

AMAZING FULL-O'-LAUGHS SCHOOL YARN INSIDE!

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

The GEM

2^d



THE ROBOT of ST JIM'S!

The ROBOT of ST. JIM'S!



Bernard Glyn & Co., the New Firm at St. Jim's, arouse the suspicions of Tom Merry & Co. when they work behind a locked door! Tom Merry & Co. are sure that there is a "wheeze" on—but they get the shock of a lifetime when they find out just what it is!

CHAPTER 1.

An Inventor in Trouble!

"H A, ha, ha!"

The sudden laugh rang through the stillness of the Shell Form Room at St. Jim's. It was startling, to say the least.

The Shell were labouring through deponent verbs, and even Mr. Linton, the Form master, was looking a little sleepy, though he was supposed to be keen on Latin conjugations.

The Form-room was very quiet. That sudden laugh, though not loud in itself, rang through the quiet room with the startling suddenness of a thunderclap.

Mr. Linton simply jumped. His book dropped to the floor with a thud. The class jumped, too. Every head was craned round towards the fellow who laughed.

It was Bernard Glyn. Conscious in a moment of the enormity he had been guilty of, the lad from Liverpool sat with a crimson face.

The laugh had been quite involuntary, the outcome of thoughts that were passing in his mind, though, needless to say, wholly unconnected with deponent verbs or any other verbs.

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"My hat!" murmured Monty Lowther to Tom Merry. "Of all the giddy asses! Fancy cackling in class—"

"You are speaking, Lowther."

"Oh!"

"Take fifty lines!"

"Oh!"

"Glyn!"

"Yes, sir."

"Did you laugh?"

"Ye-es, sir."

"You find something exceptionally amusing in the construction of deponent verbs?" asked Mr. Linton, who was famous for a vein of heavy sarcasm.

Glyn turned redder still, if possible.

He would gladly have sunk through the floor, if that had been possible, to escape the eyes of Mr. Linton—eyes popularly supposed in the Shell to resemble gimlets in their piercing powers. But as that was not practicable he had to sit where he was, and face the incensed Form master.

"Did you hear my question, Glyn?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then answer it, will you?"

"No, sir."

"What?" thundered Mr. Linton.

By Martin Clifford

"That—that is my answer to your question, sir!" stammered Bernard Glyn hurriedly. "I did not find anything exceptionally amusing in the construction of deponent verbs, sir."

"Oh, I see! Well, and why did you laugh, Glyn?"

"I—I—I—"

"A parrot-like repetition of the first person singular is no answer to my question, Glyn!" thundered Mr. Linton.

"N-no, sir!"

"Will you answer me?"

"Ye-es, sir."

"I am waiting, Glyn."

"Ye-es, sir."

"Then answer me!"

"Certainly, sir!"

"Well?"

"You see, sir, I—I—I was thinking, sir."

"Indeed! I grant that is quite an unaccustomed exercise for you," said Mr. Linton, again heavily sarcastic. "But why should this novel proceeding on your part cause you to burst into a horse-laugh?"

Some of the Shell giggled, either because they thought Mr. Linton's remarks humorous, or because they wanted to put him into a good temper by appearing to think so.

The giggle propitiated Mr. Linton a little. His frown relaxed, but his glance was still bent severely upon Bernard Glyn.

The Liverpool lad seemed to be at a loss for words.

"Well, Glyn?"

"You see, sir, I—I thought of a wheeze."

"A what?"

"A rag, sir."

"A—a—a—a rag!"

"An idea, sir."

"Oh, an idea! No doubt the first idea you were ever troubled with, but that does not explain the horse-laugh, Glyn."

"What is a horse-laugh, sir?"

"I give you one moment more——"

"You see, sir——"

"Well?"

"It was rather funny, sir."

"What was funny?"

"I was thinking of an invention of mine, sir."

"Indeed! The proper place to think of inventions is certainly not the class-room. I must suppose, Glyn, that you laugh from mere vacancy of mind."

"Not exactly, sir. I——"

"Or else that you deliberately intended to show disrespect to your Form master!" thundered Mr. Linton.

"Oh, no, sir!"

"In any case you were not thinking of the lesson in hand."

"I am sorry, sir."

"Stand out before the class, Glyn!"

The Liverpool lad slowly left his place.

Under the eyes of the whole Shell he was feeling very red and uncomfortable. The master of the Shell pointed to a corner in the Form-room.

"Glyn, you will stand in that corner."

"Ye-es, sir."

"You will remain there till the end of the lesson, sir, as an example to the rest of this class."

"Oh, sir!"

"Stand there at once!"

"If you please, sir——"

"Another word, and I will send you in to the Head!"

Bernard Glyn slowly turned and walked to the corner. He would not have minded being caned, or even to having a few raps from the pointer, but to be made to stand in a corner of the class-room like a naughty fag in the Third or Second Form was too humiliating.

Glyn was wrathful, but there was no help for it. He stood in the corner and glared at the Shell, who were mostly grinning.

Tom Merry felt sorry for him, but he could not help smiling. Gore was chuckling with enjoyment. He did not

like Glyn. Skimpole blinked at him through his big spectacles, and was inclined to rise in his place and make a protest on his behalf. He felt, as a matter of fact, very sympathetic towards Glyn, as a brother inventor. For, much as the Liverpool lad—the son of a famous engineer—was given to inventing, he had a close rival in Skimpole. Skimpole, the genius of the Shell, would invent anything almost at a moment's notice, from a new thing in pen-nibs to an airship. The pens would not write, and the airship would not leave the ground; but Skimpole had a mind above such trivial details as those.

He whispered his doubts to Tom Merry.

"Merry, do you—er—think it would be judicious for me to interfere in this matter?"

Skimpole placed great reliance on the judgment of Tom Merry. Tom was one of those sensible chaps, not at all a genius, whose judgment generally could be relied upon.

Tom would willingly have given advice, but Mr. Linton's eye was upon him. The master of the Shell was watching every motion of Skimpole's lips, as a matter of fact, though the genius of the Shell was too short-sighted to even know that the Form master was looking at him.

"Skimpole!"

Mr. Linton rapped out the name before Tom Merry could reply.

"Yes, sir!"

"Stand out here!"

"Yes, sir."

Skimpole went out before the class.

"You will stand with Glyn for the rest of the lesson."

"Really, sir! Why?"

"For talking in class, Skimpole."

"Pray allow me to explain, sir."

Mr. Linton gasped.

"Skimpole!"

"Yes, sir. I consider——"

"Silence!"

"I consider——"

"Go and stand beside Glyn."

"I have no pronounced objection to standing beside Glyn, sir; but I should like first to explain—— Ow!"

The "ow" was uttered as the pointer rapped over his knuckles.

Then Mr. Linton pointed to the corner with the pointer.

"Go at once, Skimpole!"

"Yes, sir!"

And Skimpole hurriedly went, giving up Mr. Linton as a person too utterly obtuse with whom to reason.

CHAPTER 2.

Inventors Two!

SKIMPOLE joined Bernard Glyn in the corner, and the lesson proceeded.

The Determinist of St. Jim's blinked at the Liverpool lad.

A greater contrast can hardly be imagined than that which existed between the two inventors of the School House at St. Jim's.

Skimpole was dreaming and visionary, he had huge ideas and many of them, but he never reduced any of them to a practical shape.

He was the best-natured and most absent-minded fellow in the School House, and he would carry out his peculiar ideas on the subject of Determinism at any expense to himself or anybody else. He never got half-through an idea without throwing it aside for something new—something just as visionary and impracticable.

Bernard Glyn was very different. He was hard-headed and practical; his ideas were less far-reaching, but he carried them all out, and he never touched a new piece of work till the old one was finished.

"This is very rotten, Glyn!" Skimpole whispered in the corner. "I regard it as a ridiculous position."

Glyn grunted.

"What is wanted in this school is an effective propaganda to convert the Head and the masters to Determinism."

"Rats!"

"Really, Glyn——"

"Ring off!"

"A sincere Determinist never rings off. You see——"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Glyn. "I'm thinking something out."

"Is it the new invention?"

"Yes."

"You had better tell me all about it. With my superior intellectual powers, I may be able to assist you. I place my brain power quite at your service."

"Thanks! I'm like Nature in one respect—I abhor a vacuum," said Glyn.

"If you mean to imply that my brain is vacant, Glyn——"

"Mr. Linton is looking round."

"Dear me."

And Skimpole relapsed into silence.

The Liverpool lad's brow was wrinkled in deep thought, and the glimmer of fun in his eyes showed that he was thinking of the same idea which had called forth his sudden and unexpected laugh in the midst of the Latin lesson.

Skimpole blinked at him curiously.

He would have given a great deal to know what was passing in the Liverpool lad's mind.

Until Bernard Glyn came to St. Jim's, Skimpole had been the only inventor there, and he had had to acknowledge that Glyn was a little more practical and a great deal more successful than himself.

"I say, Glyn," he whispered, when Mr. Linton's attention was diverted again, "what's the wheeze?"

"Ask me another."

"Is it a secret?"

"Yes."

"Then you can tell me. I'm good at keeping secrets."

"So am I," said Glyn grimly.

"Really, Glyn——"

"Oh, cheese it!"

Mr. Linton looked round quickly.

"You were speaking, Glyn."

Bernard could not deny it.

"You will stay in half an hour after last lesson."

"Yes, sir," said Glyn helplessly.

He could have jumped on Skimpole.

Full of his new scheme, and eager to carry it out, the inventor of the School House would rather have had a caning that afternoon than half an hour's detention.

He glared at Skimpole; but the freak of the Shell did not mind. He was not unaccustomed to being glared at.

"Dear me, you are in trouble again, Glyn," he remarked. "I was going to ask you, after school, to lend me some of your electrical apparatus."

"Go and eat cake!"

"However, you need not trouble. I know where you keep it, and I can take it myself."

Glyn snapped his teeth.

"You utter ass!"

"Really, Glyn——"

"If you go into my study——"

"Glyn!" thundered Mr. Linton. "You cannot keep silent, it appears. You will stay in an hour instead of half an hour, and if you open your lips again I will gate you for the next two half-holidays."

Glyn was dumb.

He was not exactly to blame for talking, in the circumstances, but it was not possible to explain that to the exasperated master of the Shell.

His eyes said volumes of things to Skimpole; but Skimpole was too short-sighted and too busy with his own thoughts to heed them.

"Dear me! Mr. Linton seems to be in a bad temper this afternoon," Skimpole murmured. "Perhaps something has happened to annoy him. Glyn, did you say I could have the electrical apparatus in your study?"

Glyn did not speak.

He did not know whether Mr. Linton was listening or not, although his head was turned away, and he dared not risk being gated for the half-holidays. He glared at Skimpole without a word.

"Then I may have it?"

Glyn did not speak.

"Very well," said Skimpole, apparently taking silence for consent. "I will get the things from your study after school."

Still Glyn did not speak.

Skimpole relapsed into silence, thinking, too, of a great idea. Skimpole was great on telephones, and he had once constructed a telephone in the School House that caused great trouble. He had dropped the idea for a time, but lately he had revived it, only there was a financial difficulty in the way. Skimpole never had any money, and electrical apparatus cost money.

The difficulty would be overcome if he could draw upon the extensive stock Glyn kept in his study, and that was what the genius of the Shell intended to do.

The lesson ended, and the Shell were dismissed, and Skimpole went out with the rest.

Bernard Glyn would gladly have followed, if only to warn Skimpole, with dire threats, not to dare to enter his study. But the Form master's eye was upon him.

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"You will remain until half-past five, Glyn," said Mr. Linton.

"Ye-es, sir."

"You will not leave the class-room under any pretext."

"Very well, sir."

And Glyn set down at his desk.

Mr. Linton left the room and closed the door.

CHAPTER 3.

Caught in the Act!

TOM MERRY, Manners, and Lowther—the Terrible Three—came down the passage arm-in-arm, calmly pushing the other fellows out of the way, notwithstanding many fierce objections to this high-handed proceeding.

Skimpole tried to stop them, to speak. He caught hold of Tom Merry's button, in the objectionable way he had, and arrested his progress.

"Merry, I want to speak——"

"Go out in the quad and do it, old fellow."

"On an important subject."

"Get along!"

"I'm thinking of establishing a telephone system in the School House——"

"Rats!"

"We've had some!" said Manners. "Clear!"

"Really, Manners——"

"You're in the way, Skimmy!"

"I'm thinking of establishing a telephonic connection between all the studies, so that we can talk to one another without going out of the rooms," said Skimpole. "I regard this as a great improvement upon existing arrangements."

"Yes, a ripping improvement, if you can talk to a fellow whether he likes it or not," said Monty Lowther. "You're bad enough now, when a chap can dodge you if he likes."

"Really, Lowther——"

"Bunk!"

"I'm raising a subscription of ten shillings a head——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There is nothing comic in that."

"That's your mistake. I'm going on. Better move."

"Really—— Ow!"

The Terrible Three marched on.

As Skimpole was standing directly in the way, and as he did not move, they had no choice but to march over him.

Which they accordingly did.

Skimpole was left gasping like a newly landed fish on the flagged floor of the passage, and he was still gasping when a slim and elegant Fourth-Former came hastily along, tripped over him, and went down on his hands and knees.

It was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of the Fourth.

D'Arcy fell with his knee upon Skimpole's ribs, and the unfortunate Shell fellow gave a prolonged gasp, like escaping steam.

"Ow-wow-wow!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Yow-wow!"

"What on earth's this I've fallen ovah?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, without moving his knee, which was jammed into Skimpole's ribs. "It has thwown me into quite a fluttah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Jack Blake. "It's Skimmy!"

"Bai Jove! Is that you, Skimmy?"

"Yes, you duffer! Gerroff!"

"I wefuse to be called a duffah!"

"Gerroff!"

"Yaas, wathah! But undah the cires——"

"You—you're cr-cr-crushing m-m-me! Gerroff, you idiot!"

"I uttably decline to be chawactewised as an idiot."

"Get off him, then," said Jack Blake, grinning. "You'll extinguish Skimmy, if you don't look out."

"I should be sowry to extinguish Skimmy; but I must decline to move until he has withdrawn that oppwobvious expression."

Jack Blake and his chum Digby stooped, and, seizing Arthur Augustus D'Arcy by the shoulders, jerked him off the gasping freak of the Shell.

"Wefuse me!" exclaimed D'Arcy indignantly. "I wefuse to——"

"Can't be bothered with an inquest now," said Blake, yawning. "Skimmy, my son, what is the idea of taking a nap in the passage?"

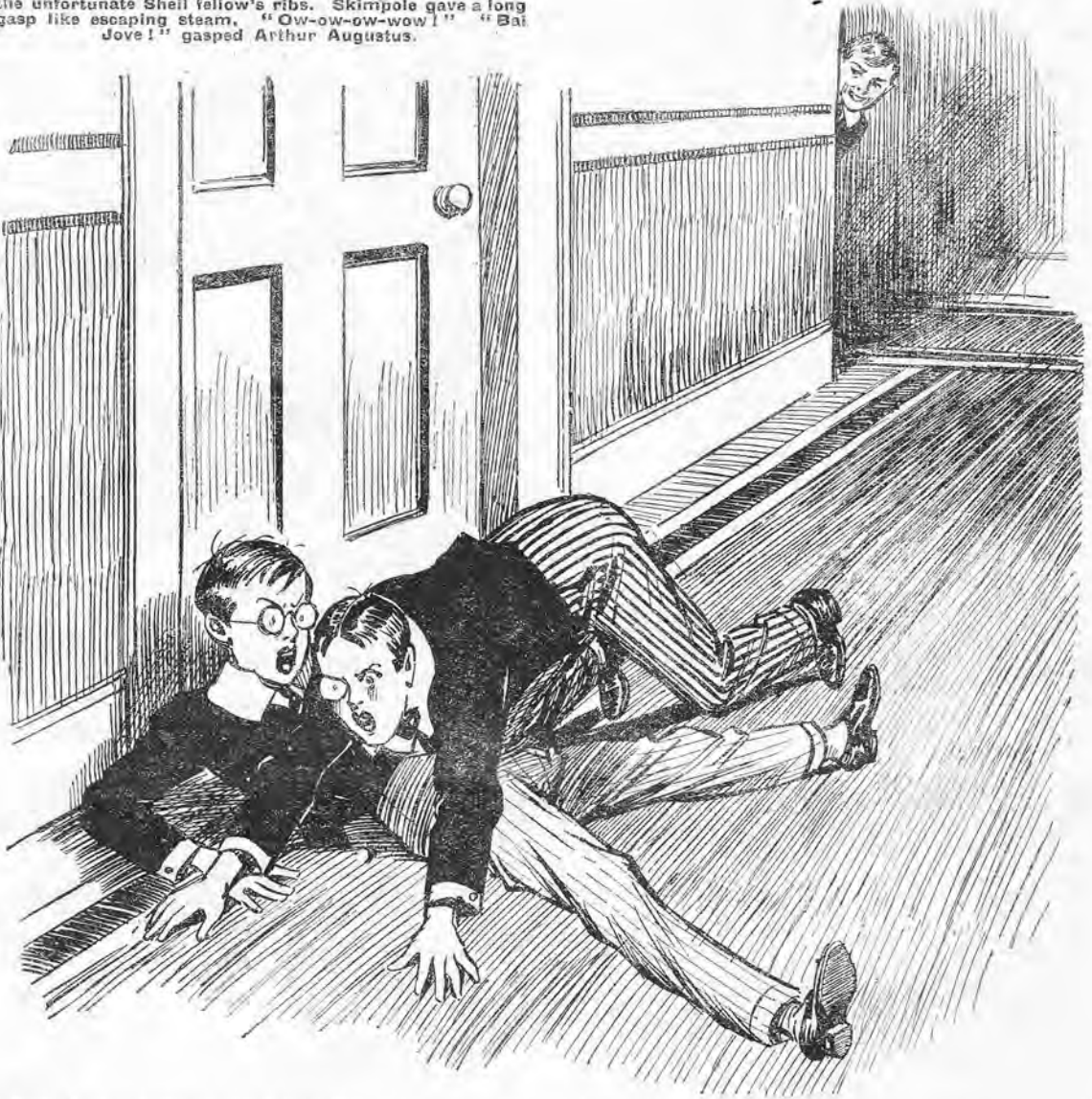
Skimpole staggered up.

"I was not taking a nap in the passage, Blake. I was pushed over in a very rude way by Tom Merry. I was proposing to him——"

"Naughty!"

"Oh, pray do not be frivolous, Blake. I was proposing to him to enter into the scheme I am framing for connecting

D'Arcy tripped over Skimpole and fell with his knee upon the unfortunate Shell fellow's ribs. Skimpole gave a long gasp like escaping steam. "Ow-ow-ow-wow!" "Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus.



up all the junior studies in the School House by means of a telephone. The exchange would be in my study. The subscription is ten shillings a head for a term, payable in advance. I suppose your fellows will join?"

"Something wrong with your supposer, then," said Digby.

"Really, Digby—"

"Oh, we'll join when the telephone's up!" said Blake, laughing. "You can ask me for my subscription when the telephonic communication is established between the junior studies. Let's get to the cricket, Dig."

"What-ho!"

"Hold on a minute— Really, you know, D'Arcy! Pray stop a minute!"

Now, as Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was considerably ruffled by stumbling over Skimpole, he was really the fellow who should have been least likely to stay and be bored by him. But Arthur Augustus was nothing if not polite. He paused, jammed his eyeglass into his eye, and looked at the genius of the Shell.

"What is it, Skimpole?"

"I require assistance in beginning the telephone construction," said Skimpole. "I shall allow my assistant to benefit by the arrangement without the payment of a fee. Will you help me?"

"You see—"

"I should take Glyn into the affair, as he knows a great deal about electricity, but he is obstinate, and very self-willed, and he is absurd enough to think that my ideas are nonsensical, you know."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Pray come and help me. Knowledge of the matter is not required, as I have plenty of that, and any intelligence need not be exerted. Of course, I should not expect that of you. I have brains enough for two."

"Bai Jove!"

"Will you assist me?"

"You are so deuced flatterin' about it, Skimmay, that I weally can't wesist," said Arthur Augustus, with a sarcasm that was quite lost upon the amateur telephonist.

"Very good! Come this way."

"Where are you goin'?"

"To Glyn's study. He has a large quantity of the apparatus necessary for my work," explained Skimpole, leading the way in the direction of the Shell studies in the School House. "I am going to borrow it."

"Bai Jove! Will he let you?"

"Certainly!"

"But has he given his permish? Does he know?"

"His permission is not really necessary, as a fellow has a right to anything he needs for his personal use at any time. But, as a matter of fact, I have explained it to Glyn, and he does not object."

"Oh, that's all wight, then."

"Of course it's all right! Come on!"

Arthur Augustus gave a glance through the open door at the great quad, and heard the merry cries of the cricketers. Then he followed Skimpole upstairs. The swell of St. Jim's was the most obliging fellow in the world. They reached Glyn's study, and entered it.

It was the end study in the Shell corridor, and the

Liverpool lad shared it with Harry Noble, the junior from Australia, and Clifton Dane, of Canada.

But most of the property in the room belonged to Glyn, who was the son of a millionaire, and was indulged in almost everything he wanted by a fond father.

Skimpole knew where the young inventor kept his electrical apparatus, and he opened the lid of a large chest which he pulled out from under the table.

The chest was packed in an orderly way that used up every available inch of space, with a collection of things useful to a young electrician.

There were coils of insulated wire, single and double, bells and switches and presses, jars of chemicals, and various other materials and instruments, many of which D'Arcy did not know either the names or the use.

Skimpole blinked at them with great satisfaction.

"Dear me! This is really excellent!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Take all the things I hand to you, D'Arcy, will you, and pack them into that little bag."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I shall want some hundreds of yards of insulated wire, and a certain number of bells. I had better take the lot. Then a set of receivers. Let me see—"

"Are you sure—"

"I will take half a dozen dry batteries, and by connecting them up, I shall obtain a sufficiently powerful battery for my purpose."

"That Glyn doesn't mind—"

"Then I shall want—"

"Your taking his property?"

"Really, D'Arcy—"

There was a hasty footstep at the door.

"My only hat!"

Bernard Glyn looked in.

Filled with uneasiness for his property, he had ventured to disregard the Shell master's injunction, and to quit the Form-room before the expiration of the hour of detention.

He rushed into the study.

"You rotters!" he roared. "I'll teach you to burgle in my study!"

"Weally, Glyn—"

Arthur Augustus had no time for more.

The incensed inventor was upon him.

He dropped the bags containing the purloined property, and went reeling and staggering in a desperate combat with the Liverpool lad.

Skimpole blinked at them.

"Dear me! Pray do not hurt one another, my friends!"

"Gr-r-r-r!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Glyn—"

"Get out!"

"D'Arcy—"

"Wats!"

"Dear me! It is clearly useless for me to remain!"

And Skimpole picked up the bag containing the borrowed apparatus and left the study, leaving D'Arcy and Glyn rolling over and over in a wild and whirling conflict.

CHAPTER 4.

Hoist With His Own Petard!

"B AI Jove!"

"Now, then—"

"Weally—"

"You ass—"

"Ow!"

"I wefuse—"

"Gr-r-r-r!"

"My only hat!" ejaculated Tom Merry, as he came along the Shell passage. "What on earth's that? An earthquake, or Herries dropping his boots, or what?"

"Wescue, deah boys!"

"It's Gussy!"

Tom Merry looked into the study.

He stared in amazement at the scene before him.

Bernard Glyn and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy were rolling round the study, but the Liverpool lad seemed to be getting the best of it.

D'Arcy's elegant clothes were in a shocking state.

His collar was torn wholly out and lay on the carpet, his jacket was split up the back, his hair was ruffled like a mop.

The swell of St. Jim's was scarcely recognisable for a moment.

"Phew!"

"Wescue, deah boys! This howwid ass is wuinin' my clothes!"

"I'll ruin his chivvy, too!" roared Glyn.

"What's the matter?"

"Gr-r-r-r!"

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"Wescue!"

Tom Merry ran into the study.

Glyn happened to be uppermost, and Tom Merry seized him by the shoulders, and jerked him away from his adversary.

Arthur Augustus lay gasping on the carpet.

Glyn was excited, and he struggled as Tom Merry pulled him off and wrenched himself away from the grasp of the hero of the Shell.

He staggered, and fell plump into an armchair.

The next moment he gave a yell.

That armchair was well known in the School House at St. Jim's; it was one of the many inventions of Bernard Glyn.

As soon as anyone sat in it the weight on the seat released a spring, and metal bands shot out and enveloped the luckless sitter. Both Arthur Augustus and Herr Schneider, the German master, had had experience of that chair. Now Glyn himself was given a sample of what it was like.

The metal bands enclosed him in a twinkling, and he struggled desperately, though, as the maker of the chair, he ought to have known how useless that was.

Arthur Augustus staggered to his feet.

He presented a shocking sight, but he did not receive much sympathy. Tom Merry burst into a roar of laughter that rang through the Shell passage.

"My aunt! You do look a picture, Gussy!"

"I feel extremely wotten!"

"You look it!" said Lowther, at the door. "Been having a rough-and-tumble with a wildcat or a lawn mower?"

"I have been thwashin' Glyn!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There is no cause for wibald laughter that I am awaf of, Lowthah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Only you look as if Glyn had been thrashing you, that's all," said Lowther. "You ought to be put on the cinematograph like that! Will you wait here a minute, without moving, while I get my camera?"

"Certainly not, Lowthah! I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort!"

"Here, let me get out of this!" gasped Bernard Glyn.

"Ha, ha, ha! What is it Shakespeare says on that subject?" grinned Monty Lowther.

"I do not wemembah Shakespeare sayin' anythin' about Bernard Glyn," said D'Arcy, with a puzzled expression.

"Ass! It's in 'Hamlet'—"

"I wefuse to be called an ass—"

"For this the sport to see the engineer hoist by his own petard," grinned Lowther. "William must have been thinking of something like this."

"Let me out, you grinning ass!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There's a spring—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pway don't let the violent ass out yet!" said Arthur Augustus. "I wegard him as a dangewous maniac!"

"What's the row about?" asked Tom Merry.

"I weally do not know. I was helpin' Skimpole to wemove some things fwom that chest when this uttah ass suddenly spwang upon me like—like anythin'! Of course, I had no wescource but to thwash him!"

"You thrash me!" hooted Glyn. "You couldn't thrash a blind puppy dog!"

"Weally, Glyn—"

"Lemme out of this rotten chair."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry. "I don't know how to work it!"

"Neither do I," said Lowther. "Better fetch Skimpole, he's the only other inventor in the School House. Or Blake would take the chair to pieces, as he's a carpenter. Shall I buzz over to the New House and fetch Figgins, Glyn? He's got a new axe for cutting saplings, and he would make short work of that chair."

"You utter idiot—"

"Good! Is that the Liverpooldian for 'Thank you'?" asked Lowther.

"You—you—"

"Pway do not wescuse that uttah ass, anyway, deah boy. I think I had better take some more of these things—"

"You let them alone!" roared Glyn.

"Weally, Glyn, you are an unwescounable boundah! You gave Skimmay your permish to bowwow the things—"

"I didn't, you ass!"

"I decline to be called an ass, and I wefuse to have doubt cast upon the word of a fwend of mine. Skimmay assuashed me that he had mentioned the mattah to you."

"Yes, ass; he mentioned it, duffer! But I couldn't explain to him that I'd smash him if he touched my things, dummy, because old Linton had his gimlets on me, maniac!"

So do you understand now, idiot?"

"I wegard all those expressions as oppwobwious!"

"Ass! Dummy!"

"Undah the cires, if there was a misunderstandin', I am willin' to excuse your violence," said D'Arcy. "I shall not thrash you any more."

"There you are—a reprieve at the foot of the scaffold," said Lowther. "Gussy is not going to thrash you any more. You can consider that you've got off cheap. You know what a Gorgon Gussy is when he's roused."

"Let me out of this rotten chair!"

"Bai Jove! How do you work it?"

"There's a spring!"

"Where?" asked Tom Merry.

"At the back, down below. You can find it by feeling for it and pressing it hard. Then the contraption unfstens."

"Vewy good! Pway be patient, deah boy, while I find the spwing."

"Buck up, for goodness' sake!"

Arthur Augustus felt over the lower part of the back of the chair, pressing his thumb on the paddling everywhere in search of the hidden spring.

"Buck up, for goodness' sake!"

Suddenly he gave a terrific yell.

"Oh! Ow! Wow!"

He jumped away from the chair as if it had become suddenly red-hot, and danced in the study, with his thumb in his mouth.

"Go it!" exclaimed Harry Noble, the Australian, coming into the study, which he shared with Glyn and Clifton Dane. "Go it, Gussy! Is this a new thing in breakdowns?"

"Yow!"

"What on earth's the matter?"

"I've pwicked my fingah!"

"On the spring?"

"No; on some wotten thing or othah!"

"It's all right," said Glyn. "That's only a needle-point. There's several of them arranged there, in case anybody should go looking for the spring. I forgot to mention that. It's all right."

"I decline to wegard it as all wight," said Arthur Augustus, sucking his thumb. "In fact, I wegard it as all wong. I have pwicked my thumb!"

"Blow your thumb!"

"I wufuse to look for the spwing any longah. Undah the cires, I shall wetiah, and twy to wepair the damage you have done to my clothes."

And Arthur Augustus strolled across to the window.

"For goodness' sake let me out—some of you!" exclaimed Glyn. "Skimpole's walked off with a lot of my apparatus, and I'm going to scalp him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Find the spring, you giggling idiots!"

"Blessed if I like the idea of exploring among those giddy needle-points," said Tom Merry. "Isn't there any other way?"

"No, ass!"

"Suppose we turn the chair upside down, you may drop out," suggested Monty Lowther.

"Idiot!"

"I'll have a go at it with the poker, if you like," said Harry Noble. "Blessed if I'm going to squeeze all over that lining full of needle-points!"

"There's only six of them."

"Well, I'm not goin' to touch one of them."

"You ass!"

"I'll smash the thing up, if you like," said the Cornstalk. "Better get rid of it. I've had to sit in it twice for ten minutes or so, owing to sitting down in it by mistake. I'd be glad to see the end of it."

"Look for the spring."

"Rats!"

"It's all right—"

"More rats!"

"Oh, smash it up, then—anything you like! Only for goodness' sake let me out!" gasped the School House inventor.

"Right-ho!" said Tom Merry. "We'll help!"

The Shell fellows set cheerfully to work. With poker, tongs, and chopper they attacked the armchair manfully.

It was a strong, well-made piece of furniture, and it resisted long. But they were in earnest. The crashing blows attracted attention from all quarters.

Fellows of the Shell and the Fourth Form gathered in the passage to look on. There was soon quite a crowd, and the fellows watched the proceedings of the rescuers with great interest.

In spite of the greatest energy, and a terrific amount of noise, the progress of the rescuers was slow.

Monty Lowther remarked that it was like the rescuers trying to get at some miner entombed in the depths of the earth, only Glyn had the good fortune to be close to

his rescuers. That proximity, however, was not wholly fortunate for Bernard Glyn. For some of the knocks intended for the chair fell upon him, and he was soon in possession of a really extensive and varied collection of bruises. The chair was demolished at last, however, and the youthful inventor was released from the fastening bands.

"Jolly good!" said Tom Merry, throwing the poker into the grate with a clang. "We've done it!"

"You've nearly done for me, too," grumbled Glyn.

"Well, you had to expect a knock or two."

"Yah!"

"Oh, come on!" said Lowther. "This is what we get for wasting a quarter of an hour on the boulder. I hit the chair oftener than I hit him all the time."

"Br-r-r-r!"

Bernard Glyn, without stopping to discuss the question as to how much gratitude was due to his rescuers, ran off to recover the property the freak of the Shell had taken away.

He bumped at Skimpole's door, but it did not open.

He kicked at the lower panels, and yelled through the keyhole to the Determinist of St. Jia's.

"Skimpole! Skimmy!"

"Yes! Is that you, Glyn?"

"Yes! Open the door!"

"I'm busy!"

"I want those things!"

"What things?"

"The things you've taken from my study!" bawled Glyn through the keyhole.

"I had your permission, you know."

"You hadn't, you ass! I never said a word!"

"Silence gives consent."

"Look here! You can have some of them, but—"

"I shall need them all."

"But they're mine!" roared Glyn.

"You are quite mistaken," said Skimpole, from the safe side of the keyhole. "If you care to listen, I will explain."

"Unlock the door!"

"For the present, I consider it more judicious to keep the door locked. You see, as a sincere Determinist, I—"

"You giddy ass!"

"But I wish to get on with the telephone construction at once, and it will be probably some weeks before—"

"You—you—you—"

"Therefore, I cannot return these things to you, Glyn. But if you care about the value of them, I will pay you promptly, every penny, when my invention materializes."

Glyn raved.

The prospect held out by Skimpole was not quite sufficient consolation to the youthful inventor.

He kicked at the door, but Skimpole, being busy, was no longer listening, and he refused to even reply to the lurid threats Glyn howled through the keyhole.

But the Liverpool lad ceased his attack upon the door suddenly. He caught a glimpse of Mr. Linton's figure in the distance, and, remembering that he was supposed to be still in the Shell Form Room, he dashed off just in time to elude the Form master. And Skimpole went on with his work cheerfully, uninterrupted now.

CHAPTER 5. A Little Secret!

"H A, ha, ha!"

"Ho, ho, ho!"

"He, he, he!"

"My only summer bonnet!" ejaculated Monty Lowther.

"There's something funny on the boards. Listen!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It came from the end study, tenanted by Bernard Glyn, Harry Noble, and Clifton Dane.

It was a shout of irresistible laughter, and it recalled to the Terrible Three that curious outbreak of Glyn's in the Form-room that afternoon.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Terrible Three looked at one another. They were coming along the Shell passage to speak to Glyn and his chums, and the roar of laughter had suddenly greeted them. The door of the end study was closed, but the laugh rang along the corridor.

"Phew! Some new wheeze, I suppose," said Tom Merry.

"Or else this is lung exercise, or they're testing the ceiling."

"Better look in," suggested Manners. "As head of the Shell we ought to keep an eye on the wheezes."

"Yes, rather."

And Tom Merry gave a powerful kick at the door of the study. It flew open, and the Terrible Three walked in.

The New Firm, as Cornstalk & Co. were sometimes called,

were all there, and their faces were wet with tears of merriment.

"Hallo! What do you want?"

They stared with far from polite inquiry at the chums of the Shell.

"We came to speak about the Form match," Tom Merry remarked. "But we heard a mysterious noise as we came along the passage—"

"A sound something like a lot of fireworks exploding all at once, with a rheumatically old barnyard fowl keeping company," said Lowther.

"Or coals rolling downstairs to the accompaniment of a man filing a saw," said Manners.

"We thought something must be the matter," went on Tom Merry blandly, as the New Firm looked decidedly cross at this unflattering description of their laughter. "If you feel a pain anywhere—"

"Or an ache—"

"We'll lend a hand—"

"You'll feel a pain somewhere if you don't buzz off!" said Noble. "We're busy. No time to talk about Form matches. It doesn't come off for a week, anyway. I'll play; Dane'll play; Glyn'll play. Now, cut!"

"Buzz off!" said Glyn.

"Vamoose!" remarked Clifton Dane.

"Look here—"

"Rats! Give us something decent to look at, then perhaps we will. The sooner you get on the outside of that door—"

"But—"

"Can't you see we're busy?"

"Busy! Cackling away like a lot of farmyard roosters!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "What's the idea?"

"Mine!"

"I didn't say whose; I said what."

"You can whose, what, which, why, and wherefore, if you like, and all the rest of the pronouns in the grammar books, if you'll only get on the other side of that door," said Glyn.

"Exactly!"

"Buzz off!"

The Terrible Three looked wrathfully at the New Firm. They were strongly inclined to rush them there and then; but it was not worth a scrimmage.

"Well," said Tom Merry, "remember we're going to hear this wheeze. As heads of the Shell, we can't let you youngsters rip."

"Rats!"

"More rats!"

"And many of 'em!"

Such were the disrespectful replies of Cornstalk & Co. The Terrible Three went out and slammed the door with unnecessary violence.

The New Firm chuckled.

"It's ripping!" said Kangaroo.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Sure you can work it, though?"

"I think so."

"My hat, it will be spiffing! Utterly unheard of!"

"Yes, rather!"

"That little jape of Figgins & Co. in passing off Kerr as Blake's uncle the other day will be a feeble joke to it."

"I should say so."

"If it comes off."

"It'll come off all right."

"What about the materials?"

"I've got most of the things."

"And the clothes?"

"We'll collar some of Skimpole's."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The door opened, and Jack Blake of the Fourth Form looked in. Behind him the faces of Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy peered into the study.

Cornstalk & Co. looked at them.

"This is a private apartment, gentlemen," said Kangaroo. "Next door is the box-room. Pass on!"

"Weally, Kangaroo—"

"We're busy."

"Look here," said Blake, "Tom Merry says you've got a new wheeze on. We've come to look into it."

"Good-bye!"

"If it's up against the New House boundaries we don't mind taking a hand."

"Farewell!"

"If it's a jape against the Terrible Three, you can count us in. As older hands we'll take the lead if the idea's a good one."

"Yaas, watbah!"

"That's fair," said Digby.

"Look here—" began Herries.

"Adios!"

"You set of grinning asses—"

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"Vale!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Kangaroo had now got to the end of his variety of good-byes. He slid his hand towards the inkpot. Arthur Augustus made a hasty strategic movement to the rear. He was no coward, but, as he would have said, a fellow was bound to think of his clothes.

"Look here," said Blake, "I dare say you think yourselves jolly deep—"

"We don't think it; we know it," said Glyn blandly.

"Have you really got a wheeze on, or are you rotting?"

"We have, and we aren't."

"What's the wheeze?"

"A secret," said Kangaroo cheerfully.

"You silly asses—"

"Good-bye!"

"You frabjous, burbling jabberwocks—"

"Farewell!" said Kangaroo, beginning the list again.

The chums of Study No. 6 went out and slammed the door. "Ha, ha, ha!" roared the New Firm.

And their mirth ran along the Shell passage after the retiring Fourth-Formers.

Blake & Co. were utterly puzzled.

It was evident that the Shell chums in the end study had a new wheeze of some sort on the boards, but they could not form the faintest idea as to what it was.

"Pewwaps they're only wottin', deah boys!" Arthur Augustus suggested.

Jack Blake shook his head.

"No; there's something on."

"Then what is it?" demanded Dig.

"Give it up!"

And Blake's chums had to give it up, too. Whatever the new wheeze was, Cornstalk & Co. kept their own counsel about it.

CHAPTER 6

"Are You There?"

SKIMPOLE was busy the next day. The rules of the school compelled him to devote a certain amount of time to lessons, a fact which Skimmy bemoaned, regarding the hours spent in the class-room as so much sheer waste. Nothing could make him give his attention to his work, however.

Even Mr. Linton's pointer had lost its terrors. When Skimpole had a new idea, Skimpole was, as Blake said, more Skimpole than ever. He was thinking of telephones now, and his mighty brain simply refused to come down to such things as Norman kings and decimals and Latin conjugations and declensions.

Having informed his astounded Form master that England was invaded in 1066 Gerrard, instead of 1066 anno Domini, Skimpole was awarded fifty lines. Five hundred would have made no difference. He was still thinking of telephones. He told the mathematics master that the three sides of an isosceles telephone were equal. The master, who was not inventing telephones, was inclined to think him insane, and gave him a hundred lines, anyway.

Skimpole had quite a collection of lines after morning school, but as they weren't telephone lines they didn't interest him.

The moment he was free from classes he hurried to his study and resumed work.

He had done a great deal the previous evening. His apparatus was mostly in working order. Glyn had been placated, and had allowed the genius of the Shell to remain in possession of his plunder, only taking away a few things he really required. The cost of the apparatus was nothing to Glyn, who only had to send to his home to get any quantity. His father was proud of his inventive turn of mind, and gave him every encouragement, including unlimited pocket-money.

Skimpole was hard at work all his spare time that day.

By the time the bell rang for afternoon school the genius of the Shell had put up the telephone in his own study, and had run the wires along the Shell passage.

He had connected up Study No. 6, mindful of Blake's humorous promise to pay his subscription when the installation was complete.

He had just time to test the telephone, when he had to go in to afternoon lessons. It seemed all right.

Skimpole was in great good-humour with himself.

After afternoon school, from which he emerged with a couple of hundred more lines to his credit, the amateur telephonist sought out Jack Blake.

The chums of Study No. 6 had gone into the quadrangle to get in some cricket practice before dark, and Skimpole went to look after them.

"Have you seen Blake?" he asked Glyn, who was chatting with Dane and Harry Noble in the doorway of the School House.



With a bound Wally was at the window. Leaving the silent figure of Skimpole under the table, he bundled out as quickly as he could go. Not for the wealth of the Indies would he have remained in that room a moment longer.

The chums of the end study grinned at one another.
 "Yes," said Kangaroo. "What do you want him for, my son? Is the telephone finished?"
 "Yes, quite ready for use now. I have connected up Study No. 6 with my own study."
 "Good!"
 "It is now possible to hold a conversation between the two studies," went on Skimpole. "I want Blake to give it a trial."
 "Good idea," said Kangaroo, with a wink at Glyn. "This way!"
 "Do you know where Blake is?"
 "I saw him not five minutes ago. Come on!"
 "Thank you very much, Noble!"
 "Don't mention it," said the Cornstalk obligingly. "This is a pleasure to me."
 And if Skimpole hadn't been so extremely short-sighted he would have noticed that Noble's broad grin indicated that he really was very much amused.
 As a matter of fact, Kangaroo was leading the freak of the Shell in a direction opposite to that where Blake and his chums were to be found.
 It did not suit the plan of the New Firm for the chums of Study No. 6 to begin testing the telephone yet.
 "What's the little game?" asked Clifton Dane, as Kangaroo hurried Skimpole away in the wrong direction.
 Bernard Glyn laughed.
 "It's a little wheeze about that telephone. That boulder collared my props to make the phone, so it's only fair that we should squeeze some fun out of it."

"Yes, rather! But how?"
 "I'm going to connect up the telephone with another receiver in my study. Of course, Skimpy won't know. I shall make the connection of the wires in the passage, and he will never think of looking for anything of the sort."
 "And then—"
 "Then we shall be able to ring up Study No. 6 on the telephone and talk to them," said Glyn, with a grin.
 "They'll think it's Skimpole—see?"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 It did not take the inventor of St. Jim's long to carry out his plan.
 When he had finished his preparations, he waved a white handkerchief from the window of the end study, as a signal to Kangaroo.
 The Cornstalk was looking for it, and he promptly led Skimpole in the right direction, and allowed him to find Blake.
 "There you are, Skimpy!" he exclaimed, pointing to the chums of Study No. 6, who were in flannels, and standing in a group by the junior pitch, watching the bowling of Reilly to Kerruish's wicket.
 "Thank you, Noble. What a long time we have been finding them! I really might have guessed that they would have been on the cricket field."
 Kangaroo chuckled as he strolled away.
 Skimpole hurried to the chums of the Fourth. He immediately seized Jack Blake by the button, and the leader of

the Fourth allowed the end of his bat to drop on Skimpole's toe. The genius of the Shell gave a gasp, and released him.

"Hallo!" said Blake. "Is that you, Skimmy?"

"Yes," gasped Skimpole. "I—I have been looking for you. The telephone is installed, as far as your study is concerned."

"The what?"

"The telephone."

"What telephone?"

Skimpole blinked at him through his spectacles.

"The telephone, Blake. You surely remember undertaking to pay the subscription of ten shillings when the telephone was completed?"

"My hat! I'd forgotten all about it!"

"Really, Blake—"

"Besides, it was only a joke—"

"By dear Blake—"

"You see, it's all rot, you know," explained Blake patiently.

But Skimpole, naturally, perhaps, couldn't see it in that light.

"I must insist upon your keeping the agreement, Blake. The telephone is up, and I want ten shillings."

"All right!" exclaimed Blake hurriedly. "I'll pay the ten bob. I'll borrow it of Gussy! Hold on!"

"Before you pay the fee, of course you had better test the telephone," said Skimpole. "Will you come and test it now?"

"Yaas, wathah! Come on, deah boys! I am wathah intewested in telephones. I wegard the telephone as a gweat invention. I could not have done it myself, you know."

"Go hon!" said Blake.

"Come with me," said Skimpole. "It is all ready."

"Right-ho!" said Blake resignedly.

The Fourth-Formers followed Skimpole into the School House. They went into Study No. 6, and Skimpole went farther on to his own room, which was next to Tom Merry's. He looked in on the Terrible Three as he passed.

"If you would care to see the telephone worked, you can come into my room," he said.

"Oh, we'll come!" said Tom Merry.

They went into Skimpole's study. Gore, who shared the room with the genius of the Shell, was there, and he scowled and went out when the Terrible Three came in. The cad of the Shell was not on good terms with Tom Merry & Co.

Skimpole went to the telephone and rang up Study No. 6.

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in great admiration, as the telephone-bell buzzed. "The bell weally wings, you know."

"Marvellous!" said Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"It's so curious that it should ring," remarked Digby. "If it danced or whistled a tune, it wouldn't be so remarkable."

"Weally, Dig—"

"Shut up, you kids, while I jaw to Skimmy!" said Blake. He took up the receiver.

"Are you there?" came in a wheezy whisper from the telephone.

"What-ho!"

"Can you hear me?"

"Yes."

"The instrument's all right?"

"Seems so."

"Then I shall expect ten shillings."

"Will you have it by telephone or telegraph?"

This question was intended as a joke, but Skimpole, the genius, had a brain above jokes. There was a pause, and then his voice was heard again.

"I fail to comprehend you, Blake. It is impossible to send any solid object, such as silver coinage, by telephone."

"Bai Jove!"

"Go hon!" said Blake.

"I will ring off now, and you can bring the money to my study."

"Thanks!"

Blake dropped the receiver.

"Well, it works all right," he remarked. "I was only joking with the burbling duffer, but a chap must stick to his word."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You think I ought to cash up, Gussy?"

"Certainly, deah boy."

"Then hand over the ten boblets."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Hand them over!"

"I object—"

"Objections don't count, unless supported by the umpire. Hand over the boblets."

"I wefuse!"

"Gussy! Going stingy in your old age! Oh, Gussy! Gus!"

"Certainly not, Blake."

"Then chuck us over the boblets!"

"I wepeat that I object—"

"Then go and eat coke!" said Blake, rather huffily.

"Herries-Dig—can you raise ten bob between you?"

"Pway don't be hasty, deah boy. Allow me to finish. I object to the—"

"Rats!"

"Weally, Blake, I was about to say that I object to the term boblets. I wegard it as a vulgah expression. I have no objection to lendin' you the sum of ten shillin's," said D'Arcy, extracting a ten-shilling note from his pocket-book. "Pway take this, deah boy!"

Blake grinned, and consented to accept the Treasury note. "It's all right," he said. "I might have known you were only playing the giddy ox!"

"Weally, Blake—"

Buz-z-z-z!

"Hallo! That's the blessed telephone bell again!"

"Pway don't go to the telephone for a moment, Blake. I considah that you owe me an apology for suspecting me of being stingy—"

"How was I to know you were playing the goat?"

"I object to that expression—"

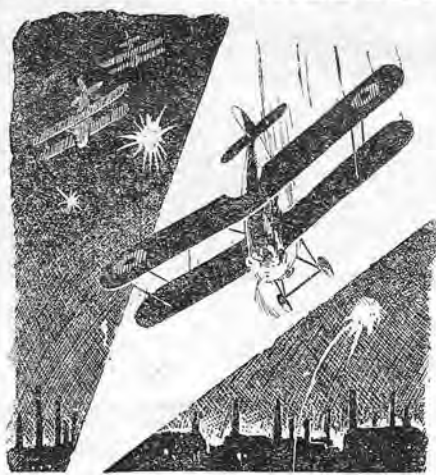
"I object to your playing the goat, but that doesn't make you stop it."

"Weally, Blake—"

Buz-z-z-z!

The telephone bell rang impatiently. Blake ran to the receiver.

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CHAPTER 7.

A Ragging by Telephone!

B UZ-Z-Z-Z!

"Hallo!"

"Are you there?"

"Where do you think I am?"

"Eh? What?"

"Yes, I'm here. What's the row?"

"Is that you, Blake?"

"Yes, ass! Blessed if I know who's talking!" added Blake, looking up at his chums in Study No. 6. "It's not Skimmy's squeak this time."

"Sure that's Blake?" came the voice from the telephone.

"Yes, ass! I suppose I ought to know."

"Then what have you done with your voice?"

"Eh?"

"What's the matter with your croak?"

"Why, I—I—"

"Hold on. I've got a message for you."

"Then buck up, you dummy!"

"Are you all there—all four of you?"

"Yes, idiot!"

"Good! I want you to do something to oblige me."

"Well, that depends. What is it?"

"Go and drown yourselves."

"What?"

Blake hung up the receiver and looked round for a cricket stump. His face was very wrathful.

"That isn't Skimmy," he said. "It's somebody in Skimmy's study having a little joke with us on the telephone."

"Bai Jove!"

Buz-z-z-z!

"There he is again," said Digby, taking up the receiver.

"Hallo, hallo! Who is it?"

"Are you Blake?"

"No; I'm Digby."

"Same sort of ass. You'll do. Are you going to do that little thing to oblige me?"

"What little thing?"

"Go and drown yourselves!"

"I believe I know that voice," murmured Digby, putting up the receiver. "Either the thing alters it, or the chap is trying to disguise it. But it's not Skimmy."

Buz-z-z!

"Pway allow me to talk to the wottah!" said D'Arcy, taking the receiver. "Yaas! Hallo! I'm heah, deah boy!"

"Who's that?"

"It is I, you know."

"Who's I?"

"Arthur Augustus D'Arcy."

"Oh! All at once?"

"I wegard that we mark as fwivolous!"

"So it's you, Gussy? Any news? Anything new in the fancy waistcoat line?"

"Weally, deah boy—"

"Did you know young Wally had put Pongo to sleep in your hatbox?"

"Gweat Scott!"

Arthur Augustus made one bound to his hatbox. But it contained nothing but hats.

The swell of St. Jim's breathed deep with relief.

It would have been just like his hopeful minor, Wally, to put his shaggy mongrel into that hatbox.

But it was only a false alarm.

Arthur Augustus returned to the telephone.

"It's all wright, deah boy!"

"Who's all right?"

"Pongo isn't in the hatbox."

"I never said he was."

"Bai Jove! I wegard that as weally ve y like a pwe-va-vication!"

"Hallo, hallo! Are you still there?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Aren't you going to do that little thing to oblige me?"

"What little thing, deah boy?"

"Go and drown yourself!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Hallo, hallo! Put Blake on the phone!"

"Blake, deah boy, this wude wottah wants to talk to you!"

Blake snorted.

"I'll talk to him soon," he said. "I want to find out whose voice it is, that's all."

He took the receiver.

"Hallo! Hallo!"

"Is that Blake—Jack Blake?"

"Yes, dummy!"

(Continued on next page.)



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THE PIG!

Diner: "Waiter, you're not fit to serve a pig!"

Waiter: "I'm doing my best, sir!"

H. NAIRNE, 16, Glengarry Road, East Dulwich, S.E.22.

HE DIDN'T BLAME HIM!

Bootblack: "Shine yer boots, sir?"

Man: "No!"

Bootblack: "Shine yer boots so yer can see yer face in 'em?"

Man: "No!"

Bootblack: "I don't blame yer, sir!"

S. EDMENDS, Bungalow, Thorp, Royton, near Oldham, Lancs.

THE RIGHT WAY!

Doctor: "How are the broken ribs to-day?"

Patient: "Better, doctor, but I've had a stitch in my side all day!"

Doctor: "Ah, that shows that the ribs are knitting!"

JOHN R. GOULBURN, Clarksfield House, Salem, Oldham.

NOT AS EXPECTED.

Father: "Pat, what does the word 'thief' mean?"

Pat: "I don't know."

Father: "Well, what would I be if I put my hand in your pocket and took out a penny?"

Pat: "A conjurer!"

B. LANDMAN, P.O. Box 215, Lichtenburg, Transvaal, S. Africa.

CLEANING THE SKY!

Friend (to old lady on first visit to New York): "That's a skyscraper!"

Old Lady: "How marvellous! I should so like to see it work!"

ROBERT JEATER, 4, Addington Square, Camberwell, S.E.5.

ELECTRIC SPARKS!

Magistrate: "What is your name, occupation, and what is the charge?"

Prisoner: "My name is Sparks, I'm an electrician, and I'm charged with battery."

Magistrate: "Constable, put this man in a dry cell!"

I. WRIGHT, 43, Hall Road, Smethwick, Staffs.

WRONG AGAIN!

Absent-minded Professor: "You see, I haven't forgotten to bring home my umbrella this time."

Friend: "Er—no, but you didn't take one with you!"

S. SAXTON, 138, Cooper Road, Grimsby, Lancs.

THE TRUTH.

Teacher: "Does anyone help you with your sums, Tommy? They're always added up wrong!"

Tommy: "Father helps me."

Teacher: "What is your father?"

Tommy: "A waiter."

R. KELL, Ingledene, Kingston Road, Woodbridge, Suffolk.

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"We're thinking of having some new rules in the School House," went on the voice. "All Fourth-Formers are to wash their necks in the morning and comb their hair."

"I'll comb your hair for you jolly soon!" murmured Blake wrathfully.

"D'Arcy is to be allowed only nine waistcoats and seventeen silk hats—"

"Bai Jove!" said D'Arcy, who was listening over Blake's shoulder. "I vegard that observation as absolutely wickidulous. I have nevah had more than six silk hats at a time in all my life!"

"Herries is to be prohibited from taking a larger size than twenty-seven in boots," went on the voice; "and Digby is not to have trousers baggy at the knees. As for Blake—Is that you, Blake?"

"Yes, here I am. Keep it up."

"Good! You are to touch your cap whenever you pass a member of the Shell Form, as an outward and visible sign that you obey the rules."

"My hat!"

"No—your cap."

"I—I—I—"

"If you are good, obedient little boys, and carry out all the instructions of your elders, the Shell, we shall not lick you except when you really deserve it, and it will be for your own good."

Blake dropped the receiver.

"I can't make out who's speaking," he said. "But the chap must be in Skimpole's study, as the phone is fixed there and nowhere else. Come on!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Blake caught up the cricket stump again. Herries picked up an old boot, one of his own, and a good-sized one. Digby seized a cushion, and D'Arcy hastily drew on a pair of gloves as he followed his chums. If there was to be punching, the swell of the School House wanted to protect his knuckles as much as possible.

The chums of Study No. 6 dashed along the passage and rushed into Skimpole's study. The door of the study was half-open, and within it the Terrible Three were still standing with Skimpole, the genius of the Shell, trying to persuade them to join in the telephone idea.

Blake & Co. burst into the study like an avalanche.

They did not stop to explain.

The case did not need explaining.

They hurled themselves upon the Terrible Three and smote them hip and thigh.

CHAPTER 8.

Misdirected Vengeance!

TOM MERRY rolled on the carpet, and Blake rolled on him. Monty Lowther went down with Herries sprawling over him, and Manners staggered under the weight of Digby and D'Arcy, and fell, too.

Never was a surprise more complete, or an attack more successful.

The Terrible Three were vanquished almost without a struggle, but they began to struggle on the floor.

Skimpole gazed upon the scene, blinking with astonishment.

"Dear me!" he said. "This is a very rude interruption, Blake!"

"Got them!" roared Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Bump them!"

"What-ho!"

"You dangerous maniacs!" howled Tom Merry. "What on earth's the matter with you? What's the little game?"

"I'll teach you to slang me!"

"Eh?"

"Go and drown ourselves—eh?"

"What are you jabbering about?"

"Sixteen silk hats, bai Jove! I have nevah had more than six at one time in my life, you uttah ass!"

"They're mad!" gasped Lowther. "Stark, staring mad! Help!"

"Rescue, Shell!"

"Roll 'em over!"

"Bump 'em!"

"Shove their nappers into the cinders!"

"Hand over that inkpot, Skimmy!" shouted Blake.

"Don't do anything of the sort, Skimmy!" yelled Tom Merry, as the Determinist of St. Jim's reached out for the inkpot.

Skimpole blinked at him.

The Terrible Three were utterly helpless, pinned down by Blake & Co., but it did not seem to occur to Skimpole to go to their aid.

"As a Determinist, Merry, I cannot refuse a reasonable request," said Skimpole, shaking his head. "Do you really want the ink, Blake?"

"Yes. Quick—hand it over!"

"Stop!" yelled Tom Merry. "He's going to ink me!"

"Dear me! Are you going to ink Merry, Blake?"

"Well, I'm not going to drink it!" snorted Blake.

"I did not suppose you were going to drink it, Blake. That would be a ridiculous proceeding, as ink is neither palatable nor nourishing taken as a beverage. However, if Merry has a serious objection to being inked—"

"I have, rather!" shouted Tom Merry.

"Then I shall not hand Blake the ink. I do not wish to be disobliging, however, Blake. I will hand you the blotting-paper or the paper-knife."

"You utter ass—"

"Really, Blake—"

"Rescue!" roared Manners. "Rescue, Shell!"

"Phew! What's the row here?"

Bernard Glyn asked the question as he looked in at the door. Kangaroo and Clifton Dane grinning over his shoulders.

"You keep out!" snorted Blake. "This is no business of yours. We're giving these toads a licking for ragging us!"

"We haven't—"

"We never—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at, Kangaroo?"

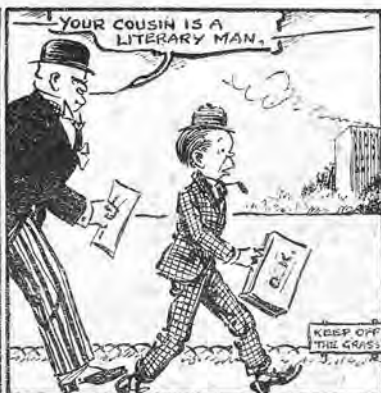
"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Rescue!" gasped Monty Lowther, who was being rolled on the carpet—in none too clean a state—in a way that was positively ruinous to his clothes and painful to his bones.

"Rescue, you cackling dummies!"

It wasn't a polite way of asking for aid, but the Shell fellows were bound to stand by their Form. They entered the study, and, the odds being against the chums of Study No. 6, they released the Terrible Three and drew towards the door.

Potts, the Office Boy!



Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther staggered to their feet. They were ruffled, dusty, and excited.

"Come on!" shouted Lowther, dashing straight at Blake.

Kangaroo stopped him.

"It's all right!"

"Leggo! 'Tain't all right!"

The Fourth-Formers, pretty well satisfied with their vengeance, retreated from the study, breathless, but triumphant. Cornstalk & Co. stopped the Terrible Three from pursuing them. They didn't want to have any explanations just then on the subject of the telephonic ragging.

Monty Lowther rubbed his aching bones ruefully.

"They're mad!" he said. "Stark insane! They think we've been ragging them, and we haven't!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What is there to cackle at in that?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Kangaroo, Glyn, and Dane retreated from the study, still cackling. The Terrible Three looked at one another.

"Blessed if I can make those chaps out," said Lowther.

"I wonder if they've been japing Blake & Co., and putting it down to us?"

"Shouldn't wonder."

"Well, I'm going to get a brush down," said Tom Merry.

"We'll make Blake sit up afterwards!"

"Hold on!" exclaimed Skimpole. "Are you going to enter into the telephone arrangement? The fees would be—"

But the chums of the Shell were gone.

Ten minutes later Tom Merry, glancing out of a window, saw Bernard Glyn wheeling his bicycle down to the gates. Cornstalk and Dane were with them, and all three were laughing together.

"My hat!" murmured Tom Merry. "Something's on, it's a cert. It occurs to me that the New Co. are getting their ears up a little too much. They will have to be jumped on—hard!"

CHAPTER 9. A Dead Secret!

"DEAR me!" Skimpole was blinking round his study with an extremely puzzled expression.

It was the day after the installation of the telephone. Gore had just come into the study, and he stared at Skimpole as the short-sighted genius of the Shell nearly walked into him.

"Where are you shoving?" demanded Gore.

"Eh! I am sorry. I did not see you. It is a remarkable thing."

"What is a remarkable thing?"

"Where they have gone to."

"Who? What?"

"My clothes."

"Your what?"

"Clothes! They are gone! I do not refer to the clothes I am wearing, of course," explained Skimpole. "You see, I have other clothes. One of my suits of clothes is gone. You perhaps remember my tweed jacket, Gore—the one with the stripes?"

"Yes, rather," granted Gore. "A nice object it was, too!"

"Well, it's gone!"

"All the better!"

"I kept it hanging on the door in this study," said Skimpole. "It is now gone. Do you know what has become of it, Gore?"

"How the dickens should I know? Nobody has taken it to wear, you can be certain of that. Nobody but you would ever have worn the thing!"

"Then there's my trousers—my old ones, I mean. I keep them in the dormitory; but they have been taken away."

"Time they were! Perhaps the House dame's given them to the rag-and-bone man!"

"Really, Gore, they were not as far gone as that! Then my socks—a pair of my socks are missing, the red ones with the white spots."

"Dazzlers, weren't they?" said Gore.

"Not at all," said Skimpole. "Also one of my neckties is missing."

"Well, I haven't seen it!"

"But it is most remarkable. I have sometimes taken articles of food and clothing to give to the poor at the gates, and did not always have time to explain first to the owners, and I have sometimes been treated with great rudeness in consequence. But I suppose there is not another similarly charitable person in the School House!"

Gore roared.

"Ha, ha, ha! Perhaps there is, and he's been giving away your togs to the poor. Serve you jolly well right! You've given my grub away often enough."

"That was quite a different matter."

"Of course; it always is, when it comes home to oneself," grinned Gore. "I hope the rest of your blessed wardrobe will follow, that's all."

Skimpole blinked at him, but he felt that Gore was not to be argued with. He left the study, and inquired up and down the Shell passage for his missing clothes. But nobody appeared to have seen anything of them.

Skimpole's wardrobe was limited, and his old clothes were kept in use till they nearly fell to pieces, and he was very keen on recovering those that had been removed. He did not think they had been given to the poor, for they weren't quite good enough to be worth taking away by the poor. But where were they? He could only come to the conclusion that they had been hidden for a joke by someone.

Tom Merry suggested to him that he had put them away somewhere in a fit of absent-mindedness, and Skimpole rubbed his bumpy forehead, and reflected upon that possibility. It wasn't at all improbable.

The Shell, however, had something more interesting than Skimpole's old clothes to think about just then. That there was something going on in the end study was apparent to the whole Form, and the Shell were juzzled.

From the moment when Bernard Glyn had burst into that sudden and startling yell of laughter in the class-room, and had brought down upon himself the wrath of Mr. Linton, thereby, the Terrible Three had known that there was something in the wind.

They had been on the track ever since, but they had discovered nothing. Blake and his chums were equally interested, and equally unable to discover what was going on.

The door of the study was always kept locked when the New Firm weren't in it, and generally when they were.

Most of the Shell studies could have been opened by a key

EVER "BIN" HAD!



belonging to the other studies; but not so the end room. Bernard Glyn had taken care of that. The Liverpool lad had put a Yale lock on it himself, and had had three keys made for that lock, and those keys were carried by the three Shell fellows on their watch-chains.

There was no getting into the study without a key, and there was no getting a key from any member of the New Firm. The Shell was baffled.

Most of the fellows, naturally, were intensely curious to know what the secret was hidden behind the locked door of the end study. Tom Merry, as head of the Shell, took up the position that the New Firm mustn't get its cars up. Blake assumed that as Study No. 6 was the top study in the School House, it was entitled to know all about it. Skimpole, convinced that some invention was in progress, offered his aid to Bernard Glyn, and was surprised to have it declined without thanks. After that he set his wits to work to discover some means of penetrating to the study, and the ways and means he devised were wonderful, but unfortunately impracticable.

And still the New Firm went on their way calmly and said nothing.

The Shell knew something on the subject. They knew that Glyn had ordered some things in Rylcombe which had been delivered in a tightly nailed-up packing-case. They knew that the three chums were constantly at work in the study. But that was all. Mellish of the Fourth even tried to investigate by way of the keyhole one day, but he found that the new lock gave no access of that sort.

Even the boys' maid, who had the pleasant task of keeping the Shell studies in order, could afford no information. She had been enlisted by the New Firm on their side, as it were, by a generous tip, and the prospect of more tips. She arranged only to clean the study when there was one of the three present. On such occasions some fellows had been able to get a peep into the room; but on such occasions any secrets were carefully hidden. Nothing was to be discovered. The maid was as ignorant of what was going on as the Shell fellows and the Fourth-Formers.

It was not only the Shell and the Fourth who were curious on the subject. The fags of the Third wanted to know all about it. D'Arcy minor even had the nerve to question Cornstalk & Co., but he did not receive much satisfaction.

Kangaroo told him that they had committed several homicides, and were hiding the bodies in the study. Clifton Dane confided to him that they were inventing a new aeroplane, which folded up into the size of a pocket handkerchief, and was hidden behind the clock when the boys' maid came in. Bernard Glyn said it was a new thing in wireless telegraphy, and offered to send Wally a wireless wire to let him know all about it later.

And all this information was greeted with scornful sniffs by the hero of the Third, who resolved that he would get at the facts all the same. But he received little encouragement from the juniors. Tom Merry told him, when his help was asked, that fags had better go on lagging, and not bother. Blake advised him to cut. Wally cut, and took counsel with his chums in the Third Form—Jameson and Curly Gibson.

"Of course, there's something on," said Jameson. "I've known that a long time. And it's in connection with that ass Skimpole!"

"How do you know that?"

"Because I've been keeping my peepers open. Those two Shell duffers are rival inventors, and I know it's something up against Skimpole. The way they were grinning when Skimmy was questioning them the other day put it into my head. They've got Skimmy's photo in the study, too."

"What's that got to do with it?"

"I don't know; but it looks to me—"

"Never mind what it looks to you," said Wally, rather unreasonably. "Don't jaw. We've got to get into the study."

"Can't be did."

"It's got to be did."

"Well, if you can pick a Yale lock—"

"There's a window."

"Rats!"

"If you say rats to me, young Jameson—"

"Well, how are you going to get in at the window?"

"Somehow. We're going to work it, if only to show those duffers in the Fourth and Shell that the Third know how to do these things."

"Hear, hear!" said Curly Gibson heartily.

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"Don't make that row, young Gibson."

"Look here, D'Arcy minor—"

"Shut up! There's that ladder of Taggles—"

"They'll see us putting it up to the window."

"Not if we do it after dark."

"They'll be in the study in the evening."

"We can pick a moment when they're out."

"Well, I suppose it could be worked," said Jameson slowly. "Taggles will want a bob at least to lend us the ladder and hold his jaw."

"That's all right! I'll borrow it of my brother Gus."

"Good!"

And so the plot was plotted by the scamps of the Third, and it was to have a startling result that Wally & Co. were far from foreseeing.



Swish! Arthur Augustus gave a yell as a stream of ink caught him full in the face. He slid down the ladder at express speed. "Bai Jove!" he gasped. "Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Kangaroo.

CHAPTER 10.

D'Arcy Minor is Scared!

THAT evening the New Firm had tea in their study as usual, and remained in the room behind a locked door until nearly eight o'clock.

Curious fellows who wandered up the Shell passage, and listened outside the end study, heard mysterious sounds from within.

Sometimes there was a tapping, as of a hammer. Sometimes the noise of a chisel, or a screw-driver. And all the time, suppressed chuckles.

Mellish, with his ear to the door, heard a few words uttered in an incautiously loud tone, and marvelled over them much.

"It's full size now, Dane, old man."



"Yes, rather!"
 "Can't shove it into the box again."
 "No; can put it under the table when we leave the study."
 "What about to-morrow when the maid's here?"
 "Well, one of us will be here, Kangaroo, and we can keep it covered with a cloth or something."
 "That's all right."
 "My hat! If it only works—"
 "It will work," said the voice of Bernard Glyn. "Haven't you seen the mechanism in motion already?"
 "Well, it's marvellous!"
 "It's ripping!"
 "Hush! There's somebody outside!"
 Mellish stole away, more amazed and mystified than when he had come. What on earth were they talking about? Was it, indeed, an aeroplane that the Liverpool lad and his friends were inventing—a model, of course?
 When the New Firm came out of the study they carefully locked the door.
 Then they strolled down to the Common-room, to be greeted with stares and curious questions, and to parry them all.
 A Third Form fag looked into the Common-room, and saw the New Firm there engaged in passing more or less polite remarks with the Terrible Three.
 The fag chuckled and scuttled away to report.
 "It's all right, young D'Arcy," he said, putting his head into the Third Form Room, "they're downstairs, jawing."
 "Good!" said Wally.
 And Wally, Jameson, and Gibson scuttled out into the dusky quadrangle. They almost ran into a slim and elegant figure, and Wally stopped it at once.
 "Hallo, Gus!"
 "Weally, Wally—"
 "Lend me a bob, Gus!"
 "Do you mean a shilling?" asked D'Arcy, in his most stately way.
 "Yes. Buck up!"
 Arthur Augustus felt in his pocket.
 "I twust, Wally, that you are not goin' to squandah this shillin' in vicious extwavganee," he said. "This is the second shillin' I have lent you to-day."
 "I've still got the other, Gus. This is in case one isn't enough. Taggles is a rotten old extortioner."

"Taggles! What about Taggles?"
 "Nothing," said Wally, regretting that he had spoken.
 "Hand over the tin!"
 "I decline to hand ovah the tin without an explanation, Wally. I am afraid that you are about to play some twick."
 "Rats! Hand it over!"
 "I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort."
 "Don't be a cad, Gus!"
 "Weally, Wally!"—D'Arcy handed over the shilling—"there is the shillin', deah boy! Now you are upon your honah to explain."
 "We are going to borrow a ladder from Taggles, and look in at the window of the end study," explained Wally, in a whisper.
 "Bai Jove!"
 "You can come and hold the ladder, if you like."
 "That would hardly be consistent with my dig, deah boy! I will come and make the ascent to the window if you like."
 "Well, you'd make a muck of it, you know."
 "Weally, Wally—"
 "Come on, Gus! Taggy mightn't let us have the ladder, but he knows you're harmless," whispered Wally.
 "That is hardly a wespectable way of puttin' it, deah boy; but anythin' to oblige."
 And D'Arcy major accompanied his youthful younger brother.
 Taggles willingly agreed to lend out his ladder, and not to hear anybody moving it, for the consideration of eightpence.
 It was very dark in the quadrangle. The juniors ran the ladder across to the School House without mishap, and it was planted in the shadow of a giant elm under the window of the end study in the Shell passage.
 "That's all wight," said Arthur Augustus. "Hold my toppah while I go up, Wally."
 "You wouldn't be able to get the window open, Gussy."
 "Weally, Wally—"
 "Better hold the ladder for me."
 "I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort."
 "You see," explained Wally, "the ladder's pretty jerky, and you'll spoil your clothes for a dead cert."
 "Bai Jove, I nevah thought of that, you know!"
 Arthur Augustus took his foot off the ladder.
 "I will hold it for you, deah boy!"
 "Right you are!"
 And Wally skimmed up the ladder before Gussy could change his mind. He was soon on a level with the window. He pressed his nose flat against the glass and peered in.
 The interior of the study was even darker than the quad, and Wally, of course, could see nothing.
 He felt the sash of the window carefully with his hands. The window was open a couple of inches at the top for ventilation, and Wally found it easy enough to raise the sash.
 It slid up with a slight noise.
 He put his head into the room and listened. It was quite still and silent.
 The New Firm were downstairs, and the door was locked. Wally was safe from interruption.
 He chuckled softly as he drew himself in through the open window and set foot upon the floor of the study.
 The secret would not be hidden long.
 There was nothing in the nature of spying about it. His conscience was quite easy on that score. He had declared that he would investigate the secret to the New Firm, and they had laughingly told him to go ahead.
 Wally looked upon himself as a scout in the enemy's country. Of course, Cornstalk & Co. had not foreseen anything of this sort.
 Wally stood in the dim study and looked about him.
 So far as he could see in the dusk, there was nothing unusual about the room. The chairs, the table, the bookcase, the clock, loomed up dimly from the dusk.
 Where was the secret? What was it?
 Wally did not care to strike a light. The glimmer under the door and out of the window would have given him away, even to a casual observer.
 He groped his way about the study.
 As his eyes became more accustomed to the gloom, he discerned the objects about him more distinctly.
 There was a large box near the bookcase, and Wally opened the lid and looked in. The box contained tools, clothes, and several other things he could not quite make out.
 But nothing to give a clue to the mystery.
 "Ah!"
 Wally uttered that exclamation suddenly, in a suppressed voice.
 He had suddenly caught sight of something that protruded from under the long cloth on the table.
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He stooped and looked at it.

The hair seemed to rise on his scalp as he saw that it was the top of a head. The hair and the tips of the ears were quite plain, even in the gloom.

Wally's heart stood still for a moment.

What did it mean?

But the next second he guessed.

Someone else had penetrated the study, and had dodged under the table on hearing him coming.

Wally's brow darkened.

"You ass!" he muttered fiercely. "Why couldn't you speak? I won't give you away! Don't make a row!"

There was no reply.

"Can't you hear me, you dummy?" muttered Wally. "You duffer! I'm D'Arcy minor. Can't you answer me? Who are you?"

Still the same eerie silence.

Wally was exasperated. He took a tight grip on the hair of the half-seen head, and gave a sharp tug.

"Now will you speak, you ass?"

Then he started.

The form under the table had neither moved nor spoken.

"My only Aunt Jane!" murmured Wally, feeling a creepy sensation beginning to come over him. "Wh-what's the matter with him?"

He lifted the table-cover and threw it back upon the table.

He could now see underneath, and he made out the lines of a human figure lying upon its side.

There was something familiar, even in the gloom, in the big, bumpy forehead, and the spectacles, and the Eton jacket.

"Skimpole!"

The figure was silent.

"Skimpole!" Wally's voice was shrill with a vague terror. "Skimpole, what's the matter?"

Dead silence.

Wally, with a trembling hand, touched the face of the silent figure. It was hard and cold. His hand wandered to the breast. There was no pulsation there.

The boy staggered to his feet.

"Oh—oh, he's dead!"

It was a gasping cry of horror.

With a bound Wally was at the window.

He bundled out and went sliding down the ladder at lightning speed. Not for the wealth of the Indies would he have remained in that room a second longer.

CHAPTER 11.

No Entrance for Gussy!

"BAI JOVE!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy uttered that exclamation as Wally came sliding down the ladder.

Wally was too horrified by his discovery in the end study to think of the fellows standing at the foot of the ladder.

He came down with a wild rush, and his boots clumped upon his major.

Arthur Augustus staggered back.

Wally bumped upon the ground, and caught Jameson round the neck to save himself from falling.

Jameson gave a roar.

"Ow! Hold on! Leggo!"

"Bai Jove! You uttah young ass!"

Arthur Augustus staggered against the wall. He looked down at his beautiful waistcoat. He could not see it in the gloom, but he knew that it was badly damaged by the heavy impact of his minor's feet, and he could tell by the feeling that his chest was damaged.

"What's the row?" demanded Curly Gibson. "Did they catch you there?"

Wally did not reply.

He released the staggering Jameson, and hung on to the ladder with both hands, gasping for breath, and trembling in every limb.

Arthur Augustus detached himself from the wall.

"I am extremely sorry, Wally," he said. "But, undah the cires, I have no resource but to twash you. You have thown me into a fluttah, and uttably wuined my waistcoat."

"Why doesn't he speak?" said Jameson.

Curly Gibson shook Wally by the shoulder.

"Gone deaf?" he shouted.

Still Wally was silent, and shaking.

Jameson peered into his face, and saw how white and strained it was, and uttered a sharp exclamation.

"Hold on, chaps! There's something the matter with him."

"There's somethin' the mattah with my waistcoat."

"He's ill!"

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"Bai Jove!"

"Look at him!"

Arthur Augustus' wrath vanished in a moment. He peered at his younger brother's face in the gloom.

"Bai Jove! What's the mattah, Wally?"

"Skimpole!"

"Skimpole?"

"Yes."

"What about Skimpole?"

"He's there!"

"Where?"

"He's in that study."

"Well, supposing he is?" said Jameson. "There's nothing to be scared about in that!"

Wally shuddered.

"He's dead!"

"Dead?" shrieked Gibson.

"Dead?" gasped D'Arcy.

"Yes!"

"Imposs, deah boy!"

"I saw him," Wally shuddered violently. "I touched him!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Rats!" said Jameson incredulously. "He can't be! I saw him not an hour ago. He was all right then, and gassing away, as usual."

"He's dead!"

"Rot!"

"I tell you I touched him!" said Wally angrily. "His heart wasn't beating. He was lying under the table, still and cold."

The juniors were silent.

It was impossible to doubt Wally's earnestness.

"Good heavens!" muttered Curly Gibson. "It can't be possible!"

"Wathah not!"

"Go and look for yourself, then!"

"I—I don't think I'll go up," stammered Gibson. "You go, Jimmy!"

Jameson shook his head.

"I don't want to go!"

"Bai Jove! I'll go!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "If poor old Skimmay is dead, we may be able to wendah first aid or somethin'."

"He won't want it if he's dead."

"He can't be dead!"

Arthur Augustus mounted the ladder. A face peered out of the window above; a light gleamed out into the dusky quadrangle.

"My only hat! Here's a ladder!" said a well-known voice.

"Phew! That accounts for the window being open."

"Those young bounders have been here!"

Kangaroo looked out of the window.

Arthur Augustus was not six feet below him, and the Cornstalk recognised the swell of St. Jim's.

"Gussy!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"So you are scouting!" grinned Harry Noble. "Bjing the ink here, Dane!"

"Right you are!"

"Pway don't be a beast, Kangaroo. I am comin' up to investigate, because Wally says Skimmay is in your study and dead undah the table."

Kangaroo started.

"Wally! Has he been in here?"

"Yaas, wathah! He says Skimmay is dead undah the table!"

"The young sweep!"

"Is Skimmay dead undah the table, deah boy?"

"Of course not, ass!"

"I wefuse to be called an ass! My minah says Skimmay is dead undah the table, and I am comin' to investigate."

"Rats!"

"Here's the ink," said Clifton Dane, putting his head out of the window. "Will you have the squirt?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Weally, deah boys—"

"Scouting is not allowed in this study," said Kangaroo blandly. "Where will you have it, Gussy?"

"Weally, Kangaroo—"

Swish!

Arthur Augustus gave a yell as a stream of ink caught him full in the face. He slid down the ladder at express speed.

Kangaroo chuckled, and filled the squirt again. A stream of ink fell over the Third-Formers at the foot of the ladder.

There was a scattering at once.

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus, as he scudded off out of the reach of the squirt. "I don't believe Skimmay's dead at all; but I know I'm jolly inky. I'm going to get a wash!"

"It's all bunkum!" said Jameson. "Skimmay wasn't there. It was your nerves in the dark, young D'Arcy!"

The fact that Wally did not hit out from the shoulder was a sufficient proof that he was not in his usual mood. "It wasn't," he said. "I'm going to see about it!" "Where are you going?" "To the end study." "But—" "Come on!"

And they hurried into the School House, meeting with some startled stares from the fellows they met. Their faces were spotted and streaked with ink. But Wally cared little for that. He marched straight up to the end study in the Shell passage, and kicked fiercely at the door.

CHAPTER 12.

An Astonishing Resurrection!

TICK! Bang! Crash! "Here, draw it mild!" said Jameson. "You'll have a prefect up here soon!"

"I don't care!" "But I tell you—" "Shut up!"

And Wally kicked and banged and thumped away right heartily. Wally's face was still pale and strained; the horror of that terrible discovery was still strong upon him. He meant to find out the truth, anyway.

There was a sound of movement within the study. But the door did not open. The light streamed out from underneath the door. The Yale lock held fast. The New Firm evidently did not intend to open the door.

Bang! Crash! Kick! Bang!

"Oh, go away!" came Bernard Glyn's voice from within.

"Open this door!"

"Rats!"

"Buzz off!"

"Take a run!"

"What have you done with Skinny?"

"We've eaten him for tea."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Jameson.

Wally turned upon his chum fiercely.

"What are you cackling about?" he demanded.

"Nothing, only—"

"Then shut up! Help me make a row on the door."

"You're bringing the whole passage here!"

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"All the better!" - Bang! Crash! Bang! The Shell were crowding out of their studies in blank amazement. Noise was not infrequent in that passage, but Wally's hammering on the door of the end study was a little out of the common. And it was unusual for Third Form fags to have the nerve to kick up a row in the Shell quarters.

Tom Merry's hand dropped upon Wally's shoulder. "Here, ease off!" he exclaimed. "What's this row about?"

"Lemme alone!"

"That's all very well, but I can't work while you're making this unearthly row," said Tom good-humouredly.

"Chuck it!"

"I'm going in!"

"They won't let you in!"

"They've got to!"

"What's the matter with the kid?" exclaimed Monty Lowther. "What's the trouble, Jameson? What are you fags doing here, anyway?"

Jameson made a grimace.

"Wally says Skimpole's in the study," he said. "He says he's dead under the table."

Tom Merry jumped.

"Dead? Under the table?"

"So he says."

"Look here, Wally, if you begin romancing like this—"

"It's not romancing," said Wally doggedly. "I got in at the window, and I saw him and touched him. He was cold and stiff."

Tom Merry looked startled.

"Blessed if I can make it out!" he exclaimed. "Ease off a bit while I speak to the goats in there."

The hero of the Shell knocked at the door.

"I say, kids," he called out, "is anything wrong in there?"

"Not much," called back Bernard Glyn. "We're all right."

"Wally says Skinny is in there."

"Rats!"

"He says he's under the table."

"More rats!"

"And that he's dead."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry laughed.

"You see, Wally, there's nothing in it. You must have made a mistake. If Skinny were dead in there they wouldn't be making fun of it."

"I'm going in."

"But you can't!"

"I'm going to."

Bang! Crash! Bang!

Wally was in deadly earnest. Gore suggested slinging him along the passage, but Tom Merry set his foot on the suggestion.

Crash! Bang!

"What the dickens is all this row about?"

It was an angry voice. Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, came upon the scene, with a cane in his hand.

"What are you doing, D'Arcy minor?"

"Kicking at the door."

"He says Skimpy is dead in the study," said Tom Merry.

Kildare started, as well he might.

"Impossible! What do you mean, D'Arcy minor?"

"I got in at the window, and I saw and touched him," repeated Wally. "He is in there, and he's dead."

"Are you joking, D'Arcy minor?"

"Do I look as if I were?"

"I don't understand this," said Kildare. "If you're joking on such a subject, I'll give you a licking you'll remember."

"Look in the study and see."

"I will."

Kildare knocked at the door. The Shell fellows stood round with bated breath. The door would have to open now; there was no denying the authority of the Head of the Sixth Form.

"Open this door, you youngsters!" called out Kildare.

There was an exclamation of dismay inside the study.

Kildare rapped again sharply with his knuckles. A key clicked in the lock, and the door swung open. Kangaroo, Clifton Dane, and Bernard Glyn looked meekly at the captain of St. Jim's.

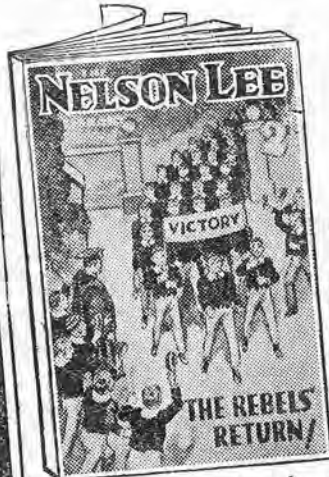
"Yes, Kildare?"

They all three spoke at once, in the meekest possible tone.

Kildare looked at them, and looked round the study. There

(Continued on page 19.)

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NELSON LEE

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Here the conquering heroes come! The Remove rebels return to St. Frank's in triumph when their tyrannous Housemaster yields to them. But the victory of Nipper and his fellow rebels is short-lived—for they promptly discover that the tyrant has tricked them! Read the magnificent long complete yarn of the St. Frank's chums in to-day's issue of the

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HALLO, chums! Isn't this a grand number of the GEM? You'll be glad to hear that I can promise you another tip-top yarn of St. Jim's by Martin Clifford next week.

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is packed with thrills and fun from start to finish, and you will enjoy every word of it.

As you see our great air story has come to an end, but I can promise you a packet of thrills next week with the opening chapters of

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our gripping new Western adventure yarn. Chaps, it's a wow! Make sure you get your copy of the old paper next week, and meet Jerry Garrison, the Red Star Ranger, and his pal Fusty!

Then there will be another antic by our ever-cheerful office boy, Potts, and a further column of jokes will appear, for each of which I shall pay half-a-crown, and also, of course, another page from my notebook.

A BROKEN HEART!

Some people think that there is no such thing as dying of a broken heart, while others claim that there very definitely is. Here is a true story, so judge for yourselves. Joe Hibbard, a sixty-eight-year-old inhabitant of Port Talbot, had a horse and cart. One day a bus crashed into them and Joe was taken to hospital with a broken thigh. There were no complications and Joe was going on splendidly, but he would keep asking about his horse. At last they had to tell him the truth. The horse had been so badly injured that he had had to be destroyed. When he heard that Joe just stopped getting well and died—of a broken heart.

THE PIGEON WON!

A novel type of race took place recently, when a certain M.P. had a match with a pigeon. The course was from Westminster to the M.P.'s constituency, and the distance was 132½ miles. The M.P. was driving a car while the pigeon travelled in the usual manner—for pigeons, that is!

Despite the fact that the car went very fast, and averaged about forty miles an hour on the journey, the pigeon won by fifty-three minutes. It averaged nearly fifty-five miles an hour!

WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

If you were walking through the New Forest, and you met a man dressed in Lincoln green, with a cowl over his head, a dagger and horn bugle in his belt, and a six-foot bow over his shoulder, not to

mention a few arrows, what would you do? Would you pinch yourself to see if you were dreaming? Or run away, or what? Well, let me tell you, you need not do anything unusual, for if you walk through the New Forest you will quite likely see a man such as I have described, and this is the reason. There is a society called the Kibbo Kift or Green Shirts, who live in the forest for three months in every year, and live on the game they shoot with their arrows. In everyday life they will wear green shirts, but when they are living in the forest they dress as the man I have described above. Their object is to bring back to England the spirit of our forefathers. Incidentally they speak a language of their own which is like nothing that you or I have ever heard.

GOAT RACING

Have you ever heard of goat racing? (I said "heard" not "herd"!) No, it isn't the latest sport to invade these shores; it hasn't reached us yet. But there is a great demand for racing goats in the West Indies, and many are shipped from England. The chief centres of goat racing are Antigua and Montserrat. The goats all wear colours to distinguish them, and a man runs behind them with a little cane to urge them on! I can't say that it sounds very thrilling, but some people seem to enjoy it. And you can certainly back your fancy, for they even have a totalisator working!

A MIRACULOUS ESCAPE!

From time to time motor racing drivers and spectators have narrow escapes from death which can only be described as miraculous. At Brooklands not long ago one of the officials in a race had an amazingly lucky escape. A car driven by Captain G. E. T. Eyston was travelling down the straight at about eighty miles an hour when the driver realised that one of his front wheels was coming adrift. Before he could do anything the wheel shot off the axle, and tearing on ahead of the car crashed into a pit-marshall and hurled him against the pits. Death might well have been the result of such an accident as this, but the fortunate marshal got off without serious injury, although he had to be removed in an ambulance as he was stunned by the force of the blow. In the meantime, by masterly driving, Captain Eyston had brought his car into the pits on three wheels and the brake drum of the fourth!

THE WORLD'S LARGEST!

Southampton already boasts the largest floating dock in the world, which is capable of lifting 60,000 tons; but in July, when the King opens the new dry dock there,

Southampton will also have the largest dry dock in the world. This giant dock is capable not only of taking the largest liners in the world to-day, but even of taking 100,000-ton liners, should there ever be any! The dock holds 260,000 tons of water, and on this a giant liner is floated into the dock. At the pressing of a button the door of the dock, which weighs 4,500 tons, will slide into position, and the job of pumping out the water will begin. This will only take four hours, so fast do the four special pumps remove the water. The door, which is twenty-nine feet wide, will act as a roadway from one side of the dock to the other, and you can get some idea of the massiveness of this part of the dock when I tell you that, when the dock is pumped dry inside, the door will have to resist a pressure of six thousand tons of water from outside!

ODDS AND ENDS!

A Californian grocer was very troubled by rats, so he bought a cat to kill them. The next day he bought a dog. Why? The rats had killed the cat!

You've heard about snakes fixing people with a glassy stare, haven't you? Next time you go to the Zoo, don't be surprised if that happens to you. Two pythons there have recently been fitted with glass eyes!

Mickey Mouse, generally considered to be the most popular film-star in the world, is to appear in a full-length talking picture with real actors! The actors will have to look to their laurels or they may find themselves overshadowed by Mickey!

"TRICKED BY THE TYRANT!"

Are you reading the thrilling adventures of the cheery chums of the Remove Form at St. Frank's? If not, you are missing a magnificent school series that is more popular with boys than any other—a rebellion by juniors! Get to-day's topping number of "The Nelson Lee Library" and read how Nipper and his fellow rebels of the Remove, who, in their island stronghold, have resisted all the attacks of their tyrant Housemaster, at last triumph over the tyrant—only to discover, when they return to St. Frank's, that they have been tricked! There's not a dull moment in this grand long complete yarn, and I strongly advise all "Gemites" to pay their newsagent a visit and get "The Nelson Lee" right away.

A REMINDER!

Let me remind you of the wonderful free gifts which are being given away each week by our companion papers the "Ranger," "Magnet," and "Modern Boy." These gifts consist of a series of ripping photography plates. The "Ranger," the paper that is famous for its six thrilling adventure yarns each week, is presenting a series of plates entitled "Records We Are Proud Of," while the "Magnet" series is called "Marvels of Modern Engineering." "Great Adventures" is the title of the series presented by "Modern Boy," and if you take my advice you will pay a visit to your newsagent, and buy one or all of these papers, for you just can't afford to miss this grand opportunity of getting these splendid plates—FREE!

YOUR EDITOR.

THE ROBOT OF ST. JIM'S!

(Continued from page 17.)

was no sign of a dead body, either under the table, or anywhere else.

"D'Arcy minor says Skimpole is in here."

"He isn't, Kildare."

"They've hidden him," said Wally.

Kildare entered the study and looked round. Wally was evidently in deadly earnest, and it puzzled Kildare. If Skimpole's body had been in the study, it was inconceivable that the three chums would have concealed it. What did the whole affair mean?

"Has Skimpole been in here, Glyn?"

"No, Kildare."

"Has anything happened to him?"

"Not that I know of."

"You have been dreaming, D'Arcy minor," said the captain of St. Jim's abruptly. "I don't understand you at all!"

"They've hidden it. Look in that box."

Kildare made a movement towards the long box beside the bookcase. Kangaroo sat down on it, as if by accident.

"There! They won't let you see into it!" exclaimed Wally, triumphantly.

"Have you any objection to my looking into that box, you fellows?"

"Well, you see—" began Kangaroo.

"You see—" began Clifton Dane.

"You see," said Bernard Glyn—"you see, there's an invention of mine in there, and—and I don't want to give the secret away. See?"

"But—"

"My only Aunt Jane!"

It was a sudden and startled exclamation from Wally.

A well-known figure was pushing its way through the crowd in the passage—the crowd making way for it with a buzz of amazement and merriment.

Wally stared at it dumbfounded.

It was Skimpole!

Jameson gave a yell.

"Skimpole!"

"Skimpole!" muttered Wally. "My only Aunt Jane!"

Skimpole blinked at them.

"I heard a disturbance," he said. "It had interrupted my calculations. Is there anything the matter?"

"No," said Tom Merry, laughing—"unless you're dead. Are you dead?"

"Dear me! What a curious question, Merry! No, I am alive."

"Look at him, young D'Arcy."

"He must have been pretending," said Wally dazedly. "But he was quite cold when I touched him."

"You touched me? You have not touched me! I fail to comprehend."

"I touched you when you were under the table, here."

"Dear me! I fail to understand! I have not been under the table, there! You must be dreaming, D'Arcy minor! Why should I get under the table?"

"Look here," said Wally wrathfully, "do you mean to say that you weren't under the table ten minutes ago when I got in at the window?"

"Certainly not!"

"My only Aunt Jane! What a fearful wopper! Why—"

"You are dreaming!"

It was a case of nerves in the dark," said Jameson, dragging Wally out of the study. "Come on, before Kildare licks you!"

Wally thought he might as well. He scolded off with Jameson before Kildare could decide whether to lick him or not. And the crowd broke up, nothing more, of course, being said about looking into the box which Glyn had declared to contain his invention.

Bernard Glyn closed the study door behind the last of the investigators, and locked it, with a sigh of relief.

CHAPTER 13.

Skimpole Minor!

"MY hat!" said Kangaroo. "That was a close shave!"

"What-ho!" said Bernard Glyn. "If we hadn't come up to the study when we did, those young bounders would have found everything out." "We didn't think of the window."

"We'll keep it fastened after this," said Glyn, drawing down the blind. "That young sweep Wally would have bowled us right out if he hadn't jumped to the conclusion that it was a real turtle—I mean, that it was Skimpole himself."

"It must have given him a shock!" chuckled Kangaroo.

"Serve him jolly well right!"

"Let's get it finished now," said Clifton Dane. "It won't be long before some of them are up to some other dodge."

"Right you are!"

Kangaroo raised the lid of the long box.

Clifton Dane and Bernard Glyn lifted out a figure that was laid at full length inside the box, cramped somewhat, for there was hardly room for it there.

It was a life-size figure.

This was what Wally had seen under the table—this was the latest invention of the Liverpool lad's fertile brain—that was the "wheeze" which, at its first inception, had caused him to give that yell of laughter in the sacred precincts of the class-room.

The figure was built of wooden laths and wire framing. It was exactly the size of Skimpole of the Shell, and was dressed in his clothes. If the freak of St. Jim's had been there he would have recognised his own garments, missing for some time from their usual place.

The face was formed of a cardboard mask, shaped with great skill, and painted in imitation of Skimpole's colouring.

The thin cheeks, high cheekbones, huge, bumpy forehead, and sickly complexion of the Determinist of St. Jim's were reproduced to the life. And, to add to the effect, a pair of spectacles were perched upon the nose. The head was adorned with tufts of irregular hair, exactly in Skimpole's style, and the shambling figure was there to the life, and the large, flat feet, which were Skimpole's distinguishing feature.

With many a chuckle the chums set it upright.

The figure was wonderfully balanced. It stood upon its feet without the slightest sign of a tendency to topple over.

Cornstalk & Co. surveyed it with great admiration.

"It's marvellous!" exclaimed Kangaroo.

"Ripping!" said Clifton Dane.

"Well, I rather think it takes the cake myself," said Bernard Glyn, with just pride. "There's precious few fellows could have made that!"

"Precious few could have afforded to buy the materials," grinned Kangaroo.

"Yes; but it wanted brains as well."

"Well, it does want brains—like the original!" said Kangaroo, laughing. "If Skimpole saw this he wouldn't know which was himself. But the question is will it work?"

"I know it will."

"Well, we've seen it work in the study. But a longer walk—"

"You'll see!"

Bernard Glyn lifted the jacket at the back, and disclosed a key fastened in the middle of the figure's back, between the shoulders. It was something like the key of an alarm-clock, which is not detachable.

There was a clacking sound as he wound the key round and round.

His chums looked on with great interest.

The clockwork mechanism inside the figure was not the most wonderful part of it. The balancing was more amazing.

Click, click, click!

Bernard Glyn let the key go at last. The mechanism was wound up to its fullest extent.

"Now then!"

"Let her go, Gallagher!" grinned the Cornstalk.

Glyn pressed a button below the key.

The figure moved.

The right leg was lifted, and slid along the carpet before the other; and then the left leg overtook and passed it.

The figure advanced upon the Australian, who promptly dodged out of the way.

"Great Scott!" he muttered. "It's—it's uncanny! Blessed if it isn't alive!"

"It was dead when young Wally found it!" grinned Dane.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The figure strode on.

It marched straight into the opposite wall, and stood there, the legs working spasmodically, trying to get onward. Glyn's eyes gleamed with triumph.

"There you are, kids!"

"You can't make him turn round," said Noble regretfully.

"That's all you know!"

"You don't mean to say—"

"Look here!"

Glyn advanced and took hold of the figure. There was a click as he shot a little lever into its place, and the

figure tramped on again. It took a swerving course now, and tramped round and round the table in the middle of the study, and the juniors crowded back out of its way.

Round and round went the figure.

Except for a curious jerkiness of motion and the fixity of the features, the juniors might have supposed that it was the living Skimpole.

As a matter of fact, the jerky walk was very like Skimpole's.

"Ha, ha, ha!" shouted Kangaroo. "It's ripping! This will be a surprise for the bounders! Send him down the passage."

"I'll set him right again for that."

Glyn fumbled with the figure.

Clifton Dane unlocked the door. He threw it open and looked out into the passage. There were still several of the Shell fellows hanging about.

Monty Lowther glanced towards the end study as the door opened.

He gave a tremendous jump as "Skimpole minor," as the inventor had named his machine-man, strode out of the doorway.

Tom Merry's eyes almost started from his head.

He had seen Skimpole go into his study, and yet here he was coming out of the end room in the passage.

"Wh-wh-what—" gasped Tom.

"It's Skimmy!"

"But he is—"

"In his study—"

"What the—"

"It's a ghost!" shrieked Gore.

"Help!"

"Oh! Ow!"

Gore dashed away breathlessly. The rest followed suit. In a moment the Shell passage was cleared of all but that weird figure, tramping steadily on. In the doorway of the end study the New Firm were suffocating with laughter.

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CHAPTER 14.

Skimpole Minor Causes Trouble!

SKIMPOLE MINOR strode on.

There was a sound of footsteps dying away in various directions, of slamming doors, of chairs and tables being piled inside doors of studies.

The Shell were scared out of their wits.

They knew it wasn't Skimpole—yet it was Skimpole! It must be a ghost of some sort—some kind of an unearthly, unheard-of horror!

Even the Terrible Three had dashed into the study and jammed the table against the door.

Gore rushed into his own room, where the genuine Skimpole was at the telephone.

Skimpole was just calling up Blake in Study No. 6 in the Fourth Form passage, to remind him that he hadn't yet paid up the ten-shilling fee.

He dropped the receiver in amazement as the door opened and he caught sight of the startled face of Gore.

Gore rushed in, slammed the door, and turned the key in the lock.

Then he dragged over the table and jammed it against the door, and piled the armchair upon it with feverish haste.

"Dear me!" exclaimed Skimpole.

Gore turned upon him.

He ran straight at Skimpole, seized him by the arm, and pinched it hard.

Skimpole gave a yell.

"Good!" exclaimed Gore, in great relief.

"Eh—what?"

"Good! You're not a ghost!"

"Ghost!"

"Yes," said Gore, sinking into a chair. "The other chap's the ghost."

"You must be mad! I fail to comprehend. What have you barricaded the door for?"

"The ghost."

"What ghost?"

"Your ghost! Hark!"

There was a fresh yell and a scamper of feet in the passage.

Skimpole minor was finding fresh victims.

While Skimpole was vainly trying to understand Gore's terror, Skimpole minor was striding along the Shell passage in solitary state.

He reached the corner of the Fourth Form passage, and came face to face with Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

D'Arcy had washed the ink off and changed his collar, and was coming along to demand an explanation at the end study, not being aware of the scene made there by Wally, and its result.

He started as he saw Skimpole minor.

"Bai Jove! Is that you, deah boy?" he exclaimed, jamming his eyeglass into his eye, and surveying the oncoming figure.

Skimpole minor made no reply.

He walked straight on with a slow and stately stride, and the swell of St. Jim's looked a little annoyed.

"Weally, deah boy, I addresssed you just now."

No reply.

"I wegard it as only the polite thing to take the twouble to weply when you are addresssed, Skimmay."

Still silence.

The figure was brushing past Arthur Augustus now. The swell of St. Jim's stood his ground. He wasn't going to be shoved out of the way like this.

But the figure pushed on grimly.

"Skimpole, why don't you speak, you ass?"

D'Arcy almost reeled aside, and Skimpole minor passed him triumphantly, and, after bumping on the wall, curved round into the Fourth Form passage.

D'Arcy's eye glittered behind his eyeglass.

"Skimpole, you ass!"

No answer. Skimpole minor strode on.

"Bai Jove! I wathah think that I'm goin' to teach you mannaahs, you uttah wottah!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. And he rushed after the figure and clapped his hand upon his shoulder.

Then he recoiled with a yell.

Under the cloth of the jacket a number of fine points were arranged, business ends outward, and D'Arcy felt as if he had tried to take up a handful of needles.

"Ow! Wow! Yow!"

Skimpole minor marched on, unheeding.

Blake, Herries, and Digby had left their prep and were looking out into the passage, startled from their work by the outbreak of noise and the slamming of doors.

Arthur Augustus waved his hand to them.

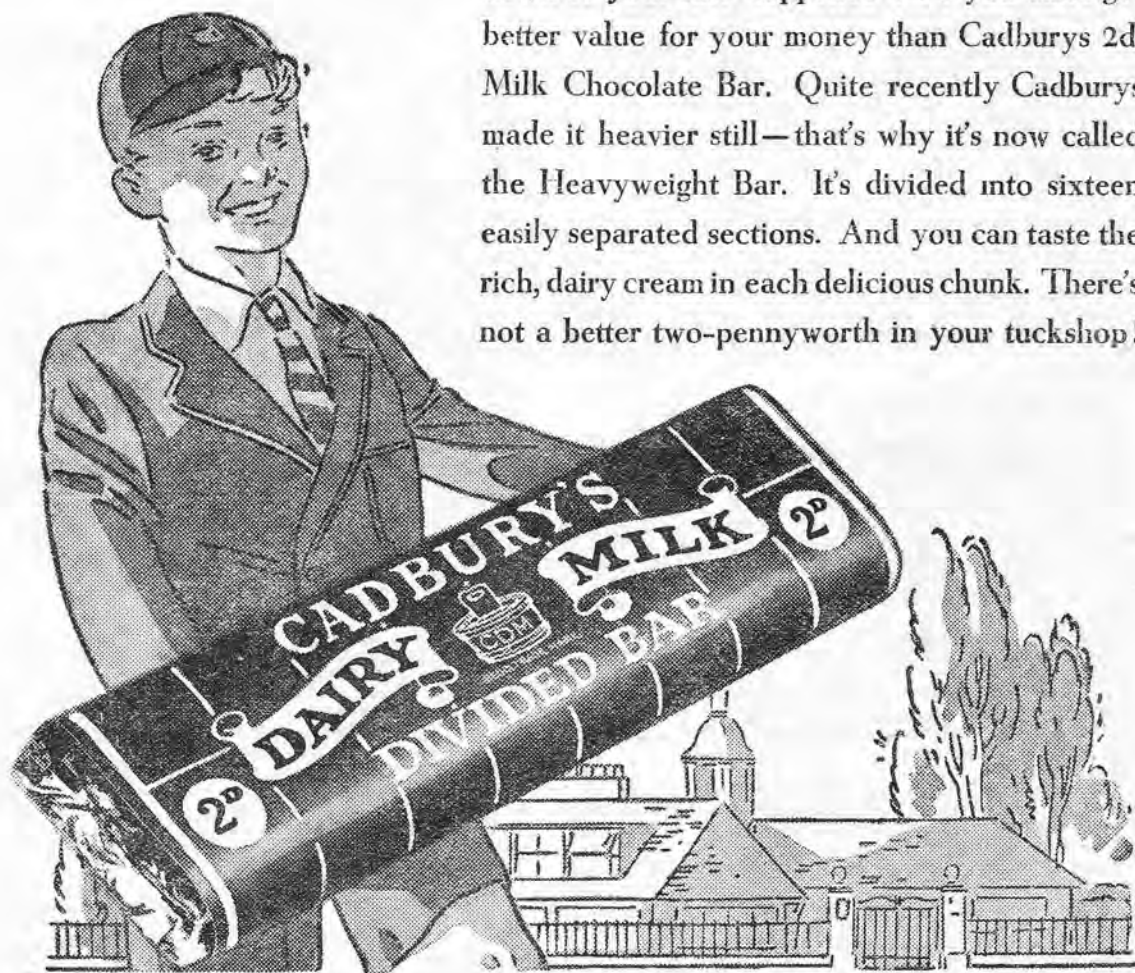
"Stop him, deah boys!"

"What-ho!" said Blake.

(Continued on page 22.)

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It doesn't matter whether you're in funds or down to your last 'tuppence'. . . you can't get better value for your money than Cadburys 2d. Milk Chocolate Bar. Quite recently Cadburys made it heavier still—that's why it's now called the Heavyweight Bar. It's divided into sixteen easily separated sections. And you can taste the rich, dairy cream in each delicious chunk. There's not a better two-pennyworth in your tuckshop!



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Skimpole minor came striding past the study.

Blake reached out and caught him by the arm.

"Hold on!" he exclaimed. "Why—what—"

The grasp on his arm had swung Skimpole minor round from his course. The figure came tramping on in at the study door. He marched right into Blake, and sent him reeling, and tramped into the study.

"Great Scott!"

"What the—"

"He's mad!"

Skimpole minor tramped right across the study to the fireplace, and there appeared to be trying to walk into the grate.

He stood there, with his nose against the clock, tramping upon the fender and fire-irons with a terrific noise.

There were several plates on the fender, keeping sausages and chips warm for the Fourth Form chums when their prep should be finished.

Skimpole minor made short work of them.

Blake & Co. watched him aghast.

They could only think that Skimpole had gone mad.

"Right off his rocker!" said Herries. "Down, Towser!" Towser, the bulldog, was under the table. Towser was not allowed in the House, but Herries often had him there all the same. Towser had a peculiar fancy for sampling the calves of everybody he could get at, and he seemed to consider that he was entitled to his free bite of every person he met.

Herries waved him back as he put his head out from under the table.

"Down!"

"Gr-r-r-r!" said Towser.

Tramp, tramp, tramp! went Skimpole minor on the crashing plates.

"Bai Jove!"

Gr-r-r-r!

"Down, Towser! Here, you brute—"

But Towser did not stop.

He seemed to be exasperated by the proceedings of Skimpole minor, and he flew at the thin legs of the freak of the Shell.

Gr-r-r-r!

"Come off, Towser, old boy!"

But Towser old boy did not come off.

His big teeth fastened upon the leg of Skimpole minor.

Skimpole minor uttered no sound.

He did not seem to be hurt. The chums of the Fourth

watched him in utter stupefaction.

Towser seemed to be surprised himself. He let go Skimpole minor's leg, and took a better grip. Still Skimmy made no sound. But the drag on his leg jerked him round again, and he walked to the door.

"Skimmy, stop, old chap!"

"Towser!"

"Bai Jove, Skimmy—"

Skimpole minor did not even turn his head.

He marched out into the passage, Towser still clinging to his leg, and hopping along amazedly after him.

Skimpole minor marched straight against the opposite wall, and hit it with a crack that ought to have made him yell with pain.

But it did not.

Towser dragged at his leg and dragged him round. He strode back the way he had come, and the Shell fellows, who had ventured to peep out of their studies, promptly slammed their doors again.

"My only hat!" gasped Blake. "What's the matter with him?"

"Mad, deah boy! Wight off his giddy wockah!"

"Or hypnotised," said Digby.

"Perhaps Clifton Dane's been hypnotising him, you know. He did once before."

"Bai Jove!"

"That's it," said Herries. "When people are hypnotised they don't feel pain, you know."

Blake nodded quickly.

"You've hit it! He's hypnotised! Let's get after him and see that he doesn't come to any harm!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

And the chums of Study No. 6 rushed out after Skimpole minor. Right along the Fourth Form passage they went, and as they came by the door of Gore's study it opened, and a well-known form popped out. Skimpole had succeeded in inducing Gore to let him open the door at last.

"Bai Jove!" shrieked D'Arcy. "Look!"

"Great Scott!"

Skimpole blinked at them through his spectacles.

"Dear me! What is the matter?"

Jack Blake looked at Skimpole, and then at Skimpole minor, who was striding on in advance, and he thought his head was turning round.

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Digby staggered against the wall.

"Then it's not hypnotism."

"It's a gh-gh-ghost!"

"Dear me! What—" Skimpole broke off as he caught sight of his double. "Oh!" he gasped.

Towser was tearing at the leg of the unresponsive figure. Skimpole minor, yielding to the jerks, swung round, and came striding towards the passage again, towards the startled Fourth-Formers.

They looked at it, and they looked at Skimpole. Then they ran.

It was no wonder!

The whole thing was so utterly uncanny it might have shaken stronger nerves. Skimpole reeled back into the study, and Gore slammed the door.

The Fourth-Formers dashed away with thumping hearts.

"Wun!" gasped D'Arcy. "Wun like anythin'!"

"Yes, come on, quick!" muttered Jack Blake.

And they ran. And after them, in incessant pursuit, came the steady tramping of Skimpole minor.

CHAPTER 15.

The Secret Out!

"HELP!"

"Wescue!"

"Oh, oh, oh!"

The Fourth-Formers made a wild break for the stairs.

Skimpole minor strode after them. Towser had left off worrying his leg now. A leg that had neither flesh nor blood in it had no interest for Towser. He could not keep on biting at lath and wire.

Skimpole minor, undisturbed now by Towser's attack, marched straight on towards the stairs after the fleeing chums of the Fourth.

Blake & Co. went helter-skelter down the stairs.

Kildare was coming up, and they rushed into him and carried him away in their flight.

The St. Jim's skipper clung to the banisters.

"What on earth—" he began.

"Run—run!" gasped Blake.

"Eh? What the—"

"Wun like anythin', deah boy!" shrieked D'Arcy; and he fairly jerked the captain of St. Jim's from his hold.

Kildare, willy-nilly, broke loose and went whirling down with them.

At the bottom of the staircase he grasped Blake with one hand and Arthur Augustus with the other.

"Now, then," he roared, "what does this mean?"

"Bai Jove!"

"The ghost!"

"Are you mad?"

"Skimpole's ghost!"

"Skimpole again! I—"

"Look!" yelled Blake. "There he is!"

Kildare's glance followed the direction of the junior's outstretched finger up the lighted staircase.

At the top the figure of Skimpole appeared, but to the eyes of Kildare he was not Skimpole.

There was a rapid patter of footsteps in the passage behind him. The danger of the staircase had occurred to Bernard Glyn. The New Firm were racing after the machine man, but they were too late.

Skimpole minor stood upon the top step, still staring straight before him through his spectacles.

Then his right leg advanced over the top step, but did not step downwards. Skimpole minor trod in space, and fell.

A cry of horror broke from Kildare as the machine junior toppled headlong forward.

Skimpole minor did not even make any effort to save himself. He fell blindly, helplessly upon the stairs, with a crash that sounded more like wood and tin than flesh and bones. Then he rolled to the bottom.

"Good heavens!" said Kildare. "He's killed!"

Arthur Augustus shook his head.

"A ghost can't be killed!"

"Ghost! That's Skimpole!"

"Skimpole's in his study, deah boy!"

But Kildare paid no attention to Arthur Augustus.

The figure rolled to the bottom of the staircase, and Kildare rushed to it as it lay on the mat.

It lay terribly still.

Not a cry had come from Skimpole minor, but now a strange sound could be heard from his interior—something like the ticking of a clock.

"Tick, tick, tick!"

Kildare hardly noticed it in his horror and excitement.

The crash of the falling body had caused several doors to open. Boys and masters were hurrying up on all sides.

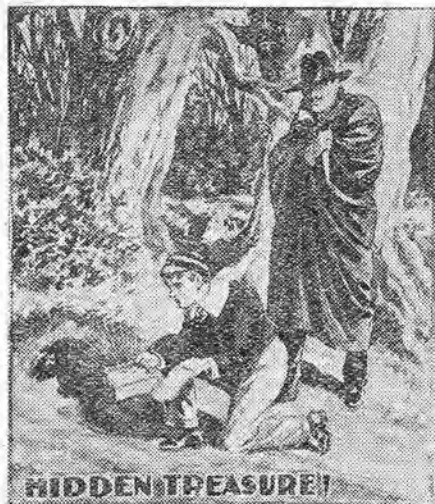
"What has happened?" cried Mr. Railton.

"An accident, sir,"
 "What? Skimpole?"
 "He's fallen downstairs, sir."
 "Good heavens!"
 Mr. Railton knelt beside the fallen form on the mat at the foot of the stairs. He placed his hand upon the breast of the junior.
 Like Wally, in similar circumstances, he felt no movement there, no sign of life. His face went very pale.
 "Skimpole!"
 No answer, save that curious ticking.
 "He—he can't be dead, sir!" stammered Kildare.
 "Heavens!"
 "Bai Jove! It's not a ghost, deah boys! It's solid enough. Bai Jove! There's machinery of some kind in it, too!"
 "My hat!"
 "This is not a living body," said Mr. Railton, recovering himself. "Dear me! What can this mean?"
 "Not—not a body, sir!"
 "Certainly not!"
 "Is—is it a ghost, Mr. Wailton?"
 "Certainly not, D'Arcy! Don't be absurd!"
 "Weally, Mr. Wailton—"
 Mr. Railton rose to his feet.
 "It is an absurd trick!" he said. "This is a figure made life-size, and made to resemble Skimpole."
 "Bai Jove!"
 "But it is certainly not Skimpole," Mr. Railton felt over the body. "It is made of some kind of wire framework, padded and stuffed, I think."
 "My only Aunt Jane!" yelled Wally, who was one of the first to arrive on the spot. "That's what I saw under Glyn's table!"
 "Glyn's table!" ejaculated Mr. Railton. "Is it possible that this is another of the absurd contrivances of Glyn?"
 "Yaas, wathah, sir! It's not a ghost aifah all, deah boys. I am weally vewy much welieved to discovah that it is not a ghost, aifah all."
 "Great Scott!" gasped Kildare, staring down at the figure. "It's jolly well made, anyway. I took it for Skimpole."
 "So we all did," said Blake. "And when we saw Skimmy himself, cheek by jowl, with it, it was rather startling."
 "Yaas, wathah!"
 "Do you mean to say that this figure actually walked along?" demanded the Housemaster, in amazement.
 "Yes, sir; rather. It walked into our study and out again," said Digby. "We thought it was Skimmy all the time, and we thought he was off his kiddy rocker—er—I mean, we thought he had gone dotty, sir."
 "Amazing!"
 "Yaas, wathah! I wegard it as extwemely amazin'!"
 "Tell Glyn to come here at once!"

The New Firm were regarding the scene with some dismay from the top of the stairs.
 They had intended to play a great many little japes with Skimpole minor before the secret was let out; but the accident at the stairs had knocked their plans in that respect into a cocked hat.
 The news of the real state of affairs quickly spread, and while the New Firm came demurely to answer for their misdeeds to the Housemaster, the scared juniors in the studies unlocked and unbarricaded their doors, and poured out to swell the crowd gathered in the Lower Hall about the inanimate figure.
 Mr. Railton looked sternly at Cornstalk & Co.
 "Glyn, did you make this figure?"
 "Yes, sir," said the Liverpool lad.
 "We helped, sir," said Clifton Dane quickly. "We were all in it, sir."
 "What-ho!" said Kangaroo. "It was a case of three of a kind, sir. But it was only a jape. We didn't mean any harm."
 Mr. Railton looked at them a little uncertainly.
 The latest invention of the Liverpool lad had certainly caused a great deal of excitement, and had been the cause of his receiving a shock. But, as a matter of fact, there was no rule against an enterprising junior making a mechanical figure if he wanted to.
 "You caused me a very painful shock by this," he said.
 "For a moment I thought it was Skimpole who had fallen downstairs."
 "I am sorry, sir," said Bernard Glyn sincerely enough. "Of course, we never intended him to fall downstairs, sir. We didn't really expect him to turn the corner of the passage, but he managed it."
 "I must say that it is very clever, and does your mechanical genius credit," said the Housemaster. "You must be careful not to cause so much excitement on another occasion; nor do I think it is a good idea to parody the form and features of your schoolmate in this curious figure. Otherwise, I see no harm in such a mechanical construction."
 "Thank you, sir."
 "I presume that it is damaged by falling downstairs," said Mr. Railton, "otherwise I should be very glad to see it in action."
 "Yaas, wathah!" murmured D'Arcy. "I should like to see it in action now that I know what it is, you know."
 Bernard Glyn bent beside the fallen figure.
 Its light weight and the thickness of the paddings had prevented it from taking any serious damage in its fall down the staircase.
 The whirring of the mechanism was stopped as the young inventor clicked a lever in its place under the jacket.
 "Lend a hand, Kangy," he said.
 "What-ho!" said the Cornstalk.

(Continued on page 28.)

"THE TREASURE OF RYLCOMBE WOODS!"



There are thrills galore in this splendid yarn of Tom Merry & Co. of St. Jim's. Tom is entrusted by his cousin with a valuable packet—and within five minutes it is stolen!

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ST. JIM'S SPOTLIGHT

(LATEST NEWS FROM THE SCHOOL.)

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A ST. JIM'S FELLOW. WORK—AND SPORT—FROM DAWN TILL DARK!

None of us like to turn out these winter mornings, and St. Jim's fellows are no exception to the rule. One or two of them, however, notably Tom Merry and Figgins, make a point of leaping from bed at the first peal of the rising-bell, and starting the day with a few Swedish exercises. After all, it is no worse to get straight out of bed at seven-thirty and have plenty of time before chapel, than to take an extra snooze and have to rush down to chapel with collar undone and hair not brushed.

Fellows like Mellish and Sharp, of course, never get out of bed till the very last moment, unless disturbed unexpectedly by a cold sponge wielded by Monty Lowther, as happens whenever Monty is in a playful mood! The Terrible Three, on the other hand, always set a good example by going for a trot around the quad, thus blowing the cobwebs away and enabling them to come into chapel feeling fresh and vigorous. Vigour is needed in chapel, too, as the choir-master demands vociferous support for his choir, and if fellows do not sing loudly enough to please him, he will have them back after school and put them through a rehearsal.

After chapel another trot, or perhaps a gathering round the letter-rack, till breakfast at eight-thirty, which is well patronised. Fatty Wynn always shines here, and there is little talk. Fellows are too busy with eggs and bacon to talk!

Classes are at nine, but if a fellow has finished breakfast before, he may go to his study for a few minutes. Fellows who have neglected their preparation the previous evening, usually gulp their breakfast down, which, as Mr. Linton says, is no good to them, and hasten to their studies to "swot up" a construe or finish off an essay.

Classes last from nine to twelve, with a short mid-way break, and they are the main bugbear of life at St. Jim's, as practically any fellow will tell you. Asking quite a number of Shell and Fourth-Form men, I gathered that if classes were abolished to-morrow, there would be dry eyes in the junior school!

Gore and Mellish, whom I taxed first, said that they would dearly like to boil Linton and Lathom, their respective Form masters, in oil, and all their books with them! As Gore and Mellish are confirmed slackers, I thought perhaps they were exaggerating the horrors of Form work.

"I suppose classes are weally necessary?" asked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy thoughtfully, when I met him. "I have often wondered what actual benefit a fellow gets from stickin' indoors and listenin' to a Form master dwonin' away about deponent verbs, you know. A fellow could do a lot more work alone in his study, you know, without a Form master botherin' him with a silly construe!"

"But do you think fellows would really do any work if left alone in their studies?" I asked. D'Arcy meditated, and then shook his head.

"Well—no," he admitted. "I am afraid fellows could hardly be trusted, unless they were put on their honah. And I personally shouldn't like that!"

"Why not?" I inquired.

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"Because, if a master puts you on your honah, you are bound to do the work," explained D'Arcy. "But if you are only told to do it, you can please yourself if you wisk trouble the next morning!"

George Herries, D'Arcy's study-mate, said he thought much more time ought to be allowed for a fellow to take his dog for a run, instead of wasting time with books. Jack Blake was more guarded, and admitted that looked at in certain lights, classes might be necessary.

Tom Merry supported this view, and went even further.

"I should be the last fellow to go in for 'swotting,'" he answered, smiling. "But, after all, the masters take a good deal of trouble working out a curriculum for us, and they work jolly hard dinning things into us; so there must be something worth learning. I think the Classics are overdone, and modern subjects like shorthand and typewriting might be taught. But naturally, it all depends on what a fellow thinks of doing when he leaves school."

After classes, St. Jim's men do what they like till one o'clock, when dinner attracts everybody. There is freedom again till two, when afternoon classes call fellows in from quad and playing-fields. From two till four, classes hold sway—excepting on Wednesdays and Saturdays, which are half-holidays. On these occasions every possible kind of recreation is open to senior and junior. Cricket is compulsory on Wednesdays, unless the Junior XI. have a match on Little Side, when the other fellows crowd around and cheer.

Cricket is the only compulsory sport at St. Jim's, and it is the only active pursuit in which slackers like Mellish and Sharp ever take part! Kildare's hefty foot is frequently needed to get them down on the ground, and they avoid the ball as much as possible. Compulsory practice, however, gives everybody an equal chance, and is seized upon by fellows who think they ought to be in the junior eleven to show their prowess.

I spent quite a long time last Wednesday afternoon, listening to Lancelot French, of the New House Shell. French is a most promising bat, and plays for the New House against the School House. For junior matches, however, Tom Merry justly prefers Monty Lowther. French does not accuse Merry of favouritism, but he feels that he can knock spots off Lowther, and never misses a chance of showing that he thinks so.

After cricket, there is tea in Hall at five-thirty for those who cannot afford a private "spread" in the study. Most fellows lay in a supply of good things from Dame Taggles' little shop, and "feed" in their studies. Tea in Hall, though despised, is plain and wholesome, consisting of bread-and-jam, followed by cake. There is not much cake, but the chief drawback is that the meal has to be taken under the eye of a Form master. A different master presides every day.

Calling Over comes at seven-fifteen, and fellows who have been out of gates must be in by this time or be reported by Taggles and "lined." Having answered "Adsum" in Hall, the Saints repair to their studies and tackle prep. I questioned several juniors, but none of them

could give me an assurance that they invariably do their prep conscientiously. The more sensible men, like Tom Merry and Blake, always do something towards it; but the slackers frequently neglect the lot, with dire consequences next day!

From eight to eight-forty-five juniors foregather in the junior common-room, till a prefect looks in to warn them of bed-time. "Lights out" for juniors is at nine, and for seniors at ten.

I have heard rumours of dormitory spreads after "lights out," but I could gather no definite information as to the next one. D'Arcy innocently let drop a hint, however, that he is expecting a hamper shortly, from home, and that a dormitory "spweed" is the only way of getting rid of a jolly big hamper!

Hungry?

AUTOMATIC INTERVIEWS.

George Figgins Speaking.

"Am I glad that I've got the longest legs in the junior school? Rather!" said George Figgins, regarding his somewhat bony shanks with pride.

"Having a longer stride than most fellows is a big advantage, you know. I can run faster without any more effort than a shorter man, and at football especially, it's jolly useful to be able to stretch out one leg, and take a pass that another fellow would have missed."

"At cricket, too, I field in the slips; and I find I can cover a wider area than the average fellow, because of my length of leg and my longer reach. I've got long arms, too!"

Figgins held them up for my inspection. "Long arms come in useful for boxing," grinned Figgins. "Kerr and I often have a friendly bout, and though Kerr is as good a man as I am, I usually beat him—simply because I have a longer reach. Of course, I know I look a bit ungainly; that can't be helped. My face isn't exactly a picture, so perhaps beauty isn't in my line. As far as I'm concerned, I'd far rather be a good man at sport than the most attractive Adonis under the sun!"

"Incidentally," went on Figgins seriously, "I've a pet theory that the tallest fellow in a Form should be captain—the tallest junior being junior captain. It sort of fits in—don't you think? I've suggested the idea to Merry, but he doesn't see eye to eye with me. Still, I'm hoping that at the next election, the New House men will rally round and put me at the top of the poll!"

Figgins certainly believes in growing upward and onward!

RADIOGRAMS.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy has designed some startling new fashions for men, and avows his intention of wearing them—if he can get a tailor to execute his designs!

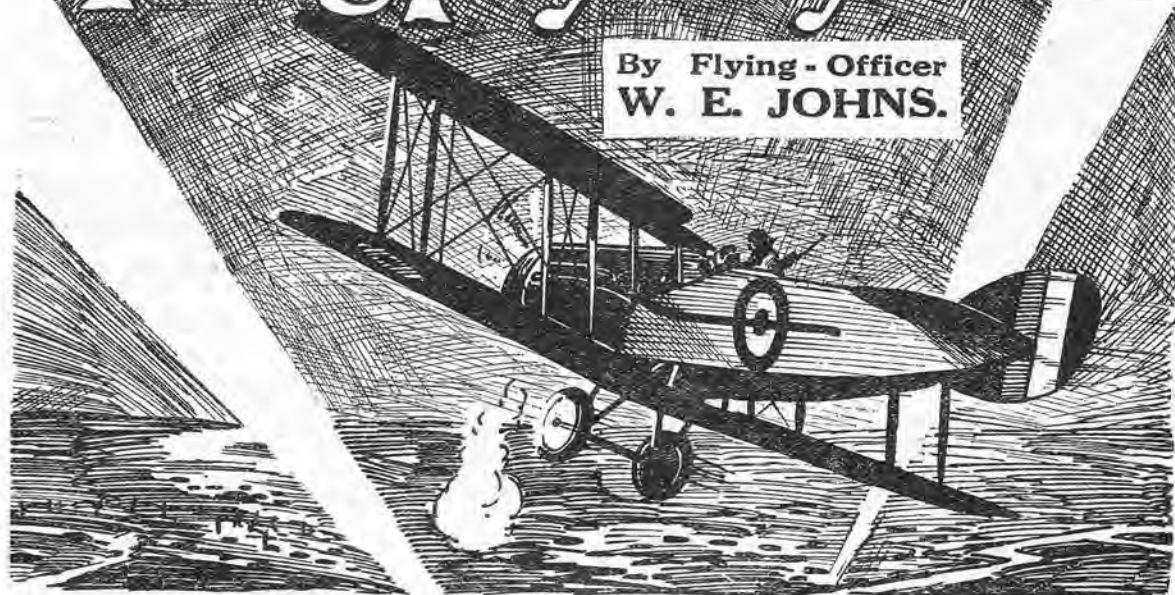
Dame Taggles, who presides over the school tuck-shop, "trusts" most of the juniors to almost any extent—and they never let her down!

Tom Merry was born in India, and brought to England as a baby at the death of his father, General Merry, who lost his life during an Indian uprising.

OUR GRIPPING AIR WAR YARN!

The Spyflyers

By Flying-Officer
W. E. JOHNS.



WHAT HAS HAPPENED.

HEX LOVELL and TONY FOSTER, engaged on Secret Service work in the air, are rescued from a tight corner by CAPTAIN FAIRFAX. Later they learn that Fairfax is lying wounded behind the German lines, and the two airmen immediately ask for permission to go to his rescue.

(Now read on.)

"One Good Turn—"

"**A**LL right, fill in your forms at once and ask Major Linkers, with my compliments, to send them on to Wing by hand to-night," said the general. "You may assume that your application is granted. Thank you very much. Good-bye—and the best of luck!"

The boys saluted and withdrew. They took their places in the waiting car, and were almost back at Maranique before either of them spoke.

"Well," said Rex at last, "the more I think about that message the less I like it."

"I must say I'm not very keen on—"

"Oh, I don't mind going over there," interrupted Rex impatiently. "It isn't that. There was something about the way that message was worded that didn't ring true. It smells fishy to me."

"Fishy?"

Rex nodded.

"Fairfax is the last man on earth to send a message like that, if I know anything about him. What did he say? 'wounded and in great danger.' Danger my eye. If Fairfax was in a mess he'd see about getting out of it. The very last thing he would be likely to do would be to suggest that someone else should risk their life to get him out of it—for that's what it amounts to. Do you suppose that if I was in a hole I should expect Fairfax to come and stand a good chance of facing the firing party with me? Not on your life. Neither would he. He's the sort of chap who relies on his own wits—not other people's."

"Well, what are you going to do about it?" asked Tony in alarm.

"I'm going over, of course."

"But—"

"Never mind but; we can't do less. One thing is certain, and that is that Fairfax has been nabbed, or he would be back by now. Dash it all, we should never forgive ourselves if we heard that he had gone west behind the riding school at Lille without either of us lifting a finger to help him. No! He took a big chance to get us out of the worst hole we are ever likely to be in—whatever he says about it—and I'm going to find him if I can."

"When do we go?" asked Tony.

"As soon as it is dark," replied Rex briefly. "Let's go to the map-room and get the lie of the land. We've got to find a field somewhere within striking distance of that pin-point."

"I'll go along to the sheds and see that the tanks are filled; I'll join you in a minute," said Tony as the car pulled up at the aerodrome.

They alighted, and Rex contemplated the aerodrome reflectively.

"Fairfax is either at that farmhouse or he is not," he observed in a low voice, "but, in any case, it is from there that we shall have to start operations. We shan't get far in these uniforms if there are people about—and I expect there will be. I think we had better wear those German Tommies' uniforms we have in the cupboard. They'll shoot us anyway if they catch us, so we are not taking any extra risk by wearing them; on the contrary, unless we meet one of the Varne crowd, which isn't likely, it will be easier for us to get about. We'll take some grub in our pockets in case we get hung up over there, and I might as well take some of that German money that was in Wistmann's wallet. It might come in handy, you never know. Well, go and get the Bristol filled up and join me in the map-room, then we'll try to get a bit of rest before we start."

It was nearly dark when they took off and circled over the British lines, climbing for height; not until the altimeter touched sixteen thousand feet did Rex, still climbing, turn the nose of the machine towards the enemy sky. A few searchlights probed the air with their wavering beams, but at the height at which the Bristol was flying there was little to fear from them. For three-quarters of an hour they flew steadily on the course they had set; not a course which would take them immediately over their objective, but a route which took them to the right and brought them back behind it. This was a precaution upon which Rex had decided to allay suspicion in case they were heard.

When he was satisfied that his bearings were correct, he cut off his engine and began a long glide towards the field he

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had selected for landing. It was far away from the lines and outside the area of normal operations, so he was not apprehensive that the field might be a pilot-trap. The wheels touched the ground at last, and once again they sat listening for any sound which might indicate that their descent had been detected. A coppers at the far end of the field formed a ready-made hiding-place for the machine. They dragged the Bristol into it and discarded their heavy flying kit, throwing it over the bottom plane ready for immediate use when they returned.

"This is the safest place we've landed in yet," observed Rex. "As far as I could see from the map there isn't a building of any sort within half a mile. The farmhouse is up a road which turns off to the right about a mile and a half along the road over there on our right. There may be troops about, so we shall have to watch our steps."

They made their way to the road and set off at a brisk pace in the direction of the farmhouse. The hedges began to thin out, and the country became more open; presently they found themselves crossing an open heath with no cover within easy reach.

"I don't think much of this," muttered Rex, when they had travelled for some distance along the open road. "If anybody comes along they will certainly see us, not that it really matters, I suppose, now that we are so far away from Varne."

He had hardly finished speaking when a motor-lorry rumbled into sight behind them, going in their direction. The sound of many voices singing was borne to their ears.

"Sounds like troops to me," observed Rex, "and they seem to have had a merry evening. Keep straight on; they won't pay any attention to us, and it's safer than dodging about looking as if we were trying to hide. It can be nothing unusual for troops to be walking about here, and I should say they'll pass us without a word."

In this he was mistaken, however, for as the lorry drew level with them they were greeted with a chorus of salutations.

"Come on," shouted the driver, "get up behind—there's plenty of room."

"What made you start walking back?" cried a voice from within the lorry, as Rex continued to trudge along without answering.

"You'll get plenty of walking in the morning," called another voice. "You come on in here or you'll be late and I'll get the blame for it."

"That's right, corporal," agreed yet another voice. "We shan't get any more passes if fools start rolling up late!"

Realising that silence might lead to trouble, Rex made the best of what he thought was an unfortunate affair, and with a quick nudge to Tony to follow him, sprang up in the back of the vehicle. He found himself with some eighteen or twenty German soldiers, who were seated on wooden seats and on the floor. The driver slipped in the clutch, and the lorry continued its bumping way along the road.

The air was heavy with the smell of beer, sour bread, and cheese, and Rex regretted more than ever that they had been obliged to join the party. He said nothing, but watched the country through which they were passing with interest, keeping a sharp look-out for the turning up which the farmhouse was situated. As they drew level with it the man on his left burst into a stream of lurid invective.

"Donner Blitz! It's my turn for extra guard to-night, curse it!" he ended sullenly.

"And mine," said a voice opposite. "Don't think you're the only one."

"I'm about sick of these guards!" went on the first grumbler. "I thought we came here out of the lines for a rest, but it's guards, guards, guards—morning, noon, and night! Stable-guards, headquarter-guards, gate-guards! I should have thought there were enough guards without starting another special guard! There's no rest for anybody."

"What is this special guard?" asked Rex casually.

"The new guard up at the farm. As if we hadn't enough guards down at the camp, but they must needs start doing guards round people's houses! What have they got to guard up there, anyway, I should like to know?"

"The sergeant-major says they've got a prisoner up there," observed another, whom Rex noted wore the chevron of a corporal. "I'm corporal of the guard to-night, so stop grousing."

"I'd swop my to-morrow's rations for anybody to do my guard for me to-night!" said the first speaker, looking round hopefully; but the offer was received with a shout of laughter.

"Bah! You're an optimist! I'd swop two days' rations!" offered the second guard.

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"You're pretty generous, I must say!" sneered Rex, nudging Tony. "Who's going to do a job like that for a chunk of rotten bread, I should like to know? Make it two pints of beer, and two marks, and I'm your man! I can't sleep, anyway, and I'd as soon stand as lie down!"

"That's a bet!" cried the other, with alacrity.

"Here, hold hard!" exclaimed Rex. "You fix it with the corporal first!"

"It's all right with me, but where do I come in?" growled the N.C.O. "What do I get out of it?"

"Well, I'm not mean!" murmured Rex boastfully. "I'll split the beer with you, corporal, when we get to camp. Are you going to keep me company to-night, Koepler?" he added, turning to Tony.

"I'm not doing any guards for any two beers and two marks! Five marks is my price!" announced Tony loudly.

There was a titter of laughter, followed by an argument, which ended in Tony accepting four marks from the second guard, one mark to be handed over to the corporal.

"Well, here we are; let's go and get that beer," said the N.C.O. "We've only got ten minutes before we fall in, so we shall have to get a move on. Parade in marching-order, rifles and bayonets, remember," he added.

The lorry swung through the gates and past the head-quarter guard of a camp, which Rex saw at a glance was of considerable size.

"I don't know what we've barged into!" he muttered to Tony as they alighted; "but I've taken the chance that this special guard is at the farmhouse we're making for. If it is it looks as if we've had a bit of luck."

With the corporal leading the way, and accompanied by the two men whose places they were taking, they made their way towards a big, well-lighted tent, from which came sounds of revelry.

"Come across with those marks!" said Rex to his man, as they entered the canteen—and the soldier paid them over without a word. "Here! You'll have to lend me your rifle and bayonet," said Rex suddenly. "I'd forgotten that. I didn't know I was to be on guard to-night, so I haven't cleaned mine."

"That's all right," answered the man at once. "I'll fetch mine in a minute. Fancy having one canteen for a place this size!" he went on, forcing his way through the crowd of soldiers towards the bar. "There's ten regiments here already, and I hear there's more coming to-morrow."

With some difficulty, they managed to reach the trestle table at which drinks were being served, and the corporal's eyes glistened when he saw the wad of notes in Rex's hand after Rex had insisted on paying for a second round of drinks.

"Gott in Himmel!" he gasped. "Where did you get all that from?"

"My old man's got more than he knows what to do with," grinned Rex. "He's made it out of the War, and he keeps me well supplied."

"Can you lend me twenty marks till pay-day, old chap?" said the corporal quickly, in a low voice.

"Of course I can. Why didn't you ask me before? I know a good sort when I see one—you can make it forty if you like. I say"—he dropped his voice to a whisper—"what about taking a bottle of cognac along to-night? It will be cold towards morning."

"Good idea!" responded the corporal, smacking him on the back. "I don't mind doing a guard with a fellow like you. Keep it under your coat, though, and don't let old Pulzer see it. He's in charge of the guard to-night, and he's an old devil!"

The cognac was quickly forthcoming. Rex pushed some notes into the corporal's hand, and, thrusting the bottle under his tunic, turned towards the door.

"Yes, it's time we were getting our equipment on," said the corporal, glancing at his watch. "Parade outside the main gate—don't forget. See you in a minute," he added, hurrying off into the darkness.

Five minutes later Rex and Tony, complete in marching-order, with rifle and bayonets, made their way towards the gate, where several similarly dressed soldiers were standing about. The corporal hurried up to them.

"Here, you two!" he whispered. "Don't forget you're taking Schmidt's place," he said, nodding to Rex. "And you're Burnheim," he told Tony. "When I call the roll you answer for them. What about the booze? I'll try to get you both posted to a quiet corner, so that I can get a nip as I do the rounds."

"Fall in everybody!" snapped an Unter-Offizier, striding up. "Call the roll, corporal!"

Rex and Tony took their places at the end of the line

of troops. The corporal produced a notebook from his pocket and called the roll by the aid of a flashlight.

Altogether ten names were called, and at the end the N.C.O. closed the book with a snap, and turned to the sergeant-major with a brisk:

"All present, sir!"

And a moment later Rex and Tony were marching through the gates of the German rest camp on the most audacious venture they had yet undertaken.

"Tramp, tramp, tramp, tramp!" went the heavy boots on the road as they marched at attention towards the farm. A building loomed up in the darkness ahead.

"Halt!" snapped the Unter-Offizier. "Left—turn!"

He strode off towards the door of the house.

"Is this the place, do you think?" whispered Tony.

"If it isn't we must be somewhere near it," whispered Rex back. "As far as I can remember from the map this should be about the spot."

The figure of the Unter-Offizier, accompanied by a cloak officer, loomed up in the gloom.

"I want you to listen carefully to your orders," said the officer; and as the sound of the voice fell on his ears Rex felt every muscle in his body go taut and the blood ebb from his face. He could sense that Tony was experiencing the same feeling, and thanked Providence that there was no moon to expose their dumbfounded expressions. It was the voice of Major Trevor. "You will take your stations where the sergeant-major posts you, and you will keep strict watch for anyone approaching. There is a prisoner housed in this building, and it is expected that an attempt will be made to rescue him. If anyone comes, the sentry will allow him, or them, to approach, and, if necessary, enter the house; but if they attempt to retreat it must be prevented at any cost! It is desired to catch the rescuers alive, if possible, but if there is a possibility of their escape you will shoot. That is all. The sergeant-major will now post you."

the guard-room. Quick march—straight up the stairs, and jump to it! Left—right—left—right! Halt!"

The sergeant-major was standing outside a door on the first floor, and he flung it open as they arrived. Inside the room, seated on the edge of a trestle bed, with his chin cupped in his hands, was Fairfax. He arose without a word, and, without so much as a glance at his escort, took his place between them.

"Forward—march!" snapped the corporal, and the heavy boots clattered down the staircase.

The corporal and Tony led the way, and as Rex brought up the rear he noticed that the prisoner's hands were tied behind him. Rex pulled his cap a little lower over his eyes as he saw Trevor waiting in the doorway below.

"You know your orders, sentries," said the ex-major as they passed him. "If the prisoner attempts to escape you will shoot to kill."

Rex breathed a sigh of relief as they passed into the darkness of the garden path and formed up abreast.

"You will soon have company, Fairfax!" called Trevor as they passed through the gate. "I expect your two young friends to arrive shortly; I'll send them along to join you!" he sneered.

"Left—right—left—right!" snapped the corporal as they marched down the silent roadway towards the camp.

"What about a drink, corporal?" asked Rex, when they were well outside earshot of the farm.

"All right, but we'd better not stop," replied the corporal. "Keep going and pass me the bottle."

Rex groped in his pocket and produced the cognac.

"Better let me have your rifle while you drink," he suggested; and the N.C.O. passed over his weapon without a word.

"Hold that a minute, will you, Koepler?" muttered Rex, passing the weapon on to Tony.

The corporal raised the bottle to his lips. As he threw his head back to drink, Rex punched him with all his

LOOK OUT FOR THE RED STAR RANGER! SEE PAGE 20.

A few moments later Rex found himself standing in the shade of a yew-tree near the front of the house; Tony was stationed a few yards away on his right at the corner of an outbuilding. No one else was in sight, and not a sound broke the eerie silence. Ten minutes passed slowly, and then a sound of muffled voices came to Rex's ears from a window near at hand, and through which gleamed a pale shaft of yellow light. He took a pace or two nearer, and, after a quick glance around, risked a peep.

He was back in his place in an instant, his heart beating wildly. Sitting by a smouldering log fire was Major Trevor and Von Henkel, looking desperately ill and with his left arm in a sling. Rex edged a little nearer again, and strained his ears to catch the words of their conversation.

Von Henkel was speaking, and appeared to be upbraiding Trevor for something. Rex caught a few odd words here and there:

"... make another mistake ... last chance ... folly to risk keeping him here ... get him out of the way ..."

Rex caught the name "Fairfax" and took a step nearer.

"They're not fools, those two," he heard Von Henkel say. "Heaven knows what they might do—they have the luck of the very devil! I say it's dangerous and unnecessary to keep Fairfax in this house; he ought to be behind bars at Lille, or else in the guard-room at the camp. I say send him down to the guard-room now, and we can shift him in the morning."

"Here, what are you up to there?" said a low voice near Rex's elbow.

"Oh, I was wondering where you'd got to, corporal," answered Rex innocently. "Listen! They are talking of sending someone back to the guard-room"—he indicated the room behind him with a jab of his thumb—"and if we can click for the job it will be better than standing here risking the sergeant-major seeing us if we try to get a swig out of the bottle."

"You get back to your place!" grumbled the corporal. "If Pulzer comes round and finds you out, he'll play hell!"

"Sorry," said Rex apologetically, and stepped back into his place under the yew tree just as the door opened and the sergeant-major appeared, calling loudly for the corporal.

The corporal followed him back into the house.

He reappeared again almost immediately.

"Schmidt—Burnheim!" he called sharply. "Fall in to escort prisoner!" he went on brusquely as the two sentries doubled forward. "We are going to escort a prisoner to

might in the pit of the stomach. He caught him by the throat as he fell.

"And you hold that!" he added grimly. "Don't run away, Fairfax," he went on quickly, as he saw the prisoner looking to right and left, as if he intended to make a bolt for it.

Rex heard a quick intake of breath, and saw the prisoner lean forward in the darkness, as if unable to believe his ears.

"Give me a hand, Tony!" grunted Rex, as he knelt on the corporal's chest. "Give me the pull-through out of the butt-end of the rifle. That's right."

With the tough whipcord the new prisoner was swiftly bound hand and foot. A handkerchief was thrust into his mouth, and kept in place by a rifle-sling.

"Sorry, corporal," said Rex apologetically as the unfortunate German let out a muffled groan; "but I had to do it. You'll get into trouble to-morrow, I'm afraid. Buy yourself something with this," he added, thrusting a wad of notes into the other's pocket. "I shall have to put you over the hedge, but I'll drop a note to-morrow over this side of the lines, in case you haven't been found." He picked up the cognac bottle, and hurled it with all his might far into the field. "I've put that out of the way, so that they can't accuse you of drinking while on duty. That's as much as I can do for you; you aren't a bad sort."

"Now," he said, "have you cut Fairfax's hands free, Tony? Good! Let's get off, then we'll leave the talking until later."

"My heavens, you've got some nerve, you two!" muttered Fairfax, as they hurried across the heath in the direction of the Bristol. "Fancy marching me out right under Trevor's nose! I've never seen anything quite like that!"

"How is it that Trevor is still alive?" asked Rex, as they trotted along.

"Because he wasn't killed!" grinned Fairfax. "When you saw him going down, the pilot did as a matter of fact, sidleslip right down into the ground, but Trevor was lucky enough to get away with it. He was rather badly burned down one side, and has been swearing vengeance ever since. So has Von Henkel. My bullet only went through his shoulder—missed his heart by about an inch, I heard him tell Trevor."

THE SPY-FLYERS!

(Continued from page 27.)

"I slipped up looking for that gun. Both Trevor and Von Henkel had lost their jobs at Intelligence Headquarters, although they were, of course, at a field hospital for the time being. I was coming along a road the day after I had discovered the long-range gun, prepared to keep the appointment with my pilot, when I met them both face to face. I was disguised, of course, but it did not deceive them. I thought it was all up, and no mistake—"

"Keep quiet now!" broke in Rex. "The Bristol is in the corner over there under the trees. I don't think it will have been found. You'll have to squeeze in the back seat with Fraser. It will be a heavy load, but I have a long run to take off in. Here she is, all clear. Swing the prop, Tony!"

They took their places as the engine started. Rex swung round into the slight breeze, raced across the turf, and then zoomed into the starry sky. At two thousand feet he levelled out and turned his nose towards home and safety.

"The general is mighty pleased with you two lads, I can tell you," said Fairfax, the following morning, when they met to talk over their adventure. "He was shaken when I told him how you had kept out of that trap, and how you had pulled me out of it. He was still more pleased when I gave him the position of the German gun."

"But he knew that already," said Rex quickly. "Knew it! Don't be silly. You don't suppose the position marked on that dud message was correct, do you? What happened was this. They sent that pigeon home, which, by the way, was one of mine, with the idea of getting you out there. They knew that there was a good chance of somebody being sent to fetch me, and they hoped it would be you."

"Giving the position of the gun incorrectly has cost our people probably a quarter of a million pounds—shelling and bombing an empty wood. You see, if Trevor and Von Henkel could have hauled all three of us before the authorities, it would have been a feather in their caps, and might have got them once more in favour with the Higher Command."

"I should like to see his face when he discovers how we walked out with you!" laughed Rex. "Well, that makes us quits, anyway."

"Well, I must be getting along," said Fairfax. "Thanks very much for getting me out of a tight corner."

"Bosh!" grinned Rex. "People in our profession don't look for thanks. It will probably be your turn next time!"

(A gripping new Western adventure yarn begins in the GEM next Wednesday! "RED STAR RANGER" is packed with thrills in every line! See page 20 of this issue!)



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THE ROBOT OF ST. JIM'S!

(Continued from page 23.)

He laid hold of the figure. Between them they lifted it carefully to its feet, and stood it upright. The boys crowded back to make room.

"Is it all right?" asked Mr. Railton.

"Right as rain, sir. Shall I set it going?"

"Certainly!"

Bernard Glyn released the figure.

With a slow and solemn tread Skimpole minor marched off down the long hall to the door.

The boys watched it in astonishment, which was equalled by that of the Housemaster.

Skimpole, who had come downstairs, blinked at his double in amazement.

"Dear me!" he murmured. "This is most surprising! Now I know where my missing clothes are!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Really, Glyn—"

"Bai Jove, it's more natural than life!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, jamming his monocle into his eye, and gazing after the marching figure of Skimpole minor. "It's a great improvement on the original Skimmay, as it doesn't talk, you know."

"Hear, hear!" said Tom Merry, laughing. "I vote we shut Skimpole up in the box in the end study, and have Skimpole minor in the Shell instead."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Skimpole blinked at Tom Merry, not knowing whether to take him seriously or not. Glyn followed the machine man, and turned him at the door. Skimpole minor came marching back with regular steps, looking straight before him through his spectacles.

"Amazing!" said Mr. Railton. "I think it would be as well, however, Glyn, to—er—circumscribe the evolutions of this wonderful figure. I should also recommend you to remove this likeness of your Form-follow."

"Yes, sir."

And Mr. Railton went back to his study. The New Firm carried the machine man upstairs, followed by a curious crowd.

"So that was the wheeze," said Tom Merry. "That was the deadly secret!"

"Yes," said Glyn, laughing; "and a jolly good one, too!"

"Well, yes; we'll give you the credit of that," said the leader of the Terrible Three magnanimously. "It was a good wheeze."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, looking round through his eyeglass. "Do you know, dear boys, I couldn't have thought of a better wheeze than that myself."

And the dear boys cordially agreed that he couldn't.

(Next week's GEM contains a ripping long complete yarn of Tom Merry & Co., entitled "THE TREASURE OF RYLCOMBE WOODS!" See page 23 for full particulars!)

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Printed and published every Wednesday by the Proprietors, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Advertisement offices: The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Registered for transmission by Canadian Magazine Post. Subscription rates: Inland and Abroad, 11s. per annum; 5s. 6d. for six months; 30d. for three months. Agents for Australia and New Zealand: Messrs. Gordon & Gotch, Ltd., and for South Africa: Central News Agency, Ltd.—Saturday, June 3rd, 1933.