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ST. JIM'S ON THE WAR-PATH!

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

P.-C. CRUMP AND P.-C. RACKE!

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A Magnificent, New, Long, Complete School Story of Tom Merry and Co. at St. Jim's.

ST. JIM'S ON THE WAR-PATH!

By Martin Clifford.

CHAPTER 1.
The Bomb-Dodger.

"HI!" Three juniors of St. Jim's, who were seated in a row on the stile in Rylcombe Lane, heard that hail, and did not look round.

Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther were discussing the coming football season, and they were interested in their discussion.

Therefore they had not observed a fat, pursy gentleman who came up the road from Rylcombe, and stopped near the stile.

"Hi!"

The fat gentleman repeated the ejaculation, but the Terrible Three of St. Jim's still remained oblivious.

"Hi!" jerked out the fat gentleman for the third time. "Hi, there! You youngsters!"

Then Monty Lowther condescended to glance round in a leisurely manner.

The fat gentleman looked very warm, and he had taken off a glossy silk-hat and was fanning himself with it. The walk from the village had bedewed him with moisture. He looked a City man, and not in the best condition.

"Did you address us, sir?" asked Monty Lowther, with elaborate and sarcastic politeness.

"Yes, I did!" grunted the fat gentleman. "I'm a stranger here. Can you direct me to Rose Cottage?"

"Certainly!" said Lowther.

"Thank goodness!" said the fat gentleman. "I've been looking for the place for an hour. Near the village, I was told, 'Easy distance of the railway-station.' Looks like it!"

And he grunted again.

"It isn't far from the railway-station, if you take the short cut," said Tom Merry, with a smile. "But perhaps you don't know the short cuts hereabouts?"

"Of course I don't! Never saw this dead-and-alive place before!" said the fat man. "If you can show me the way, one of you, I'll give you sixpence."

The Terrible Three looked at him.

The fat man appeared to be rather a prosperous man. His clothes, though not in good taste, were certainly expensive, and he wore enough jewellery to buy any number of War Savings Certificates if melted down. And he offered the Terrible Three, the ornaments of the Shell Form at St. Jim's, sixpence!

Tom Merry laughed, and Manners frowned. Monty Lowther, as was his way, became humorous.

"Sixpence!" he repeated.

"I mean it!" said the fat gentleman.

"You are sure that you are not overdoing it?" suggested Lowther. "You do not think that at the last moment you may repent of this generosity, and wish to reduce the sum to threepence?"

The fat gentleman blinked at him.

"You talk too much, youngster!" he said. "I mean it! I'll give you sixpence to show me the way. Horatio Chumper's word is his bond!"

"Shurrup, Monty!" murmured Tom Merry, as Lowther was about to speak again. "We can tell you the way, sir, and never mind about the sixpence."

"Cheeky ass!" grunted Manners, with a glance of extreme disfavour at Mr. Chumper.

"Well, where is the dashed place, then?" demanded the gentleman from London, fortunately not hearing Manners' remark. "I've been hunting for it. My train goes at six, and I've got to view the place before then."

"Oh!" said Tom, in surprise. "Are you sure it's Rose Cottage you want, Mr. Chumper? I'm sure it's not to let!"

"It's to let right enough!" answered Mr. Chumper. "I've got the agent's card to view it."

Tom Merry shook his head.

"I'm afraid there must be some mistake," he answered. "Mrs. Hastings lives at Rose Cottage, sir. Her husband is in France, and I know very well that she does not intend to give up the cottage."

"Hastings!" repeated Mr. Chumper, glancing at the card he took from his pocket. "Yes; that's the name: 'Mrs. Hastings, the present tenant, will show the cottage.' That's the place I'm looking for."

Tom Merry looked hard at the fat gentleman.

As it happened, the Terrible Three were acquainted with Mrs. Hastings, the wife of a soldier just then in France, having helped the good lady with her garden on half-holidays after her husband's call-up. They were very well aware that Private Hastings' wife had no intention of giving up her little home if she could help it. Apparently she was not going to be able to help it.

It was rather puzzling, too, for the fat gentleman looked far too important and prosperous to be contented with a four-roomed cottage as a country residence. What he wanted with Rose Cottage was a mystery, till the explanation suddenly dawned on Tom Merry. Mr. Horatio Chumper was a "bomb-dodger."

Tom's brow grew dark as that explanation came into his mind. More than once he had seen the bomb-dodgers at work in that quiet countryside, offering twice or thrice the just rent to induce unscrupulous landlords to turn their tenants out to make room for them.

The thought of a soldier's wife being turned out of her home to provide a shelter for a bomb-dodger from town was more than enough to rouse Tom Merry's ire

His eyes gleamed at Mr. Horatio Chumper.

"Oh!" he said. "Air-raids—what?"

"You've hit it!" said Mr. Chumper calmly. "Now, where is that place?"

"You can find it for yourself, Mr. Chumper," said Tom Merry deliberately. "The present tenant does not want to give up that cottage, and you know it. She's paying four shillings a week, and I dare say you've offered double."

"I'm paying sixteen!" snapped Mr. Chumper.

"It's not worth it, except as a funk-hole!" said Tom contemptuously. "Look here, Mr. Chumper! The woman who lives there is a soldier's wife——"

"Will you show me the way?"

"Her man is in France fighting the Germans, and she has two little kids——"

"I'll make it a shilling if you show me where the place is," said Mr. Chumper, apparently deaf.

"If you and the landlord turn her out you ought to be hanged!" continued Tom Merry, with a directness of speech that made his chums chuckle.

Mr. Chumper, apparently deciding that he would get no directions from the three schoolboys, turned away. Monty Lowther jumped off the stile.

"Hold on!" he called out. "Did you say a shilling?"

"I did!" snapped Mr. Chumper, looking back.

"Monty!" shouted Tom.

Monty Lowther closed one eye at his chums.

"My dear chaps, I'm going to earn an honest bob," he said. "This way, Mr. Chumper. Get over the stile."

"Right!" said Mr. Chumper, much relieved.

Lowther vaulted over the stile; Tom and Manners made room for Mr. Chumper to follow. They smiled as they watched Monty Lowther and the gentleman from London crossing the field together. As they were proceeding with their backs to Rose Cottage, it did not seem probable that Mr. Chumper would arrive at his destination, unless he walked twenty-five thousand miles that afternoon. Monty Lowther's offer of guidance was somewhat on the lines of a delusion and a snare.

"Worm!" said Manners, with reference to Mr. Chumper. "He doesn't care twopence if a poor woman is turned out to make room for his worthless carcase. What does it matter if he gets bombed in an air-raid, a fellow like that?"

"Nothing at all!" agreed Tom Merry. "I wonder where Monty will lead him? My hat, they're heading for the moor!"

Manners chuckled.

"Looks as if Horatio won't catch his train back at six," he said. "Let's trot along to the village."

The chums of the Shell sauntered along to Rylcombe, very much entertained by the thought of Mr. Chumper's feelings when Monty Lowther had finished guiding him.

CHAPTER 2.
Arthur Augustus Chips In.

"PWAY, jump down heah, deah boys!"

Four cyclists were riding along a dusty lane that afternoon towards Rylcombe while the Terrible Three were talking to Mr. Chumper a mile away. Blake and Herries and Digby and D'Arcy of the Fourth Form were pedalling home after a spin round the country. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy slacked down near a gate that gave admittance to a cottage-garden, and jumped off his machine.

"Come on, fathead!" called out Blake. "We've got to get in to tea."

"I am wathah dwy, Blake. Pway stop a few minutes, while I wequest Mrs. Hastings to give me a dwink of watah."

"Oh, bow-wow!" answered Blake; but he stopped, and jumped down.

The four juniors leaned their machines against the fence, and went up the

garden path to the cottage. Arthur Augustus knocked at the door, and it was opened by a grave, anxious-faced woman. Her troubled countenance cleared at the sight of the cheery juniors.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, "I thought it was——"

"Only us, ma'am," said Arthur Augustus, rasing his cap gracefully. "Pway excuse my intwusion. Will you allow us to get some watah at the pump?"

Mrs. Hastings smiled.

"Won't you come in?" she said. "You are always welcome. I will soon get you some water. I am sorry I can offer you nothing better."

"You are vewy kind, ma'am."

The juniors entered a shady little room, glad to get out of the hot sunshine for a few minutes.

A jug of cool, refreshing water, and four cups were soon forthcoming. It was all the hospitality the poor woman could offer, but it was given with a good heart.

"I twust Mr. Hastings is goin' on well, ma'am?" said Arthur Augustus, whose benevolent eye had noted the shadow on the woman's face.

"Yes, thank you, Master D'Arcy. I have had a letter from him this morning."

"That's jollay good! Tommy all wight?"

"Yes, Tommy is quite well."

"And little Alice?"

"Quite well."

Arthur Augustus paused.

"Garden goin' all wight?" he asked.

"Yes, quite nicely," said Mrs. Hastings. "I have had a lot of help with it, as you know."

While she was speaking the good lady had her eyes on the window, watching the garden path, as if in expectation of seeing a visitor, and the troubled look returned to her face. Arthur Augustus finished his refreshing drink very slowly and thoughtfully.

Blake & Co. were ready to return to the bikes, but the swell of St. Jim's was not ready yet. He did not heed their glances.

"Pway excuse me, ma'am," he said, in his most graceful way, "but it appeahs to me that you seem wathah wowwied this aftahnoon. Is there anythin' a fellow could do?"

Mrs. Hastings smiled faintly.

"Nothing, thanks," she answered. "I have a great trouble, but it cannot be helped. I—I have notice to give up my cottage."

"Bai Jove! You are leavin' Wose Cottage?"

"I must."

"It will be wathah difficult wemovin', with Mr. Hastings away," remarked Arthur Augustus. "If you awwange it for a half-holiday, ma'am—Wednesday or Satahday—we should be vewy pleased to come and help."

"Yes, rather!" said Blake and Herries and Dig.

"Where will you be movin' to, ma'am?"

The tears came into the poor woman's eyes, in spite of herself.

"I don't know," she faltered. "I have nowhere to move to. I have to leave on Saturday, but I cannot get another cottage. I am at my wits'-end. There are no cottages to be had in this neighbourhood."

"But you can't move out without movin' in," said Arthur Augustus, in astonishment. "You will have to stay on, ma'am."

"I cannot. The cottage is already taken by someone from London."

"Gweat Scott! You don't mean to say they are turnin' you out?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus.

"Yes. The new tenant wants possession at once. He is coming down to-day to see the cottage, but it is settled that he is to take it. A Mr. Chumper, from London."

"A blessed bomb-dodger!" exclaimed Blake.

"What a wotten shame!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, in indignation and distress. "I should wefuse to give up the place. I should bah the door, and hit them in the eye!"

"Fathead!" murmured Digby.

"Weally, Dig——"

"But there must be some mistake," said Arthur Augustus, with conviction. "Nobody would be wottah enough to turn a soldier's wife out. I am suah that the landlord doesn't undahstand how mattahs are. You must wequest him——"

"It's the agent, Mr. Stuckey, in Rylcombe," said Mrs. Hastings. "I have seen him, but it is no use. He has let the cottage over my head, and I have to go."

"The awful beast!" said Arthur Augustus. "But pewwaps you did not fully explain the mattah, Mrs. Hastings. Pewwaps, if it was explained to him, say, by a fellow of tact and judgment, he would see that he could not do anythin' of the sort."

"I am afraid it is no use, Master D'Arcy."

"Wats! I—I mean, pewwaps it can be worked." Arthur Augustus rose to his feet. "Will you give me permission to speak to Mr. Stuckey, ma'am? I am suah I could make him see mattahs in a wight light."

Mrs. Hastings smiled a hopeless smile, but she nodded. Perhaps she had a faint hope that the estate agent might listen to remonstrances from the son of a noble lord when he was deaf to the pleading of a poor cottager.

"Do so, if you wish, Master D'Arcy. I should be very grateful if I could get permission to remain till my husband comes home from Flanders."

"Wely on me!" said Arthur Augustus encouragingly. "There must be some mistake. I wefuse to believe that there is such a wottah in existence as to do such a thing like this delibewately. Wely on me, ma'am. Come on, you chaps!"

The chums of the Fourth took leave of Mrs. Hastings, and returned to their machines. There was an expression of serene confidence on Arthur Augustus' aristocratic face as he mounted his jigger.

"Look here, what are you going to do, Gussy?" demanded Blake.

"Talk to Mr. Stuckey."

"He won't listen to you."

"Wats!"

"You duffer!" said Digby. "Stuckey's been doing this kind of dirty trick ever since the air-raids started."

"I am suah the man is undah some misappwehension, Dig. He can't intend to turn a woman and children out without shelter."

"Bet you he does!"

"Wats!"

"I've got an idea," said Herries.

"Go it, Hewwies, deah boy!"

"I think I might bring my bulldog, Towser——"

"What?"

"And lend him to Mrs. Hastings," said Herries thoughtfully. "I'll bet you nobody would set foot in that cottage if Towser was set to keep 'em out!"

"Bai Jove!"

Blake and Digby chuckled. They could not quite imagine Mrs. Hastings standing a siege with Towser as garrison. The Fourth-Formers pedalled on to Rylcombe. Tom Merry and Manners

Gussy is Disgusted!
(See Chapter 3.)

came in sight, strolling towards them. Blake slowed down.

"Hallo! Join up, you chaps!" he called out.

"Anything on?" asked Tom Merry.

"Yes. One of Gussy's special funny entertainments," said Blake. "It will be worth listening to."

"Weally, Blake——"

"What's the game?" asked Manners.

"Gussy is going to preach the higher morality to an estate agent. We're going to form an admiring audience. Don't miss it. It will be quite as good as a cinema."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Blake, you uttah ass——"

"Lead on, Macduff!" said Blake. "We're after you!"

"Oh, wats!"

Arthur Augustus set his machine against a lamp-post outside Mr. Stuckey's dark little office in the High Street, and the juniors piled their machines against it. Arthur Augustus strode into the office with his noble nose in the air, and five juniors followed him with great anticipation.

CHAPTER 3.
A Fearful Thrashing.

"GOOD-AFTAHNOON, sir!" Thus Arthur Augustus, in polite greeting.

Mr. Stuckey was alone in his office, and he did not seem very busy that afternoon, for he was seated with his feet on his desk, reading a newspaper. He glanced over the top of the paper carelessly, and gave a short nod, without troubling himself to rise.

Can you spare me a few minutes, Mr. Stuckey?" asked Arthur Augustus, very politely.

"Wire in!" answered Mr. Stuckey, with a rather puzzled glance at Tom Merry & Co., who had followed D'Arcy in.

"I have called upon you with wefewence to Mrs. Hastings and Wose Cottage,"

"Well?"

"It appeahs that Mrs. Hastings is undah notice to leave on Saturday."

Nod.

"She has been unable to secure any othah quartahs."

Yawn!

"You are pwobably awah, Mr. Stuckey, that this lady's husband is now in Fwance, fightin' the Germans," said Arthur Augustus, a little warmly.

"I believe so!"

"Undah the circs, I am suah you will allow Mrs. Hastings to wemain tenant of Wose Cottage—at least, until he weturns fwom the fwont?"

"Can't be done!"

"Or at the vewy least until she has secured othah quartahs, sir?"

"Not my business."

"Bai Jove!"

"Good-afternoon!" said Mr. Stuckey, returning to his paper.

Arthur Augustus breathed hard through his noble nose. He took off his eyeglass, polished it, and jammed it into his eye again, and fixed it upon Mr. Stuckey.

"I have not finished yet, sir," he said. "May I venchah to inquiah why you cannot allow Mrs. Hastings to wemain in her cottage?"

"Let!"

"You have let the cottage to anothah person?"

"Yes!"

"But that is not a justifiable pwoceedin', Mr. Stuckey."

This remark seemed to surprise Mr. Stuckey very much. He lowered his paper, and stared at the swell of St. Jim's. Perhaps it struck him as odd that anybody should suppose that the justice, or otherwise, of his proceedings bothered him at all.

"I am suah that, upon weflection, you will wealise that you cannot do such a thing, sir," said Arthur Augustus gently. "May I weturn to Mrs. Hastings and assuah her fwom you that she is fwee to wemain at Wose Cottage?"

"My eye!" said Mr. Stuckey.

"Pway answah my question."

"Do you see the door?" queried Mr. Stuckey.

"Eh? Yaas!"

"Well, shut it after you!"

"But I have not finished yet. Pway what do you suppose will become of Mrs. Hastings and her childwen if they are turned out without anywhah to go to?"

"Good-afternoon!"

"Do you mean to say, sir that you do not care?"

Mr. Stuckey went on reading his paper. Arthur Augustus paused, like Brutus, for a reply; but he paused in vain. No reply was forthcoming.

"Nothing doing. Gussy!" said Tom Merry. "Come along!"

"I cannot come along yet, Tom Mewwy. Mr. Stuckey, will you have the gweat kindness to answah me?"

Silence behind the newspaper.

"I insist upon a weply, sir!"

Silence.

Arthur Augustus strode towards the desk, caught hold of the newspaper, and jerked it away, tossing it across the office. Mr. Stuckey, greatly startled, jumped up, red with anger.

"What are you up to?" he roared. "You cheeky young cub, get out of my office!"

"I insist upon having this mattah out, Mr. Stuckey! I wish to know whether you weally intend to turn that poor woman out of her home on Satahday?"

"Leave my office!"

"Then, Mr. Stuckey, I feel bound to tell you that you are a wascal!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, his voice trembling with wrath.

"Hear, hear!" said Blake, heartily.

"Sneaking rotter!" remarked Herries.

"Worm!" said Manners.

"Will you leave my office, or shall I turn you out, you young hooligans?" demanded Mr. Stuckey.

"Turn us out!" grinned Blake.

"I shall not leave your office yet, Mr. Stuckey," said Arthur Augustus. "You are actin' in a mannah worthy only of a disgustin' German—in fact, like a Pwussian of the deepest dye. Undah the circs, as it is useless to appeal to your bettah feelin's, I have no wesource but to give you a feahful thwashin'!"

"Wha-a-at!" stuttered the astounded agent.

"Gussy!" murmured Dig.

Arthur Augustus calmly peeled off his jacket and pushed back his cuffs.

"Are you weady, Mr. Stuckey?" he asked.

"Do you want me to call in the police?" roared Mr. Stuckey.

"Will you have the kindness to put up your hands?"

"I shall complain to your headmaster of this. I will have you flogged!" roared Mr. Stuckey.

"Come on, Gussy!" murmured Tom Merry.

"I wefuse to come on, Tom Mewwy, until I have given this wascal a feahful thwashin'. I wegard myself as defendin' a soldiah's home!"

And, with that noble object in view, Arthur Augustus rushed at Mr. Stuckey, who dodged behind his desk in great alarm.

But he was pursued there, and a clump on his somewhat prominent nose showed him that Arthur Augustus was in deadly earnest.

"Yaroooh!" roared Mr. Stuckey, sprawling against his desk.

"You had bettah put up your hands, sir," said Arthur Augustus. "You are goin' to be thwashed anyway!"

Mr. Stuckey made a rush for the door. But Herries slammed it, and put his back against it.

"No, you don't!" said Herries.

"Leave my office!" shrieked Mr. Stuckey. "This is assault—this is actionable! Help!"

"Pway put up your sneakin' hands, you wottah!"

Tap!

Arthur Augustus' knuckles landed on the agent's nose, and he put his hands up in desperation.

He was a man against a boy, and certainly he ought to have the best of it; but Arthur Augustus was brimming with courage and indignation, and Mr. Stuckey's gifts ran rather to sharpness than to courage. He only thought of defence, and backed away feebly under D'Arcy's slashing attack, and he was knocked right and left.

A terrific right-hander sent him fairly spinning at last, and he rolled over, landing with his head in the wastepaper-basket.

He lay and howled.

Arthur Augustus looked down at him with blazing eyes

"Will you get up and have some more, you unspeakable wottah?" he thundered.

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"Pewwaps I have thwashed him enough. Do you think so, deah boys?"

"Quite enough, considering what a ghastly row there will be about it!" grinned Blake.

"Yow-ow-ow!" came from Mr. Stuckey. "I'll summons you! I'll summons your father! I'll summons your headmaster. Yow-ow-ow!"

"Wats!"

Arthur Augustus put on his jacket, and walked out of the office with his grinning chums, leaving Mr. Stuckey to gasp and groan. Tom Merry & Co. grinned as they went; but they became grave enough as they walked away down the street. For Gussy's action, though pardonable under the circumstances, was palpably against all law and order, and a stern complaint to the Head of St. Jim's was the certain outcome. But Arthur Augustus refused to be alarmed.

"It's all wight, deah boys," he said. "Wight as wain! Let the sneakin' cad come up to the school and complain if he likes."

"It means a flogging at least!" hooted Blake.

"Wats! I shall explain to Dr. Holmes, and I am suah that he will agwee that the wascal ought to be thwashed."

"Oh, my hat!"

And Arthur Augustus was quite confident on that point, when he returned to St. Jim's. He awaited the expected visit from the agent with complete absence of any misgivings. But his chums had misgivings for him, and they were worried.

CHAPTER 4.
A False Alarm.

MONTY LOWTHER came in just in time for calling-over, looking a little tired, but with a sweet smile of satisfaction on his face. He answered "adsum" as Mr. Railton called his name, slipping into the ranks of the Shell a minute before the Housemaster spoke. Apparently the humorist of the Shell had had a long walk. Tom Merry and Manners gave him inquiring looks as they left Big Hall together.

"Well?"

"Where's Chumper?" inquired Manners.

"I really don't know," answered Lowther. "I only know where I left him. That was in the middle of Wayland Moor."

"Oh!"

"I took him round the wood, and along by Wayland, smiled Lowther. "He was puffing and blowing no end. Then I told him of the short cut across the moor. It was a short cut to Abbotsford, of course; but he appeared to think that it was a short cut to Rose Cottage——"

"Ha ha, ha!"

"In the middle of the moor he fairly sunk under it," said Lowther cheerily. "He simply sat down on a hillock and groaned. Never seen a man so fagged—if he is a man. So I said good-evening to him and cleared off! And he never gave me the shilling!"

"Poor beast!" said Tom.

"Yes, he must have suffered severely," agreed Lowther. "He's a good four miles from everywhere if he's still sitting there, and if he's started walking, goodness knows where he'll land. I think he must have suspected that I was pulling his leg at the finish, for he called me some nasty names when I left him. Quite abusive, in fact. A very ill-bred man."

"Ha, ha!"

"He won't get a train back to London to-night," said Lowther. "Sad, isn't it? Perhaps he will have to camp out on the moor under his silk-hat. Well, he seems to think it all right for Mrs. Hastings to camp out with the children, and it's better for him than for her, isn't it?"

"Much!" grinned Manners.

"It may even be a valuable lesson to him," said Monty Lowther. "Who knows? I'm sure I hope so, and I did my very best to feed him up."

Tom Merry and Manners chuckled. The sad fate of the bomb-dodger did not touch them very deeply. They reserved their sympathy for the present tenant of Rose Cottage. The Terrible Three went to their study for prep. When they came down to the Common-room later they found Arthur Augustus D'Arcy the centre of attraction, and his exploit in Mr. Stuckey's office the one topic.

Most of the fellows grinned over it, but all agreed that it had a serious side. Arthur Augustus himself was calm and lofty. His opinion was that in thrashing Mr. Stuckey he had been engaged upon work of national importance, and he was sure that the Head would take his view.

Nobody else thought so, however. The Head's point of view was likely to be very different from that of the Fourth Form.

"Of course, the man will send in a summons," remarked Racke of the Shell, with much satisfaction. "D'Arcy will have to appear in a police-court."

"Sure to," agreed Crooke, with a grin. "It's assault and battery. The man's entitled to damages."

"Fancy Gussy up before a magistrate!" chortled Trimble of the Fourth.

"Three months' hard!" said Scrope.

"Well, I don't know about hard labour," said Aubrey Racke, with a judicial air. "D'Arcy, being a schoolboy, can't very well be sent to hard labour. A reformatory, I think."

"Levison's uncle is boss of a reformatory," remarked Crooke. "If D'Arcy goes there Levison might put in a word for him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Racke & Co. carried on that cheery conversation within a few feet of Arthur Augustus, who heard it all without a sign. He disdained to take the least notice of Racke & Co.

Grundy of the Shell chimed in with his bull voice.

"D'Arcy did quite right," he announced. "I'd have done the same in his place, only I'd have walloped the cad till he couldn't howl. If the Head makes a row about it I'm prepared to head a deputation to him to remonstrate."

"You're prepared to head anythin', old scout, aren't you?" said Cardew of the Fourth.

"The Head's jolly certain to make a row," said Gore. "It won't be pleasant for a St. Jim's chap to be summoned for assault and battery. It served the man right, but there's a limit."

"What rot!" said Racke. "The man's only sellin' his goods at the highest price. Everybody does that."

"Especially war profiteers!" snorted Herries.

"Rot!" repeated Racke. "Everybody's doin' it. People can't expect to have a house at a low rent if somebody else is willin' to pay higher. Everybody bags all he can, especially in war-time."

"That's not right," said Talbot of the Shell quietly. "The soldiers don't bag very much, Racke. If they put their own interests before everybody else's they wouldn't be fighting the Germans for practically nothing. If they give up everything the stay-at-homes can very well give up their rotten profits."

"Yaas, wathah!" chimed in Arthur Augustus, speaking at last. "I wegard your views as worthy only of a Pwussian, Wacke."

Aubrey Racke sneered, and was silent. His peculiar views were not popular.

Baggy Trimble rolled out of the Common-room while the juniors were still discussing the prospect before Arthur Augustus. He came back in about ten minutes.

"I say, Gussy——" he began.

"I weally wish, Twimble, that you would not addwess me as Gussy."

"Well, I've got something to tell you," said Trimble sulkily. "There's a man asking for you."

"Vewy well."

"He's got a blue paper in his hand," said Trimble.

"Bai Jove!"

"Phew!" said Racke. "It's the summons already!"

There was consternation in most faces now, but Arthur Augustus rose to his feet quietly, and with perfect calmness.

"I had bettah see the man," he said.

"Oh dear!" groaned Blake.

"You need not be alarmed about me, Blake. If the mattah comes befoah a magistwate, I have not the slightest doubt that he will wegard the affair as a Bwiton, and commend me vewy highly for havin' thwashed that wottah."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Haven't you ever heard of such a thing as law and order?" asked Crooke.

"Law and ordah, Cwooke, were invented for punishin' wascals, and that is what I have been doin'."

"He may get off under the First Offenders' Act," remarked Mellish thoughtfully.

Arthur Augustus walked loftily out of the Common-room. If he felt any inward uneasiness he did not show any outward sign of it. He was prepared to receive the blue paper with calm assurance.

The juniors waited very uneasily for him to return, excepting Trimble, who sidled away grinning. The swell of St. Jim's came back in a few minutes with a frown on his brow.

"Well?" said Tom Merry anxiously.

"That uttah wottah Twimble was pullin' my leg!" said Arthur Augustus wrathfully. "There is no man and no blue papah."

"Oh!"

"Twimble, you wottah——"

But Trimble was gone.

CHAPTER 5.

Racke's Luck is Out.

TOM MERRY & Co. were feeling uneasy the next day.

Exactly what steps Mr. Stuckey of Rylcombe would take they did not know, but it seemed certain that he would take some steps. Whether he would apply for a summons against Arthur Augustus for assault and battery, or whether he would call on the headmaster and complain, they did not know, but they felt that one or the other was certain. Mr. Stuckey had been thrashed in his own office, and he could not possibly take it "lying down."

Morally, perhaps, Arthur Augustus was quite in the right, but legally he was hopelessly in the wrong, and it was the legal aspect of the case that worried the chums of St. Jim's, with the exception of the delinquent himself.

Arthur Augustus did not seem worried. He had a belief that law and justice were the same thing, in which, perhaps, he did not show his usual tact and judgment.

Nothing was heard from Mr. Stuckey during the day, however.

Certainly he had not informed Dr. Holmes, or D'Arcy would have been called before the Head, which had not happened; and no policeman had arrived with the dreaded blue paper.

"It may take time to get out a summons," Blake remarked dismally after lessons. "I don't know much about it. I believe you go somewhere and give somebody a bob to do it, or something of the sort. It will come along to-morrow, perhaps."

"They send bobbies with summonses," said Herries thoughtfully.

"I believe so."

"And a chap doesn't have to appear unless the summons is actually served on him, I believe," went on Herries. "I think we can manage this, you fellows."

"How?" demanded Dig.

"Towser——"

"What?"

"Towser!" said Herries. "Suppose we keep Towser on the watch, and set him on any bobby who comes near the school? I'll bet you the man wouldn't stop to serve a summons."

"Fathead!" shrieked Blake. "You get a thousand years in chokey for going for a bobby!"

"But we shouldn't be going for him," said Herries. "It would be Towser. They don't send dogs to prison, you know."

"They ought to, when they're like Towser!" grunted Blake. "You ass! Towser would be shot if he did anything of the kind!"

"I'd like to see anybody shoot Towser!" said Herries, with a warlike look.

"Hewwies, I uttahly wefuse to have Towsah brought into the mattah!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "I am surpwised at your pwoposin' to wowwy a bobbay in the execution of his dutay. Have you no wespect for law and ordah?"

"Wha-at?" ejaculated Herries.

"Law and ordah!" said Arthur Augustus severely. "Wespect for law and ordah, Hewwies, is the distinguishin' twait of the Bwitish people. Othahwise, we are likely to degenewate into Bolsheviks. I am surpwised at you!"

"Well, my hat!" said Herries. "Law and order—you! After punching a man in his own office!"

"That was a perfectly justifiable pwoceedin', Hewwies. I wepeat, I am surpwised at you!"

"Well, of all the cheeky chumps!" exclaimed Herries indignantly.

"Weally, Hewwies——"

"Dry up, Gussy, old chap!" said Blake.

"You're too funny to live, you know. Still, we bar Towser. If old Crump comes along with a summons, Gussy will have to have it. After all, he's asked for it."

"Wats!"

But Police-constable Crump did not come along with a summons that day; and by bed-time the friends of Arthur Augustus were feeling relieved. But there were other fellows who felt disappointed. Racke & Co. had looked upon the possibility of a summons with delighted anticipation. They felt that such an event would be a heavy blow for their old enemies, and they felt exasperated with Mr. Stuckey for not standing upon his rights.

"The man's a worm!" said Racke to his cronies. "He's bound to get damages if he goes in for it. Why doesn't he?"

"Blow him!" said Crooke. "D'Arcy might have been expelled from St. Jim's for this! What a dab in the eye for that gang if he was!"

Racke's eyes glistened at the thought. The black sheep of the School House would have given quite a large slice of the parental war-profits to see a member of Tom Merry's select circle expelled from the school.

"It may come by post," he said. "I believe they do sometimes. D'Arcy may find it ready for him along with brekker in the mornin'. If it doesn't, I'm jolly well goin' to take a hand!"

"Eh? What can you do?"

"I'm goin' to call on Stuckey, an' put it to him," said Racke. "I'll egg him on. He must be feelin' revengeful—that stands to reason; and I'll try to egg him on to go in for it."

"Good wheeze!" said Crooke.

The next morning there was a disappointment for Racke & Co.—no blue paper arrived by the morning's post. Tom Merry & Co. were almost entirely relieved in their minds now. Amazing as it seemed, it certainly appeared that Mr. Stuckey intended to take no steps whatever. They could not understand why it was so, but it certainly seemed to be so.

But Aubrey Racke was not satisfied, and after lessons he walked down cheerily to Rylcombe, to call upon the estate agent. That Mr. Stuckey must be feeling sore about the occurrence was certain, and Racke felt that a little judicious urging would bring him up to the scratch.

If Tom Merry & Co. had guessed Racke's object the cad of the Shell would certainly not have got far from the school gates. But they were thinking about anything but Racke, and the cheery Aubrey went on his way unmolested.

Racke arrived at Mr. Stuckey's office. That gentleman was about to leave for lunch when Racke stepped in.

Mr. Stuckey was showing some signs still of the visit of Arthur Augustus, and his expression was not good-tempered. It became less so, if possible, at the sight of a schoolboy in the St. Jim's cap, which he recognised at once. Mr. Stuckey rose from his desk, and slid his hand towards a big stick that leaned against his chair, fixing a deadly look upon Racke.

"Good-morning, Mr. Stuckey!" said Racke cheerily. "I've just dropped in to speak a word about that affair the other day."

"Have you?" said Mr. Stuckey, his hand behind him closing on the stick.

"That's it! I hear that D'Arcy of my school came in here and licked you—knocked you right and left," said Racke. "Now, what I think is this—— Yaroop!"

Racke broke off suddenly as Mr. Stuckey rushed on him, brandishing the big stick.

Mr. Stuckey misunderstood.

He supposed that Racke was some schoolfellow of D'Arcy's who had come to chip him, or perhaps to repeat the performance; and he had the stick ready.

Racke had no time to explain.

The agent grasped him by the collar, spun him round, and laid on the stick across his back with terrific vim.

Whack, whack, whack!

"Yaroop!" roared the Shell fellow. "Help! Leave off! Leggo! Stoppit! I—I—I was going to say—— Yaroooh! Oh, crumbs!"

"Whack, whack, whack!

"I'll teach you!" said Mr. Stuckey, between his teeth. "Take that! And that! And that!"

"Yah! Oh! Help! Help!"

Whack, whack, whack!

Mr. Stuckey, gasping with his exertions, pitched Aubrey Racke out of his office on to the pavement. Racke sprawled there, gasping for breath, dishevelled and furious.

"I give you half a minute to clear off, you young ruffian!" said Mr. Stuckey, shaking the stick at him.

"You fool! You silly idiot!" panted Racke. "I meant——"

He did not finish.

The agent was coming for him, and Racke bounded to his feet and fled.

He did not leave off running till he was out of the village, and then he limped on his way, gasping and groaning. Crooke and Scrope were waiting for him in the lane, and they stared as he came limping up.

"What the thump has happened?" exclaimed Crooke.

"Ow! Oh! Yow! Wow!" was Racke's reply.

"You haven't rowed with the man?" asked Scrope.

"Ow! Ow! The fool misunderstood me!" gasped Racke. "He pitched into me with a stick before I could explain!"

"Oh, crikey!"

"The silly villain nearly smashed me up!" groaned Racke. "I'm sore all over! Ow, ow, ow!"

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

"You silly rotters, what are you cackling at?" yelled Racke in surprise and fury. "You—you rotters, is there anything funny in a chap being nearly smashed up with a big stick?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Crooke and Scrope apparently thought there was, for they shrieked. Racke shook a savage fist at them and limped on, leaving his dear pals still yelling.

DOES YOUR SOLDIER PAL WRITE TO YOU?

Notepaper is "some" price these days, but none of us would grudge Tommy all the paper he needs on which to write those cheery letters of his if paper were treble the price it is to-day. Still, it's no use simply "gassing" about it; it's up to each one to do his bit to pay the piper.

"It costs the Y.M.C.A., who supply Tommy with free stationery, no less than £60,000 a year. Sixpence will supply your own or somebody else's pal with enough notepaper to write one letter each week for a year. Going to let him have it? Of course you are!

So send sixpence along to-day to Y.M.C.A. (Stationery Fund), Tottenham Court Road, London, W.C., mentioning that it comes from a reader of this paper.

CHAPTER 6.

Trying It On.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY had displayed no signs of uneasiness while the uncertainty lasted; but doubtless he shared the relief of his chums when it became pretty clear that no "blue paper" was to be expected. Tom Merry & Co. were completely puzzled at Mr. Stuckey's inaction; but it did not puzzle Gussy. His view was that Mr. Stuckey realised that he had only had his deserts, and did not choose to go farther and fare worse. Indeed, he had an idea that he ought to call upon Mr. Stuckey again, to urge the claims of Mrs. Hastings to consideration, and his chums warned him solemnly that the first step he took in the direction of Mr. Stuckey's office would be a signal for the biggest ragging he had ever experienced. Blake explained that they had had enough worry on his account, and were fed up.

"Besides, the summons may still come!" remarked Monty Lowther. "Stuckey may be only biding his time. You're not out of the wood yet, Gussy!"

"Wats!" said Arthur Augustus cheerfully.

And when Arthur Augustus mentioned, later, that he was going down to Rylcombe to see about his new footer, Blake and Herries and Dig announced significantly that they were coming to Rylcombe, too, to see about that new footer. They did not intend to trust the swell of St. Jim's out of their sight. Thrashing Mr. Stuckey might be entertaining, but it was rather too worrying an entertainment for Study No. 6.

Meanwhile, Racke was feeling very sore. He was sore in body from the vigorous application of Mr. Stuckey's big stick, and still sorer in mind. His happy anticipation of a police-court case with Arthur Augustus figuring in it had been disappointed; but keen as he was to see Arthur Augustus dragged though the mire of a police-court, he did not think of approaching Mr. Stuckey again. He had had quite enough of that. But he was thinking hard; so hard that at afternoon lessons that day he was called to order several time by Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell, and earned a hundred lines by the time the class was dismissed.

But his deep thinking had had results, and when the Shell left their Form-room he led Crooke and Scrope to his study.

"Anythin' on?" asked Crooke.

"Yes; I've thought it out, and I've got a jolly good idea," said Racke. "I know how to make those cads sit up!"

"Go ahead!" said his chums cordially.

"It looks now as if that worm Stuckey is goin' to let the matter drop," said Racke. "I can't understand his reason; but there it is. It would have been no end of a facer for those rotters if a summons had been served on D'Arcy. Whatever they choose to say about it, it's a disgrace!"

"Well, it's not going to happen, just to please us!" yawned Crooke.

"It's goin' to happen!"

"Goin' to see Stuckey again?" chuckled Crooke.

"No. Look here, we don't enter much into their theatrical rot, but we can do it if we like," said Racke. "What about a spoof summons, served on D'Arcy by a spoof bobby?"

"Rot!" answered Crooke decidedly. "I dare say Kerr of the New House could make himself up as a bobby and take anybody in; but I know he jolly well wouldn't, to please you. Lowther could do it, too, but he wouldn't."

"There's nothing in it," said Racke. "The Dramatic Society have the bobby clobber that they use for the comic

policeman in their plays. I know where it's kept, and could bag it quite easily, and the other stuff, too. With a uniform and padding, and elevated boots, and plenty of whiskers and a helmet, anybody could pass as a bobby."

"H'm!"

"Just imagine their feelings when a bobby came up to D'Arcy in the quad!" said Racke, with glistening eyes. "He comes up to him, and serves a blue paper on him, with a crowd of fellows looking on. It will make 'em all feel sicker than they've ever felt before!"

"No doubt it would. But——"

"You know how worried they've been ever since that idiot hammered Stuckey. Well, if it happened——"

Crooke grinned.

"It's too thick!" he said.

"Of course, they'd know it was spoof afterwards," said Racke. "But they'd have the shock of their lives. Gussy would jolly well come down off his perch, too, I'll bet you. He keeps up appearances, but I'd give you ten to one that he's quaking inside, all the same. A bobby and a blue paper would fairly double him up!"

"I dare say it could be worked," said Crooke thoughtfully.

"Fact is, Crooke, you're a dab at such things," said Racke flatteringly. "You could take the shine out of their private theatricals, if you took the trouble. Now, you could play a game like this on your head!"

"Perhaps I could," agreed Gerald Crooke, with a grin. "But I jolly well know I'm not goin' to. I'll look on, old chap."

Racke compressed his lips.

"What about you, Scrope?" he asked.

"Nothing about me," answered Scrope promptly.

"You could do it easily enough," said Racke. "You're clever——"

"This is the first time you've told me so."

"Well, I really think you are clever, and——"

"You're right," said Scrope. "Too jolly clever to let you plant this on me, Aubrey, old nut!"

Racke's eyes gleamed. His comrades were grinning, and it was pretty clear that if Racke's little scheme was to be carried out, the carrying out would have to be done by the enterprising Aubrey himself.

"Go it, Racke!" said Crooke encouragingly. "We'll help you, and we'll—we'll look on. Pile in and win!"

"Well, I'll jolly well do it!" said Racke at last. "It's too jolly good a thing to miss. We'll bag the clobber and the whiskers and things, and get them outside the school, and I'll come in as a policeman."

"You wouldn't have the nerve."

"You'll see!" snapped Racke.

"It's a bit risky. If the Head should see you——"

"I'm chancin' that."

"Well, go ahead, an' good luck," said Crooke. "We'll help, anyhow."

Ten minutes later Racke & Co. left the School House, all three of them carrying bags. The Terrible Three were in the quad, and noticed them pass. But they were far from guessing that the bags contained a choice assortment of the props of the Junior Dramatic Society, borrowed from the property-box without permission being asked.

Racke & Co. sauntered down the road, and entered the wood, selecting a quiet and retired spot for the metamorphosis of Aubrey Racke into a member of his Majesty's Police Force.

Crooke and Scrope had their doubts, and very strong doubts, as to whether Racke could play the part with anything like success, but they were cheerily willing to let him chance it, if he liked. And they helped him industriously. Aubrey Racke donned the uniform, padded out to the required extent, and the big boots, with extremely thick soles, which added to his height. The helmet, too, gave him an appearance of larger stature. Racke had some cleverness in make-up, and that part of the business he did very well, and, with whiskers and a moustache, he looked a good fifty years old.

Certainly, he was small for his age. But, after all, as Crooke remarked, all policemen are not big men, and, though Racke was certainly short for a bobby, he had a burly look. Crooke and Scrope surveyed him quite with admiration when he had finished.

"Think I'll pass?" asked Racke, perhaps with some inward uneasiness.

"Well, nobody could guess who you are, that's a cert," said Crooke. "You'll never be recognised. And I don't see why you shouldn't pass for a country bobby."

"Got the blue paper?" grinned Scrope.

"Yes; here it is. "Racke paused. "Look here, I can't go up to the School House asking for D'Arcy; the Housemaster would come out to see me, and that wouldn't be what we want."

"Ha, ha! No fear!"

"I shall have to catch him out of doors. I'll keep across the road, under the trees, pretty near the gate," said Racke. "You fellows can go back, and whistle when D'Arcy's to be got at. You might manage to edge him near the gate, if possible. Spin him some yarn—say his young brother's been run over, or somethin'."

"Ha, ha! All right."

And, after a little more instruction from P.-c. Racke, Crooke and Scrope returned to the school, and Racke waited in cover as near the gates as he could get without being observed, and listened for the signal whistle.

CHAPTER 7.

Towser Takes a Hand.

"HEWWIES!"

"Hallo?" grunted George Herries.

"Is it weally necessawy to bwing that feahful animal along?"

Snort!

A snort was the only possible reply Herries could make to such a question, for who could talk reasonably to anyone who alluded to Towser, the bulldog, as a "fearful animal"?

"I have wemarked sevewal times, Hewwies, that Towsah has no wespect whatevah for a fellow's twousahs," said Arthur Augustus severely.

"Towser will come in useful," said Blake. "Herries is going to set him on you, Gussy, if you go anywhere near Stuckey's office."

"Bai Jove!"

"Jolly good idea!" said Dig heartily.

"Weally, you duffah——"

"Let's start," said Herries. "Towser's ready."

He jerked at the chain, and Towser rose reluctantly from the road. Crooke and Scrope had strolled up to the gates, and they exchanged a look, and Crooke gave utterance to a shrill whistle.

"He won't come to your whistle, Crooke," said Herries disdainfully.

"Eh? Who won't?" exclaimed Crooke, with a start.

"Towser won't."

Crooke laughed. He had not been whistling to Towser.

"Well, if you are bound to bwing that dweadful animal, Hewwies, pway keep him vewy carefully on the chain," said Arthur Augustus, with a glance of strong disfavour at Towser. "I am vewy fond of dogs, but a chap's clobbah is a chap's clobbah."

"Bother your clobber!" answered Herries. Besides, if it amused a dog to take a nip at a chap's clobber, where's the harm? I don't believe in being selfish."

"I can only wegard that wemark, Hewwies, as uttahly asinine."

"Oh, bow-wow!"

"Hallo!" said Blake, as the Fourth-Formers were about to start, Towser showing some reluctance. "Here comes a bobby! Look out, Gussy!"

"Weally, Blake——"

A figure in uniform had appeared on the road, moving towards them. It was not P.-c. Crump of Rylcombe, certainly, but it looked like a policeman.

Blake's warning to Arthur Augustus had only been meant playfully, but he became serious as he saw that the newcomer had a folded blue paper in his thickly-gloved hand.

"My hat!" murmured Blake. "It—it can't be a paper for Gussy, can it?"

"Oh, my word!" murmured Digby, in dismay.

"Looks like it," said Crooke blandly. "Better bolt while you've got the chance, D'Arcy."

Arthur Augustus gave him a look of sovereign disdain.

"I should wefuse to bolt, Cwooke, undah any circs whatevah," he answered. "I am not afwaid to face the consequences of anythin' I may have done."

Herries looked grim, and spoke softly to Towser. Herries had by no means abandoned his scheme of dealing drastically, with Towser's help, with any limb of the law who attempted to serve a summons upon Arthur Augustus. Herries thought it a good idea, and he was hard to persuade. He considered it very lucky that Towser was with him just then, and he was only waiting now to see whether the policeman's blue paper was for his chum.

Crooke called out to some juniors within the gateway.

"This way, you fellows! D'Arcy's in for it!"

"Hallo! What's the row?" called out Figgins of the New House.

"Summons for D'Arcy."

"My hat!"

"Great Scott!"

Figgins & Co. rushed out, and a dozen fellows after him. There was a buzz of excitement as the whiskered policeman came up, with ponderous steps, in his thick boots.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy did not share in the excitement. He stood quiet and calm and lofty.

He was in the mood of Ajax when that ancient gentleman defied the lightning. The law had no terrors for him, perhaps because he had never come into contact with it.

His eyeglass, gleaming in his eye, was fixed upon the short, fat policeman as the latter drew nigh.

There was a breathless hush as the policeman stopped and touched his helmet.

"Master D'Arcy here?" he asked, in a deep, husky voice.

"Ahem!" murmured Blake.

"Better inquire indoors, officer," said Dick Roylance.

"This way in!" exclaimed Clive.

But those well-meant efforts to avert the danger were brought to naught by Arthur Augustus himself. He chimed in calmly:

"It's all wight, you fellows! Offical,

Cadet Notes.

With the very rapid growth and increase of the Cadet Movement that has taken place throughout the country during the past year, a large number of new corps have been started in places where such organisations did not exist formerly. When these notes first began to appear in this journal a large number of boys who applied for information with a view to joining the nearest corps had to be told that there was no body in existence to which they could be recommended. In many instances this is no longer the case, and if any of our readers who applied in the early days for information have not been able to join a corps yet, they should make further inquiry, and they may possibly find that a battalion or detachment has been started in their neighbourhood which they can belong to. Inquiries should be addressed as hitherto to the Central Association Volunteer Regiments, Judges' Quadrangle, Law Courts, Strand, W.C. 2, who will reply to their letter, and, wherever possible, will gladly send them a note of introduction to the O.C. the nearest corps to the address given. In writing, boys should remember that it is useful if they will give their age and any other particulars about themselves likely to assist in forming a judgment as to a suitable corps for their needs, etc.

This growth of the Cadet Movement has an incidental advantage for the lads themselves, because it opens the door much more easily to rapid promotion for those who take an active and keen interest in the work of the Cadet Movement. We have evidence of a considerable number of cases in which readers of the GEM who have joined Cadet Corps through the means of these Notes during the past few months have become N.C.O.'s, and are now occupying important and useful posts in connection with their local corps. Even then the matter does not stop, as there are instances in which some of the older boys have now secured commissions, and are now temporary Cadet lieutenants or second-lieutenants in connection with their companies. This is a prospect which ought to be attractive to those lads who are anxious to do their best in connection with any movement they identify themselves with. Incidentally, also, it has the advantage of giving them a good jumping-off place for attaining rapid promotion in the Army when they are called up to enter the Regular Forces a year or so hence. In a growing Movement like this, every boy who is determined to do his best and leave no stone unturned to make himself useful and efficient may reasonably hope to attain to some higher rank than that of a mere private, and to all those boys who have this ambition to succeed, a fact of this kind is an additional inducement for joining the Cadet Movement in its present stage.

my name is D'Arcy. Have you any business with me?"

"Yes, sir! Sorry, sir! Rather an unpleasant business, sir. Excuse me; only doing my duty!" said the policeman, in the same husky tones.

"Certainly, officah!"

"I've a little paper for you, sir," said the policeman—"that is, if you are the lad who committed assault and battery upon Mr. Stuckey in his office on Wednesday afternoon."

"Oh, dear!" groaned Blake.

"It's all wight, Blake! I am the person you want, officah; but your statement is not quite cowwect. I did not commit assault and battewy on Mr. Stuckey. I simply thwashed him!"

"That's near enough, sir," said the constable. "This paper is for you, sir, and you will see on it when you have to appear before the magistrates."

"Vewy well."

At that moment there came a startling interruption before the "officer" could serve his little paper.

There was the click of a falling chain, and Herries' voice boomed:

"Fetch him!"

Like an arrow from a bow Towser leaped at the policeman.

The latter jumped back.

"Oh! Ah! Keep that dog off!" he shrieked.

"Fetch him, Towser!"

"Stop him, Hewwies!" shouted Arthur Augustus.

"Herries, you ass!"

"Call him off!"

Herries did not heed.

"Fetch him!" he roared. "Seize him!"

Towser was doing his best. But the policeman was also doing his best; he had an evident dislike to being fetched and seized by a bulldog. He dodged wildly to escape, and took to his heels, fleeing down the road like one possessed. His helmet fell off, and Towser stayed one moment to give it a snap, and then raced on again after the limb of the law.

The juniors stood spellbound for a moment with horror. What might be the result of setting a bulldog at a policeman they did not know; but they knew it must be something terribly serious.

"Herries!" gasped Blake. "You—you idiot! Call him off!"

"Stop him!"

"After him!" shouted Tom Merry, who had come out at the gates with Manners and Lowther. "Stop him somehow!"

The juniors broke into a rush in pursuit

But they were far behind. The policeman, fat as he was, was covering the ground in great style, with Towser in hot pursuit. They vanished round the bend in the lane.

"Oh, you chum, Herries! You frabjous chump!" gasped Blake.

"Rats!" snapped Herries.

"I say, that blue paper is on the ground," called out Trimble.

"Leave it there! It's not served!" answered Herries. "I think this is a jolly good idea. They'll have to get a fresh summons now."

"Oh, you frabjous ass!" stuttered Tom Merry. "You may be sent to chokey for this!"

"Rats!" answered Herries.

"But don't you know——"

"I know that bobby won't be serving summonses again in a hurry if Towser gets hold of him."

"Oh, you chump!"

The juniors came tearing round the bend in the lane, and they gasped with relief when they saw the policeman astride of a high paling, with Towser snarling below. He had jumped to safety, and was sitting in a rather precarious position, holding on and yelling for help.

"He's not got him!" gasped Tom Merry. "Thank goodness for that!"

"He'll have him!" answered Herries calmly.

"Bad for you if he does, you ass!" Call him off!"

"Rats!"

"Weally, Hewweis——"

"Hallo! What's that he's shouting?" exclaimed Lowther, as the juniors came panting up to the scene.

The policeman, clinging to the palings, was yelling for help; but he was no longer using a deep, husky voice. And what he was saying was not quite in keeping with the constabulary character.

"Call him off! Herries, you hound, call that fiend of a dog off! I'll complain to the Head! I'll poison him! I'll get a gun and shoot him! Blake, you rotter, make Herries call him off! Help!"

Tom Merry rubbed his eyes in blank amazement.

"That's Racke's voice!" he said dazedly

"Gr-r-r-r-r!" came from Towser.

"Call him off! Do you hear? I shall be falling in a minute! I'll have him killed! Help! You rotters, do you want me to be torn to pieces? Help!"

"Racke!" yelled Blake.

"Wacke, bai Jove!"

"Spoofed!" ejaculated Monty Lowther. "Racke, by all the little tin gods! What a lark—for Racke! Stick to him, Towser!"

CHAPTER 8.
The Woes of a Humorist.

TOWSER was sitting below the fence watching the disguised junior above with a deadly intentness. It did not matter to Towser whether Aubrey Racke was a real policeman or not; he had been told to fetch him and seize him, and he was going to fetch him and seize him if he could.

Racke was not recognisable, though his disguise was in disorder now. His whiskers were loosened, and his wig a little sideways, and some of his buttons had burst off and the padding was exuding. His made-up face was full of terror. Never had a practical joker looked so exceedingly unhumorous. Racke's face was still unrecognisable, but his sharp and unmusical voice was known.

The discovery that he was not a real policeman quite banished the seriousness of the affair. The juniors roared with laughter, while Towser growled with a growl of deep menace.

"Blessed if I knew Racke was such a humorist!" grinned Blake.

"Wathah funnay, I must say!" remarked Arthur Augustus, with a chuckle. "Vewwy funnay indeed—just now!"

"Better stick to the fence, Racke!" roared Figgins. "Towser's ready for business if you drop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I can't hold on much longer, you

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Each card is divided up into thirty-one spaces Whenever you have 6d. to spare you just buy a coupon at the post-office and fix it on one of the spaces. As soon as all the spaces are filled up you can take the card to a post-office and exchange it for a 15s. 6d. War Savings Certificate.

In five years' time that certificate will be worth £1.

This is the best way for a patriotic boy to put money by. Won't you try it?

rotters!" howled Racke. "The dashed palings are sticking in me. There go my bags!"

There was the sound of rending cloth.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Not so bad as Towser will give you when you drop!" said Herries.

"Call him off!"

"No fear!"

"Crooke! Scrope!" yelled Racke. "Get something and smash him! Get a stick, or an axe! Drive him away! Kill him!"

"Yes, do!" said Herries grimly. "You go near Towser, and I'll set him on you!"

"I'm not interfering!" said Crooke hastily, and he walked away with Scrope.

Aubrey Racke's chums felt that as Racke had landed himself in this, he could get himself out again without their aid.

Tom Merry wiped his eyes.

"Racke, old man, you're too funny!" he said. "You sho ldn't be so humorous. That clobber won't be worth much when you've finished sitting on the fence."

"It's yours!" yelled Racke.

"What?"

"I've taken this clobber out of your property-box!" hissed Racke.

"You cheeky chump!" roared Tom Merry, in great wrath.

"Ha, ha, ha!" howled Cardew of the Fourth. "This is funnier than ever! Why don't you laugh, Tommy?"

There was another sound of rending.

The uniform was going in all directions, as Racke clung on frantically to the top of the palings.

"Call that beast off, Herries!" said Tom Merry hastily.

Herries caught hold of the chain. Nobody was worried about Aubrey Racke; but the property of the Junior Dramatic Society was a more serious matter. Towser reluctantly obeyed his master's hand.

"Hop it, Racke!" grinned Blake.

Racke, with some difficulty, detached himself from the palings, and dropped into the lane. There was a clink of the chain as Towser made a movement towards him, and Racke yelled:

"Hold that beast in!"

Herries grunted, and led Towser away—not very easily, for the bulldog was in a state of indignation at being deprived of his promised bite. Aubrey Racke stood panting and perspiring. There was a heavy tread on the road, and a deep and important voice interrupted the chortling of the juniors.

"Ho!" Wot's all this 'ere?"

"My hat! Crump!" murmured Blake.

Police-constable Crump, of Rylcombe, fixed his official eyes upon Aubrey Racke in astonishment and wrath.

Racke was a peculiar sight, with his uniform burst and torn, most of the buttons off, and his wig sideways, his whiskers hanging by wire-ends, and his moustache on one side of his nose. Naturally, Mr. Crump was indignant at seeing such a figure in a constabulary uniform.

"Ho!" he said severely. "Ho! Wot's this 'ere?"

"Nothing to do with you!" snapped Racke savagely.

"Ain't it?" said Mr. Crump warmly. "That there's a hofficial uniform or a himitation of it! Don't you know it's agin the law to dress yourself up as a constable, you young rapscallion?"

"Oh, rot!"

"Bai Jove! That's quite true," said Arthur Augustus. "I am afraid you have landed yourself in twouble, Wacke."

The juniors were serious enough now. Wearing a policeman's uniform in a school play was one thing, but wearing

"Gr-r-r!"
(See Chapter 8.)

it out of doors was quite another. Aubrey Racke realised that, too.

"Look here, Crump, it was only a joke," he said. "I'm Racke, of St. Jim's. You needn't interfere."

"I've get my dooty to do," said Mr. Crump stolidly. "I find you dressed up as a constab'e, caricaturin' his Majesty's uniform. I'm going to take you into custody, Master Racke!"

"What?" yelled Racke.

"You come alonger me!"

"I—I tell you it was only a lark!" shrieked Racke, in great alarm.

"You can explain all that at the station!"

"Look here——"

"Are you coming quietly?" asked Mr. Crump.

"Bai Jove! I say, Mr. Cwump——"

"For goodness' sake——" began Tom Merry.

Mr. Crump waved them aside with a huge hand.

"'Nuff said! You come alonger me, Master Racke! If you've got anything to say, you can say it at the station. Now, then, lively's the word!"

Mr. Crump dropped his heavy hand upon the shoulder of the horrified Racke, and marched him away up the lane.

Tom Merry & Co. looked on in consternation.

"My word!" murmured Blake. "This takes the whole cake, and no mistake! Poor old Racke!"

"Bai Jove! I am weally sowwy for Wacke!"

"The—the old ass can't intend to take him to the station, surely!" ejaculated Mamers.

"Looks like it!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

Mr. Crump and his prisoner disappeared round the bend in the lane, Racke expostulating frantically.

"Well, that puts the lid on!" murmured Cardew. "Why was Racke born so humorous?"

"The Head will have to go and bail him out!" giggled Trimble. "I say, shall I cut off and tell the Head?"

"Dry up, you fat duffer!" said Tom Merry. "I believe Crump's only frightening him!"

"After all, he has no right to dress up as a bobby in public," said Dig. "I believe it's against the law."

"Yaas, wathah."

"Let's see what happens, anyway!" remarked Levison.

The juniors moved on down the road after Mr. Crump and his prisoner. They soon spotted Mr. Crump stalking loftily onward; but he was going alone. Aubrey Racke was on the belt of grass beside the road, tearing off his uniform, and stamping on it. Fortunately, he had his own clothes underneath.

"Oh! He's let you go!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

Racke scowled at him.

"It's cost me a quid!" he hissed.

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, in a shocked tone. "I twust, Wacke, that you have not been guilty of the wottennes of bwibin' an officah to neglect his dutay?"

"Fool!" was Racke's polite reply.

"Weally, Wacke——"

The unfortunate Aubrey hurled off the last fragment of his disguise.

"There's your rubbish, Tom Merry," he said. "You can pick it up and stick it together if you like!"

Tom Merry glanced at the rags and tatters which had once been a valued "prop" of the Dramatic Society.

"I don't like!" he answered. "You've spoiled that outfit, Racke, and you will have to pay for it."

"Catch me!" snarled Racke.

"I'll catch you fast enough if you don't stump up," answered Tom. "You've done about four pounds' worth of damage, and you'll pay every shilling to the Dramatic Society. You shouldn't be funny with other people's property."

"I won't pay a penny!" roared Racke.

"You'll see!"

Racke stamped away furiously. His humorous scheme had ended in the rankest possible failure, and he knew that he would have to pay for the damage he had done to the Dramatic Society's props. He paid up the next day, the alternative being a record ragging from wrathful amateur dramatists, and his feelings when he parted with the money were too deep for words. And when Crooke and Scrope asked him smilingly when he was "going for" Tom Merry & Co. again, Racke's answer was couched in language worthy only of a wild Hun. He had had enough of Tom Merry & Co.

CHAPTER 9.
What's to be Done?

GRUNDY of the Shell came in from a bike ride a few days later with a majestic frown upon his brow. He strode into the School House still frowning. Evidently something had happened to stir the ire of the great Grundy.

"Hallo! What's the trouble, mighty chief?" asked Monty Lowther as Grundy came striding in. "Have the naughty Grammarians been ragging you?"

Grundy snorted.

"Like to catch anybody ragging me!" he said.

"Isn't the war going on according to your expert opinion of how it ought to be done?" asked Manners.

"No, it isn't!" said Grundy. "But that's not the matter now. I'm going to take a hand in this! I'm not going to allow it!"

"Eh? What?"

"I'm going to put a notice on the board!" said Grundy. "In this matter I expect all the fellows to rally round me."

"Oh!"

Grundy strode away to his study. Wilkins and Gunn were there at tea. Grundy did not waste any words on his study-mates. He rapidly cleared a corner of the table, and sat down with a pen and a sheet of impot paper.

"Anything on?" ventured Wilkins.

"Don't interrupt!"

"Ahem!"

Grundy finished scrawling without further interruptions. Wilkins ate the sardines he had left for Grundy.

"There!" said George Alfred, when he had finished. "That'll do! You fellows don't fail to turn up at the meeting, mind!"

"Eh? Is there a meeting?" inquired Gunn.

"Yes! Common-room at six."

"Oh! But what——"

Grundy strode out of the study without answering. He made his way with all speed to the notice-board, where his paper was pinned up in a prominent position. A good many fellows gathered round to see what George Alfred was up to, and they read Grundy's notice with surprise and entertainment. It ran:

"A MEETING IS CALLED FOR SIX SHARP, IN THE COMMON-ROOM, TO DEEL WITH A MATTER OF NASHONAL IMPORTANCE. ALL PAYTRIOTIC FELLOWS ARE EXPECTED TO TERN UP.

"SIGNED, GEORGE ALFRED GRUNDY."

"Another of Grundy's fatheaded stunts!" yawned Jack Blake. "What beats me is how Grundy expects anybody to come and listen to his burbling. The proper place for Grundy is the House of Commons, or a home for idiots!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"What's up, Grundy?" called out Talbot of the Shell.

"You'll hear at the meeting," answered Grundy loftily.

"I don't think I can, Grundy."

"Eh? Why not?"

"Because I sha'n't be there," explained Talbot, with a smile.

"Same with the rest of us, I fancy," said Gore. "It's nearly six, Grundy. Better go to your meeting. You'll have it all to yourself."

Grundy glared.

"Is this what you call patriotism?" he asked bitterly.

"Is it patriotic to listen to a silly ass gassing?" asked Levison.

"You see, old bean, you're an awful bore," remarked Cardew. "You run on like a politician making epoch-making speeches till you make fellows nearly weep. Go and hold your meeting by yourself."

"I wegard that as a vewy good idea," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "No harm in Gwunday borin' himself to death."

"I want all you fellows to rally round," exclaimed Grundy warmly. "If you don't care about a soldier's wife being turned out of her home——"

"Eh?"

"What?"

"Oh, you're interested at last, are you?" hooted Grundy. "Well, I've just passed Rose Cottage on my bike, and called in to see whether Mrs. Hastings was all serene, and I found a fat bounder from London there. She's been turned out, and this bomb-dodgin' Hun has bagged her cottage!"

"Bai Jove! That howwid wascal Stuckey has done it, even aftah I gave him a feahful thwashin'!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus indignantly. "I took all that twouble for nothin', bai Jove!"

"I'm going to stop it!" said Grundy.

"You are?" yelled Blake.

"Yes; and I expect backing up. Now, you fellows, come along to the meeting!" said Grundy loftily, and he strode away to the Common-room.

Tom Merry & Co. followed him. They were anxious to hear about poor Mrs. Hastings, and a crowd of fellows followed the Terrible Three. Grundy's announcement that he was going to "stop it" was rather interesting.

It was certainly a dirty piece of business, but it was not clear how a junior in the Shell at St. Jim's was going to stop a grasping landlord and his agent from doing whatever the law allowed them to do.

Grundy mounted upon a chair, finding himself in possession of a meeting numbering a dozen to begin with.

"Gentlemen," said George Alfred, "I've a few words to say. Don't joggle this chair, Lowther, you idiot! Gentlemen—— If you point that pea-shooter at me, Tompkins, I'll come over there and mash you like potatoes!"

"Hear, hear!"

"You chaps," resumed Grundy, "know that that man Hastings is at the Front, and he left the country generally to look after his wife and nippers while he was gone. We're part of the country, I suppose."

"A very important part," said Monty Lowther solemnly. "Passed nem. con."

"Well," resumed Grundy, "Mrs. Hastings has been turned out of her cottage to make room for a bomb-dodger who has offered a higher rent over her head."

"Shame!"

"The fellow doesn't even want the cottage to live in," went on Grundy. "He's only keeping it to dodge into whenever there's a raid. It's shut up at other times, and useless to anybody. I've been making some inquiries. Mrs. Hastings has had to plant her two nippers on relations at different places simply to get them shelter—one three miles away, the other five miles away—and she's had to put up with a friend for the present who can't accommodate more than one, and is crowded out with one. Is that a proper state of affairs?"

"Wathah not."

"Mind, I don't object to civilians clearing out of places where there are raids," said Grundy generously. "Let 'em do it, and take what accommodation they can get. That's fair. But don't let 'em turn poorer people out of their homes by bribing measly landlords with high rents. Of course, there's not many would do that. But there's some, I'm sorry to say, and this man Chumper is one of them."

"A wegulah wottah!"

"Shame!"

"Of course," added Grundy, "it's got to be stopped."

"Oh!"

"I'm going to stop it!"

"Ahem!"

"And I expect every patriotic fellow here to back me up. I think I've mentioned that Mr. Hastings is at the Front. He can't come home and look after the missus and the nippers. We're going to do it for him. Otherwise," added Grundy loftily—"otherwise I should not feel justified in asking Mr. Hastings to go on licking the Huns."

"Hear, hear!"

"Not so much chinwag, old nut!" said Cardew. "If you've got anythin' to suggest get it off your chest. Do you want us to lynch Chumper over his own door—I mean, Mrs. Hastings' door?"

"It would serve him right!" snapped Grundy.

"Agreed! Anybody got a rope?" asked Cardew, looking round.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm not suggesting lynching," said Grundy. "Mind, I shouldn't disapprove of it entirely. But I feel that that would be going too far."

"Go hon!"

"Civilisation has its drawbacks," said Grundy, "but we live in a civilised country, and we can't have lynchings. There's other ways. I'm going to take a party there to-morrow afternoon, as it's a half-holiday."

"What then?"

"And rout him out."

"What?" yelled the juniors.

"Rout him out of Mrs. Hastings' cottage," said Grundy firmly. "I feel that this is my duty."

"Oh, holy smoke!"

"My idea is this: We march on Rose Cottage, march in, collar the man, and duck him in the pond."

"Great Scott!"

"Then we give him the frog's march all the way to the railway-station——"

"Ye gods!"

"And pitch him into the first train—never mind where it's going," said Grundy. "That ought to settle the matter, I think."

The juniors gazed at George Alfred Grundy. The great Grundy's ideas were always drastic, but this was, as Blake remarked, a corker.

"Well?" snapped Grundy, who had expected a rousing cheer. "Well?"

"My hat!" gasped Tom Merry. "Have you ever heard of an institution called the law, Grundy?"

"Blow the law!"

"Oh!"

"I don't think much of the law," said Grundy truculently. "What is the law, anyway? Only a dodge for helping lawyers to live without working."

"Bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy's original views on legal institutions evoked some applause. Certainly the great George Alfred had the courage to air some of his opinions.

"Mind, that's what I'm going to do," said Grundy. "I rely on all patriotic chaps to back me up. Aren't we always being told to back up the men at the Front? Well, you can take it from me Tommies don't care twopence whether we howl patriotic songs and wag flags, but they do care whether their folks at home are looked after. I know that, because I've got common-sense. I'm about the only chap here who's got common-sense, I'm afraid. But I've got it."

"Weally, Gwunday——"

"Every chap who's coming with me to-morrow to rout out Chumper can give me his name," said Grundy. "The fat bounder's at the cottage now fixing himself up. Most likely he's going away soon, unless there's an air-raid, and in that case he'll be hiding under the cabbages in the garden, I expect. We've got to strike the iron while it's hot. It stands to reason that after we've handled him he will be fed up with Rose Cottage. If he comes back we'll handle him again—and a bit harder. That's the programme."

"And suppose he calls in the police?" demanded Levison.

"Oh, blow the police!" said Grundy. "I could handle a policeman, if you come to that."

"Oh, my only hat!"

"Weally Gwunday," said Arthur Augustus severely, "I share your indignation, but I wegard you as little bettah than a Bolshevik. I weally think we ought to deal with this person Chumpah, but I insist upon wespect for law and ordah."

"Perhaps a little gentle ragging," said Tom Merry thoughtfully. "Something ought to be done. But if you start fighting policemen, Grundy, we'll carry you home and lock you up in the woodshed!"

"Look here——"

"Do you want to be put in chokey, you ass?" exclaimed Blake.

"Among the conscientious objectors," added Wilkins.

"A conscientious objector is a man and a brother compared with that man Chumper!" answered Grundy. "I'm prepared to go to chokey for doing my duty, if necessary."

"Well, you're jolly well not going," said Tom Merry laughing. "You'll take a back seat in this bizney, Grundy."

"What?"

"We'll see what's to be done," said the captain of the Shell, "and we'll do it in a sensible way. You can come and help."

"Me—come and help!" stuttered Grundy. "Why, you cheeky ass, you chump, I'm taking the lead! I'm the chief. I—I—— Don't march off, you silly, fatheads, while I'm talking to you!"

But the juniors did march off, and George Alfred Grundy was left in sole possession of the Common-room, to waste his sweetness on the desert air.

CHAPTER 10.

St. Jim's on the War-path.

TOM MERRY & Co. did some thinking the next day on the subject of the news Grundy had brought.

They were indignant.

It was not, perhaps, exactly their business; but a good many of the juniors agreed to make it their business.

Grundy was an ass, but Grundy was right in stating that patriotism did not consist wholly in wagging flags and spouting. There was such a thing as practical patriotism, which made less noise and was of more use. Still, it was difficult to see what was to be done. Mr. Chumper was a bomb-dodging beast, that was agreed. Mr. Stuckey was a cad of the first water; that was passed nem. con.; and Private Hastings was worth bushels of them. But——

Tom Merry rubbed his nose in perplexity as he thought of it. The little home had been broken up, and poor Mrs. Hastings separated from her children for the sake of getting them shelter of any sort. What miserable news to go out in a letter to a man facing terrible dangers for his country's sake! What a state of affairs for Private Hastings to find when he came home on leave! But——

Private Hastings' youthful champions really did not know what could be done; but they were determined to do something. And it was decided that a visit should be paid to Rose Cottage, at least, and that Horatio Chumper should learn what they thought of him. And a little ragging, within the limits of law and order, might do good.

Grundy was gently but firmly pushed into the background. Tom Merry took the matter in hand. After dinner that day he called for volunteers to call on Mr. Chumper.

There was no lack of volunteers.

The Terrible Three and Study No. 6 were the first, and Figgins & Co. of the New House, and Grundy and Wilkins and Gunn. They were joined by Roylance, and Kerruish and Reilly and Gore and Talbot and Julian, and Redfern and Durrance and Kangaroo, and at least a dozen more fellows. Levison and Clive came, of course, and even Cardew found energy enough to join up. It was quite an army that started from the school gates.

Racke & Co. watched them start with sneering looks, but did not join in. After they had gone Racke looked thoughtfully at his chums.

"Those silly chumps are goin' to kick up a shindy," he said. "I wonder what the Head would say?"

"Drop on 'em heavy, I should think," answered Crooke. "I believe he'd be down on Chumper; but he couldn't uphold kicking up a shindy at a man's house. "A bit too much like hooliganism."

"That's what I was thinkin'," said Racke, with a cunning gleam in his eyes. "A word dropped to a prefect, now——"

"Sneakin's rather risky."

"They'd never know. Suppose we let a word drop to Knox of the Sixth. He wouldn't mention where he'd got his information."

"Better not," said Crooke uneasily.

"Well, I'm goin' to," said Racke coolly. "I'll give 'em time to start a shindy, and then put Knox on the track."

And half an hour later Aubrey Racke looked for Gerald Knox of the Sixth with that laudable object in view.

Quite unsuspicious of Racke's intentions, Tom Merry & Co. marched away, a little vague as to what they intended to do, but fully determined to do something.

They arrived at Rose Cottage.

The first object that met their eyes was Mr. Chumper himself, sitting in a big chair in the garden under the apple-tree reading a newspaper, and nodding over it. Mr. Chumper had lunched at the Railway Arms in Rylcombe, and was now taking his ease in his garden. He did not look as if he were enjoying the quiet of the countryside. But he had to remain at Rose Cottage until he had seen it furnished for his use; then, doubtless, he intended to lock the place up, to be revisited when air-raids recommenced. It was to lie unoccupied till wanted by the bomb-dodger, while its previous occupants were scattered wherever they could find shelter from wind and weather.

Mr. Chumper glanced up as the garden gate clicked, and he stared at the sight of a crowd of schoolboys marching in.

He waved his newspaper at them, and called out:

"Hi!"

"Hallo, old bird!" said Cardew.

"You're not allowed in this garden. Clear out at once!" said Mr. Chumper warmly.

"Bow-wow!"

The juniors came across the little lawn towards the astonished Chumper. He sat and stared at them, and frowned portentously as he recognised Monty Lowther among them. He had not forgotten his little walk on the moor under that cheery youth's guidance.

"What do you want?" he ejaculated at last.

"Pway allow me to addwess this person, deah boys——"

"Dry up, Gussy!"

"Let a chap speak!" roared Grundy. "Look here——"

"Shut up, Grundy!"

"I'm not going to shut up! I—— Yaroooh!" roared Grundy, as he sat down suddenly in the grass.

"Now shut up, or we'll make Fatty Wynn sit on you," said Tom Merry severely.

"Yaas, wathah! Leave the talkin' to me, deah boys! As a fellow of tact and judgment——"

"Cheese it!"

"I wefuse to cheese it! I am goin' to make an appeal to Mr. Chumpah's bettah feelin's," said Arthur Augustus firmly. "I twust that Mr. Chumpah will listen to weason."

"Get out of my garden!" roared Mr. Chumper, displaying no sign whatever of any intention of listening to reason.

"Pway listen to me, Mr. Chumpah, for——"

"Get out!"

"Look heah——"

"I'll send for the police!"

"Wats!"

"Collar the cad and rag him!" bellowed Grundy.

"Pway dwy up, Gwunday, while I appeal to Mr. Chumpah's bettah feelin's."

"Give Gussy his head," said Jack Blake. "He's bound to jaw; he can't help it. Besides, he's funny."

"I wefuse to be wegarded as funnay, Blake!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus indignantly. "This is a vewy sewious mattah. Mr. Chumpah, pway give me your attention while I make a few wemarks."

"I—I—I'll——" gasped Mr. Chumper.

"I do not intend to wepwove you for bomb-dodgin'," said Arthur Augustus magnanimously. "It would be more dignified to stand the wacket, and take no notice of disgustin' Huns; but let that pass. You are entitled to find countwy quartahs, if you can; but you are not entitled to turn anyone else out to make room for you. I twust you see that clearly."

"Will you get off my premises?" shouted Mr. Chumper.

"Certainly not. I have not yet finished. You have taken possession of this wesidence, Mr. Chumpah, undah particulahly wotten circs. The lady you have dispossessed is a soldiah's wife, and therefore entitled to evewyone's

vewy best considewation. Mr. Hastings is at pwesent fightin' the Germans, to save the skins of unsavouwy wottahs like you, sir. Seein' it in this light, I am suah you will admit that you cannot possibly wemain heah."

Mr. Chumper stuttered.

He would certainly have been guilty of assault and battery just then if the swell of St. Jim's had been alone. But there were rather too many of the St. Jim's fellows to be assaulted and battered by Mr. Chumper. So he had to let Arthur Augustus run on, and Arthur Augustus ran on cheerfully:

"I am therefore makin' an appeal to your bettah feelin's, sir. I twust you will vacate these pwemises at once, and allow the wightful tenant to weturn. May I take it that you intend to do so?"

"By gad!" gasped Mr. Chumper. "If you don't clear out of my garden I'll—I'll—I'll——"

"Am I to understand, Mr. Chumpah, that you wefuse to vacate these pwemises?" asked D'Arcy calmly.

"Get out!"

"That means that the answer's in the negative, as the gas merchants say in Parliament!" chuckled Cardew.

"I wequiah a plain 'Yes!' or 'No!' Mr. Chumpah!"

"No!" roared Mr. Chumper. "Now, get out!"

"Vewy well! Gentlemen, I see nothin' for it but to wag this person," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity.

"You dare to lay a finger——" hooted Mr. Chumper.

He had no time to finish, for George Alfred Grundy, getting out of control, as it were, made a sudden rush at him. George Alfred grasped the garden chair, up-ended it, and Mr. Chumper, with a roar, spread over the grass. His paper went in one direction, his hat in another, and Mr. Chumper sprawled in the grass and blinked up at the blue sky—feeling as if he were in the middle of one of the air-raids he was so bent on dodging.

CHAPTER 11.
Nice for Horatio.

"HA, ha, ha!"

"Yow-ow-ow!" came from Horatio Chumper.

"Take hold of him!" said Grundy. "There's a pond across the field!"

Mr. Chumper sat up.

He was in a rather dazed condition, and boiling with wrath.

"I'll have you all run in for this!" he spluttered. "How dare you trespass in my garden and assault a man! How dare you! What? Oh, dear! Ow!"

"Are you going?" asked Tom Merry.

"Yow-ow! I'll prosecute you!"

"Yank him along by his spindle shanks!" said Grundy impatiently.

"Order!" rapped out Tom Merry. "Don't be rough!"

"Look here——"

"Take him by the ears!"

"Oh, all right!"

Grundy took one of Mr. Chumper's ears, and Tom Merry took the other. They were, as it happened, of a size convenient for handling. The unfortunate bomb-dodger looked like a man dreaming. He really found it hard to believe that this was happening at all. It was utterly unheard-of.

But it was happening! The grip on his ears was very real, and he howled with anguish as he was assisted to his feet.

He struck out fiercely at the juniors, but his wrists were grasped at once by many hands; and he was helpless.

Stuttering with wrath, Mr. Chumper was marched out of his garden into the lane.

"This way to the pond!" said Grundy. Tom Merry shook his head.

"We're not going to duck him, Grundy!" That's too thick. We'll take him for a walk—a long walk."

"We're going to duck him!" roared Grundy, dragging at Mr. Chumper by one ear to get him to the pond.

"We're not!" snapped Tom Merry, holding on tightly to Mr. Chumper's other ear.

Grundy dragged, and Tom Merry pulled; and there was an agonised howl from the unfortunate bone of contention.

"Yow-ow-ow! Help! Police! Leggo! Oh, my ears! Yaroooh!"

"Let go, Grundy!"

"Rats! You let go!"

"Yaroooop! Help!"

"Bai Jove! You'll have the fellow's eahs off if you keep on like this!" remarked Arthur Augustus. "They are gettin' vewy wed!"

"Yow-ow-wooop!"

Two or three juniors tripped up Grundy, who rolled over with a roar. Mr. Chumper jerked his head free, wrenched his hands loose, and rubbed his ears in deep anguish.

"This way, Chumper!" said Tom Merry.

"I won't come!" roared Mr. Chumper. "Do you think you can turn a man out of his house?"

"You've turned a woman out!" said Blake.

Mr. Chumper made a dive into the garden again.

"After him!" yelled Lowther.

There was a rush in pursuit.

Horatio Chumper was bolting wildly for the house, with the idea of locking himself in; but the juniors overtook him at the doorway.

Half a dozen pairs of hands grasped him, and he went down, with the juniors sprawling over him.

"Got him!" roared Blake.

"Sit on him!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Yaroooop! Oh! Ah! Help!" came in muffled tones from under the heap of juniors. "Police! Help!"

There was a buzz of a bicycle-bell on the road, and a shout from Kerruish near the gate.

"Cave! Here comes Kildare!"

There was a scattering of some of the juniors as Kildare of the Sixth came speeding up to the cottage on his bicycle.

Tom Merry & Co. scrambled up from the gasping Mr. Chumper as the captain of St. Jim's jumped off his machine and came striding up the garden path.

Kildare's brow was thunderous.

"Then you are here?" he exclaimed.

"Yaas, Kildare! Heah we are!"

"Knox told me he thought you were coming here for a row!" exclaimed the prefect. "I could hardly believe it."

"You—you see——" stammered Tom Merry.

"What are you doing here?" demanded the captain of St. Jim's.

Grundy strode forward independently.

"We're ragging that cad!" he said, pointing to the wriggling and gasping Mr. Chumper. "He's turned a soldier's wife out of this cottage, and we're ragging him. Got any objections to make?"

"Yes, a few!" said Kildare grimly. "I shall have to report this to the Head. All of you clear off at once!"

"Look here——" roared Grundy.

"Take a hundred lines, Grundy!"

"Why, I—I——"

"Weally, Kildare, you seem undah a slight misappwehension. We are bound to wag this wottah till he allows Mrs. Hastings to have her cottage again!"

"Patriotic duty, you know!" murmured Cardew.

Mr. Chumper sat up, spluttering.

"I'll have the law on you! I'll prosecute you! I'll—I'll—I'll—I'll——"

"You shut up, Chumper!" said Grundy, giving the fat gentleman a push with his boot which sent him rolling again.

"Grundy, leave this garden at once!" rapped out Kildare. The captain of St. Jim's did not sympathise with Horatio Chumper, but he had his duty to do. "All of you now—sharp!"

Grundy was inclined to rebel; but Kildare's word was law, and the St. Jim's juniors marched out of the garden. Grundy snorted very emphatically as he went, and confided to Wilkins and Gunn that if the other fellows would back him up he would duck Kildare in the pond along with Horatio Chumper. To which Wilkins replied with brevity and emphasis: "Ass!"

In the lane, having shepherded the raggers out of the garden, Kildare gave them a stern look.

"I suppose you meant well in playing this extraordinary prank," he said; "but you have to learn not to take the law into your own hands. That man is sure to complain to the Head."

"Let him!" said Grundy.

"And I am bound to report the matter," said Kildare. "I'm afraid you're booked for trouble. Now, get back to the school, and I'll see you go!"

"I say, Kildare——"

"Weally, you know——"

"Get a move on!" rapped out Kildare, and the juniors obeyed. There was nothing else to be done.

Mr. Chumper was left gasping, in a state of breathless wrath and indignation, in the cottage garden.

With Kildare's grim eye on them Tom Merry & Co. marched back to St. Jim's. Knox of the Sixth grinned at them as they came in, looking rather crestfallen.

"You will all remain indoors for the present," said Kildare.

"All right!" said Tom Merry resignedly. "Any old thing, Kildare!"

"I pwotest!" said Arthur Augustus firmly.

Kildare affected not to hear that remark, and he went on to the Head's study. Tom Merry & Co. went to their studies, not in a happy frame of mind. They felt that they had dealt with Mr. Chumper according to his deserts; but the most sanguine among them did not expect the Head to take the same view.

And when the order came for Tom Merry, Blake, and Figgins to appear before the Head there were dismal looks. The three were evidently selected as the ringleaders.

"Let's all go together," said Dig.

"Yaas, wathah! I wefuse to wemain behind!"

"You'll do nothing of the kind!" rapped out Kildare, who brought the order. "The Head wants Merry, Figgins, and Blake."

"Weally, Kildare——"

The captain of St. Jim's marched the three away, heedless of Arthur Augustus. And with very serious faces the unfortunate trio were taken into the Head's study.

CHAPTER 12.
"All Serene!"

DR. HOLMES glanced at the juniors overh is glasses with a very stern expression.

The three faced him in a row in silence.

"What is this?" said the Head severely. "Is it possible, Merry, that you have led a number of boys of this school in making a disturbance at a gentleman's residence in the neighbourhood?"

"No, sir!" said Tom Merry firmly.

"I understand from Kildare——"

"Kildare hasn't got it quite right, sir! The man isn't a gentleman; and it's not his residence," said Tom.

The Head coughed, and Kildare suppressed a grin.

"Ahem! You are playing upon words, Merry. You made a disturbance at the residence of a Mr. Chumper——"

"We thought it was justified, sir."

"Quite!" said Figgins.

"I cannot see how such a proceeding can be justified, but I am willing to hear you," said the Head. "Kindly tell me your objects and motives."

Tom Merry proceeded to explain, helped out by Figgins and Blake with occasional interjections.

The Head listened silently and attentively.

What he thought of the story could not be read in his face, but his look certainly was not unkindly.

Kildare's frank face expressed a good deal of sympathy with the delinquents, though, as a representative of law and order, the prefect could not very well give expression to his opinion.

"Dear me!" said the Head, when the juniors had finished. "It is a very hard case—very hard indeed! I do not wonder, my boys, that you were indignant; yet you must know very well that no one is allowed to take the law into his own hands. If everyone were to do this life and property would not be safe in the land. You can see that?"

"I—I suppose so, sir," said Tom Merry. "But—but considering that Mr. Hastings is at the Front, and—and——"

"I shall not take a severe view of what you have done, Merry, especially as it happens that the person you have annoyed has been acting illegally. The law of the land, my boy, is not so wanting in justice and common-sense as you have supposed. There is a recent enactment of Parliament which is designed to prevent these cruel evictions by heartless landlords; and, although it came late, it came in time to save Mrs. Hastings' little home, if the good lady had been acquainted with the law."

"Oh, sir!" exclaimed Tom.

"Mr. Chumper may or may not be aware that he has no legal right to take Mrs. Hastings' cottage from her," resumed the Head. "But Mr. Stuckey, the agent, must certainly be perfectly aware of it, and knows that he has acted illegally in taking advantage of this poor woman's ignorance of the new law."

"Oh!" exclaimed Blake. "That's why——"

He broke off abruptly.

The juniors understood now why Mr. Stuckey had let the matter of the thrashing drop. Under the circumstances, the rascally agent had no desire to appeal to the law in connection with the case of Mrs. Hastings at all. He was afraid of his own unscrupulous acts coming to light.

The Head turned to his telephone.

"You may wait a few minutes, my boys," he said. "Kildare, will you kindly find me Mr. Stuckey's number in the directory?"

"Certainly, sir!"

The number was quickly found, and Dr. Holmes rang up Mr. Stuckey's office in Rylcombe.

The juniors waited breathlessly.

"Hallo!" came through.

"This is St. Jim's—Dr. Holmes speaking," said the Head quietly. "Is that Mr. Stuckey?"

"Yes, sir!" The estate agent's voice was very respectful. "Quite at your service, Dr. Holmes!"

"I have to refer to the matter of Mrs. Hastings' cottage—Rose Cottage!" said the Head of St. Jim's.

"Oh!"

"It has come to my knowledge that Mrs. Hastings has been turned out of her cottage at a week's notice to provide for a new tenant paying a higher rent."

"A mere matter of business, sir," said the agent suavely. "I was, of course, acting upon instructions."

"You are aware, Mr. Stuckey, that Mrs. Hastings' husband is at the Front?"

"That does not come within my province, Dr. Holmes."

"Is not the proceeding very harsh, Mr. Stuckey?"

"I am afraid I cannot discuss that, sir."

"Neither do I desire to discuss it!" said the Head icily. "I have merely to point out, Mr. Stuckey, that in view of the recent enactment of Parliament your action is illegal."

"Sir!"

"I am convinced, sir, that you know it as well as I do; and I insist, Mr. Stuckey, upon Mrs. Hastings being reinstated in her cottage without delay."

"Impossible!"

"Very well! Refuse, and I shall instruct my own solicitors to act in the matter!"

"Dr. Holmes!"

"It is my duty, sir, to see that this wrong is not done to the wife of a man now defending his country. Unless Mrs. Hastings returns to her cottage within two days, Mr. Stuckey, you may expect to hear from my solicitors. You know perfectly well what the law is on the subject."

There was a peculiar sound on the telephone as if Mr. Stuckey, at the end of the wire, was snarling like a wild animal in a cage. Perhaps he was. But his voice was smooth when he spoke again.

"My dear Dr. Holmes, there is certainly no need for such disagreeable steps to be taken. I will see what can be done."

"I recommend you to lose no time, Mr. Stuckey. I shall send to Rose Cottage the day after to-morrow, and if Mrs. Hastings is not there I shall proceed to take action at once."

"The matter shall be arranged as you wish, sir."

"Very good."

The Head rang off.

He turned to the juniors with a slight smile.

"You may go, my boys," he said. "I shall consider what is to be done with reference to your absurd proceedings this afternoon. For the present you may go."

"Thank you, sir!"

And the juniors went.

Their faces were very bright as they left the Head's study. They had a very shrewd idea that the good old doctor intended to let the matter drop altogether. A crowd of fellows met them at the end of the passage.

"Well?" asked a dozen voices.

"All serene!" said Tom Merry. "The Head's a brick! And it turns out that there's a new law, or something, and that cad Stuckey can't turn Mrs. Hastings out; and the Head's ordered him to let her go back by 'phone, and—and everything in the garden's lovely!"

"Hurrah!" shouted Arthur Augustus, waving his eyeglass. "Three cheahs for the Head!"

And the cheers were given with a roar that reached Dr. Holmes in his study, and caused the old gentleman first to jump and then to smile.

Two days later Tom Merry & Co. cycled over to Rose Cottage. They found that Mr. Chumper had vanished—seeking fresh fields and pastures new in his anxious task of bomb-dodging. Mrs. Hastings and Tommy and Alice were once more installed in their home, and the good lady was busily and happily engaged in arranging her furniture. And the juniors were busily and happily engaged in helping her; and afterwards they rode back to St. Jim's in a very satisfied frame of mind.

THE END.

(Don't miss next Wednesday's Great Story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's—"COUSIN ETHEL'S CHAMPIONS!"—by Martin Clifford.)

THE LAKE OF THE GODS.

The Story of a Treasure Hunt in the Apache Country.

By RICHARD RANDOLPH.

CHAPTER 1.
The Lake.

"HERE we are!" said Bill Allenby, looking out over the gleaming waters of the lake.

"Seems so," answered Josh Wrentham, throwing himself down in utter weariness. It had been a hard climb up.

"Done up, Josh?"

"Shall be all right to-morrow, old chap. At present I feel off everything, even my feed."

"Just as well, for we haven't much grub," answered Bill.

Josh sat up suddenly, with a comical expression of dismay on his round, tanned face. Bill grinned.

"Thought that would make you sit up and take notice, Josh," he said. "Rare chap you are for your tommy! But it's all right. We've as much as we need. Of course, we can't cook anything—Redskins might twig our fire."

Josh lay down again.

"Don't believe there's a blessed Red within a hundred miles," he said. "And if there are, I guess they're tame ones."

"No tame Indians in this locality, you bet!" Bill replied. "They're Apache, and an Apache doesn't get tamed."

"Well, they won't know anything about the treasure, anyhow. It was the old Aztec gang that used to chuck the stuff in. Don't suppose the present incumbrances ever heard of them."

"Don't you be too sure! The tribes all pass down those old yarns. They know, all serene. Let's hope they don't know that we're after the stuff."

Bill Allenby had been in Mexico ever since he was fifteen, and in those five years had travelled far and wide. Josh Wrentham, a couple of years his junior, was not long out from home. Josh was no weakling, but he lacked the great strength and staying power his big chum possessed.

Through the desert and over the prairies they had come, guided by an old Indian who had been the faithful servant of Bill's dead father. But they had lost Grey Wolf now. Not by desertion. A snake-bite had sent him to the happy hunting-grounds.

A faded parchment, found among Mr. Allenby's papers, had moved them to this quest. It told how, in the old days, a great

city of the Aztecs, long since ruined and forgotten, had stood on this high tableland, and how the people of the city had held the lake sacred, believing that some of their most powerful gods dwelt under its waters, and to please those gods had, on certain festival days, come hither to throw gold and jewels into the waters.

Now, after many hardships, the two young adventurers had reached the lake, hoping to prove the story true.

To south and west of them they saw high mountains, their tops crowned with snow. To east and north lay the broken country of the foothills; and beyond that, though they could not see it, a wide prairie region.

Bill threw himself down on the bank, and peered into the clear water. He saw fishes swim to and fro. He could see right down to the bottom. But never a sign of jewels or of gold!

He laughed at himself that he should have expected it, even for a moment. They would be covered long ago, of course—would have to be sought for in mud and sand and pebbles.

"What's your plan, Josh?" he asked. "It's a sign of no end big faith in you that I've let you keep it dark so long; but we're on the spot now, and I want to hear it."

"Oh, you bet your boots I've a plan, all serene, Bill!"

Josh was by way of being an engineer. He had had comparatively little training; but the root of the matter was in him, and a genius in any line requires far less training than the average man. Josh had brains, and he used them.

"Well, old chap, let's have it!"

"Grub first," replied Josh.

Bill produced some dried meat and hard cakes of maizemeal.

"Are you going to dive for them?" asked Bill, chewing away.

"Diving be jiggered!" returned Josh.

"Well, you wouldn't fish for 'em, I suppose?"

"Fishing be hanged!"

"If we had a dredger—— But even if you could fix up one, two of us could hardly work it, I should think."

"Dredging be smothered!"

"Well, what is the plan, then?"

"Drain the blessed lake!" answered Josh, with his mouth full.

"My word! That's a tall order!"

"Plenty of room for the water to run," said Josh, indicating, by a wave of his hand, the steep slope behind them.

"But to dig a trench would take us weeks. And our tools would never last out."

"I'm not going to fag digging trenches," Josh replied.

"How, then?"

"Blasting-powder. See how the lake lies! Away to the right there its edge comes within ten yards or so of a regular precipice. Grey Wolf said there were storms up here. I'll bet the water dashes over them!"

"You're going to flood out something if you start that game, old man!"

"Oh, I don't reckon to make a hole as big as a church. We'll just blast away the rock till we've only a few fet of it left, and then bore through that till we get a trickle of water. I can regulate the flow all right. Come and have a look at the place, Bill! Your uncle knows what he's talking about."

They went and inspected it, talked more, and then tramped down the hill to where they had left their horses. One of them had broken its hobble, and gave some trouble before it was captured. They were dead tired by the time they turned in; but did not find it easy to sleep.

"I'm thinking about that blessed scheme of yours, Josh," said Bill.

"I'm thinking that it's jolly miserable without a fire, Bill. What's home without—I mean, what's a camp without a camp-fire?"

"A darned sight better than one with, when you're in the Apache country!" growled Bill.

"Got Apaches on the brain, haven't you, old man?"

Bill did not answer that. He leaned on his elbow, and gazed away to the south-eastward. Then he stood up, laying a hand on Josh's shoulder. For Josh was sitting up now. He, too, saw something.

A gleam of fire! Not a steady gleam, such as a lamp in a window shows. But there were no lamps and no windows within many miles of the Lake of the Gods. This was a flickering gleam.

"What's it mean, Bill?"

"Indians!"

"Long way off, aren't they?"

"Nearer than I like, Josh."

"Well, anyhow, they aren't on the war-path, or they wouldn't have lit a fire."

"Not so bad for a tenderfoot! Still, it's no great odds. You don't ask a wolf whether he's on the war-path, and an Apache's just a two-legged wolf. We must find a more sheltered place for a camp to-morrow. This lot may clear off, but others may blow in any moment."

"I say, Bill, they're bound to hear when I begin my blasting!"

"Needn't worry about that. They'll think the old gods have got angry. They won't twig the truth."

Bill rolled himself in his blanket again, and was soon asleep. But Josh stayed awake ever so long, watching that gleam of fire, and listening to the barking of the coyotes.

When he did drop off he slept soundly enough, and did not wake till Bill stuck a booted foot against his ribs.

Breakfast over, they started on a hard day's work. They found very soon a narrow-mouthed paddock, so to speak, in a fold of the mountain, with plenty of grass, and a stream trickling close by. But getting the horses up took far longer than finding it.

"That's all right," said Bill, when it was done. "Those big stones in the gully will keep the horses in, and at a pinch we could defend the place against a score of Reds. No sign of them this morning, by the way; but that doesn't prove much. They may be lurking in the woods down there."

CHAPTER 2.

Thunder Cloud's Last Trail.

"NOW for the blasting-powder," said Bill.

"Don't you be in too big a hurry, old man! We shall have to take soundings of the lake first."

"What for? I could see the bottom easily enough last night. Bit more than six feet, I should say, but certainly not twelve."

"Yes, at the side. Question is—how deep further out? We can't drain the lake if it goes down a hundred feet or so."

"How are we going to find out? We should need a boat. I could make a rough sort of a canoe easily enough, but it would cut a bit of time to waste."

"Boat? Not likely! Two ways besides that. One's swimming."

"No use. The lake's so beastly cold. The strongest swimmer can't stand as low a temperature as that for long. I don't mind having a shot, but——"

"Not likely, Bill! The other plan's the best—a raft."

"Oh, good notion! That's easily done. There aren't any trees on the edge of the lake, but we'll chop down some young ones as near it as we can find them, to save haulage. What about a sounding-line?"

"Two minutes' job. Length of rope and a stone," answered Josh.

They got to work. Bill was a rare good woodsman, and Josh had picked up some skill with the axe. Chopping down two or three saplings was a light task; but getting them up the steep ascent to the edge of the lake proved toilsome enough.

"Sweat, Josh?" asked Bill, as they landed the second roughly-hewn trunk on the bank.

"My word, yes! I never properly knew what sweating meant before!"

"Well, don't drink too much of that water. Ice-cold stuff like that's bad."

"Teach your grandmother, Bill! Best water I ever tasted!"

Josh lay on the bank, dipping up the water in his hands and lapping it greedily. Bill's axe was at trimming work on one of the logs.

Neither saw a copper-coloured face—evil, leering, cruel-eyed—that peered at them from over a ledge fifty yards away.

Feathers were stuck in the coarse black hair, but the face carried no war-paint. As Bill had said, though, an Apache is always more or less on the war-path. Certainly this fellow seemed in no peaceful or friendly mood.

Twice he lifted his rifle and levelled it at Bill's broad back, but lowered it again without shooting.

He could hardly have had any doubt of hitting. Many Indians are bad shots with the rifle, but they don't usually realise it.

Josh sat up suddenly. The evil, red face disappeared.

"Queer thing, Bill," said Josh. "I'd the rummiest kind of feeling that someone was looking at me then—no friend, either!"

"Eh?" returned Bill, stopping work. "I know that feeling. It means something; comes down to us from the time when our ancestors had to keep their eyes skinned for trouble all the time. If I'd felt it—— But you're a tenderfoot, Josh!"

"Oh, all serene, old man! I'm not harping on it. Your Redskins are far enough away by this time, I guess. Let's go down and bring up another log. I don't mind owning now, though, that you were right about toting the rifles along. Makes me feel easier to have mine on my back."

They went downhill together. When they had disappeared the Indian stole out of cover.

He trod on tiptoe, careful even so not to step where his moccasin would leave a trail. Where they had been working there was bare rock, and here he lowered his heels to ground.

"Ugh!" he grunted, looking down at the logs. He picked up and poised Bill's axe, running his broad thumb along the keen, well-tempered edge, and grunted another "Ugh!" of approval. Then he examined Josh's axe, and the "Ugh!" this time was in a different tone. That tool did less work than Bill's, but its edge was not so workman-like keen.

Then the Indian squatted down on the rock and looked out over the lake. His lips worked, perhaps in some invocation to the old gods. He seized a log, and made as if to throw it into the water.

But the faint sound of a voice reached his ears, and he replaced the log in exactly the position in which he had found it. Then he stole cautiously back to his hiding-place.

He was Thunder Cloud, a young buck of the Apache nation—a big, powerful fellow, exceeding Bill Allenby in stature, though Bill stood a good six feet one.

There is hardly any limit to an Indian's patience. Thunder Cloud lay in cover for hours, watching always. He saw them lash the logs with rope and rawhide, and now and then he fingered rifle or tomahawk, but still he waited.

He meant to have their scalps, but he could bide his time.

Bill looked up. The sun had dropped almost to the level of the mountain-peak ahead of them across the lake.

"We might launch her and see how she floats," he said. "But we'll have to leave taking soundings till to-morrow. It will be dark in next to no time."

All the gold had passed out of the sky now, and under the shadow of the mountain the Lake of the Gods lay dark and gloomy.

The raft floated well. With rough punt-poles they pushed out over the darkening water.

Thunder Cloud raised his rifle again, and drew a bead on Bill's head. But still he did not fire.

Perhaps he half expected that the angry gods would interfere, and snatch under water these daring young palefaces.

He did not want that to happen, though. He wanted their scalps. He was a young man, not yet blooded. As he thought of the tawny hair of Bill and the red locks of Josh dangling at his scalp-belt he grinned with horrible glee.

Josh could not resist the temptation to take a few soundings.

"No deepening yet," he said. "If it's all like this we shall drain it as easily as falling off a house."

They were now fully forty yards out. Thunder Cloud could not afford to wait longer. He did not mean that they should escape him, and he had not learned yet where their camp was. If they landed on the farther shore they would give him a long stalk after them.

He took careful aim, and fired.

Josh cried out, heeled over, and tumbled into the icy water.

Another shot followed. Bill fell across the raft.

But he was not hit. Reaching out, he gripped his chum's hands, and inquired anxiously:

"Hurt much, Josh?"

"No. Stung my arm up, that's all. What about yourself?"

"I'm all right. Wasn't hit, but thought I'd better let on to be. It's the only way to draw that beast. There's only one, I'm pretty certain."

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The raft was drifting now, though Bill had his pole, Josh's had dropped into the water. Some slight current moved them gently outwards, and every moment the surface of the lake grew darker.

Peering through the gloom, Bill could barely discern the near shore. But he could just see a tall figure looming up. Thunder Cloud had come out of his lurking-place, and was trying to see exactly how matters stood upon the raft.

"Can you stand the cold a minute or two longer, old man?"

"Ye-e-es!" answered Josh, his teeth chattering. "I guess so. What's the g-g-game, B-B-Bill?"

"I want that rascal near enough for a certain kill," returned his chum grimly. "He's not an old hand, or he wouldn't have broken cover like that. He's after our scalps, of course."

"Hope he'll l-l-like mine," answered Josh. "S-s-some people rather b-b-bar the colour. But he'll be afraid of the g-g-gods down below."

The tanned face under the red hair had gone blue with cold, but Josh still had the pluck to jest. Somehow, he didn't feel a bit afraid. It was only like a queer and rather uncomfortable game.

He clung to the side of the raft while Bill, lying full length upon it, waited, rifle at shoulder.

"He'll come, I think," whispered Bill. "Scalps count, and he's only a young brave, I'm sure, and will be keen."

"I s-s-should call him a young coward!" answered Josh, his teeth going like castanets.

It had grown darker still. Bill could no longer see the tall form looming up. But he could not be sure that the Apache had plunged in.

"Get aboard as quietly as you can," he said, and helped Josh to clamber on to the raft.

In the intense stillness that brooded over the lake Bill heard sounds now which told him that a man was swimming towards them.

"He's coming, Josh!" he whispered.

The sounds grew more easily audible. Still nothing could be seen in the gloom. Josh lay flat, one shirt-sleeve red and soaking. He had all he could do to keep his teeth still.

The Apache believed that he had hit both the palefaces. One was still on the raft; his scalp, at least, Thunder Cloud would have. Perhaps, with the favour of the gods, he might also secure the other's.

The icy water was hard to bear. His teeth chattered now, and Bill could hear them. But the gloom had deepened, and he still saw nothing.

Then, on a sudden, the Indian seized the raft. The rifle went off harmlessly. The Apache struck upwards with his long knife, but Bill clutched his wrist in a grip like steel.

An instant's tense struggle; then the raft canted, and Bill and the Indian, locked in deadly grip, disappeared from the sight of Josh, who kept a desperate grip upon the logs.

He had never had so bad a time in his life before. Not three yards from him, in the darkness, fought his comrade and the wily savage. He heard the splashing, the hoarse grunts of the Indian brave, the hissing breath of Bill Allenby. But he could see nothing, could do nothing.

Nothing at all! Rifle and knife had gone, and it needed all his strength just to cling on to the raft.

Splash, hiss, grunt! Grunt, hiss, splash! Would both be drowned, or would they kill one another? Josh found himself making queer noises that were like a child's whimpering. The suspense was too horrible to bear in silence.

Then a hoarse, half-choked cry reached him. Next moment Bill was by his side.

"I've done him!" he gasped. "Hard job—anybody's game; but I've done him! Cling on, old boy; I'll have you aboard in a jiffy!"

With Bill's help Josh managed to scramble up, and then, swimming strongly, Bill pushed the raft before him to the bank.

Luckily he went straight for it, guided by that instinct of location which the out-of-doors man generally has. Bill could not have borne many more minutes in that ice-cold water.

Shaking with cold, they got ashore.

"A pretty pickle, Bill! Our rifles lost in the lake, and no one knows how many of those redskinned devils lurking near!"

"Never mind, pard. When you've drained the lake we'll get the guns back. And I rather fancy that chap was on a lone trail. His last trail, anyway!"

If there were hundreds—or even scores—of Apaches about, their goose was cooked, he knew. But he hoped for the best.

He hid the raft as best he could. Josh had no strength left to help him. Then they made their way down the rough trail to their camping-place in the little natural paddock.

The risk of a camp-fire had to be taken that night. Josh might have been dead before morning without it, and in this sheltered place the risk was small, for the fire could not be seen from below, though the smoke might be.

Then both slept the sleep of the outworn man.

CHAPTER 3.

A Way for the Water.

THE two young adventurers woke early next morning, and Josh, stretching himself, breathed a deep sigh of relief.

"You didn't say anything last night, Bill," he said, "but I knew you were a bit doubtful whether we'd wake at all. We have, though, and I've still my scalp—such as it is!"

Bill grinned rather wryly, wondering how long Josh could keep that scalp. Still, as the slain Indian had not yet been inquired for, so to speak, it was just possible he never might be.

"Sooner we can clear out better I shall like it, old chap," he said. "We've only poor old Grey Wolf's rifle between us at present."

"We'll get the guns again. I'll drain that lake as easy as eating pie!"

Breakfast over, they made their way up at once. The horses, left behind, were feeding well, and the rest after their long and hard journey was doing them good. There was no chance of their straying, for the breast-work across the gap was altogether too big a barrier for any hobbled horse to jump.

New poles were made. The raft was pushed out again, and the Lake of the Gods was pretty thoroughly sounded. Nowhere did the depth seem to be more than fifteen or sixteen feet, and Josh was confident that his drainage scheme would be a success.

The lake was in a tableland high up among the mountains. On the opposite shore, the west, there was a fairly level though rocky stretch of ground some miles in extent, behind which rose the peaks of the mountains. Here, in ancient times, had stood the Aztec city, with its great sacrificial towers.

But to the east, where they were, the lake was much nearer the edge of the tableland. In some places it approached to within a few yards, even.

Josh meant to choose one of these places, and blast away the rock until he had made a tunnel nearly to the lake. Then he trusted, judging by the nature of the shore, to find softer stuff, which could readily be excavated. He would have to be careful not to blast too far; they must have it in their power to regulate the movement of the water—to some extent, at least—or they might find themselves carried away in the rush.

Josh knew all about the operations of blasting-powder. He would not let Bill meddle with this at all.

"It's no work for kids," he said. "You're all right in your department, Bill—shooting Apaches and other game better fit to eat—but this is a man's job!"

He drilled the holes himself, set the fuses himself, and grinned when Bill protested against idleness to which he was not used.

"Here's where we scoot to a safe place!" he said. And they scooted.

A big bang followed, reverberating hollowly among the mountains.

"If the Reds hear that they'll think it's the lake-gods growling," said Bill.

"Pretty good old growl, too!" answered Josh.

They went back.

"All right so far. About three will do it," said the engineer.

By the time the sun began to sink behind the western sierras the blasting was done.

"I say, suppose some of the rocks fall on you?" protested Bill, as Josh made his way into the tunnel.

"Oh, rot! What dynamite didn't move is going to stand all serene, you bet!"

Bill was about to answer that he wasn't so sure, when he caught sight of something in the water.

It was the corpse of the Indian buck, floating just below the surface. Bill hadn't expected to see the Apache again; but perhaps the shock of the explosions had brought his body up.

Not the first man he had killed! He had been in tight places before, and had had to fight for dear life.

He felt no pity for the Apache, himself a brute without pity or remorse. Yet, looking down at the body, he had a queer, sinking sensation. The horror of that fight in the dark lake was more real to him now, while the lake's eastern half gleamed red-gold under the setting sun, than it had been at the time.

He did not call Josh to look. He was just thinking of fishing out the corpse with design to bury it, when it sank, and disappeared under the gleaming waters.

At that moment Josh gave a shout of triumph, and Bill hurried down to him.

"Hooray! Hoo-jolly-ray! Good ain't the word, old Bill! You look here!"

"Don't see anything very special," answered Bill, looking.

"Oh, you blind old duffer! Why, we're right through the rock! This is all soft earth—easy digging. I can rig up a drainage-pipe in no time, and we'll have the lake empty before you can say 'knife'!"

"I say, though, Josh, isn't it a bit dangerous? I can understand that with a narrow channel through hard rock the water might drain away gradually without any risk. But this is like weakening a wall. What's to hinder the weight of water bringing down that soft stuff?"

"Rats! I've considered all that. It can't touch our camp, anyway, and it's not much odds if it makes a Niagara Falls for an hour or two anywhere else."

"Yes," drawled Bill; "and suppose we happen to be in the way of Niagara; how then, Joshuwash?"

"We just haven't got to be in the way, that's all about it. See here, just you shape me a trough five or six feet long. No, make two—one to go over the other."

"It will be dark before——?"

"I don't care, old Bill! Bound to get this job finished to-night. Why, by the morning we may see the bottom, with the gold and jewels all a-glittering and a-shining like——"

"Don't make any error, Josh. That's going to be a mudlark job."

"Can't say I ever minded mudlarking myself, Bill. It will be a bit uncomfortable for the fishes in a little while, old son. Get to work on your troughs now, like a good little kid!"

Night had fallen before they made their way down to the camp; but the trough had been constructed and placed, and already a steady stream of water—of no great volume—was flowing through the improvised drain-pipe.

Bill glanced from side to side as they went downwards. Josh did not notice anything but that he was unusually silent, and after a bit he asked:

"What's the row, Bill? Or, rather, what isn't the row? For you're not making much."

"Thinking, Josh! Suppose the outfall from the lake becomes bigger—and I believe it will, for I don't trust the strength of what you've left—mayn't we find ourselves swamped out?"

"Not likely! Look how the land falls. There's a big rock in the way that's bound to divert the current, even if it should get strong."

"Well, I'm glad you're sure! I'd rather chance the lake than the Redskins; but the two together would be a bit too much."

Yet they were to have the two together, and out of the double danger to win salvation, after all!

CHAPTER 4.

The Way the Water Went.

NO camp-fire that night! Dried beef and maize-cake were their fare, and they were far too hungry to grumble.

Josh dropped asleep almost before he was fairly rolled up in his blanket.

But Bill could not sleep yet. There was something in the air that kept him awake.

It was not only the thunderstorm that seemed to be gathering. It was not fear of the lake. There was something else—something that made the horses vaguely uneasy, and him likewise. He had lived long enough in a wild country to have acquired that sort of sixth sense which warns one of coming danger.

He could not see, or hear, or smell Indians; yet he felt sure Indians were somewhere near.

And his rifle and Josh's lay at the bottom of the lake! What fools they had been! Why hadn't they dived, and fished them up? Oh, yes, they had been busy—not a minute to spare—and the water of the lake was horribly

cold! But what good were all the treasures the Aztecs ever owned to dead men? And the lake was not quite as cold as death, at worst.

He walked to the breastwork, and stood peering out into a darkness as black as a wolf's mouth. In the hollow of his arm lay their one rifle—that which had belonged to their staunch old Indian guide.

He could hear nothing, though he strained his ears for the sound of the lake's outfall, increased as it might well be by now.

But he saw!

A jagged streak of lightning rent the black sky, and in its lurid light Bill saw the painted faces of a dozen or more Apache warriors!

The darkness that followed seemed blacker than ever. That flash had shown Bill the enemy. Had it shown them him?

It mattered little. Trackers far less expert than these savages could have followed their trail. And this was a no-whither road, save to the lake. Only the following of a trail would have brought the Apaches so far up the mountain, where their horses were of no use to them. These wild riders of the desert and the plains hate nothing worse than walking.

Only one rifle! Only one rifle! That was the thought that kept beating in Bill's brain. But of what use would a hundred rifles be without men to handle them?

Overhead the thunder roared and rumbled, beaten back from the mountains. Bill crouched by the breastwork, so that the next flash might not reveal him.

But he had already been seen.

Led by two trails, the Apaches had come in two bands up the mountain. One had followed the tracks of their missing comrade, the other that of the expedition. Now the two bands had joined up.

"They'll hardly attack while the storm lasts, I reckon!" muttered Bill to himself.

Then he started in sudden alarm, for a hand was laid upon his sleeve.

But it was only Josh.

"What's the matter, Bill?"

"Hist! Keep your voice low, and your head down. The Reds are close at hand!"

Josh ducked. Only just in time. In another moment many miles of the country lying below were revealed in a lurid blue light. Again the thunder growled itself out among the hills. But still no rain fell.

"I've a dodge for them," whispered Josh, and ran back to the tent.

Bill, nursing his rifle, carefully calculated chances.

Indians hate frontal attack, and that was their only method here. The little paddock was enclosed by high, precipitous walls, and there was no way up except by a detour of miles.

But the Redskins would know there were but two of them, and would certainly attack in those circumstances. They might—probably would—wait till the storm ended, for they had a superstitous dread of thunderstorms. But even that was not certain; an Apache is a chancy customer at best.

Flash followed flash of lightning—peal after peal of thunder—but still no rain.

Josh came back.

"Got a bomb ready for 'em," he whispered. "Only had stuff for one, though—used up most of it."

Side by side the two comrades squatted behind the breastwork awaiting the attack.

An hour passed. The storm was as violent as ever, but still there was no rain.

"I believe they've done a bunk!" whispered Josh.

Even as he spoke another flash showed them the painted faces within half a dozen yards of their breastwork.

Bill threw up his rifle, and fired on the instant.

In the darkness that followed the flash they could see nothing. In the thunder that followed the darkness they could hear nothing. But when it ceased the terrible war-cry of the Apaches rang in their ears.

"It's the bomb or nothing now," said Bill coolly.

"All serene!" answered Josh. "I'll fling it directly they rush. It's ready!"

He got to his feet. Within an inch of his head sang a bullet. But he felt no fear.

The next flash came, and showed him the Redskins rushing on.

Josh hurled his bomb straight into the midst of them.

There followed a horrible, rending sound, drowned on the instant by the roar of the thunder. The shock of the explosion threw down the breastwork, and flung both lads backwards, happily without damage by the falling stones.

The next flash showed writhing red bodies, streaked with paint—dismembered limbs—here a plumed head—there a hand still grasping rifle or tomahawk—and the Apaches in full retreat!

"But they'll come back," said Bill. "When it's light they'll come back."

Just in time a gasping sound warned him, and in a moment he was locked in deadly grapple with a wounded Apache. The fellow fought like a tiger, and Josh's help was needed to finish him. Then Josh was deadly sick. He felt all over him the hot, sticky blood of the savage he had helped to kill, and it was too much for his overstrained nerves.

Now the storm ceased suddenly, and stars shone out in the sky above. There was a touch of dawn on the eastern horizon.

"We've beaten 'em off," said Josh, struggling up.

"They'll come back," answered Bill.

But the sun rose, and still there was no sign. The two adventurers rebuilt their breastwork, and ate and drank.

"They're coming!" said Bill.

"Can't hear 'em, old man."

"Nor I. But I saw a painted face look out of that bush. Shake hands, pard! This is the end. We sha'n't get the treasure from the lake. We sha'n't see Old England again. You've been a good pal, Josh—the best of pals!"

"What's that row?" cried Josh.

There was a sound in the air like the sound of a great roar of rushing water.

The Redskins, shouting their war-cry, broke cover, and surged on. Bill fired into the thick of them.

"It's the lake, Bill! And I do believe it's coming down this way!"

A Red was down. Bill fired again. They were close upon the breastwork now. All must be over in another minute or two.

Then a cry of dread and alarm broke from the ranks of the Reds, and they turned and fled for their lives.

Down the mountain plunged and seethed and roared a great torrent of water. It tore up trees in its track; it tossed great rocks like feathers. It broke upon the Apaches, and in an instant they were not, save only one man, who gained the breastwork. Flourishing his tomahawk and shouting madly, he jumped, and as he jumped Bill's bullet took him in the heart.

Then the stones of the breastwork itself seemed to crumble like dust before the rush of waters, and the two ran their hardest for the highest part of the little valley.

The flood pursued them but only for a little way. It began to drop again immediately. Within ten minutes the rage of the torrent on its downhill course had spent itself. Within half an hour there was no more than a trickle of water.

The Apaches were wiped out, and down the mountain-side the flood had scarred a path plain to be seen, marked by shivered tree-trunks and overturned roots.

"You were wrong, Josh, and it's jolly lucky you were!" said Bill.

"It is that. But I don't quite like it, all the same. Let's go up and see how it happened, Bill."

They climbed the slippery path and inspected. Josh put down the fact that the flood had come in the wrong—or, as it had proved the right—direction to the unexpected failure of his key-rock, which was to have controlled its course. Bill could not quite follow the explanation, but he was satisfied.

They groped for the treasure during a long week in the mud and sand and stones of the lake, and found a good deal—more than they could take away at one journey. But though they hid the rest they never went back for it. What they had was enough for them, and they had no great fancy for a second visit to the Lake of the Gods, upon which, it may be, no white man has looked since.

THE END.

The Editor's Chat.

For Next Wednesday:

"COUSIN ETHEL'S CHAMPIONS!"

By Martin Clifford.

"When are we going to hear about Cousin Ethel again?"

This is a query which has reached me, in slightly varying forms, hundreds of times during the last few months. I can answer it now.

We are going to hear about Cousin Ethel again next week.

It is only in the nature of things that the characters in the stories not actually belonging to St. Jim's should come and go. Even the fellows with whom the stories are more immediately concerned have their ups and downs, so to speak. We may hear little or nothing of some of them for a time, but they are pretty sure to crop up again. Everybody can't be in everything, you know.

Next week's story tells of how, after a long absence, Ethel Cleveland visited St. Jim's again on a very special occasion; how there was trouble, in which Racke was concerned; of the parts played by Manners and Figgins, Tom Merry and Cardew, Crooke and Mellish and Trimble; of a rehearsal in which Wally & Co. played an unexpected part; and of how those young gentlemen played another part—more creditable, if less funny—in another place and at another time.

More than that I am not going to tell you here. You do not need to know everything in advance.

"STANDS SCOTLAND WHERE SHE DID?"

I have had by me for quite a long time a letter from a Falkirk reader, which amused me highly when I received it, and which I have been meaning to refer to ever since.

There is no more level-headed and intelligent race on earth than the Scottish race. I suppose there are fools in Scotland. Every nation has them. But they are not nearly so often met with in that country as in some others, as far as my experience goes. But when a Scot makes such silly complaints as does our Falkirk reader, one might well ask, "Stands Scotland where she did?" One swallow does not make a summer, however; and the folly of one person does not prove anything against the race to which that person belongs.

Our Falkirk reader.

(1) Resents that Scotland should be ignored so much in the GEM.

(2) Resents the mention of England in connection with the war.

(3) Resents Roylance's being given such prominence in the GEM stories, when, instead of him, a new character from the Highlands might have been introduced.

(4) Resents the attribution of red hair and freckles to Kerr.

(5) Resents the failure to mention the handsome face of a Scottish character, when Tom Merry and Talbot are often referred to as being handsome.

(6) Resents the Cadet Notes, because Scotland is rarely referred to in them.

"How many of us up here are freckled and have red hair?" he—or she; I fear I may be dealing with a young lady—asks. My answer is, as far as my observation goes, quite a lot. And nothing against you, either. What's the matter with red hair? Who is ashamed of freckles? If it is a positive insult to the Scots to accuse any of them of having red hair and freckles, then I am afraid that to the end of time they will have to go on being insulted. But, of course, it is not.

Perhaps it is best to say, in all seriousness, that there is no intention of slighting Scotland, Ireland, Wales, the great Dominions, or any part of the whole British Empire, in these pages. They are read where ever the flag flies. But this is not a war paper. It is not a newspaper. It is a story paper. The school dealt with in it is an English school, and there are few English schools which have very many Scots boys. Kerr is one of the chief characters; but there is no need to be continually insisting on the fact that he hails from Scotland.

Your Editor

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