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"THE GUYS OF ST. JIM'S!"— A SPECIAL GUY FAWKES YARN INSIDE.

CONTINUOUS
VARIETY!
YOUR FAVOURITE
STARS—
TOM MERRY & Co
INSIDE!

The GEM

2^d



NOVEMBER THE FIFTH AT ST. JIM'S IS EVER A GRAND OCCASION—

The GUYS of ST. JIM'S!



It goes with a bang! What does? Why, November the Fifth at St. Jim's! Here is a rip-snorting, long complete yarn of Tom Merry & Co. of St. Jim's, telling of their adventures on Guy Fawkes Day!

CHAPTER 1. An Unexpected Visit!

TOM MERRY raised his head from his work in his study in the School House at St. Jim's, and listened. The November dusk was thick on the old quad, and the gas was alight in the study. From the dusky quadrangle came the confused sound of voices, mingled with laughter and cheers.

"Seems to be a row in the quad this evening," Tom Merry remarked.

Manners, who was developing films, gave a grunt of assent. Monty Lowther looked up from a German imposition.

"Seems like it," he said. "Something on, I suppose. To-morrow's the Fifth, and perhaps some of the kids are celebrating it a little in advance."

"H'm! Perhaps!"

And Tom Merry's pen scratched on again.
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The noise in the quadrangle grew louder and nearer, and it was evident that it was approaching the School House. It sounded louder under the window of the study, and Tom Merry stepped to the window to look out. But the November mist was so thick on the glass that he could not see. He threw up the sash.

There was a shout as Tom Merry put his head out of the window and looked out into the quadrangle.

"Here you are, Merry!"

It was the voice of Gore, the cad of the Shell. Tom Merry could only make out indistinct figures moving in the mist.

"What's the row?" he called out.

"Another guy!"

"Eh?"

"Ha, ha, ha! Another guy! Why don't you come down?"

"Oh, rats!" said Tom Merry, and he jammed down the window and returned to the table. "It's only that ass Gore!"

"They're coming along the passage," said Monty Lowther. Footsteps sounded along the Shell passage. A crowd was

—AND HERE IS A GRAND STORY ABOUT THAT GREAT DAY!

By Martin Clifford.

evidently coming along to Tom Merry's study. Tom laid down his pen again and opened the door. He was growing puzzled. But as he looked into the lighted passage, he understood.

A crowd of fellows came along, most of them grinning and some cheering. In the midst of them walked an elderly lady, whom Tom Merry at once recognised as his old governess, Miss Priscilla Fawcett. He had not been expecting a visit from Miss Fawcett, and he was surprised to see her, but he was not so much surprised as angry at what was taking place. The jokers of the School House were escorting Miss Fawcett to Tom Merry's study, and Miss Fawcett herself was the only person who could not see that they were "rotting."

Miss Priscilla beamed at the sight of Tom Merry, and ran forward and threw her arms about his neck.

"My dear child," she murmured, "you must be surprised to see me. As I had to undertake a journey in the neighbourhood I could not resist calling to see you. These dear boys have kindly escorted me to your study. You must thank them for their kindness and courtesy to your old governess."

The juniors who crowded the passage behind the old lady giggled joyously, but if Miss Fawcett noticed that, she only attributed it to the exuberance of youthful spirits. Tom Merry glared at the juniors, but his glare was quite ineffectual. In the presence of Miss Fawcett they knew that he could not proceed to more forcible measures.

Mellish of the Fourth smirked at Miss Fawcett and winked at his comrades.

"Not at all, Miss Fawcett," he said. "We do not need thanks for a little natural courtesy shown to Tom Merry's governess. We are all so fond of Tom Merry that we are always glad to show him any little attention like this."

"Yes, rather!" said Gore. "And we take it as kind of you, Miss Fawcett, to visit the school on this most appropriate date."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We should be willing to do much more than we have done," said Mellish, "for the sake of pleasing Tom Merry."

"My dear boys, I thank you from my heart," said Miss Fawcett, "and you must thank them, too, Tommy darling. They have taken a great deal of trouble. Owing to the mist, they lost the path in the quadrangle, and we have been all round the school, and I have been quite a long time getting in!"

"It's awfully thick in the quad," said Mellish blandly.

Tom Merry's eyes gleamed.

"Come in, dear," he said, extricating himself from the embrace of his old governess, who never could guess that demonstrative affection in public made her unfortunate ward inwardly writhe. "Come into the study."

"Yes, Tommy darling; but you must first thank these dear, kind lads."

"Not at all," said Mellish. "We are more than sufficiently repaid by witnessing this tender scene of affection. When I see Tom Merry's delight at meeting his dear old nurse, I remember the time when my grandmother kissed me on my baby brow, and—"

"Shut up, you cad!" muttered Tom Merry fiercely.

"Did you speak, Merry?"

"I—I—"

"You have not thanked those dear, kind boys yet, Tommy darling!"

"I—I'll thank them presently," said Tom Merry. "I—shall know better how to thank them presently, dear. Come in!"

He almost pulled Miss Priscilla into the study, and slammed the door. There was a loud chuckle in the passage. Tom Merry's face was crimson. It angered him for the kind, unsuspecting old soul to be made the butt of the School House jokers, and he mentally promised Gore and Mellish and their friends some forcible thanks after Miss Fawcett was gone.

The old lady sat down in the only armchair politely offered by Lowther, and untied the strings of her bonnet. She beamed upon the chums of the Shell. Manners and

Lowther had faces of preternatural gravity, but Tom Merry was not unaware of the twinkles in their eyes.

"I hope I have not interrupted your work, dear boys," said Miss Fawcett.

Tom Merry had left off in the midst of a problem he had to work out. Monty Lowther had only half-written a German imposition which had to be shown to Herr Schneider before bed-time. Manners was quakingly conscious of two films immersed in the developer and spoiling. But politeness came before everything.

"We're awfully glad to see you, ma'am," said Lowther. "It's kind of you to give us a look-in like this."

"Awfully kind!" said Manners.

"I could not resist the temptation to see my darling Tommy once more, if only for a few minutes," said Miss Fawcett, her eyes dwelling affectionately upon the hero of the Shell. "As that boy—that kind boy Gore—remarked, it is a most appropriate date for me to come and see my darling Tommy."

Manners nearly exploded, and Lowther made a curious suppressed sound in his throat. Tom Merry's beautiful crimson complexion became redder, if possible. Gore had been alluding to the Fifth of November, but not in the sense that Miss Fawcett understood.

"Because," went on Miss Fawcett, "to-morrow is the anniversary of the Gunpowder Plot, and I am sure that you will wish to have some little celebration, Tommy darling."

"Yes, rather!" said Tom Merry.

"I am so sorry," went on Miss Fawcett, "that it will be impossible for me to be here. I should like to very much. But I must go—I cannot stay here now more than twenty minutes, or I shall lose my train. But I hope you will have a very happy time, my sweet boy, letting off Roman crackers and catherine candles and rocket wheels and other fireworks."

Tom Merry grinned.

"Oh, yes, rather!" he said.

"And I am sure you will be in need of extra funds," said Miss Priscilla, beaming. "You will open this envelope when I am gone, Tommy darling. I am so glad to see you again. Do you know you are growing?"

"Am I?" murmured Tom Merry.

"Dear me! I shall have to see about my train; the cab is waiting at the gate for me. It is very misty in the quadrangle. You may see me as far as the gate if you wish, Tommy darling."

"Of course, dear," said Tom Merry, jumping up with alacrity.

CHAPTER 2.

Skimpole is Not Satisfied.

TOM MERRY composed his features as he escorted Miss Fawcett down to the Hall.

He knew that there was an ordeal to go through yet. Gore and his friends were in the Hall, grinning and chuckling, and evidently on the watch for Miss Priscilla.

"Here she comes!" murmured Mellish. "Look out!"

The whole crowd of them turned towards Miss Fawcett with polite bows, some of them laying their hands upon their hearts.

Miss Fawcett, in the innocence of her heart, bowed gracefully in return.

"I hope you are not going yet, Miss Fawcett?" said Gore.

"I am sorry," said the unsuspecting Miss Priscilla, "but I really must."

"Couldn't you possibly manage to stay over to-morrow?"

"You know how pleased the Head is when you come, Miss Fawcett," said Mellish, "and the celebration to-morrow won't be complete without you."

"It is very kind of you to say so, but I really cannot remain. Come, my darling Tommy; the cab will be waiting."

"Excuse me a moment, Miss Fawcett," said Gore; "I think Merry has run out of cod-liver oil. Could you send him some more? We are all anxious about him."

"Dear, kind lad!" said Miss Fawcett. "Yes, I shall certainly send him some more. Tommy sweet, it is very pleasant to see how much your dear schoolfellows love you."

Tom Merry looked daggers at Gore, and escorted Miss Fawcett to the cab. The juniors followed them, and all stood hat in hand as Tom Merry handed his old governess into the vehicle. She kissed him seven or eight times at the door, much to the delight of the juniors; but at last the vehicle drove off.

"Good-bye, Tommy darling!"

"Good-bye, dear!"
 "Don't forget to take care of your dear little chest in this damp weather—" But the rest was lost as the hack rolled off into the November gloom.

There was a yell of laughter from Gore & Co.
 "Don't forget to take care of your ickle chest, Tommy darling!" shrieked Gore.

"And to keep your ickle feet dry!" said Mellish.

"And to take cod-liver oil in regular doses!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Remember the chest-protector!"

"And the pink pills!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry stood with ominous calmness while the cab drove off, and when it disappeared he woke to sudden energy. He made a rush at his tormentors, hitting out right and left. They scattered before him in the gloom of the quadrangle, yelling and hooting, and Tom Merry, baffled, took his way back to the School House. There was a frown upon his usually sunny face.

Manners and Lowther were waiting for him at the door of the House. They were looking very grave, having laughed themselves almost into a state of exhaustion in the study.

Tom Merry looked at them quickly.

"Miss Fawcett gone?" asked Manners solemnly.

"Yes."

"Kind of her to give us a look-up."

"Oh, don't be funny!"

"Anyway, the contribution from Miss Fawcett will be useful just now," said Manners, as the chums of the Shell went up to the study. "We weren't in a very flourishing state financially. And we want to do our little bit to-morrow. Those chaps in Study No. 6 are going to celebrate, and Figgins & Co. are on the warpath, too. We want to keep our end up."

"Hallo! Here's someone in the study."

A youth with a big head and a bumpy forehead and a large pair of spectacles blinked at the chums of the Shell as they came in. It was Herbert Skimpole of the Shell, the genius of St. Jim's.

"I came up to speak to you, Merry," he said. "As you were not here I waited. I believe Miss Fawcett has just been to see you."

"Yes," said Tom Merry, with a dangerous glint in his eyes. He had had enough chipping on that subject, and if Skimpole had come to his study to give him some more it was the most reckless thing the freak of St. Jim's could possibly do.

"Good! I thought so. Now, your old governess is extremely fond of you—Ow!"

Skimpole broke off, gasping, as Tom Merry grasped him by his shoulders. He blinked at the hero of the Shell in blank amazement.

"Really, Merry—really, I—"

"Outside!"

"But, really—"

Tom Merry slung Skimpole across the study and bumped him through the doorway. The Determinist of St. Jim's staggered against the opposite wall, leaned there for a moment, and then slid to the floor. He sat in a huddled heap there, staring blankly at Tom Merry, with an expression of almost idiotic bewilderment upon his face.

Tom Merry shook a warning finger at him.

"That's lesson number one!" he said. "I've had enough, and enough's as good as a feast! Keep off the grass in future, or you will be bumped again—and harder!"

"But, really, Merry—"

"Oh, travel along!"

"But really I am unconscious of having given you any cause of offence, and as there is no grass in the study I cannot possibly have trodden on it."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Monty Lowther.

"There is nothing to laugh at, Lowther. Merry has acted in an absurd and unaccountable way, and I only hope that he has not been drinking."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I made the innocent remark that his old governess is very fond of him—a remark that is certainly true, as you can ask any fellow in the School House who has seen."

"Get off!" roared Tom Merry.

"But, really—"

Tom Merry slammed the door and cut short the remarks of Herbert Skimpole. Manners and Lowther were grinning, and Tom looked very heated. He took up the envelope Miss Fawcett had left on the table and felt the rustle of a currency note. Before he could open it the door reopened and Skimpole looked in.

"Merry, I wish to speak to you on a most important matter. Your governess—Ow!"

A Latin grammar biffed on Skimpole's chest, and he sat

down in the doorway. Tom Merry started towards him with an ink-bottle, and he squirmed out into the passage.

"Merry, pray do not be a beast! As you know I am opposed to violence; but I shall punch your head if you spill any of that ink over me. If you do not wish to lend me the money—"

"Eh?"

"I wish to borrow a small sum off you."

"Why didn't you say so at first?"

"You didn't give me an opportunity. I was remarking that as Miss Fawcett is so fond of you, she has doubtless left you a substantial tip."

Tom Merry laughed. He saw that he had been a little hasty.

"And I was thinking you might lend me a little sum for an important purpose," said Skimpole. "You are doubtless aware that to-morrow is Fireworks Day?"

"Yes, I think I heard something of it," assented Tom Merry, his good-humour quite restored as he discovered that Skimpole was not chipping after all. "The Fifth of November follows next after the fourth, as a rule, I believe."

"It does so always, Tom Merry, without exception, as a little reflection on the matter would, I think, be sufficient to convince you," said Skimpole reprovingly. "To-morrow being Guy Fawkes Day, most of the fellows are spending money in fireworks. It has occurred to me that it would be cheaper and more efficacious to make the fireworks ourselves, and as I have the necessary knowledge—"

"Good! You can make us as many fireworks as you like," said Tom Merry. "No need to talk about it. Cut along now; I've got my work to finish."

"But you don't understand. Two things are necessary, knowledge and cash. I have the knowledge, so if you have the cash, we can come to some arrangement. If you like to hand me a pound or so, I will make you any number of fireworks."

"Yes, I'm likely to hand you a pound or so—I don't think!"

"Really, Tom Merry!"

Tom Merry opened his envelope. It contained two pound notes. There was a beaming expression of satisfaction upon the faces of the chums of the Shell. The tip was likely to come in very useful, as it could on such an occasion, Skimpole made a step towards the table.

"Very good!" he said. "Those two pounds will be ample."

"Go hon!"

"I could make one of them do."

"Can't be did, Skimmy. We want this cash for the celebration to-morrow; and besides, I know you'd only blow yourself up."

"There is little likelihood of that, Tom Merry. It is true that I do not know very much about chemistry, and am not very well acquainted with combustibles; but with my unusual brain power I am certain to make a success of the matter. You would probably save about fifty per cent on the cost of the fireworks."

"Rats! If you can make a couple of bob do, I'll oblige," said Tom Merry, who felt that some compensation was due to the brainy man of the Shell for the bumping he had received by mistake. "That's enough for you to blow up your study with."

"Thank you very much, Merry. I will endeavour to raise the rest of the required sum in other quarters," said Skimpole, taking the two shillings that Tom Merry produced from his trousers pocket. "Do you know where D'Arcy is?"

"He's gone out."

"How unfortunate! However, I shall wait for him at the gates. Thank you very much for the loan, Merry. If you would prefer to make it two pounds after all—"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" said Tom Merry, settling down to his interrupted problem.

"If you would like to make a contribution, Manners—"

"These films are spoiled," said Manners. "I knew they would be."

"Lowther, if you would care—"

"Nur mit Entsetzen wach! ich morgens auf," said Lowther, reading aloud as his pen travelled over the impotent paper, to drown Skimpole's voice.

Skimpole closed the door.

CHAPTER 3.

D'Arcy Minor in Difficulties.

SKIMPOLE went down the corridor, turned into the Fourth Form passage, and knocked at the door of Study No. 6.

Study No. 6 was the dwelling of the chums of the Fourth—Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of the School House, was the Croesus of the Junior Forms, and many a borrower came to share in his ample pocket-money.

There was no reply to Skimpole's knock, and the freak of the Shell knocked again.

Still dead silence.

"Dear me," murmured Skimpole. "I suppose Tom Merry was right. D'Arcy has gone out, and has not yet returned. It is curious that no one is here, however. Perhaps I had better look into the study. The gas is certainly alright."

He opened the door and looked in. Three juniors were in Study No. 6, unfastening a number of packets at the table.

Skimpole blinked at them, and they turned their heads to stare at Skimpole.

"Dear me," said Skimpole, "how singular that you did not hear me knock, Blake!"

"You remember your last experiment with gunpowder aboard the Condor in the vac. You wrecked the ship."

"I certainly cannot admit anything of the kind, Blake. I was conducting an experiment in the hold, and I should have proved that the mysterious powder was not gunpowder, had not that sudden and unaccountable explosion prevented me from making the experiment. However, that is neither here nor there. If you do not feel inclined to advance a small loan for the purpose of making fireworks—"

"And I certainly don't!"

"Very well. Has D'Arcy returned yet?"

"No, he hasn't."

"Ah, then I will wait for him at the gate. He understands me better than any of you fellows, and he will probably advance the tin. Or, as it is very cold and misty outdoors, perhaps I had better wait for him here."



"Here she comes!" murmured Mellish. "Look out!" The whole crowd of juniors turned towards Miss Fawcett with polite bows, some of them laying their hands on their hearts. Miss Fawcett bowed gracefully in return.

"Ass! We heard you!" said Jack Blake.

"Then why didn't you call out?"

"Because we didn't want to be bothered by a howling idiot just now."

"Really, Blake—"

"Can't you see we're busy?" demanded Digby.

Skimpole blinked at the table. The packets the Fourth Formers were unfastening contained fireworks of various shapes and sizes.

"I see you have been purchasing fireworks," said Skimpole. "I might have saved you a great deal of money if you had consulted me in time."

"Got a relation in the business?" asked Herries.

"Certainly not, Herries. I mean that I can make fireworks of a much better quality than those sold in shops, and at about half the price. If you fellows like to finance the scheme I shall be pleased to—"

"You'd be the only person pleased, then, I expect," grunted Blake. "We're not financing any rotten schemes just now."

"That is quite a mistake, Blake. It is not a rotten scheme, but an excellent idea for saving money," Skimpole explained patiently. "Tom Merry has advanced two shillings, but that is far from being sufficient for the purpose. I shall require a quantity of gunpowder, and gunpowder is expensive."

"You'd better leave gunpowder alone," said Blake.

Skimpole came farther into the study, and sat down calmly in the only armchair close to the fire.

"I shall be sure not to miss him, then. I will improve the shining hour, if you like, by reading you some very interesting extracts from the three hundred and thirty-third chapter of my work on Determinism, which I hope will be published before Christmas."

Jack Blake winked at his chums, and selected some crackers from one of the packets.

"Go ahead!" he said. "Read it out by all means."

"Good! I am very glad indeed to welcome this unusual manifestation of intelligence on your part, Blake. It shows that your faculties are awakening to the higher conceptions. The chapter I am speaking of deals with the great question of heredity and environment. Every man being what he is, and, therefore, not what he is not, it is unquestionable that Determinism is quite right in maintaining that that which is, under present conditions, in existence, is the evident outcome of that which was in existence under previous conditions, and, this great truth being admitted, it is only necessary to—"

Bang! Bang!

Skimpole jumped clear of the chair. His spectacles slid from his nose, and his notes for the three hundred and thirty-third chapter of his forthcoming publication were scattered over the rug.

"Wh-wh-what was that?"

Bang! Bang!

The new bangs came from fairly under his feet. He jumped into the air, caught his foot in the chair, and rolled on the carpet.

Bang, bang, bang!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wh-wh-what—ow—dear me!"

Bang, bang, bang!

"Dear me! I declare you are throwing crackers at me! Really, Blake, Digby, Herries—really—oh—oh—oh!"

Bang, bang, bang!

Jumping crackers were exploding all round Skimpole. The freak of the Shell was startled almost out of his wits. He made a clutch at his spectacles, and another at his valuable notes, and bolted from the study.

The Fourth-Formers, howling with laughter, rushed to the door, and pelted his legs with crackers as he ran.

Bang, bang, bang!

A youth, with a wide collar stained with ink, and a cheery, round face, also adorned with ink-spots, was coming up the stairs, and Skimpole ran full tilt into him.

The inky youth sat down on the stairs, and Skimpole rushed blindly past.

The sitting youth stared after him blankly.

"My only hat!" murmured D'Arcy minor. "What's the matter with Skimpole? What's all that giddy banging about?"

There was a strong smell of gunpowder in the Fourth Form passage as the Third Form fag picked himself up and made his way to Study No. 6.

He looked in, and there was an instant explosion under his feet.

Bang, bang, bang!

Wally D'Arcy jumped into the air.

"Hallo!" he roared. "What's the little game?"

"My hat! It's young Wally! All right, my son!" grinned Jack Blake. "I thought it was that ass Skimpole coming back. You can come in."

"Blessed if I care about coming into such a nifty old den!" said Wally, sniffing the gunpowder as he entered.

"Is my brother Gus here?"

"Your brother Gus isn't here," said Blake, "and you won't be here long if you don't show a proper respect to your elders, young shaver!"

"Oh, get off!" said the hero of the Third Form at St. Jim's. "I want to see Gus. What's the good of having a brother in the Fourth if you never make use of him? It's a bit up against me in the Third, having a Fourth-Former belonging to me. We rather look down on the Fourth, you know."

Jack Blake breathed hard through his nose.

The Third Form at St. Jim's had been accustomed to tremble in the presence of the Fourth and the Shell; but somehow things were changing in that respect since Wally had come to the old school. Wally, certainly, never showed any intention of trembling in the presence of anybody.

"It's rotten, Gus being out," said Wally. "Blessed if I can see what he wants to be out for, just when I want to speak to him. The mater particularly told him he was to look after me, and now when I'm out of tin he's gone out. It's provoking."

"Bai Jove! Is that young Wally?"

It was the voice of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of St. Jim's, at the door.

D'Arcy came in, and removed his overcoat, and put his silk hat on the nearest chair. The elegant Fourth-Former presented a striking contrast to his somewhat untidy and inky younger brother.

"Yes, it's me!" grunted Wally.

"Weally, Wally, you shouldn't say 'it's me,'" said the swell of St. Jim's in a tone of mild remonstrance. "You must know—"

"I didn't say 'it's you.' I said 'it's me.'"

"You said 'it's me.'"

"I said 'it's me.'"

"What I mean is—"

"Oh, never mind what you mean, Gus! You're too long-winded. Have you any tin?"

"I insist upon explainin' my meanin'," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "You should not say 'it's me.' You should say 'it is I.'"

"Got any tin?"

"Weally, Wally—"

"The mater said you were to look after me," said Wally. "The pater said I was always to go to you when in difficulties."

"Yaas, wathah, in a case of doubt, deah boy, I'll tell you what's the pwopah thing to do," assented D'Arcy.

"Well, I'm in difficulties now," said Wally. "I want some tin. I'm blewed—"

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"What? You whatted?"

"I blewed all my last allowance without thinking about bonfire-day, and now I'm stony."

"Wally, I cannot give my permish for you to use such slangy expvressions."

"That's all right. I can manage without," said Wally. "I'm busted, and I want some tin for fireworks to-morrow. How much can you stand?"

"Undah the circes—"

"Oh, no long speeches, old chap! I have enough of those from the governor. I could do with ten bob."

"I wufuse to advance you any such sum to spend in extwavgance," said D'Arcy. "I am bound, as your eldah bwothah, to inculcate carefulness with money. If you follow my example, and nevah waste anythin', you will always have plenty of cash."

"Rats! Now, don't you begin, Gus. I can't stand speeches. How much can you stand?"

"I shall be vevy pleased to stand half-a-crown."

"Well, of all the cheek! I'd wire home to the governor for some, only he's gone abroad. Make it ten bob."

"It is weally impos, deah boy!"

"That's all very well; but the fellows in the Third expect something of me," said Wally. "I relied on you, and you've no right to fail me like this. Are you bounders going to celebrate the Fifth in any way?"

"A trifle," said Jack Blake—"that is, if the Third Form don't object, of course."

"Oh, you can go ahead!" said Wally. "But the trouble is that we are mostly stony, and we shall have to raise supplies somehow. Perhaps we may be able to raid the New House and collar Figgins & Co.'s fireworks, though."

Jack Blake shook a warning finger at the cheerful Third-Former.

"Don't you do anything of the sort," he exclaimed. "You infants in the Third Form can keep clear of House rows."

"Rats!" said Wally. "We'd raid your study for two pins! I can tell you that the Third Form isn't going to be sat upon now I'm in it. I'm agreed about that with Jameson and Gibson. We're going to make things hum."

"Weally, Wally, I wish you would not use those slangy expvressions! I weally considah—"

"Oh, don't you begin, Gus! Look here, I'll make you an offer, you chaps. If one of you likes to volunteer as a guy, it will save us a lot of trouble making one, and—"

It was the last straw. Blake, Herries, and Digby rushed at the cheerful infant, and Wally dodged into the passage and ran. The chums of Study No. 6 came back breathless after a vain pursuit as far as the staircase.

"Bai Jove!" muttered D'Arcy. "My young bwothah is a wegulah young wascal, you know!"

"He'll be found drowned one of these days!" said Blake darkly.

CHAPTER 4.

Skimpole Waits!

"D EAR me, how very dark and misty it is!" murmured Skimpole, as he came to the gates at St. Jim's to wait for D'Arcy, quite unconscious of the fact that D'Arcy had already come in. "It will be very unpleasant waiting here, but otherwise I shall probably miss D'Arcy, and it is most important for me to see him."

Skimpole had already missed D'Arcy in the foggy quad, but as he did not know it that did not worry him. He took up his stand at the gates. They were locked for the night, but he knew that D'Arcy had had a pass from Darrell, the prefect. The chums of Study No. 6 had made it impossible for him to wait there, so there was no choice but to wait at the gates if he wanted to make sure of catching Arthur Augustus.

But it was, as Skimpole said, very cold and misty.

A quarter of an hour later Jack Blake came down to the porter's lodge to inquire for a parcel of fireworks he expected, and he caught sight of the Determinist of St. Jim's at the gates, blinking through the bars into the dusky Rylcombe Road.

"Hallo, there!" exclaimed Blake. "Who's that?"

"It is I, Blake."

"My hat! What are you doing there? Inhaling mist as a new treatment for the lungs, or trying to catch cold?"

"I am waiting for D'Arcy."

"You are whatting for which?"

"I am waiting for D'Arcy. Since your treatment of me in the study, which I cannot but characterise as rough and rude, I have decided to wait at the gates. If I waited at the door of the School House D'Arcy might go in another way. He is very unreliable."

"You—you are waiting here for Gussy?"

"Yes, certainly! I suppose I am at liberty to wait here if I like?"

Jack Blake chuckled.

"Oh, certainly! Wait as long as you like, my son; but I don't suppose D'Arcy will come in to-night now."

"Nonsense, Blake! He would not be allowed to stay out all night. I shall certainly wait here till he comes in."

"Oh, do as you like, Skimmy! I'm the last person in the world to interfere with the liberty of a sincere Determinist-howling-idiotist."

"Really, Blake—"

But Jack Blake, having obtained his parcel from Taggles, the porter, disappeared into the gloom. The sound of a chuckle floated back as he took his departure.

Skimpole shifted from one leg to another, and back again. It was very cold. The mist was clinging to his glasses and obstructing his vision, his feet were cold, and even his overcoat did not keep off the November wind. He tramped to and fro to keep himself warm, every now and

"I tell you Gussy has come in!" yelled Digby. "Blake told me to tell you."

"I am sorry that Blake is a party to this inexcusable prevarication."

"Oh, stay where you are, then!" said Digby. "I've a jolly good mind to bash your head against the gate, only it might damage the gate."

And Digby walked off.

Skimpole, very pleased with himself for having so easily seen through the devices of the Fourth-Formers to get him away from his post, resumed his patient tramping to and fro.

Ten minutes passed, and then Herries came down. Herries had been round to feed his bulldog, and he, good-naturedly, gave Skimpole a look-up as he returned. Skimpole turned round and blinked at him in the mist.

"Are you still waiting for D'Arcy?" grinned Herries.



Bang! Bang! "Wh-wh-what was that?" gasped Skimpole. Bang! Bang! The new bangs came from fairly under his feet. Skimpole jumped into the air, caught his foot on the chair and fell on to the carpet. "Wh-wh-what-ow-dear me!"

then casting anxious glances through the bars of the gates into the misty road.

A form loomed up in the mist of the quad.

"Hallo!" said the voice of Digby. "Blake asked me to come and see if you were still there, duffer!"

"I am still here," said Skimpole, in shivering tones. "It is very curious, is it not, that D'Arcy should be so late?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There is nothing to laugh at, Digby. D'Arcy may have met with some terrible accident. At this very moment a railway train may be thundering over his mangled limbs."

"Well, you're a cheerful idiot, and no mistake! As a matter of fact, D'Arcy has come in," said Digby.

"Pray do not attempt to rot so wideawake a person as myself, Digby. You can hardly expect to take me in with so flimsy a tale."

"You howling ass! D'Arcy has been indoors a long time!"

"I am sorry to see you departing from the truth for the sake of a very poor joke. It might appear to you to be humorous to make me come in after waiting a long time for nothing, but a joke is no excuse for telling an untruth."

"You screaming lunatic—"

"Really, Digby—"

"Yes," mumbled Skimpole, through his chattering teeth.

"He is late, isn't he?"

"He's indoors," said Herries.

"Really, Herries?"

"He's been in an hour."

"I am sorry to see you sharing in the prevarication practised by Digby for the sake of a very poor joke," said Skimpole. "I assure you that a fellow like myself is not taken in so easily, Herries."

"You utter dummy!" said Herries. "I thought I'd tell you, that's all. You can stay there as long as you like!"

And Herries marched off indignantly.

Skimpole blinked into the fog. Presently he tapped at the door of the porter's lodge. Taggles opened it in no good humour.

"It's come, Master Figgins," he said—"which is the third time you've bothered me about that blessed box of fireworks! Here it is! Why, it ain't Master Figgins!"

"It is I," said Skimpole. "I want to ask you—"

"There ain't nothin' for you!" growled Taggles.

"I am not expecting anything, Taggles."

"Then what are you worritin' me for?" demanded the porter aggressively.

"I had no intention of worrying you. I simply wanted to ask you if you knew when D'Arcy was likely to return."

"D'Arcy? He hain't gone out again!"

"Eh? He went out before tea—"

"Which 'e came in more than an hower ago," grunted Taggles.

"He—he came in?" said Skimpole faintly.

"Hain't I told you so?"

"Then—then I must have missed him in the mist," said Skimpole. "And they were not trying to jape me, after all!"

"I don't know what you're talking about," said Taggles; "but I jolly well know that I'm not goin' to stand 'ere listenin' to you!"

And the school porter closed his door in Skimpole's face with a slam.

The freak of the Shell took his way back to the School House, shivering with cold, and wishing he had not been quite so knowing.

Skimpole looked into the Common-room, and found D'Arcy there. He rubbed the mist off his glasses and approached the swell of St. Jim's.

"I have been waiting for you, D'Arcy," he said, in a tone of mild reproach.

"Yaas, Blake told me you were waitin' at the gate," said D'Arcy, with a nod. "I was thinkin' whethah I would come down and tell you I was indoors, you know, but I feel so exhausted afteh goin' out. Why didn't you come in when Dig told you?"

"I thought he was japing."

"Then it serves you wight for doubtin' a gentleman's word," said D'Arcy severely. "You ought to have known that a friend of mine would not depart from the twuth for the sake of japin' anybody."

"I think I have caught a cold—"

"I cannot say that I commiseate with you in the least. A fellow who would doubt the word of a friend of mine—"

"I wanted to see you particularly. I have a scheme for making fireworks, and saving about fifty per cent of the cost—"

"I am afraid I cannot give you my opinion on the scheme. I cannot discuss any mattah with a fellow who would doubt the word of a friend of mine."

"I really do not want your opinion, D'Arcy. That is not the point. With your limited intellect you would hardly be able to advance an opinion of any great value. What I want you to do is to lend me a pound."

"I uttaly wufuse to lend a pound to a fellow who doubts the word of a friend of mine!" said D'Arcy, with great dignity.

"Really, D'Arcy—"

"This discussion may as well close. I cannot converse on a friendly footin' with a fellow who doubts the word of a friend of mine!"

And Arthur Augustus effectually closed the discussion by strolling away, leaving Skimpole blinking undecidedly and still minus the necessary pound for carrying out his scheme.

CHAPTER 5.

A Third Form Raid!

"HOW much?"

Jameson of the Third Form at St. Jim's asked that question as Wally strolled into the Third Form room at the School House.

Most of the Form-rooms were in the School House building, and the Third Form room was used, after school hours, by School House and New House boys alike. They preferred it to the Junior Common-room, where their youthful mirth was severely repressed by the Fourth Form and the Shell fellows.

The Form-room was crowded with inky-fingered fags. Among that untidy and scraggy fraternity, D'Arcy minor was already looked upon as a leader. Jameson, of the New House, had been cock of the Third, but Wally had knocked him literally off his perch, and since then D'Arcy minor had reigned.

But there was no ill-feeling. He chummed up with Jameson before the black eyes had resumed their natural hue.

Wally shook his head in answer to Jameson's question. "Nothing."

Jameson whistled expressively.

"I say, that won't do, you know. Hallo! What have you got there—fireworks?"

"My new bunny," said Wally, showing the head of a rabbit from under his jacket. "Jolly little chap, isn't he? I gave James a bob for him."

"Oh, blow your old bunny! What about the fireworks?"

Wally was fond of animals, and so he generally had one or more about him—white mice or rabbits, or a ferret, or

something hairy and smelly. He shoved the rabbit back under his jacket.

"I can't make a raise from Gussy," he added. "He offered half-a-crown."

"Better than nothing."

"Only I rowed with the chaps in Study No. 6, and they chased me out before he had time to hand it over. But that wouldn't be any good. My idea is that we ought to raid the Fourth or the Shell."

"Pshaw!" said Jameson. "That would mean trouble."

"Let it! They always sit on the Third Form, and it's war between us. I don't care a rap for their House rows! When the School House fellows row the New House, or vice versa, they expect the Third Form to back them up without question, and without wanting to have a voice in the matter."

"Well, we've always done it," said Jameson. "I always back up Figgins."

"I think it's rot. We've got to stand on our own—the Third Form for itself. United we stand, divided we fall," said Wally. "No House rows in the Form, that's my opinion, and I'm willing to fight anybody for the sake of making peace all round."

"I can see you've got something in your mind," said Curly Gibson. "Out with it!"

"Well, I've noticed that Figgins of the New House has been down to the porter's lodge several times about a box of fireworks he's expecting. Figgins belongs to the Fourth, and we're up against him every time. What price raiding his fireworks?"

"Figgins would be waxy."

"All the better. I like to see him waxy; he's funny then."

"Ha, ha, ha! It mayn't be funny for us, though."

"I don't mean to stick to the things, though. I'll send Figgins a postal order for them the next time my governor shells out. But the immediate question is to get hold of some fireworks for to-morrow."

"How are we to get hold of them?"

"We shall have to do it before they are taken into the New House. The carrier has already been, and most likely the box is at Taggles' lodge. Figgins may go down for it, or leave it to be sent up to the House in the morning. This is where we come in. In the first place you, as you're a New House kid, can go to the lodge and ask Taggles if the parcel has come. If it has we'll get Taggles out of the lodge somehow, and I can slip in and collar it."

"It will be risky."

"Oh, rats! Who cares for the risk?"

And Wally D'Arcy, Jameson, and Curly Gibson forthwith left the Form-room, and proceeded upon the expedition. Jameson marched up to the door of Taggles' lodge, which Skimpole had left five minutes before. His knock brought Taggles to the door in anything but a good humour. He glared out into the mist. Wally and Gibson were a dozen paces away, but the mist effectually concealed them.

"Whatcher want?" was Taggles' polite query.

"Please has a box of fireworks come for Figgins?" asked Jameson.

"Yes, it 'ave," grunted Taggles. "'Ere it is."

Jameson grinned as Taggles took up a box from a stool inside the room. But it was not his cue to take it then. When Figgins came for it, Taggles would tell him that the box had been given to Jameson, and if it was not forthcoming there would be trouble for Jameson. The Third-Former shook his head.

"Oh, I don't want to take it!" he said. "I only wanted to know if it had come. It's all right, Taggy."

"Is it?" growled Taggles. "If you come a-knockin' at my door again, I'll report yer. Young himps! I'll report yer!"

Jameson vanished, and Taggles closed the door. The junior rejoined his comrades.

"It's all right," he whispered. "The box is on the stool just inside the door, waiting for Figgins. If you could get Taggles out of his lodge for a minute, it would be the easiest thing in the world to nip in and collar it."

"Good!" said Wally, with a chuckle. "You had better go and show up in the New House now, and get an alibi ready. When Figgy finds his box has been raided he may hear about you inquiring for it, and—"

"Right-ho! I'll take an exercise into Figgy's study, and ask one of them to help me. That will be an alibi."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jameson cut off towards the New House, and Wally and Curly crept towards Taggles' door again. Wally took cover close to the door, out of sight if Taggles should open it.

"Now you go and bang at the door, Curly," he whispered. "Make the bouncer come out, and make him chase you, and then I'll nip in."

"Right-ho!" chuckled Curly.

He picked up a stone, and forthwith proceeded to bang upon the door. It opened in a few seconds, and Taggles came down the steps into view in a towering rage. Curly

had promptly backed away behind an empty packing-case, and the porter saw nothing in the gloom.

"Which I'll report yer," he said.

"Holler boys!" said Curly. "Here's another guy!"

"Young himp—"

"Ha, ha, ha! Another guy!"

It was too much for Taggles' patience. He made a rush in the direction of the junior, and Curly promptly dodged away. The porter rushed after him, and the mist swallowed him up. It was Wally's opportunity, and he did not lose it. In a twinkling he had darted from his cover and entered the lodge, and the box of fireworks was in his hands. He dashed out again at full speed, and was behind the nearest tree by the time Taggles came back, grunting with exertion, and having, of course, failed to secure the elusive Curly.

The porter went into his lodge and slammed the door, and Wally chuckled gleefully.

light gleamed from the curtained window. Figgins knocked again, but it was evident that the porter did not intend to open the door again that night.

Wally squeezed Curly Gibson's arm.

"He thinks it's another jape," he whispered. "He won't open the door. I wonder what Figgy will do?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hush!"

Figgins waited a minute, looking very much surprised and puzzled, and then he knocked again—more loudly than before—and rang the bell in addition. This failing to elicit any response from Taggles, Figgins walked along to the window and tapped on it. The window was opened with such suddenness that Figgins started back in surprise, and the next moment he gave a wild yell as a jug of water was thrown over him.



The window was opened with such suddenness that Figgins started back in surprise, and the next moment he gave a wild yell as Taggles threw a jug of water over him. "You—you dangerous lunatic!" hooted Figgins.

"Got it?" asked Curly eagerly, as his chum joined him.

"Yes, rather! Look!"

"Ripping! Let's get it out of sight. Hist, there's somebody coming."

"Get behind this tree."

The two young rascals were out of sight in a moment. A tall figure came along towards the porter's lodge, and the Third-Formers, recognising the long limbs of Figgins of the Fourth, chuckled silently.

"He's going for his box of fireworks," Wally murmured.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins looked round, catching a faint echo of the chuckle. Wally pinched his companion's arm, and Curly was silent. Figgins walked on, and knocked at the porter's door. It did not open.

Figgins knocked again. Still there was no sound of a movement within.

The New House junior looked puzzled.

"Taggy gone deaf, all of a sudden, I wonder?" he wondered. "What's the matter with him? I know he's at home."

It was pretty certain that Taggles was at home, for a

Taggles had evidently been expecting that tap at the window, and he was ready for it.

Figgins staggered back, drenched with water, and the porter glared at him from the open window.

"Which I've caught yer!" he roared. "Perhaps you won't come a-knockin' up a 'ard-workin' man at this time of night agin, you young rip!"

"You—you dangerous lunatic!" hooted Figgins. "What do you mean?"

"Is that Master Figgins?"

"Yes, you howling idiot!"

"Wasn't it you knockin' at my door time and again?"

"No, it wasn't, you dummy!" howled Figgins. "I've only just come along to get my box of fireworks and—"

"Then I've made a mistake," said Taggles. "Some young himp has been knockin' at my door and a-dodgin' me, and I—"

"You shrieking duffer—"

"Well, you see—"

"Oh, let's get away!" murmured Wally. "I must go somewhere and laugh or I shall burst a boiler! Let's cut!"

And they cut.
Five minutes later the whole Form-room was gloating over the prize, and shrieking over the joke.

CHAPTER 6.

Figgins is Rather Hasty!

"**H**AND them over!" Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn—otherwise known as Figgins & Co.—marched into Study No. 6 in the School House.

Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy were all there, enjoying a late supper of roasted chestnuts, and they all turned round to stare at the New House juniors.

Figgins & Co. looked warlike.

"Hand them over!" repeated Figgins.

"Eh?" said Jack Blake.

"Hand them over!"

"Weally, Figgins," expostulated Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, "this is wathah a wude mannah of askin' us for some chestnuts! I weally considah—"

"I'm not asking for any chestnuts, ass!"

"I wufuse to be called an ass! I—"

"Hand them over!" roared Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn, in chorus.

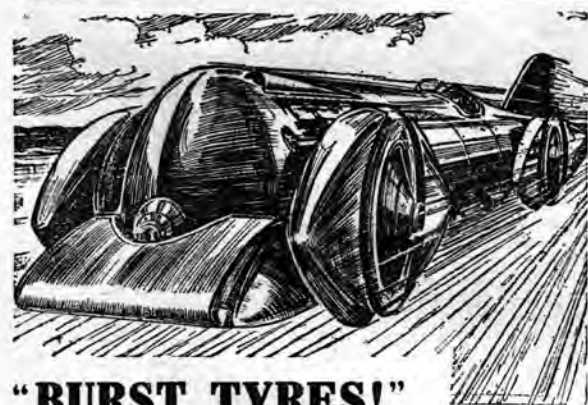
"Off your rockers?" asked Dig pleasantly.

"Are you going to hand them over?"

"Hand what over?" asked Jack Blake. "If you're not off your giddy chumps, and you're not asking for some of the chestnuts, what the dickens are you driving at?"

"You know jolly well what I'm driving at," said Figgins wrathfully. "Of course, I knew it was you at once!"

"You knew what—whom—which was me?"



"BURST TYRES!"

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"Oh, don't jaw! Hand them over!"

"A sad case," said Blake, looking at his friends—"a very sad case indeed! Quite mad, and apt to become excited at the sight of innocent youths eating roast chestnuts!"

"Are you going to hand them over?"

"Certainly," said Blake. "I believe in humouring lunatics. What do you want me to hand over? Will D'Arcy's topper do?"

"Weally, Blake, I wufuse to have my toppah handed over to Figgins!"

"Will you hand them over?" shrieked Figgins.

"Oh, not this evening—some other evening!"

"Then we'll jolly well wipe the study up with you and look for 'em ourselves!" yelled Figgins. "Sock it to them!"

And Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn rushed to the attack. But the chums of Study No. 6 were always ready for a House row, and they jumped up in a twinkling. A wild and whirling scrimmage was soon raging in the study. The table went over with a crash, and chairs and books flew in all directions. Figgins & Co. were in earnest. But there was one point upon which they had not calculated, and that was that the odds were against them.

Figgins and Blake were soon rolling on the floor, and Digby and Kerr were pommelling one another in a corner. Herries and Fatty Wynn sprawled across the overturned table, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy adjusted his eyeglass and looked round.

Blake yelled to him.

"Lend me a hand with this rotter, you ass!"

"I dislike bein' addressed as an ass, Blake."

"Lend me a hand, will you, you dummy?"

"I absolutely wufuse to be called a dummy!"

"Will you lend a hand?" shrieked Blake.

"Yaas, wathah, so long as you do not accompany the request with opprobrious expressions," said the swell of the School House placidly.

He lent a hand, with the result that Figgins was soon lying on his back, with Jack Blake sitting on his chest and pinning him down.

"Now help, Dig, ass!"

"I wufuse—"

"Come on!" shouted Dig. "This beast is getting the best of it!"

D'Arcy seized Kerr by the collar as he got Digby down. Kerr was swung off, and Digby scrambled on him in turn and held him on the carpet. Then Arthur Augustus lent his kindly aid to Herries, with the result that Fatty Wynn was soon secured. Then the swell of St. Jim's fanned himself with a cambric handkerchief.

"Bai Jove, this wufness is vewy exhaustin'," he murmured. "Still, I am vewy glad I was heah to turn defeat into victowry, deah boys!"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Blake. "Get a handful of soot out of the chimney and rub it over Figgy's chivvy."

D'Arcy jammed his monocle into his eye and regarded his leader with a steady stare.

"What did you say, Blake?"

"Get your paw full of soot and jam it over Figgy's dial!"

"Do you weally think, Blake, that I could possibly soil my hands in such a disgustin' mannah?"

"Well, get some soot in the shovel, then, dummy!"

"Hold on!" gasped Figgins. "Don't trouble about the soot—we give in!"

"That's all very well, but we can't be put to the trouble of licking you for nothing."

"You have licked us—"

"Get that soot, Gussy—"

"Well, the odds were on your side, anyway. And you started it!"

"I don't see how you make that out, Figgy. Weren't we sitting at home by the family fireside in the most peaceable way in the world when you came in and—"

"Well, you should have handed our fireworks over!"

"Your fireworks!"

"Yes; we're going to have them back, I can tell you!"

"Quite off your rocker," said Blake. "It's a touching case. I wonder whether we could get up a Form subscription for a strait-waistcoat?"

"Look here!" roared Figgins. "Do you mean to say that you didn't get my box of fireworks from Taggles' lodge?"

"Ha, ha, ha! No!"

"Honest Injun?" said Figgins suspiciously.

"Yes, honest Injun!" said Blake. "Has somebody raided your fireworks? Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, make it pax!" growled Kerr. "I thought all along you were too hasty about it, Figgy!"

"You didn't say so till now, anyway," grunted Figgins.

"Well, it's no use arguing with you."

"Oh, rats! Let's get up, Blake! It's pax!"

Figgins & Co. were allowed to rise. They looked very

dusty and rumped. So did the School House chums for that matter.

Figgins rubbed his nose ruefully. There was a thin stream of claret issuing therefrom.

"I suppose we've made a mistake," he remarked. "I was certain you had them. Somebody knocked up Taggles and got him to chase out into the quad, and then the box of fireworks was collared—at least, that's what Taggles says. He declares that the box was there when he went out, and he was back in a minute, so he didn't notice it was gone till I came for it. I was certain it was you who raided it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Must have been some of you School House rotters, of course. We'd better get along and see Tom Merry, kids. I suppose it was those Shell bouncers, after all."

"You and Kerr can go," said Fatty Wynn. "I say, Blake, they are ripping chestnuts."

Jack Blake laughed.

"Have some?" he said hospitably. "There's lots—and Gussy can easily roast some more."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Certainly I will," said Fatty Wynn. "If only to show that there's no ill-feeling. You can go and ask Tom Merry about those fireworks, Figgy—but I'd really recommend you to be a little less hasty next time."

"You and Kerr are always so blessed knowing when it's too late," grunted Figgins. "Come along, Kerr. Do you know where Merry is, Blake?"

"Well, Lowther had an imposition to do, so I dare say you'll find them in their study," said Jack Blake. "Won't you stop and have some chestnuts?"

"Thanks, no—I'm after my fireworks at present."

And Figgins and Kerr walked out, leaving Fatty Wynn disposing of the roast chestnuts at a remarkable rate of speed.

Figgins kicked open Tom Merry's door, and the New House chums entered. Lowther had finished his imposition long ago, but the chums of the Shell were still in the study, chatting over the prospects of St. Jim's juniors in an important junior match that was to come off the following afternoon. They favoured the two intruders with a stare.

Figgins and Kerr glared back.

"Did they always come into a room without knocking in the slum you were brought up in, Figgins?" asked Monty Lowther genially.

"Where are our fireworks?" demanded Figgins, without replying to the question.

"Blessed if I know," said Tom Merry. "What are you driving at?"

"Didn't you raid my box of fireworks from Taggles' lodge?"

"Ha, ha, ha! No!"

"Then who did?" exclaimed Figgins, looking very puzzled. "We've inquired in Study No. 6 and they don't know anything about them."

"Ha, ha, ha! You look as if you had been inquiring in a dustbin, or under a motor-car."

"Well, we did have a bit of a scrap before there was time to explain. We were certain Blake had had them. I'm blessed if I know where to look now; nobody but Blake or you would have the confounded cheek to raid our fireworks!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Perhaps it was some fellow in your own House?"

"They wouldn't dare," said Figgins grimly. "I've got the kids in my House in order. There ain't two parties disputing about the leadership in the New House, as there are in this rotten old show—not much."

Tom Merry rose.

"You've come to the wrong place for your fireworks," he remarked, "but this is exactly the right spot for a thick ear, if you are looking for one."

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

And the two New House juniors quitted the study, and relieved their feelings a little by giving the door a slam that almost shook the House. They left the School House, Fatty Wynn joining them in the passage, still eating chestnuts. As the trio went out into the mist, there was a sudden bang—bang—bang! under their very feet.

Figgins and Kerr jumped, and Fatty Wynn slid on the steps and sat down with a heavy bump.

"My—my hat!" he gasped.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

"It's some duffer letting off crackers," growled Figgins. "Hallo, there! It's that young imp D'Arcy minor!"

"Hallo!" said Wally, peering from the gloom, with a curious grin on his face. "Hallo! Did that cracker make you jump?"

Figgins & Co. strode away without deigning a reply. A jumping cracker followed them, and went off with six successive bangs round their feet. They disappeared towards the New House, and Wally chuckled.

"My only Aunt Jane!" he murmured. "I wonder what Figgins would say if he knew to whom those crackers belonged? Ha, ha, ha!"

CHAPTER 7.

A Night Alarm!

"HAVE you seen my rabbit, Jameson?"

"No; you shouldn't carry beastly rabbits about under your jacket," said Jameson.

"I didn't ask for your advice, old son. I asked you if you had seen my rabbit."

"Well, I haven't! Perhaps your dog has settled him."

"Oh, Pongo wouldn't touch one of my rabbits. He gobbled up young Parker's white mice the other day, but he wouldn't touch anything of mine."

"Herries' bulldog may have come across him, though," suggested Jameson comfortingly.

"Oh, don't be a beast! I wonder where the little brute has got to?"

It was bed-time for the Third Form, and Wally was worried about his rabbit. It had escaped from its cosy berth under his jacket, and where it had gone was a mystery. The junior had to go to bed with the rabbit still missing. Bed-time for the Third Form was nine o'clock—rather to Wally's indignation. He didn't see why he shouldn't stay up till half-past along with the Fourth and the Shell.

The raiding of the fireworks from Taggles' lodge was still a mystery. Figgins & Co. had been inquiring right and left. Nobody seemed to know anything about it. It did not even occur to Figgins that a Third-Former might have had the "nerve" to raid the property of Fourth-Formers, and Wally did not enter his mind in connection with the raid.

Tom Merry was puzzled, too, to account for it. It looked like a House raid, but a House raid without either himself or Blake being mixed up in it was improbable. Besides, all the fellows he spoke to about the matter disclaimed knowledge of the affair.

"It's a blessed mystery," said Tom Merry, when the time came to go to bed, and nothing had transpired about Figgins' fireworks. "I can't make it out at all. It's rather rough on Figgins and rough on us. We might have had those fireworks if we'd known."

"It might have been Gore," said Monty Lowther reflectively. "There's something going on in Gore's study—I know that. He and Sands and Norton have been chuckling over some joke all the evening, and they won't let on what it is."

"More likely something up against us," said Tom Merry. "If they had raided the New House they would brag of it fast enough."

"Yes, that's true—it can't have been Gore."

The Shell went to bed, and were soon wrapped in the arms of Morpheus. Tom Merry was still thinking of the missing fireworks, and the matter mingled with his dreams. It was some time later when he started and awoke.

Tom Merry's eyes opened in the darkness of the dormitory. He looked round; the dormitory was much lighter than when he had gone to bed. The mist had cleared off, and the stars were shining in a clear, dark sky. The starlight streamed into the high windows of the dormitory, falling in strange, ghostly patches on the white coverlets.

Tom Merry sat up in bed and listened.

Faintly through the night came the boom of the clock from the tower. Twelve strokes in slow succession. The quarters had already rung out before he awoke—perhaps had awakened him. But no—as he listened in the silence of the night, a faint sound in the corridor caught his ear.

It was the sound of somebody—or something—passing the door so close as to brush against it.

A thrill ran through Tom Merry.

At that hour every occupant of the School House was in bed. The thought crossed his mind that it might be a New House raid, but he dismissed it. Figgins & Co. would not be likely to raid at such an extremely late hour. Yet whom could it be? Tom Merry thought of the burglars who, but a short time before, had broken into the chapel. Was it a burglar again?

He listened with all his ears. A strange, eerie sound came through the silence; the sound of a curious staccato tread on the stairs. He hesitated no longer, but jumped out of bed, and shook Manners by the shoulder.

"Gr-r-r-r!" murmured Manners. "Leggo!"

"Get up, old chap—there's something on."

Manners started into wakefulness. He sat up in bed and rubbed his eyes.

"What's the row?"

"There's somebody outside the dorm—sounds to me like a burglar."

"My aunt!"
 "I'm going to have a look, anyway. Wake up, Lowther!"
 "Tain't rising-bell," murmured Lowther drowsily.
 "I know it isn't—it's a burglar!"
 "Let him burgle!"
 "Oh, get up, ass!" Tom Merry jerked away the bed-clothes, and Lowther grumbled and got up.
 He shivered as he drew on his clothes.
 "Blessed if I see what you want to interfere with a chap following his trade for," he grunted. "If a burglar can't burgle at midnight, when can he burgle?"
 "Oh, cheese it, come on!"
 Tom Merry cautiously opened the dormitory door and the Terrible Three crept out.
 "Listen!" whispered Tom.
 From the direction of the stairs came that eerie sound. Plop, plop, plop!
 "What on earth is it?" muttered Lowther. "Somebody going downstairs with padded feet, and jumping from one step to another, it sounds like."
 "It can't be that, anyway."
 "Then what is it?"
 "Blessed if I know. We're going to find out."
 "Jolly uncanny!" muttered Manners. "Blessed if I know what to make of it!"
 "Come on!" said Tom Merry.
 They hurried silently towards the staircase. The noise had ceased now, and there was dead silence. Through the Hall window the starlight poured in in a clear, silvery stream. It lay like a bar across the Hall, leaving darkness where it did not fall.
 The chums of the Shell leaned over the banisters on the lower landing, and stared down into the Hall.
 A faint sound of something moving came into the darkness below.

"There's somebody there!" murmured Manners.
 "By Jove! It must be a burglar!"
 They watched anxiously. Somebody or something was moving about in the Hall below. They waited breathlessly, hoping he would cross the path of light and reveal himself to their gaze.

Lowther suddenly clutched Tom Merry's arm, and pointed.
 "Look!"

Something dark and shadowy had whisked across the patch of light. What it was the chums of the Shell had no time to see. A thrill ran through them. It was not a burglar, evidently—but what was it? A curiously uncanny feeling was stealing over them.

"Did you see it?"
 "Just a glimpse—what was it?"
 "Blessed if I know."
 "There it goes again!"

The chums watched breathlessly. Across the patch of light whisked the dark form—and this time it remained in the light.

Tom Merry uttered a sudden exclamation.

"My hat! It's an animal!"
 "By Jove, so it is!"
 "A rabbit!" exclaimed Manners. "Look at its ears!"
 Tom Merry burst into a laugh. The mystery was explained—though how a rabbit came to be loose in the School House was another mystery. But the next moment the laugh died away. From the dark corridor behind them

came a distinct footstep. It was no rabbit this time, but undoubtedly a human being.

"Look out!" muttered Tom Merry.
 The chums of the Shell whisked round. A shadowy figure loomed up in the gloom.

"Collar him!"
 "Hold on," said a well-known voice, "what's the row?"
 "D'Arcy minor!"
 "Yes, rather! I'm looking for my rabbit."
 "Your rabbit!" gasped Tom Merry.
 "Yes. What are you kids doing out of bed?" said Wally, with refreshing coolness. "I heard the beggar plodding past the door of our dorm, and I came out to look for him. Did you take me for a giddy burglar? Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, don't cackle; get back to bed."
 "I'm looking for my rabbit."
 "You young rascal—"

"Did you hear my bunny?" asked Wally. "Ha, ha, ha—I suppose you took him for a burglar! Fancy taking a bunny rabbit for a burglar! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Are you going to stop that cackling?" demanded Lowther.

The chums of the Shell had turned very pink in the dark. "Fancy taking the bunny rabbit for a— Ow!"

Three pairs of hands seized the cheerful Third-Former. He was whisked off his feet, carried back to the Third Form dormitory, and plumped down bodily on the nearest bed. There was a yell from Jameson, who happened to be occupying that bed.

The Terrible Three walked back to their own quarters chuckling.

"That shuts him up," Manners remarked. "Cheeky young bounder! He can look for his bunny now, if he likes."

And the three went back to bed.

CHAPTER 8.

The One and Only!

THE morning of the Fifth dawned clear and cold. Tom Merry & Co. were down early for a little practice on the football field before breakfast. There was an important junior fixture for the afternoon, as November the Fifth came on a Saturday.

The Junior Eleven were playing away, but they meant to return in time for the bonfire celebration in the evening.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, however, was not with the early footballers. He had been out the previous evening, and he had made that the excuse for missing early football. He declared that he was exhausted.

"I'll come and look on, deah boys," he said. "Of course I don't need so much pwactice as you fellows do."

"No time to argue with the dummy," said Tom Merry. "Come on!"

They passed Wally in the quad. The hero of the Third Form grinned at them.

"Found any more bunny burglars?" he called out.

The Terrible Three marched on without replying. Wally sidled up to his elegant brother, and gave him a dig in the ribs.

"You needn't bother about that ten bob, Gus."
 "Weally, Wally, I wish you would not dig me in the wibs in that wuff way. I wegard it as a vulgah action, and—"

Potts, the Office Boy!



"Oh, come off!" said Wally. "You needn't bother about that ten bob. I've got enough fireworks for to-night!"

"Vewy good, but I don't see—"

"Got 'em cheap," said Wally.

A light dawned on Arthur Augustus. He adjusted his eyeglass and stared at his cheerful younger brother.

"Wally, is it poss that it was you—"

D'Arcy minor nodded coolly.

"Yes; we raided old Figgins!"

"Bai Jove!"

"The Fourth Form 'chaps aren't up to our style," said Wally patronisingly. "We raided the stuff. We're going to pay Figgins for it afterwards, though. Of course you'll keep it dark, Gus."

"I shall not betway your confidence, of course, but weally I—"

"That's all right. I say, there's something to interest you over by the New House," said Wally, with a grin.

"Is there weally? It is wathah a long walk, and I'm feelin' wathah exhausted—"

"Ha, ha, ha! You'd be sorry to miss it!"

"But what is it, Wally?"

"Go and see," replied the infant, and he scuttled off.

D'Arcy major stared after him doubtfully, and then strolled over to the New House.

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus uttered that exclamation suddenly, as he came in sight of a strange figure seated in an old chair outside the New House.

He guessed at once that this was what Wally had said would interest him. It did interest him—painfully.

The figure was a life-size—or, rather, more than life-size—guy, built up of sticks and old clothes, with a face of stuffed cloth daubed into grotesque features. A cardboard imitation of a silk hat—in a very battered condition—was on its head, and a curtain ring with a cord attached was jammed into one eye, in evident imitation of a monocle. The grotesque figure did not bear the faintest resemblance to the swell of the School House—but its manufacturers thought otherwise, to judge by the placard on its chest.

"THE ONE AND ONLY AUGUSTUS, ESQUIRE."

That was the legend the placard bore.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gazed at the figure in speechless indignation.

"Bai Jove!" he muttered at last. "I suppose that is the work of Figgins & Co.—wude wottahs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was a yell of laughter from the direction of the New House.

D'Arcy turned round and saw Figgins & Co. on the steps of the House. They wore long coats over their football things, and were just going down to join Tom Merry & Co. at practice.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Figgins. "Hear me smile! See the likeness, Gussy?"

"There is no likeness, you wottah!"

"Oh, come, Gussy!" exclaimed Kerr in surprise. "You must be blind, you know! Look at it again; the resemblance is striking. Look at the cut of the trousers!"

"You uttah wottahs—"

"Then there's the placard," said Fatty Wynn. "If there

were any doubt about it the placard would settle it. The one and only—"

"Augustus, Esquire!" said Figgins.

"You wotten boundahs—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus stalked away. Figgins & Co., still chuckling, went down to the junior ground. More than one School House junior came over to have a look at the guy and departed chuckling. Arthur Augustus was asked if he had seen it, and what he thought of it, till he was weary of the subject.

"Faith, and it's a remarkable likeness entoirely!" said Reilly. "You must have noticed that yourself, Gussy darling."

"I have noticed nothin' of the sort!"

"Sure, and ye're just the one to be selected, too—so appropriate."

"Weally, Weilly—"

"Life-size and lifelike; no need to make any changes."

"If you speak to me again on that subject, Weilly, I shall give you a feahful thwashin'!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Gore. "It's ripping, and so like the original. But it isn't quite up to the one we're making, is it, Norton?"

"Not half," said Norton.

"Hallo! Are you making a guy, Gore?" said Tom Merry, coming in from the football field. "So are we. That will be two for the School House."

"But yours won't come up to mine!" chuckled Gore.

"Eh, Norton?"

"Ha, ha, ha! Not half!"

Tom Merry looked at Gore curiously. He had thought several times before that the cad of the Shell had some wheeze on and something up against him, but he could not guess what it was.

"Well, we shall see," he said good-naturedly, and passed on.

Monty Lowther looked back suspiciously and saw Gore and Norton and Sands laughing together.

"They've got something on," said Lowther. "Something caddish, to judge by the way they're enjoying themselves over it."

"I don't catch on to it, though. Hallo, Gussy! Have you seen that likeness of yourself over by the New House?"

"Did you address me, Tom Mewwy?"

"Have you seen that likeness— Hallo! What's the row?"

The swell of the School House was pushing back his cuffs with a very warlike air. His eye gleamed from behind his monocle with the light of battle.

"I have made up my mind to bestow a feahful thwashin' upon the next person who made a wemark to me on that widiculous subject, Tom Mewwy."

"My hat! Look at the awful danger I've run into unawares. Won't you accept my apology, Adolphus?"

"I have before wemarked that my name is not Adolphus. I will accept an apology, howevah, on condish that you make no furthah wefewence to that obnoxious subject."

"You must answer my question first, though," said Tom Merry, with a grave shake of the head.

"What question, Tom Mewwy?"

"Have you seen the likeness?"

"I shall now wefuse to accept your apology, Tom Mewwy; and, undah the cires, I have no alternative but to thwash you. Pway put up your beastlay fists!"



NOT SO DUSTY!



"Where?" asked Tom Merry innocently.

"Pway don't wot! Put up your fists at once, as I'm about to stwike you!"

"Oh, certainly!" said Tom Merry, and he put up his right, and it came with a gentle tap on D'Arcy's nose. "Is that all right?"

"Ow!"

"Or do you like that better?" And Tom Merry's left tapped Arthur Augustus under the chin. "Or that?" And the third tap was on the chest.

"Bai Jove! I shall thwack you!"

"He's looking dangerous!" said Lowther, in great alarm.

"There's no time to be killed before breakfast. Let's cut!"

"Good! Run for your lives!"

The Terrible Three ran. As D'Arcy stood directly in the way they ran over him, and left him sitting on the ground looking very dazed. Then they went indoors and changed their things, and came down to breakfast with beaming smiles upon their faces. D'Arcy was sitting at the Fourth Form table, and did not deign to look at them. A whisper came along the Fourth Form table from Jack Blake.

"I say, Gussy, have you seen your counterpart?"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Silence at the table!" said Mr. Lathom. And the swell of St. Jim's swallowed his indignation.

CHAPTER 9.

Gore's Little Scheme.

AFTER morning lessons the members of St. Jim's Junior Eleven were thinking of nothing but the afternoon's match.

They had to leave St. Jim's immediately they had bolted their dinner to catch the train for Friardale, and they had their preparations to make before dinner.

Skimpole was also making some preparations. The genius of the Shell had succeeded in raising the wind at last. Skimpole shared a study with Gore, and Gore—usually the last person in the world to lend anybody anything—was the Good Samaritan who came to the rescue.

Jack Blake was coming out of the School House with his bag under his arm, when the freak of the Shell collared him by a jacket button in his objectionable way.

"Will you lend me your pudding-basin, Blake?"

Jack Blake stared at him.

"Off your dot?" he asked.

"Certainly not. I really do not see why you should deduce by such a simple question as that that I am at all weak in my reasoning powers," said Skimpole, looking puzzled. "I asked you if you would lend me your pudding-basin."

"And I asked you if you were off your dot."

"Your reply is utterly irrelevant. I particularly want your pudding-basin to do some mixing in. Will you lend it to me?"

"Oh, I see! Are you going to make a pudding? If it's a fig pudding, Figgins can put you up to some points about it. He's great on fig puddings."

"I am not going to make a fig pudding; I am going to make fireworks."

"Where are you going to get the materials?"

"At the shop in the village. I have inquired there, and I can get all the things I require there and at the chemist's, as well as a few things I am going to take from the school laboratory."

"Then you've raised the wind?" said Blake with interest.

"Blessed if I thought there was anybody at St. Jim's idiot enough to lend you tin!"

"Gore has lent me only five shillings, but—"

"Gore!" ejaculated Blake.

"Yes, he has lent me only five shillings; but with the two Tom Merry lent me, that will be sufficient for making a small quantity of fireworks."

"Do you mean to say that Gore lent you five bob?"

"Yes, certainly! Why should he not? He is to have the money back out of the profits on my book on Determinism, which I expect to be publishing before Christmas."

"Gore lent you five bob on the security of your book on Determinism?" murmured Blake, looking dazed.

"You speak as if there were something surprising in it—What ever are you doing?"

Blake was taking the brainy man of the Shell by the throat. He jammed him up against the school wall and held him pinned there.

"Now then, Skimmy, no more of your bosh! What's the little game?"

"There's no little game, Blake. Gore, perhaps, thought he ought to return me some little favour for keeping his secret—that may have been a motive with him."

"What secret?" demanded Blake.

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"About the guy he and Sands and Norton are making in our study, you know."

"So they're making a guy, are they?"

"Yes; and, of course, he wouldn't like me to tell Tom Merry."

"Why wouldn't he?"

"Well, Merry would be certain to be annoyed, you know."

"Blessed if I can see why he should be," said Blake.

"Merry is making up a guy, too; but it's a free country, and the more the merrier!"

"Yes; but Gore's guy is rather personal."

"Oh, I see; it's on the lines of Figgins' one—a caricature of Tom Merry!" grinned Blake. "I see the point."

"No, not exactly that, either; but, as Gore has so kindly lent me the five shillings, perhaps I ought not to say any more. Will you lend me your pudding-basin?"

"Certainly; if you can find it!"

"Oh, I'll find it easily enough!"

And Skimpole hurried into the School House. It was nearly time for the charabanc to take the juniors to the station, and they were gathering ready. Figgins & Co.



Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther came out of the School House laughing from the School House fellows greeted it. On the guy v Blake. "Good old Figgv

came over from the New House and mounted into the vehicle. Arthur Augustus was already in it, with a pencil in his hand and a paper spread on his knee. He was deep in the composition of a poem for the forthcoming number of "Tom Merry's Weekly." Blake was mounting the step when Skimpole came hurriedly out of the House.

"Blake! Hold on a minute, Blake!"

"Hallo! What's the trouble?"

"I can't find your pudding-basin!"

"Sorry! I told you you could have it if you could find it."

"But where is it?"

"I don't know. I forgot to mention that Herries broke it yesterday, and that it was chucked away."

"Really, Blake—"

The charabanc drove off, followed by a loud cheer from the St. Jim's boys.

Skimpole blinked after it.

"Really, I cannot help regarding that as rather rude of Blake," he murmured. "I must look for another pudding-basin. I think there is one in Tom Merry's study, now I

come to think of it. Of course, I am entitled to use it. I don't suppose my mixture will harm it, and I'm not likely to break it, barring accidents."

And Skimpole started off to Tom Merry's study.

Gore and Sands and Norton had watched the departure of the charabanc, with three separate grins, and now they burst into a simultaneous chuckle.

"We'll get it finished while they're gone," grinned Gore. "They won't be back until after dark. Then we'll have it ready for the procession."

"Ha, ha, ha! Good!"

"I don't see that Tom Merry can say anything. You see, he can't interfere without acknowledging the likeness."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What little game are you up to?" asked D'Arcy minor, looking at them.



their effigy hoisted in the air upon an ancient chair. A yell of label that read: "THIS IS FIGGINS!" "Hurrah!" roared might be his twin!"

"Mind your own business, young shaver," said Gore loftily; "and don't have the cheek to ask questions of a chap in the Shell! We bar cheek from Third Form infants!"

"Oh rats!" said Wally, keeping out of Gore's reach, however.

Gore made a threatening gesture, but Norton pulled him by the sleeve, and the three Shell fellows entered the House. Wally looked after them curiously.

"I wonder what they're up to?" he murmured. "Some cad's game, I suppose. Gore wouldn't look so jolly pleased if it wasn't."

He went thoughtfully upstairs. Skimpole came out of Tom Merry's study with a pudding-basin and a big spoon in his hand—and, of course, nearly ran into D'Arcy minor.

"Look where you're going!" grunted Wally. "Have you been scoffing Tom Merry's crockeryware, you giddy Anarchist?"

"Certainly not, young D'Arcy! I am simply borrowing some utensils I need for the manufacture of fireworks," said Skimpole.

"What is Gore up to?" asked Wally abruptly. "You're in his study, so you ought to know. What's his little game?"

"He is making a guy," said Skimpole. "I am sorry I cannot stop now, as I have to go to the village—"

"Hold on a minute! What sort of a guy is he making?"

"A Guy Fawkes' guy."

"You howling ass, I know that; but it's something up against Tom Merry."

"Not exactly; it's really more against Tom Merry's old governess."

Wally gave a low whistle.

"You don't mean to say that he's cad enough to make an imitation of Miss Fawcett for a guy!" he exclaimed.

"Gore having lent me five shillings, I am bound to tell no one," said Skimpole; "otherwise I should answer your question in the affirmative. But I must be going."

He hurried on.

Wally stared after him, with a wrinkle on his young brow. Then he opened Gore's door, and went in without taking the trouble to knock. He knew that a knock would probably be followed by the turning of the key.

There was a sudden exclamation in the study as Wally entered. Three startled faces turned round towards him. Gore gave a gasp of relief as he saw that it was only a Third-Former; but his relief soon changed to rage.

"You young mongrel!" he shouted. "What do you mean by sticking yourself in here without being asked? Get out!"

Wally did not reply. He was looking at the guy Gore and his friends were making. It was a really well-made one, in imitation of an elderly lady. It wore an ancient skirt, a still more ancient bodice, and a white cotton frilled collar, and a pair of spectacles without lenses were fastened upon the face. The face had been made out of an old football, and Gore was touching it up with paint when D'Arcy minor entered.

The sudden entrance of the Third-Former had caused Gore to draw the brush across the face, and extend the lip on one side as far as the ear.

The head of the dummy was adorned with an ancient bonnet, which Gore had discovered by hunting through the secondhand clothes shop in Rylcombe, and which exactly matched the Victorian bonnet of Miss Priscilla Fawcett. The bonnet alone was sufficient to identify the figure. No one seeing it would doubt for a moment that it was meant to represent Tom Merry's old governess.

But, to make assurance doubly sure, a notice was pinned on the bodice: "I've come to see my darling Tommy!"

Wally looked at the figure, and a scornful smile curved his lip. It was funny, and the Third-Former had a sense of humour. But humour which consisted in mockery of an old lady did not appeal to Wally.

"Are you going to get out?" roared Gore, laying down the paint-brush.

"Oh, certainly!" said Wally. "I wouldn't stay here with a set of cads if you asked me. Are you going to show that guy in the quad to-night?"

"What's that to do with you?"

"I am going to give you my opinion of it. You're a mean cad; Norton is a mean cad; Sands is a mean cad! You're all mean cads! There!"

The three Shell fellows stared at Wally in blank amazement. For a member of the Third Form to use that language in their own quarters was something new.

"You young imp!" gasped Sands. "I'll pulverise you!"

"Rats! If you've got any decency you'll break up that thing! I'm jolly sure Tom Merry will break you up, if you don't!"

Gore made a spring at the infant. Wally dodged to the door, but Norton put out a foot, and he stumbled over it. As he went down, Gore pounced on him.

"Let me go!" shouted Wally, struggling.

"Yes, when I've punished you for your cheek," said Gore, chuckling. "You weren't asked to come in here, and now—"

"Give him a coat of paint!"

"That's what I'm going to do!"

The door reopened, and Skimpole blinked in.

"Did I leave my cap— Oh!"

A violent push on the chest sent the freak of the Shell sprawling out again, and the door slammed and was locked.

CHAPTER 10.

Wally Changes Colour.

WALLY had ceased to struggle. With a couple of sturdy Shell fellows holding him, he hadn't much chance. Norton and Sands grasped him by either arm, and he was jammed against the locked door. Gore dipped his brush in the

red paint with which he had been daubing a grotesque mouth on the face of the dummy.

"If you touch me with that—" began Wally.

"There's for a start!" grinned Gore, dabbing the brush in his mouth.

"Grooooh-gerrooooh—poof! You beast! I'll make you sit up for this!"

"Ha, ha, ha! You're doing the sitting-up at present. Hold the little beast tight! I'll make him as red as a Red Indian before I've done with him!"

"Stop it! Hold on! Ooooooh!"

"Every time you open your mouth I'm going to jam my brush into it!" said Gore warningly. "Keep it shut!"

"I—Ow! Ooooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha! You're making me waste a lot of paint. Will you keep your mouth shut?"

"You horrid beast—Ow! Groo—gerrooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Keep it shut, then!"

Wally thought he had better keep it shut. Gore proceeded to paint his face a brilliant red, from the top of his white collar to the roots of his hair. Nose and cheeks and forehead and ears all became brightly scarlet, and Wally's aspect was decidedly startling by the time Gore had finished with the red paint.

"Are you sorry you came in and bothered us?" grinned Gore.

"No, I'm not!" said Wally sturdily.

"Good! I'll give you black circles round the eyes!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Sands, as Gore added the black circles. "He looks a treat now. He'll give anyone a start who meets him."

"You beast! You—groo—gerrooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Keep it shut, then!"

"Now, then. Are you sorry you came in?"

"No, I am not."

"Let him have a few with a cricket-bat, Gore!"

"Good! Yank him over the table!"

Wally began to struggle, but the bullies of the Shell were, of course, too strong for him. He was dragged across the table, face downwards, and Gore looked round for a cricket-bat. But cricket things had been put away for some time, and there was not one in the study.

"The shovel will do," said Norton.

"Good enough!"

Gore seized the shovel and brought it down flat upon Wally. The Third-Former squirmed, and wriggled, and kicked. Norton gave a yell. The heel of Wally's boot had caught him under the chin.

"Give it to him harder!" he howled. "The young beast!"

"Let me go!"

"Are you sorry you came in?" grinned Gore, laying on the shovel.

"No!" roared Wally. "And you'll have the Third Form to reckon with for this!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Don't make us tremble!"

"Give him some more for his cheek!"

"You bet!"

The shovel rose and fell rapidly. Every blow rang through the study, but no cry left Wally's lips. D'Arcy minor seemed to be made of iron. His face went white and hard with pain, but he would not cry out.

"That's about enough!" said Gore breathlessly. "I don't think he'll be in a hurry to come into this study again. Sling him out!"

"Open the door, then!"

Gore dragged the door open, and his two friends slung the Third-Former out into the passage. Wally bumped on the hard linoleum.

"Now clear off!" said Gore threateningly. "That's only a taste of what you'll get if you show your nose here again, you cheeky young waster!"

Wally staggered to his feet. He was hurt, but not so much as he was enraged. His crimson face and ears made the Shell bullies roar with laughter.

"You just wait a bit!" panted Wally. "I'll show you!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Get out!"

Wally ran down the passage. He made a dash for the Third Form room, in search of his cronies. Jameson was in the passage, and Wally ran towards him.

"Jameson! Hallo—hallo!"

Jameson took one look at the amazing face coming towards him, and bolted. Wally had forgotten his painted features, with the black circles round the eyes, in his excitement, and Jameson's flight astounded him.

He ran on, and met Curly Gibson face to face, turning out of another passage.

"I say, Gibson! My only Aunt Jane!"

Gibson had halted, too!

"The silly asses!" muttered Wally wrathfully. "What's the matter with them?"

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A wild shriek interrupted him. Mary, the housemaid, was coming along the passage, and the moment she saw Wally she threw up her hands and shrieked.

"What's the matter, Mary? I say—"

But Mary had fled, still shrieking. Wally stared after her in amazement, and then went on towards the Third Form room. A couple of fellows were looking cautiously out, and as Wally came in sight they drew quickly in and slammed the door, and Wally heard the sound of a key being turned.

Exasperated at being shut out of his own quarters, the junior ran on, and began to kick furiously at the door.

"Go away!" came a hollow voice through the keyhole. "Go away!"

"Open the door, Jameson!"

"Why, that's young Wally's voice!"

"Of course it is!" yelled D'Arcy minor wrathfully. "Why don't you open the door, you silly set of howling asses? Why don't you open the door?"

"Is it there?"

"Is what there?"

"That—I don't know what it is—a fearful-looking thing, with a crimson face and horrible-looking eyes—"

"You silly duffer! There's nothing here but me!"

Jameson hesitatingly opened the door. He peeped out, and at the sight of Wally's face would have slammed it again, but D'Arcy minor's foot was in the opening.

"Go away!" yelled Jameson. "Go—Oh!"

Wally shoved him out of the way and entered the room. The room was lighter than the passage, and the juniors saw Wally a little more clearly; but the sight was none the less a very startling one.

"What's all this fooling about?" demanded Wally. "Are you looking for a prize thick ear, Jameson?"

"It's—it's you!" stammered Jameson.

"Of course it's me. Who did you think it was?"

"I—I didn't know what to think, but—but it looks to me like one of those guys come suddenly to life, and—Hold on!"

Wally had suddenly rushed at Jameson, hitting out with right and left. Jameson sat down on the Form-room floor, and the other juniors crowded back from the incensed Wally.

Wally glared round like a gladiator.

"If anybody else wants to compare me with a guy, he can go ahead!" he exclaimed.

"Look here! Do you know what your face is like?" gasped Jameson.

Wally started, and then he passed his hand over his face. He broke into a grin, which looked ghastly under the red and black.

"My only Aunt Jane! I had forgotten that!"

"What on earth have you been painting yourself up in that style for?" demanded Jameson, staggering to his feet. "I think you would run if you saw it yourself!"

"It was that beast Gore! Gore and Norton and Sands! They collared me in their study, and painted me up, and licked me with a fire-shovel—"

"And you let them do it?"

"I'd like to see you tackle three Shell fellows, you ass!" said Wally indignantly. "How could I help it? But I'm going to make them sit up for it. The Shell have got to learn that the Third Form isn't to be ragged with—"

"With a fire-shovel?" asked Curly Gibson.

"No, ass—I forget the word—with—oh, with impunity. The Shell have got to learn that the Third Form cannot be ragged with impunity. It's a good opportunity now, too—some of the Shell are gone to play at Greyfriars, and nearly all the rest are having practice on the junior ground. We shall have the Shell passage to ourselves."

"What's the idea?"

"We're going to make Gore & Co. sorry for themselves. Come on!"

"Better get your face cleaned first," grinned Jameson. "You'd give anyone fits who met you now."

"Good! I'll cut off to a bath-room and get cleaned, while you find a chopper—in case they've locked the door, you know. We'll wreck the place and teach them that it doesn't pay to rag a Third-Former!"

Five minutes later the Third-Formers were on the war-path.

CHAPTER 11.

The Fags to the Fore!

GORE locked the door of his study, and turned back to the dummy, and resumed painting the grotesque features on the old footer. The bully of the Shell was feeling very pleased with himself.

Tom Merry had put down most of his bullying in his

own Form, but Gore still found opportunities sometimes of ragging the infants. And so long as he bullied somebody Gore was not particular as to whom it was.

"That puts him in his place," he remarked. "Things are getting to a fine pass when Third Form youngsters come and cheek you in your own study!"

"Yes, rather!"

"I don't think he'll forget his hiding in a hurry. I laid it on pretty well. I've bent the beastly shovel, but it was worth it. I say, this guy will be a howling success. Everybody will know at a glance whom it's meant for, and if Tom Merry raises any objection it will show that he recognises the luceness."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The three worthies continued their work. A little later there was a knock at the door.

Gore turned his head from his painting.

"Who's there?" he called out.

"I am!" called back D'Arcy minor.

"My hat!" ejaculated Gore, in amazement. "That young rat back again! Of all the cheek—this fairly takes the biscuit."

"Open this door!"

"I haven't time to lick you now," said Gore. "I'll remember this presently, though."

"Are you going to open this door?"

"No, you cheeky young rat!"

"Then we'll jolly well open it ourselves!"

Crash!

Gore gave a jump. It was the crash of the heavy chopper on the lock. Crash again—and the lock burst its fastening, and the door flew open. A crowd of Third Form fags rushed in, with Wally at their head.

The amazing nerve of the fags held the Shell trio spell-bound for a moment. They had never heard of anything like this before. For the fags of the Third to invade a Shell study with hostile intent was unheard of—undreamt of! But things were taking a new turn with D'Arcy minor as cock of the Third.

"Follow me!" roared Wally.

Wally had washed off most of the paint, but there were still plain traces of it about his ears and chin.

"You young rascals!" gasped Gore. "Get out! Do you hear? Get out!"

"Collar the cads!"

The cads were promptly collared. Gore and Norton and Sands hit out wildly, and a dozen or more of the fags went sprawling before the Shell fellows were down. But the fags were there in dozens, and the odds were irresistible. Any one of the three could have accounted for two or three fags. But a couple of dozen swarmed into the study, scrambling over the furniture, knocking things to right and left, scrambling over each other in their eagerness to get at the enemy. Wally had inspired them all with his own spirit. The room was crammed—the fags were packed in almost like sardines in a tin.

Gore, Norton, and Sands went down helplessly under a sprawling, scrambling mass of humanity, and were pinned down by sheer weight.

"Got 'em!" yelled Jameson.

"Hurrah for the Third!"

"Hip-pip-hurrah!"

The three Shell fellows were helpless prisoners under a heap of fags. Wally waved his hand to his excited followers to get back.

"Some of you get out! Keep watching the passage, and if any Shell fellow tries to get in, mob him!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Right-ho!"

"Let me get up!" roared Gore.

"Yes, I'll let you get up when you've had your lesson!" said Wally. "Yank him over on the table, kids! I'll get the fire shovel!"

"Here you are! We've got him!"

"Don't you dare to touch me with that fire shovel!" roared Gore. "I'll—I'll—Ow! Oh! I'll break your necks for this! Oh! Oh!"

Wally was making rapid play with the flat of the shovel, and the dust rose in little clouds from George Gore's garments.

The bully of the Shell writhed and wriggled, and wriggled and writhed, but the rain of blows descended pitilessly. Norton and Sands, each pinned down by half a dozen fags, watched with growing apprehension. They felt that their own turns were coming.

"Had enough, Gore?" asked Wally, panting for breath.

"I'll show you—I—Yes, yes!"

"Are you sorry you were cheeky to the cock of the Third?"

(Continued on page 19.)

First for the Fifth!



WE lead the way again this year with an unsurpassed feast of firework delights! All the latest and best novelties are contained in this year's selection. With Brock's Fireworks you cannot fail to have a good "Fifth of November." So buy your fireworks at the shops which sell **BROCK'S "CRYSTAL PALACE" FIREWORKS.**

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NEWS AND VIEWS FROM-



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

HALLO, chums! Have you finished this week's long complete school yarn? Great, isn't it? Well, next Wednesday's story of Tom Merry & Co. is even greater! Make a note of this title:

"WALLY, THE RUNAWAY!"

and be prepared for something EXTRA! Look out, as well, for a host of thrills from the next chapters of

"THE LOST LEGION!"

and, by way of contrast, a hearty laugh at the expense of Potts, our inimitable Office Boy. There will be another batch of up-to-date news pars, of course, and also replies to readers who have sent me knotty problems. See you again, then, next Wednesday! Right!

"THEY ARE IN THE 'HOLIDAY ANNUAL.'"

Who? Why, Tom Merry & Co., of St. Jim's. This par is in reply to several Gemites who have written in asking me for details of the new edition of the "Holiday Annual." There's an extra special long story of Tom Merry & Co. in this bulky volume, to say nothing of innumerable small features, written by the juniors and the masters of St. Jim's, and snappy poems. If you are a keen Gemite you simply must get the "Holiday Annual." Besides the St. Jim's stories there are scores of top-notch school yarns dealing with Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars, and Jimmy Silver & Co. of Rookwood, as well as adventure stories of derring-do on land, at sea, and in the air. For six shillings the "Holiday Annual" offers the best value obtainable. Ask your newsagent to show you a copy. Better still, ask him to explain the details of his Christmas Club, by which means you can purchase your annual without feeling a "draught" in your pocket.

THIS WEEK'S STRANGE STORY.

The patient angler had sat for a long time on Boscombe Pier waiting for a "bite." Presently he got a "big 'un." In came his line. But what do you think his fish was? A lady's bicycle—and it was almost new!

THE BABY WITH WINGS!

We've heard a deal about baby motor-cars, and now comes news that a go-ahead aircraft manufacturing company has completed a baby aeroplane. Ready for flight it will cost you £200. A six horse-power Douglas motor-cycle engine supplies the motive power to this light two-seater craft, and, all out, it can knock up a speed of forty-eight miles an hour. The petrol consumption is extremely

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low, and, better still, the landing speed of this baby is twenty miles an hour—which makes landing (usually the most hazardous part about flying) unusually safe.

TOUGH LUCK!

He was a sorry-looking individual, obviously hungry and homeless, so the police of New York took him "inside," on a charge of vagrancy. When questioned, the unfortunate man declared that in reality he was worth a £8,000 legacy which was waiting for him in England, but that he couldn't raise the fare to claim it. The police laughed—they had heard that type of story so many times that it had got "whiskers on it." But the "poor rich man" produced tattered documents which supported his story. Whether he ever raised the necessary fare home to England is not reported. We hope he did, however.

THE LONE PRISONER!

Some time during last month an Irishman was convicted for breaking a window whilst under the influence of liquor and sent to Cork Gaol. Once inside, he discovered that he was the only prisoner in the whole of that vast building, which contains hundreds of cells and scores of cold-looking corridors. All the same for that, the usual routine was carried out. He was visited by the prison doctor, the governor, the clergyman, and looked after by two-score warders. In addition a clerk was present to take a note of his complaints or any request he might make. In due course, too, five magistrates paid their usual visit to the gaol and interviewed the lone prisoner. They asked him if he was all right, and the prisoner replied that he was having too much attention paid him. Can you blame him?

S O S

"Send up the pigeons!" commanded the skipper of a Spanish fishing smack. "It's our only chance." Up flapped a number of homing pigeons into the storm clouds and were soon lost to sight by the anxious crew. But they did their job; those pigeons flew to land, carrying with them messages describing the plight of the smack, which was rudderless and out of control, and also the direction in which the gale was taking it. Just in time motor-boats were put off. Under full power they dashed to the rescue and saved the crew from a watery grave. Bravo, the pigeons!

WOULD YOU BELIEVE IT?

A Wiltshire village team were about to try conclusions with a footer eleven from a Chippenham

village when they made the alarming discovery that they were two men short. "Scouts" immediately scoured the village to find two men, or two substitutes, but they returned "empty-handed." Then a "gentleman of the road," who had been looking on, volunteered his services. They were accepted with alacrity. Off came the stranger's coat, and, just as he was, in long trousers and worn boots, he piled into that game with great zeal. The match was drawn—three goals each. And the stranger scored all three for his "adopted" side!

STAMINA!

He was a boy apprentice and he looked very diminutive perched on the glossy back of the racehorse Trustee. In company with other boy jockeys he had faced the starting-gate on a public racecourse, prepared to win the mile and a half apprentice race that lay before him. But, just his luck, Trustee fouled the starting-gate at the critical moment and threw his little jockey clean out of the saddle. Wait a moment. Trustee then turned completely round and bolted at a full gallop. Mile after mile fell behind his thudding hoofs. In fact, he didn't stop until he reached a village seven miles away! You'd have thought he would have looked a bit sorry for himself after a gruelling gallop like that, wouldn't you? But an inspection by anxious people connected with the stable showed that he was none the worse for it. As I mentioned above, his name is Trustee; but do you think the little boy jockey will trust 'e again? Ah!

ANCIENT—MODERN!

The famous old saying, "People who live in glass houses should not throw stones," will very soon be out of date completely. Go-ahead builders in America are designing blocks of flats made of unbreakable glass. They claim, among other things, that they will be dust-proof, noise-proof, and proof also against heat or cold.

HEARD THIS ONE?

Tommy: "How's that new watchdog of yours, Ernie?"
Ernie: "Fine! We've been afraid to go in the house ever since we've had it!"

THE WALKERS' REAR LAMP.

Here's a good invention. It has been devised especially for country folk who have to walk along dark and lonely roads. These unfortunates stand very little chance if your modern speed fiend comes dashing by at umpteen miles an hour and doesn't happen to see them. You know the familiar red ruby reflector which cyclists carry on the back forks or mud-guard of their bicycles? Well, the same type of reflector has now been fitted with a special gadget which enables the night walker to attach it to the heel of his shoe. Careless motorists can't say now that they "didn't see anyone," for the heel "rear light" can be seen plainly enough on the darkest of nights. Once indoors, the wearer of this novel device can speedily detach it and slip it into his pocket.

A REPLY TO FRED ARTHUR (LANCS).

The average full-grown elephant can carry a load of three tons on its back without feeling much discomfort.

YOUR EDITOR.

THE GUYS OF ST. JIM'S!

(Continued from page 17.)

"Oo! Ow! Oh! Yes!"
 "Are you awfully, fearfully sorry?"
 "Yes! Oh, yes—yes!"
 "Good! You can roll him off the table, kids, and shove Norton along."

Gore was rolled off the table. He bumped on the floor, and half a dozen fags sat on him. Norton took his place on the table, and the dust rose from Norton's garments as it had risen from Gore's.

"Are you sorry, Norton?"
 "No!" gasped Norton. "I mean—yes! Oh, won't I pay you out for this! Yes!"
 "Are you awfully, fearfully sorry?"
 "Yes—oh, yes!"

"Throw the rotter off and bring up Sands," said Wally, who was now warming to his work. "I think this will be a jolly good lesson to the rotters. Are you still sorry, Gore?"

"Ye-es!" hissed Gore.
 "Good! Throw that fellow Sands over here!"
 "It's all right!" yelled Sands, as he was dragged towards the table. "It's all right—I'm sorry! I'm awfully, fearfully sorry!"

D'Arcy minor grinned.
 "You're a little bit too previous," he remarked. "I haven't asked you yet, and I'm jolly well not going to ask you until you've had a dozen with the fire shovel!"
 "But—but I say—Ow! Oh! Groo!"

The dozen with the fire shovel were administered, and then Wally asked his usual question, as if Sands had said nothing on the point so far.

"Are you sorry, Sands?"
 "Yes!" gasped Sands. "Oh, lor! Yes; I'm sorry!"
 "Are you awfully, fearfully sorry?"
 "Yes, yes, yes!"

"Down with him, then," said Wally, flinging the fire shovel into the grate, and smashing the teapot that was standing there. "Hallo! There's your teapot gone, Gore. Knock some of the things over, kids. We must make the lesson a telling one. If we wreck the study, Gore will remember next time to treat the Third Form with proper respect. Heave the guy over. It's a rotten, cowardly insult to a good old lady, and the Third Form at St. Jim's can't allow anything of that sort. Knock it to pieces."

The fags fully agreed with Wally—at least, as far as concerned knocking the guy to pieces. They were quite ready to knock anything to pieces. The dummy was dismembered and trampled on, and then Gore's crockery was smashed on it, and his bookcase emptied out over the heap. The contents of the drawer of his table were added, and then the ashpans from the fire-grate. Then Wally looked round, like Alexander the Great, for something more to do, but the fags had very nearly reached the limit.

"I think that will do," said Wally. "What do you think, Jimmy?"

"I think so, too," grinned Jameson.
 "Good! We'll be getting along, then. You've put us to a lot of trouble, Gore, but we don't mind, so long as the lesson is useful to you. And I think it will be. So—long!"

The fags departed. They left the study a wreck, and the three bullies something like wrecks also. A short time before all three of them had lent a hand in wrecking Tom Merry's study, and they had regarded it as great fun. It did not seem so funny now.

"My hat!" groaned Norton. "What a muck! And fancy those Third Form kids, too! The cheek!"

"I'll wring their necks for it!" hissed Gore.
 "Better catch them one at a time, then," grinned Sands.
 "My hat! D'Arcy minor is making things hum in the Third! Your guy's ruined."
 "I can mend it all right."

"Jolly long job! My hat! What a muck!"
 The bullies of the Shell were furious. But none of them felt inclined at that moment to pursue the victorious Third-Formers.

Wally & Co. marched off in high glee, and celebrated their victory by giving three fearful yells under the window of Gore's study.

CHAPTER 12.

The Return of the Footballers.

THE dark November evening had set in when the charabanc rolled up from the station with the returning footballers.

There was a crowd at the gates of St. Jim's to greet them, most of the juniors being eager to know how the team had fared on the football ground at Greyfriars.

"How did it go?"
 "Licked!" inquired Gore, in his usual amiable way.
 "Did you lick them?" shouted Wally.
 "No," said Tom Merry; "no, both of you."
 "Eh? Was it a draw, then?"
 "Yes; one all!"
 "Oh, rats!" said Gore. "That's not much to brag about."
 "Well, I'm not bragging," said Tom Merry mildly.
 "Greyfriars put up a splendid game, and their skipper kicked the equalising goal at the last moment. Otherwise we—"

"Of course!" sneered Gore. "Otherwise—if things hadn't been as they were, and a few miracles had happened which didn't happen—you would have won."

"The result was entirely owing to Gore not being in the team," said Lowther.

"Well, I'm glad to hear you admit that, anyway."
 "It's a fact; it wouldn't have been a draw if Gore had been playing—it would have been a licking!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Look here, Monty Lowther—"

"Oh, get aside, Gore; we want to come in!"
 The vehicle drove on through the gateway. Wally swung himself up on the footboard by the driver and pressed a grubby hand on the electric horn, waved his cap, and cheered wildly.

Toot, toot-toot!
 "Get down, you cheeky young beggar!" called out Jack Blake.

"Oh, rats!" said Wally cheerfully.
 "Weally, Wally—"
 "Oh, don't you begin, Gus!"
 Toot-toot-toot!

The charabanc drew up at last outside the School House. The footballers poured out of it, and Figgins took the Third-Former round the waist, jerked him off the footboard, and set him head downwards on the lowest step.

"Hold on!" yelled Wally, writhing in the grasp of the muscular Figgins. "Let go!"

Figgins let him go, and Wally sat on the step of the School House, rubbing his head.

"You long-legged ass!"

"Wally, I must weally insist upon your tweatin' Figgins with gweatah respect. He certainly is a long-legged ass, but it is wude to tell him so, and— Pway don't poke me in the wibs like that, Figgins. It takes my breath away, and thwows me into a fluttah."

"I'll throw you into a puddle for two pins," said Figgins.
 "Weally, Figgins—"

"Oh, let's get in!" exclaimed Fatty Wynn. "I'm simply famished. It's curious how hungry a chap gets in this November weather."

"Didn't you have anything to eat at Greyfriars?" asked Jimson.

"Well, yes, there was a cold snack after the match, but what was that to me? I was hungry before we were half-way home. Lucky I thought of having tea ready in the study. I foresaw that I should be famished when I got back."

"Oh, come in, quick!" exclaimed Kerr. "I'm always afraid of Fatty when he gets into this state. Blessed if I should like to be in an open boat at sea with him."

"Well, you see, I get so jolly hungry in this November weather—"

Fatty Wynn's voice died away in the gloom towards the New House.

The Terrible Three went up to their study. They had had a substantial feed at Greyfriars after the match, but they were hungry again after the journey. Blake & Co. were in the same state. Jack Blake, Herries, and Digby hurried off, but Arthur Augustus D'Arcy remained behind for a moment to speak reprovingly to his younger brother.

"Wally, you are lookin' untidiah than I have evah seen you before, and that is sayin' a gweat deal!" he exclaimed.
 "You have twaces of paint behind your eyahs and wound your eyes. Have you been paintin' your face?"

"No, I haven't," grunted Wally. "Gore has."
 "Gore! What the deuce should he paint your face for, deah boy?"

"I suppose he thought I should look nicer if he obliterated any resemblance to your chivvy," said Wally. "Something in that, too."

"Weally, Wally—"

"But it's all right. We ragged him, and wrecked his study, and licked him with a fire shovel," said D'Arcy minor cheerfully. "It's all right; don't you worry."

"You—you wagged Gore?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus in amazement.

"Yes, rather!"

"You weeked a Shell study, you young wascal?"

"We made a regular hash of it."

"You young wascal! Is that what you call respect for your eldahs? It was vewy wong of Gore to paint your face, but you should have acquainted me with the ciros, and I would have administahed a feahful thwashin' to Gore. It was extremely cheeky of you to week an Upper Form study."

"More rats!" said Wally, and he put his hands in his pockets and walked away.

Arthur Augustus went up to Study No. 6 still in a state of considerable astonishment. There was a pleasant hissing sound and a fragrant smell from the open door of the study, and he knew that sausages were frying there. A fire was roaring in the grate, and Jack Blake was busy with the frying-pan. A similar scene of culinary industry was proceeding in Tom Merry's study.

The juniors were in too late for the school tea in Hall, but that did not matter to them, as they seldom had tea in Hall. It did not take Tom Merry two minutes to light the fire, and he was quickly warming up some more solid food than the bread-and-butter provided in Hall. The chums of the Shell were hungry; there is nothing like football on a cold, keen day to give you an appetite. A pair of large spectacles looked into the study, and Skimpole blinked at the chums of the Shell.

"Ah, I see you have come in, Merry!"

"Go hon!" said Monty Lowther. "Now run along and see if somebody else has come in, there's a good chap. And don't come back again."

"Not at all, Lowther. I want to speak to you fellows. You will be glad to hear that I have succeeded in raising the money to get the necessary materials for manufacturing fireworks of a superior quality."

"Can't say I'm pleased," said Tom Merry. "You see, your study's next to mine. If you blow yourself to pieces, it will very likely damage things in my study."

"Really, Merry—"

"Haden't you better get on with the manufacture?" asked Manners.

"Certainly! I have already commenced, but it has occurred to me that, in the absorption of scientific pursuits, I have forgotten to go down and have my tea. I have, therefore, come to have tea with you."

"Thanks, awfully; but we don't deserve an honour like that," said Lowther, with a shake of the head. "You had better go farther along the passage."

"Impossible, as the other fellows have finished tea. It is very fortunate your being in so late, considering," said Skimpole, as he took a chair at the table. "I am very hungry, but don't hurry the cooking for me. I can wait."

Manners and Lowther looked at him grimly, but Tom Merry burst into a laugh. There was enough to go round, so the self-invited guest was allowed to remain where he was. The meal was quickly got ready, and the four juniors set to work upon it, and did it full justice.

Skimpole blinked amiably over his spectacles at the chums of the Shell.

"I am very much obliged to you," he said. "This feed is ripping. It was really good of you to ask me to tea."

"Ask!" murmured Monty Lowther.

"Did you speak, Lowther?"

"Yes. I said it was very kind of you to yield to our pressing invitation."

"Well, the fact is I am very hungry," said Skimpole.

"Yes, I will have some more, please. Would you fellows like to come into my study and see the manufacture of the fireworks? I am making several varieties. The trouble is that I have not been able to get quite all the necessary ingredients described in the book, and I am having to make up the fireworks with some of them left out."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, the fireworks will be all right!" said Skimpole. "I am hardly likely to fail in a simple matter like this. You know, that to a man of real genius all things are possible. Whenever I get discouraged, I bear that in mind. I think the fireworks will be a great success, especially the Roman candles. There, I think I will go and get on now. You fellows can look in when you have finished."

"Certainly!" said Tom Merry. "But what does Gore say to turning the study into a manufactory of fireworks?"

"Oh, Gore raised objections, of course! But I pointed out to him that, as I had told no one anything about the guy he was making, I was entitled to some consideration at his hands. Of course, he knew that if I mentioned the matter to you, you would break up the guy in all probability."

Tom Merry stared.

"Why should I break up Gore's guy?" he asked. "I'm not likely to do anything of the kind. Is it a caricature of me?"

"Oh, no; but—"

"If it were, I shouldn't care."

"I had better tell you no more, or I shall be letting out Gore's secret. As a matter of fact, I do not approve of it, but Gore refused to listen to my remonstrances on the subject. In fact, he said that if I did not ring off he would pitch me out of the study, which I could not help regarding as rude. The guy has been smashed up once by a crowd of Third Form fags, but Gore has mended it again. He has put it away in the box-room till the evening, so that it cannot be seen. As I have obliged him by keeping the secret, he could hardly refuse to vacate the study, and leave me in peace to manufacture my fireworks. But I must be getting along. You won't forget to look in when you're finished."

"Right-ho! We'll come!"

Skimpole left the study, and the chums of the Shell looked at one another curiously.

"Blessed if I know what Gore is up to!" Tom Merry remarked. "I've noticed for some time that he had something up his sleeve. It's something caddish, of course. It's not worth while going to the box-room to see. It's taking too much notice of the cad. We shall see soon, anyway."

And the chums of the Shell, having finished a hearty meal, proceeded to Skimpole's study to have a look at the fire-work factory.

CHAPTER 13.

Skimpole Makes Fireworks.

"G ROOH-UGH! My hat!"

"G-r-r-r-r!"

"Poof!"

Those remarks were made by the chums of the Shell as they looked into Skimpole's study. An extremely strong and very pungent smell assailed them, and Tom Merry clapped his handkerchief to his nose.

"My only hat!" gasped Manners. "Anything wrong with the drains in the School House?"

"It's the manufacture."

"GOLLY! Where's my HOLIDAY ANNUAL?"

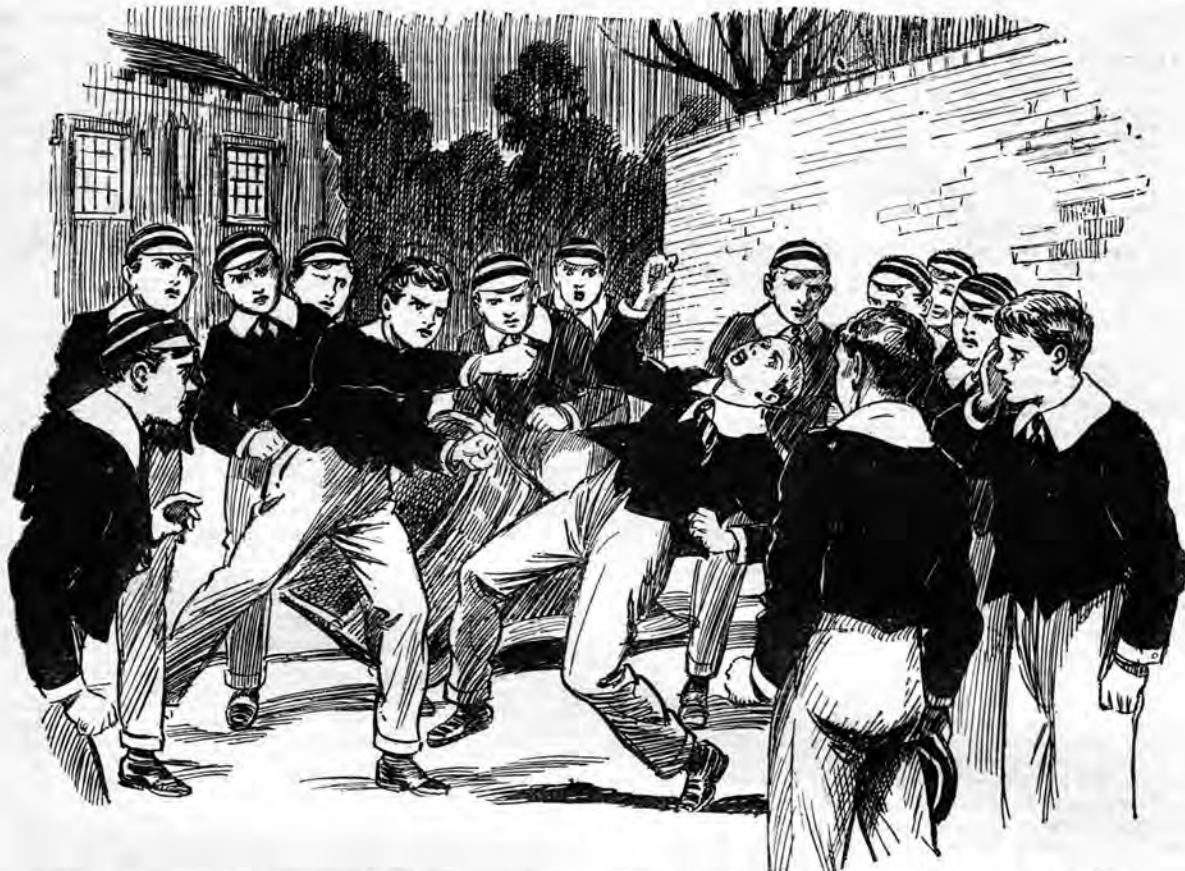


Bunter is distinctly perturbed. Somebody's pinched his HOLIDAY ANNUAL—and that's no joke! You'd hate to lose yours, wouldn't you?

You all know what a grand budget of stories of School-life, Sport and Adventure it contains. There are all the fun and thrills of a lifetime between two covers. There are breezy poems and articles, and a clever little play for amateur actors. In case you haven't got yours yet, here's a tip—See your Newsagent right now!



Now on Sale 6/- net



"Put up your fists!" snapped Tom Merry. "I—I—" murmured Gore. Tom Merry wasted no more time. He hit out again and Gore staggered under the blow. There was no getting out of it now—the fight was on!

Skimpole blinked a welcome to them. The genius of the Shell was busy, and the chums, enduring the terrible scent as well as they could, looked on at the process of manufacture. Skimpole was stirring a sticky-looking mess in a basin, which Tom Merry recognised as a pudding-basin belonging to his own study.

The table was covered with bottles, boxes, packets, fuses, and all kinds of receptacles, some of them bearing fearsome scientific names. The mess that was being mixed up in the basin emitted a scent that would have discouraged anybody less enthusiastic than Skimpole. The brainy man of the Shell, in his shirtsleeves, was working away as if on piece-work.

"Hard work," said Tom Merry sympathetically.

"Yes, somewhat," gasped Skimpole. "But, of course, nothing can be achieved without hard work. As Professor Balmcrumpet says in his book on—"

"What have you got there?"

"The fact is, Merry, I put some of the chemicals into this basin before I came into your study, and I do not quite remember what is in and what isn't. I am going to add a little more of every ingredient I have been able to obtain. This will, I hope, make up for leaving out the ingredients I was unable to purchase in Rylcombe."

"Ha, ha, ha! That's a jolly good idea, Skimmy, and worthy of a genius."

"Yes, I thought so myself. You see, genius can triumph over all difficulties, and that thought is a great consolation to me when I am in difficulty. What are you sniffing like that for, Manners?"

"Well, the scent is just a trifle—just a trifle perfumous."

"Oh, you can get used to that, you know!"

"Blessed if I'm going to stay here long enough to get used to it!" gasped Manners, and he bolted from the study.

"Dear me!" murmured Skimpole, blinking after him. "It is curious that Manners should allow a slight scent to deprive him of the educational advantages of watching a truly scientific experiment. Do you notice a slight scent about this stuff, Merry?"

"Well, yes, just the barest trifle."

"It is not really unpleasant when you get accustomed to it."

"I suppose not."

"I dare say it would be ripping after a time," said

Lowther. "But I remember I've got something to say to Manners, so I think I'll buzz off." And Monty Lowther quietly quitted the firework factory.

"Dear me! I should be glad if you would stay, Merry, and help me with the work," said Skimpole. "I want to get the fireworks finished, if possible, before the bonfire is lighted. This smell is merely a trifle; after a time it becomes positively pleasant. It all depends on getting accustomed to it."

"Yes, I dare say it does. I should be awfully pleased to stay and get accustomed to it, Skimmy, but I think I ought to go and see to building the bonfire."

And Tom Merry hurried after his chums. He gasped for breath in the passage.

"My only hat!" he muttered. "Of all the niffs! Let's get out into the quad, my sons; I'm nearly suffocated."

The Terrible Three went out into the November dusk. There were stars in the sky, and, fortunately, no fog. The night was dark, but clear. The quadrangle was a lively scene. At that hour the boys were usually indoors, but on the evening of the Fifth of November ordinary rules were relaxed.

Some early fireworks were already popping off, and there was a rain of coloured sparks in the sky. Opposite the School House the bonfire was being built, and as the School House juniors had expended a considerable sum on materials it was likely to be a good one.

There was a post in the middle for the "guy" to be attached to when the time came to light up. Over by the New House the juniors of the rival side were also busy. Figgins & Co. had a bonfire of their own. The New House juniors were already mustering to carry their dummy round the quad in procession.

The dummy was the libellous representation of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, which had so excited the wrath of the School House swell that morning.

As Figgins & Co., with a crowd of New House juniors, bore it round the quadrangle in solemn procession, there were yells of laughter from the School House fellows, who, of course, recognised whom it was meant for.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy put up his eyeglass and surveyed the procession in deep indignation.

"Bai Jove!" he exclaimed. "Weally, Figgins—"

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"Out of the way, Gussy!"
 "I wefuse to get out of the way. I wegard that dummy as a wibald insult. I have to considah my dig. I insist—"
 "Kick him out!" roared the procession.
 "I uttably decline to be kicked out. I wefuse—"
 "Stand aside there!"
 "Shove him aside!"
 "Get out of the way!"
 "I uttably wefuse— Ow!"

The swell of the School House was bumped down in the quad, and he sat there, clutching at his silk hat to save it, as the procession went by.

"Please to remember the Fifth of November!" chanted Figgins & Co.

"Weally, Figgins! Weally, you wottahs—"

"Ha, ha, ha! Another guy!"

Arthur Augustus picked himself up. He was simmering with indignation. He rushed up to Blake, who was shrieking with laughter.

"Blake, I wefuse to be tweated with this uttah diswespect! I call upon you to back me up to thwash those wottahs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Digby—Hewwies—I wequiah you—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The chums of Study No. 6 were laughing too much to reply. Arthur Augustus glared at them, and then rushed off to Tom Merry, who was shrieking, too.

"Tom Mewwy, will you back me up—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It is an insult to the School House as well as to myself, deah boy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Mannahs—Lowthah—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wegard you as beastlay wottahs! It is an insult to the House, and—"

"By Jove, there's something in that!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Gussy is a funny merchant, but we can't have a School House chap caricatured by a set of New House wasters. Besides, we're just going to have a procession ourselves, and we can't have two of them in the quad."

"I wefuse to be alluded to as a funny merchant."

"Rally, School House!" shouted Tom Merry. "Those rotters are on our side of the quad! Rally up, there!"

The School House fellows had enjoyed the joke against D'Arcy. But they never needed twice bidding to a House row. The Terrible Three led the way, Blake & Co. were only a second behind, and a whole horde of School House

juniors followed them. They burst upon the New House procession like a thunderbolt.

"Line up!" roared Figgins.

The guy went with a crash to the ground. The New House processionists put up their fists, and a wild and whirling conflict ensued. Arthur Augustus made directly for the guy. His silk hat was knocked off, his eyeglass trailing at the end of its cord, his collar torn out. But he did not care. He had eyes only for the disrespectful effigy.

He dragged it out from the trampling feet, and stamped on it, and dismembered it fragment by fragment.

"Rally!" roared Figgins. "Buck up, New House!"

They rallied, and the School House were driven back for a moment. Figgins & Co. made a rush for the guy, to carry it off. They found it in little pieces, and D'Arcy stamping out the last vestige of its resemblance to a human being.

"Bai Jove, I've settled that!"

"Then we'll have the original instead!" exclaimed Figgins. "Collar him!"

"Bai Jove! You wottahs!"

"Up with him!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Hurrah! Here's a guy!"

"Welease me—"

But they did not release him. They had lost one guy, and, having found another, they were not disposed to part with him. D'Arcy was borne off, with a rush, on the shoulders of Figgins & Co., vainly struggling, and the New House procession crowded back to their own side of the quad.

CHAPTER 14.

An Exciting "Fifth."

"MY hat!" exclaimed Jack Blake. "They've got Gussie!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wescue, deah boys!" came a gasping voice from the dusky distance. "Wescue!"

"Another guy!" roared the New House juniors. "Bring him along!"

"Welease me, you wottahs!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Another guy!"

D'Arcy was borne in triumphant procession up and down before the New House, on the shoulders of Figgins & Co., the crowd round him waving their caps and cheering wildly.

"Hurrah, hurrah!"

"Good old guy!"

"This is better than the other!" gasped Figgins. "It talks and moves of its own accord."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Welease me, you wottahs! I shall thwash ewevy wottah here! I insist upon bein' immediately weleased! Wescue, deah boys! Wescue!"

"Please to remember the— Look out!"

The School House juniors were coming to the rescue. The predicament of Arthur Augustus made them laugh almost as much as it did the New House fellows; but the honour of the House demanded that the swell of Study No. 6 should be rescued.

Tom Merry & Co. came after the rival juniors with a rush, and the procession was broken up again, and a scene of whirling conflict took its place.

Arthur Augustus rolled on the ground as Figgins & Co. released him at last, to stem the tide of the School House rush.

"Hurrah! Sock it to them!"

"Buck up, New House!"

"Go it, School House!"

Arthur Augustus, blind with rage, rushed at the nearest junior and grasped him round the neck, and got his head into chancery and commenced pommelling away for all he was worth. In the darkness and the excitement he did not notice that it was a School House boy he had seized instead of a foe.

"Bai Jove, I'll give you a feahful thwashin'!" he panted. "I have wesolved to thwash ewevy wottah in the New House! Take that—and that, you wascal! Take that!"

"Leggo!" roared a muffled voice. "You dangerous maniac—leggo!"

"Bai Jove, is that you, Blake, deah boy?"

"You shrieking dummy—"

"I am feahfully sowwy. I thought it was a New House wottah!" exclaimed D'Arcy, as he released his chum. "I apologise most sincerely."

"You can't apologise this bump off my nose!" yelled Blake. "I'll wipe up the ground with you! I'll—"

An eddy of the conflict swept them apart, perhaps fortunately for D'Arcy. The New House juniors were outnumbered, and they were swept back towards their own House. A prefect, attracted by the terrific din, came out with a cane in his hand.

"Hallo! What's all this about?" he exclaimed.

WALLY THE RUNAWAY!

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Without waiting for an answer to his question, Monteith began to lay the cane about all the juniors within reach of his arm.

This persuasive method soon stopped the row. The juniors scattered, and the House combat was over—for the time, at least.

"It's all right, Monteith!" exclaimed Figgins. "Hold on—ow!"

He hopped out of the way of the cane. Monteith returned to the New House, grinning, and the juniors rubbed the places where the cane had landed, ruefully.

"Never mind," grinned Kerr; "it was a good jape. We've lost our guy, but there's the bonfire left. Let's get it going."

"Right you are."

And the bonfire was soon roaring in the quad, casting a strange, ruddy glare on the facade of the House and the leafless branches of the old elms.

The School House juniors returned to their own side, satisfied with the defeat of the enemy. The New House effigy had been broken up, and the prisoner had been rescued, so the whole affair was a score for the School House. Arthur Augustus was breathless with exertion and indignation. He looked round in the dusky quad for his topper, and found it at last, and smoothed it carefully with his sleeve.

"You might lend me that, Gussy," said Tom Merry, tapping him on the shoulder.

"Pway why, Tom Mewwy?"

"I haven't a hat for the guy I've been making—"

"Weally, Mewwy—"

"And that one would do rippingly. If you've a high collar and a fancy waistcoat to spare, I should be glad of them."

"I must wefuse to discuss so wibald a suggestion. Bai Jove, you know, I am in a most bweathless state! I shall thrash all those wottahs feahfully to-mowwow. I shall have to go and change my beastlay clothes, you know. I am soiled and wumped from head to foot."

"Yes, you look as if you could do with a wash," said Monty Lowther. "So you won't lend me that hat?"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"You could have it back after we've burnt the guy, you know."

To this frivolous remark the School House swell deigned no reply. He donned the dusty topper, and walked off towards the School House. As he mounted the steps there was a sudden explosion under his feet.

Bang, bang, bang!

"Bai Jove! Oh!"

"Hallo! You're treading on my jumping crackers!" said the voice of D'Arcy minor. "You are a clumsy chap, Gus!"

"Weally, Wally, I believe you threw that cwackah undah my feet on purpose to startle me," said Arthur Augustus, with asperity. "I am gwowin' convinced that I shall have to take to thrashin' you to teach you mannahs."

"Better take to physical culture and boxing first," grinned Wally.

And he marched on with Jameson and Curly, all three with their pockets crammed with crackers that had formerly belonged to Figgins.

D'Arcy went in to change his clothes, and Gore, Norton, and Sands went in for another purpose—to fetch the effigy of Miss Priscilla Fawcett from its hiding-place in the box-room.

A number of their cronies, who were in the secret, waited eagerly for them to bring it out, forming up ready for a procession.

Wally looked at them as he passed, and hurled a jumping cracker into their midst, and escaped before he could be collared. He ran full tilt into Tom Merry, and the hero of the Shell seized him by the ears.

"Where are you running to, young shaver? Oh!"

Jameson dropped a lighted cracker under Tom Merry's feet, and Tom released Wally as it banged. The Third Form trio scuttled off, but Wally turned back suddenly, and called to the hero of the Shell.

"Tom Merry! I say, Tom—"

"Hallo, kid! Come and have your ears boxed."

"Rats! You'd better look after Gore."

"Eh? Why should I look after Gore?"

"He's up to a cad's trick. Better keep an eye on his dummy before he gets it carried round the quad. I'll back you up."

"Thank you!" said Tom Merry politely. "If I am backed up by Third Form infants I shall be irresistible. But what do you mean about Gore?"

"Just look when he comes out, and see."

Tom Merry looked puzzled. He had known for some time that Gore had some game on that was up against him, but what it could be he could not for the life of him guess.

"Better hang on here for a moment," said Lowther.

"We'll see what it is as Gore comes out. There's no hurry for our procession."

Tom Merry nodded.

The chums of the Shell waited, joining the crowd that was fast gathering at the foot of the School House steps.

There was a sudden shout from Gore's friends, who were nearest the door, and first saw him coming.

"Here they are!"

"Holler, boys! Here's a guy!"

"Hurrah!"

"Look at her curls!"

"Notice the saucy bonnet?"

"She's coming to see her darling Tommy! Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry started forward.

Gore, Norton, and Sands came down the steps of the School House, bearing an old wicker-chair, in which an effigy of an old lady was seated. The effigy had been skilfully repaired after the rough handling the fags had given it in the afternoon. It really looked very lifelike, although the features could not be said to bear the most distant resemblance to Miss Fawcett. The curls and bonnet were exact, and the placard on the bodice was plain enough for all to see.

"I've come to see my darling Tommy!"

There was a roar of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha! She's come to see her darling Tommy!"

"Hurrah! Where's her darling Tommy?"

"Holler, boys!"

Tom Merry's face was scarlet. For the joke against himself he did not care one straw, but the mockery of his kind old governess stung him to the quick.

"Clear the way there!" shouted Gore. "Room—room for the lady."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The effigy was borne down the steps. The juniors made way, most of them yelling with laughter, some of them looking uneasily in the direction of Tom Merry. They did not know how he would take it. But they soon saw.

Tom Merry sprang into Gore's path. His fists were clenched, and his eyes were flashing.

"Put that down!" he exclaimed, in a voice trembling with anger.

"Rats!" said Gore. "I—"

He did not finish.

A right-hander caught him between the eyes, and he sat down with such suddenness that the chair and the guy went sprawling.

Norton and Sands let go, and before they could decide what to do, Tom Merry's right and left came out in quick succession, and they sprawled beside Gore.

CHAPTER 15.

Gore is Sorry!

TOM MERRY stood over the jokers, his eyes blazing, his chest heaving. The usually good-tempered and placable captain of the Shell was in a passion such as his Form-fellows had never seen him in before.

"Get up!" he said thickly. "Get up, you cads!"

The laughter had died away now. The juniors realised that the matter was serious.

Monty Lowther tore the bonnet and curls from the guy and hurled them in different directions. Manners tore the figure into pieces and scattered them. Not a hand was raised to stop them.

Gore staggered to his feet. His glance was like that of a demon as he looked at Tom Merry.

Tom Merry stepped closer to him, his lips set hard.

"Put up your fists!" he said.

"Look here—"

"Put up your fists!" shouted Tom Merry. "If you don't I'll thrash you, anyway. Do you hear?"

"What are you interfering for?"

"I am interfering because you are cur enough to insult an old lady who never did you any harm. You can make any joke you like against me, but you've passed the limit in insulting Miss Fawcett. I'm going to thrash you, and those two cads as well. Put up your fists!"

"I—I—"

Tom Merry wasted no more time. He hit out again, and Gore staggered under the blow. There was no getting out of it now. Gore would have given a great deal to avoid that encounter; but he had no chance, and his friends, much as they had enjoyed the joke, showed no disposition whatever to rally round him now that the crisis had come.

It was better to fight than to be licked unresistingly.

Gore put up his fists. He was a big, burly fellow, much bigger and heavier than Tom Merry, though in science and in pluck much the inferior. But he was desperate now, and he fought his hardest. Tom Merry had licked him before, but he had a chance of retrieving that defeat now. After

a hard football match in the afternoon, a long railway journey, and the scrimmage with the New House, Tom Merry was certain to be a little fatigued.

Yet he did not seem fatigued. Anger seemed to give him double strength. He pressed Gore hard, and twice the bully of the Shell dropped under his crashing blows.

Norton and Sands stood looking on sullenly. They felt that their turn was coming, and they did not like the prospect. Sands was sliding away quietly, when Monty Lowther caught him by the arm.

"No, you don't!" he remarked genially.

"I—I just want to—to," stammered Sands—"to speak to Gibbons."

"But you can leave it until a little later, my pippin."

"But—but—"

"Look here, Lowther—"

"I'm looking," said Lowther significantly. "You won't get away in a hurry. After the dance you have to pay the piper, you know."

Sands yielded to the inevitable. It was no use having a fight with Monty Lowther then, and another with Tom Merry afterwards.

For the third time Gore rolled on the ground under the blows of the hero of the Shell, and this time he refused to rise again.

"Get up, you skulker!"

"I—I can't!" gasped Gore. "I—I—I'm done! I give in!"

"You coward!"

"I—I tell you I'm done!"

"Oh, get away, then!" cried Tom Merry scornfully.

"Now, Norton, your turn."

"I—I don't want to fight with you, Tom Merry."

"I dare say you don't, but you've got no choice in the matter. Put up your fists!"

"Hurrah!" yelled Wally. "Go it, Merry, old buck!"

Norton had no choice. He was knocked right and left, and then came Sands' turn. He stayed on the ground the first time he was knocked down, and refused to move.

"Get up!" growled Monty Lowther.

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy, who had come out arrayed in another suit of clothes and a well-brushed topper. "Get up, deah boy, and take your licking. I wegard you as a beastly coward, you know."

"I—I can't get up!"

"I'll stick a pin in him," said Jack Blake, stooping down. "If he can't get up he won't be able to move. Why, he's up already!"

Sands had jumped up with a face like a demon. He faced Tom Merry again, and in a minute he was on his back once more. This time he was allowed to lie.

"That's enough," said Tom Merry contemptuously. "If you don't want any more, that's enough, only keep off the grass in future, that's all."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Sands slunk away after Norton and Gore. The joke of the cads of the Shell did not seem such a successful one, after all. Tom Merry had hardly received a scratch.

"Bai Jove!" remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I wegard Tom Mewwy's conduct in this mattah as exemplawy. He was in honah bound to thwash the wottahs for insultin' a respectable and esteemed lady, and if he had not done so I should have given them a feahful thrashin' myself."

"Yes, I could see you doing it!" grunted Blake.

"Weally, Blake, I twust you do not doubt my wesolve, undah such circes, to avenge an insult to an estimable lady?"

"No, ass; but I don't see how you could lick three fellows in the Shell, any one of whom could have eaten you."

"Bai Jove, I nevah thought of that, you know!"

CHAPTER 16.

The Last Procession!

TOM MERRY, Manners, and Lowther came out of the School House with their effigy hoisted in the air upon an ancient chair. A yell of laughter from the School House fellows greeted it.

The effigy represented an extremely slender youth, and was attired in a very old pair of knickerbockers, which showed off the two broom-handles inserted to represent legs. Figgins' slender calves were a standing joke at St. Jim's, and the juniors knew at once whom the figure was meant to represent. To make all sure there was a label on the old cap on the head of the guy. The ancient Greek who wrote under his picture, "This is an ox," had evidently been taken as an example by the School House artists, for the label bore the unmistakable inscription, "THIS IS FIGGINS!"

"Hurrah!" roared Blake. "Good old Figgy! It might be his twin!"

"Bai Jove, wathah!"

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"Line up, kids!" shouted Tom Merry. "We've got to take it once round the quadrangle and under the windows of the New House."

"Hallo, there's Figgy!" exclaimed Blake. "Look out!"

"Faith, and they've spotted the guy!" said Reilly. "Sure, and there'll be an awful row entiorely! Come on, ye spalpeens!"

"Shoulder to shoulder!"

The School House procession, marching under the very windows of the New House, could not fail to gain the wrathful attention of the New House juniors.

In the glare of the two bonfires the effigy, raised high aloft, was distinctly seen. Many seniors, looking out of their study windows, laughed at the absurd figure. But Figgins & Co. did not laugh.

They were wrathful. The voice of Figgins called the New House juniors to the attack.

"The cheek!" said Kerr. "On our own side, too!"

"Well, we marched round on their side," said Pratt.

"That's nothing to do with it! It's like their cheek to come over here. And to bring along an effigy of Figgins, too!"

"What rot! It's nothing like!" said Figgins.

"Oh, the legs, you know!" said Fatty Wynn. "They—What the deuce are you knocking my cap off for, Figgy?"

"Nothing!" said Figgins warmly. "Don't be an ass, that's all! We're going for those cheeky youngsters because they're on our side. Line up there!"

"We're ready!"

"Follow me, and rush 'em off their feet!"

The New House juniors rushed. Figgins & Co. gallantly led the way. But the School House procession was quite ready for them.

"Shoulder to shoulder!" yelled Tom Merry.

The fight was fast and furious. More juniors poured up to take part on both sides, and the din was terrific. The School House phalanx fought its way on, and marched round the quad in spite of the attack. High aloft in the glare of the bonfire the Terrible Three bore the effigy of the New House junior captain.

"Go for 'em!" panted Figgins. "They're not going to get it away again!"

But they did!

In spite of the furious attack, the School House held their own, and slowly but steadily they made their way onward, back towards the School House side.

The New House party renewed their efforts, but Tom Merry & Co. arrived at the blazing bonfire at last, and there the procession halted.

"Hollah, boys!" roared Blake.

"Hurrah! Hurrah!"

"Please to remember the Fifth of November—"

"Good old Figgins! Shove him in the fire!"

"Hurrah!"

"Come on!" shrieked Figgins.

He was determined to have that guy. The New House heroes made one more desperate effort. The combatants swayed and struggled on the very verge of the blazing bonfire at the imminent risk of rolling into it. Figgins grasped the guy at last. He knocked down Monty Lowther with his left, and seized the guy with his right.

Manners dragged him off, and Kerr and Wynn dragged Manners off; and then Figgins seized the guy again, and jerked it away from the chair.

Tom Merry immediately seized it, too, and he tugged, and Figgins tugged, and that unfortunate effigy suffered the fate of the body of Valerius in Macaulay's famous lay—when Titus dragged him by the foot and Aulus by the head. But the effigy was made of flimsier material than the Roman hero, for at the third or fourth tug it came into two pieces, and Tom Merry and Figgins sat down violently, each with a half of the dismembered guy in his grasp.

"Ha, ha, ha!" gasped Blake. "Shove it in!"

Tom Merry staggered up and hurled his half of the guy into the flames. Figgins, as he tried to rise, was grasped by Digby and Reilly, and his half was torn away from him and sent crashing into the bonfire. And the School House crowd cheered wildly.

And rows being over for the night, the juniors of both Houses celebrated the Fifth together. Both parties had had enough of rowing for a time, at least. The crop of black eyes and swollen noses was unusually large. But troubles like those did not damp the general enjoyment.

And when the bonfire had burnt itself out, and the last cracker had cracked, and the last squib had squibbed, the juniors mutually agreed that there had never been a more ripping celebration of the Fifth at St. Jim's.

THE END.

(Next week's thrilling yarn, "Wally the Runaway!" is one of Martin Clifford's best. It features Tom Merry & Co. in London! Don't miss it!)

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THE LOST LEGION!

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Read here of the amazing adventures that befell Jim Nelson, Phil Harris, Rex Bruce, and Colonel K. when they make a forced landing in Central Asia.

The Emperor's Story.

IN the starlight the Roman camp showed as a dark blur upon the plain, close up under the shadow of the hills. A vast entrenched square, split up both lengthways and across by wide avenues, it held three full legions, and the gates which pierced its four walls were strongly guarded.

Under the skin tents composing the greater part of it lay thousands of sleeping legionnaires, but in the officers' quarters people were not yet abed. The prætorium, the general's own pavilion, made of some light-woven material, was illuminated within, and the sound of voices and laughter drifted out into the night. The young Emperor, Valerius Martius Donatus, was entertaining strange guests.

Before the prætorium, in the great main thoroughfare that ran clear across the camp, the Via Principia, stood something which would have made the chance observer rub his eyes in bewilderment, and wonder whether he was mad or only dreaming. There, ringed about with alert legionnaires in their brazen cuirasses and plumed helmets, was a machine that rendered the whole scene utterly unreal. For it was nothing less than a huge white monoplane, with scarlet wingtips—the weirdest anachronism imaginable in that ancient setting.

It belonged to Colonel K, the eccentric and world-famous explorer, who was at that very moment one of the chief guests at the Emperor's feast. For amazingly, though the time was the twentieth century, and the place Central Asia, the Roman camp was no fake. It was absolutely genuine, and the colonel and his companions were just about to learn how a Roman colony came to be flourishing there in the wilds nearly two thousand years after the original greatness of Rome itself had passed away.

The explorer had been on a round-the-world flight in the monoplane, the Albatross, with his two schoolboy wards, Phil Harris and Jim Nelson, his young secretary Rex Bruce, and his little Welsh servant Llewelyn. A slight engine defect had forced them down in Central Asia, where, to their unbounded amazement, they had fallen in with the legions of Roma Secunda, as the colony was called.

Phil Harris and Rex Bruce had been captured by a rebel, Dolabella, and imprisoned in his camp. They had been rescued by means of the repaired Albatross, which had landed in the Via Principia and whisked them off from under the very noses of the enemy, Valerius Martius

Donatus, the general who was trying to put down Dolabella's revolt, had received the flyers with open arms, and the banquet he was now giving was entirely in their honour.

The scene in the dining-hall of the Emperor's quarters would have been a wonderful one in almost any time and place; but when one realises that this was actually Central Asia in the twentieth century it became all but incredible.

The inner walls of the tent were soft woollen hangings, striped red and white, and the only light came from four tall bronze lamps, standing one in each corner. Set about three sides of the table were draped couches, and on these reclined the travellers and their Roman hosts, the Emperor and his three legates or adjutants, all clad alike in simple belted white tunics. They were all barefooted, too, since it was not considered good form to wear sandals at table—in fact, the boys had learned from Colonel K that to call for one's shoes after a Roman dinner was the same thing as summoning one's car after an English one.

The first two parts of the feast had already been served. Three or four different kinds of cooked meat and vegetables had followed an amazingly varied array of appetisers, and now the company was engaged with the dessert of fruit and pastry. Valerius Martius and his three legates had satisfied some of their eager curiosity about the Albatross during the meal, and it was the Emperor's turn to relate the history of Roma Secunda.

"It is unfortunate that only two of you, Colonnus and Arrius, understand our tongue," he said, glancing at the colonel and Phil. "But I will tell the tale slowly so that you may translate to your companions as we go along."

"Two thousand years ago, according to our reckoning here in Roma Secunda, a great legion, nearly five thousand strong, was sent to Armenia under the command of Parnesius Nero to subdue a rebel named Ambarsus, a Mongol. By some means this Ambarsus trapped Parnesius and slew him, and flung his severed head into the camp as a taunt."

"Now this Parnesius was well loved by his soldiers, who clamoured for vengeance. So the six tribuni militum, after a conference, decided to pursue Ambarsus, who had fled, and bring him back dead or alive."

"The tribuni militum are the chief officers of the legion,"

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explained Colonel K as he translated for the benefit of Rex, Jim Nelson, and his little Welsh servant, Llewelyn. In Latin he added: "Proceed, O Valerius Martius."

"Accordingly, the legion set out on the track of the Mongol, who led them farther and farther into the fastnesses of Asia," continued the Emperor. "Month after month they marched, suffering unheard-of hardships, for Ambarus laid waste the country through which they must pass, and food for such a vast company of men was hard to come by."

"But Rome was never to be daunted by difficulties that beset her path, and they kept up unflinchingly. All around the southern shore of the Caspian Sea the pursuit took them, betwixt the mountains and the sea, then northwards many marches through the wilderness. And all the while the rear-guard of the Mongol's force harried their flanks by day and night."

"At last he turned at bay among the hills—the very hills that surround us now. And here his great army, which outnumbered the gallant legion three to one, fell upon the Romans who had dogged their footsteps for so long. Under the direction of one of the tribunes, Lucius Aemilius Marullus, the legion formed a square and fought magnificently. But defeat seemed inevitable when suddenly help came from an unexpected quarter."

"Out of the hills in every direction swooped cohorts of armed warriors, who fell upon the Mongols' rear tooth and nail. In a moment the whole aspect of the battle changed. Trapped between two merciless foes, the soldiers of Ambarus lost heart for fight, and those who could fled away. But fully two-thirds never left the field alive, and the rebel himself was found among the dead."

"When it was all over the Romans advanced to greet the strange allies who had made their victory possible. And then they saw, to their amazement, that these people of the hills had skins as white as their own."

"What? More white folk?" said the colonel in English, pricking up his ears. "The plot thickens! Who on earth are these?"

"This is far too complicated a story to be told so soon after a good meal," said Jim, helping himself to another luscious ripe purple fig. "Tell him to go on."

"The legion made camp in the valley in order to allow their sick to recover before starting on the return journey," proceeded Valerius Martius. "The strange white race treated them with every consideration, providing them with food and raiment and healing ointments. And then one terrible night the whole earth shook, and in the morning they found that the only entrance to the valley had been closed for ever by a tremendous landslide."

"Prisoners perforce, our forefathers settled down and intermarried with one section of the white people, imposing their language and manners and customs upon them. But another section, inhabiting the city of Iolensis in a valley beyond this, equally cut off from the outside world, became hostile when they saw the old order changing. For almost twenty centuries there has been, and still is, undying hatred between them and us of Roma Secunda. And that, O Colonus, is the true story of the foundation of our city."

Dolabella, the Rebel.

"IT'S an amazing tale," commented Colonel K, when he had translated to the other three. "And the most amazing part is that it's fact, not fiction."

Jim opened his mouth to say "Truth is stranger than fiction," but caught Phil's eye upon him and shut it again without a word, rather like a gasping cod-fish.

"Well, that may be the history of the beginning of the colony," said Bruce, propping himself up more comfortably on his elbow, "but it doesn't tell us much about Dolabella and his two legions. Ask the Emperor where he comes in, sir."

Colonel K nodded, turning once more to the young general.

"What of Dolabella, the rebel?" he asked in Latin. "What place has he in the affairs of the land?"

The face of Valerius Martius was stern as he replied.

"Know, O Colonus, that Roma Secunda has always been ruled by a king and Senate together. Now Pomponius Quintus, the present king, is a very old man and near to

death. His rightful heir is Claudius, son of his elder son, who was killed in an attack upon Iolensis some ten years past."

"But Dolabella, younger son of Pomponius, considers that he has a better right to the throne than his nephew. Two days ago, when Claudius was leaving the Senate, Dolabella made an attempt to assassinate him. Waiting at the foot of the stairway, he tried to plunge a dagger into his heart, but the swiftness of one of the praetorian guard defeated him. The soldier thrust his shield in front of Claudius in the nick of time, undoubtedly saving his life."

"In the excitement Dolabella escaped, and fled to the camp of the Third and Fourth Legions, which is outside the city. He won them over to his cause, and a few hours later marched away from Roma Secunda at their head. The Senate declared war upon him immediately, and appointed me Imperator, giving me three legions to command. Tomorrow I hope to give battle to the renegade."

"My hat, this is jolly thrilling!" said Phil, his eyes sparkling, as he translated. "I never thought when I was reading about Roman wars at school last term that I should soon be taking part in one!"

Colonel K laughed.

"You lads want to have a hand in circumventing the wicked uncle, then?" he inquired.

"Rather!" said Jim Nelson emphatically. "And I bet that it's a chance you wouldn't lose for worlds, either, sir!"

"For once you're right, Jim," agreed his guardian. "It's something we simply can't afford to miss. When the Albatross came down this morning, we stepped back two thousand years into the past, and for a week or two at least we're going to remain there!"

Strange trumpets sounding the reveille. Cavalry horses neighing and stamping. Brazen armour clanging softly as soldiers hastened to and fro. Phil and Jim were aroused next morning by all the unaccustomed bustle of a great camp awakening.

"I am not asleep!" asserted Jim, sitting up on his couch and pinching himself several times to make sure. "This is the twentieth century, and this is Central Asia, and this is a Roman camp in full working order, and this is me. My aunt!"

Before Phil could reply, the curtains at the tent door were pushed aside and Rex entered, followed by two slaves bearing laden trays.

"Good-morning, laddies!" he said cheerfully. "Are you two lazy young monkeys going to lie in bed all day? The colonel and I have been up for hours with Valerius Martius and the legates, planning all sorts of nasty surprises for Dolabella."

"Smells as though Lewelyn had been busy, too," remarked Phil, sniffing appreciatively at the coffee-pot on one of the trays.

Rex laughed.

"He has. He went aboard the Albatross and made about a quart of hot coffee, so we decided to give the Emperor and his aides a treat. Of course, they'd never tasted anything like it in their lives, and judging from the way they appreciated it, our stock of coffee isn't going to last long."

"What's the latest news?" asked Jim, as he made a hasty breakfast. "Is Dolabella preparing to fight?"

"I rather gather that he is," replied Rex. "Spies keep coming in with new information, though so I can't tell you exactly how things stand at the moment. Buck up and get dressed, and we'll go and find out."

Swiftly the boys made their toilet and donned their own clothing. Presently they were hurrying out to join the colonel, but as they turned into the great Via Principia from among the tents, Rex came to an abrupt halt.

"By Jove!" he said softly. "That looks like business."

He pointed towards the praetorium as he spoke, and his companions saw with a thrill that a red banner now floated over it. It was the signal for battle. Trumpets were sounding on every side, and the legions were massing in the Via Principia to hear the speech of exhortation which it was customary for the Emperor to make before an action. Rex urged the boys forward.

"Quick!" he said. "There's the colonel waiting for us. The Albatross has been moved into one of the outer avenues over by the Left Gate, where she's out of the way for the moment. Come on. We'd better let him see you're up and about!"

"Ah! So here you are at last!" was their guardian's comment as they hastened up. Turning, he called into the tent in Latin. "Ho, Valerius Martius! Arrius and Nelsonius are here. We go to the bird-chariot."

The young Emperor appeared smiling before him, clad in magnificent bronze armour, the long plume of scarlet horse-hair in his great helmet rasping on his flexible shoulder-plates.

"I give you greeting!" he said to the boys. "To-day we

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"shall wipe out the false Dolabella and his legions, and you will enter Roma Secunda with me in triumph. And now for the present—farewell. I must harangue my troops, and you regain your bird-chariot."

He saluted them all gravely with the majestic Roman salute, and the Englishmen started off swiftly for the monoplane. The camp now presented a strangely deserted appearance, for all but the guards at the four gates were concentrated in the Via Principia, but the boys were surprised to see that none of the tents had been struck.

"No, Valerius Martius is so confident of victory that he is leaving five cohorts to hold the fort, and means to spend to-night here," explained the colonel when they remarked on it.

"Where do we come in in this battle, sir?" asked Phil.

"Well, it appears that Dolabella's main strength lies in his cavalry," was the reply. "He has with him a thousand picked horsemen who are capable of breaking any line of battle, and he's probably pinning his faith to them. Our job is to prevent him making any effective use of them by scaring their mounts with the plane."

"Sounds easy enough," said Jim, as they came in sight of the Albatross. "Hallo, Llewelyn! How are you this morning?"

"Look you, young sir, I'm very well, thankee!" said the wizened little Welshman. "Is it starting we'll be immediately, whatever?"

"Yes, we might as well take the air and see what the enemy is up to," said Colonel K, and a few minutes later the great white monoplane soared up into the blue sky of early morning as effortlessly as the graceful bird after which she was named.

Llewelyn, in the cockpit, took them up to five thousand feet, flying in wide spirals, and the whole scene of the coming battle spread itself out before their fascinated eyes. The two camps were only a few miles apart, but separated by a spur of low hills, and it was evident that Dolabella would choose to fight on the level plain beyond, since there his redoubtable cavalry would have the greatest advantage.

They circled once or twice about the rebel encampment at a considerable altitude, using glasses to make out what was going on. Dolabella's preparations were clearly well advanced, for the tents had been struck and packed, and already the columns were forming ready to march forth at the signal.

"He'll have his forces all drawn up where he wants them in less than an hour," prophesied the colonel, turning away from the window. "Hey, Llewelyn! Let's get back and see what the Imperator's doing."

The Albatross came about in a big sweep, and in a few moments they were once more over their own camp.

"Hurrah!" cried Phil, looking down. "We're on the move!"

It was true. Just emerging from the Porta Prætoria, or main gate, was plainly discernible Valerius Martius on his snowy charger, closely followed by his legates. Behind, borne aloft by a tall standard-bearer, came the eagle of the First Legion, a great brazen bird with outspread wings perched on a long gilded pole, and then line upon line of marching men, flanked here and there by mounted officers.

It was a magnificent spectacle, and one which none of the world-flyers ever forgot. From above the plumed helmets of the legionnaires resembled a forest of tossing scarlet and black feathers, and below them one caught flashes of sunlight on bronze cuirass and white tunic. It was almost impossible to realise that it was a mere forty-eight hours since the Albatross left England for Tokyo on the first stage of her air-cruise. As Colonel K had said, they had stepped back two thousand years practically overnight.

"Look!" exclaimed the great explorer suddenly. "They're deploying to form the triplex acies. They evidently mean to march in battle array to avoid the possibility of a surprise attack by the enemy."

It was as he said. The cohorts were spreading out to right and left as they passed the gate, and forming a triple line in close formation. In the centre was the Prætorian Guard, the general's own bodyguard, and five cohorts of the Sixth Legion, the other half of which remained behind to hold the camp. The First and Second Legions made the two wings, but of cavalry there was none, since the Albatross would have stampeded the Roman horses just as effectively as the rebel ones.

"My aunt! This is jolly exciting!" said Jim, hopping from one leg to the other in his excitement.

The whole great force was now in motion, marching with the long steady stride that was a characteristic of the Roman legion. For some time the Albatross remained above it, high in the heavens, swooping back and forth like a huge dragonfly. Then, at a command from the colonel, she swept about and made off again towards the rebels.

Dolabella's two legions were drawn up on the plain in the three-line chessboard formation so often described by the ancient writers. The cohorts were so arranged that a space equal to the length of the front of one of them separated each from the next, and each line from the one behind, while the cohorts of the second and third lines came exactly behind the gaps in the lines before them.

The cavalry hung like a cloud on the left wing, and the renegade leader himself was easily picked out, riding up and down before his troops on a grey horse.

Colonel K looked at his watch.

"Well, it won't be long now," he said. "Half an hour more, and the battle should be on. Jim, come into the cockpit with me. I'm going to take over control."

The Battle!

THE next thirty minutes were the longest the boys had ever known. From their lofty perch they could see the royal army approaching the enemy, but it seemed in their excitement to be moving at a snail's pace. Slowly it advanced across the plain towards the waiting legions, and at last the two forces were face to face, ready for the signal to attack.

Phil and Rex, watching through powerful glasses, held their breath.

Then all at once, in response to some order which they naturally could not hear, a shower of spears came from Dolabella's ranks. The other side replied, and in a moment the air was thick with the deadly missiles. Fascinated, the flyers followed the manoeuvres of the legions.

As soon as the first line of cohorts had discharged their javelins, they retired between the gaps of the second, which advanced to form a new front. Presently the third came to the fore, and a last volley of spears was exchanged. Then, as the soldiers below drew their short swords for a charge, the Albatross swooped suddenly downwards, and, glancing about, Phil saw the reason. Dolabella was preparing to bring his cavalry into action.

Down, down, dived the monoplane at a steep angle, the wind screaming past. Straight towards the massed horsemen on the left wing she slid like some savage monster of the skies. The soldiers, ready for the furious onslaught for which they were famous, looked up in alarm at this new menace, and their horses began to dance uneasily.

Lower and lower swept the plane, her mighty engines silent. Now, despite all the efforts of the men to quieten them, their mounts were kicking and plunging in fright, milling round in circles, and reducing the ranks to a turmoil. It needed but one final touch to set them stampeding madly in all directions, wild with terror.

And Colonel K gave it.

At three hundred feet he flattened out abruptly and opened up his engines. They awoke to life with a deep-toned roar, and in that instant the rout of Dolabella's thousand picked cavalry was complete. The frantic horses, totally out of control, broke and fled on every side, their one instinct to escape from this frightful bellowing creature of the clouds.

Looking back as they zoomed upwards once more, the flyers saw the havoc they had wrought more plainly. The whole of the left wing of Dolabella's army was in the utmost confusion, for many of the fear-blinded horses had dashed into the midst of the infantry, and scattered the cohorts from their path until well-aimed blows put an end to their career. And the rest of the rebels were standing agast, stupefied by this trick which had robbed them of one of their strongest assets. It was at this precise moment that Valerius Martius decided to make his great charge.

A splendid figure in the centre on his prancing white horse, he raised his sword above his head and gave a shout of command. The next second he was racing towards the foe with the faithful Prætorian Guard at his heels, and the two wings were not slow to follow their example. Like a huge brazen wave the Roman front rolled forward, and in a few instants the two armies were engaged in a furious hand-to-hand struggle.

The watchers in the air above found their gaze riveted by the scene. The battle had become a series of single combats, man against man, and the total absence of all the main weapons of modern warfare made it a strange sight. There was no rattle of machine-guns, no roar of exploding bombs, no smoke to obstruct the view. Clang of metal on metal, clash of sword on shield or armour, yells of triumph or pain, orders shouted above the din—these were the only sounds in a fight of twenty centuries ago.

And wherever the fray was thickest there was the young Imperator, his weapon flashing as he forced his way into the press, still mounted, and laid about him. Time and time again he rallied his soldiers when they seemed to fail!

back, and time and time again he escaped death as though by a miracle. He was here, there, and everywhere, just as he was needed, most, and there was no man on the field so utterly fearless as he.

All at once a cry went up from somewhere in the rear of the rebel forces:

"Friends, we are betrayed! Our general has fled!" It was only too true. The cowardly Dolabella had seen with the practised eye of a commander that he was already defeated; however staunch a stand might be made about the eagles, and determined not to fall into the hands of the Imperator, had callously abandoned his troops to their fate.

Mounted on his grey charger, he was half a mile away across the plain before his departure was noticed, making at top speed for the hills with two or three of his most trusted adjutants.

Valerius Martius gave a shout of rage at sight of the escaping traitor, and tried to force his horse out of the press to go in pursuit. But he was too closely hemmed in by both friend and foe, and, finding that it was impossible to extricate himself, turned to throw himself into the fray with redoubled vigour.

But this base desertion on the part of the man whose cause they were fighting was too much for the remnant of the Third and Fourth Legions. They lost all heart for the struggle, and, with their resistance weakening at every blow, it was only a matter of minutes before the Imperator won through to the side of the aquilifer, or standard-bearer, of the Third.

"Surrender your eagles!" he commanded, his voice rising sharply to make itself heard above the din. "A free pardon for all who lay down their arms and return to their former allegiance!"

There was a momentary hesitation, then the aquilifer gave up the standard, to be followed swiftly by his companion of the Fourth. Dozens of legionnaires, glad enough of the chance to escape being made prisoner, surrendered; but scores of others, seizing their opportunity, had withdrawn quietly from the rear of the army and were stream-

ing towards the hills in the wake of their general. The battle was won.

Valerius Martius wheeled his horse out from among the cohorts, and rode to where the Albatross had landed on the plain.

"Hail, O great Colonus!" he said, saluting. "The day is won! Victory is ours! I beg thee to lend thy aid once more, that we may pursue the craven Dolabella to his lair in the hills."

"It is thine for the asking," returned the colonel, in Latin. "The traitor must be hunted down, and the bird-chariot will assist thy cohorts in the search. Wilt thou fly with us?"

"Even so," replied Valerius Martius, who had been up in the Albatross before, and did not fear it.

He entered the plane, and they took the air again as three strong cohorts left the battlefield and started on the trail of Dolabella. And so the great comb-out of the hills began.

But, though the flyers scouted high and low, far and wide, hour in and hour out, and the legionnaires below scoured the slopes, never a glimpse did any of them catch of the vanished general. The old fox had gone safely to earth.

Colonel K turned back, and a few minutes later landed once more in the Roman camp.

"To-night we feast again, my friends!" the Imperator said. "This time for victory gained. I will see you all anon."

"Stay a minute," said Colonel K, as the Imperator prepared to descend from the cabin. "How long do we remain in camp here?"

"Two days only—to rest and nurse our wounds," was the reply. "On the third we march to Roma Secunda, whither I have already sent messengers to tell of the defeat of Dolabella. You shall enter into our glorious city in triumph, as befits you, O men from over the seas!"

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