

Result of our "OUTLINES" COMPETITION! See page 6.

GRAND
FREE GIFT

NEXT
WEEK.

The GEM

2^d



GREAT
FREE GIFT
FOR EVERY READER
NEXT WEEK!

SEE PAGE 17

SKIMPOLES THREE!



Tom Merry & Co. think one Skimpole is a bit of a trial, but they don't mind Glyn's mechanical model of the Freak of the Shell until Glyn makes it talk like the original! But when a third Skimpole arrives on the scene—look out for ructions!

CHAPTER 1. Skimpole I.

"GLYN!"
"Bernard Glyn!"
"Hallo, in there!"
"Glyn, you ass!"

"Glyn, you duffer!"
"Glyn, you sweep!"
Knock, knock!

"Glyn! GLYN!"
And still there came no reply from within the end study. The end study of the Shell passage in the School House at St. Jim's was usually occupied by three fellows—Bernard Glyn, the Liverpool lad; Clifton Dane, of Canada; and Harry Noble, otherwise known as the Kangaroo—a nickname which sufficiently indicates the country of his birth.

Bernard Glyn, as the fellows of the School House knew only too well, was of an inventive turn of mind, equalling even Skimpole in that line, and, in fact, excelling him, for some of his inventions actually worked.

When Glyn was deep in some of his experiments, it was his custom to lock himself up in his study, and bury himself in his work. And at such times Clifton Dane and Kangaroo might knock and kick and stamp, but the door would not open.

At such times unholy smells of chemicals would emanate

from the study—or perhaps the whirring of some machine or other—and sometimes the voice of Bernard Glyn, telling them to buzz off and not worry.

On the present occasion Kangaroo had come up to the study with Tom Merry of the Shell and Jack Blake of the Fourth Form. He was going to show them a pair of boomerangs which he had received as a present from Australia, and Tom Merry and Blake were naturally anxious to see them, and to examine the strange weapon of the Australian aborigine. And their excitement may be imagined when they found the study door locked, and could obtain no answer from within.

"The utter ass is making some of his beastly experiments," growled Kangaroo. "He locked us out yesterday, and when we got in the room was simply reeking with some beastly chemical."

"It's not smelly now," said Tom Merry. "I think I can hear some blessed machinery going."

There was a whir from within the study, and that was all.

Kangaroo kicked at the door, and the chorus recommenced.

"Glyn, you ass!"
"Glyn, you sweep!"
"Glyn, you frabjous duffer!"
Whir, whir, whir!

That was the only sound from within the end study. The three juniors looked at one another in great exasperation.

BERNARD GLYN, THE INVENTOR AT ST. JIM'S! IT'S A WOW!

By Martin Clifford.

CHAPTER 2. Skimpole II.

"Dear me!" said a voice, as a junior with a large head, a weedy figure, and thin legs, came along the passage blinking through a pair of huge spectacles. "Dear me! Cannot you get into this study?"

"No; door's locked!"

"Ah; I want to speak to Glyn particularly!" said Skimpole. "I require a small dynamo for an invention I am making, and I have no doubt that Glyn possesses exactly the thing I want. He will lend it to me."

"I don't think," remarked Kangaroo. "I remember what happened to the battery he lent you last week."

"Well, you see, that was a wet battery, and when it fell off the table, something was bound to go," said Skimpole. "You cannot expect glass jars to remain intact after an impact of considerable force with a hard floor. If it had been a dry battery, it would not have been injured. Now, I had asked Glyn for a dry battery, and he could not lend me one. I regard the accident as being quite due to Glyn."

Kangaroo stamped at the door.

"Glyn! Glyn!"

"However, if he will not lend me the dynamo, I shall borrow it when he is absent from the study," said Skimpole thoughtfully. "Of course, I have as much right to use the dynamo as he has."

"It belongs to him, doesn't it?"

Skimpole smiled in a condescending way.

"Oh, yes; but under Determinism—"

"Dear me," said Skimpole, "my time is far too valuable to waste here. When you go into the study, Noble, will you tell Glyn I want his dynamo, and ask him to bring it along to my room?"

"Ha, ha, ha! Oh, certainly!"

"Thank you very much!"

And Skimpole trotted along the passage and disappeared into his study.

Kangaroo delivered a formidable kick at the door.

"Glyn! Glyn! Look here, I want my boomerangs. Chuck them out of the window into the quad if you don't want to open the blessed door."

There was a click of a key in the lock. The sound of the whirring within the study had ceased.

"Hallo! He's opening the door!"

Tom Merry tried the handle, and the door swung open.

"Good!" muttered Kangaroo. "We'll slay him for this! Collar him all at once, and we'll give him a jolly good bumping."

"What-ho!"

The door swung open wide, and the three juniors rushed into the study.

Then they halted with a simultaneous gasp of astonishment. A figure stood facing them as they entered.

But it was not that of Bernard Glyn, the youthful inventor. He was not to be seen in the study. It was Skimpole!

Skimpole, whom they had just been talking to in the passage—Skimpole, whom they had seen go into his own room half a dozen doors down—Herbert Skimpole, the genius of the Shell, and the deadliest bore at St. Jim's.

He was standing in the study facing them, his eyes blinking away behind his glasses. No wonder the three juniors staggered back.

"My only hat!" gasped Blake.

"Great Scott!"

"Phew!"

"It's a giddy trick!" roared Kangaroo. "It isn't Skimmy, it's that blessed mechanical man! It's a joke of that Liverpool bouncer! I'll bash it over!"

Kangaroo seized a chair and whirled it in the air over Skimpole's double.

"Hold on!" yelled a voice.

And Bernard Glyn sprang out from behind a screen, and rushed to interpose between the wrathful Cornstalk and the wonderful invention.

"HOLD on, you ass!" shouted Glyn. Kangaroo grinned and lowered the chair to the floor.

"It's all right, kid," he said. "I wasn't going to hurt it—that was only to fetch you out. What do you mean by locking a chap out of his own study?"

"Well, you see, I was busy," said Bernard Glyn. "I've just given the finishing touches to the figure, do you see? I've made the eyelids work so that he blinks his eyes, and I've made the mouth move, too. It makes it awfully life-like."

"By Jove, it does!" said Tom Merry.

The juniors gazed at the figure in great admiration, forgetting all about the boomerangs they had come in search of for the moment.

It was really a wonderful contrivance. The figure was built up of paddings, such as are used to render plump the limbs of stage performers in tights, who do not happen to be blessed by Nature with plump limbs. The paddings were built up on a framework of steel. The face had been formed of wax, and it had been coloured into an exact imitation of life. The features were Skimpole, the form was Skimpole. The blink of the mechanical eyelids was Skimpole to the life, and the big glasses added, of course, to the effect. The tufts of hair on the large head, the frayed collar round the long neck, the shabby clothes which looked as if they had been thrown on instead of put on, the thin legs encased in baggy trousers—all seemed simply to breathe of Skimpole.

Skimpole the Second was an exact reproduction of Skimpole the First.

Once before Bernard Glyn had sprung his invention upon the startled School House, but that had been an accident—the figure had tumbled downstairs—and since then Glyn had kept it in the background. He had been working away, improving it, and there was no doubt that it was a masterpiece now.

"My hat!" said Blake, in almost an awed tone. "I don't believe Skimpole's own mother would know the difference."

"Well, yes, this one doesn't talk, and the other one does nothing else," grinned Bernard Glyn. "But I really think that's about the only difference."

"Only when Skimmy is thinking out new poetry, he goes off in a moony state, and doesn't talk," said Tom Merry. "This Skimmy might be the other Skimmy thinking out some subject like Determinism, or some other piffle!"

"By George!" exclaimed Blake. "I heard Skimmy say that his father was coming to the school to see him this week. It would be a ripping wheeze to let him see the wrong Skimmy."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I really think it's rather good," remarked Glyn. "You can get up to no end of larks with a thing like this. I—"

Ting-ting!

"Hallo, there's the bell!" said Kangaroo. "That's for afternoon school. I shall have to show you the boomerangs afterwards, kids!"

"Oh, blow school!" said Glyn. "I was going to give this chap one more touch."

"You'll have to leave it now."

"Yes, I suppose so!"

"Better come," said Tom Merry, turning back to the doorway. "You know how ratty Linton gets if we are late. He said if we were late again you would hear of it."

"I heard of it yesterday," grunted Glyn. "He jawed me about ten minutes, I think. It's all right, you chaps—cut off! I'll be down in two ticks."

"The bell's left off ringing."

"All right; buzz off!"

Kangaroo and Blake and Tom Merry ran off down the passage, and Glyn delayed a moment to give the final touch to the face of Skimpole II with his brush. When Glyn was at work on one of his inventions, even the bell for classes sometimes passed unheard, much to the wrath of the Shell Form master. Glyn was a good pupil and a hard worker, and Mr. Linton approved of him on that account; but the master of the Shell was extremely particular on the subject of punctuality, and there had been trouble about it.

Glyn dabbed with his brush, and dabbed again. The bell had long ceased ringing, and the Forms of St. Jim's were in the class-rooms. Tom Merry and Kangaroo parted with Blake in the passage. Blake dashed into the Fourth Form Room, and Tom Merry and Noble into the Shell class-room, getting in just as Mr. Linton walked up to his desk. The master of the Shell glanced round and frowned slightly. He was a somewhat formal gentleman, and disliked seeing

anybody in a hurry. However, he made no remark, and Noble and Tom Merry took their places.

"Narrow escape," murmured Monty Lowther, as Tom Merry sat down beside him. "Linton's not in his best Sunday temper this afternoon. There was a beefsteak-pie for dinner, and you know what he's like after that."

Tom Merry nodded. He knew only too well.

"Skimpy and Glyn aren't here," muttered Manners. "There will be a row as soon as Linton notices. Hallo! He's looking round. Cave!"

Mr. Linton adjusted his glasses and glanced over the Shell.

He noticed at once that two places were empty, and a heavy frown gathered on his face.

"Skimpole! Glyn!"

The names, of course, were not answered to. The boys sat very silent. Skimpole, like Glyn, was doubtless very busy with his invention.

"Ah!" said Mr. Linton. "It seems that Skimpole and Glyn do not regard lessons as being of sufficient importance to draw them from childish amusements. Merry, you may go and tell them—Stay! I will go myself. Merry, I leave you in charge of the Form while I am gone."

"Yes, sir."

Mr. Linton left the class-room.

"My only hat!" said Clifton Dane. "There will be trouble now. Linton was seeing red."

"Well, the duffers ought to come," said Manners. "Hang it! A chap ought to draw a line somewhere. We shall all be ragged this afternoon through them. When Linton once starts he jolly well never leaves off!"

"That's so!"

The class-room door opened, and Skimpole blinked in.

"Hallo! Here's one of the duffers!"

"Really, Lowther, I regard that observation as almost rude!" Skimpole blinked towards the master's desk. "I am sorry I am late, sir. I was very much interested in a scientific book, in which the author proves that, according to the theory of evolution, man and his progenitors have existed upon this planet for millions of years, and that the ancestry of the human race, therefore, stretches back far into the glacial period, when organic life on this planet was impossible. It is a most interesting subject, and proves what a wonderful thing science is when it can contain two theories that directly contradict one another, and yet which are both scientifically demonstrated to be quite true."

If Mr. Linton had been seated at his desk, Skimpole would certainly never have been allowed time to get all that off.

By the time he had finished, the scientific genius of the Shell had discovered that Mr. Linton was not there.

The Shell was chuckling joyously. Skimpole was generally regarded as a funny merchant, but to see him making a long speech to an empty desk was too funny for anything.

"Dear me!" said the short-sighted junior, blinking round. "Mr. Linton does not appear to be present."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"How on earth did you escape him?" demanded Tom Merry. "He's gone to look for you and Glyn."

"As a matter of fact, I had taken my book into the Common-room to read, and I was studying it there when Binks kindly informed me that the bell had gone some time. However, it is all right. I am here before Mr. Linton is ready to take the class, so, as a reasonable man, he cannot complain."

And Skimpole sat down.

CHAPTER 3.

Mr. Linton Loses His Temper!

BERNARD GLYN stepped back and viewed the finished figure with a great admiration in his face. Like most young inventors, he admired his own handiwork immensely. And really the contrivance was a wonderful one.

The eyelids and the mouth were both working, and, except that there was no voice, the figure seemed to live.

"My hat! I shall be late for class!" exclaimed Glyn, suddenly remembering. "I'll buzz off, I think. It means a hundred lines; never mind. I shall have to put the thing away first, though, in case anybody looks in while I'm away."

There was a large chest at one side of the study, in which Glyn was accustomed to keep his mechanical figure. He opened the lid, and as he did so the sound of hurried footsteps in the passage came to his ears.

Glyn knew those sharp, quick footsteps. His face lengthened. It was the master of the Shell coming to fetch him; and the fact that Mr. Linton was coming in person showed how annoyed he was. Glyn looked serious.

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The footsteps were approaching rapidly.

Obedying a sudden impulse, Glyn popped into the long chest, and drew the lid down upon himself. It was only putting off the evil moment, certainly, but he had a natural disinclination to facing his Form master just then.

He had barely drawn the lid down when Mr. Linton appeared in the doorway.

The Shell master had paused in passing Skimpole's study to see if the genius of the Shell was there, but he had missed Skimpole. He half expected to find him in Glyn's study with the Liverpool lad, and so he was not surprised to see the mechanical figure standing there.

More than half expecting to see Skimpole, it never even crossed his mind that this was not the real Skimpy.

He looked angrily at the figure, who blinked back at him. Skimpole II's lips moved, but he did not speak—naturally.

Mr. Linton glanced round the study for Glyn. Glyn was not to be seen. He had the lid of the chest about half an inch open, for air and to peep out. He was half sorry he had hidden himself, but it was too late to think of that now. And, indeed, the Form master's face was so angry that it was just as well that he did not find Glyn there.

"Skimpole!"

Skimpole II blinked, but did not reply.

"Skimpole!" said Mr. Linton, in a louder voice. "Where is Glyn?"

Skimpole II's lips moved, but no voice came forth.

"Boy!"

Mr. Linton simply glared. Skimpole II was staring straight at him, blinking behind his glasses, but did not speak. It seemed to the master of the Shell a piece of the most astounding impertinence.

Bernard Glyn peeped out of the chest, and he could hardly suppress a chuckle as he saw the expression upon the Form master's face. He understood at once that Mr. Linton mistook Skimpole II for the real Skimpole. He wondered breathlessly what would happen.

"Skimpole!" thundered Mr. Linton. "What do you mean? Why do you not answer me, sir? What is the meaning of this outrageous impertinence?"

Skimpole II blinked.

Mr. Linton simply trembled with anger.

"Skimpole, you are a boy of such dull and obtuse sense that I will give you another chance. I cannot think that you really mean to be insolent to your Form master. Will you answer me? Do you know where Glyn is?"

No reply.

"Why have you not come to the Form-room?"

No reply.

"Skimpole!"

Still silence!

"Skimpole!" said Mr. Linton, his voice quivering. "Skimpole! Will you speak? Will you explain to me? Boy, what do you mean? Are you mad?"

Silence.

"Boy! Speak!"

No reply.

Mr. Linton's hand closed convulsively on the cane he had thoughtfully brought with him to the study. He was white with anger now, and his eyes were blazing.

"Hold out your hand, Skimpole."

Skimpole II did not stir.

"Boy! Will you obey me?"

Not a movement on the part of Skimpole. Bernard Glyn waited breathlessly. He was getting alarmed now—matters were too serious to be funny.

"Skimpole, if you do not immediately obey me I shall thrash you with this cane in the most severe manner."

Skimpole II seemed quite unaffected by the threat. His lips moved, but he did not speak. He blinked directly at the Form master in the most exasperating way.

Mr. Linton grasped the cane hard, took a step towards Skimpole and brought it down across his shoulders with a resounding thwack.

Thwack!

The echo of it rang along the Shell passage. Skimpole II did not utter a cry. He simply staggered, and fell with a crash to the floor.

Bernard Glyn gave an inward groan. He was full of fears for his invention. The figure lay prone on the floor, without a sound, without a movement. Mr. Linton gazed at it in amazement, soon mingled with alarm.

"Skimpole! Get up immediately!"

Skimpole II did not move.

"Skimpole!"

Dead silence. Mr. Linton began to be alarmed. He remembered that Skimpole, though a most absent-minded and exasperating pupil, was not insolent, as a rule, and he began to fear that there was something seriously wrong

Kangaroo seized a chair and whirled it in the air over Skimpole's double. "Hold on!" yelled a voice, and Bernard Glyn sprang out from behind a screen and rushed to interpose between the wrathful Cornstalk and the wonderful invention.



with the lad. He could not be pretending now. What was the matter with him, then?

"Good heavens!" murmured Mr. Linton. "Is it possible that the boy is ill? Have I struck him while he was suffering from some complaint? I—I recall that there was something strangely fixed about his face when I came in. Is it possible that he was in a trance? He is a most extraordinary boy, and I should not be surprised at anything in Skimpole."

He gazed at the motionless figure. A faint ticking, which the Form master naturally concluded to be the ticking of Skimpole's watch, proceeded from it, audible in the dead silence of the study.

Mr. Linton broke the silence at last. His voice was hoarse and husky as he spoke. He very much regretted that angry blow now.

"Skimpole! Skimpole, my dear lad!"

Not a word or a motion from Skimpole!

He lay face downwards on the carpet, still as death. Mr. Linton shuddered. He knelt beside the inanimate form, and slipped his hand underneath to feel the breast, to ascertain whether the heart was beating. Was Skimpole in a fit or a trance, or was he—The Form master dared not shape that terrible thought even in his mind.

"Good heavens!" muttered the master of the Shell.

There was no motion to be felt in the breast of Skimpole II. The heart was not beating. Mr. Linton rose to his feet, and hastily quitted the study.

His quick footsteps rang away down the passage. Bernard Glyn threw up the lid of the big chest and sprang out.

He ran to the prostrate figure, lifted it up, and in a

moment had carried it to the box, and laid it in its place. He closed down the lid and locked it, and breathed a deep sigh of relief. What would happen if Mr. Linton ever discovered the deception he hardly dared to think.

He thrust the key of the chest into his pocket, and then put his head out of the door and listened. Mr. Linton was quite gone.

"My only hat!" muttered Glyn. "I shall have to prove a strong alibi over this."

He ran out of the study.

He had almost reached the stairs when he caught a distant sight of two approaching forms, and recognised Mr. Linton and the Head.

"Phew!"

He darted into the nearest room and closed the door. It happened to be Tom Merry's study. Just inside the closed door he waited and listened. The footsteps and the voices of the Head and Mr. Linton passed and died away up the passage towards the end study.

Glyn cautiously opened the door.

The Head and Mr. Linton were not in sight. The junior whipped out of the study, ran desperately for the stairs, and descended them by sliding headlong down the banisters. Two seconds later he dashed breathlessly into the Shell classroom, and sat down in his place, puffing and gasping.

There was a general yell of inquiry.

"What's happened?"

Glyn panted.

"Don't ask me! But—but look out for Linton this afternoon! I've a feeling that there's going to be trouble."

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CHAPTER 4.

Skimpole Proves an Alibi?

"EXTRAORDINARY!" said the Head. He made that remark as he moved along the Shell passage with Mr. Linton. The master of the Shell was in a state of perturbation natural in the circumstances, brimming with excitement and alarm. But the Head was not to be hurried. He could not help thinking that Mr. Linton had made some mistake somehow.

"Yes. The boy must have been in a trance, you see."
 "I did not know that Skimpole was subject to trances."
 "No; I was not aware of it myself, or I should have been more careful. But, you see, he stared directly at me, and refused to speak a word. It did not occur to me until too late that he was in a trance."

"It is very strange."
 "But—but that is not the worst. I felt his heart, and—and it had ceased to beat!"

"It really seems impossible."
 "It was true, sir."

"I hope not. But we shall see."
 "I do not understand the matter at all. If it had been Lowther, for instance, I might suspect that it was some practical joke. But Skimpole would hardly have the intelligence to carry out such a scheme."

"Oh, I am certain not."
 "You say you left him in the study?"

"Yes; just where he fell. I thought I had better call you at once, sir. I—I was very much upset."

"Naturally."
 "Here he is, sir. I—why—what?"
 Mr. Linton and the Head entered the study while the Shell master was speaking. The Form master pointed out the spot where the body of Skimpole II had lain, and then he saw that the body was no longer there.

Have YOU Won?

Result of "Outlines" Competition!

In this recent GEM competition, five "James" Cycles were offered as prizes, but in checking the claims it was found that three readers only sent correct solutions, while fifty others all had one error. Therefore, we have decided to award a cycle, as offered, to each of the three competitors who sent all-correct attempts, and we have added together the value of the remaining two cycles to provide a suitable consolation prize for each of the other fifty winners.

Here are the three fellows who win "James" Cycles:

WILLIAM ADDY, 8, Pepper View, Hunslet, Leeds, 10.

PETER BOOKLESS, Whyntay, Hillfield Road, Farnborough, Hants.

E. V. F. HOLMES, 73, Kimberley Road, West Southbourne, Bournemouth.

Special Consolation Prizes, as stated above, have been awarded to these fifty readers, whose attempts each contained one error:

J. W. Allen, 105, Wembury Street, Harpurhey, Manchester, 9;
 R. T. Baker, 13, Musley Hill, Ware, Herts.; E. D. Ball, 21, Reginald Road, Bexhill-on-Sea; W. Banks, 34, Paynter Street, Fenton, Stoke-on-Trent; M. Barrett, 28, Laburnum Road, Exeter; H. Beely, 34, Woodside, Wimborne, S.W. 19; E. G. Bishop, 57, Stewart Road, Leyton, E. 10; P. Borland, 38, Cadogan Square, London, S.W. 1;
 F. A. Browne, 78, Becket Avenue, East Ham, E. 6; A. F. Buck, 181, Gladstone Street, Peterborough; E. S. Cole, 37, Cardiff Road, North End, Portsmouth; P. Darnell, Glenryst, Church Road, Leyland, Lancs.; E. D. Doggett, 16, Hartismere Road, Fulham, S.W. 6;
 R. Edwards, 44, Bethesda Street, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent; R. W. Fearnhead, 108, Westmead Road, Sutton, Surrey; P. Forster, 125, Carlton Road, Gidea Park, Essex; N. French, 144, Rickmansworth Road, Watford; M. Galloway, 44, Worton Gardens, Isleworth, Middlesex; C. Gourlay, Royal Caledonian Schools, Bushey, Herts.; H. Groucutt, 71, Junction Road, Handsworth, Birmingham;
 E. J. Hale, 8, The Glebe, Nettleswell, nr. Harlow, Essex; P. Heggs, 18, Gopsall Street, Leicester; R. J. Hoare, 22, Dalmeny Road, Tufnell Park, N. 7; J. A. Humphreys, 25, Warwick Road, Bootle, Liverpool; C. King, White Hall, nr. Taunton; J. W. Lidstone, Warfield Cottage, Dartmouth, Devon; A. W. Linsay, 96, Morley Hill, Enfield, Middlesex; F. A. Lindfield, 33, The Bar, Southwater, Horsham, Sussex; D. F. Low, 87, Billet Road, Walthamstow, E. 17; P. Marks, 122, Grimby Road, Cleethorpes, Lincs.; S. P. Mason, 11, Metford Road, Bristol, 6; F. Phillips, 47, Bovey Street, Wellington, Som.; Miss B. Planker, 1033, Forest Road, Walthamstow, E. 17; G. Porteus, 1, St. Saviour's Avenue, Dartford, Kent; W. D. Rae, 101, Hilton Street, Aberdeen; A. Rayner, Nazareth House, Stoke Bishop, Bristol; Miss M. Reynolds, 32, Bengal Terrace, Limerick; G. Robinson, 129, Conyers Road, Newcastle-on-Tyne; R. Roots, 12, Laitwood Road, Balham, S.W. 12; P. H. Sayer, High Street, Great Cheverell, Wilts.; H. Serlvin, 113, Prince Street, Rochdale; R. K. C. Sheldon, 41, Oakhurst Road, Oswestry; C. Smith, 6, Bessborough Road, Birkenhead; Miss M. Snell, 23, Devonshire Place, Harrogate; H. Swann, 50, War Seal Mansions, Fulham, S.W. 6; G. Thompson, 17, Katherine Road, East Ham, E. 6; J. A. West, Rectory Cottage, Ingham, Bury St. Edmunds; E. Wills, 22, St. Dominic Street, Penzance, Cornwall; K. Wood, 2, Welbeck Street, Sandal, Wakefield; B. Wyles, Weir Road, Kibworth Beauchamp, Leicester.

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The place was vacant.

Mr. Linton staggered back. He glared round the study. It was empty. Skimpole was not to be seen.

The doctor contracted his brows a little.

"You see, Mr. Linton, he is gone."

"Gone!" repeated the master of the Shell faintly.

"Gone!"

"Yes, gone!"

"Yes, certainly he appears to be gone," said Mr. Linton dazedly. "I—I do not understand it. I assure you, sir, that he lay without sense or motion, and that I could detect no pulsation of the heart."

The Head smiled dryly.

"Well, I thought it must be some deception, Mr. Linton, and, you see, I was right. Skimpole is not there!"

"It is very extraordinary."

"Most extraordinary."

The Head's tone was very dry. Mr. Linton flushed slightly.

"I do not understand it," he said. "Perhaps we had better proceed to the class-room and see if Skimpole is there."

"Oh, certainly!"

The whole of the Shell were in their places when the Head and the Form master entered the class-room. Skimpole blinked round towards the door as they came in, little dreaming of the experience Mr. Linton had gone through with his double.

The Shell master gasped at the sight of the amateur Determinist, sitting in his place in the Form as calmly as though nothing had happened.

"Skimpole!" he ejaculated.

"Yes, sir!" said Skimpole.

"Stand up!" gasped Mr. Linton.

"Certainly, sir!"

Skimpole stood up. Mr. Linton stared at him as he might have stared at a ghost. The Head gazed at him narrowly. He was searching Skimpole's face—a face in which it was generally easy to read all Skimpole's thoughts. Certainly the junior did not look as if he had just been playing an astounding practical joke upon his Form master.

"So, Skimpole!" gasped Mr. Linton. "So it was all a joke?"

"Eh? What, sir?"

"You had the unheard-of, unparalleled insolence to play a joke upon me—upon your Form master!" thundered Mr. Linton.

"I do not understand you, sir. I was late for class, I admit, but I do not regard that as serious, as you were not present when I arrived. Besides, under—"

"Silence, boy! Now, answer me!"

Skimpole looked perplexed.

"How can I be silent and answer you at the same time, sir?"

"Skimpole, this insolence—"

"Perhaps you had better leave him to me," said the Head. "Answer me, Skimpole!"

"Yes, sir. I am sorry I was late for class, but I was deeply interested in a scientific book, sir, in which the author proves that the Darwinian theory, while undoubtedly quite true and correct, is hopelessly at variance with other scientific theories, equally true and correct. You see, sir—"

"I am not speaking about your being late for class, Skimpole. You were in the end study in the Shell corridor a few minutes ago—"

"I, sir?"

"Do you deny it?"

"Yes, sir."

"What!" thundered Mr. Linton. "You—you deny that you went to the study?"

"Oh, no, sir! I went there to borrow a dynamo of Bernard Glyn. But the door was locked, and I couldn't get in, and so, instead of proceeding with my invention—a splendid invention, sir, for saving labour which enables Dr. Holmes to discharge half the servants in the school—instead of that, sir, I proceeded to the Common-room with my book, to study the very interesting question of evolution, which—"

"Were you inside the end study, or were you not?"

"No, sir!"

"The boy is speaking absolutely falsely," said Mr. Linton. "He was certainly in the end study, and I saw him there a few minutes ago."

"Quite a mistake, sir," said Skimpole, blinking. "I assure you, sir, that I have been here for some time. All the fellows will bear witness that I have been in this room for the past ten minutes, at least."

The Head looked at Tom Merry.

"Is that the case, Merry?"

Tom Merry glanced at the clock over the bookcase.

"Yes, sir—ten or twelve minutes."

"At what time did you leave Skimpole in the end study, Mr. Linton?"

"Certainly not more than five or six minutes ago," said Mr. Linton, beginning to look bewildered.

He knew perfectly well that Tom Merry would not tell a lie, to save himself or anybody else; and he simply could not grasp the matter at all now.

"Do you boys bear out Merry's statement?" said the Head.

"Yes, sir," said nearly the whole of the Shell.

The Head glanced at Mr. Linton. The master of the Shell passed a hand across his brow. His face was very white. He could no longer doubt that he had been the victim of some strange hallucination, and the knowledge of it alarmed him. Bernard Glyn's face changed as he looked at him. The junior had hitherto thought only of keeping his share of the matter a secret. Now another thought came to his mind. It was not fair to leave Mr. Linton under such a misapprehension.

"I—I cannot understand it," muttered the master of the Shell. "It—it is incomprehensible. Unless I was under an hallucination, Skimpole was in the study."

"I was here, sir," said Skimpole.

"Perhaps you had better let Mr. Lathom take the class this afternoon, and retire to your room, Mr. Linton," said the Head in a low voice. "You are not in a fit state to take the class, evidently."

Mr. Linton nodded dazedly.

"Very well, sir."

He moved towards the door like a man in a dream. Bernard Glyn could stand it no longer. He sprang to his feet.

"Dr. Holmes! Mr. Linton!"

"What is it, Glyn?"

"If you please, sir, I can explain. It—it was really my fault."

"What do you mean?"

"I dodged out of sight when Mr. Linton came into my study, sir. I—I thought I was going to have a licking for being late for class. I—I have a figure in my study, dressed up like Skimpole, and—and it was that that Mr. Linton mistook for Skimpole, sir."

"Oh!"

"Impossible!" exclaimed Mr. Linton.

"It's true, sir."

"Ah!" said Dr. Holmes. "I remember hearing something about this figure before. That explains your strange mistake, Mr. Linton. I think I may return to the Sixth Form Room now."

And the Head departed with a rustle of his gown.

Mr. Linton stared at Glyn. The Liverpool lad instinctively wetted the palms of his hands. He felt that he was in for it now.

"Glyn!" said Mr. Linton at last. "You have acted very—very wrongly. But what was your motive in telling me all about it, when I had not the faintest suspicion that you were concerned in the matter?"

"I—I thought you might think you were a screw loose, sir—going off your rocker, I mean," stammered Glyn. "It—it was all so queer, sir, and—and—"

"So you made your confession to relieve my mind, Glyn?"

"Ye-es, sir."

"That was very honest and manly of you," said Mr. Linton, his face softening a little. "You deserve to be punished, Glyn, but your confession was very manly and straightforward, and I shall excuse you. We will now commence; too much time has been wasted already."

Glyn sat down, scarcely believing his ears. But he had escaped; there was no doubt about it. And—much as he had been worried by Glyn's troublesome invention—it was noticeable that Mr. Linton's manner to the Liverpool lad was very kind for the rest of the afternoon.

CHAPTER 5.

Skimpole is Detained!

"STOP him!"
"Glyn!"
"Stop!"

Bernard Glyn was hurrying off as soon as the Shell were dismissed that afternoon, when a dozen voices shouted after him in the passage. The Liverpool lad turned his head.

"What's the row?"

"We want to hear the story," said Tom Merry indignantly. "What happened in the end study when Linton came to look for you?"

"Give us the yarn," said Kangaroo.

The inventor of St. Jim's grinned.

"Oh, I see! It was funny!"

He related the story of Mr. Linton's visit to the end study,

and what he had seen from the interior of the chest. A group of Shell fellows gathered round, and a number of Fourth-Formers came crowding up with Blake. Glyn was the centre of a crowd as he related the startling adventure of Mr. Linton. One junior of the Fourth Form, in particular, kept an eyeglass fixed upon Glyn all the time, with an expression of the most intense interest.

"Bai Jove!" remarked this youth. "I wegard this as awfully funny, you know. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, a funny merchant like yourself ought to be a good judge," agreed Monty Lowther.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy turned his eyeglass upon Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"It was funny," said Blake. "It must have given Linton quite a turn when he found Skimpy sitting in the class-room."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove, it must! It was awfully decent of him to take it as he did. He might have caned Glyn, and confiscated Skimpole II, you know."

"What-ho!" said Figgins of the New House. "Linton's not a bad sort. I should like to see this blessed figure. I've heard about it before."

"It is takin' wathah a liberty with a chap to make up a figuah to imitate him," Arthur Augustus remarked thoughtfully. "I should rather resent it, I think, if I had been taken as a model."

Bernard Glyn chuckled.

"It was a toss-up whether I made it you or Skimpy," he said. "Skimpy won, that's all. He is a bit easier to make up."

"Weally, Glyn—"

"I may make you up some day."

"I should uttably wefuse my permish for anythin' of the sort. I wegard the suggestion as insultin'."

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy walked away with his head in the air. Bernard Glyn chuckled again. He left off chuckling, and gasped, as a bony finger dug him in the ribs.

"Ow! Yaroo! What's that?"

"I want to speak to you, Glyn," said Skimpole, blinking at him. "I require a dynamo for my invention. I—"

"You idiot! You've nearly punctured me!" growled Glyn, rubbing his ribs.

"I am sorry. It does not, however, matter. Can I have the dynamo?"

"I—I'm not giving any dynamo's away to dangerous lunatics," grunted the Liverpool lad. "My dynamos cost money. I'll let you have it at five per cent. on cost price, cash down."

"Unfortunately, I have no money. I very seldom have any."

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

"I require the dynamo—"

"Ach! Is tat Skimpole, ain't it?"

Skimpole turned round.

"Yes, Herr Schneider."

The German master of St. Jim's looked at him over his glasses. There was a portentous frown upon the brow of Herr Schneider.

"Skimpole, have you done dose lines after?"

"I am sorry, sir, but I have not had time to do them yet," said Skimpole politely. "I shall be very pleased to do them when I get time. At present I am busy with an invention, and also with studying the question of evolution."

"Ach! I tink, Skimpole, tat you do dose lines to-day. I tink you go into the Form-room now and write dem out before tea!" said Herr Schneider grimly.

"I am really very busy at present—"

"Go into der class-room at vunce, Skimpole!"

Herr Schneider had raised his voice. Skimpole blinked at him, and went into the room, and got out his footscaap. Herr Schneider wagged a warning forefinger at him.

"Skimpole, dose lines were given you for inattention in de Sherman class. Dey was doubled because you had not done dem. I tinks tat you are a pad poy!"

"Oh, no, sir! I have really not had time to do the lines. I have been studying the subject of evolution, which is a very deep and engrossing subject," said Skimpole.

"I tink," said Herr Schneider, "tat if you talk tat nonsense I gives you te cane. It is vat you English call piffle. You vill write out dem lines, and you vill stay in te class-room till half-past six, as a punishment for talking nonsense to a master."

And Herr Schneider stalked out of the Shell Form Room, leaving the amateur evolutionist alone in his glory.

Tom Merry looked in at the door a few minutes later.

"Hallo, Skimpy!" he said. "In the wars, as usual?"

"Yes," answered the freak of the Shell. "Herr Schneider has given me lines to do. I would much rather be in my study. I wonder whether I could venture to depart?"

"Look here!" said Tom Merry. "We've got some lines in hand in our study. You can have them if you like. Schneider never looks at them, and he won't know the difference."

"Thank you very much, Merry. This is really kind of you."

"Not at all. I'll get them."

"Yes; but—"

Tom Merry dashed away. Bore and duffer as Skimpole was, everybody rather liked him, and Tom Merry was sorry to see him sitting alone in the Form-room. Tom Merry returned in a few minutes with sheets of foolscap closely scribbled on in his own hand.

"Here you are, Skimmy."

"Thank you very much, Merry. I—"

"Cave!"

Tom Merry darted behind the bookcase, just in time. Herr Schneider blinked into the room.

CHAPTER 6.

The Other Fellow!

HERR SCHNEIDER looked round the Form-room rather suspiciously. He had thought that he heard voices as he came along the passage. However, Skimpole appeared to be alone, and, after a suspicious glance round, the German master was quite satisfied.

"Ach! You are still here, Skimpole?"

"Yes, sir."

"How was you getting on?"

"Pretty well, sir."

"You stays till six o'clock, ain't it?" said Herr Schneider, shaking a fat forefinger at the junior. "I look in every now and every den, and if you leaves te class-room, I tinks I give you te cane after."

And Herr Schneider rolled away again.

Tom Merry came out from behind the bookcase.

"So you're detained until six, whether you get the lines done or not?" he asked.

"Yes, Merry. I had forgotten that circumstance. However, the lines will be very useful, as, now, instead of working, I can make notes on my forthcoming book on the subject of evolution. I wish, however, that it would be safe to go to my study, as it is much more comfortable there."

A gleam of fun darted into Tom Merry's eyes.

"Schneider is going to look in every now and then," he remarked. "If you're missing, he'll spot it at once."

"Yes, unfortunately."

"I think it can be worked, though. If Schneider only wants to look at you, Skimpole II will do as well as Skimpole I."

"I do not understand you, Merry."

"I don't expect you to understand anything, Skimmy. You're too jolly scientific. But I'll see to it."

And Tom Merry departed. He ran along to the end study in the Shell passage. He found it crowded. A good many fellows had come along to see Skimpole II. Bernard Glyn, yielding to the general persuasion, had taken the figure out of the chest, and was showing it to the assembled juniors.

He had set the mechanism in motion, and the figure was solemnly stalking round and round the study table. Tom Merry gave a gasp.

If he had not just left Skimpole in the Shell Form Room he would certainly have been sure that this was the amateur scientist of St. Jim's.

"My hat!" said Jack Blake. "It's ripping!"

"Splendid!" said Digby.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I'll tell you what!" exclaimed Herries. "I'll set my bulldog, Towser, on to it, and see if he takes it for a live chap! It would be worth seeing, in any case."

Bernard Glyn gave the cheerful owner of Towser a withering look.

"You ass!" he said. "If you bring your measly bulldog anywhere near my study, I'll—I'll electrocute him!"

"Look here, Glyn—"

"Weally, Hewwies, I must say that I uphold Glyn in this mattah," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Towsah is quite out of place heah. He has no wespect whatevah for a fellow's twousahs!"

"It's a ripping thing!" said Figgins of the New House, who was there with the Co.—Kerr and Wynne—curious to see the strange invention of Bernard Glyn. "It's wonderful how you make it work!"

"Marvellous!" said Kerr.

"By George," said Fatty Wynn, with great admiration, THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,329.

"you only want to make it able to eat, and it would certainly be like life."

"I say, Glyn, I want you to lend me this thing!" exclaimed Tom Merry, pushing his way into the study.

The Liverpool lad looked round.

"You can want!"

"It's for a jape."

"What's the jape?" said Glyn. "Let me hear it."

"Skimmy's detained in the Form-room till six. Schneider is peeping in at the door every ten minutes to see that he's still working. Now suppose you shove Skimpole II into the class-room for a bit. He's quite good enough for Herr Schneider to look at, and Skimmy can get off."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake. "A jolly good wheeze!"

Bernard Glyn grinned.

"Good! I'll do it!"

"Make him walk along the passage," grinned Tom Merry. "I'll keep watch outside Herr Schneider's study, and give you notice when the coast is clear."

"Good!"

And in the midst of a crowd of juniors Skimpole II walked out of the study. The juniors roared with laughter at seeing him walk. Glyn took his arm, and the figure walked on beside him with the jerky, hasty stride that was so like Skimpole.

Tom Merry ran along to the German master's study to keep watch, and almost ran into Herr Schneider himself, on his way to the Shell Form Room to take another look at Skimpole.

Herr Schneider was a decidedly suspicious man, and he did not trust anybody. And indeed it would have required a great deal of faith to trust a boy to remain detained indoors if he could possibly escape.

Tom Merry slackened pace as he caught sight of Herr Schneider, and burst into a shrill whistle—a signal to Bernard Glyn to keep Skimpole II out of sight.

Herr Schneider stopped.

"Merry—Merry!"

"Yes, sir!"

"You must not whistle like tat in te passages. I like it not."

"Very well, sir!"

Tom Merry smiled demurely and passed on. Herr Schneider arrived at the door of the Shell Form Room and looked in. Skimpole was sitting at the desk, writing.

He glanced up as the herr looked in, and then dropped his eyes on his paper again.

The German master gave a satisfied grunt, and left the Form-room.

He returned to his own study, sat in his armchair, resumed his pipe, and took up his German paper. When his door was closed, Tom Merry ran back and joined the juniors round the corner.

"It's all right!"

"Coast clear?" asked Blake.

"Quite clear."

"Good! Come on!"

They walked on with Skimpole II and took him into the Form-room. Skimpole started up, and his eyes almost started out through his spectacles at the sight of his double. He started to his feet.

"What—who—"

"It's your twin, Skimmy."

"Indeed, I'm not a twin. I—I— Oh, I suppose this is your absurd invention, Glyn. You surely do not mean to say that anybody could mistake that decidedly plain and ill-favoured creature for me?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Really—"

"My dear chap, it's your double—your twin! Ha, ha, ha!"

"And it's going to take your place," said Tom Merry. "Catch on? This chap is going to sit there, and you can buzz off!"

Skimpole blinked at him thoughtfully, and then nodded his head.

"You really think it might be taken for me, Tom Merry?"

"Ha, ha, ha! Certain!"

"In that case, I shall be glad to lend my assistance to the scheme," said Skimpole. "I shall be very glad indeed to have time to commence my great book on evolution. The subject quite takes hold of me, and I shall be able to set many anxious minds at rest as to what took place about fifteen million years ago."

"Good!" said Jack Blake. "I can really imagine a lot of people hanging about in a state of suspense to know what really did take place about that time. But I say, Skimmy, is there really anybody outside a professor's



Mr. Linton grasped the cane hard, took a step towards Skimpole and brought it down across his shoulders with a resounding thwack. The echo of it rang along the Shell passage. Skimpole did not utter a cry. He simply staggered and fell with a crash to the floor.

lecture-room, or a lunatic asylum who really cares twopence about it?"

"Really, Blake——"

"Don't start Skimmy talking, or we shall be kept here all night," interrupted Tom Merry. "Buzz off, Skimmy!"

"Yaas, wathah, Skimmy, deah boy! Buzz off!"

"If any of you fellows would like to come to my study, I will explain the whole subject of evolution," said Skimpole. "I will begin at the very beginning, and take you through the matter right to the finish. I could get through by bed-time."

"My only hat!" gasped Tom Merry. "We should be fit for a lunatic asylum or a graveyard by that time. Do buzz off!"

"Really, Merry——"

"Scat!"

And Skimpole "scatted." The dummy was placed on his form at his desk, with one elbow on the desk, and a pen in the fingers of his right hand. The juniors drew back and looked at it. They could hardly believe that it was not the real Skimpole.

"Splendid!" said Figgins.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Now get out, in case Schneider comes!" grinned Tom Merry. "We can watch from the door of the Fourth Form Room."

"Good egg!"

And the juniors crowded away, and from half a dozen doors farther along they watched for Herr Schneider. He was certain to come along soon to see whether Skimpole was still in the class-room, and the question was whether he would recognise the other fellow.

CHAPTER 7. Bowled Out!

"H E'S coming!"

Jack Blake stepped back quickly from the half-open door, where he was keeping watch, and unfortunately trod upon the toes of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

There was a wail from the swell of the School House.

"Ow! You clumsy ass!"

"Quiet!"

"You have twodden on my toe!"

"Well, shut up!"

"I wefuse to shut up! You have twodden on my toe, and hurt me considerably!"

"Ring off, you ass!" whispered Tom Merry. "Schneider will hear you."

"I decline to wing off! I——"

"Bash his napper against the wall if he doesn't shut up," growled Blake. "Schneider's coming along the passage."

"I wefuse to have my nappah bashed——"

Three pairs of hands seized the swell of the School House.

Biff!

He gave a howl as his head came in contact with the wall.

"You uttah wottah!"

"Are you going to be quiet?"

"Certainly not!"

Another bash!

"Fway don't be hasty! On second thoughts, I will be quiet. I wegard you as a set of wuffianly wottahs, how-evah."

"Schneider's coming, you duffer! If he hears us—"
 "It's all right," said Tom Merry, looking over Blake's shoulder. "He's gone into the Shell Form Room."
 "Good!"

The juniors waited in tense anxiety for the result. They could not see the German master after he had entered the Shell Form Room; but they would soon hear, of course, whether he had discovered the imposture.

Herr Schneider entered the room, and blinked at the supposed Skimpole. The boy was sitting very quietly at the desk, and appeared to be lost in thought.

"Ach!" murmured Herr Schneider. "It is all right. I tinks tat I need not come again. Skimpole, you stays here till six, and den you goes."

There was no reply.

Skimpole seemed to be buried in thought.

"You hear me, Skimpole," said the herr, raising his voice a little. "I tell you tat you goes at six o'clock."

Skimpole II did not speak.

"Skimpole!"

Silence!

Herr Schneider grew pink with annoyance. He did not like being treated in this disrespectful manner.

"Skimpole, you answers me at vunce, ain't you?"

Skimpole did not move or speak. Herr Schneider gazed at him, and noted a strange stillness about the form at the desk. He would not have thought of it but for the adventure of Mr. Linton that afternoon, which the German master had heard of. It occurred to him that the same trick that had been played upon Mr. Linton might now be played upon him.

He came along the row of desks and stood close to the figure. He adjusted his glasses carefully and looked down at it with keen examination.



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The juniors in the next Form-room waited in tense anxiety. They had heard the German master's voice, though they could not distinguish the words. Bernard Glyn and Tom Merry exchanged a look of dismay.

"I—I didn't expect the duffer to begin to talk to Skimmy!" muttered Tom Merry. "This looks like giving the game away."

"I'm afraid it does."

"Bai Joye! There'll be a wow."

"I'm going to see what he's up to," muttered Tom Merry. "You fellows keep quiet, and keep the door open, in case I have to pop back."

"Yes, rather!"

Tom Merry ran lightly along the passage. He peeped into the Shell Form Room through the wide open doorway.

Herr Schneider was standing beside Skimpole II, carefully examining the figure through his glasses. His voice was audible now.

"Ach! Den tat it is, is it? It is not Skimpole at all, and it is tat a shoke is being played on me, ain't it? I tinks I make sure by sticking in te pin."

Herr Schneider fumbled in his coat and produced a pin, which he proceeded to thrust into the arm of the figure.

Skimpole II did not utter a sound.

The German master grunted.

"Ach! I vas sure now! I tinks tat I goes and fetches te Head, ain't it, and shows him vat is te shoke tat dey play on der master, pefore."

And the German master came towards the door.

Tom Merry scuttled back into the Fourth Form Room.

He was barely inside when the German master appeared in the passage and went away with his heavy tread towards the Head's study.

"What's happened?" whispered Blake breathlessly.

"He's found it out."

"Phew!"

"And he's gone to fetch the Head."

"Great pip!"

"Cut off and fetch Skimmy, Blake. He'll have to be in his place when the Head comes, or there will be a row," muttered Tom Merry. "Two of you go, and make Skimmy come instantly. We'll get Skimmy II out of sight."

"Ha, ha, ha! Good!"

Jack Blake and Monty Lowther rushed away for Skimpole. Tom Merry and Bernard Glyn ran into the classroom to get Skimpole II out of sight. The rest of the juniors lay low in the Fourth Form Room.

"Quick!" exclaimed Glyn, catching up the figure from the desk.

"Hold on! We shall never be able to get away in time. We may meet Herr Schneider and the Head in the passage!"

"Phew! Then what—"

"Into this cupboard—"

"Good! But about ourselves—"

"Into the cupboard along with it."

"Good egg!"

The big wall cupboard in the corner of the Form-room, used for easels and blackboards and roller maps, and so forth, was amply large enough to accommodate the three. In a few seconds Skimpole II was whirled into it, and the two juniors ensconced themselves inside and pulled the door nearly shut.

"There'll be plenty of room," whispered Tom Merry. "I wish they'd get Skimmy here."

"I can hear them coming, I think."

"Lie low, it might be the Head."

But a voice at the door of the Form-room told them that it was Skimpole. It was a complaining voice; Skimpole was annoyed. He was being marched into the Form-room with Blake on one side and Lowther on the other, gripping his arms, so he had very little choice about coming.

"It is really too bad," he exclaimed. "I was just beginning my work of evolution, and I have had to leave all my papers and notes on the study table. Suppose Gore comes in and throws them into the fire? It would be just like him."

"Never mind that. Look here, you'll get a licking if you're not here when Herr Schneider brings the Head," exclaimed Blake.

"Yes, rather," said Tom Merry, opening the door of the cupboard. "Sit there, Skimmy, and pretend to be thinking—you can pretend, though you can't do the real thing."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Really, Merry—"

"And don't answer at once when you're spoken to. Be buried in deep thought. Do sit down, and don't jaw. We shall all get a licking if we're bowled out, and all through helping you off detention," said Tom Merry.

"Well, really, Merry—"

"Sit down and shut up!"

Skimpole sat down in his place. There was already a sound of footsteps in the passage.

"Lowther! Blake! In here, quick!" muttered Tom Merry.

"Right-ho!"
The juniors crammed themselves into the cupboard. It was a close fit with four of them, as well as Skimpole II. But they managed it, and Tom Merry pulled the door shut, leaving about half an inch, which allowed them to take a view of the class-room.

Two forms appeared in the doorway. Herr Schneider, with many gestures and ejaculations, was guiding the Head to the spot. The doctor did not seem too well pleased. It was the second time he had been interrupted over Skimpole II.

"Quiet!" breathed Tom Merry.

And the juniors were still as mice, hardly daring to breathe as Herr Schneider and the Head strode into the room.

CHAPTER 8.

A Surprise for Herr Schneider!

DR. HOLMES glanced at the junior sitting at the desk. Skimpole was not a good actor, and he had already forgotten what Tom Merry had told him of the part he was to play. But he was unintentionally and unconsciously playing it very well.

As a matter of fact, the important subject of the evolution of the human race was occupying his whole thoughts now, and he had gone off into a deep reverie. His chin was leaning on his hand, and his whole attitude was one of quiet and intense reflection. Even his eyes had ceased to blink behind his glasses. When Skimpole was in a state of thoughtfulness like this, settling the most important subject in his mind, a cannon might have been fired without awakening him to the outside world.

Dr. Holmes gazed at him attentively.

"Really, Herr Schneider," he said, "I find it impossible to credit that any person could make a figure so closely resembling the original."

"I assure you, Herr Doctor—"

"I have seen very clever waxworks," said the Head; "but certainly nothing so lifelike as that. You must have made a mistake. This is really Skimpole!"

"But I speak mit him, and he not answer."

"He is a very absent-minded boy. He is generally thinking about matters he is not old enough to understand."

"But I stick a pin in him!"

"Ah!"

"If it is really Skimpole, he make a yell when I stick in te pin," argued Herr Schneider. "Besides, you see tat he is not lifelike, because he not move at all. Shust now when I see him he vas blink his eyes; but I suppose tat te machine have run down, because he not blink his eyes now. Don't you tink tat he looks too still for a poy, Herr Doctor?"

"He appears to be lost in thought!"

"Speak mit him and see, then!"

"Certainly! Skimpole!"

Skimpole did not hear or heed.

"Skimpole!"

"You see, mein herr, he not speak."

"It is very curious," said the Head, regarding the genius of the Shell attentively. "If that is a waxwork figure, Glyn must be a genius!"

"I will show you, mein herr!"

Herr Schneider took the pin from his coat, and stepped round behind the forms. Tom Merry suppressed a grin.

"What is it?" breathed Blake.

"He's going to stick a pin in Skimmy, to show the Head that it's not alive."

Jack Blake nearly exploded. Fortunately he restrained any audible demonstration; but he shook and shook till the easels and blackboards stowed in the cupboard shook, too. Tom Merry looked out of the slit of the door ajar breathlessly. What was about to happen?

Herr Schneider stepped behind Skimpole and dug the pin into his arm. He fully expected, of course, that the figure would remain silent and motionless, and thus demonstrate to the Head that his statement was correct. But there was a surprise in store for Herr Schneider.

The genius of the Shell, even when thinking about such an intensely important matter as the happenings of six million years ago, could not remain unmoved with half an inch of sharp pin suddenly jabbed into his arm. Skimpole came out of his reverie with a jump.

"Ow!" he yelled.

He jumped up so suddenly that the back of his head came in violent contact with Herr Schneider's chin as the German leaned over him from behind. Herr Schneider's jaw clicked shut with a sound like castanets, and he staggered back and sprawled on the desk behind.

(Continued on next page.)



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Half-a-crown will be paid for every joke that appears in this column.

BOTH THE SAME!

Bill: "What did the landlady do when she found that you had left the light on all night?"

Ted: "She turned us both out."

R. MARKS, 6, Connaught Road, Littlehampton, Sussex.

BUT HOW?

Mike (trying on new pair of boots): "Begorrah, I'll never be able to get these boots on till I've worn them a time or two!"

T. M. EDWARDS, 11, Imperial Avenue, Liscard, Wallasey.

PERSON UNKNOWN!

Teacher: "An anonymous person is a person who does not wish to be known—who is that laughing?"

Small Voice: "An anonymous person, sir!"

ERIC BAKER, Bull Hotel, Morecambe.

SONG AND DANCE!

Policeman (to street musician): "I shall have to ask you to accompany me."

Musician: "Certainly. What would you like to sing?"

ERIC JOHNSON, 117, Prince Street, Rochdale, Lancs.

THE TREASURE HUNT.

Houseowner: "Hey! What are you doing here?"

Burglar: "Looking for money."

Houseowner: "Wait a minute while I switch on the light, then, and we'll both have a look!"

C. WOMBELL, 84, Sandringham Road, Intake, Doncaster.

NOT WHAT SHE MEANT!

A letter received by a schoolmaster: "Dear Sir,—Please excuse my son Willie from school this morning as he fell in the mud. By doing the same you will greatly oblige—Mrs. Smith."

H. GILES, 16, Alice Street, Bilston, Staffs.

"LAGGING" BEHIND.

Warder (to convict): "I understand you are very good at music."

Convict: "Only fairly good, sir. You see, I'm usually behind a few bars!"

F. T. PEARCE, Junr., 27, William Street, Lozells, Birmingham.

NOT AS A GIFT!

The two taxi-drivers glared at each other angrily. Then: "What's the matter with you?" demanded one. "Yer gave me a nasty look."

"I didn't give it to yer," replied the other. "You were born wit it!"

N. TRACY, 127, Melrose Avenue, London, N.W.2.

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"Ach!" he gasped. "Ach! Himmel!"
Skimpole clapped his hand to his arm and whirled round, blinking away wildly.

"What—what does this mean?" he exclaimed. "I—I have been stabbed. I am hurt." He blinked in amazement at the German master. "Herr Schneider, is it possible that you, as a master of this school, are capable of playing such silly tricks?"

"Mein gootness!"

Herr Schneider rubbed his injured chin and stared helplessly at Skimpole.

"Mein gootness, it is alive!"

"Dear me!" said the Head.

"I am surprised—astounded!" said Skimpole. "It is most unpleasant to be suddenly startled by an absurd practical joke. I am surprised at you, Herr Schneider!"

"Mein gootness!"

"In Lowther or Blake," said Skimpole, assuming a magisterial air, "I should not be surprised; but in a gentleman of your age, Herr Schneider—"

"Mein gootness!"

"Skimpole!"

Skimpole turned round and blinked at the Head, seeing him for the first time.

"Yes, sir!"

"Herr Schneider has made a mistake. He imagined that you had left the Form-room, and that a dummy figure had been put in your place."

"It is very strange! I stick te pin into him, and he not move before. Now I stick te pin into him, and he shoomp up and pang against mein chin, ain't it?"

"I have hurt the back of my head," said Skimpole. "I trust I shall not have a headache. It would be most unfortunate at the present moment, because I am thinking out the whole subject of the descent of man, for a book I propose writing, which will, I think, cause something of a sensation in the scientific world."

"Skimpole!"

"Yes, sir! It is quite a mistake to suppose that Darwin and Spencer and Huxley have said the last word on these subjects. I think I shall be able to let in a flood of light which will dazzle the scientific world."

"Skimpole—"

"You see, sir, a great and original brain is certain to find out something new. It is a mistake to suppose that the question of the evolution of the human race is unimportant and a terrible bore. It is nothing of the sort. Think of the intense satisfaction it will cause to every scientific mind to know that at a certain period, between six and sixty million years ago, the human race—"

"Skimpole, you must not talk nonsense!"

"This is not nonsense, sir," said Skimpole, in astonishment. "This is science. It is quite a mistake to suppose that science is at all nonsensical—a common mistake, I know, but quite a mistake, all the same. I will explain to you—"

"You will do nothing of the sort, Skimpole. You will leave this room at once!"

"I should like to explain—"

"You may go!"

"Oh, very well, sir! But my theory is really a most important one. By tracing a resemblance to the monkey tribe in human features, I can prove—"

"Don't be stupid, boy!"

"Not at all, sir. Take your features, for example—"

"Skimpole!"

"The strong resemblance to the features of a monkey I saw in the Zoo is very striking. Now, that proves—"

Dr. Holmes made a step to the desk and seized a pointer. Skimpole gave him one blink and bolted. The Head breathed hard for a moment.

"A most extraordinary boy!" he exclaimed. "Extraordinary, indeed! I should certainly punish him for his impertinence if you had not already hurt him, Herr Schneider, by pricking him with that pin."

"Mein gootness!"

"You see now that you have made a mistake."

"Mein gootness!" Herr Schneider seemed to be only able to repeat those words. Dr. Holmes quitted the Form-room, and Herr Schneider remained there, blinking dazedly. "Mein gootness! First I stick te pin in him, and he not move nor squeak. Den I sticks te pin in him, and he shoumps oop and knocks mein chin fery hard. It is strange!"

"I shall burst a rib if he doesn't go!" murmured Jack Blake.

"Ach! Here are te lines, too! Ach! He has written dem! Tat is fery strange! It is certain tat te dummy could not write te lines. It must have been Skimpole. But for why did he not squeak ven tat I sticks te pin into him before? It is fery strange! Mein gootness, I am to not understand it after!"

And the German master, shaking his head slowly and solemnly, walked out of the Form-room. The hidden juniors hardly waited for him to be gone before they burst out of the cupboard, shrieking with laughter.

"Oh, my hat!" sobbed Blake. "Mein gootness! Why for did he not squeak when tat I sticks de pin in him before?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Fancy Herr Schneider playing a trick like that on an innocent kid, and Skimpy lecturing him on the subject!" grinned Tom Merry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I thought I should have died in that cupboard," said Monty Lowther pathetically. "I would have given a week's pocket-money to be able to yell."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It looks to me as if we shall be able to get some fun out of this dummy," said Tom Merry. "Better get it out of sight now, though; it will be safer."

And Skimpole II was rushed back at once to his hiding-place in the end study.

CHAPTER 9.

Kerr's Great Wheeze!

FIGGINS & Co. sat in their study in the New House. There had been silence in the study for some minutes, and that silence still continued. Figgins & Co. were not cheerful.

They had raided the School House, and they had been defeated. That was nothing new. In the alarms and excursions between the two Houses at St. Jim's the honours were about equally divided. Each House claimed to be Cock House, but the question was never settled, and probably never would be settled.

But the defeat had been such a public and humiliating one. Almost the whole of the New House had been witnesses of the return of Figgins & Co.

They had been frog's-marched across the quad, under the eyes of a grinning crowd, and dumped down on the

Potts, the Office Boy!



steps of the New House under the eyes of their own House-fellows. It was too bitter.

The New House juniors were openly sniffing at the great Figgins. His leadership of the juniors of his House was in danger. If there had been any other junior in the House with abilities to take the lead it is probable that Figgins would then and there have fallen from his high estate. But the only fellow who could possibly have supplanted Figgins was Kerr, and Kerr would sooner have cut off his right hand.

So the New House juniors grumbled and jeered, and asked Figgins whether it was time to go out of business, and whether he particularly enjoyed frog-marches, and so on, till the chums of the New House had retired to their study in a state of boiling wrath and exasperation.

There was no one belonging to the Lower Forms in the New House to take Figgins' place if he fell, but it was quite possible that unless he did something to re-establish his prestige his leadership would be disregarded, and the New House juniors would be in the same state as the chosen people of old, when there was no king in Israel, and every man did that which was right in his own eyes.

Figgins & Co. had been chipped and sniffed at unmercifully. As they sat in the study it was evident that they had not taken the chipping patiently. Kerr had a cut lip, and Figgins a discoloured eye. Fatty Wynn was still mopping his nose with a handkerchief which showed plentiful stains of gore.

"Well, this is what I call not nice," said Figgins at last.

Kerr started. They had been silent so long that Figgins' voice in the quiet study was quite startling.

"Yes," he said.

"It's rotten," said Fatty Wynn. "Pratt said you were an ass, Figg!"

Figgins snorted.

"You needn't repeat to me all the piffle Pratt said," he replied crossly.

"Yes; but he said you were an ass——"

"Oh, rats!"

"He said——"

"Oh, do ring off, Fatty! You make me tired."

"But it's so rotten, you know," said Fatty Wynn. "He said you were an ass, and I punched his nose, and he punched mine."

"Well, mop it, then. It will mend in time, I expect, and if it doesn't it doesn't matter."

"Doesn't it?" said Fatty Wynn indignantly. "But I'm not thinking about my nose. I was thinking of something else. I remembered afterwards that Pratt was standing a feed in his study this evening. Of course, he won't ask me now that I've slogged him on the boko. It's not to be expected."

"And, of course, you're hungry?" jeered Figgins.

"Well, I get so awfully peckish in this weather, you know. I'm always hungry at this time of the year. And Pratt was standing a decent feed, too. He had a tip from an uncle or an aunt or a grandfather, or something of that sort."

"Blow Pratt!"

"Oh, blow Pratt as much as you like, but the feed——"

"Blow the feed!"

"It's no good being an ass, Figg. I was wondering whether I could explain to Pratt. After all, it isn't exactly unfriendly to punch a chap's nose, is it?" said Fatty Wynn

argumentatively. "I mean, you can explain away a thing like that, can't you?"

"I say, you chaps——" began Kerr.

"Well, what do you think?" asked Wynn eagerly.

"I think I've got a good idea."

"You think I could explain to Pratt, and——"

"Pratt! Pratt! What's Pratt got to do with it?"

"I was just saying that Pratt's standing a feed, and I——"

"Oh, I haven't been listening to you!"

Fatty Wynn simply glared.

"Oh, you haven't! But you said you had a good idea? What do you mean, you ass?"

"I wasn't thinking of your blessed feeds," said Kerr disdainfully. "I've a good idea for getting level with the School House, I think."

"Oh," said Fatty Wynn, in a disappointed tone.

But Figgins gave an eager start.

"Good!" he exclaimed. "What is it, Kerr, old man? We've got to think of something or we shall have those duffers barking at us all the time now!"

"That's what I was thinking."

"Well, go ahead."

Figgins was eager. He knew how keen and canny his Scots chum was. Although Figgins was the acknowledged leader of the New House juniors, it was well known that Kerr was responsible for most of the good ideas that proceeded from the study.

"I was thinking about that blessed mechanical figure," said Kerr.

"We tried to raid it," said Figgins gloomily. "We were done! It was awfully unlucky. We might have managed it if the real Skimmy hadn't been there. But our luck was out."

"One swallow doesn't make a summer," said Kerr sagely.

"You're thinking of trying again?" said Figgins, in a doubtful sort of way.

Kerr shook his head.

"No; Glyn will take jolly good care now to keep the thing safe. But my idea is to jape the School House wasters off their own bat, so to speak. They've made a Skimpole II. Why shouldn't we make a Skimpole III?"

"Eh?"

"You know I'm pretty good at impersonations," said Kerr modestly. "When I was made up as Lathom once I took in Mr. Railton. I took in Study No. 6 by making up as a detective. I impersonated Skimpole himself once, and was only discovered by accident."

"That's so!"

"Well, then, there you are!"

Figgins stared at his chum for some moments, and then he jumped to his feet with a war-whoop of delight.

"My only hat! Ripping!"

"But I don't quite catch on," said Fatty Wynn. "Where's Skimpole III to come from?"

Kerr tapped his chest.

"Here he is!"

"You?"

"Exactly!"

"Phew!"

"What larks!" chuckled Figgins. "Mind, keep it dark. It will be a jape that will make the New House see that this study isn't played out yet. My hat! I foresee the highest of high old times!"

SEE?



CHAPTER 10.

Skimpole II Speaks!

"HALLO, Glyn! Where are you bolting off to?" asked Blake, the inventor of the Shell passed him with rapid steps after lessons the next morning.

"I'm off to my study."

"More giddy inventions?"

"I'm going to give Skimpole II a finishing touch. I've been thinking that with a new contrivance in his head he might be able to talk, you know," said Bernard Glyn, his eyes beaming with his new ideas. "I could have a sort of gramophone attachment in his head, you know—it's hollow, like that of the other Skimmy—and he could be made to talk when I turn the record on."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What a jolly good wheeze!" exclaimed Digby. "I don't believe it will work, though."

"Well, you'll see," said Glyn.

He hurried off to the end study.

And no more was said on the subject of Skimpole II until the Shell were dismissed at half-past four.

Bernard Glyn was surrounded by eager inquirers as soon as the Shell was out of the Form-room. Kangaroo and Dane were particularly keen about the matter. They had had to pay for their curiosity with lines, but they did not care. Lines were not new to them. The Cornstalk grabbed Glyn by the back of the collar as he was hurrying off to the study.

"You've made it talk?" he demanded.

"Eh? Yes!"

"How?"

"Oh, it was simple enough!" said Glyn, coming to himself and discussing his triumph eagerly. "You see, I've made lots of gramophone records, and it's simple as A B C. All I had to do was to imitate Skimpole's voice into a receiver, making up a silly-ass speech such as he makes, and then I had my record. Well, I've arranged it on a disc, with a fixed needle with a sapphire point. I've fixed it inside the head of the figure, and there's a spring to wind up the disc, and when you touch a button it starts. See? Then it winds off the Skimpole speech."

"Then he only makes one speech?"

"Did you think he could recite Shakespeare, or preach a sermon?" asked Bernard Glyn indignantly. "You want a lot, I must say."

"Oh, don't get ratty! Let's go and hear him speechify!"

"I'd rather you waited till—"

"Rats! We're going to hear it now."

"Oh, all right; come on!" said the inventor resignedly. The chums hurried to the end study. There Bernard Glyn locked the door to keep out curious intruders, of whom several followed them into the Shell passage. The curious ones, after kicking at the door a little, took their departure.

Glyn lifted the figure out of the box, and Skimpole II stood upon his feet before them. The inventor touched a spring, and the eyes behind the big glasses began to blink, and the lips to move.

"Make him talk!" said Kangaroo.

"All right; he's just going to begin!"

Glyn touched a button under the tufty hair at the back of Skimpole II's head. Then from the mouth came a speech in cracked, squeaky tones, strongly resembling Skimpole's.

It was really astounding, and the chums yelled with laughter, while congratulations were showered upon Glyn.

"Now for a little jape!" grinned Kangaroo.

CHAPTER 11.

D'Arcy Sees It All!

"GIVE me your arm, Skimmy, my son," said Kangaroo, with a grin; and he linked arms with Skimpole II.

Clifton Dane, grinning, too, took the other arm. Bernard Glyn gave the figure a touch and it started walking. They walked with it out of the study and along the passage, and several fellows glanced at them without suspecting for a moment that it was not the real Skimmy.

The real Skimpole was safely locked up in his study—Glyn had seen to that—and could not interfere with the little jape of the chums of the end study.

Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell, met them in the Lower Hall, and he glanced curiously at them.

"Ah, Glyn!" he said. "I wish you would let me see that figure of yours some time, as I am very much interested. Not now, as you are going out."

"I should be glad to show it to you now, sir, if you like," said Glyn.

"Oh, no! Another time will do."

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"I have succeeded in making it talk, sir."

"Indeed!"

"Yes; it can talk Determinism now, just like the real Skimpole, sir. I suppose you have heard Skimpole talk Determinism, sir?"

"I really—"

Glyn gave the figure a touch on the back of the head. Skimpole II started at once.

"The first principles of Determinism may be stated in this way. Everything being as it is, is evidently as it is."



Skimpole came out of his reverie with a jump. "Ow!" he yelled as he came in contact with Herr Schneider's chin as the German master I...

Mr. Linton frowned.

"Nonsense, Skimpole!"

"And must be considered as a result, resulting from a cause of series of causes—"

"Skimpole!"

"Each of these causes must be considered as being in part the producer of the result. It is, therefore, clear—"

"Skimpole!"

"That as nothing exists, except heredity and environ—"

ment, heredity and environment are responsible for man as we find him—"

"Skimpole, will you cease talking this utter nonsense?" exclaimed the master of the Shell sharply.

"Man, as we find him being the creature of heredity and environment—"

"Skimpole!"

"And, therefore, being just what he is—"

"Silence!"

"Is demonstrably—"



umped so suddenly that the back of his head came into violent aim. "Ach!" gasped Herr Schneider. "Ach! Himmel!"

"One more word, Skimpole, and I will cane you!"

The chums of the end study could contain themselves no longer. They burst into a loud and simultaneous chuckle. The master of the Shell stared at them angrily.

"This is very unseemly, Glyn."

Glyn tapped the back of Skimpole II's head, and stopped him. There was a slight whir, and silence on the part of Skimpole II.

"I'm sorry, sir, but—"

"I shall cane Skimpole for his impertinence. Follow me to my study at once, Skimpole!"

Skimpole did not move.

"Do you hear me, Skimpole?" thundered Mr. Linton.

"If you please, sir—"

"Not a word, Glyn!"

"But—"

"Not a word! Follow me at once, Skimpole!"

Skimpole II did not obey, and Mr. Linton started forward, and grasped him by the shoulder. When he felt the lifeless substance under the cloth of the jacket, he gave a start.

"What—what!"

"It's—it's Skimpole II, sir!"

"Is—is it possible?"

"Yes, sir. I was going to tell you, sir."

"But he—he talks!" gasped the master of the Shell, gazing at the figure in blank astonishment.

"It's a phonographic arrangement inside his napper, sir."

"I—I mean his head, sir."

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated Mr. Linton. "Wonderful!"

"Would you like to hear him run on, sir?"

"Yes, certainly! This is most amazing."

Bernard Glyn restarted the phonograph, and Skimpole II resumed the thread of his discourse where he had dropped it and ran on to the end.

"Is the product of the causes that have worked together to produce him, and hence the first principles of Determinism are incontrovertibly established."

"Dear me!"

Mr. Linton gazed almost in awe at Skimpole II.

"That's all he can say at present, sir," said Bernard Glyn. "I hope to make him talk more presently, sir."

"It is wonderful!"

Mr. Linton walked on, very much amazed. The chums of the end study walked Skimpole out into the quadrangle. Tom Merry & Co. were on the steps, and Tom Merry was talking to the chums of Study No. 6.

"Hallo! Here comes Glyn with Skimmay!" said D'Arcy suddenly.

Tom Merry laughed.

"Oh, that's Skimpole II!"

"Pwaw don't be funny, Tom Mewwy! I know the weal thing fwom the sham, if you don't. I wegard you as an ass!"

"I tell you that's Skimpole II!" shouted Tom Merry.

"Wats!"

"Which Skimpole is it, Glyn?" demanded Monty Lowther.

"Second—mine!"

"Oh, pwaw don't be funnay, Glyn!" said D'Arcy, turning his eyeglass scrutinisingly on the figure. "I know too much for that. Skimmay, deah boy, it's no use your playin' the giddy goat! We know you!"

"Blessed if I don't believe it's the real Skimmy!" said Jack Blake. "Let's hear him talk."

"Certainly!"

Skimpole II started.

"The first principles of Determinism may be stated in this way. Everything being as it is, is evidently as it is—"

"Bai Jove! That's the weal Skimmay!"

"And must be considered as a result, resulting from a cause or a series of causes."

"Bai Jove!"

"Each of these causes must be considered as being in part the producer of the result—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It is, therefore, clear that, as nothing exists except heredity and environment—"

"Oh, stop him!" gasped Tom Merry.

Glyn stopped him.

"Well, it's wonderful!" said Blake.

"Amazing!" said Digby.

"Wats!"

"Look here, Gussy—"

"My dear fellows, I can see it all. Skimmay is joinin' with these asses in a little joke on us," explained D'Arcy, with a smile of superior wisdom. "That's what it is. I saw it all fwom the beginnin'."

"March!" said Glyn.

The chums of the end study walked on, and Skimpole II walked on with them. He walked right into Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Skimmay! You clumsy ass!"

The mechanical figure marched straight on, and D'Arcy skipped straight out of the way. He seized the figure by the shoulder.

"Look here, you ass— Bai Jove!"

Skimpole II might look like Skimmy, but he did not feel like Skimmy.

like Skimmy. D'Arcy released him with an expression of wonder.

"Gweat Scott!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake.

"Bai Jove! It is weally the mechanical figuah, you know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I fail to see any cause for wibald laughtah. I——"

"You saw it all along, didn't you?" shouted Tom Merry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yes, he saw it all along, Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Blake——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you intend to continue this wibald mewwiment, there is nothin' for me to do but to wetiah!" said Arthur Augustus, with a great deal of dignity.

And he retired, leaving the juniors yelling with laughter. Meanwhile, the chums of the end study and Skimpole II were promenading in a stately manner in the quadrangle.

CHAPTER 12.

Figgins is Taken In!

FIGGINS & CO. had come out of the New House and they were chatting together under the elms, when Figgins caught sight of the chums of the end study.

"Hallo, here's the giddy inventor!" he remarked. "I wish that was the second Skimpole they had with them, and we'd have a try to collar it."

"Perhaps it is," said Kerr.

"Oh, no! It's the real thing this time. Glyn wouldn't have the cheek to bring it out for a walk in the quad; besides, it couldn't walk as well as that."

"Oh, I don't know——"

"I was thinking——" began Fatty Wynn.

"Well, what were you thinking about, Fatty? Is it Skimpole I or Skimpole II?"

"Eh? Oh, I wasn't thinking about that," said Fatty Wynn. "I was thinking that we hadn't had tea yet, and it's a bit late, and——"

"Rats! Let's go and speak to Glyn."

"You see, I'm hungry——"

"That's no news; you're never anything else."

"Well, you see I do get peckish in this weather," said Fatty Wynn. "At this time of the year, I seem to have a keener appetite than at other times."

"I've heard you say that in every blessed month of the year, I believe," said Figgins. "Never mind your unearthy appetite now. Let's get on."

"But, really——"

"Rats! Come with me!"

And Fatty Wynn sighed and followed his leader. Figgins looked keenly at the figure that was strolling along with its arms linked in those of Clifton Dane and Kangaroo. The circumstances made Figgins suspicious. The chums of the end study never went about arm-in-arm with the real Skimpole.

"I suppose that's the blessed dummy you've got there," said Figgins.

"What-ho!" said Bernard Glyn.

"Then we're jolly well going to have it!" said Kerr. "Here, New House—New House, this way! School House cads on our side of the quad! Rescue!"

"Rally, New House!" roared Figgins.

There was a rush of feet at once.

The chums of the end study looked a little alarmed. They had brought the figure out there to guy Figgins & Co., but they didn't want to have it raided by the New House juniors under their very noses.

"Hurry up, New House!"

"This way!"

"Hold on!" said Bernard Glyn. "Jaw to them Skimmay, and let them see whether you're real or not."

The Liverpool lad's keen wits were equal to the occasion. He gave Skimpole II a friendly tap on the head as he spoke.

Skimpole II blinked and began at once.

"The first principles of Determinism may be stated in this way. Everything being as it is, is evidently as it is——"

"Oh, rats!" grunted Figgins. "It's all right, you fellows. It's the real Skimmy!"

Pratt snorted.

"Of course it's the real Skimmy!" he said. "Nice ass you are, Figgins!"

"Are you looking for another thick ear, to match that one you've got, Pratt?" demanded Figgins.

"Oh, rats!" said Pratt, walking away.

Meanwhile Skimpole II was rattling on.

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"... and must be considered as a result resulting from a cause or series of causes——"

"Oh, shut up!" growled Figgins.

"Each of these causes must be considered as being in part the producer of the results."

"Stop it, you silly ass!"

"It is, therefore, clear that, as nothing exists except heredity and environment, heredity and environment are responsible for man as we find him."

"Br-r-r-r-r!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry, coming up breathlessly. He had dashed across the quad to the rescue with his chums as soon as he saw the hostile demonstration of the New House fellows; but the rescue was not needed.

"Blessed idiot!" grunted Figgins. "If that had been Skimpole II we'd have had him this time, and no mistake!"

"What-ho!" said Kerr.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here!" exclaimed the exasperated Figgins. "What's the joke? I don't see anything to get the sniggers about!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You frabjous ass!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry. "That is Skimpole II, that's all!"

Figgins jumped.

"What?"

"Start him again, Glyn."

Bernard Glyn grinned cheerfully.

"Certainly!"

"It's impossible!" gasped Figgins. "Impossible! It was Skimpole's voice, Skimpole's blink, Skimpole's silly rot!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Glyn started the mechanical figure again, and the voice ran on through the set speech from start to finish.

"My only hat!" gasped Figgins.

A faint, whirring sound showed that Skimpole II had come to the end of his record. Kerr was busily taking down the words in shorthand as the figure uttered them. Kerr, who could do nearly everything, wrote shorthand as easily as Latin, and Latin as easily as English. He was taking the speech down like a reporter—for his own reasons.

"Well, it's wonderful!" said Figgins. "Blessed if I should have guessed that it wasn't the real silly ass all the time!"

"Yes, rather!" chuckled Fatty Wynn. "I was taken in!"

Bernard Glyn chuckled, and he walked on with his chums and the mechanical figure, seeking fresh victims for his little joke.

Kerr chuckled softly as they went away. Figgins looked at him.

"What are you gurgling about?" he demanded. "It seems to me that the joke is up against us this time."

"The Scots junior chuckled again."

"Not wholly, old chap. I've taken down the speech in shorthand."

"What's the good of that? I saw you doing it, and I'm blessed if I can see what good it's going to do," said Figgins, looking puzzled.

"Let's go and talk it over in the tuckshop," said Fatty Wynn, with the air of a fellow who had hit a really brilliant idea.

Figgins grunted.

"Shut up, Fatty! Now, what do you want with Skimpole II's speech, Kerr?"

"To learn it by heart."

"Eh?"

"Don't you see," grinned Kerr. "Skimpole III will have to spout the same piffle, if he's to be taken for Skimpole II?"

"Why, of course! What a chap you are for thinking of things!" exclaimed Figgins, in great admiration. "I should have thought of it afterwards, you know."

Kerr smiled.

"Well, I thought of it at the time, that's all."

"And you've got it all down?"

"Every word."

"Jolly good!"

"You can say it over in the tuckshop," said Fatty Wynn encouragingly. "We'll hear you, and see if you've got it right. I say, I heard from young Jameson that they're going to have a feed in Tom Merry's study to-night."

"Blow Tom Merry's feed!"

"Yes, but——"

"Why don't you join the School House, and have done with it?" demanded Figgins scornfully.

"Look here, Figgins——"

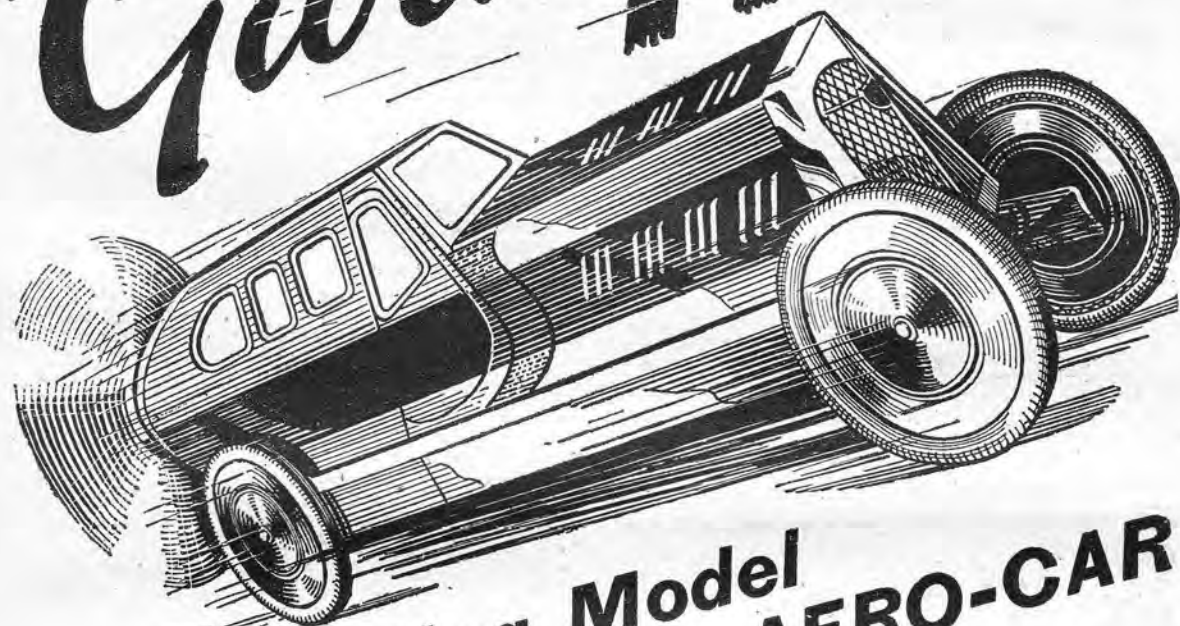
"I'm going to practise this a bit," said Kerr. "It won't take me more than ten minutes to get it off, and I can do Skimpole's voice already."

"Come to the tuckshop, and——"

"I'm going to the study."

(Continued on page 13.)

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"But—"

But Kerr was gone.

Fatty Wynn grunted discontentedly.

"I say, Figgy, are you coming to the tuckshop? Hallo, he's gone, too! I shall go, anyway."

And Fatty Wynn ambled along to the school shop, and did not leave it again till his last penny had passed across the counter. Then, with a feeling of more fullness than comfort, he ambled back to the New House.

He ascended to the study, and as he approached it he heard a voice he could have sworn was the squeaky voice of Herbert Skimpole.

Fatty Wynn looked into the study. He half-expected to see Skimpole there, but the genius of the Shell was not present, neither was his mechanical double.

It was Kerr who was holding forth, in Skimpole's words and Skimpole's voice, to the grinning and delighted Figgins.

"Splendid!" ejaculated Figgins enthusiastically.

"Ripping!"

"What-ho!" said Fatty Wynn. "Blessed if I didn't think it was the other silly ass when I heard you."

"What!"

"The other silly ass—Ow! What are you clucking cushions at me for, Kerr, you howling duffer!"

And Fatty Wynn sat on the floor and gasped. And Kerr, without condescending to explain why he had hurled the cushions, squeaked through the speech again and again, till he was, as Figgins said, letter-perfect and squeak-perfect in the part, and was quite certain that he would make no mistake when he came to repeat the words in his character of Skimpole III.

CHAPTER 13.

Many Invitations!

BERNARD GLYN and his chums walked into the School House with Skimpole II. They were very well satisfied with their success. Skimpole II was panning out well. There seemed to be endless possibilities of fun—more possibilities, in fact, than the chums of the end study guessed—for they had no suspicions of the plans that were working in the minds of Figgins & Co.

As they walked the mechanical junior along the Shell passage, there came a sound of hammering and complaining from within Skimpole's study.



The Bounder of Greyfriars!

ONE of the most perplexing schoolboy characters at Greyfriars is Herbert Vernon-Smith of the Remove Form—a mixture of good and bad. When he's running straight there's no finer chap breathing than "Smithy."

But when he breaks out he well merits the nickname of the "Bounder" which was given him when he first joined up with Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars, whose exciting adventures are told in breezy fashion each week in

The Magnet

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Glyn gave quite a jump.

"Phew! I forgot Skimmy. He's still in there."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Kangaroo. "He's been shut up there for about an hour, then!"

"My hat! Poor old Skimmy!"

Hammer, hammer, hammer!

"I say, let me out—I want to get out! Hallo, there! I say!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ah, there is somebody there! Pray open the door. It appears to be locked on the outside. Pray open it."

Bernard Glyn unlocked the door and opened it. Skimpole blinked out at the chums of the study, and started at the sight of his double.

"Dear me! I have been locked in my study, Glyn."

"Dear me!" said Glyn.

"Yes, I have been a prisoner for some time. I was hard at work on my book dealing with the important question of evolution and the origin of species, and did not notice that someone was fastening my door."

"Dear me!"

"It was very inconsiderate, because I wished to obtain a book of reference from the library. I am not quite certain whether man originated in a tiny atom of jelly floating in the sea, or in a fragment of rotten fruit that turned to life in the sun. It is a most important point."

"Yes, and a jolly savoury one, too," said Glyn cordially.

"It seems to me that I've heard a different story of the origin of the human race, but I suppose you've gone one better?"

"Oh, yes!" said Skimpole confidently. "There isn't much doubt now that the theory of evolution is correct. Of course, there isn't any proof, but you can't expect everything. A chap is bound to have some faith, you know."

"Well, if it's a question of faith, I'd rather stick to faith in what I was brought up to believe," said Glyn. "Skimpole, old chap, why don't you let that rot alone? Why don't you go in for gymnastics, or something, instead?"

"Really, Glyn—"

"Or marbles," said Kangaroo. "Marbles would just about suit your intellect—"

"Really, Noble—"

The chums of the end study chuckled and walked on, and Skimpole blinked after them with a shake of the head, and hurried away to discover his book of reference. Skimpole II was laid away in his box, and locked up safe from New House raids. Then Tom Merry looked into the end study.

"You fellows coming along?" he asked.

"Whither, my son?"

"Feed in my study."

"Jolly good!" said Kangaroo heartily. "I'm jolly hungry, and I really think you've sprung a good idea on us this time, Tom Merry."

"Come on, then, duffers!"

And Tom Merry vanished.

The sound of raised voices in Study No. 6 drew Tom Merry's attention in that direction.

"Hallo!" he shouted, putting his head in at the study door. "What's the trouble?"

Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass upon the hero of the Shell.

"Blake has made a most insulting proposition, Mewwy. He suggests that Bernard Glyn should be requested to make a D'Arcy II, on the same lines as Skimpole II."

"Jolly good wheeze!" said Tom Merry heartily.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Well, it would be funny," said Jack Blake. "Gussy is a funny merchant, and a Gussy II would make the school shriek."

"I should wefuse to give my permish for anythin' of the sort. I—"

"I looked in—"

"You are intewwuptin' me, Tom Mewwy—"

"Exactly. I looked in to tell you it was time to come to tea in my study."

"Oh!"

"Come on. Lowther's making the tea, and Manners is cutting the cake. Come on!"

"Wathah!"

And the Fourth-Formers followed Tom Merry down the passage.

Skimpole looked out of his study.

"Ah, I hear that you are standing a feed in your study, Merry."

"Go hon!"

"I will come, if you like. I have missed tea in Hall, owing to my being deeply engrossed in my book on evolution."

Tom Merry linked his arm in Skimpole's.

"Come on, Skimmy—we shall be delighted. Help him, Blake!"

"Certainly!"

"Ow! Blake, I strongly object to the brutal impact of a

boot upon my person. I regard it as a custom surviving from barbaric times.

"Ow, ow, ow!"

Skimpole broke into a run as Blake lifted his foot again, and bolted into Tom Merry's study, and the juniors followed him in, laughing. There was a pleasant smell of freshly made tea in the study.

The juniors gazed around them with looks of appreciation. There were heaps of cakes and buns and tarts, and other things calculated to make youthful mouths water.

"My hat!" said Blake. "This is ripping! Have you come into a fortune, or dug up a rich uncle, or what, Tom Merry?"

"Yaas, wathah! It is certainly wippin', deah boy!"

Tom Merry laughed.

"I've had a tip from my old governess," he said. "Miss Fawcett has come down handsome. Of course, I was bound to share my good luck with such fellows as you are. What would a feed be without Gussy's aristocratic chivvy at the table?"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

There was a tap at the door.

"Come in!" sang out Tom Merry.

Gore of the Shell looked into the study. There was a surprised and somewhat alarmed look on Gore's face.

"Hallo!" he exclaimed. "Skimpole's here!"

"Yes, I am here, Gore," said Skimpole, looking at him. "I trust nothing has happened to the papers I left on the study table—"

"Blow the papers! Then it's Skimpole II."

Bernard Glyn looked up quickly from his teacup.

"Eh? What's Skimpole II?"

"The chap who's ambling down the passage."

"What?"

"Come and see."

"I've left him locked up!" exclaimed Glyn.

"Dear me," said somebody's taken him out—or he's got out, or something. It's simply uncanny. Look at him! Here he is!"

Gore jumped away from the doorway. With a steady, monotonous tread, a figure came into view—a figure that was an exact reproduction of Herbert Skimpole. Glyn jumped up.

"It's my Skimmy—Skimmy II."

Or was it Skimpole III?

CHAPTER 14.

Most Surprising!

SKIMPOLE I blinked at the figure, and Skimpole II or III—whichever it was—blinked back at him.

"Dear me!" said Skimpole.

"Hang it!" said Bernard Glyn, in an annoyed tone.

"Somebody's been and let him out of his box and started him going. I suppose this is Figgins' work. But it's curious. I have the key of the box in my pocket."

"The first principles of Determinism may be stated in this way," came in squeaking tones from the visitor. "Everything being as it is, is evidently as it is—"

"Why, he's talking!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Without being started!" ejaculated Glyn. "What on earth—"

"And must be considered as a result resulting from a cause or series of causes—"

"Dear me!" said Skimpole.

"Each of these causes must be considered as being in part a producer of the result. It is therefore clear that, as nothing exists except heredity and environment, heredity and environment are responsible for man as we find him. Man as we find him being the creature of heredity and environment—"

"My hat!"

"Gweat Scott!"

"I—I can't understand it!" muttered Glyn. "There's—there's something uncanny about it. I don't catch on."

"And therefore being just what he is, is demonstrably the product of the causes that have worked together to produce him, and the first principles of Determinism are therefore incontrovertibly established."

Then there was a faint whir.

"My only hat!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Hallo! Look out!"

The figure walked into the study, advanced to the table, and stood there tramping, as if trying to get farther.

The arms were raised in the air, and they came down upon the table, and then swept from side to side, sending teapot and teacups, saucers and plates, buns and tarts, flying on all sides.

"Hold on!" yelled Tom Merry. "Stop him!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Help!"

"It's alive!"

"Ow!"

"Gweat Scott! My twousahs are wuined! The howwid thing has knocked the teapot on my twousahs, and they are uttaly wuined!"

Bernard Glyn sprang forward to seize the figure.

One arm swept round and caught the youthful inventor on the side of the head, and sent him sprawling on the floor.

"Oh!" roared Glyn.

"Bai Jove! This is vewy wemarkable!"

"Help!"

"What on earth—"

"It's alive! I tell you it's alive!"

The juniors crowded back from the figure.

Whether it was wound up, or whether Skimpole I had suddenly come to life, certainly it was acting in the most outrageous way.

It swept the table clear of things, and then marched with a mechanical tramp round the study, sweeping its arms round and knocking things down.

Then it tramped out of the room.

The juniors simply gasped.

Bernard Glyn staggered to his feet. He was a little hurt and very much astonished. He seemed dazed.

"I—I don't understand it!" he gasped.

"The blessed thing's alive!" said Manners, in an awed tone. "I'll swear I saw it grinning when it was knocking the books off the shelf!"

"Oh, draw it mild!"

"I tell you it was! It's like that giddy statue in the Greek lesson—the chap made it so lifelike, and it came to life, you know."

"Rot!"

"Look here, Blake—"

"Let's get after it!" exclaimed Kangaroo. "Goodness only knows exactly how much damage it will do!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Good! Quick!"

Forgetting all about the feed and the wrecked tea-table, the juniors ran along the passage after that most remarkable mechanical figure.

The figure had reached the stairs and was tramping on the verge of the landing.

"It's going to fall and get smashed!" exclaimed Glyn, and he dashed towards the pseudo Skimpole at top speed.

But the figure was already descending, planting its feet squarely, with a curious mechanical regularity. It descended the stairs methodically.

The juniors crowded down after it.

"Hallo, there's Linton!" exclaimed Bernard Glyn, in dismay. "That blessed figure seems fated to run into Linton!"

The figure stopped dead as Mr. Linton met it in the Hall. The mechanism seemed to have run down at that especial moment.

Mr. Linton glanced at it.

"Ah, Skimpole!" he exclaimed. "You were doubtless coming to my study with your lines. I hope you have finished them, otherwise it will be my painful duty to double them."

The figure did not speak.

"Skimpole! Answer me!"

"The first principles may be stated in this way—"

"Skimpole!"

"Everything being as it is, is evidently as it is, and must be considered as a result resulting from a cause or series of causes—"

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated Mr. Linton. "It is the mechanical figure again!"

"Each of these causes must be considered as being in part the producer of the result—"

"How very curious!" said Mr. Linton. "It is really comic."

"Ach! Vat it is tat is comic?" asked Herr Schneider, the German master, who was crossing the Hall just then. He had heard Skimpole's words.

"This is the mechanical figure constructed by Glyn of the Shell," explained Mr. Linton. "It is a most remarkable thing."

"Mein Gott!"

"The figure talks, repeating a certain set of words by means of a phonographic arrangement placed inside the head," explained Mr. Linton.

"Ach! It is vunderful!"

"Yes, Glyn is certainly a clever boy."

The German master blinked through his glasses at the figure with great interest.

"Vunderful, vunderful!" he ejaculated. "I tinks tat I can almost see it breathing, ain't it? It is vunderful!"

"Yes; that is doubtless a mechanical contrivance to imitate respiration," said Mr. Linton. "Some button or lever has to be touched at the back of the head to make it talk. Give it a tap, Herr Schneider."

"Certainly."

Herr Schneider gave the mechanical figure—if such it was—a smart rap on the back of the head with his knuckles.

The next moment he almost fell upon the floor, and Mr. Linton staggered back in amazement. For, instead of the usual formula of words from the mechanical figure which answered that sudden slap on the head, there was a loud and sonorous:

"Ow!"

CHAPTER 15.

Amazing!

"Ow!"

"Dear me!" ejaculated Mr. Linton.

"Ach! Himmel!"

"Ow—yow!"

The figure put up one hand in the most natural way in the world to rub the back of its head.

Herr Schneider staggered back as if he had seen a ghost, and Mr. Linton stared blankly, gasping for breath.

"Amazing," he exclaimed—"amazing!"

"Himmel!"

"I am astounded! It seems impossible——"

"Mein Gott!"

The figure lowered its hand from the back of its head. Perhaps it had suddenly remembered that it was giving itself away.

The squeaky voice started.

"The first principles of Determinism may be stated in this way——"

"Most remarkable," said Mr. Linton—"very remarkable, indeed! Ah, is that you, Glyn? You have succeeded in improving this curious invention wonderfully——"

Bernard Glyn's face was the picture of amazement.

"I—I don't quite understand it!" he gasped.

"It is certainly very good."

"I—I never made it able to say that!" gasped Glyn. "I—I never put in any joints so that it could bend its arm!"

"What!"

"It must be a—a hallucination!"

"Glyn!"

"Ach! It is that it is to real Skimpole, ain't it, after?"

"No; here's the real Skimpole, sir!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Mein Gott!"

"It is very surprising," said Skimpole I.

"Ach! That is to real Skimpole, ain't it?"

"Certainly, sir. I must make a note of these curious circumstances, for a report to be sent to the 'Modern Scientific Piffler.'"

"I am amazed," said Mr. Linton—"amazed!"

"My hat—he's going!"

The figure turned with the sharp mechanical motion they knew so well and tramped on towards the open door of the quadrangle.

"Stop it, Glyn!" exclaimed Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

The Liverpool lad ran after the figure. It turned round, and the right arm came squarely up and shot out straight from the shoulder.

Bernard Glyn received that right-hander on the chin, and he fell with a bump on his back.

"Gweat Scott!"

The figure strode out into the quad. Then it disappeared into the gloom.

Mr. Linton, with an ejaculation of surprise, walked away. Herr Schneider seemed glued to the floor.

The juniors gazed after the vanished figure.

"It's a ghost!" gasped Lowther.

"It's come to life," said Manners. "It's like that blessed statue that that ancient Greek boulder made."

"Bai Jove!"

Kangaroo raised Glyn up.

The Liverpool lad seemed dazed. It was not the knock-down blow, but the fact that his mechanical figure had suddenly developed a will of its own that dazed him.

"I—I can't understand it!" gasped Glyn.

"Amazin', deah boy!"

"I'm going to look for it!"

And Glyn ran out into the dark quad.

"Blessed if it isn't like Frankenstein and his monster in the story!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "There's something awfully uncanny about this."

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"There is no end to the wonders of science," said Skimpole, blinking at them. "How do we know that the story of Pygmalion and the statue is impossible? One must have faith in the marvels of science, as you know. If evolution can produce a human race from a floating speck of jelly in a prehistoric sea, why should not the principle of life develop of its own volition in a mechanical figure? I pause for a reply!"

But no one replied. No one was listening to Skimpole, as a matter of fact.

"Let's go and help Glyn look for his blessed Frankenstein monster," said Herries.

"Yaas, wathah!"

And they went. It was very dark in the quad, and nothing was to be seen of either Glyn or the imitation Skimpole.

As a matter of fact, Glyn had fallen among foes.

As he ran across the shadowy quad in search of the vanished figure, he was suddenly seized by two pairs of hands, and plumped down on the ground.

"Got him!" said the voice of Figgins.

"Good!" said Fatty Wynn.

Glyn gasped and struggled.

"Let me go, you duffers!"

"Rats!"

"Pax, Figgins! It's serious! Let me go!"

"What's the matter?"

"Blessed if I know!" gasped Glyn, struggling to his feet as the New House juniors released him. "There's something gone wrong with my mechanical figure, that's all. I can't understand it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's nothing to cackle at."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bernard Glyn scuttled off, leaving the New House chums still laughing. He disappeared into the shadows, and Figgins' laugh died away in a chuckle.

"Have you got it?" asked Fatty Wynn, with a chuckle, too.

"What-ho!"

Figgins held up a little Yale key.

"I knew he had it on his watch chain," he grinned. "I had it off him in a twinkling."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Figgins & Co. moved off quietly towards the School House. Tom Merry & Co. had gone out into the quadrangle to help Glyn in his search for that wonderful mechanical figure, and no one took any notice of Figgins and Wynn as they entered the School House. The two juniors hurried up to Bernard Glyn's study.

Figgins fitted the key into the lock of the long oaken box in which Glyn kept Skimpole II, and in a moment had it unlocked.

He raised the lid, and between them they lifted out Skimpole II.

They had him out in the passage in a twinkling, and Figgins, who had seen Glyn work the figure, soon set the mechanism in motion.

"Cave!" whispered Wynn suddenly. "Cave! Somebody's coming!"

"Get him along to the box-room!"

The New House chums whisked the mechanical figure out of sight. Several juniors were coming along the passage towards the end study.

"I can't understand it," said Bernard Glyn. "I know I never put any mechanism in that thing that would let it bend its arm."

"But he did bend it."

"It's uncanny."

"It's some blessed jape, somehow," said Blake. "I don't catch on to it, but it's a jape of some sort, and I shouldn't wonder if Figgins & Co. were at the bottom of it."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"That's what occurred to me," said Glyn. "I don't believe Figgins could make another figure like mine, but it's possible. Anyway, I'm going to see whether the thing's still in its place in my study."

"That will settle it," said the Kangaroo.

"Yaas, wathah!"

They reached the end study. Bernard Glyn felt on his watchchain for his key, and uttered an exclamation.

"What's the mattah, deah boy?"

"My key's gone!"

"What key?"

"The key of the box where I keep the figure."

"Bai Jove! Somebody has found the key and taken the figure out. That's how it happened," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with an air of great wisdom.

"I—I suppose so. We'll soon see, anyway."

(Continued on page 23.)

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HALLO, chums! I'm sure you're all looking forward to next week, when I am giving away that ripping Aero-car! Isn't it a grand model? If you haven't already done so, turn to page seventeen and learn all about it! But, above all, let me impress upon you that it is essential that you should place your order for the Gem at once if you want to make certain of getting this grand Free Gift, because everyone else will want one, too! Remember, the model is given away in next week's issue and the mechanism the following week. Place your order right now, and you're on to a good thing. Next week's issue will also contain a special long complete yarn by Martin Clifford entitled:

"CHUMS OF THE CIRCUS!"

Tom Merry & Co. have a high old time when the great circus comes to St. Jim's, and I can assure you that you will thoroughly enjoy every word of this ripping yarn. Then there will be the conclusion of

"LOST IN THE LEGION!"

our gripping yarn of grim desert adventure with the French Foreign Legion. Potts, the imitable office boy, will be on parade once again, to supply a good laugh, and further laughs will be supplied by my column of readers' jokes, for each of which I pay half-a-crown. The week after next I have a very special serial coming along for you, but I'm not going to tell you about it this week. You'll have to wait and see!

A LIGHTNING OPENER!

There is nothing more annoying than being thirsty and finding that the bottle opener has been mislaid, and if something happened suddenly that caused the bottle to open, we should be duly thankful. But the experience of a labourer of Needwood Forest, Burton-on-Trent, the other day was somewhat alarming. He was in his cottage and picked up a bottle, wondering how he was going to open it. There was a thunder-storm going on at the time, and suddenly a flash of lightning came down the chimney, filled the room with soot, burnt the curtains, damaged the furniture—and knocked the neck of the bottle off! The man himself was not hurt at all!

STRANGE FOOD!

A man went to a hospital complaining of pains in his stomach. It was decided to operate, and the doctors duly got to work. Imagine their amazement when they found nearly five hundred metal objects in the man! These included
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coins, forks, needles, pins, keys, penknives, hooks, teaspoons, 200 iron nails, 9 screws, 7 curtain rings, 92 unrecognisable objects, and a piece of chain! The total weight of these objects was three and a half pounds.

FOOTBALL BANDITS!

We get used to hearing of bandits of different sorts from day to day, who raid various places and so on, but here is one of the strangest bandit stories ever heard of. It happened in Acton, where there is a sports ground which is in charge of a steward. The other day the steward was attacked by invaders who tied him up and left him where he was not likely to be found for a little while. Then the invaders proceeded to play a game of football on the ground! Members of the club saw the game and thought nothing of it, they even stopped and watched it. When the match was over, the invaders disappeared—but they took nothing with them!

WHERE FLIES WOULD LIKE TO BE!

How the flies would like to be in the room in a jam factory where fifteen thousand tons of jam stands in jars, unsealed and without protection. It would be a really happy playground for flies and wasps—but they are forbidden to enter. How are they kept out? It's so simple—just a matter of having amber-coloured glass windows. With these windows no ultra-violet rays can pass into the room, and flies and wasps will not go where this is the case. Not a single wasp or fly is seen in the store-room the whole year round.

CHOCOLATE!

Once again I want to remind all my readers who either live by the sea or go to stay there this summer, of the great offer made by Messrs. Cadbury Bros., who have contributed no less than a quarter of a million bars of their Dairy Milk Chocolate for the consumption of all our readers who buy their copies of the GEM from beach-sellers, kiosks, and other such places at most of our popular seaside resorts. In addition, Messrs. Cadbury Bros. have contributed pound boxes of their delicious assorted chocolates for prizes at our Concert Party, Cinema, and Gala competitions. Don't forget this, chums, when you go to the seaside this year! It's an opportunity far too good to be missed.

ODDS AND ENDS.

A missionary who has been in China for nine years is on his way home on leave.

He says that his first meal in this country will be steak and onions and ice cream!

A man was being shaved by a barber in Berlin, New Jersey, when the barber felt dead. The razor entered the man's throat and missed his jugular vein by a hairsbreadth.

In Dormansland, Surrey, a gardener found that all his cherries were being eaten by the birds, so he erected a scarecrow. The next day a pair of starlings began to build their nest in the scarecrow's pocket!

A Malay missed his goat. He went in search of it along the bank of the river. He discovered on his journey a 22-foot python and shot it. Inside it he found his goat!

A police constable in Prague arrested a man for loitering—and then discovered that it was his brother who had been missing for fifteen years.

A robin built a nest on a railroad car belonging to the Canadian National Railways. When the car was joined up to a train a message was sent to the station-master at each station at which the train would stop giving the number of the car and requesting that a supply of worms should be ready for the inmates of the nest!

LITTLE THINGS!

A big bomber plane belonging to the American Air Force was forced down the other day by the smallest flying insect in the world. The engines stopped in midair and when, on landing, they were examined it was found that the filters were choked with masses of salt-water gnats. It just shows that even the smallest things can make their presence felt!

THE PRISONERS OF THE DRAGON!

Follow the holiday adventures of the St. Frank's chums for thrills! Bound for China to rescue an Asiatic schoolfellow from the clutches of Dr. Foo Chow, an all-powerful Chinese millionaire, they get to grips with the kidnapper in China seas. What happens then? Read the magnificent extra-long yarn of the adventures of the St. Frank's expedition which appears in to-day's tip-top issue of the "Nelson Lee Library." Also, this number stars a sparkling complete cricket story of the Gem's own favourites—Tom Merry & Co. and Gussy. You'll enjoy immensely "Last Man In!" Ask for the "Nelson Lee" to-day.

SHADES OF DICK TURPIN!

In these days one does not expect to hear of the deeds of Dick Turpin, that famous highwayman, coming to light, but just recently an amazing discovery was made at the Three Tunns Inn, Cambridge. There is a coat there that was left behind by Turpin on January 12th, 1739, and in this coat it has just been found that there were concealed jewellery, money, pistols, and a mask! The coat was left by Turpin when he fled hurriedly from the Runners, which accounts for the things being left in it, and the fact that the coat really belonged to Turpin is vouched for in a letter signed by the then landlord of the inn, who states that Turpin left the clothes four months before he was hanged.

YOUR EDITOR.

SKIMPOLES THREE!

(Continued from page 20.)

The juniors entered the end study. Glyn turned up the gas, and the first thing that caught his eye was the long box, with the lid standing wide open.

Skimpole II was gone!

"My hat!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "That settles it, Glyn. Somebody found the key when you lost it, and took the figure out."

"Bai Jove! Then it must weally be Skimpole II that we've seen!" exclaimed D'Arcy. "I wegard this as most remarkable."

"Glyn must have put more machinery than he knew of into the blessed thing," said Lowther, "and it's worked out like this."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Glyn shook his head.

"I don't understand it," he said slowly.

"Oh, it's simple enough," said Blake. "Something's always going wrong with the machinery, you know."

"Yes, but—"

"The thing's worked out a little differently, that's all."

"But it couldn't."

Tom Merry laughed.

"But it has, Glyn."

"Yes—and that's what I don't understand. It's uncanny."

"Well, when you find the figure again, you can examine it and see what's gone wrong," Kangaroo remarked.

"Ye-es, but where has it gone?"

"Into the quad."

"Yes, but it ought to have run down by now. It is wound up like a clock. I've hunted all over the quad for it. It ought to have run into a wall and stopped there. I'm hanged if I don't think the blessed thing's alive, somehow."

"It's a giddy Frankenstein monster."

"Well, we must find it, somehow," exclaimed Glyn.

"Hark! What's that?"

It was a sound of regular tramping in the passage.

"Hallo! That sounds like it."

"Let's look."

The juniors hurried out of the study. Down the passage, from the direction of the box-room, came Skimpole II.

The lips were moving, the eyes blinking, and the slow and jerky motion curiously reminiscent of the real Skimpole, showed that this was indeed the mechanical figure.

"Now, there it is," ejaculated Glyn. "How did it get in from the quad and get up the stairs?"

"Bai Jove!"

"It's horribly uncanny."

Glyn put out his hand as the figure passed and stopped it. He grasped it hard, and a look of bewilderment came over his face.

"It's simply amazing!" he cried. "I had a faint idea that somebody might have dressed up as the figure, you know, to puzzle us, but here it is—it's the figure right enough."

"Bai Jove!"

"Feel it."

The juniors felt the thing over. It was evidently the figure, and there was no possibility of doubt.

Blake gave it a tap on the back of the head, and the figure began to talk in squeaky tones:

"The first principles of Determinism may be stated in this way. Everything being as it is, is evidently as it is, and must be considered as a result resulting from a cause or series of causes—"

"Oh, stop him, for goodness' sake."

Glyn stopped the record. The figure relapsed into silence. The Liverpool lad had released it and stepped back, pressing his hand to his forehead as if to assist his thoughts. He was trying to think it out—to explain the mystery.

The figure, released from control, walked on.

CHAPTER 16.

An Amazing Discovery!

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "This is most amazing!"

"Simply astounding!" said Tom Merry. "I don't understand a bit. That's the odd thing about these blessed clever inventions—they're always going wrong."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"It's a trick of some sort," grunted Bernard Glyn. "I don't understand it. Better go and stop that beastly thing, though."

The figure had reached the stairs.

After what they had seen Skimpole III do, the juniors fully expected the figure to descend the stairs in perfect safety, but it did not.

It stepped blindly off the landing into vacancy, and rolled down the stairs. It alighted with a bump on the mat, the bump apparently started the record in the head, for there was a whirring sound, and then the squeaky voice started:

"The first principles of Determinism may be stated in this way. Everything being as it is, is evidently as it is, and must be considered as a result resulting from a cause or series of—whir—whir-r-r-r-r!"

The shock had damaged the apparatus, apparently, and Skimpole II could now get no further than that.

The juniors ran downstairs.

Bernard Glyn picked up the figure and set it on its feet, and it immediately started walking again, showing that the internal mechanism was not damaged by the fall.

It walked on to the doorway, and out upon the steps, and fell down them into the quad.

"Can't understand it," said Tom Merry, shaking his head. "Last time it walked down the steps as easily as anything."

"It's amazing!"

"Pick it up, Glyn!"

Glyn went out and picked the figure up. It walked on unconcernedly. The Liverpool lad did not follow it. He was so overcome with astonishment at these strange happenings that he felt as if his head was turning round.

The figure disappeared into the darkness.

The juniors did not know that a pair of eyes were watching it, and that Skimpole III was ready to take the place of Skimpole II. Pratt, of the New House, who had been let into the secret, seized the walking figure and walked off towards the New House. As he did so, the disguised Kerr came towards the School House, with the curious mechanical walk of the figure.

Tom Merry uttered an exclamation as Skimpole III loomed up in the gloom.

"It's coming back!"

"Gweat Scott!"

Bernard Glyn smote his forehead.

"Wh-what can it mean?" he gasped. "I—I can't grasp it! I tell you there's nothing whatever in that blessed figure to enable it to turn round."

"But it has turned round, deah boy."

"Then it's jolly well alive!"

"Imposs."

"It must be."

"Wats!"

"Oh, we'll soon see!" grinned Tom Merry.

The figure came on steadily.

Tom Merry stepped quickly towards it as it passed, and grasped it by the shoulder.

"M-m-my hat!"

The hero of the Shell simply staggered—for under his grasp was not the hard substance of the mechanical figure, but flesh and blood!

Tom Merry staggered back.

"It's alive!"

"Wats!"

"Try yourself, ess!"

"I wefuse to be called an ass!"

"My hat! I—I—"

"Howevah, I will twy."

And Arthur Augustus ran after the figure and grasped it. He staggered away in amazement.

"Bai Jove! I beg your pardon, Tom Mewwy! It is weally alive!"

Tramp, tramp, went the figure up the School House steps. The juniors followed it at a respectable distance now. No one felt inclined to touch it again.

What did it all mean? A horrible sense of uncanniness was creeping over the juniors. The figure was alive, or seemed so. What did it mean?

Blake at last reached out and tapped the figure on the back of the head. Without stopping it began to talk.

"The first principles of Determinism may be stated in this way: Everything being as it is, is evidently as it is."

"My hat!"

"Gweat Scott!"

The figure ran through that set speech, whirred, and was silent. Bernard Glyn tore his hair.

"It's impossible!" he stuttered. "The record can't run twice without being wound up."

"But it has, deah boy!"

"And, besides, it was busted when the thing fell down-stairs."

"But it's still working."

"It's a dream—a horrible vision!" said Glyn wildly. "I'll never make a blessed mechanical figure again!"

"Let's follow it!"

"Bless my boots if it isn't going upstairs!" muttered Blake.

Up the stairs went Skimpole III. It passed along the Fourth Form passage, into the Shell passage, and stopped at the door of Tom Merry's study. Then it entered the study, and the juniors cautiously followed it to the door and looked in.

They gasped at what they saw. Skimpole III was filling a basket with the provisions placed for the feed in Tom Merry's study. A considerable quantity remained untouched—and Skimpole III was raiding the whole.

"My hat!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Look here, we're going to stop the beastly thing, whether it's alive or not, human or ghost!" exclaimed Glyn. "Collar it as it comes out."

"Right-ho!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

The figure, with a full basket on its arm, came out of the study doorway. The juniors closed upon it, and grasped it desperately. The basket went with a crash to the floor, and cakes and apples and jam-tarts rolled in all directions, and were squashed under the trampling feet.

Skimpole III woke to sudden life. He struggled and fought desperately, and there was no longer any doubt that it was alive. But the conviction that there was some amazing trick in the matter was in every mind now, and the juniors did not let go.

Skimpole III was dragged down, with the juniors sprawling over him in a heap. And then Skimpole III uttered a yell that was certainly not part of the phonograph speech he had uttered so often.

"Yow! Yaroo! Help! Rescue, New House!"

He spoke in his natural tones at last. The juniors gasped.

"Kerr!"

CHAPTER 17.

Figgins & Co. Smile!

"KERR!"

"Kerr, you bounder!"

"Kerr, you villain!"

"Kerr!"

"It's a New House jape!"

"Collar him!"

"Squash him!"

"Don't let him get away!"

"Bai Jove!"

Kerr struggled desperately in the clutches of the amazed and wrathful School House juniors. His spectacles came off, and were crunched underfoot, and his jacket was ripped up the back, his collar torn out.

"Rescue, New House!"

That cry was not likely to be answered in the School House; but answered it was, nevertheless. There was a rush of feet in the passage, and Figgins and Fatty Wynn came tearing along the passage, and they hurled themselves upon Tom Merry & Co.

"Hallo!"

"Look out!"

"Great Scott!"

"Sock it to them!" panted Figgins.

The School House juniors, taken quite by surprise, were knocked right and left. Kerr wrenched himself loose, and sprang up, and Figgins & Co. charged down the passage for freedom. But the noise had brought a score or more of School House fellows upon the scene. New hands laid hold of the three, and they were stopped, struggling furiously; and then Tom Merry & Co. fastened upon them again.

The odds were too great.

Figgins & Co., resisting desperately, were dragged bodily into Tom Merry's study, and there they were pinned by a dozen hands. Gasping and breathless, they glared at the School House juniors.

Kerr looked a decidedly odd sight. He was flushed and breathless, the grease-paint was smeared over his face, his clothes were ripped and ragged, and he was covered with dust. He still bore a faint resemblance to Skimpole I and II, but it was plainly to be seen that he was really Kerr of the New House.

Tom Merry & Co. simply stared at him.

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"Well, my hat!" ejaculated Tom Merry at last. "Who'd have thought it?"

"Dear me!" said Skimpole. "It is very astonishing! Kerr must have been imitating the mechanical figure all the time!"

"Not all the time," said Bernard Glyn. "It was Kerr sometimes, and Skimpole II sometimes; and no wonder he was sometimes alive and sometimes he wasn't!"

"The first principles of Determinism may be stated in this way!" gasped Kerr. "Everything being as it is, is evidently as it is!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ring off!"

"Well, it was a jolly good jape!" grinned Figgins. "You can't get out of that!"

"It was a fair catch!" admitted Blake. "You took us in."

"You've been diddled, dished, and done, and you'd never have found it out if I hadn't come into this blessed House a second time!" chuckled Kerr. "It was going too far."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"But you looked such a precious set of asses that I couldn't resist it!"

"Oh, did we?"

"You did! Ha, ha, ha!"

"The New House knows it all by this time!" grinned Fatty Wynn. "We've got our own back. Is it alive? Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Figgins and Kerr.

The School House chums looked at one another sheepishly. There was no doubt that Figgins & Co. had scored this time—and scored heavily.

"Bai Jove!" marmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "We've been fairly done this time, I wathah think, deah boys!"

"Looks like it!"

"Never mind. We've got the perpetrators," said Tom Merry. "We'll give Figgins & Co. another frog's-march home to the New House."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Good egg!"

"No, you won't!" said a voice at the door. "And Pratt of the New House looked into the study. 'You jolly well won't!'"

"Hallo!" said Tom Merry, looking round. "Here's another of them! We'll march all four home again on their necks!"

"Yes, rather!"

"No, you won't!" repeated Pratt.

"What do you mean? Why won't we?"

"Because we've got Skimpole II."

"What!" ejaculated Glyn.

"We've captured him!" grinned Pratt. "We'll let you have him back for Figgins & Co.—see? Otherwise we retain him."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Figgins.

"It's all right!" grinned Kerr. "I told Pratt to take the dummy into the New House. I knew it would be useful if anything went wrong."

"Oh, blow the dummy!" exclaimed Blake. "We're jolly well going to frog's-march these bounders back to the rotten old show they call a House!"

"Then you won't see Skimpole II again."

"Blessed if I want to."

"Yaas, wathah! We're not particularly anxious to see the wottah again, Pwatt."

"Hold on!" exclaimed Bernard Glyn. "You may not be anxious about Skimpole II, but I am. I want him back." Tom Merry laughed.

"All right. We'll ransom Figgins & Co., then," he said. "Let's have Skimmy II, and you can go free."

"It's a bargain!"

"Oh, all right!" said Blake. "It's pax, then."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And to show there's no ill-feeling, we'll come to tea if you like," said Fatty Wynn, with a beaming smile at Tom Merry & Co.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Some of the things have been spoiled, but there seems a lot left, and we're quite willing to have tea with you, and smoke the giddy pipe of peace," said Fatty Wynn. And so they did.

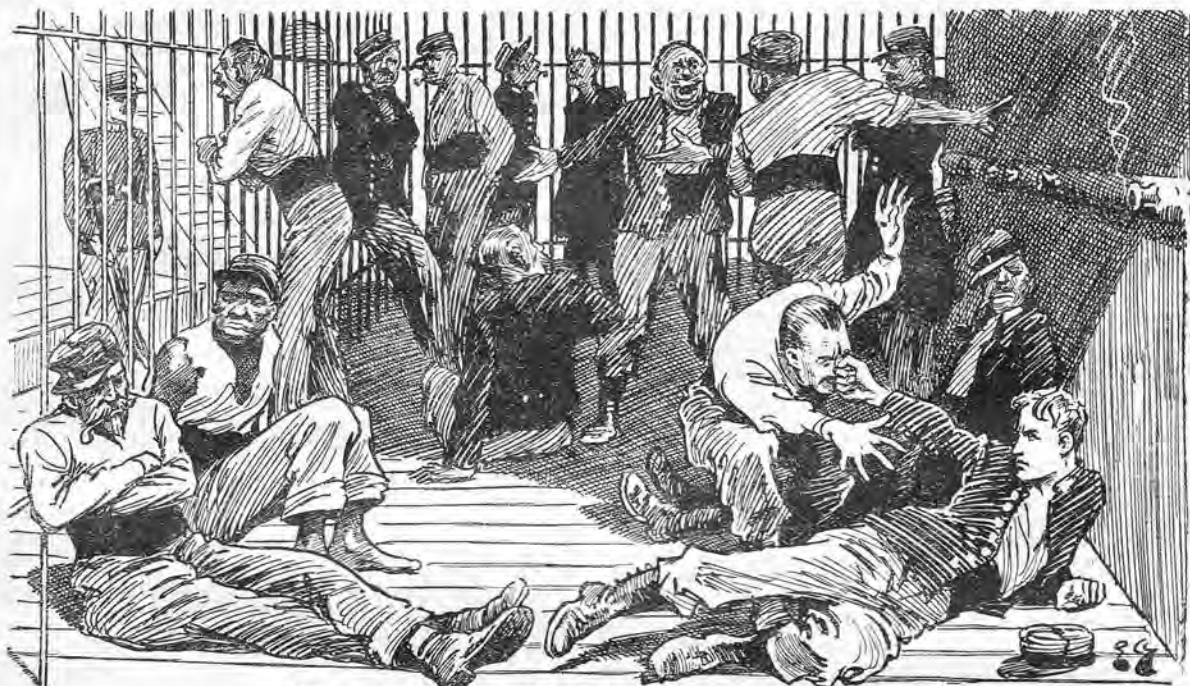
When the true story of the three Skimpoles got out, it made Mr. Linton frown a little, and the rest of St. Jim's roar; and the juniors of both Houses indulged in many a chuckle over the remarkable adventures of Skimpole III.

THE END.

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Trouble For Two!

BAWLING voices and the jangling discords of a mechanical piano struck Terry Drake full in the face as he thrust open the swing doors of the Cafe Riviere, and passed into the stuffy little room that was swirling with the sickly smoke of cheap cigars and Caporal cigarettes. Halting in the doorway he saw that the place was packed with N.C.O.'s of the French Foreign Legion, and he was about to make for a less crowded cafe when he was swung round by a heavy hand, and flung against the wall with a brutal force that knocked most of the breath out of his body.

"Stand there!" rasped a guttural voice. "Shun! Drink to the health of Papa Schomm, of the Legion!"

Steadying himself, an angry glint in his clear, grey eyes, Terry looked up and found a burly sergeant leering down at him, a purple-faced, bloated fellow with a bulging neck, and a back like the side of a house.

"What's the big idea?" demanded the youngster fiercely. "You're not playing with your toy soldiers now, you know, Mister Bottle-Nose!"

The remark was scarcely tactful; it was not meant to be. The massive N.C.O. glowered with bloodshot eyes.

"Do you dare insult me, swinehound of a Britisher?" he demanded, with a stream of Teutonic invective. He had to shout in order to make his throaty voice heard above the din. "Would you insult me, Sergeant Emil Schomm, of the Legion?"

"You bet I'd insult you!" snapped Terry, looking straight into the beady, red eyes. "You may think you're a little tin idol on wheels, but to me you're just something that the cat's brought in!"

This was asking for trouble, for a sergeant of the Foreign Legion has a very exalted idea about his own importance; but Terry Drake was feeling neither pleasant nor polite at that moment, and neither was he worried about what might happen. For one thing he was hungry, thirsty, and dead beat; for another, he had exactly fifteen centimes in the wide world. He was alone in Marseilles on a rainy night, without a friend in the place or the hope of a job, and to be picked on by a square-headed Hun was just about the last straw. He saw red.

Sergeant Schomm's thick lips curled into a toothy grin. "A British fire-eater, hein?" he sneered, with a throaty chuckle. "He offers me an insult, is it? I am Mister Bottle-Nose, hein? It is a great pity that Papa Schomm cannot have the handling of you for the next few years! How you would grow to love the kind Papa Schomm if you were in his company of the Legion!"

A rumble of laughter broke out, and a mantle of angry colour stung Terry's cheeks.

"You've got some hopes, old warrior!" he scoffed. "I'll bet you lead the poor blessed rookies a dog's life!"

"And why not, my infant?" asked Schomm, showing his horse teeth, yellow and ugly. "Are they not curs that have to be trained to obedience? But I forget." Puffing out his barrel-like chest, he glared into the youngster's steady, grey eyes. "You offered me an insult, is it not?" he demanded, a threat in his tone and manner.

Terry nodded.

"Sure," he returned easily. "Do you think you can put your paws on me and get away with it?" Scowling, wine-flushed faces hemmed him in, and the situation looked ugly, full of menace; but though the odds were so great he didn't lose his nerve. "It's going to be a bit of a wrench," he ran on, with gentle sarcasm, "but I must tear myself away from your pleasant company."

"Ach! But no, my infant!" Schomm threw up fat, flabby hands in mock alarm. "You will buy a litre of wine, and drink to the kindhearted N.C.O.'s of the Legion!"

"I've no money for wine!" rapped out Terry. "And even if I had, I wouldn't take orders from you!" He was prepared for anything now. He didn't like the playful menace in the other's manner. "I'm going! Out of my way, please!"

For answer, Schomm shot out a muscular hand, gripped the youngster by the throat, lifted him bodily, and slammed him hard against the wall; and there he held him, one mighty arm tense and outstretched.

"You will drink to the N.C.O.'s of the Legion, stupid camel!" leered Schomm.

"I'll see you to blazes before I'll—" breathed Terry, struggling wildly to free himself from the strangling grip.

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The next instant he was choking and spluttering, dazed and blinded by the wine that Schomm, with his free hand, had dashed full into his face. It was a brutal trick, and Terry became a thing of seething fury. For the second time that night he saw red. Lashing out with right and left, he sent his hard fists crashing into the flabby features of the mountainous bully, and sent him tottering across the room. A wild scampering left a clear passage for Schomm, and on tripping over a low bench he crashed to the red-brick floor with a force which shook the cafe.

Pale and tight-lipped, Terry flung himself upon the heaving bulk, grabbed it by the ears, and hauled it into an upright position. Then, snatching the bayonet out of the N.C.O.'s scabbard, he caught the dazed Schomm by the throat, and thrust the point of steel through the gaping collar of the tunic, pinning the big fellow to the wall like a butterfly to a pad.

The whole thing happened in an incredibly short space of time, and a tense silence settled upon the room as Terry stepped back and fixed his limp victim with a hard, mocking eye. As to Schomm, a bully, with a wide, yellow streak, he appeared to be upon the verge of physical collapse, and he stood like a man petrified as, with wildly staring eyes, he felt the blade of chilling steel pressed against the side of his fat neck.

A man not without imagination, he knew exactly what would have happened had that swift bayonet thrust been just a shade to the left.

Incredible though it may seem, Terry was master of the situation as he stood there in the middle of the tiled floor, his legs apart, his hands on his hips. A smile of amused contempt upon his boyish features he turned to the other N.C.O.'s, most of whom were regarding the pitiable spectacle of Sergeant Schomm with anything but sympathy or understanding. They'll put up with a bully in the Legion of the Lost, but they've no use for a coward.

"Take care of the old lady, gentleman," said Terry, strolling across to the door. "I think she's going to faint."

Then, with a mocking smile at Schomm he passed into the night, the door slamming behind him.

A fierce bluster of rain and wind met him as he made off towards the docks. It was a night of black shadows, with great banks of angry clouds scudding across the sullen heavens. From the numerous cafes in the waterfront district came the sounds of laughter or turmoil, and the blatant din of mechanical pianos, and lurking in dark alleys and mysterious corners were the night-hawks of Marseilles, waiting to pounce upon their prey.

Terry Drake was troubled by none of these things, however. Broke to the wide in a strange town, he was wondering where he was going to spend the night, and it was with the idea of giving much careful thought to this poignant proposition that he turned into a dingy little cafe, and found an empty table near the iron stove in the centre of the room. There were about a dozen legionnaires in the place, but they lacked the devil-may-care air which stamps the old campaigner. Their uniforms were new, and three or four of them were huddled up in their chairs, their drinks untouched before them, gazing dumbly into space—into the past, maybe. Raw recruits, guessed Terry.

A pretty, plump-cheeked girl having served him with coffee, Terry decided to get down to brass tacks and face the situation, and he was dwelling upon the idea of becoming a stowaway when the door burst open and a tall young legionnaire clattered across the tiled floor. Pushing his dripping cap to the back of his head, he shook himself like a drenched retriever, at the same time staring hard at the lone civilian by the stove.

"Coffee and cognac, Suzanne!" he ordered quietly; and there was something about the tone of the well-bred voice that made Terry turn in his chair.

Their eyes met.

"You're Drake, aren't you?" asked the legionnaire, with a boyish grin. "Let's see—Terry Drake—eh?"

Terry nodded, a puzzled expression upon his clean-cut features.

"I'm Drake, all right," he said, getting up and shaking the other fellow's sinewy hand; "but I don't seem to place you. You were at Rundle's, perhaps?"

"You've hit it first time, old man!" grinned the legionnaire. "You were games skipper, House captain, Public schools' champ, and Heaven knows what else during my short spell at Rundle's, so you wouldn't know of the existence of an insignificant blighter named Tod Browning! That's me, by the way!"

"Glad to meet you, Browning!" beamed Terry, as they gripped hands again. "Stammering cats! Isn't life strange! I'll bet you didn't think that one day you'd be a soldier of the French Legion when you were at Rundle's;

and I'm certain I didn't dream that I'd ever be down-and-out in Marseilles!"

The boyish smile vanished from Browning's good-looking face as he sat down beside Terry.

"As bad as all that, old man?" he asked. "If there's anything I can do—" He broke off, confused. "I mean," he ran on, sticking to it, "I've got a few pounds I don't want—"

"That's decent of you, old son," broke in Terry; "but I'm not the borrowing sort! Not only that, something's bound to turn up sooner or later!"

Browning studied his companion with deep interest, seeing in him the magnificent sportsman who had been the idol of Rundle's School. Then:

"I don't want to butt in," he began tentatively, "but how on earth did you get into this ghastly—I mean—"

"It's a long story, old man," laughed Terry—"long and a bit curious; like your own, maybe!"

"You're right," grinned Browning. "Look here, our company is pushing off into the wilds of North Africa with the early morning tide, so we're going to split a bottle of bubbly and celebrate! I'm buying the finest bottle of champagne in the house, and I'm getting it from the cellar myself! Is that in order, Suzanne?" he asked, pinching the plump cheeks of the pretty French girl.

"O.K., chief!" smiled Suzanne, proud of her talkie English.

Five minutes later found Terry and Tod Browning clinking brimming goblets and drinking deep to the memory of their famous West Country school. His blue eyes bright with excitement, the young legionnaire chattered almost without interruption for the next hour, and he was doing his best to press a third glass of fizz upon his companion when Terry gave a thin kind of smile and shook his head.

"I've got to get out of here, old son," he said. "P'shew! It's like an oven! I'm tickled to death to have met you, Brownny, but this sewing-class has got to break up! It must be that confounded wine!"

His face pale, with little beads of moisture breaking out upon his brow, he heaved himself out of his chair, and he would have fallen headlong if Browning had not put a strong arm about him and half carried him into the open air.

"Don't worry, Suzanne!" cried Browning, through the open doorway. "I'll look after him; he's an old school pal of mine!"

"O.K., big boy!" called Suzanne, putting in some good nasal work. "On your way!"

The Frame-up!

TERRY DRAKE opened his eyes, and promptly closed them again; lifting his heavy lids sent a thousand white-hot needles plunging into his throbbing temples. Or so it seemed to him as he lay upon the floor, oblivious and indifferent to his surroundings, caring nothing for the hour of the day, the day of the year, nor the state of the weather. The top of his scalp seemed to be opening and closing in a most painful way, and his eyes were balls of fire. His mouth was parched, his tongue a bit of scorched leather, and a red-hot wire seemed to be stretched across his forehead, cutting deep into the flesh.

Lying quite still, with his burning eyes tightly closed, he tried to think things out, but his brain was about as much use as a wad of wet cottonwool.

"It will all come back to me in a moment," he told himself hopefully. "I remember the spot of bother with the rotter of a sergeant, and after that—"

His train of thought snapped abruptly, for he realised, with a shock, that the floor was not stationary. The boards were moving gently from side to side, rocking in a soothing manner; but there was something wrong, all the same. Convinced that this wasn't a trick of his imagination, he forced himself to open his eyes, and his whole body stiffened, and he stared and stared, like a person hypnotised.

"Stammering cats!" he breathed, at length. "What on earth is it all about?"

He had every reason for being flabbergasted, for he was lying within a cage, stout iron bars reaching from floor to ceiling on three sides of the apartment. His head was resting against the fourth side of the cage—a steel wall—and dotted about the wall were bright nozzles that dripped boiling-water and emitted testy little bursts of scalding steam.

Staring through the bars, Terry found himself gazing upon the tumbling waters of a sparkling ocean, and many miles away he thought he could make out a vague coastline.

"Stammering cats!" he breathed once more; and then he received a second spine-jarring shock.

Looking down at his feet, he noticed that he was wearing a pair of clumsy, iron-studded boots that were at least three sizes too large for him; of socks there was no sign. Added to this, his flannel "bags" were no more; in their

place he had leather gaiters and a species of red plus fours. His tweed sports coat was missing, having been replaced by a blue tunic. There was no sign of his felt hat, but by his side was a kepi of the French Foreign Legion.

His throbbing brain was clearing by this time, and it did not take him long to put two and two together. He was rigged out in the uniform of the Foreign Legion; there could be no doubt about that. Quite definitely, his own clothing was missing.

Closing his eyes again, telling himself that the whole business was a ghastly nightmare, he started to run through his pockets—and there was something unpleasantly real about the notebook that he found in a pocket of his tunic. And a franc note and a packet of Caporal cigarettes were also real enough. No dream about that!

Struggling up into a sitting position, Terry opened the notebook and read:

"FOREIGN LEGION OF FRANCE.

Name: BROWNING, Tod.

No: 11,123.

Rank: Legionnaire of the 3rd Class.

Nationality: British.

Remarks: None.

Shaking his dazed head, Terry ran puzzled fingers through his tousled hair. This strange business had got him stone cold. He remembered being in the waterfront cafe; he remembered being with Tod Browning; he remembered feeling a bit groggy and going into the open air. But what happened after that?

"You can search me," he muttered hopelessly, and began to take stock of his companions within the cage. Never had he seen such unlovely and disreputable specimens of humanity in the whole of his life. Legionnaires to a man, most of them in varying stages of undress and showing signs of wear and tear, they were of all creeds and colour. And all were getting over the previous night's festivities.

A giant with a yellow beard was stretched out beside an enormous negro, and a tubby squarehead of Teutonic aspect would have been in his birthday suit but for the barrel that he wore round his waist. Strangely enough, he had his boots on. All sorts and conditions of men were snoring noisily in that sweltering cage, and they all looked what they were—sweepings of the gutters of the world.

There was nothing particularly squeamish about Terry Drake, but he felt a wave of nausea pass through him as he gazed round at the huddled heaps that sweated and moaned in the sun.

"Thank goodness I shall soon be out of this mess!" he mused. "A word to the officer in charge will do the trick! It will be easy enough to prove that some fool played a practical joke on me, and—"

"Say, gimme a fag, sister!"

A nasal voice snarled the command, and a bony hand reached over Terry's shoulder and snatched the packet of Caporals out of his fingers.

Quick to anger in his present mood, Terry turned swiftly and found himself looking into the bloodshot eyes of a horse-faced fellow with "dago" stamped all over him. And the stranger's ugly leer did nothing to appease the youngster's anger.

"Hand over those cigarettes, greaser!" rapped out Terry.

"Aw, go chase yerself, Britisher!" spat out the other, with a Mexican oath. "Go bite yer chin, you cheap skate! Gimme a light, before I—"

Smack!

Turning upon his elbow, Terry brought over a snappy punch that landed flush between the dago's eyes and knocked him flat upon his back, and within two seconds there came a flash of naked steel as the dago threw himself bodily forward, a skinny arm upraised.

Hurling himself sideways, Terry felt the knife slash through his sleeve, near the shoulder, and the terrific punch he brought over crashed behind the dago's ear and knocked him cold, beating every vestige of consciousness out of him.

The interlude, short though it was, did not pass unnoticed by the other prisoners in the cage, and at once a battle royal was in progress. The massive nigger started the trouble, tearing at the Swede's bearded throat and making the air hideous with squeal after squeal of maniacal laughter. The drink-crazed prisoners threw themselves upon each other like a pack of wild beasts, and shrill screams of pain and fury must have been heard all over the ship.

A bell started to clang furiously. There came a rush of heavy feet.

"Cook the skunks!" roared a guttural voice. "Give 'em

a dose of steam! Cook them until they are done, ain't it? Full pressure, below!"

A burly, purple-faced N.C.O. came lumbering along the deck, and a moment later Terry Drake found himself staring through the bars into the beady red eyes of Sergeant Emil Schomm.

Schomm Gets the Laugh!

SCHOMM stood quite still for fully five seconds, a stupid expression upon his fleshy countenance, then gradually he bared his ugly yellow teeth in a gloating grin. His beady eyes glinting with venom, he leered through the bars at Terry Drake, at the same time trying to make his guttural voice heard above the deafening din of the battle royal that raged within the cage.

"Steam! Steam!" he roared. "Full pressure, below!" Something warned Terry of what to expect, and, without a second's hesitation, he flung himself full length upon the floor. And he was not a moment too soon. With an evil, terrifying hiss, the bright brass nozzles belched a mighty volume of scalding steam, and the cries of bloodlust and fury turned to shrill screams of terror and agony. Steam filled the cage and blotted out everything, although vague forms could be seen dashing backwards and forwards across the floor, tearing at the bars and yelling for mercy.

"Full pressure!" roared Sergeant Schomm. "You shall have a proper cooking this time, my little camels! Papa Schomm will see to that! Kind-hearted Papa Schomm—how he loves his little soldiers!"

Stretched out full-length in a corner, Terry pressed his fingers into his ears and closed his eyes, and so he remained for the greater part of fifteen minutes, passing through the most hideous and agonising period of his life. That such inhumanity could exist appalled him—that some poor devils should have to live under a murderous system that allowed such a barbarous state of things sent a cold shiver rippling down his spine. He thanked his lucky stars that he would soon be out of it—a few words of explanation to the commanding officer would soon find him a free man! It was a pleasant, comforting thought.

Gradually the fury of the steam died down until the brass nozzles were hissing softly in an exhausted kind of way. The prisoners by this time were lying about in huddled, groaning heaps, but the burly nigger, who had been held against a nozzle by the maddened Swede, was red and raw, and he would never fight again. His razor had struck its last blow.

Sergeant Schomm grinned round with gloating satisfaction in his little red eyes until at length his gaze came to rest upon Terry Drake. Then:

"Stand up, you yellow rat!" he roared. "Attention, you scum! Obey my orders unless you want a taste of 'solitary'!"

It was with the utmost difficulty that the youngster checked the hot words that leapt to his lips; but he told himself that it would be policy to play up to the N.C.O.

"May I have a word with you, sergeant?" he asked, getting up and walking across to the bars. "I want to go along to the officer in charge. Some playful ass has had a joke at my expense, as you can see, and—"

"Well, well," grinned Schomm. "Surely Legionnaire Browning would wish Colonel St. Just to come to him! I know the Butcher will be most willing to oblige!"

"Legionnaire Browning!" echoed Terry, colouring. "You know dashed well that I'm not a legionnaire! My name is Drake, and I am a civilian! This legionnaire business is all a ghastly mistake—"

"Of course, of course," gloated Sergeant Schomm, with a throaty chuckle. "All these others made the same mistake when they joined the Legion! That's why they drowned their sorrows last night and had to be brought aboard by the military police! You were found stretched out upon the quay, too full of wine to move a finger! Quit bluffing, you rat! You're in the Legion of the Lost for seven years, and in the Legion you remain! Papa Schomm will see to that, my infant! Oh, we are going to be very happy together!"

"Don't talk through your hat!" blazed Terry, conscious of an unpleasant, warm sensation in the pit of his stomach. It began to dawn upon him that he was in a very awkward position. "You know quite well that you can't keep me in the Legion!"

"There is nothing the Legion cannot do!" grinned Sergeant Schomm.

"But—"

"Silence, you rat!" snarled Schomm; and Terry received a smashing punch in the mouth that sent him tottering across the cage. "I'll deal with you later!" added the N.C.O., clattering off along the deck.

It was later in the day when Terry and the other prisoners were brought up before Colonel Armand St. Just, a tall, thin, eagle-faced martinet, who was known throughout the Legion by the sinister nickname of the Butcher. St. Just wore a rimless monocle, and an icy, supercilious air, and to him the humble legionnaire was just so much cannon fodder. Discipline was his fetish; mercy he knew not.

Terry Drake, a dishevelled, scarecrow figure in a crumpled uniform, felt a chill run down his spine as he found the merciless eyes of Colonel St. Just fixed upon him. The youngster was standing between two giant legionnaires with fixed bayonets; on the right of the table was Sergeant Emil Schomm.

"Sir!" cried Terry, eager and desperate. "I want to explain—"

"Silence, garbage!" thundered Schomm. "I have had much trouble with this recruit, mon colonel!" he ran on. "He started a free fight in the cage! He attacked a brother soldier and knocked him senseless! He has threatened me with violence! He pretends to be a little mad, saying that he is not Browning, who enlisted in Paris! Yet his pay-book proves that he is! It is the old trick, mon colonel!"

Colonel St. Just nodded his sleek, grey head; a cold, sinister smile curved his thin lips.

"We will trump that trick," he said almost pleasantly. "Seven days solitary confinement! Take him away!"

The heart of Terry Drake thumped hard against his ribs as he heard the savage sentence. It meant a week in a coffin, a week cut off from the outside world; and each day would carry him nearer some isolated post in the desert wastes of North Africa.

"Sir!" he cried in a panic. "My name is Drake, and a terrible mistake has been made! A legionnaire named Browning played a trick on me, and—"

"Increase that sentence to ten days, Sergeant Schomm!" cut in the Butcher, with a yawn. "This fellow bores me!"

"Listen, sir, I insist upon—" began Terry, his eyes flashing, his fists clenched; and then he groaned, and crumpled up as the butt of a rifle seemed to splinter his ribs.

The "solitary" cell aboard the troopship was a cramped apartment without windows or proper ventilation, and space was so limited that the prisoner could neither lie down flat nor stand upright. All he could do was to squat down against the wall, with his knees drawn up to his chin. His diet consisted of a daily ration of bread and a tin mug of tepid water. Many a poor devil, condemned to a period in the dreaded Ice Box, had emerged a raving lunatic, a useless thing to be disposed of at the earliest opportunity. But Terry Drake was made of sterner stuff. He knew that he was up against the most desperate proposition of his life, but he meant to come out on top. Though his position was hopeless enough, in all truth. He could make neither head nor tail of the mysterious business; he had nothing to get his teeth into, as it were. Someone else's identity had been thrust upon him, and to all intents and purposes he was No. 11,123, Soldier of the 3rd Class, Tod Browning.

Having served his sentence, he would find ways and means of putting the facts before the powers that be. He would

demand justice. He would go over the sleek head of Colonel St. Just.

The troopship reached its destination within three days, and after a week the company of legionnaires found itself in the desert garrison of El Moukil, a cluster of mud block-houses upon the Arab trade route that stretched away to Sadi Marnou on the coast.

It was in the garrison that Terry Drake finished his sentence, the ill-ventilated, verminous cell being even less habitable than the Ice Box aboard the troopship. At last came the day of release, and it was Sergeant Emil Schomm who was waiting to greet Terry. The youngster saw the gloating, purple face through a reddish haze. The sudden blinding glare made him sick and light-headed.

Unwashed, unshaven, his hair a tangled mass, Terry collapsed into a huddled heap after he had been dragged out of the cell and propped against a mud wall.

"Get up, you lazy shirker!" roared Schomm, using his iron-studded boot. "Try any tricks, you carrion, and I'll give you a taste of the capillaude! You'll enjoy that, being stripped and tied up and left out in the sun to roast!"

Molten metal seemed to be coursing through Terry's veins as he dragged himself to his feet, and no sooner was he in an upright position than Schomm stepped forward and struck him a vicious backhand slap across the mouth. This was the last straw, so far as the youngster was concerned. Snarling like a mad dog, he drew upon every ounce of his reserve strength, and the punch that crashed against Schomm's heavy jaw dropped the bully into the burning sand. Making no cry, he rolled over on to his broad back and remained still, lifeless and unlovely as a stuck pig.

Terry never knew exactly what happened immediately after that, but he was in a dazed and beaten state when, later in the afternoon, he was hauled before Colonel St. Just. The Butcher regarded the prisoner with a cold, impersonal eye as the youngster faced him in the mud-walled orderly-room. His manner was impatient as he glanced at his neat, jewelled wrist-watch.

They waste no time in the Legion, even when a man's life is at stake. Legionnaires are cheap enough at a few pence a day.

"I know the facts of the charge," said the Butcher, in his bored way. "Do you plead guilty or not guilty to striking Sergeant Schomm, Legionnaire Browning?"

"I did hit him, sir," answered Terry, making a valiant effort to pull his wandering senses together; "but I want to say a word about—"

"Enough!" The Butcher silenced him with a slender, nicely manicured hand. "You have committed a most serious offence; to-morrow you face a firing-squad at dawn!" Then, to Sergeant Schomm: "Take yourself and the escort outside!" he ordered. "I am not to be disturbed! The prisoner remains with me!" And to Terry, when the door closed behind the N.C.O. and his men: "Sit down, Drake!" he invited, with a pleasant smile. "I want to have a little chat with you!"

(The concluding part of this gripping story will appear in next Wednesday's GEM, which will also contain the finest Free Gift ever offered to readers! Order it in advance!)



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