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INSIDE!

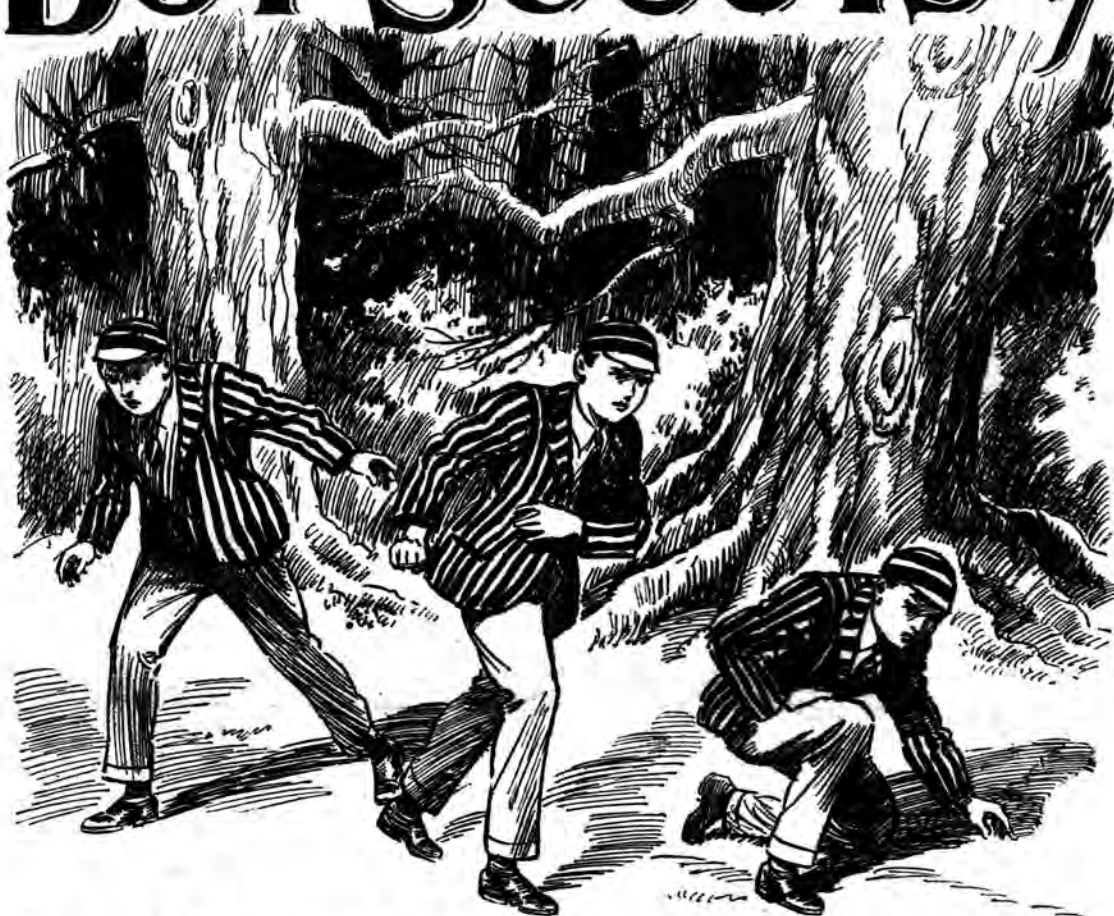
The GEM

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FERRERS LOCKE COMES TO ST. JIM'S AGAIN IN THIS FINE YARN—

BOY SCOUTS of



Ferrers Locke organises a great detective game to decide who shall be the first Chief Scout at St. Jim's. Read this topping story—and learn who won the prize!

CHAPTER 1.

A Meeting is Called!

HALF-PAST FOUR chimed from the clock tower of St. Jim's, and one minute later the doors of the Fourth Form class-room were flung open, and a mob of youngsters poured out.

There was instantly a buzz in the wide, flagged passage as if a dozen beehives had broken loose.

But the boys did not, as usual, make straight for the open door into the quadrangle. It was fine October weather, but hardly a fellow in the Fourth went out of doors. The juniors collected in the passage in groups, or twos and threes, talking excitedly, and discussing some topic evidently of great interest to all of them.

A dozen or more of the youngsters collected round Jack Blake, who was talking to his chums, Digby, D'Arcy, and Herries, in a rather dissatisfied way.

"Blessed if I know what it's all about," said Blake. "I suppose we'd better go."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with a decided nod. "Whatevah may be the weason the meetin' is called, it would only be the polite thing to do, you know."

"I don't see why they couldn't explain."

"Well, the meeting's in ten minutes," said Digby. "I suppose they'll explain then."

"I don't like being kept in the dark," said Blake. "It's

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still light enough for a bit of footer practice, and I don't know that the meeting's worth cutting the footer."

"Pewwaps Tom Mewwy could enlighten us?" D'Arcy suggested. "He pwobably knows somethin' about it, as Fewwers Locke is to address the meetin'."

"Shouldn't wonder," said Blake, brightening up. "The Shell are not out yet. Let's go and wait for them."

And the chums of the Fourth hurried along to the door of the Shell class-room. They planted themselves just outside the door to wait for Tom Merry.

The cause of the excitement among the juniors was simple.

Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth, had announced at the close of lessons that the juniors were requested to attend a general meeting of the Lower School in the lecture-hall. The meeting was to be addressed by Mr. Ferrers Locke, the famous detective, and Colonel Carr-Hilton, of North-West Frontier of India fame. That was all Mr. Lathom had announced, and it was little enough.

The curiosity of the juniors was greatly excited. As Ferrers Locke, the detective, was an old friend of Tom Merry it was possible that there might be something in D'Arcy's suggestion that Tom Merry of the Shell could enlighten them.

The four juniors had not long to wait. The Shell were delayed only a few minutes, doubtless while their master made the same announcement that had been made to the Fourth. Then the door was flung open and the Shell marched out.

—OF THE RIVALRY OF TOM MERRY & CO. AND FIGGINS & CO.!

ST. JIM'S!

By
MARTIN CLIFFORD.

Three sturdy juniors—Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther—came first, and they ran into the locked arms of the four Fourth-Formers barring the way.

The three stopped, perforce, and threw the fellows behind into confusion, and there was a considerable amount of pushing and shoving in the doorway.

"Halt!" said Jack Blake.

"Rats!" said Tom Merry cheerfully. "Get out of the way, you kids."

"We want to know what the meeting's about?"

"Blessed if I know."

"Make way, there!" shouted Gore from behind.

"No hurry!" said Jack Blake. "You can wait, I suppose?"

But the Shell made a surge forward, and the Fourth-Formers were hurled back from the door and the Form came marching out.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sat down with considerable violence, and Herries reeled against the opposite wall. Jack Blake caught Tom Merry by the shoulder and drew him out of the crowd.

"I say, don't you know what the row is?" he demanded. "Ferrers Locke is in it and I thought you would be bound to know."

"I thought he would be bound to know, dear boy!" gasped D'Arcy. "Pwaw don't wob me of my suggestion!"

"Well, we thought you would be bound to know," said Blake. "I suppose you knew that Ferrers Locke was here?"

Tom Merry shook his head.

"No, I wasn't aware that Mr. Locke had come to St. Jim's at all. As for Colonel Carr-Hilton, I've never seen him, though I know the name, of course."

"Then what is the meeting about?"

"Haven't the faintest idea," said Tom Merry. "I'm going to it to see, you know, and I'd advise you to do the same."

And the Terrible Three walked on. Arthur Augustus had picked himself up and was dusting his trousers with a cambric handkerchief.

"Weally, dear boys, I wegard it as wathah dewogatory to the dignity of the Fourth Form to call us to a meetin' without acquaintin' us with its object," he remarked. "I should be strongly tempted to ignore the meetin', but it would be hardly the pwopah thing to do undah the cires. I have a gweat wespect for Mr. Fewwers Locke, but, weally—"

"Suppose we get along to the meeting," suggested Digby. "Those New House bounders will be bagging all the front seats if we are late."

"Good idea," said Blake. "Come on—"

And the chums of the Fourth hurried away in the direction of the lecture-hall. There was a tide of juniors setting in the same direction. All were eager to get good seats, and to hear what Mr. Ferrers Locke and Colonel Carr-Hilton had to say.

The front seats had been already taken by Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther, who had gone directly to the lecture-hall from the class-room. An argument was proceeding between the Terrible Three and three juniors belonging to the New House—three Fourth-Formers known at St. Jim's as Figgins & Co. Figgins, the long-limbed chief of the New House juniors, was explaining matters excitedly to Tom Merry, while Fatty Wynn and Kerr backed him up with heated voices and excited gestures.

Tom Merry sat quiet and composed, apparently totally unmoved by the eloquence of the New House trio.

"I say that's my seat," said Figgins. "I came in the moment the Fourth was dismissed and put my cap on the middle seat."

"And I put mine next to it," said Kerr.

"And I put mine next to Kerr's!" exclaimed Fatty Wynn. "Then I dodged out to the tuckshop for a minute, and when I came in—"

"I went to speak to Pratt," said Figgins, "and when I came back—"

"I strolled to the door for a second," said Kerr, "and when I came back—"

"Look here," said Tom Merry severely, "you little boys mustn't all talk at once if you want to make yourselves understood. You—"

"I'll little boys you!" howled Figgins. "You School House waster, are you going to get off that scat?"

"I'm very comfy here, thank you!"

"I'm very comfy, too," said Lowther. "We should be all right if those kids would stop making a row. Can't you sit down and be quiet, Figgins?"

"You've got our seats!"

"Rats! It's a rule that the New House chaps can't sit down till all the fellows belonging to the Cock House at St. Jim's have seats."

"You School House rotter, if you're looking for a thick car—"

"Run away and play!"

"We left our caps on the seats—"

"Oh, that's all right!" said Tom Merry. "We found some old caps on the seats, and we chucked them away."

"You—you've chucked them away?" said Figgins, in measured tones. "You've chucked our caps away?"

"Yes; they're along the wall over there somewhere."

Figgins & Co. glared at the Terrible Three in almost speechless wrath. Tom Merry, of course, knew perfectly well that the seats belonged to Figgins & Co. But the School House rivalry was keen, and School House and New House boys were always on the look-out to take a rise out of one another.

To hurl Figgins & Co.'s caps in the distance and to take calm possession of the seats to which they had an undoubted right, naturally appealed very much to the heroes of the School House.

"Look here," gasped Figgins at last, "are you going to get out of those seats?"

"I don't think," said Manners.

"Would you rather be chucked out?"

"Certainly!" said Tom Merry cheerfully. "We'll be chucked out, if you please—if there are any New House bounders up to the chucking."

"Collar them!" exclaimed Figgins. "Chuck them out before the masters come in."

There was no time to be lost. The meeting was to open in a few minutes, and when the masters came in, any chucking out would be impossible.

Figgins & Co. hurled themselves upon the Terrible Three, and a terrific struggle commenced. The fellows who were crowding into the hall, or who had already taken their seats, cheered on the combatants, many standing up on the seats to get a view of the conflict.

"Go it, Merry!"

"Buck up, Figgy!"

"Good old School House! Sock it to them!"

Tom Merry and Figgins were rolling on the dusty floor. Fatty Wynn was sitting on Lowther's chest, pinning him down by sheer weight. Manners and Kerr were wrestling desperately. Jack Blake and his chums were in the row behind, and they looked on with great interest. The disputed seats were left empty during the combat, and a gleam of mischief suddenly darted into Blake's eyes.

"Blessed if I can see why we shouldn't have the front seats," he muttered to Digby. "It's against the dignity of the House to let New House wasters have them, and against the dignity of the Form to let the Shell-fish have them. Come on—you and Herries."

"Right-ho!" grinned Herries.

The three juniors promptly scrambled over the backs of the seats in front of them, and sat down in the places of Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther.

The three pairs of combatants were rolling on the floor in a cloud of dust, and did not even see the cool usurpation. There was a sudden shout.

"Cave!"

Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth Form, was entering the room. The short-sighted little gentleman came blinking towards the scene of the disturbance.

"Dear me! What is all this noise?"

The combat ceased immediately. Six dusty and dishevelled juniors stood up breathlessly. The Terrible Three retreated towards their seats, and nearly sat down on the knees of Blake, Herries, and Dig.

"You young rotters!" muttered Tom Merry. "Get out of our seats!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Get out!"

"Rats!"

"I am sorry to see this horseplay in the lecture-hall," said little Mr. Lathom. "The quadrangle would be a more suitable place for a House riot, if you cannot keep quite. Go to your seats at once!"

"Yes, sir," said Figgins meekly.

He looked expressively at Blake. Blake regarded the ceiling with an absent-minded smile. He had no intention of moving. Tom Merry exchanged glances with Figgins. They would gladly have joined forces for the purpose of ejecting the cool usurpers. But that was impossible under a master's eye.

Slowly and reluctantly the dusty half-dozen turned away, and walked to the back of the hall. All the front rows were taken up now, and the six dusty juniors found places in the very last row of the audience.

"My only hat!" said Figgins. "The cheek of those young wasters—"

Tom Merry laughed.

"We're both done," he said. "Blake scores this time. We—"

He broke off as there was a sudden hush in the lecture-hall. A door had opened at the back of the dais, and two gentlemen entered.

It was exactly a quarter to five, and Ferrers Locke and the colonel were prompt to time.

CHAPTER 2.

The Colonel Explains.

TOM MERRY rubbed the dust from his eyes and looked at Ferrers Locke over the crowd of heads.

The famous detective glanced over the audience, and gave Tom a cheery nod. There was a genial smile upon the clear-cut face of Ferrers Locke. He was well known to the boys of St. Jim's; but interest centred upon the colonel.

The latter was a muscular, bronzed veteran of the North-West Frontier of India, where his exploits were well-known. After the first hush, there was a low buzz in the hall, which swelled into a burst of cheering.

"Hurrah!"

The colonel nodded and smiled. Mr. Lathom rose to his feet, and held up his hand for silence, and the cheering ceased.

The Fourth Form master blinked at the meeting through his spectacles, and informed them that he had the honour of introducing Colonel Carr-Hilton, of whom they had all heard, who was desirous of speaking a few words to them on the subject of forming Boy Scout organisations at St. Jim's. He would be followed by Mr. Ferrers Locke, whom they all knew, on the same subject.

Mr. Lathom sat down with a buzz of applause. The object of the meeting was understood now.

"We ought to have guessed it," Tom Merry murmured. "The name of Carr-Hilton was enough. And it's a jolly good idea."

"Ripping!" said Monty Lowther. "I'm rather surprised that we didn't think of it ourselves. Hallo, he's going to speak! Order!"

Colonel Carr-Hilton advanced to the edge of the dais, and looked at his youthful audience with a good-humoured smile upon his bronzed face.

There was no beating about the bush with the colonel. He came straight to the point. He said that he had Dr. Holmes' permission to address a few words to them on a subject he considered very important; that he would not detain them long, and that he hoped the time they were giving him would not be wasted.

Here the boys interrupted with a prolonged cheer, and the colonel had to wait for the demonstration to end before he could proceed.

"Then I may take it that you like the idea," he said, in his crisp tone. "I suppose every lad here would like to serve his country in some way. If the time ever comes—and it may come—when Britain needs you, you will fight for the old flag, as your fathers did in the Great War; and if you are to do that with effect, you must be prepared, you must be trained. There is no better way than by becoming a Boy Scout."

"Good wheeze!" said Jack Blake, from the front seat.

The colonel smiled.

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"As my young friend remarks, it is a good wheeze," he said, taking up Blake's words. "I should be glad to see all the boys of this school, and especially the boys of the Lower Forms, organised into Scout patrols. I hope you will all regard it as what my young friend, with whose name I am unacquainted, calls a good wheeze."

There was a ripple of laughter, and Jack Blake turned pink.

"It is the simplest thing in the world to organise Scout patrols," went on the colonel. "The training received from them is invaluable. If the idea is taken up at this school, I shall be happy to render any assistance in my power during the few days I am staying with Mr. Locke in this neighbourhood. I shall be happy to explain the whole matter to you, and give you any instruction you need. At present, I want you to think about it, and form a committee for taking up the matter in a definite and businesslike way. That is all for the present."

And the colonel stepped back.

The boys gave him a hearty cheer.

The colonel was a man of his word. He had said that he would address to them a few words, and he had done so, and those who had been in terror of a long-winded oration were relieved at once.

"My friend Mr. Locke has a few words to say on the same subject," the colonel added, when the cheer subsided. "He has a proposition to make, which I hope my young friend, with whose name I am unacquainted, will also regard as a good wheeze."

The juniors laughed, and Blake wished he had not spoken.

Ferrers Locke came forward.

The famous detective stood in an easy attitude, and spoke to the eagerly interested crowd of boys as if chatting with friends in the street.

"I have a suggestion to make for carrying out the ideas of the colonel," he said. "In order to familiarise the boys of St. Jim's with the idea of becoming Boy Scouts, and to show them how keenly interesting scouting may be as a hobby, I suggest a test in which all the juniors of St. Jim's can take part."

"Hear, hear!"

"My idea is that a certain boy—to be selected with care, of course—should be chosen from the rest. This boy is to watch his opportunity, and to abstract a certain specified article from a certain place, and to make his escape with it. He is to carry it to a point not more than three miles from St. Jim's, and leave on that spot proof that he has done so, and then to return to the school."

"If he can accomplish this without being captured and deprived of his prize, he is the victor of the contest. The part of the other boys is to prevent his success—to capture him either upon his going or returning. He will do his best to keep out of sight, and you others will do your best to capture him. The boy effecting the capture, if it is effected, will become the first Chief Scout of St. Jim's. The boy, if uncaptured, will become the Chief Scout, as he will have proved his worth and capacity, by eluding so many enemies."

"I think you will find this an instructive and interesting contest, partaking of the nature both of scouting and detective work."

"Hear, hear!"

"Then I take it that you regard it as what my young friend Blake calls a good wheeze?"

Blake was crimson by this time.

"Hear, hear!" shouted the Terrible Three.

"Hurrah!"

There was no doubt that the proposition was a popular one. The names of Ferrers Locke and the colonel alone would have sufficed to make it popular. The juniors received it with enthusiasm.

Ferrers Locke, with a smile on his face, waited for silence.

"As the idea seems to be adopted, it only remains to form a committee to arrange details. Suppose you select about a dozen fellows who can consult with the colonel and with me. The details can be settled this evening, and to-morrow, which I understand is a half-holiday with you, will be an excellent time for putting the scheme to the test."

"Hear, hear!"

The colonel and Ferrers Locke made their bow, and retired to the door they had entered by, and Mr. Lathom followed them. The juniors of St. Jim's were left to form the committee.

There was a buzz of eager and excited voices at once.

"It's a ripping idea!" exclaimed Jack Blake. "Of course, there will have to be a committee, and, of course, we shall have to be on it."

"Faith, and I don't see that!" said Reilly. "Sure, there's no need of you on the committee, Blake darling. I can manage it entoirly. I don't see—"

"You certainly won't see if you give me any more of your cheek!" said Blake darkly. "You won't see, unless you can manage to see with a couple of black eyes!"

"Faith, and I—"

"Look here, let's see about the committee."

"Good wheeze!" said Mellish, with a chuckle, and a roar of laughter followed.

"Oh, shut up!" said Blake crossly. "What do you think of the idea, Tom Merry?"

"I?" said Tom Merry blandly. "Why, I think, with my good friend with whose name I am unacquainted, that it is a good wheeze."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You cackling asses!"

"Order!" exclaimed Figgins.

"Order yourself, you New House waster!"

tell you my views. A boy is to be first selected to play the part of the hare. I suppose he will be a member of the committee?"

"Yes, rather, sir!"

"I am willin' to offah my services," said Arthur Augustus modestly. "I am not the kind of fellow to put myself forward in any way, but, undah the circs, I cannot but wegard myself as the most suitable person."

"Ring off, Gussy!" muttered Blake in the ear of the swell of the School House.

"Undah the circs, Blake, I must wefuse to wing off!"

"Order, order!"

"If there are no other volunteers, D'Arcy's offer must be accepted," said Ferrers Locke, with a smile.

"But there are, sir," said Tom Merry promptly. "We'd all jump at the job!"

"Yaas; but as the most suitable person—"

"Cheese it, Gussy, you're interrupting Mr Locke!"

"I weally beg your pardon, Mr. Locke. It was not my



Figgins followed Curly Gibson into the gym without a suspicion. He was hardly within the building when there was a sudden rush of feet and a dozen figures, springing from nowhere, hurled themselves upon the New House junior. "Collar him!" gasped Wally D'Arcy. "You young villains!" roared the amazed Figgins.

"School House ass!"

"Peace, my children!" said Tom Merry, with a wave of the hand. "We don't want Mr. Locke or the colonel to come in and find us quarrelling. They will expect that committee soon. Peace, my infants, and listen to your uncle."

Tom Merry's appeal had its effect, and the threatened House row was averted. Tom Merry mounted upon a chair and waved his hand for silence.

After some rowing between rival Forms and Houses, the committee was finally selected, its members being the Terrible Three, Blake and Co., Figgins & Co., Reilly, and Kerruish. Blake was then sent to fetch Ferrers Locke to a meeting of the committee.

CHAPTER 3.

The Committee Get to Business!

FERRERS LOCKE sat down, and the committee assumed a more orderly aspect.

The famous detective's manner was businesslike.

"I'm glad to see you getting to business so soon," he said. "It won't take us long to arrange the details, I think. I have been thinking the matter over, and I will

intention to intewwupt you, or to be discourteous in any way."

"Quite so. As I was saying—"

"But I weally wish to assuah you that it was not my intention—"

"Exactly!" said Ferrers Locke. "In the first place, then, as all are volunteers, we must select the individual to play the part of the hare. A junior who is a good runner must, of course, be chosen, and I leave the selection to the committee."

There was a pause.

"Not much good doing that, sir," said Tom Merry. "We should never agree. Every chap would vote for himself, and that would leave us where we started."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"It's between Blake, Figgins, and myself, as a matter of fact," pursued Tom Merry. "If it were put to voting we should come to that."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, it would be bettah for this mattah to go by mewit than by votin', and in that case you could select me, and save furthah bothah."

"Order!"

"Of course, the hare ought to be a School House fellow,"

said Blake, "so it really comes down to a choice between Tom Merry and me."

"Rats!" said Figgins. "I was just going to say that, as the hare ought to be a New House fellow, you and Tom Merry are out of it."

"Now, don't be an ass, Figgy!"

"Then don't you be a silly cuckoo!"

Ferrers Locke waved his hand.

"Suppose you three draw lots for it?" he said.

"Well, that's a good idea," said Tom Merry. "Anybody got a penny to toss up?"

"I have half-a-crown, Tom Mewwy, if th will do."

"That's all right, Gussy. I suppose it doesn't matter if it should get lost?"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Give it to Mr. Locke, and we will guess in turns," said Tom Merry.

Ferrers Locke tossed up the coin, and Blake guessed first, and was wrong. Then Tom Merry guessed, and was wrong, too.

Figgins grinned.

"Then I'm the pippin!" he exclaimed.

"Rats!" said Blake warmly. "You may be wrong as well, and then we all guess over again. Play the game, Figgy!"

"Oh, all right! Head, Mr. Locke!"

Ferrers Locke showed the coin, and head it was.

Figgins chuckled.

"I think that settles it," said Figgins. "Eh, Blake?"

"Oh, yes, rather! Figgins is the hare!"

"Unless Figgins, for the sake of havin' the thing done in the best possible style, would care to wessign in my favah," suggested Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. To which Figgins replied with the ancient and classic expression, "Rats!"

"The hare is now selected," said Ferrers Locke. "And I must say that I consider Figgins quite equal to the task he has undertaken."

"Hear, hear!" said the Co.

"The next point to settle is, what is the article to be taken, and where from? I suggest some handy article that can be easily carried, such as a pocket-knife or a watch. Figgins is to take it from a certain spot and escape with it, and go a certain distance—we will say as far as the ruined castle on the other side of Rylocombe Wood. After he has once started, he is liable to be captured at any moment, until he has visited the ruined castle, made some plain mark on the spot to prove his visit, and returned to St. Jim's. The gate of the school will be his home."

"I'll manage it," said Figgins.

"The hare is not to receive any assistance from the hounds, and all are to try equally hard to capture him," said Ferrers Locke. "There is no objection to parties uniting for the purposes of comparing notes and helping one another in the tracking; but the capture can only be performed by one person. The capture is effected by placing a hand on the shoulder of the hare, and he will not resist."

"Oh!" said Figgins.

"That is the rule of the game. It is a contest of scouting and woodcraft, not of physical strength. Another point. All who join in the contest must join in the tracking. It would not do to wait for Figgins' return near the gates of St. Jim's, for instance. If Figgins has reached the castle successfully, his captor must reach the castle also before capturing him. Apart from this, any latitude is allowed. The capture may be either by scent, sound, or sight!"

"Good!" said Tom Merry.

"The contest should commence after dinner to-morrow," resumed Ferrers Locke. "Colonel Carr-Hilton and myself will be there to give you a send-off. You juniors dine at half-past one, I think?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then Figgins is at liberty to begin at any time after two."

"What-ho!" said Figgins. "I'll give 'em a run for their money."

"The article to be taken should be, I think, a small Union Jack," said Ferrers Locke. "This can be planted in the old castle as a proof that Figgins has been there."

"Good wheeze!"

"Now, as to where it shall be taken from. Suppose we place it in the gym, and from two o'clock Figgins is allowed five minutes in which to obtain possession of it, and to escape by any means he thinks fit, without anyone touching him. After five minutes past two the chase commences."

"Good!"

"I think that all is settled now," said Ferrers Locke, rising. "I have never dealt with a more businesslike committee."

The committee smiled complacently. Their business had been to say "Yes," "Very good," or "Ripping" to each of

the detective's suggestions. Still, it was very pleasant to be told that they were businesslike by so famous a personage as Mr. Locke. And the details of the contest being settled, the businesslike committee broke up.

CHAPTER 4.

Wally's Warning!

THE great scouting contest planned by Ferrers Locke caught on immediately.

The Shell and the Fourth Form were eager, almost to a man, for the hunt to commence.

The Third Form at St. Jim's had also got wind of the scouting contest, but D'Arcy minor's proposal that he and his chums should take part in the contest was negated by the Fourth and the Shell with singular unanimity.

But Wally was not the youth to be discouraged with ease. On Wednesday morning he was busy discussing the project with his comrades of the Third, and the inky youngsters all backed him heartily.

If the Fourth and the Shell were going to be of some use to their country some day, and had to be trained ready for that important object, why shouldn't the Third be trained for the same purpose? A Third-Former was as useful to his country as a Fourth-Former or a Shell-fish. At least, so Wally declared, and Jameson and Gibson, and other inky heroes of the Third, backed him up with all the strength of their lungs.

Accordingly, when classes were dismissed on Wednesday morning, a stream of inky-fingered and indignant youngsters poured out of the Third Form room, and gathered in the quad.

Wally D'Arcy mounted upon a seat under the elms, conspicuous in the crowd by his elevated position, his excited gestures, and the ink spots on his collar.

"Are we downhearted?" was his first question.

To that ancient question the Third Form responded with one voice, in a shout that rang through St. Jim's:

"No!"

"Are we going to be downtrodden?"

"No!"

"Are we going to be left out of the scouting?"

"No—that is, yes! I mean yes!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Who cares for the Fourth Form or the Shell?"

A general groan.

"I've got a brother in the Fourth Form," pursued Wally excitedly. "You all know what he's like—"

"He's like you, ain't he?" said Jameson.

"If you want a thick ear, Jameson—"

"I mean in features," said Jameson. "I wasn't referring to the ink spots."

There was a yell of laughter, and Wally jumped off the seat to execute summary vengeance upon Jameson. They rolled in the quadrangle in a deadly embrace, collecting up dust and a quantity of dead leaves.

There was a cry of "Cave!" as Mr. Railton, the master of the School House, bore down upon them. The Third Form scattered, and the meeting came to an abrupt end.

Wally and Jameson rose, to find themselves under the stern glance of the Housemaster.

"What were you doing?" demanded Mr. Railton severely.

"Having a little argument, sir," said Wally meekly.

The Housemaster could not help smiling.

"You will take a hundred lines each for arguing in the quadrangle," he said; and, with a warning shake of the head, he walked on.

D'Arcy minor and Jameson looked at each other rather ruefully.

"Blessed pair of asses we are to start ragging one another!" said Wally. "We shall be left out of the scouting contest if we lose time."

"You shouldn't begin it!"

"You began it."

"I tell you—"

"I tell you—"

The scrimmage seemed to be on the point of recommencing, when the Terrible Three were observed strolling under the elms.

Wally at once hurried to intercept them, leaving Jameson to nurse a swelling nose and bruised eye.

Tom Merry looked at D'Arcy minor with a grin. The hero of the Third looked very dusty and rumpled, but as cool as ever. He planted himself in the path of the Terrible Three.

"Get away!" said Lowther, retreating a pace. "You make me feel inky to look at you."

"I want to speak to you chaps—"

"The want is entirely on your side, kid. And why don't you take off your cap when you're addressing your elders?"

"Oh, don't be funny!" said Wally. "What I want to say

is, why shouldn't the Third be admitted to the scouting contest?"

"Can't be bothered with a parcel of kids!"

D'Arcy minor glared.

"You long-legged Shell-fish——"

Tom Merry jerked Lowther back as he was about to reply forcibly to that epithet.

Monty Lowther glared at him.

"Lemme go, Tom! I'm going to squash that microbe!"

"Hold on! Let us reason with him," said Tom Merry. "Now, young shaver, you ought to understand that a kid of your age is no use in a contest of this kind. A lot will depend on running powers. Now, I suppose you wouldn't pit yourself as a runner against anybody in the Fourth or the Shell?"

"Yes, rather! I can distance my brother Gus any day!" said Wally instantly.

The Fourth-Formers were sunning themselves, the day being a very bright and sunshiny one for late October.

"Hallo, young ink merchant!" said Blake cheerfully. "Are they the same spots on your chivvy that you were wearing last night?"

D'Arcy minor drew his sleeve hastily across his face. As his sleeve had been dipped in a puddle during the scramble with Jameson, this action did not improve the appearance of his face much.

The chums of the Fourth cackled in chorus.

"Weally, Wally, I wish you would make an effort to look a little more respectable!" said Arthur Augustus, looking severely at his young brother. "It is vewy painful to me to have fellows wemarkin' that my young bwothah is the untidiest and inkiest fag in the Third Form at St. Jim's; and, weally——"

"Oh, don't you begin, Gus!" said Wally disrespectfully.



Tom Merry reached cautiously forward and suddenly clapped his hand on the shoulder before him. "Caught!" he yelled. The sitting figure sprang up with a startled yell. It was not Figgins! A pair of big spectacles turned towards Tom, and he recognised the Freak of the Shell. "Dear me!" gasped Skimpole.

Tom Merry scratched his head.

"Well, that's the exception that proves the rule," he said.

"I can knock spots off Mellish of the Fourth and Gore of the Shell!" said Wally triumphantly.

"Well, that's because Gore smokes and ruins his wind——"

"That makes no difference. I don't care what the reason is. You said I couldn't run against a chap in your Form, and I say I can. Any other objections?"

"We can't have a lot of inky fags swarming over the job. The dignity of the Middle School is at stake."

"Rats!" said D'Arcy minor cheerfully.

Tom Merry turned pink.

"If you say 'Rats!' to me, young shaver——"

"Rats!"

Tom Merry waved his hand indulgently.

"Go!" he said. "I won't lick you; I should spoil my hands. Go in peace——"

"Or you'll jolly soon go in pieces, you cheeky young imp!" said Manners darkly.

"Then you mean to keep the Third Form out?"

"Yes, rather!" said the Terrible Three in unison.

"There'll be trouble!" said D'Arcy minor, frowning.

And as the chums of the Shell only grinned at this terrible threat, Wally stalked away in high dudgeon.

He looked round the quadrangle for Blake & Co., as the next best persons to apply to, and he found them in a group on the School House steps.

"I have a bone to pick with you chaps. Tom Merry says that the Third Form are left out of this contest."

"Tom Merry has hit the right nail exactly on the head," said Jack Blake blandly.

"Look here, you can't expect us to take it lying down——"

"You can take it lying down, standing up, or sitting still," said Blake liberally. "Your attitude on the matter is left entirely to your own discretion. But we can't have a swarm of inky fags on this job."

"We're not going to be left out."

"Rats!"

"There'll be trouble!" said Wally threateningly.

The chums of Study No. 6 laughed. The threat did not disturb their equanimity.

"You see, it's a question of the dignity of the Middle Forms," said Blake condescendingly. "If you infants want a hand in the business you can come to the gate and cheer us when we get home."

"Yaas, wathah!"

D'Arcy minor deigned no reply, but gave an expressive snort; and then he walked off with his hands in his pockets. He crossed over to the New House in search of Figgins & Co., and ran them down in their study.

Figgins & Co. were preparing for the run, and Figgins was carefully selecting the clothing he should wear.

"No good going in running clothes," he remarked thoughtfully. "This is more scouting than running; and if I have to take cover in the bush it would be jolly cold. I suppose I can't do better than a blazer and knickers. I hope one of you fellows will be the one to catch me if I get caught."

"We'll do our best," said Kerr.

"I say, Figgy, you'd better take some sandwiches with you," said Fatty Wynn. "You'll get fearfully hungry if you have to stay out a long time, and you may be hours getting home if you have to dodge."

"Good idea," said Figgins. "You can get me some at Dame Taggles', Fatty. I can trust you to get good ones?"

"Well, rather," said Fatty Wynn. "Mrs. Taggles knows better than to work off any of her stale sandwiches on me—rather! Hallo, young inkpots! What do you want?"

"I've got something to say to you," said Wally, coming into the study. "I hear that the Third Form are being left out of the run."

"You have heard correctly, my son."

"We're not going to stand it."

"Sit down, then."

"We're as good scouts as you are," said Wally warmly. "We're willing to join peacefully in the scheme. That's all we want."

"Nothing doing!" said Figgins.

"I warn you there'll be trouble," said Wally.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Wally left the study and slammed the door, leaving Figgins & Co. still laughing.

As he went out into the quadrangle, deeply incensed, he caught sight of Ferrers Locke and Colonel Carr-Hilton strolling under the trees. Ferrers Locke was showing his companion about St. Jim's. Wally's eyes gleamed, and he cut across towards the two gentlemen and arrived breathless and panting.

"If you please—" he gasped.

Ferrers Locke and the colonel immediately stopped.

CHAPTER 5.

A Third Form Plot!

FERRERS LOCKE looked down upon the Third-Former with a good-humoured smile.

Wally dragged his cap off and showed his bunch of curly hair, standing nearly on end as usual.

"If you please," he said breathlessly, "may I speak to you, sir?"

"Certainly, my little man."

The great fighting-man of the Third Form frowned a moment at being addressed as a little man. It did not savour of reverence. But he plunged quickly into his subject.

"If you please, sir, the Third Form—I belong to the Third, sir—were not asked to the meeting to hear you speak last night."

"My remarks were mainly addressed to the Fourth and the Shell," assented Ferrers Locke.

"You forgot the Third, sir."

The detective nodded, with a smile.

"Yes, I am afraid I must plead guilty to that sin of omission, my little man."

"We're as good as any other Form at St. Jim's, sir. There are some big fellows in the Third, old enough to be in the Fourth, or even the Shell, only they haven't been able to get their remove. Those rotters—I mean, those fellows—call us the infants, but that's really only their rot, sir."

"I see," said Ferrers Locke gravely, while Colonel Carr-Hilton smiled. "That is only their rot, is it?"

"Yes, sir," said Wally undauntedly. "If any chaps are good enough to train to be useful to their country at this school, you'll find them in the Third quite as much as in any other Form. Why shouldn't the Third Form learn to be scouts as well as any other?"

"Why not, indeed?"

"Certainly," said the colonel.

"Then you think we might as well join in the contest this afternoon, sir?" said Wally eagerly.

"Well, I don't see that it would do any harm," said Ferrers Locke. "Of course, you will have no chance of capturing the hare. You naturally will have no chance against fellows so much older and stronger than yourselves."

"Not the average Third-Former, sir, I admit; but there are some of us who can keep their end up with the Fourth—myself, for instance."

"I see. Well, although I really think the Third Form would be left hopelessly behind, yet there is no reason why they should not be admitted to the contest."

"Quite so," agreed the colonel. "I am glad to see so much spirit in a Lower Form. After all, the younger they start learning, the better it will be. The chief difficulty is

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that a swarm of very little boys might have the effect of obscuring the tracks that will have to be followed."

"Oh, we'd be awfully careful about that, sir!"

"Then you may bring the matter before the committee," said Ferrers Locke. "It is entirely a question for the boys concerned to settle among themselves. I should not like to impose my opinion on them."

"Exactly," said the colonel.

"My opinion really is, that the admission of the Third Form would do no harm, but would probably not do much good to the Third," said Ferrers Locke. "A better plan would be for the Third to get up a scouting organisation of its own."

"Yes, sir, we mean to do that; but for to-day—"

"Well, you must see the committee. It is entirely in their hands," said Ferrers Locke, with a smile.

"Thank you, sir!" said Wally.

He walked away in a dissatisfied mood. He felt pretty sure of the answer the committee would give him. If Ferrers Locke had expressed a decided opinion, and the colonel had agreed, the committee would have upheld their view unanimously. But the two gentlemen evidently did not mean to interfere. And the claims of the Third Form were likely to be met shortly and sharply by a prejudiced committee. Wally did not even know who the committee were, but he guessed that Tom Merry would be on it, and he went about looking for the hero of the Shell.

He found the Terrible Three in their study in the School House, and he entered without the formality of knocking. Three distinct glares were at once fastened upon him.

"Here's that young shaver again," grunted Manners. "I suppose he has constituted himself our shadow."

"Are you chaps on the committee?" demanded Wally.

"Yes, we are," said Tom Merry patiently. "Now you know, run away and play."

"I've spoken to Ferrers Locke and the colonel—"

"The dickens you have!"

"And they had no objection to the Third Form taking part in the contest, but the matter is left to the committee to decide."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Do you want to bring it before the committee?"

"Yes. When does the committee meet again?"

"I dare say it will meet some time this evening."

"This evening!" howled Wally. "The contest will be over at dark!"

"My dear chap, we haven't any time for committee meetings now; it will be dinner-time soon, and half an hour after that we start."

"How am I to bring the matter before the committee if the committee doesn't meet?"

"Is that a conundrum?"

"How am I to do it, fathead?"

"You must work that out in your own head," said Tom Merry. "I haven't any time now to work out problems for Third Form kids."

"Look here, there'll be trouble!"

"Go ahead with the trouble, then!"

Wally walked out of the study.

The Terrible Three grinned at one another.

"We could let that cheeky young beggar in," Tom Merry remarked. "But the whole thing would be mucked up with a swarm of fags aged nine to twelve joining in the hunt. They'd trample out all the tracks, and muck things up generally."

Wally left the School House with a determined expression upon his smudgy face. Jameson and Curly Gibson met him in the quadrangle with serious looks.

"Well, how has it worked out?" asked Jameson.

"Rotten!"

"They won't let us in?"

"No, I've seen the lot of them. Ferrers Locke and Colonel Carr-Hilton remain out of it, and won't decide; it's left to the committee. And Tom Merry says that the committee won't meet till after the run."

"Then we're done in!" said Gibson.

D'Arcy minor shook his head.

"Not yet, my pippin. I've got an idea."

"We couldn't very well join in without leave," said Jameson doubtfully. "It would look like cheek on our part to Locke and the colonel. And, besides, we don't know any of the particulars of the contest, and so we should be hopelessly out of it."

"I wasn't thinking of that."

"What's the idea, then?"

"I know that Figgins is to be the hare, and that the others are to track him down. That's as much as I know. I have just learned from Tom Merry that they're starting immediately after dinner, too. Now, as there's to be only one hare, and that's Figgins, it stands to reason that the hunt can't start without him."

"I suppose not."
 "Well," said Wally boldly, "suppose Figgins is missing?"
 Jameson and Gibson stared at him blankly.
 "Missing!"
 "Yes."
 "But why should he be missing?" said Jameson, who was a little dull of comprehension. "He'll take jolly good care not to be missing, won't he?"
 "We might take jolly good care that he is missing," said Wally. "What I mean is, why shouldn't we collar Figgins?"
 "Collar him?"
 "Yes, and shut him up somewhere. Then we could make our own terms with the precious committee," said Wally.
 "My hat! We could never do it!"
 "Why not?"
 "Well, Figgins is the biggest junior in the New House, for one thing, and he could knock any two or three of us flying."

CHAPTER 6.

The Disappearance of Figgins.

F IGGINS came out of the dining-room in the New House at St. Jim's, and almost ran into Curly Gibson of the Third. The little, flaxen-haired, blue-eyed "infant" always looked the picture of innocence, and he had never looked so innocent as now.

He tapped Figgins on the arm as he was passing hurriedly to go up to his study for the sandwiches he was to take with him.

"Can you come and see Mr. Locke for a minute, Figgins?" asked Curly breathlessly, as if he had just rushed in with the message.

"Certainly," said Figgins, stopping. "Is the time altered?"

"I don't think so."

"Then there isn't much time to lose. Still, I'd better come, I suppose."



Blake made a sign to Herries and the two of them collared the swell of the School House. The next moment Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was reposing on his back in a prickly bush. "Help, deah boys!" gasped D'Arcy. "My twousahs are gettin' torn!"

"If we could get him into a certain spot we could have a dozen of the Third all ready to pounce on him, and a rope all ready to tie him up with. What do you think, Curly?"

"It's a good idea," said Gibson promptly. "Figgins won't be thinking of anything of the sort, and I think I could pull the wool over his eyes and get him into the proper place."

"Yes, that's what I was thinking of. You're such an innocent-looking beggar, he would be almost bound to fall into the trap."

"It's risky," said Jameson.

"Can you think of anything better?"

"Well, no, unless you throw up the whole thing."

"We're not going to do that. Hallo, there's the bell! Let's get in to dinner, and the moment it's over we'll lay in wait for Figgins."

And the plot having been plotted, the young rascals went in to dinner with good appetites. And during the meal Wally startled the fellows near him on several occasions by bursting into an irrepressible chuckle.

It was evident that he was perfecting the plan in his own mind, and regarded its success as a foregone conclusion.

"Come on, then!"

And Curly Gibson led the way towards the gymnasium. It was quite deserted at that time—at all events, it seemed to be so. As the flag which Figgins was to take was to be placed in the gym, he had no doubt that Ferrers Locke was there to give him some final instructions before the boys gathered for the start.

He followed Curly Gibson into the gym without a suspicion.

He was hardly within the building when there was a sudden rush of feet, and a dozen figures, springing from nowhere, hurled themselves upon the New House junior.

Figgins was bowled over, as much by the surprise as by the assault, and went sprawling along the floor, with the heroes of the Third sprawling over him.

"Collar him!" gasped Wally.

"You young villains!" roared the amazed Figgins. "Let me up!"

"Rats! Collar him!"

Figgins struggled desperately, but though he could have

crushed any two or three of the infants, united they were too many for him.

He knocked four or five flying, but he could not loosen the grip of Wally and Jameson, who were clinging to him like cats, or of Curly Gibson, who had thrown an arm round his neck from behind, and were holding him down on his back. The infants piled on him, those who were knocked over returning gallantly to the attack, and Figgins was crushed under the weight of numbers.

"Got him!" panted Wally.

"You—you young imps!" Figgins gasped. "What do you mean? Let me go!"

"Bring him along!"

"Let me go! I'll break all your necks for this!"

"Yank him along! Where's that rope?"

"Here it is!"

"Tie him up, then, and yank him along. Keep a look-out, Carter, in case anybody comes along. If they see him, the game's up."

Figgins' dignity as a Fourth-Former had hitherto prevented him from yelling for help; but now he opened his mouth to do so. But Wally was on the watch for it, and he promptly jammed a cake of soap into Figgins' mouth. The yell was never uttered; Figgins gasped and gurgled and foamed over the soap.

Wally, with an amiable grin, tied a handkerchief over his mouth to keep the soap there, and secured it in its place with nearly half a ball of twine, winding it round and round Figgins' head and ears till he felt like a fly in the web of a spider.

Meanwhile, the others were fastening together Figgins' arms and legs with lengths of cord they had brought in their pockets for the purpose.

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The chief of the New House juniors was a hopeless prisoner.

"Yank him along!" repeated Wally.

Figgins had not the faintest idea what they meant to do with him. But he soon discovered. He was "yanked" along to a little room at the farther end of the gym where athletic apparatus was kept, and dumped down in the midst of steps and bars and foils and Indian clubs and other paraphernalia. There he lay gasping.

There was a shout from Carter.

"Somebody's coming!"

"All right!" gasped Wally. "You fellows get out—quick! Don't look excited. Just loiter about. Some of you get on the vaulting-horse. Just look as if there wasn't anything going on, or I'll lam you—"

The Third-Formers obeyed as well as they could.

Wally, without heeding the mute fury of Figgins, followed them out of the room and locked the door, putting the key in his pocket.

Ferrers Locke glanced into the gym. The infants, in spite of Wally's order, were looking red and excited enough, but Wally was equal to the occasion. He suddenly turned upon Jameson and smote him on the mouth; and Jameson, nothing loath, though very much surprised, smote him back, and in a moment they were fighting desperately. The others gathered round, cheering, and for the moment, as a matter of fact, forgot all about the junior imprisoned behind the locked door.

"It's all right!" whispered Wally in Jameson's ear, as he wrestled with him. "I—"

"Is it?" said Jameson, hitting out. "Take that! And that!"

Wally took them on the nose, but he still tried to explain. He got Jameson's head into chancery and pommelled one ear, while he explained into the other.

"It's all right, you idiot!"

Biff!

"It's only a game!"

Biff!

"I only hit you so that these dummies wouldn't give the show away!"

Biff!

"I'm only pretending."

Biff, biff, biff!

"Ow!" gasped Jameson, who was just as much hurt as if Wally hadn't been only pretending. "Ow! Leave off! Chuck it!"

"Right you are!"

Wally released his rumples and damaged adversary.

Ferrers Locke strolled towards the juniors with an unconscious look on his face, apparently having seen nothing of the fight.

"Has anyone seen Figgins?" he said.

"Figgins!" said Curly Gibson thoughtfully. "I saw him just after dinner in the hall of the New House, sir."

"H'm! It's more than time!" muttered Ferrers Locke.

He strode back towards the door of the gym, where he was joined by the colonel.

Wally winked at his chums.

"It's all right," he murmured. "Let's get out of the gym by the other door, and look as innocent as we can. I can't keep on hitting Jameson to keep up appearances."

"You'd better not!" said Jameson.

"Come on! They won't suspect that Figgins is there; and, anyway, they can't get at him while the door's locked!" grinned Wally.

The Third-Formers scuttled out of the gym. Meanwhile, the Fourth Form and the Shell had assembled. It was past two, and high time for the scouting contest to begin.

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther were the first to join Ferrers Locke at the door. Blake and his chums came next, and then the Fourth and the Shell in a crowd, School House and New House fellows mingled.

"Do you know where Figgins is, Merry?" asked Ferrers Locke.

"It is high time he was here," said Colonel Carr-Hilton, pursing his lips. "I believe in boys being punctual, above all things."

"I haven't seen him, sir," said Tom Merry. "Do you know where Figgins is, Blake?"

"Haven't the faintest idea."

"Here's Kerr," said Monty Lowther. "I suppose he knows. I say, Kerr, where's Figgins? He's late. What's the matter with him?"

"Isn't he here?" said Kerr, looking astonished.

"No, he isn't."

"Blessed if I know where he is, then. I thought he was going up to his study to get the sandwiches," said Kerr, looking mystified.

"Perhaps he's stopped to eat them," suggested Blake.

"Oh, don't be funny, Blake! He must be here somewhere."

"Better go and look for him. Tell him he's a silly ass, from me, and add that he ought to have a prize thick ear for keeping us waiting."

Kerr declined no reply to this kind message, but cut off towards the New House. He came back in a few minutes with a packet of sandwiches in his hand, but no Figgins.

"Well?" said Ferrers Locke tersely. "Is he coming?"

"I can't find him, sir."

"You can't find Figgins?" repeated Ferrers Locke in amazement. "Where can he be?"

Kerr shook his head hopelessly.

"I've looked everywhere in the New House, sir, but he's not there."

"Did you not say he went up to his study?"

"I thought he was going to. But he couldn't have gone, because I found this packet of sandwiches there. He was going up for them."

"This is somewhat annoying," said Ferrers Locke. "If Figgins chooses to absent himself at the time of starting, it only remains to choose another hare—"

"One minute, sir!"

It was D'Arcy minor who spoke. He came forward, with his hands in his pockets and a grin on his face, perfectly undisturbed by the excitement reigning round him. Jameson and several other grinning Third-Formers were with him.

Ferrers Locke looked curiously at the infant.

"Well, can you tell us anything about Figgins?" he asked.

"Yes, sir, I know where he is."

"Where is he, then?"

"Somewhere where he won't get away in a hurry, sir," said Wally coolly, "unless the Third Form take part in this show."

CHAPTER 7.

D'Arcy Minor Makes Terms!

WALLY spoke with perfect calmness, and for a few moments the import of his words did not fully dawn upon the assembled juniors.

Ferrers Locke looked amazed, and then his face broke into a smile. The colonel chuckled.

But the juniors did not smile or chuckle. As soon as they realised what Wally's words conveyed, they pressed more closely round the hero of the Third.

"Do you mean to say," said Tom Merry, in measured accents, "that you've had the cheek to collar Figgins?"

"Yes," said Wally. "It's a Third Form raid. School House and New House are together in it. I belong to the School House, but Jameson is in the New House, and we were the leaders in collaring Figgins."

"Just so," said Jameson, with a grin.

"It's a Form row," pursued Wally. "You wanted to leave us out of the contest. The Third Form at St. Jim's isn't to be ignored."

"Hear, hear!" said Jameson.

"We're standing together in this, and we've got Figgins. We've got him put away safely, and you won't see him again unless the Third Form joins in this show on equal terms. So there you are!"

"Knock his head off!"

"Collar him!"

"Snatch him bald-headed!"

"Jump on him!"

Wally, with his hands still in his pockets, grinned derisively at the juniors. He knew that the presence of Ferrers Locke and the colonel could save him from any very severe ragging; but, in any case, he had plenty of nerve.

The grin on Wally's smudgy face was distinctly exasperating to the Fourth Form and the Shell, and many were the threatening gestures round him.

"Better frog's-march him till he tells us where Figgins is!" said Monty Lowther.

"Good idea!" said Blake.

"You can frog's-march me till you're black in the face, but you won't get a word out of me!" said Wally determinedly.

"Weally, deah boys—"

"Tell us where Figgins is, then!"

"Find out!" said Wally cheerfully.

"Collar the young rascal!"

"Weally, deah boys. I object to my young bwothah bein' chawactewised as a wascal! I object to his bein' fwog's-marched. It is an infraction of the dig of a D'Arcy to be fwog's-marched. I pwotest!"

"Oh, ring off, Gussy!"

"I wufuse to wing off!" said Arthur Augustus, ranging himself by the side of D'Arcy minor. "Any boundah pwe-suming to twy to fwog's-march my young bwothah will immediately weceive a feahful thwashin'!"

Tom Merry laughed.

"In the circumstances, there's only one thing to be done,"

he said. "We'd better give in, before Gussy thrashes the lot of us."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Let the Third Form come into the game," said Tom Merry. "They won't do any good, but they won't do much harm. Wally deserves it for his cheek, anyway."

"Oh, all right!" said Jack Blake. "I don't mind!"

"Is it a go?" asked Wally.

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy!"

"Yes, it's a go," said Tom Merry, laughing. "We've wasted enough time already. Now, you young scallawags, where is Figgins?"

Wally produced a key from his pocket.

"You'll find him t'other end of the gym," he said.

Kerr took the key and hurried into the gym.

"So the matter is settled?" said Ferrers Locke.

"Yes, sir," said D'Arcy minor. "The Third Form are taking a hand in the proceedings, and everything in the garden is lovely. Whistle up the fellows, Jimmy."

Jameson gave a whistle, and the Third Form gathered from all directions. Most of them were already near at hand.

"Very good!" said Ferrers Locke, smiling. "As you are now in the contest, I had better briefly explain the conditions to you. Figgins is the hare. He is to take a little flag from the gym, and is to be allowed five minutes in which to make his escape in any manner he pleases. Then the tracking commences. Figgins is to place the flag in the ruined castle on Rylcombe Hill, and to return to St. Jim's uncaptured. If he succeeds in doing so, he is the victor in the contest. If he is captured, his captor is the victor. A hand on the shoulder constitutes capture."

"Very good, sir; that's all quite clear!"

Kerr and Figgins came out of the gym. Figgins' neat blazer was very rumpled, and his stockings were dragged nearly down to his ankles, and there was a rent in his knickers. He showed plenty of signs of the struggle with the infants. He was looking very red and uncomfortable, too, and making strange twistings with his mouth, where the strong flavour of the soapy gag still lingered.

A general grin greeted him.

"Hallo, here you are!" said Jack Blake. "Feel fit for the run? I don't mind taking your place if you're not."

"I'm fit enough!" granted Figgins. "I want to massacre some Third-Formers first, though."

"No time," said Tom Merry, laughing. "We're a quarter of an hour late already, Figg. You shouldn't have allowed yourself to be kidnapped by a lot of infants."

"How could I help it when a dozen piled on me?" demanded Figgins indignantly.

"Oh, don't ask me riddles! Pull up your socks, and get ready!"

And Figgins, amid many chuckles and murmured remarks, pulled up his socks and prepared for the run.

Ferrers Locke took out the flag. It was a tiny Union Jack, on a stick only nine or ten inches long, so that it could be placed in the pocket. In sight of all the juniors, Ferrers Locke placed it in the gym, and then asked Figgins if he were ready.

"Quite ready, sir," said Figgins, jamming the packet of sandwiches in his pocket.

"Then start! Five clear minutes are allowed you to get away!"

"Very good, sir!"

Ferrers Locke made a sign to the juniors, and they crowded back from the gym. If Figgins left the gym in the usual way, and ran out of the gates, that would not take him more than a couple of minutes at the most, and then he would have three in which to gain cover and commence the flight.

Ferrers Locke and the colonel watched the clock in the tower. Figgins had entered the gym when the clock indicated twenty minutes past two. The juniors watched it as anxiously, and the big hand crept on.

What was Figgins doing? The juniors were amazed.

Three minutes had passed, and Figgins had not even come out of the gym. He had left himself only time for a run to the gates.

Four minutes!

The amazement was now general. Had Figgins stopped to make some final preparations, or had he forgotten the flight of time? Did he think that he still had four minutes or so remaining, when, as a matter of fact, the last few seconds were ticking away?

The juniors looked at Ferrers Locke, hoping to read his thoughts in his face. But the famous detective's face expressed nothing.

What did it mean?

Five minutes!

"Start!" said Ferrers Locke quietly.

There was a general rush into the gym.

But Figgins was not to be seen. The flag was gone, and Figgins was gone, too.

The door leading into the little room where Figgins had been a prisoner was open, and Tom Merry rushed into the room.

The window was open, too. It was evident now which way Figgins had gone. Tom Merry gave a shout.

"Stole away!"

The next moment he was clambering through the window. The hunt had commenced.

CHAPTER 8.

On the Track!

FERRERS LOCKE and the colonel exchanged a smile. The contest had begun well, and Figgins' strategy had made the start far from easy for the pursuers.

He had vanished from a window at the back of the gym, scuttled round the chapel unseen, and escaped over the school wall.

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther followed by the same route, while Blake and the others rushed out of the gates to pick up the trail in the road. Figgins was nowhere in sight, and the juniors spread up and down the road in search of him.

It was certain that he would go through the wood, but there were more than a dozen different paths to choose from.

The hunters were soon widely separated. Kerr and Wynn went by the footpath, Blake and his chums by another track, and Tom Merry & Co. remained in the road, looking for Figgins' tracks before they took up the chase.

D'Arcy minor and a select party of the Third Form disappeared into the wood, as eager in the quest as any. Wally had provided himself with a bugle, which he used to keep his inky band together. A single blast was a rallying cry, two meant that he was on the track. Any infant not obeying the call was to have his head punched after getting home.

But the Third-Formers were all keen. They meant that the honour of capturing Figgins should belong to the infants, if possible.

Tom Merry searched for tracks along the ditch which Figgins must have crossed to enter the wood. He was satisfied at last that he had found them, and the Terrible Three took up the trail. On more than one previous occasion Tom Merry had scouted in the woods round St. Jim's. He knew a great deal of woodcraft, and a little keen observation in such matters would go a very long way.

Guided by slight indications, the chums of the Shell plunged into the heart of the wood. Under the thick trees, where the sky was half-hidden by heavy boughs, it was impossible to keep their bearings, except by knowledge of the ground, and by the use of a compass. Monty Lowther had brought a compass, and he consulted it every few minutes, but he did not seem to derive any guidance from it.

The wood was so thick in places that it was impossible to keep a straight course, and the "sign" for which Tom Merry was keeping his eyes open led the Scouts on a zigzag course.

Manners uttered a sudden exclamation:

"Look here!"

The Terrible Three halted. The winds of late October had carpeted the earth with leaves, sodden by rain, and in a pulpy mass any kind of a footprint showed clearly.

The ill-defined track the chums had been following through the bushes was now clear before their eyes. The print of two

boots of considerable size rewarded their examination, and Tom Merry smiled a smile of satisfaction.

"Looks like Figgy's track," he said.

"Yes, rather; they're about his size."

"The tracks are fresh," said Tom Merry, cocking his head on one side and examining the trail with the air of a Buffalo Bill. "They haven't been made long, kids."

"Then it must be Figgins."

"Let's make sure. Nothing like working the thing out. The tracks weren't made by a keeper, because they're a boy's boots. They weren't made by a village boy, because they don't wear this kind of boot. Therefore, as no one else can be here, the tracks were made by a fellow from St. Jim's. We are ahead of all the fellows but Figgins."

"Ergo, it was Figgins."

"Yes; and the fact that the boots are of a jolly big size is additional evidence. It seems pretty clear that we have found Figgy's track."

"Looks like it; let's get on."

Eagerly enough the chums of the Shell followed the track. It was plainer and plainer as they followed it, till it ended in a thicket. And as the chums stopped to take a breath before entering the thicket, they heard a sound beyond the thick bush.

It was the sound of someone breathing.

Tom Merry held up his hand.

"He's stopped to rest," he muttered.

"Sounds like it, Tommy."

"Look here, only one chap can capture him; the other two have to stand out."

"Yes; you and Manners remain here while I—"

"Oh, rats! You two remain here, while I—"

"Cheese it!" muttered Manners. "He'll get away while you're jawing. You two stay here while I—"

Tom Merry chuckled silently.

"Let's get on together then. The one who collars him

first is the captor."

"Right you are!"

"Careful, now; don't give the alarm."

The Terrible Three acted with great caution. They dropped on their hands and knees, and wormed their way silently through the thickets.

Manners murmured something at a keen thorn scratched along his face, drawing a streak of red in its track. Monty Lowther paused for a minute or so to listen. He had lost the sound of the quarry, and lost his bearings. He had passed out of sight of Tom Merry and Manners, and was lost in a maze of tangled thickets. He paused, and strove to find his way again, and in the midst of it he was startled by a wild yell from the bushes.

"Hang it! Tom Merry's got him!"

Tom Merry had crept on with more judgment. He had carefully noted the spot whence the sound he had heard proceeded, and he carefully kept it in his mind as he crept. With the single idea in his mind, with his whole faculties concentrated on the work in hand, Tom Merry threaded his way on hands and knees, creeping like a Redskin on his prey.

The dim outline of a head and shoulders appeared through the tangled greenery, and Tom Merry's heart beat faster.

There was his quarry!

He smiled quietly, and crept on with renewed caution. To get behind Figgins, and quietly tap him on the shoulder, and announce that he was a prisoner, was his object. He could imagine the jump Figgins would give when he felt the hand on his shoulder.

Potts, the Office Boy!



Closer and closer!

Tom Merry reached cautiously forward through the tangled twigs, and suddenly clapped his hand on the shoulder before him.

"Caught!" he yelled.

The sitting figure sprang up with a startled yell.

Tom Merry sprang up, too, and the next moment he uttered an exclamation of angry disappointment.

It was not Figgins!

A pair of big spectacles turned towards Tom Merry, and he recognised Skimpole, the freak of the Shell at St. Jim's.

"Dear me!" gasped Skimpole. "You—you startled me, Merry."

"Skimpole!"

"It was really very injudicious suddenly to pat a fellow on the shoulder, without warning him of your intention," said Skimpole. "You have really given me a most unpleasant start."

"You—you utter ass!" grunted Tom Merry. "What do you mean by sticking here, and making me think you were Figgins?"

Skimpole blinked at him.

"Really, Merry, I did not make you think I was Figgins. Are you looking for Figgins?"

"Yes, ass! It's all right, kids, come on; it's only that ass Skimpole!"

"Really, Merry, I cannot but regard that expression as almost rude. I am sorry to say Figgins is not here, as you seem to want him, but—"

"Ass, he's the hare!"

"Oh, yes, I remember; you are playing some game, I think—"

Tom Merry glared at him.

"Ain't you playing, too?" he demanded.

Skimpole shook his head.

"No, I was thinking of doing so, but I thought it better not. You fellows would have had no chance against me, you know, and so it would have been hardly fair to the rest of the school for me to enter into the contest. I thought I would withdraw into a secluded spot this pleasant afternoon, and complete the notes for the three hundred and thirty-fourth chapter of my book on Determinism."

"Come on, kids!"

"You have somewhat disturbed my thoughts, and caused me to drop my pencil," said Skimpole. "If you are inclined for a brief rest, I should have great pleasure in reading out some of my notes to you. In the three hundred and thirty-fourth chapter of my book I deal with the subject of racial degeneracy, from the point of view of Determinism. The combined influences of heredity and environment—"

"Oh, come on!" gasped Tom Merry.

"The combined influences of heredity and environment—"

The Terrible Three ran on through the wood.

Skimpole blinked after them solemnly, and shook his head.

"Curious how these feeble intellects fly from the great problem of modern existence," he murmured. "I should have been pleased to enlighten them upon the subject of racial degeneracy, considered from the point of view of a Determinist, and could have proved that degeneration, like everything else, is an effect to be traced to a cause, and that the cause is incontrovertibly the producer of the effect. This is the great truth of Determinism which I must labour

to make clear in my three hundred and thirty-fourth chapter."

And Skimpole groped in the grass for his pencil, and sat down with his notebook again, and forgot the existence of Tom Merry and everyone else in the keen interest inspired by his great theme.

Meanwhile, the Terrible Three, having escaped from the bore of St. Jim's, ran on; but the track was lost.

Whether the tracks they had been following all along had been made by Skimpole or not, there was certainly no trace of Figgins to be discovered. No sight, nor sound, nor sign of the fugitive.

"Better push on for the old castle," said Tom Merry, at last. "Figgins is bound to go there, and we may pick up the track afresh."

"Good!" said Lowther.

From the distance in the woods rang the ta-ra-ra of a bugle. It came from D'Arcy minor, calling together his ink-fingered band.

The sound showed that Wally was well on his way.

The Terrible Three, giving up the attempt to find the tracks of Figgins in the wood, made direct for the ruined castle on Rylcombe Hill, and came in sight of it at last.

CHAPTER 9.

Arthur Augustus is Captured!

"BAI Jove, deah boys!"

"What's the matter with you?"

"I am beginnin' to feel wathah exhausted—"

"Sit down, then!"

"Bai Jove, that's a good ideah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, sinking upon a big root that cropped up out of the ground. "I feel weally as if I want a west, you know. I won't keep you more than a quartah of an hour."

Jack Blake grinned.

"You won't keep me more than a quarter of a second," he replied. "Come on, kids!"

"Right-ho!" said Herries.

Herries and Digby followed Blake as he went on.

D'Arcy jumped up quickly enough, and followed them.

"Weally, Blake, I undahstood that you were goin' to west, too."

"Something wrong with your understanding, then. No time for rest."

"In that case, I shall not wemain behind."

"Follow your leader, then, and don't keep on complaining like a girl," said Blake severely. "Keep a stiff upper lip, and don't grouse!"

"I wefuse—"

"Oh, come on!" said Blake, plunging into the thickets.

"I uttally wefuse to allow dispaugin' wemarks concernin' gals to be made in my pwesence. I have wemonstated with you before on this mattah, Blake."

Jack Blake did not reply. He had dropped on his knees in the bushes, and was examining a mark in the soft soil, thick with fallen leaves.

Arthur Augustus leaned over him, and tapped him on the shoulder, and Blake gave a jump.

"You ass! Keep away! I think I've found the track!"

"The mattah must be settled—"

"Well, I'm examining it—"

"I mean the othah mattah—"

"What other matter, ass? Shut up!"

"I wefuse to shut up! I mean your diswepctful

PETTY THEFT!



allusion to gals. I cannot allow such an expression to pass in my presence."

"Drag that lunatic away, Herries."

"I refuse to be dragged away. If you lay a finger on me, Hewwies, I shall lose my tempah and stwike you. Blake, I request you to withdraw your words."

"Shut up!"

"I distinctly refuse to shut up! As one gentleman to another, I request you to withdraw your disrespectful allusion to gals."

"Kill him, somebody!" said Blake. "Look here, somebody's been this way. The marks are as deep as anything in the soil. Look!"

"I insist—"

"Are you going to ring off?" bawled Blake.

"No, I am not goin' to wing off! Undah the cires, I have no alternative but to distinctly refuse to wing off."

Blake jumped up. He made a sign to Herries, and the two of them collared the swell of the School House.

The next moment Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was reposing on his back in a prickly bush.

Blake looked at the track again.

"This looks promising," he remarked. "We had better follow it up, anyway. Come on!"

"Help, deah boys! My twousahs are gettin' torn—"

But the chums of Study No. 6 did not heed. They were hot on the track, and they dashed off through the wood, and D'Arcy was left to extricate himself.

This he did, with some difficulty, and with more than one rent in his beautifully creased trousers.

He jammed his eyeglass into his eye and looked round discontentedly for his hat.

"Bai Jove," he murmured, "that was feahfully wuff of those wottahs, and I wegard them as havin' acted like beasts in shovin' me into that bush. I doubt whether I can continue to wegard the wottahs as fwiends. Where is my beaslay hat? Upon reflection, I think it is wathah a mistake to come out scoutin' in a silk hat."

The hat was discovered impaled upon some thorns. Arthur Augustus brushed it, and replaced it on his head, and then followed his chums. He was very indignant, and had half a mind to abandon the whole affair; but the thought that his comrades would probably get into some trouble without him made him keep on.

But Blake, Herries, and Digby had vanished in the wood, and D'Arcy could not find a sign of them. He halted at last in some dismay.

"Bai Jove, those weekless wottahs have lost themselves—" he murmured.

Ta-ra-ra-ra!

He started as the bugle note rang through the wood.

"Bai Jove, I wondah what that is!" muttered Arthur Augustus. "Deah me, I wish I could find those wottahs! They will get into some mischief."

He pursued his way, plunging through bush and briar; but there was no trace of Blake and his companions to be discovered.

A rustle in the bushes suddenly caught his ear.

He was in a very thick part of the wood, where there was no track, and he had to push twigs and branches and huge ferns out of the way with his hand in order to make any progress. The rustle he heard came from behind him, and D'Arcy looked back.

He frowned a little as he scanned the impenetrable mass of greenery behind him.

"It is those wottahs playin' a twick!" he murmured. "They are followin' me, and pwobably mean to jump on me suddenly. I weally wish Blake would wemembah what I have so fwrequently told him—that pwactical jokes are in vewy bad form. I shall take no notice of the wottahs!"

And Arthur Augustus walked on.

The rustle behind him continued at intervals. It was evident that he was being stalked through the wood. The note of the bugle rang out twice in succession. Then came rustles from different quarters, as if a number of fellows were closing in.

Arthur Augustus stopped and looked round him.

And as he did so, there was a trampling and crashing in the thickets, and half a dozen figures rushed upon him.

In a twinkling he was bowled over and dragged to the ground, and the inky-fingered fags were swarming over him.

"Got him!" yelled Wally.

"Bai Jove!"

"It isn't Figgins!" shouted Jameson.

"My hat!"

"It's your beasly brother!"

"My only Aunt Jane, so it is!"

D'Arcy writhed and gasped under the weight of the excited fags.

"Pway let me get up!" he panted. "You howwid young

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wascals, welsease me at once! Wally, I shall give you a feahful thwashin' if you do not immediately get off my chest! You are uttably wuinin' my waistcoat!"

"You howling ass!"

"You young wascal!"

"What do you mean by going sneaking about as if you were the hare?" demanded Wally wrathfully, as he moved off his brother's chest. "I took you for Figgins!"

"Weally, Wally, you could suahly nevah have mistaken my fighah for that of Figgins!"

"I couldn't see you, ass! I was following you by sound and tracking you. If I could have seen you I should have known that there was only one dummy at St. Jim's capable of going out scouting in a white shirt and high collar and a silk hat."

"Your language is uttably disrespectful!"



"Look out!" yelled Blake. But the warning came too late! Before the next moment it was torn from its place. Four splashes sounded.

"Oh, rats! It's a frost, you chaps!"

D'Arcy rose to his feet. The fags of the Third Form glowered at him. They had been disappointed, and they were annoyed.

Jameson picked up D'Arcy's hat.

"If you say wats to me, Wally," said Arthur Augustus, "I shall forget that you are my bwothah, and administrah a feahful thwashin'. I wegard you and your fwiends as a set of inky little weptiles."

"Oh, go and eat coke!" said D'Arcy minor disrespectfully. "I've a jolly good mind to tie you to a tree, you ass!"

"Weally, Wally—"

"You've led us on the wrong track, and now that rotter Figgins will be quite gone, or somebody else will have collared him."

"Well, here goes his topper, anyway!" said Jameson.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy shrieked.
"Give me my toppah at once, you disrespectful young boundahs!"

"Certainly!" grinned Jameson. "Here you are!"

And he punted the topper over to D'Arcy. Excepting that the toe of his boot went through the crown, it was not damaged.

D'Arcy caught his topper and looked at it speechlessly, and made a rush at Jameson. But the fags closed round him, and he was hurled back into the thickets, and then the Third-Formers rushed on into the wood.

Arthur Augustus regained his feet, but his enemies were gone, and the bugle of D'Arcy minor was ringing through the wood far away.

And the swell of St. Jim's, gasping for breath, sat down upon a knoll to brush his topper.



illy bumped on the plank near the end and the bump unsettled it, and
ounded in the water and four simultaneous yells rang over the trees!

CHAPTER 10.

A Ducking All Round!

"THERE he is!"

Jack Blake gave a sudden shout as he came out on the bank of the Feeder—the little stream that flowed through the heart of the wood. By the glimmer of sunny waters a figure was visible, trotting steadily along to the little plank bridge that crossed the Feeder in its narrowest part.

Blake, Herries, and Digby had lost the track, and Jack Blake was beginning to doubt whether it had been Figgins' track at all; but when he caught sight of the long-limbed junior that settled all doubts.

There was Figgy in the flesh, making for the plank, after crossing which the run to the ruined castle was a short and easy one through the wood.

Blake's eyes gleamed as he came out of the thickets and caught sight of Figgins, and he involuntarily shouted to his comrades.

It was not a cautious thing to do. Figgins heard the shout, as well as Herries and Dig, and he looked round. He caught sight of Blake, and was evidently surprised to find a pursuer so near at hand. He had been going at a trot, but now he quickened his pace, making a rapid run for the plank bridge.

"After him!" panted Dig.

The three School House juniors sprinted down the grassy, uneven bank of the Feeder. They knew that Figgins would remove the plank after crossing, and the stream was deep at this point, though narrow.

Figgins dashed off towards the plank, but suddenly he was seen to halt in dismay.

"Headed off!" yelled Blake, in delight.

Two figures had burst from the wood on to the bank of the stream, ahead of Figgins, and cutting him off from the plank by which he had intended to cross.

They were Kerruish and Reilly, and they caught sight of Figgins at once and dashed towards him.

"Arrah, and we've got him entirely!" gasped Reilly.

Figgins halted, his eyes gleaming.

Reilly and Kerruish were in front of him, and Blake, Herries, and Digby behind. The wood on his left was alive with pursuers, and on the right was the deep Feeder, and he was cut off from access to the plank bridge.

But it was only for a few seconds that Figgins hesitated. Then he turned to the stream and waded in.

"My hat, he's taken to the water!" exclaimed Blake. "Good old Figgins! It's a bit chilly this time of the year; but we'll have him yet!"

Figgins tramped through the stream gallantly. The water came with a swish over his knees, and then up to his waist, and in the middle it was up to his armpits. Then he drew to the other side, only his shoulders unwetted. He dragged himself through the rushes and scrambled ashore, and, turning round, waved his little Union Jack defiantly at the pursuers, and then disappeared among the trees.

"Faith, he's gone!" howled Reilly. "After him!"

And the Irish boy plunged recklessly into the stream. Kerruish, a little more prudent, crossed by the plank bridge, and the chums of Study No. 6 followed his example.

They were rushing into the wood on the other side, when a yell came from Reilly.

"Help, help!"

Jack Blake looked round.

Reilly had lost his footing in the bed of the stream, having inadvertently stepped into a hollow, and for a moment his head went under the water. It came up again, and the Irish junior, struggling to save himself, was borne down the stream by the current towards the plank bridge.

"Young ass!" growled Blake.

The plank bridge crossed the stream at not more than the elevation of a foot above the water. It was a broad, massive plank, sunk at either end in the deep mud and rushes. The juniors rushed to the plank to collar Reilly as soon as he could reach it.

The pursuit of Figgins was momentarily forgotten.

Reilly came down with a rush, and the four juniors on the plank were ready to clutch at him. But Reilly himself was clutching at the plank. He caught at it, and the current bumped him on it, with the natural result that it was dislodged.

"Look out!" yelled Blake.

The warning came too late!

Reilly had bumped on the plank near the end, and the bump unsettled it, and the next moment it was torn from its place.

Four splashes sounded in the water and four simultaneous yells rang over the trees.

Five juniors, clinging to the floating plank, went down the stream a dozen yards or more before they could get a footing, and when they scrambled out they were on the wrong side of the water.

Blake rubbed the water from his eyes. Herries lay in the grass and gasped. Digby gasped and sat up.

"Of all the howling idiots—" began Blake, with a withering look at the boy from Belfast.

"Faith, and you're right!" said Reilly. "Of all the howling idiots, I think you chaps take the cake! What were you all standing on the plank for, like a lot of geese in a row?"

"You—you— We were there to save you, you young ass!"

"Blessed if I can see how you were going to save me by shoving the plank over!"

"We didn't shove it over! You shoved it over!"

"Faith, and it wouldn't have gone over if you hadn't been standing on it!"

"We should have pulled you out if you'd only had sense enough not to bump against the plank."

"Sure, and it was your own fault entirely!"

"It's an ass you are, Reilly!" said Kerruish. "What did you go into the water at all for?"

"I went after that spalpeen Figgins!"

"Why didn't you cross by the plank?"

"Faith, and I never thought of that!"

"Oh, come on, kids!" said Blake. "We shall get dry running, I suppose. And we're not much wetter than Figgins, anyway."

"Faith, and you wouldn't be wet at all if you'd kept off the plank!"

"If you hadn't gone in the water—" began Kerruish.

"Faith, and I—"

"It's an ass you are!"

"I tell ye—"

"And I tell you—"

"Sure, and it's a thick ear you're looking for entirely!"

"Rats! I've got a good mind to shove you into the water again!"

"You couldn't do it!"

"Couldn't I?" shouted Kerruish. "I'll jolly soon show you!"

Blake, Herries, and Digby were replacing the plank. They crossed it again, leaving Reilly and Kerruish to argue the matter out to their satisfaction.

Blake's last glance back showed him the two juniors fighting close by the waterside, and as he looked they slipped in the rushes and splashed in the Feeder.

He lost sight of them as they were scrambling out. Wet as they were, the chums of Study No. 6 took up the trail with undiminished ardour. They had been very close on the track, but the time wasted in the Feeder had given Figgins a chance to get ahead—a chance of which the New House junior was certain to have availed himself.

"But he must have left a lot of wet behind him," said Blake, looking round carefully for tracks. "He must be dripping with water, you know, as much as we are. Look for that!"

"Here you are!" exclaimed Dig.

The wet footprints of Figgins were clear enough on the fallen-leaves.

The chums of the School House pressed forward eagerly. There was no doubt that they were on the track—the trail was too plain to be mistaken. Wherever Figgins had gone he had left the water track. It grew fainter as they proceeded, but by the time it failed them they were in sight of the slope that led up to the gateway of the ruined castle.

"Come on!" muttered Blake.

And without troubling any further about tracks he led the way at a run towards the castle. The solitude showed that they were the first of the hunters to reach it, but there was little doubt that Figgins had been there. Was he there still? It was very probable, for Blake was sure that he was not far behind, and it was likely enough that Figgins would stop for a few minutes' rest.

Blake made a sign of caution to his comrades. If Figgins was in the ruins, the best plan was to surprise him. The rules of the contest allowed him any amount of dodging, as long as a hand was not actually laid on his shoulder. Amid the rugged ruins of the ancient castle there was room for a hundred fugitives to dodge and twist, and, once given a start, Figgins might yet baffle his hunters.

The juniors ran on the thick grass of the track to the castle without a sound. The exercise and the sun helped to dry them, and they no longer squelched out water as they ran.

The huge stone gateway of the castle, with its crumpled and shattered arch, rose before them. On those ancient stones could still be seen the traces of the cannon shots that had battered down the castle and left it a wreck more than two hundred years before.

Blake, Herries, and Digby paused for breath, and then crept silently in at the shattered gateway. A faint sound reached their ears, and they grinned—it was the sound produced by a pair of hungry jaws hastily champing sandwiches.

They stopped, and, peering round the masonry, looked into the ruins. There was Figgins! He sat on a block of stone. The little Union Jack was planted in a prominent position on a block of masonry where it would immediately catch the eye of anyone entering the ruins.

Figgins was sitting near it, eating the sandwiches which had so thoughtfully been provided by Fatty Wynn.

"Got him!" murmured Blake.

But Figgins was on the watch. The School House juniors had to dash across a dozen yards of open space before they could reach him, and Figgins had the eye of a hawk. He certainly did not know that his hunters were so close at hand; but, nevertheless, it would not be easy to take him by surprise.

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"We'll separate!" muttered Blake. "I'll stay here and cut him off from the path; you two go one each way, and get in through the holes in the walls on either side of the boulder. Then when we make a rush—"

"But whose prisoner is he?"

"We'll toss for that afterwards."

"Good!"

And the three chums separated. Herries and Dig crept away silently. If the plan were carried out, there was not much chance for Figgins. But just then a piercing sound awoke every echo in the old castle.

Ta-ra-ra-ra-ta-a!

Figgins jammed the rest of his sandwiches into the pocket of his blazer and looked quickly round him. The next moment he had caught sight of Blake's shadow in the gateway, and was dashing away. The carefully laid scheme of the three chums had gone to nothing, owing to that unlucky bugle blast.

Blake gave a yell.

"Come on!"

And he dashed recklessly after Figgins.

There was no further use for caution. The race was now to the swift.

CHAPTER 11.

Cunning Figgins!

F IGGINS gave a quick look round as the three juniors dashed in from different directions. Then he sprang away from the ruins, clearing a fragment of ancient wall with a bound that a roe might have envied, and coming down on the other side with a clatter.

Blake, Herries, and Digby did not take the jump; they lacked the long legs of Figgins, and they had to scramble over. But Figgins did not lose an instant! He scrambled up another mass of the old wall, on the farther side of which lay the open hill.

Clutching at the thick tendrils of the ivy, Figgins dragged himself to the top.

True to the caution of a scout, he looked quickly over the wall before he showed himself on the outer side.

It was well that he did. Three youths were just emerging from the wood on that side of the castle, and Figgins recognised Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther. He crouched into the thick ivy, and lay low. It was only for a moment that the chums of the Shell were in sight. They passed beyond a mass of masonry, making their way round to the castle entrance, and Figgins breathed a deep breath of relief.

He swung himself from the ivy, and dropped on the outer side of the wall.

He was none too soon. The Fourth-Formers were already scrambling up the inner side, and in less than a minute more Jack Blake's grip would have been on him.

Although Figgins had let himself down part of the way by means of the ivy, it was a good drop, and he rolled over on the ground.

He was up again in an instant and darting away. Into the woods in the direction of St. Jim's he did not dare to venture. They were alive with belated hunters who had not yet reached the old castle.

His return had to be by a different route, or he would infallibly be captured. He had rested only two or three minutes at the castle, but those two or three minutes seemed likely to cost him dear.

He ran down the slope, and there were three distinct thuds on the earth behind him as the chums of the Fourth dropped from the wall after him.

Blake gave a shout:

"There he goes!"

The shout reached the ears of the Terrible Three, who were entering the ruins. Tom Merry quickened his pace. He caught sight of the little flag planted by Figgins, and knew that Figg had been and gone.

He dashed on after Blake, and in a few moments the chums of the Shell were panting on behind the Fourth-Formers. A minute later and Wally and his dusty band entered the castle, and Wally made the ruins ring with blasts on his bugle. And then, minute after minute, dusty and weary trackers came in, in twos and threes, and most of them stopped in the castle to rest before resuming the chase; but there were some who did not rest.

Blake was dashing on in full sight of Figgins now. On this side of the castle the hill was thinly wooded, and the lanky figure of the New House junior was visible almost all the time as he ran on. It was a case of sprinting now.

Blake put on speed. Herries dropped behind, but Dig kept pace with his chief. There was a rapid patter of feet behind them, and Tom Merry came on gallantly, and was quickly running neck and neck with Blake.

Blake gave him a sidelong glance. But he had no breath for speaking. He wanted it all for the race.

Figgins was keeping his distance. He covered the hill-side and reached the wood at the bottom of the hill, which lay in a wide sweep towards the Wayland road. Blake snapped his teeth as the lanky figure disappeared into the trees. He had hoped to settle the matter there and then by a burst of speed, but Figgy's long legs stood him in good stead at the critical moment.

"The boulder!" gasped Blake. "We'll have him yet!" The juniors rushed into the wood. But here the thick undergrowth hid Figgins from view, and speed was no longer useful. Had Figgins kept on at a run, the crackling of the underwoods would have been a sufficient guide to his pursuers. But not a sound came to their anxious ears. Figgins was evidently adopting a more cautious method. It was pretty certain that he was close at hand. But where?

Blake listened for a few moments, and then gave that up and looked for tracks.

The autumn winds had carpeted the ground with leaves, and in those seldom trodden recesses the tracks were not difficult to find. A call from Tom Merry showed that he had picked up Figgins' trail. He followed it swiftly, and the other juniors followed him.

"We'll have him now!" muttered Lowther. "He can't be far off!"

"The track's plain enough in these leaves."

"By Jove, it's awfully plain!" said Blake. "Figgins must be fagged; he seems to have let his trotters come down like hammers."

"Looks like it!"

The track was indeed easy. The footmarks were deeply stamped into the beds of fallen and rotting leaves, and the juniors could have followed them almost by touch, so deeply imprinted were they. They hurried on triumphantly, but all of a sudden Tom Merry halted with an exclamation. The juniors, who were following him quickly in single file, halted, too, bumping into one another.

"Go on!" called out Blake. "What on earth are you stopping for? This isn't a time to go to sleep, Tom Merry!"

"Why don't you follow the track?" exclaimed Digby.

"There isn't any more track!"

"What?"

"I've come to the end!"

"Oh, rot!" said Blake. "Let me look!"

He looked, but he had to admit that Tom Merry was right. The deeply printed track ended in a dense thicket. Up to the thicket it was plainly marked. On the other side there was no track at all. It was evident that Figgins had gone no farther. The juniors looked at one another in blank amazement. There was no large tree close at hand which Figgins could have climbed. Where was he?

"My only hat!" said Blake mystified. "He can't have vanished into thin air, I suppose?"

Tom Merry made a grimace.

"I think I have it! We ought to have guessed it from the tracks."

"What do you mean?"

"He's gone back the way he came."

"There's no back tracks."

"No; don't you see, it's a scouting dodge? He's gone back backwards, treading in his own tracks—walking backwards the way he came," said Tom Merry. "That prevented him making any more tracks, and made the old ones deeper."

"My hat! The deep beast!"

"He was only a few minutes ahead of us, so he can't have gone far," said Tom Merry. "He went backwards along the track a little way, and then I imagine he pulled himself into a tree, and got off the track without making any fresh sign. It's a scouting dodge, but I didn't look for it in Figgins."

"The artful dodger! Let's get back and look!"

They followed the trail back again, scanning the ground on either side for traces of the spot where Figgins had left the trail. But traces could not be found. There was no fresh track in the wood.

It was pretty clear that Tom Merry's surmise was correct. Figgins, standing in his tracks, had pulled himself up from the ground to a low branch, and had clambered through the trees for some distance before descending to the ground again.

Baffled as they were, the juniors could not help grinning at the ingenuity of the redoubtable Figgins.

(Continued on page 19.)



Goal !!!

The score's now even, 2 all . . . the whistle blown for half-time. Half-time for a brief rest and a refresher. That means Wrigley's . . . of course. Nothing like a piece of Wrigley's to refresh you during the game. It keeps the mouth fresh . . . makes you feel alert. Wrigley's helps the digestion, too, and cleanses the teeth. Use it "after every meal."

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E.M. 33.

NOTES AND NEWS FROM—



Address all letters: The Editor, The GEM, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

HALLO, chums! Next week we shall all be frisking about with fireworks, thanks to that unfortunate plotter of bygone days who rejoiced in the name of Guy Fawkes. He didn't get much fun out of his "big bang," but we are not going to complain. To celebrate the occasion I am publishing a special "November Fifth" story dealing with Tom Merry & Co. It goes with a big bang, you can bet your life. Look out for this title,

"THE GUYS OF ST. JIM'S!"

and stand by for laughs—of the explosive variety. In addition there will be more chapters of

"THE LOST LEGION!"

featuring Jim, Phil, Rex, and Colonel K. which you simply must not miss. Of course Potts the Office Boy will be "on parade," whilst to round off the programme you will find another page of news. Order your copy of the GEM early—it's a regular jewel of a number!

A BLIND FOR SHOP RAIDERS!

Crash! The smash-and-grabber was at his fell work. The thick plate-glass of the expensive-looking jewellery shop shivered under the onslaught of his heavy hammer. Then came the surprise. From the top of the window suddenly whirled a blind, cutting off the startled raider's view of the precious stones he coveted. At the same time alarm bells rang out on all sides. Such is the new device used by many shopkeepers. The blind—it is made of strong linen and actuates on a super-strong spring—is wired to the window. Directly the glass of the window is broken it whirls downward with astonishing speed. The big idea behind this is to delay would-be raiders, who ordinarily rely on the speed of their activities to ensure success. To get at his prize the raider would first have to cut through the blind—and all the time the alarm bells would be ringing. Would he linger on the spot? Not likely; he'd bolt for his life!

ANNUALS FOR ALL!

Don't forget to have a good look at the following Annuals when you visit your newsagent next time. They cover a wide range of taste, and each one is personally recommended by your Editor. The "Holiday Annual" (price six shillings), "The Popular Book of Boys' Stories" (price two shillings and sixpence), "The Modern Boy's Annual" (price six shillings), "The New Zoo Annual" (price six shillings), "The

Hobby Annual" (price six shillings), "The Modern Boy's Book of Motors, Ships, and Engines" (price seven shillings and sixpence). A good book is a good pal at all times. The bumper books mentioned above will provide you with hours and hours of interesting reading. Have a look at them, anyway!

LUCKY THREEPENNY BITS!

He was a Warwickshire farm labourer, getting on in years, but his big ambition was to see a bit of the world and enjoy a good holiday before, to use his own words, he snuffed it. Accordingly he one day arrived at the offices of a famous shipping concern, who specialise in Mediterranean cruises, and dumped down a bag which jingled mightily. When the bag was opened (in the style of the nursery rhyme) there was revealed a collection of threepenny pieces—1,080 to be precise—which represented twenty years' savings. The old chap got his holiday, and who shall say he didn't deserve it!

THE UGLY DUCKLING!

There are "handsome" stamps, there are ugly ones. Ask those people who quite recently held a "Beauty Contest" in which postage stamps of all types, shapes, and nationality were exhibited. And one of the "ugly" ones—so ugly in fact that the authorities wouldn't show it, was the most valuable stamp in the world—the two-cent British Guiana, which is reckoned to be worth £8,600.

BANDITS—HOLD THIS ONE!

"Stick 'em up!" He was your modern road bandit, complete with pistol, and he thought he'd found an easy victim when he stopped the lonely motorist on a still more lonely road one dark night. The motorist slowly obliged—up went his hands above his head. But at the same time his foot touched a pedal, unobserved by the bandit. BANG! It was an earsplitting report that suddenly shattered the silence of the night and, incidentally, the nerve of the bandit. Up into the darkened heavens screamed a fiery rocket, telling the world and all the police in the vicinity that a bandit was at his nefarious work again. Did the bandit bolt? You bet he did—and how? This isn't exactly a true story, but it is told to supply a "background" to the new invention two ingenious men have just completed. If it is adopted this rocket device will soon give newspaper men an apt alliterative headline in **BIG BANG BEATS BAD BANDITS**. This special

rocket is wired to the car's ordinary electrical equipment, whilst the rocket itself is concealed on the roof of the car. Not a bad "SOS" method, what?

HEARD THIS ONE?

Lecturer: "Trees play an important part in the heating of the atmosphere." Small Listener: "Yes, sir, I know. The birch has warmed me up many a time."

WOULD YOU BELIEVE IT?

Five years ago a Reading man discovered that his silver cigarette case had been "lifted" from his pocket. Less than a month ago the case in question was mysteriously returned to him, complete with the same cigarettes, presumably, that had been inside it when the sneak-thief was tempted and fell.

THE LIFTING EYEBROW!

If you see a number of your elder brothers and sisters performing facial contortions, don't get alarmed. Possibly they have read the announcement a certain film magnate made a short while ago. According to him a potential film star must be able to lift one eyebrow whilst the other eyebrow remains perfectly stationary. This is what he calls facial mobility. Since that announcement appeared I personally have seen many a film fan doing these strange facial contortions; and it's surprising how difficult the "eyebrow lift" is. Try it in front of a mirror!

THE BABY SUBMARINE.

It's only eighteen feet long, weighs ten tons, and is provided with wheels. According to its inventor it will be invaluable in the collecting of oysters from the sea bed, or better still in recovering sunken wealth. This baby sub has been christened the "Explorer," and it is sufficiently large and safe to carry a crew of six. What next?

FREE GIFTS!

Are you collecting the amazing picture stamps that are being presented FREE with every copy of our companion papers—"Ranger," "Magnet," and "Modern Boy"? If not, you are missing the treat of the year. These coloured picture-stamps depict Roughriders, Locomotives, Aeroplanes, Ships, Dogs, and the Art of Self-defence. The complete set numbers 144 Stamps—twenty-four superb stamps being devoted to each subject. If you are interested, get a copy of the above named boys' papers this week. Apart from the super stamps they represent the best value in twopenny boys' books it is possible to find.

HE SOLD HIS HEAD—TWICE!

In 1904 Datas, the famous memory man who can tell you the date of any event, sold his head to four American doctors for £10,000! But he outlived all the four, and so his head became his own property once more. Now he has sold it again on the hire-purchase system! He is to receive £1,000 down and £99 a quarter for life. The doctors who have made this deal want to discover the secret of his amazing memory by analysing his brain—when he is dead, of course! Considering that he makes his living by performing feats of memory on the stage, Datas must have just about the most valuable head in the world—though to me mine is worth more than that of anyone else!

YOUR EDITOR.

BOY SCOUTS OF ST. JIM'S!

(Continued from page 17.)

"The only thing is to hunt for the tracks," said Blake. "Let's get to work."

But it was a long task. The wood was thick, and in some places the ground was hard, and bore little sign. It was always possible, too, that Figgins was concealed in the thick branches of one of the trees, and had made no fresh tracks at all. Half an hour passed by, and the number of trackers was increased by those who had rested in the old castle and then taken up the trail again.

Kerr and Fatty Wynn arrived on the scene, and Gore and Norton and Smith. Then came D'Arcy minor and his band. The Third-Formers were now reduced in number. Half of them had dropped off before the ruins were reached. Half of the remainder had stayed there, too fagged to go farther. Of those who still followed D'Arcy minor, most were lagging behind at various distances. They were realising that a race with Upper Form fellows was a little above their weight. But Wally was as resolute as ever.

With half a dozen companions he was still well to the fore, and he arrived on the scene, breathless but undaunted, while Tom Merry and his companions were still searching for the vanished Figgins.

"Blessed if I'm going to waste time!" said Wally decidedly. "Those chaps won't find the trail in a month of Sundays! Let's go on!"

"Yes; but where?" asked Jameson.

"We'll have a run up the Wayland road. Figgins is certain to go that way and cut across the moor among the chalk pits home. We can get the quickest cut to the moor, and perhaps nail him there."

"Right-ho!" said the infants.

And the Third Form band dashed off.

Tom Merry had heard the sapient remarks of D'Arcy minor, and he rose from his examination of the trackless ground.

"There's something in that," he remarked. "If we waste much more time here, Figgins will be home before we've started."

"Come on, then," said Blake, starting off. The same thought had occurred to him.

The juniors were soon streaming away after Tom Merry, only Fatty Wynn remaining sitting on a knoll, eating a pork pie he had extracted from his jacket pocket.

Kerr waved his hand to him excitedly.

"Come on, Fatty!"

"Wait a minute, Kerr. I'm so fearfully hungry, I must have a feed before I start. I've got another pork pie here, if you'd like—"

"Rats!" said Kerr, and he dashed away after the rest.

Fatty Wynn gazed after him for a moment doubtfully, and then recommenced his pork pie.

"Hang it all!" he murmured. "I must have some grub! No good fainting by the way, and giving them the job of carrying me home. I must finish the pie, and I may as well have the other, as Kerr wouldn't stop."

And he had the other.

CHAPTER 12.

Very Near It!

TOM MERRY came out of the wood on the Wayland road. Leaving the high road some distance from the market town, the hero of the Shell followed the path to the moor, Lowther and Manners keeping pace with him in a steady trot.

Blake & Co. had taken a different track, but a good many juniors were streaming on in the wake of the Terrible Three. The moor was one of the loneliest places in the country, and very dangerous after dark, owing to the existence of numerous pits from which chalk had been taken in past times, and which mostly remained without even a fence to guard the sudden precipices.

"There's a short cut over the moor," Tom Merry remarked. "I don't know whether Figgins knows it. I discovered it for myself, and if Figgy doesn't know it, it will give us a good chance of getting level."

Monty Lowther chuckled.

"Good! Blake's gone round through the wood, but he'll have no chance."

"I fancy not. We shall be in at the death, if anybody is."

"Or that young boulder Wally," grinned Lowther. "He's a chap for sticking to it. He's ahead of us now."

"He can keep ahead. He's passed the spot where the short cut leaves the track."

At a spot where the rugged moor seemed to be delved on all sides with the dangerous pits, Tom Merry left the beaten track. Lowther and Manners followed him without question, but the rest of the juniors behind him halted.

"You're going wrong!" bawled Gore. "You're off the track!"

The Terrible Three deigned no reply, but kept on along the verge of a yawning gap in the earth. The juniors hesitated a short time, and then went on, following the beaten track.

Tom Merry laughed as he looked back.

"They think we're losing ourselves," he remarked.

"Are you sure you're not?" said Lowther, with a rather uneasy glance round at the wild and desolate moor, russet in the setting sun. "Looks a perfect wilderness to me."

"It's all right. I've been over the track before. A shepherd chap showed it to me."

"Well, if you're sure—"

"Of course I'm sure! Hallo! If that isn't young Wally!"

The hero of the Third had evidently retraced his steps, for he was pounding along now behind the Terrible Three. Jameson and Curly Gibson were following him, with panting breath and crimson faces. The Terrible Three kept on at a steady trot, a pace that covered the ground pretty quickly without fagging them, but which put the Third-Formers to their biggest efforts to equal.

D'Arcy minor came fagging up breathlessly.

"I say, Tom Merry!" he gasped.

"Hallo, kid!"

"Aren't you going off the track, or is this a short cut?"

"Short cut."

"Where does it bring you out?"

"Close by the pine wood near Rylcombe."

"Good! The regular track takes you to the pine wood if you follow it far enough."

"Exactly!"

"Sure this is a short cut, or is it some of your rot?" asked D'Arcy minor.

"I haven't time to box your ears now—"

"Jolly lucky for you, as I haven't time to punch your nose, either."

Tom Merry laughed, and ran on. Wally fell back a pace or two, and allowed his perspiring companions to get level. The Third-Former's face was glowing with exertion and satisfaction.

"It's a short cut," he said. "We shall manage all right, if we don't fall into the chalk pits, and if we don't give in."

"Go hon!" gasped Jameson.

"I—I can't stick it out any longer," said Curly Gibson, whose heart was pounding against his ribs like a hammer.

"I—I shall have to rest."

"Oh, keep on!"

"I can't run."

"Crawl, then!"

D'Arcy minor dashed on. Jameson, heavy-footed but determined, plodded on steadily only a pace or two behind. But Curly Gibson was done. He dropped upon a mound of chalk, and remained there, gasping. The Terrible Three were well ahead of D'Arcy minor now. But Wally was sticking it out grimly. If he were not in at the death, he did not mean to be far behind.

The short cut led through dangerous ground, but it saved more than a mile of difficult country. The spire of Rylcombe Church rose to view far away to the left against the setting sun, and ahead of the Terrible Three were the shady recesses and sweet-scented glades of the pine-wood. They ran on under the trees, and reached the spot where the beaten track across the moor joined the footpath through the wood.

There at last they halted, pretty well spent with the long and hard run.

Tom Merry dropped on his knees and examined the ground.

"Has Figgins passed?" he said. "He had a jolly good start of us, I think, but he had an extra mile of the most difficult running country in Sussex. I'm rather inclined to believe that we've headed him off."

"Better keep out of sight, then, in case he comes along!" exclaimed Monty Lowther, looking along the track towards the hazy moor.

"Good! You two get into cover while I look for tracks."

Manners and Lowther drew into the shade of the pine-wood. Tom Merry searched for tracks, but there was nothing to indicate that Figgins had passed that way. Tom Merry had a mental picture of Figgy's footprint. There were a good many footprints here, but most of them hazy and indistinct. Whether Figgy's was among them he could not tell for certain, but he thought not.

He rose to his feet, and joined Manners and Lowther in cover. The chums of the Shell were breathing very hard.

"I don't think he's passed," said Tom Merry. "I really think he hasn't had time to get ahead of us, seeing how

much we've gained. And there's another point. You see how dusty our boots are from the moor—chalky dust."

"Yes, rather! But what—"

"Look here! We're leaving dusty, white marks in the grass. Well, Figgy has come the same way, and he's had more of the chalk. If he had passed there would be some sign of it."

"My hat! You would make a scout, and no mistake, Tommy!" said Lowther admiringly. "I didn't think of that; but you're quite right."

"Good!" said Manners. "Figgy hasn't passed, and if we lay for him here, he's a gone coon."

"So I believe. Let's have a rest."

"He might leave the track," said Lowther dubiously, as he sank down with his back against a tree trunk. "If he left the track five minutes from here, he could turn off to the left and get into Rylcombe."

"So he would if he knew we were ahead of him; but he thinks he's got a clear course. He won't go home through Rylcombe if he can help it. The place will be swarming with our fellows who have come back direct from the castle. They'll be all over Rylcombe and the lane up to St. Jim's."

"I suppose so."

"Figgy would be snapped up in a tick if he went that way. I think we're pretty sure of him here."

"Well, we shall soon see."

The chums of the Shell were glad of the rest. But it did not last many minutes. There was a sound of pounding feet on the path, and they looked out from the trees to see the lanky form of Figgins approaching their hiding-place from the direction of the moor.

Tom Merry's deductions had been exactly correct.

Figgins was coming on, without a suspicion that the Terrible Three were ahead of him, and was running directly into the ambush.

Tom Merry laughed quietly.

"Stand ready, you chaps! We shall have to settle afterwards whose prisoner he is."

"Right-ho!"

With bated breath the Terrible Three stood, ready to rush out into the path the moment Figgins should pass. From the straggling bushes which hid the short cut across the moor came a sudden sound, piercing through the air.

Ta-ra-ra-ra-ta-a!

It was the note of Wally's bugle.

Figgins stopped like a stag suddenly startled by the horn of the hunter, and without a second's pause swung round and ran back the way he had come.

The bugle note was quite enough to warn him that there were enemies ahead, and that he had been cut off from St. Jim's in that direction.

Tom Merry was speechless for a moment. The prize was almost within his grasp, when that unlucky bugle note had ruined everything; and Figgins, who was still some twenty yards from the ambush when he received the warning, had a good start in his fresh run.

"The—the young villain!" gasped Tom Merry. "Come on, run for it!"

Wally came panting up, bugle in hand. Jameson was lagging far behind, and it was for his benefit that the blast had been blown.

"Seen him?" gasped Wally.

For reply, Monty Lowther seized him by the collar and the back of his waistband and tossed him bodily, bugle and all, into a prickly bush. Wally woke the echoes of the pine-wood with his yells, while the Terrible Three, a little relieved in their feelings by the handling of Wally, resumed the chase.

CHAPTER 13.

Still Running!

F IGGINS had been warned only just in time. But his start was again a good one, and he made the most of it.

He had had a long run, but the effect seemed to be little upon his slim, muscular frame. He was breathing deeply and steadily as he turned from the path to the pine-wood and struck off to the left, with the spire of Rylcombe Church rising into the sunset before him.

A burst of speed, which taxed his endurance, but carried him well ahead, brought him upon the lane leading to the high road; and there, for the first time, he paused and looked back. The lane behind him was winding, and, looking through a gap in the hedge, he saw the ground he had passed over, and saw the forms of the chums of the Shell coming steadily on. Far behind them were two smaller figures.

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther had been left a little behind by Figgy's burst, but they were coming on at a pace that promised to make up for lost ground. Their rest, brief as it was, had refreshed them, and Figgins was keen enough to see that Tom, at least, was fresher than himself.

The New House junior ran grimly on, but as he ran he revolved in his mind various plans for circumventing his pursuers. He had been forced to rely upon his speed, but it was by stout strategy, that he hoped to escape. In a race to the gates of St. Jim's Tom Merry would have him, even if he were not stopped on the road, as he was pretty certain to be. He came to the end of the lane, and turned into the high road towards Rylcombe, and at the same moment a butcher's cart came dashing by, going towards the village.

Figgins' eyes gleamed with hope. Any strategy was permitted to a scout, and if he could get a lift it might be the saving of him, and was quite within the rules of the contest.

He ran out into the road and threw up his hand. The butcher, who happened to be the local tradesman who supplied St. Jim's, stopped at once.

"Can you give me a lift?" panted Figgins.

The butcher looked at him curiously. Figgins was damp all over, and the dust had clung to the damp of his clothes. His boots and stockings were chalky, his face red and perspiring. He looked as if he had "been through it" with a vengeance.

"Jump in!" said the butcher.

Figgins jumped in, and the cart dashed on. Tom Merry came bounding out of the lane a minute later, and gazed after the disappearing cart with feelings too deep for words. Figgins looked back from the cart and waved his cap.

"Row with the Grammar School kids?" asked the butcher, who knew the little ways of the St. Jim's juniors very well.

"Oh, no; scouting!" said Figgins. "Boy scouts, you know."

"Oh, I see! Shall I take you right on into the village?"

"Oh, no! The fellows are bound to be there, watching for me. I've got to get in somehow without being collared. I can't go through Rylcombe. It's allowed to gain any kind of information from natives of the country," continued Figgins. "Can you give me a tip, Mr. Simmons?"

The good-natured butcher grinned.

"They're behind you and in front," he remarked. "What about getting down to the Rhyll and having a boat? You could pull to the boathouse at the school and out in there."

"My hat! What a ripping idea!"



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Utterly spent, Figgins clung to the wall, for the moment unable to pull himself over. Tom Merry came up, almost reeling with fatigue, but grimly determined. Figgins strove to drag himself up, but a strong hand closed on his ankle. "Got you!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Then I'll drop you at Water Lane."

"Thanks, awfully! I'll do them yet."

Water Lane was a rutty little path that led down from the road to the banks of the Rhyl, the river that flowed under Rylcombe Bridge and past the grounds of St Jim's.

Figgins would have to pull against the current to get home, but he was a powerful oarsman. Besides, although he was getting tired in his legs, his arms were as fresh as ever. The butcher drew up at the end of Water Lane, and Figgins, thanking him warmly, dropped into the road and disappeared down the narrow path. The butcher drove on into Rylcombe, and Figgins hurried down to the river.

In a couple of minutes the junior came out on the towing-path, and turned along in the direction of St. Jim's. Unless someone suspected his design, there was likely to be no one to spot him till he drew near the village bridge. There he was pretty certain to be seen, and there he would have to have a boat, if he was to escape. He ran lightly along the towing-path, looking out for a craft. In scouting among the enemy Figgins felt that he could not afford to stand upon ceremony. He would have to borrow a boat and find the owner afterwards and compensate him.

A sudden exclamation startled him as he came in sight of the bridge.

"Bai Jove! It's Figgins!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy jammed his eyeglass into his eye and stared at Figgins.

Figgins halted, and stared at Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Bai Jove! It's weally Figgins!"

"My hat!" muttered Figgins.

He was nonplussed for the moment. To go on meant capture, for capture merely consisted of being tapped on the shoulder, and there was no room to dodge in the narrow rowing-path. To turn back was as bad, for he knew that one at least of his pursuers would have turned down Water Lane, even if the others went on to the village.

"Fancy meetin' you!" said D'Arcy. "I came along here for a stwoll, aftah leavin' the othahs."

"Oh, did you?" said Figgins.

He rather wondered that D'Arcy did not advance upon him, tap him on the shoulder, and claim him as a prisoner. In the desperate hope of getting out of his fix, he was willing to parley and gain time.

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy! Blake tweated me, with shockin' wudeness, and I am afwaid that I can no longer wegard him as a fiwend. Hewwies was vewy wude, too. Dig was not wude, but he laughed when they bumped me into the bush. He did weally."

"Too bad!" said Figgins.

"Yaas, you see, it wasn't tweatin' me with pwopah respect. That's weally why I gave up the chase. I was tweated with gweat disrespect by some young wottahs in the Third Form, too. They bowled me ovah, thinkin' I was you."

"Did they really?"

"Yaas, wathah; Of course. I wemonstated. I took it as an insult."

Figgins' eyes gleamed.

"But they jumped on me without seein' me, you see," explained D'Arcy. "That accounts for it. Wally didn't weally mean to hurt my feelings when he said that he had mistaken me for you."

"Well, Gussy, you've captured me," said Figgins grimly. "But it's an excellent opportunity for me to give you a hiding for your cheek."

"I weally do not compwehend," said D'Arcy. "I have not captuathed you, deah boy."

"Ass! You've only got to tap me on the shoulder. I can hear one of the rotters behind me, so it's all up!" said Figgins.

"But I'm out of it, deah boy. I haven't been to the wuined castle, and accordin' to the wules I should have to follow you there before I could captuath you."

Figgins started.

"You—you haven't been to the castle!" he exclaimed. "Then I can't be captured by you. You young ass, why didn't you say so before?"

"You didn't ask me, deah boy."

Figgins burst into a laugh.

"Well, I didn't. Let's get by. I'll let you off that hiding."

He ran, and D'Arcy ran after him excitedly.

"Figgins! I say, Figgins! Pway wait a moment! It is important."

Figgins looked back.

"What is it—quick?"

"You have spoken of a hidin'. I wish you to fully undahstand that, undah any circes whatever, I should have uttally wufused to weceive anythin' of the sort, and that I should, on the contwawy, have given you a feahful thwashin'—"

But Figgins was not listening. He was sprinting on again, and D'Arcy was left to discourse to the towing-path and the river. The swell of St. Jim's was startled the next minute by a heavy clap on the shoulder. He swung round with a jump, to see Tom Merry. The hero of the Shell was panting for breath.

"Was that Figgins, Gussy—"

"I weally wish you would not stwike me on the shouldah in that extremely wude and wuff mannah, Tom Mewwy."

"Was that Figgins?"

"It disturbs my nerves, and, in fact, thwows me into quite a fluttah, to say nothin' of the fact that you have wumped my jacket."

"Was that Figgins?" bawled Tom Merry.

"I disappwove of this wuff method of gweetin' absolutely, and I wefuse—"

D'Arcy sat down in the grass as the indignant junior gave him a push on the chest, and Tom Merry raced on without waiting for his question to be answered. He had heard voices as he rounded a bend in the towing-path, and thought that he recognised the tones of Figgins. He dashed on, and rounded another bend, and came in sight of Figgins, and stopped, with an exclamation of dismay.

Figgins was casting off the painter of a small boat moored to the bank. He cast loose, jumped in, and picked up an oar as Tom Merry came racing on.

Figgins saw him and looked up with a grin.

A dozen yards only separated them as Figgins shoved off with the oar, and the little skiff went dancing out upon the glimmering waters of the Rhyl.

Tom Merry halted on the bank, breathless, exasperated. A dozen feet of deep water separated him from the boat, and Figgins waved his hand mockingly. Then he settled down to his oars and pulled up-stream.

CHAPTER 14.

In at the Death!

TOM MERRY stared after Figgins in a state of exasperation. It was too bad, when he had fairly run the hare down, to be baffled like this at the last moment.

But he did not give in yet. The race would not end until Figgins was safe home at St. Jim's, captured or uncaptured.

Tom Merry went off along the towing-path. Figgins was pulling against the current, and it was quite easy for Tom Merry to keep pace on the bank, so long as the path was clear. There was a yell from Rylcombe Bridge as Figgins pulled underneath it. The bridge and the road were crowded with fellows returning that way from the old castle.

Kerr and Gore, and Reilly and Kerruish, clambered on the parapet, and yelled at the scout below, and Mellish brought his peashooter into play. But Figgins did not even heed. He pulled on steadily, while some of the fellows scrambled round to the bank to take up the pursuit on the towing-path.

Tom Merry followed the path under the bridge, and kept on steadily. Past the bridge the wood came in sight which extended along the Rhyl as far as the grounds of St. Jim's, and then the boathouse of Rylcombe Grammar School.

Tom Merry set his teeth and prepared for a desperate dash. If there were any of the Grammarians near the boathouse he knew that he would not be allowed to pass easily.

And fortunately for Figgins—unfortunately for his pursuer—the Grammarians were there. Three youths in Grammar School caps had put up a boat, and were carrying the oars ashore, when they caught sight of Tom Merry.

"Look out!" shouted Monk. "Collar him!"

Monk, Lane, and Carboy, the three Grammarians, dropped the oars and made a dash at Tom Merry. They did not waste time in words. The rivalry between the two schools was keen, and led to action, not to words, when the rivals met.

Tom Merry halted.

Figgins pulled steadily on towards St. Jim's.

Only for a moment did Tom Merry stand hesitating on the towing-path. To allow himself to be collared by the Grammarians would be the end of his chase. They blocked the way, and he took the only possible course. He left the towing-path, and made for Rylcombe Lane through the wood.

The Grammarians, not in the least understanding how

THE GUYS of ST. JIM'S!



Please to remember the Fifth of November.

"The Guys of St Jim's!"
is a wow!

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WHIZ! BANG!

Next Wednesday's Yarn of Tom Merry & Co. is a

WINNER!

IT GOES WITH A BANG!

Whatever you do, don't miss the Fifth of November at St. Jim's! Take a look at the cover shown alongside in miniature!

Order your copy now and make sure of getting it! Don't Delay!

matters stood, but seeing that the "Saint" was fleeing, ran after him with gleeful shouts.

Figgins chuckled as he rowed on towards St. Jim's.

Tom Merry went along the track through the wood as if he had been on the cinder-path. The Grammarians followed him for a quarter of a mile or more, but Tom Merry gradually outdistanced them, and at last Monk and his comrades gave it up.

Tom Merry did not slacken his pace. He had to go a long way round now to intercept Figgins, and he could not afford to lose a second.

He left the footpath, and followed a beaten track which he knew well, which would lead him to the road within a few minutes of the gates of St. Jim's. If he were in time he would yet be able to intercept Figgins, who would be bound to land at the boathouse and come up the path to the school.

He came out into the road. A dozen or more juniors were in sight, but they were all fellows who had given up the chase before reaching the castle, and so were out of it. Tom Merry had had the longest run, but he was home before anyone who had returned directly from the turning-point.

The hero of the Shell stopped to breathe as he came into the road. He was in sight of the gates of St. Jim's now, and he saw the figures of Ferrers Locke and the colonel standing there.

That was enough to tell him that Figgins was not yet home.

He started down the road, when there was a sudden clatter of hoofs and a yell of warning. Tom Merry sprang aside as a donkey clattered by with a youth clinging to its bare back, and urging it on with his heels. The donkey reared, and D'Arcy minor slid from its back and joined Tom Merry breathlessly.

"Got him?" he gasped.

Tom Merry stared at him.

"I got a lift," explained D'Arcy minor, with a chuckle. "I found that donkey grazing in a field beside the road, and I commandeered him. Bless if I know whom he belongs to, but I dare say he'll find his way home. Jolly lucky for me I learned to ride bareback at Eastwood, wasn't it?"

"You reckless young bouncer!"

"Have you got him?"

"No, I haven't. He's not in yet."

"Good! Then I'm in at the finish. I told you the Third Form meant business this time, my pippin!"

"Did you? I don't remember."

"Well, if I didn't tell you, I thought it," grinned Wally.

"I'm in at the death! My only Aunt Jane! I think Figgys must be pretty nearly dead by this time. Where is he?"

Tom Merry did not reply. He dashed forward as a distant footstep caught his ear. If he did not cut Figgins off from the school, the hare would baffle him yet.

Wally dashed after him.

The hero of the Third meant to be, as he expressed it, in at the death.

A path ran down from the gates of St. Jim's to the river, where the school boathouse stood. Figgins was coming up the path, having left his skiff at the boathouse. The breathless fugitive was within three minutes from home; but there was a lion in the path—in the shape of Tom Merry.

"There he is!" suddenly yelled Wally.

There he was—for a second—but there he was not, the next. Figgins had caught sight of Tom Merry, heading him off from St. Jim's, and in a second he had dashed off in a new direction, without pausing a moment. Leaving the path, he ran across the fields, and Tom Merry plunged through a gap in the hedge and cut across to intercept him.

Wally made a rush to keep up with him; but the Third-Former was quite spent. He reeled as he plunged through the ditch and sank into a bed of fern, and sat there gasping.

"My only Aunt Jane!" gasped D'Arcy minor. "I'm done!"

A strong hand plucked him from the ditch and set him on his feet. It was that of the colonel, who looked at him with an approving smile.

Ferrers Locke patted him on the shoulder.

"Well done, my lad; you've stuck it out well!"

"Not so bad!" panted Wally. "In at the death, you know; only one other chap in front! Not so bad!"

The detective strained his eyes after Figgins. The New House junior, suddenly cut off from his goal, had taken to the fields. He gained some distance by crossing a wide, full ditch, and then tossing the plank into the water.

Tom Merry lost a minute in going round, and Figgins made the most of it. He could not make for the gates of the school, for D'Arcy minor was there, ready to collar him if he appeared. Yet he was not "home" unless he was within the walls of St. Jim's.

He ran on swiftly, though now with labouring breath. The long struggle was telling on him, as it was upon Tom Merry. But Figgins was always game to the finish. There was a spot where the wall had many a time been crossed by the juniors after locking up.

From the inside the crossing was easy, by means of the ivy and a slanting oak-tree near the wall. From the outside, the climb was possible to only few and then was very difficult. But Figgins had no other chance.

He came out of the fields into the road again, and made for the well-known place, and Tom Merry, guessing his intention, put on a spurt to overtake him. Each of the juniors put his last ounce into that last desperate effort.

Figgins came up to the wall. There was no time to think of cautious climbing—the footsteps of the pursuer were too close behind.

He came on gallantly, and, without stopping, made a spring, and his hands clasped in a grip on the top of the wall.

Only one effort more was required to drag his legs over; to roll over the wall and drop down on the inside, the victor in the long contest.

But the spring had pumped him out, and he hung to the wall, utterly spent; without the strength to move a finger, let alone to pull himself up.

It was only for a few seconds, but those few seconds were all that Tom Merry required. He came up, almost reeling in his run with fatigue, but grimly determined.

Figgins strove to drag himself up, but a strong hand closed on his ankle.

"Got you!" gasped Tom Merry.

Figgins set his teeth. He was not captured unless a hand was laid on his shoulder—and that was safe so far. He made a desperate effort to drag himself up. But it was easier for Tom Merry to throw his weight on the New House junior than for Figgins to pull himself away.

"Got you!"

Figgins gasped, utterly winded.

"Right-ho! Let go, or I shall come down on my napper!"

"You are my prisoner!"

"Honest Injun!"

Tom Merry let go. Figgins dropped into the road, and reeled against the wall. The hero of the Shell tapped him on the shoulder.

"You've done me!" gasped Figgins. "Jolly close thing, too!"

"Yes, rather; it's all right. My hat! I'm fagged! I shouldn't have done it alone, old Figgys. If young Wally hadn't been at the gate you could have run straight on and buzzed in."

"Well, that's so, too."

"Honours are easy!" said Ferrers Locke as he came up.

"But, by the rules of the competition, Tom Merry is victor in the contest."

"Oh, yes, that's all right!" panted Figgins. "I'm done. I did my best!"

"And a splendid best it was, too," said Ferrers Locke, patting the exhausted junior on the back. "Tom Merry has won the contest, and becomes Chief Scout of St. Jim's; but I should advise him to choose you for second in command."

"What-ho!" said Tom Merry.

Amicable rivals, Tom Merry, leaning on Ferrers Locke's arm, and Figgins on the colonel's, entered the gates of St. Jim's. And as the juniors came crowding in, and the result of the contest was learned, there were loud cheers for Tom Merry, and cheers almost as loud for Figgins.

It had been a splendid contest, and, as Ferrers Locke put it, honours were easy.

Jack Blake gave Tom Merry a hearty thump on the back when he came in, as a sign that he took his victory in good part.

"Sorry I didn't rope him in," he said. "But I'm glad it's a School House kid who did it, anyway. That's something!"

"Yaas, wathah!" D'Arcy remarked. "And do you know, deah boys, my young bwothah was next in aftah Tom Mewwy—young Wally. He was weally! Upon the whole, I wegard the young bwoudah with pwide, and I shall not give him the feafuhl thwashin' I was goin' to give him for his feafuhl cheek. He is a little scallywag, you know, but he sticks to a thing, weally, as wesolutely as I do myself."

"Well, it was a good run," said Blake. "We should probably have had Figgys if Gussy hadn't been with us—"

"Oh, weally, Blak—"

"Still, it's no good thinking of that now. It was a good beginning for the Scouts of St. Jim's."

"Yaas, wathah!"

And Jack Blake's opinion was shared by all the Boy Scouts.

THE END.

(See all about next week's ripping yarn of Tom Merry & Co. on the opposite page!)

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The ST. JIM'S SPOTLIGHT

Latest News from the School—By "Old Boy."

SAINTS AT WORK—AND IN TROUBLE!

I GLEANED the following sidelights on life in the Form-rooms at St. Jim's by relieving Kildare of a duty. As head prefect, Kildare is frequently called upon to take a notice from the headmaster to each of the Form-rooms in turn, the master in charge reading the notice aloud to his Form.

I was chatting with the Head when he asked Kildare to take round a notice relating to damage to locker-room windows. At the same moment Tupper, the page, announced that Kildare was wanted on the phone. I took the opportunity to offer myself as deputy for Kildare, and thus entered each of the Form-rooms, catching them in the midst of work—and trouble!

Everything was quiet in the Sixth, of course, where Mr. Railton presided. Mr. Railton, who, besides being very interested in sport, is a keen classical scholar, was discoursing learnedly on the works of Plato, an ancient Greek in whom the Sixth were supposed to be very much interested. They seemed very pleased at the interruption, however, though there were smiles as Mr. Railton read out the Head's stern command to those boys responsible for damage to locker-room windows to own up at once. The culprit or culprits were not likely to be found in the Sixth, as Mr. Railton gently hinted to me!

If all had been calm in the Sixth, it was not so in the Fifth Form room. Mr. Horace Ratcliff's voice was booming as I approached—fairly echoing along the corridor, in fact. I knocked twice, but Mr. Ratcliff's voice was going too strong for him to hear. Finally I opened the door and walked in.

Mr. Ratcliff was glaring at Gerald Cutts, the dandy of the Fifth, as if he would have liked to eat him. Cutts is rather a slacker, and possibly a late party in the study was the reason for his having neglected his prep. Fifth-Formers are supposed to do their prep as a sort of duty, without scamping it like fags, and Fifth Form masters are not supposed to "chew the rag," as though their pupils were fags. Cutts had evidently disobeyed the unwritten rule, and Mr. Ratcliff was disobeying it, too.

I coughed, and Mr. Ratcliff paused.

"What is it?"

I proffered the notice, and Mr. Ratcliff read it. Then he glared at Cutts. "Cutts, have you broken a locker-room window in the gymnasium?" he snapped. Cutts stared.

"Why, no, sir. I—"

"Try the Junior Forms!" snapped "Ratty" to me, handing back the notice. He did not really think for a moment that Cutts had broken the window or windows in question. That was just Ratty's way of making Cutts squirm. Thankful that I was not under Mr. Ratcliff's thumb, I wended my way to the Shell Form room. Another booming voice met my ears this time—and the words were unmistakable.

"Well, sir, I think you're wrong!"

I knocked and entered.

Mr. Linton seemed about to have a fit. He was gazing at Gore, who stood grimly defiant.

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"You mean to say, Gore," gasped Mr. Linton, "that you don't believe William the Conqueror came over in 1066?"

"I think you're wrong, sir," repeated Gore stolidly. "That was the date Columbus discovered America. I believe you're trying to catch me, sir."

"Catch you!" gasped Mr. Linton faintly. "When do you think William the Conqueror came to England?"

"In 1492, sir. The year of the Black Death," answered Gore coolly.

Mr. Linton turned helplessly to me.

"What would you do with a boy like that?" he asked.

I could offer no advice on that subject. It was really no use arguing with Gore. He believed he was right, and nothing on earth could convince him that Mr. Linton knew a little more about history than he did!

Mr. Linton read out the notice, but there were no "takers." If the window-breaker was in the Shell he did not want to give himself away.

Going on to the Fourth Form room, I found Arthur Augustus D'Arcy doing a construe for the mild Mr. Lathom. Gussy is rather above the average with Form work, but he had found a stumbling block in the Latin verb, "rego," I rule. Gussy, who always pronounces his r's as if they were w's, pronounced "rego" as "wego." He was sailing cheerily on when Mr. Lathom pulled him up.

"Conjugate the verb rego, D'Arcy," said Mr. Lathom.

"Wego, wegis, wegite—" began Gussy.

"Rego, regis, regite—" corrected Mr. Lathom.

I stopped further argument by presenting the notice. Once again it drew blank, so to speak. No self-confessed window-breaker stepped forth from the class to give himself up to the Head, and Mr. Lathom smiled, shaking his head.

"You will probably find the culprit in the Third," he suggested.

As I left the Fourth Form room I heard Gussy's dulcet tones floating after me.

"Wego, wegis, wegite—"

I could have found the Third Form room without knowing where it was. It seemed as though a battle royal was in progress when I arrived. I opened the door, having received no answer, to find Mr. Selby engaged in a wild and whirling wrestling match with no less than three fags in front of the desks.

My entry brought them to a standstill, and Mr. Selby, who had been whacking out right and left with a cane, glared at me as though he had half a mind to set about me, too. The three fags, Wally D'Arcy, Curly Gibson, and Jameson, stood aside, gasping and rubbing themselves in various places.

"You see what an unruly Form I have!" snapped Mr. Selby, feeling perhaps that some explanation was due for the spectacle of a Form master scuffling with three fags in front of the rest of the Form. "They defy me to my face—and when I attempt to correct them they lead me in a reckless chase all over the Form-room!"

It was not my place to give a Form master advice, but I had no doubt that Mr. Selby had been giving way to his

savage temper. I have heard that he sometimes hits out at fellows as they sit in their desks, and if a fellow dodges out of his desk when subjected to a brutal attack it is not to be wondered at. Mr. Selby evidently thought he had overstepped the mark a little, for he turned suddenly to the fags and rapped:

"Resume your places!"

Wally, Curly, and Jameson did that thankfully enough. Then Mr. Selby read the notice. His eyes glinted hopefully at the thought of discovering the window-breaker among his flock. Nothing would have delighted him more than to have hauled some hapless malefactor before Dr. Holmes.

"It is useless to attempt to evade discovery!" rapped Mr. Selby, watching his Form like a lynx. "If the boy does not confess now it will be all the worse for him when he is found out! You, D'Arcy—was it you?"

"No, sir."

"Gibson—was it you?"

"No, sir."

"Jameson?"

At that moment there was a knock at the Form-room door, and in walked the Head himself. He seemed pleased to have arrived at the same time as myself.

"I find a mistake has been made," he said, coughing. "Taggles reports that a man he employed as assistant was responsible for breaking the windows in the locker-room. I am sorry you have had your trouble for nothing."

I wasn't sorry—I had enjoyed my tour through the Form-rooms, and I am sure the Third were thankful to hear that there was no culprit, after all.

The only person who was disappointed was Mr. Henry Selby, but nobody worried about that!

RADIOGRAMS!

D'Arcy's chums make fun of him as a singer, but he has quite a good tenor voice.

Monty Lowther's first success as a jester was at the age of ten, when he won half-a-crown in a joke competition!

D'Arcy's cousin, Ethel Cleveland, holds a very high position in Figgins' regard, and his admiration is returned.

George Herries is devoted to his bulldog Towser with which he has won several prizes. Herries scorns the prizes, however. With him, the dog is the thing!

George Kerr is the chess champion of St. Jim's.

George Figgins is the tallest fellow in the junior school, being 5 ft. 7½ in. in height.

Eric Kildare was born in "Old Killarney," which speaks well for the famous lakes and fells.

START RIGHT AWAY ON OUR GRIPPING YARN OF STRANGE ADVENTURE!

THE LOST LEGION!

By
DON ENGLISH.



The adventures of Jim Nelson and Phil Harris, with their guardian, Colonel K, will hold you enthralled from start to finish.

In The Emperor's Camp.

ROCKS piled upon rocks, giant masses of stone flung in jagged heaps, frowning crags, impassable cliffs. A vast hilly wilderness of sand and rock and scrub, hot under a pitiless blue sky.

And in the middle of it all, like a crippled bird, a great white monoplane with scarlet wingtips. She lay at one end of a little clearing, in the sparse vegetation of the hillside, and one would have said that her chances of escaping from that unfriendly waste were very slender.

But apparently those aboard her thought otherwise, for someone was whistling cheerfully, and a man's deep voice was singing a rollicking sea shanty. Colonel K, the explorer, owner, and commander of the Albatross, was never depressed. Even though the plane, in which he was making a flight round the world with his two schoolboy wards, Phil Harris and Jim Nelson, his secretary Rex Bruce, and his Welsh servant Llewelyn, had made a forced landing in Central Asia, hundreds of miles from civilisation, he was serenely confident of their ability to get away again without any outside aid that they might summon by wireless.

"How are the repairs coming along, Llewelyn?" he asked, breaking off his song to call to the little Welshman, who was busy with the engines.

The reply was a heartening one.

"Bah! It was nothing, look you! In half an hour we shall be ready to take the air again, yes indeed!"

"Splendid!" returned the colonel. "Did you hear that, Jim, my lad? We'd better recall Phil and Rex."

Jim Nelson, standing in the open doorway of the cabin, made no reply. A few minutes before Phil Harris and Rex Bruce had left the monoplane for a short stroll, to stretch their legs, and, despite the fact that they had promised not to get out of earshot, Jim was not entirely at ease about them. His guardian swung around in his chair to find him staring out intently across the desolate hillside.

"Hullo! What's the matter?" he demanded.

"Just come here a minute, will you, sir?" said Jim, in a queer tone of suppressed excitement. "There's something moving in the scrub, and I don't think it's the other two."

Colonel K did not stop to ask further questions. He rose without hesitation and joined the boy in the doorway, his keen blue eyes searching the bushes. There were certainly

signs of motion among them, and now and then the watchers caught a glint of sunlight on metal. The explorer's face hardened as he gazed.

"This place is evidently not as deserted as it looks," he said grimly. "I should never have let Phil and Rex leave the plane. Whoever those people are out there in the scrub, they'll prevent them from returning."

"Great Scott, sir!" exclaimed Jim. "Who d'you suppose they can be?"

Colonel K shrugged, turning away with a final glance.

"Tribesmen with nasty dispositions," he said, making for the "charthouse" with its rack of guns. "Better come and get a rifle, my boy. Hey, Llewelyn!"

"Yes, sir?"

"Leave the engines for a moment. It looks as though we're surrounded by the inhabitants, and we shall need your help if they're hostile. The repairs must wait."

"Coming, look you, yes indeed!" answered Llewelyn; and presently the three of them, armed with rifles and revolvers, were grouped about the cabin door, gazing anxiously out.

"Here they come!" muttered Jim, as several figures broke cover on the edge of the clearing.

Then his eyes nearly started from his head and his mouth dropped open in sheer amazement.

"My hat!" he gasped. "What on earth—"

"Good heavens!" breathed the colonel, his blue eyes alight with excitement. "They're Romans!"

Utterly incredible as it seemed, it was absolutely true. This forgotten corner of the world held an astounding mystery. The advancing men wore a costume such as Caesar's legions must have worn two thousand years before—brazen cuirasses gleaming in the sun over short white tunics. From the great helmet of the centurion in the lead floated a plume of scarlet horsehair, and they could plainly see the number of his legion, the Fourth, marked in Roman numerals on his shield.

Twenty yards from the Albatross they came to a smart halt in response to a command. Another, and they poised the long spears which they all carried, but before the third order could be given Colonel K had coolly raised his rifle and fired over their heads.

The men wavered, but the centurion stood his ground, THE GEN LIBRARY.—No. 1,239.

rapping out his commands. The next moment a flight of spears came rattling down on the metal hull of the monoplane, and Llewelyn gave a cry of rage.

"They'll spoil my paintwork, look you, the barbarians. whate'er!" he cried, hopping up and down. "We must stop them indeed to goodness, yes!"

The other two paid no attention to him.

"They've drawn their swords," said the colonel quietly. "They'll start a rush in a minute if we don't discourage them. All together now—a volley over their heads!"

The three guns spoke simultaneously, and the legionnaires halted. Then, as the intrepid centurion raised his short sword to call them on, the explorer steadied himself and took deliberate aim. The soldier gave a shout of mingled pain and anger and amazement as the bullet struck the broad blade and fairly tore it out of his hand, flinging it with a clatter a dozen yards away. The men broke and scattered, and at the same instant Jim suddenly seized his guardian's arm.

"Look!" he said, pointing to the far end of the clearing. "More of 'em!"

Emerging from the scrub of the hillside was a larger band of legionnaires, and the sight of them affected the attacking centurion strangely. After a single swift glance, instead of advancing to meet them, he barked out an order to the few of his men who still remained on the field, and disappeared hastily into the bushes with them at his heels.

"Well, I'm blessed!" said Jim. "What's the meaning of that, sir?"

Colonel K was inspecting the newcomers carefully as they marched without hesitation towards the Albatross.

"H'm! A different legion, I see. These evidently belong to the Second, judging from the number on their shields," he said. "I wonder what their attitude will be?"

A moment later they knew. The centurion in command halted his men, who numbered several hundreds, fifty yards from the plane, and came forward alone. Twenty paces away he stopped, and then raised his right hand in a sign which there could be no mistaking.

"By Jove!" said the colonel. "He's friendly!"

"What are you going to do, sir?" asked Jim.

"Go out and speak to him, of course," was the reply. "And you can come with me. Llewelyn, stand by the plane!"

"Indeed to goodness, yes!" said the little Welshman.

And the colonel and Jim stepped out of the cabin.

They came to a standstill ten yards from the waiting centurion, and the explorer lifted his right hand in the same sign of peace that he had made.

"Hail, O soldier!" he boomed, in Latin. "I give thee greeting. Colonnus is my name, and this is my ward, Jacobus Nelsonius."

"Hail, O mighty Colonnus!" answered the centurion. "I am Curiatus Fufetus, in command of the first and second cohorts of the Second Legion of Roma Secunda. The Emperor, Valerius Martius Donatus, seeing your bird-chariot descend from the heavens, sent us to discover what manner of men you be."

The colonel translated hastily to Jim, who studied German at school in place of Latin.

"He's the first centurion of the Second Legion," he said; "which shows that he's a good man."

He turned back to the centurion.

"Two of our number have disappeared," he said. "They went to take exercise, and have not returned. Have you seen them?"

Curiatus Fufetus shook his head.

"We have seen no one but sundry of the rebels, with whom we were ordered not to skirmish," he replied. "But it may be that one of the scouts knows something of your companions. I will inquire further."

He saluted the colonel, and then swiftly rejoined his waiting men. The English pair watched tensely as he made a sign to one of them, who immediately voiced a shrill call. A few minutes later a score of legionnaires were trickling in one at a time from all directions and presenting themselves before the centurion. He questioned them all quickly, dismissed them, and returned to the colonel and Jim.

"Lord, I have news," he said. "Several of my scouts report that they witnessed a struggle a little way down

the slope. Two young strangers, clad as you are, were engaged in hand-to-hand combat with members of the rebellious Fourth Legion. For some time they held their own, but in the end they were overpowered and captured. When last seen they were being marched under strong guard towards the rebel camp on the plain, where, doubtless, they will appear before the ringleader, Dolabella."

Colonel K whistled softly and translated to Jim.

"My hat, sir!" exclaimed the boy. "That sounds bad. What are you going to do?"

"Try to get some help from this fellow's commander-in-chief," said the colonel, then in Latin to the soldier, "I would speak with the Emperor. Wilt thou leave one cohort to guard the bird-chariot, and take us to him?"

The centurion saluted again and withdrew. A few minutes later, leaving Llewelyn and the second cohort to take care of the Albatross, Colonel K and Jim were on the way to the camp of the Emperor. It took an hour to reach it through the piled and jumbled rocks of the hills, even with the long, steady stride of the legionnaires, which never varied an inch.

But at last they came in sight of it, a huge, entrenched square, capable of holding three full legions, divided lengthways and across by wide avenues between the tents. Colonel K drew a deep breath as he and Jim passed with Curiatus Fufetus through the Porta Sinistra, or Left Gate, and marched along the main thoroughfare, the Via Principia, to the general's quarters.

"Just think of it!" he said. "We're seeing something now that nobody of the outside world has seen for nearly twenty centuries! It's incredible!"

Jim nodded, eyes shining as he looked about him.

"I keep feeling that I must be dreaming, and I don't want to wake up," he said. "How on earth did they get here, sir? And how—"

He had no time to finish his question. Their escort was halting before the pretorium, the commander's big white tent, and next moment the English pair were following their centurion guide into it.

"I've had a good many queer experiences in my travels, but this beats the lot!" remarked the colonel softly, and then they found themselves face to face with the Emperor.

Valerius Martius Donatus was amazingly young for his exalted position. He appeared scarcely older than Rex Bruce, the colonel's captured secretary, but the grey eyes in his likeable face were as piercing as an eagle's, and he looked every inch a soldier in the gold-embroidered cloak of scarlet wool which was the exclusive badge of his office.

"Speak, O Curiatus Fufetus," he said, as the centurion saluted him. "Are these the strangers who were in the bird-chariot?"

"Even so, lord," was the reply. "By good fortune they speak our tongue, and since they desired to appear before you I brought them hither with all speed."

"You have done well," said the Emperor. "I will see that your services are not forgotten."

He turned to the colonel with a smile.

"Hail, O strangers!" he greeted them. "Whence came you in this marvellous chariot?"

"From the island of Albion beyond the sea," replied the colonel promptly, and repeated the names he had given the centurion. "But two of us strayed away to explore the hillside, and evil has befallen them."

In a few words he told what had occurred before the arrival of Fufetus with his cohorts—how Phil Harris, his other ward, and Rex Bruce had strolled off to stretch their legs, and how the Albatross had been attacked by men of the Fourth Legion.

"And the scouts of Fufetus report that our comrades were made prisoner by the rebels and carried off to their camp," he finished up.

Valerius Martius looked grave.

"If that is so, then their lives are in the greatest peril," he said, "for if we assail the camp they will certainly be put to death. The leader of the rebellious Third and Fourth Legions, Gaius Procellus Dolabella, is utterly ruthless."

Colonel K translated to Jim.

"We've got to rescue them somehow," he said grimly, "and it'll have to be by strategy. Mere force of arms is obviously no good."

"What about the plane, sir," asked Jim eagerly. "Llewelyn said that she was almost ready for the air. Couldn't we do anything with her?"

"By Jove, of course!" shouted the colonel. "What the dickens am I thinking of? We can land in the Via Principia of the camp and have the other two out in no time!"

He swung back again to face the Emperor, who was listening to their conversation with interest.

"We must return immediately to the bird-chariot," he said. "By means of it we may be able to save our comrades."

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"So be it," replied Valerius Martius. "I myself will accompany you, since I desire to see this marvel with my own eyes."

Rescue!

TEN minutes later, mounted on a great white horse, he led the way out of the camp, closely followed by the two Englishmen and Fufetus, also astride. Behind came the praetorian guard, a thousand strong, the Emperor's own bodyguard, and the very pick of the troops. Fufetus acted as guide, and they travelled as fast as the men could march; they returned to the Albatross little more than two hours after they had left it.

"It's glad I am to see you back again, sir, yes, indeed to goodness!" said Llewelyn, as the colonel dismounted and strode up to the cabin door. "Look you, I was beginning to think they'd murdered you both."

"No, they're friendly enough," said the explorer, with a laugh, clapping the wizened little fellow on the back. "Has anything happened while we were away?"

"No; but the repairs are finished. We can start whenever you like, whatever."

"That's good news!" boomed the colonel. He turned swiftly to Valerius Martius, who had also dismounted and was regarding the Albatross with interest and wonder.

"The bird-chariot is ready to take the air," he said in Latin. "We go now to rescue our companions, but we will come back to your camp when we have done so. I bid you farewell for the present."

"Stay!" said the Emperor suddenly. "I will ride in the bird-chariot with you!"

Despite himself, the colonel was startled.

"You are a brave man, O Valerius Martius!" he said. "I did not think that you would dare to fly."

"If Nelsonius, who is but a boy, can do so, then so can the Emperor of Roma Secunda!" retorted Valerius Martius proudly, with a glance at Jim.

He stepped forward to enter the plane, but before he could do so the captain of the praetorian guard had barred the way.

"Lord, I crave pardon," he said humbly, "but what guarantee have we that these men who have conquered the clouds will return with you if once you enter the bird-chariot? How do we know that they will not spirit you away into the heavens for ever? You are our general; we cannot let you go."

Valerius Martius looked at the colonel, who was at his elbow.

"You hear him?" he said, with a smile. "My men will not allow their Emperor to fly in case he should disappear."

Colonel K chuckled, motioning Llewelyn to descend.

"The difficulty is easily solved," he said. "Here, O captain of the guard, take my servant as a hostage for the safety of thy general! Llewelyn," he continued in English, "we're going to rescue Phil and Rex, and we're leaving you with this soldier. He'll take you back to his camp, and we'll join you there later. Good-bye."

"Good-bye, sir," said Llewelyn obediently, shaking hands.

Valerius Martius gave the necessary orders to his men, then followed Jim and the colonel into the Albatross. The praetorian guard melted into the scrub as the explorer started up the engines. The monoplane came about, narrowly missing a great boulder, and began to taxi bumpily across the clearing. Jim pushed Valerius Martius into a seat by one of the cabin windows, and set his teeth as they neared the farther line of bushes. For a long moment it seemed impossible that they could clear them, but just in the nick of time the Albatross lifted, and they shot up into the blue.

"Gosh!" breathed Jim, wiping his forehead. "That was a narrow shave!"

He looked at the Roman, who sat gazing spellbound out of the window without a trace of fear, and for the first time regretted his inability to speak Latin.

"Old Phil ought to be here instead of me," he thought, for Phil Harris was an excellent Latin scholar.

Colonel K was flying in the direction in which he had been told the other camp lay, and presently Valerius Martius gave a cry of excitement, pointing downwards. The boy saw an encampment similar to the one they had visited, though slightly smaller, with hundreds of ant-like figures running to and fro. At the same moment he heard the colonel's deep voice hailing him from the cockpit, and went hastily to join him.

"I'm going to land in the Via Principia, the main street, right in front of the praetorium," said his guardian. "It's 100 feet wide, so there'll be plenty of room. The instant we stop I want you to open the door, shout for Phil and

Rex, and listen for the reply. If they manage to get out of wherever they're confined, it's up to you to cover their retreat with a few revolver shots. If they're tied up though, we shall just have to make a dash and cut them free. Now, off you go—I'm going down."

The Albatross swung about in a great graceful curve, and began to swoop lower and lower in vast spirals. The whole camp was in the uttermost confusion, and Colonel K could see the terrified horses of the officers breaking loose from their lines and stampeding wildly among the tents, tearing them down and leaving destruction in their wake. He smiled grimly to himself, and brought the monoplane down in a long slant towards the Via Principia, the wide avenue that ran clear across the camp in front of the general's quarters.

Jim, in the "charthouse," hastily buckled on a cartridge belt and two revolvers, and ran back into the cabin as they touched ground. Valerius Martius was standing by the window, his grey eyes blazing with excitement. He shouted something which the boy naturally did not understand.

"Oh crumbs! Shut up and sit down!" he cried in return; then dashed to fling open the door as they came to a standstill. "Phil! Rex!" He yelled with all the force of his powerful lungs.

"Here! Here!" came an answering shout from a tent not twenty yards away, about which a crowd of guards were still standing, obviously undecided whether or not to flee.

Drawing one revolver, Jim made up their minds for them with half a dozen rapid shots over their heads. They bolted for cover like rabbits, but the boldest paused a second to fling his heavy spear. The action caught Jim unawares, and the weapon would certainly have transfigured him but for the quickness of Valerius Martius. Leaping forward, the young Emperor snatched him aside just as the deadly missile whirled through the door and struck the opposite wall with a clang.

"By Jove!" gasped the boy, as the other released him. "You saved my life, and you can jolly well bet I shan't forget it!"

He sprang back to the door, drawing his other revolver, just in time to see the curtains covering the entrance to the now-unguarded tent pushed apart, and Phil Harris and Rex Bruce stagger out, their hands bound behind them. At the same instant there came a shout of command from somewhere in the rear, and the sound of running feet. Someone was rallying men to repel the rescue party.

"Come on, quick!" yelled Jim, fairly dancing up and down. "Stand by to take off, sir!"

And at that very moment disaster came. Phil, running a pace behind Rex, suddenly turned his ankle and measured his length on the ground. And even as he fell a strong body of soldiers burst into view from among the tents not two score paces beyond, and came charging down on the fugitives with cries of triumph.

Jim emptied his gun despairingly at them, but though he hit a couple, the rest were not to be checked. Rex, unable to help Phil because of his bound hands, but unwilling to desert him, stood his ground calmly awaiting what seemed to be a certain recapture. And then Valerius Martius saved the situation a second time.

Coolly brushing past the frantic Jim, he leaped out of the cabin and raced for the prisoners. Catching Rex by the shoulder, he swung him round and sent him reeling towards the plane with a powerful shove. Then, bending down, he swept the prostrate Phil up into his strong arms—like a baby, almost under the very noses of the enemy, and was back at the doorway before Jim had got over his surprise.

Bundling Phil over the threshold, he thrust Rex swiftly after him, and turned to wave a jaunty hand at the baffled rebels. Then he sprang into the plane as they came charging down afresh, and Jim slammed the door behind him.

"They are rescued, O Colonnus!" he called in Latin. "Make haste to go ere they attack us in force!"

The colonel needed no second bidding. The Albatross began to move forward along the Via Principia, gathering speed as she went, until at last she was racing like a wild thing, scattering frightened legionnaires right and left from her path. Fifty paces short of the staked rampart she soared abruptly upward with a triumphant zoom of her great engines, and a minute later the camp of Dolabella lay like a troubled ant-heap far below.

"Hurrah!" shouted Jim, capering round like a maniac, while the more practical Valerius Martius busied himself with cutting the bonds of the rescued pair, and chafing their numbed hands. "This is the Emperor of Roma Secunda, you chaps! He's a marvellous fellow!"

"Thanks! We can see that for ourselves," replied Rex dryly, smiling at the Roman. "How's the ankle, Phil?"

"Only twisted," said the boy. "It'll be all right in a little while. I say, where's Llewelyn?"

"We had to leave him behind as a hostage," explained

Jim, and swiftly outlined the events since they left the monoplane. "So, we're going back to his camp now," he concluded. "You talk to him, Phil, I can't. Tell him what a jolly fine chappie he is, and all that sort of thing. He saved my life, you know."

"And you expect me to thank him for that?" demanded Phil, with a mock groan. "It's the one thing I'll never forgive him!"

Turning to Valerius Martius, he introduced himself and Rex, and soon was deep in conversation with the young general.

Meanwhile, Colonel K, in the cockpit, was making for the Emperor's camp, and it was not long before it came in sight. He swooped down on it as he had on Dolabella's, and presently the Albatross was gliding to a smooth halt directly in front of the big prætorium. Soldiers came running up on all sides, and in a few moments the monoplane was in the centre of a great hollow square of men, all eager for a glimpse of the strange bird-chariot, but afraid of venturing too close.

There was a gasp of amazement from thousands of throats, and then a terrific cheer, when the cabin door opened and the Emperor himself stepped out with a smile, for the prætorian guard had not yet returned from the hills, and nobody in the camp was aware of the Emperor's decision to fly.

Colonel K, who followed him out, also received a tremendous ovation, and the noise was deafening until Valerius Martius held up his hand for silence.

"Men," he said in the hush that succeeded, "I have flown in the clouds with these lords, and returned safe and sound. From henceforward until they wish to depart they will be our guests, and I command you to show them every kindness. A guard of two cohorts is to be mounted over the bird-chariot, and let no man presume to lay finger on it unbidden."

He turned to address the colonel.

"As for you, O great Colonnus, I and my legates will furnish you and your companions with raiment and a place for rest should you so desire. I hope that you will honour us with your presence for many days."

The colonel smiled. "Indeed, O Valerius Martius, we wish for nothing more earnestly than to remain with you," he replied truthfully. "We are consumed with curiosity to know how a second

Rome came to be founded in the wilderness so far from the Mother City, and also why you are now at war among yourselves. I beg that you will enlighten our ignorance."

"Even so, Colonnus," returned Valerius Martius, as they moved towards the prætorium, and the close-packed ranks of legionnaires opened before them. "I will give a feast to-night to celebrate your arrival, and the history shall be told. I, too, desire to learn more about your island of Albion beyond the sea, which can produce such wonders as the bird-chariot and the rods which spit forth lightning."

They entered the great tent, and he summoned his three legates, handing over Phil, Jim, and Rex to them, while he escorted Colonel K to his own quarters. So that presently each of the travel-stained young world-flyers found himself, as the guest of a different legate, being bathed and massaged and oiled and scented in true Roman fashion by his slaves.

Decius Candidus Philario, the young man whom the Emperor had left in command of the camp while he visited the Albatross, was Phil's host. Discovering that the boy spoke Latin almost as fluently as his guardian, he came to chat with him while he dressed, but their conversation was rudely interrupted by the advent of Jim, clad in nothing but a linen bath-towel, and highly indignant. Behind him came half a dozen slaves, all obviously completely bewildered by his attitude.

"Why, what's the matter, old chap?" asked Phil, with a laugh. "Something not to your liking?"

"Not to my liking!" spluttered Jim. "Look here! You tell these chappies that they've jolly well got to stop playing around with me. They're actually trying to curl my hair!"

Phil went off into gales of laughter, rocking back and forth in his seat while Jim watched him in high dudgeon.

"I don't see anything funny in that," he said at last, drawing his bath-sheet about him with a dignified air. "You wouldn't think so, either, if you didn't know a word of the language and couldn't tell them to stop being silly asses!"

Phil sat up and wiped his eyes.

"Sorry," he said. "Jimmie, old salt, they mean no harm. It's just an old Roman custom. Everyone whose hair isn't naturally curly has got to be curled to be in the fashion. But I'll tell your slaves that you prefer not to have your natural beauty tampered with."

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