

"THE SCHOOLBOY INVENTOR!" Magnificent EXTRA-LONG story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's—INSIDE.

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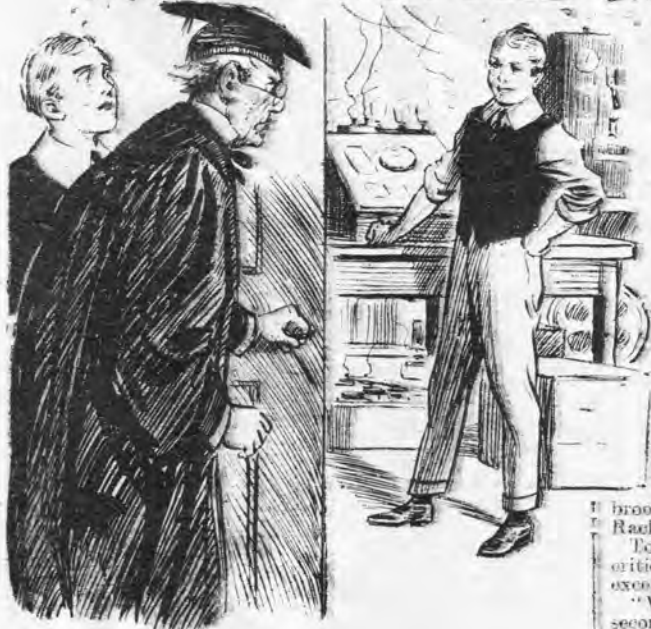


SHOCKS!

(A lively incident from the rollicking, book-length school story in this issue.)

ST. JIM'S V. GRAMMARIANS! A state of friendly warfare always exists between Tom Merry & Co. and Gordon Gay & Co., for neither side will acknowledge the superiority of the other. In their latest set-to, however, the Grammarians are dished; diddled and done brown—thanks to the services of Bernard Glyn—

THE SCHOOLBOY INVENTOR!



CHAPTER I.

Glyn is too Busy!

"SHEN!"

Tom Merry stood at the bottom of the School House steps at St. Jim's and rapped out that command in approved sergeant-major tones.

And the Boy Scouts who stood before him in the quadrangle clattered their heels smartly whilst some of them shuffled, as they "shunned" at their leader's behest.

It was a gloriously sunny afternoon, and, eschewing cricket for the time being, the Boy Scouts of St. Jim's had bestirred themselves into fresh activities.

Most of the boys of the Lower School were very keen Boy Scouts, and, under the able direction of Tom Merry and Figgins, the respective House leaders, they had attained great proficiency in the various arts of scoutcraft.

Dr. Holmes, the Head of St. Jim's, looked upon the scouting movement with an approving eye—so much so, in fact, that, to give the troops a helping hand, he had presented Tom Merry & Co. with a fine new tent, and Figgins & Co. with a trol-cart.

So this afternoon Tom Merry, the patrol leader of the Wolves, as the School House Scouts were called, and Figgins, commandant of the New House Eagles, had agreed to join forces, and had mustered their men in the quad, for a route march and manoeuvres in the Rylcombe Wood.

The juniors were all dressed in Scouts' uniform, and, with very few exceptions, they looked a sturdy and active set of fellows indeed.

The exceptions included Baggy Trimble, Mellish, and Chowle of the Fourth, and Aubrey Racke, Crooke, and Skimpole of the Shell, all of whom had been conscripted into service, much against their will.

Baggy Trimble, the fat youth of the Fourth, cut rather a curious figure as a Boy Scout. His portly form seemed about to burst out of his uniform at any minute. Indeed, it was a matter of great wonder how he managed to get into those clothes at all. Fatty Wynn of the New House, of course, was also very plump, but Fatty was upright and sturdy.

Scouting, or any form of hard work, for that matter, made no appeal to Baggy Trimble, and it was only by dint of several violent applications of his staff to the tender parts of Baggy's anatomy that Blake had persuaded him to turn out for manoeuvres.

Racke, Crooke, Mellish, and a few other dingy fellows of the same kidney, had joined up with very ill grace, Smoking, playing nap, and "spotting" winners were pastimes to which they were more addicted, but Tom Merry

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A Splendid Extra-Long Story of the Chums of St. Jim's, dealing with Bernard Glyn's latest invention—and what came of it.

By

Martin Clifford.

brooked no slacking, and he had sent a press-gang after Racke & Co., and conscripted them into the ranks.

Tom, standing in front of his fellow-scouts, and running a critical eye over them, saw that all were now assembled except one.

"Where's Glyn?" he rapped out, turning to Blake, his second in command.

"Blessed if I know!" replied Blake. "The ass must have read the notice in the Hall. Perhaps he's in his den."

The Wolves' leader snorted.

"The silly slacker! Glyn is absent without leave! Gussy, run up to his study and yank him out, if he's there!"

"All sewene, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Gussy left the ranks and went indoors. He hurried upstairs to the Shell passage, and knocked on Glyn's study door.

He turned the handle and tried to push the door open, but found it locked.

It was no unusual thing for Glyn's study door to be locked.

Bernard Glyn was an inventor, and was for ever engaged on experimenting with weird chemicals and strange mechanical contraptions. Sometimes his chemical experiments resulted in the most awful odours permeating the Shell passage, and the noises that oftentimes emanated from his many fearsome mechanical contrivances were not generally received with favour by other Shell fellows.

Indeed, the juniors in the vicinity of Bernard Glyn's study were constantly being driven to desperation by the horrid smells and nerve-racking noises that were inflicted upon them, and nowadays Glyn always took the precaution, when working on any of his inventions, to lock the study door—a measure of self-defence that was most necessary, considering the homicidal tendencies developed by his schoolfellows.

So D'Arcy, failing to open Glyn's study door, knocked again, rather more loudly.

"Hallo!" came the voice of the schoolboy inventor from within. "Run away and play, fathead!"

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "I say, Glyn, you disrespeckful boundah—"

"Oh, is that you, Gussy?" said Glyn, recognising the voice. "Sheer off, there's a good ass."

"Weally, Glyn, I wefuse to sheer off, and I also wefuse to be chawactewised as an ass!" retorted Arthur Augustus, with some heat. "I have come to inform you that you are wanted in the twoop!"

"The which?"

"The twoop!" said Gussy severely. "I twust, Glyn, you haven't forgotten that our Scout twoop is goin' out for manoeuvres this afternoon?"

"Oh, jemimy!" exclaimed Glyn. "As a matter of fact, Gussy, it had completely slipped my memory. But, never mind, old chap, it really makes no difference. I'm not going anyway."

"Weally, Glyn, you are wanted—"

"Oh, rats!"

"F wepeat, Glyn, you are wanted—"

"More rats!"

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus, his eyeglass glimmering

with rising wrath. "You are a vewy impertinent boundah, Glyn, and unless you come out at once and join up with the twoop, I shall considah it my painful duty to give you a feahful thwashin'!"

A chuckle sounded from inside the study. "Do you heah me, you wottah?" exclaimed the swell of the Fourth through the keyhole.

"Yes, I hear you, Gussy," replied Glyn. "But please buzz off, and don't bother. I'm fearfully busy, and simply can't be bothered with scouting!"

"Weally, Glyn, you have no wight to be busy this aftahnoon. The Scouts are goin' for a wun—"

"Let 'em go. They can have their little run without me, I suppose?"

"Bai Jove! You uttah slackah—"

Whirr-rrr! Sputter! Whirr-rrr! came a series of strange noises from the inside of the study, like a motor running in spasmodic jerks.

"Glyn, you fwoightful boundah! I wegard you as a desertaht fwom the wanks, bai Jove!" exclaimed D'Arcy.

"Will you open this door?"

He commenced to thump energetically upon it.

"Chuck it!" roared Glyn, his voice taking on a tone of exasperation. "Will you buzz off, Gussy?"

"I wefuse to buzz off, Glyn. I command you to open this door!" said Arthur Augustus determinedly.

Whirr-rrr!

There was a tramp of feet along the passage, and Tom Merry, Kangaroo, and Blake came hurrying into view, looking very grim and determined.

"Where's Glyn?" demanded the Shell captain impatiently. "You don't mean to say, Gussy, he's locked himself in?"

"Yaas, he wefuses to open the door, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus, a little breathlessly. "I have told Glyn that he is wanted in the twoop, but he positively wefuses to come out. His attitude is weally most wealcitwant!"

"We'll soon see about that!" said Blake grimly.

Striding up to Glyn's study door, he gave it a mighty smite with his boot.

Biff!

A wrathful howl arose from inside.

"No—you lunatic! Did you do that, Gussy?"

"No, I did it!" snorted Blake. "Open this door, you blighter!"

"Rats!" said the schoolboy inventor.

"You've got to join up with the Scouts, Glyn!" hissed Tom Merry sulphurously through the keyhole. "Chuck that rotten invention, or whatever it is you're wasting your time on, and come out, or we—we'll spificate you!"

"It isn't a rotten invention!" said Glyn indignantly. "I'm working up a jolly good stunt, and so long as you rowdy beggars don't interfere—"

"Open this door!"

"Look here—"

Bang! Crash! Wallop! went three hefty boots on the door.

"Shurrup that row, you burbling idiots!" roared Bernard Glyn from inside. "You're upsetting the dials of my apparatus—"

"We'll upset your dial, you cuckoo, if you don't come out!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "It's a lovely afternoon, and you've no right to be stuck indoors messing about with your fat-headed inventions, Glyn. Open the door!"

"I won't!" snorted Glyn.

Tom Merry & Co. looked wrathfully at each other.

"The stubborn ass!" snorted Blake. "Glyn's on his hind legs again. He can be as obstinate as Gussy when he likes."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Oh, don't let's stay here arguing!" said Tom Merry crossly. "We've wasted more time than enough, as it is! We'll give Glyn a bumping later, and stuff his blithering invention, whatever it is, down his back! Come on; let's get out!"

The exasperated recruits went downstairs again, leaving Glyn alone in his glory.

The Boy Scouts' ranks, which had got rather straggly, were ordered back to position.

"Form—fours!" rapped Tom Merry, looking quite fierce.

The scouts obeyed.

"R-r-right—turn!"

Click! Click! went the heels of the Wolves and the Eagles.

The band, of which Blake was the leader, ranged themselves in front of the ranks, and then, on the command, "Quick—march!" the St. Jim's Scouts started off at a swinging pace for the gates. The band struck up with a din that woke the echoes, and Skimpole of the Shell, whose thoughts were far away, gave quite a jump, and fell badly out of step.

Bang, bang, bang! went the drum, whacked energetically by Grundy; and Herries, Digby, Monty Lowther, and

Lennox, armed with bugles, blew fortissimo tootles with all the power of their lungs.

And, keeping very good time with the strains of that martial music, the Wolves and the Eagles marched out of St. Jim's, wending their way along the Rylcombe Lane towards the wood; whilst Bernard Glyn, secure in his study, proceeded with the work on his mysterious and important invention.

CHAPTER 2.

Gordon Gay & Co. Chip in!

TOM MERRY & CO. were in great spirits that afternoon. They had all their scouting tackle with them, and the great affair of the run was to be the building of a bridge across the wide brook that ran through the wood to the Rhyl.

Only the faces of Baggy Trimble and Racke & Co. were glum. The slackers' looks became blacker, too, as Tom Merry and the others kept prodding them with their staves, to make them keep time.

"Throw your chest out there, Mellish!" rapped Tom sharply. "Don't crawl along like a forty-bob horse! Do you call that marching?"

"I don't want to do any marching," replied Mellish, with a scowl. "You've no right to order us out on a grind like this, Merry, against our will. It's all very well for you chaps, but— Yow-ow-ow! Stop it! Wharree you at?"

Tom was lunging at him with his staff, and Mellish quickened the pace considerably.

"You're lagging behind, too, Trimble!" exclaimed the Wolf Patrol leader severely. "Get a move on!"

"Look here, Tom Merry, I'm tired!" gasped Baggy, who really did look hot and bothered as a result of his undue exertions. "If I drop with exhaustion, and anything serious happens to me, I shall hold you responsible. Groooooogh! I'm going back."

"No you're not, you fat waster!" said Tom promptly. "If you don't make a better show of marching I shall ask Figgins to let you pull the trek-cart. That will help get some of your surplus weight down!"

"Oh dear!"

Baggy, keeping a wary eye on Tom's staff, increased his step, and toiled on with the rest of the troop.

Rylcombe Wood was reached, and the two patrols marched in, the band having ceased its labours. The youthful musicians seemed to be in need of a breather, too, for they had expended all their energies in playing their instruments.

"Halt!" said Tom Merry, when a glade near the centre of the wood was reached.

"Shun!" roared Figgins.

The Scouts stood at attention.

"We'll make this place the headquarters of the Wolf Patrol," said Tom Merry, looking round. "The tent will be pitched here and all our chattels deposited. Figgins, your patrol will take possession of the other end of the wood. We'll have a skirmish, and our job will be to sling a bridge over the stream and break through your lines. You can erect your fortifications and go all out to stop us, and take as many prisoners as possible. How's that?"

"Ripping!" said Figgins enthusiastically. "You'll have a job to break through our territory, I can tell you! The Eagles will be on the watch!"

"Go hon! Well, get along with it, old son! In fifteen minutes' time the Wolves advance!"

Figgins rapped out orders to his patrol, and the Eagles marched off with their tent and trek-cart, to pitch camp and raise fortifications at the other side of the wood.

Tom Merry & Co., meanwhile, busied themselves in constructing their own camp and getting ready for the bridge-building operation.

Blake gave Baggy Trimble a mallet, and ordered him to drive in the tent-pegs. The tent was already up, and Blake went in to join Tom Merry, Talbot, Kangaroo, and Manners in a council of war.

Baggy took the mallet, and commenced work with a very bad grace. He wielded the implement clumsily, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who happened to pass by, gave vent to a sudden fiendish howl:

THIS IS THE FIRST OF THE EXTRA LONG

Tom Merry yarns you have been asking for.

Drop me a line and let me have your opinion
of it, chums.

"Yawooooooooogh! Yah! Ow! My foot! Oh cwumps! Yawooooop!"

Gussy hopped about on one foot, the other clasped tenderly between his hands.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Monty Lowther. "Baggy's clubbed Gussy on the right hoof! Didn't it strike you as being very funny, Gustavus?"

"Gwoooogh! Ow! Where is that clumsy boundah Twimble? I—I'll give him a fearful thwashin'!"

Baggy saw the war light gleaming on D'Arcy's monocle, and he dropped the mallet in terror. Gussy, limping and gasping, made a dash in his direction, and the fat youth of the Fourth fell back.

"Yah! Oooooogh! Keepimoff!" yelled Baggy. "Look here, D'Arcy—Yarooooop!"

Baggy Trimble did not look where he was going. He tripped up on one of the tent ropes, and went sprawling. There was a thud as Baggy fell headlong on the canvas.

"Oooooogh! Help!"

Baggy Trimble was no light-weight, and the tent, being only roughly erected, was not proof against the sudden impact. There was a rending and a swishing noise, and a clatter of poles; and a moment later the whole tent fell with a flop, completely imprisoning the juniors who were within.

Weird, muffled noises sounded from under the billowing canvas.

"Yerrugh! Wh-what the—"

"Gerroff my chest!"

"Yow! Leggo my neck!"

"Oooooop!"

The canvas heaved up and down as the luckless Scouts underneath struggled to get free. Monty Lowther, Herries, Digby, Kerruish, and a few others dashed to the rescue, roaring with merriment. They grasped the fallen canvas and yanked at it. Five red-faced, dusty, and tousled-looking Boy Scouts crawled out on the grass and glared round with wrathful eyes.

"It was Trimble's fault!" hooted Blake sulphurously. "Where is the fat idiot? Let's bump him for his carelessness. Why, the little blighter has mizzled!"

"So's Racke—and Mellish—and Crooke!" exclaimed Tom Merry angrily. "The cads have deserted!"

"Oh cwumps!"

Baggy Trimble, in fact, had made his escape, and Racke & Co. taking advantage of the general confusion had, like the Arabs in the poem, silently drifted away.

Tom Merry gritted his teeth.

"The rotten slackers! We'll court-martial them for desertion when we catch 'em! Blake, take out a search-party and bring them in."

"What-ho!" said Blake.

A search-party was made up, and Blake led them away with all speed.

But the heartless deserters had a good start, and they lost no time in making themselves scarce. They came at length to a remote part of the wood, and there, having successfully eluded the pursuers, they halted.

"Good!" said Racke. "We've given those rotters the slip. Hang scouting this afternoon! It's a lot of rot, and too much fag, anyway."

"Rather!" said Mellish. "Crooke and I had an appointment at the Green Man this afternoon. Coming along with us, Racke, to have a smoke and a game of billiards?"

"All serene," said Racke.

"I say, you chaps, I think I'll join your party, too," said Baggy Trimble, who was rather puffed after his exertions.

"I consider myself a bit of a goer, you know, and—"

"Oh, hold your row, Trimble," said Racke impatiently.

"Come on, you chaps."

Racke & Co. hurried through the wood and made their way towards the river.

Baggy Trimble followed, but, being less active than the others, he soon began to find the pace too fast.

"Here, slow up a bit!" he gasped. "Groooooogh! I'm puffed!"

"Oh, rats!" said Racke, grinning. "If you can't keep pace with us, Trimble, you must stay behind, that's all."

"Look here—"

"We don't want you with us, anyway, Trimble," said Crooke. "The Green Man is no place for you. Besides, you're too much of a blabber. Better go for a ramble on your own, but be careful to keep out of the others' way, or you'll get it in the neck for desertion."

"I'm not going to be left out!" gasped Baggy Trimble, who was already a long way behind. "Groooooogh! Wait for me, you rotters! Yah! Of all the selfish beasts—Yarooooooogh!"

A howl of anguish escaped Baggy as he stumbled on a projecting root and fell to earth with a crash. Racke & Co. laughed heartlessly and hurried on, leaving Baggy

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sprawled on all-fours on the grass, they increased their pace and disappeared into the thicknesses of the wood.

Baggy gave a moan.

"Yow! Wow! The rotters! They've left me on my own while they go on to the Green Man to enjoy themselves!" he gasped. "Ow-wow! They ought to be shown up, the beastly cads! Groooooogh! For two pins I'd— Oh! Mum-m-my hat!"

Baggy broke off, and his eyes opened wide in horror, for the bushes behind him had parted suddenly, and a trio of youths, dressed in Boy Scouts uniform, appeared.

Baggy knew these youths only too well, and had cause to fear them!

They were Gordon Gay, Frank Monk, and Harry Wootton, of the Rylcombe Grammar School!

The Grammarians looked very fit and active in their scouting garb. They grinned broadly when they saw Baggy.

"Hallo!" said Gordon Gay. "What do mine aged eyes behold, dear lads? A prize porker done up as a Boy Scout!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I say—" began Baggy uneasily.

"It talks!" said the Grammarian leader, in tones of intense surprise. "Can it be human, I wonder? Why, yes, it's almost human! It's young Trimble of St. Jim's!"

"Trimble a Boy Scout—what next?" grinned Frank Monk.

"Looks ripping, doesn't he, in his get-up?" chuckled Harry Wootton. "What are you doing down there, Trimble, anyway? Nosing out a trail?"

"Perhaps he's niffed a kipper, or can smell a jam-tart in the offing," remarked Gordon Gay.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Baggy Trimble rose to his feet and blinked at the Grammarian Scouts in great trepidation.

He knew that he was in for a ragging. Gordon Gay & Co. never missed an opportunity for a rag—especially when it was against St. Jim's. A good deal of rivalry existed between the two schools, and the question of which was "top dog"—St. Jim's or the Grammar School—had never yet been settled, although it was contested with great heat by either side.

Gordon Gay gave a low "ooo-ee," and in response a whole troop of Grammarians, all in scouting uniform, quickly appeared on the scene. The wood seemed to be alive with Gordon Gay's followers that afternoon.

"Gaze at this, my comrades!" said the enterprising Gordon Gay, extending a hand towards Baggy. "Trimble, the Boy Scout! Methinks, then, there are others about! The alleged Scout troop belonging to that measly old casual ward, St. Jim's, must be out manoeuvring this afternoon. Trimble, have you deserted?"

"Nun-no!" gasped Baggy. "I—I'm doing some reconnoitring, you know."

"Ah-ha! A spy!" said Gordon Gay in fearsome tones.

"He is spying on our troops! He shall be shot at dawn!"

"He shall!" chorused the Grammarian Scouts threateningly.

Baggy's knees began to knock.

"I wasn't! I'm not a spy!" he gasped. "Really, Gay, I was looking for the Eagles."

"The Eagles!" said Gordon Gay. "Is that the scraggy lot run by that long-legged idiot Figgins?"

"Yes," said Baggy eagerly. "I—I'm a Wolf, you know."

"A Wolf!" grinned Gordon Gay. "Well, Trimble, I must say you look more like a Porker."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, I'm going now," said Baggy, trying to edge away down the path. "I've got to get my report in to Tom Merry, so that the Wolves can make their attack. I— Yarooooop! Wharrer you doing, Gay, you rotter?"

"Just yanking you back, that's all!" said the Grammarian leader cheerfully, taking Baggy by his scarf and holding him. "You can consider yourself a prisoner of war, my friend. You've got to give us the information we want, otherwise things will go very hard with you. We have a way of dealing with prisoners that they don't like. Now, am I to understand that the Wolves and the Eagles are in this wood, and that the Wolves are going to fall on the Eagles' fold?"

"Oooooogh! Ye-es!" gurgled Baggy. "I—I don't mind giving you the information, Gay, so long as you let me go. As a matter of fact, I'm finished with scouting this afternoon. I'm fed up. I want to go back to school, and— Groooooogh! Leggo my neck-scarf, you beast. You're choking me!"

He was in the hands of the Philistines, and not being of the stuff of which heroes are made, Baggy soon told Gordon Gay & Co. all they wished to know concerning the activities of the St. Jim's scouts.

"And you have deserted with Racke and Crooke and Mellish, you young bounder!" said Gordon Gay severely.



Blake gave Baggy Trimble a mallet and ordered him to drive in a tent peg. The fat Fourth-Former commenced work with a very bad grace. At that precise moment Arthur Augustus D'Arcy happened to be passing by, and he gave a sudden fiendish yell as the mallet came down heavily upon his toe. "Yawwooh!" he cried, hopping about on one foot. "Yah! Ow! My foot! Oh, cwumbs! Yoooop!" (See Chapter 2.)

"They left you behind, did they, and have gone pub-haunting. Carboy, you and a few others run along and rope in those three merry blades, will you?"

"Rather!"

Carboy and a detachment of sturdy scouts ran off in the direction taken by Racke & Co. Not very long afterwards, distant sounds of strife and woe were heard, followed soon by the re-appearance of Carboy & Co., dragging along Racke, Crooke, and Mellish.

"We caught these bounders just as they were skulking in at the back door of the Green Man," said Carboy, surveying his captives with a contemptuous glance. "They deserve a ducking in the river for their caddishness, and I nearly gave them it, too—"

"Good job you didn't, then," said Gordon Gay. "I want their giddy clobber. You see, my sons, I have hatched a little plot, whereby it may be possible to put the kybosh on those St. Jim's scallywags. Four of us can dress as Wolves, and set out on an artful game of deception. Our own scout uniforms are a darker brown than the Wolves, and our scarves, hats, and badges are different. But, dressed in these fellows' uniform, we ought to be able to spoof Wolves and Eagles, what?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Rather!"

Racke & Co. and Baggy Trimble were divested of their upper garments. These were put on by Gordon Gay, Frank Monk, and Harry and Jack Wootton. The four St. Jim's deserters were bound with rope, taken from the Grammarians' trek-cart, and tied to a tree, with gags over their mouths to prevent them giving the alarm.

Tadpole and Mont Blong were left to do sentry-go round them, whilst the others marched off to look for Tom Merry & Co.

CHAPTER 3.

The Downfall of the Saints!

GORDON GAY & CO., proceeding through the wood with great stealth and caution, at length drew close to the stream. The four who were dressed as Wolves went ahead, to spy out the land. As they came closer to the stream, they heard sounds of great

activity, and peering through the trees, they saw Tom Merry & Co. busily engaged in the operation of bridge building.

The little wooden bridge that was to be slung across the stream was developing in a very workmanlike manner.

"My word!" murmured Gordon Gay. "They're getting along splendidly, aren't they? Look at old Gussy, working like a giddy sapper! But what a pity his monocle keeps dropping off! What about having the bridge down, boys, now most of those bounders are working on it?"

"Good wheeze! But we shall have to be jolly careful," said Frank Monk. "Hallo! Who's this?"

Kerruish and Lumley-Lumley, who had crossed the stream by means of the iron bridge farther down, and were on the look-out for the Eagles, came up unsuspectingly, seeing the Wolves' uniforms.

"How did you chaps get across?" Kerruish exclaimed in perplexity, and then he broke off with a gasp as his supposed comrades turned on him and Lumley-Lumley.

The two startled Scouts stood absolutely no chance—they could not even cry out. Down they went, with hands clapped over their mouths, and in a twinkling they were rushed back to where the rest of the Grammarians' scouts were waiting, there to be thoroughly gagged and made prisoners.

"Now this is where we take Tom Merry and his mouldy crew by surprise!" chuckled Gordon Gay. "The coast is clear for action, so come on, my lads!"

The Grammarians plunged on towards the stream and, dashing out of the trees, they made a concerted attack on the bridge, which was now nearly completed.

Tom Merry & Co. were on the bridge when Gordon Gay & Co. appeared.

They gazed, with almost unbelieving eyes, at the Grammarians.

"Oh, my only hat!" ejaculated Blake. "Grammar School rotters! That's done it!"

Gordon Gay & Co. charged without more ado.

"Up, boys, and at 'em!" yelled Frank Monk boisterously. Tom Merry looked round in desperation. The Grammarian party was much stronger than his. The Wolves, too, were

at a disadvantage. Tom's brain worked swiftly, but he could see no hope of deliverance.

Jack Blake stood on the end of the bridge wielding a hatchet to defend it in the noble manner of Horatius of old; but his downfall was swift and sudden. Gordon Gay & Co. came on with a rush, and looked like capturing the bridge.

Tom Merry & Co. crowded forward. They hit out valiantly to right and left, and managed to drive back the attackers.

Gordon Gay and his myrmidons suddenly retired from the bridge; but this was purely in accordance with another of the wily Grammarian leader's plans. For, all this while, Frank Monk, Jack Wootton, and Derwent were underneath the bridge, artfully engaged in loosening the stays that kept it up.

"Now, come on, you bounders! Get across if you can!" said Tom Merry, facing the attackers with gleaming eyes. "This bridge will stand a bit of weight, never worry, and if you think you can take it, you're welcome to try. I—Oh! M-m-my hat! What was that?"

A strange, rending noise sounded underneath the bridge, and the staging began to sway. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in fact, nearly lost his footing, and he clasped Monty Lowther quite lovingly round the neck.

"Bai Jove!" he gasped. "I—I say, deah boys, I'm a'fraid this bidge is wathah wocky. If you wemembah I pointed out, Tom Mewwy, that—"

Cr-r-r-rack!

"Look out!" shrieked Blake. "The whole giddy show is going over!"

"Oh, scissors!"

Crash!

With a fearful noise and a sickening lurch, the whole bridge collapsed like a pack of cards. That fine structure, so cherished by the Wolves as a really fine example of bridge-building, gave way underneath, and the weight of the Scouts upon it rended its timbers wide asunder!

Tom Merry & Co. were pitched headlong downward amongst the debris, grabbing each other and yelling frantically. A series of loud concussions and splashes arose as they floundered into the stream with the ruins of their bridge.

Splash! Bump! Clatter! Splash!

"Yarooogh!"

"Oh, cwumbs!"

"Gerrooogh!"

Several made valiant attempts to leap to the bank; but their feet slipped on the grass and clay, and down they went into the rippling waters, to mingle their gurgling cries with the rest.

Gordon Gay & Co. stood on the opposite bank and roared with mirth as the fallen Wolves struggled in wild confusion in the stream, most of them entangled in the disrupted bridge members.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Monk. "What a fall was there, my countrymen! Do you find it wet, dear boys? Better put the pieces of your bridge together and make a raft!"

"Oooogh!" gasped Tom Merry, standing up waist-deep in the stream, and shaking a muddy fist at the chortling Grammarians. "You—you rotters! You—you—you—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh deah! This is howwid!" gasped Arthur Augustus, groping for his monocle and jamming it, streaming with water, into his eye. "I am dwenehed, you know, deah boys. This has thown me in a feahful fluttah! Bai Jove! Look at my bags!"

"Look at our bridge!" hooted Blake wrathfully. "All our work done for nothing, and we—we've got a soaking in the bargain!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Gordon Gay & Co.

Tom Merry and his luckless followers crawled out of the stream on the other side. They presented a sorry and bedraggled spectacle as they gathered on the bank.

The bed of the stream was apparently very muddy, for the Wolves were plastered with mud. Monty Lowther's head, in fact, was fairly caked with it. Kangaroo, who had taken a rather high dive into the shallow waters, had a complexion that was more like a nigger minstrel's than a schoolboy's. As for Arthur Augustus, he was smothered in mud from head to foot, and his head was festooned with weeds in an effective, if rather inartistic, style.

They stood there, streaming and dripping wet, and uttering the most weird and wonderful sounds imaginable.

"My word! What a giddy bevvy of beauty!" chuckled Harry Wootton. "Gaze at the Mudlark Patrol, dear lads, and weep! What about taking them into custody, Gay?"

"I don't think it matters," was Gordon Gay's prompt response. "They're too dirty! I wouldn't think of soiling my fingers on 'em. Better march back to St. Jim's now, Merry, with the rest of your cheery-looking crowd, and tell your teachers that you want spring cleaning. Perhaps it

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would be better if you asked old Taggles to turn the hose-pipe on you."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you—you—"

Tom Merry & Co. could find no words sufficient to express themselves. Their feelings, in fact, were too deep for words.

The heartless Grammarians left them standing there, dripping and gurgling incoherently. Uttering loud chorles of victory, Gordon Gay & Co. departed into the woods, and took their prisoners back with them, their next objective being the stronghold of the Eagles.

Tom Merry & Co., meanwhile, held a very dismal council of war. Scouting, as Blake remarked, had been "properly knocked on the head" for the afternoon. The only thing that remained for them to do was to strike camp and return to St. Jim's and hide their diminished heads.

So they trekked back to the camp, uttering the most hair-raising things concerning Gordon Gay & Co. The sun shone down gloriously on those miserable, muddy Scouts, and dried the mud to a lighter hue. But there was no sunshine in the hearts of the Wolf Patrol!

It was a forlorn-looking troop indeed that marched—or, rather crawled—into the gates of St. Jim's just before tea-time.

Wally D'Arcy & Co. of the Third, who were standing in the quadrangle when they came in, sent up a concerted yell of laughter at the Scouts' appearance.

Chuckles greeted them on all sides as they made their way indoors, squelching mud out of their boots as they went.

Over half an hour elapsed before Tom Merry & Co. reappeared from the region of the bath-room. They were now clad, of course, in their Etons, and they looked very clean and fresh after the thorough scrubbing they had given themselves.

But their looks were very black, and they were still muttering dark threats on the devoted heads of Gordon Gay & Co.

The Terrible Three and Jack Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy went down to the gates later, to watch for the return of the Eagles. They wondered whether those yomhs, also, had fallen foul of the Grammarians. In fact, they trembled for the fate of Figgins & Co.

They were soon to know the worst.

The shades of night were falling fast when an old farm cart lumbered up to the gates of St. Jim's.

It was driven by a grinning yokel. Inside the cart was the canvas structure of a tent, in which a mass of struggling boyhood was tied. Lying around this tent-load of boys were Figgins, Kerr, Wynn, Redfern, and a few others of the Eagle troop, bound hand and foot. Their faces had been decorated with liberal applications of paint and ink. The effect was so gruesome that they looked like a batch of Hottentots!

It was all too apparent that Gordon Gay & Co. had succeeded in making the Eagles the further victims of their wiles.

The rest of Figgins' followers were crawling along behind the cart, tied in a long, dejected-looking line to the tail-board. With them were Racke & Co., Lumley-Lumley, Keruish, and Baggy Trimble, wearing looks of unutterable woe. Their faces, too, had been painted by the Grammarians in such a manner that they were a sight to make all beholders stare.

Affixed to the cart was a large placard, on which was scrawled, in glaring characters, the following notice:

"RETURNED WITHOUT THANKS!

PLEASE BURY THEM QUIETLY, WITH NO
MILITARY HONOURS!

N.B.—WHO'S TOP DOG NOW?

THE GRAMMAR SCHOOL, OF COURSE!"

When Tom Merry & Co. saw this they ground their teeth in wrath and chagrin.

"Oh dear!" moaned Blake. "We've got the kybosh properly this time, Tommy. This is where we sing small!"

"Yaas. It's howwid, deah boys!"

"Don't stand there looking at us like a lot of boiled owls!" hooted Figgins furiously from the cart. "Let us loose!"

The captives were released, and they all made a dash indoors to escape the derisive laughter of the large crowd of fellows who gathered round to see the sight.

Manœuvres that afternoon had indeed been a farce and a fiasco for all the St. Jim's Scouts. The rest of the school thought it a huge joke, and roared over the manner of their undoing.

And Tom Merry & Co., whilst they chafed over the indignities they had suffered, vowed vengeance, dire and dreadful, on Gordon Gay and the rest of their heartless rivals of the Grammar School!

CHAPTER 4.

Mr. Seiby is Shocked!

"WELL, you are a set of duffers!" Thus spoke Bernard Glyn, as he met the Terrible Three coming along the Shell passage later.

The schoolboy inventor was looking very cheerful, and the grin he wore spread literally from ear to ear.

Tom Merry gave a grunt.

"I suppose you feel frightfully bucked, Glyn, because you missed the ragging this afternoon?" he said.

"Rather!" chuckled Glyn. "But fancy letting the Grammarians do you in the eye like that! I'm ashamed of you!"

"Oh, rats!" said Monty Lowther crossly. "Look here, chaps, don't you think we ought to bump the fathead for staying in this afternoon, when he ought to have been out with us?"

"Rather!" said Tom Merry. "Grab him!"

"Here, hold on—I mean, leggo!" roared Glyn, as the Terrible Three gathered round and seized him. "Hands off, you bouncers! I've been busy this afternoon on a frightfully important invention of mine. I tell you I—"

"Blow your rotten invention!" said Tom Merry brusquely. "Your duty was with the troop, Glyn. Bump him!"

"Look here—Oh! Yah! Yaroooooh!"

Bump, bump, bump!

Bernard Glyn was whirled over in the hands of the Terrible Three, and his person smote the cold, hard linoleum with a series of mighty smites.

There they left him, sprawled on the floor, and looking dazed and dishevelled, whilst they walked on towards the Common-room, their feelings somewhat relieved.

"Yow! Ow! The rotters!" gasped Glyn, picking himself up and rubbing his hurts with great tenderness. "The—these scatter-brained chumps! Call my invention rotten, do they? Grooooh! Wait till they know of my great stunt, that's all. Yow! They'll sing a different tune then, I'll wager! Ow-ow-ow!"

Glyn went downstairs, still gasping, and walked out into the quadrangle.

He crossed to the cloisters, and made his way to the old ruined tower.

The tower was one of the original relics of the Middle Ages, when St. Jim's was an abbey. Its crumbling, ivy-clad walls stood high over the rest of the school buildings, noble and picturesque, despite the ravages that time had made upon it. The ancient belfry, exposed high aloft to the four winds of heaven, was now the refuge of bats and owls. The ruined tower of St. Jim's, in fact, was quite a landmark in the countryside, and so tall was it that from the top one could see for miles around.

The top chamber of the tower was reached by means of a flight of winding stone stairs. Glyn opened the heavy oak door at the bottom and climbed up into the dark regions above, lighting his way with a pocket torch.

The evening wore on, and Tom Merry & Co. and most of the Shell were quite exercised as to Glyn's mysterious disappearance.

It was close on time for prep when Baggy Trimble came trotting into the Common-room looking excited.

"I say, you chaps, I know where Glyn is!" he cried. "He's hiding in the ruined tower!"

"My hat!" said Tom Merry. "What ever can Glyn be up to in the tower?"

"Goodness knows!" said Baggy. "I saw a light in the belfry at the top, and I reckon Glyn's up there. But when I went to climb the stairs I found the door bolted."

The Terrible Three exchanged glances.

"Well, if Glyn's in the tower, we're going up to see what all this mysterious business is about," said Tom Merry. "I know how to open that oak door. All I need is my penknife. I think it's only right that we should know what Glyn is up to."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus. "I quite agree deah boy. Theah's no knowin' what that boundah Glyn might be doin'. F'winstance, he may be makin' anothah livin' model of someone—"

"Yes; he made quite a lifelike dummy of you once, didn't he, Gussy?" grinned Tom Merry. "The thing moved, too, and a lot of fellows were taken in over it."

"Gussy and the model both being dummies, of course—" began Monty Lowther, but Arthur Augustus silenced him with a frigid look.

"Come on, you chaps! There's no time for rotting," said Tom Merry.

The juniors made hurried tracks for the tower, and, arriving at the old oak door at the bottom, Tom Merry manipu-

lated the lock. They then crept softly up the stairs into the dim and misty confines of the tower.

As they climbed higher they heard a peculiar humming noise coming down from up above. They at length reached the oak door, which gave access to the topmost chamber of the tower.

"There's someone in the room," whispered Tom. "Hark! What the thump is that humming noise?"

They listened, with bated breath, and the well-known voice of Bernard Glyn came to them from the other side of the door.

"Hallo, Edith! Can you hear me now? That's ripping! Yes; I'm speaking from the top of the tower at St. Jim's. How are you, sis?"

The juniors outside the door exchanged wondering looks.

"Mum-m-my only hat!" gasped Monty Lowther. "Glyn's jawing with his sister Edith. But—but it seems impossible! Edith Glyn isn't at St. Jim's, you know. She's at Glyn House, nearly five miles away!"

"Stwange, isn't it?" said D'Arcy.

Tom Merry tapped at the door.

"I say, Glyn!" he called.

Bernard Glyn gave a gasp.

"Hallo! Is that you, Merry?"

"Yes. We've come up to find out what awfully deep game you are playing. Will you open this door?"

"No, fear!" said Bernard Glyn promptly. "I don't want any intruders here. This place is private."

"Oh, bosh! We're coming in!"

They heard Glyn chuckle, and then the electric motor, or whatever it was, started humming more furiously than before.

Blake kicked on the door.

"Are you going to let us in, you chump?" he bawled.

"No!" came the very decided reply.

Blake grasped the iron ring on the door, with the intention of turning it, but no sooner had his hands touched that ring than he gave a yell that rang through the length and breadth of the tower, and he jumped quite two feet in the air.

"Yarooooooh!"

Tom Merry and the others gazed at Blake in startled wonderment.

It seemed that he had suddenly taken leave of his senses.

"What the dickens is the matter, Blake?" demanded Herries.

"Grooooooh! Wow!" moaned Blake, wagging his right hand in the air. "I'm hurt! Yow-ow!"

"Bai Jove! I wegard you as a twightfully careless ass, Blake!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Fancy you catchin' your hand in the wing like that! Perhaps I can manage it bettah."

Arthur Augustus took hold of the ring firmly. Next instant a fiendish yell burst from him, and Gussy gave a jump that was worthy of a kangaroo, if somewhat lacking in that animal's grace.

"Ooooooooh! Oh dear! Bai-bai Jove! Ow-ow-ow!"

The others looked dumbfounded.

"What on earth did you do, Gussy?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Yah! Oh, ewwubs! I didn't do anythin', deah boy!" gasped the swell of the Fourth, rubbing his hands ruefully. "Somethin' seemed to give my hands a twightful kick—"

"Eh? Something kicked you in the paws, you say?" said Tom Merry. "What utter rot! You must be off your rocker, Gussy. Here, let me try— Yoooooooh! Wow! Owp!"

Tom let go of the door-handle as though it had suddenly become red-hot. Then he, too, began to rub his hands.

"Great pip!" gasped Monty Lowther. "What ever is wrong with the door-handle? I—"

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

Light suddenly dawned on Tom Merry, and he gave a wrathful shout.

"Why, the—the rotten spoofer! Glyn's been giving us electric shocks!"

"Wha-a-at!"

"The door-handle has been electrified somehow!" cried Tom wrathfully. "Glyn has wangled it from inside so that anyone catching hold of the handle will get an electric shock."

"Bai Jove! The howwid blightah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" chortled Glyn from inside. "How do you like it, you duffers? Have another go! I'll switch on a bit more current next time!"

"You—you—you—"

Buzz-z-z-z-z-z-z-z-z-z-z! went Glyn's mysterious machinery inside. "That's what you get for being nose-y, you bouncers," chuckled Glyn. "Now run away and play, there's good chaps."

"Oh, you chortling cuckoo, Glyn!" gasped Tom Merry in wrathful tones. "We—we'll slaughter you when you come out!"

"Bow-wow!"

The indignant juniors at the top of the stairs kicked and banged at the door, taking care not to touch that evil handle, but at last gave it up, and went down to the bottom of the tower, feeling greatly aggrieved.

Baggy Trimble came up the stairs not long after, puffing like a grampus from his exertions. The humming behind the closed door caught his ears, and he blinked curiously.

"Something's going on in there," he murmured. "I'll just open the door quietly and peep in."

Baggy grasped the handle, and immediately gave a loud howl.

"Yah! Wow! Help! Yarooooop!"

He jumped away from the door with an alacrity that was amazing for one of his girth, then he turned on his heel and fled down the steps.

He went headlong into the quadrangle at top speed.

He almost collided with a short, sharp-featured gentleman in cap and gown who happened to be crossing the quadrangle in front of him.

"Bless my soul!" gasped Mr. Selby, the master of the Third, holding Baggy as he ran precipitately into his arms. "Trimble! Good heavens, boy, how dare you! What is the matter?"

"Lemme go!" roared Baggy. "I've nearly been murdered! Help! Something tried to kill me at the top of the tower steps, sir! Oooogh!"

Baggy tore himself away from the astounded master's grasp, and fairly flew in the direction of the School House.

Several fellows who had gathered round looked after him in astonishment. As for Mr. Selby, his face was a study.

"Dear me! The boy must be dreaming!" he exclaimed testily. "It is, however, a matter that should be investigated. Kildare, North, and Darrell, kindly follow me up into the tower."

The prefects thus addressed, having strolled up and heard Mr. Selby's command, had no alternative but to obey. Mr. Selby, his gown swishing behind him, led the way into the ruined tower, and Kildare, Darrell, and North, and a number of interested and excited juniors, followed after.

Mr. Selby reached the top of the stairs in rather a breathless state. He was not an athlete, by any means, and it was a long climb to the top of the tower. He frowned when he heard the strange, buzzing sounds that proceeded from behind the closed oak door.

"Bless my soul! What is going on here?" he rapped. "Some ridiculous junior prank, I presume. However, I will soon ascertain the truth."

Mr. Selby grasped the door-handle and tried to turn it. The door would not open, so he shook it.

"Try both hands, old scout!" came Glyn's voice from within. "You might do it that way. Go it!"

Mr. Selby did try both hands, and no sooner had he done so than he gave an ear-splitting yell, and commenced to dance a weird species of caper on the stone landing.

He could not let go of the door-handle. His hands seemed glued to it by some magical force, that sent horrible shooting pains up his arms. And all the time he held on to the handle, Mr. Selby continued to roar at the top of his voice, and dance about like a very dervish.

"Yooogh! Good heavens! Yah! Ow-wooooooogh!" he bellowed.

"My hat!" ejaculated Kildare. "Whatever is the matter, sir?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Glyn from inside. "How do you like it that way? A little bit stronger for both hands—what? Would you like some more juice, old son? It's good for the nerves, you know!"

"Wooooogh! Stoppit! Boy, how dare you?" howled Mr. Selby, performing the wildest of acrobatic tricks as he tried to wrench himself away from the door. "I am being subjected to an electrical shocking device! Yooooop! Yah! You little villain, turn it off!"

A horrified gasp sounded from the other side of the door.

"I—I say, is that you, sir?"

"It is I—Mr. Selby!" shrieked the infuriated master. "Ow-ow-ow! Turn it off this minute! I am being electrocuted! Oooooogh!"

"Oh crumbs!"

The current was promptly switched off, and Mr. Selby's hands were free.

His state of fury was truly awful to behold. His steely eyes glinted like points of fire, and his brow was thunderous.

"Glyn! It is you in there, is it?" he stormed. "Open this door immediately!"

"Oh dear! I—I say, sir, I can't, really!"

"Open this door, I say!" howled Mr. Selby, dancing again, only with rage this time. "Do you hear me, Glyn? I command you to obey!"

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A key grated in the lock and the door swung open.

The schoolboy inventor, looking very dismayed and crestfallen, appeared.

"I'm awfully sorry, sir!" he gasped. "I didn't know it was you. I thought it was some other silly ass—I—I mean—ahem! Here, don't come in, sir! You'll upset my apparatus!"

But Mr. Selby paid no heed.

He walked straight into the room, and glared round him with a choleric eye.

The boys outside surged through the doorway, eager and curious.

The room was full of the most weird and wonderful contraptions imaginable. In one corner was a large electric generator, which was humming busily. On a bench stood a conglomeration of articles that were really bewildering to look at. There were pieces of apparatus that looked like wireless sets, adorned with mysterious-looking dials, meters, and indicators. There were coils, and switches, and levers, and knobs, and batteries, and all manner of mysterious devices. In the window—or rather, the gap in the crumbling masonry where once a window had been—was a strange affair, built like a wooden frame, with gleaming copper wire wound round it, and which moved on a stand at the bottom by means of a long lever. Near it was an apparatus that looked like a telephone, with three little lights twinkling over it. The place seemed full of wire. There was wire, wire everywhere. Mr. Selby's gown, in fact, caught in some of it as he strode in, and when he turned round there was a rending noise as his scholastic garment slit right up the back.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the boys in the doorway, immensely tickled.

"Oh, jemimy!" said Bernard Glyn in dismay, as a number of wires began to fall. "That's done it! You've pulled down my counterpoise, sir!"

"What—what!" spluttered Mr. Selby, whose legs were now getting tangled in the wires. "Good heavens! I—I—really, this is infamous! Groooogh! I cannot move for wire! Yow-ow! I demand to know, Glyn, what all this means!"

"This is my wireless station, sir," said Bernard Glyn with some degree of pride.

"A wireless station?" ejaculated Mr. Selby, giving quite a start. "Bless my soul!"

"Howly smoke!" gasped Reilly. "Then that's what the spalpeen's been up to, bedad!"

Mr. Selby's eyes glittered as he looked round at Glyn's fearsome stock of apparatus.

"How dare you take the liberty of installing rubbish up here, Glyn?" he thundered. "I will see that you are punished severely!"

"It isn't rubbish, sir," interposed the schoolboy inventor warmly. "And I've got permission from the Head to use the tower as my wireless station. I obtained my licence last week, so everything is quite O.K., sir."

"Bless my soul!"

The other boys looked thrilled.

"Good old Glyn!" chuckled Talbot. "You are a cough-drop, and no giddy error!"

"Fancy having a wireless station rigged up here! That's great!" said Kerruish.

"With the Head's permission, too!" grinned Cardew, with a sly look at the Third Form master.

Mr. Selby snorted.

"Dr. Holmes did not give you permission to fix up that diabolical contrivance on the door-handle, I suppose, Glyn?" he demanded.

"N-n-no, sir!" said Glyn. "I did that on my own—er—to keep intruders away. You see, sir, my apparatus is still very much in the experimental stage, and I didn't want silly asses—ahem!—I mean other people, interfering."

"Indeed!" snapped Mr. Selby. "I consider it a very dangerous thing to do, Glyn, and you will follow me at once to Dr. Holmes' study. Boys, kindly disperse!"

The juniors were herded down the stairs; Mr. Selby locked the door of the upper room, and then he commanded Glyn to go with him.

The schoolboy inventor, looking rather rueful, accompanied the irate master into the School House, and a sympathetic and interested crowd watched them go.

Wally D'Arcy & Co. of the Third, indeed, gave Glyn a slight cheer as he went up the School House steps, in recognition of the "shock" he had given their Form master.

CHAPTER 5.

Glyn Explains!

BY the time Glyn emerged from the Head's study all the school was buzzing with the news. The idea of a wireless-station at St. Jim's captured the imagination of everyone, and a crowd flocked round the schoolboy inventor as he came down the corridor.



"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, clasping Monty Lowther lovingly round the neck. "I—I say, dash boys, I'm afwaid this bwidg is wathah wocky. If you wemembah I pointed out——" Or-r-r-rack! "Look out!" shrieked Blake. Crash! Blake had hardly given the warning when, with a fearful noise and a sickening lurch, the whole bridge collapsed like a pack of cards! (See Chapter 3.)

"Licked?" asked Talbot sympathetically.
 "Yes—a couple of cuts, just to satisfy old Selby," grinned Glyn. "The Head's a real brick, though! I've still got permission to carry out my own experiments in the ruined tower, and I'm going right ahead, you bet."

"By Jove, how ripping!"
 "I say, Glyn, are you going to broadcast concerts?" asked Digby eagerly. "If so, you can count me in for a few banjo solos!"
 "And me for the cornet!" said Herries. "You know how I can play the cornet, Glyn!"

"Yes, I know—and I wouldn't give your blessed cornet houseroom!" laughed the schoolboy inventor. "But you chaps needn't get excited. I'm not going to broadcast any concerts. I'm not a giddy broadcasting-station, you know—just an ordinary common or garden experimenter. But I've got a little stunt I'm working up that ought to cause a bit of a stir."

"What's the wheeze, Glyn?"
 "Oh, I'm not prepared to say—yet!" was the grinning reply; and he strolled off.

Tom Merry & Co. were greatly interested when they heard the news concerning Glyn's activities in the tower. He was very reticent, however, about the matter, and it was not till tea-time the next day that the Terrible Three and Blake & Co. managed to find him at home in his study.

"Come in!" said the schoolboy inventor, as Tom Merry opened the door. "I was just coming along to see you chaps, as a matter of fact. You know, I've got a wireless-station installed at the top of the tower——"

"Yes, you bouncer!" said Tom Merry warmly. "Why didn't you let us into the wheeze before? What exactly are you doing up there, anyway? We've been simply itching to know."

"Well, by means of my patent wireless apparatus I've succeeded in establishing two-way communication with my home," said the schoolboy inventor proudly. "You see, I've invented a new type of transmitter and receiver that incorporates all the advantages of the ordinary telephone.

That is to say, the persons at both ends can hold a conversation without either having to break off when a reply is wanted. My patent transmitter and receiver enables two people to talk together at one and the same time by means of wireless—see? The secret lies in my special method of simultaneous tuning to two different wave-lengths."

"My hat!" said Tom Merry. "It sounds awfully interesting."

"If I can perfect the apparatus it will be a jolly good thing for me, I can tell you!" said Glyn. "At present, the range of the apparatus is limited to about seven miles. But the great advantage of it is that my combined receiver and transmitter is entirely portable. It is no larger than an ordinary attache-case. It requires no aerial, but works entirely on the capacity and inductance principle. That means to say, a chap carrying one of these portable sets can go anywhere within five to seven miles of St. Jim's, and hold an intelligent conversation with me, working my big set up in the old tower."

"Bai Jove!"
 "The portable set works in sympathy, as it were, with my apparatus in the tower," explained Glyn. "By means of a direct beam system, I can transmit sufficient power into the portable set on any given wave-length to make it work quite independently of an aerial. The worst of it is, the range is only about seven miles."

"But still, Glyn, that's jolly good!" said Tom Merry enthusiastically. "I think it's wonderful! So that's how you came to be talking to Miss Edith?"

"Exactly!" chuckled Glyn. "I have installed one of my portable sets in my workshop at home, and my sister can talk to me at any time she wishes—so long as I am up in the tower to receive her signal. The person operating the portable set has only to switch on the reaction, and this causes an oscillation to be set up in the apparatus on the tower, thus giving me warning that I am being called."

"My word!" breathed Monty Lowther. "And it really works, Glyn?"

"Yes, my son, it works!" said the inventor, with a proud chuckle. "Edith and I have tested it pretty thoroughly, and the results have been really great. But the portable set hasn't been tested from anywhere else but my home at Glyn House. I now want to try it from somewhere else—say the middle of Rylcombe Wood—and that's where you chaps will come in. The Scout troop is going out again next half, I believe?"

"Yes," said Tom Merry. "We were going to drag you out by the scruff of the neck, Glyn, but, under the circumstances, you're excused."

"Thanks awfully!" said Glyn, with a laugh. "But I want to see how my wireless stunt helps the Scouts on manoeuvres. This is what I was going to suggest—that you take out one of my portable wireless sets with the troop, and try to keep in constant communication with me. I'll be working my apparatus from the top of the tower. I can see for miles from the top there, you know, and I could give you directions as to which way to march. Not only that, but if the Grammarians should happen to turn up again, I could give you warning. That ought to be jolly useful, considering what happened last time."

Tom Merry went red, and then he laughed.

"It's a ripping idea, Glyn! You'll have to explain all the details of the apparatus first, of course."

Glyn nodded.

"I can do that easily," he said. "The set is so simple that even a child could operate it. I want to try working the set in Morse code, too."

"Good egg!" exclaimed Tom. "All the Scouts know the Morse code, and to have a wireless set on manoeuvres, working in Morse, will be really ripping! We've said some horrid things about your inventions in the past, Glyn, but this one seems to be a corker, and we take back all we've said!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Right-ho!" grinned Glyn. "Let's go up to the tower, then, and I'll explain how the giddy box of tricks works."

"Selby looked the door of the tower, though, didn't he?"

"Yes; but I've got the key," chuckled Glyn. "The Head gave me one, you see. Kim on!"

The juniors went up to the tower with Glyn, and there spent half an hour breathlessly immersed in his wonderful new invention.

Glyn showed how, by switching on a valve and turning a dial, he could transmit power into the small portable set he had made. He also demonstrated how the buzzer on the same receiver responded to signals sent out by a simple Morse key installed with his apparatus in the tower.

"It's really topping, old man!" said Tom Merry admiringly. "I'm longing for to-morrow afternoon to come, so that we can put your apparatus to the test. Gordon Gay and his lot will be out scouting, so I hear. Perhaps we shall be able to get our own back on the blighters."

"Hope so!" grinned Glyn. "We could put the set to the test to-day, only we've got to swot for that beastly Craven Prize!"

"My hat! I'd forgotten that," said Tom Merry. "We'd better be getting back."

"Rather!" said Blake. "That Craven exam is a beastly nuisance. Who wants to swot, anyway? And who wants the ten-quid prize? It's no use wanting, really, because none of us stands an earthly of getting it. The Head might just as well leave it to the clever chaps—like Brooke, for instance. And even if I won it, I should feel rather a bounder for taking the money. Old Brooke, I hear, is relying on winning the Craven Prize, and I hope he pulls it off. He needs all the cash he can get, poor chap!"

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "As a matter of fact, dear boys, I think I shall ask the Head to allow me to wetiah from the exam, to give old Brooke a chance."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors did not relish going back to their studies to "swot." But it had to be done. Next week the examination for the Craven Prize was to take place. The exam was compulsory for all boys in the Fourth and Shell, except a few in the latter Form who were too old to participate. Usually, the Craven Prize was keenly contested for in the Lower School. The winner, besides getting all the kudos of success, received in addition a cash award of ten pounds.

Perhaps it was the money, and not the kudos, that attracted the majority of the juniors. Ten pounds was not an amount to be sneezed at—especially in such hard times—and as the winner received the cash almost immediately the result of the exam was announced, it was regarded as quite a popular contest by some of the Lower School boys.

Tom Merry & Co., however, regarded it as rather a nuisance, and did not welcome the extra "swot" the compulsory exam entailed. They felt that the governors might at least have made the entry optional.

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Glyn locked the room at the top of the tower, and went across to the School House with the others.

The Shell and Fourth Form passages were regular hives of industry that evening. Latin grammars, lexicons, and other school books were in great demand, and from behind the doors of the many studies came the sounds of boys' voices conjugating verbs, reciting the tenses and moods; or arguing over the obscure points of the ablative absolute.

The Terrible Three, Blake & Co., and Glyn repaired into their respective dens to apply themselves diligently to their work. None of them expected to win, but it behoved them, of course, to make as good a "show" as possible to please their Form masters.

There was one study in the Shell passage where idleness reigned. That was Study No. 7, the room occupied by Racke and Crooke.

These two, with Skimpole and a few others in the Shell, were exempt from the exam owing to their age. Racke rejoiced at the trouble thus spared him. He was the son of a millionaire war profiteer, and did not have to worry much about money. With Gerald Crooke, however, it was a different matter.

Crooke was not so flush as his studymate, and had been eligible for the exam, he would have made a determined bid to win. His numerous little "flutters" at the Green Man lately had been costing him dear, and the ten-pounds prize-money would have been very useful to him.

Crooke, too, was of a different calibre from the rest of the St. Jim's rotters' brigade. Cunning and unscrupulous to a greater degree even than Aubrey Racke, he was also clever, possessing an intelligence far above the average. Had he wished to adapt himself, Crooke might easily have become one of the foremost juniors in the school, but the bad streak in him kept him permanently on the level of Racke, Mellish, and the other black sheep he associated with.

A quiet game of nap was in progress in Study No. 7. Racke and Crooke smoking cheap cigarettes as they played. The air in the room consequently soon became laden with a blue haze of tobacco smoke.

"Play up!" grinned Racke, who had been winning steadily. "You seem a bit off colour, Crooke. What's the trouble—old Banks been raggin' you again?"

Crooke scowled over the table.

"Yes, hang him!" he muttered. "The rotter swindled me over the tip he gave out for the Slumpton Selling Plate race. He—he said it was a sure cert, but the confounded horse I backed came home amongst the also rans."

Racke's grin widened.

"Hard cheese!" he said. "And I suppose you went down pretty hard?"

"I owe the rotter over two pounds," growled Crooke; "and goodness knows how I shall manage to pay him! Mellish is in the cart, too. He owes Banks nearly a fiver. Unless we show the colour of some money soon, Banks will start making things hot for us. He wouldn't be above coming to the Head and telling him—"

"That you've been goin' in for the merry sport of backin' gee-gecs—eh?" grinned Racke. "Well, I hope you get out of it all right, Crooke. It's a rotten hole to be in, I know."

He did not offer his confederate any assistance. Racke had plenty of money, but he also made a point of keeping it to himself. Crooke knew better than to rely on him to help him out of a scrape. Racke was one of those persons who did not care who sank, so long as he himself was able to swim.

Crooke played up with a very bad grace. His luck did not turn, so at last he flung the cards from him, and drew back from the table.

"Hang cards!" he muttered. "I'm a fool to let my cash go like this, when I need all I can get to pay Banks—"

He was interrupted by the door opening.

The young rascals of the Shell started guiltily, and held their cigarettes down, to hide them. But when they saw that the visitor was Percy Mellish, they drew deep breaths of relief, and went on smoking.

"Oh, it's only you, Mellish!" said Racke, with a slight gasp. "Close the door, you fool; we don't want the prefects to smell the smoke! Been swottin'?"

"Yes," said Mellish, who looked pale and a little haggard. "I've been studying hard, and given myself a rotten headache!"

Racke raised his eyebrows in surprise.

"Fancy you takin' to swottin' in your old age, Mellish!" he said. "Rather unusual for you, isn't it? Goin' to romp off with the Craven Prize—what?"

He said this in a sarcastic tone, and Mellish's face turned red.

"Yes, I'm going all out to win that prize!" he exclaimed fiercely. "I must win! I need the money! That cad Banks—"

"Ah, another one in the toils of the obligin' Mr. Banks!" laughed Racke. "That's what comes of goin' the pace,

you know, instead of keepin' to the straight and narrow path, accordin' to the precepts of Merry and his goody-goody crowd. You really should be more careful, Mellish!"

The young rascal of the Fourth scowled.

"You can afford to talk, Racke!" he exclaimed passionately. "It's all very well for you, you're rolling in money; but with us, it's different. Banks is threatening to apply to the Head for the money I owe him, unless I settle up soon. He'll keep his word, too, and you know what that means."

"The sack—eh?" said Racke cynically. "Yes, you're bound to get it in the neck if Banks comes here. Better do something to stall him off."

"That's why I want to win the Craven Prize," said Mellish miserably. "If only I can do that I shall be saved! Look here, Crooke, you're clever, and you could help me if you wanted to. You know more about the subjects than I do. If only you'd coach me for the exam I'd stand you something out of the ten quid, if I won it. You need money, too—"

"Yes, but it's a forlorn hope, relying on you to win the Craven Prize," said Crooke disparagingly. "You're generally regarded as a bit of a dunce, Mellish, and you don't stand much of a chance against chaps like Brooke, and Talbot, and Tom Merry."

"But I might pull it off, if I swot hard enough," said Mellish, desperately. "You've got to help me, Crooke. I must win that money—I must!"

Crooke shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, I don't mind putting you right in any difficulties you have, Mellish," he said. "I might be able to get out

scouts who were not already assembled in the ranks came running up from all directions.

Tom Merry & Co. were there in full force that afternoon, dressed in nice, clean uniforms from which all traces of mud had been studiously removed. The stain of the Grammarians' rag, however, was still embedded deep in their hearts, and it was with the intention of delivering vengeance on Gordon Gay & Co. that they were going out.

There would be no peace in the St. Jim's camp until full retribution had been taken!

Figgins & Co. were there, too. The Eagles were simply thirsting for revenge. Figgins, in fact, had sworn that, like the venerable king of ancient lore, he would never smile again unless Gordon Gay & Co. were "paid out" for that heartless rag.

Bernard Glyn strolled down the School House steps, carrying a small canvas-covered case. The scouts regarded it with great interest, and they thrilled when Glyn opened the lid and displayed a very neatly-constructed wireless set.

"Well, here's the giddy apparatus," said the schoolboy inventor cheerfully. "All you have to do, Tommy, is to take it with you and keep to the wave-lengths marked on the centre dial—one wave for receiving a message from me, you see, and the other wave for replying. I shall be working my apparatus from the top of the tower, and so will be able to keep in constant communication with you, wherever you go, so long as you don't venture too far afield."

"Right-ho!" said Tom Merry, taking the case and closing the lid with great care. "I think it's topping, old chap, and we'll give it a good try-out, you bet your boots. The

Result of "Scarlet Streak" Competition No. 6.

£10 WON BY GEM READERS!

In this competition no competitor sent in a correct solution. THE FIRST PRIZE OF £5 has therefore been awarded to:

C. H. Morton, 9, Thompson Road, Ivy Road, Bolton, whose effort, containing three errors, came nearest to correct.

THE FIVE PRIZES OF £1 EACH have been divided among the following six competitors whose solutions came next in order of merit:

J. R. Dixon, 100, Addison Road, Heaton, Newcastle-on-Tyne.

Miss M. Gunn, 15, Waverley Park, Edinaburgh.

C. Hewitt, 94, Windsor Road, Neath, Glam.

A. Jones, Vine Cottage, Dudley Road, Ventnor.

J. Meynell, Greenmount, 13, Talbot Road, Old Trafford, Manchester.

H. Smith, 31, Diamond Row, Walker, Newcastle-on-Tyne.

The correct solution was as follows:

Mary Crawford is the daughter of the inventor, and is her father's single assistant. For a long time she has worked at his side, and is only too well aware of the danger that threatens from the crooks. She is a beautiful young woman and as courageous as the heroine of any story.

a crib for you, too. It would certainly be jolly useful if you did win. Going to get on with it now?"

"Yes, rather!" said Mellish, setting down his books on the study table. "I—I've got a headache, but I'll stick at it. I don't care for anything so long as I win."

Racke threw the stub of his cigarette into the grate and rose from the table.

"Oh, well, if you two chumps are goin' to start on that rotten book-mug, I'll hop off," he said. "Anythin' in the nature of work gets on my nerves... So long!"

And with a sneering smile at his two less fortunate satellites, Aubrey Racke sauntered from the study.

He went along to see Cutts & Co., of the Fifth, who were always ready to welcome him into their secret circle. Crooke and Mellish, left alone, settled themselves to grind away at Latin verbs without interruption. It was a new departure for those two to take so assiduously to work, but the present state of their circumstances demanded desperate measures, and Mellish swotted hard till the bell rang for bed.

And, by that time, Mellish had had quite enough. His face was pale as he went upstairs, and his hands twitched nervously. But he had set his mind on winning the Craven Prize, and as he lay in bed his thoughts still dwelt on the intricacies of the Latin Grammar that Crooke had been explaining to him, and the grey streaks of early dawn were coming in through the dormitory windows ere he at last sank into slumber.

CHAPTER 6.

Scouting By Wireless!

T A-R-A-R-A-A-A!

The strident notes of a bugle rang out in the quadrangle at St. Jim's. Herries, of the Fourth, was responsible for that furious tootling. He stood on the School House steps and blew the Scouts' troop call unto the four winds of Heaven. And, in response, those

St. Jim's army now goes forth to war, equipped with the latest wheeze in science—namely, wireless!"

"Good old Glyn!"

"Now for the Grammarians!"

"We'll give 'em dot and dash!" grinned Monty Lowther. "They'll never tumble that we've got wireless to help us on manoeuvres this afternoon."

The St. Jim's scouts lined up and marched away cheerily, Tom Merry carrying the wireless set.

Glyn, meanwhile, went up to the top of the old tower, in order to spy out the land. For that purpose he had installed a powerful telescope—one of his own invention, of course. Standing at the window of the upper room, he was able to look all over the countryside.

He saw Tom Merry & Co. marching down the Rylcombe Lane towards the wood. In the distance the River Rhyl could be seen, winding a silvery course between its picturesque banks, and disappearing behind the cluster of trees and the high ground that marked the beginning of Wayland Moor.

On the other side stretched the wood, with the red-brick pile of Rylcombe Grammar School plainly visible beyond. Glyn's eyes dwelt very closely on the Grammar School, and, picking up his telescope, he subjected the distant school grounds to a long and searching scrutiny.

He gave a low chuckle when he saw a number of brown-clad figures assembled near the gates, with a trek-cart, on which a large hamper and some other bundles were being loaded. He recognised the well-known figures of Gordon Gay and his chums, dressed in their scouting uniforms, and watched their preparations for the afternoon's outing. At the same time, of course, Glyn switched on his wireless apparatus, in order to get into communication with Tom Merry & Co.

The St. Jim's scouts halted at the cross roads, and Tom Merry adjusted the buzzer on the portable wireless set. Then he pressed a button and commenced to tap on the Morse key fitted to the panel.

Almost immediately, the buzzer began to work at a great rate. Bernard Glyn, stationed at the top of the tower, had heard Tom's call, and was answering in the Morse code.

The Scouts gathered round to listen to the buzzer and decipher the message, which Blake wrote down on paper, transcribing the dots and dashes into words.

"All clear so far," the message ran. "Grammarians just setting off. March on into wood. Bear left towards Grammar School. Go slow at first."

Tom tapped out his reply:

"Thanks, old man. Your message received O. K. Will act accordingly."

The Scouts drew their breath as Tom closed the case.

"Bai Jove! It works wonderfully, deah boys!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I wegard that as a weally wippin' invention. I wish I could get into touch with my patah by wiahless, and buck him up about that fivah he promised to send this week."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Scouts marched on into the wood, and made their way slowly in the direction of the Grammar School.

They had not gone far before the buzzer inside the wireless set began to work, and Tom Merry opened the case. Blake took out his notebook and wrote down Glyn's message as the buzzer spelt it out in the Morse code. This is how it ran:

"Make detour by stream. Keep to other side of wood near Grammar School, but go easy. Gay up to something, but cannot find out yet."

Tom, having tapped out a swift reply, led his men on in the direction advised by Glyn.

"I wonder what those Grammarians bounders are doing?" said Figgins. "Perhaps it's something up against us. Hope Glyn manages to give us the tip, anyway."

"Trust old Glyn to keep his peepers open," chuckled Tom Merry. "He's as keen as mustard and—Hallo! He's calling up again!"

The buzzer was going furiously. Tom ordered his Scouts to halt, and, resting the wireless set on his knee, he listened to the message that came through in swift dots and dashes:

"Hide immediately. Danger near. Urgent. Switch over to phones and microphone when hidden, and give me your position."

The St. Jim's Scouts thrilled as they heard this message.

"My word!" breathed Blake. "Then we've got the tip in time! If it wasn't for Glyn's giddy wireless we might now be running into the Grammarians' clutches again. Now, whither shall we hide, Tommy?"

Tom Merry and Figgins were already in consultation as to where they should take their troops into hiding.

"There's a big gully not far away from here," said the Eagle Patrol leader swiftly. "It lies about fifty yards to our right, so far as I can remember. Let's nip down there."

"All serene," said Tom. "This way, chaps—and mind you don't make a noise."

Well skilled in woodcraft, the Scouts managed to reach the gully without mishap. As Figgins had said, it was not far away. They scrambled one after another down the steep slopes, and secreted themselves among the bushes and undergrowth at the bottom.

"Now, what about getting into touch with Glyn again?" said Gerald Crooke, who had started out with the troop very unwillingly, but now was evincing the closest interest in the proceedings. "I wonder whether you'll be able to do it from down here? This gully is pretty deep, you know."

"We shall soon see," said Tom, setting down the wireless set and opening the lid. "We'll try this little contraption on telephony now, instead of Morse."

Remembering the directions given him by Bernard Glyn, Tom turned the necessary switches and put on the headphones contained in the set. Almost immediately he was thrilled to hear Glyn's voice in his ears.

"Hallo! Hallo! Is that you calling, Tommy?"

"Yes, rather," said Tom, speaking into the microphone on the panel. "But I say, Glyn, is that really you talking from the top of the tower at St. Jim's?"

"Of course it is, fathead!" was Glyn's reply. "Can't you get it into your silly head that you're speaking to me by wireless?"

"Ye-es; but—well, it seems so jolly wonderful—"

"Oh, bow-wow! The point is, old son, you chaps have only just saved your bacon. You're well hidden, I suppose?"

"You bet! We're down in the large gully near the stream. Do you know where I mean, Glyn?"

"I can pretty well guess, though I didn't see your movements, of course," said Glyn's voice in the headphones. "Well, I've got news to tell you. I've seen quite a lot going on from my giddy vantage-point up here. Gordon Gay and his lot are out in the wood, but they haven't ventured far. It looks as though they've pitched camp in rather a secluded spot, not far from the main road that

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leads to their school. I can see the top of a large tent or a marquee, showing over the trees. I can't give you the exact position, but if you follow the stream, and then cut across towards the main road, you'll come close to it."

"Right-ho, Glyn! We'll find it, never worry," said Tom. "We'll raid the giddy camp and—"

"There are other things to do first, old son," cut in Glyn. "Those Grammar School bounders are well up to snuff, and they're setting a trap for you. I've been watching 'em from here, and for a time I wondered what on earth they were up to. Half a dozen of the bounders were climbing up trees, pulling wires across from the direction of the tent. I didn't tumble at first, but now I can see the game. They've got a couple of field telephones out with 'em, one fixed at the camp, and the other hidden in the top of a tree not far from where you're hiding. They've been running telephone wires over the tree-tops from the camp to the secret telephone out in the wood. Carboy is up the tree, where the telephone is, keeping watch for you fellows. He's got field-glasses, too, and when I called you on the buzzer just now I thought for the minute that he'd spotted you. But you're safe, so far. Carboy's job, apparently, is to notify the camp by telephone directly he sees you. A jolly artful dodge—what?—having a telephone in the wood, with wires slung over the tree-tops, out of sight!"

"It's a clever idea on Gay's part, but our wireless knocks his old-fashioned telephone into a cocked hat," grinned Tom Merry. "That just proves our claim that St. Jim's always goes one better than the Grammar School—eh? So Carboy's hidden up a tree, with a telephone, watching for us. Tell us where that tree is, Glyn, and you can leave the rest to us!"

"It's the tall oak near the stream, Tommy—the tallest tree round there, so you can't miss it," replied Glyn. "Your best plan would be for a few of you to make a detour, get between Carboy and the camp, and cut the giddy telephone wires. That will put a spoke in Carboy's wheel, and then you'll have him at your mercy. He'll shout till he's black in the face into that giddy telephone, but the rest of the gang won't hear him."

Tom Merry's eyes danced.

"My word! That's a ripping wheeze, Glyn!" he exclaimed. "We'll do that, you bet. Keep your peepers open for us. I'll call you later."

"All serene!"

Tom took off the headphones, closed the wireless set, and turned to his fellow Scouts eagerly. He told them all he had heard from Glyn, and they thrilled at the news.

"Bai Jove! How weally wippin'!" exclaimed D'Arcy. "Now we can proceed to give those Gwammawian bounders the surprise of their lives, deah boys. Of course, Tom Mewwy, you will need some welliable men to go out and cut the telephone wiahs—"

"Yes, but you'd better keep back, Gussy," said Tom Merry, with a smile. "You might get your bags torn in climbing the trees, you know, or you might even lose your monocle. What a tragedy that would be!"

"Weally, deah boy—"

"Figgins, Kangy, and I will run out and see to the telephone wires," said Tom. "You other chaps wait here till we come back. Then we'll all march on to victory."

"What-ho!"

The three Scouts set out cautiously, working their way along the bottom of the gully for some distance, and clambering out when they were near the stream, some distance away from the spot where Carboy was hidden.

After pausing for a little while to take their bearings, they started off again, and, acting in accordance with Glyn's directions, made a detour.

It did not take them long to locate the telephone wires stretched across the tops of the trees. Figgins clambered swiftly up into a tree, and cut the wires with his jack-knife.

"Don't lose the run of the ends, Figgy," called Tom Merry from below. "If everything goes all right, we'll have the wires joined later, and do a bit of talking to the Grammarian camp ourselves."

"Ha, ha! Good wheeze, Tommy!"

The telephone wires having been cut, and the ends left hanging loose on a tree branch, the three made their way back to the gully with all haste.

CHAPTER 7.

Tit for Tat!

"ALL serene!" exclaimed Tom, in answer to the other Scouts' eager queries. "The wires have been cut. Now we'll run along and rope in old Carboy. We shall find him properly up a tree—in more senses than one!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The St. Jim's Scouts left the gully and made their way

cautiously to the tall oak by the stream. They all gathered underneath it and looked up. There, sure enough, in one of the topmost branches, was the khaki-clad figure of Carboy, of Rylcombe Grammar School.

Carboy was jabbing frantically at the tickler knob on his telephone.

"Hallo! Hallo!" they heard him snorting into the mouthpiece. "Are you there, Gay? Where the dickens are you, you—you fatheads? Why the thump don't you answer? Oh, crumbs! Something's wrong with this dashed telephone—Yarooooooh!"

Carboy broke off with a yell as a huge chunk of turf, hurled by Blake's unerring hand, whizzed up from below and caught him clean under the jaw.

Carboy dropped the receiver, and in order to maintain his position on the tree branch, he performed evolutions that were worthy of a monkey in its native element!

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry & Co., highly amused by Carboy's antics in the tree.

"Got you that time, Carboy!"

Carboy, clinging to the tree branch, blinked down in dismay and horror.

"You—you rotters!" he gurgled, the awful truth dawning on him at last. "You've cut the telephone wires—"

"Right first time, old tulip!" said Tom Merry. "Now, Carboy, you may consider yourself our prisoner. Are you coming down like a good little boy, or shall we come and rake you out of it?"

"I—I won't come down!" gasped Carboy wildly. "I—I'll yell for help! I—Ow-wow-wooooooh!"

Three more pieces of flying turf came up, and two of them struck Carboy—one on the nose and another in the nape of his neck.

The luckless Grammarian performed a species of somersault off the tree trunk, and, floundering downward, grabbed a lower branch. There he swung, with his legs dangling over the heads of Tom Merry & Co.

Carboy could not have been in a better position, for the Scouts' staves reached him nicely; and without more ado, Tom Merry & Co. commenced to take playful whacks at their luckless victim.

"Ow-ow! Wow! Yah! Stoppit! Geroooh! Ow! Yarooooooh!" roared Carboy.

He did not hang there for long! Human flesh and blood could not stand much of that treatment! He let go his hold of the tree branch and fell with a flop into the grass below.

Instantly he was seized upon by many hands and made prisoner. His scarf served as an excellent gag, and there was plenty of cord forthcoming for tying up his hands.

"Now, Figgy, just hop along and connect up those telephone wires," grinned Tom Merry. "While you're gone, I'll have a chat with Glyn."

Carboy's eyes opened wide when he saw the wireless apparatus. And he almost collapsed with astonishment when he heard Tom Merry speaking into that instrument!

"Hallo, Glyn!" said the St. Jim's leader cheerily. "We've worked the giddy oracle, so far. We have Carboy a prisoner, and are just about to commandeer the telephone for our own purposes."

"That's the stuff!" was Glyn's response from the old tower. "I saw Carboy doing monkey tricks in the tree. They're busy in the Grammarian camp, I should imagine. There's a fire going, anyway. I can see smoke. You ought to be able to go in and win now, old son."

"We'll do our best," chuckled Tom. "Don't forget to give us the tip, Glyn, if you see anything suspicious going on. Cheerio for now."

Carboy was standing with mouth agape, quite overcome with astonishment and wonder.

"Don't look so much like a boiled owl, Carboy. This isn't black magic," grinned Tom Merry. "It's just wireless. All up-to-date armies make use of wireless, you know, and we're nothing if not up-to-date at St. Jim's. Glyn, our giddy tame inventor, has been spying out the land for us from St. Jim's, you see, and giving us the necessary info. That's how we knew you were up the tree. Ah! Here's Figgy back again. All serene, old scout?"

"Rather!" chuckled Figgins. "I've joined up the jolly old telephone wires."

"Good egg!"

Tom Merry climbed the tree, picked up the receiver of the enemy troop's telephone, and pressed the button.

"Hallo! Hallo!" he said, in a perfectly good imitation of Carboy's rather high-pitched voice. "Are you there, Gay?"

"Yes, I'm here," came his old rival's voice over the wires. "What the dickens have you been up to all this time, Carboy? We've been trying to get through to you, and got windy. Has anything happened?"

"Lots!" said Tom Merry. "I've spotted those St. Jim's bounders."

"Oh, good!"

"You just do as I ask, Gay, and you'll be surprised at the way things will turn out," said Tom, winking at his fellow Scouts below, who were chuckling in enjoyment of the joke. "How many of you are there in camp now?"

"We're all here," said Gordon Gay. "As a matter of fact, we're getting the feed ready, and we've got a fine fire going for cooking the eggs and the sosses. But a good scrap-up with Tom Merry's lot will give us an appetite—what? Where are the bounders?"

"Not far from here," was Tom's reply. "They'll be heading your way pretty soon. Have you got the camp well defended?"

"You bet!" chuckled Gordon Gay at the other end.

"Good!" said Tom. "I say, Gay, I've got an idea. What about running a decoy? From my position here, I can see a fine opportunity for a decoy. If you can send along half a dozen chaps, and leave the rest to me, I can promise you a bit of an eye-opener."

"Hm! The decoy idea isn't bad," said Gordon Gay.

"Are you sure you can work it, Carboy?"

"Trust me!" said Tom Merry promptly. "Send me along those six chaps, and you and the others wait in the camp, till I call again. Take it from me, Gay, I can see a way of working a real surprise packet."

"All right," said Gordon Gay. "I'll send six chaps along now."

"I'll want a good bit of rope, too," said Tom slyly.

"Let 'em bring some rope with 'em."

"All serene."

Gordon Gay rang off at the other end, and Tom Merry descended the tree, chuckling.

When he told the others of the valuable information he had thus artfully gleaned from the unsuspecting Grammarian leader, they all roared with mirth.

"Good old Tommy!" chuckled Blake. "You worked that giddy game of spoof rippingly. We'll give old Gordon Gay an eye-opener, you bet. He'll have the loveliest surprise packet of his life."

"Ha, ha! Rather!"

Tom Merry rapped out orders swiftly and concisely. Carboy was dragged behind a clump of bushes and held there, powerless to move or yell out. The Scouts all took ambush and waited for the six Grammarians to come along.

Soon, footsteps were heard on the woodland path, and a party of six Scouts, led by Harry Wootton, came into view, each carrying a length of rope.

They drew alongside the ambush, all blissfully ignorant of the surprise that awaited them. Then Tom Merry & Co. arose from their hiding-places, and, falling on them with swift suddenness, proceeded to smite them hip and thigh.

The Grammarians, taken so utterly by surprise, and with the odds so overwhelmingly against them, stood absolutely no chance. Before they had time to realise quite what had happened, they found themselves lying on their backs in the grass, each with a smiling St. Jim's Scout mounted astride him.

They yelled out and struggled wildly, but all to no purpose. They were swiftly gagged and bound with their own ropes. Then Tom Merry again climbed the tree and rang through on the telephone to the Grammarian camp.

"Hallo, Gay! It's all serene," he said, in Carboy's voice. "We've taken some prisoners already. Everything's worked according to plan so far. Now, I've got my eye on the St. Jim's crowd—I can see practically every one of 'em from here, and I've overheard all they've been saying. That's fine—eh?"

Gordon Gay chuckled at the other end.

"Top hole!" he said. "That telephone wheeze of mine was a corker, wasn't it? You say you've overheard—"

"Yes; I know just what they are up to," said Tom. "Now, to bring off the coup really successfully, it will be necessary for you all to leave the camp and come along to the stream. Do you know the hollow oak? Go along there, and hide yourselves till you hear me call."

"Right-ho!" said Gordon Gay. "We'll pop along right now!"

Tom descended from the tree, grinning broadly.

"The trick works!" he chuckled. "Gordon Gay has swallowed me whole. He and his lot are going to leave the camp and buzz off down to the stream. And, my sons, that will leave the coast clear for our attack on the camp."

"Rather!"

The St. Jim's Scouts pushed on towards the main road, taking their prisoners with them. When they reached the road, Tom Merry again set the wireless to work, and held a swift consultation with Glyn. Watching from the top of the tower, Glyn directed their movements, and so, taking the main road route, they came at last to the grass-grown path that led to the glade where the Grammarian camp was pitched.

It was deserted, except for one sentry. Mont Blong was

the sentry. He gave a startled cry when he saw the invading army bearing down through the trees.

"Ciel! You rottairs have worked ze trick—"

"Yes, Froggy, we've done you in the eye properly this time," chuckled Tom Merry. "Grab him!"

Figgins grabbed Mont Blong, and the French boy was rapidly made prisoner.

Tom Merry & Co. looked around the camp with great satisfaction. A large, square marquee was erected in the glade, and not far off a camp-fire was burning brightly. Fatty Wynn gave a whoop of delight when he discovered a hamper and several large bundles, all full of luscious tuck, inside the tent.

"My hat!" said Blake. "Then those bounders intended having a bit of a spread here this afternoon. Their grub department is jolly well stacked, and no giddy error. So we seize the lot—camp and stores and everything!"

"Rather!"

Harry Wootton, Carboy, Mont Blong, and the others gurgled wildly behind their gags, and fought with all their might to free themselves from the bonds that held them. But they were in the hands of the Philistines, and there was no escape!

The St. Jim's Scouts promptly invested the camp, and dumped the prisoners inside the marquee.

"Now, we must see about capturing the rest," grinned Tom Merry. "Let me see, Gay and his lot are waiting patiently by the stream, expecting a call to action. Well, we sha'n't disappoint them. Give a few tootles on your bugle, Herries. That ought to fetch 'em back."

George Herries raised the bugle to his lips and blew vociferously on it. The strident notes carried far and wide through the wood, like a clarion call of the gods.

"Groogh!" gasped Tom, stuffing up his ears. "That will do, you noisy beggar. Now, kids, take ambush. Hark! I hear them coming!"

The St. Jim's Scouts took hiding in the trees. From the distance came sounds of hurrying footsteps, and shortly afterwards the rest of the Grammarian troop appeared, looking very excited.

"That call came from our camp, sure enough," said Gordon Gay, who was leading the way. "I hope nothing has happened. I don't suppose any of those St. Jim's worms have come this way yet. I— Look out!"

The words were hardly out of his mouth when the bushes on either side of him parted. Next moment the St. Jim's Scouts descended on the surprised Grammarians like wolves on the fold.

"Trapped!" gasped Gay. "I— Yarooop!"

A wild yell escaped him as he went down under a violent charge from Tom Merry.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry. "This is where St. Jim's scores again! Sock it to 'em!"

"Back up, kids!" screeched Tadpole. "Take that, Blake, you bounder! Oooooop!"

The Grammarians fought valiantly, but they were swiftly overthrown. They went down like chaff before the wind under that concerted rush. They were all taken prisoner and hustled into the camp, where ropes were procured with which to bind them.

The whole of the Grammarian Scout troop, as well as the camp, was in the hands of Tom Merry & Co. Those youths rejoiced mightily in their victory, and the wood re-echoed with the sounds of their laughter.

Gordon Gay & Co. were all ranged in a bunch at one end of the glade, a long rope was passed round them, and then they were all tethered to a tree-trunk. In that position they were quite powerless to get free, and the more they struggled the more they hurt each other. Tom Merry had the gags removed from the first batch of prisoners, and then he and his fellows stood back to feast their eyes on the captured troop.

CHAPTER 8.

The Grammarians are "let in" for it!

"WELL, here they are—every man-jack of 'em, bless their little hearts!" grinned Blake. "Who said St. Jim's wasn't top dog at Rylcombe?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You didn't expect that little packet, Gay, did you?" said Tom Merry. "It's wonderful what wireless, in conjunction with ordinary common or garden telephones, will do, isn't it? Fancy you not recognising my voice over the phone! Remember I promised you an eye-opener? I think you've got one now, old scout—three bags full! It really serves you right that you've been so thoroughly dished, diddled, and done brown, you know."

"You—you—" stuttered Gordon Gay.

He tried to say more, but the effort failed miserably. His feelings for the moment were too deep for words. But his

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looks were wild and homicidal, and they spoke volumes for his thoughts.

Tom Merry set down the wireless set, opened the lid, and called up Bernard Glyn on the buzzer.

The eyes of the Grammarian troop opened wide at this, and when they heard the buzzer going they could scarcely believe their ears.

Tom Merry grinned round at them.

"Understand Morse?" he chuckled. "Just listen to this, dear lads. I'm tapping out a message to our giddy look-out at St. Jim's."

Gordon Gay & Co. listened wonderingly, and heard Tom transmit the following:

"Have Grammarians all done up and done in. Gay has got the proper kybosh. His camp and troop completely in our hands. How's that?"

And the reply came back, in swift dots and dashes:

"Good egg! Who's top-dog now?"

To which Tom Merry, grinning at Gordon Gay, tapped out as follows:

"St. Jim's, of course. Every time!"

Gordon Gay & Co. were almost curling up with ignominy.



Tom Merry & Co. ground Gordon Gay & Co.'s hard very sorry for themselves of ink and paint. "Oh d

"What do you think of our latest equipment, Gay?" asked Jack Blake sweetly. "Rather puts your telephone in the shade—what? Old Glyn—our school inventor, you know—is working with us from the top of the old tower at St. Jim's. He's been spying on you all the afternoon, and giving us the necessary info. as to your movements. That's how we came to catch old Carboy on the hop, and bag your telephone. That was a great wheeze on your part, but we went one better. Of course, if you hadn't hung your giddy telephone-wires on the tops of trees, Glyn wouldn't have seen you, and things might not have turned out quite as they are now. But I think we've got the laugh of you, old son, and no error. Hear us smile!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The smile of the victorious St. Jim's Scouts rang throughout the wood. And Gordon Gay & Co., tied up in a sorry bunch to the tree, fairly writhed in physical and mental anguish.

Tom Merry switched the wireless set to the microphone and put on the headphones. This was another eye-opener for the Grammarians. The transmission of Morse between that little set and St. Jim's had seemed wonderful enough,

but when they heard Tom Merry speaking, as if into a telephone, they marvelled mightily.

"Hallo, Glyn!" chuckled Tom. "I'm calling from Gordon Gay's camp—beg pardon, I mean our camp. We've taken it by right of conquest. Well, old chap, you deserve well of your country for the duty you have performed this afternoon! You might as well close down the giddy wireless-station now and come along and join us. We've a fine supply of tuck here. These bounders have been good enough to light a fire all ready for us, and now we're going to have a ripping spread on the captured enemy rations! Coming?"

"You bet!" said Glyn's voice, with great promptitude. "I feel rather peckish. I'll hop along right now."

Tom Merry switched off and put the wireless set in a safe place inside the tent.

"Now for the feed!" he chuckled. "That's right, Fatty—unpack the hamper. My word, this will be a feast fit for the gods!"

Gordon Gay almost exploded when he saw Fatty Wynn taking the good things out of the hamper with a loving hand.



round their teeth in wrath and chagrin as they gazed upon handiwork. The members of the Eagle troop were looking lives, and their faces were decorated with liberal applications Oh dear!" moaned Blake. "This is where we sing small!" (See Chapter 3.)

"Here, you leave our tuck alone!" he howled. "That's ours, and—"

"Pardon me, Gay, but it's ours!" said Tom Merry blandly. "To the victors the giddy spoils, you know! Carry on, Fatty, and fry those sosses!"

"What-ho!" said Fatty Wynn, with a joyous chuckle. The Grammarians' cooking utensils were taken from the trek-cart, and soon an appetising smell of frying sausages filled the woodland glade.

The other St. Jim's Scouts busied themselves in preparing a camp feed on a mammoth scale. They had plenty of provender, and what they had was of the best.

Gordon Gay & Co. looked on with feelings that were indescribable. Dearly would they have loved to burst their bonds asunder and fall on the heartless foe to do them battle! But those bonds had been tied with cunning hands, and, try as they might, they could not move them one iota.

The feed was all ready, and the tuck laid out in appetising array right under the luckless Grammarians' noses, when there were footsteps on the path and Bernard Glyn arrived. Tom Merry & Co. greeted him with a cheer.

"Good old Glyn!"

"This way, old son!"

"We've heaps of tuck, and the sosses are done to a turn!"

Bernard Glyn chuckled, and took the place of honour between Tom Merry and Figgins. Fatty Wynn was dispensing hot sosses, chip potatoes, and toast with a lavish hand, and the luscious aroma that was wafted towards Gordon Gay & Co. was like a merciless torment to their souls!

Bottles of ginger-pop were opened, and the Scouts amused themselves by taking "cock-shies" at their prisoners with the corks. Several howls of anguish arose as those corks hit home on the various nasal organs to which they had been directed. Tom Merry & Co. were nothing if not good shots!

"Now, kids, the scene is set for the feed of a lifetime!" chuckled Tom Merry. "So pile in!"

The St. Jim's Scouts needed no second bidding. They piled in with a will, and proceeded to do justice to the goodly viands before them.

Gordon Gay & Co. gazed at the feasters with looks of unutterable woe. It was like gall and wormwood to them to have to stand there and watch their feed being demolished by the hated foe. But there was no help for it. They writhed and wriggled, and spluttered out lurid invectives on their tormentors. But those words had not the slightest effect on Tom Merry & Co. They proceeded with the feed in mirth and jollity, and drank their own healths in the Grammarians' ginger-pop.

"Well, here's to St. Jim's—and may it ever maintain its proud position as top-dog at Rylecombe!" said Tom Merry, raising a foaming glass to his lips.

"Hear, hear!"

"You—you chortling fatheads!" roared Gordon Gay. "We'll get our own back for this! We—we—"

"Rats!"

"You're squashed, old son!"

"Wiped right out of the running, you know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Grammarians could say no more. They had not the heart to give vent to the bitter woe that consumed them. They had, perforce, to stand there and suffer, whilst their victorious rivals feasted on and made merry at their expense.

The feed was over at last, and hardly a thing was left over from the glorious store the Grammarians had provided. As Blake remarked, they had done themselves well, and Gordon Gay deserved a hearty vote of thanks for providing such excellent rations!

"Well, kids, it's time we struck camp and cleared off," said Tom Merry. "We shall have to return these bounders to their old casual-ward, I suppose. Let me see, there's a trek-cart and a tent and several bits of paraphernalia to go. We'll make them carry their own stuff, anyway. Let's form them into a procession and march them home to show their schoolfellows what a lot of poor, done duffers they are!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Gordon Gay & Co., loudly protesting, were formed in a long line, roped together securely. The trek-cart, loaded with the rest of the Grammarians' property, was tied on the rear of the procession, and in this manner Tom Merry & Co. drove them from the wood.

They kept them going by means of their staves, jabbing them at intervals and ordering them to "Gee-up!"

Gordon Gay & Co. had no alternative but to "gee-up," and they made quite a precipitate exit from the wood, their trek-cart lumbering along behind.

Tom Merry & Co. marched their prisoners down the main road that led to the Grammar School.

They were passing some excavations at the side of the road, when Tom Merry rapped out suddenly:

"Halt!"

The St. Jim's Scouts and their long line of prisoners halted.

"I don't think it will be quite strategic to go any farther towards the enemy hang-out," said Tom. "The Grammar School isn't far away, you know. As a matter of fact, I think the best idea will be to plant these seedy Scouts."

"Plant 'em?" said Blake wonderingly. "What do you mean, Tommy?"

Tom Merry waved a hand towards the long trench that was dug at the side of the road.

The workmen had been busy for days on that excavation, digging a trench for a new set of water-pipes. The trench was long and deep, and ran for some distance along the road. At the side were piled large mounds of earth that had been dug up, as well as goodly quantities of sand and stones.

"You see, kids," said Tom Merry, with a chuckle, "the workmen have knocked off for the day, and we are therefore free to commandeer the trench. In that trench we

will proceed to inter these bounders. We'll dump 'em down there, and fill in the hole all round 'em, so that they'll be really buried. We'll leave their heads sticking out, of course. We can't expect 'em to be like real worms, and breathe under the earth!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"See the wheeze?" said Tom. "We'll bury these blighters in the trench, and leave 'em for their schoolfellows to dig out. That will give the other fellows at the Grammar School something to do and to think about. It will, in fact, impress upon them more than ever that St. Jim's is top dog, and that Gordon Gay & Co. ought really to be buried."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The rest of the St. Jim's scouts roared with mirth at their leader's suggestion. As for Gordon Gay & Co., they gazed at Tom Merry in horror. They could scarcely realise the awful fate that was in store for them.

"Now, then, kids, hurry up and plant those chaps down the trench!" said Tom Merry. "Never mind if the old watchman comes along and interferes. I'll square him."

"What ho!"

Gordon Gay & Co. were seized and hustled to the edge of the road excavation. They yelled frantically as they staggered towards it.

"You rotters!" howled Frank Monk. "Don't you dare put us in there!"

"We dare anything, old top!" retorted Tom Merry cheerfully. "Down you go, Monk—what's the style!"

"Yaroooooogh!" yelled Monk.

Receiving a gentle push from Tom, he went floundering down into the depths of the trench, and dragged Carboy, Mont Blong, and a few others with him.

Gordon Gay & Co. shouted furiously, but all to no purpose. They were pushed one after another into the trench, and there they had to remain. Their legs were free, but their arms were still tied behind them, so that, once down the hole, they had no means of getting up.

The trench was sufficiently deep to enable them to stand with their heads showing above the surface of the road.

Tom Merry & Co., having hurled the Grammarians' belongings into the trench all round them, proceeded to fill it up with the earth and stones that were piled at the side of the road.

Gordon Gay & Co., "planted" helplessly in the trench, bawled wildly for help, hoping that the sound of their lamentations would carry as far as the Grammar School, and bring their schoolfellows to the rescue. But there was no help forthcoming yet for the luckless Grammarian Scouts.

The old watchman, frying a bloater over a coke fire at his little hut lower down the road, came hobbling along when he saw what was happening, and he protested very vigorously with Tom Merry & Co. But something passed from Tom Merry's pocket to that of the watchman's, and he went off, grinning.

At last the trench was filled in, and Gordon Gay & Co. were well and truly "planted" in the road.

The heartless raggies stood back and surveyed the results of their handiwork.

Gordon Gay & Co. were completely interred, with the exception of their heads. Those heads wagged and twisted above the surface of the ground in the funniest manner imaginable.

The expressions on the faces and their wild, frantic splutterings of wrath evoked fresh outbursts of mirth from Tom Merry & Co.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake, gazing at the protruding heads, and wiping salt tears of merriment from his eyes. "Oh, great pip! You chaps do look fine! I hope you find it comfortable down there, Gay?"

"You—you rotters!" hissed Gordon Gay, rolling his eyes in a truly fearful manner. "You—you awful cads!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, affixing his monocle in his eye and gazing down upon the buried Grammarians. "I regard this as a weally a pwime wag, deah boys. These Gwammah School boundahs look distinctly funny. Ha, ha, ha!"

The roadway fairly rang with the laughter of the St. Jim's Scouts.

"Well, my sons, I think it's time we went!" chuckled Tom Merry. "We'd better give the other chaps at the Grammar School the tip to come along and dig these boobies out. Run along, will you, Figgy, and spread the glad tidings."

"Rather!" laughed Figgins.

The long-legged New House leader ran off in the direction of the Grammar School. Some minutes later he returned, his face wreathed in a wide grin.

"All serene!" he announced. "I had some chalk in my pocket, and I chalked a note on the flagstones in the Grammar School gateway. This is what I wrote: 'Help

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wanted at once, to dig out a troop of diddled Scouts who are sunk in the depths of despair. Turn to your right, and go straight on till you come to the burial ground. Please bring spades and shovels. Urgent.—Gordon Gay.' How's that?"

Tom Merry & Co. roared.

"Ripping, Figgy," said the Shell captain approvingly. "That ought to fetch 'em—what?"

"Rather!"

Tom turned to Gordon Gay, whose face, protruding out of the ground, was red with wrath and chagrin.

"Well, so-long, dear boy!" he said. "We'll be off now. I don't suppose it will be long before the rest of your gang comes along to dig you up? Now, you chaps, form into line. 'Shun!"

The St. Jim's Scouts formed into line, and on the command from their leader, they marched off, chuckling.

Gordon Gay & Co. glared homicidally after them from their place of interment. If looks had the power to kill, the glares those helpless Grammarians sent after Tom Merry & Co. would have stretched the whole troop lifeless in the roadway! As it was, the St. Jim's boys were quite unaffected.

They stopped at the cross-roads and looked back.

In the distance they saw a party of Grammar School juniors, armed with spades and shovels, arrive by the road excavations. Figgins' notice had had the desired effect.

The faces of the new arrivals, when they saw Gordon Gay & Co. buried in the road, registered blank and utter amazement.

After a while they set to work with their implements to dig out Gordon Gay & Co. from their premature graves. Tom Merry & Co., meanwhile, sent up a long, loud, lifting yell of laughter.

It really was a funny sight to see those juniors digging for all they were worth, flinging the soil in all directions as they hurried to excavate the buried troop and their belongings.

Tom Merry & Co. marched back to St. Jim's that afternoon crowned with victory, and chortling in high glee.

They had more than avenged themselves, and, thanks to Glyn's wireless, had now encompassed the complete and utter downfall of Gordon Gay & Co.

CHAPTER 9.

A Deep-Laid Scheme!

THAT evening all St. Jim's was agog with the news of the Scouts' manoeuvres, and the great part Glyn's wireless had played in the operations against the Grammarians. The wireless, in fact, captured the imaginations of everyone, and Bernard Glyn was made much of. He was regarded as something of a national hero, and all the evening enthusiastic fellows were bombarding him with questions, and demanding all manner of information concerning his new invention.

Glyn sought seclusion from the madding crowd by locking himself up in the old tower, there to carry out his experiments in peace. There would have been no peace for Glyn had he not taken the precaution to secure the door at the bottom. He did not resort to electrocuting tricks any more, for fear of a recurrence of the mishap such as Mr. Selby had suffered.

A good number of fellows made attempts to enter the tower in order to watch the schoolboy inventor at work, but the locked door barred their way. Tom Merry & Co. backed up Glyn, and forestalled any attempts at "rushing" the tower. So Glyn was left alone, and he did not reappear in the school until it was time for prep.

By then most of the juniors had settled down to their evening's "swotting" in preparation for the Craven exam, which was coming off the following afternoon.

Mellish, working on several "cribs" that Crooke had prepared for him, kept hard at it that evening. The rascally bookmaker and cardsharp at the Green Man was still pressing for his money, and threatening to acquaint Dr. Holmes of the facts, unless his demands were met.

Mellish, therefore, with his mind set on winning the Craven Prize, worked as never he had worked before.

Even with Crooke's help, however, he was not sure of winning. The questions set on the exam sheet might touch on subjects he had not prepared. There was always that risk, and Mellish studied in by no means a happy frame of mind.

Tom Merry & Co. noticed his haunted looks the following day, and wondered why the exam should affect Mellish so. They knew, of course, that he had been swotting hard, and that he was looking forward to winning. Mellish, however, was an inveterate slacker, and something of a dunce at lessons, and so was regarded as being hopelessly out of the running. Nobody credited him with having a "dog's chance" of winning the Craven Prize against such

redoubtable rivals as Brooke, Talbot, and the others who were at the top of their Forms.

But Mellish, tormented with the fear of Banks showing him up to the Head, clung desperately to the shred of hope that he might succeed in winning the money that meant so much to him.

On the following day, Friday, the exam for the Craven Prize was to take place, instead of the usual morning lessons. Only the "lucky" few were exempt, and for them, of course, it meant a morning free from the rigours of work.

Herbert Skimpole, the Genius of the Shell, was one of the exempt ones. He had stated his intention of finishing the hundred-and-forty-ninth chapter of his "Treatise on Determinism," while the others were taking the exam. Skimmy had been engaged on that stupendous work for quite a long time, and the course of its construction had been rather a chequered one, because many of the pages had been either ruthlessly burnt, or stuffed down his neck, or torn to shreds by Gore, his study-mate. Gore was of a very matter-of-fact nature, and did not in the least appreciate Skimmy's many "isms," and he always developed homicidal tendencies whenever his learned study-mate attempted to read out selections from his book.

Skimpole had ever been an assiduous student of Professor Balmeyerumpet, who was a great authority on Determinism, and it was from that immortal work that Skimmy was founding his own treatise. This, when finished, was destined to make the welkin ring and perpetuate the name of Skimpole throughout the ages—according to Skimpole's idea, that is!

Skimpole vied with Bernard Glyn as a brainy man and inventive genius, but whereas Glyn's inventions usually worked—if only for a time—the things which Skimmy evolved from his mighty brain had always been weird and wonderful in the extreme. He had often quite startled his schoolfellows, in fact, with his intricate scientific contrivances, most of which had turned out to be ghastly failures for Skimmy, but affording huge merriment for the rest of St. Jim's.

Skimpole had been greatly interested in Glyn's wireless apparatus, and ever since the news had first gone round he had been buttonholing the schoolboy inventor at every opportunity, and asking him for details.

Skimmy himself had been dabbling in wireless for some time, with the fixed desire of getting through to Mars. Only last week he had rigged up a large and fearful wireless contraption in Study No. 9. This, however, had been smashed up by Gore, on coming in to do his prep. That was the worst of being a scientific genius, Skimmy sadly thought—a genius, like a prophet, is never appreciated in his own land!

Glyn had flatly and firmly told Skimpole to "keep off the grass" where his wireless apparatus was concerned, and had threatened the brainy man of the Shell with all manner of horrible, lingering tortures if he dared intrude into the old tower.

On the evening before the Craven exam, when the boys of the Shell and Fourth were hard at work preparing for the gruelling test in the morning, Skimpole thought he would risk a visit to the tower and investigate among Glyn's apparatus.

Skimmy had no ulterior motives in doing this, of course. All he wanted to do was to give Glyn the advantage of his great knowledge on the subject, and improve the apparatus so as to make it possible to send a message to Mars. That was Skimpole's great ambition!

Glyn was at work in his study, so the coast was clear, Skimmy thought.

He received a great shock when, arriving at the tower with a key that opened the bottom door, he found that door already open.

With heart beating very fast, Skimpole crept up the stairs. Reaching the top, he saw a light in the upper room, and, peering through the door, his eyes opened wide to see the burly form of Gerald Croke bending over Glyn's wireless apparatus.

Croke was examining the transmitter very carefully, and Skimpole saw him slip one or two instruments into his pocket. Then Croke heard Skimpole give a gasp, and, swinging round, he came face to face with the brainy man of St. Jim's.

"M-my hat! Skimpole!" he ejaculated. "What are you doing up here, you—you spy?"

Herbert Skimpole blinked at him very solemnly through his large spectacles.

"Really, my dear Croke, your hasty delineation of me as a spy is a misnomer, I assure you," he said. "I have come purely for the purpose of examining Glyn's apparatus, with the ultimate object of gathering information as to what means may be employed to bring about effectual improvements. It is my earnest desire that I may be of service to Glyn in attaining the utmost efficiency from his

invention. I would point out that, according to my theory of assuming the specific coefficient of a given dialectic to be—"

"You crass idiot!" growled Croke. "You can shut your silly jaw, Skimpole. You'd better leave this apparatus alone, too, or you'll do some damage. What do you know about wireless, anyway?"

"My dear Croke, your truculent attitude is quite unwarranted. With my extensive cognisance of the fundamentals and principles of rude science, as comprehensively applied to the tangible rudiments of wave transmission—"

"Oh, bosh!" broke in Croke impatiently. "You can clear off, Skimpole, and mind your own business."

Skimpole blinked hard at his Form-fellow.

"Really, Croke, I rather fancy that it becomes more incumbent on me to remonstrate with you for insinuating yourself on these premises without authority," he said. "I observed, as I came in, that you misappropriated certain articles, which you secreted in your pocket—"

"They're mine, and not Glyn's," growled Croke, giving him a quick look. "You can shut your head about that, Skimpole, because it's got nothing to do with you. You and Glyn are not the only ones interested in wireless. I've got a set at home, and my cousin does a lot of transmuting, so I know a bit about the subject. That's why I'm interested in Glyn's stuff up here. Anyway, I'm going to look up now, in case Glyn comes back. Sheer off, Skimpole!"

"But, my dear Croke, I desire to— Yow-wow! There is no cause whatever for this unseemly violence— Yarooogh!"

Croke grasped Skimpole roughly, and propelled him through the door. The weedy genius went down the stairs rather precipitately, and when he paused, Croke grabbed him again and hustled him to the bottom. By the time they got out into the quadrangle, Skimpole was in quite a breathless state.

"Now Skimpole, don't you dare tell anyone you or I have been to the tower, or you'll catch it hot," said Croke threateningly before they parted. "Understand, you image?"

"Grooogh! Ah! Ye-es! Gerooogh!" gasped Skimpole. Croke strode away and went indoors.

It was now getting late, and near time for bed. He went along to Mellish's study and tapped at the door. A tired voice answered him:

"Come in!"

Percy Mellish was sitting at the table in a despondent attitude, his school books spread out before him. His face was white and his eyes heavy. It was apparent that the strain of his unaccustomed work was telling heavily on Mellish.

"Still hard at it?" said Croke, with a grin, closing the door.

Mellish nodded.

"Yes," he muttered. "I shall knock myself up if I do any more. I—I'm not used to swotting, and I can't get a grip of anything now. I'm dead beat. My head is buzzing, and the print seems to swim before my eyes every time I look at a book. I—I shall have to give in, Croke. I can't stand it!"

Croke gave a laugh, and drew a chair close to the table. Then, sitting down, he took a sheet of paper out of his pocket, and laid it before Mellish.

"Have a look at that," he chuckled. "I bet that'll do your eyes good, Mellish."

The Fourth-Former took the missive wonderingly, and looked at it. As he did so an expression of blank surprise came over his face, and he darted a quick look at his companion.

"What is it, Croke?" he asked breathlessly. "Not—the exam paper for to-morrow?"

Croke gave a low chuckle.

"That's just what it is, and nothing else!" he replied. "I was passing under the Head's study window after dark a little while ago, on my way to the tower to have a look at Glyn's wireless, when I saw this paper fluttering in a grating. It looked as if it had blown down from the Head's window and got caught. So, just out of curiosity, I picked it up. It's headed the Craven Bursary Examination, and there's no doubt at all that those questions typed on it are the ones that are going to be set at the exam to-morrow morning."

Mellish caught his breath.

"Oh, what luck! You're right, Croke, it is the exam paper!" he exclaimed. "But supposing the Head misses this—"

"It's ten to one that he won't!" said Croke reassuringly. "The Head has dozens of those typed, you know—one for each chap taking the exam, and a few over, in case they are wanted. I expect he left the pile of papers on his desk near the window this evening, and one blew out and got lodged in the grating, out of sight. Then the wind must

have worked it out, again gradually, and that's how I came to catch sight of it as I was passing. Jolly lucky I saw it, too. It will come in useful, Mellish."

Mellish's look of relief vanished suddenly, and he made a hopeless gesture.

"But what's the use of it now, Crooke?" he muttered. "These questions take in work that I haven't swotted up yet. I—I guessed I would be swotting in vain. To make any use of this paper, I should have to spend at least a day working up the questions. I'm fagged out as it is, and, however hard I worked, I couldn't get prepared by to-morrow morning. I—I should kill myself if I tried, anyway."

Crooke gave a laugh—a harsh, cynical laugh.

"There's no need for you to swot as much as that, Mellish," he said. "I've thought of a better way. It's a wheeze that struck me all of a sudden, and, although it may sound a bit mad to you, I'm certain it will work. That wireless stunt of Glyn's put it into my head."

"Wireless!" exclaimed Mellish. "What the dickens has wireless got to do with the Craven exam?"

"A good deal, I reckon!" chuckled Crooke, with a side-long look towards the door, to make sure that it was closed. "As you say, Mellish, there is no time now for you to swot up all these questions on the exam paper. I couldn't give you the answers myself without swotting for a few hours. And if I could you wouldn't be able to remember them. Besides, if I start to swot the chaps will get suspicious. But you can go over some of them to-night, and the rest I can help you with to-morrow—by means of wireless."

The Fourth-Former looked at him in amazement.

"I—I don't see what you are driving at, Crooke."

Crooke leaned closer to him, and dropped his voice to nearly a whisper.

"What about having one of Glyn's portable buzzer sets fixed up in your desk in the Form-room?" he asked. "Glyn will be in his own Form-room at the time, taking the exam, and, meanwhile, I can be at the top of the tower, working his transmitting set. Don't look at me like that, Mellish; I'm not out of my rocker. Listen. I've just been up and had a look at Glyn's apparatus. I know a good bit about wireless—my cousin taught me during the last vac—and I saw that working Glyn's Morse transmitter is as easy as rolling off a form. That telephony stunt of his is different—a bit too complicated for me to pick up—but the Morse part of it is dead easy. It's a jolly good idea, but like all good ideas, it's very simple. I took the vital parts from one of the portable sets he'd got under construction, and pinched a small buzzer, too. In my pocket I have all I want for fixing up a Morse receiver in your desk. That receiver will pick up signals sent out from the old tower without an aerial—just the same as the set Merry took out with the Scouts the other afternoon. The power required to work the set is sent out by the transmitter, you see, and in this case it will be easier than ever to work, because it's scarcely any distance from the Form-room to the old tower, and as we only require weak buzzes to sound in your desk, there will be no need to fit up any complicated apparatus. All that is wanted is an inductance to act as a pick-up, and the rest of the circuit relies on capacity. Otherwise, the apparatus is exactly the same as any other Morse set. You understand Morse, don't you?"

"Yes; but—"

"There aren't any buts in it, Mellish. The idea will work. I tell you, as long as you are game to go in with me in it. And it's safe, too. This is what we'll do. To-morrow morning, when Glyn and the rest of the fellows are in the Form-rooms taking the exam, I'll get into the old tower and set his Morse transmitter going. You will have a buzzer receiver tuned down to a low note, hidden in your desk. I'll fix it to-night, when the others are in bed. There won't be any wires fitted outside the desk, so no one need suspect, and the buzzer can be tuned right down so that you can only hear it by bending close over the desk and listening hard. I'll be in the tower, with the exam paper and all the necessary books in front of me, and I can tap out messages to you that will enable you to put the right answers down. You won't be able to transmit to me, of course, as Merry did in the wood, but that won't be necessary, because I shall have the exam paper in front of me all the time. I can do all that's wanted. Besides, as I said before, some of the answers you can swot on to-night, leaving me about half the exam paper to wangle over the wireless. It amounts to this, Mellish, that I shall be sending you cribs by wireless for the actual questions being set. How's that?"

Percy Mellish's eyes were gleaming. He looked eagerly at his companion.

"My word! It sounds great—really great!" he muttered. "But are you sure it will work? I can read Morse, of course, and will be able to make out your messages, so long

as you don't send them too fast. But—but it's an awful risk. It's cheating, and—"

He was interrupted by a scornful laugh from Crooke.

"Not so awful as running the risk of Banks coming to the Head and letting the cat out of the bag about the little carryings-on at the Green Man, Mellish!"

Mellish shuddered.

"If you don't agree to working this trick with me, you'll be done," went on Crooke. "You can bet your boots that, unless you get help on the questions during actual exam time, you'll stand no more chance of winning the Craven Prize than a V.C. Nobody will suspect—the scheme's too jolly daring for anyone to guess—and all you will have to do is listen to the buzzer in your desk, tapping out faint messages that will help you answer all the questions correctly."

Mellish's face cleared a little.

"You will just bend close over the desk while you are writing, and who would tumble to what you were really up to? Not one in a million!" declared Crooke. "Some fellows bend very low over their desks—Trimble, for instance; he almost rubs his nose on the paper when he's writing. Glyn will be out of the way, and all the other fellows will be in school; I shall have the tower to myself. There couldn't be a better opportunity, and even if I am caught up there afterwards, nobody would guess what I was up to. If you go through with this without losing your nerve, Mellish, the Craven Prize will be yours—ours, I mean. We go fifty-fifty on this deal."

Mellish drew a deep breath. The pallor of his face had gone, to give place to a flush of excitement and eagerness.

"I'll do it, Crooke!" he exclaimed. "I see now that if I had all the answers on a slip of paper I should never be able to get a peep at it in class with old Lathom's eye on me. It will be easy this way, and safe, as you say. I'll work like the dickens to-night, and prepare the answers to those of the questions I reckon I shall be able to memorise. The rest you can answer for me by wireless to-morrow. But fancy your thinking of such a wheeze, Crooke! You—you clever beggar!"

Gerald Crooke laughed. He liked to be complimented on his cleverness.

He pointed to the paper that Mellish was holding in a trembling hand.

"Put that away when you've finished swotting this evening, and keep it well out of sight," he said. "I shall want it in the morning, remember; and if that gets lost, we're done. I'm going along to the Form-room now, to fix up the apparatus in your desk."

He nodded coolly and left the study.

Mellish opened his books again, and, with the stolen exam paper before him, feverishly started to prepare the first questions.

CHAPTER 10.

A Bit of a "Bust-up!"

WHILE the rest of the school slept that night, Crooke and Mellish were busy. The wireless receiving apparatus and buzzer had been safely installed in Mellish's desk, together with a small dull-emitter valve and the batteries necessary to work it, and at midnight the young rascals left their beds and crept out to put their plot to the test.

Crooke went across to the old tower, and got in by means of the key he had prepared, whilst Mellish sat at his desk in the Form-room, to see if Crooke was able to get through to him by means of Glyn's power-radiating transmitter.

He thrilled when, from underneath the lid of the desk, he heard a swift buzzing in Morse dots and dashes.

It was Crooke calling him from the old tower!

All he had to do then was to adjust the buzzer to the necessary pitch, so that it was inaudible from inside the desk until he bent closely over the lid.

That done, he closed and locked the desk and went down to the lower box-room to wait for Crooke to return from the tower.

The Shell fellow's eyes glinted with satisfaction when Mellish told him that the wireless set hidden in his desk in the Form-room worked according to their expectations.

Crooke took charge of the stolen exam paper; and, after further discussing their plans for the morrow, they went to bed.

Next morning the Shell and Fourth went into their Form-rooms for the examinations, whilst the few exempted juniors went off for their morning's freedom.

Racke had anticipated a little game of nap with Crooke in the seclusion of Study No. 7, but could not find him anywhere.

Crooke, as a matter of fact, had secreted himself at the top of the ruined tower, in Glyn's wireless station, long ago.

He had the exam paper with him, and the school books necessary for the carrying out of his underhand scheme. And what was more, he had a good hour's start of the other competitors.

Racke at last gave up the search for Crooke, and retired into his study to spend the morning studying a certain pink newspaper called "Sporty Bits."

Mellish, as he took his seat in the Fourth Form-room, looked pallid and nervous. He hadn't a quarter of Crooke's coolness, and the thought of the concealed wireless apparatus in his desk put a guilty fear into him.

Jack Blake & Co. noted Mellish's uneasy manner, and attributed it to a natural anxiety over the exam. They little guessed what was really passing through the young rascal's mind.

There was a hum of excited conversation in the class-room till Mr. Lathom came in, gown swishing, armed with a pile of examination papers.

The Form master looked round severely and commanded silence. Then he distributed the papers, and the juniors set to work on the exam.

Mellish caught his breath as he looked at the question paper given him by Mr. Lathom, but breathed more freely when he saw that it was identical with the one Crooke had found in the quadrangle last night. So he commenced to answer the first questions with confidence, having prepared them carefully overnight.

When he had disposed of these, he leaned over his desk and waited. Then, at the arranged time, he heard a series of scarcely audible buzzes coming from under the desk lid. He bent down closer to listen to them.

It was a message, tapped in Morse, coming from Crooke in the ruined tower!

"Get ready for Virgil, question nine," it ran. "Will send out translation in a few minutes."

Mellish was able to decipher the dots and dashes without difficulty. He gave a crafty look round the class. The other juniors were poring over their papers, hard at work. Mr. Linton was seated at his desk, regarding his pupils gravely over the rims of his spectacles. His glance dwelt for a minute on Mellish, but passed on without suspicion.

Mellish had had no difficulty, so far, with his examination paper. If Crooke managed to get through the answers to the rest of the questions, everything would be plain sailing. It was a stiff exam, and it was probable that not even the

best of the others would get everything right. Mellish chuckled as he thought what a walk-over it would be for him if Crooke's plans were successful.

Tap—tap—tap—tap!

The wireless set inside his desk was going again, calling him to get ready. Then, slowly, the translation of a difficult passage in the Aeneid came through. Crooke, standing in the tower with the question-sheet, text-book, and lexicon before him, was tapping a perfect translation through to Mellish.

The young rascal of the Fourth took it down carefully. Crooke allowed him a few minutes, and then the answer to the next question came through—some intricate declensions, the hardest in all Latin syntax.

The wireless set worked on steadily inside the desk, and Mellish, bending over with his ear close to the lid, heard every movement of the buzzer, and interpreted the dots and dashes into words. It was ridiculously easy and quite safe. Nobody but himself could hear those significant sounds inside the desk.

Mellish would have found it impossible to cope with the examination questions alone, but with the aid of the secret wireless messages he was enabled to give the answers practically word perfect.

As the morning wore on, and answer after answer came through without mishap, Mellish's spirits rose, and he actually began to chuckle softly at the simplicity of the ruse.

Meanwhile, the sun was shining brightly outside the dusty Form-room, bathing the quadrangle at St. Jim's in radiance, and the boys who were free from the exam felt that it was good to be alive.

Towards the latter part of the morning the tall, weedy figure of Herbert Skimpole came out of the School House and descended the steps. Skimpole blinked earnestly through his spectacles towards the ruined tower.

He had been working hard on the hundred and forty-ninth chapter of his Treatise on Determinism, but, having got "stuck" on a knotty point, he had decided to leave the great work until another time, and go out into the sunshine. Now, Skimpole was really very deeply interested in Glyn's wireless. Being essentially of a scientific turn of mind, and having dabbled in wireless waves himself, he felt that it devolved upon him to go right into Glyn's invention, and

(Continued on next page.)



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All Efforts in this Competition should be Addressed to: "My Readers' Own Corner," Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C.4.

TOTTENHAM TAKES THE TUCK!

THE PIPE OF PEACE!

A Scot and an Irishman made arrangements to have a camping holiday. When they had pitched the tent they found they had forgotten to bring pillows, so they resorted to a couple of iron drain-pipes which they found lying about. In the morning Sandy complained that his neck was nearly broken, owing to his "pillow." "Ah, sure," said Paddy, "you should have done as Oi did. Oi stuffed me poipe with straw!"—A Tuck Hamper, filled with delicious Tuck, has been awarded to A. Constable, 58, Cranleigh Road, S. Tottenham, N. 15.

THOROUGHLY CONSCIENTIOUS!

A very selfish and lazy miser was in need of a servant. One day a man applied for the job, and the miser said he would be very pleased to have him. "What do you wish me to do, sir?" inquired the servant. The miser rubbed his hands together. "Every morning I want you to wake me up, brush my clothes, make my bed, get my breakfast ready, wash the floor, dust the carpets, milk the cow, feed the horses, wash the stable, go to the post-office and see whether there are any parcels for me, then come back and get my dinner ready." By this time the poor servant had nearly fainted. "What I have just mentioned," went

on the miser, "is what you do in the morning. In the after—" "I—I say, sir, what is the soil in your garden like?" The miser eyed the man in some astonishment.

"Why?" he asked. "Because, if it is anything like clay, I will build houses in my spare time," answered the servant with a smile.—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Joseph Sammut, 7, Sda Mercanti, Valletta, Malta.

SAFETY FIRST!

Airman: "Coming for a trip through the clouds, Sambo?" Sambo: "No, thanks. Ah stays on terrah firmah, and de more firmah de less terrah!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Thomas Caffrey, 51, Gladstone Street, Sunderland.

GETTING AT DAD!

Small Boy: "Didn't you say, father, that it was so hot in India that they don't need fires?" Father: "Yes, my son." Small boy: "Then how does the Calcutta Sweep make a living?"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to J. Anderson, Ben-Aigent, Keptie Road, Arbroath, Scotland.

A REGULAR MIX-UP!

It was in the General Supply Stores in the village of Slapton-on-Slush. A small boy came into the shop. "Well, my little man, and what can I do for you?" asked the proprietor kindly. "Please, sir," replied the youngster, "I want an empty barrel of apples to make into a chicken coop for my dog!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Stanley Clinch, 51, Prince Street, Bolton, Lancs.

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see where he could improve it. The set-back given him by Crooke last night had not daunted him in the least.

Skimmy felt that he would be doing Glyn a good turn by collaborating his great mind with him in wireless matters. Besides, Skimpole wanted to know just how Glyn's apparatus worked, and to find out whether there really was a possibility of being able to get a message through to Mars.

So, after pondering for a little while, the genius of the Shell walked across towards the ruined tower. He had in his pocket a small appliance which he had christened the Skimpole Universal Lock-Opener. That contrivance looked, as Monty Lowther had described it, a cross between a tooth-pick and a gimlet, but it worked quite well on ordinary common or garden locks. Skimmy had offered that great invention to many, many manufacturers, but each and every one had heartlessly turned it down—possibly because the Skimpole Universal Lock-Opener somewhat resembled a similar appliance already on the market, with one main point of difference, it was rather too crude to be commercial.

However, Skimmy had often found it useful for opening his study door when Gore had locked it upon him. So he tried it on the door of the old tower.

Crooke had locked the door behind him, of course. Skimpole dug away at the lock with his patent opener, blissfully unconscious of the fact that Gerald Crooke was upstairs in the top of the tower, working Glyn's wireless set in secret.

At last the lock yielded, albeit Skimmy's wonderful opener was reduced to the shape of a corkscrew after the operation. But that did not dismay the brainy man of the Shell. His main idea was to get at the wireless, and cast his scientific eye upon it.

So, opening the oak door softly, Skimmy crept into the shadowy interior of the old tower and climbed up the stairs to the regions above.

The clock at St. Jim's boomed the hour of twelve noon—it was almost time for the examination to cease. Skimpole had left it rather late in making his entry into the tower. That hundred and forty-ninth chapter of his Treatise on Determinism had dominated all his thoughts until an obscure point of theory had left him temporarily "bunkered." But Skimmy was a great believer in that old precept of the Village Blacksmith's—"something attempted, something done"—and so he climbed the steps of the tower feeling confident that, by the time the Shell was dismissed, he would have satisfied his thirst for knowledge.

The humming of Glyn's electric dynamo caught Skimpole's ears as he reached the top of the stairs. He halted outside the door, blinking at it rather uncertainly.

"Dear me!" he murmured. "Surely Glyn cannot be here. I—I think I had better investigate."

Skimpole opened the door and walked in.

Crooke, seated over the transmitting apparatus, with the examination paper and the school books before him, jumped up with a guilty start.

"Oh, it's you again, Skimpole, is it?" he scowled. "What the blazes do you want?"

"I—I—really, Crooke—" stammered Skimpole, rather taken aback.

Crooke glared angrily at him, thrusting a book over the tell-tale exam paper.

"Get out, you interfering idiot!" he exclaimed. "You've no business up here, Skimpole. Leave me alone—I'm only experimenting!"

The weedy genius of the Shell came farther into the room, blinking round through his spectacles.

"Really, Crooke, I must remind you that there is a vast element of danger in tampering with apparatus you are not acquainted with," he said mildly. "The machinery here, apparently, is very powerful, and—Ow-wow-wow-wow!"

Skimpole gave vent to a fiendish yell as he accidentally touched one of the wires leading from the humming dynamo. At the same moment a series of sparks arose from the apparatus in front of Crooke, and he jumped back in alarm.

"You fool, Skimpole! What are you doing?"

"M-m-my dear Crooke, I must have inadvertently touched the—"

"Then leave things alone!" scowled Crooke. "You'll mess things up if you start interfering. Oh crumbs! You've put this apparatus out of joint already. Something's gone wrong."

Skimpole walked eagerly forward, his hands outstretched. "Then let me proceed to rectify the defect, my dear Crooke," he exclaimed. "It seems to me that these terminals are short-circuited, and if I just join this wire to the other, like so—"

S-zzz-zzzzz-zzzzz-zzzzz!

There was a flash of light, accompanied by a sound like that of frying bacon, and Skimmy leaped quite three feet in the air, for the wire he held had suddenly become red-hot.

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A howl of wrath arose from Crooke.

"You burbling idiot! You howling fathead! Look what you've done! You—"

"Grooogh! I—I am burnt, Crooke. I must have made a wrong connection," gasped Skimpole. "Now, if I turn this knob, like so—"

Cr-rr-r-r-rack! Bang!

There was another detonation, and a myriad of sparks flew up from the apparatus on the bench.

Skimpole, blinking furiously, proceeded to twist the knobs and turn the switches in quite a frantic manner, and as he did so all manner of terrifying flashes arose from various parts of the room.

Crooke began to dance like a dervish as the wire counterpoise on the floor began to emit sparks, and darted long, lurid tongues of flame round his legs.

"Leave it alone, you idiot!" he howled, charging across the room at Skimpole. "You'll blow the whole lot up in a minute, you—you—"

"M-m-my dear Crooke, I assure you— Yaroooooogh!" Bang! Sizz-zzz-zzz!

Crooke reached Skimpole in one wide leap and, catching him by the scruff of the neck, commenced to drag him away from the apparatus, where he was wreaking so much havoc.

But Skimmy, as he found himself being whirled backwards, flung out his arms and grabbed the contraption nearest him, which happened to be a large-sized helix.

The whole structure came over with a crash, and Skimpole and Crooke fell to the floor together, with a goodly part of Glyn's wireless apparatus on top of them.

Bump! Crack! Fizz-zzzzz!

Wires were pulled out in all directions, plugs were wrenched from their sockets, and next minute the whole room seemed to be alive with spluttering sparks and vivid flashes.

Fizz-zzz! Bang! Whirrrr! Bang!

Quite a pandemonium of noise arose, and the two struggling juniors on the floor, mixed up in a hopeless tangle of wires, lent their voices to the general noise in tones of wild, woeful lamentation:

"Yarooooogh! Yah! Yow!"

"Oh! Wow-wow! Help! Oooooop!"

CHAPTER 11.

Rough on Glyn!

BACK in the Fourth Form-room in the School House, Mellish had been busy answering the examination questions, according to the "cribs" tapped out to him from the wireless apparatus in his desk.

He was nearly at the end of the list, now and was feeling considerably elated, for he had had no difficulty with any of the questions.

He felt that success in the exam was already assured, and the Craven Prize money was as good as his.

Mr. Lathom was seated at his desk in front of the class, looking now and again at his watch, for time was getting on.

No sound disturbed the air in the class-room, except the busy scratching of pens and the rustling of papers.

Mellish, his ear kept close to the lid of his desk, was the only one who heard those dots and dashes that were issuing from within.

All of a sudden, however, the buzzes ceased in the middle of a sentence, and a puzzled look came over Mellish's face.

"My hat!" he muttered, after waiting a little while. "What the dickens is the matter, I wonder? I—I hope nothing has gone wrong."

Another minute elapsed, and still there was no sound from the concealed wireless set, and the puzzled look on Mellish's face gave way to one of anxiety.

He cast a covert glance round the class, and he flushed when he saw Mr. Lathom's gaze resting on him.

He dropped his eyes immediately to the paper on which he had been working. He leaned over the desk and put his ear closer to the lid, listening desperately for the buzzes that meant so much to him. Without the continuation of the message, he was completely and helplessly stuck.

Mr. Lathom was peering at him over the rims of his eyeglasses.

"What is the matter, Mellish?" he asked in a grave voice. "Are you not feeling well, my boy?"

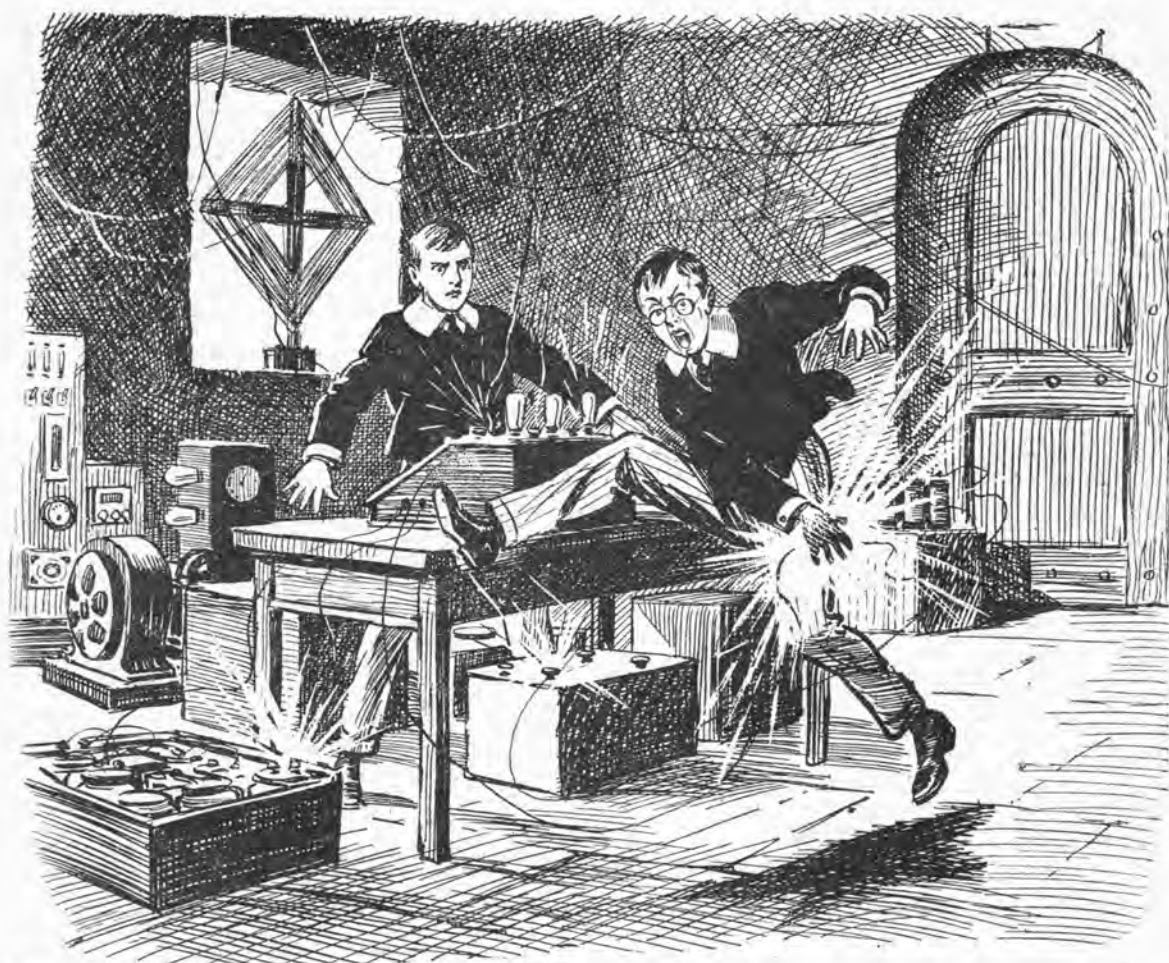
Mellish's head came up from the desk-lid with a jerk.

All eyes in the class-room were turned on him now, and his face went crimson.

"I—I'm all right, sir," he managed to gasp out. "I—"

Sizzzzzz-zzz! Splutter! Sizzzz!

Those mysterious noises, breaking out suddenly through the stillness of the Form-room, could not have startled everyone more, had they been a series of thunderclaps.



"Something's gone wrong here," cried Crooke. Skimpole walked eagerly forward, his hands outstretched. "Then let me proceed to rectify the defect, my dear Crooke," he said, taking hold of a piece of wire. "If I join this to the other—8-zzz-zzzzz-zzzzzzzzz! There was a flash of light, accompanied by a sizzling sound, and Skimmy leaped high in the air, for the wire he held had suddenly become red hot. (See Chapter 10.)

Mellish's face turned from crimson to green. The noises came from inside his desk, and as the awful truth dawned upon him, he seemed to freeze to the very marrow of his bones.

Something was happening to the hidden wireless set! Mellish did not know the cause of the catastrophe. The fracas in the tower, of course, was having its effect in deadly manner on the receiver in the Fourth Form-room!

Sizz-zzz-zz! Bang!

The noises stopped, and then a cloud of blue smoke began to pour out from under the desk-lid.

Mr. Lathom and the boys of the Fourth sprang to their feet at once.

Blake gave an alarmed shout.

"Great pip! Mellish's desk is alight! Look out, Mellish!"

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, grabbing his monocle, and jamming it hurriedly into his eye. "Just look at the smoke, deah boys. Oh, cwumbs! Fiah!"

Whirr! Bang! Bang!

More strange noises were coming from the desk, and smoke was pouring out in long, acrid streams.

Mellish jumped up, wild-eyed with terror. Cries of alarm were arising from all parts of the Form-room.

"Boys—boys!" cried Mr. Lathom, hurrying up the gangway. "Pray calm yourselves! I—I do not see that there is any occasion to be afraid. Possibly it is a case of spontaneous combustion. I will ascertain the cause of the matter."

Mr. Lathom strode up to Mellish's desk and raised the lid. As he did so there was a terrific bang, and a cloud of blue smoke came up from inside, enveloping him like a pall.

The startled Form master dropped the lid and sprang back, sneezing and coughing.

"Ah-ti-shoo! Good heavens! Choo-choo! Mellish, you young rascal, what ever have you—grooogh!—secreted in here?" he gurgled.

Mellish was standing in the gangway, a look of tragic terror on his face.

The fizzing and sizzling noises were now dying down, but smoke was still coming from the desk. His knees almost gave way beneath him when he saw the grim look that Mr. Lathom fixed upon him.

"Mellish!" thundered the Form master, whose eyes were streaming as the result of the smoke. "What is that burning inside your desk? What dangerous contraption have you had the audacity to bring into the Form-room?"

"I—I—I—" stuttered Mellish.

His tongue clave to the roof of his mouth. He was so overcome with terror that for the time being he found himself wholly incapable of speech.

Meanwhile, Blake and Lumley Lumley had dashed out into the corridor, and they came back each laden with a fire-bucket. They charged up to Mellish's desk, raised the lid, and valiantly emptied the contents of the buckets within.

Swooooosh!

Water flew in all directions, as well as into the desk, and Mr. Lathom gave a hop as a miniature cataract came down the gangway.

But the fire, or whatever it was, had ceased, thanks to the douching. Blake dived a hand inside Mellish's desk, and drew forth the secret wireless apparatus, the wire and coils of which were now completely charred.

Mellish grasped the nearest desk for support. Fervently he wished that the earth would open and swallow him up!

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated Mr. Lathom, adjusting his eyeglasses, and peering closely at the apparatus thus divulged. "Wh-what is it?"

"Looks like a wireless set, sir," said Blake. "Well, carry me home to die, somebody! These are some of Glyn's gadgets!"

"Bai Jove!"

Mr. Lathom turned angrily to Mellish.

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"Boy!" he rapped. "Is it possible that you have had a wireless set concealed in your desk?"

Mellish licked his dry lips.

"Ye-es, sir," he stammered.

"For what purpose, Mellish, did you bring this here?" demanded the Form master, in a voice of fear.

"I—I—I—"

Before he could say any more, a noise coming from outside caused everyone in the Form to give a jump.

It was a distant bang, sounding far across the quadrangle, and Blake led a general rush to the windows.

Gazing without, they saw a column of smoke rise from the top of the old tower. Then there was another loud detonation, and a flash of yellow flame darted out of the tower window like a streak of lightning.

"Gug-g-good heavens!" ejaculated Blake, turning a startled face to the others. "Something's gone wrong in the old tower! Oh, my giddy aunt! Look!"

A fearful crash sounded from the tower-top; there was another streak of light and a few thousand sparks, and then a litter of miscellaneous articles came flying forth from the window, to whiz down to the ground below and smash to a thousand fragments.

"Oh, jeminy!" gurgled Blake. "The tower's blowing up! Come on, you chaps! We must go to the rescue!"

All thoughts of the exam now forgotten, the boys of the Fourth dashed precipitately from the room. As they ran down the corridor, Tom Merry & Co., wearing startled looks, came pouring forth from the Shell Form room.

Bernard Glyn was in the forefront, his face a picture of dismay and consternation.

"Some lunatic is up in the tower, tampering with my apparatus!" he moaned, as they flew downstairs together. "There's no knowing what might have happened—that generator and the high-tension batteries are all of a special design, and there's about a couple of thousand volts to play with. Oh crumbs! Hark at that!"

"That" was the sound of another crash at the top of the old tower. It struck like a knell into the soul of Bernard Glyn, and he waved his fists in a frenzy of rage.

The juniors ran down the School-House steps, and made their way with all speed across the quadrangle.

As they neared the old tower a weird and wonderful figure came bounding out of the front door. Tom Merry & Co. halted in their tracks, and gazed at the newcomer with horrified eyes.

It was Herbert Skimpole—they could tell that by his weedy form. But otherwise Skimmy was unrecognisable.

His face was black, his eyebrows were missing, and his hair was so badly scorched that what there was left of it stood up in little tufts, somewhat in the manner of a French poodle's. His eyeglasses dangled from his left ear, his collar was disrupted from its stud, and his necktie flew out behind him like a pennon as he ran. Skimmy's clothes, too, were badly scorched and tattered. In all, he looked an utter, complete, and unholy wreck.

When he saw Tom Merry & Co. gazing at him he halted, gasping like a grampus. He groped for his spectacles, set them on his nose, and blinked through them at a great rate.

"My only sainted aunt!" ejaculated Tom Merry, in a faint voice. "What the dickens have you been doing, Skimpole?"

"Groogh! Ow! Yow! My d-d-dear fellows, a—a catastrophe has happened—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Monty Lowther. "Skimmy looks as though he's been mixed up in an earthquake, or a gas explosion. Where are your eyebrows, old chap? Did they go west in the big bang?"

"Yow-ow!" gurgled Skimpole. "I—I cannot comprehend exactly what took place, my dear fellows. Grooooooh! Really, I have been projected into a state of complete distraction. I—I think the electric generator must have been blown up—"

"What!" howled Glyn. "My generator blown up? I—I—"

"Ye-es. But pray calm yourself, my dear Glyn. That wasn't so serious. Ow-ow! When the batteries burst, however—"

"B-b-b-batteries b-b-burst?" gurgled Glyn. "Oh, my hat! You don't mean to say all my batteries are done in?"

"N-n-not all of them, Glyn. I perceived that three of them went out of the window in the last explosion, and as they were in cases there is—geroooooh!—a possibility that they are still intact, and— Oh dear! Wh-wh-what are you doing, Glyn?"

"I'm going to slaughter you!" howled Glyn, making a wild dive for Skimpole. "I'll teach you to go up there interfering with my wireless. You've messed the whole lot up! You've ruined everything! You—you chuckle-headed dummy! You burbling jabberwock! You—you—you— Oh, lemme get at him!"

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Skimpole dodged just as the avenging hands reached out for him, and then, with fear lending him wings, he streaked across the quadrangle for all he was worth.

Glyn, breathing battle, murder, and sudden death, gave chase, and pursued and pursuer disappeared behind the chapel, Skimpole leading by a length.

Tom Merry & Co., having recovered from their momentary mirth, looked seriously at each other.

"Well, this is a giddy go, and no mistake!" exclaimed Tom. "It seems as though Skimmy has messed up all Glyn's wireless props. Let's go up and see what damage actually has been done."

They hurried into the tower and climbed the stairs. The room at the top was filled with smoke. Above the spluttering that came from the disrupted apparatus they heard a series of strange thuds and scufflings. They ran in, and were surprised to see Gerald Crooke struggling on the floor, completely entangled in the remains of Glyn's wireless gear.

He had wire round his legs and arms, and cables round his neck, and it really would have taxed the powers of a Houdini to have unravelled all those knots and meshes.

He gave the juniors a baleful look as they came in.

Crooke, like Skimpole, was in a parlous state, although not quite so bad.

Tom Merry & Co. looked blankly at the scene of ruin and desolation that confronted them. Alas! for Glyn's wireless apparatus, for it was no more! Everything was either burned, broken, or blown up. Skimpole and Crooke between them had made a clean sweep of everything.

"Ye gods!" ejaculated Blake. "What will Glyn say when he sees this? The poor chap will be ready to tear his hair! Hallo! What's this I spy? Our giddy exam paper!"

He picked up the paper from the floor and looked at it in astonishment.

"How did this come here?" he exclaimed, "and what on earth have these books and lexicons been brought up for? My hat! I wonder if this has anything to do with the explosion in Mellish's desk?"

"What was that?" exclaimed Tom Merry sharply.

"Why, Mellish had a wireless set hidden in his desk during exam time," said Blake. "Just before the explosion up here, there was a bit of a blow-up in Mellish's desk. The wireless set caught fire, or fused, or something—and that was how it came to be discovered. I noticed that Mellish had his head bent very close to the desk lid all the time he was writing. I saw him grinning to himself once or twice, too, and I couldn't help wondering, because I saw nothing in the giddy exam paper to grin about. Now, I wonder—"

"My only hat!" exclaimed Tom Merry, drawing a deep breath. "I—I wonder— Perhaps Crooke has been up here all the time with an exam paper and these school books, using Glyn's wireless—to transmit the answers to the set hidden in Mellish's desk!"

"Bai Jove!"

The juniors all looked aghast at their leader.

"It sounds impossible!" ejaculated Herries.

"It isn't impossible," said Tom curtly. "I know what Glyn's wireless will do. And we all know what a cunning rotter Crooke is, and what a miserable little cheat Mellish is. It would have been as easy as pie to work, so long as everything was arranged properly beforehand. Crooke must have got hold of an exam paper somehow, and he and Mellish worked this trick. Crooke was up here during the exam, tapping out answers to the questions by wireless, and Mellish picked them up from the wireless set hidden in his desk. It's as plain as a pikestaff, now. What a rotten, low-down wangle!"

"The cheats!"

"The cads!"

The juniors gathered round Crooke angrily. He cowered down, scowling at them.

"You miserable cheat, Crooke," exclaimed Tom Merry, his lip curling with contempt. "This is just the caddish sort of thing you would do. I suppose you and Mellish agreed to go halves with the prize-money afterwards?"

"I don't know what you mean," muttered Crooke.

"You've got things all wrong, and—"

"Oh, bump the rotter!" exclaimed Blake. "We'll knock the truth out of him that way."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Willing hands seized the wires that held Crooke, and he was soon extricated. Then he was raised aloft, and the process of bumping was proceeded with in a thorough and determined manner.

Tom Merry & Co. gave him no quarter, and Crooke's yells soon rang out stridently through the upper room of the old tower.

"Do you confess?" demanded Tom Merry during a pause.

"Yah! No, hang you!" snarled Crooke. "Yarooogh!" Bump! Bump! Bump! Bump!
"Keep it going!" said Blake grimly.
Crooke yelled out in anguish, and at last even his stubborn will gave way.

"Stop! Leave me alone!" he whined. "I—I'll confess."
"Then I was right?" demanded Tom. "Mellish had that wireless set hidden in his desk so that you could transmit the answers to the exam questions from here?"
"Ye-es, hang you!"

"How did you get hold of this question paper?" rapped the Shell captain sternly. "You surely didn't have the nerve to break into the Head's study and take it?"

"No; I found it in the quadrangle last night," panted Crooke. "It had blown out of the Head's study window. I picked it up, and then the idea came to me. I—I did it to help Mellish. He wanted the Craven Prize money, and—"

"Boys!"
It was the Head's voice breaking in suddenly, and the juniors wheeled round, thunderstruck.

They had not heard the footsteps on the stairs, so immersed had they been in bumping Crooke.

Dr. Holmes appeared in the doorway, a tall, awe-inspiring figure in cap and gown. Mr. Lathom was at his side, and Mellish, looking pale and terrified, stood in the rear.

The Head's look was dark and foreboding as he looked down at the cowering Shell fellow on the floor.

"Allow Crooke to rise," he rapped, turning to Tom Merry and the others. "I must hold an immediate inquiry into this affair. From what I heard just now, I gather that some plot has been afoot to enable Mellish to cheat in the Craven exam."

Crooke struggled to his feet, gritting his teeth in rage, but he wilted before the Head's burning gaze.

"Well, Crooke?" Dr. Holmes' voice was quiet but

"Poor old Glyn!" murmured Blake.

Dr. Holmes and Mr. Lathom took the two unhappy delinquents away with them. Tom Merry & Co., meanwhile, went down to the quadrangle.

A sorry figure came crawling out from the region of the cloisters. It was Skimpole, looking more of a wreck and a ruin than ever. From his battered and bent condition it really seemed that the Genius of St. Jim's had been trying conclusions with a steam roller.

"My word! What's happened, Skimmy?" asked Tom Merry. "You look as though you've been properly in the wars!"

Skimpole blinked at the others through his spectacles in deep distress and anguish.

"Grooogh! My dear f-fellows, I have been subjected to a particularly violent assault!" he moaned. "Glyn adopted a most—wow-ow—truculent attitude towards me. He would not listen to—yow-wow—reason. Oh dear! I—I—I am suffering excruciating discomfort, my dear fellows. Groooooogh!"

Tom Merry slapped Skimpole on the back—an action that brought another anguishing gasp from the luckless brainy man.

"Cheer up, Skimmy!" he said encouragingly. "You have done a great deed this morning, old chap. By nosing into Glyn's wireless room, you were the means of bringing to light a rotten trick of Crooke's and Mellish's to cheat in the Craven exam. It's a pity you've had to suffer, but you suffer nobly, old man. You're a giddy martyr!"

"Yow-ow-wow!"

Skimpole limped away.

Bernard Glyn almost exploded when told of Dr. Holmes' edict. He immediately rushed away to the Head's study, and arrived there just as Crooke and Mellish were coming out.

The two plotters presented woebegone spectacles indeed. Mellish had his hands tucked beneath his armpits, and

Next
Wednesday's
Programme!

"CHUMS UNDER CANVAS!"

By Martin Clifford.

Another book-length story of Tom Merry & Co., at St. Jim's.

"A PHANTOM THRONE!"

By Sidney Dre

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ominous. "Will you kindly repeat the information you were giving to Merry when I came in? I wish to hear the whole facts of this matter, and warn you that it will be useless for you to resort to falsehoods or subterfuge."

Crooke darted a baleful look at Mellish, and then commenced to stammer his confession in a thick, tremulous voice. Dr. Holmes' brow became blacker as he listened, whilst Mr. Lathom looked amazed and horrified.

"It—it was only a joke, sir," wound up the Shell fellow in a whining voice. "I—we—we didn't mean any harm—"

"You adopted this underhand trick in order to cheat at the examination, and enable Mellish to take the prize under false pretences!" exclaimed Dr. Holmes angrily. "How can you stand there, Crooke, and tell me that you mean no harm? I am ashamed that two boys of St. Jim's should descend to such base and dishonourable behaviour. You have disgraced the traditions of this school—traditions which I hoped would be jealously upheld by every pupil of mine. Such conduct as you and Mellish have been guilty of merits expulsion, and I feel half constrained to mete out to you the punishment you deserve."

He looked round grimly at the scene of ruin in the upper room.

"All Glyn's apparatus has, apparently, been destroyed by your wanton interference here!" he exclaimed.

"It was all Skimpole's fault!" cried Crooke passionately. "If it hadn't been for him this wouldn't have happened—"

"And probably you and Mellish would have carried through your dastardly plan undetected," broke in the Head curtly. "It is as well, then, that Skimpole did come here. But I had no idea that Glyn had installed such dangerous appliances in this room. Had I been aware of the nature of his—er—inventions I should certainly not have given my sanction to have them set up in the school premises. A serious fire might have resulted from this affair, or possibly loss of life. I will see that these things are removed as quickly as possible, and that no further wireless apparatus is put in."

seemed to be trying to fold himself up in the manner of a penknife. Crooke was rubbing his hands and groaning. Both he and Mellish staggered down the corridor, suffering agonies as a result of the terrific caning they had just undergone.

Dr. Holmes had not spared the rod, but had brought home to them in a very drastic manner that the way of the transgressor is hard!

Glyn had no luck with the Head, although he pleaded to be allowed to re-establish his wireless in the old tower. His weird electrical contraptions were condemned as dangerous, and, although Dr. Holmes expressed sympathy with the schoolboy inventor, he did not relax one iota from his decision.

The juniors finished their exam that afternoon, and the next day the result—a very popular one—was announced. Dick Brooke was the winner, and Tom Merry & Co. were the first to congratulate him. They knew how much the money meant to the scholarship lad, and when they thought of how Mellish and Crooke had nearly succeeded in robbing him of it, they felt inclined to go along and "slaughter" them.

The two tricksters, however, were already having a very unenviable time. The fear of Banks haunted them; it was like a sword of Damocles hovering over their heads. They managed at last to get an advance from Racke, and this satisfied the rascally bookmaker for the time being.

It came as a bitter realisation to Mellish that, had he not essayed to cheat at the Craven exam, Tom Merry & Co. would have helped him out of his dilemma. As it was, they left him to fend for himself, and he had to pinch and scrape for weeks before the debt was cleared. And by that time Mellish had come to rue his wayward conduct.

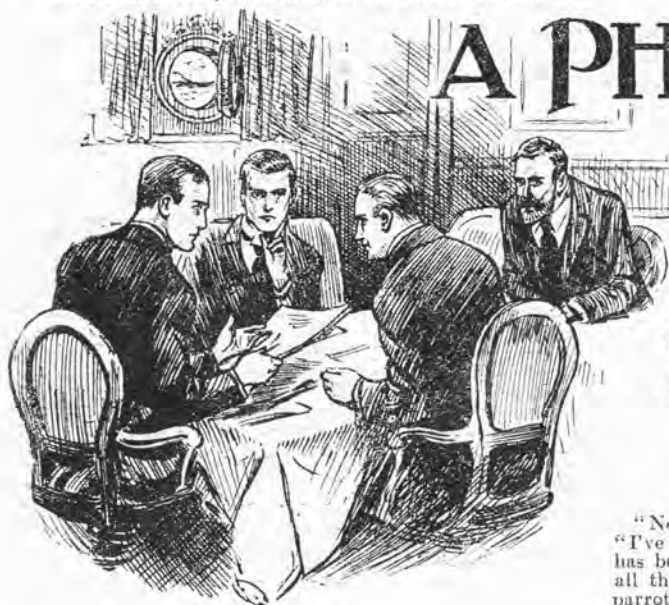
THE END.

(There will be another topping extra-long Tale of Tom Merry & Co. next week, entitled: "CHUMS UNDER CANVAS!" By Martin Clifford. On no account should you miss it, chums.)

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Glad Rags!

THOUGH the day was warm and the waters of Portsmouth harbour sparkled in the sun, Captain Scobber, accustomed to tropical climes, had lighted the stove, boiled the kettle, and mixed himself a stiff glass of hot grog. Having nothing to do and plenty of time to do it in, the captain trilled a snatch of song about rolling down to Amazon, the dirty, yellow Amazon, steamy, smelly Amazon, softly at first, and then with considerable pep:

"What's your cargo, son?
Snakes and armadillers,
Tapirs and gorillas,
And crawly caterpillars
From the slimy Amazon."

Having got this off his chest, the captain, who ran a rusty menagerie-boat up and down the mighty river he had been carolling about, collecting live and dead specimens of the birds, beasts, reptiles, and insects of those regions, took a sip of hot grog. Scobber did a good trade in monkeys, and with very little disguise indeed he might have palmed himself off on one of his customers as a rare and magnificent specimen of man-ape, for he looked like one except that most man-apes are much handsomer.

Mr. McSnort, the chief-engineer, put a fiery red head and a freckled face round the cabin door.

"Ye hairy, noisy monsther, wull ye na'a hae dune?" snapped Mr. McSnort. "Ye mak' row enough tae paralyse a deaf mon, and the voice of ye is waur than boilers explodin'. If ye'd confine yerself tae singin' in yer bath," added the engineer witheringly, "this auld hooker wad be a quiet and peaceful vessal."

"And if ye'd blacklead yer hair, Sandy, me lad," said the skipper, "I wouldn't be in sich mortal terror of getting me whiskers afire every time ye came near me."

"They're fireproof, waterproof, bombproof, and a lastin' disgrace tae ye," said the engineer. "It's amazin' tae me that the Customs folk don't search them for smuggled goods every time ye come into port. Ah'm for a nap, and Ah tell ye plain, if there's only mair o' yer yelpin' and yaupin' the dee, ye can find another engineer!"

"Scobber, ahoy!" came a hail. "Anybody aboard, souse me?"

Captain Scobber immediately filled the open porthole with face and whiskers, and beheld a neat motor-launch with a couple of men in her.

"Make fast and come aboard, Ben," he growled. "How blows it, my lad, how blows it? I see the yacht go up and meant to put a leg on her afore dark."

"I can't stop now, souse me," answered Mr. Benjamin Maddock, of the steam yacht Lord of the Deep. "I've just been ashore for the letters. The boys are fine and will be glad to see you and McSnort. Had a good trip?"

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"Not so bad, my lad, not so rocky," said the captain. "I've had wuss and I've had better, and, in course, McSnort has been grousin' all the time. Big snakes ain't fetchin' all they might, but monkeys and alligators is good, and parrots fair. Give my how-de-doo to Prout and O'Rooney, and tell 'em I'll float along. Adoo, my lad, adoo!"

The launch sped away and Captain Scobber withdrew his face and whiskers and reached for the glass out of which he had been refreshing himself. The glass was empty, and so was the cabin, for Mr. McSnort had gone.

White and shining, Ferrers Lord's beautiful yacht lay at her moorings with a huge grey battleship astern of her. Maddock passed up the mailbag, and before the bo'sun was on deck himself, the bag had gone below to the sorters.

"No telegrams, bo'sun?" asked the smart-looking midshipman in charge.

"Not unless they're in the bag, sir," replied Maddock, saluting. "I told them any telegrams were to be sent aboard at once, sir."

"Right," said Midshipman Val Hilton.

Val Hilton's chum, David Ap Rees, who was slumbering in a deck-chair awoke to receive his letters, read them, and strolled across the deck to where the midshipman stood.

"Any news, old thing?"

"Only one letter from Prince Ching Lung," said Val. "And a week old. He's in London, and asks us to run up and see him when we get shore leave. I can't get those beastly trials off my chest, Dave. I expected to get four or five extra knots out of her with oil fuel, and though she was all out, I did not get an extra foot."

"That wasn't your fault, so get it off your chest," said Dave. "You couldn't very well get out and give her a push, could you?"

Mr. Thomas Prout, the yacht's steerman and pilot emerged from the chart-room, very bronzed and weather-beaten, and gave Midshipman Hilton a salute as he passed him. At that moment, all the wireless in the harbour started fizzing and spluttering, and a few seconds later, a boy raced up from below and placed a message in Val Hilton's hand.

"Mr. Prout," shouted Val. "Glad rags! The Royal Yacht is coming up with Royalty aboard. About ten minutes to do it in, so hustle like mad! Let's show some of these hookers how the Lord of the Deep does it!"

The deck of the battleship, almost deserted a few seconds before, had become crowded with men. On the yacht a bugle shrilled an urgent call, and its note brought up every available man on the books, firemen, cooks, and stewards included, and Prout's voice bellowed deafening orders through a megaphone.

Even the battleship did not possess a better or more efficient crew. The coming of the Royal Yacht was quite unexpected, but every ship in Portsmouth harbour was trying to make some display in the shape of bunting to welcome it. On the Lord of the Deep, they worked swiftly and desperately, but without the least confusion, and as the guns began to boom from seaward, the yacht, like some gorgeous tropical plant bursting suddenly into bloom, became a mass of brilliant colour and radiant pennants and streamers.

"Souse me," grunted the bo'sun, wiping his perspiring forehead and gazing round him, "we've got 'em all beat

to a frazzle! She must look as pretty as a nosegay, and time enough left to get into our own glad rags."

A man who was pulling out from the shore in a dinghy, rested on his oars to watch the yacht and smoke a cigarette. A puff of breeze from the west helped things, setting her thousands of pennants fluttering. As the dinghy rocked on the swell, the Royal Yacht came into view, piloted by a saucy little naval pinnace. "The Lord of the Deep" manned sides, every member of the crew spotless in a white uniform, and then she dipped her flag, fired a salute, and sent up a crashing cheer.

The man in the dinghy took up his oars again. The crew of the Lord of the Deep still cheered, and the man climbed the yacht's side and came aboard almost unobserved. Prout, who was on the bridge with Val Hilton and Dave, happened to turn his head, and the megaphone nearly fell from his hand.

"The chief, sir," he said in a hoarse whisper. "The chief's here!"

In spite of the clamour of sirens and screaming of steam-whistles, Val heard him and hurried down. In front of Ferrers Lord, the millionaire owner of the Lord of the Deep, he came smartly to the salute, and a shout from the bridge brought the men on the rails swinging round with their hands to their caps. Ferrers Lord raised his own hand to the brim of his straw hat, and there was a momentary flicker of amusement in his grey-blue eyes as he looked at his nephew, Midshipman Valentine Hilton.

"We tried to do our best at such short notice, sir," said Val.

"Not so bad, Mr. Hilton," said the millionaire lazily. "Were you satisfied with what she did over the measured mile with oil fuel?"

"No, sir; I was very disappointed!" said Val. "She was quite as fast with coal. I gave her eight bursts over the measured mile yesterday, all out, and the times were practically the same to a second or two. When I compared them with the records in the log, oil, according to the log, hasn't improved the speed by a foot. No doubt Mr. Honour will do better."

"Let us hope so," said Ferrers Lord. "Clear your bunting at sundown, Mr. Hilton. You may give the usual shore leave to-morrow, unless I countermand it."

The millionaire gave Dave a nod of recognition, and went below to his cabin, and then the bo'sun said a few words.

"This here I will maintain, souse me," he remarked, "that even if we'd known the chief was watching, which we didn't, we couldn't have done it snarlier or better. It was worth gold medals and gold cups that was, souse me! We licked every craft in Porthampton by streets, and if she ain't the prettiest thing afloat at this minute, I'll chuck up my berth, and ship with old Scobber, chasing alligators and parrots on the Amazon!"

"Bedad, Oi could write a poem about her!" added Barry O'Roonney, who had fired the salute. "She floats in beauty on the bay, Wit all her glad rags fluttering gay."

"I never heard such piffing rot, for which I'd like to have you shot!" grinned Dave. "Cut it out, Barry, for you fill me with pains. Have you seen the old boy with the barbed wire whiskers, Ben? Old Scobber, I mean, as I heard you mention him."

"He's punting along with McSnort later, sir," answered the bo'sun. "Not a bad sort is Scobber, souse me, if he'd only run a lawn-mower over his face now and then. Which reminds me, I'd better see about fixing them up something for supper."

Dave went lounging back to his deck-chair, and Val, who was still on duty, though the yacht was safe in harbour, mounted the bridge. Young as he was, Val had had his training, and could have piloted the beautiful and powerful vessel into any port in the world where there was water enough to float her.

He straightened out a rather untidy knot in the lashing of the weather-screen, and then sprang to the bridge telephone as the bell rang sharply.

"Are you there, Mr. Hilton?" asked the millionaire's deep voice.

"Yes, sir."

"Please get your motor-launch away to pick up some passengers at the west jetty," said Ferrers Lord, "and in ten minutes man sides."

"Very good, sir!" said Val.

In less than three minutes with the bo'sun in charge, the launch was away, and Val paced up and down the bridge with one eye on the chronometer, wondering what the second order portended.

"What's the gadget, Prout?" he asked, as the steersman joined him. "I can't think who can be coming, unless it's Honour, Mr. Thurston, or the prince, and we don't man sides for old friends. Anyhow, they can't get here under the half-hour."

Prout put a pair of binoculars to his eyes and looked up the harbour.

"I expect it's somebody from the Royal yacht, sir. There's an Admiralty pinnace backing clear of her, by honey, brass funnel complete and shining like a jack-a-dandy. Perhaps it's the King."

Val took the glasses.

"She's heading this way, for a fact" he said. "I wonder if we're going to have a Royal visit? If not, it must be some big boss, so up with the boys!"

At a signal, the crew swarmed to their stations, and the little pinnace raced up, her brasswork glittering dazzlingly, swept round in a curve at top speed, reversed, stopped almost dead in first-class naval fashion, and came alongside the yacht in the exact position to an inch as quickly and lightly as a drifting feather.

"Good work, by honey!" said Prout admiringly. "Clean as a whistle!"

Two men wearing flannels, blazers, and yachting-caps, came up the ladder. Instead of replying to the salute, they kept their heads down, as if to hide their faces. Then a deep voice spoke quickly, but so clearly that it could be heard the full length of the deck.

"Gentlemen," said Ferrers Lord, "except at my bidding, no living soul here possesses either eyes or tongue!"

The two visitors raised their heads, and though Val to his knowledge had never set eyes on either of them before, he had seen their photographs hundreds of times, and recognised them at a glance. The shorter man was the British Prime Minister and his taller companion was the Chief Secretary for Foreign Affairs.

As the two distinguished visitors went below with Ferrers Lord, a dirty old boat, pulled by Mr. McSnort, nosed in beside the pinnace and when the engineer had made fast Captain Scobber went up the ladder.

The captain was not very particular about his attire and did not wear spats or fancy waistcoats. A pair of baggy dungaree trousers, a rough jersey, and an ancient peaked cap, bleached by hot suns and salt water, were good enough for the skipper, and with his criss-cross mat of whiskers he looked as much like a Russian Bolshevik as didn't matter. Captain Scobber gazed about him with his dull, glassy eyes, and produced a lighted pipe from the depths of his beard.

"Very nice and very pretty—very pretty indeed!" he growled. "This is what I call a real welcome, McSnort!"

"Awa! ye hairy horror—awa!" cried Mr. McSnort. "D'ye think it's meant for you, ye crazy loon?"

Even for the well-trained crew of the Lord of the Deep this was too much, and though it was Val's duty to be dignified, he could not help joining in the roar of laughter that followed.

In Secret Conclave.

"THIS is like the gathering of the clans, Dave," said Val. "It looks as if the chief had sent out the Fiery Cross for some big stunt. I wonder what's in the wind this time?"

The launch had brought back Harold Honour, the famous engineer, Prince Ching Lung of Kwai-hal, Rupert Thurston, and that extraordinary and pampered individual Gan Waga, the Eskimo. The return of Gan Waga had brought angry growls from Prout, Maddock, and Barry O'Roonney, for the Eskimo was rather a difficult person to live with. In fact, he seemed to have brought bad luck already, for Maddock had been chased out of the galley already by the enraged chef and a large carving-knife when he had asked for a boiled leg of mutton and onion sauce for his guests, Captain Scobber and Mr. McSnort. As the chef and his staff were working at high pressure to prepare a special dinner for the saloon, the bo'sun was unlucky.

When the report of the sunset gun crashed across the harbour, Midshipman Hilton saw the yacht stripped of her finery, and went down to his dinner. A table had been laid for himself, Prince Ching Lung, and David Ap Rees in the smaller saloon.

"Gee! What are you doing here? Why aren't you in the other boat, prince?" asked Val, surprised to see Ching Lung there.

"Because, my dear youth, I wasn't invited," said Ching Lung. "They may be talking secrets of State, and in such matters I am only an outsider. Gan Waga has also received the order of the hobnailed boot from that select assembly."

"And he'll get it if he tries to come here, too!" said Val. "I like Gan, but I can't stand his table manners! When were you rounded up?"

"A telegram at three this afternoon asking me to catch a special train at five, which just gave me time to have Gan Waga's hair cut and give him a good wash," said the Prince. "I found Rupert and Hal at the railway-station just about to board the special lugger for Porthampton, so that was that! About anything else, I'm about as ignorant as this slice of salmon."

"Anyhow, it's jolly to have the whole bunch together again," said Dave. "I hope it's nothing very serious, or I can see myself getting the boot, too! What have you done with Gan Waga, Prince?"

"Fired him down into the booby-hatch to amuse them there. I've had nearly three weeks of the blubber-biter myself, and not being greedy by nature, I want somebody else to have a share! Have you been long aboard, Dave?"

"Three days. I came down to see Val do the speed trials with oil fuel. Poor old chap! He nearly bust the boilers, but he didn't bust any records. You ought to have seen the way he foamed at the mouth. Val, you deceitful old thing, you sold me a pup. I expected enough busted records to fill a gasometer, and we didn't collect a single bean!"

In the large saloon dinner was over, and except for some bowls of magnificent blooms, the table had been cleared. Ferrers Lord sat at the head of it, with the Prime Minister at his right hand, and the Chief Secretary for Foreign Affairs at his left. Harold Honour, bearded, burly, and silent, was at the farther end with Rupert Thurston beside him. All were smoking.

"There's no good beating about the bush, gentlemen," said the Prime Minister in his blunt way. "We were utterly wrong in disregarding your advice, Mr. Ferrers Lord, and we admit our folly. We know now that all you told us was true."

"In fact, you are standing on the very brink of the chasm and the ground is crumbling under your feet," said Ferrers Lord. "I ought perhaps to have taken this in hand before, with or without consulting you, but I had other important work to do. All you have told me does not surprise me. If this plot carries, it will plunge Europe into another devastating war of bloodshed, ruin, and bankruptcy. Are you prepared to face it?"

"If we must we must," said the Foreign Secretary. "The Socialist party in Germany is very powerful. All our information tends to prove that. They are anti-royalist to a man, and there is some hope to be got there. The French Government is of the same opinion, and only yesterday the French Ambassador assured me that we were getting alarmed without much cause. The plot is then undoubtedly to restore the monarchy, but we have heard of such plots before, and the present government of Germany will hear nothing of Kaiserism."

Ferrers Lord rested his chin on his hand and smiled.

"Perhaps," he said; "but with all due deference to the French Government and their knowledge, I venture to promise you in less than three weeks either a successful bid for the throne in Germany or a bitter civil war. Either will set Europe in a blaze from end to end. Since the peace, we have altered frontiers and changed boundaries and borders. Unfortunately, we have satisfied few and discontented many. Let a new war break out and there will be a frantic rush to recover old losses. With the Allies in difficulties and civil war in Germany, you will have Russia sweeping down on Poland, the old Balkan States leaping again at each others throats, and not only Europe, but Asia, too, engaged in this mad carnage."

"I am afraid that it is only too true," said the Prime Minister, with a sigh; "but is it possible to prevent this horrible calamity?"

"I think so," said Ferrers Lord, his hand on the bell.

At a nod from the millionaire, Hal Honour arose and unlocked the door, to admit the chief steward.

"My compliments to Mr. Hilton," said Ferrers Lord to the steward. "Give him this key and tell him to unlock the safe

in my cabin and bring me the envelope he will find in the third drawer on the left-hand side."

There was a sudden silence in the room which lasted until a knock was heard. The engineer opened the door, and Val came in. Walking to the head of the table, he saluted and placed a sealed envelope beside Ferrers Lord.

"My nephew, Midshipman Hilton," said the millionaire. "As I have no doubt he knows who you are, it will not be necessary to mention names. Under a certain amount of wise supervision, my nephew, when I am absent, commands my yacht."

"I am very pleased to meet you, Mr. Hilton," said the Prime Minister, holding out his hand to Val in his generous, impulsive way. "If you command this yacht, you have something to be proud of. As we passed her coming in, I heard a very great person say that she looked perfection, and that very high and important person knows a great deal about yachts."

Val flushed with pleasure, but he was so tanned that he hoped no one noticed it. The Chief Secretary also shook hands with him, but his grasp was not so firm and friendly as the Premier's.

"Thank you, Mr. Hilton," said Ferrers Lord.

Val went out, receiving a heavy pat on the shoulder from the engineer as he did so, and again Hal Honour closed and locked the door. Involuntarily, the four men leaned forward and watched Ferrers Lord as he broke the seal of the envelope.

"It may seem like impertinence to put information in front of that of the Foreign Office and your Intelligence Department, gentlemen," he said, as he drew out a document, "but I have a compilation of evidence here that may startle you. Do you happen to have a list of the leaders of this extremely clever royalist plot, Sir Trenton?"

"We have a list of suspects, sir."

"Look at this list then, and tell me if you see any of the names there."

The Secretary for Foreign Affairs glanced slowly down the row of names.

"Trusting to memory, I do not think so," he answered, and then gave a quick start. "But, my dear Mr. Ferrers Lord, surely this is utterly preposterous. Rudolf Zeimmeyer! Why, Zeimmeyer is our biggest asset. He is the staunchest socialist and greatest hater of kings and monarchies in all Germany, perhaps in all Europe! We are in touch with him now, and so is the French Government. If this is the value of your information," he added, reddening, "I scarcely think—"

"Gently, Sir Trenton, gently," said the Prime Minister.

The millionaire smiled again and lighted another cigarette.

"My information is that Herr Rudolf Zeimmeyer is one of our greatest dangers," he said. "I give him credit for being a very clever and a very determined man, for up to the present he has been successful in bluffing three governments. It is no custom of mine, gentlemen, to make statements I cannot prove. Well, let me convince you. It will only take you ten minutes to read the evidence here, Sir Trenton. If it does not convince you, I am afraid that I must wash my hands of the whole affair."

Ferrers Lord watched the Chief Secretary lazily as he read, and saw him begin to gnaw his lower lip nervously.

"I am thoroughly astounded," he said at last. "It seems impossible and incredible. Those other names are unknown to me, but we trusted Zeimmeyer. We are not alone in that, for the French and Italian Governments have implicit confidence in him. I must warn them at once. Zeimmeyer's treachery makes the position almost desperate."

"It will make it utterly desperate if he receives a single hint to make him think that he is distrusted or under suspicion," said Ferrers Lord. "That might urge him to light the fuse and explode the mine without giving us the chance to strike the match out of his hand. It would be red war then, and Europe would blaze up like tinder."

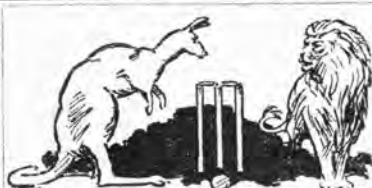
"I can see nothing else but war," said the Chief Secretary hopelessly.

"If we die—yes," said Hal Honour.

These were the first words the engineer had spoken, and he relapsed into profound silence again.

"Come, we are men of action," said Ferrers Lord. "A my friend has wisely said, if we die there must be war, and that is something worth dying to prevent. Better death for a few than death for millions and Europe a charnel house and a smoking ruin. Now, gentlemen, you shall hear my plan."

An hour later the British Prime Minister and the Chief Secretary for Foreign Affairs went on deck. The crew of the pinnacle had been kept waiting a long time, but as they



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had a good hot dinner and plenty of cigarettes to smoke they had not worried much about it.

"Mad, mad!" said Sir Trenton, in a low voice. "He must be crazy! He must be one of the richest men in the world, but a multi-millionaire may be as crazy as anyone else!"

"Ssh! The other two must be mad as well, for they seemed to agree with him that the plan was not impossible," said the Prime Minister. "After all, we have more to do with words than deeds, you and I, and these are men of action."

They said no more just then, for Ferrers Lord was close behind them, and the searchlight of the battleship was searching the harbour. The millionaire did not shake hands with his departing guests, but lifted his straw hat as they went down the ladder and wished them good-night.

From the open portholes of the booby-hutch came a burst of melody. They were happy there, for the chef had relented and sent in a boiled leg of mutton. The strains of an old sea-chanty, sung in chorus by lusty lungs, followed the pinnace as it made for the Royal Yacht on which the searchlight from the battleship was shining.

A Slow Landing and a Hurried Departure!

THE steam-yacht Lord of the Deep left Portsmouth long before dawn, and vanished without making any further speed tests on the measured mile. She burned good clear oil that made very little smoke.

Two nights later she was nosing cautiously through a dense summer fog, her automatic lead working and clicking out the varying depths on the illuminated dial Val Hilton was watching so anxiously.

"Eight fathoms, sandy bottom," he said. "Seven-half-seven—seven—six—six—three—Steady, Mr. Prout, it's shoaling fast!"

"By honey, I wish this fog was at the North Pole and frozen stiff!" said the steersman. "There should be a bell-buoy here, sir. Listen out!"

"If there is, this flat, oily tide wouldn't waggle it," said Val. "It will ring, right enough, if we punch it. Gee, you're making my hair stand on end! A bare six and still shoaling! She'll bump her nose into a sandbank in a minute!"

Prout's signal stopped the engines, but the yacht still made headway.

"Six again," said Val, with a sigh of relief. "That's better!"

The yacht was showing no lights except those on the bridge, and they were carefully screened. The sea was dead flat, as if crushed down by the warm, wet fog, and the only sounds Val could hear were the faint ripple of water at her bows and the regular ticking of the indicator. They were in fairly deep water again—nearly nine fathoms.

"We've struck the channel," said Prout; "but if a breeze don't spring up, by honey, and shift this soup, we look like drifting aground when the tide runs, for it can run here like a Niagara! Bad luck, but we've got to go through with it! For all we know, her bowsprit may be ashore. It's Klarspargen we want. It's got no name on the chart—no printed name, but that's what the chief wrote under it. This place is a nest of rotten little islands and ditches. We'll have the anchor down with your leave, sir, and let 'em put it over as gentle as they know how."

While Val was feeling his way forward through the mist Ching Lung managed to blunder his way to the bridge.

"Held up, Tom?" he asked.

"Held up so much, by honey, sir, that Mr. Hilton has gone to nail us down!" answered Prout. A dirty trick coming on like this afore daylight, somehow. If she was an ordinary craft losing her bearings in a fog it wouldn't matter, but you've only got to see the Lord of the Deep

once to remember her all the time. I hope to Mike she won't barge into anything when she swings on the cable!"

Nothing of the kind happened, and when the cable tightened the damp gloom seemed to have grown thicker.

"The only thing I can see for it, sir," said Prout, when Val came back, "is to get the launch out and play blind-man's buff. I'll wager we're right atop of Klaps—On, I forget the rotten name! If you don't find it, it's a case of backing out quick, and trying again to-morrow night. The orders were for to-night, and orders aren't like eggshells, to be broken every breakfast-time!"

"We'll try it," said Val doubtfully. "Klarspargen has the ruins of an old mill on it and a few stunted trees, but if it had St. Paul's Cathedral on it and half a dozen skyscrapers, that wouldn't help us much to-night!"

"It's got to be done, sir!" said Prout. "This fog may lift as quickly as it came, but it's just as likely to stop until sunrise, and, by honey, I'm packing up and getting well out of this before that!"

Even Gan Waga, the Eskimo, who, like a cat, could see in the dark, was of no use, for even a cat cannot see in a fog, and neither could Gan Waga. Most of the islands—mere wind-blown, spray-lashed sandbanks—were without inhabitants, except when visited by occasional bands of smugglers, who found them convenient for their trade and the officials whose duty it was to suppress the trade.

The launch was pretty weighty, but she was got into the water without mishap. Val had a final look at the chart and at the compass, and nearly took a header into the water going down the ladder; but, luckily, Barry O'Rooney's strong hand came out of the gloom and gasped him.

"Aye, sor-aisy!" said Barry O'Rooney. "And thread lightly, or y'll be steppin' on somebody's face—not so much that you'll damage the face, but it might spoil your boot! Well, ev'ry cloud has its silver lining, they say, and even a fog has its good points. This wan kapes me from seein' the horrid faychures of Misther Benjamin Maddock, and so O'm grateful."

"It also prevents me from seeing yours," said the bo'sun's voice. "Which way, sir?"

"Ask me another," said Val. "We'll not use the engine, so get the oars out and pull gently, and see what you can hit."

"Strike a match—quick, somebody!" said another voice. "I've just lost me false teeth! For the love of Mike don't tread on them, or they'll bite you!"

"Hello, are you there, Dave, you sneaking stowaway?" said Val. "I thought you were fast asleep in your bunk. Who gave you permission to come?"

"I came to look after you, my bonny lad, for you're not safe out alone after dark," said Dave. "Quite a jolly stunt, isn't it? We're looking for an island, or something, I believe. If you've lost your silly old island, why don't you come and look for it in the daylight?"

"Perhaps you'd better cut talking out, son," said Ching Lung, who was pulling one of the oars. "I don't suppose there's likely to be anyone about to hear us, but voices travel a long way in a fog."

The dense mist had swallowed up the yacht, but they knew that Prout would throw discretion to the winds, and make noise enough to guide them back when he thought it time to recall them.

It seemed a hopeless and impossible task, but Ferrers Lord's orders were to land certain goods on a certain island at a certain time, and it would not be easy to persuade Ferrers Lord that any task was hopeless and impossible until every human effort had failed.

They paddled about, pausing to listen for even a faint swish of surf, but the water seemed as dead as the air, and it surprised Val that the Lord of the Deep had found

(Continued overleaf.)



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enough run of tide to bring her up to her anchor. Then there was a slight bump, and putting out his hand, Barry O'Rooney felt the plates of the yacht, and above them, like a pale star, twinkled the fog-strangled light of a powerful flash-lamp.

"Who's that?" asked a voice.

"Don't shout, Joe, old darlin', for we're doing our best!" said Barry. "We only strolled back to see that nobody had pinched the hooker. An' av you've seen a wandering oisland, bhoy, decorated wid the mortal remains of a windmill, don't kape it a secret, for we've missed wan. Push on, brave hearrets, wance more into the inky gloom! Bedad, O'm thinking it's a soight aiser to get all the wins and dhraws correct in a thousand-pound football competition than win this!"

"Making a circle of it, souse me!" said Maddock. "Some gentleman must be pulling more than his weight and dragging us round. I'll bet it ain't Barry O'Rooney. You'll never catch him risking blisters on his hands by doing a bit extra!"

Val began to whistle dismally in an undertone. He was extremely anxious to carry out the millionaire's orders successfully, and the sudden fog was a stroke of atrocious bad luck. He had an envelope in his pocket, which no doubt contained further instructions, but it was no use to open that until he had completed the first.

"The tide ought to be running now," he said at last. "Ease up and listen if you can't hear it swishing against anything."

"Nary a swish, kid!" said Dave, after a pause. "It seems to me that if you can't bust speed records, you can bust bearings and dead reckonings to beat the band! You're umpteen thousand miles from any old sort of land, Val. When the fog shuffles off, and we do sight an island, there'll be coconut palms on it, and we shall discover that we're not in the North Sea at all, but somewhere near Honolulu, where the ukuleles came from!"

"Land, by the whiskers of Captain Scobber!" cried Barry O'Rooney, who had been prodding about his oar. "Bedad, O'v hit it! Dape water, too! Push on and O'll make a grab! Got it, and a whole handful of whiskers, and it's aythur old Scobber's, or else it's grass! Where's the painter? O'v got hold of the island, and sooner than let it go, O'll pull it up by the roots!"

A thud and a grunt told them that Barry was safely ashore with the painter. There was another thud.

"Bad luck, O'v found it first toime!" growled the Irishman. "O'v was looking for a post to make fast to, and O'v left over it. And if O'v a sound rib left in me O'll be grateful! And it's the last toime you'll catch this bloy chasing after oislands in the dark! O'll work afore O'll do it! Murder! Every rib of me is clane busted!"

They had forgotten Ching Lung's advice not to speak, and Barry, after hitting the stump with his ribs, did not talk quite in a whisper.

Barry had found an island, but whether it was the right island had yet to be decided.

"Thank goodness it's only his ribs!" said Dave. "If he'd hit the post with his head, the post would have gone west. And what about it, Val, my gallant skipper? Who's going to dig out that windmill?"

"Fog's lifting, sir," said the bo'sun. "I can see O'Rooney sitting on that old stump quite plain."

The fog had certainly thinned, for Barry O'Rooney had become visible to the naked eye.

"We'd better get ashore before it thickens again," said Ching Lung. "Did the chief mark the position of the mill, Val?"

"I don't think it matters, for there can't be much island. You stick to the boat, Dave, and whistle us back if the pea-soup gets thicker. We can't very well miss a windmill if this stuff keeps off for a bit and gives us just the ghost of a chance!"

In spite of his terrible injuries, Barry O'Rooney went with them. Coarse grass grew in the sand, and for thirty or forty yards they could see a little way ahead of them, and then the fog blanketed them again.

"It's only rolling up," said Maddock. "There's a breeze at last pushing the mouldy stuff along. Didn't I tell you, souse me?"

The fog went rolling past in great grey billows, and then, to the delight of Val and the sorrow of nobody, it lifted and parted.

"Bedad, there's your old mill!" said Barry O'Rooney.

The mill looked a ruin, for the sails and sail-arms had vanished long ago, and as they approached it the moon shone out.

"As that's where we have to put the goods, we'll have a look what room there is and if it's dry," said Val.

The barrel of a gun was pushed from a narrow window, a flash and a roar came from the muzzle, and a charge of buckshot whistled over the heads of the landing-party. The next moment a dozen men or more, one carrying a gun and the others armed with knives and cudgels, rushed out of the mill and charged down on the yachtsmen.

Numbers were too great, and Ching Lung alone carried a firearm; but he was not insane enough to try and use it in such a place, except it became a matter of life and death.

"Run for it, lads!" he shouted. "We can't fight that bunch, so beat it!"

As they fled for the launch, Dave started the engine, and then sprang ashore and unfastened the painter. On they came with the yelling pack at their heels, and the man with the gun dropped on one knee, levelled the weapon, and pulled the trigger. With the crash of the report the fog surged over the island again, blotting out everything but the cello of the gun.

(It was a thrilling start to the quest upon which Val and his companions had embarked, but it's nothing to what lies in store for them. Mind you read next week's grand instalment, chums.)



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