25, Cole Street, Moston Lane, Moston, Manchester.

DEAMOUNT VILLA—15-3 mile radius—J. Daley, 21, Richard Street, Newcastle-on-Tyne.

DESMOND STARS—15-5 mile radius—R. Barker, 17, Rectory Road, Fulham, S.W.6.

DOUBLOIN ROVERS—16-6. E. F. Dyer, 48, Medfield Street, Rochampton, S.E.7.

ALBERT STARS—15-5 mile radius—E. FitzHenry, 292, Katharine Buildings, Cartwright Street, Royal Mint Street, E.1.

RHODING ARGYLE—16-7 mile radius—Thursdays only—L. D. Barber, 112, Garscote Road, Barking, E.

CLARENCE OLYMPIA—16-17 away matches, 5 mile radius—Wm. Kerslake, 35, Clarence Street, Nottingham.

COVENTRY JUNIORS—15-5 mile radius—R. 29, Tower Hamlets Road, Forest Gate, E.7.

MANCHESTER ROVERS—15-2 mile radius of 8.1 ton Park Gates, Aigburth end—Alfred Jones, 35, Milner Road, Aigburth, Liverpool.

ALMA STARS—15-5 mile radius—F. Rust, 23, Northlands Road, Coldharbour Lane, S.E.5.

ALTON VILLA—15-5 mile radius of Manchester—H. Riley, 50, Haydon Street, Mill Platting, Manchester.

KEITH ROVERS—13-14 5 mile radius—away matches only—T. McKenna, 41, Keith Road, Barking, E.

FULX VILLA—15-2 mile radius—G. Cox, 110, Barrington Road, Waverley, Liverpool.

MUSON MESSENGERS—15-5. H. J. Legg, Wireless Traffic Dept., Marconi House, Strand, W.C.2.

CHATHAM LIONS BRIGADE (New Barnet)—15 mile radius—A. E. Turner, 265, East Barnet Road, New Barnet.

OLD FORD ROVERS—3 mile radius—J. Adams, 111, Old Ford Road, Bury, E.10.

WATFORD JUNIORS—14-16 6 mile radius—L. J. Barnett, Langdon, Bishop's Road, Watford, Herts.

Other Football Notices.

A Peckham team wants four good players—13-16—J. H. Jones, 100, St. George's Road, Peckham, S.E.15.

ROSBURY—several players wanted—16-17—H. A. Just, 29, Theoberton Street, 4-1ington N.1.

Arthur Cobley, 57, Ashdown Road, Worthing, would like a place in a team—17-18—within 6 miles.

W. King wants place in team, any position—16-18—Address, 6, Hollingsworth Street, Holloway, N.

Leagues, Magazines, etc.

Harst Cogan, 8, Richmond Hill, Bathmans, Dublin, wants readers and contributors for his amateur magazine. Stamped and addressed envelopes sent.

Philanthropic Hobby Club wants more members—entrance fee 3d.—A. A. Bagwell, 25, Alexandra Road, Burton-on-Trent.

C. N. Morrison, 55, Ashen Grove, Windon, would be glad to hear from readers who would help him to form Correspondence Club with a small monthly magazine.

John Close, 18, Franklin Road, Liphfield, would be glad to contribute complete school stories to amateur magazines. Stamped and addressed envelopes, please.