

SKIMPOLE THE SPORTSMAN!

GRAND ST. JIM'S
YARN OF SPORT, FUN
AND ADVENTURE

INSIDE.

The GEM

2^d

**ARE YOU
COLLECTING OUR
ARMAMENTS
STAMPS?**

**THOUSANDS OF
GRAND PRIZES
OFFERED FOR
THE LARGEST
COLLECTIONS!**

(See within.)



The MASTER'S CATCH!

THE GREAT "ARMAMENTS" RACE

**PRIZE
NEWS**

15 First Prizes of Hercules Bikes

HAVE you heard the GREAT NEWS? It's PRIZE NEWS, too! Fifteen spanking new Bikes, and Thousands and Thousands and THOUSANDS of other top-hole prizes all going FREE. Read on! Each week in the GEM I am printing Armaments Stamps—BOMBERS, GUNS, SEARCHLIGHTS, and so on—eight kinds altogether—and all you do is just CUT 'EM OUT AND COLLECT 'EM. Some were given last week, but you can start collecting TO-DAY—there are TWENTY more stamps in this issue; TEN are on this page, while there are TEN more on Page 35. If you also take other boys' papers, like "Modern Boy" and "Magnet," you'll find more stamps in them to swell your total. And here's a good tip, pals—there are Four Bonus BOMBER Stamps in this week's "Magnet" (dated May 14th), making twenty-four stamps altogether!

At the end of this month I shall ask you how many of one or more kinds of stamps you've collected. It may be Bombers, or Battleships, or perhaps Tanks and Destroyers together. Which? Well, that's my secret!

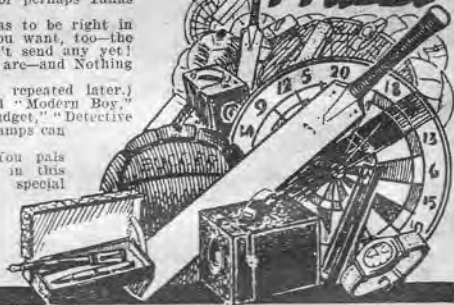
So keep at it! Go on collecting all the stamps you can so as to be right in front for the first prize-giving. I shall ask you which prize you want, too—the highest collections of the stamps I call for will win. But don't send any yet! I'll tell you how, and where, when the time comes. There you are—and Nothing to Pay! Isn't it great!—THE EDITOR

(The rules of this offer were given last week and will be repeated later.) N.B.—You can also collect or swap stamps with pals who read "Modern Boy," "Magnet," "Boy's Cinema," "Champion," "Triumph," "Sports Budget," "Detective Weekly," and "Thriller"—stamps can be cut from all these papers.

Overseas Readers, Too!—You pals who are far away—you're in this great scheme also, and special awards will be given for the best collections from overseas readers. There will be a special closing date for you, as well, of course!

**FOR COLLECTING
ARMAMENTS
STAMPS**

**6000
Other
TIP-TOP
PRIZES**



SUBMARINE



BOMBER



HOWITZER



SUBMARINE



TANK



BOMBER



SEARCHLIGHT



ANTI-AIRCRAFT
GUN



BOMBER



SUBMARINE

TURN TO PAGE 35 FOR TEN MORE STAMPS.

THE SCHOOLBOY WHO TRIES TO REFORM A SHADY BOOKMAKER—BY WINNING ALL HIS MONEY!



"Skimpole!" rapped out Mr. Railton sharply. The genius of the Shell blinked at him over the paper. "Oh, sir! I'm sorry. I did not see you!" Thunder gathered on the School House master's brow. "What is that paper, Skimpole?"

CHAPTER 1.

A Slight Misunderstanding!

"WHAT'S the row?"

The Terrible Three of St. Jim's asked that question together.

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther had looked into Talbot's study in the Shell passage to take their chum down to cricket practice. The new season was starting, and Tom Merry & Co. were keen to get into form.

They found Talbot alone in the study. Gore and Skimpole, his studymates, were out.

Talbot was sitting on the corner of the table, his hands thrust deep into his pockets, and a wrinkle of worried thought on his brow.

The Terrible Three eyed him curiously, and Talbot's handsome face flushed a little under their gaze. Tom's glance passed him, and fell upon a paper that lay on the table. It was a sporting paper, turned inside out, and marked in pencil.

Tom gave a start at the sight of it.

"What's up, old man?" he asked.

"Nothing," said Talbot. "I was thinking."

"Don't!" said Monty Lowther seriously.

"These sudden changes—"

"Oh, don't rot!" said Talbot. "I dare say it's no business of mine, but—but I couldn't help thinking about it."

"Is it anything about this?" Tom Merry asked, tapping the paper with his hand. "It isn't your paper, is it, Talbot?"

Talbot shook his head.

"You'd better put a match to it, all the same," said Manners. "There would be a row if a prefect saw it in the study."

"Must be Gore's," said Tom Merry, with a frown. "I thought Gore had thrown over all that rot."

"So did I," said Talbot. "Gore isn't a bad chap. I found that paper lying on the table when I came in, Gore got into an awful fix over that kind of thing last term. I shouldn't have thought he'd take it up again. But there's the paper."

"It can't be Skimpole's," grinned Lowther.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,578.

By

MARTIN CLIFFORD.

Determinism, Evolution, and Darwinism are easy meat to Herbert Skimpole, the genius of the St. Jim's Shell. But when he turns his mighty brain to picking winners, he finds he's an "also ran"!

The chums of the Shell could not help laughing at the idea.

Skimpole, the genius of the Shell, had many extraordinary qualities, but he had no vices at all. He was, as Lowther said, a perfectly harmless lunatic.

"No, hardly!" said Talbot, smiling.

"It's Gore's, then."

"I suppose so."

"Not like Gore to be such an ass as to leave it lying about," said Manners.

"Well, I found it here," said Talbot. "I was thinking about it. Gore's my studymate, and he's not a bad chap in the main. I—I was wondering whether to speak to him; only it's so rotten to look like setting up to preach at a chap."

"I'd do more than preach at him if he brought a racing paper into my study!" said Tom Merry wrathfully. "Why can't he keep his dashed blackguardism to himself if he must be a blackguard? And after the fearful cropper he came last term, too—which you got him out of, the silly ass! Hallo! Here he is!"

George Gore of the Shell came into the study hastily, as if he were looking for something. He stared at the serious faces of the juniors.

"Hallo! Anything wrong?" he asked.

"Yes!" growled Tom.

"Well, you're looking like a set of boiled owls," said George Gore politely. "Seen my paper, Talbot?"

"Yes."

"Well, I want it," said Gore, looking in surprise at Talbot's clouded face. "I forgot it when I went out, and I left it here somewhere. I haven't finished reading it yet. Where is it?"

"Gore, old chap," said Talbot quietly, "don't you think it's rather risky leaving that paper on the table in the study?"

"What rot! Why?"

"Well, suppose somebody came in and saw it?"

"Why shouldn't they?"

"Why shouldn't they?" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Have you gone off your rocker, Gore?"

"Don't you know it would mean being hauled up before the beak," demanded Manners, "and very likely the sack to follow?"

"A flogging, at least," said Lowther.

Gore stared harder than ever. He seemed astounded.

"A flogging! The sack!" he repeated. "What are you drivelling about? I don't care who sees my paper. As a matter of fact, half a dozen fellows want my paper when I've finished with it."

"Fellows like Levison and Crooke, perhaps," said Tom Merry.

"Any fellows," said Gore. "You, yourself, Tom Merry. You asked me for it last week, I remember."

Tom Merry jumped.

"I asked you to lend me your racing paper!" he howled.

"My which?" howled Gore, in his turn. "You asked me to lend you my 'Magnet.' And where's the harm?"

"'Magnet'!" exclaimed Tom.

"Yes. I think you're all off your dots!" said Gore, in wonder. "Everybody reads the 'Magnet.' I've seen Skimpy gurgling over it. What is there against it, I'd like to know."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Talbot. "Did you come here for your 'Magnet,' Gore?"

"Yes, I did!" said Gore, puzzled and exasperated. "I don't see what you want to run it down for. It's a jolly good paper!"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,578.

The Terrible Three blinked at Gore. Gore's words could not always be regarded as the frozen truth, as they well knew.

"Look here," exclaimed Tom Merry, thrusting the sporting paper fairly under Gore's nose.

"Look at that!"

Gore looked at it and frowned.

"You can jolly well take that away, Tom Merry!" he said. "I've chucked up that kind of thing, and I'm surprised to see you taking it up."

"I!" stammered the captain of the Shell.

"You've preached at me often enough over it, I know that," said Gore. "I don't want to be personal, but I'd rather you didn't bring that paper into my study. I'm jolly sure Talbot doesn't want to see it."

"Isn't it yours?" shrieked Monty Lowther.

"Mine! Why, you insulting ass—"

"It's all right, Gore," said Talbot. "The paper was on the study table here, and we couldn't help thinking it was yours. Excuse us."

"Oh, I see! You might have asked a chap first, I think," said Gore sulkily. "I don't see how the paper got here, either, unless one of these chaps brought it. It isn't mine, and it's not yours, and it can't be Skimpy's. You can go and eat coke, the lot of you!"

And George Gore routed out the "Magnet" from among a heap of impot paper and exercise-books, snorted emphatically, and marched out of the study, closing the door behind him with a bang that was expressive of considerable indignation and wrath.

CHAPTER 2.

Justice for Crooke!

TOM MERRY & CO. looked at one another rather uncertainly.

There had evidently been a misunderstanding.

It was that harmless and necessary publication, the "Magnet," of which George Gore had come in search. The sporting paper did not belong to him.

But if it did not belong to Gore, to whom did it belong?

Only three fellows shared the study—Talbot, Gore, and Skimpole.

"That paper belonged to somebody," said Manners.

"Somebody's brought it to the study and left it here," said Talbot. "I'm glad it's not Gore's, after all."

"Ahem! Gore wasn't brought up at the feet of George Washington," remarked Monty Lowther.

"I believe him," said Talbot simply.

"Well, a chap doesn't like to doubt a chap's word, of course. That paper belongs to somebody. Why should a fellow bring it here and leave it on the table?"

"It's jolly odd!"

"Better find out who it was and punch his head, Talbot," advised Tom Merry. "Might be one of Levison's tricks. There would have been a row if a prefect had seen it here."

Talbot nodded.

"Good idea!" said Lowther. "Let's find the ead it belongs to and bump him. Crooke of the Shell, perhaps. Anyway, Crooke's study is nearest, and we'll start on him."

"Come on!" said Manners.

The Terrible Three and Talbot quitted the study, Tom taking the paper in his hand.

Crooke was in his room, as a scent of tobacco smoke warned the juniors when they looked in. But Racke, his studymate, was not there.

The cad of the Shell was sprawling in the armchair, smoking a cigarette. He stared insolently at his visitors, and did not remove the cigarette from his lips. Contemptuous looks had no effect on George Gerald Crooke.

"This paper yours?" asked Tom Merry, coming to the point at once, and shoving the racing paper under Crooke's nose.

Crooke looked at it.

"I dare say it is," he replied.

"You had one like this?"

"Yes."

"What did you leave it in Talbot's study for?"

"Eh? I didn't!"

"Then how did it get there?"

"Did it get there?" yawned Crooke.

"I found it on my study table, Crooke," said Talbot quietly.

"Then I don't suppose it's mine. Your own, most likely," said Crooke insolently.

Talbot flushed, but made no reply.

"It isn't Talbot's!" said Tom Merry hotly.

"It looks to me as if some cad has put it in his study to cause him trouble."

"What rot!" said Crooke, with another yawn.

"How did your paper get into Talbot's study, then?"

Crooke appeared to reflect.

"Oh, Skimmy!" he said. "He borrowed it! He's in Talbot's study, and I suppose he left it there."

"Don't be an ass!" growled Tom. "Skimmy never goes in for anything of that sort."

"Well, I know he borrowed my paper," said Crooke. "He came into my study and asked me for one, and I had that, so I lent it to him."

"It's impossible!" said Talbot. "Skimmy isn't that kind of chap."

"Better ask him," sneered Crooke.

"We'll ask him," said Tom Merry grimly.

"You're cad enough to get Skimmy into your rotten ways, if you could. You'd do anything blackguardly. I suppose a silly ass like Skimmy might be taken in. We'll ask Skimmy. But before we do that we'll show you what to expect for lending decent fellows your rotten rags!"

"Hear, hear!" said Lowther.

"Here, hands off!" roared Crooke.

The Terrible Three grasped him and yanked him out of the chair.

There was a wild howl of anguish from Crooke as the cigarette went into his mouth. It was very warm at one end.

"Yaroooh! Groogh! Gug-gug-gug!"

Bump!

"Oh crumbs!"

Bump!

"Gurrrgh!"

Justice having been done, the Shell fellows quitted the study, leaving Crooke sprawling on the hearthrug, gasping for breath and furiously spitting out the remains of the cigarette.

"Hallo, there's Skimmy!"

Skimpole of the Shell was going into his study. Tom Merry & Co. hurried after him.

They could hardly believe Crooke's statement that the genius of the Shell had suddenly developed an interest in racing matters. They had laughed at Skimmy's Determinism and other "isms." But if Skimmy was adding blackguardism to his other "isms," it was time for his friends to speak to him seriously.

Skimmy certainly could mean no harm—he never meant any harm. Perhaps he had discovered a scientific interest in racing. If so, the sooner it was bumped out of him the better.

Skimpole was blinking round the study through his big spectacles when the Shell fellows came in.

He blinked at them as they entered.

Skimpole was a weedy youth in figure, but Nature, which had been rather niggardly to him in the matter of limb and muscle, had compensated him with a remarkable brain. Whether the brain was of first quality was another matter; but undoubtedly there was plenty of it, such as it was. Skimpole's big head always looked several sizes too large. It was adorned with tufts of hair which never would keep down, and his brainy forehead bulged over a large pair of spectacles.

The idea of that brainy youth as a sporting man made the juniors grin in spite of themselves.

"Have you seen my paper, dear fellows?" asked Skimpole, blinking at them very anxiously.

THE GEM SPELLING BEE

Ten More Teasers to Test You!

Which of the following words are spelled wrong?

IRRESISTABLE
MISSPENT
ACQUILINE
PRESUMPTIOUS
PLAGUEY
KEENNESS
NUCLEOUS
APOPLECTIC
ELOCUTION
PORTENTEUS

Correct the words which you think have mistakes and then turn to page 31, where the answers are given. Maybe you'll find you aren't the speller you thought you were!

"What paper are you looking for, you champion ass?"

"A sporting paper, my dear Merry. A periodical devoted to the pursuits of the race-course," said Skimpole.

"Well, my hat!"

"Great Scott!"

"Is this the paper, you dummy?"

"Yes, it is, my dear Merry. Thank you very much!" said Skimpole, holding out his bony hand for the paper.

To his surprise it was not handed to him.

Tom Merry and Lowther seized him by the shoulders, and jammed him into the armchair with a jam that took Skimmy's breath away.

"Now, you silly idiot," said Tom—"now tell us what you mean by it!"

CHAPTER 3.

Skimpole's New "Ism"!

HERBERT SKIMPOLE set his big spectacles straight on his nose, and blinked at the juniors.

Tom Merry & Co. were excited and exasperated. THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1573

If Skimpole was too big an ass to look after himself, they were prepared to look after him; but it was probable that the process of looking after him would not be gentle. If Skimpole had to have sense bumped into him, they were ready.

"Well?" demanded the four together.

"My dear fellows—" murmured Skimpole.

"Look here, Skimmy," said Talbot, "you've got to explain yourself. It isn't exactly our business, in a way, but we're making it our business."

"Thank you very much, Talbot! That is really very kind of you," said Skimpole. "I assure you that I am very much obliged. You see, as a Determinist, I believe in people minding one another's business."

"Well, we're agreed on that point, at least," said Talbot, laughing. "Now, we're not going to let you get yourself into trouble."

"We're going to give you some good advice," snapped Tom Merry.

Skimpole smiled pityingly.

"My dear Merry, I fear your advice would not be of much use to me. You see, your mental powers, in comparison with mine, are not quite developed."

"Eh?"

"I should not exactly call you a fool," said Skimpole benevolently.

"My hat! You'd better not."

"But I should not be far from the truth if I did—"

"What?"

"Pray do not get excited, my dear fellow," said Skimpole, blinking at him. "I admit that this is a painful truth, and from regard for your feelings, I shall not dwell upon it."

"You silly ass!" roared Tom Merry, while his comrades chuckled.

Skimpole was not jesting in the least. Skimpole had never been known to jest. He was speaking with great patience and earnestness. That was Skimmy's way.

"I've a jolly good mind to have you out of that chair and rub your head in the coal-locker!" said Tom wrathfully.

"My dear Merry, what for?" asked Skimpole in surprise. "I trust I have not said anything to annoy you."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry laughed, too, in spite of himself. It really was not easy to be angry with the sublime Skimpole.

"Look here," said Manners. "You've been going in for racing papers. We always knew you were a crass idiot, but we never thought you were a blackguard before, Skimmy. Are you a blackguard?"

"Not at all, my dear Manners. I trust you are not one, either," said Skimmy innocently.

"Then what do you want with a racing paper?" gasped Manners.

"Ah! That is my new scheme," said Skimpole complacently. "I should be willing to explain to you fellows, though I fear that your intelligence would be hardly equal—"

"Are you going in for betting?"

"Yes."

"And you're not ashamed to own it!" gasped Tom Merry, in amazement.

"Not at all, Merry."

"Then you jolly well ought to be!" hooted Lowther.

"You do not understand, my dear Lowther. The

incompetence of your understanding incapacitates you for comprehending—"

"Mercy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My dear fellows, this is not a laughing matter. I am taking up this new scheme very seriously. You are aware that I have a benevolent disposition, but have hitherto been prevented from giving it full play by the paucity of my financial resources—"

"Where does he dig up those words?" said Lowther, in wonder.

"You are also aware, I presume, that I am an individual with very unusual—perhaps I might say unprecedented—brain powers," said Skimpole modestly. "A first-class intellect can be turned successfully upon any subject. In Determinism, for instance, my knowledge very nearly equals that of the celebrated Professor Balmeyerumpet. In the theory of Evolution I have reached, if not surpassed, the attainments of the famous Dr. Hoaxem. In mechanical matters, I have invented an airship which is perfect in theory, though unfortunately it will not rise from the ground. In other matters—"

"Look here—"

"Should I turn my intellect upon some frivolous subject, such as the game of cricket, for instance, I should become a tremendous player in a very short time, and should captain the Shell instead of you, Merry."

"Quite potty," remarked Lowther.

"Not at all, my dear Lowther. If you were more acquainted with scientific subjects you would be aware that it is not uncommon for insane persons to suspect insanity in others—"

"What?" yelled Lowther.

"It is, indeed, a proof of insanity," said Skimpole, beaming at him. "It confirms my previous observations of you, my dear Lowther. I have feared several times that your mind was a little unhinged."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you asses cackling at?" demanded Monty Lowther warmly.

"Pray do not be angry, Lowther. I do not blame you for this. As a Determinist, I attribute it to the influence of your heredity and environment, and I feel only compassion— Yaroo!"

Monty Lowther rushed at Skimpole, but the other fellows grabbed him and dragged him back.

"Lemme go!" he roared. "I'm going to shove his silly head in the coal locker!"

"Cheese it!" said Talbot, laughing. "Skimmy doesn't mean any harm. Do you, Skimmy?"

"Certainly not, my dear Talbot. I am sorry I have mentioned that painful truth to Lowther, as he seems to be annoyed," said Skimpole.

"Now, if you fellows have finished, I will peruse this periodical—"

"We've not quite finished yet," said Tom Merry. "It seems that you've taken up racing?"

"Exactly!"

"Blessed if I don't think you are really barmy, Skimmy!" said Tom, puzzled. "What are you doing it for?"

"For several reasons, Merry. I have no objection to acquainting you with them. I regard racing and betting, of course, as disgraceful pursuits. All racescourses ought to be turned into playgrounds for children. But it is my intention to raise a large sum of money—"

"By betting?" howled Manners.

"Yes; by betting upon the performances of equine quadrupeds," said Skimpole. "My idea



The Terrible Three grasped Crooke and yanked him out of the chair. There was a wild howl of anguish from the cad of the Shell as the cigarette went into his mouth. It was very warm at one end! "Yaroooh! Grooh! Gug-gug-gug!"

is this: I have made the acquaintance of a book-maker, a somewhat beery person, named Weekes, who lives at Wayland. This person is willing to take my bets. I am going to win all his money, and thus, I hope and trust, cause him to give up bookmaking and take up a more reputable means of earning a livelihood. This will be a good deed."

The juniors shrieked.

"And how are you going to win money from a bookmaker?" gasped Manners.

Skimpole smiled.

"That is quite easy, my dear fellow. After dealing with such subjects as Determinism, Evolution, and the origin of species, horse racing will be merely child's play to me. By bending the energies of my powerful intellect upon this simple subject, I shall master it in a few days, and then, of course, winning money will be as easy as beating you fellows at cricket, if I preferred to exert myself in that direction."

"Just about as easy!" grinned Tom Merry.

"I am glad you agree with me, Merry."

"Oh, my hat!" said Talbot, wiping his eyes. "You're too funny to live, Skimpole! So you're going to abolish Weekes, the bookie, by winning all his money? Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yes; but that is not all. That will be a good deed, and will fully excuse my soiling myself by touching such a thing as horse-racing. But that is not the full extent of my intentions. I am going to devote the whole of my winnings to improving the social conditions of my fellow-creatures."

"Your winnings?" stuttered Tom Merry. "What about your losings?"

"There will be no losings, Merry. I shall master the whole subject in a few days," said Skimpole calmly. "Then it will be plain sailing. Mr. Weekes will be astonished when I win all his money."

"Ha, ha, ha! So should we!"

"Now, if you do not mind, I will peruse my periodical—"

"But we do mind," said Tom Merry. "We've got to explain to you, Skimmy. I suppose it's no good telling you you are a silly ass—"

"None at all, my dear Merry."

"Well, I won't, then. But you're not going to bet with Weekes," said Tom. "You don't know anything about racing; and if you did, you couldn't beat a bookie at his own game. But even if you could win, you're not going to do anything so dashed blackguardly—see? You don't understand that you're doing wrong, because you're a silly idiot, but you've got to take my word for it."

"You are interrupting my studies," said Skimpole mildly.

"You're going to chuck this up!" said Tom. "What would happen to you if the Housemaster or the Head spotted it?"

"I should probably be flogged. However, I shall not tell them anything about it."

"You might be sacked."

"Doubtless I should find some other sphere of usefulness, my dear Merry."

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,573.

"Oh, you crass ass! What would your people say?"

"I am sure I have no idea, Merry. Now, if you will leave the study, and close the door after you, I will proceed with my perusal of this periodical."

"No good talking to him!" said Talbot, laughing.

"No good at all!" said Tom. "But there are other ways. Give me that paper, Skimmy!"

"But I desire to peruse it— Oh!"

Tom Merry jerked the sporting paper away, tore it into half a dozen pieces, and struck a match.

Skimpole blinked at him in dismay as the fragments of his precious periodical flared up in the fender.

"That's a beginning!" said Tom. "Now, you've got to look on us, Skimmy, as friends who are going to look after you. You'd better take up airships again, or Determinism, or some other piffle! That's idiotic, but harmless. But we're not going to have our tame idiot sacked from the school. We're going to bump you as a warning! Collar him!"

"My dear Merry— Ow! My dear Talbot— Yoop! My dear— Yaroooooh!"

Bump!

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"Now will you promise to chuck it?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Groogh! Certainly not!"

Bump, bump!

"Ow-ow-ow-wow!"

Skimpole sprawled on the floor and groped for his spectacles, and gasped.

"Here endeth the first lesson," said Monty Lowther; "and the second's ready as soon as you want it, Skimmy!"

A Prisoner of the Desert!

Here's an exciting new, long, complete yarn telling of the holiday adventures of Harry Wharton & Co. in Texas.

A few weeks ago Herbert Vernon-Smith was at Greyfriars School, in Kent, working under the eagle eye

of his Form-master. Now he's miles and miles away from the Old Country—a prisoner of the Desert!

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"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Groogh!"

And Tom Merry & Co. quitted the study, feeling that they had acted the part of real pals to the brainy Skimpole.

Skimmy found his spectacles and jammed them on, and blinked and gasped.

"Oh dear!" he gasped. "Now I shall be compelled to search for another periodical dealing with racing matters! Groogh! Perhaps Cutts will lend me one, or Knox. Oh crumbs! Ow!"

CHAPTER 4.

No Luck!

CUTTS of the Fifth was lounging on the School House steps, chatting with Gilmore and St. Leger, when Skimpole of the Shell came out.

The dandy of the Fifth was looking in high good humour. His little speculations on the races had turned out well for once, and he was in high feather. He stared at Skimpole as the Shell fellow came up to him. But Skimpole smiled genially.

"My dear Cutts, can you lend me a racing paper?"

Cutts jumped. Gilmore and St. Leger gasped.

"A—a—a what?" stuttered Cutts.

"A racing paper," said Skimpole. "I desire to study the form of the horses entered for the Dalton Plate on Saturday."

"Great pip!"

The three Fifth Formers stared at Skimpole and at one another.

Cutts' little ways were suspected in a good many quarters, and had evidently reached Skimpole's ears. But the dandy of the Fifth, of course, had no intention of admitting anything of the kind to a junior.

"So you want a racing paper?" said Cutts. "You confounded young blackguard! What do you think I know about racing papers?"

Skimpole blinked in surprise.

"I understand that you know all about racing, Cutts. I have heard the fellows speak of it. Perhaps I was mistaken, however."

"You were mistaken, or else you are a cheeky young scoundrel!" said Cutts, with virtuous indignation. "How dare you speak to me on such a subject!"

"My dear Cutts, if I am mistaken, I assure you that it is most gratifying to me!" said Skimpole, beaming. "It shows me that you are by no means the rascally character most of the fellows think you—"

"What?"

"It is very gratifying, Cutts, to discover that you have at least some decency in your character, and— Yarooooop!"

Skimpole suddenly found himself rolling down the steps. He sat up in the quad in great surprise, gasping spasmodically, while Cutts & Co. strolled away, grinning.

"Bai Jove!" D'Arcy, the swell of the Fourth, ran up to give Skimmy a helping hand. "Poor old Skimmy! What did that boundah do that for, Skimmy?"

"I'm sure I do not know, D'Arcy!" gasped Skimpole. "I was merely telling him that it was gratifying to find that he was not so great a rascal as is generally supposed—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I fail to see any cause for laughter, D'Arcy."

Cutts has acted in a very violent and unreasonable manner. By the way, D'Arcy"—Skimmy caught the swell of St. Jim's by the arm—"could you lend me a racing paper?"
"A—a—a wacin' papah!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus.

"Yes, I should be much obliged."
Arthur Augustus fixed his celebrated monocle into his eye and surveyed the genius of the Shell with a withering glance.

"What do you want with a wacin' papah, you uttah ass?"

"I want to study the form of the horses for the Dalton Plate."

"Gweat Scott!"

"I am taking up racing——"

"Bai Jove!"

"From the best motives, of course," explained Skimpole. "I am going to win all Mr. Weekes' money, and thus compel him to take up a more honourable method of gaining a livelihood."

"I wegard you as a shwiekin' ass, Skimpole!"

"My dear D'Arcy, if you could lend me a racing paper——"

"If you were not a howlin' idiot, Skimmy, I would give you a feahful thwashin' for hintin' that I might have a wacin' papah in my possession!" exclaimed the swell of St. Jim's indignantly.

"My dear fellow——"

"Oh, wats!"

Arthur Augustus walked away with his noble nose in the air. Skimpole sighed, and went into the School House, making his way to Knox's study in the Sixth Form passage.

Skimpole had heard whispers in the Shell of Gerald Knox's manners and customs, and, as a matter of fact, Knox's study was an excellent place to visit in search of a racing paper.

Skimpole tapped at the door and entered. The study was empty.

"Dear me!" murmured Skimpole. "Knox is not here! However, I am sure he would have no objection to my looking for what I require."

Skimpole proceeded to look. He was engaged in looking when the prefect came to his study.

Knox stared, as well he might, at the sight of the junior rummaging through his room, turning over newspapers and books and other articles. The bully of the Sixth was about the last senior at St. Jim's to take that good-temperedly.

"What are you doing?" he shouted.

Skimpole blinked round.

"Excuse me, my dear Knox. I wish to borrow a racing paper——"

"Wha-a-at?"

"I am looking for it. Perhaps, however, if you would tell me precisely where you keep your literature of a sporting nature, it would save me trouble."

Knox made a spring for a cane.

Skimpole, understanding at last that there was danger, made a spring for the door. But the prefect was first.

Whack, whack, whack, whack, whack!

"Oh dear! Yaroo! Knox, my dear fellow—— Yaroo! Wharrer marrer? Yoooop! Oh, my hat!"

Skimpole dodged out of the study under the lashing cane, and fled.

He did not stop till he was half-way across the quadrangle. There he paused to take his breath.

"How extraordinary of Knox to break out in that unaccountable manner!" gasped Skimpole.



"Going my way, buddy?"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to Miss N. Peace, 261, Ingram Road, Bloxwich, Walsall.

"I have a great mind to report his brutality to the Housemaster. I suppose I shall have to walk down to Rylcombe and purchase a paper. It is most annoying."

Even Skimpole did not feel inclined to make any further efforts to borrow a racing paper. He trotted down to the village to purchase one.

About an hour later, Mr. Railton, the Housemaster of the School House, was crossing the quadrangle when Skimpole almost ran into him. Skimpole was reading a paper as he walked, and was quite buried in it.

"Skimpole!" rapped out Mr. Railton sharply.

Skimpole blinked at him over the paper.

"Oh, sir; I am sorry! I did not see you!"

"You should not read while you are walking," said the Housemaster severely. "Dear me!"

He caught sight of the title of Skimpole's paper. "What is that? What is that paper, Skimpole?"

Mr. Railton's eyes almost bulged at the sight of the "Racing Tipster." Thunder gathered on his brow, and Skimpole hastily thrust the paper behind him.

"This—this paper, sir?" he stammered.

"That is a racing paper, Skimpole!"

"Ahem! You—you see, sir——"

"Hand it to me at once!"

Skimpole reluctantly handed over the paper to the Housemaster.

"How dare you bring such a paper into the school!" thundered Mr. Railton. "Skimpole, I have observed that you are an unusually stupid boy——"

"I, sir!" ejaculated Skimpole, in astonishment. "Not at all, sir! It is quite a common mistake for stupid people to fancy that others are stupid, whereas in reality——"

Mr. Railton gasped.

"Follow me to my study, Skimpole!"

"Certainly, sir!"

In his study, the Housemaster selected his stoutest cane—a proceeding that Skimpole watched in great dismay.

"Skimpole, you are a stupid boy; but stupidity is no excuse for vice. I have not observed vicious inclinations in you before, and I trust that a severe lesson will prevent them from going any farther. I shall cane you severely, and if you are found with such a paper again, I shall report you to the headmaster for a flogging. Hold out your hand!"

Swish, swish, swish, swish!

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

Skimpole retired from the study minus the "Racing Tipster," and squeezing his bony hands in anguish. For some time after that Skimpole was rubbing his hands dolefully, and had no time whatever to think of his new "ism."

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CHAPTER 5.

Fallen Among Friends!

TOM MERRY & CO., in the kindness of their hearts, kept an eye on Skimpole for a day or two.

They really intended to keep a constant eye on him, and to note whether he showed any more sporting proclivities; and, in that case, to administer another and severer bumping for his own good.

But the juniors had their own affairs, and plenty of occupation of one kind or another, and they did not find very much time to expend upon Skimpole.

They asked him several times how the geese were getting on; but Skimpole, scenting another bumping, declined to take them into his confidence. And on Wednesday came the first cricket match of the season. St. Jim's juniors were playing the Grammar School, and they forgot all about the existence of Skimpole of the Shell.

Talbot remembered him just as the team were starting, and while the other cricketers were getting into the coach, the good-natured Shell fellow looked for Skimpole. He found him in deep thought, and woke him up with a slap on the back.

"Coming along to watch the match, Skimmy?" asked Talbot.

Skimpole shook his head.

"Thank you, Talbot; but I am afraid I have no time this afternoon."

"Not detained?" asked Talbot.

"Not at all. I have an engagement."

"Going out with another chap, eh?"

Talbot was the last fellow in the world to ask questions, but he had a reason now. He suspected very strongly that Skimpole's engagement was one that would not bear investigation.

"No; I'm going to meet somebody."

"Look here, Skimmy, I don't want to push into your affairs!" said Talbot earnestly. "But if you are going to meet that fellow Weekes—"

"Really! How did you guess, Talbot?" Talbot smiled.

"It wasn't very hard, Skimmy. Hadn't you better come to the Grammar School instead, and watch the cricket?"

"Impossible! You see, I have already mastered the subject thoroughly, and am prepared to carry out my new scheme," Skimpole explained. "Talbot, I am surprised at you seeing any objections. I have hitherto had a considerable amount of respect for your character. But, really, this opposition to a very worthy enterprise—"

"Oh, you ass!" said Talbot, half-laughing, and half-vexed. "You fathead, Skimmy! You can't go and meet this blackguard!"

"It is my object to make the man something better than a blackguard, Talbot. If I deprive him of his ill-gotten gains he will have to take to honest work. It would be the saving of him. Some day he would thank me. I am convinced of that."

"Oh, my hat! You—you think you are going to skin a professional bookie at his own game!" groaned Talbot.

"Undoubtedly! With my brain-power—"

"Look here, you're not going to meet him! Come along to Rylcombe!"

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"Talbot! Talbot!" Tom Merry was shouting from the coach. "Where's that ass Talbot?"

"Here!" called out Talbot.

"Come on, then, we're waiting!"

"Come and lend me a hand!"

"Eh? What the dickens—"

"Come here, Tom!"

The captain of the Shell jumped out of the coach in surprise and ran to Talbot.

"What the merry dickens—" he began.

"Skimpole's got an appointment with Mr. Weekes this afternoon," explained Talbot.

"You thumping ass, Skimmy—"

"So we're going to take him in the coach," said Talbot. "Take his other arm, Tom."

"Ha, ha, ha! Good egg!"

"My dear fellows," protested Skimpole, as the chums of the Shell grasped him by either arm and propelled him forcibly towards the coach.

"My dear—Ow, ow! I refuse—Ow! I insist—O dear!"

"Bai Jove! What's the mattah with Skimmy?"

"He's coming! Help him in!"

"I don't want to get in!" yelled Skimpole, struggling. "I insist upon being released. I—Yah!"

"Gweat Scott! Why should Skimmy come if he doesn't want to, deah boys?" asked Arthur Augustus, in astonishment.

"We're rather crowded already," said Blake of the Fourth. "There isn't much room for Skimmy's ears in this coach."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He's got to come," said Tom Merry. "Take an ear each, two of you, and drag him in!"

Monty Lowther and Manners grasped Skimpole's ears, and Tom Merry and Talbot "bunked" him from behind.

The genius of the Shell had no choice about getting into the coach. He got in—in a heap, with a loud roar. The coach started, and Skimpole sat up.

"What's the little game?" asked Blake, in wonder. "Skimmy doesn't care for cricket. It's cruelty to lunatics to make them watch a game."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I have no time for cricket!" gasped Skimmy. "I shall be late for my appointment with Mr. Weekes."

"Weekes!" yelled Jack Blake.

"The silly ass has taken up racing," grinned Tom Merry. "He's got an appointment with a bookie this afternoon."

"Oh crumbs!"

"Well, my hat!" exclaimed Figgins of the New House, in astonishment. "Aren't you ashamed of yourself, Skimmy, you thumping young duffer?"

"I should not be likely to be ashamed of doing a good deed, Figgins! Groogh!"

"A good deed!" howled the astonished Figgins.

"Is betting with bookmakers a good deed?"

"In the circumstances, Figgins, it is."

"Well, my hat!"

"Off his rocker!" said Fatty Wynn.

"My dear Wynn, I do not expect a person of your mental capacity to understand—or perhaps I should say your mental incapacity!"

"What!"

Skimpole struggled to his feet, just escaping a lunge of Fatty Wynn's boot. He blinked round in distress at the grinning cricketers.

"My dear fellows, pray stop the coach and allow me to alight!"

"Likely!" grinned Blake.

The coach was bowling along a quiet lane at a good speed. There was no escape for Skimpole.

LAUGH THESE OFF!

—with Monty
Lowther.



Hallo, Everybody!

I hear a fire at the school doctor's house caused the wires to fuse and the house-bell to ring. The maid said she thought the invisible man had come for his medicine.

A stage producer says it is gratifying to see the audience on a first night rise to the play as one man. Unless, of course, that is what the audience is!

"Double-Barrelled Guns for Quick Disposal." Of whom?

A school inspector says skylights should be done away with, as they only lead to damp ceilings and walls. I always thought they led to the roof.

An American lecturer states that English-

men don't know how to use their leisure. Does he judge by those who attend his lectures?

A lion-tamer says, when putting your head into the lion's mouth, the hand should first be inserted carefully and the lion's jaw dislocated slightly. All right, if you don't believe him, try it for yourself!

"Has your cousin sold anything since he took up novel writing for a living?" Blake asked Gore. "Oh, yes!" replied Gore. "His business, his house, and his car!"

What did the army contractor say when he landed a big new contract to supply tanks? Tanks, pal!

A thief stole a police car in Rylcombe. He quickly set the machinery of the law in motion.

Nothing is worse than the back-chat one so frequently hears on the football field, says a sports writer. Unless it is lacrosse-talk. Ow!

Story: "I have to do all the work in this regiment," complained the colonel. "I am my own major, my own captain, my own lieutenant, my own sergeant, and—" "Your own trumpeter?" suggested a bored listener.

I'll be seeing you, chaps!

"I'd have brought Towser's chain for him if you'd told me," said Herries. "Blessed if he oughtn't to be chained up, the howling ass!"

"I don't quite catch on," said Figgins. "I know you've got some precious bad characters in the School House, but I'm blessed if I thought Skimmy was one of them. I always thought he was a harmless idiot!"

"Evil communications corrupt good manners," said Kerr of the New House, with a sad shake of the head, and the New House fellows in the coach chuckled.

"You New House ass!" said Blake. "We've got a few rotters in the School House, and if you haven't any it's because they've been sacked. We don't have any expulsions in our House."

"Time you did, though," said Figgins.

"Peace, my infants, peace!" said Tom Merry soothingly. "Skimmy isn't a blackguard, Figgins—he's only a howling idiot! He's going to put an end to bookmaking by winning all the book-maker's money."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

That revelation of Skimmy's noble object was sufficient to restore everybody to good humour. The juniors roared.

Skimpole blinked at them in astonishment.

"Surely this is a very noble object!" he exclaimed.

"Ha, ha, ha! Ripping!"

"Top-hole, bai Jove! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good old Skimmy!"

"He's going to turn all the bookies honest!" said Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I have no time to waste listening to unseemly merriment!" exclaimed Skimpole. "Unless you allow me to alight I shall project myself from this vehicle while it is in motion, at the risk of sustaining serious injuries by my abrupt impact upon the surface of the earth."

"Fall on your head, Skimmy," advised Blake. "It won't hurt you if fall on something soft, you know."

"Here, hold him!" shouted Tom Merry.

The cricketers grasped Skimpole on all sides.

"Now will you sit down and keep still?" demanded Tom.

"Certainly not, Merry! I refuse—"

"You're going to jump out—what?"

"No; he's going to project himself from the vehicle!" grinned Blake.

"Most decidedly I shall make my departure with a minimum of delay!" said Skimpole. "I regard this restraint upon my personal liberty of action as intolerable and indeed incomprehensible—"

"Then we shall have to look after you," said Tom. "Shove him down and put your feet on him!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Yaroooo! My dear fellows, I object—Yoop!"

Skimpole disappeared under an army of feet. He was pinned down by a dozen shoes at least, and almost disappeared from view. And in that happy state Skimpole of the Shell arrived at Rylcombe Grammar School with the cricketers.

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CHAPTER 6.

The Grammar School Match!

GORDON GAY & CO. were on the Grammar School ground, waiting for the St. Jim's team.

They looked rather curious when the St. Jim's cricketers appeared with Skimpole in their midst.

Skimpole was walking between Tom Merry and Monty Lowther, and they were holding his arms, and he was wriggling like an eel.

"Well, here you are," said Gordon Gay. "Is that a new recruit for your opening match, Merry?"

"Ha, ha, ha! No. Skimpole has come to watch the game. He's awfully interested in cricket. Aren't you, Skimmy?"

"My dear Merry, I have no time to waste watching a frivolous game! I insist upon being released immediately!"

"Skimmy was to get into mischief this afternoon, and we're stopping him," said Tom Merry. "I suppose you haven't a dog-chain and a kennel you could lend us for a bit?"

"Merry, I absolutely refuse to be placed in a dog-kennel!"

"Ha, ha ha!"

"Bettah tie him up in the pavilion," said Arthur Augustus. "Gay will lend you a wope."

"Certainly," said Gordon Gay, grinning. "Or I'll get some fags to sit on him, if you like."

"Gay, I regard that suggestion as simply ruffianly!" gasped Skimpole.

"Look here, will you promise to stay here till the match is over?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Certainly not!"

"Then a couple of chaps will have to look after you. You, Reilly, and Hammond, are not playing. Will you take care of this idiot?"

"Sure I will!" said Reilly. "I'll knock him down entirely if he tries to get away, begorra!"

"And I'll jump on his 'ead!" said Hammond.

"Good! Keep hold of him!"

"Ow! I protest!" howled Skimpole, as Reilly and Harry Hammond grasped him by the arms.

"I refuse to be held! I refuse—Yaroooh!"

"Hallo! What's the matter now?"

"You are twisting my arm, Hammond, and causing me considerable pain——"

"That's because you ain't keepin' quiet," said Hammond. "You keep quiet, and you'll be all right. See?"

"I refuse to keep quiet in the circumstances! I——Yarooop!"

"Better keep quiet!" urged Hammond.

"Yow! Wow! In the circumstances, I will refrain from vocal ebullitions, notwithstanding the incomprehensible treatment to which I am being subjected!" groaned Skimpole.

"Does he always talk in four-point-seven words like that?" ejaculated Gordon Gay.

"My dear Gay, your failure to comprehend simple expressions is merely a demonstration of the incapacity of your intellectual organisation!"

"Help!" gasped Gordon Gay.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My dear Merry, before you commence this frivolous game—I sincerely wish, Merry, that you would not peregrinate in a different direction while I am addressing my observations to you!"

But Tom Merry did peregrinate in a different direction, and the remainder of Skimpole's observations were lost upon him.

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The Saints batted first, and Gordon Gay & Co. went into the field.

A dozen or more fellows had come over with the cricket team, and they mingled with the Grammarian crowd round the field.

Skimpole stood between Reilly and Hammond, looking very blue.

He had a very special appointment with Mr. Weekes that afternoon, and he was in a very exasperated frame of mind.

The interference of Tom Merry & Co. with his personal liberty excited even the gentle and patient Skimmy to anger. If he had been going to do blackguardly things like Levison or Crooke or Racke, he could have understood it, but his object was noble and worthy.

So far from desiring to encourage or participate in betting transactions, he was merely going to use the system of betting to force a rascally racing man into honest paths—by winning all his money and devoting it to a good object.

True it was against the rules of the school, but Skimmy had satisfied himself that the rules of the school could be disregarded in this case. Even if called before the Head himself, he did not fear to explain his conduct; though, from a doubt as to whether the Head would be intelligent enough to understand, he preferred to keep the matter dark.

Skimpole cast imploring blinks at Reilly and Hammond alternately, but those two heartless youths only chuckled. There was no escape for Skimmy. Skimmy was so annoyed that he felt justified in using actual violence to regain his liberty.

But, unfortunately, violence was of no use, as either Reilly or Hammond could have knocked him into a cocked hat with one hand.

Skimpole had to grin and bear it, hoping that sooner or later the vigilance of his guards would relax.

Hammond and Reilly were very interested in the cricket, but they kept hold of Skimmy's bony arms. It was an innings' worth watching.

Tom Merry and Talbot were at the wickets when the rest were down, and they were keeping the innings alive in great style.

Gordon Gay and Wootton major and Mont Blong assailed the wickets in vain, and the runs piled up.

It was not till the St. Jim's score had touched a hundred that Talbot was caught out at last, and the innings ended in a roar of cheering from the Saints round the field.

There was a rush for Tom Merry as he came off, and he was shouldered back to the pavilion, amid shouts and the waving of caps.

"Hurroo! Hurroo!" roared Reilly, who had Tom's right leg, while Clifton Dane of the Shell had his left.

"Hurrah!" roared Hammond, thumping him on the back.

"Bravo, Merry!" shouted the crowd.

"Oh rats! Chuck it!" said Tom.

He scrambled down before the pavilion amid cheers.

"Reilly, you ass—Hammond, you duffer—where's Skimmy?"

"Tare and 'ounds——"

"Oh, my 'at!"

Reilly and Hammond looked hastily round. They had joined in the rush for Tom Merry, and completely forgotten Skimmy for the moment.

Skimmy had not neglected his chance.

He was gone!

"Stole away, bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus "Oh, you duffahs—"
 "Sure, I forgot that baste for a minute!" exclaimed Reilly. "I'll cut after him, and bring him back alive or dead intoirely!"
 Reilly tore away to the gates, with Hammond after him.

The Grammarian innings had begun when they returned—without Skimpole.

The great man of the Shell was far away, but it could not be helped, and Tom Merry dismissed Skimpole from his mind.

The Grammarian cricketers gave him plenty to think about.

high hopes. But Talbot, with the ball, proved dangerous, and Fatty Wynn was in great form, and the wickets fell fast.

Nine down for sixty, and the last man in, and the shadows lengthening.

St. Jim's was safe enough on the result of the first innings, but they were as keen as the Grammarians to finish the match.

Fifteen to tie, and Gordon Gay at the wicket with Mont Blong, the French junior.

Gay was making the running, and the figures went up to sixty-two, sixty-six, sixty-eight, seventy!

Five more to tie! And Mont Blong contributed



Knox stared in astonishment at the sight of Skimpole rummaging through his room, turning over newspapers and books. "What are you doing?" he shouted. Skimpole blinked round. "Excuse me, my dear Knox. I wish to borrow a racing paper—"

CHAPTER 7.

Skimpole's Plunge!

THE Grammarians kept Tom Merry & Co. quite busy until the summer sun was sinking and long shadows fell across the cricket ground.

It was a well-fought match.

The Grammar School first innings totalled sixty, leaving St. Jim's well to the good. But St. Jim's second innings was unlucky, Talbot having the bad luck to be caught out for four, and Kangaroo being bowled for nothing at all. Figgins was dismissed for a duck's egg by Gordon Gay, and Arthur Augustus for three.

Tom and his comrades fought hard against the tide of ill-luck, but the innings closed for thirty-five runs.

Gordon Gay & Co. batted a second time, with

three, amid yells of applause from the Grammar School crowd.

"Two to tie!" shouted Tom Merry, as he tossed the ball to Fatty Wynn. "Go in and shift that boulder Gay, Fatty, or we'll scalp you!"

Fatty Wynn grinned, and went in to shift Gay. A single run brought Mont Blong to face the bowling. One more to tie, two to win, and still light enough to finish—just enough.

Then there was a roar as the ball went down, and was turned away to leg by the French junior. But Talbot of the Shell made a jump into the air, and held it!

"Well caught!"

"Hurrah!"

"Bravo, Talbot!"

And the Grammarian match was over. St. THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,578.

Jim's the winners by a single run. The first game of the season had ended in victory.

Needless to say, Tom Merry had not given a thought to Skimpole, and the genius of the Shell did not come into his mind again till the St. Jim's fellows were in their coach, returning home.

The captain of the Shell suddenly remembered him.

"By Jove! I wonder if Skimpole's home yet?" he exclaimed.

"We'll find him rolling in money!" grinned Blake. "He's had plenty of time to scalp Mr. Weekes—perhaps. Poor old Weekes!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

When the cricketers arrived at St. Jim's Skimpole's kind friends looked for him.

Study No. 6 had joined the Terrible Three and Talbot in their enterprise of keeping Skimmy out of mischief. As D'Arcy remarked, it was up to them to see that the silly duffer did not come a "muckah."

They did not have far to look for the genius of the School House.

Skimpole was in his study, and they found him there. He blinked at them, more in sorrow than in anger.

"Have you seen Weekes?" exclaimed Talbot.

"Certainly. I kept my appointment."

"Bai Jove! You've been makin' bets with him?" exclaimed D'Arcy.

"Undoubtedly."

"You feahful wascal!"

"You horrid blackguard!" said Digby.

"You rank outsider!" said Herries.

Skimpole smiled patiently.

"My dear fellows, you do not understand. My motive is not pecuniary gain, as in the case of Knox or Cutts or Levison. My object is to force Mr. Weekes into an honest means of gaining a livelihood, and at the same time to obtain a large sum of money to improve the social conditions of my fellow-men. There is only one point on which I am doubtful."

"Oh, you're doubtful on one point!" grinned Monty Lowther.

"Yes, my dear Lowther. I doubt a little whether I am acting in a somewhat high-handed manner towards Mr. Weekes. Have I the right to subject him to such a violent change of life?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But my object is good, and I am convinced that in the long run Mr. Weekes himself will be thankful," said Skimpole. "I shall continue to make bets with him so long as he has any money left, and then he will have no choice but to take to honest work."

"You uttah ass!"

"You've actually made a bet with Weekes?" exclaimed Tom Merry. "You've bet money on a horse?"

"Certainly. I had no choice about that. I should have been equally pleased to bet on any other quadruped. But races, it seems, are only run with equine quadrupeds," said Skimpole.

"Fathead! I didn't suppose you had bet on a donkey, or a rhinoceros!" howled Tom Merry. "How much have you bet?"

"Five pounds."

"Five pounds!" shouted the juniors.

"Certainly. However, Mr. Weekes has bet a larger sum, as the odds are ten to one against the horse I have selected. Mr. Weekes will have to pay me fifty pounds when my horse—Blue Bird—wins on Saturday!"

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"You think a horse will win at ten to one against?" grinned Lowther.

"Yes. You have heard of outsiders romping home!" said Skimpole. The good Skimmy had evidently picked up a new phraseology from his perusal of the "Racing Tipster." "Blue Bird is an outsider, but he will romp home. There is not the slightest doubt that I shall win fifty pounds—a very considerable sum!"

"And you think a downy old bird-like Weekes is betting for the special purpose of handing you fifty quid on Saturday?" shouted Manners.

"My dear Manners—"

"What do you know about horses?" demanded Blake.

"Practically everything that is to be known, my dear Blake. I have studied the subject for two days."

"And mastered it in that time?" grinned Tom Merry.

"Perfectly. A brain that can deal with Evolution and the origin of species finds such trifling matters mere child's play. Pray do not be uneasy, my dear fellows. I am assured that my horse will win. I have not the slightest doubt on that point."

"And—and suppose he doesn't?"

Skimpole smiled.

"I cannot suppose impossibilities, my dear Merry. With my thorough knowledge of the subject, I have selected a certain winner."

"And you've handed that swindling rascal Weekes five solid quids?" said Tom. "Oh, you champion ass!"

"Not at all. I have handed him nothing in the way of a pecuniary consideration. I should certainly have done so, but there was a difficulty in the way, as I had no money."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Then you're gambling on the nod?" exclaimed Lowther. "Well, that doesn't matter so much. You'll lose, but you needn't pay the swindler."

"Blessed if it isn't jolly near swindling of Skimmy!" said Tom Merry, frowning. "Betting is rotten, anyway; but to bet when you haven't the money to pay your losses is nearly as bad as embezzlement!"

"In this case, my dear Merry, the impossibility of losing makes the matter right. However, in the remote case of losing the bet, I should pay Weekes—I should feel bound to do so."

"And where would you get the money?" asked Talbot.

"I should borrow it of you, my dear fellow."

"Wha-a-at!"

"As you are my studymate, I should borrow it of you, Talbot. Of course, if you should chance to be short of money I would allow Tom Merry to lend it to me."

"Would you?" said Tom grimly.

"Yes, or D'Arcy," said Skimpole, beaming. "But I do not anticipate anything of the kind, as the quadruped I have selected, after careful study, is absolutely assured or terminating the contest successfully."

"Well, of all the howling idiots!" said Tom Merry, quite aghast. "If the silly ass had picked out a respectable bookie—but, of course, a respectable bookie wouldn't make bets with a schoolboy. Skimmy, you dummy, don't you know this man Weekes is a drunken blackguard—an awful rascal who has been warred off the course, and is known to be a rank outsider even in his own business?"

"That, my dear Merry, adds to my desire to reclaim him."

Catching the Stamp Collector!

Certain unscrupulous people consider stamp collectors easy prey, so be on your guard.

Even our expert has been "caught"!

HAVE you ever been "caught" by stamps which aren't stamps at all? I don't mean such things as bill stamps (fiscals) and publicity "stickers," but items which look so much like genuine new-issue postage stamps that you've readily bought them for your collection?

Ever since stamp collecting started, unscrupulous people have considered collectors easy prey. In the early days of the hobby some enterprising (?) individual would simply coin a new set of stamps for sale to collectors, and, if need be, would "manufacture" the stamps' country of origin.

Nowadays, it seems, this questionable stamp-issuing business has passed from individuals to so-called responsible governments. Actually, half the new stamps issued to-day fill no real postal need, but are devised solely for our benefit! But, as if this is not bad enough, some countries have even gone in for this "source-manufacturing" stunt as well.

SUSPICIOUS STAMPS.

Russia, unfortunately, is one of the worst offenders in this connection. Almost every fellow



Not a crowd of Volga boatmen, but a company of revolutionaries—
—a Ukraine issue of 1921.

must have at least one stamp in his collection showing a seated Russian peasant woman with a man bending over her. White Russia is claimed as its district of origin, and 1920 its year of issue, but there are grave doubts as to the authenticity of itself and its four companions.

Almost equally doubtful, but nowadays included in many stamp catalogues, are the Ukraine pictorials, two of which are illustrated here. For a country as unsettled as the Ukraine was during its temporary independence just after the Russian Revolution, these stamps are most suspiciously well printed. One of these days, maybe, we shall find that they have a story

similar to that of another set of stamps which nearly "caught"

the writer shortly after the Great War ended.

I was in Amsterdam at the time, and a set of stamps was being offered by leading dealers there, supposedly coming from Russia. As the Soviet in those days was in a pretty chaotic state, with official postal news hard to come by, I bought a set. A short while afterwards I discovered that those stamps had never been anywhere near Russia. A firm of foreign printers had turned Russia's chaos to their own profit and flooded the stamp market with these worthless issues.

Nowadays, thanks to our efficient news services, "catches" of this sort are very rare, and you can safely buy most new issues with the certainty that at least they are postage stamps, even if they are only intended to frank mail sent from such a relatively unimportant place as a trade fair. All the same, snags still exist, and in at least one another instance Russia is still the culprit.

For some years past magnificent stamps have appeared from the Republic of Tannou-Touva. This large Soviet-controlled territory is tucked away in Central Asia, but the queer thing is that, so far, few, if any, of her new stamps have been obtained genuinely postmarked. Most of them reach the rest of the world through the official stamp bureau in Moscow.

A CLEVER HOAX.

There are amusing as well as seemingly audacious stamp suspects, however. In the late 1860's Continental stamp collectors were sadly taken in by a stamp purporting to come from our Tasmania.

In those days that lovely island was known generally as Van Dieman's Land. The "hoax" stamp was inscribed "Van Demon's Land," and had for design a portrait of Satan himself, complete with forked tail. For value the words "5 souls" served. British collectors, of course, took this item for what it so obviously was—a joke, but it drew good money from the pockets of many stamp collectors on the Continent, whose knowledge of the English language was sadly limited.

like Weekes. But I do not entertain the idea for a moment, since I have exercised all my judgment and knowledge of the matter in selecting the quadruped—"

"Not much good talking to a howling idiot!" said Tom Merry. "Bump him!"

"My dear Merry, I protest— Oh dear! Help!"

During the next five minutes there was a sound
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Another of Ukraine's "suspect" stamps, which shows a memorial to Vladimir the Great.

of heavy bumping in the study, to the accompaniment of yells of anguish.

Then Tom Merry & Co. went to tea in Study No. 6, leaving Skimpole gasping on the floor.

It was the best they could do—and they had done it with a will.

Skimpole was groaning at intervals during the remainder of the evening; but the next day he was quite cheery.

He had got over the bumping, and he was anticipating fifty pounds on Saturday, and his benevolent mind dwelt upon that handsome sum.

And that was a full consolation to Skimmy.

CHAPTER 8.

Also Ran!

DURING the next few days Skimpole of the Shell was the subject of considerable interest among the School House juniors.

Although no word was breathed in the hearing of the masters or prefects, most of the juniors knew of Skimpole's new "ism."

The mere idea of Skimmy as a sportsman made them chuckle.

The genius of the Shell knew all there was to be known about Determinism and Darwinism, or, at least, was satisfied that he did—his peculiar brain was admirably suited to such matters.

But what he did not know about horses and racing sharpers would have filled large volumes.

Skimpole was admitted to be a funny ass by all who knew him, but as a sportsman he was a funnier ass than ever. His lack of knowledge of the abstruse subject of horseracing was only equalled by his lack of knowledge of human nature. His belief that Mr. Weekes would hand him fifty pounds on Saturday if his horse won was really touching.

Anybody who saw Mr. Weekes could see that the boozey gentleman was far from possessing fifty shillings, let alone fifty pounds. If, by some miraculous chance, Skimmy's selected gee-gee did win, there was not the slightest possibility of collecting the stakes from a frowsy and disreputable blackguard like Mr. Weekes.

But Skimpole remained in blissful unconsciousness of that important fact. He looked forward to Saturday with cheery confidence.

Tom Merry & Co. were also a little curious about the result. Skimpole's essay in blackguardism was too absurd to be taken seriously, and his sublime unconsciousness that he was doing wrong was some sort of excuse for him. The chums of the School House considered, too, that he would have his lesson when the race was run. Either he would lose—which was most probable—and thus discover that he had not quite mastered racing matters, or he would win, and Mr. Weekes would fail to pay him—an equally valuable lesson.

After lessons on Saturday, Tom Merry & Co. were playing cricket. When the game was over they looked for Skimpole, prepared to lock him in his study if he showed any disposition to visit Mr. Weekes at Wayland.

They found Skimmy loitering about the quad; he was waiting.

"Well, how goes the gee-gees?" asked Tom.

"I do not know yet, my dear Merry. I am waiting for the evening paper, which will give the result of the race. When I have received

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official information that Blue Bird has won I shall call on Mr. Weekes for the money."

"You won't!" said Tom Merry cheerily.

"My dear Merry—"

"We'll trot down to Rylcombe with you and get the paper," grinned Lowther. "Let's be put out of our suspense."

"Yes, come on, Skimmy."

"Certainly, my dear fellows!"

Skimpole walked down to the village with the Terrible Three and Talbot, and the evening paper was duly purchased from the village newsagent.

The four juniors stood round Skimpole in a grinning circle as he opened the paper to look for the racing results.

"Ah, here it is!" said Skimpole, blinking at the paper. "Dalton Plate at two o'clock—that's the race."

"Well, what's the winner?" asked Talbot.

Skimmy looked puzzled.

"There is something very odd about this," he remarked. "My horse does not seem to be mentioned. Three names are given—Mahomet, Billiard Ball, and Snooker's Pride. It is very odd."

"Ass! They're the first three horses in the race. Mahomet's won, and Billiard Ball and Snooker's Pride are second and third."

Skimpole shook his head.

"Impossible! Blue Bird must have won."

"Fathead!" shouted Tom. "Look at this. Also ran: Davy Jones, Cherry Ripe, and Blue Bird. Your gee-gee came in last."

"Also ran!" chortled Lowther.

"Dear me! Then, instead of receiving fifty pounds from Mr. Weekes, I shall have to pay Mr. Weekes five pounds!"

"Exactly!"

Skimpole looked quite serious.

"Dear me! That is very unfortunate," he said. "You see, I have no money. Perhaps you had better lend me five pounds, Talbot, and I will go over to Wayland and pay the man. It will be for only a short time. Next week I shall make a larger bet and win a hundred pounds. I shall then return your five, and have ninety-five left to help my unfortunate fellow-men."

"Are you good at arithmetic, Skimmy?" asked Talbot.

"Certainly, my dear fellow. That is a very easy subject to me."

"Then can you tell me how to lend you five pounds out of three shillings and sixpence?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Skimpole reflected.

"I am afraid that is impossible, Talbot," he said at last. "A larger sum cannot be deducted from a smaller."

"Go hon!" murmured Monty Lowther. "Skimmy's worked that out in his head, you chaps. What a brain!"

"Perhaps you can lend me five pounds, my dear Merry?"

"With pleasure, if you can tell me how to do it with ninepence."

"You, Lowther—"

"Like a bird," said Lowther affably. "I've only got one-and-six to do it with, but with a brain like yours, Skimmy, I dare say you could manage that, somehow."

"Manners, my dear fellow—"

Manners chuckled.

"I've got seven-and-six, and I'm keeping it in my trousers pocket," he remarked.

"Then it appears that I shall not be able to pay him," said Skimpole, quite undisturbed. "I will write to him, regretting my inability to do so. Perhaps at some future date I may be able to liquidate the debt."

"You won't write to him, you shrieking ass!" said Tom Merry. "If he got hold of anything in writing from you he would be able to blackmail you—and he's quite rascal enough."

"But he has something in writing from me already."

"What?"

"You see, as I was unable to stake the ready cash I gave him my written promise to pay," explained Skimpole. "That was necessary, according to Mr. Weekes. Indeed, he was very keen to get a written paper from me."

"Oh crumbs!"

The four juniors stared at Skimpole in dismay. They had wondered that so "downy" a bird as Mr. Weekes had allowed the duffer of the Shell to make bets "on the nod." They understood now.

"Oh, you ass! Oh, you crass idiot!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "You'll be jolly lucky to get that paper back, even for five pounds! Don't you understand what you've done, you howling ass? Suppose Weekes showed that paper to the Head?"

Skimpole blinked in surprise.

"Why should he do that, my dear Merry?"

"I'm jolly certain he'll do it if you don't pay him, dummy! Don't you know it's enough to get you flogged and sacked from the school if Dr. Holmes knew?"

"Dear me!" said Skimpole. "But considering the excellence of my motives, I am sure the Head would take a lenient view."

"Fathead! The Head doesn't know you as we do. He doesn't know you're a blithering idiot!" groaned Tom. "You're booked, you dummy!"

"Well, the silly idiot's put his foot in it!" growled Lowther. "I feel inclined to wash my hands of him."

"We took it on ourselves to look after him," said Talbot, with a faint smile. "We've bumped him for his own good. We can't desert him now."

"I suppose not."

"But what's going to be done?" asked Tom Merry. "That rascal won't part with the paper unless he's paid. And if he isn't paid he'll threaten to show Skimmy up to the Head. That's what he's got the paper from him for."

"He must be paid," said Talbot quietly.

"Five pounds!" said Manners, with a whistle.

The juniors exchanged glances. Five pounds was a large sum to find.

"We've got to manage it somehow, I suppose," growled Lowther. "Some of the other fellows may whack it out with us."

"Let's get back," said Tom.

The chums of the Shell walked back to St. Jim's in a pensive mood.

Skimpole was in a scrape, and they had to get him out of it; and there was a very considerable possibility that, in getting him out of it, they might get themselves into it. And, good-natured as they were, they almost regretted that they had ever undertaken the difficult task of looking after Skimpole.

CHAPTER 9.

Back Up!

"B A I Jove! What a fearful scrape!"

There was a very serious meeting in Study No. 6.

Eight juniors, with very grave faces, surrounded Skimpole. Skimpole himself was the least concerned of all present, but even he was looking grave.

"Of all the born idiots!" said Jack Blake in measured tones.

"Of all the howling maniacs!" said Herries.

"The silly ass ought to be boiled in oil!" said Digby. "Where the merry dickens is five quid coming from?"

"My dear fellows," said Skimpole, "I am really sorry it has turned out like this. However, pray do not bother about it. Probably something will turn up."

"Fathead!"

"Weekes will turn up with your paper in his paw!" growled Monty Lowther.

"The wottah will have to be paid, and that papah destroyed," said Arthur Augustus. "Con-



Judge: "Ever been fined before?"

Timid soul: "Well—er—yes; I once kept a library book for a fortnight!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to N. Halpern, 143, St. Joseph Boulevard West, Montreal, Quebec, Canada.

sidewin' that Skimmy is a born idiot, deah boys, it's up to us to get him out of this scrape."

"Yes. Look here, Skimmy," said Tom Merry. "We're going to get you out of this on condition that you promise not to land yourself in another scrape of the same sort."

"That's understood," said Blake. "Otherwise, the silly ass may as well be sacked this time as next time."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Skimpole blinked at them.

"My dear fellows, I cannot quite agree to such an exceedingly unreasonable proposition. It is, unfortunately, true that, somehow, I have failed to select the winner. But I have not the slightest doubt that next time—"

"There's not going to be any next time," said Tom Merry grimly. "You'll give us your word on that, or you can get out of this by yourself."

"That is rather unreasonable, Merry. If this matter comes to the knowledge of the Head, he will not allow me to enter into any further sporting speculations."

"Hardly!" grinned Tom.

"That's the first thing," said Blake decidedly. "You'll make that promise, Skimmy, or you can clear out, and go and eat coke!"

Skimpole reflected.

The juniors were all in deadly earnest on that point. If they saved Skimpole from that scrape it was only on condition that he did not get into

another. Skimmy evidently regarded their attitude as unreasonable; but he thought of an interview with the Head—and the swishing birch—and he made up his mind.

"If you insist, my dear fellows, I appear to have no alternative. I will, therefore, make the promise. I warn you, however, that you are preventing me from obtaining large sums of money for a very worthy object."

"We'll chance that. Honour bright, you know."

"Honour bright, my dear Merry. Perhaps it would be better, in many ways, for me to perfect the plans of my airship, instead of expending my time upon speculations of a sporting nature," said Skimpole thoughtfully.

"Much better. Have you arranged where to meet this rotter, and pay him?"

"Yes; I have to go to the Black Bull in Wayland to receive my winnings—or, as it turns out, to pay my losses. Mr. Weekes will be there at seven."

"Then you'll have to go over on your bike," said Blake. "There isn't much time to spare. And we've not got the money yet."

Talbot glanced round.

"It's agreed that we whack it out equally?" he asked. "I mean, so far as we can. Every fellow hands out what he can spare?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Arthur Augustus, who was fortunately in funds, started with a pound-note. Blake, with a very expressive grunt, added a ten-shilling note. The rest of the contributions were in silver.

"Total, three pounds," said Talbot. "We've got to raise two more. I've got some tin in the bank, you know. I can borrow it, and settle again out of that. Gore will lend me a quid, and perhaps Kangaroo, or Glyn. I'll see."

Talbot quitted the study.

The juniors waited for the Shell fellow to come back, passing the time by telling Skimpole what they thought of him—quite without disturbing the equanimity of the genius of St. Jim's.

Talbot returned at last.

"All serene!" he said. "Gore stood a quid, and Kangaroo and Glyn ten bob each. I'm getting the tin out of the post office next week to square them. There's the five. Put it in your pocket, Skimmy."

"Certainly, my dear Talbot."

"Now buzz off!" growled Blake.

The Terrible Three and Talbot accompanied Skimpole to the bikeshed, and his bicycle was wheeled out.

"You won't be back before locking-up," said Lowther. "I suppose you didn't think of that—what?"

"Such a trifle naturally did not enter my mind, my dear Lowther."

"Well, I dare say Railton will impress it on your mind when you get back. Buzz off, and break your silly neck, if you can!"

"Remember, Skimmy," said Talbot, "you're to get your paper back from Weekes in exchange for the cash. Don't part with the money without the paper."

"I will be very careful, my dear Talbot."

And Skimpole biked away.

When Mr. Railton took calling-over, Skimpole was marked down as absent. He came in about an hour later, Taggles having to unlock the gate to admit him, and had the pleasure of receiving two hundred lines after an interview with Mr. Railton in his study.

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Tom Merry & Co. were waiting for him in the passage when he came out of the Housemaster's study, and they seized him and marched him off to their own quarters, anxious to know the result of his visit to Mr. Weekes at Wayland.

CHAPTER 10.

Money Wanted!

SKIMPOLE was looking very cheerful, in spite of the two hundred lines.

"Is it all right?" demanded Lowther.

"Quite all right, my dear fellow."



Wanting one to tie and two to win, the Gram-marians let up a roar as Mont Blong turned the ball away to leg. But Talbot was there, and he leaped into the air, and his hand clasped the ball.

"Well caught!" "Bravo, Talbot!"

"You've paid that wotten bwute?" asked D'Arcy.

"Certainly!"

"And weceived your papah in exchange?"

"Yes."

"Oh, good!" said Blake. "That's all over, anyway. And if you ever get into a scrape like that again, you silly ass—"

"We'll scalp you!" growled Manners.

"My dear Manners—"

"You'd better burn the paper," said Tom Merry. "The sooner it's out of existence, the better!"

"Very well, my dear Merry."

Skimpole fumbled in his pocket and took out a folded paper.

Talbot arrested his arm as he was about to toss it into the fire.

"Better make sure of it," he said. "Weekes is a downy rascal. I suppose you've examined it carefully, Skimmy?"

Skimpole blinked at him in surprise.

"My dear Talbot, I do not see the necessity. I handed Mr. Weekes five pounds, and he gave me the paper. However, I will look at it, if you wish."

"Oh, you silly ass!"

Tom Merry jerked the paper from Skimpole's hand, and unfolded it.

It was blank.

Skimpole stared at it, with his eyes almost bulging through his spectacles.

"What an extraordinary thing!" he exclaimed.

"The stupid man has given me a blank piece of paper instead of my note."



"Well, my hat!"

"Oh, bai Jove!"

"It is of no consequence," said Skimpole. "I will call on him again on Monday, and ask him for the right paper. This is an absurd mistake."

"Oh, you ass! You duffer!" groaned Tom Merry. "It isn't a mistake. The rotter is keeping the paper on purpose!"

"My dear Merry, why should he do that? The paper is valueless to him now the money is paid!"

"Fathead!"

The juniors were in utter dismay. It was, of course, evident that the cunning Mr. Weekes had deliberately retained the paper, taking advantage

of Skimpole's unsuspecting stupidity. He could only have retained it for one purpose—blackmail. The paper was worth more than five pounds to an unscrupulous rascal.

It was useless to rag Skimpole for his stupidity, though the juniors felt strongly inclined to do so. The matter had to drop.

Skimpole was serenely convinced that it was ended, but Tom Merry & Co. knew better, and they were looking forward to the next few days with apprehension.

Five pounds would not last a man of Mr. Weekes' character long. When he wanted money again, he would have resource to his hold over Skimpole—that was why he had retained the tell-tale paper.

Tom Merry & Co. had exhausted their financial resources—for nothing. But even if they had been able to pay any further demand, they would not have been foolish enough to do so. For if Mr. Weekes started blackmailing, it was quite certain that his demands would grow the more, the more they were met.

Skimpole's friends could only wait and see.

They "saw" soon enough.

On Monday evening Talbot came into his study and found Gore chuckling, and Skimpole looking decidedly worried over a letter.

Gore grinned at Talbot as he came in.

"More trouble!" he remarked cheerfully. "Skimpy's being dunned by a bookie. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, that isn't exactly a laughing matter, Gore," said Talbot quietly. "Is that a letter from Weekes, Skimpy?"

"Yes, my dear Talbot. I fail to understand it, since the man has been paid," said Skimpole. "Doubtless he is labouring under some misapprehension."

"Give me the letter!"

Talbot read the letter, with knitted brows. It ran:

"Dear Sir,—I hope you ain't forgotten that you owe me five quids on a bit of paper. I can't afford to wait. Come and see me this evening. I'll wait at the stile in Rylcombe Lane at six.—Yores truly,
"J. WEEKES."

"The man is evidently under a most extraordinary delusion," said Skimpole, blinking at Talbot. "He wants to be paid over again."

"Dear me!"

"Well, of all the idiots!" said Gore.

"Are you seeing that thundering ass through this, Talbot?"

"Yes, if it can be done."

"If you're short of tin I can stand another pound," said Gore.

Talbot shook his head.

"Thanks! But the man isn't going to get any money from us. He won't part with the paper, I can see that."

"I—I say, that stile is jolly near St. Jim's," said Gore. "Anybody might see him there. It's risky."

"He means us to understand that," said Talbot. "It's meant to frighten Skimpy into bringing him more money."

Gore whistled.

"Blessed if I see what you're going to do, then. That man Weekes isn't a real bookie. He's an awful rogue who's been warned off the course, I hear—a regular welshing blackguard. He's been in prison, too. Mind how you handle him. He's

just the kind of rotter to get squiffy, and to come up to the school and make a scene."

"Oh dear!" said Skimpole. "What are you going to do, Talbot? Really, I do not feel quite equal to dealing with such a character. Do you think it would be any good to see him, and point out that he is acting in a very unscrupulous manner?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My dear Gore——"

"I don't think that would be much good, Skimmy," said Talbot, with a smile. "It's not much use your seeing him. I will go, if you like."

"Jolly risky!" said Gore.

"Perhaps you could deal with him better than I could," said Skimpole thoughtfully. "It will also save my time."

"Your—your time?" said Talbot.

"Yes. I am very busy now perfecting the plans of my airship," said Skimpole, beaming. "I am quite satisfied to leave the matter in your hands, my dear Talbot. In fact, I should prefer to hear nothing more about it."

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Gore.

"My dear Gore, I fail to see any cause for this excessive risibility," said Skimpole, in surprise.

Talbot quitted the study with the letter. Whether Skimpole's time was valuable or not, it was evident that he was quite incapable of dealing with the bookmaker. The appointment had to be kept, otherwise Mr. Weekes was quite reckless rascal enough to come up to the school. Somehow, anyhow, the blackmailer had to be kept away. Skimpole had to be saved from the result of his folly, and Talbot intended to do his best. But he had very little hope of the result.

CHAPTER 11.

The Only Way!

MR. WEEKES was leaning his shoulders on the stile, smoking a cigarette, and exhaling a genial odour of tobacco and strong spirits. He was watching the road towards St. Jim's, and he grunted when six o'clock rang from the distant village.

Skimpole was not in sight, but a handsome, athletic junior was coming up the lane.

Mr. Weekes glared at him surlily, expecting him to pass.

It was Talbot, and he did not pass. He stopped. His eyes ran over the squat, beery, odorous Mr. Weekes with a glance of disgust and contempt.

"You are Mr. Weekes?" Talbot asked abruptly.

"That's my name," said the bookmaker. "I don't know you, young gentleman. Perhaps you've brought me a message—wot?"

"I have come here for Skimpole."

"Very good!" Mr. Weekes rubbed his hands. "I hope you've brought the spondulics!"

"I have brought you nothing."

Mr. Weekes looked ugly at once.

"Skimpole paid you what was due on Saturday," said Talbot quietly. "You did not return him the paper he signed."

Mr. Weekes grinned.

"That there paper is worth more than five quid," he remarked.

"I have come for that paper."

"My heve!"

"As Skimpole has paid you, you have no right to keep back the paper," said Talbot, as patiently as he could.

"I ain't worried about that," said Mr. Weekes, THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,578.

quite unabashed. "I'm 'ard up. That there paper's worth a lot to me. A rich young gentleman 'as to pay for his little games—wot?"

"Skimpole is not rich."

"He 'anded me five quid on Saturday," grinned Mr. Weekes.

"That was raised by his friends to get him out of the difficulty."

"Then his friends can raise some more," said Mr. Weekes coolly. "They'd better, if they don't want to see the young gentleman showed up. If I 'ave to come up to the school there will be trouble."

"The Head would pay you nothing."

"I fancy that paper's worth five quid to save a scandal, if it comes to that," said Mr. Weekes coolly. "And it's worth more so long as I 'old it."

"What do you want?"

"I want two quids down, and the same every time I'm 'ard up," said Mr. Weekes. "Twice a week, say."

"And how is Skimpole to give you that out of four shillings a week pocket-money?"

Mr. Weekes shrugged his shoulders.

"I desay he can raise it. He raised five quid. P'raps his friends will shell out to save his bacon. Let 'im write 'ome for it. I don't know, and I don't care. I know I want the money, and I'm goin' to 'ave it. That's wot I know, young fellow-me-lad!"

"You mean that you are going to bleed Skimpole so long as he can pay you anything, and then show that paper to the Head, in the hope of getting five pounds to save a scandal?" said Talbot quietly.

"I ain't going to argue with you!" snorted Mr. Weekes, stung a little, in spite of his extremely thick skin, by Talbot's scorn. "I ain't 'ere to see you. Let that skinny young raskil come and see me, or I'll mighty soon come and see 'im!"

"Listen to me," said Talbot. "I will give you a pound for that paper, if you hand it over to me."

"Good-bye!" said Mr. Weekes.

"You refuse that offer?"

"Nice evenin', ain't it?" said Mr. Weekes.

"Very well," said Talbot, still very quietly, "you won't get anything. Skimpole can't pay you anything, and his friends won't let him if he could. You will not get a single shilling. And you will not come near the school."

"Won't I?" grinned Mr. Weekes. "And who's going to stop me?"

"I am," said Talbot. "I shall do my best, at all events." He peeled off his jacket, threw it on the stile, and pushed back his cuffs. "Put your hands up, Mr. Weekes."

The fat, beery rascal blinked at him. He was a man, and Talbot was a boy. But the athletic Shell fellow looked as if he could account for Mr. Weekes without much difficulty. Tobacco and spirits and late hours did not conduce to fitness, and Mr. Weekes was not in fighting condition.

He detached himself from the stile and backed away in alarm.

"Look 'ere, don't you lay a 'and on me!" he said.

"I am going to thrash you," said Talbot calmly.

"That's the only way to deal with you, and I'm going to do it. Come near this school again and you'll get another dose. Put up your hands!"

(Continued on page 22.)



THE ADVENTURES of **HARRY** and his **HERCULES** CYCLE

Episode 2.

FILM FAME

The Story so far:

Harry, out for a ride on his new Hercules, comes across a film company 'on location'. He rides back to the studios for a forgotten revolver, but on his return rushes on to the set and ruins an important scene. The director is furious until he sees the 'shot' and realises that Harry has the makings of a boy actor. Meanwhile, Harry has wandered off, but the Assistant Director is instructed to find him.



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IT'S THE BIKE TO BUY!

728B

"Look 'ere, I—I—I— Yaroooooh!"

Mr. Weekes had to put up his hands, for Talbot was attacking. His beery face crimsoned with rage, and he put all his "beef" into the contest that followed.

But he very quickly had "bellows to mend."

Talbot, grim and determined, pressed him hard, and every blow came straight from the shoulder with strength and resolution behind it. His fists—that seemed as hard as iron to Mr. Weekes—rained upon the staggering, wheezy, cursing bookmaker. Few blows reached the handsome, set face of the Shell fellow, though the ruffian did his best.

For five minutes Mr. Weekes felt as if he were caught in a threshing-machine, and then he went down on his back with a crash.

It was as thorough a licking as Mr. Weekes had ever experienced, and he had had some experiences of that kind during his career as a welsher.

He lay on his back in the dust, blinking dizzily up at the Shell fellow of St. Jim's.

Talbot stood over him, breathing hard.

"Ang yer!" groaned Mr. Weekes. "Ang yer, you young 'ound! Ow!"

"Are you going?" said Talbot.

"Ang yer! I ain't goin' for you!"

"I give you one minute before I kick you into the ditch!"

Mr. Weekes thought better of it. He staggered to his feet, grabbed up his battered hat, and started.

Talbot watched him as he shambled away across the fields.

The rascal disappeared from sight at last, and the Shell fellow walked back thoughtfully to the school.

The Terrible Three met him as he came in.

"Hullo! Where did you pick up that nose?" asked Monty Lowther.

Talbot smiled, and rubbed his nose, where Mr. Weekes' knuckles had landed one blow.

"And what the dickens have you been doing with your knuckles?" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Row with the Grammarians?"

"No. I've met Mr. Weekes."

"Oh crumbs!"

Talbot held out Skimpole's letter, and the chums of the Shell read it.

Tom Merry's brow darkened.

"So that was it? As we thought—blackmail!" he said. "But—but what have you done?"

"He would not part with the paper," said Talbot quietly. "He wants four pounds a week for keeping it dark."

"My hat! Where does the ass think Skimmy could get it?"

"After Skimmy was bled dry, he intended to claim the money here. He thinks it would be paid in exchange for the paper to save a scandal. That means the finish for Skimmy. He can't be paid, that's certain. I thought the best thing would be to give him a hiding. That may keep him off."

"It won't make matters any worse," said Tom Merry, with a nod. "But I'm afraid it won't make 'em much better. We shall have to wait and see."

Skimpole did not ask Talbot how he had fared when the latter came in. Skimmy was deep in his wonderful invention once more, and Mr. Weekes and all his works seemed to have passed entirely from the mighty brain of Skimmy.

Skimpole's friends looked forward to the next few days with uneasiness.

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CHAPTER 12.

Mr. Weekes Calls In!

"GREAT pip!" Figgins of the Fourth uttered that ejaculation.

It was Wednesday afternoon, and the St. Jim's juniors had turned out after dinner for cricket.

As Figgins & Co. came sauntering from the New House they spotted a peculiar figure entering at the gates.

A squat man, with beery eyes, came across the quadrangle towards the School House. He had a cigarette in his mouth and a battered bowler hat on the back of his head. The flush in his face showed that he had been drinking.

"Who on earth's that merchant?" exclaimed Fatty Wynn.

"Weekes, the bookie," said Kerr. "I've seen him in Wayland."

"What the merry thunder does he want here?"

"Visitor for the School House!" grinned Figgins. "They have some weird acquaintances on that side—what?"

Mr. Weekes, with a somewhat unsteady tread, arrived at the School House. The Terrible Three were just coming out. They stopped dead at sight of the bookmaker.

"Weekes!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Lowther. "He's come for Skimmy, and all the fat's in the fire now!"

Mr. Weekes came up the steps, leering insolently at the three juniors.

Evidently he had nerved himself for that visit by liberal potations. Without the peculiar courage imparted by strong drink, even Mr. Weekes would not have had the audacity to present himself at St. Jim's.

"Arternoon!" said Mr. Weekes affably. "Young gentleman of the name of Skimpole 'ere—what?"

"You—you've come to see Skimpole?"

"Wot! Young gentleman owes me some money!" said Mr. Weekes. "Pr'aps you'll be good enough to tell him I've come."

"You can't see Skimpole," said Tom hurriedly. "You'd better go quietly."

"I ain't goin' without my money!"

"Skimpole paid you—"

"That's a lie!" said Mr. Weekes cheerfully.

Tom's eyes blazed and his hands clenched, but he held himself in check. The one chance of saving Skimpole from the punishment of his folly was to get Mr. Weekes away quietly before he was seen. Not that there was much chance.

"Look here," said Tom, "if you're found here you—"

"Where's Master Skimpole?" asked Mr. Weekes defiantly. "I've come for my money, and if I ain't paid I'm going to the 'Ead!"

"Gweat Scott! Who is that feahful boundah?" Arthur Augustus came out, and his eyeglass dropped out of his eye at the sight of the visitor.

"Weekes—to see Skimpole!" said Tom Merry hopelessly.

"Bai Jove! Bettah get him out of sight!" said D'Arcy anxiously. "Old Wailton may come out any minute!"

"He won't go."

"Pway lend a hand all wound, and we'll chuck him out, deah boy!"

"Hold on, Gussy! If there's a row, Railton will hear and come out!" exclaimed Tom Merry hastily.



"I'm not leaving without the money——" began Mr. Weekes, but he had no time to say more. Mr. Railton brought the cane lashing across his shoulders, and the bookmaker dodged round the table. "Yaroooh!" he roared. "Stop it! Yeop!"

"Bai Jove! I nevah thought of that!"

Mr. Weekes pushed into the House.

Dearly the juniors would have liked to collar him and hurl him headlong down the steps. But it was not to be done.

"Where's young Skimpole?" demanded Mr. Weekes. "Where's that young swindler—what?"

"Hush!"

"I ain't 'ushin'!" said Mr. Weekes, raising his voice. "What I want is my money, and that's what I'm goin' to 'ave!"

"Bai Jove! Pway don't speak so loudly!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "You will attwact the attention of the Housemastah!"

"I ain't afraid of no bloomin' 'ousemasters!"

"Come up to Skimpole's study!" exclaimed Tom, in an agony lest the ruffian's voice should reach the Housemaster in his room. "This way!"

"Right you are!" said Mr. Weekes. "I don't want no row, s'long as I'm paid. But if I ain't paid, there's goin' to be trouble! You 'ear me?"

Tom Merry hurried the rascal up the broad staircase. What was going to be done he simply could not guess. But his instinct was to keep Mr. Weekes out of sight if possible.

It might be possible to make some terms with him. At all events, if he were seen, the game was up so far as protecting Skimpole was concerned.

Fortunately, masters and prefects were not in the Hall just then, only some juniors were on the

spot, and they stared at Mr. Weekes without comment. Skimpole's adventures as a "sportsman" were known far and wide, and the fellows guessed that this was the result of them, and there was general compassion for the unfortunate Skimmy.

"It's the sack for the silly ass!" remarked Levison of the Fourth. "That horrid bounder won't be here long without being spotted. Blessed if I'd have anything to do with him!"

"Those silly asses will be hauled over the coals for it!" said Crooke, with a sneer. "Catch me having a hand in it!"

But Tom Merry & Co. were not thinking of themselves.

Mr. Weekes was hurried up to the Shell passage and into Skimpole's study.

Talbot and Gore were absent, but Skimpole was in the room, blinking over a huge volume of the valuable lucubrations of the celebrated Professor Balmcrumpet. He blinked up at the three juniors as they piloted Mr. Weekes in, followed by D'Arcy.

"Dear me!" said Skimpole, in surprise.

"Well, here's your precious friend!" growled Monty Lowther. "And now what are you going to do with him?"

"I want my money," said Mr. Weekes truculently. "Five quids is wot you owe me, Master

Skinny Skimpole, and that's what I've come for."

"You are labouring under a misapprehension, my good man," said Skimpole. "I have already liquidated that obligation."

"Are you paying, or are you not paying?" roared Mr. Weekes.

"Certainly not!"

"Orlright! Then I'm goin' to the 'Ead!"

Tom Merry slipped quickly between the ruffian and the door.

"Hold on!" he said quietly.

"You let me pass, you young 'ound!"

"Another step, and I'll smash you!" said Tom savagely. "You're staying here for the present!"

Mr. Weekes backed away in alarm.

The sturdy junior could have knocked him across the room, and Mr. Weekes realised it.

"Goin' to keep me 'ere, are you?" snarled Mr. Weekes, his reddened eyes gleaming with rage. "Well, I'll soon bring the 'Ead here with a yell or two! I'll—"

"Speak lower, you cad!" said Tom. "Give one shout, and you'll get your teeth knocked down your throat! Mind, I mean business!"

His hands were itching to be on the rascal already.

Mr. Weekes backed farther away, and he did not utter the yell or two.

"Look 'ere!" he said. "You look 'ere—"

"Oh, hold your tongue!" said Tom Merry contemptuously. "Gussy, old chap, cut off and bring Talbot here! He's changing into his flannels in the dorm."

"Yaas, deah boy!"

Arthur Augustus sped down the passage. In a few minutes Talbot arrived in his flannels. Mr. Weekes blinked at him and backed round the table.

"You keep your 'ands off me!" he gasped. "I ain't come 'ere for a row, I tell you! I come 'ere for my money!"

Talbot came quietly into the study and closed the door.

"Nobody's seen him yet?" he asked.

"Not yet," said Tom—"only some of the fellows. But—but it was a miracle that none of the Sixth happened to be near."

"They'll see me yet!" said Mr. Weekes truculently. "They'll 'ear me, too, if I don't get my money!"

"Silence, you cur!" rapped out Talbot.

Mr. Weekes threw himself sullenly into the armchair. The juniors exchanged glances of dismay. The rascal had come, and how he was to get rid of was a problem that passed all their powers of solution. They looked at Skimpole.

The genius of the Shell, evidently bored with the proceedings, had turned to his valuable volume again, and was deeply intent upon the extremely important subject of Evolution and the origin of species. There was a long pause.

The door suddenly opened, and Blake looked in.

"Is he here?" he gasped.

"Yes. What?"

"Railton's coming!"

"Oh, great Scott!"

"He was on the cricket field and spotted him from there!" panted Blake. "He saw him come into the House. I cut off to tell you he was coming. He looked rather waxy."

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"All U P!" said Monty Lowther. "Oh, Skimmy, you silly idiot—"

"Let him come!" grinned Mr. Weekes. "Let 'im come! I'm ready for him, I am!"

"You fool!" burst out Tom Merry. "When Railton sees you, he'll give you a licking to start with!"

Mr. Weekes' jaw dropped. Apparently he had not thought of that possibility.

"Get out of sight!" said Talbot quickly.

"Look here, you want money, not a thrashing! If Skimpole gets clear of this, I'll see that you have five pounds!"

"Now you're talking!" said Mr. Weekes amicably. "Mind, I want 'ard cash afore I go!"

"If Skimpole gets clear of it," said Talbot. "Get under the table—that's the only place! Sharp's the word!"

"Railton's got a cricket stump in his hand," Blake remarked casually. "He knows Weekes by sight, you know."

That was enough for Mr. Weekes. He made a dive under the study table.

Tom Merry pulled the cover lower on the side towards the door. Then the juniors hastily stood round the table.

"Read aloud, Skimmy!" said Lowther.

"Certainly, my dear fellows!" said Skimpole, with a beaming smile.

It was the last desperate effort to save Skimmy from the inevitable. The juniors were standing round the table, and Skimpole was reading aloud to them, when Mr. Railton's step was heard at the door.

CHAPTER 13.

Mr. Railton Settles the Matter!

TAP!

The door opened, and the Housemaster looked in.

The juniors turned to face him, taking care, however, to keep close to the table.

Under the table Mr. Weekes was as silent as a mouse.

Mr. Railton was looking stern. His eyes dwelt scrutinisingly on the juniors.

"I am sorry to interrupt you," he said. Mr. Railton was always courteous, even to the scamps of the Lower School. "A very extraordinary thing has happened. A man of very bad character named Weekes has been seen to enter this House. I understand that he was brought upstairs. Have you seen him?"

"Weekes, sir?" gasped Tom Merry.

"Yes."

"I saw him in the hall, sir," said Tom.

"He came upstairs?"

"Yes, sir."

"I do not see him in the passage, so I presume he is in one of the studies," said the Housemaster.

"Yaas; I think he went into a study, sir," said Arthur Augustus.

"Did he come to visit any of you?"

"Wathah not!"

"Do you know where he is?"

The juniors looked round the study.

"I—I can't see anything of him, sir!" faltered Tom Merry.

Mr. Railton smiled grimly.

"Is he in this study?"

(Continued on page 26.)

In Town To-day



Introducing George Herries to the Microphone. By a B.B.C. TALENT SCOUT.

HERRIES: Well, I had quite made up my mind to bring old Towser along, when last night he managed to get into the Beak's bad books.

INTERVIEWER: Good gracious! You don't mean to suggest that Towser went so far as to bite the headmaster?

HERRIES: Not exactly. But he did tear the old gentleman's trousers. You see, Dr. Holmes bought an Alsatian recently, and Towser has never really liked the look of it. Last evening I took Towser for a late run round the quad—against the rules, I admit. Dogged by ill-luck, we almost ran into the Head, who was taking a stroll in his garden with a pipe, and exercising his Alsatian. To cut a long tale short, there was a bit of a scuffle—and though the Alsatian was twice as big as Towser, I think if I hadn't stopped him in time, Towser would have pretty well destroyed the Alsatian! Of course, the Head kept hopping about—

INTERVIEWER: And, in the excitement, Towser ripped the headmaster's nether garments?

HERRIES: 'Fraid so. A pure accident, of course. Towser wouldn't hurt anyone for the world, even a headmaster. He meant to rip the Alsatian.

INTERVIEWER: Quite. But how did the Head take it?

HERRIES: Dr. Holmes was no end decent, really. At first he did talk a lot of rot about having Towser destroyed, but I managed to wheedle him round. I had to hang on to Towser all the time, for he was in the mood to have eaten the Alsatian. Dr. Holmes agreed that it was nobody's fault. All the same, he wouldn't let me bring Towser to London to-day. Says Towser needs close observation, of all the rot.

INTERVIEWER: That's a pity. We were hoping you would ask Towser to bark for the listeners—I feel sure every reader of the GEM would like to hear him.

HERRIES: What a grand idea. I say, you know, it's possible I may be able to persuade the Head to let me bring Towser along another time. Would that be O.K., Mr. Interviewer?

INTERVIEWER: Splendid!

HERRIES: And now, what about my cornet solo—

INTERVIEWER: I'm very much afraid our time has gone. But perhaps you will give us that solo another time, too, Herries?

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INTERVIEWER: Ah, Herries! I am glad to see you have not forgotten your cornet.

HERRIES: It's very sporting of you to give me a chance to play it on the air, Mr. Interviewer. To tell you the truth, my chums at St. Jim's seem to like my playing best when they are too far away to hear it.

INTERVIEWER: But I understood your friend D'Arcy to say that if we were looking for an instrumentalist really out of the ordinary, we could not do better than listen to your performance on the cornet. I think I am right in quoting D'Arcy as saying he had never heard anything quite like it.

HERRIES: So that was what Gussy told you? I begin to see daylight. You know, Mr. Interviewer, I have a suspicion that Gussy was joking. But before I've finished my broadcast, the joke may be on the other foot. Kindly note, crotchety listeners, that I use the minim-um of effort.

INTERVIEWER: What sort of stuff do you play, Herries? The classics?

HERRIES: As a matter of fact, I'm a bit fed up with the classics, Mr. Interviewer. Not that they are too difficult to execute. But execution was what some of those composers rather deserved, if you ask me. So for this occasion I've written a number of my own.

INTERVIEWER: After the classic style?

HERRIES: No, ahead of it, and it's the last word in modernity. It's called "Tip-Toe to Those 1948 Blues."

INTERVIEWER: Great Scott! Really, Herries, I'm afraid we should want to hear that number before we could allow it to be broadcast.

HERRIES: But think what a ripping surprise it would be for the listeners—

INTERVIEWER: More of a shock, perhaps. Ahem! Before you begin, Herries, we should like to ask you about your famous bulldog, Towser.

HERRIES: Oh, Towser! I'm sorry about him.

INTERVIEWER: Why, nothing has happened to him, I hope?

"This—this study, sir?"
 "I think I spoke plainly, Merry. Is Mr. Weekes in this study?"
 "I—I don't see him, sir!"
 "What are you all doing here?"
 "Ahem! Skimpy is reading out to us, sir!" gasped Blake.
 "Do you generally change into your flannels when Skimpole reads out to you?"
 "We—we—we were just going down to cricket, sir!"
 "I hope, my boys, that you do not intend to prevaricate," said the School House master severely.
 "N-no, sir!"
 "But this comes very near to it!"
 "Oh, sir!"
 "In fact, I have very little doubt that the man is in this study. Kindly step away from the table!"
 "Oh crumbs!"
 Mr. Railton advanced to the table as the juniors stepped backwards, jerked up the tablecloth, and the sprawling form of Mr. Weekes was revealed.
 "I thought so," said the Housemaster grimly.



"Twenty-nine shillings, twenty-nine shillings—who'll say thirty?"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to J. Genders, 5, Railway Cottages, Amington, Tamworth, Staffs.

"Now, my man, you will kindly explain your presence here."

"Oh jiminy!" gasped Mr. Weekes.
 Mr. Railton grasped him by the collar and jerked him to his feet.

The juniors stood dumb with dismay. The game was up now with a vengeance.

"You keep your 'ands off me!" said Mr. Weekes, with an attempt at bluster. "You touch me and I'll 'ave the law on yer, I can tell you that. I ain't afraid of no bloomin' 'Ousemaster!"

"What is this man doing here, Talbot? This is your study."

"He—he came to—to see a chap, sir," faltered Talbot.

"To see you?"

"No, sir!"

The juniors looked at Skimpole. They were all "in it," but it was time for the genius of the Shell to own up. They had done their best.

Skimpole blinked at them, and closed his big volume, with a sigh. Evidently he did not like coming down from the important subject of Evolution to such a trifling matter as this.

"This disreputable and somewhat dishonourable person came to visit me, sir," said Skimpole.
 Mr. Railton started.

"You, Skimpole! Is it possible that you have had any dealings with such a man?"

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"Yes, sir!"

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Railton in astonishment. "And how many of you others have been concerned in this disgraceful affair?"

"Weally, Mr. Wailton, I twust you do not suspect us of havin' dealings with a wascally chavvatah like that!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus indignantly.

"I am here to judge that," said the Housemaster grimly.

"We—we were trying to get old Skimpy out of it, sir," stammered Tom Merry. "He—he can't help being a silly ass, sir. We—we thought we ought to help him."

"Yaas, wathah, sir!"

Mr. Railton frowned.

"Then this man has had dealings only with you, Skimpole?"

"Certainly, sir! The other fellows are hardly equal in intellectual powers to the task of spotting winners," said Skimpole.

"What!" thundered Mr. Railton.

"Skimpy was taken in by that rotter, sir," said Talbot. "He didn't mean any harm, sir—all the fellows know he's a silly idiot—ahem!"

"Taken in, was he?" snarled Mr. Weekes. "I like that! That young gent came to me to put a bit on a 'orse. Now he's lost, he don't want to pay. I'm 'ere for my money, and I ain't goin' without it!"

"The man's been paid, sir!" said Tom Merry hastily. "We paid him to get Skimpole's note back, and then he wouldn't part with it!"

"You had no right to pay him, Merry. You should have had no dealings with the man, as you know very well. However, I shall not be hard upon thoughtless boys for trying to help a foolish boy out of a scrape. Mr. Weekes, you declare that you booked a bet on a horse for this stupid boy?"

"You bet!" said Mr. Weekes. "And I got 'is paper to prove it, too, an' that there paper's worth five pounds!"

"Give it to me!"

"I ain't partin' with it without the money," said Mr. Weekes.

"Blake, fetch me a cane from my study!"

"Yes, sir."

Jack Blake hurried away. He came back with the cane, and the juniors rubbed their hands in anticipation.

"Will you give me that paper, Mr. Weekes?" said the Housemaster, as he took the cane from Blake.

"Not without the money—"

Mr. Weekes had no time for more. The cane was lashing across his shoulders, and he dodged round the table to escape.

Lash, lash, lash, lash!

"Bwavo!" chirruped Arthur Augustus, in great delight.

"Yaroooooh!" roared Mr. Weekes. "Stop it! Chuck it! Help! Yoop! 'Ere's the bloomin' paper! Oh crumbs!"

He hurled the paper on to the table, and the cane ceased to lash.

"Look at that paper, Skimpole, and tell me whether it is yours."

Skimpole blinked at the paper.

"That is it, sir."

"Very good. Destroy it at once."

Tom Merry struck a match, and Skimpole held the paper in the flame. It was consumed in a few seconds.

"You may go, Mr. Weekes," said the Housemaster quietly. "You have been rascal enough to



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C. Long, Haverian College, Queen's Park, Brighton 7, Sussex; age 13-14; swimming, cricket, football, photos, animals and cycle rides; Rhodesia, S. Africa, New Zealand.

B. C. Clarke, 28, Firfield Ave., Birstall, Leicester; dance music, dance bands; British Isles.

I. G. Thow, 41, Stanwell Road, Ashford, Middx; age 12-16; stamps; British Empire.

G. Marshall, 140, Windsor Street, Paddington, Sydney, N.S.W., Australia; age 13-15; stamps, speedway-racing; Canada, U.S.A., or England.

D. B. Mornell, 16, Emille Street, Nailsworth, S. Australia; age 16-20; general topics.

J. Hodge, 18, Haig Road, Milton, W.2, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia; pen pals; Norway, Sweden, Denmark.

Miss J. Hopkinson, 107, St. Georges Road, Preston, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia; girl correspondents; photographs, pictures, and all sports; anywhere.

M. G. Dunley, South Wales Sanatorium, Talgath, Brecon, S. Wales; pen pals; stamps, cycling, films, jazz; Empire and U.S.A.

Miss M. Regan, 234, Rimrose Road, Bootle, Liverpool 20; girl correspondents; age 13-15; stamps; Germany, Africa, or Egypt.

Miss L. Jansen, 19, Argyle Street, Woodstock, Capetown, S. Africa; girl correspondents; age 18-21; reading, music, and dancing; England or America.

make bets with a schoolboy, and you have been punished. Let me find you anywhere near the school again and I will thrash you soundly. Go!"

"I ain't goin' without— Yaroooh! Yoop! Help! Oh crickey!"

Mr. Weekes dodged out of the study and fled. He did the stairs three at a time and bolted out of the School House.

"Now," said Mr. Railton, "that rascal has been dealt with, and it remains to deal with you, Skimpole."

"I should prefer the matter to close now, if you do not mind, sir," said Skimpole mildly.

"Shurrup, you ass!" whispered Blake.

"You have entered into betting transactions, Skimpole?"

"Yes, sir."

"Are you not ashamed of yourself?"

"Not at all, sir."

"Wha-a-at?"

"You see, sir," beamed Skimpole, "my motive was good. My intention was to win all the money of Mr. Weekes and thus force him to take up an honest livelihood. I am sure, sir, that you will be prepared to admit that this was an extremely commendable object."

"Skimpole!"

"The large sums I intended to obtain from him, sir, I should have used to help unfortunate fellow-creatures. Thus two good works would be done at the same time."

Mr. Railton looked fixedly at the genius of the Shell.

"And you had no doubt, Skimpole, about your ability to do this?"

"Not in the least, sir," said the cheerful Skimmy. "With my unusual mental powers, sir,

W. Harris, 354, Kennington Green, London, S.E.11; age 13-15; stamps, swimming, photography.

B. Katz, 92, Bultenkaat Street, Gardens, Capetown, S. Africa; any age; stamps and all kinds of sports; Newfoundland, Canada, England, Jamaica, America.

H. Jenkinson, 34, Alpha Street West, Seadley, Salford 6, Lancs; age 15-20; exchanging stamps; overseas.

D. King, 11, Richmond Road, Wanstead, London, E.11; stamps, aviation; Trinidad or British Guiana.

S. Acklam, 20, Reform Street, Hull, Yorkshire; age 18 upwards; exchange news and photographs; Australia or New Zealand.

J. Westwell, 92, Water Street, Accrington, Lancs; stamp collecting; British Colonies.

N. Gibbs, 11, M. D. Wakefield, Nelson, New Zealand; pen pals, age 15-18; British Isles.

F. K. Mensah, Post Office Lane, Winneba, Gold Coast, West Africa; pen pals, age 19-21; all letters answered; British Empire.

J. Kind, 80, Grove Road, St. Saviour's Road, Leicester; stamps.

Kwaku Parker, P.O. Box 14, Winneba, Gold Coast; age 15 upwards; general topics and exchanging stamps; Europe, France, Canada.

A. Ratcliffe, 2, Gerrards Terrace, Milnrow, near Rochdale, Lancs; pen pals; overseas.

A. D. S. Drinkwater, 245, Sovereign Road, Earlsdon, Coventry, Warwickshire; any age; all general topics Australia, North or South America, Africa, Canada, New Zealand, Scotland.

Miss M. Benjamin, 70, Addington Mansions, Highbury Grange, Highbury, London; girl correspondents; age 12-14; sports, films, and books; U.S.A., France, Ireland, or Australia.

J. F. Geary, Verona House, O'Connell Avenue, Limerick, Ireland; age 14-16; films, stamps; America, Canada.

PEN PALS COUPON

14-5-38

I was able to master the subject in a very short time. Indeed, within a reasonable period I fully anticipated collecting a fortune of considerable dimensions, but these somewhat obtuse fellows have made me promise not to pursue my avocation, sir, and have insisted that I shall have no further connection with racing matters. Otherwise—"

"Skimpole!"

"Yes, sir! You see—"

"I see, Skimpole, that you have acted in a disgraceful manner, but that you are too stupid to understand the seriousness of your action. I shall, however, attempt to impress it on your mind. Hold out your hand."

Swish, swish, swish, swish!

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

Swish, swish, swish!

Skimpole doubled up.

"I trust, Skimpole, that that will be a lesson to you," said Mr. Railton. "Any further folly of this kind will be more severely punished."

Mr. Railton left the study, Tom Merry & Co. following him out, leaving Skimpole to groan.

The genius of the Shell had escaped cheaply, though he did not feel very happy at the present moment.

But the lesson he had received had impressed itself even upon Skimmy's powerful brain, and his new "ism" was a thing of the past, and nothing more was heard of Skimpole the sportsman.

(Next Wednesday: "THE FUNK OF THE FOURTH!" Don't miss the great yarn of mystery and drama telling of an amazing newcomer to St. Jim's. Order your GEM early.)

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WHEN THE GREYFRIARS REMOVE ELEVEN IS BEATEN AT CRICKET BY A SCHOOLGIRL TEAM!



Clara took a run forward and let fly the ball. Unluckily, it left her hand at the wrong moment, and clumped with a thud on the side of Wun Lung's head. The Chinese gave a fearful yell and hopped in the air.

WHAT HAPPENED LAST WEEK.

The cricket season opens at Greyfriars, and the Remove, having elected Harry Wharton captain, decide to hold a trial match. The two teams are posted on the notice-board, and for a joke, Wun Lung adds Billy Bunter's name to one of the elevens. The Owl of the Remove is hopeless at cricket, but when he turns up in play, Wharton, taking pity on him, gives him a chance. Bunter opens the innings and is out first ball.

While the trial match is in progress, Marjorie Hazeldene & Co., of Cliff House, turn up to watch, and when the Remove cricketers come off the field the girls challenge them to a match. Not wishing to be discourteous to Marjorie & Co., Wharton accepts the challenge, and the game is fixed to be played on the following Saturday on the Cliff House ground.

(Now read on.)

A Puzzling Case!

BILLY BUNTER of the Greyfriars Remove sat in Study No. 1 with a decidedly dissatisfied look on his fat face. The fine May day was drawing to a close, and from the playing fields could be heard the merry voices of the cricketers. Billy Bunter had not joined them. His first efforts to get into the Remove eleven had been so little appreciated that he had dropped the idea. He was feeling dissatisfied now.

It wasn't only that the Remove made fun of his cricket. That he attributed to envy and could understand. But financial troubles were thickening round Billy Bunter.

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The Freak Match!

By FRANK RICHARDS.

(Author of the grand long yarns of Greyfriars appearing every Saturday in our companion paper, the "Magnet.")

The famous postal order, the arrival of which had been so long expected, had never materialised, and Bunter's latest scheme for raising the wind seemed equally unproductive.

He had purchased a colour box for six shillings from the Patriotic Homework Association, for the purpose of colouring picture postcards, at which easy and artistic occupation he fondly hoped to earn three pounds a week. That was the sum mentioned in the attractive advertisement that had first caught his eye, and Bunter had no doubts about his ability as a postcard painter.

Unfortunately all the postcards he had coloured had been returned to him as not quite up to the mark, and new ones were sent for him to try his skill afresh. As Bunter was paying all the postage in stamps borrowed from Wharton, the Homework Association was not losing anything on the transaction.

The chums of the Remove had tried to point out to Bunter that the Patriotic Homework Association had only wanted his six shillings from the start, and that they were now simply trying to tire him out, at his own expense.

Bunter had refused to credit it.

But it was slowly dawning on him at last that there might be something in it. He was sitting in the study, pondering upon the subject, when Harry Wharton & Co. came in, hungry as hunters, from the cricket field.

"Tea ready?" asked Bob Cherry, as he pitched his bat into a corner. "Hallo, hallo, hallo! Have you gone to sleep, Bunt?"

"No, I haven't! I'm thinking—"

"Stuff! Why haven't you got tea ready?"

"There isn't anything for tea."

"What about the sausages and the cold ham?"

"I suppose you didn't want me to go hungry," said Bunter, with dignity. "I had to have a snack to keep my strength up."

"You—you— Come downstairs, you chaps, and let's have tea in Hall before it's all gone," said Bob Cherry. "I'm going to get a muzzel for Bunter out of my next remittance."

"I think I'd better come with you," said Billy Bunter, rising slowly. "I'm jolly hungry myself. I only had a snack. I say, you fellows, I've had another letter from the Patriotic Homework Association."

A LIFE-AND-DEATH ADVENTURE, PLUS FUN AND SPORT, ARE THE HIGHLIGHTS OF THIS GRAND YARN.

"Three pounds this time, I hope," said Wharton.

"Well, no; my work isn't quite up to the mark yet."

"Ha, ha, ha! I fancy it never will be."

"But look here. They gave me the name and address of a chap who was earning three pounds a week by colouring postcards for them. He lives at Fernhill, and that's not very far from here. Suppose you were to come over with me, Wharton, and see whether there's anything in it or not."

"Of course, it's all spoof."

"Yes; but they give a real name and address, and if it's a swindle we could show them up, you know."

Harry Wharton nodded.

"All right. I'll get a pass from Wingate if I can, after tea, and we'll run over."

"And if it turns out to be genuine——"

"Don't worry—it won't!"

And after tea, the pass being secured easily enough from the captain of Greyfriars, the two juniors quitted the school. It was half an hour's walk to Fernhill, and as they passed through the village of Friardale, Billy Bunter hinted at hiring the station cab.

"You can have it if you like," said Wharton.

"I'm going to walk."

"Well, will you settle with the driver?"

"Not much!"

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"Come on, you young ass! It's not a long walk, and I'm giving up half the evening, anyway," said Wharton impatiently. "I haven't five shillings to waste on laziness."

"I'm afraid that over-exertion may have a harmful effect on my constitution. You see, I'm delicate."

"Cut your meals down to eight or nine a day, and then you'll be all right."

"Oh, really——"

"Are you coming, or going back?"

"I'm coming," groaned Billy Bunter.

He wore an injured expression, but toddled on, keeping up an incessant trot to keep pace with Wharton's stride. They reached Fernhill at last, and inquired their way to the house of Mr. Jones, and soon found it.

Wharton felt a certain amount of hesitation in knocking at the door, but Bunter explained that the Patriotic Homework Association had given him Mr. Jones' address as that of a man who was earning three pounds a week in the evenings by colouring cards for them, and had distinctly stated that Mr. Jones would be willing to answer inquiries.

Wharton knocked, and the door was opened by a buxom woman. She did not seem at all surprised at their visit, and Harry guessed that they were not the first who had called on the same mission.

They were shown into a neatly furnished room, where a man was seated at a table with a brush in his hand, and some water colours at his elbow. A heap of cards lay before him, and several that had been coloured were laid out to dry.

Wharton saw at a glance that there was a certain amount of skill in the colouring, but how the man's labour could be worth three pounds a week was a mystery. The cards certainly could not be sold at a high figure, and the quantity it would be necessary to sell to leave a margin of profit

sufficient for the association to pay the painter three pounds a week, would have to be enormous.

Yet when Mr. Jones rose from his work with a pleasant smile on his homely face to greet them, Harry felt at once that if there was a swindle, this man was not a party to it.

"Good-evening, young men!" said Mr. Jones. "So you have called about the postcard colouring for the association?"

"Yes, sir," said Harry. "Your name was given to us—I mean, to Bunter here. They tell us that you're getting three pounds a week for colouring postcards, and that everyone can earn the same amount. I hope we're not interrupting your work."

"That's nothing," said Mr. Jones. "Please sit down. Will you take a cup of tea after your walk? Yes, I'm sure you will. Mary, bring in some tea and cake!"

"You are very kind, sir."

"Not a bit of it! I've benefited too much by the kindness of the association not to be ready to do everything I can," went on Mr. Jones, when the juniors—who certainly were hungry after their walk—were discussing tea and cake. "You see, I work in the garden, and raise vegetables and flowers, and make something out of that, but it's the evening work that keeps me going. I had an injury in my trade, and I can't follow that, and this work of the Homework Association came in the nick of time. Would you like to see some of my work?"

And he showed them cards, coloured and uncoloured, and explained every detail to them. Billy Bunter's face grew brighter and brighter, and Wharton's more and more puzzled. It was perfectly evident that Mr. Jones was honest, and sincerely grateful to the Patriotic Homework Association, and if one man was earning three pounds a week by evening work, why not others?

The time passed very pleasantly, and the visitors had quite a long chat.

When the juniors took their leave at last they had stayed much later than they had intended, and nine was chiming out from the village church as they said good-night to Mr. Jones.

Harry Wharton gave a start as he heard it.

"By Jove, we're late!" he exclaimed, as they went down the garden path. "We'll take the short cut home by the sea, Bunter, and get in in time for bed."

"Right-ho!" said Billy Bunter, grinning contentedly. "What do you think of the Patriotic Homework Association now, Wharton?"

"Blessed if I know what to think!"

"Mr. Jones is genuine enough, eh?"

"Yes, he's genuine."

"Well, then, if they're paying him three pounds a week, why shouldn't they pay me the same? My work will jolly soon be as good as his. His is no great shakes, from what I could see."

"That's true enough."

"Aren't you convinced yet?" demanded Billy Bunter indignantly.

"No," said Harry Wharton quietly. "I can't quite catch on to it, but there's a swindle somewhere. Mr. Jones may be a dupe to help them catch mugs. I know jolly well that they're not paying three pounds a week to people for colouring picture postcards, and that's flat. If they're paying Mr. Jones—and I suppose they are—it must be that it's worth their while to expend three pounds a week to secure a bona-fide reference and

a standing advertisement, but Mr. Jones is about the only chap who's receiving any tin from them."

Billy Bunter sniffed.

"Oh, that's awfully far-fetched, you know!"

"I think it will turn out to be correct."

Bunter sniffed again, and they walked on in silence by the coast path, with the high Shoulder rising on their right and the sea glimmering in the starlight on their left.

Caught by the Tide!

THE two juniors walked quickly along the shingly path. They had just time to get to Greyfriars if they hurried, and even Billy Bunter put his best foot foremost and hurried on without grumbling. But as they rounded a jutting spur of the great cliff Harry Wharton halted, with a sudden exclamation:

"The tide!"

Before them lay a hollow of the cliff, where the tide from the English Channel was beating against the rocks of the Shoulder. More than one person had been caught by the tide on that perilous path, as it was impossible to climb the cliff there.

"What are you stopping for, Wharton?" asked the short-sighted junior, blinking at his companion.

"The tide's in," said Harry Wharton. "We can't go on now. We should never get past the cliff in time, and we shouldn't be able to come back, either."

Billy Bunter grunted.

"We shall be in late."

"Can't be helped. We shall have to take the path over the cliff. Come on!"

And Wharton turned to retrace his steps a hundred yards or so to the spot where a path left the beach and zigzagged upward among the rocks of the Shoulder. Bunter followed him grumblingly.

"I—I don't think I shall be able to do the walk, Wharton. I'm not strong, you know, and I never could climb these rugged paths."

"Like to stop on the beach for the night?"

"No, of course I wouldn't."

"Well, ass, you must either come or stay," said Wharton. "What's the good of grouching? Get a move on!"

There was certainly nothing else to be done. Billy Bunter growled and obeyed. He seemed to forget that it was entirely on his account that Wharton had undertaken the expedition at all, and he blamed Harry for everything that went wrong.

But Wharton was used to that, and it did not affect him. He helped the fat junior over the most difficult places and took no notice of his grumbling.

They came out on the top of the cliff, Wharton breathing rather hard and Billy Bunter gasping like a newly landed fish.

"All right now," said Wharton cheerily. "Come on!"

"All right for you, perhaps! I'm tired. I'm getting hungry, too."

Wharton laughed and set off at a swinging stride along the path at the edge of the cliff. On his left the Shoulder dropped away almost as abruptly as the side of a house, down to the beach far below. The beach was hidden now by the tide, roaring over the broken rocks and in the hollows of the cliff.

Save for the wash of the waters below no sound came through the silence of the May night.

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Suddenly Harry stopped and listened. In the silence a faint cry was heard.

"Did you hear that, Bunter?"

"Eh? I didn't hear anything."

"There it is again. Hark!"

"It's only a seagull."

"It isn't; it's a human voice," said Wharton, "and it's from the beach."

"It can't be. The tide's in."

"Ass! It must be somebody caught by the tide!"

Wharton knelt on the very verge of the cliff. In the dim starlight he caught the lines of foam as the tide rolled over sunken rocks, but the bulging cliff hid what was immediately below him from sight.

He listened intently. Billy Bunter waited, with a low undercurrent of grumbling. Wharton turned his head sharply.

"Hold your tongue!"

He listened again. From the dusky depths below came a faint cry that rang in his ears with a curious thrill:

"Help!"

"Look here, Wharton, I'm not going to wait!" Wharton sprang to his feet. Bunter caught his expression in the starlight, and the words died on his tongue.

"Bunter, there's someone caught by the tide, and it's a girl's voice."

At the Peril of Life!

"HELP!"

Faint and low on the breath of the night wind came the cry from the hollow cliff. It was a female voice—Wharton was sure of that. The unfortunate wayfarer must have clambered to some rugged part of the cliff out of reach of the waves. But that refuge could not serve long. The tide was coming in fast. Long before Wharton, running his hardest, could get to the fishing village on the bay—long before a boat could be brought round—all would be over.

With a throbbing heart, the junior knelt again on the verge of the cliff, where the descent was so steep that it made Bunter's head reel even to look at it.

"Help!"

Again that faint cry from below. The caller could have had little hope of being heard. But in the faint hope that someone might be following the cliff path at that hour, and might hear the call, she cried for help.

"Hallo-o-o!"

Wharton shouted back the word.

There was a long pause. He wondered whether the unseen one below could hear his voice.

Then the reply came back:

"Help! Can you hear me?"

"Yes. Where are you?"

"Clinging to the cliff. I am caught by the tide!"

Wharton felt a strange shiver pass through him. Far off and faint as the voice was, he thought he recognised those tones.

"Are you Marjorie Hazeldene?"

He hardly dared put the question into words. If it were Marjorie penned up there by the tide—doomed to a helpless death—

"Yes. Who are you?"

"Harry Wharton!"

A joyful cry came back.

"Harry! Oh, can you help me?"

"Yes," called back Wharton. "I will!"

Now, he did not know. What help was there?

He rose to his feet again. He pressed his hand to his forehead and tried to think. Bunter watched him in silence. Even his grumbling was quieted now, at the thought that a girl was in danger.

"What can I do?"

The question hammered in Wharton's brain. What could he do?

"A rope!" he exclaimed. "If only I could get a rope!"

He gave a despairing glance round. Where was a rope to be obtained on that lonely, barren cliff? The thought of Cliff House came into his mind. Miss Penelope's school was close by the cliff, looking out on the sea. A quick run—but he paused again. He could not leave Marjorie there.

"Bunter," said Harry quickly, "you know where Cliff House is. You'll find them up, for they must have missed Marjorie! Cut off as quickly as you can, and tell Miss Primrose what's the matter here. You understand?"

"Yes," gasped Bunter.

"Tell them to get men, bring a rope—and come here! Quick! There's not a second to be lost!"

"But—but— You go—you can run quicker."

"I'm going down the cliff!"

"Down the cliff?" exclaimed Bunter. "You must be dotty!"

"Never mind that. Go off—and run for your life! Remember, don't you waste a second!"

"I—I—I'll go, but—"

"Cut off!"

Wharton turned to the cliff again. Billy Bunter stared at him for a moment, and then set off towards Cliff House as fast as his fat little legs could carry him.

Wharton knelt on the verge.

"Marjorie!"

"Yes, Harry?"

"Cheer up! I've sent Bunter for a rope. Help will come. How far are you from the water?"

"It is touching my feet!"

"Can you climb higher?"

"No. There is nothing to hold on."

Wharton drew a deep breath. It was a matter of minutes, then, before the girl was swept from the cliff.

"Bear up, Marjorie! I'm coming down!"

"No, no!" came back the anxious cry. "You cannot. You will fall."

"I shall be all right."

"You'll be killed!"

Wharton did not reply. He knew that he was taking his life in his hands, but he did not hesitate for a moment. Carefully selecting the most favourable spot, he swung himself over the cliff.

Some fragments of stone displaced by his movements, rattled down the cliff and dropped, with a faint sound of splashing, into the sea. The faint, hollow sound struck dully and forebodingly on his ears. It might not be many moments before he, too, followed the stones.

Yet his courage did not falter.

In the daylight, long before, Wharton had climbed the Shoulder, but it was in an easier spot. This place was new to him, and whether it was possible to climb it, he did not know. But if it were possible, he would do it.

Down, down, scraping on the cliff, making use of any small footholds and handholds that presented themselves, any tuft of vegetation growing in the clefts, sometimes hanging by his fingers,

with his weight pressed against the rock, sometimes pausing in a more secure spot to take breath and rest for a few moments.

At length he came to a place, thirty yards down the cliff, where the rock bulged out under him, offering no hold for hand or foot, and with a chill of despair he stopped.

He was close to the end of his journey now, and he was stopped. He could not look downwards without losing his hold, but the wash of the waters was clearly audible to him. Without looking down, he called:

"Marjorie!"

"Harry!"

Her voice came back, near at hand now. Below the bulging that stopped him was where she was. It prevented him from going lower; it prevented her from climbing higher.

"I'm near you, Marjorie!"

"Yes, Harry!"

"Hold on! Help is coming! They won't be long! Are you in the water now?"

"Yes. It's coming in fast."

"You can hold on?"

"Yes." The girl's voice was almost a sob. "I—I will try. But you, Harry. Where are you?"

"I'm near you! I'm coming!"

The junior gritted his teeth. He would not be baffled. For a minute he paused to rest his aching muscles, to recover his breath. Then he worked his way down, on one side of the bulging rock. How he did it he did not know, but he found a way. Where there seemed no hold he clung on. Lower and lower, till a glimpse of a white face in the starlight caught his eye.

"Marjorie!"

"Harry, you have come!"

The girl was up to her waist in the water, clinging on mechanically, in danger every moment of being swept away. Only the courage given her by Harry's coming had enabled her to hold on so long. She was exhausted, fainting.

Wharton went no lower. He knelt on a tiny ledge of rock, clinging with one hand, and extended the other down to Marjorie.

The girl clasped it with her cold fingers.

"Marjorie!" Wharton spoke in hurried, gasping tones. "Can you pull yourself up here—with my help? Try!"

"I will try."

Wharton exerted all his strength, and Marjorie was drawn to the tiny ledge. There she was safe. The ledge was not ten inches wide, and it extended only three feet in length; but it was a foothold, and so long as they could cling to the face of the cliff they were safe.

Marjorie's strength was gone. Wharton held on to a jutting point of rock with his left hand, and his right arm was round the girl's drooping form. Marjorie, almost fainting, leaned against the cliff.

Answers to Spelling Bee.

IRRESISTIBLE
AQUILINE
PRESUMPTUOUS
PLAGUY
NUCLEUS
PORTENTOUS

How many words did you get right? Another test next week.

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The tide was creeping on. Some minutes passed in silence. Both were too exhausted to speak. The water washed slowly up to the ledge; it was soon over their feet. Marjorie shuddered as she realised that it was washing right over the spot where she had been clinging.

Wharton listened intently for some sound from above. Only the night breeze murmuring in the crannies of the cliff came to his ears. Would help never come?

He doubted if he could have climbed back in his exhausted state, but with Marjorie to aid, it was impossible. He could only wait for help.

Exactly how high the water would rise he did not know. It was washing round his feet; but he thought it must be almost at the full now.

"You have saved my life, Harry—if we get away."

"We shall get away," said Harry cheerfully. "Help is coming. They may be up there with the rope any minute now. How did you come to be caught by the tide, Marjorie?"

"I—I had forgotten the tide. I was walking home from Ferndale, and I took the short cut by the sea. And when I found I could not go forward, or go back, I was frightened. I remembered what the fishermen had told me, of a man being caught here in the tide, and drowned. And then I heard your voice."

"Thank goodness we came this way!"

A light flashed from the cliff. Harry's heart beat fast. From above came a hoarse voice shouting through the gloom:

"Ahoy, there!"

The Rescue!

HARRY WHARTON uttered an exclamation of relief. He knew the voice; it was that of Captain Stump, the wooden-legged old seaman who dwelt in the Anchor Inn at Pegg. It was help at last.

"Hallo!" shouted Harry.

"Are you all right?"

"Yes."

"And the ledgy?"

"Yes."

"Bust my topsails! That's lucky! Look out for the rope!"

"Right-ho!"

A thick, tarry rope came swinging down the cliff. Harry Wharton caught the end, and called out to the sailorman. Then he turned to the girl.

"I will fasten it round you, Marjorie, and you must hold on as well."

"Yes, Harry!"

He made a wide loop in the rope so that Marjorie could sit in it as a swing, leaving a loose end to tie round her so that she could not fall even if she did let go. Then he gave the signal to Captain Stump to haul away.

There were three or four stout fishermen on the cliff, and the hauling up was the work only of a few minutes. The girl, clinging to the rope above her with two hands, was pulled into reach and lifted over the top of the cliff.

Miss Penelope Primrose was there, with Miss Locke and some of the girls of Cliff House. They received the half-fainting girl with tender hands.

Marjorie had been missed and searched for, and Billy Bunter had found Cliff House in a state of alarm. To call the fishermen to help, from the village, was quick work, long enough

as it seemed to Harry and Marjorie, clinging to the cliff.

"Come, bring her home at once!" exclaimed Miss Locke.

But Marjorie resisted.

"Not till Harry is safe."

"Bust my topsails! He'll be up in a minute, ma'am," said Captain Stump.

And Marjorie, wet as she was, was allowed to wait to see her rescuer safe. The rope went swinging down the cliff again, and Harry Wharton caught it. He clung to it and was dragged up, and stood upon the cliff, wet, shivering, but glowing with satisfaction. He would have gone through more for Marjorie Hazeldene's sake.

"Safe now, ma'am."

Miss Locke pressed Harry's hand.

"We shall never be able to thank you, Harry," she said softly. "You have saved Marjorie's life. You are a plucky lad."

And Miss Penelope took both Harry's hands, and in her joy and relief, kissed him on both cheeks. Then Marjorie was hurried off.

Miss Penelope insisted upon Wharton accompanying them to Cliff House to dry his clothes before going home, and Wharton willingly enough assented. Billy Bunter showed a great keenness, too. He was hungry, and he had already tasted Miss Penelope's hospitality.

Captain Stump and the fishermen accompanied them to the door of Cliff House, where Miss Penelope gave them substantial rewards for their assistance.

Wharton was wrapped in blankets, in a bed-room, before a roaring fire, while his clothes were dried.

Both the juniors had a good supper, and Bunter distinguished himself in the gastronomic line, as usual.

The juniors took their leave at last and set out for Greyfriars. There was a grin on the face of Gosling the porter as he admitted them.

"You're to go straight to the 'Ead," he said.

"Very well."

"I saw 'im take out a cane when he give me my horders," said Gosling casually.

Wharton made no reply. Billy Bunter tugged at his sleeve as they crossed the Close.

"I say, Wharton, you'll own up that it was your fault, you know."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"That's all right, Bunter. Don't be afraid."

Dr. Locke received the juniors grimly. The cane was on the table ready. But he gave them a chance to explain; and his face changed as he heard Harry's explanation.

Wharton dwelt lightly on his part in the affair. He simply said that Miss Hazeldene had been caught by the tide, and that he had stopped to help her.

"I know I can take your word, Wharton," said Dr. Locke quietly. "You are excused. Good-night!"

And the juniors went to bed. They were tired out, and they slept like tops till the rising-bell went the next morning.

THE OPEN ROAD.

Why not cycle to school, 'chaps? It's grand fun! Saves fares and pushing on and off buses and trams, though I hope you don't push, anyway. If you are considering it, go to your local dealer, and he will give you full particulars of Hercules Cycles, which, you will soon agree, have a superior finish, and run easily. And they are very reasonably priced. You can get models from 24 7s. 6d., or about 2s. a week.

An Amazing Match!

HARRY WHARTON felt none the worse on the following day for his adventure on the cliffs, but Bunter adopted an air of fatigue that attracted general attention.

In the class that morning Mr. Quelch's eye singled him out, and he was asked, in a sarcastic tone, whether he had made a mistake in imagining the form he was sitting on to be a sofa, upon which he was at liberty to take a nap. The Remove smiled, but Bunter assumed an injured expression.

"Oh, really, sir, I'm so tired!"

"Dear me! Have you by any chance been doing any work?" asked the Form-master, in the same sarcastic tone.

"I had a lot of climbing on the cliffs to do last night, sir," said Bunter meekly. "Miss Hazeldene of Cliff House was caught by the tide and very nearly drowned."

"Indeed?"

"Fortunately, we rescued her, sir."

"Whom do you mean by 'we'?" asked Mr. Quelch.

"Myself and Wharton, sir. Wharton helped—I may say he did a lot."

Harry Wharton smiled. Mr. Quelch looked curiously from one to the other. He did not quite know what to make of it; but he let Bunter alone for the rest of the lesson, and the fat junior enjoyed the laziest morning of the term.

After lessons inquiries were piled upon Wharton and Bunter. Harry said blankly that he had nothing to say on the subject. He could not very well relate exactly what had occurred without appearing to laud himself, and he rather chose to appear brusque, even to his chums.

"But is there any truth in what Bunter says?" demanded Bob Cherry.

"Oh, yes—as much as usual."

"That's about one per cent, I suppose."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"About that," said Harry, laughing. "The fact is, Miss Hazeldene was caught by the tide, and we came along in time to help."

"I fetched help," said Bunter. "I ran like the wind, and nearly broke my shins—and my neck, too—on the beastly rocks. Wharton stayed there. Of course, I don't say that Wharton wouldn't have done what he could. Only it happened to be me that did it, that's all. I don't want to boast. It was really what any fellow might have done. Only as it happened I saved the life of Hazeldene's sister, and if Vaseline likes to stand me a feed, I shan't say no."

"You won't have a chance, till I know something more certain on the subject," said Hazeldene grimly.

As Wharton had nothing to say, Bunter's explanations grew further from the facts till wondrous yarns were afloat on the subject; and Bunter assumed the manners and airs of a modest hero.

Meanwhile, the time was drawing near for the cricket match with the Cliff House team.

Marjorie was little the worse for the experience, dangerous as it had been; and Harry walked over to Cliff House to inquire about her, and learned that she was taking her usual place in class.

The cricket match remained a fixture, and the Remove cricketers, whatever they felt on the subject, had to make up their minds to go through with it.

Bunter pleaded hard to be included in the

team. The hospitality of Cliff House appealed to him more than the cricket. As no one was keen on joining a team that was to play a freak match, Bunter was allowed to have his way.

A weak Remove team would give the girls a chance and make it a little less of a walk-over. So when the time came for the visit to Cliff House, Bunter proudly donned his flannels, which were strained almost to bursting-point when he was crammed inside them.

The story of the girls' challenge had gone the rounds at Greyfriars, and the fellows all took an amused interest in the matter.

Temple, Dabney & Co. of the Upper Fourth had announced their intention of seeing the match, and most of the Remove who were not in the team declared similar intentions.



Lower and lower Harry Wharton worked his way down the cliff, making use of any small footholds and handholds that presented themselves. Below him Marjorie Hazeldene, up to her waist in water, was in danger every moment of being swept away!

There was even a possibility that seniors would come along to look on; the general impression being that the match would be a farce from beginning to end. Judging from the knowledge Marjorie & Co. had displayed of the noble game, Harry Wharton couldn't help thinking so himself.

The cricketers walked over to Cliff House in the sunny May afternoon.

"It will be fun, anyway," Frank Nugent remarked, as they came in sight of the gates. "We shall have a good laugh all round."

"Well, keep as serious as possible," said Wharton. "I shouldn't like the girls to think we were laughing at them."

"Oh, no, of course not! But blessed if I know how I shall keep from grinning, though."

"I fear that the griffulness will be terrific, my worthy chums."

"Here we are!"

They entered at the gates of Cliff House. The playing field of the girls was very smooth and green, and, beside the painted wooden pavilion, a tent was erected for the accommodation of the Greyfriars cricketers.

Marjorie & Co. received the visiting team with all the gravity due to the occasion. It had been agreed that it was to be a single-innings match, as there would otherwise be no time to play it out. How long the girls' innings would last, however, if the Greyfriars bowlers put forth their best efforts might have been calculated in seconds.

"Glad to see you!" said Marjorie, as she shook hands with the Remove captain. "Ripping weather for the match!"

"Yes, isn't it?" said Harry, smiling.

"We're going to give you a tussle, you know."

"We'll try to keep our end up," said Wharton gravely, and giving Nugent a severe glance out of the corner of his eye just in time to avert an explosion.

The juniors looked over the Cliff House team with interest; eleven charming girls, looking very healthy and bright. Marjorie was captain of the team; and Alice, Clara, and Wilhelmina were her right-hand men—or, rather, right-hand women.

Marjorie tossed for choice of innings and lost, and the Remove batted first.

"My goodness!" said Clara. "Hadh't we better bat first, Marjorie?"

"We've lost the toss."

"It's all one," said Wharton quickly. "We should be very glad if you would bat first. In—in fact, we should prefer it."

Marjorie shook her head decidedly.

"Certainly not; we're going to play the game. I hope you are not going to give us advantages simply because we are girls. We want to win this game on our merits."

"Ha, ha—I mean, of course! We'll bat, then."

So the Remove opened the innings.

Wharton sent in Bunter and Wun Lung for the start. If the girls could bowl at all, those wickets ought to fall, and encourage them a little. Clara was sent on to bowl against Bunter's wicket.

Clara's ideas of bowling seemed to be a little mixed. She retired to some distance from the crease and took a run forward and let fly the ball. Unluckily, it left her hand at the wrong moment and clumped with a thud on the side of Wun Lung's head, who was standing away from the wicket.

The unfortunate Chinese gave a fearful yell and hopped in the air.

Clara looked round in surprise.

"Where's the ball?"

A fieldsmen tossed it back to her. Wun Lung rubbed his head. Clara looked at the poor Chinese indignantly.

"I suppose that's one to us?" she said.

Wun Lung stared—as well he might.

"No savvy," he murmured.

"Isn't that one to us?" Clara called out to Wharton. "Wasn't it leg before wicket, or something?"

"Ha, ha, ha! I—I mean, no. It's all right. Go ahead!"

Clara looked puzzled and a little dissatisfied, but she went ahead. The next ball missed Wun Lung—he took good care that it should—and it bumped along the ground towards Bunter's wicket. There was no danger to the wicket, but Bunter swiped blindly and knocked his stumps down.

"How's that?" called out Clara triumphantly.

"Faith, and it's out!" said Micky Desmond, who was umpiring.

"Hurrah!" shouted the pupils of Cliff House, who gathered round in an interested crowd.

"Bravo, Clara!"

"Well bowled!"

Nugent, who was almost suffocating with suppressed laughter, went in in Bunter's place. Clara bowled against him, and the ball flew into the crowd, and there was a general yelling and scattering.

The rest of the over resulted in nothing more serious than that, but Clara showed no desire to cross over.

"Why can't I go on bowling from this end?" she asked.

"It's against the rules," said Marjorie.

"My goodness! Does it matter?"

The Remove batsmen laughed, and Marjorie assumed a severe expression.

"Of course," she said, with an air of great knowledge. "If you bowled again from this end you would be off-side!"

This explanation, which sent the juniors almost into convulsions, quite satisfied Clara, and she crossed to the other end. She still retained the ball, and when the umpire delicately hinted that it should be handed to someone else she looked at him in innocent surprise.

"Why shouldn't I bowl again if I like?"

"Faith, and there's no reason at all!" said Micky Desmond, who was too true an Irishman ever to contradict a lady. "Bowl, by all means!"

So Clara bowled again, and continued to do so for several overs. She was evidently the crack

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bowler of the Cliff House team, and on several occasions the ball went within a yard or two of the wicket.

It seldom came near enough to the batsmen for them to hit it; but on one or two occasions Nugent knocked it away, and the batsmen ran.

A hard hit sent it to the boundary at last, and nearly the whole field rushed in pursuit. Nugent and Wun Lung ran and ran, and then dropped into a leisurely walk.

Meanwhile, the girls hunted for the ball. It was three or four minutes before it turned up, but only 5 runs had been registered. The batsmen were laughing too much to run.

The ball came in at last.

Whether the fieldsmen deemed it the correct thing to aim at the batsmen or not cannot be said, but the ball caught Nugent on the chest, and he sat down with a bump on the turf.

"Oh!" he gasped.

The wicketkeeper picked up the ball and knocked his balls down.

"How's that?" shrieked half a dozen triumphant voices.

"Out!" said Micky Desmond promptly.

Nugent staggered to his feet.

"Here, I say!" he exclaimed.

"Now, play the game!" said Clara, shaking a finger at him. "You're out!"

"Oh, my hat! All right, I'm out!"

And Nugent returned to the pavilion. Harry Wharton took his place.

The bowler was changed now, and Miss Wilhelmina Limburger took the leather. She made a little run, and came very close to Harry's wicket as she bowled to Wun Lung. Her skirt brushed the bails from Harry's wicket, and she gave a little crow of satisfaction. Apparently she did not regard it as being of much importance which wicket she took.

"How was dat, umpire?" she called out.

"Out!" said Micky Desmond.

"What!" roared Wharton.

"Out!"

"You utter duffer—"

"Faith, and it's out, Wharton, darling. Who's umpiring this game?"

"You are, but—"

"Sure, and I'm not going to contradict a lady at all. You're out!"

Wharton laughed and walked back to the pavilion. After that, the innings closed very fast. The bowlers had learned that, whenever they cried "How's that?" the umpire would respond "Out!" and, of course, they took full advantage of that fact.

The Greyfriars wickets were soon all down for a total of seven runs, and the Cliff House team rejoiced.

"Hard cheese, old fellow!" said Marjorie to Wharton, patting him on the shoulder. "Better luck next time, you know."

"Oh, yes!" grinned Wharton.

"And you haven't scored any runs," said Clara sympathetically. "It's very rough. You didn't expect to be out for a pigeon's egg."

"Ha, ha! You mean a duck's egg!"

"I don't see much difference," said Clara stiffly.

"No, no; of course, there isn't much difference," said Wharton hastily.

Clara still looked somewhat prim, and she confided to Wilhelmina that, whether she could talk cricket or not, she could play it better than some boys, judging by results, and the German girl agreed "tat was so."

And now came the time for the Cliff House innings.

The Greyfriars innings had been finished so quickly that Miss Hazeldene rather regretted it was a single innings match. However, she did not propose an alteration. After all, if the juniors were beaten, they were beaten, and that was the main point. And Cliff House only wanted eight runs to win, and, considering their success so far, victory seemed certain.

"If the batting is anything like the bowling, it will be ripping!" Bob Cherry murmured.

"The rippingfulness will be terrific!"

"You can bowl, Nugent."

Nugent took the ball doubtfully. However, he went to the crease. Marjorie and Clara were opening the innings for Cliff House, and Clara received first over.

She swiped at the ball as if she were attempting to describe a circle with the bat, but the ground got in the way, and the willow jarred and dropped from her hands. The ball whipped the middle stump out of the ground. But Clara made no movement to return to the pavilion.

"How's that?" sang out Nugent.

"Not out!"

"Eh—what?"

"Not out!" said Micky Desmond obstinately. "A lady's never out first ball of the over."

"Oh, chuck that ball over here!"

Nugent bowled again with the same result; but Clara showed no disposition to leave the wicket. She set up the stump, and put the bails straight again, and took middle. The Greyfriars juniors looked on at her dazedly.

"Well, that's out, I suppose?" said Nugent; and even Micky Desmond's Irish politeness was at a loss. But Clara was unmoved.

"Of course not!" she said indignantly. "I wasn't looking."

"But—"

"Please bowl again!" said Clara, in a tone that decided the matter.

Nugent bowled again. Marvellous to relate, Clara struck the ball with the bat, and it went straight into the hands of Wun Lung.

"How's that?"

"Faith, I'm afraid it's out!"

"Nonsense!" said Clara. "I should have taken several runs if that person had not stopped the ball. I don't know whether you call this cricket. I regard it as persecution, so there!"

Harry Wharton gasped for breath, and made a sign to the fieldsmen not to stop any more balls. After that the batting went on more briskly. Clara and Marjorie scored runs and the fieldsmen sauntered up in a leisurely manner with the ball after they had finished running.

At last Bob Cherry, by sheer force of habit, sent the ball into the wicket from long field, and Marjorie was out.

She took her defeat smilingly enough.

Wilhelmina joined Clara at the wickets, and

between them they did the rest of the batting for that remarkable innings.

At seven runs the crowd of Cliff House pupils set up a great cheer. It was echoed by a crowd of Greyfriars fellows who were looking on and admiring that wonderful cricket match. The Cliff House side only wanted one run to win, and they had nine wickets to fall. It looked like a certainty.

As a matter of fact, Wharton and Nugent could have taken every wicket without another run being scored, if they had liked, but that would probably not have finished the match, for Clara, at least, was by no means inclined to admit that she was out when she was caught, bowled, stumped, or run out.

As the juniors knew no other way of getting a batsman out, they would have found it a very hard matter indeed to win the match.

The winning run was scored by Clara, who was out several times according to the rules, but was still batting merrily. And all Cliff House set up a shout of victory, and even the Removites could scarce forbear to cheer.

And after the match, boy and girl cricketers fraternised in a cheerful tea on the lawn, presided over by Miss Penelope Primrose, and the Greyfriars fellows had a very pleasant time indeed.

When the time came to say good-bye, the Cliff House cricketers saw their visitors off as far as the corner of the road, and they parted with much cordiality.

"I hope we shall play some more matches, and give you your revenge, you know," said Marjorie. "I like cricket ever so much better than tennis, and it is so gratifying to win the match on our form."

And it was not until the Cliff House girls were quite out of hearing that sundry mysterious cachinnations were allowed to escape the Greyfriars cricketers.

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