

"SKIMPOLE THE BENEVOLENT!" THE FUNNIEST SCHOOL STORY OF THE WEEK— INSIDE,



2
THE SCHOOLBOY WHO INVITED A CROWD OF TRAMPS TO ST. JIM'S AND
DISTRIBUTED TWENTY POUNDS AMONG THEM!

SKIMPOLE *the*



Skimpole had intended the distribution of the money to come after his speech. But the "gentlemen" were too impatient. There was a wild scramble of the tattered and whiskery tramps to clutch the money as Skimmy handed it out. His first windfall had disappeared quickly, but his second was gone in a flash!

CHAPTER 1.

Skimpole is Too Generous!

"SKIMMY, old chap—"
Skimpole of the Shell blinked up at Talbot through his enormous spectacles and waved a bony and worried hand—waving him away, as it were.

"Please don't interrupt, Talbot—"

"But—"

"I am very busy! Please go away! I am very busy indeed!"

Skimpole looked very busy. He was seated at the study table, which was littered with papers; the floor was littered, too. Skimpole had a pen in his hand and ink on his fingers, and a smudge or two upon his intellectual features; his big, bony forehead was wrinkled in thought.

Skimpole's mighty brain was evidently working.

Talbot grinned, but he declined to be THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,545.

waved away. He had the pleasure—or otherwise—of sharing that study with Skimpole. It was tea-time, and Talbot had guests coming to tea, so it was clearly inevitable that Skimpole's mighty mental operations had to be interrupted.

"I'm sorry, Skimmy—"

"Not at all! Please run away!"

"It's tea-time—"

"I do not want any tea, Talbot; I'm far too busy to think of such trifles."

"But I do," explained Talbot; "so does Gore. And I've got visitors coming to tea. Shall I help you clear the table?"

"My dear Talbot," said Skimpole firmly, "it is quite impossible to have tea in the study this evening. I am making up the notes for my lecture. You can lend me your assistance if you like. It would be necessary for you to miss your tea."

George Gore came into the study; he stared at the littered table.

"Clear that rubbish off, Skimmy!" he said. Gore was not so polite as Talbot; in his dealings with Skimpole he sometimes used heavy-handed methods. "Never mind your giddy inventions now; we want tea. You can leave your marvellous airship to be continued in our next."

Skimpole gave him a worried blink. Skimpole was a genius. But, even as a prophet is not honoured in his own country, so Herbert Skimpole was not appreciated in his own study. Gore characterised his inventions as bosh.

"I am not thinking of airships now, Gore. I have completed the plans of my new airship and sent them to London. I am expecting shortly to receive a substantial cheque for them. I am now making the notes for my lecture—"

"Bow-wow!" said Gore.

"A large number of fellows are

IT'S THE LAUGH OF A LIFETIME—THIS AMUSING LONG YARN TELLING HOW SKIMPOLE SQUANDERED A SMALL FORTUNE—AND THEN FOUND HIMSELF IN DEBT!

BENEVOLENT!

By
**MARTIN
CLIFFORD**



coming to hear my lecture, Gore," said Skimpole gently. "I cannot disappoint them. I hope you will come, Gore. By putting my lecture into the simplest possible language I hope to make the great truths of Determinism comprehensible to the dullest mind."

"What?"

"Here come the fellows," said Talbot, as there was a sound of footsteps and cheery voices in the passage.

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther, the Terrible Three of the Shell, appeared in the doorway.

"Here we are again!" said Monty Lowther affably. "We've come early to help."

"Looks as if help is needed," remarked Tom Merry.

"My dear friends," said Skimpole in distress, "do go away! With your talking here I shall never get these notes finished, and my lecture is at seven o'clock."

"Are you going to clear that table?" demanded Gore.

"Certainly not, Gore!"

"Lend a hand, you chaps!" said Gore.

Skimpole gave a roar as Gore collected up a double handful of his valuable papers and hurled them into the corner of the study.

"Gore, my notes; you are mixing them! Dear me! I shall get my lecture wrong and lose this great opportunity of spreading the light."

"Oh, if that's what you want, we'll help you!" said Gore. And the next handful went into the study fire.

Skimpole yelled.

"Gore, wharver you doing with my notes?"

"Spreading the light," said Gore.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gore, you are utterly stupid! I did not refer to that kind of light," gasped Skimpole. "I really suspect, Gore, that that was a deliberate misunderstanding on your part. My dear Lowther, do not spill the ink over my notes. Merry, please do not stick my papers in the wastepaper-basket. Manners—Talbot, you are mixing up my notes!"

But the Shell fellows did not heed.

The study table was cleared in a remarkably short space of time, and the juniors proceeded cheerfully to lay the cloth.

"Oh dear!" said Skimpole distressfully. "I have been at work on those notes for hours. Now they are all mixed. Oh dear!"

It's a big surprise to Tom Merry & Co. when Herbert Skimpole, the crank of the Shell, receives forty pounds for his weird and wonderful invention. But it's an even bigger surprise to them when they see how Skimmy disposes of his windfall!

"Yes, the rot with the bosh and the piddle with the rubbish!" said Gore heartlessly. "Shove the kettle on, somebody!"

"Here we are, deah boys!" said the cheery voice of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of the Fourth, and the swell of St. Jim's came in with Blake, Herries, and Digby. "Bai Jove! What is the mattah with Skimmy?"

Skimpole blinked at him dolorously. "My notes have been mixed up, D'Arcy. Gore has actually destroyed some of them. My lecture will be spoiled. My special argument addressed to you has disappeared—"

"Addressed to me? Bai Jove!"

"Yes. I had hoped to convince you, D'Arcy, that you are a useless encumbrance upon the earth—"

"What?"

"That your existence, and that of the class you represent, is a mistake—"

"Bai Jove!"

"And that your painless extinction is a great desideratum in social progress—"

"You uttah ass—"

"And now Gore has burned my notes," said Skimpole distressfully. "I had hoped to make it clear even to your limited intellect, D'Arcy—"

"Talbot, deah boy, have you any objection to me givin' that idiot a fearful thrashin' in your study?" asked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"My dear D'Arcy," said Skimpole in surprise, "have I offended you in any

way? I am sure I should be sorry to say anything to hurt your feelings."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a sudden roar from Gore.

Gore had gone to the cupboard for supplies. Gore and Talbot were standing that feed to the chums of the School House, and they had laid in supplies on a really lavish scale.

Gore's eyes almost started from his head as he gazed into the cupboard. It was in the same state as that of the celebrated Mrs. Hubbard.

"Where is the grub?" demanded Gore.

"Isn't it there?" said Talbot.

"There's nothing here."

"But—but we've got it all in ready," said Talbot. "Has some silly ass been larking?"

Skimpole blinked at them.

"Are you referring to the provisions that were in the cupboard, my dear Talbot?"

"Yes, ass!"

"The ham, and the cold beef, and the eggs—"

"Yes, yes!"

"And the gammon rashers, and the cake, and the three pots of jam—"

"Yes," roared Gore. "Where are they?"

"And the biscuits, and the jelly, and the doughnuts—"

"Yes, fathead! What's become of them? We want them!"

"I am very sorry," said Skimpole. "However, I am sure you will be pleased to hear what I have done with them."

Nine pairs of eyes were fastened upon Skimpole. Nine juniors looked anything but pleased. They were all hungry after footer practice; and in Tom Merry's study and Blake's study funds were low. The invitation to a feed with Talbot and Gore had come like corn in Egypt in one of the lean years.

"Where's the grub?" asked Talbot, breathing hard through his nose. "You blithering ass, what have you done with it?"

"As a sincere Determinist, Talbot, I—"

"Where's the grub?" shrieked Gore. "I could not refuse to supply the wants a member of the down-trodden millions. A short time ago a tramp came to the side gate. He was so hungry that he was staggering from side to side, and Toby turned him heartlessly away. I could not let him depart unsatisfied. Fortunately, I had observed you fellows bringing in the tuck. I rushed in immediately—"

"What?"

"Made it into a bundle—"

"Eh?"

"And rushed after that unfortunate victim of our imperfect social system and presented it to him."

"Bai Jove!"

"He was very pleased," said Skimpole, beaming. "His voice was quite broken as he thanked me. He was very pleased indeed."

Nine hungry juniors glared at the charitable and magnanimous Skimpole as if they would eat him.

"You—you—you've given away our feed to a tipsy tramp!" stuttered Gore at last.

"My dear Gore, as a sincere Determinist—"

"Scrag him!" yelled Blake.

"Wag the silly ass!"

"Bump him!"

"Lynch him!"

"My dear fellows," ejaculated Skimpole, "I—ow!—thought you would be—yow!—pleased—yaroooh!—I assure you—leggo!—as a sincere—yaroop!—oh, my hat! Oh crumbs!"

Skimpole disappeared for a few minutes, and nothing more could be seen but arms and legs. Dust rose from the carpet, and wild yells from the genius of the Shell.

Skimpole sat up at last.

Tom Merry & Co. were departing from the study, seeking a feed elsewhere. Skimpole sat and blinked, and groped for his spectacles. His valuable notes had been crumpled up and stuffed down his back, and the inkpot had been emptied over his brainy head. He gasped, and gasped, trying to get his second wind.

"Oh dear!" groaned Skimpole. "Groogh I'm inky! Oh crumbs! I am hurt! Yow-ow-ow! I have several distinct pains! Oh—oh dear! I suppose I must have offended them in some way. Ow—ow—ow! This is—ow!—horrid—yow!"

CHAPTER 2.

Many Converts!

TOWARDS seven o'clock that evening the Shell Form Room began to fill.

There was a notice on the door announcing that the sublime Skimpole would be giving his lecture at seven. Skimpole and his lecture were not taken quite seriously. The good Skimmy hoped to spread the light in St. Jim's, but there wasn't the slightest prospect of success. A

numerous audience was turning up. But as most of them brought tin whistles, or pea-shooters, and had nuts and apples, and other missiles in their pockets, it was probable that the lecture would terminate in a rag. Indeed, it was probable that the lecture would not proceed very far before the rag commenced.

Tom Merry & Co. were in the front seats. Skimpole was already arranging his notes—such notes as he had been able to rescue from ruin—on the Form-master's desk. From that high position Skimpole blinked over the increasing audience with satisfaction.

He had hoped for a good audience. But he had really not expected such a whacking crowd. The Terrible Three brought in most of the Shell; Study No. 6 had an army of the Fourth; Wally D'Arcy, the minor of the great Arthur Augustus, came in with a horde of Third Form fags; Figgins & Co. came over from the New House.

All the seats were soon taken, and a crowd of fellows were standing. There was a buzz of voices, and a ripple of laughter. It struck the audience as funny that Herbert Skimpole did not suspect that a rag was intended. Any other fellow, looking at the grinning crowd, would have guessed that they were there for a lark. Indeed, no other reason could possibly have drawn them to a lecture by Skimpole.

But Skimmy hadn't the least suspicion. His kind and gentle face beamed with satisfaction as the juniors swarmed in.

There were still a few streaks of ink on Skimmy's bony forehead, and one or two of his notes were still down his back, and made him wriggle a little uncomfortably. He had been busy since his ragging in getting his notes ready again, and hadn't had much time for anything else.

Tom Merry & Co. waited for the lecture to begin. As a rule, they were easy-going with Skimmy. They would dodge him when he wanted to argue, or knock his hat off in a friendly way, and they gently, but firmly, excluded his contributions on social subjects from the "Weekly."

But they felt that the time had come to make an example of Skimmy. They had come in to a first-class feed that evening to find the cupboard bare. They had been too late for tea in Hall, and they were out of funds.

They would have missed their tea altogether had not Figgins taken compassion on them, and asked them over to the New House. Figgy was very good; but his supplies did not go far among such a crowd, so the heroes of the School House were unsatisfied and wrathful. They felt that Skimpole needed a lesson. The proper place for Determinism was in a book. Skimpole had to learn not to put his theories into practice. The juniors were going to give him the necessary lesson free of charge.

When seven boomed out from the clock tower, the Form-room was crowded. Certainly, no other lecture given at St. Jim's had called together such a numerous and distinguished audience.

Skimpole was still busy trying to get his notes in order. Many of them were missing. The rest were mixed. His long and carefully thought-out arguments and valuable observations on Determinism were hopelessly mingled with facts relating to the Origin of Species. As Skimpole made his notes on all sorts of fragments of paper, the difficulties were great when they got mixed. Trifling precautions like that of

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Skimpole jumped in astonishment as pea-shooters came into play and apples and nuts whizzed across the Form-room. "My dear friends—oh dear! Whatever—yaroooh! My dear comrades, this is most unseemly—yow-ow-ow!" Skimpole's lecture had come to an abrupt termination!

numbering them had escaped his mighty brain.

Stamp, stamp, stamp!

The time-honoured signal of an impatient audience boomed through the Form-room. It was past seven, and the audience were waiting. They had prep to do that evening, and they did not want to waste time. Besides, Levison of the Fourth had brought a very ancient egg, and he expressed fears that it would not keep much longer.

Stamp, stamp, stamp!

Skimpole jabbed his spectacles a little more firmly upon his nose, and blinked down at the audience.

"Pray be patient, my friends!"

"Begin!"

"On the bawl!"

"Go it, Skimmy!"

Skimpole gave up the attempt to get his notes in order. He determined to trust to luck. He cleared his throat with a little preliminary cough.

"Gentlemen—"

"Hear, hear!"

"We have met this evening for a very important purpose. I have every hope of instilling into your minds some rudimentary knowledge of the great truths of Determinism. I shall endeavour to speak in very simple language, suitable to your understanding."

"Bai Jove!"

"Determinism is so simple, so self-evident, I must say, that its principles may be grasped by the most limited intellects. I have, therefore, every hope of making you all understand—"

"Hear, hear!"

"In the course of the next few hours, I shall explain the matter thoroughly,

with especial reference to the bearing of Evolution on the question, and a glance at Determinism."

The audience smiled loudly. The good Skimmy had the impression that he was going to hold forth for several hours. The audience had the impression that the lecture could be counted by minutes.

"Gentlemen," said Skimpole, "or, rather, I should say comrades—Dear me, was that a wasp?" ejaculated Skimpole, clapping his hand to his ear.

It was not a wasp; it was a pea from Figgy's pea-shooter.

The fun was beginning.

"Comrades, you are aware that in society as at present constituted, there is a very unequal distribution of wealth. Members of an idle and pernicious aristocracy expend huge sums upon their personal adornment, and roll in wealth upon the tessellated floors of their marble halls."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I rise to order," said Monty Lowther, getting up. "I appeal to D'Arcy, as a member of the aristocracy, to state whether he has ever seen any idle and pernicious aristocrats rolling on the tessellated floors of his ancestral halls?"

"Certainly not, you duffah! I vegard Skimmy as an ass!"

"I beg you to take your seat, Lowther. I was speaking in a figurative sense," said Skimpole. "I repeat"—he blinked at his confused notes—"I repeat that while the idle rich are rolling in the earliest theory of Evolution, as propounded by Darwin—dear me, that does not sound right!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pray be patient! My notes are a little mixed. While the idle rich roll in filthy lucre and unmanly luxury, the down-trodden millions toil and moil from morn to night, and the voice of their woe sounds in the ears of—of huge monsters that walked the earth in the far-away geological epochs."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Skimpole was getting mixed up again.

"Silence, please! Take, for instance, the total sum of the national income—dear me, I have lost the figure! However, this sum, if divided equally among the population of the kingdom, would bring in an income of four pounds a week for every family. Comrades, I put it to you whether that would not be a most just and equitable distribution of the national wealth. Fellows like D'Arcy would not be able to buy so many new hats—"

"Bai Jove!"

"Public schools, of course, would be closed—"

"By gum!"

"All you fellows would have to work instead of grinding Latin in the Form-room!"

"Help!"

"But the hungry would be fed, and the poor would not be turned away empty,"—went on Skimpole, with enthusiasm. "Oh, my dear friends, I repeat—Yow-ow-ow! What's that?" "That" was a small, but very hard apple, which caught Skimmy under the chin.

Skimmy blinked reproachfully at the audience, and went on:

"Comrades, I hope shortly to be able

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to give you an object lesson in Determinism. I have sent the plans of my new airship to the editor of the 'Flying Times,' and I have not the slightest doubt they will be purchased by the Air Ministry. I have empowered the 'Flying Times' to place my airship at the disposal of the Air Ministry for what-ever sum they care to pay; and, indeed, I am of opinion that my invention will revolutionise aviation. The sum I shall receive will probably be large. This sum I shall devote to Determinism. Every fellow in need of cash will only have to ask for his just share, and it will be given to him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"As a Determinist, of course, I shall be entitled to no more than a fair share. My brains are at the services of my fellow-creatures. I shall therefore divide equally with all my claimants."

"Good old Skimmy!"

"Whack it out!"

"I shall hand it out, my dear friends, as freely as I handed out Gore's supplies of tuck to a hungry beggar!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"To resume. In order to acquaint you with the root principles of Determinism, we will take the case of two men on an island—"

There was a roar. Skimpole was not aware of it, but it was agreed among the audience that the first mention of two men on an island should be the signal for a regular fusillade.

Skimpole jumped in astonishment as fifty pea-shooters came into play, and apples and nuts whizzed across the Form-room in volleys.

"My dear friends—Oh dear! Whatever—yaroooh! My dear comrades, this is most unseemly—yow-ow-ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pile in!"

"Comrades—gentlemen—oh crumbs! You are interrupting my lecture—yow-ow-ow!"

Skimpole dodged down behind the desk.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a rush of the audience.

The lecturer was collared and dragged out from behind the desk, struggling and gasping. The lecture was hopelessly interrupted.

"Gentlemen," said Monty Lowther, "on Deterministic principles, I claim Skimmy's spees as my share of his property."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My dear Lowther, I assure you that that is not—wow!—Determinism—ow! Oh dear!"

Lowther calmly appropriated Skimpole's spectacles. The unfortunate Determinist blinked round in dismay. Blake jerked off his jacket.

"This is my bit," said Blake cheerfully. "I'm going to give this jacket to a young beggar, Skimmy."

"I claim the waistcoat!" yelled Digby.

And Skimmy's waistcoat was whipped off and triumphantly appropriated by Digby.

"The collar for me!" shouted Herries.

"Give me his necktie!"

"I'll have his shoes!"

"I'll have his socks!"

"Harrah for Determinism!"

"My dear friends," yelled Skimpole, "this is not Determinism! Determinism is the confiscation of the property of non-Determinists—yow!"

"Gimme his braces!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The trousers for me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hold on!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Draw a line somewhere. Leave Skimmy his bags as a share of his own property."

"My dear friends—oh dear!—please give me my clothes—ow!—I feel quite cold. Yow! Suppose Mr. Linton should come in—groogh! How ever am I to leave the Form-room in this state? Oh dear!"

"Gentlemen," said Monty Lowther, "an equal distribution of Skimpole's property having been made, the proceedings will now close. Good-bye, Skimmy!"

The yelling audience streamed out of the Form-room. Wally of the Third took Skimmy's braces, and Skimmy held

on to the few garments that remained as if for his life.

The unfortunate Determinist of St. Jim's remained in quite a dazed condition. He would willingly have explained to the hilarious audience that they totally mistook the principles of Determinism, which certainly did not mean parting with one's own property. But the audience were gone, and Skimpole's things were gone with them. The hapless social reformer remained in the Form-room with his shirt and trousers.

"Oh dear!" gasped Skimpole. "Dear me! I really fear that they must have done this for a joke—an absurd joke! Oh dear! How ever am I to go out in this state? Suppose I meet Mr. Linton—suppose I meet the Head! Oh!"

Skimpole did not venture to leave the Form-room in his denuded state. He waited, in the hope that some of the japers would return. About a quarter of an hour later Jack Blake looked in, with a coat on his arm.

"Like to borrow a coat, Skimmy?" he asked.

"My dear Blake—"

"Here you are," said Blake. "It is your own coat, and I give it to you as a present."

Skimpole gladly accepted his own coat as a present, and bundled himself in it, and escaped to the dormitory to obtain a fresh supply of other requisites from his box. When he came down to the study he found Talbot and Gore at work on their preparation. Skimpole blinked at them reproachfully.

"Congratulations!" said Talbot, laughing. "You made quite a lot of converts at your lecture, Skimmy."

"My dear Talbot—"

The door opened and Tom Merry looked in. He had a big bundle in his hand.

"Skimmy here?" he asked cheerily. "Here you are, Skimmy—a present for you!"

Skimpole caught the bundle—with his chest—as Tom Merry tossed it to him, and sat down on the carpet with the bundle on his knees. Tom Merry chuckled and retired.

Skimmy opened the bundle. "Dear me! Here are all my things," he said. "I think it must have been a joke, after all."

"Go hon!" said Gore.

"In the circumstances," said Skimpole, with dignity, "I shall not, in future, give any more lectures on social subjects."

And he didn't.

CHAPTER 3.

Great Expectations!

"Gussy, old fellow—"

It was Wally of the Third, the minor of the great Arthur Augustus, who addressed his major in those affectionate terms.

It was a day or two after Skimpole's lecture, and a group of School House juniors were collected on the House steps watching for the postman.

The Terrible Three were there, hoping that a letter would arrive for Tom Merry or Manners or Lowther—it didn't matter which. The Terrible Three had things in common.

There seemed to be a general dearth of wealth in the School House.

Study No. 6 had gathered there, too, to wait for old Blagg. Skimpole came along. Talbot was there, but he was only keeping his chums company; he wasn't expecting any remittances.

Then came Wally, and Wally sidled up to his major with such a respectfully meek manner that it was plain at a

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glance that D'Arcy minor was hard-up, too.

With all D'Arcy minor's good qualities, it could not be said he overdid respect for his major. Indeed, the scamp of the Third generally treated Arthur Augustus in a very off-hand manner. Only on special occasions was he all that a younger brother really ought to be. This was evidently one of the special occasions.

"Yaas, Wally," said Arthur Augustus. "I say, old chap—"

"Your collah is not vewy clean, Wally."

"I'll change it," said Wally meekly. "And you have ink on your fingahs."

"I'll go and wash 'em."

The unaccustomed meekness of the hero of the Third astonished Arthur Augustus. He jammed his celebrated monocle into his eye and surveyed his minor suspiciously.

"Is anythin' the mattah, Wally?"

"Ahem!"

"I twust you are not ill?"

"Rats! No!"

"Then I must wemark that your mannaahs are vewy much impvovin'."

"I'm taking you as a model, Gussy," said Wally blandly.

There was a chuckle from Tom Merry & Co.; but Arthur Augustus D'Arcy nodded approvingly.

"That's wight, Wally! I'm vewy glad to heah you say so."

"I—I want you to lend me a clothes-brush," said Wally.

"With pleasuah, deah boy!"

"And—and some tin."

"Oh!"

"We're all stony," said Wally.

"Young Jameson and Frayne and Curly and Hobbs—broke to the wide!"

There was another chuckle from the Shell fellows and the Fourth Formers, and even Arthur Augustus looked a little suspicious. He could not help suspecting that it was rather the tin than the clothes-brush that Wally really wanted.

"So if you've got any quids knocking around unused—" hinted Wally.

"If you mean pounds, Wally—"

"Oh, quids will do! Pound notes, if you like," said Wally affably. "I'm not a particular chap. You see, it's a half-holiday this afternoon, and we're all busted!"

"That is wathah a vulgah expwession, Wally!"

Wally's mouth opened, but he closed it again quickly.

"I am sowwy I haven't a pound, Wally."

"Make it five bob."

"Yaas; I should be vewy pleased to make it five bob, Wally—I mean, five shillings, but I haven't five shillings."

"Oh, jiminy!" said Wally. "Ladle out a bob, and have done with it!"

"Unless I weceive a wemittance, Wally, I cannot even give you a shillin'."

I have only a penny, and it is a P'wench one."

Wally glared.

"You ass! Do you mean to say you're stony?" he demanded wrathfully.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And I've been buttering you up for five minutes for nothing, then!" exclaimed the scamp of the Third indignantly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you young wascal—"

"Oh, go and chop chips!" said Wally disrespectfully.

And he turned away.

"Are you goin' to change your collah, Wally?"

"No fear!"

"And wash your inky fingahs?"

"Rats!"



"I told you to keep the ostrich locked up till that cement was dry!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to C. Hembry, 41, Defoe Avenue, Kew Gardens, Surrey.

"Weally, Wally—"

"Bow-wow!"

Wally of the Third marched off. Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass upon his grinning chums.

"I have a great mind to twash that young wascal!" he said. "Fancy his buttewin' me up, as he calls it, and me nevah suspectin' it! I twust my fivah will come. If I get a wemittance I shall punish Wally severely!"

"You won't give him any?" asked Blake.

"Now, Gussy—"

"Weally, Blake, I twust you do not think that I shall keep a wemittance for myself when my minah is stony? Besides, I should not be able to punish him if I did."

"Then how are you going to punish him?" demanded Talbot.

"I shall give him a big whack of my wemittance, deah boy!"

"Is that a punishment?"

"Yaas, wathah! It will be heapin' coals of fire on his head," explained Arthur Augustus. "He has been pullin' my leg for the sake of a loan of five shillings. Well, I shall give the young boundah ten shillings, and leave him to his wemorse!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I fail to see any weason for laughtah, deah boys! I wegard that as heapin' coals of fire on his head—a vewy severe punishment."

"Would you mind heapin' coals of fire on my head, too?" asked Monty Lowther. "I'm stony!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"When is this blessed postman coming?" growled Blake. "There's never been such a drought in the House before! Not a blessed boblet anywhere! There won't be any tea in the study if a remittance doesn't come!"

"Somebody's bound to get something," said Tom Merry. "We can't all get a miss in balk."

"My dear friends," said Skimpole, "may I make a suggestion? You here see the advantages of a system of Determinism—"

"Oh, don't!"

"Suppose you made an agreement to share out equally all the money that is received, and then you will all be provided for?" suggested Skimpole.

"I am perfectly willing to enter into such a compact."

The juniors grinned. As Skimpole seldom or never had any remittances, he could easily afford to carry out

Determinism on those lines.

"I am expecting a handsome remittance," said Skimpole. "I am not sure that it will come by this post, but when it comes it will be, perhaps, a hundred pounds!"

"Wha-a-at!"

"Which!"

"Who's going to send you a hundred pounds?" roared Blake.

"I am not sure that it will be a hundred pounds; it may be only fifty," said Skimpole. "I am expecting it from the 'Flying Times'."

"The—the what—"

"The 'Flying Times'—the great periodical dealing with aeronautical matters. It is some time since I sent them the plans of my airship."

"Oh, you ass!"

"My plans were very carefully drawn up, and the meanest intelligence would be able to see at a glance the value of my invention. The system of the self-acting propeller, requiring no motive force in the machine at all, will save the whole expense of petrol, to say nothing of avoiding all engine trouble."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I have empowered the editor of the 'Flying Times' to negotiate with the Air Ministry. I thought the matter over, and concluded that I could not get an interview with the Minister for Air."

"Barely possible!" assented Blake.

"So I have placed the whole matter in the hands of the editor of the 'Flying Times.' I shall look to him for my payment. I shall be willing to accept any reasonable sum, as I am chiefly anxious for my airship to be used speedily. And I am quite willing to make an agreement with you to share out on equal terms all remittances that are received this afternoon."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Skimpole blinked at the juniors in surprise.

"I do not see anything amusing in that suggestion," he said. "As I am expecting a large remittance, and you fellows are expecting small ones, I do not stand to benefit by the arrangement. I hope you do not suspect me of ulterior motives of that sort."

"We wouldn't suspect you of anything with any sense in it, old chap," said Blake. "I am willing to agree to whack it out."

"Hear, hear!" said Tom Merry.

"Yaas wathah!"

"Done!"

All the expectant juniors concurred. As they had not the slightest belief that Skimpole would receive anything, they were willing to agree, with the kindly motive of "standing" Skimpole part of their cash if it came, and relieving his perpetual state of hard-upness.

Skimpole's allowance always went quickly, fellows often coming to the kindly amateur Determinist for a loan, and often forgetting to return it. Skimpole's principles, of course, prevented him from insisting upon the return of a loan.

"It's agweed, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus. "Whatevah comes by this post, if anythin' comes at all, is to be whacked out on equal terms—what?"

"Leave me out," said Talbot. "I'm not expecting a remittance, so I can't take a whack."

"My dear Talbot," said Skimpole, "you are as much entitled to a whack as anybody else. Under Determinism all remittances will be nationalised."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Then there are seven of us expecting something—Skimmy makin' eight," grinned Arthur Augustus. "Whatevah comes is to be whacked out in eight equal parts."

So it was agreed. It was really a good idea, for among so many fellows expecting cash it was very probable that one at least would receive some, though that one was pretty certain not to be Skimpole.

"Here's Blaggy!" sang out Digby. There was a rush down the steps to intercept the postman.

Old Blagg stopped, with a circle of eager juniors round him, and blinked at them.

"What have you got for me, Blaggy?"

"Stand and deliver!"

"Registered letters or your life!"

"Hands up!"

Old Blagg grinned; he was used to the humorous manners and customs of the juniors of St. Jim's. He began to fumble in his bag.

"Nothing for you, Master D'Arcy!"

"Oh, wats!"

"Nothing for you, Master Merry!"

"Oh, rotten!"

"Only one for Master Skimpole!"

"What!"

Old Blagg handed out the letter for Herbert Skimpole, and went on his way.

Skimpole took the letter, and beamed benevolently at the juniors through his big spectacles.

"You see now the advantages of a Determinist arrangement, my dear friends!"

"Bow-wow!" said Blake. "Only a begging letter, I expect, or a bill. Bow-wow!"

"It is from the editor of the 'Flying Times,' I am sure."

"Rats!"

"Look, my dear Blake!" Skimpole held up the letter. On the flap of the envelope was a printed line—the "Flying Times."

"Bai Jove!"

"You see, my dear fellows, as it is an envelope from the 'Flying Times' office, it is extremely probable that the letter is from the 'Flying Times,'" said Skimpole seriously. "I regard it as almost certain. It is merely logical deduction."

"Go hon!"

"I wathah think I can guess what is in that lettah, deah boys. The editah of the 'Flyin' Times' is tellin' Skimpole he is a howlin' ass, and wecommendin' him to wun away to a lunatic asylum."

"Something of the sort," said Tom Merry. "My hat! We're fairly done! We shall have to go over to the New House and see if Figgins & Co. can shell out."

"Pray do not hurry away, my dear friends; I have not opened my letter

yet. I think it is very probable that there is a cheque in it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, let's see what's in it, anyway," grinned Blake. "I dare say the editor is quite eloquent about your flying machine. Go it!"

Skimpole slit open the letter; he drew out a folded paper. There was a gasp of amazement from the juniors as Skimpole unfolded the paper and held it up. It was a cheque for twenty pounds!

CHAPTER 4.

Skimpole's Windfall!

"TWENTY pounds!"

"Great Scott!"

"My only Lat!"

"Well, this beats the band!"

Skimpole smiled serenely. He was not in the least astonished. Tom Merry & Co. could not believe their eyes.

"Twenty pounds!" gasped Blake.

"There must be some mistake!"

"Not at all," said Skimpole. "This can only be a first instalment. They would scarcely have the cheek to offer me so insignificant a sum as twenty pounds for the plans of my airship. If they think I should accept this paltry sum in full payment there is certainly some mistake, which I shall see that they correct."

"But—but it's impossible—"

"Your airship's all silly rot, you know."

"You do not understand these things, my dear fellows," said Skimpole. "My airship is so great an invention that it will completely supersede the aeroplane. It will cause a fall in the price of petrol, that liquid no longer being required. The system of a propeller driven by energy created by its own action—"

"Oh, bow-wow! Let's have a look at that blessed cheque! There's something printed on the back."

"Probably a statement that it is merely an instalment," said Skimpole. The juniors examined the cheque eagerly.

It was difficult to trust their own eyesight. The cheque was quite in order.

"Pay H. Skimpole the sum of twenty pounds."

"They've spelt your name wrong," said Blake.

"Doubtless the last letter was taken for an L," said Skimpole. "My writing is not very clear. It is meant for Skimpole, of course."

The juniors nodded. From Skimmy's writing it was certainly not easy for anybody to know whether his name was spelt Skimpole or Skimpoll.

On the back of the cheque was a printed paragraph, with a line filled in in handwriting; there was also a space for a stamp and signature.

"Received the amount stated on the other side of the cheque, being payment of first instalment 'The Skimmer of the Skies.'"

The last words were in handwriting. There followed the space for the signature, with a square marked:

"If for two pounds or over, a two-penny stamp is required."

Under that was another line:

"This cheque, when signed in the space indicated, will be taken as a full receipt, and no answer is necessary."

"You see, my dear fellows, there is no mistake," said Skimpole calmly. "It is a common system in business to have the receipt form printed on the back of the cheque to save correspondence. They have named my airship the Skimmer of the Skies—a very good name for it. As I surmised, it is only an instalment. Such a ridiculously small sum could not be sent in complete payment."

"Isn't there a letter with it?" asked Tom Merry.

"Dear me! Yes, there is a letter in the envelope."

"Fish it out, you ass!"

Skimpole fished the letter out. It was merely a printed form and stated:

"Enclosed please find cheque in payment of work as stated on back of cheque. Yours faithfully,

"K. JONES,
Cashier."

It was headed:

"'Flying Times' Office,
Black Lion Court,
Fleet Street,
London, E.C.4."

"Well, this beats the giddy band!" said Tom Merry. "It's genuine enough. Blessed if I ever thought there was anything in Skimmy's airship!"

"I wathah think we owe Skimmy an apology, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus thoughtfully. "We have regarded him as a thumpin' ass, and it turns out that there is somethin' in his weird ideahs, aftah all. I withdrew my remarks about your bwains, Skimmy."

"There must be something in it if they're paying cash for it," said Lowther. "But I'm blessed if I understand it!"

"It beats me," said Manners. "Well, I congratulate you, Skimmy!"

"Yaas, wathah! Congwats, old man!"

"Congratulations, Skimmy!" chorused
(Continued on the next page.)

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the juniors. They were astounded, but they were really pleased to see old Skimmy succeed like this at last.

"The Housemaster will cash it for you," said Herries. "I suppose you haven't a bank account, Skimmy?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Unfortunately, no," said Skimmy. "With my next cheque I shall start a banking account, however. Will you lend me a pencil, somebody? I will now make the calculation."

"What calculation?"

"This cheque has to be divided into eight equal parts."

"Then you want a pair of scissors, not a pencil," remarked Lowther.

"I mean the cash has to be divided, my dear Lowther," explained Skimpole in his solemn manner. Skimmy's mighty brain was not receptive of jokes. "If the cheque should be cut into eight pieces it would lose its value. The bankers would decline to pay on each piece separately."

"Go hon!"

"Eight into twenty goes—how many?" said Skimpole. "Exactly two pounds ten shillings each, I think."

The juniors looked at Skimpole, and looked at one another. Skimmy was evidently prepared to carry out his Deterministic agreement to the bitter end.

But Tom Merry & Co. were not. They had entered into that agreement with the benevolent idea of "whacking out" their expected remittances with Skimmy. But they had no intention of "scoffing" his cheque.

"Rats!" said Tom Merry emphatically. "We're not touching the cheque—are we?"

"Wathah not!"

"Of course not," grinned Blake. "Don't be an ass, Skimmy. The cheque's yours, you duffer! We never dreamed you were going to get a whacking sum of money."

"My dear fellows, an agreement is an agreement, and a sincere Determinist is bound to carry out his principles. I insist upon sharing this cheque out."

Tom Merry patted him on the back. "It's all right, Skimmy. We're not going to rob you. But I'll tell you what—you can stand tea to the whole company, if you like. As we're all stony, we'll let you do that much, but no more."

"Yaas, that's a wippin' ideah."

"I would greatly prefer to keep to the agreement," said Skimpole.

"Well, we won't let you, and that's flat. An agreement can be cancelled by a majority vote," said Tom Merry. "Hands up for cancelling the agreement."

Seven hands went up.

"You see, Skimmy, you're outvoted. As a sincere Determinist, you have to bow to the majority."

"Quite so, my dear fellows," said Skimpole, satisfied at last. "If you put it like that I must give way, of course. But I should like to stand a really handsome feed. Will you fellows order the things while I go to the Housemaster?"

"What-ho!"

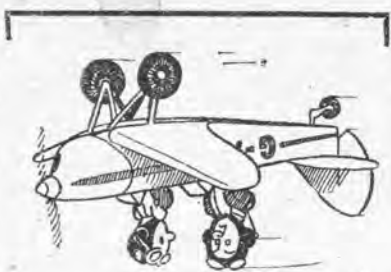
"Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry & Co. did not need telling twice. It was tea-time and they were hungry. A handsome spread in the study was better than tea in Hall. Skimpole ambled away to the Housemaster's study to raise the wind on his cheque, and Tom Merry & Co. trooped down to the school shop.

They spread the news on the way.

It was received with astonishment and incredulity.

"Skimmy—a cheque—twenty pounds



"Gosh, Bert, we must have put too much air in the tyres!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to W. Hawkins, 25, Beeston Street, Buckland, Portsmouth.

—giddy airship!" stuttered Figgins of the New House. "Gammon! Whose leg do you think you are pulling?"

"Draw it mild!" urged Kerr.

"Give us an easier one!" hooted Fatty Wynn.

"Honest Injun!"

"Honest Injun!" was indubitable. Figgins & Co. could not doubt after that; they could only gasp.

"Come to the feed," said Tom Merry.

"Skimmy's standing treat!"

"You bet!" said Fatty Wynn promptly.

The news spread—received with amazement, with wonder, with gasping. That Herbert Skimpole would ever receive anything but ridicule for his inventions, the St. Jim's fellows had never dreamed. Evidently, the school had entertained an angel unawares.

Certainly there must be something in Skimpole, if an experienced man in the flying world was willing to pay him twenty pounds as a first instalment on his invention.

"It beats Banagher!" said Reilly of the Fourth. "Sure I've heard that the fool of the family sometimes turns out the genius. But who'd have thought it of Skimmy?"

Nobody would have thought it of Skimpole. But it was true—there was the cheque. Skimmy had gone to the Housemaster to get it cashed. Doubt wasn't possible. The St. Jim's fellows could only wonder.

Dame Taggles opened her eyes at the extensive orders that were given in the tuckshop. Skimpole had said that it was to be a handsome spread, and the juniors felt that they were entitled to make it a handsome one. Skimmy's cheque had to be celebrated in proper style.

"We'll pay for these things presently, Mrs. Taggles," said Tom Merry. "Skimmy's standing the feed, and he's got to get a cheque cashed. It's all right."

"Very well, Master Merry. You know I don't give credit for more than a few shillings, even to you," said Dame Taggles. "You have ordered thirty shillings' worth."

"It isn't tick; we'll come down after tea and settle. Our study always keeps its word."

"Yes, yes. I know you always keep your word, Master Merry."

Dame Taggles had no hesitation in handing out the goods on the strength of Tom Merry's word.

Lader, with parcels, the charms of the School House proceeded to Study No. 6, accompanied by Figgins & Co., and Reilly and Lumley-Lumley, and several other fellows. It was quite a large party, and Study No. 6 soon presented a very festive appearance. But even Fatty Wynn agreed that they must wait for Skimmy.

CHAPTER 5.

A Surprise for the Housemaster!

"COME in!" said Mr. Railton. Skimpole had tapped at the door of the Housemaster's study in the School House. The genius of the Shell trotted in, with the cheque in his hand. Mr. Railton was at work, but he laid down his pen good-humouredly, and regarded Herbert Skimpole with a glance of inquiry.

"What is it, Skimpole?"

"I am sorry to interrupt you, sir," said Skimpole. "It is rather a pressing matter."

"Well, go on!"

"Am I interrupting you, sir?"

"You are, Skimpole. Pray do not lose time! What do you want?"

"Then I am sorry. I feel it very much when Gore and Talbot interrupt me, when I am busy in my study," said Skimpole. "Only the other day when I was preparing notes for a lecture, they—"

"Will you tell me what you want, Skimpole?"

"Certainly, sir; that is why I am here!" said Skimpole, surprised by the question. "I should like you to cash a cheque, sir."

"Why could you not say so at once? One of your relations has sent you a cheque?"

"Not a relation, sir—"

"Well, well! It doesn't matter whom. You could pass it through the Post Office bank, Skimpole—unless you are in a hurry for the money?"

"If you would change it, sir, and pass it through your bank, I should be under a great obligation, as the fellows—"

"How much is it?"

"Twenty pounds, sir," said Skimpole, coming to the point at last.

Mr. Railton stared in astonishment.

"Do you mean to say, Skimpole, that someone has sent you a cheque for twenty pounds?" he exclaimed.

"Certainly, sir."

"Such a sum of money should not have been sent without permission from the Head. But perhaps it is to purchase something?"

"I have not yet decided upon the expenditure of the cheque, sir, excepting that I am standing a feed to begin with. If you will kindly change it for me—"

"My dear boy, I do not keep twenty pounds in my study," said Mr. Railton.

"I can, however, advance you something, and give you the rest when the cheque is passed through the bank. Kindly let me see the cheque. It is extraordinary that such a sum of money should be sent to a junior."

"Here is the cheque, sir. I am expecting some more shortly."

"Indeed!"

"This is only a first instalment," explained Skimpole. "I have sold an invention to the editor of the 'Flying Times'—my new airship, sir."

"Wha-a-at?"

Mr. Railton's hand strayed towards the cane. Skimpole's statement was so extraordinary that the Housemaster's impression was that his leg was being pulled.

But the genius of the Shell blinked at

him quite solemnly. Skimpy did not look as if he were joking. He did not, indeed, look as if he were capable of joking. Life was a very serious business for Skimpy.

"Let me understand you aright, Skimpole. I have heard of certain ridiculous experiments you have made in your study. There was an explosion on one occasion—"

"Yes, sir; I have had several accidents," said Skimpole cheerfully. "But my experiments are not all ridiculous, sir. That is quite a mistake. Glyn calls them ridiculous. It is an error into which a mind lacking in intelligence would naturally fall."

"What?"

"I am referring to Glyn's mind, sir," said Skimpole hastily.

"You state that you have invented an airship—"

"Yes, sir; on a new system—"

"And—and you have sold it—"

"I have sold the plans, sir. I sent them to the editor of the 'Flying Times,' empowering him to dispose of them to the Air Ministry."

"You—you thought it possible that the Air Ministry would make use of an invention of yours?" gasped Mr. Railton.

"Certainly, sir. I have no doubt that my invention will be accepted."

"Dear me!"

"The editor of the 'Flying Times' thinks so, sir, as he has sent me a cheque for twenty pounds as a first instalment on my invention."

"Impossible!"

"Here is the cheque, sir."

Mr. Railton stared at the cheque. There it was, right enough. The Housemaster rubbed his nose and blinked at the cheque. Skimpole blinked at him.

"The Skimmer of the Skies," said Mr. Railton. "That sounds like the name of a story."

"No; that is the name they have given my airship, sir. A very appropriate name."

"This is extraordinary!"

"Not at all, sir. The fellows were all surprised, too. I do not see anything to be surprised at. I have been at work upon my airship for a very long time, and I have perfected it at last. I could not make a model, as I was forbidden to do so, after an explosion happened in my study, and Glyn was so very unreasonable about my taking his materials. But I was quite certain that as soon as an intelligent man saw my plans, he would see at once what a splendid idea it was."

"I cannot understand it," said Mr. Railton. "If there is no mistake here, Skimpole, you are a remarkably clever boy, and deserve great credit. But I cannot understand it. Before I can give you the money for this cheque I must pass it through the bank. I will write to my bankers and ask them to clear it at once, to establish whether there has been any mistake. Then, if it is all right, you will receive the twenty pounds."

"I should prefer—"

"I can do nothing else, Skimpole. If this cheque passes the bankers, it will prove that you are entitled to the money. Otherwise, although it seems in order, I think there must be some mistake. You must wait."

"Oh, very well, sir!"

"You must sign the cheque, and I will send it away this afternoon."

"Certainly, sir. Can you give me a stamp? I lent my last one to Levison."

Mr. Railton placed a stamp on the

place marked for it, and Skimpole signed the receipt on the back of the cheque—"H. Skimpole."

"Very well, Skimpole—you may go. As soon as I hear from the bank I will tell you."

"Thank you, sir!"

Skimpole quitted the study, quite satisfied. Mr. Railton's precaution was only a reasonable one, and Skimpole was not in a hurry for the money. The genius of the Shell was a trifle absent-minded, and he had quite forgotten that a tremendous feed was being ordered on the strength of that cheque.

But as he quitted the Housemaster's study, Jack Blake bore down on him and dragged him off.

"Come on, Skimpy! Is it all right?"

"Certainly, my dear Blake. I—"

"Railton's passing the cheque?"

"Yes, certainly! He—"

"Good! Come on; the feed's ready!"

"Thank you, my dear Blake! I am somewhat hungry," said Skimpole. "I do not usually think much of such matters. However, I'm quite ready for tea."

Blake marched Skimpy into Study No. 6, where tea was ready, and a whole army of juniors were waiting for him.

There was a cheer as he came in:

"Bravo, Skimpy!"

"Here's the giddy genius!"

"There isn't a fellow in the New House who can invent airships, and get cheques for twenty quids," grinned Digby.

"I give in," said Figgins. "I'd never have believed it possible. How do you do these things, Skimpy?"

"I will explain the whole thing from the very beginning, Figgins."

"Help!" gasped Figgins. "Sorry I spoke."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shove Skimpy at the head of the table," said Blake. "Skimpy's the founder of the feed. Here you are, Skimpy! Pile in!"

Skimpole piled in, and so did the rest of the party. Study No. 6 was crowded, and all the crowd were in the greatest of spirits. Skimpole of the Shell, for once, was a hero.

CHAPTER 6.

After the Feast, the Reckoning!

SKIMPOLÉ beamed over the well-spread board through his big glasses.

Skimpole was a benevolent youth, and he liked to see people happy. It was for this reason that he frequently handed out Talbot's and Gore's supplies from the study cupboard to hungry tramps. But those little weaknesses were fully forgiven him now.

Skimpole, the much misunderstood Skimpole, was a genius. People don't pay out cheques of twenty pounds for nothing. The "Flying Times" was paying Skimpole twenty of the best merely as a first instalment. Therefore, the value of his much-derided airship could be considered as proved.

The prospect of wealth that spread out before Skimpole was dazzling. Instalment after instalment of the payment on his wonderful "Skimmer of the Skies" would raise him to wealth beyond the dreams of avarice.

Under the influence of their new admiration for Skimpole, and of the feed, the juniors, for once, allowed Skimpy to talk Determinism. He explained to them at full length the

theories of Professor Balmcrumpet, Dr. Loosetop, and Herr Dummkoph. Skimpole was fairly given his head for once, and the juniors, feeling that that was quite enough, did not take the trouble to listen. They devoted their personal attention to the feed.

The feed was voted a great success.

When it was over, and the juniors were feeling highly satisfied, Skimpole was still running on, apparently being somewhat like unto the little brook that went on for ever. But the party broke up.

Tom Merry gave Skimpy a tap on his bumpy forehead, and brought him out of the down-trodden millions with a jump.

"After the feed, the reckoning," said Tom. "You've got to pay Mrs. Taggles a little call, Skimpy."

"I shall be very pleased to call upon Mrs. Taggles, my dear Merry. Is she in need of advice or assistance?"

"She's in need of thirty bob for this feed," said Tom.

"Dear me!"

"And it was to be settled immediately after tea," said Tom.

"How very unfortunate!" said Skimpole.

"I don't quite see it," said Tom, puzzled. "No trouble to walk over to the tuckshop and hand over the cash, is it?"

"N-no; but—"

"Thirty bob wasn't too much, was it?" asked Tom. "You said it was to be a handsome feed."

"Certainly not, my dear Merry. I should have been equally satisfied if it had been three pounds."

"Then what's the matter?"

"It unfortunately happens that I have no money," said Skimpole, blinking at him.

There was a yell from the juniors.

"No money!"

"It is really very unfortunate—"

"But—but the cheque!" roared Blake. "Isn't Railton cashing that cheque for you?"

"Certainly!"

"Then why haven't you any money?"

"Mr. Railton prefers to wait till the cheque is passed before he hands me the money, or any part of it," explained Skimpole. "It is really very absurd of Mr. Railton; but he was very decided. However, it makes no difference. Mrs. Taggles will be paid in a few days."

"In a few days!" groaned Tom Merry. "She won't wait a few days for thirty bob. I've given her my word that it shall be paid this evening."

"It will be all right, Merry. I will explain to Mrs. Taggles that she really has no right to expect payment at all, and that if the debt is settled it will be really an act of grace. Under Determinism all jam tarts and gammon rashers will be nationalised."

"But we're not under Determinism yet, and Mrs. Taggles has to be paid this evening," said Tom, in great dismay.

"It is a matter of little moment. Now, I was explaining, when you interrupted me, about the iniquitous beginnings of the present social system. Suppose there were two men on an island—"

"Shut up!" roared Tom Merry, exasperated. "Bother your two men on an island. Dame Taggles has got to be squared."

"Impossible, my dear Merry. Consider this—we will suppose that there are two men on a desert island.

Would it be just that one man should charge the other man rent for permission to live on that island? Evidently not. Then how can it be just that, on a larger island, with a larger population, one set of men called landlords should charge all the rest a regular sum for permission to live in their own country?"

"Oh, for goodness' sake dry up!"

"The private ownership of land is therefore a horrible iniquity. So long as land is in private hands—"

"Will you cheese it?"

"The sufferings of the down-trodden will continue," said Skimpole, without showing any sign whatever of cheesing it. "I may add that, according to the ancient law of England, land cannot be held as private property, and all landowners are, according to law, trespassers."

"Dry up!"

"And if the law were enforced, all present so-called owners of land would be compelled to make restitution."

"Ring off!"

"All landlords would be sent to honest work, and— Yaroooh!"

The juniors were fed-up. Dame Taggles had to be paid, and the cheerful Determinist had no money. In these circumstances, the juniors were not likely to listen to a lecture on the land question.

They laid violent hands upon Skimpy, and the amateur Determinist shot through the study doorway, and slid along the linoleum in the passage.

A wild yell floated back as Blake slammed the door.

Tom Merry & Co. then turned their attention to the pressing question of paying Dame Taggles her thirty shillings.

"It's an awful fix!" groaned Tom. "We're all stony, and I've given Mrs. Taggles my word to pay after tea. Just imagine that cheerful idiot letting us feed when he hadn't the cash! If he'd told us in time, we could have taken the things back! Now it's too late!"

"Well, a little too late!" agreed Lowther.

"Bai Jove, it's a frightful fix!"

"Better have a whip-round," said Talbot. "I've got six bob. I was going to stand a tea if Skimpy hadn't come to the rescue."

"My hat! I wish he hadn't!" said Tom Merry. "The blithering idiot!"

"He means well," grinned Lowther. "People who mean well ought to be boiled in oil! We've passed our word to pay up this evening, and even if we clear out Talbot, we still have twenty-four bob to find! Twenty-four bob—it might as well be twenty-four quids!"

Figgins & Co. turned out their pockets. They had one-and-ninepence among them.

"Every little helps," said Figgins. "Twenty-two-and-three wanted!" said Manners. "I dare say we can manage the threepence, but what price the twenty-two?"

"Sure, I've got a threepenny-bit," said Reilly.

"Oh, good!"

"Only Mrs. Taggles has refused it twice already; says it's bad!"

"Fathead!"

"I guess I'm stumped," said Lumley. Lumley. "Leave it till Saturday, and I could lend you all the thirty."

"Can't be did! Dame Taggles will kick up a row; besides, we've promised. She'll think we don't keep our promises," said Tom Merry, running his fingers through his curly hair in desperation.

"It's got to be done," said Arthur Augustus. "It's a question of honour with us. Dame Taggles has to be settled with this evenin'!"

"How? It's got to be done—but how?"

The dismayed juniors held a council of war. But there seemed no way out. It was because everybody was so excessively hard up that Skimpole's feed had been welcomed so joyously. Now Skimpole's feed had to be paid for, they were still in the same stony state, and their word was pledged.

It was a horrid dilemma!

They talked it over; they discussed it under every aspect, but the staring fact remained that twenty-two shillings and threepence were still required, and the meeting broke up at last, the fellows departing in various directions on borrowing expeditions. But they had little hope. For already, owing to the tightness of the money market, they had borrowed all they could on all sides. The borrowing wheeze was, as Blake put it, a sucked lemon.

But something had to be done! There was no doubt at all about that. The question was—what?



Skimpole slit open the letter and drew out a folded paper. There was a gasp of astonishment from the juniors as the St. Jim's inventor unfolded the paper and held it up. It was a cheque for twenty pounds! Skimpy's invention was apparently a success!

CHAPTER 7.

A Black Deed!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY wore a determined and thoughtful frown.

He was alone in Study No. 6.

The other fellows were all on the borrow, going up and down like lions, so to speak, seeking what they might devour.

They had a little luck.

A shilling here, a sixpence there, two-pences and three-pences were gathered in. But the principal part of the sum required was beyond their borrowing powers.

The only member of the little party who was not worried was Skimpole. Skimpole had shut himself up in his study to make plans for the disposal of the twenty pounds when the cheque was cashed. Deterministic schemes were flitting through his mighty brain. And that mighty brain could not be brought down to such trifles as were worrying Tom Merry & Co. at that moment.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was thinking it out with wrinkled brow. The swell of St. Jim's felt that it was up to him. He was accustomed to looking after his chums in a fatherly sort of way. True, Study No. 6 did not receive his fatherly way in an appreciative spirit. But Arthur Augustus felt that it was up to him. As a fellow of tact and judgment, he realised that if he didn't get the fellows out of this awful scrape, they would never get out.

The chums of the School House naturally prided themselves on the fact that their word was their bond. Dame Taggles had been promising her money that evening. As Skimmy had failed them, they had to raise it, though the skies fell. Arthur Augustus thought it out. The determined frown upon his aristocratic brow seemed to indicate that he had thought of a way.

"It's wotten!" he murmured. "A fellow must be careful of his dig. But honah comes first; our personal honah is involved in this mattah. I am resolved!"

That settled it!

Having made his resolution, whatever it was, Arthur Augustus proceeded to put it into execution. For the next quarter of an hour he was packing things into a large cricket bag. With the bag in his hand he quitted the study. He dodged quickly out of the School House, and made his way to the woodshed; the door of the woodshed closed upon him, and he disappeared from human ken.

Meanwhile, Tom Merry & Co. were still on the trail. They had agreed to gather at six to compare notes. As six boomed out from the clock tower the crowd of juniors met in the quad outside the School House.

Tom Merry held out his cap.

A few shillings, several sixpences, and a little shower of coppers fell into it from all sides.

Tom Merry counted up the cash.

"Six-and-six!" he said. "No; there's a threepenny-bit—six-and-nine. Six-and-nine added to seven-and-nine makes fourteen-and-six. That leaves fifteen-and-six wanted to make up thirty bob."

"We've dried up everybody," said Blake dismally. "Where's Gussy? Gussy hasn't turned up. Perhaps Gussy's made a raid somewhere," said Dig hopefully.

"Not likely."

"We've got to get the rest somehow," granted Lowther. "We can't fail to

keep our word to Mrs. Taggles. Blow that ass, Skimpole!"

"Hallo! What the dickens is that?"

The unmelodious strains of a concertina resounded through the quadrangle of St. Jim's.

The juniors stared at the queer figure that came towards the School House.

It was a nigger minstrel.

Apparently the minstrel did not know that strolling players were not admitted within the gates of St. Jim's. He was evidently there to give a performance, in full war-paint—striped trousers and jacket, white waistcoat, black face, and broad-brimmed silk hat complete. He drew terrific strains from the cheap concertina as he sawed with it. If he was playing a tune, it was unrecognisable.

"Hallo!" called out Tom Merry. "You'd better clear off. Minstrels are not allowed in the school, chappie."

Tom's idea was to give the stroller a friendly warning before Taggles, the porter, dropped on him and turned him out. The juniors themselves had no objection to seeing a nigger minstrel performance, though at that moment they would have been unable to contribute coppers when the hat was passed round.

But the nigger took no notice of Tom Merry. He sawed away with his concertina, and the racking strains drew a crowd from all sides.

"My only Aunt Jane!" shouted Wally of the Third. "Here's Uncle Bones! Give us a jig, uncle!"

"Play up, Sambo!" shouted Jameson.

"Go it, Snowball!"

"Hurrah!"

A numerous crowd speedily gathered round the minstrel as he sawed away at the concertina. Kildare, captain of St. Jim's, looked out of his study window and called to the performer.

"Clear off!"

The concertina sawed away with unmelodious music. Kildare was unheeded. Taggles, the porter, came out of his lodge and stared at the nigger in astonishment and indignation.

"My heye!" said Taggles. "My heye! I never see that raskil come in! I'll soon shift him hout!"

And Taggles rushed upon the scene to "shift" the coloured gentleman. But the crowd wedged together round him, grinning, and kept Taggles off.

"Lemme pass, young gentlemen!" yelled Taggles. "I've got to turn that fellow hout!"

"Leave him alone!" shouted Wally. "Let him give us a song. Go it, Uncle Bones! Give us a song!"

"Keep back, Taggy! He's just going to begin."

"On the bawl, Sambo!" exclaimed Jack Blake.

Sambo started. And when he started there was a gasp from Tom Merry & Co. For this is how the nigger minstrel started:

"Way down upon the Swanee Wiyah, Fah, fah away!

That's where my heart is turnin' evah;

That's where the old folks stay!

"All the world is sad and dweawy, Eweywhere I weam!

Oh, darkies, how my heart gnows weawy,

Fah from the old folks at home!"

"Gussy!" shrieked Blake.

"Oh, my hat, Gussy!" sobbed Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was no mistaking the unmistakable accent of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. It could have been recognised anywhere. It was, as Blake said, an accent that could be cut with a cheese knife. And, now they looked at Uncle Bones more closely, the juniors could recognise the nigger minstrel "clobber" they used in their amateur concert performances.

There was a general gurgle from the whole crowd. Taggles stood thunder-struck. Kildare almost fell out of the window.

"Give him a copper!" shrieked Wally. "Give Gussy a copper!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Railton came striding out of the House. The crowd made way for him. They could not sheer him off as they sheered off Taggles. The Housemaster fixed his eyes upon the nigger minstrel. He had not heard his voice yet.

"What are you doing here?" asked the Housemaster. "You are not allowed inside the grounds. Kindly go at once!"

"Weally, sir, I twust you will allow a poor stowlin' playah to give a little performance to the young gentlemen."

Mr. Railton almost fell down as he heard Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's voice proceeding from the nigger minstrel. He gazed speechlessly at the black face.

"I am weally not doin' any harm, sir," pursued the minstrel. "I twust I may give a little performance, sir, in the intewest of chawity. I want to help somebody who is vewy hard up—in fact, quite on the wocks."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"D'Arcy!" exclaimed Mr. Railton at once. "D'Arcy of the Fourth! Is it possible? What does this ridiculous masquerade mean? How dare you!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence! This is no laughing matter!" thundered the Housemaster. "D'Arcy, how dare you disguise yourself in this ridiculous manner, and make a disturbance in the quadrangle?"

"Oh ewumbs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Follow me to my study!" exclaimed Mr. Railton. "This is unheard of! I shall punish you most severely! Follow me at once!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The nigger minstrel, with a dismayed expression upon his black face, followed the angry Housemaster into the School House. A wild yell of merriment followed him. For the moment even Tom Merry & Co. had forgotten their financial troubles. They were almost in hysterics.

CHAPTER 8.

All Through Gussy!

JACK BLAKE wiped his eyes quite weakly.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gussy!" gurgled Lowther. "Gussy! This is why he disappeared. This is Gussy's way of raising the wind!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And he's raised Railton's, instead!" gasped Tom Merry. "Poor old Gussy! He will be the death of me!"

"Let's go and bail him out!" exclaimed Blake. "Railton thinks he's done it for a trick. If we own up about the famine in cash he may let him off lightly. He will see that he's only a silly idiot then."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The chums hurried off to the House-master's study, still gurgling. Arthur Augustus' extraordinary method of attempting to raise the wind almost overcame them. They felt that if the matter were explained to Mr. Railton he might deal more lightly with the swell of St. Jim's. Mr. Railton was a good-tempered man, as a rule, though he did not look very good-tempered when he spotted Arthur Augustus in his nigger minstrel rig.

Tom Merry tapped discreetly at the door and opened it. The juniors filled the doorway as Tom stepped in. Mr. Railton glanced round angrily.

He had selected his stoutest cane already.

"Kindly leave my study, all of you!" he snapped. "D'Arcy, hold out your hand! I am going to punish you in the most exemplary manner for this amazing freak! Such a prank is unheard of—unheard of! I am astounded at such impudence!"

"Weally, Mr. Wailton—"

"Hold out your hand at once!"

"May I speak a word, sir?" said Tom Merry meekly. "I—I want to explain that—"

"Do you know anything about this extraordinary freak?" asked the House-master angrily.

"Ye-es, sir."

"If you were a party to it, I shall punish you also!"

"Ahem! The—the fact is, sir, it—it was through you, sir—"

"What?"

Tom Merry jumped at the thunder in the Housemaster's voice. But he stuck manfully to his guns.

"If you'll let me explain, sir—"

"I am waiting for you to do so!" snapped Mr. Railton.

"You—you see, sir, Skimmy—I mean Skimpole—had a whacking cheque this afternoon. He was standing a big feed out of it, sir, and it came to thirty bob. Then, after the feed, the silly ass—I—I mean Skimpole—told us that you hadn't given him the money for the cheque, so—"

"That is the case. But what has that to do with this extraordinary prank of D'Arcy's?"

"The feed had to be paid for, sir, and we were all stony—I—I mean short of money—"

"We've been borrowing all we could, sir," said Blake, taking up the tale.

"But we couldn't come near it," said Lowther.

"And Dame Taggles was promised the cash for this evening—", went on Manners.

"And so you see, sir—"

"That ass—I mean Gussy—that is, D'Arcy, did this. I suppose he did it to—to raise the wind, sir. The silly chump—I mean it was very thoughtless—"

"But he didn't mean any harm, sir—he never does!"

"A chap can't help being a duffer, sir—"

"It was all through Skimmy not getting the cash for his cheque—"

Mr. Railton waved his hand for silence as all these explanations came upon him at once. However, he began to comprehend.

"D'Arcy!" he rapped out.

"Yaas, sir!"

"Did you adopt this utterly ridiculous garb of a negro minstrel in order to obtain a collection of coppers?"

"Certainly not, sir!"

"Oh, by gum!" gasped Tom Merry. "I thought he did, sir. I'm sorry. I took it for granted—"

"Then what on earth did he do it for?" murmured Blake.

"You did not, D'Arcy?"

"Wathah not, sir!"

"Then why did you do it?"

"To get a collection of silvah, sir!" said Arthur Augustus innocently.

"Wha-a-at!"

"A collection of coppers would have been of no use, sir. I twusted that by givin' a weally good song and dance I should be able to wope in a collection of tannahs and shillings, sir."

"You are a very stupid boy, D'Arcy."

"Bai Jove!"

"Your object, then, was to make a collection of money?"

"Yaas, sir."

"And do you consider that a proper and dignified proceeding?"

"As a mattah of fact, sir, that wotwied me vewy much. A fellow must considah his dig. But you see, sir,

these fellows were in a feahful fix, and they hadn't the bwaains to get out of it themselves. I wegard it as my duty to look aiftah t h e m—they a r e always gettin' into sewapes. I c o n - sidah—"

"Dry up, you a s s !", murmured Blake.

"Weally, Blake, I—"

Mr. Railton's face had relaxed considerably. Indeed, it was not easy to keep frowning while his eyes rested upon the swell of St. Jim's with his black face and red-striped nigger garment.

"It appears, Merry, that you have incurred a debt that was to be discharged from Skimpole's cheque, and—"

"Yes, sir. It was Skimpole's feed," explained Tom Merry. "He never thought a b o u t having to wait till the cheque w a s passed, and—and we didn't either. We ordered the stuff, and now we can't pay for it unless we—we raise the tin."

"It was a question of honah, sir. Honah comes before dig!"

Mr. Railton's mouth twitched.

"I am glad to see you have very correct ideas on that subject, D'Arcy; but to disguise yourself as a nigger minstrel, and give a ridiculous performance in the quadrangle to raise a few shillings from the boys, is—"

"I was goin' to give them value for their money, sir—a weally good song and dance. I

hadn't got to the dance when you interrupted me."

The juniors almost yelled. The idea of Arthur Augustus doing a nigger-minstrel dance in the quadrangle was almost too much for them. Mr. Railton gave a hurried cough.

"You are a ridiculous boy, D'Arcy!"

"Bai Jove!"

"I forbid you ever to do anything of the kind again, and you will take two hundred lines."

"Vewy well, sir. But in the circs—"

"As for the debt you boys have incurred," said Mr. Railton, "I will advance you the money to pay Mrs. Taggles, and will stop it from the money due to Skimpole when it comes, if it does come—otherwise from your allowances. How much is it?"

(Continued on the next page.)

"BAI JOVE, FELLAHS, WE MUST SAVE UP FOR GUY FAWKES NIGHT-LET'S JOIN BWOCK'S CLUB!"

says Gussy



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"Thirty bob—ahem, shillings, sir!" said Tom Merry, delighted.

The Housemaster laid down a pound and a ten-shilling note, which were promptly captured by Tom Merry, and the juniors quitted the study, after thanking the kind-hearted Housemaster warmly.

"You had better go and clean yourself at once, D'Arcy," said Mr. Railton, "and if ever you appear in that ridiculous costume again!"

He left the rest to the imagination of Arthur Augustus, and closed the door.

"What a blessed brick!" exclaimed Blake. "We can go round handing back those twopences and threepences now."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yaas, wathah! I wegard Wailton as a bwick!" said Arthur Augustus.

"I'll cut off and pay Mrs. Taggles," said Tom Merry. "You fellows can distribute all those blessed tanners and twopences to the owners. We shan't want 'em now. What a giddy relief!"

"Yaas; I am vewy glad that I have saved the situation."

"You?"

"Yaas, wathah! If I had not been the means of callin' Mr. Wailton's attention to the mattah he would not have advanced the cash. I wegard it as quite cleah that I have got you fellows out of this swape. In the cires, I am quite willin' to do the two hundred lines."

"Oh!"

"You fellows can always wely on me. Whenever you are in a difficult posish you cannot do bettah than leave it to a fellow of tact and judgment."

And Arthur Augustus walked away, leaving the juniors staring. They had been under the impression that they owed their escape from the scrape to Mr. Railton. Arthur Augustus, however, evidently put it down to his own account.

Tom Merry & Co. cut off at once to the tuckshop to settle that troublesome bill. The rest of the juniors made a general visit to their creditors, returning the small sums that had been borrowed on all sides.

Arthur Augustus proceeded to the dormitory to clean up. Naturally, he did not go alone. Half the School House followed him, grinning. In the dormitory they urged him to do a song and dance. They offered him halfpennies, and Wally even offered him a biscuit if he would sit up and beg. Arthur Augustus was glad when he had finished cleaning and changing, and could escape to Study No. 6, and lock himself in.

CHAPTER 9.

Hard Cash!

SKIMPOLE'S windfall had caused great commotion and excitement, but the disastrous results of Skimpole's feed on the strength of the wonderful windfall had caused belief in that windfall to ebb.

A cheque was a cheque, of course, but most of the juniors declared that they wanted to see the colour of the money before they hailed Skimmy as a giddy genius. And the money seemed a long time coming.

The belief gained ground that there had been some mistake about the cheque, and that the cash was not coming at all. Tom Merry & Co. made up their minds that the thirty shillings advanced by Mr. Railton would have to be stopped out of their own allowances. They did not mind that very much; they

had had the feed, anyway. But they told Skimmy what they thought of him, his inventions, his "Skimmer of the Skies," and his brains, in the plainest of English.

Skimpole only blinked at them solemnly, and told them that the money would come along in a few days. To which they replied disrespectfully:

"Bow-wow!"

A few days later, however, Mr. Railton called Skimpole of the Shell into his study after morning lessons. Tom Merry & Co. observed it, and they were interested once more. They guessed that it meant news of the cheque. As the Housemaster's door closed behind Skimpole a crowd began to gather in the passage.

Mr. Railton regarded Skimpole with some curiosity as the genius of the Shell stood blinking by his study table. Mr. Railton could not understand it. He had always regarded Skimpole as a duffer. And now—

"Skimpole, I am glad to say that the cheque has passed the bankers, and I have received the money for you."

"Yes, sir."

Skimmy was not in the least degree surprised. He had expected it.

"I received the sum of twenty pounds," said Mr. Railton. "I understand from Merry that you were to pay the thirty shillings due to Mrs. Taggles, which I have advanced."

"Quite so, sir. I had forgotten it, but it is quite correct."

"Then I have eighteen pounds ten shillings to hand you, Skimpole."

"Exactly, sir!"

"There is the money."

Mr. Railton laid three five-pound notes, three pounds, and a ten-shilling note on the table.

Skimpole collected them up carelessly, and shoved them into his pocket.

"Thank you, sir! I suppose you will not mind cashing other cheques when I receive them? That one was only an instalment."

"Certainly!" said Mr. Railton. "To avoid possible errors, I shall pass the cheques through the bank before cashing them. Skimpole, I congratulate you! You have certainly shown remarkable cleverness for a boy of your age—it is clear that my opinion of you was not a correct one. Ahem! I should advise you to be careful with so much money. You had better ask your father to take charge of it."

"I was thinking of devoting it to doing good, sir," said Skimpole. "There are many unfortunate poor people in the world, and I have been looking forward to relieving distress with this money."

"My dear boy," said the Housemaster, "that is very generous, but—certainly I have no fault to find with such an intention—but be careful that you are not imposed upon, and that it is genuine distress that you relieve."

"Oh, certainly, sir!"

Skimpole quitted the study, and Mr.

Railton rubbed his chin very thoughtfully as the door closed behind him.

Skimpole's heart was certainly all right, whatever might be said of his head. Money talks, as the proverb declares, yet the Housemaster still found it difficult to believe that Skimpole was a genius.

In the passage Skimpole found about fifty fellows waiting for him. They all greeted him with questions.

"Well?"

"Cheque a wrong 'un—what?"

"All a jape?"

Skimpole blinked at them in surprise.

"My dear fellows, the cheque was all right. Did I not tell you so?"



"Go it, Uncle Bones!" shouted Wally D'Arcy. "G started, the juniors barring Taggles from reaching him than his voice was recogni

"Where's the cash, then?"

"I have it in my pocket."

"In—in—in your pocket?"

"Yes."

"Show it up," said Gore sceptically.

"Yaas, wathah! Let's see it, Skimmy."

"Certainly, my dear fellows!" Skimmy dived his hand into his pocket, and it came out empty. He had dived it into the wrong pocket. Skimmy had a genius' full allowance of absent-mindedness. "Dear me! The money does not seem to be here!" said Skimmy in wonder.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Jolly well knew it wasn't," said Gore.

"It is very extraordinary! Mr. Railton certainly handed it to me—" "Gammon!"

"Ah, it is, perhaps, in the other pocket," said Skimpy, as if struck by a bright idea. "Yes, here it is."

The juniors stared at Skimpy, showed a fist full of banknotes. There was a buzz of astonishment.

"I have paid the thirty shillings for the feed, Tom Merry," said Skimpole, blinking at the captain of the Shell. "As I told you, there was no cause for alarm. I have now eighteen pounds ten shillings. If any of you fellows are in need of money, you have only to say so. As a sincere Determinist, of course,

Mellish almost fell down as Skimpole handed him a pound. That even the most ardent Determinist would carry out his principles to that extent seemed incredible.

But Skimpole was in deadly earnest. Mellish's thin fingers closed on the pound.

"You—you mean it?" he stammered. "Certainly, my dear Mellish. You have as much right to that pound as I have to your bicycle if I should need it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let me catch you after my bike, that's all!" murmured Mellish, as he beat a retreat with the pound.

Mellish was not a Determinist.

"A quid for me," chorled Levison.

"Here you are, my dear Levison!"

"Oh, my nat!" exclaimed the cad of the Fourth.

"I say, gimme a quid!" yelled Pigott of the Third.

Skimpole cheerfully handed Pigott a pound, and the young rascal scuttled off with it. Skimpole's windfall was going.

"Would you like some money, Tom Merry?"

"Ha, ha, ha! No thanks!"

"Would you like some, Talbot? You sold your bike the other day. If you would like to repurchase it, here is plenty of money," said Skimpole.

Talbot chuckled.

"Thanks awfully, Skimpy—I wouldn't rob you."

The juniors were yelling with laughter. At this rate, Skimpole's windfall was not likely to last him long. Most of the fellows, of course, refused to rob him, but there were some, like Levison and Mellish and Pigott, who had few scruples on that point. Skimpole was likely to be in need soon of another instalment.

A happy crowd marched Skimpole off to the tuckshop, where he changed his banknotes, and stood a new feed in celebration of his new riches. Dame Taggles benefited to the extent of another thirty shillings. Several fellows extracted little loans, and when Skimpy emerged from the tuckshop, his windfall was reduced to twelve pounds.

But Skimpy did not mind. He met Taggles, the school porter, in the quadrangle, and greeted him genially.

"My dear Taggles—"

"Hallo!" said Taggles.

"I have frequently heard you remark, my dear Taggles, that you are a very hard-working man," said Skimpole, blinking benevolently at the surprised porter. "It is true that I have never seen you do any work, but I should be far from doubting your word. Owing to the slenderness of my financial resources, my dear Taggles, I have hitherto been unable to gratify you with any considerable gratuity."

"My heye!" murmured Taggles.

"So I have great pleasure, at the present moment, in presenting you with this pound, my dear Taggles."

"Oh lor'!"

"Pray do not spend it in drink, my dear Taggles," said Skimpole, beaming at him. "Under Determinism the drink traffic will be abolished."

Skimpole ambled away, leaving Taggles staring dazedly at the pound in his horny fist.

"Mad!" murmured Taggles. "Mad as a 'atter or a March 'are!"

And it is much to be regretted that Taggles, in spite of Skimpole's warning, expended most of that pound in support of the drink traffic.

CHAPTER 10.

Riches Take Unto Themselves Wings!

TALBOT stared when he came into the study at tea-time.

Skimpole was there, with his nose and spectacles buried in a huge volume, in deep and entranced study of the lugubrious of Herr Dummkopf, translated into polysyllabic English by the celebrated Professor Loosetop.

On the table was a flower-pot. In the flower-pot was a heap of money. Half-crowns and two-shilling-pieces, shillings and sixpences filled the flower-pot to the brim. And gummed to the side of the flower-pot was a paper which bore the inscription:

"PLEASE TAKE SOME!"

Talbot stared at the flower-pot and stared at Skimpole. The genius of the Shell blinked up at him.

"What on earth's that?" demanded Talbot.

Skimpole smiled.

"That is my latest idea, my dear Talbot. I think it is excellent. You see, some of the fellows who are hard-up do not care to say so. I have thought of the excellent idea of putting the money there so that anybody who wants any can come and take it. I have changed it all into small silver for that purpose. Every fellow will be able to take exactly what he needs. See?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I do not see any cause for laughter, my dear Talbot. It is an easy method of distributing the money, and it saves a great deal of trouble personally."

"And how long do you think it will last at that rate?" gasped Talbot.

"That is a matter of indifference to me, my dear fellow. When I need any money I can help myself from the pot, the same as the other fellows. Of course, I have as much right to the money as anyone."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mellish of the Fourth looked in.

"Skimpy, old man—"

"Yes, my dear Mellish!"

"Piggott says you've got a free supply of cash here."

Skimpole waved a bony hand towards the flower-pot.

"Help yourself, my dear Mellish."

"Oh, my only hat!"

Mellish helped himself. He took a fistful of half-crowns and departed, chuckling.

"Don't you see that only the unscrupulous rotters will collar your cash? The other fellows won't."

But Skimpole was deep again in Herr Dummkopf's wonderful book, and did not reply.

Talbot went into the Terrible Three's study to tea. Tom Merry & Co. yelled when they were told of the flower-pot. While they were having tea they could hear almost incessant footsteps in the passage, coming and going.

Skimpole's flower-pot was evidently doing a roaring trade.

Unscrupulous fellows like Levison and

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"On the bawl!" exclaimed Jack Blake. Sambo g him out. But no sooner had Sambo started singing sey!" shrieked Blake.

I do not regard this money as belonging to me personally. Every person in need of money has a right to ask for some from any other person who possesses it."

"Oh crumbs!"

"It is a great pleasure to me," said Skimpole, his benevolent eyes beaming through his glasses, "to have an opportunity of putting my principles into practice. I shall immediately change all these banknotes into silver, and I hope that anybody in need of money will come to my study and help himself."

"Gweat Scott!"

"Oh, rather!" yelled Mellish of the Fourth. "Lend me a quid, Skimpy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Certainly, my dear Mellish!"

Mellish helped themselves without the slightest intention of reimbursing Skimpole. They took the amateur Determinist at his word, and helped him to live up to his principles.

Other fellows helped themselves to loans, with the intention of repaying them—though it was probable that some memories would be short afterwards.

When Talbot came back to do his preparation, he found an empty flower-pot on the table.

"Where's the tin, Skimmy?" he asked. "Eh? In the flower-pot, my dear Talbot."

"It's empty."

"Dear me! Then it has all gone," said Skimpole.

"And you don't mind?" grinned Talbot.

"Why should I mind, my dear fellow?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Talbot cleared off the flower-pot and sat down to his prep. That evening there was a reign of plenty in the School House. Fags who had helped themselves from Skimpole's supply held high revel.

And the general wish was that Skimmy would soon get another instalment on his invention.

Now that the cash had really materialised, the fellows were willing to give Skimmy credit for being a real genius; and a large number of them were willing to lend him their full assistance in getting rid of the money.

Quite an army of them, in fact, were looking forward to the next instalment. Skimpole, indeed, appeared to be the most indifferent of all. On the day following his windfall he was in his usual state of shortness of cash.

After lessons, Tom Merry & Co. found him outside the tuckshop, going through his pockets with a very thoughtful air. Tom Merry had had a remittance that day from Miss Priscilla Fawcett, and so the Co. were "on their legs" again. The captain of the Shell gave Skimmy a friendly slap on the shoulder which made the weedy youth stagger.

"Stony, Skimmy?"

"Yow! Oh, yes, my dear Merry! I do not appear to have any money left," said Skimpole, blinking at him. "I have asked Mellish for a small loan, but he is, unfortunately, out of funds also. I suggested that he should sell his bicycle—"

"Sell Mellish's bike?"

"Why not?"

"Ha, ha, ha! What did Mellish say?"

"His reply was quite rude, Merry. I do not know why, but he grew quite excited, and said several rude things. He doesn't appear to understand Determinism at all. Of course, Determinism implies give and take. Mellish appears to be under the delusion that it is all take and no give—a very common error, I think. However, I hope to enlighten Mellish's mind some day. Meanwhile, I have no money."

"Then it's lucky I have," said Tom Merry. "Come in, Skimmy; one good turn deserves another!"

"My dear Merry, I am very glad to have converted you to my principles."

"But you haven't—only to the extent of a feed," grinned Tom Merry. "If you start selling my bike I shall slaughter you!"

However, Skimpole had a good feed, and over the feed he explained to the Terrible Three what he intended to do with his next instalment.

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"I shall bring general joy to the hearts of the poor," said Skimpole, beaming. "You may have seen certain ragged persons hanging about the lanes—persons who are so poor that they cannot even afford to wash themselves. Well, I am going to seek them out and ask them to come here—"

"Here!" ejaculated Lowther.

"Certainly! I suppose I have a right to extend the hospitality of the school to my poorer brothers?"

"Oh, my hat!"

"I am thinking of a mass meeting in the quadrangle," said Skimpole enthusiastically. "I shall make a round of the countryside, and tell every poor person I meet to come here. Then I shall make a speech to them, explaining that they owe their suffering to the defects of the social system. Then, as proof of sincerity, I shall distribute all my money to them. Of course, poor people cannot be expected to believe you unless you practise what you preach!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"After addressing my meeting, I shall give to each according to his needs, and, of course, shall not bother about retaining any filthy lucre for myself. By that means, I shall convince them of my

Three were going down to football practice when they met the genius of the Shell. Skimpole's benevolent face was truly beaming.

"I am holding my meeting to-day," Skimmy explained.

"Oh, my hat!"

"The second instalment came—as I think I mentioned to you that it would—and to-day I have received the cash for the cheque," said Skimpole. "I am now going forth to collect an audience of the humble and down-trodden—"

"So you've got another twenty quid in your pocket?"

"Yes, my dear Lowther."

"Why not put it in the bank, Skimmy?" suggested Tom Merry. "You'll find it useful some time, you know."

Skimpole shook his head.

"I have my duty to do as a sincere Determinist, my dear Merry. I hope you will attend my meeting. I am now going forth—"

"Have you got permission?"

"Permission for what, my dear fellow?"

"To hold a merry meeting in the quad," grinned Lowther.

"Permission is not necessary. The quadrangle is, in point of fact, national property—all private land being held in defiance of the law."

"Oh dear! But the Head—"

"If the Head should interfere, I should be compelled to explain that I regard him as a usurper."

"You—you funny ass! You'll get a flogging!"

"I am prepared to suffer for my principles. The meeting will take place at five o'clock in the quad. Every poor person I meet on the way I shall urge to come, and promise him financial relief. I have no doubt I shall have a good audience."

"It depends on the number of tramps who happen to be in this part of Sussex just now," chuckled Lowther.

"For goodness' sake, Skimmy, don't be such a blessed ass!" urged Tom Merry. "You'll get into an awful row!"

Skimpole blinked at him pityingly.

"You do not understand, Merry. The cause needs martyrs. I am perfectly prepared to be a martyr."

And Skimpole ambled away to the gates. The Terrible Three gazed at one another.

"Well, it's lucky he's prepared to be a martyr," murmured Lowther. "Well, we can't stop him, so let's get down to the football."

Tom Merry & Co. were very keen on football about this time, as the match with Greyfriars was approaching. On the footer field they forgot Skimpole.

They came off the field and adjourned to the tuckshop for ginger-beer about five o'clock. They were enjoying their ginger-pop when the voice of Taggles was heard.

As a rule, the voice of Taggles could hardly be heard from the lodge to the tuckshop. But the voice of Taggles was now raised in wrath, and, indeed, resembled the roar of a bull of Bashan.

"Get hout! What blessed cheek comin' in 'ere! My heye! Har you gettin' hout, or har you waitin' to be pitched hout?"

"Hallo! That sounds like a row," remarked Monty Lowther; and the juniors, naturally interested in a row, hurried out of the tuckshop and made for the gates.

Taggles, the porter, was confronting three tattered and dirty tramps, who had just come in at the gates. The trio

(Continued on page 18.)



"Hallo! Is that the Zoo? I've captured your snake!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to R. Davis, 33, Tudor Road, East Ham, London, E.6.

sincerity, and shall enlist their aid in the great work to be done for Determinism."

"Have another ginger-pop!"

"For reflect, my dear friends—suppose there were two men on an island—"

The Terrible Three fled.

"Dear me!" said Skimpole. "I wish fellows would not walk away when I am speaking to them. Very many of them do it—very many. I suppose it is absent-mindedness."

The idea of Skimpole's forthcoming meeting in the quadrangle of all the beggars and tramps he could collect tickled the chums of the Shell immensely. It was likely to be an interesting meeting, but they could not help thinking that it might mean trouble for Skimmy.

CHAPTER 11.

Skimpole's Meeting!

"WHEREFORE that beaming brow, O sublime Skimmy?"

Monty Lowther addressed that humorous question to Herbert Skimpole about a week later. It was a half-holiday, and the Terrible

The Editor's Chair

Let the Editor be your pal.
Drop him a line to-day,
addressing your letters:
The Editor, The GEM,
Fleetway House, Farring-
don Street, London, E.C.4.



I STAND CORRECTED.

Before I deal with my letters I should like to correct a mistake I made in a recent chat. I have to thank two old GEM readers—R. Dexter, of Rhyl, and G. Doyle, of Ruislip—for drawing my attention to it.

In reply to a reader I said that the first story of Tom Merry at St. Jim's was called "Tom Merry's Schooldays," and that the GEM was a penny in those days. I gave that reply from memory, which fails us all at times. "Tom Merry's Schooldays" dealt with his adventures at Clavering, before he came to St. Jim's. The story of his arrival at the latter school, which appeared in No. 11 of the GEM (old series), price a halfpenny, was entitled "Tom Merry at St. Jim's."

IN REPLY TO READERS.

B. G. Waite (Leeds). Thanks for your interesting letter. I think, however, that you have greatly exaggerated the "general demoralisation," as you term it, that goes on at St. Jim's. If you are against smoking and gambling, etc., it seems passing strange that you uphold Levison, the cad of the Fourth. No story that Martin Clifford has ever written has not been morally sound. The GEM has built up its reputation on clean, wholesome stories. Your good wishes are reciprocated, and I heartily endorse your remark, "More power to Martin Clifford's elbow." Sorry your three jokes were not quite suitable. Try again.

B. Hudson (Wellington, N. Zealand).—Sorry, but I cannot send the photographs you want. St. Jim's and its characters are fictitious.

"Girl Reader" (Glasgow).—Thanks for your letter. I didn't find it a bit tedious to read. I appreciate the points you raise, but I don't agree that Tom Merry & Co. go "nuts" on girls. They have only one girl chum and that's Cousin Ethel. D'Arcy and Bunter are very popular characters. St. Jim's and Greyfriars wouldn't seem the same without them. I am glad to hear that you will read the companion papers till you have grey hairs! Best wishes.

Miss J. Chennell (Croydon).—Thanks for your interesting letter and list of St. Jim's characters you like best. A Rookwood or a St. Jim's yarn is published nearly every month in the "Schoolboys' Own Library." "The Boy Who Wanted the Sack," featuring a newcomer to St. Jim's who preferred flying to learning Latin, is now on sale, price 4d. Harry Wharton is 15 years 4 months; Bob Cherry, 16 years 2 months.

Sorry your two jokes failed to hit the mark. Send along some more.

Miss A. Mouton (Mowbray, Cape Town).—Glad to hear you think the GEM stories are getting better and better. The characters you mention will appear again in due course. Your joke was not the type I like to use in the GEM. Try again.

D. Barker (Handsworth).—Mr. Ratcliff is the only master in the New House, which is merely a boarding-house. All class-rooms are in the School House. Monteith is second in command to Kildare.

J. Mack (Glasgow).—St. Jim's only plays Soccer. The junior team is selected from the following: Merry, D'Arcy, Blake, Lowther, Figgins, Talbot, Kerr, Wynn, Redfern, Noble, Manners, Lawrence, Owen, and Hammond.

Miss M. Cobb (Canterbury).—Pleased to know you think the GEM is a topping paper. Wally D'Arcy is 13½ years old; Joe Frayne, 13 years 5 months; Grundy, 16 years 4 months; Brooks, 15 years, 3 months.

J. Cross (Doncaster).—Sorry your joke didn't win you half-a-crown so that you could buy that tortoise. Better luck next time! Thanks for your good opinion of the old paper.

I. Booth (Oldham).—Your splendid collection of five hundred copies of the GEM and "Magnet" shows that you are the staunchest of readers. Your selection of the best GEM yarns since 1932 is well considered, and I think they are among Martin Clifford's best efforts. The high jump, long jump, and one hundred yards records at St. Jim's are respectively: 5 feet 2½ inches, 20 feet 4 inches, and 11½ seconds.

R. Dexter (Rhyl).—Thanks for pointing out my mistake, which I have already referred to. Yes, you are quite right about the author of those early St. Jim's stories published in "Pluck" in 1906. But I'm sorry I cannot reprint the very first St. Jim's yarn. Glad to hear you liked the Rio Kid stories. In this year's "Holiday Annual" there's a yarn of the boy outlaw of Texas. Best wishes!

E. Pearce (Reading).—Blenkinsop is 15 years 3 months; Bunter, 15 years 1 month; Hurree Singh, 14 years 11 months; Carne, 17 years 7 months; Blundell, 17 years; Sammy Bunter, 12 years. Thanks for your suggestion. I will bear it in mind.

A. Black (Glasgow).—Lumley-Lumley and Kerr have both been featured recently in stories. The character you miss will be reappearing in due course.

P. Bard (Stepney, E.14).—Pleased to hear that you have enjoyed the companion papers for many years. Thanks for drawing my attention to that story, but I already knew about it. My reason for publishing it was because it proved very popular.

THE EDITOR.

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HALLO, Chums! In next week's GEM appears the first article of a ripping new series on stamps and stamp collecting. These articles are written by an expert, and they contain many useful hints which will save stamp collectors time, trouble, and, what's more important, money. But even readers who are not stamp enthusiasts will find the articles very interesting to read. The series is designed to appeal particularly to them, as well as those who are philatelists. No doubt the articles will encourage many readers to take an interest in stamp collecting, for it is a popular, fascinating, and instructive hobby. The first article is called:

"STARTING A STAMP COLLECTION."

Look out for it.

As I told readers last week, I am in the midst of arranging several grand things for the GEM, and my plans are now nearly complete. I shall be in a position soon to let readers know my good news.

"SKIMPOLE'S SCRAPE!"

That's the title of next Wednesday's humorous St. Jim's yarn, which is the sequel to the story in this number.

Finding himself called upon to repay forty pounds sent to him in error, and which, incidentally, he has spent, Skimpole just sits down and does nothing to get himself out of his scrape! But Tom Merry & Co. have promised to see that the money is refunded, and they put their heads together to devise ways and means of "raising the wind." Forty pounds, however, takes some raising, as the juniors soon discover. A collection and a big feed realise ten pounds. But where the other thirty pounds is to come from gets Tom Merry & Co. guessing!

I'll leave you to discover next week how the juniors fare in their self-imposed task of saving Skimmy from his scrape. You'll enjoy this grand yarn from first word to last.

"EXPELLED!"

In next Wednesday's powerful Greyfriars yarn, Ernest Levison, whose recklessness has led him into trouble, goes from bad to worse. In spite of Harry Wharton's efforts to turn him from the downward path, Levison gets mixed up with a gambling crowd at a local public-house. He breaks bounds at night to visit the place, and Wharton follows him to try to prevent him from getting into trouble. But as a result the captain of the Remove and Levison are caught by Mr. Quelch at the public-house! It means expulsion for one, if not both, of the juniors!

You cannot fail to be enthralled by this great story by Frank Richards. If your GEM is not reserved for you each week, see that you order your copy early.

PEN PALS COUPON

25-9-37

were about the roughest specimens the St. Jim's juniors had ever seen. All three of them had been drinking, and they looked quarrelsome. And they came rolling in at the gates as if the school belonged to them.

Taggles was red with rage as he confronted them with a big stick in his hand. For those three beery ruffians to invade the quadrangle was naturally exasperating to the porter, though the task of throwing them out was probably a little beyond the old gentleman's powers.

"The 'orrid beasts!' howled Taggles. 'Comin' in 'ere drunk! My heye! Will you get hout?'"

"We was asked 'ere," roared one of the three—"was invited 'ere—and we're comin' in—see? You get hout of the way!"

"Houtside, I say!"

"Land 'im one, Snookey!"

The gentleman addressed as Snookey rushed at Taggles, and roared as the porter's stick came down. The next moment Taggles was picked up and tossed bodily into his lodge. Snookey & Co. came on triumphantly.

"Bai Jove! We'd bettah throw those boundahs out, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus.

Tom Merry gasped.

"It's Skimpole's meeting!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The cry is still they come!" chortled Lowther. "Look at that lot!"

Half a dozen more ragged specimens came in at the gate. They blinked round them, and followed Snookey & Co. into the quad. Taggles remained in his lodge. He was not quite equal to dealing with this invasion.

The juniors retreated to the School House. It was no business of theirs to interfere, and, indeed, the ruffianly crowd that was coming in did not look safe to interfere with.

Skimpole was evidently having great success in making his collection. Two or three hours' scouting had unearthed quite an army of tramps.

More and more came in at the gates, of all sorts and sizes and ages, and in all states of dirt, tatters, and drink.

Mr. Ratcliff, the Housemaster of the New House, was the first master to spot them. He came forth from the New House like a lion from his den.

"What is the meaning of this?" he shouted. "Go away at once!"

Snookey rolled up to him.

"Who are you torkin' to?" he demanded.

"My man—ahem!" Mr. Ratcliff backed away. "No violence—no violence. I—I shall telephone for the police! I order you to go away!"

"Horder your grandfather!" said Snookey. "I've been asked 'ere to visit a young gent, and I been promised money for my trouble. I ain't goin' without it, not for any old cove in a nightgown—see!"

Mr. Ratcliff's gown was certainly not a nightgown; perhaps Snookey was being humorous. He proceeded to shake a large, knotty, and exceedingly dirty fist under Mr. Ratcliff's nose, and the New House master retreated incontinently into his House and rushed to the telephone.

Skimpole of the Shell came in with the last batch. By the time Skimpole arrived, there were forty or fifty tramps in the quadrangle, most of them at least half-tipsy, and all of them noisy and excited. Mr. Railton came out of the School House in a state of amazement.

"What are you doing here?" he exclaimed.

"It's all right!" chirruped Skimpole.

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"These gentlemen have come here at my invitation."

"What!" roared the Housemaster.

"I am about to address a meeting, sir. Gentlemen—"

"Skimpole!"

"Really, sir—"

"Come into the House at once, Skimpole—or, rather, I will fetch you."

"And off the young gent!" bellowed Snookey. "He ain't paid up yet!"

"Ands off, old gent!"

"Let 'im alone!"

Half a dozen beery fellows interposed between Mr. Railton and Skimpole, and the Housemaster was hustled back, gasping.

Tom Merry & Co. rushed to his aid. They were not going to see their Housemaster handled. But Mr. Railton waved them back.

"Stop! Stop at once! Go back!"

"Wecally, Mr. Wailton—"

"Go back, I say! Obey me at once! Now, you men, whoever you are, I request you to leave these premises immediately!"

"Yah! Bah! Shut up!"

"Otherwise I shall telephone for the police."

"Yah! Booh!"

Mr. Railton went into the House. The Head, in a state of great astonishment, met him in the Hall.

"What ever has happened, Mr. Railton?" Dr. Holmes exclaimed.

"A—a crowd of ruffians have invaded the quadrangle, sir. They—they appear to have been asked here by that utterly absurd boy Skimpole, and they refuse to go."

"Bless my soul!"

"I had better telephone for the police, I think."

"Yes, yes; certainly!"

The Head looked out of the doorway, over the steps crowded with grinning juniors. But he did not venture out to tackle that dreadful-looking crowd. Skimpole, heedless of everything but the business in hand, was already mounted on the stone step of the fountain in the quad, addressing the meeting.

CHAPTER 12.

Trouble For Skimmy!

"GENTLEMEN—"

"Ear, 'ear!"

"Pray excuse me for addressing you by that obsolete and ridiculous expression. I should rather have said, brothers and comrades—"

"Wot's he torkin' about, Snookey?"

"Blowed if I know, Nick!"

"Where's the rhino? There was goin' to be some rhino. We ain't come 'ere for nothin', I know that!"

"Comrades and brothers," pursued Skimpole, blinking at them. "I am about to address you on the subject of Determinism."

"Wot's that, Snookey?"

"Some bally rot," said Snookey.

"Wot I want to know is, where's the rhino? I'm thirsty!"

"Same 'ere!"

"Where's the rhino?" roared a dozen voices.

"Gentlemen—I mean comrades—we will begin at the beginning. Suppose there were two men on an island—"

"Where's the rhino?"

"Look here, young shaver!" roared Snookey, shaking his fist under the startled Skimpole's nose. "You said that if me and my pals was to come 'ere at five o'clock, the rhino would be 'anded out! So I says to you, as one gentleman to another, where's the rhino?"

"My dear friend, pray be patient. All the money I have is entirely at your service. I have twenty pounds, which will be distributed to you according to your needs. You are welcome."

"My heye! 'And it out, then!"

"He's gammoning! 'Ave 'im hover!"

"Serag 'im! It's gammon!"

"Where's the rhino?" roared Snookey threateningly.

"But I have not yet made my speech, my dear fellow—"

"Ang your speech! Bust your speech! I can't drink your speech, can I? And I'm thirsty!"

"You may help yourself to the water in the fountain!"

Snookey shuddered.

"The water is free to all!" said Skimpole. "You, my dear friends, instead of loafing about the lanes in a filthy and ragged condition as at present, an eyesore to all that see you—"

"Wot?"

"Instead of that, you will be provided with work—"

"E's mad!"

"You will not even know the taste of intoxicating liquor. You will work, and be clean and happy, instead of being in your present revolting state—"

"Knock 'im hover! Insultin' young 'ound!"

"You are living proofs of the defects of the present social system," went on Skimpole. "You—a believe your name is Snookey—you are offensive to the sight, and, indeed, offensive to the sense of smell. This is caused by—Yarrah!"

Snookey appeared to be fed up. He yanked Skimpole off the step of the fountain with a heavy hand, and bumped him down in the quad.

"Yah! Oh! Oh dear! My dear friend—" gasped Skimmy.

"Where's the rhino? We ain't wastin' time 'ere. If you don't 'and out the spondulics, accordin' to promise, we'll smash yer!" roared Snookey.

"Oh dear! Pray do not be violent! I assure you, my dear friends—"

"Jump on him!"

"Kick him!"

"Smash him!"

"Where's the rhino, you young swindler?"

Tom Merry & Co. were preparing for a charge. But, fortunately, Skimpole stemmed the tide of indignation by producing the "rhino." He had intended that to come after his speech, as a dramatic finish. But the gentlemen were too impatient.

Snookey calmed down as the "rhino" was handed out.

Skimpole's first windfall had disappeared quickly, but his second was gone in a flash.

There was a wild scramble of the beery, smelly, and whiskery gentlemen to clutch at the money. In about three minutes Skimpole was "stony" once more, and Snookey & Co. were making for the gates, seeking the shortest path to the Green Man to quench their thirst.

Half-a-dozen who had been shoved aside in the scramble gathered round the gasping Skimpole with outstretched hands.

"'And it hout! You ain't goin' ter leave me hout!"

"I ain't come 'ere for nothin'! Pay up, you swindler! Fetchin' an 'onest man 'alf a mile fer nothin'!"

Skimpole blinked at them in dismay.

"My dear friends and comrades—"

"Not so much jore! 'And it hout!"

"I have, unfortunately, no money left—"

"'And it hout!"

"It is impossible! I have given away all I had, I assure you. I beg you to be calm. Pray do not shove me—oh dear—help—yaroo!"

"Rescue!" shouted Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah! Wescue the silly ass!"

Skimpole was in need of rescue. The exasperated gentlemen who had not had part of the sharing, were bumping him in the quad, and rolling him over, and ragging him till he was breathless and more dead than alive. The School House juniors charged, and Skimmy was dragged out of the clutches of his dear comrades.

They rushed him away to the School House, and the remnant of the meeting, with a final yell, disappeared out

nate. I should have enlightened them on the land question, and warned them of the folly of giving way to drink. Oh dear!"

"Skimpole!"

It was the Head's voice.

Skimpole blinked at him. To his surprise, the Head looked very angry.

"Yes, sir."

"Am I to understand, Skimpole, that you are responsible for having brought that crowd of dreadful persons within the gates of the school?" thundered the Head.

"I certainly invited them to come here, sir."

"You—you invited them?"

"Yes—I intended to make them a speech, and to distribute money. They

more mass meetings in the quad," chuckled Lowther. "Poor old Skimmy!"

From the Head's study there soon proceeded sounds of anguish. Why the Head was angry Skimpole could not understand. But there was not the slightest doubt that he was angry—in fact, furious.

The amateur Determinist of St. Jim's was prepared to be made a martyr for his principles, but he had not anticipated the martyrdom he now went through. It was the licking of Skimmy's life.

When he crawled away from the Head's study at last he felt that the life of a sincere and enthusiastic Determinist was not worth living.



Skimpole was buried in a huge volume when Talbot came into the room. On the table was a flower-pot filled to the brim with money. The flower-pot bore the notice: "PLEASE TAKE SOME." "What on earth's that?" demanded Talbot. "That is my latest idea," smiled Skimpole. "Every fellow will be able to take what money he needs."

of the gates. And Taggles promptly locked the gates when the last one was gone.

When the police force of Rylcombe arrived on the scene—consisting of P.c. Crump—all was calm and bright. Which was perhaps as well for the police-constable, for certainly he would have found it a very large order to handle nearly fifty tramps at once.

"Oh dear!" gasped Skimpole, clinging exhaustedly to Tom Merry. "I am quite hurt! I am breathless! Oh dear!"

"You utter ass, Skimmy—"

"They seemed very impatient!" gasped Skimmy. "They have gone, and I fear that the money may be spent in drink, as I had no time to make my speech. It is very unfortu-

were, for some reason, so anxious about the distribution of money that they did not wait for the speech. It was very unfortunate—"

"Skimpole, you will follow me to my study—"

"Really, sir—ow!"

Skimpole was marched away with a finger and thumb compressed like a vice upon his ear.

"Poor old Skimmy!" murmured Lowther. "He said he was ready to be a martyr; now he's going to have a first-class chance."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The uthah ass!" said Arthur Augustus. "Weally, the fivhtful duffah ought to be inside a lunatic asylum, you know!"

"I don't think there will be any

CHAPTER 13.

Skimpole Sees It All!

"EXTRAORDINARY!"

Skimpole's face was extraordinary, too, as he uttered that remark.

It was the day after the second windfall. Skimmy was not expecting another instalment yet from the purchase of his wonderful airship. But a packet addressed to Skimpole had arrived, and on the outside was a label, which showed that it came from the office of the "Flying Times."

It was not registered, and even if it had been it could scarcely have been supposed to contain banknotes or cheques; it was too large for that. But

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the juniors were very anxious to know what it did contain.

They gathered round Skimpole in the Common-room, and Tom Merry lent him a penknife to cut the string, and he opened the packet on the table.

A set of weird looking plans came into view. They were the plans of Skimpole's airship.

No wonder Skimmy said it was extraordinary. After paying two instalments of twenty pounds each on the airship, they had sent his plans back. It was certainly very puzzling.

"Perhaps they want you to make some improvements, dear boy," suggested D'Arcy.

Skimpole shook his head.

"Impossible! There is no room for improvement in my airship. It is the very last word in scientific construction!"

"There's a letter," grinned Lowther. "What do they say, Skimmy?"

It was a typewritten letter on paper headed "The Flying Times," Black Lion Court, London, E.C." And it ran—the juniors all helping the astonished Skimpole to read it:

"Master Herbert Skimpole, St. Jim's, near Wayland, Sussex.

"Dear Master Skimpole,—We return herewith the plans you so kindly sent us. If you will make a study of the most elementary principles of mechanics you will probably discover in the course of time that a machine, however constructed, cannot be propelled without motive power. We may add that a machine constructed on the principles here depicted could not be propelled by any motive power at all, however powerful. We conclude that these plans

were sent to us as a practical joke. If, however, you are serious in the matter, we advise you to begin the study of the subject before proceeding to make inventions.

"Yours faithfully,
"THE 'FLYING TIMES.'"

"That's not bad advice," said Blake thoughtfully. "By the way, did you ever study the subject?"

"Genius, my dear Blake, works by inspiration. I do not need close study like many fellows with more ordinary brains. It is extraordinary. This person cannot have submitted my plans to the Air Ministry after all."

"I am not surprised at the blessed bosh coming back," remarked Tom Merry. "But what have they been paying Skimmy for? He's had forty pounds already."

"There must have been some mistake," grinned Lowther. "They've been sending Skimmy somebody else's cheques."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Skimmy will have to refund."

"That would be quite impossible," said Skimpole. "If there were a mistake I should, of course, be willing to return all the money I have left. As it amounts to one halfpenny, however, they would probably not be satisfied."

"Probably not. Ha, ha, ha!"

"You'll get a letter next explaining the mistake, and asking for the giddy cheques!" chuckled Levison. "If you don't shell out they'll send a bobby."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Nonsense!" said Skimpole. "I cannot believe there is a mistake. Of course, my plans being sent back is a mistake, that is evident. I shall certainly refuse to take any notice of a

story of a mistake about the cheques. That is all rot."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Skimpole dismissed the matter from his mighty brain. But the other fellows were very eager to know about the next communication from the "Flying Times." They felt certain that one was coming. They were right; it came that evening. Nearly every junior in the School House was deeply interested in it, much more than Skimmy appeared to be, and a whole army marched up to Skimpole's study with the letter.

"Here you are, Skimmy!"

"Open it and see if it's a writ."

Skimpole reluctantly laid down the great volume of the learned Professor Loosetop, and opened the letter.

"Read it out!" chorused the juniors. Skimpole's correspondence was a matter of general interest now. Skimmy did not want to keep it to himself, however. As a sincere Determinist, he admitted that his correspondence was as much anybody else's property as his own.

"It is extraordinary," said Skimpole. "After their returning the plans of my airship with absurd remarks, I am not surprised, however, at anything they do."

"Sir,—It appears that two cheques, each for the sum of twenty pounds, have been forwarded to your address in error.

"Owing to the similarity of name causing confusion, two cheques intended for Mr. H. Skimpoll, the author of our serial, 'The Skimmer of the Skies,' have been sent to you.

"We find that these cheques have been passed through the bank. Mr. Skimpoll being a new contributor, his signature was unknown to the bankers, or the error would have been detected immediately. We now have these cheques, and it is evident that the signature thereon does not resemble that of our contributor, Mr. Skimpoll, in the least. This bears out Mr. Skimpoll's statement that he did not receive the cheques, did not endorse them, and did not cash them.

"Your conduct in cashing these cheques, which you must have known were not intended for you, requires explanation. We shall be happy to receive your explanation immediately, and at the same time a remittance for the sum of forty pounds sent to you in error.

"Yours faithfully,
"THE 'FLYING TIMES.'"

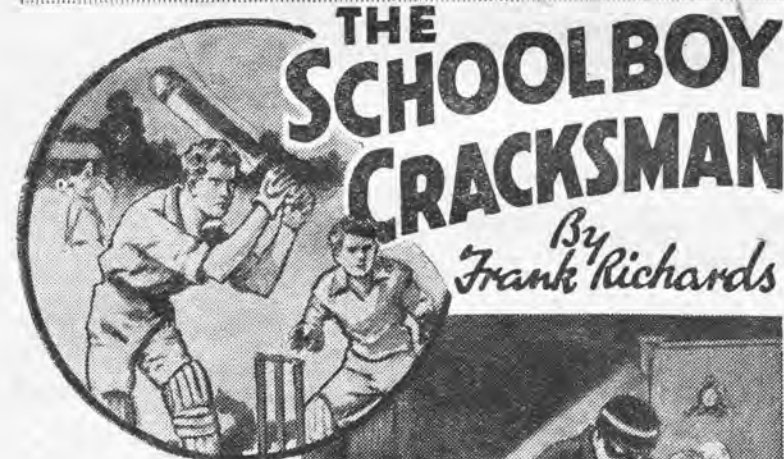
Tom Merry & Co. simply gasped. It was all explained now. "The Skimmer of the Skies," which Skimpole had taken to be a name applied to his new airship, was the title of a story apparently just beginning in the "Flying Times."

Cheques for the first and second instalments of that story had been posted, and by the addresses of Skimpole and Skimpoll getting mixed by some careless clerk, they had been posted to St. Jim's instead of to the author's address.

H. Skimpoll had inquired after the payment for his two instalments, which had led to the discovery that the cheques were not endorsed by that gentleman. Or perhaps the cheques had been returned to the office by the bankers in the usual way, and then the cashier had noted that the endorsement had not resembled the signature of H. Skimpoll. At all events, the discovery had been made, and the "Flying Times" very naturally required an explanation—and forty pounds.

The explanation could have been furnished easily enough. Skimpole would have had no objection to explaining. But the forty pounds was quite another matter.

Of that handsome sum of money Skimpole had exactly one halfpenny left,



To Greyfriars, the new Sixth Former, Dick Lancaster, is a great fellow and a fine sportsman. But the school little know that in the underworld he is known as the "Wizard," expert cracksmen! You cannot fail to be enthralled by this gripping yarn of Harry Wharton & Co.



SCHOOLBOYS' OWN Library 4^D

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It was absurd to expect either Mr. H. Skimpoll or the editor of the "Flying Times" to be satisfied with restitution to that extent.

"I say, this is rotten," said Tom Merry. "Where are you going to get forty quidlets from, Skimmy?"

"I have no intention of getting them, my dear Merry. I fear that there is more in this than meets the eye."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It is no laughing matter!" said Skimpoll solemnly. "This flimsy pretence that the money was intended as payment for some absurd serial—to some probably imaginary person named Skimpoll—is only an invention to conceal the fact that some foreign influence is at work. I shall write a very severe letter to the 'Flying Times,' if—if—"

"If what?"

"If one of you fellows will lend me a stamp."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Argument was wasted on Skimpoll. He was deaf to reasoning. Knowing that his airship was the very last word, the actual limit in scientific possibilities, he could only conclude that the editor of the "Flying Times" had yielded to the suasion of foreign money. It was the only possible explanation, according to Skimmy.

And Skimpoll sat down to write his reply, with a grinning crowd of juniors around him.

Having sealed up the remarkable epistle, and stamped it, Herbert Skimpoll sallied forth to post it, leaving his study crowded with juniors in a state of hopeless hysteria.

CHAPTER 14.

Skimpoll Does Not Object!

"WALLY wound, deah boys!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gave the warning.

A stranger had entered the school gates, and, after a word with Taggles, started for the School House. And Tom Merry & Co. "rallied round" immediately Arthur Augustus gave the word, the swell of St. Jim's being the first to spot the visitor.

Tom Merry & Co. had debated the matter, and decided to see Skimpoll through. The genius of the Shell had evidently got himself into a bad fix. That the forty pounds had to be returned was quite certain; and Skimpoll would be lucky if he did not get into trouble for endorsing cheques that did not belong to him.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stepped into the path of the newcomer as he approached the House, and raised his topper gracefully.

"Pway excuse me, sir!" he said.

The stranger stopped. He was rather a good-looking gentleman, and seemed good-humoured.

"What is it?" he asked.

"May I inqiah whethah you have called in wefevence to Skimpoll?"

"Yes, I have called to see a young gentleman named Herbert Skimpoll, or his headmaster. I am Henry Skimpoll."

"It's all wight, deah boys, we've got him!"

"Ahem! What—" began Mr. Skimpoll, somewhat surprised by that remark.

"You see, we're all Skimpoll's friends," explained Arthur Augustus. "Skimmy is weally a born idiot, you know, and we are seen' him through."

Mr. Skimpoll laughed.

"He wrote a most extraordinary letter to my editor in reply to a demand for the return of the money sent to him by



"Could you put a little dab on this stamp?"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to B. Kaukas, 48, Gladesmore Road, Tottenham, London, N.15.

mistake," he said. "Instead of taking legal measures, I have decided to call and see whether the matter could be amicably arranged. If Master Skimpoll does not return the money, I must see his headmaster."

"That's all wight. I'll show you up to Skimmy. Come on, deah boys! It's all wight, my deah sir; we've wresolved to see Skimmy through."

Mr. Skimpoll nodded, and accompanied Arthur Augustus to Skimpoll's study.

Tom Merry & Co. marched after them. They found Skimpoll writing. He was busy with a letter to the Air Ministry.

"This is Mr. Skimpoll, Skimmy," said Arthur Augustus. "Mr. Skimpoll, this is the duffah!"

"My dear D'Arcy—"

"Mr. Skimpoll has come for his forty quidlets, Skimmy," said Tom Merry.

Skimpoll blinked at Mr. Skimmy through his spectacles.

"So this is Skimpoll," said Mr. Skimpoll, with a smile. "I trust you understand that a mistake has been made, Master Skimpoll? It was not intended to send you anything in payment for your invention, which, I am told, you sent to my paper. You received the cheques that should have come to me for two instalments of my story. Surely you understand that, my boy?"

Skimpoll blinked at him thoughtfully.

"I am willing to accept your assurance on that point," he said. "If the editor of the 'Flying Times' really intended to reject my invention, it proves that he is a man of very low mental capacity, and so liable to make absurd mistakes. I have just looked at the latest number of the 'Flying Times,' and I find that it contains a serial story entitled 'The Skimmer of the Skies.' This bears out my statement. I am satisfied. I do not blame you in any way. Good-evening!"

"But the matter is not quite settled yet," said Mr. Skimpoll. "It is necessary to return the money sent you in error."

"Oh, the money!" said Skimpoll carelessly. "You have called about that?"

"Yes."

"Dear me! What a great amount of trouble you take over a trifle! I am

sorry it is not possible for me to return what remains."

"But the money must be returned. You surely cannot have expended the sum of forty pounds in a fortnight—you, a schoolboy?" exclaimed Mr. Skimpoll. "I do not wish to cause you serious trouble over a trifle; if you return what remains, it may be possible to arrange—"

"I will willingly do so!" said Skimpoll, going through his pockets. "Dear me! Where is that halfpenny? I am sure I had a halfpenny left! I must have put it somewhere, or lent it to somebody. Have I lent you a halfpenny, D'Arcy?"

"Wathah not, deah boy."

"Or you, Merry?"

"I never borrow whacking sums like that, Skimmy."

"Ah, here it is!" Skimmy extracted the halfpenny from the lining of a pocket and laid it on the table. "You are very welcome to this, Mr. Skimpoll. I wish the sum were larger, as you appear to be very keen about money. However, such as it is, you are very welcome to it. Pray take it. Good-bye!"

Mr. Skimpoll looked fixedly at the genius of the Shell. Skimpoll, quite out of patience, sat down and went on with his important letter.

"Then I must see the headmaster," said Mr. Skimpoll. "I am afraid that this boy is not in his right senses."

"Yaas, he's quite sane, except that he's a Determinist, sir," said Arthur Augustus. "Pway don't wowwy the headmaster. We have all made up our minds to see Skimmy through. We are goin' to pay the money—somehow."

"Ahem!"

"You see, sir, Skimmy would get into an awful row," said Tom Merry. "His father would have to pay it, and his father would nearly slaughter Skimmy. We have made up our minds to pay it for him. We regard it as a debt of honour. Skimmy whacked out the money when he had it, and we're going to see him through."

"I twust, sir, that you will not be hard on Skimmy," said Arthur Augustus persuasively. "He can't weally help bein' a howlin' ass, you know—some fellows are born like that; and the mistake was weally made by your papah, in the first place. Of course, the money will be returned. I am goin' to take the mattah in hand."

"Well, of course, I do not wish to do anything hard," said Mr. Skimpoll. "But I cannot afford to lose forty pounds, and my editor would most decidedly decline to lose it. It must be paid."

"If you can give us a week, sir, it shall be paid, on the word of honah of Study No. 6," said Arthur Augustus, with a great deal of dignity.

Mr. Skimpoll seemed to have some sense of humour.

"That, of course, is quite sufficient," he said solemnly. "I will wait a week before I speak to this extraordinary boy's headmaster, on your assurance that the money will be paid. I accept the word of honour of Study No. 6."

Tom Merry & Co. chuckled, but Arthur Augustus made a graceful bow.

"Will you honah us by comin' to tea in the study, sir?" said Arthur Augustus. "It will be a gweat honah to entabtain a weal live authah."

Mr. Skimpoll accepted the invitation with a smile, and the Co. marched off to Study No. 6.

Herbert Skimpoll was left in peace. (Continued on page 28.)

THE LITTLE PARTY OF THE BLACK SHEEP OF THE SIXTH WAS A FROST—THANKS TO BOB CHERRY'S "HOT" MEASURES!

HEADING FOR TROUBLE!

Wharton Chips In!

"DON'T—oh, don't, Levison!" Harry Wharton heard the words as he came along the Remove passage at Greyfriars, and his face clouded over.

"Don't—oh, don't!"

Harry knew the voice; that of little Benson, the youngest and one of the cheekiest juniors in the Third Form. The cry came clearly through the closed door of Ernest Levison's study.

Harry Wharton paused. He did not like to interfere with any fellow in his Form—least of all Levison—but anything in the way of bullying "put his back up" at once. Besides, as captain of the Remove, it was his duty to put down anything of the kind.

As he paused in the passage, a cry rang out again from the study; and it was followed by Benson's voice once more.

"Don't—oh, don't!"

Wharton made up his mind. He knocked sharply at Levison's door and threw it open. His eyes glinted as he stepped into the study.

Levison turned his head with an exclamation of annoyance; but as he saw who his visitor was, his expression changed, and he gave a short nod.

He had started on very ill-terms with Harry Wharton when he first came to Greyfriars, but of late they had been on a better footing. Levison had tried to keep on good terms with Harry since the night when the latter had saved him from death on the rainy summit of Black Pike.

"Hallo, Wharton!" he said civilly. "I didn't know it was you."

Wharton's glance turned to the fag, who was squirming in Levison's grip. Levison had a hard grip on his wrist, and had plainly been twisting his arm. The fag's eyes turned appealingly to the captain of the Remove.

"Wharton, stop him! He'll break my arm!"

"I'll break your neck for two pins!" growled Levison. "I'll teach you a lesson on the subject of cheeking your elders, my son. A few more twists like that, and I fancy you'll leave the subject alone."

"Oh, don't! Stop him, Wharton!"

"Hang it, Levison!" broke out Wharton sharply. "Stop it! Let the kid alone!"

Levison looked at him sneeringly.

"Are you going to interfere?"

"Well, I think I ought to. I don't like doing it—"

"Ahem! You have a reputation in the Remove for interfering with most things, all the same," said Levison.

Wharton turned red.

"Well, I think I'm quite within my rights in interfering here, anyway!" he rapped out. "What do you mean by bullying a kid like that?"

"I was teaching him a lesson for his confounded cheek!" snapped Levison. "And I'm not finished yet."

"I don't know the rights of the case, but—"

"Then don't push your oar in."

"You have no right to treat Benson like that, whatever he has done. What have you been doing, Benny?"

"It—it was only a joke!" said young Benson. "I—I was only making a little

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By Frank Richards.

(Author of the grand long yarns of Greyfriars appearing every Saturday in our companion paper, the "Magnet.")

joke about Levison playing the detective, you know—I heard it from Bunter. He thought Wun Lung was conspiring or something, because he used to have postcards come with a cipher or something on them."

Harry Wharton could not suppress a smile.

Levison was a suspicious boy by nature, and his suspiciousness had got him into trouble on that occasion. Wun Lung, the Chinese junior, had been playing a game of chess by correspondence, and the mysterious postcards had excited the suspicions of Levison, who was not a chess-player, and did not know what the simple abbreviations such as "K" or "Kt" or "Q" meant.

The suspicious junior had worked out an amazing theory, founded upon the supposed cipher, and had sent an anonymous letter to Scotland Yard, which had brought a detective to Greyfriars and caused considerable trouble.

Harry Wharton had intended to keep the matter a secret, but Billy Bunter, the chatterbox of the Remove, had got hold of it and related it to several fellows in the Remove.

Smarting under the ridicule of his Form-fellows, Ernest Levison seeks an outlet for his anger in recklessness—and finds only trouble!

Levison, who was of a proud and sensitive nature, had suffered keenly from the consequent ridicule, and his temper—never very good—seemed to be growing much sourer.

He set his teeth hard now as Benson spoke, and, reaching across the table, pushed a sheet of cardboard across the table towards Wharton.

"Look at that!" he said savagely.

Wharton looked at it. The cardboard was about a foot square, and an inscription was daubed upon it in the shape of an advertisement. It ran as follows:

"E. Levison, Private Detective. Fellows spied upon and their letters read, at the shortest notice. Plots discovered to order, and anonymous letters written with promptness and despatch. All kinds of meanness undertaken, and spying into other chaps' correspondence a speciality."

Harry Wharton tried hard not to laugh, but he couldn't help it.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Levison's brow grew blacker. He had expected sympathy and he had received laughter, and he gave Wharton a savage look.

"The young rotter was pinning that on my door when I came along and caught him," he said. "I'm glad you find it amusing."

"I'm sorry, Levison," said Harry, checking his mirth. "But—"

"Oh, don't mind me! Of course, it's amusing. I made a fool of myself, and it's like you to make it a standing joke in the Form!"

"Nothing of the sort," said Harry, flushing. "I've never said a word about it, and neither has one of my friends. Wun Lung agreed to keep it dark. It was that ass Bunter who caught something of it and spread the tale."

"I—I heard it from Bunter!" stammered Benson. "I—I didn't mean any harm, Levison. It—it was only a joke."

"I'll teach you not to joke with me!" exclaimed Levison furiously. And he gave the fag's arm a twist that made him shriek with pain.

Harry Wharton stepped quickly forward.

"Let him alone, Levison!"

"Shant!"

Wharton's eyes gleamed.

"I tell you I won't see him bullied!"

"I'll do as I like!"

"No, you won't while I'm captain of the Remove," said Harry determinedly. "After all, he's only a kid and it was just a joke—and you let yourself in for it. You know you did wrong in the matter of Wun Lung, and you ought to take your gruel and live it down."

"I didn't ask for your opinion, Wharton, and I don't want to hear it. I'll be obliged if you'll get out of the study."

"I'll get out with pleasure, but Benson goes with me. Come on, young 'un!"

Benson made a movement to go, but Levison gripped his wrist tighter, with a hard and obstinate expression on his face.

"Let him go, Levison!"

"I won't!"

Harry said no more. He took hold of Levison's hand, and by sheer force loosened his fingers and released Benson. The fag scuttled out of the study like a frightened rabbit.

Levison clenched his free hand as if he were about to punch the captain of the Remove. But he restrained himself. He tore his hand from Wharton's grip as Benson scuttled away, and faced Harry with blazing eyes.

"Now go," he said between his teeth. "You'd better leave this study before we come to blows. You know why I cannot fight you. You're trading on the fact that you saved my life. Now get out!"

Wharton's face was crimson.

"I'm not trading on that, or thinking of it," he said. "And I did no more on the Black Pike than a dozen fellows would have done. I'm sorry I've had to interfere, but I wasn't going to stand by quietly while you bullied a fag."

"I've had my wrists twisted often enough by a bully in the Sixth," said Levison, with a harsh laugh.

"All the more reason why you shouldn't start the same tricks in the Remove."

"Rats! Clear out! I hate you and your set! I hate the Remove and all this place!" said Levison angrily. "I wish I'd never come here! Get out of my study!"

Wharton turned without a word and left the room.

ANOTHER POWERFUL STORY OF THE EARLY SCHOOLDAYS OF THE CHUMS OF GREYFRIARS.

Carberry Finds a Fag!

CARBERRY, the prefect, was looking out of his study doorway. There was a frown of ill-temper on his face as he glanced up and down the passage. Carberry wanted a fag, but he did not want to bawl "Fag!" at the top of his voice, as was customary with the great men of the Sixth when they required service.

Carberry, prefect as he was, was the black sheep of the Sixth. He frequently required services of fags that would have got him into serious trouble with the powers that be if the matter had become known.

Some of the Sixth knew the kind of fellow Carberry was, and shrugged their shoulders at it. But it was only in the Upper Fourth and the Remove that his character was really known in its true light, for from the Lower School Carberry picked his fags, and in return for their services frequently initiated them into his own shady pursuits.

More than one fellow in the Lower School had smoked his first cigarette in Carberry's study, the reward of smuggling the smokes into the school, smoking being strictly forbidden at Greyfriars.

Carberry was having a couple of friends of his own kidney into his study that evening, and he intended to treat them in first-class style. For that purpose he wanted a messenger to go to the Red Cow, in Friardale village, to obtain supplies.

But the question was—who should he send? As he stood looking out of his study door there was a step in the passage, and a junior came along with a book under his arm. Carberry looked up and gave a nod of satisfaction.

The junior was a new boy at Greyfriars—Mark Linley, who had come to the school on a scholarship. He had worked in his earlier days in a Lancashire cotton-mill, and in consequence some of the more snobbish of the Greyfriars fellows kept aloof from him.

He was just the fag, in Carberry's opinion, to need the protection of a prefect, and to be glad to be taken up by a Sixth Former.

Carberry called to him as he passed, and Linley stopped. The lad from Lancashire knew very little of Carberry, except that the senior was something of a bully. The prefect looked at him searchingly, and noted the big book he was carrying under his arm.

"What on earth have you got there, Linley?" he asked.

"It's Wingate's Liddell and Scott," explained Linley. "He was kind enough to lend it to me."

The prefect stared at him blankly. "In the name of all that's idiotic, what do you want with a Greek lexicon?" he demanded.

Mark Linley coloured a little.

"I'm doing Greek," he said. "It's an extra here, and—and I don't take it in class; but I'm doing it on my own, and Wingate helps me sometimes. He lends me books. I haven't a lexicon, you see."

Carberry burst into a laugh. He knew that the Lancashire lad came of very poor people, and that he could not afford the "extras" outside the ordinary school curriculum. The grit of the lad in sticking to a difficult study did not appeal to Carberry in the least.

"Well, you'll do!" he exclaimed. "Of course, it's no good coming that humbug



"A few more twists like that," said Levison, "and I fancy you won't be so cheeky!" "Oh, don't!" howled Benson. "Stop him, Wharton!" "Hang it, Levison!" broke out Harry sharply. "Let the kid alone!"

with me. I'm a little too keen for that, but it's very deep."

Mark Linley looked puzzled.

"What's deep?" he asked. "I don't understand you."

"Oh, don't come that with me!" said Carberry impatiently. "I'll never believe that a junior tackles Greek for the fun of the thing. You're playing that little game to get round your Form-master, or to curry favour with the Head. I know the dodge, and I've seen it worked before. Nice boy is accidentally discovered by master swotting over lexicon; is taken into favour from that moment, and always backed up by his master afterwards. It's one of the oldest dodges, kid, though I must say you've caught on to it very soon."

Mark Linley flushed crimson.

"I wasn't thinking of anything of the kind," he said. "My scholarship here is only for two years, and I want to make the most of my chances, that's all."

"I tell you you can't take me in," said Carberry, frowning. "But never mind that; keep it up if you like. I want you to go down to the village for me."

Linley's face fell.

He had looked forward to devoting the next hour to quiet study while his studymates were out of his quarters, and he could work without interruption. But he knew that it was of no use to object. The Remove could always be fagged by the Sixth, and besides, he was an obliging fellow.

"I'll go if you like," said Mark.

"Good! You understand that you're to keep it dark? I mean, I don't want you gassing all over Greyfriars that you're going out for me."

Linley looked surprised.

"I shouldn't be likely to gas all over Greyfriars," he said. "Besides, I don't see that it would matter if I did. A prefect has a right to send a junior to the village, hasn't he, or you wouldn't send me?"

"That's so. I can give you a pass after locking-up, and if anybody wants to know what you're going to Friardale for, you're going to select a new football at Harvey's."

"But—but I'm not going to select a new football."

"I know you're not, ass. That's what you're to say if you're asked."

Linley's face set hard.

"Do you mean that I'm to tell lies?" he asked, with his Lancashire directness. "If you do, I won't—for you or anybody else!"

"Why, you cheeky young sweep—" "I'm not going to start telling lies on your account!"

"You'll feel the weight of my cane if you don't do as I tell you!" said Carberry threateningly. "I want you to go to the Red Cow in the village—"

"We're not allowed to go there."

"And give a note to the landlord, and bring back whatever he gives you," went on Carberry, unheeding. "And keep it dark. I'll give you a tanner for your trouble."

"I don't want your money, and—and I can't fetch you anything from the Red Cow," broke out Mark. "It's against the rules, and you've no right to ask me."

"There's no danger if you're careful."

"It's not only the danger. I—I can't do it. You've no right to ask me. You a prefect, too!" exclaimed Mark indignantly.

Carberry almost panted with rage. THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,545.

It was not only the humiliation of being defied by a junior, it was the sneaking sense of inferiority he felt. He looked as if he would spring on the junior, and Linley backed away a little.

"I'm sorry," said Mark quietly. "I can't do that. I'll do anything else you like, but you've no right to ask me that. You know very well what the Head would say if he knew."

"So you're going to tell tales, you young sweep?"

Mark flushed crimson.

"No, I'm not going to do anything of the sort; but I won't go to a public-house for you, and that settles it!"

And he walked away down the passage. Carberry would have given a great deal to rush after him and send him spinning with a savage blow, but he could not venture to do so. He had placed himself, to a certain extent, in the junior's power.

"Wait a bit, you insolent young scoundrel!" he muttered, glaring after the Lancashire lad. "I'll find an occasion soon, and then I'll make you squirm for this. I suppose I had better look for another fag—"

Carberry broke off as he felt a touch on his elbow. He looked round and saw Ernest Levison.

There was a curious expression on Levison's face, a reckless gleam in his eyes. Carberry looked at him savagely.

"What do you want?"

Levison shrugged his shoulders.

"Nothing. I heard what you said to young Linley."

Carberry glared.

"Don't get your rag out," said Levison coolly. "All I want to say is that I'll go to the Red Cow for you, if you like."

Levison's Mission!

HARRY WHARTON was standing at the door, looking into the Close, when Bob Cherry and Frank Nugent came along.

There was a shade on the brow of the captain of the Remove, and he was plunged in deep reverie. He did not notice the approach of his chums till Bob Cherry slapped him on the shoulder.

"You mustn't fall into these fits of absent-mindedness, old chap," said Bob, wagging a warning forefinger. "I've been looking for you. You've overlooked the fact that it's tea-time, and have given us the trouble of coming down to look for you. It won't do, you know."

"Sorry," said Harry, laughing. "I forgot tea."

"Better not tell Billy Bunter so. He's been making omelets, and I must say, they're good. It's a special surprise for you, so come along and be surprised. You must be hungry."

"Ye-es, but—" Wharton hesitated, and Bob Cherry and Nugent looked at him with some curiosity.

"What's up?" said Nugent. "Been having a row with somebody?"

"Not exactly a row. It was Levison."

"Oh, Levison! My dear chap, haven't I told you a dozen times that it's no good trying to keep on good terms with Levison? He's a suspicious beast, and you never know how to take him. It's a marvel to me how you've kept from rowing with him for so long."

"He's not a bad sort, taking him all round."

"I shouldn't like to take him any way. But what has he been doing?"

"He was ragging young Benson. THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,545.

The little beggar had been checking him over that ridiculous affair of Wun Lung's postcards, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It was absurd, of course," said Harry, his face relaxing. "Levison made a fool of himself and showed up in a very mean light. And the affair ended so ridiculously, too. Bunter got hold of it, and half the Form has been laughing at Levison since. He can't stand that kind of thing; he's too sensitive."

"If he had been a bit more sensitive on the point of honour, he would never have got into this scrape," said Nugent indifferently. "I can't say that I feel very sorry for him."

"No; but—well, he's a fellow with a curious temper, and he feels a thing like that more than most. He's getting soured over it; he's quarrelled with most of his friends because they chipped him, and he seems to fancy solitude. I had to interfere between him and young Benson, and now he's got his back up against me."

"Let him rip! Come and have the omelets."

"I suppose I may as well."

Harry Wharton was turning away with his chums when Levison came towards the door with his coat and cap on. His eyes glinted as he saw the chums of the Remove, but otherwise he took no notice of them.

"Go on, you chaps!" muttered

Harry. "I want to speak to Levison for a minute."

Bob Cherry and Nugent grimaced, but they did as he desired. Harry stepped over towards Levison. The latter halted and looked at him coolly.

"I want to speak to you, Levison,"

said Wharton, a little abruptly. "I'm sorry there was that little breeze between us in your study."

"You're sorry you interfered with me?"

"Well, no! I think, on reflection, that you were carrying things a little too far," urged Wharton.

"I'm not inclined to admit anything of the sort!" snapped Levison. "I think you interfered with me like a meddling ass, if you want to know my opinion. And unless you say you're sorry for it, I don't want to have anything more to say to you."

"You make it very hard for a chap to get on with you," said Harry.

"I don't want you to get on with me. I want to be left alone," said Levison bitterly. "You're making a set against me in the Remove."

"I'm doing nothing of the sort!"

"Most of the fellows are, and you don't back me up in any way. I can't show my nose in the Common-room now without a howl going up about that confounded affair with the Chinese. I shall never hear the end of that. I've had enough of it. I've got friends in another part of the school, and the Remove can go hang!"

"I don't quite understand you," said Wharton. "But I'm not against you. And that affair will soon die out if you let it alone. It's your flying into a temper about it that makes the fellows keep it up. So long as you lose your temper over it, they'll keep up the joke."

"Hang them all!" said Levison. "I'm done with them and with you! I don't know what I'm standing here jawing for now. I've got to get to the village."

He turned towards the door. Harry Wharton stepped quickly after him. There was a savage recklessness in Levison's manner that made him very uneasy.

"Wait a moment, Levison! Are you going out?"

"Haven't I said so?"

"You needn't snap a fellow's head off. It's raining."

"I know it is."

"Look here, old man, you can't go to the village after locking-up. Gosling will be closing the gates now. You know what that means."

"Suppose I have a pass? As it happens I'm going down to the village for Carberry."

And Levison strode out of the door. It was raining hard in the Close. Harry Wharton ran after the junior, hatless as he was.

"Levison, hold on!"

Levison did not even look round. Wharton caught him up and dropped a hand on his shoulder. Levison had to stop then.

"Well, what do you want?" he said savagely.

"I must speak to you. I know what it means when Carberry gives a junior a pass. You're going to the public-house for him!"

"What if I am?"

"I don't want to preach to you, Levison, but you know you oughtn't to do a blackguardly thing like that."

"I shall do as I like!"

"Yes, I know you can do as you like. But listen a minute. Think of the danger."

"I'm not afraid of the danger."

"It's not a question of being afraid. Suppose you are caught, as you might be? Wingate and the other prefects are very sharp after that sort of thing. If you are caught, do you think Carberry will stand by you? He'll deny having had any knowledge of your action."

"Do you think I don't know that?"

"It might mean a flogging, or perhaps expulsion."

"I shouldn't care!"

"Don't be an ass!" said Harry sharply. "Levison, you can't go—"

"Rats!" retorted Levison. "If I'm questioned, I'm going to Harvey's for a new football, and that's why Carberry gave me the pass."

"You mean to say that you'd tell lies?" said Harry scornfully.

"Oh, mind your own business, and let me alone!"

Harry Wharton stepped back without another word, and Levison disappeared in the gloom.

Mr. Quelch is Annoyed!

HALLO, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, as Wharton came into Study No. 1. "What on earth have you been doing?"

"Nothing."

"You—you duffer! You're soaking wet! You'll catch cold, you ass!"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"I'm all right."

"You're not," said Bob Cherry. "You've got to change your things, or you'll catch cold. Bunter's cold made the study uninhabitable for a week, and we don't want any more. Go and change."

"H'm! I suppose I may as well," assented Harry, who was usually very careful in such matters.

He knew that to sit about in damp clothes was the surest way of catching a cold. He hurried out of the study while Bunter was serving up the omelets.

"I say, you fellows, these will be ripping!" said Billy Bunter, blinking contentedly through his big spectacles. "I

must say I think my cooking is up to the mark. These are worth the money I spent on them."

"The money who spent on them, my worthy chum?" asked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, the Hindu chum, in a tone of mild surprise.

"Well, you fellows subscribed the cash, but I laid it out," said Bunter. "And I think the omelets are ripping."

"So they are," said Bob Cherry. "You're worth your weight in bacon fat, Bunter, and I wouldn't change you for any other pig in the United Kingdom."

"Oh, rea'y, Cherry—"

"I'm going to begin," said Nugent. "Come on, and leave Wharton's on the hob."

"I've cooked fifteen eggs," said Billy Bunter. "That will be a couple each for you fellows, and—the rest for me. I feel very peckish this evening." "You young cormorant! Serve, and don't jaw!"

Harry Wharton re-entered the study; he had only been a few minutes changing. In the keen autumn air the juniors developed hearty appetites, and they did full justice to the meal Billy Bunter had prepared.

The omelets, flanked by ham and a huge pile of bread-and-butter, disappeared as if by magic. Billy Bunter's fat face was glistening contentedly.

"I really think this is ripping!" he remarked. "I'm sorry it won't run to a feed like this every evening. If I hadn't been disappointed about getting that prize in 'Answers' football competition, I should have stood a series of extensive feeds in this study. As a matter of fact, though, I'm expecting a postal order this evening. If one of you fellows would like to cash it—What are you laughing at?"

"We'll cash it when it comes," said Bob Cherry.

"But it won't come till after the tuck-

shop is closed, unfortunately. If you'd like to cash it in advance, it would be only a matter of hours—"

"More like a few centuries!" yawned Nugent. "Do get off the subject of that postal order, Bunter! You know it's a standing joke in the Form."

"If you fellows can't trust me, this discussion had better cease," said Billy Bunter, with a great deal of dignity.

"A jolly sight better!" agreed Bob Cherry. "Pass the bread-and-butter, porpoise!"

"Yes; but as I was saying, you fellows—"

"Rats! The discussion has ceased! Ring off!"

"But this postal order is bound to come—"

"Scat!"

"In fact, I shouldn't wonder if it came by the last post, and is waiting for me in the rack downstairs. I'll go and look after tea."

"And for goodness' sake shut up till then!" implored Bob Cherry.

Harry Wharton was very silent during the meal. He was thinking of Levison. The junior would be at the Red Cow by that time. Whether he had ever been there before, Wharton did not know, but he felt that this would not be the last visit.

To Levison, in his present reckless mood, the place was one of the most dangerous conceivable. And Harry, knowing the good that there really was in the junior, in spite of his unpleasant temper, could not help thinking of him.

Hazeldene of the Remove looked into the study. Wharton glanced up and beckoned him to enter.

"Had your tea?" he asked. "If not, here you are!"

"Right-ho!" said Hazeldene. "I see you've got omelets, and it would be a sin to waste such good grub on Bunter! Tinned beef is good enough for him; he only wants quantity."

"Oh, really, Vaseline—"

"But I looked in to see if Levison is

here," said Hazeldene, sitting himself at the table. "Queelch is asking for him, and is looking rather wild. If Levison can't be found, he wants to see you, Wharton."

"What does he want Levison for?"

"I don't know; but I fancy he's booked for a row, to judge by Queelch's look. Levison has been in all sorts of tantrums lately," grinned Hazeldene. "It's that affair of the Chinese, you know. The fellows won't let it rest, and Levison seems to be determined to go the wrong way to stop it."

Harry Wharton rose from the table.

"I suppose I'd better go to Queelch," he remarked. "Where is he, Hazeldene?"

"In his study. By the way, what's become of Levison? He's not to be found."

"He's gone out."

"Then he'll get warmed when he comes in, I reckon."

Harry Wharton made his way to the Remove master's study. He found Mr. Quelch standing on the hearthrug, with his back to the fire, looking very annoyed.

The Form-master looked at him with a clouded brow.

"Ah, it is you, Wharton! Where is Levison?"

Wharton involuntarily coloured. He knew that Levison was either at the Red Cow, or on the road home from it. But it was impossible to betray the reckless and foolish fellow to the Form-master.

"He has gone out, sir," said Harry.

Mr. Quelch made a gesture.

"Gone out—at this hour!"

"I know he has a pass, sir."

"But he has no right to go out. I gave him an imposition this morning, for a flagrant case of bullying a younger boy," said Mr. Quelch. "He had orders to bring it to me at six o'clock. It is now half-past six, and you say he's gone out!"



Bob Cherry just had time to put out the light and slip behind the door before Carberry, Hacker, and Datchett came into the study. "Blessed if I didn't think I saw a light under the door!" exclaimed Carberry.

"He must have forgotten, sir," said Harry.

"He will learn not to forget a Form-master's orders," said Mr. Quelch, setting his lips. "You may go, Wharton, but bring Levison to me the moment he enters the House."

"Yes, sir," said Harry. Wharton left the study. It was, of course, impossible for him to have concealed the fact that Levison was absent, when several juniors were looking for him, and he could not be found.

The recklessness of the junior in the circumstances amazed Harry. It seemed as if Levison was deliberately looking for trouble in a quarter where trouble would be most serious for him.

Wharton did not return to his study. As captain of the Remove he sometimes had duties to perform that were distasteful enough to him, and the present was one of them. He waited downstairs for Levison, having no choice but to do so.

"Six" for Levison!

HARRY WHARTON had not long to wait. About ten minutes later Ernest Levison came in, looking miserable and wet. He shook himself as he ground his muddy feet on the mat, and glanced at Wharton with a surly expression. His walk to the village had not been a pleasant one in the rain.

Wharton felt awkward enough in the position he found himself in, but there was no help for it. He went directly towards Levison.

"Mr. Quelch has been inquiring for you, Levison," he said.

"Has he?" said Levison sourly. "And I suppose you told him where I was?"

"I told him nothing, except that you had gone out. He says I'm to take you straight to his study the moment you come in."

Levison chuckled and indicated a parcel under his arm.

"Precious row there would be if I took this into Quelch's study!" he said. "I must nip upstairs a minute first."

Wharton looked uncomfortable.

"I had strict orders from Mr. Quelch. His study door's open, and he will see you when you go up. You had better come at once."

"Don't be a fool! Do you know what I've got in this parcel?"

"I can guess."

"Well, you know I can't take it into Quelch's study, then. There's a bottle of whisky and a box of cigarettes. Don't be a fool!"

Wharton hesitated. Mr. Quelch, from his study, had a view of the big staircase. If he happened to be glancing in that direction he would see Levison go up and would know that Wharton had disobeyed him.

"It's impossible Levison. You can't go upstairs," he said at last.

Levison gritted his teeth.

"I see your game; you want to get me into trouble, and you think—"

"Don't be a fool!" said Wharton sharply. "It's your own fault for going there, and I warned you beforehand. You've no right to shunt the responsibility on to me now."

"You know jolly well I shall be expelled if Quelch orders me to open this parcel. Look here, you take the parcel and put it in Carberry's study, and I'll go to Quelch."

Wharton hesitated. He strongly objected being a party to smuggling the

precious parcel to Carberry's study, but in the circumstances there was nothing else to be done.

"Give me the parcel," said Harry hastily.

He took the parcel Levison handed to him; and the junior, with a sneering smile upon his face, walked down the passage to Mr. Quelch's study.

Harry had said that he would take the things to Carberry's study, and he did so. The room was dark and empty; Carberry and his friends were not there yet; the little party was, in fact, fixed for eight o'clock. The prefect's evening duties would be over then until half-past nine, when he had to put out lights for the Remove.

Levison walked to Mr. Quelch's study with almost a jaunty air, tapped at the open door, and entered. The Form-master looked at him sternly.

"So you have come back, Levison."

"Yes, sir."

"Where have you been?"

"Friardale, sir."

"And for what purpose?"

"I've been to Harvey's, sir, to select a new football," said Levison with perfect calmness.

Mr. Quelch gave him a searching glance. It seemed that some vague suspicion was in the Remove master's mind, but Levison met the glance with perfect nonchalance.

"This is surely a strange time to choose for going to Harvey's about a football, Levison."

"I had a pass out, sir."

"Who gave you the pass?"

"Carberry of the Sixth, sir."

"For the purpose of selecting a new football at Harvey's?"

"Yes, sir."

"I should write a note to Mr. Harvey and ask his corroboration of your statement," said Mr. Quelch sternly, and Levison turned white, "but I cannot bring myself to express in public doubt of a Greyfriars boy's word."

Levison breathed again; his eyes were on the carpet now.

"I hope you have told me the truth," said Mr. Quelch. "I shall not deal with your visit to Friardale, then, but I shall speak to Carberry on the subject. What I have to remind you of is that you had an imposition to bring to me at six o'clock; it is now near seven. Where is the imposition?"

"I—I haven't written it, sir."

"You preferred to go and select a new football at Harvey's," said Mr. Quelch in a tone of sarcasm.

Levison was silent.

"Did you forget it, Levison?"

"No, sir," said Levison sullenly.

Mr. Quelch turned pink.

"If you had forgotten it, Levison," he said sternly, "I should have caned you for your negligence, but you tell me that you did not forget. Am I to understand that you deliberately disobeyed orders?"

"I—I haven't had time to write it, sir."

"This is nonsense! You have gone out, instead of doing the task I set you—a task which was only a light punishment for the fault you were guilty of. I do not quite understand you, Levison. You have frequently been guilty of impertinence. Of late your whole character seems to have taken a turn for the worse. In the circumstances, I must conclude that my leniency has encouraged you, and I have no alternative but to cane you. Hold out your hand."

Mr. Quelch took up a cane. Levison

hesitated for a moment, but the stern glance of the Form-master compelled obedience.

He held out his hand, and received a stroke that numbed his palm and made him draw in his breath with a gasp, but he uttered no cry; the reckless, obstinate nature of the boy came out in full force now.

Five more cuts he received, each as hard and stinging as the first, but not a sound escaped his lips. But for the drawn, strained look about his lips he might have been a statue standing there under the blows of the cane.

Mr. Quelch looked hard at him and laid down his cane.

"You may go, Levison."

Without a word Levison left the study. He paused in the passage, uncontrolled rage welling up inside him. He pressed his hands under his arms to ease the pain, but the relief was very little. The strokes had been laid on with a hard hand.

He went slowly down the passage. His white, drawn face attracted glances from several fellows he passed, and one or two stopped to inquire what was the matter.

Levison did not answer them; he went straight to the Remove dormitory, where he knew he would be able to escape observation. There he sat down on a bed. A step sounded in the darkness, and Levison looked up.

"Who's there?"

"Don't be alarmed," said a quiet voice. "It's I—Wharton."

"So you have followed me," said Levison savagely. "Can't you leave me alone?"

"I wanted to see if I could do anything for you. Levison, old chap, do be reasonable. I—"

"If you want to do anything for me, get out and leave me alone."

"Very well."

Harry Wharton left the room. Levison remained alone, sitting on the bed in the darkness, his burning eyes gleaming in the darkness and anger in his heart.

Bob Cherry's Jape!

"**Y**OU'LL never get your prep done," said Nugent.

Harry Wharton nodded without speaking, and sat down in the study at the table. The other juniors were getting through with their work, but Harry found it hard to concentrate his attention on it. Bob Cherry looked at him curiously once or twice, and at last spoke.

"Where have you been all this time, Harry?"

Wharton explained. A glimmering of fun came into Bob Cherry's eyes at the mention of the parcel placed in Carberry's study.

"Rotten low cad!" he said. "Levison is a reckless fool, but Carberry is a blackguard. He ought to be expelled! Fancy, a bottle of whisky!"

"The fools!" said Nugent. "They'll start drinking and smoking, and pretend they like it."

"True enough. I say, it would be rather a joke to doctor the stuff," said Bob Cherry. "I'm thinking of paying a visit to Carberry's study."

"What's the wheeze?"

"Well, if the precious party aren't there yet, I think I may be able to work up some comic effects," grinned Bob Cherry. "Don't you fellows come. I can manage alone, and a crowd would attract attention."

And Bob Cherry left the study.

He hastened at once to Carberry's

quarters, anxious lest the prefect should have returned there, and so spoiled his intended joke. But the study was still dark and unoccupied.

It was dangerous for a junior to venture into a Sixth Form study without permission—especially Carberry's study. But Bob did not hesitate. He went in and closed the door, and turned on the light.

Wharton had placed the obnoxious parcel on the table, and it still lay there. To untie the string and open it was the work of a moment.

A bottle of whisky and a box of cigarettes were disclosed. Bob opened the box and found it full of an expensive brand of cigarettes.

"My aunt!" he murmured. "That's one way to get rid of one's tin. Such extravagance ought to be nipped in the bud, and it's the duty of a good little boy to see that his elders are stopped on the downward path."

There was a jug, containing flowers, at the window, and it did not take Bob Cherry long to dip the ends of the cigarettes into the water, wetting them a third of their length, so that it would be impossible to light them.

Then he wiped them dry on his handkerchief and restored them to the box. The tobacco, of course, remained wet, and would not light.

Then the humorous junior turned his attention to the bottle of whisky. The seal had already been broken, and the cork withdrawn, and Bob noted that the bottle was only three-quarters full. Doubtless, even Carberry and his precious friends did not want a whole bottle for their convivial meeting, and Mr. Jolliffe, of the Red Cow, had sent the quantity ordered in an old bottle, for convenience of carriage.

Bob Cherry opened the bottle and poured half the contents into the jug of water with the flowers. Then he added an amount of liquid sufficient to restore the liquor to its former quantity. But it was not water that he added. He used several ingredients; among others, cycle lubricating oil, gum, and paraffin.

"I think that will do," murmured

Bob, as he recorked the bottle; and he proceeded to tie up the parcel as he had found it.

He had just finished when there was a sound of footsteps outside the study door.

"Here we are!" said the voice of Hacker, one of Carberry's intimates.

Bob Cherry turned out the light instantly and drew behind the door. He hoped to be able to slip out as the seniors entered.

Carberry threw open the door.

"Blessed if I didn't think I saw a light under the door!" he exclaimed. "Hullo, what's that?"

"That" was Bob Cherry trying to slip out of the study. He whisked past the surprised Carberry and bolted. But Datchett of the Sixth was a pace or two behind the others, and he put out his hand and caught the junior by the collar.

"Hold him!" exclaimed Carberry furiously.

"I've got him," said Datchett. "Is it your bag?"

"No. It's one of those Remove kids—Cherry, I think. Hold him!"

Carberry turned on the light and Bob Cherry was dragged into the study by Datchett and Hacker.

The prefect turned a glinting eye on the junior.

"So it's you, Cherry!" said Carberry. "I thought so."

"Yes, I think so," said Bob, with unshaken coolness. "Will you kindly take your paws off my collar, Datchett? I'm not particular, but I bar having fellows' paws on my collar. That's a clean collar—or was a minute ago."

"Cheeky young sweep!" said Datchett.

"Give him a hiding," suggested Hacker.

Carberry gave a harsh laugh.

"That's what I'm going to do. Lay him across the table while I get my cane."

"Hold on!" said Bob Cherry. "I might kick, you know, and knock that parcel down and bust your whisky bottle."

Carberry started.

"That young fool Levison! Fancy leaving the things there!" he exclaimed, catching sight of the parcel. "Anybody might have come in. Cherry, have you been spying into that parcel?"

"I know what's in it," said Bob.

"Give the cheeky young monkey six!" suggested Datchett.

Carberry hesitated. He would gladly have given Bob "six," but he feared that the junior, if exasperated, might talk too much. The Remquite was not likely to sneak to a master, but he might spread the tale in his own Form; and it would not be pleasant for Carberry to have half the Remove come along the Sixth Form passage to peep in at his convivial party.

"Better let him go," he said, after a pause. "You can cut, Cherry; but if you say a word outside this room, I'll skin you alive!"

"I shall say what I like, when I like, how I like, and to whom I like," said Bob Cherry independently, as he was freed. "You know jolly well I shan't sneak. It would serve you right if I did, though. And you'd lick me now if you dared—and you're a set of rotters, anyway."

And Bob Cherry scuttled out of the study.

The three seniors looked at one another with rather sickly expressions. The junior's plain speaking was not palatable to them. Carberry forced a laugh.

"Cheeky young monkey!" he said. "I'll take it out of him another time. Close the door, Datchy, and we'll get the stuff out!"

"Right you are, old man!"

Datchett closed the door and locked it, and Hacker stirred the fire to a cheerful blaze. Carberry opened the parcel, and took out the bottle of whisky and the box of cigarettes. He set a kettle on the fire, and produced a couple of lemons, a basin of sugar, a knife, spoons, and glasses from the cupboard. Three chairs were drawn up round the fire, and the whole scene looked very cosy.

(Continued on the next page.)

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William Cotton, 8, Ranelagh Ave., Liverpool 21; pen pals; age 14-18; stamps, sport; Newfoundland, U.S.A., British Dominions.

Miss J. Geatnell, "Cowtrial," Gaptown Gardens, Gaptown, nr. Arundel, Sussex; girl correspondents; age 15-17; stamp collecting; England or the British Empire.

L. Thomas, 44, Caulfield Road, East Ham, London, E.6; age 15-18; all sports, especially boxing; U.S.A., Canada, Australia.

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There was not one of them who would not have preferred lemonade or coffee, and each in his heart knew it perfectly well, but none of them would have admitted it for worlds.

Hacker and Datchett kept up a look of eager anticipation as Carberry unlocked the bottle. Hacker sliced the lemons, and the scent of them neutralised the smell of the whisky, which was unpleasant to them, in spite of their elaborate sniffs of appreciation.

"Jolly good stuff," said Carberry. "Put life into you. It's what you want on a cold night like this. You'll find the smokes good, too—real Turkish!"

"Ripping!" said Hacker. The glasses were filled with whisky and water and lemon, and the three black sheep of the Sixth settled down to enjoy themselves.

"Here's to you!" said Hacker. The three seniors drank—and then there was a yell in the study, followed by a crash of three glasses on the floor.

"Ow!"

"Oh!"

"Oooh!"

Carberry frantically spat into the fire. Hacker stuffed his handkerchief into his mouth. Datchett sputtered and choked and gasped.

"Call that whisky!" panted Datchett. "It's your idea of a joke, Carberry. It's the last time I'll ever enter your study."

"I'm poisoned!" moaned Hacker. "You fool!" snarled Carberry.

"Can't you see I'm poisoned myself as much as you are? Somebody has been doctoring the stuff!"

"Gr-r-rough!"

"I—I—I feel sick!"

"It must be a joke of Jolliffe's, or one of the fellows at the Red Cow."

"What about that Remove kid we found in here?"

Carberry uttered a fierce exclamation.

"Cherry! Of course, it was he! That's what he was doing here. That's why there was a smell of whisky. He'd been doctoring it!"

"What—what did he put in it? I—I feel as if I were going to be violently ill!" moaned Hacker.

"It tasted like oil to me," said Carberry.

"It was like paraffin to me!"

"Yes, there was paraffin, too. It's not dangerous, and you didn't swallow enough to hurt you, anyway. But—but that young villain—"

"I'll smash him!"

"Let's go and collar him!"

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EVO EVO EVO EVO

"Hold on! We don't want to start a row, and have it blabbed all over the school that we had a bottle of whisky here. I'll take it out of him later. I'm sorry this has happened, you chaps," said Carberry, remembering that he was the host. "Never mind; I've got some lemonade in the cupboard, and we can drink that with the smokes. The smokes are ripping!"

"That's all right, old fellow!"

The lemonade was forthcoming, and,

as a matter of fact, the convivial party, upon reflection, were not sorry for the substitution. The smokes were handed round, and the three essayed to light them.

Carberry struck match after match, but his cigarette would not light.

"Something wrong with that!" he muttered, throwing it angrily into the fire. He took another from the box.

"Mine won't light, either!" grunted Hacker. "It seems to me to be damp. Careless of Jolliffe to let his smokes get damp."

"Mine's damp, I think," said Datchett. "It won't light."

The three Sixth Formers took fresh cigarettes, but the same difficulty recurred. They would not light.

"Blessed if I can understand it!" said Carberry. His little party was a decided frost, and Hacker and Datchett were looking far from pleased.

"They seem damp," said Hacker thoughtfully, feeling over the cigarettes in the box. "Why, look here, the bottom of the box is wet."

Carberry gave a yell.

"That young scoundrel again!"

"What do you mean?" cried Hacker.

"Why, he's been playing tricks on the smokes, too! They've been dipped in water!" said Carberry, almost raving with rage.

"My hat! So they have."

"The young villain!"

Carberry, with an oath, hurled the cigarettes into the fire.

"I'll make that scoundrel wriggle for this!" he exclaimed savagely. "Let him wait till after lights out, that's all! I'll go into the Remove dormitory with a cane, and give him such a hiding that he won't be able to crawl!"

And the convivial party broke up.

(You simply mustn't miss next week's yarn, called "EXPELLED!"—telling how Levison is sacked from Greyfriars. Order your GEM early.)

SKIMPOLE THE BENEVOLENT!

(Continued from page 21.)

at last to write his important letter to the Air Ministry. Henry Skimpole was quite royally entertained in Study No. 6, and when he departed he was on the best of terms with Tom Merry & Co.

After he was gone the Co. looked at one another.

"We're in for it," remarked Blake.

"Can't be helped," said Tom Merry.

"Skimpole did us well while he had any money, and we can't let the chopper come down on him. It's a debt of honour for the school, and we've got to see it paid. We've got to raise a Skimpole fund."

"We'll call it the Funny Freak Fund!" suggested Lowther.

"Hear, hear!"

"Hallo! Here he is!"

Skimpole blinked into the study.

"Will one of you fellows lend me a stamp? I must get this letter off to the Air Ministry."

"Stamps are off," explained Tom Merry. "We've got to raise forty quids for you, and we're not going to make it forty pounds and three-halfpence. We're going to pay your debt to Mr. Skimpole, and save you from getting the chopper."

"I am sure I have no objection," said Skimpole. "If the man is in need of money I regard it, indeed, as a worthy object. Pray do not think that I mind in the least. But that stamp—"

"You—you don't mind!" stammered Blake. "Do you know what may happen to you if the money isn't paid?"

"Really, I have not thought about it. I have some more important matters to think of. But to come back to a

more important subject. Can you lend me a stamp?"

The juniors did not lend Skimpole a stamp. They took his letter, crumpled it, dipped it in ink, and stuffed it down his back. Then they ejected Skimpole violently from the room.

Skimpole returned to his study without a stamp, and in a state of great astonishment, and when he painfully extracted that letter it was not in a fit state to send to any office.

Tom Merry & Co. had set themselves a difficult task. They had to raise a fund for Skimpole, and all they had towards it, so far, was Skimpole's benevolent approval.

(Next Wednesday: "SKIMPOLE'S SCRAPE!" Forty pounds to raise in a week! Can Tom Merry & Co. do it? Read in this grand yarn how they fare.)

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