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# THE SCHOOL UNDER CANVAS!

A SPLENDID TALE OF GORDON GAY & CO.  
By PROSPER HOWARD.



3<sup>d.</sup>



By **DAVID GOODWIN**

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# The School Under Canvas!

*A Splendid, Long Complete Tale of GORDON GAY & CO.  
Full of Novel and Rousing Adventure Incidents.*

By **PROSPER HOWARD.**

## CHAPTER 1.

### Nobody Knows!

**B** UZZ-Z-Z-Z!

The bell rang, and almost immediately the big doors of the Fourth Form-room at Rylcombe Grammar School were flung open, and the juniors trooped gleefully out.

Morning lessons were over.

Lessons had seemed longer than usual that morning. They always seemed long enough, as a matter of fact, to the youthful Grammarians. Most of them would rather have been out in the fields or on the river.

Gordon Gay, the captain of the Fourth Form, had confided to his chum, Wootton major, in a whisper, that he would give all the books of Cæsar, and all the orations of Cicero, with the history of the Carthaginian War thrown in, to get out of the stuffy Form-room and on to the cricket-pitch for ten minutes. Unfortunately, Mr. Adams, the master of the Fourth, had observed the whisper, and Gordon Gay was the richer by fifty lines from the despised Julius.

But Gordon Gay did not mind now that he was out once more. It had really seemed as if lessons would never end that morning. The June sun was blazing down upon the Close, and shining in at the Form-room windows, and a soft breeze was stirring the leaves of the trees outside. As Tadpole of the Fourth put it in his poetical way—Nature was calling to them. And certainly the juniors were eager enough to obey the call.

Gordon Gay stood in the big doorway of the schoolhouse and looked out into the sunny Close, and stretched his limbs and yawned.

"Lessons are a mistake in this weather," he remarked. "If the Head would take my advice——"

"Which, of course, he's very likely to do," grinned Wootton major.

"If the Head would take my advice," pursued Gordon Gay, unheeding the interruption, "he would make a little change. Now, suppose we had cricket instead of Latin——"

"Hear, hear!"

"Rowing instead of French——"

"Good!"

"Swimming instead of German——"

"Hurrah!"

And—and swinging in a hammock instead of maths," said Gordon Gay. "I should look upon that as an improvement all round. Talking of cricket,

let's get down and knock the ball about for a bit." He looked back into the house. "Why don't you fellows come out?" he demanded.

A crowd of the Fourth-Formers had gathered about the notice-board in the hall. There was evidently a notice of unusual interest on the board, judging by the eagerness of the juniors to read it. There were many exclamations as the juniors crowded round the board, and Gordon Gay turned back to join them. He made his way to the board by the simple expedient of digging right and left with his elbows, and there was a howl of indignation from the fellows he displaced.

"Ow! You ass!"

"Keep back there!"

"Don't shove!"

"Yow!"

"It's all right, my infants!" said Gordon Gay serenely. "Make room for your uncle! What is that giddy notice about?"

"Anything to do with the cricket?" asked Wootton major.

"It's by the Head," said Tadpole. "There's something up!"

Gordon Gay read the notice aloud:

"The School will assemble in Big Hall at half-past six o'clock. An important announcement will be made.

(Signed)

E. Monk, Headmaster."

Gordon Gay whistled softly.

"An important announcement—eh?" he remarked. "Anybody know what it's about?"

Apparently nobody did.

"Where's Monkey?" demanded Gordon Gay. "He ought to know. If he's brought his father up properly, the Head can't start keeping secrets from him. Where's Franky?"

"Yes, he ought to know, if anybody does," said Wootton major.

"Where's Frank Monk?"

"Monk! Monk! Monkey!"

"Where's Monkey?"

"Monk! Monk!"

The juniors shouted for Frank Monk of the Fourth. He had come out of the Form-room with the rest, but he did not seem to be in evidence now. Frank Monk was the son of Dr. Monk, the headmaster of Rylcombe Grammar School, and so the juniors had some reason to suppose that he might be able to shed some light upon the mystery. They were all very keen to know what was the important announcement the Head had to make. It was very probably something that affected their interests; and anyway, they were curious. There was a general yell for Frank Monk:

"Monk! Monk! Monkey!"

Fellows of other Forms were gathering round the notice-board, and the crowd was thickening. Punter of the Fifth elbowed his way to the front, amid glares from the juniors, who could do nothing but glare; for Punter was a big fellow, accustomed to having his own way. Fourth-Formers and Fifth-Formers, and seniors of the Sixth, and innumerable fags, gathered round to read the notice, and asked one another what it meant; but no one seemed to be able to throw any light on the subject. The curiosity was intense. And Frank Monk, the only fellow who might have explained, was missing. There was a shout from Wootton minor at the door.

"There goes the bounder! He's got his bat! Come on!"

Gordon Gay & Co. shouted from the school-house door. Three juniors—



Monk, Lane, and Carboy of the Fourth—were going down towards the cricket-field, and Frank Monk had a bat under his arm. He turned his head calmly as the juniors shouted and waved their hands from the doorway.

"Hallo!" he called out. "Coming down to the cricket?"

"Come back!"

"Can't!"

"We want you!"

"Sorry!"

"There's a notice on the board!" yelled Gordon Gay.

"Well, I didn't put it there!"

"We want you to read it, and——"

"Oh, that will do when I come in!" said Frank Monk easily, and he sauntered on with his chums.

Gordon Gay snorted.

"After him!" he exclaimed. "We'll jolly well see whether it will do when he comes in! If he won't walk in, we'll carry him!"

"Hear, hear!"

And Gordon Gay & Co. rushed down the steps and sped across the Close on the track of Frank Monk & Co. They came up to them with a rush. Lane and Carboy were charged off, and a crowd of juniors laid violent hands upon Monk.

"Oh!" roared Monk. "Hands off, you asses! Yaroo!"

The bat slipped from under his arm. Wootton major gave a terrific yell, and hopped upon one leg. The end of the bat had clumped upon his toe. He clasped his damaged foot as if he loved it, and danced on the other, roaring:

"You ass! Ow! You fathead! Yow! You chump! Yaroo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You grinning asses—groo! Ow! My toe's squashed! Yowp! What are you cackling at—yowp!" roared Wootton major.

"Never mind your toe!" said Gordon Gay cheerfully. "It might have been worse."

"How could it have been worse, ass?"

"Well, it might have been my toe!" said Gay innocently.

"Why, you frabjous fathead——"

"Bring him along!"

Frank Monk struggled to escape, but it was useless. He was swept off his feet in the grasp of half a dozen juniors, and swept away in the direction of the house. Wootton major was left to nurse his injured toe and to say things. Frank Monk was rushed up the steps and into the house, with his arms and legs flying wildly in the air.

"Ow!" he roared. "You silly asses! Leggo! Chuck it! Yaroo! Yah! Let me down!"

"Bring him along!" said Gordon Gay. "Your pater has put up a notice on the board, Monkey, and we want you to construe!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yow! I won't! Leggo!"

"Don't you fags shove me!" roared Punter of the Fifth, as the juniors pushed their prisoner across the hall. "Keep off! I—— Oh!"

Monk was bumped into the Fifth-Former, who was standing in the way. Punter roared, and sat down with surprising suddenness. The rush of juniors passed over and round him, and Frank Monk was brought up to the notice-board. There, still in the grasp of Gordon Gay & Co., he was swung round so that he could read it. Gordon Gay pointed to the notice on the Head's handwriting.

"Read that, Monkey!"

"Ow!"

"Read it, you ass!"

"Yow!"

"What does it mean?"

"Yah!"

"Look here! It's no good talking Esperanto or Chinese, or whatever that is, to us!" said Gordon Gay. "We don't understand it. Construe that notice for us!"

"Grooh!"

"What does it mean?"

"Leggo!"

"Rats! It doesn't mean anything of the sort. Now then, we're waiting. If he doesn't read that notice at once, Tadpole, lay into him with that cricket-stump!"

"Hold on!" roared Frank Monk. "I'll read it!"

"I thought you would!" grinned Gordon Gay. "Go ahead!"

Frank Monk read the notice. He looked as surprised as the rest of the Fourth had looked. Apparently he could make nothing of it. The juniors watched him eagerly.

"Well?" demanded Gordon Gay. "What does it mean?"

"Eh?"

"What's the important announcement going to be?"

"I don't know!"

"You don't know!" exclaimed the Cornstalk junior. "Do you mean to say your pater hasn't said anything about it?"

Frank Monk grinned.

"Not a word!" he replied.

"You don't know what's going to happen?"

"No more than you do!"

Gordon Gay gave a snort of disgust.

"Well, you utter ass!" he exclaimed. "After giving us all the trouble of carrying you in here, you tell us coolly that you don't know any more about it than we do!"

"I didn't ask you to carry me in here!" grinned Monk.

"Oh, don't argue!" said Gordon Gay crossly. "I never met such a chap for arguing! I say, you chaps, he's given us all this trouble for nothing! Bump him!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Here! Hold on!" roared Monk. "Ow! Chuck it! I——"

Bump!

"Yar-o-o-o-o-oop!"

Bump! Bump!

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

"There!" said Gordon Gay severely. "You'll think twice before you give us so much trouble for nothing again! Come on, you chaps, let's go down to the cricket, for goodness' sake! We've wasted more than enough time on Monkey!"

And the grinning juniors trooped away, leaving Frank Monk sitting on the floor, very dusty and dishevelled, and gasping for breath.

## CHAPTER 2.

## The Self-Sacrificers.

**C**RICKET practice was carried on with great keenness, until it was interrupted by the loud tones of a bell.

"Dinner," said Wootton major laconically, "and I'm hungry as a hunter. I say, I hear there's a new kid coming to-day—a French chap."

"I've just heard it, too," said Gay. "I've got an idea. Have you chaps ever heard of the Entente Cordiale?"

"The Ontong Cordiale?" said Wootton major thoughtfully. "I think I saw it in a newspaper somewhere."

"What is it?" asked Jack Wootton.

Gordon Gay laughed.

"It means a good and cordial understanding. It's in French, you know, because—because it is. There's a giddy Entente Cordiale between England and France. We back them up, you know, and they back us up, and that sort of thing."

"Well, what about it?" demanded the two Woottons together. "Why don't you come down to dinner?"

"Because I've got a wheeze. The Entente Cordiale is a jolly good thing, isn't it?"

"Is it?"

"Blessed if I see how it matters to us!"

"Well, it does matter to us," said Gordon Gay. "I think we are called upon to back up the Entente Cordiale."

His chums stared at him.

"How on earth——"

"What the dickens——"

"There's a French chap coming here," went on the Cornstalk. "Now backing up the Entente Cordiale means giving him a good welcome and backing him up, you know. And the first step would be getting leave from lessons, and going down into Rylcombe to meet him when he arrives."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I think we ought to get leave, considering the Entente Cordiale," said Gordon Gay thoughtfully. "And it's German this afternoon, too. Herr Hentzel is always ratty in this hot weather, and it would be ripping to give him a miss."

"Good egg!" said Wootton major. "We'll try it on old Adams."

"Come on, then!"

Mr. Adams, the master of the Fourth, was about to leave his study for the dining-room when the three juniors reached it.

"May we speak to you a minute, sir?" said Gordon Gay, with his blandest smile.

Mr. Adams peered at him through his spectacles. Mr. Adams was a kind old gentleman, with a bald spot and spectacles.

"Yes, Gay, certainly. What is it?"

"There's a new boy coming to the school this afternoon, sir," said Gay meekly, "a French chap, sir, named Blong, or something."

"Yes, Gustave Blanc," said Mr. Adams, with a nod. "Quite so, Gay. Trust that you boys will be very polite to him, and show him every consideration, as he is a foreigner here, and a stranger to our customs."

"Exactly, sir; that's what we were thinking of."

"I am very glad to hear it, Gay."

"In fact, sir, considering that there is an Entente Cordiale going strong at the present moment, sir, we thought it our duty to show this French chap every possible attention, sir," said Gordon Gay.

"Quite right—quite right, my boy!"

"Under the circumstances, sir, wouldn't it be only polite for some of us to meet him at the station, sir?" Gordon Gay suggested. "Of course, it would be rather a sacrifice missing afternoon lessons, but we should be willing to do that, sir, for the sake of backing up the Entente Cordiale."

"Quite willing," said Wootton major

"Very willing indeed," said Jack Wootton.

Mr. Adams nodded approval.

"Very good, my dear boys. This is indeed thoughtful of you. The new boy arrives by the half-past three train, and you may certainly go to the station to meet him. Of course, it is understood that you bring him directly to the school, and that you do not play any jokes upon him."

"Oh, sir!"

"I merely mention that," said Mr. Adams. "Very well, you will be excused from lessons at three o'clock, in time to walk down to the station."

"Perhaps it would be a good idea, sir, if you think proper, for us to go down very early, in—in case Blong should come by an earlier train, sir," Gordon Gay suggested diffidently. "We shouldn't mind giving up the whole afternoon, sir, as it is a special occasion."

Mr. Adams smiled.

"Three o'clock will be soon enough," he said. "Master Gustave Blanc will arrive by the half-past three train, and not earlier. I must not take too great an advantage of your generous self-sacrifice, Gay."

And Mr. Adams walked away. The chums looked at one another.

"Well, getting off at three is better than nothing," Gordon Gay remarked. "We sha'n't miss the German lesson, but we shall get out of maths. and history. We can learn all the history we want from Taddy's historical paintings. Now let's get in to dinner."

And they got.

### CHAPTER 3.

#### A Little Too Late.

**F**RANK MONK wore a thoughtful expression as he sat at dinner at the Fourth Form table in the dining-room at the Grammar School. Monk was thinking. His chums, Lane and Carboy, who sat on either side of him, looked at him occasionally, wondering what was the cause of his unusually deep cogitations. Gordon Gay looked across the table at him occasionally, too, and grinned. The Cornstalk was thinking of the next way in which he had got ahead of the rival Co. in the Fourth. There was a very keen rivalry in the Fourth Form at the Grammar School between Gordon Gay & Co. on the one hand and Frank Monk & Co. on the other. Frank Monk had been captain of the Form before Gay and the two Woottons arrived from Australia; but the three Cornstalks had immediately proceeded to wake things up in the Fourth. Monk still considered himself Form captain, but the Cornstalk Co. did very much as they liked, and the Old Co., as the three chums called themselves, had plenty to do to keep the Cornstalks in their place, and they did not quite succeed in doing it. Sometimes the rivalry between the two Co.'s made matters very lively in the Fourth Form at Ryloombe Grammar School.

The Cornstalks had scored this time, in getting leave from afternoon

school for the walk down to Rylcombe Station. The duty of meeting the new boy and guiding him to the school was a light one. As Gordon Gay remarked, he would willingly have met a hippopotamus or a prize tiger at the station, if necessary, in order to get out of doors on that glorious summer's afternoon.

Frank Monk cogitated during dinner; and when that meal was over, he signed to his chums to stay in the hall, and wait for Mr. Adams. The master of the Fourth came out with his slow and solemn tread, and Frank Monk met him most respectfully.

"Please excuse me, sir——"

"Certainly, Monk!" said Mr. Adams, peering at him. "What is the matter?"

"Ahem! Nothing, sir. There is a new fellow coming into the Fourth, I hear."

"Quite so."

"A French chap, sir."

"Quite correct."

"I—I was thinking, sir," said Monk diffidently, "that as the new chap is a foreigner, sir, and perhaps does not talk very much English, sir, I—I was thinking that it would be rather a good wheeze, sir—I—I mean a good idea, for some fellows to meet him at the station and bring him here, sir."

"Ahem! It is an excellent idea, Monk!"

"Yes; so we thought, sir."

"And it has already been suggested to me——"

"Indeed, sir——"

"And I have arranged that three juniors shall meet Gustave Blanc——"

"Oh, good!"

"Gordon Gay and the two Woottons——"

"Eh?"

"Are going to meet the new boy——"

"Oh!"

"So it will not be necessary for you to go, Monk. I thank you, however, for the suggestion, which was indeed very kind and thoughtful of you."

And Mr. Adams rustled on.

Frank Monk looked after him, and then looked at Lane and Carboy.

"Done!" he ejaculated.

"Oh, quite."

"Those blessed Cornstalks have got ahead of us this time!" said Frank savagely. "I suppose they tackled Adams before dinner. Blow!"

"There is the bounder grinning at us!" growled Lane.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Cornstalk, who had heard all that passed.

"You're a little too late, Monkey! Ha, ha, ha!"

"You cheeky sweep!" exclaimed Frank wrathfully, glaring at Gordon Gay. "I've a jolly good mind to bump you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And I jolly well will!" exclaimed Monk, exasperated. "I owe you a bumping, anyway. Collar him, you chaps!"

"Yes, rather!"

The Old Co. rushed at Gordon Gay wrathfully. The Cornstalk laughed and dashed down the passage. The three chums dashed after him at top speed. After the bright sunlight in the hall, the passage past the Form-room was dusky, and Gordon Gay did not see a blonde-bearded man who slipped out into the passage, until he was upon him. Then it was too late.

Crash!

The blonde gentleman went over on the floor with a yell, and Gordon Gay

went sprawling across him, dazed by the shock. Monk, who was in advance, made an attempt to slacken down, but Lane and Carboy crashed into him from behind, and he was hurled forward. He sprawled across Gordon Gay, and Lane and Carboy stumbled over him and sprawled upon him. Quite a heap of juniors were sprawling and struggling on top of the blonde gentleman, who was lying upon his back roaring.

"Ach! Mein Gott! Tat you get off! Ach! Oh! Ach-h-h-h-h!"

"Gerroff!" mumbled Gordon Gay. "You awful asses, get off! You've floored Hentzel! Gerroff!"

"My hat!" gasped Monk.

He shoved Lane off, and dragged himself up. Lane sat gasping. Carboy rolled on the floor, and gasped, too. Monk lent Gordon Gay a hand and dragged him off the German master.

Herr Hentzel sat up, with both hands pressed to his ample waistcoat. He had had all his breath knocked out, and he was gasping painfully to get some more.

"I'm so sorry, sir," panted Gordon Gay. "I—I didn't see you, sir!"

"So sorry, sir!" said Monk meekly. "We couldn't stop in time, sir!"

"Oh, quite!" murmured Carboy dazedly.

"Ach! Himmel! You vicked young rascals! You play te trick on purpose! Ach!"

Gordon Gay flushed red. He did not like to have his word doubted, and no other master at Rylcombe School would have doubted it. But Herr Otto Hentzel was not exactly like the other masters. He was a capable German master, but he had no qualities to win either the liking or the respect of the boys.

"Ach"—the German master staggered to his feet, still gasping—"Ach! I tink tat it is a trick, ain't it? Ach! You take five hundred lines of German each, ain't it? Ach! Mein Gott!"

"Oh, sir!"

"Ach! I tink I cane you——"

The juniors melted away. And Herr Otto Hentzel, gasping and furious, staggered away to his study in a furious temper. He had only one consolation, and that was that the offending juniors would be in his class for German that afternoon. And no one knew better than Herr Hentzel how to make a lesson unpleasant to any fellow whom he disliked.

## CHAPTER 4.

### Wasps!

**G**ORDON GAY looked very cheerful as he came into the Fourth Form-room that afternoon. True, he had five hundred lines of German to do, but that did not trouble him very much. The task was a heavy one, but it was not immediately pressing, and Gordon Gay was not accustomed to meeting troubles half-way. What he was thinking about was the fact that he was to escape from the Form-room at three o'clock with his chums, and stroll down to the village through the pleasant, shady lanes. Therefore Gordon Gay looked very cheerful, and his cheerfulness was reflected in the countenances of Wootton major and minor. They grinned at the Old Co. as they took their seats in the Form-room.

German was the second lesson that afternoon, and when it was over the Cornstalk Co. would be free to go. Herr Hentzel entered the Fourth Form-room with a dark frown upon his brow. The Herr had, perhaps, not quite



recovered from his tumble in the Form-room passage; at all events, his temper certainly had not recovered. He cast a glance at Gordon Gay and at the Old Co. which showed plainly enough that there was trouble in store for the four. And the four exchanged warning glances. Outside the Form-room they were rivals; but they were together, shoulder to shoulder, against any common enemy, and Herr Hentzel was certainly an enemy that afternoon.

Mr. Adams had left the Form-room a few minutes before the German master entered. Herr Hentzel was frequently late. Gordon Gay had filled in the interval by buzzing peas from his pea-shooter at the blackboard. Gordon Gay was a dead shot with the pea-shooter, and from his desk he could hit the smallest chalk mark on the blackboard. But immediately the heavy tread of Herr Hentzel was heard, the pea-shooter was slipped into the Cornstalk's pocket. He did not mean to give the German master the slightest excuse for ragging him. He felt that Herr Hentzel could contrive to make enough. And he was right.

Herr Hentzel was evidently in a bad temper, and the juniors were very careful with him. But meekness could not save them. It was, as Frank Monk remarked afterwards, a case of the wolf and the lamb over again—though whether the young rascals of the Fourth could justly be compared to lambs was a question. But it was evident that Herr Hentzel was determined to find fault.

Gordon Gay was his first victim.

The Cornstalk was good at German. He worked as hard as he played, and he could both read and speak German, and any other master but Herr Hentzel would have been more than satisfied with him. Even Herr Hentzel found it difficult to find fault for some time. But Gay was caught at last.

"Ach! I tink tat you are stupid!" said Herr Hentzel. "You know no Sherman. I tink I giff you no more lines. Tat is no use."

"Thank you, sir," said Gordon Gay gravely.

The German's light-blue eyes gleamed.

"I tink tat you stand in te corner of te room," he said. "Go into te corner, and remain dere for te rest of te lesson, you stupid boy!"

Gordon Gay turned red.

He did not mind lines, and he could take canings; but to be placed in a corner of the room, like a naughty little fag in the First or Second Form, was rather too much. He did not move immediately.

"Vill you go?" thundered Herr Hentzel.

Gordon Gay moved unwillingly from his place. There was no help for it; he had to go. But his eyes gleamed as he went. There was a snigger from some of the Fourth. It seemed funny to see Gordon Gay, the great chief of the Cornstalk Co., standing in the corner of the Form-room like a naughty infant, and Gay's face became quite crimson as he heard the snigger. The German master smiled grimly. His object was to make the boy he disliked look ridiculous, and he thought he had succeeded. Carter, the bully of the Fourth, who had had many rubs with the Cornstalk, chuckled openly, and Herr Hentzel did not reprove him, though probably Wootton or Monk would have received a hundred lines for it. Herr Hentzel knew how to discriminate.

The lesson went on. Herr Hentzel turned to Potty Benson, who had the reputation of being the biggest duffer in the Fourth—a reputation he fully lived up to. Benson had a horror of German, and he was so nervous when Herr Hentzel turned his cold, hard eyes upon him, that what little knowledge he had, fled from his mind at once. When Herr Hentzel gave him the simplest

sentence to construe, little Benson could have dealt almost as easily with Chinese or Sanskrit.

"Ach! I tink tat you are as stupid as Gay, ain't it!" growled Herr Hentzel, as little Benson fixed his frightened eyes on him. "I giff you easy sentence, and you know noting. Listen, den: Ich sage, dass Sie mein Bleistift haben."

"Yes, sir."

"Vat is tat, ten?"

"G-g-german, sir," stammered Benson.

The Fourth roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!" shouted Herr Hentzel. "Listen to me, you stupid boy! I say tat you have my pencil. You understand?"

"N-n-no, sir!" stuttered Potty Benson. "I—I haven't, sir."

"Vat you say?"

"I say I haven't, sir."

"You—you haven't vat?"

"I haven't your pencil, sir," said Benson innocently. "There it is, sticking out of your own pocket, sir."

Herr Hentzel glared.

"You utter idiot!" he ejaculated. "Vat I say is te translation of te Sherman sentence. Ich sage, dass Sie mein Bleistift haben. Now, do you understand it, ain't it?"

"Yes, sir."

"I tink tat it is time. Now, what does tat sentence mean?"

"I don't know, sir."

Herr Hentzel paused for breath, and then caught up a cane from his desk. As he did so, he felt a sudden stinging pain on the ear, and uttered a sharp exclamation. He dropped the cane, and his fat hand flew up to his ear.

"Ach! Oh! Mein Gott!"

Herr Hentzel gazed about him in wonder. His first impression was that a wasp had stung him, but there was no wasp to be seen. Bees and wasps buzzed in sometimes at the open Form-room windows on summer afternoons, but there was none to be seen now.

The Herr rubbed his ear, and turned back to the class. There was a suppressed gurgle from Wootton major, who had seen Gordon Gay slip his peashooter back into his pocket.

Herr Hentzel resumed operations upon Potty Benson. He dragged the unfortunate duffer of the Fourth up and down through a weary wilderness of incomprehensible German, and poor Benson perspired with the terrific mental exercise. In the midst of it there came another sharp sting upon the German master's fat skin, this time on the side of his nose.

"Himmel!" shouted Herr Hentzel, clapping his hand to his nose with such sudden force that he hurt that prominent feature. "Vat vas tat?"

The Fourth Form grinned. But as the German master swept a furious glance at them they left off grinning. The German glared round the Form-room. Gordon Gay was standing in his corner, with his eyes modestly down-cast, and a perfectly-innocent expression upon his face.

"Ach! Dere is a vasp in dis room," said Herr Hentzel. "Can any of you poys see zat vasp?"

"No, sir."

"I can't sir."

"Shall we get up, and look for it, sir?" asked Higgs eagerly.

"Certainly nod! We will resume. Yew!"

Herr Hentzel clapped his hand to his ear again.

"Ach! 'Tat is tat vasp vunce more! Ow!"

The German master caught up a pointer, and swished it savagely through the air. It was some minutes before he resumed the lesson, his face crimson with anger, and with the heat that followed his unaccustomed exercise on the warm June afterneon.

But he had scarcely started finding fault with Bonk's German than he left off with a sudden wild howl, as a sharp pang smote him on the neck.

"Ach! I am stung! Oh!"

He leaped almost clear of the floor, and swept out his fat hands to drive off the supposed wasp, in terror lest it should settle upon him.

"Dere is a vasp here!" he gasped. "You may look for it, poys! I will reward to poy who kill tat vasp!"

Like one man the Fourth Form rose to the task. They searched for that wasp everywhere. They dragged out forms, they turned out cupboards, they knocked over the blackboard, they wrecked the easel. In the midst of the confusion, Mr. Mopps, the mathematics master, who was to take the Fourth in the next lesson, opened the door and entered, and he gazed upon the scene in utter amazement.

"Goodness gracious!" exclaimed Mr. Mopps. "What ever is the matter!"

Herr Hentzel turned a crimson and perspiring face towards him.

"Ach! Dere is a vasp here, Herr Mobbs, and ve look for it, ain't it?"

"Ach!"

"I see no wasp," said Mr. Mopps, with some asperity; "and the juniors will kindly resume their places at once, and attend to me."

Herr Hentzel, perspiring, stalked out of the Form-room, almost as glad that the German lesson was over as the Fourth Form were. Gordon Gay and Wootton major and minor followed him out. They were free for the rest of the afternoon, and they put on their hats, and walked out of the School House arm in arm in joyful mood.

"If he had spotted you with that shooter——" murmured Jack Wootton.

"Ha, ha, ha! He didn't!"

"No, he didn't. Ha, ha, ha!"

And the Cornstalk Co. chuckled joyously as they sauntered out of the school gates, and took their way down the shady lane to Rylcombe.

## CHAPTER 5.

### The Arrival of Mont Blong.

"PORTAIR!"

Trumble, the old porter of Rylcombe, started. As a rule, nothing surprised Trumble. Even when the local train from Way came in to time, Trumble did not look surprised. And, having been for many years in a station close to a big public school—St. Jim's—and a big preparatory school—that of Dr. Monk's—Trumble thought that he knew all that was to be known about boys. He had seen all sorts and conditions of all varieties, big and little. And he was used to them. But the somewhat shrill voice that called "Portair!" from a window of a first-class carriage, and the face that looked out of the window, were new to Trumble, and he started, and stared.

"My heye!" said Trumble.

The face was sallow, somewhat long in feature, with black eyes that shined like jet. There was a frizz of curly hair over the somewhat narrow forehead, and its appearance betrayed at once that it was curled by art, and not by nature. A silk hat, with a very curly brim, surmounted the head.

There was something very foreign in the look of the face, and in the accent of the shrill voice.

"Portair! Portair!"

"Yessir?" rumbled Trumble.

"Is zis Rylcombe?"

"Yessir."

The carriage door opened, and a lithe little figure hopped down. The rest of the passenger being disclosed, Trumble was enabled to view the whole of him, which he did with great interest.

The lad was dressed in Etons, but he had a very highly-coloured necktie, and he wore patent-leather boots of an extremely small size. He had a gold-headed cane in his delicately-gloved hand. He looked neat, and clean, and tidy as a new pin, from head to heel. In fact, a miniature edition of a very tidy schoolboy.

"Zis is ze station for ze school?" he asked.

"Yessir. You goin' to St. Jim's, sir?"

"Non! I go to ze Grammair School."

"Oh!" said Trumble. "Yessir."

"You see zat my box——"

Bump!

A trunk alighted on the platform from the guard's van with a bump that rang the whole length of the station, and the foreign youth uttered an exclamation.

"Ciel! Zat is my box."

"I'll put it on a trolley, sir," said Trumble. "Shall I bring the box arter you to the school, sir, or will you take the keb, sir?"

"I zink zat I walk, if I know ze way. But you take great care of zat box."

"Hevery care, sir."

"Here he is!"

Three youths rushed breathlessly into Rylcombe Station. Gordon Gay and Harry and Jack Wootton were a little late. They had passed Grimes, the grocer's boy, on the road, and stopped to exchange polite opinions with him, and so the train had got in first.

The Cornstalk Co. rushed up to the foreign youth, and Gordon Gay grasped his right hand, and Harry Wootton his left, while Jack Wootton minor thumped him on the back in the most hearty manner.

"Here he is!"

"Welcome to Rylcombe!"

"Vive l'Entente Cordiale!"

"Hurrah!"

"Mon Dieu! Vat is ze mattair?"

"Nothing," said Gordon Gay blandly. "You are Gustave Blong—Monsieur Blong, in fact."

"Or Mont Blong for short," said Wootton major.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My name is Blanc——"

"That's right! I knew it was you. We've come to meet you, Mont Blong, and to take you to the school," Gordon Gay explained. "You have heard of the Entente Cordiale, I suppose?"

"Ma foi! Oui, oui, mais oui!"

"We're backing it up. That's why we came to meet you. We belong to Rylcombe Grammar School. I'm Gordon Gay. That chap with the nose is Wootton major."

"Look here, Gay, you ass!"

"And the kid with the ears is Wootton minor——"

"Say, you fathead——"

"We're the cocks of the walk in the Fourth Form at Bylcombe," said Gordon Gay cheerily. "I hear you are coming into the Fourth, Monsieur Blanc——"

"Blanc, please, not Blong."

"Yes, Blong," assented Gordon Gay. "I don't see any difference, but I have it your own way. We're jolly glad to see you, ain't we, chaps?"

"We are," said Wootton major—"we is!"

"Yes, rather!"

The French junior disengaged himself from the grasp of the Grammarians, and raised his silk hat gracefully, and bowed almost to the platform. A rumble burst into a rusty chuckle as he saw this performance. The Grammarians stared.

"Oh, good!" said Gordon Gay, as the French youth rose from the excessively low bow. "Do that again!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My dear friends," said the French youth, beaming upon them, "I am glad—I am ravish—zat you come to meet me. I am full of joy. I zink zat I have never been so joyful as on zis occasion. I do not express myself well in ze beautiful English language, but I am vat you call ravish viz delight. Vive l'Entente Cordiale! I zink zat ven I am at ze Grammar school, I make you vat you call—vat you call——" He paused for a word.

"Ah, I have ze word! Shum!"

"Eh?"

"Shum!"

"What!"

"You are shum!"

The juniors looked puzzled.

"What is that?" asked Gordon Gay. "Is it a French word?"

"Non, non, non! It is vun English vord."

"My hat! I don't remember it, then! What does it mean?"

"Vat we say, ami," said Gustave Blanc. "Nous sommes amis, you see, ce-pas."

Gordon Gay roared.

"Ha, ha, ha! You mean shum!"

"Zat is it! You hit ze right nail viz a stitch in time!" said Gustave, using a couple of proverbs mixed with great effect. "You will be my friend, and I will be your shum, and zat is ze Entente Cordiale."

"See," said Gordon Gay slowly.

"I zink zat I luff you!" said the French youth, in the effusive way that is natural enough to a French lad, but extremely surprising to an English

"I zank you zat you 'ave come to meet me. I make you my shum."

"Zat!" gasped Gordon Gay. "Here, hold on—chuck it—ow——"

There was no escape. Gustave Blanc rushed upon him and threw a couple of lifhe arms round his neck, and embraced him, while the junior tried to escape. There was a sounding smack as the French youth hit the Cornstalk. Gordon Gay tried to dodge, with the result that the French youth landed upon his nose instead of upon his cheek.

"My luffed shum——"

"Ow! Leggo!"

"My dear shum——"

"Draggimoff!" panted Gordon Gay.

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Wootton major and minor.

"Help!" yelled Gordon Gay. "He's mad! Help!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My dear shum——"

"Yank him off! He's going to kiss me! Yow! Yankimoff!"

"I kiss my shum—"

Wootton major, choking with laughter, laid hands upon the French youth, and dragged him off Gordon Gay.

"Here, we've got to get to the school," said Gordon Gay, in alarm, afraid that the embracing was about to recommence. He did not want to hit the stranger from afar, but he felt that he could not stand any more embraces.

"Buck up, or we shall be late! Leave your box with the porter, and come on!"

"Oui, oui, oui, my dear shum!"

And Gustave put his stick under his arm, and put his silk topper straight, and walked out of the station with the Cornstalk Co. They walked with him, but they kept their eyes upon him—afraid every minute that he might turn suddenly chummy, and want to embrace them.

## CHAPTER 6.

### Carker is Surprised.

GORDON GAY & CO. did not hurry back from Rylcombe. By strolling gently they were able to time their return nicely to coincide with the end of afternoon lessons.

When they entered at the school gateway, the Fourth Form had just been dismissed, and they were swarming out into the Close. Gustave Blanc—whom the juniors were already calling Mont Blong, and who was seldom called anything else thereafter—looked round at the big, red-brick buildings with great interest, and at the cricket-ground, where several teams were at practice. He smiled a beaming smile at the Cornstalks.

"I zink zat I like zis school," he remarked. "I zink zat I shall be very happy here viz my shums."

Gordon Gay grinned.

He rather liked the French lad; but he had no intention of being appropriated as a chum at the first meeting, and he did not mean to be embraced any more. But he did not like to say so to the confiding youth from Paris.

"My only hat!" exclaimed Carker, of the Fourth, coming up with a crowd of the juniors, and staring blankly at Blanc. "What on earth's that?"

"Gentlemen, I am very glad to find myself viz myself at zis so respected school," said the new junior. "I zink zat ve all be great good friends; n'est-ce-pas?"

"I don't know what you mean by nespah!" said Carker grimly. "But you remind me of an organ grinder's moukey, and there goes your topper for a start!"

Biff!

Gustave Blanc's shiny hat sailed away as Carker smote it, and the French junior muttered an exclamation.

"Mon Dieu! My new topper! Helas!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I zink zat is more zan a joke, monsieur," said Mont Blong. "I zink zat you go and pick up zat hat and give him to me."

Carker roared.

"Yes—I can see myself doing it—I don't think! Ha, ha, ha!"

"I zink zat I have ze right to insist, monsieur!"

"Oh, go and eat coke, you froggy ass!" said Carker, chuckling. "For two pins I'd knock your head off after your hat!"



"You knock him off for ze two pins?" asked Mont Blong.

"Yes, you fathead!"

"Zat is all serene!" Mont Blong drew two pins from the lining of his jacket and laid them in the palm of his hand, and extended them towards Carker, of the Fourth. "Zere you are, monsieur!"

Carker stared blankly at the two glistening pins in the French junior's

hand. "What do you mean?" he gasped.

"Zere are ze two pins," said Mont Blong, with calm deliberation. "Now, you knock off ze head, mon ami—if you are not too great a coward!"

"Why, you little whipper-snapper——"

"I wait for you to knock off ze head, monsieur."

"Go it, Carky!" shouted Higgs. "You ain't afraid of the Froggy, are you?"

Carker turned red with rage.

"Afraid!" he bellowed. "I'll show him!"

And he rushed at the French junior. The little Frenchman looked as if he would be swept away, if not knocked to pieces, by the heavy rush of the bully of the Fourth. But it did not happen. He jumped lightly out of the way, as light as a monkey, and before the heavy Fourth-Former could swerve and, the lithe French youth danced round him, and smote him hard and heavy.

Carker gave a roar as Mont Blong's right crashed upon his ear, followed by the left on his eye. Carker spun round like an uprooted tree, and fell down.

Bump!

There was a roar of surprise and approval.

"Bravo, Frenchy!"

"Carker's down!"

"Hurray!"

A bell clanged out.

"Hallo! There goes the bell!" shouted Jack Wootton. "Time for the meeting in Hall. Come on, you fellows!"

And the new boy was rushed into Hall amid a crowd of juniors.

It was time for the school to assemble, and all the Grammarians, seniors and juniors, were anxious to hear the important announcement which the Head had to make. Every fellow, from Delamere, the captain of the school, to the youngest fag, wanted to know what the school was called together. All the Grammarians felt that it was something out of the ordinary—indeed, they discovered soon enough that it was.

Mont Blong gasped for breath as he was rushed in, and his comrades followed among the Fourth. Mont Blong's silk topper had been lost en route, and there was no time to stop for that.

"How Dieu!" gasped Mont Blong. "Vat is it? Vat is it, my shums? Zat I am out of ze breath! What is going on, zen?"

"Speech from the Head," explained Gordon Gay breathlessly. "It's all right. We're in time; the Head ain't in yet."

"But I zink——"

"Here comes the Head!" called out Carboy. "Order, you Cornstalk sounders!"

There was a rustle, and Dr. Monk entered by the door at the upper end of the Hall. And there was a hush, as the Grammarians listened with intense interest for the important announcement to be made.

## CHAPTER 7.

## A Very Important Announcement.

**T**HE Big Hall of Rylcombe Grammar School was crammed. The whole school had been assembled, and every fellow there, from Delamere, the captain, to the smallest fag, was in a state of eager expectancy. The Head's notice on the board had informed the Grammarians that an important announcement was to be made, and all the Grammarians were very keen to hear that important announcement. No one, as yet, had any idea of what it was to be about. Gustave Blanc—otherwise Mont Blong—the new junior in the Fourth, tugged at Gordon Gay's sleeve in great curiosity.

"Vat is zat all about, mon ami?" he asked. "Vy is it zat we are here, zen?"

Hake, the prefect, glared at the French junior.

"Silence, there! Silence in the Fourth!"

"Is zat you speak viz me, monsieur?"

"Shut up, fathead!" whispered Wootton major. "You mustn't iaw here. The Head's going to speak!"

"Ze Head! Is zat ze old gentleman in ze shirt?"

Gordon Gay nearly exploded.

"Shirt, you ass! That's a gown!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence, you juniors!" called out Delamere, with a frown.

"Shut up, Mont Blong!"

"I am as silent as ze tomb."

Dr. Monk, on the platform at the upper end of the Big Hall, raised his hand. The buzz of voices died away.

The secret was about to be revealed. The Head was looking very serious; and the masters were all looking becomingly grave. But it was easy to see that the masters were not in the secret, with the exception of Mr. Hilton, the master of the Fifth.

Herr Hentzel, the German master, looked very curious. It was possible that the Herr had a suspicion of what was coming. Herr Hentzel, since he had been at Rylcombe, had given the boys the impression that he was somewhat of the nature of a Paul Pry, and that he generally knew what was going on, whether it was his business or not.

"Now we're going to get the giddy history of the giddy mystery!" murmured Gordon Gay.

"Silence!"

"My boys!" Dr. Monk's deep voice, though low in tone, came clearly through the hall, and every fellow present heard it, every word. "My boys, I have a very important announcement to make—an announcement which will cause you great surprise, and, I think, great pleasure. At least, I hope so."

"Must be going to give us a whole holiday, I should think," murmured Frank Monk.

Frank Monk was the Headmaster's son, but he knew no more than the others what was coming.

"'Praps a week off!" whispered Lane.

"Listen!"

"We are now in the heart of the summer," the Head went on. "At such a time the thoughts of all turn to the open air, the country, and the seaside."

"Must be a holiday!" murmured Carboy.

"Silence!" rapped out Hake, of the Sixth.

"It is my intention to try an experiment—a great experiment, which I think will be of great and lasting benefit to the school," the Head continued. "For the remainder of this term, the Grammar School will be transferred to another place—by the sea. The buildings here will be closed for the rest of the summer, and the whole school will be transported to a place on the coast, where arrangements have been made for its reception."

"Oh!"

It was a general exclamation of astonishment.

The Head had said that his announcement would be a surprising one, and certainly he was quite right.

The Grammarians could only stare. The surprise took their breath away. Dr. Monk smiled.

"I can see that you are surprised, my boys," he said. "I hope that you will be equally pleased when you have had time to think over the matter. The whole school will go into camp, under canvas, for the remainder of the summer term. I think that this will be very beneficial to the health of the whole school. Lessons will continue as usual, after a few days which will be occupied in settling down into our new quarters. Rylcombe Grammar School will, in fact, go on unchanged, but in different quarters, where the conditions will be better calculated for health and for pleasure."

There was a pause.

Delamere, the head of the Sixth, and captain of the Grammar School, broke the silence.

"Will you tell us where we are going, sir?" he asked.

"Certainly, Delamere," said the Head graciously. "The place selected is on the coast of Essex, facing the North Sea—a very healthy district."

Herr Hentzel started a little.

"On the Essex coast, sir?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, Herr Hentzel."

"And the name of the place, sir?"

"The school camp is pitched within a short distance of the village of Netherby."

"Ach!"

"You know the place, perhaps, Herr Hentzel?" asked the Head, looking at the German master in some little surprise.

"Ach! Yes, sir. I have a friend dere—I tink I know the name," said the German master.

"Very good. My boys, the school camp is well outside the village of Netherby, and at an equal distance from a public school called Netherby Abbey, a very old and historical place. We shall be neighbours of Netherby Abbey. The camp is on the shore of an inlet, where it will be possible to obtain good boating and sailing practice. I think that the school will like this change of quarters, I trust so, at all events."

"Hurray!" shouted Gordon Gay.

It was really rather cheeky of a Fourth-Former to take it upon himself to approve of the Head's speech in this way; but Gordon Gay was famous for his sublime cheek. And the cheer he gave was echoed from all parts of the crowded hall. The fellows, seniors and juniors, simply roared.

The idea just jumped with their inclinations. There was nothing that could have suited them better.

To get out of stuffy class-rooms, and live under canvas for months at a time! It was a prospect that was simply dazzling.

And to live by the sea—the sea, always so romantic and strangely fascinating to every British boy—that, as Gordon Gay remarked, put the cap on the wheeze.

And the whole school shouted approval.

“Hurray! Hip-pip!”

The Head smiled.

“I see that you like the idea, my boys,” he said, as soon as there was a lull.

“Yes, rather, sir.”

“It’s ripping!”

“Spiffing!”

“Gorgeous!”

“Three cheers for the Head!” shouted Punter, of the Fifth.

And they were given with a will.

“Hip, hip, hurray!”

As the roar rang through the hall, Dr. Monk disappeared by the upper door. The assembly broke up, and the fellows poured out of the hall, eagerly discussing the Head’s announcement.

“My hat!” exclaimed Frank Monk. “This beats a whole holiday—rather!”

“Oh, quite!” said Carboy.

“Why, it’s ripping!” said Gordon Gay, his eyes dancing. “I don’t think there’s a fellow or a master here who doesn’t like the wheeze.”

“There’s one, I fancy,” grinned Jack Wootton. “Look there!”

He made a gesture towards Herr Hentzel, the German master. Herr Hentzel was crossing the hall to go to his study. His face was strangely pale, and his eyes were gleaming from under his knitted brows. Potty Benson blundered in his way, and the German master boxed his ears savagely, and Benson yelled and backed away. Herr Hentzel strode into his study, and closed the door with a slam.

The chums of the Fourth looked at one another in wonder.

“What on earth’s wrong with the Deutcher?” said Wootton major.

“He doesn’t seem to cotton to the wheeze,” grinned Gordon Gay. “Perhaps he’s afraid of the fresh air. But if he doesn’t like it, he’ll have to lump it, that’s one comfort. Never mind the Herr! We’re satisfied.”

“We are! Hurray!”

“And that’s the important point, after all,” grinned Jack Wootton.

“What do you think of the idea, Froggy?”

“I zink zat I like him,” said Mont Blong, with a beaming smile. “I zink zat I shall be ‘appy anywhere vere I see my shums. It is vat you call scrumptious. My dear shums, I feel so ‘appy zat I zink I embrace you!”

But his dear chums fled.

## CHAPTER 8.

### Herr Hentzel Does Not Approve.

**T**AP! Dr. Monk was seated in his study, discussing with Mr. Hilton the plans for the transference of the Grammar School to the Essex coast, when the knock came at his door.

Herr Hentzel entered the study.

The German master’s face was clouded, but he had the urbane manner he always cultivated towards Dr. Monk. The juniors did not find him nearly so urbane; but Herr Otto Hentzel was not under the necessity of conciliating them—which made all the difference.

“Tat you excuse me, mein Herr,” said the German, with a bow.

"Certainly, Herr Hentzel. You wish to speak to me?"

"Tat is so."

Mr. Hilton rose, but the Head signed to him not to go.

"Herr Hentzel will not detain me more than a few minutes, Mr. Hilton," he said.

The German's eyes gleamed for a moment.

"Ferry well, Dr. Monk," he said. "I wish to speak mit you. You take us all ferry much by surprise dis evening."

Dr. Monk smiled.

"Yes, I dare say that is so," he assented. "I have been preparing the scheme since early summer, but I would not make the announcement until all was finished. The boys are naturally keen for such an experience, and it would have made them dissatisfied with present conditions if the announcement had been made too soon."

"Quite so, mein Herr. But I tink it is a great surprise. I suppose tat everyting is settled now?"

"Yes, Herr Hentzel."

"You not change te mind?"

"Oh, no; all is prepared."

The German looked restless.

"It is not for me to offer advice to mein employer," he said. "But may I suggest tat you consider, Herr Doktor. It is a ferry great change."

Dr. Monk looked at him in surprise.

"Surely you do not think I have made such an arrangement without due consideration and reflection?" he replied. "I have considered the matter from every point of view, and have consulted Mr. Hilton all the time. I have also taken medical advice in the matter, and Dr. Short fully approves of the idea. Surely that is enough!"

"But the ferry great inconvenience for te masters, mein Herr."

"Ah, I understand. You do not care to live at the seaside, perhaps?"

The German nodded.

"In that case," said the Head, "I should not think of holding you to your engagements with me, Herr Hentzel. I should be sorry to part with you, of course, but I should not ask you to accompany us against your wish."

The German bit his lip.

"I do not mean tat," he said. "I speak only of te surprise, and te convenience of such a change. We all live under canvas, ain't it?"

"Exactly!"

"Tat is ferry good for poys, perhaps, but for men like ourselves——"

"I think I shall stand it very well, Herr Hentzel, and I am considerably older than you," said the Head, with a smile. "I think that you will like the change when you have grown accustomed to the idea."

"In any case, den, it is fixed!"

"Oh, quite decided!"

"Ferry well, mein Herr. Tat is all tat I wish to know."

"Will you come to Netherby with the school, Herr Hentzel?"

"Ach! Yes, I come."

"Very good."

The German master hesitated.

"Te coast may not be good for te health of te poys," he suggested, "especially the low-lying coast of te county of Esscx. Vat you tink?"

"On the contrary, there is no healthier coast than that of the Eastern Counties," said Dr. Monk. "Besides, I have not acted without advice."

"Ferry well, mein Herr. Den dere is noting more to be said."

And the German master withdrew.

Dr. Monk looked at the Fifth-Form master with a rather puzzled expression.

"I do not quite understand Herr Hentzel," he said. "I remember he spent a holiday on the Essex coast in the last vacation, and he should know what it is like. For some reason he appears to object to the intended change. I cannot see why."

Mr. Hilton shook his head.

"He could hardly hope to change my decision," said Dr. Monk, musingly. "However, I hope he will be as pleased as the rest in the long run. Everybody else seems to be perfectly satisfied."

"The boys are quite enthusiastic about it," said Mr. Hilton, with a smile. "Indeed, I feel very keen myself."

"And I, I confess," said the Head. "Now, we were talking about the tents—"

And they talked on. Outside the study door, Herr Hentzel had paused, and his large, heavy hands were clenched hard, and his greenish-grey eyes were gleaming.

"Den it is settled—and I never knew!" he muttered, as he moved slowly down the passage. "I suspect something—but I know not tat it is so. Ach! If I had known—but den, it is not possible tat I stop it, if I had known! Vat is to be done? Something—something must be done to prevent te school from camping at Netherby—"

He broke off suddenly.

In his anger—an anger which would have bewildered the Head if he had known it—the German had been muttering aloud; and a slim youth who was coming down the passage heard the muttered words, and the Herr sighted him a moment too late. The youth was Monsieur Blanc, otherwise Mont Blong, and his queer little face was quite unconscious and innocent in its expression. The German frowned darkly, and made a stride towards the French junior and caught him by the shoulder.

"Ach! You play te spy, den!" he muttered.

"Monsieur!"

The German master looked hard at him.

"Who vas you?" he exclaimed. "You not belong to dis school pefore."

"Monsieur! Release me s'il vous plait," said Mont Blong, with a great deal of dignity. "I am Gustave Blanc. I have ze honour to be ze new boy."

"Gustave Blanc?"

"Zat is my name, monsieur," said Mont Blong, wriggling loose from the German's grasp, and bowing low.

Herr Hentzel looked at him with unquiet eyes.

"Ven you come to school?" he asked.

"Zis afternoon, monsieur."

"It seem to me tat I see you pefore—not here—far away," said Herr Hentzel, scanning the face of the French junior. "You have live in Paris?"

"Zat is so, monsieur."

"And your name is Blanc?"

"Zat is my name."

"You are in school in Paris, hein?"

"I am in Paris at ze Lycee Bourbon," said Mont Blong, with cheerful confidence. "My fazer vish me to study ze English in England, monsieur, zerefore he send me to zis school. I am glad zat I come, parce que—because it give me ze honour, to make ze acquaintance of monsieur!"

And he bowed again.

"Ach! Zat is enough! Go!"

"I kiss ze hands of monsieur."



And the French junior departed.

Herr Hentzel gazed after him till he turned the corner of the passage. There was a troubled look upon the German master's heavy brow.

"I know tat face—but he is but a schoolboy! Ach! I have fancies!" he muttered. "I must write—at vunce, since it is settled tat ve go to Essex."

And Herr Hentzel went into his study.

He sat down at his table with a frowning brow, and wrote—in German, but a kind of German which would have puzzled the best German scholars at Rylcombe Grammar School. For Herr Hentzel was writing in a strange code, and no one not in possession of the key could have read one sentence of what he wrote.

He sealed up the letter and addressed it, and the address upon the letter ran: "Herr Pfalz, Photographic Studio, Netherby, Essex."

The German master carried the letter down to the school letter-box with his own hands, and posted it. He heard the letter drop into the box before he turned away; then, with a moody brow, he turned back to the house.

## CHAPTER 9.

### Carker Makes Discoveries.

"PACK'S the word!" said Gordon Gay.

Tadpole looked up.

"Pax?" he repeated. "We have not been having a row, Gay.

Why—"

"Ass!" said Gordon Gay, cheerfully. "Pack, fathead—not pax!"

"But you said pax—"

"Ass! To-morrow," said Gordon Gay solemnly—"to-morrow we take a long farewell of these ancestral halls—"

"Oh, come off!" said Wootton major, yawning. "You ain't on the stage, now, Gay. Don't let us have the Junior Dramatic Society all the giddy day and night!"

"Well, to-morrow we buzz off for the seaside, if you like that better," said Gordon Gay, laughing. "And now pack's the word. All the stuff has got to be packed up to-night, and to-morrow we buzz. So let's begin."

"I shall want to borrow a trunk or two of you chaps," said Tadpole thoughtfully. "I have to take plenty of canvas, and my easel, and my colour-boxes. I do not know whether I shall be able to get artist's materials on the Essex coast. I intend to do a great deal of painting while I am there. I shall be able to get in some local colour for my great picture, the 'Landing of Hengist and Horsa.'"

"If you get local colour, what do you want to take colour-boxes for?" asked Gordon Gay innocently.

"My dear Gay, you misunderstand. I will explain—"

"That you jolly well won't!" said Gordon Gay. "I'm going to pack."

"If you can lend me a trunk—"

"I want my trunk to put my own things in, fathead!"

"Well, perhaps you can leave some of your things behind, and you and Wootton could share a trunk?" Tadpole suggested. "I must really have an extra trunk."

"Rats!"

"Let us argue the point—"

"Life's too short! Come on, you chaps!"

And Gordon Gay & Co. left the study, leaving Tadpole to address the

deserted tea-table. It was some days since the announcement the Head had made to the Grammarians in Big Hall, and all was prepared for the transferring of the Grammar School to the camp at the seaside. Herr Hentzel had apparently made up his mind to the change, for he had made his preparations to go with the school. For some time past the fellows had been sorting out boxes and trunks.

Gordon Gay clapped Gustave Blanc on the shoulder in the passage.

"Going to pack?" he asked.

"Zat is all right," said Mont Blong. "I have not unpack ze trunk, but I come and help my shums viz all ze pleasure de la vie."

And Mont Blong accompanied the Cornstalk Company to the Fourth Form dormitory. The dormitory was swarming with juniors on a similar mission. Gustave uttered an exclamation at the sight of his box mounted upon Carker's bed. The bully of the Fourth had the box open, and a group of his friends were standing round him looking into it. The French junior ran towards him.

"Vat is zat zat you do?" he exclaimed. "It is dishonourable zat you open ze box of anozer shap!"

"I'm packing it for you," Carker explained. "I wanted to save you trouble, Froggy."

Mont Blong's face cleared.

"Zat is very good of you, Carkair," he said. "But I not trouble you to pack my box. And how vas it zat you open zat box which was lock?"

"Oh, it came open!"

"Look here," said Gordon Gay, frowning, "that's rather too thick, Carker. You've busted the lock of Mont Blong's box!"

"Well, I wanted to pack it for him."

"Oh, don't tell whoppers! Leave it alone!"

"Rats!" said Carker.

"Give me zat box," said Mont Blong, pacifically. "I pack him myself."

Carker winked at his chum, Craven.

"Lend a hand, Craven, old man."

"Certainly," said Craven.

The two cads of the Fourth Form grasped the box as if to lift it off the bed. It rolled over sideways, and crashed upon the floor, and the contents rolled out in a shower. Boots, and shoes, and shirts, and pyjamas, and all sorts and conditions of things sprawled out over the dormitory floor.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Carker. "Sorry! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Awfully sorry!" grinned Craven. "Ha, ha, ha!"

Mont Blong uttered a cry.

"Rottair! Zat is done on purpose! Rottair!"

He rushed forward to collect up his property. But, before he could do so, Carker picked up an object which had fallen into plain view. It was a beard of brown hair, with wires for fastening. The bully of the Fourth held it up with an exclamation.

"Hallo! Look here!"

"My hat!" exclaimed Frank Monk. "What's that?"

"It's a false beard!"

"False beard, by jingo!"

"Great Scott!"

"And here's a moustache!" exclaimed Craven, rummaging among the upset articles. "And another beard! And a wig! And a pair of spectacles! Great Scott! The chap has got a whole set of the things."

Mont Blong changed colour for a moment.

The Fourth-Formers gathered round, staring at the strange discovery in amazement.

Mont Blong's box had contained a compartment simply packed with disguises. The discovery was enough to amaze the juniors of Rylcombe Grammar School.

"What on earth——" exclaimed Lanc.

"He's got a giddy outfit of disguises like a giddy burglar!" ejaculated Carker. "Look here, what does this mean, Frenchy? You'll have to explain this."

"Ass!" said Gordon Gay. "It's simple enough. I've got much the same in my box, in my private theatrical outfit. I didn't know you went in for amateur theatricals, Mont Blong. You never told us."

"Zat is it!" he exclaimed, in a great relief. "Vat you call ze amateur theatrical, my dear shums."

"Can you act, Mont Blong?"

"Zat is so."

"And you never told us!" exclaimed Gordon Gay. "Why, I've spoken to you about the Junior Dramatic Society three or four times, and you never let on that you could act."

"It is zat I am modest, my dear shum."

"You shall join the Dramatic Society, then," said Gay. "My hat—that's simply a splendid outfit you've got. It must have cost a lot of money, too."

"Yes, razzar."

"Yes, rather," repeated Carker. "I don't believe it. There's something jolly fishy about this, in my opinion."

"Oh, rats!" said Gordon Gay contemptuously. "What do you mean, Carker? You'd have found the same if you'd turned out my box, or Frank Monk's. Go and eat coke!"

"Zat you let my box alone, Carkair," said Mont Blong. "I allow only my shums to touch ze property zat belong to me. You are a rascal, Carkair!"

Carker clenched his fists. Since his first encounter with Mont Blong, on the day of the French junior's first arrival at the Grammar School, Carker had rather avoided him. He had realised that there was more in Mont Blong than met the eye. But Carker's temper was rising now.

"I'll jolly well teach you something in manners, you rotten Froggy!" he exclaimed. "Put up your fists, you cad!"

"Oh, shut up, Carker!" said Gordon Gay, impatiently. "We've got to look now."

"Mind your own business. I'm going to lick that French rotter."

"Let him come on, my dear shum," said Mont Blong, cheerfully. "I shan't eat I shut him up viz himself."

Carker rushed at the French junior.

The quick, nimble junior dodged the heavy rush, and caught Carker round the waist as he passed, and swung him off his feet.

Then he whirled round and round, swinging Carker round him, with his arms and legs flying and waving wildly in the air.

There was a roar of laughter from the juniors.

They would not have suspected the French junior of the strength he showed in lifting the heavy bully of the Fourth and swinging him round as if he were an infant.

Carker struggled wildly in the grasp of the French junior, but he could not escape it, and he could not get at Gustave Blanc with his fists. He swung round and round, with the French junior grinning down upon him,

till he was giddy and dazed. The laughter of the juniors rang through the dormitory.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go it, Mont Blong."

"Ow!" roared Carker. "Oh! Yah! Lemme down! Yow!"

"Zat you make it pax!"

"No!" spluttered Carker. "I won't! Yow! Leggo!"

"Zat you make it pax, Carkair!"

"Yow! Yes! Oh!"

"It is pax, zen?"

"Ow! Yow! Yes!"

Bump!

Carker was dropped upon the floor. He sat there, dazed, with the dormitory walls and the crowd of grinning juniors seeming to swim round him.

"Oh!" he gasped. "The French beast! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Carker staggered to his feet. His face was dark with rage, and his fists were clenched. There was a shout.

"Hands off, Carker! You've made it pax!"

"I'll smash him!" roared the bully of the Fourth.

"You'll keep pax, or you'll get a dormitory licking," said Gordon Gay.

"Don't be a cad, Carker. You've got to keep pax."

Carker unclenched his hands, and turned away with a savage scowl upon his face. He could not attack the French junior just then. But he was only saving up his wrath for a more convenient opportunity. Mont Blong had made an enemy in the Fourth Form at Rylcombe, and an enemy who would not be likely to lose any opportunity of making his dislike felt.

Mont Blong knew it, but he did not seem to mind. He went on cheerfully with his packing, and carefully corded up his box, so that the broken lock did not matter. It was pretty clear that Mont Blong did not want idle eyes to spy into the interior of his box. And some of the juniors wondered whether there were any other little secrets there as well as the theatrical disguise which Carker had discovered.

## CHAPTER 10.

### OFF!

"HERE'S the brake!"

It was morning at the Grammar School.

The rising bell had gone as usual; the last time that the juniors were to hear it for that summer. But morning classes did not assemble as usual. There had been no preparation the previous evening, and there were no classes that morning. In Rylcombe Railway Station a special train awaited the Grammar School, and three brakes had been engaged to carry the Grammarians to the station. The luggage had already been sent off; in charge of Corporal Cutts, the old school porter.

The brake intended for the juniors was outside the house now, and a loud shout announced its arrival.

Gordon Gay & Co. came crowding out.

"Jolly close packing, to get all the Fourth in that giddy trap," said Wootton major.

"Here, make room, you kids!" said Carker, pushing his way forward, and putting one foot on the step of the brake.

Gordon Gay cheerfully pushed Carker's other foot away from under him, and the bully of the Fourth sat down on the ground with a bump;

"Oh!" he roared.

"Sorry, Carker. I hope you are not hurt," said Gordon Gay blandly. "These little accidents will happen when fellows push. Jump in, kids."

And the Co. jumped into the brake while Carker was scrambling up, red with rage. Gay and Wootton major and minor were the first in, and Monk and Lane and Carboy followed them. Then Carker clambered in, scowling. Potty Benson and Craven and Carpenter and Mont Blong followed, and then the rest of the Fourth. There was, as Wootton major had said, a crowd for the brake, but the juniors did not really mind it. They crowded in cheerfully, and packed themselves like sardines. Gordon Gay extracted his pea-shooter from his pocket.

"Some of the St. Jim's chaps are going to see us off," he remarked. "Tom Merry and D'Arcy said they'd get off from lessons to come down if they could."

"Good egg," said Frank Monk heartily. "I wish they were coming."

"Here we go!"

The brake rolled out of the school-gates. The big, red-brick Grammar School was left behind, and the crowded vehicle rolled down the lane, under the spreading branches of the trees, towards Rylcombe. The Grammarians were in the highest spirits. The day was a whole holiday, and they were joyous to escape the stuffy class-rooms for a whole day. And the bright June weather was glorious.

"Oh, it's ripping!" exclaimed Gordon Gay. "This is almost as good as being home in Wirra-Wirra!"

"Where on earth's that?" said Frank Monk.

Gordon Gay sniffed.

"In Australia, where I come from," he said loftily. "Do you mean to say that you've never heard of Wirra-Wirra?"

"Ha, ha! Never."

"Then you're an ass! Hallo, here's Grimey!"

Grimes, the grocer's boy of Rylcombe, was passing down the lane with a big basket on his arm. Gordon Gay clapped his pea-shooter to his mouth, and the next moment Grimes gave a fiendish yell.

"Yaroooooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, it's you, Master Gay, is it?" said Grimes, with a grin. "I 'ear you're going away."

"Yes, we're going," said Gordon Gay. "I wish you were coming, Grimey."

"I wish I was," said Grimes.

Gay reached over the side of the brake.

"Give us your fin, old man."

And Gordon Gay shook hands heartily with Grimes. Grimes waved his cap as the brake rolled on. Carker looked at Gordon Gay, with a bitter sneer.

"Just like you blessed Cornstalks," he said, "letting down the school by making paws with a grocer's boy."

"Well, I don't suppose old Grimey would shake hands with you," said Gordon Gay cheerfully. "I believe he's rather particular."

"Why, you silly ass—"

"Shut up, Carker," said Frank Monk. "Don't jaw, old man. This is a holiday, and we can enjoy it if we don't see too much of you."

"You—you—"

"Let's sing," said Gordon Gay. "I feel like singing. And then we sha'n't hear Carker talk. Now then, all together—'On the Ball!'"

And the Fourth Form burst into the famous football song, and thundered

it out as the brake rolled into the old High Street of Rylcombe. Carker was still saying things, but no one excepting Carker knew what they were, so it did not matter. With a rattle of hoofs and wheels, and a roar of voices, the brake came rolling up to the railway-station and halted.

"Bai Jove! Here are the Gwammah boundahs, Tom Mewwy!"

"Hallo, Gussy!" shouted Gordon Gay. "Here we are again!"

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy."

Two juniors of St. Jim's were there to see the Fourth Form off. They were Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of the Fourth Form, and Tom Merry of the Shell. The Grammarians swarmed out of the brake, and the rival Co's. shook hands warmly with Tom Merry and D'Arcy.

"Good old Gussy!" exclaimed Gordon Gay, slapping the swell of St. Jim's forcibly on the back. "How nice of you to put on your Sunday clothes to come and see us off!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy jammed his eyeglass into his eye, and turned a wrathful glare upon the Cornstalk.

"You uttah ass!" he exclaimed. "I twust you do not imagine that I have diffevent clothes for a Sunday! I considah——"

"Dry up, Gussy!" said Tom Merry.

"I wufuse to dwy up, Tom Mewwy. I——"

"Get into the station, you fags," said Delamere of the Sixth, coming out.

"It's time you were in the train."

"Yes, come on," said Gordon Gay. "It's jolly good of you chaps to get leave to come and see us off, and I hope you'll be able to come down and see us when you get a holiday. We'll give you a good time by the giddy sad sea waves."

"Yes, rather," said Frank Monk heartily.

"It won't be necessary for Gussy to put on his Sunday clothes, either."

"Weally, Gay——"

"This way," said Gordon Gay, and the juniors marched into the station. The platform was crowded.

The whole station seemed to be alive with luggage and Grammarians. Boxes and porters and boys were crowding the length of the platform. The special train was waiting, and all the doors were open, and many of the carriages were already full. Gordon Gay & Co. made a rush for an empty carriage and crowded into it. Dr. Monk came down the platform, and the Grammarians gave him a cheer, and the good old doctor smiled genially. He seemed to be in as great spirits as his youthful charges.

"Bai Jove! I wish I were comin' with you, you know," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, as he stood by the carriage-door. "Take care of yourselves, deah boys. I should like to come all the way and look aftah you, you know."

"Oh, we'll try to get on," said Gordon Gay. "Now then, Carker don't shove."

"I'm coming into that carriage," said Carker. "You've got an empty seat there."

"We're keeping it for Mont Blong."

"Blow Mont Blong!"

Carker shoved his way into the carriage. Under the eyes of Dr. Monk, Gordon Gay & Co. could not throw him out, and he was allowed to remain. Mont Blong came running along the platform, with a bag in his hand, and his silk hat on the back of his head. Gordon Gay waved his hand to him.

"This way, Mont Blong! Here you are!"

"My dear shums, je viens—I come, zat is to say!"

And the excited French youth rushed up, and dived into the carriage. There was a roar from Carker.

"Get out! This carriage is full!"

"It's going to be fuller, then," said Gordon Gay cheerfully.

"Gerrout, I say! You French rotter——"

"It is you zat is ze rottair," exclaimed Mont Blong, plunging in past Carker, and jabbing him in the ribs with the ferrule of his umbrella.

"Yow!" roared Carker, collapsing into his seat. "Yowp! The beast has punctured me! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look out for that broolly!" gasped Frank Monk. "Leave us one eye each, Mont Blong. Put it under the seat, or chain it up somewhere."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"B' y'r leave!" grunted the porter, coming along and slamming the door. "Now, young gents, keep that door shut—you're hoff!"

There was a shriek from the engine.

"Yes, we're hoff," grinned Gordon Gay. "Good-bye, you St. Jim's chaps. We'll lick you at footer when we come back."

"I should wefuse to be licked at footah——"

"Shut them doors!"

"Hurrah!"

The train began to move. Gordon Gay & Co. crammed the window of their carriage, and all the other windows along the train were crammed with faces. Tom Merry waved his cap, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy raised his silk hat most gracefully. Mont Blong leaned out of the carriage window, and raised his silk topper in return. He did not know the St. Jim's fellows, but politeness came first, of course.

"Adieu!" he called out. "Adieu, my shum's shums. Farewell! Good-pye!"

"Good-bye!" roared Tom Merry. "We'll lick you at footer when you come back."

"Yaas, wathah! Good-bye, deah boys!"

Arthur Augustus bowed low, hat in hand. Mont Blong bowed out of the carriage window, and D'Arcy bowed back, and Mont Blong bowed still lower, till it seemed as if he were trying to hang himself out of the window. The train was moving faster now, and a gust of wind caught Mont Blong's topper and whisked it out of his hand. There was a yell from the French youth.

"Ciel! Mon chapeau! My hat! It is gone!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Gordon Gay. "You won't get it back now! Good-bye, kids!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy picked up the rolling topper, and raced along the platform with it, holding it up for Mont Blong to catch. Mont Blong reached out to take it, and for a few seconds D'Arcy kept pace with the train, only a carriage behind and out of reach. He put on a spurt, and came almost within reaching distance, but he was now at the end of the platform, and the train rushed on, leaving him behind, still holding the hat.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated D'Arcy.

The Grammarians roared. They waved caps and handkerchiefs from the window as the train rushed on, and as it vanished down the line, and the station disappeared behind them, the last thing they saw was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of St. Jim's, still standing on the platform with his own topper in his right hand and Mont Blong's topper in his left.

## CHAPTER 11.

## The Grammarians Arrive.

**A** GOLDEN June afternoon.

The special train was still speeding on its way, but in the carriage occupied by Gordon Gay & Co. the juniors did not seem tired.

The Fourth-Formers, in fact, were enjoying themselves.

They had discussed the contents of a very large and well-packed lunch-basket, and Gordon Gay felt, as he expressed it, like a giant refreshed with ginger-pop.

The lowlands of Essex were round the train now, and the juniors looked out at the landscape with great interest, and watched for the sea.

Like all British boys, the sea had a deep fascination for them; they loved the wide, blue waters upon which Britons of many generations had won fame and fortune.

"It will be simply ripping!" said Gordon Gay, for about the twentieth time. "Dr. Monk's idea of a school under canvas is simply top-notch! You've really brought your father up to be a sensible old chap, Frank."

Frank Monk grinned.

"Yes; I'll bet the St. Jim's fellows would like it, too."

"Oh, we'll have 'em down to play cricket there," said Gordon Gay. "D'ye know, I've hardly seen the sea since I landed in this little spot of yours—"

"This what?"

"Spot!" said Gordon Gay cheerfully. "We've got farms at Wirra-Wirra as big as this. I knew an Australian chap who came to England, and he went to live in the Midlands, because he was afraid he would fall off!"

"Ass!" said Frank Monk. "Where on earth is Wirra-Wirra? I think you blessed Cornstalks beat everything for nerve. You and Wootton—"

"I'm not a Cornstalk," said Wootton major cheerfully.

"Oh! Ain't all Australians Cornstalks?" asked Monk innocently.

Wootton major sniffed.

"My dear fathead, what you don't know about Australia would fill the Encyclopædia Britannica," he said. "I come from Queensland. Queensland is bananaland."

"Oh! And you're a banana, are you?"

"No, ass!" roared Wootton. "I'm a Bananalander."

"Dear me!" said Tadpole, who was slightly afflicted with deafness, among his other charms, and he looked at Wootton major in great surprise. "I always thought so, but how surprising that you should say so!"

"Eh?"

"It is certainly quite candid of you to admit it—"

"Admit what, ass?"

"Didn't you say you were a balmy bounder?" asked Tadpole innocently.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Frank Monk. "He is, but he didn't say so!"

"Ass!" yelled Wootton. "Bananalander, chump! Do you understand now?"

Tadpole nodded.

"Yes, certainly. You say you are a Bananalander chump. But—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"A Bananalander, fathead!" shrieked Wootton major.

"A Bananalander fathead!" said Tadpole, in surprise. "You just said a Bananalander chump and a balmy bounder. My dear Wootton—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"



"Br-r-r! Ring off!" growled Wootton major. "Pass the sandwiches, Monkey. I wonder when we shall see the sea?"

Gordon Gay looked out of the window.

In the distance a church spire could be seen over a belt of trees, and beyond that, far in the distance, there was a gleam in the sunshine. Gay gave a shout.

"There's the sea!"

The windows of the train were crammed. The Grammarians shouted to one another along the express. The spire they could see belonged to the village church of Netherby, and near Netherby was the camp they were to occupy for some months to come. As the express raced on, they caught sight of a grey old building embowered in thick woods.

"The Abbey!" somebody called along the train.

"Netherby Abbey!" said Gordon Gay. "That's a school, you chaps, and jolly near to our camp! We shall see something of the fellows. There's the sea again!"

"Hurrah!"

"Yes, razzar; hurrah!" said Mont Blong enthusiastically. "Zat is where ze flag have brave for ze tousand years ze battle and ze breeze. Hurrah!"

"Not your giddy flag, though!" grinned Wootton major.

"My dear shum—"

"We shall be stopping soon," said Gordon Gay. "Get your traps together. There's the station!"

The special train rushed into the little country station. It was a quiet old place, with bright flowers glowing along the plank platform. An old porter with grey beard and sleepy eyes stood watching the train come in. It was evident that a special train was a very rare visitor to Netherby Station. The special clattered and clanked to a stop.

Doors were flung open, and a swarm of Grammarians poured out upon the platform. The little station, which had been so quiet before, was noisy enough now.

Baggage dumped down on the platform in great piles. Fellows of all ages and sizes swarmed in the station.

There was a rush for the brakes, which were waiting outside, and the juniors clambered in.

## CHAPTER 12.

### In Camp.

**G**ORDON GAY & CO. spread over the camp to examine their new quarters.

They were delighted with all they saw.

The huge marquee was evidently to be the school-room, and there was room enough in it for all the Grammarians, at a pinch. But in fine weather some of the classes were to be held in the open air. There were two mess tents, one for the masters, and a very large one for the boys. And there were lines upon lines of sleeping tents, all ready, too.

The juniors looked into dozens of them, and found all prepared for their reception. Potty Benson, of the Fourth, grinned with delight as he saw the preparations in the mess tent.

A crowd of waiters there were preparing the evening meal. It was evident that the Grammarians' inner wants had been well provided for.

Ta-ra-ra-ra-tara!

It was Corporal Cutts' bugle, calling the Grammarians to their evening

meal. The school-porter of Rylcombe stood outside the mess-tent, blowing away with a purple face.

The Grammarians, the juniors' especially, were quite ready for that call, and they trooped off cheerfully to the mess-tent. Many of the fellows had brought supplies of provisions with them, in case of accidents, but there had been no time to get at the baggage yet. But very generous fare had been provided, and the juniors sat down at the long tables with great satisfaction. Gordon Gay & Co., as they sat down to supper, could see the wide waters of the German Ocean gleaming through the opening of the big tent. Far out at sea a white sail glanced in the sunset.

"Looks like a blow to-night," Gordon Gay remarked, as he noted a rim of heavy clouds rolling up from the grey of the sea. "We're going to have a wind."

"Good for us if the tents get blown over," growled Carker.

"It is all in the day's play, as you say in our tent when we get the things unpacked," said Gordon Gay. "But this isn't so bad to go on with. Pass the jam!"

"That's my jam!" growled Carker. "I brought that pot along with me in my bag. You let that jam alone!"

"Now, Carker, don't be ungrateful," urged Gordon Gay. "After the way we looked after you in the train, you might be decent."

Carker glared.

"Hand that jam back, you rotter!" he said.

Gordon Gay jerked the jam-pot from the table, and turned his back on Carker. The bully of the Fourth jumped up, and came running round the table. Gordon Gay cheerfully emptied half a bottle of Worcestershire sauce into the jam-pot, keeping Wootton major between him and Carker as he did so. He dropped the sauce-bottle under the table before Carker reached him. Carker came up threateningly.

"Give me my jam, you rotter!"

Gordon Gay handed it to him peacefully.

"Certainly, Carker!"

Carker grasped the jam-pot, and retreated to his own side of the table with it. He planted the jar on the table close to him, and ladled the jam out with a spoon. He prepared to enjoy himself under the envious eyes of the other fellows. But the other fellows did not seem envious. They were grinning.

Carker had a suspicion that what he did not eat of that jam would not survive till his next meal. He determined to finish it. He conveyed it to his mouth in large spoonfuls—or, at all events, that was his intention. As a matter of fact, he did not get further than the first spoonful.

The juniors watched the spoonful disappear into his mouth with fascinated eyes. They wondered what would happen next. They soon knew.

Carker gave a gurgling gasp, and jumped up from the table, spitting and spluttering furiously. Mr. Adams, the Form-master, at the head of the table, half rose to his feet in surprise and anger.

"Carker!" he thundered. "How dare you!"

"Groo! Groororoo!"

"Carker! You disgusting boy! How dare you over-eat yourself and act in that revolting manner at a public table!"

"Groo-oo-oo!"

"Carker! Stop that immediately!"

"Grooh! Ugh! Oh! Grooh!" Carker spluttered violently.

"This—this is simply outrageous!" gasped Mr. Adams. "Carker——"

"Ow! Groo! There's something wrong with the jam, sir," roared

Carker. "Ow! It's got a taste— Yarook! I'm pip-pip-poisoned! Yow-wop!"

"If there is something wrong with the jam, throw it away; but do not make those revolting noises, Carker," said Mr. Adams sternly. "If you do not sit down quietly, immediately, I shall cane you."

And Carker sat down, spluttering into his handkerchief. The juniors grinned, and Carker glared at them furiously. He understood.

"You—you rotter!" he muttered. "You did something to that jam!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you villain——"

"Carker, I have already told you to be silent," said Mr. Adams. "If you utter another word I shall cane you."

And Carker did not utter another word.

The supper finished, the juniors trooped out. The sun was almost gone in the west, over the low range of hills inland, and there was darkness on the sea. A strong wind was blowing from the waters, and it whistled among the tents, and the juniors smacked their lips at the salty flavour of it.

"Ripping!" said Gordon Gay.

"Get to bed, you young bounders!" said Hake, the prefect, "and mind, no striking matches, or anything of that sort, or you'll hear from me! I've got the numbers of your tents here. Buzz off!"

The juniors went to their quarters. Gordon Gay, the two Woottons, Mont Blong, and Tadpole had No. 10 to themselves. The next tent was occupied by the Old Co. and Potty Benson, and Carker & Co. were in another.

Gordon Gay & Co. were ready for bed after that eventful day, and as they had to make their beds themselves, there was still some little time before they were settled. Hake, the prefect, assisted them with a little bullying. Gordon Gay breathed a sigh of contentment as he drew the blankets over him.

"It's colder here than at Rylcombe," he remarked. "By Jove, I can hear the sea! It's ripping to be here! I fancy we are going to have a good time."

"We are—we is!" said Wootton major sleepily. "Good-night!"

"We'll get up a cricket match with the Netherby Abbey chaps, too," said Gordon Gay. "That will be all right, eh?"

"Yes—goo'-nigh——"

"Sleepy ass!" said Gordon Gay. "Are you coming down to bathe early, Wootton?"

Snore!

"You coming down to the sea early, Jack?"

"Groooo!"

"I say, Mont Blong——"

Snore!

"Tadpole, old man——"

Snore!

Gordon Gay grunted.

"Sleepy fatheads!" he said. "I suppose I may as well go to sleep myself. Good-night!"

Snore!

And Gordon Gay closed his eyes, and in a couple of minutes he was fast asleep himself. Corporal Cutts had blown "Lights Out!" but the tired juniors did not even hear. The sounds of the camp died away. Seniors and juniors, masters and boys, slept the sleep of the just under canvas.

It was a change for the Grammarians; but the healthy sleep of youth made them unconscious of it. They slept as soundly in their camp beds as

in the old dormitory at Rylcombe. Darkness settled deeply over land and sea, and the wind from the wide waters came stronger and ever stronger on the shore. From the depths of the night came the dull booming of the waves upon the shingle.

Gordon Gay stirred in his sleep. He was usually a very sound sleeper, but something made him uneasy now. Perhaps it was the wind that was now howling round the tent, and jerking at the canvas fastenings. It was a clear night, and the high wind drove the clouds in fleecy masses landward, and left the stars gleaming upon the sea and the shore. Gordon Gay stirred again, and his eyes opened.

The canvas was flapping in the wind, and the tent straining at its fastenings. But the fastenings held good, and Gordon Gay, after listening for a few moments, turned over and went to sleep again. He dreamed of the Grammar School at Rylcombe, and of St. Jim's, and fancied in his slumber that he was fighting over again one of his many rows with Tom Merry & Co. He was on his back, and Fatty Wynn was sitting on his chest, and he was struggling—and struggling—and suddenly he awoke! There was a roar in his ears, and something was indeed on his chest, pinning him down, and he wondered whether he was dreaming or awake.

"Gerroff!" he murmured. "You ass! Gerroff!"

Then he started into broad wakefulness.

A flap of canvas was over his face, and he pushed at it frantically to push it off. From the darkness a voice shouted to him, and he recognised the voice of Wootton major.

"Gay! Wake up!"

"Grooh! Wharrer marrer?"

"Get up! Look out!"

"My hat!"

Crash!

Gordon Gay tore himself loose and jumped up. For an instant he caught a glimpse of clear starlight, and the wind lashed his face; and he realised that the tent was going. Then came a terrific tearing and flapping, a crash, and the tent was down; and five struggling juniors were buried underneath it.

"Ow!"

"Yaroo!"

"Help!"

## CHAPTER 13.

### A Mistake in the Dark.

**G**ORDON GAY struggled under the tangling canvas.

Wootton major and minor and Tadpole and Mont Blong were struggling, too. A foot caught Gordon Gay under the chin, and he gave a yell. Then his own elbow crashed upon somebody's nose, and there was another yell.

"Yaroo!"

Gay struggled out of the wreck and jumped to his feet, breathless and gasping. There were stars in the sky, and a crescent of moon glimmering over the hills to the east. A stiff breeze blew from the sea, and it whistled through Gordon Gay's pyjamas and made him shiver.

He looked round, expecting to see the whole camp blown down; but the rest of the tents were standing the strain. Only the tent tenanted by the Cornstalk Co. had suffered. Wootton major dragged himself out of the

wreck, and Tadpole followed, and then Jack Wootton. A figure was still wallowing under the canvas, and muffled cries for help in mixed tongues could be heard.

"A moi! A moi! Zat you help me? I am suffocate—I die! I perish viz myself! It is zat you sall help me! A moi! Ciel! Mes amis, a moi!" "Poor old Mont Blong!" gasped Gordon Gay. "Lend a hand to yank him out."

"Zat you help me!"

"We're coming, Mont Blong!"

Gordon Gay & Co. dragged up the tangled-up canvas and cords, and a pair of thin legs came into view. Gay seized one of them, and Wootton major the other. They dragged, and the person of Gustave Blanc came into view, yelling.

"Ow! You bang my head! Mon ami, you bang my pauvre tete! Zat you are gentle viz me! Helas! 'Elp!"

"Here you are, safe and sound," said Gordon Gay, letting go the French junior's leg. "You all right, Monty."

"Ciel!"

Mont Blong rolled over and sat up. He gasped for breath, and blinked dazedly at the English boys.

"Vat is it zat have happen?" he panted. "I zink zat zo sky he have fall, is it not?"

Gordon Gay chuckled.

"No; it's only the tent."

"Jolly queer that only this tent should come down!" growled Wootton major. "What silly dummy was it put it up?"

"What rotter fetched it down, you mean?" said Gordon Gay. "Somebody's been japing us."

"By Jove!"

"Look here!"

Gordon Gay showed a loose end of cord. It had been cut clean with a knife.

"My hat! It's a jape!"

"Monkey, of course."

"Or Carker," said Jack Wootton.

"More likely Carker."

Gordon Gay looked round in the dimness. The stars were gleaming overhead, and out on sea there was a silvery shimmer. But among the tents in the schoolboy camp it was very dim. The Cornstalk junior looked very grim. He thought that the practical joker who had brought the tent down was very likely lurking close at hand to enjoy his little joke. If Gordon Gay had been within hitting distance of him, he would have ceased to enjoy it very much.

"Where is the blessed japer?" growled Wootton major. "I want to punch him."

Gay held up his hand.

"Quiet! Hark!"

The juniors listened.

From among the tents came the sound of a footstep.

Someone was coming down the lane left between the lines of tents, from the direction of the village, but close at hand.

Gordon Gay's eyes gleamed.

"It's the giddy joker! He's coming to see if the tent's down," he muttered.

"Good egg!" murmured Jack Wootton.

"Follow me—and quiet!"

"What-ho!"

Gordon Gay crept in the direction of the footsteps, and crouched by the side of a tent which the unseen comer would have to pass if he kept on. The other juniors crouched behind him.

"He'll pass here in a minute, and we'll nab him!" murmured Gordon Gay. "We'll teach him to cut our tent down!"

The juniors chuckled softly

"But I say, Gay——" murmured Tadpole.

"Quiet, you ass!"

"Yes, but——"

"Shut up!"

"But somebody else might——"

"Cheese it!"

"Suppose it should be somebody else!" persisted Tadpole. "You see——"

"Who else is likely to be wandering about the camp in the middle of the night?" said Gordon Gay in a fierce whisper. "Shut up you ass!"

"I'd rather argue the point——"

"Jump on him if he says another word, Jack!"

"Right-ho!" murmured Wootton major.

Tadpole did not say another word.

The footsteps were coming closer now.

The newcomer, whoever he was, was walking quietly and stealthily, and that made the juniors all the more certain that he was a practical joker who had caused the destruction of their sleeping quarters.

Gay gathered himself for a spring. The juniors held their breath, not to give the alarm to their intended victim.

Closer—closer—and a dim form loomed up past the tent. The juniors sprang, and the dim form went heavily to the ground, with Gordon Gay & Co. sprawling over it.

There was a stifled exclamation as the new-comer sprawled under the weight of the Grammarian juniors.

"Got him!" said Gordon Gay grimly.

"Hurray!"

"Now then, you japing ass——"

"Now then, you giddy joker——"

"Mein Gott!"

It was an exclamation in German, and it startled the juniors. Involuntarily they relaxed their grasp upon the stranger they had so roughly handled. For a moment they thought it was the German master they had seized. But the voice was not that of Herr Otto Hentzel.

"Great Scott! Who——"

"Mein Gott! Ach!"

"It's not Herr Hentzel."

"But it's a giddy German."

"Burglar, very likely."

The stranger was rolled over on his back, and Gordon Gay planted a knee on his chest, pinning him down.

"Now then, you rascal, who are you, and what do you mean by letting our tent down on us—eh?"

"Ach!"

"Zat you stop ze grunt of ze pig, and answer ze question," said Mont Blong. "Ciel! Zat I see ze face of him!"

The French junior groped in the pocket of his pyjama jacket, and took out a little electric torch, which he turned on. A beam of white light fell upon

the face of the prisoner, and revealed a set of dark, Teutonic features, and a pair of little, piggy, light blue eyes that were gleaming with rage and fright.

"Mon Dieu! Zat is a Sherman, zen!"

"It's a German, right enough, and it's not Herr Hentzel," said Gordon Gay. "We don't allow any Germans here except those born in the menagerie. What are you doing here, you bounder?"

"Ach!"

"Answer me!"

"Ach!"

"He's only got one record," grinned Wootton major. "He can't say anything else. I don't believe this is the chap who cut the tent down, Gay."

"What's he doing here, then?"

"I zink zat he is a rascal," said Mont Blong. "Zat we make him explain. I do not like ze look of his chivvy."

"Ach, tat you let me ged up!" grunted the German.

"What are you doing here?"

"Mind your own pizness!"

"He's a burglar," said Gordon Gay. "Some rotter come along for what he can pick up in the camp. He's no right here. We'll tie him up and take him to the Head in the morning."

"Good egg!"

"Ach, you led me go!" gasped the German. "I come here to see my friend, ain't it?"

"Who's your friend?"

"Herr Hentzel."

"Rats!" said Gordon Gay decisively. "You've just heard us use that name, that's all. You wouldn't come to visit Herr Hentzel in the middle of the night."

"Ach, I tells you— Ach, tat is my friend Hentzel! Otto, here to me!"

Herr Hentzel, fully dressed, came striding through the gloom towards the group, and his dark face was flushed with rage.

#### CHAPTER 14.

##### A Strange Surprise.

"RELEASE tat man—release him at vunce!"

Herr Hentzel ground out the words between his teeth. But Gordon Gay did not obey immediately. He looked up inquiringly at the German master, with his knee still planted firmly upon the chest of the fallen German.

"Do you know the man, sir?" asked Gordon Gay.

"I know him. Release him. I order you!"

"A friend of yours, sir?" asked Wootton major.

"Ach, ja, ja! I tell you to release him!"

"Very well, sir," said Gay, rising, though in a leisurely way. "Somebody has cut our tent down, sir, and we thought it was this chap. We didn't know you were receiving visitors after midnight, sir."

"Do not be insolent, Gay. Franz, mein friend, I hope you are not hurt." Herr Hentzel helped the fallen man to his feet. "They shall be punished for dis."

"It is not matter." The German gasped for breath. "I do not vish tat you make a fuss for me, Otto. I am all right."

"They have not hurt you?"

"No."

The German master made a gesture to the boys.

"Go back to bed at once."

"Yes, sir. Our tent's down, though——"

"Go into some other tent, den, or put it up. Franz, mein friend, come mit me."

The two Germans moved off towards Herr Hentzel's tent.

The juniors were left looking at one another.

"That's jolly queer," said Gordon Gay, under his breath.

"What ho!" said Wootton major. "It's a queer time for old Hentzel to have visitors. There is something fishy about this."

"Well, where are we going to sleep?" growled Jack Wootton. "We can't get that blessed tent up again now. Shall we turn Monkey & Co. out of theirs?"

"They might object," grinned Gay. "Let's give Carker a look in."

"Good!"

The juniors crept quietly towards Carker's tent. In the darkness they did not observe for the moment that Mont Blong had left them.

Gordon Gay put his head close to the opening of Carker's tent and listened. There was the sound of a chuckle within, and then Carker's voice.

"They haven't come here after all, Craven."

Craven, of the Fourth, replied:

"I thought they would guess, though."

"Oh, rats! They'd put it down to Monkey."

"We didn't put it down to Monkey, though," said Gordon Gay, inserting his head into the tent. "We guessed it was you, Carker."

There was a sharp exclamation from the interior of the tent.

"Who's that?"

"Gordon Gay!"

"What do you want?" growled Carker.

"We want you!" grinned Gordon Gay, groping his way towards Carker's voice. "We're going to have your quarters, as you've busted up ours."

"Ow!" roared Carker, as Gordon Gay collared him in the darkness of the tent. "Yow! Leggo! Help!"

"Get out, Gay!" growled Craven. "We don't know anything about it—yowp!" Wootton major's grasp was upon him.

"Help!" roared Carker.

"You're coming out!" gasped Gordon Gay.

"Yank them out!" shouted Jack Wootton.

"Here, stop that row, you fellows!" exclaimed Potty Benson, sitting up in bed. "What are you waking a fellow up for? I'm sleepy."

"Yes, shut up!" said Daly. "Faith, and somebody's trod on me foot! Ow!"

"Help!" yelled Carker.

"Shut up, you cad!" muttered Gordon Gay, as he struggled with the bully of the Fourth. "You'll have the prefects here."

"I want 'em here!" gasped Carker. "Get out of my tent!"

Gay wrenched him towards the opening. They crashed into the canvas, and it burst out under the weight, and they rolled upon the ground outside. A lantern gleamed upon them, and the angry face of Delamere, the captain of the school, looked down upon them. Delamere was half-dressed, and he had a bicycle lantern in his hand, and he was evidently in a very bad temper at being awakened by the disturbance.

"What's the row here?" he roared.



"Gay came into my tent," gasped Carker. "I couldn't help it."

"Let him alone, Gay. What did you go into his tent for?"

"Mine's down. Somebody cut it down."

"I don't know anything about it" howled Carker.

"Did you see Carker do it, Gay?"

"How could I see him when I was asleep?" demanded the Cornstalk.

"Don't be cheeky, you young cub. Take a hundred lines for making a disturbance, and go back to bed at once."

"Look here, I want Carker's bed."

"I'll cane you if you say another word."

"Oh, I say, Delamere——"

The captain of the school made a reach at Gordon Gay, and the Cornstalk promptly dodged.

"If there's any more of this row, I'll come back with a cane!" growled Delamere. "Carker, go back to bed. If you enter his tent again, Gordon Gay, I'll report you to the Head in the morning."

And Delamere tramped angrily away. Carker, with a derisive grin at the Cornstalk, went into the tent again. Gordon Gay's eyes gleamed.

"The rotten cad, to call a prefect here!" he growled. "We can't go into the tent again, you chaps. And we can't get ours up again in this wind."

"Rotten!" growled Wootton major.

"It is c-c-cold!" said Tadpole, through his chattering teeth. "I really think we had better dress ourselves, my dear fellows. We shall c-c-catch cold!"

It was very good counsel. The Grammarians dragged their clothes out of the wreck of the tent, and dressed. Then they noticed the absence of Gustave Blanc.

"Where's that giddy Froggy got to?" asked Gordon Gay.

"Blessed if I know!"

"Monty Blong! Monty! Mont Blong!"

But Mont Blong did not answer to his name.

"He's sneaked away somewhere to sleep, I suppose," said Gordon Gay.

"Phew! The wind's cold! We'd better roll ourselves up in the canvas to sleep."

Jack Wootton chuckled.

"Then Carker had better do the same," he said.

"Ha, ha, ha! Good wheeze."

Gordon Gay crept round to the windward side of Carker's tent. He groped for the tent pegs, and his keen pocket-knife whipped through the cords.

"Look-out!" he chuckled.

A gust of wind caught the canvas and whirled it over. The tent collapsed, and there were wild and muffled cries from within.

"Ow!"

"Yow!"

"Help!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Cornstalk Co. rolled themselves up in their canvas contentedly. It was some time before the yells from Carker's tent died away.

Gordon Gay's comrades soon fell asleep, but the Cornstalk remained awake. He was wondering what had become of Mont Blong. It was nearly an hour later when the French junior returned.

He returned very quietly, and Gay saw that he was dressed. A glimmer of starlight showed upon his face, and Gay started as he saw it, so stern and serious and earnest was it. It was the face of Mont Blong, and yet not his face, so strangely altered was its expression.

"Mont Blong!" Gay ejaculated involuntarily, starting up.

The French junior recoiled.

"Gay, is that you? I did not know you were awake."

Gay almost collapsed in his amazement. He stared blankly at the French junior. For all trace of Mont Blong's peculiar accent had disappeared, and he had spoken in perfect English!

The surprise was so great that Gordon Gay could only stare at the French junior. Mont Blong understood, and in the starlight a deep, red flush came over his face.

"I not zink zat you awake!" he muttered. "My shum——"

"Oh, chuck it!" said Gordon Gay, recovering his voice. "You can jolly well speak good English if you want to."

"My dear shum——"

"Chuck, it, I say! Where have you been?"

"I walk round ze camp——"

"What else?"

"Nozzing else, my shum."

"How did you learn to speak English all of a sudden?" Gordon Gay asked sarcastically. "Good-night! I'm going to sleep."

And he rolled himself up in the canvas and did not speak again; and Gustave Blanc did not speak either.

Morning dawned on shore and sea.

The "Reveille," from Corporal Cutts's bugle, rang over the camp, and the Grammarians turned out of their tents.

They turned out with keen appetites for breakfast—keener than of old—though they had not been at all feeble at home at Rylcombe. They did full justice to their breakfast.

The school were called together to prayers as usual, in the big marquee, instead of in the chapel of the Grammar School; and then they had a run upon the shore before morning lessons. The sea was a little rough from the breeze overnight, but they were allowed to bathe, and they plunged into the water with great satisfaction.

The juniors especially were in the highest of spirits; but, strangely enough, Gordon Gay was quiet and very thoughtful.

He was thinking of the strange incident of the previous night.

That Mont Blong had been taking the Grammarians in to some extent, and was not exactly what he seemed to be—what he pretended to be—seemed clear enough.

In a moment of surprise he had spoken perfectly good English. For what reason was he playing a queer part? Gordon Gay remembered the discovery of disguises in his box by Carker. Mont Blong had explained them by a story of amateur theatricals, and Gay, who was a keen and enthusiastic amateur actor himself, had fully believed him.

Now a doubt crept into his mind. There was something he did not understand about the French junior—something mysterious.

#### CHAPTER 15.

#### Caught by the Tide.

**M**ONT BLONG did not get an opportunity of speaking to Gordon Gay alone until the fellows were strolling along the shore in the cool of the evening.

"Mon ami," said the French junior timidly.

Gordon Gay looked at him squarely.

"Well?"

"It is zat you are displeas viz me?"

"I don't like humbug," said Gordon Gay coldly. "You can speak English as well as I do, if you like."

Mont Blong nodded.

"But it is zat I always speak viz ze French accent," he said. "He come easier to me, you see, my dear shum."

"You've been taking us in."

Mont Blong spread out his hands in deprecation in a very French fashion.

"Oh, my shum!"

"What were you doing last night, after your left us?" demanded Gordon Gay.

"I go round ze camp."

"What for?"

"I have ze fancy to go."

"Is that all?"

"Vat is it more zan zat zat it should be?"

Gordon Gay shook his head.

"I don't know," he said. "But I know jolly well that you're a jolly lot deeper than you let on to be, Mont Blong, and you've taken me in. You're keeping a secret of some sort."

"A secret, my shum?"

"Yes," said Gordon Gay grimly. "I'm not a fool! I don't know what it is, and I don't want to know; but I don't like secretive chaps. That's all!"

"My shum——"

"Oh, rats!"

Suddenly, like an arrow from a bow, the agile form of the French junior darted out.

He was upon Gordon Gay in a second.

"My shum! My lofed shum!"

The Gornstalk was taken completely by surprise.

In a moment Mont Blong's arms were wound about his neck, and the French junior was embracing him with exuberant affection.

"My shum! My shum! Zat you make him up viz me, my shum! I embrace and kees my dear shum!"

Smack, smack!

And Mont Blong kissed his astounded chum, with a smack on either cheek. There was one wild yell of laughter from the juniors. Gordon Gay, with a face as red as a turkey-cock's, struggled frantically in the embrace of the French junior.

"Ow! Groo! You'll make me sick! Leggo! Help!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My shum! I lofe my shum!"

"Grooooh! Draggimoff!" gasped Gordon Gay. "He's kissing me! I shall be seasick! Groo! Yankimoff!"

"My beloved shum——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I kees my shum—my beloved shum!"

"Grooh! Help!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Monk, dragging the excited Mont Blong off his victim.

"I kees you, too, my shum. I embrace you all!"

"No, you don't!" ejaculated Monk, jumping back. "Hands off——"

"My shum——"

"Hands off, fathead!"

"Zen I embrace you, Gay!"

"That you jolly well won't," said Gay, dodging. "You can embrace your grandfather! Go and eat coke!"

"My dear shums——"

But Mont Blong's dear chums, laughing, ran along the sea-path, and the French junior was left to embrace himself or nobody.

"My shums! My shums!"

Mont Blong followed them until they had left the camp far behind. There was a sudden shout from Jack Wootton, who was ahead. He was rounding the base of the cliffs, when he suddenly stopped, and came quietly back. His boots were shining with wet.

"Can't go that way!" he exclaimed.

"Why not?" asked Gordon Gay, coming up.

"The sea's come in there."

"My hat!"

Gordon Gay peered round the cliff. Where the path lay along the sand to the camp school, sea-water was now lapping up to the grey cliffs. The juniors had noticed that the tide was coming in as they came down to the headland, but they had attached no particular importance to it.

But they saw that it was important now. At high water the tide came in right up to the cliffs, and the caverns at their base were flooded, and the sea-path was under water. Their return to the school camp was cut off.

"Phew!" said Frank Monk.

Mont Blong came up panting.

"Vat is ze mattair, my shums?"

Frank Monk pointed to the lapping tide.

"The path's under water!" he cried. "We can't get back this way."

"We shall have to go round the other end of the cliffs, up the river, and by the village," said Wootton major, with a low whistle of dismay. "That will take a couple of hours. We shall get in late, and get into a fearful row."

Gordon Gay's face was very grave.

"I only hope it will be nothing worse than that," he said, in a low voice.

"What do you mean?" asked Frank Monk, startled by his look.

"Suppose the tide's up at the other end of the cliffs?"

"Great Scott!"

"Buck up!" said Lane quickly. "We may have time to pass."

The juniors ran back the way they had come.

The great embayment of the cliffs was under water, they knew, at high tide, and the rocks at either end of it stretched far into the sea at flood tide. If the rocks were impassable at the other end, they were shut in there, prisoners of the tide, and their only escape would be by climbing the cliffs. They were too far from the school camp for their voices to be heard if they called for help, and in the darkness of the night there was no chance of a boat coming to their aid.

They dashed along at top speed—silent now, save for the panting of their hurried breath. They knew that the situation was serious now, and that they might be running for life or death.

The sand ground up under their rapid footsteps. Once or twice a slush of water came over their boots, as a wave more advanced than the rest shimmered over the sand at their feet.

The tide was coming in fast now.

Gordon Gay was ahead of the others, and he reached the bluff rocks at the northern end of the embayment first. He halted there.

The others came panting up.

"We're cut off!" said the Cornstalk junior quietly.

"Good heavens!"

The tide was lashing on the rocks. Already there was a depth of several feet where the path had run an hour ago.

"Shut in!" said Frank Monk, between his teeth. "My only hat! We shall have to wait here till the tide goes down."

"All night!" said Jack Wootton.

"Mon Dieu!"

There was a lapping of water, and a wave soaked them to the knees. They ran up closer to the cliffs, with the lapping, whispering waves behind them.

They drew as close to the base of the precipitous cliffs as they could, and looked at one another with pale faces. Deep and strange murmurs came from the cliffs as the waves boomed in the hollow caverns.

"My hat!" said Frank Monk, in a scared whisper. "The tide comes right up to those cliffs, you know. It will be on us in a few minutes."

Gordon Gay set his teeth.

"We've got to climb."

"I—I don't know this place at all," said Frank, with chattering teeth. "But they say that these cliffs can't be climbed."

"Oh, don't be a giddy Job's comforter!" said Wootton major. "We've got to climb, or else be drowned like rats in a trap! Groo!"

"Mon Dieu! It is all ze fault of me!" groaned Mont Bloug.

"Well, come to think of it, it is," said Gordon Gay. "This is the result of your playing the giddy goat, you silly ass!"

"They may search for us in a boat," said Carboy hopefully.

Frank shook his head.

"Not likely. We didn't tell anybody where we were going, you know."

"My aunt!"

"We've been a set of precious asses!" said Gordon Gay, whose face was very pale now, though there was no fear in it. "This is trouble, and no mistake! Scatter along the cliffs, and look for a place to climb!"

"That's all we can do."

"Mon Dieu!"

The juniors scrambled along the base of the cliff, looking for a likely place to climb. But the headland rose rocky and abrupt above their heads, and on all sides slippery rock met their gaze, with seemingly no hold for a seagull. The tide was coming in steadily, and the waters were lapping at their feet now.

White and scared, the juniors gathered together again in the highest spot close to the base of the cliff. They looked seaward. The moon was rising on the sea, and there was a dim glimmer of pale and ghostly light on the wide, rolling waters. Far out to sea they saw the glittering lights of a ship, many miles away.

With a steady swish-swish the water came rolling in, and it rolled round the juniors, and laved them to the knees as they stood back to the rock.

They listened, in the faint hope of hearing a shout from the land that would tell them that they were searched for, and that help was at hand. But no sound came to their straining ears, save the ceaseless lapping of the water at their feet.

Gordon Gay turned a haggard glance upon his comrades.

"It's all up!" he muttered. "Unless we can find a way up the cliff we're done for!"

"We've looked," said Frank Monk. "It's no good!"

"Mon Dieu!" moaned Mont Blong. "It is all my fault. Forgive me, my shums!"

The juniors were silent. Only the lapping of the waters as they closed round the cornered chums broke the silence of the night.

## CHAPTER 16.

### From the Clutch of the Tide.

**S**LOWLY, with a dim glimmer of silvery light, the moon came out over the sea. The light fell upon the black headland and the juniors crouching against the rocks at the foot of it. The sand at their feet was churned up now by the advancing waves, and the water as it dashed rose round their waists.

Gordon Gay & Co. clung to the rocks, shivering in the cold contact of the water as it dashed round them, and the spray as it stung their faces.

Gordon Gay scanned the steep rocks of the headland as the moon came out. It seemed inaccessible from the sea; but unless the juniors could climb, there was but a little time before they must be swallowed up by the incoming tide. Gustave Blanc gave a piteous groan.

"Mon Dieu! And zis is all my fault!"

"Never mind that," said Gordon Gay. "We've got to get out of it somehow. If we could reach a ledge and hang on, out of the tide——"

"But we can't!" said Frank Monk hopelessly. "A fly couldn't climb here!"

"We're done for!" muttered Wootton major.

"We're not done for till we're drowned!" said Gordon Gay grimly. "I'm going to have another try!"

There was but little time left. The water had risen to their waists, and it was coming in fast. The juniors had to cling to the rough surfaces of the rock to avoid being swept away by the swirling waters. Once swept away from the cliff, and they knew what would happen. All of them could swim, but they knew that they would not swim long in that wide flood.

They would be dashed against the rocks by the tide, or carried out to sea; and next day, perhaps, their bodies would be thrown up on the sands within sight of the schoolboy camp.

Gordon Gay felt along the rough cliff with his hands, seeking a hold. But there was none to be found. But suddenly, as he gazed upward, a bright light shone out from the darkness overhead, almost blinding him by its glare. It appeared for a moment, shining out from the darkness of the cliff, and then vanished, and all was dark again.

Gordon Gay rubbed his eyes.

It seemed as if it must have been a trick of his fancy, so amazing was it to see that light shining from the front of the steep cliff towards the sea.

"Did—did you see that?" he exclaimed.

"Oui, oui!"

"Yes," said Frank Monk, in amazement. "It was a light from the top of the cliff."

"It wasn't from the top of the cliff," said Gordon Gay decidedly. "It was from about half-way up—not more than fifty feet over our heads."

"Well, it looked like it, but it couldn't be. How could anybody be half-way up the cliff?"

"Someone is!" said Gordon Gay.

Jack Wootton drew a quick breath.

"If there's somebody up there, we can get up there, too!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, rather!"

"Suppose we shout for help, and they may send us down a rope."

"Hold on! There's the light again!"

Bright and clear it flashed out from the face of the cliff. This time all the juniors had their eyes turned upward to it, and they saw it clearly. There was no mistake about its position. The light was glaring out midway to the top of the cliff, and it was evidently an electric light.

"There's someone there!"

"What can it be?" muttered Lane.

"It is a signal, my shums!" muttered Mont Blong. "Look! Zat is a signal vich 'ave answer from ze sea."

"My hat!"

In their amazement and curiosity the juniors almost forgot for the moment the terrible peril that overshadowed them.

From the dimness of the sea came back an answering flash to the light on the cliffs.

Then both lights disappeared abruptly, and all was dark again, save for the faint, dim glimmer of the half-hidden moon.

"Zat is a signal from a ship at sea!" muttered Mont Blong. "It is not natural zat zey make zese signals here. Do not call out, my shums!"

"Why not?" asked Monk.

"Because zat would be more dangerous zan to remain quiet."

"What!"

"Zey are against ze law, zey who make zese signals," said the French junior quietly. "You zink a little, and you know zat!"

The Grammarians were silent in the strangeness of that new thought.

Yet there could be little doubt about it.

What could the signal mean?

"Smugglers, perhaps!" muttered Gordon Gay.

"This is the only place where the signals could be made without being seen," said Frank Monk. "All the rest of the coast along here is low-lying, as far as the Blackwater. Just this headland sticks up, and there's nothing else for miles. And when the tide's in, there's nobody on the seaward side to see the signals made. It's some game! I suppose it must be smugglers, and somebody's up there signalling that the coast is clear, and it's safe to come in."

"But smugglers wouldn't leave us here to drown," said Wootton major.

"Let's yell to them!"

"Zat you keep silent!" Mont Blong exclaimed excitedly. "I tell you zat it is death! Zey are not smugglers!"

"How do you know?"

"Never mind zat, but I do know. Zey are rascals, and if zey know zat we watch zem, zey leave us to die. Zey throw down rocks upon us, I zink! I tell you if zey knew we see zem, we never live to tell!"

The juniors stared at the French junior in astonishment. His manner was so earnest that they could not help being impressed by it.

"But we shall be drowned if we stay here!" said Carboy.

"Zat we swim," said Mont Blong. "Zere is no way to climb; but up zere zere must be a cave, or zat signal could not be made. Ven ze water rise higher, ve get in, if we keep close to ze cliff."

"My hat!" said Gordon Gay. "We can do it! Keep close together, and keep hold of one another, and swim! And keep hold of the cliff!"

"Does the water rise as high as that?" asked Wootton major doubtfully.

"No fear! But a bit higher it's not so steep, and we can climb!"

"Good!" said Wootton, rather doubtfully.

The juniors held to one another and to the rough, broken surface of the cliff. The water was up to their necks now, and they had to swim. Fortunately, the sea was coming in very calmly. If there had been a rough swell on the sea, they would have been swept away from the cliff, in spite of their efforts. But now there was no danger of that. The water curled round the rocks, lapping them gently, and so long as the juniors could swim they were not in immediate danger.

Gordon Gay had calculated well.

Nine or ten feet above their heads there was a slope in the cliff, and there it would be possible to obtain foothold. Below high-water mark, the cliff was washed smooth by the action of the water; but above it, it was possible to climb.

How high the water went they did not know, but they knew it must go some distance, and if they could swim so long there was a good chance.

And the sea was coming in very fast. The tide had flooded on past the headland now on both sides, and its front towards the sea was disappearing inch by inch under the lapping water.

There was no longer sand under the feet of the juniors. They were swimming now, still holding to one another, and some of them clinging to the cliff as they found fresh hold higher and higher.

Again the light winked and blinked out above their heads, and the juniors knew that the dots and dashes were a part of some signal code which they could not understand.

Perhaps Mont Blong understood, but if he did, he did not say so. The juniors were very silent now. They needed all their strength to save their lives; and they were fearful, too, that their voices might reach the ears of the man on the ledge of the cliff above them.

If he was, indeed, a foe, as Mont Blong declared, it was necessary to keep him in ignorance of their presence there. A loose rock rolled down upon them would have dashed them away from the cliff.

It seemed impossible that there could be a man upon the cliff villain enough for such an act, but the juniors very naturally did not want to run the risk.

Dot and dash in winking lights answered from the sea.

Then the lights vanished, and did not reappear. The signalling, whatever it meant, was done.

In the silence of the night the juniors heard a faint sound from the cliff above—the sound of a boot grinding upon hard rock.

They understood. The signaller, his work done, had gone back from the edge of the cliff-ledge where he had been standing. That was clear enough indication that there was an opening in the cliff—a cavern of some sort.

Higher and higher rose the water.

Gordon Gay muttered an exclamation:

"Look out, you fellows! There's a hold here!"

"Good egg!"

The abrupt rise of the cliffs had been passed, now that the tide was almost at the full, and above the water the rocks were sloping and broken. Farther above, as the juniors knew, the abrupt steepness began again; but the flashing light had shown them that there was an opening midway to the top, and into that opening they meant to go. It was impossible to climb to the top of the cliff, and it was hopeless to think of clinging to the rock till morning. Long before morning they would become exhausted and roll into



the sea. There was one chance of life—and that chance the flashing of the signal light had revealed to them. If they could get into the cave they were saved.

And whether friend or foe waited above, into the cave they meant to go.

#### CHAPTER 17.

#### The Hidden Cave!

GORDON GAY led the way.

The rough and broken surface of the cliff at the point to which the Grammarian juniors had been floated by the rising of the tide afforded hold for hands and feet, steep as it was. The juniors would never have attempted the climb for choice, but they were desperate now. There was hungry death in the waters below, and there was no choice in the matter. Taking their courage in both hands, so to speak, the seven juniors climbed the steep front of the cliff, dragging themselves, drenched and dripping, from the water. They left the sea lapping hungrily below.

A dozen feet more upwards, slowly and cautiously. Then Gordon Gay uttered a word to his followers.

"I can feel the ledge now," he whispered. "Quiet! If Mont Blong's right, and it's an enemy here, he mustn't hear us."

"Right-ho!" whispered back Monk.

"Oui, oui! Vous avez raison!" murmured Mont Blong.

Gay, reaching his hand above him, could feel a narrow ledge on the face of the cliff. It was nearly flat, but it was not more than eight inches wide at the most, and so it was not surprising that it was not noticeable from the shore below. Getting a good grip upon the ledge, the Cornstalk drew himself up till his feet rested upon it, and he threw his weight against the steep cliff above.

He was on the ledge now, at the level at which the light had been flashed, but at a spot some yards to the left of the signaller's position.

Gay gazed searchingly along the cliff.

He could see nothing.

Dim as the night was, with thick clouds sailing over the moon, Gay could have seen the signaller if the man had been still upon the ledge.

It was certain that the unknown had gone back into an opening of the cliff. If he emerged again, he was certain to see the juniors, and if he was indeed an enemy, their position would be one of terrible peril. If there was to be a struggle, it was necessary to get a firm footing in the cave before it commenced.

Gay moved slowly and silently along the ledge, and in another minute Frank Monk had reached it, and stood in the spot where Gay had been standing, holding on to the cliff.

Then he moved along, and Wootton major gained his place.

One by one the juniors reached the ledge, with silent caution. In spite of the wetting from the sea-water, the exertion made them warm enough, and they panted for breath.

Gordon Gay, moving cautiously along the ledge, feeling the rock with his hands as he went, reached the expected opening.

A narrow cave, not more than two feet in width, hardly more than a fissure, opened in the face of the headland above the ledge.

Within was dense darkness.

Where was the man who had made the signals? Was he there in the dark? Was he afraid of showing a light in case he should be seen?

Whether the cave was now tenanted or not, it was not necessary to enter. Gordon Gay glanced back at his comrades, clinging to the cliff on the ledge behind.

"Ready?" he whispered.

"Yes."

"Oui, oui!"

"Come on, then!"

Gay stepped boldly into the cave.

There was no sound save the slight impact of his wet boot upon the rocky floor. Sand ground under his foot, and that was all.

He felt his way cautiously in the darkness, and advanced farther into the cave. The darkness was blinding. He could not see his hand before his face.

In a couple of minutes the rest of the juniors were in the cave with him. Still there was no sound of any other occupant.

"Nobody's here!" whispered Gay at last.

"Then there must be another way out!" muttered Frank Monk.

"Must be!"

"Well, we can get out that way, if that signaller chap can," said Wootton major. "Suppose we strike a light?"

"Non, non!" muttered Mont Blong anxiously. "It is not safe."

"Look here!" grunted Wootton major. "I don't see how you can know anything about that signalling chap, Mont Blong. If you do know anything, tell us."

"Yes, go ahead, Mont Blong."

"Zat is not possible. But——"

"Well, I'm going to strike a light!" growled Wootton major.

"The matches will be wet, Harry!" said Gordon Gay.

"I've got a waterproof matchbox in my pocket."

"I zink zat you——"

"Oh, cheese it! We've got to see where he are!" said Wootton major, as he fumbled in his wet pockets for the matchbox. "We might tumble down a hole and break our necks."

Scratch!

The flare of a match glimmered through the darkness of the cave.

The juniors looked around them eagerly.

The cave, narrow as it was at its opening in the face of the cliff, widened farther on, and a dozen feet from the juniors it had a width of at least six yards. Farther than that they could not penetrate into the gloom, but they could see that the cave extended farther into the rocky headland.

The floor of the cave was very uneven, and there were little pools of water in the hollows of the rock, showing that in stormy weather the water dashed into the cave, high as it was above the tide.

The walls of the cave were rugged and irregular, and there were deep fissures in them, extending on all sides, and great masses of loose rock lay about the cave.

"Plenty of cover here if we had to hide!" said Wootton major.

The next instant he uttered an angry exclamation as Mont Blong leaned towards him and blew his match out.

"You ass! What——" began Wootton, as they were plunged into darkness again.

"Hush! Ze silence!" said Mont Blong, in a voice of agony.

"But I——"

"Silence! Zere is a light!"

"My hat!"

From the deep darkness at the farther end of the cave a light gleamed

suddenly. It was at a height of about three or four feet from the cavern floor, and it was moving in an irregular manner. It needed no more to tell the Grammarians that it was carried in a man's hand. It grew clearer to the view every moment, though the lantern it came from was evidently still at a distance.

"That's the chap who made the signals," whispered Gordon Gay.

"He's coming back!"

"Mon Dieu! Zat man must not find us here!" whispered Mont Blong.

"Zat you take cover, my shums; zat ve hide."

"Look here, Mont Blong——"

"Take ze cover!" said Mont Blong, in a kind of suppressed shriek.

"Take ze cover! It is a matter of ze life or ze death!"

The juniors, startled as they were by the strange situation, shaken by the perils they had passed through, were impressed by the French junior's earnestness. That Mont Blong had a secret Gordon Gay already knew. Was his secret, then, in connection with this mysterious signaller from the cliff? It was possible.

"Yes, get into cover, quick!" Gordon Gay muttered.

The glimpse the juniors had obtained of the interior of the cavern by the light of the match made it easy for them to take cover. They drew back among the big rocks that piled the cavern floor, crouching down out of sight when the light should come by.

The sound of footsteps was now audible in the cavern, echoing with a strange hollowness through the recesses of the cliff.

Closer and closer!

The light was near at hand now, and the form of a burly man loomed up behind it. The juniors crouched behind the rocks as the light grew stronger, not venturing to look out until the man had passed. The footsteps passed them as the man, carrying a lantern, went on towards the opening of the cave. Then Gordon Gay ventured to raise his head and look.

He caught a side view of the man. He had the lantern in his right hand, and a thick coil of rope slung over his left arm. His face, of which Gay caught the profile, was hard and deeply earnest, as of a man engaged upon an enterprise of perilous importance. As Gordon Gay looked, he remained transfixed, too utterly astounded to draw back into cover again, and it was all he could do to restrain the cry of amazement that rose to his lips. If the man had turned his head, he would have seen the junior staring at him blankly across the boulder. But he did not look round; he evidently did not dream that anyone beside himself was in the cave. He moved on, and flashed the light over the sea.

Gordon Gay remained motionless, transfixed, wondering if he were dreaming. For the man with the electric-lamp, making the mysterious signals from the cliff over the dark waters of the North Sea, was Herr Otto Hentzel, the German master of Rylcombe Grammar School!

Gordon Gay drew back behind the cover of the boulder, his heart beating strangely, his face pale.

Herr Hentzel!

The German master!

There was no doubt about it, for he had seen the man plainly, his profile lighted up by the lantern in his hand.

What was Otto Hentzel doing there—signalling to some craft out in the darkness of the North Sea?

Gordon Gay felt a grasp upon his wrist. He started. Mont Blong's eyes were glimmering in the darkness close to him.

"You see?" whispered the French junior.

Otto Hentzel had gone out on the ledge now, outside the cave, and was signalling with the lantern, and it was safe to whisper.

"Yes," muttered Gay.

"You see zat it was ze German master?"

"Yes."

"So I zink you see. You know now zat zere is danger."

"Why danger? Why should Herr Hentzel want to harm us?"

Gordon Gay asked the question; yet while he asked it he felt in his bones, as it were, that there was danger—terrible danger—if the juniors were discovered there. The look on Herr Hentzel's face, perhaps, had made him feel so. But he wished to know what the French junior thought upon the subject.

"You see zose signals?"

"Yes."

"Zey are to a craft out zere—ze steam-launch zat went out some time ago."

"But, why signal to it—"

"Zat steam-launch have gone out to a ship."

"Well?"

"A ship zat dare not come in sight of ze English coast."

"What?"

"A German ship—a torpedo-boat or a gunboat mon ami—and zat steam launch it bring somevun ashore here!"

Gordon Gay breathed hard.

"But, why—why?"

"Perhaps you see soon. Zey come here."

"Here?"

"Oui, oui! Ze German he have rope-ladder on ze arm."

"My hat!"

"Taisez!" muttered Mont Blong. "Ze silence!"

The German master had ceased to signal. He set the lantern down in the mouth of the cave. From the darkness of the sea the hidden juniors could see the flashing of a responsive light. Then it vanished, and all was dark.

Gay raised his head cautiously to watch the German.

Herr Hentzel was kneeling on the rocky ledge, and the movements, and the sounds he made, showed what he was doing. He was engaged in fixing the end of a rope-ladder by means of iron spikes in the rocky ledge. The rope-ladder hung down the cliff.

Either the launch, or a boat from the launch, was coming towards the cliff, and the light was a guide. The signalling had been to tell the strangers that the coast was clear.

Who were they?

So much was understood by the juniors—but who were the strangers? How came the German master of the Grammar School to be mixed up in that? And the coast was hardly favourable for that enterprise. Smuggling cargoes would be run much more safely in the low shore further south, and in the estuary of the Blackwater. It was not likely to be smuggling. But what else? The juniors were utterly mystified.

A low whistle sounded at last under the cliff and the keen ears of the juniors detected the rhythmic splash of oars.

There was a boat under the cliff.

Then a scraping of the rope-ladder against the rough rock, and a head rose into view against the cloudy sky outside the cave.

Cloudy as the night was, it was lighter outside the cave by comparison with the thick darkness within. The juniors thought they recognised the

head, indistinct as the features were in the dimness. It was the head of the man they had "bumped" in the school-camp the night after Carker had brought their tent down, in mistake for the practical joker—it was the mysterious friend who had visited Herr Hentzel at midnight.

"Franz Pfalz!" muttered Mont Blong.

The German clambered on the ledge, and then stood ready to assist another man who was ascending the rope-ladder.

He was a burly, square-shouldered man, with a large slouch-hat drawn down over his face.

The juniors caught a glimpse of a square chin, and a thick military moustache with turned-up ends, in the gleam of the lantern.

The three men came into the cave.

By the manner of Herr Hentzel and Franz Pfalz, it was evident that the man with the slouched hat was a person of importance, in their eyes, at least. Their manner to him was deferential, indeed, cringing, and his, in return, was abrupt and commanding. As they came into the cave, Herr Hentzel carried the lantern, and the juniors crouched low. But Gordon Gay, covered by the jagged edges of the boulder he was kneeling behind, ventured to peep, and he saw the face of the third man—a hard, iron face, darkened by exposure to the weather, with steely grey eyes that glinted in the light, and hard-set lips. The man was a soldier, evidently, and the orders that glittered when he moved his cloak showed that he was an officer of rank. And he was evidently a German!

"A German military officer!" Gordon Gay murmured under his breath, feeling as if his head were turning round and round. "What on earth does it mean?"

The three men spoke together for a few minutes in guttural German.

The Grammarian juniors had a school smattering of that language, but it was not equal to following the rapid talk in low tones, and they caught but a few words they understood, and those words conveyed no meaning to them.

The three Germans moved on up the cave, Herr Hentzel carrying the light, and they disappeared from view, the light twinkling away till it was lost in the recesses of the cave.

Then Gordon Gay moved.

"Did you see?" he muttered.

"I didn't!" murmured Frank Monk. "What was it?"

"A German soldier—an officer!"

"My hat!"

"And he had a sword—and a pistol in his belt under his cloak!"

"Phew!"

"Must have been a big bug by the way the others treated him. They're gone now. Do you understand it all, Mont Blong?"

"Oui, oui!"

"Did you understand what they were saying?" Gordon Gay asked eagerly.

"Oui, oui! Yes!"

"What do they want here?"

Mont Blong was silent for some moments. He appeared to be thinking it out.

"Go ahead!" muttered Wootton major. "If you know what it's all about, explain to us, you young ass!"

"I'll explain, if you give ze word of ze honour to keep ze secret, all of you, until I give you ze permission to speak. Zat is necessary; zen I trust you!"

"Well, I suppose we can do that," said Gay dubiously.

"Yes, yes."  
 "Honour bright, Mont Blong!"  
 "C'est bien! Zen I tell you."  
 "Buck up! Who are they?"  
 "Zey are spies!"

## CHAPTER 18.

## A Capture from the Enemy.

"SPIES!"

The six juniors uttered the word together. They were utterly amazed.

In all their wild conjectures upon the subject, that explanation had not occurred to them.

"Spies!" repeated Gordon Gay dazedly.

"Great Scott!"

"German spies!" murmured Lane. "Oh, my hat!"

"It is true, my shums!"

"And our German master is in league with them?"

"Oui, oui!"

"By Jove! Are you sure, Mont Blong?"

"If you had understood vat zey said, my shums, you would know zis as well as I do."

"The rotters!" said Gordon Gay. "I say, we ought to give the alarm to somebody—they ought to be arrested!"

"Zat is impossible. Zey go before zey can be seized—and ze ozzers do ze work instead. Zey are being watched."

"Look here, Mont Blong, you seem to know a jolly lot," said Gordon Gay. "Blessed if I quite understand how you got on to it. I shouldn't wonder if it's true, though. Is that why you said there was danger—because they are spies?"

"Oui, oui!"

"And if they found us here——"

"Zey would throw us into ze zea, mon ami!"

"Not without a bit of a tussle first," murmured the Cornstalk grimly. "But we don't want a row with the rotters. That officer chap looked as hard as iron, and as if he would use the revolver he had in his belt."

"We'd better get out of this," said Monk; "and the sooner we give information to the police the better."

Mont Blong uttered an exclamation.

"You have promise to say nozzing!" he exclaimed.

"Why, you young ass——"

"I have ze promise," said the French junior, "and I tell you zat ze mattair is in ozzer hands—zey are being looked after. I not tell you how I know, but I do know. Zat is enough, my shums. I have ze promise."

"We'd better get out of this," said Gordon Gay. "Old Hentzel had no idea that we were here; but if they should think of examining the cave——"

Frank Monk gave a sudden chuckle.

"What price about their boat?" he asked. "If they haven't left anybody in it——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Taisez—taisez—silence my shums! Zere may be a man in ze boat."

"I'll soon see about that," said Gay.

He crept silently on the ledge before the cave. Stooping down, he peered cautiously over the edge of the rough rocks. Below, on the lapping water, the boat floated, jarring against the rock with the motion of the tide. It was but a little skiff, and two oars were laid inboard in it, and there was no man visible. The painter was fast to a spike jammed in a crevice in the rock. The rope ladder dangled down, and was secured to the boat. Out on the dark sea twinkled a single light—that of the launch, doubtless, waiting for the return of the German officer. But the darkness was too thick for more than the light to be distinguished.

Gordon Gay crept back and rejoined his comrades.

"The boat's empty," he muttered. "Those two rotters rowed themselves from the launch. They won't row themselves back. It will be as easy as winking to slip down the rope ladder and get off in the boat. They'll think that the painter was not fastened tight enough, and that she drifted off."

The juniors chuckled.

It seemed an excellent jape to play upon the spies, and it was certain to place them in some difficulties. They would have to wait on the ledge until they had signalled for another boat to be sent from the launch, or until the launch risked ranging up close to the rocky cliff to take them off.

"Good egg!" said Monk. "I'm on!"

"Look out!" muttered Lane. "They're coming."

In the far distance in the hollow cave a light twinkled.

The Germans were returning.

"Plenty of time yet," said Gordon Gay, looking at the light. "They're ten minutes from here. Come on!"

The juniors crept out on the ledge.

Gordon Gay clambered down the rope ladder, and his comrades followed him one by one, and in three minutes all of them were in the boat. It was a close fit for seven sturdy juniors. But the sea was very calm, and even if there had been danger they would not have cared. Gordon Gay jerked out the spike in the crevice of the rock to which the painter was secured, and cast loose the ends of the rope ladder. Frank Monk had an oar ready, and he shoved off at once.

The skiff danced away on the flowing tide.

Gordon Gay and Frank Monk took the oars, and Wootton major sat at the rudder. The two oarsmen rowed swiftly, and as silently as they could. The tide was sweeping round the headland, and they only had to keep the boat well out from the cliff for the sweep of the tide to carry them on their way.

In a few minutes they were rounding the corner of the rocky headland, over the path which they would have followed if they had not been caught by the tide, and imprisoned by the cliff and the sea.

"Hark!" muttered Gordon Gay. "Quiet!"

They lay on their oars, and the boat drifted on the tide. Monk shoved it off from the cliff as it floated too close.

From the direction of the cave came a sound of muttering voices in German. The three Germans had evidently arrived upon the ledge, and discovered that the boat was missing.

The juniors laughed softly. Monk punted the boat onward. A light gleamed out from the ledge, and was answered from the unseen launch. The Germans were signalling.

The mass of the headland intervened, and the light was shut out from view. Safe in the distance, the juniors put out the oars again, and rowed.

Ten minutes later the bows of the boat grated in the sand a quarter of a

mile from the school camp. The juniors pushed the boat in as far as they could, and then jumped ashore to clear the shallow water.

One by one they alighted safely on the land, and the boat remained pounding in the shingle.

"What are we going to do with the boat?" asked Lane.

"Leave her where she is," said Gordon Gay. "If she is found floating, old Hentzel will think she drifted away, and won't suspect that anyone was there to help her."

"Good!"

"I suppose we're not going to say anything about this?" said Frank Monk doubtfully.

"Well, we've promised Mont Blong."

"I have ze promise," said Mont Blong. "Zat is right. Say nozzing. Ze watching of zose spies is in the hands of ozzers."

The juniors were not quite satisfied. But they had promised Mont Blong, and there was no more to be said. They walked back to the school camp.

## CHAPTER 19.

### A Little Ragging.

**T**HE adventure in the cave on the headland had drawn the chums of the Grammar School together again; but it was only for a time. The coolness between Gordon Gay and Gustave Blanc continued, and they seldom spoke to one another. The French junior sometimes cast one of his pathetic glances at the Cornstalk, but Gordon Gay never seemed to see it. The fact that Mont Blong was playing a part—that he was deceiving the rest of the school, weighed upon Gordon Gay's mind, and he could not be frank and easy with the French junior. And Gordon Gay's coldness to Mont Blong drew the Woottons away from him. They did not know the cause of the trouble; but they could not, of course, desert an old friend for a new one; and as Gay avoided Mont Blong, they naturally came to see less of him, too. If he had not been quartered in the same tent, they would probably have lost sight of him altogether.

Mont Blong certainly felt the estrangement from his "shum" very deeply. He did not look for another chum. He was on very friendly terms with Frank Monk & Co., but he did not "shum" with them as he had done with Gordon Gay.

Gay felt it, too, though he would not say so. He felt that if Mont Blong had any explanation to give, he ought to give it; and if he did not give it, it was because he had none.

And the Cornstalk would have nothing to say to a fellow who admitted that he was pulling the wool over the eyes of the other fellows, and, in fact, living a life of pretence. His spying on the German master, too, worried Gay. It was doubtless true, as Mont Blong averred, that Herr Hentzel was a German spy. But what right had Mont Blong to shadow him and even play the listener outside his tent. If he had been a detective, employed to watch the man, it would have been different. But a schoolboy had no right to play the shadower, whatever his motives might be.

Poor Mont Blong, estranged from the chum he had chosen, was not very happy just now; and besides having lost a friend, he had made an enemy. There was no doubt that Herr Hentzel regarded the French junior with suspicion and dislike. He could not have known of his presence in the cave on the occasion of the visit of the German officer; but for some reason he



regarded him with suspicion, and he lost no opportunity of making the French junior feel his dislike.

Mont Blong endured that very patiently. When, in the German lessons, Herr Hentzel "ragged" him over-much, he generally found some way of retaliating, and the sympathies of the Fourth were certainly with Mont Blong.

It was about a week after the affair of the headland, when the trouble between the French junior and the German master came to a head.

Herr Hentzel had come into the canvas schoolroom in an exceedingly bad temper. He found fault with all the juniors in turn, and ragged poor Potty Benson till that plump youth hardly knew whether he was upon his head or his heels. Finally, he turned upon Mont Blong, who was looking calm and innocent and as good as gold; and he dragged the unfortunate French youth up and down through German irregular verbs in the most unmerciful way.

It occurred, oddly enough, to Gordon Gay, that Herr Hentzel was really trying to discover whether Mont Blong knew more of German than he gave out. But if that was the case, Mont Blong played his part well. He displayed just enough knowledge for a Fourth-Former, and no more. And as Herr Hentzel took the view that that was not enough, poor Mont Blong had a rough time in class, and finished with being ordered to write out two hundred lines from Goethe's "Faust."

Whereupon, Mont Blong "got his own back" in one of his peculiar ways. Instead of writing out successive lines, he appeared to misunderstand, and wrote out one line from the poem two hundred times. And the line he selected was "Das Spioneren ist die Lust"—"Spying is your pleasure."

Mont Blong took the lines in to Herr Hentzel in his tent after lessons, and presented them with great meekness.

The German master glanced at the sheets, prepared to find fault; and his face became quite white with rage as he saw what was written.

He had really no reason for finding fault; for the line was undoubtedly from "Faust," and it was very well written. But the innuendo conveyed in it was decidedly provoking, and Herr Hentzel gave way to his temper.

He crumpled the sheets in his hand, and reached out and gave the French junior a sounding box on the ear.

Mont Blong reeled back, more astonished than hurt. Masters at the Grammar School were allowed to use the cane, but a box on the ear was strictly forbidden. Mont Blong's eyes blazed with rage.

But he had no time to speak. Herr Hentzel grasped him by the shoulder, and swung him out of the tent, and he staggered away, and fell outside.

Gordon Gay & Co. were near at hand, and they ran up at once.

Harry Wootton picked the French junior up.

"What's the row?" he asked.

Mont Blong was stuttering with rage.

"Ze rascal! Ze Sherman rottair! He strike me!"

"Phew!"

"He pitch me out of ze tent!"

"The rotter!" said Wootton major. "Here, where are you going?"

"I go to strike heem, also!"

Wootton major and Gordon Gay dragged the excited French youth back.

"Take it calmly," said Wootton major, chuckling. "You can't punch a master's head, you know. Must draw a line somewhere."

"He strike me viz fist——"

"Come away, you ass!"

"I have ze satisfaction——"

"Rot!"

And the chums of the Fourth marched the shrieking French junior away. Mont Blong resisted, but it was no use. In the grasp of the three sturdy juniors, he was marched forcibly away to the seashore, and held there till he calmed down.

"Don't play the giddy ox, you know," said Jack Wootton. "I suppose you don't want to be expelled from the school, do you?"

"I zink zat I make him sit up!"

"That's all right—but you can't punch his head."

"Ha, ha! No fear!"

"If you stand by me, my shums, I pay him out all serene," said Mont Blong, eagerly. "I zink zat ve raid his tent to-night, and turn it inside out."

The juniors chuckled.

"Good egg!" said Harry Wootton. "But it's risky!"

"I do not care for ze risk!"

"Same here. But——"

"If you don't help me, I make ze raid on my own, all by myself!"

"Oh, we'll help you. What do you say, Gay? We can't have Fourth-Form chaps knocked about like giddy punching-balls, can we?" said Wootton major.

Gay shook his head.

"Quite right," he said. "Herr Hentzel has been getting his ears up too much altogether lately. A ragging would be a hint to him to put them down."

"Hear, hear!" said Jack Wootton.

"It's easy enough, too," said Wootton major, thoughtfully. "You know he always goes out for a walk after supper—some of his blessed spying, I suppose. We could turn his tent into a giddy wreck while he's gone."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the juniors, having discussed the scheme and decided upon it, waited for night.

When Corporal Cutts' bugle sounded lights out that evening, Gordon Gay & Co. retired to their beds, but they did not go to sleep. After Delamere had made his rounds, they slipped out of bed and dressed themselves again. Tadpole was fast asleep, as usual, and they did not wake him. Four of them would be enough for the work they had in hand.

Lurking among the shadows of the tents, they saw the burly form of the German master at last, leaving the camp.

"He's gone!" murmured Gordon Gay. "Come on!"

A minute more and they were in Herr Hentzel's tent.

They did not waste time.

The juniors of Rylcombe Grammar School had had some experience in ragging, and they knew how to improve every moment.

Every article in the tent was turned out or over, and the bed was upset, and the bedclothes tied in knots and scattered on the ground.

In ten minutes, the four juniors had done more damage than could possibly be set right in a couple of hours.

Mont Blong devoted most of his time to a large ironbound box, which was locked, and secured by an additional padlock. But he did not succeed in breaking it, as it was, of course, impossible to make a noise.

"Better let that alone," said Wootton major: "you can't possibly bust it. Besides, I expect Sauer Kraut keeps his papers in it."

"Vous avez raison—you are right, my shum," said Mont Blong.

But his eyes did not leave it till the juniors left the tent. They returned to their own quarters chuckling, and turned in.

"There'll be a fearful row about that to-morrow," said Gordon Gay. "We shall have to prove a jolly strong alibi."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors were soon fast asleep. Half an hour later Mont Blong sat up in bed.

"Was my shums all asleep?" he whispered.

There was no reply, save the deep breathing of Gordon Gay & Co., and the steady unmusical snore of Tadpole.

Mont Blong rose silently from his bed. He unlocked his bag, and took something from it, which he slipped into his pocket when he dressed. Then he stole silently from the tent.

It was a quarter of an hour later when he returned. His face was a little pale, and his eyes shining with excitement.

He slipped quietly into bed without awakening his chums.

#### CHAPTER 20. Missing Papers!

"ACH!"

Herr Otto Hentzel uttered that exclamation as he stepped into his tent.

His foot caught in something on the floor, and he stumbled forward, and fell at full length with a loud grunt.

"Ow! Ah! Ach! Himmel!"

The German master sat up, gasping.

He realised that there had been a "rag" in his tent during his absence; and his little piggy eyes were scintillating with rage as he scrambled to his feet, and turned on the light.

"Mein Gott!"

The German simply glared as he saw the fearful state his tent was in.

"Ach! Dose poys!" he gasped. "Ach! Mein Gott!"

The burly German stood with clenched hands and furious face, glaring round at the wreck of his quarters.

Suddenly a new thought darted into his mind; and he made a quick step towards the ironbound box.

He breathed a deep sigh of relief as he saw that the lock and the padlock were both intact.

"Mein Gott!"

The German master sat down and unlocked the box, and opened the heavy lid. In the interior were several loose papers; but the box was almost empty.

Herr Hentzel gazed into the box, with every vestige of colour fading from his face.

"Mein Gott!" he stammered. "Mein Gott! I have been robbed!"

For several minutes the German master remained there, as if transfixed by the discovery.

Then he leaped to his feet.

He dashed from the tent, and rushed across to the quarters of Dr. Monk, the Head, where a light was still burning. He rushed into the tent, and Dr. Monk and Mr. Hilton, the master of the Fifth, who were chatting together, started at his sudden entrance.

"Goodness gracious, what is the matter, Herr Hentzel?" exclaimed the Head, in alarm. "You look as if you had seen a ghost."

"I have been robbed!" shrieked Herr Hentzel.

"What!"

"I have been robbed!"

Dr. Monk rose to his feet.

"What is that—what do you say?" he exclaimed. "Robbed! What do you mean?"

"Somevun has robbed my tent!"

"Good heavens!"

"Te tief shall be found! He must be found! My papers! Dey are gone!"

"Calm yourself, Herr Hentzel," said Mr. Hilton quietly. "If you have been robbed we shall do our best to recover what has been stolen. It was very incautious to keep valuables in so insecure a place as a tent."

"Dey was locked up."

"Locked up in what?"

"A pig ironbound box."

"Is the box gone?"

"No."

"Then it has been broken open?"

"Nein, nein! Te lock have been pick."

Dr. Monk looked relieved.

"Ah! I was afraid you meant that one of the boys had taken something belonging to you, Herr Hentzel," he said. "If the lock has been picked that is evidently the work of a professional thief."

"Nein, nein! It is te poys!"

"What!"

"Dey have rag te tent. They have upset everyting!"

"Dear me! You had better show us what has happened, Herr Hentzel."

"Follow me, den."

The Head and the Fifth Form-master followed the excited German to his tent. The scene of disorder that met their view caused them to utter exclamations of surprise.

"Dear me, who can have done this?" exclaimed the Head.

"It is der poys."

"It certainly looks like what the juniors would call a rag," said Mr. Hilton. "It is the work of mischievous boys, I suppose. But the robbery—"

"Is that the box, Herr Hentzel?" asked Dr. Monk, looking at the iron-bound chest in the middle of the tent.

"Ja, ja!"

"It has not been broken," said Mr. Hilton.

"Nein, nein! It have been unlock."

"Have you lost the key?"

"Nein. I have tat here."

"Then it must have been opened by another key, or picked?"

"Ja, ja wohl!"

"Then it certainly cannot have been done by any of the boys," said the Head decidedly. "It is absurd to suppose that any of the boys of this school would be able to pick a lock like a burglar."

"I quite agree with you," said Mr. Hilton.

The German master waved his hands excitedly.

"My bapers have been taken."

"Private papers?" asked Mr. Hilton.

"Ja, ja!"

"Not money?"

"No, no! Dere was no money dere."

"That is fortunate. Yet it is certainly singular that a burglar should

come here to take your private papers," said the Head, in astonishment. "Were they of any great value?"

"Ja, ja! Papers and photographs for a book which I shall write some day," said the German master, after a momentary hesitation. "Dey are value to me, but to a purglar, nein, nein! It is for a shoke dey are taken by the poys."

"But a boy could not pick a lock!"

"I tink so— ja, ja!"

"Then you think that the boys who have ragged your tent have also taken your papers from that box?" asked the Head.

"I am sure of tat."

"There shall be a strict inquiry, of course," said Dr. Monk. "You are quite sure, I suppose, that the papers were here—that you did not place them somewhere else by mistake, or in a moment's absent-mindedness?"

"Mein Herr! Ja, ja!"

"Then in the morning—"

"In te morning!" shrieked Herr Hentzel. "But in te morning it shall be too late. Dose papers may be sent away!"

The Head regarded him in utter astonishment.

"Sent away! What do you mean?"

"I—I mean hidden away!" exclaimed Herr Hentzel, flushing. "Tat is vat I mean. Ve must not give te rascal time to hide dem away."

"Perhaps if we made a round of the camp, sir, we could see if any of the boys are still awake," said Mr. Hilton.

Dr. Monk nodded.

"Very good; let us go."

They left the tent, and made a round of the camp. The hour was very late, and only one tent was lighted. It was that of Mr. Adams, the master of the Fourth, who was busy with examination papers. He looked up in surprise as the visitors glanced into the tent.

"Is anything wrong, sir?" he asked, rising.

"Herr Hentzel's tent has been ragged, Mr. Adams. Have you seen or heard anything unusual since lights out?"

"Nothing at all, sir."

"Thank you."

All the rest of the tents were dark. The prefects as well as the juniors were in bed and asleep. Dr. Monk paused at last.

"The boys, whoever they are, have evidently gone back to bed," he said. "We cannot disturb the whole school at this hour, Herr Hentzel. There shall be an inquiry into the matter early in the morning."

"But mein papers!"

"If they have been taken by a boy for a joke they will be safe to-morrow morning," said the Head. "If you had any idea which were the boys in question—"

"I have, sir. I tink it is Gordon Gay and his friends."

"Indeed! Why do you think so?"

"It is like tem—it is like vun of deir tricks."

"I do not think so," said the Head coldly. "If you have been very severe upon them, Herr Hentzel, they might have ragged your tent certainly. But I do not believe for a moment that they would unlock a box and meddle with private papers."

"I tink—"

"I am sure it is impossible," said the Head. "Besides, their tent was quite dark and quiet when we passed it: they are in bed, and I have never known those boys to break bounds after dark."

The Head's tone was very decided, and Herr Hentzel saw that it would be useless to persist. He returned to his tent. There he sat for some time on his bed, his head bowed in his hands, thinking.

"Is it tat I have dream?" he muttered. "I tink tat I take te Head to tat tent—mein Gott! I speak to Delamere, too, and he say he have seen the Head tat night. It is certain tat he vas here. Yet he say he was not here, and Mr. Hilton he say to same. Vat does it mean? Is it tat dere is somevun like him—or—or—"

The German master was still in a maze of conjecture when he went to bed. Herr Hentzel hardly closed his eyes that night, and at the first gleam of the summer sun upon the sea and the shore, he rose.

## CHAPTER 21.

### Herr Hentzel Loses His Temper!

"SOMETHING'S up!" said Gordon Gay.

And his chums nodded.

Something was evidently "up."

The chums of the Fourth had been down to the beach for an early morning bathe, and the moment they re-entered the school camp, they could see that something unusual was going on.

The masters and the prefects were looking very serious, and groups of the fellows were talking together in low tones.

"What's the row, Monkey?" asked Gordon Gay, meeting Frank Monk as he came in.

"Somebody been ragged over-night, perhaps?" asked Wootton major, with a grin.

Monk looked at him curiously.

"It wasn't you chaps, surely?" he exclaimed.

"Well, as a matter of fact, we ragged Herr Hentzel's tent," said Gordon Gay. "Keep it dark, of course. It was for hammering Mont Blong."

"But the papers—you took the papers?" exclaimed Lane, in surprise.

Gordon Gay stared at him.

"The papers? What papers?"

"Herr Hentzel says he has been robbed."

"Robbed!" exclaimed Gordon Gay & Co., in a breath.

"Yes."

"Last night?" asked Gordon Gay.

"Yes."

"I knew you fellows couldn't have had anything to do with it," said Frank Monk. "But it's rather unlucky you ragged the Herr the same night that somebody else selected to bone his precious papers."

"What papers were they?" asked Jack Wootton.

"Papers and photographs he was collecting for writing a book, so he says. Blessed if I knew he was writing a book. Shouldn't have fancied that he had the brains for it."

"No fear!" said Wootton major.

"It seems that the papers were in a box, which was locked up," continued Frank Monk. "Did you see anything of a box in his tent?"

"Yes; there was an ironbound chest. I remember Mont Blong hammered at it; but it was too strong for him to bust."

"Then, you didn't open it?"

"Of course not!"

"I heard Delamere telling Hake about it," said Monk. "Herr Hentzel declares that the lock of that box was picked, and the papers taken out."

"Phew!"

"He found it so when he came back from his walk last night. That must have been pretty soon after you chaps had been ragging his tent."

Gordon Gay looked very grave.

He remembered the keen interest Mont Blong had shown in that iron-bound box; and he remembered, too, how Mont Blong had watched and shadowed the German. Was this some more of the handiwork of the French junior?

Gordon Gay wondered.

"Well, I'm glad it wasn't you chaps," said Monk. "I thought it couldn't be. You'd better keep it jolly dark about having ragged the tent. If they know you went there at all, they'll put the whole bizney down to you."

"What-ho!"

"Hallo! There goes the bugle for assembly."

And Frank Monk hurried off.

Gordon Gay followed more slowly, with his companions. His face was grim and thoughtful.

"I say, this is pretty rotten!" muttered Wootton major. "We could stand the racket for the ragging, if it came out; but it would be too thick to be suspected of meddling with a man's private papers."

"And stealing them, too!" said Jack gloomily.

"Herr Hentzel will put it down to us, if he can," said Gordon Gay. "We shall have to face the music."

"But who could have got the papers?" asked Jack Wootton.

"Blessed if I know."

"Why should anybody steal his silly papers? Looks to me as if it's a wheeze to get somebody into trouble," growled Wootton major. "We've only got Hentzel's word for it that there were any papers in the box at all, and he's not exactly a George Washington, you know. He might make up a yarn like that to make things extra bad for us for ragging his quarters."

"Well, he's rotter enough," said Gordon Gay.

Mont Blong had not said a word. When the Form assembled with the rest of the school, the French junior did not stand with his tent-mates. The school were assembled in the open camp, under the blue sky, all the Forms in their places. There was a good deal of anxiety in the faces of most of the fellows.

The fact that a robbery had been committed was enough to send a very unpleasant thrill through all the fellows.

Until the thief was known, every fellow felt that, in some degree, suspicion rested upon all; and the German master had declared in plain terms that it was a question of theft. Why anybody should want his papers was a mystery; but certainly Otto Hentzel appeared to regard them as very valuable.

## CHAPTER 22.

### Herr Hentzel's Accusation.

**T**HAT the German master was very much disturbed by his loss was evident from his looks. His face was paler than usual, and he pulled continually at his thick moustache, and the deep wrinkle never left his brow. No one had ever suspected Otto Hentzel of possessing literary tastes before; but evidently he took the loss of his papers very much to

heart. Indeed, a keen observer might have fancied that there was fear, as well as anger, in the deep-set eyes of the German master.

The Grammarians muttered together as they assembled in their places, the prefects walking up and down the ranks to keep order. But there was silence as the Head came out of his tent. The Head looked grave.

"Your governor's on the giddy war-path, Frank," murmured Carboy.

And Frank Monk nodded, with a grin.

Dr. Monk stopped before the assembled school. The buzz in the crowd died away into silence.

"Boys!" said Dr. Monk, in his deep tones. "There has been a most unpleasant occurrence in this school last night. Herr Hentzel's tent was entered by some person or persons at present not known, and thrown into a state of great disorder. It was, in short, what I believe you would term a ragging."

Some of the fellows grinned. Nobody liked Herr Hentzel especially, and few, if any, were sorry to hear that his quarters had been ragged.

"But that, I am sorry to say, is not all," said Dr. Monk quietly. "A box belonging to Herr Hentzel was opened, not by violence, but with the use, apparently, of a skeleton key. This is a very much more serious matter than the ragging. Some papers were taken from this box—some papers and photographs, which Herr Hentzel was collecting for a literary work. Herr Hentzel places a very high value upon these papers. He is so anxious to reclaim them that he has requested me to promise a free pardon to the boy or boys guilty of the outrage, if they will restore his papers intact. I have consented to do this. I therefore call upon the boy who has taken Herr Hentzel's papers, to confess, and return them at once."

The Head paused.

Herr Hentzel scanned the faces of the juniors with anxious keenness. It was as if he was trying to read from the boyish faces which of them had opened his strong box. And his glance fell chiefly upon Gordon Gay & Co.

There was no reply to the Head's speech. The Grammarians stood and waited. It was the doctor himself who broke the silence.

"You have heard me. If the culprit chooses to confess, and to return the papers, he shall be freely pardoned. Surely the boy concerned cannot refuse this offer?"

Silence.

Gordon Gay & Co. were looking at one another dubiously. They would gladly have confessed to the ragging on those terms; but as for the papers, since they had not taken them, they could not return them. And to confess to the ragging without confessing to taking the papers, was not of much use.

"No one answers me," said the Head, frowning. "Am I to understand that the culprit, who must be standing here before me at this moment, refuses my offer?"

Silence.

"Let him reflect!" said the Head quietly. "If he does not confess, there will be the most rigid investigation, and the whole camp will be searched for the papers. They must be found; in a camp like this there are no nooks or crannies where they can be concealed for long. Every corner will be searched and researched until they are found. Surely it will be wiser for the boy to take the offer of pardon. If he refuses and then is discovered, he will be flogged and expelled from the school."

Silence.



"I am willing to believe that the papers have been taken only for a foolish joke, and to pardon the person who has taken them," said the Head, his eyes beginning to gleam; "but if they are not returned, I can only conclude that the person who has taken them is a thief, and intends to keep them. A thief cannot, and will not, be allowed to remain in this school! I give the boy one more chance."

He paused.

There was no reply.

"Very well," said the Head at last, frowning darkly. "Very well. I shall now have the whole camp searched."

"Tat you excuse me, sir," said Herr Hentzel. "Tat you permit me to question te poys whom I tink have done dis?"

"You may do so, Herr Hentzel."

The Cornstalk Co. exchanged a hopeless glance. They felt that they were in for it.

"Gay! Wootton major! Wootton minor! Step out, if you please!"

The trio stepped out before the school.

"Vere vas you last night, Gay?" asked the German master, fixing his little gleaming eyes on the Cornstalk.

"In my tent."

"Did you go to ped at lights out?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did you leave your ped again till rising-bell in te morning?"

Gordon Gay was silent.

Whatever the result might be, he could not tell a deliberate lie. He could not stand there before the whole school and speak an untruth, if it was to save his life. He looked at the Head.

"Am I bound to answer that question, sir?" he asked.

"Certainly, Gay," said the Head. "You need not be afraid. Any minor offence that may come to light in the course of this investigation, will be taken no notice of. Only the main object will be kept in view. Answer Herr Hentzel."

"Very well, sir. Yes, I did leave my tent last night, sir."

"Where did you go?"

"To your tent, sir."

There was a buzz in the ranks of the assembled school. Gordon Gay's answers came out quite clearly and crisply.

Herr Hentzel's eyes gleamed savagely now.

"Vat did you do dere?" he asked.

"I ragged your tent, sir, because you had treated a Fourth Form fellow brutally in the afternoon," said Gordon Gay, his voice ringing out clearly.

There was a grin from some of the Grammarians, and Herr Hentzel flushed crimson. The Cornstalk junior was being compelled to own up to the ragging, and he did not mean that the cause should remain unknown, either. If anything was to come out, it should all come out.

"And you have taken my papers?" demanded Herr Hentzel.

"No, sir!"

"Ach! Tat is a lie!" exclaimed the German master furiously. "You admit tat you have go to mein tent and rag him, and I know tat also you have taken my papers! Vere are my papers?"

Gordon Gay did not reply. He stood calm and cool, his eyes fixed fearlessly upon the German master, but he did not speak.

"Answer me!" shrieked Herr Hentzel.

"I have answered you. I did not touch your papers, and I did not know they were taken until ten minutes ago!"

"That is a lie! Tell me vere——"

"I have nothing more to say," said Gordon Gay, a little pale, but with gleaming eyes. "And I refuse to answer a man who calls me a liar! I'm finished."

There was a buzz of applause from the crowded ranks of the Grammarians. Herr Hentzel, purple with rage, strode savagely towards Gordon Gay, and grasped him by the collar. The infuriated man had completely lost his self-control.

"Mein papers!" he hissed. "Give dem to me, or——" And in his blind rage, his hands closed in a grip like a vice upon the throat of the Cornstalk junior.

## CHAPTER 23.

### Undiscovered.

**G**ORDON GAY reeled in the savage grasp of Otto Hentzel.

The German master seemed to be, for the moment, completely beside himself. His little eyes were glittering, his lips parted in a snarl, and his breathing came thick and quick. His hands had closed like a vice upon the Fourth-Former's throat, and the suddenness of the savage attack rendered Gordon Gay helpless.

There was a shout of angry amazement from the boys, a cry of alarm from the Head.

"Herr Hentzel!"

"Stop that at once!" shouted Mr. Hilton, the Fifth Form-master, springing forward. "Do you hear me? Let him go!"

Wootton major sprang forward at the same moment, and grasped the arm of the burly German.

"Herr Hentzel! Are you mad? exclaimed the Head.

Wootton major and Mr. Hilton dragged the German back.

Gordon Gay staggered from his grasp, and Jack Wootton caught him in his arms.

"Oh!" murmured Gay. "The brute!"

"Buck up, old chap——"

"Herr Hentzel," said the Head sternly, "how dare you lay hands upon a boy in that brutal manner? Have you taken leave of your senses, sir?"

"Ach! I—I——"

The German had calmed himself a little now. The outburst of fury had passed, and he realised that he had made a very false step indeed.

His hard face was flushed red, and his eyes sank before the stern and angry look of the Head.

"I—I am sorry!" he muttered. "I lose mein temper. But tat is because tat poy have mein bapers, and he not give dem to me."

"You have no right to touch him, as you know very well, especially in that brutal way," rapped out the Head.

"I beg your pardon, sir!"

"Very well. Leave the matter to me now. I cannot trust you to question the boy."

Herr Hentzel stepped back, biting his lips with rage. There was still a kind of convulsive shiver in his large hands, as though they longed to be at somebody's throat. Many of the fellows could see that the burly German contained himself only with great difficulty, and they wondered that the loss of a few papers should have infuriated the man to this extent. His explanation that the papers missing from the box were the manuscripts of some literary work seemed hardly adequate under the circumstances.

"Gay," said Dr. Monk, fixing his eyes upon the junior, who was still gasping, "you have admitted that you visited Herr Hentzel's tent last night, to rag the place, as you call it?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did you go alone?"

"No, sir."

"Give me the names of your companions. I shall not punish them, so far as the ragging is concerned. My only desire is to clear up the loss of the papers."

Gay glanced at his two chums.

Wootton major and minor stepped forward at once. They were quite ready to own up. But Gustave Blanc stayed in the ranks of the Fourth. The French junior, apparently, did not wish to attract public attention to himself just then.

"We were with Gay, sir," said Harry Wootton.

"Both of you?" said the Head.

"Yes, sir."

Wootton major wondered why Mont Blong did not come forward; but it was not his business to betray the French junior. Unless the Head asked a direct question as to the number of raggers, Mont Blong would remain out of it.

"You wrecked Herr Hentzel's tent?" asked the Head.

Wootton major grinned faintly.

"Yes, sir; please, sir."

"You three were concerned together in it?"

"Yes, sir."

"Why did you do it?"

"Because Herr Hentzel was brutal to a fellow in our Form, sir."

"That is not true, sir!" said Herr Hentzel hastily. "That is vun lie!"

"It's the truth!" said Gordon Gay. "He boxed Mont Blong's ears and hurt him. Dr. Monk himself has forbidden a junior's ears to be boxed."

"Quite true!" said the Head. "I am surprised at your forgetting yourself in this way, Herr Hentzel. Of course, that does not excuse the conduct of the juniors. We will pass on. I have already said that the ragging shall not be punished so long as we can recover the missing papers, to which Herr Hentzel attaches a great value. Did any of you three juniors take the papers from the box?"

"No, sir," said the three Australians together.

"Did you open the box?"

"No, sir."

"Could you have opened it?"

"Certainly not, sir. It was locked when we saw it, and we had no key."

"It vos opened mit a skeleton-key," said Herr Hentzel.

"We've certainly never had such a thing about us, sir," said Gordon Gay.

"I believe the statements made by these boys, Herr Hentzel," said Dr. Monk. "I cannot believe that they are speaking falsely."

"Hear, hear!" shouted Lane of the Fourth.

"Silence!" said the Head, frowning.

Herr Hentzel gritted his teeth.

"Dey admit being in my tent!" he exclaimed. "If dey did not take the papers, who did take dem? My box was robbed!"

"It is certainly very curious," said the Head; "but the facts that a skeleton-key was used and that these boys deny any knowledge of the matter, point to the assumption that the robbery was committed by someone outside the school."

"Tat is impossible!"

"If the papers were valuable——"

"Dey vas ferry valuable!"

"Then a thief may have taken them. But if they have been taken for a joke, I do not believe that these boys took them."

"But, sir——"

"I will order a search of the school by Corporal Cutts," said the Head. "While the lessons are going on this morning, the corporal can search all the tents and the boxes. I have no doubt the papers will be found if they have been taken by a boy of this school."

"And if dey are not——"

"Then you must evidently look elsewhere for them."

The German muttered something under his breath. His savage display of temper had set the Head against him, he could see that. He had great difficulty in controlling his rage now.

"You may, of course, call in the police if you choose," said the Head.

"That is entirely for you to decide."

The German tightened his lips.

"I do not wish to bring disgrace upon te school," he muttered.

Dr. Monk nodded.

"You may please yourself, Herr Hentzel. I repeat my firm belief that these boys did not take your papers. Dismiss!"

And the assembly broke up.

## CHAPTER 24.

### Secret Service.

GORDON GAY looked very thoughtful during morning lessons.

The other fellows, who noticed that his face was clouded, attributed it to the suspicion that had fallen upon him in connection with the loss of the German master's papers.

Frank Monk clapped him on the shoulder cheerily as the Fourth came out after lessons into the breezy sunlight of the school camp.

"Cheero!" said Frank. "It's all serene, Gay, old man. Nobody believes that you had a hand in taking old Dutchy's papers."

Gordon Gay nodded.

"I do, for one," said Carker. "It's jolly clear to me that Gay took them—— Ow!"

Carker broke off with a yell as the Old Co. laid violent hands upon him, and Gordon Gay strolled away, leaving the bully of the Fourth struggling in the grasp of Monk and Lane and Carboy.

Mont Blong followed the Cornstalk.

Gordon Gay strolled down upon the beach, and sat down to rest upon a

sandy knoll, and gazed out to sea. He was in a very thoughtful and troubled mood.

"My shum!"

It was a soft and timid voice behind him.

Gordon Gay turned his head abruptly, and a frown knitted his brows as he saw Gustave Blanc standing before him.

"My dear shum——"

"Look here," said Gordon Gay savagely, "I'm not your chum, and I don't want to be. Let me alone."

The French junior's eyes filled with tears.

"My shum!" he murmured.

"I'm not going to chum with a chap who—who——"

"Who vat, my shum?"

"I believe you went back afterwards and collared old Hentzel's papers," said Gordon Gay angrily. "Didn't you?"

Mont Blong did not reply.

"Corporal Cutts has been searching the school camp this morning—all the morning," went on the Cornstalk. "He hasn't found them. But I don't believe any outside thief took them. I believe you did—that's flat!"

Still Gustave Blanc was silent.

"You don't deny it!" exclaimed Gay angrily.

"Non, non!"

"Then it's true?"

"I zink zat I tell you everyzing, my shum," said Mont Blong, seating himself beside the Cornstalk on the sand. "You promise me by ze bright honour zat you zay nozzing?"

Gay made a gesture of disdain.

"I don't want your rotten secrets," he said. "You've told us that Herr Hentzel is a German spy. It looks to me as if you're as big a spy as he is!"

The French junior coloured faintly.

"I zink zat you do me injustice," he said. "If it is zat you vill listen to me, you see zat I am good friend to you and to all your country."

Gordon Gay started.

"What do you mean?"

"It is zat you are patriotic?" said Mont Blong.

"I suppose so," said Gordon Gay, in wonder. "I haven't thought much about it; but I suppose I should stand up for the Old Country as soon as anybody else. What do you mean?"

"If zat zere is a Sherman invasion——"

Gordon Gay laughed.

"We shall all turn out when the Germans come, if they do come," he said. "They won't find the biggest difficulty how to get here, but how to get away again."

Mont Blong smiled.

"Before ze Franco-Sherman var, which desolate my country," he said, "ze Shermans send into France spies by ze thousand—tousand and thousand. Zey make maps of all ze roads, and ze bridges, and everyzing, and ven ze Sherman army come, zey know the country better zan ze French generals."

"Yes, I've read of that," said Gay.

"Zat is ze same plan ze Kaiser's generals follow in zis country," said the French junior. "Ze War Office in London sit viz ze eyes shut, n'est-ce-pas? But ven ze Sherman fleet come, zey have all ze knowledge zey need of zis coast—because zat zey have spies at work here."

"Oh!"

"Ze London War Office is asleep, but in Paris ve know ze Shermans," said

Mont Blong; "ve know all ze game, because if has been played on us. And among ze Sherman spies zat are under ze eyes of ze French War Office, zere is vun vat have ze name of Otto Hentzel in England, and pretend to be a Sherman master at a school."

Gordon Gay stared.

"My hat!"

"He is ze agent, who spy and send in reports of ozzer spies. Vun of zem is a Sherman who live here in Netherby—Franz Pfalz."

"The village photographer?" exclaimed Gay.

"Zat is so—he make photographs in ze village, and he make photographs on ze shore, for ze Sherman pilots."

"The rascal!"

"And zere are hundreds of zem—waiters, and tutors, and clerks, and all zings," said Mont Blong; "and zey are sending reports every day to ze Secret Service in Berlin under ze eyes of your sleepy War Office. But France is ze friend of England, and from ze Quai d'Orsay zere are varnings sent, n'est-ce-pas?"

"I dare say that's all true," said Gordon Gay slowly. "But how do you know anything about it—you, a schoolboy?"

Mont Blong grinned.

"It is not zat I am only a schoolboy," he said. "I am sent here not to learn ze English, vich I know very well. I am sent to watch Herr Hentzel & Co."

"What!"

"It is so, mon ami."

"Then you are—are——" Gordon Gay paused.

"Oui, oui!" said Mont Blong. "I am a Secret Service agent—zat is all. And all ze better, vous savez, because I am a schoolboy, and zerefore make no suspicion of me. You comprehend now, mon ami?"

Gordon Gay stared at him blankly.

"A Secret Service agent," he murmured.

"Zat is so!"

"You—a kid!"

The French junior chuckled.

"Oui, moi! Un enfant! But sharper in ze wits zan many people who are grown up, my shum. Sharper zan Herr Hentzel, I zink, zough he is an old spy of ze Sherman Government."

"I—I see," said Gay slowly. "That alters the case, of course. I understand now. But—but look here, Mont Blong. Does that mean that you have taken Herr Hentzel's papers?"

"Oui, oui!"

"You went back again after we left the tent?"

"Zat is so."

"But—I say—his papers, you know——"

"Do you know vat zose papers are?" asked Mont Blong, in a low voice.

"He said part of a literary work——"

"Zat vas a whopper. Zoze papers are maps, plans, photographs, and descriptions of the coast and the inlets, and all information zat is needed for ze Sherman pilots. Zey have been collected by Franz Pfalz, and ozzers in ze service, and Herr Hentzel he put zem togezzer to be sent to Berlin. I know zat, from vat zay vas saying in ze cave——"

"Ah! You understand all that?"

"I understand ze Sherman quite as easily as ze French. I hear ze talk zere, and I hear Herr Hentzel talk viz Pfalz. I know all zat zey say, and I look for ze chance to get ze papers. Now I have got zem."

"And they contain information for an enemy to use against England?" asked Gordon Gay breathlessly.

"Oui, oui!"

"What are you going to do with them?"

"Send zem to London."

"My hat! That alters the case," said Gordon Gay. He held out his hand. "I didn't understand, Mont Blong. Give us your fist."

"Zen you are my shum again!" exclaimed the French junior, beaming.

"What-ho!"

"I embrace my shum—I kiss ze good friend."

"Oh, dear!"

And Mont Blong embraced his friend and kissed him on both cheeks; and Gordon Gay stood it as cheerfully as he could. And they strolled back to the school camp together on the best of terms.

## CHAPTER 25.

### The Mysterious Packet.

**G**ORDON GAY had much food for thought in the revelations the French junior had made to him in that talk on the sands.

The discovery that Mont Blong, innocent and simple youth as he looked, was in reality a Secret Service agent sent from Paris was a startling one.

It explained many things that had puzzled Gordon Gay before.

The loss of Herr Hentzel's papers was the one topic in the school under canvas that day. The German wore a troubled and furious expression, and the German lesson was missed that afternoon, as he was too disturbed to give it—a miss that the Fourth Form considered very fortunate.

Gay understood now why the German dared not call in the aid of the police.

It was not regard for the honour and reputation of the school that had stopped him. He simply dared not let the papers fall into the hands of the police. For if they had been seen by official eyes, their secret would have been made known at once. His lie about the papers being part of a literary work would have been exposed at once. If the police found the papers, instead of restoring them to him, they would send them to the authorities in London, and probably arrest the German into the bargain.

But without the aid of the police it was a problem to the German how he should recover the missing papers.

Corporal Cutts had searched every tent in the camp and every box, from the head of the Sixth down to the youngest fag; not one had escaped the scrutiny.

But not a trace of the papers had been discovered.

Of course, there were many places where they could have been securely hidden. They could have been buried in the sand, in the camp or outside it, and if so they would remain there beyond the possibility of discovery.

All the German master could do was to keep his eyes open, and discover when they were taken up to be sent away.

For the German could be in no doubt as to why they had been taken.

He must have known that such papers, dry, uninteresting, and, indeed, incomprehensible to the average schoolboy, could only have been taken by someone who was acquainted with their object.

In short, that there was someone in the school camp who knew that he was

a spy, piling up information for the use of the German fleet in time of war with England.

Knowing that, all Herr Hentzel could do was to take precautions against the papers being sent away. So long as they remained in the school camp they were safe, and he was safe; but once delivered into the hands of the War Office authorities in London, and the game would be up, and he himself no longer safe from arrest. Herr Hentzel, like Othello, would find his occupation gone.

The deep anxiety in the German master's face was observed by all, and some of the fellows felt sorry for his loss, not having the slightest suspicion of its real nature.

But Gordon Gay saw the clouded face of the German with grim satisfaction.

The man who was taking advantage of the hospitality of an unsuspecting nation for the purpose of spying out secrets fully deserved anything that might happen to him. Perhaps Herr Hentzel had some excuse he could offer to his own conscience. He may have fancied that he was serving his country by spying in another land; but, whatever salve he might apply to his conscience, the fact remained that a spy was a spy, and that he was an unscrupulous rascal. And the idea of "downing" him was very agreeable to Gordon Gay.

That the German was watching for the packet of papers to be sent out of the school camp was soon clear.

After lessons that day, when the Cornstalk Company strolled along the beach, they came upon Herr Franz Pfalz, the German photographer, of Netherby. He was taking photographs, and looked harmless and innocent enough, but he had a keen eye on the juniors.

Gordon Gay grinned.

"Let's have a walk round the camp," he said.

They walked round the camp.

Another German, in the attire of a tourist—those weird tweeds which German tourists wear under the impression that it makes them look English—was sitting on a sandy knoll on the north side of the camp, consulting a guide-book.

Towards the village the juniors encountered another German, and in the distance on the headland Gordon Gay caught sight of a stout gentleman with a pair of binoculars in his hand.

The Cornstalk chuckled. His chums looked puzzled.

"Seem to be a blessed lot of Germans about here this afternoon!" Wootton major remarked. "Are they friends of Herr Hentzel?"

"They're a party of tourists, staying in the village for the fishing," said Jack Wootton. "I heard Herr Hentzel tell Mr. Hilton so."

Gay laughed.

He had a very accurate idea that the "tourists" were all good friends of Herr Otto Hentzel, and that they were watching the camp to discover whether the purloined papers were sent out of it.

"Come on!" said Gay abruptly.

"Where?"

"Back to camp."

"What for?"

"A little jape on the Dutchies."

Wootton major and minor followed him in some wonder. Gordon Gay went into his tent and selected a couple of old newspapers and some of Tadpole's artistic works, and made a bundle of them, which he tied up in brown paper and string.



"What on earth's that for?" asked Wootton major.

"To bury."

"Eh?"

"For the German chaps to find."

"But I—I don't understand," said Wootton major, in bewilderment.

"I think those German chaps are friends of old Hentzel's, looking for his giddy papers," explained Gay. "I'm going to give them something to look for."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Gordon Gay left the tent with the bundle under his arm, and the Woottons, composing their countenances, strolled down with him to the beach. Herr Pfalz was still there, and his eyes gleamed as he noted the package under Gay's arm. The three Cornstalks strolled on with great unconsciousness of manner, and Gordon Gay went on towards the headland. He took a sly glance over his shoulder a few minutes later, and was not surprised to see Herr Pfalz strolling along in the same direction.

Gay paused by the cliffs, and selected a deep crevice, and jammed the package into it the full length of his arms.

Then he walked back with his chums. They passed Franz Pfalz, the German photographer, apparently being busily occupied in looking for a favourable stand for his camera. The three juniors saluted him politely.

"Ripping evening, sir!" said Gordon Gay.

"Ach! Ja, ja, wohl!"

"Hope we didn't hurt you the other night, sir, when we piled on you by mistake," said the Cornstalk.

"Tat is all right" said the German. "It was an accident. I am sorry tat I was angry. It is all right after."

The juniors walked on smiling. Herr Pfalz was busy with his camera for some little time, but as the juniors disappeared round the cliff he laid the camera on the sands, and made a rush for the crevice where Gordon Gay had jammed the package into hiding.

Round the bulging cliff, out of sight of the German photographer, the three Cornstalks halted.

"Hold on!" said Gordon Gay. "We'll walk back now."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

They strolled back round the cliff. The German's camera lay on the sands, and the German himself was standing close up to the cliff, his right arm buried in the crevice, tugging away at the package buried there deep in the split rock. His fat face was very red, and his eyes starting with exertion. Gordon Gay had jammed the package in very tightly in the extremity of the fissure.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Gordon Gay.

The German gave a violent start, and his head knocked against the cliff. He gave a sharp cry, and turned upon the juniors.

## CHAPTER 26.

### Herr Hentzel Makes a New Move.

GORDON GAY smiled cheerfully at the startled, confused German.

"Looking for anything, sir?" he asked.

"N-n-nein—nein!" gasped Herr Pfalz.

"You can let that packet alone!" said Gay. "It belongs to me."

"Vat!"

"I put that packet there. It's some private property of mine, and I've put it there for safety," explained Gay.

The German turned crimson. That he was seeking to take the packet he had watched Gay hide in the fissure was a thing he could hardly conceal now. But he did not mean to yield it. He dragged again at the packet, and it came out in his hand. Gordon Gay ran towards him.

"That's mine!" he shouted.

"Nein—nein! Tat is mine!" said Herr Pfalz. "I keeps it, ain't it?"

"It doesn't contain anything of any value," said Gordon Gay. "But it's mine. You just hand it over to me!"

The German smiled sneeringly.

"I tink tat I keeps it," he said.

And he turned to stride away.

"Collar him!" shouted Jack Wootton.

"Take it away from him!" said Wootton major.

Herr Pfalz gave the juniors a hurried glance. It was extremely undignified of him to run from junior schoolboys, and he knew that personally he was hardly a match for three sturdy young athletes.

As the three Grammarians rushed upon him he made up his mind, and fled along the sands.

"After him!" shouted Gay.

"Stop, thief!"

"Stop him!"

The Cornstalks dashed in pursuit.

They could easily have overtaken the clumsy German, as a matter of fact; if they had wanted to do so, but they didn't. They kept just far enough behind, gasping loudly, to convince him that they were straining every nerve to overtake him. Herr Pfalz gasped and puffed in deadly earnest as he ran.

Herr Hentzel came into sight round the headland, and Pfalz dashed towards him. The Grammarians stopped at the sight of the German master.

"Hold on!" murmured Gordon Gay. "Let him rip! Only I should like to see old Hentzel's face when he opens the packet."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

All three of the juniors would have liked to see it, but they did not care to risk it. They ran back round the headland, and left the two Germans in undisputed possession of the packet. Herr Pfalz joined Otto Hentzel, gasping.

"Vat is it?" the German master exclaimed.

Pfalz held up the package.

He explained in breathless German that he had seen Gordon Gay hide it in a fissure of the cliff, and that the Grammarians had tried to recapture it.

Otto Hentzel's eyes gleamed.

"My papers!" he exclaimed.

"Ja wohl!"

Herr Hentzel seized the packet, and cut the string. He laid the packet on a rock, and unwrapped the thick sheet of paper it was wrapped in.

Pfalz watched him with gleaming eyes.

Herr Hentzel's face was full of satisfaction, too. He had no doubt that his confederate had succeeded in recovering the stolen papers.

But as he turned out the contents of the packet his expression changed.

A "Daily Mail," dated June 29th, and an "Evening News," dated June 22nd, and several sheets of crumpled cartridge-paper with weird colourings on them—such were the contents of the mysterious package.

The two Germans gazed at it speechlessly.

Herr Hentzel found his voice at last:

"Mein Gott!"

"Ach!" said Pfalz.

"It is a trick!" said Herr Hentzel, his face black with rage. "They knew that you were watching, and they did this as a trick." He spoke in German. "They were the three boys I saw following you?"

"Ja, ja!"

"Then it is proof. They took the papers, and they know all, or else they could not think of playing a trick like this. They must have known you were watching them."

Pfalz nodded.

Herr Hentzel picked up the valuable parcel and hurled it into the sea. Then he strolled off in the direction of the school camp, with knitted brows.

He came upon Gordon Gay and Co. near the camp. The Cornstalks were seated upon an upturned boat, gazing out to sea, and talking cricket. At all events, they were talking cricket when Herr Hentzel came into hearing. Their smiles seemed to indicate that they had been discussing something else before he came within sound of their voices.

"Gay!" said the German harshly.

Gordon Gay rose, and lifted his cap.

"Yes, sir."

"I want to speak mit you."

"Yes, sir."

"Wootton major and Wootton minor may go."

"Very well, sir," said Harry Wootton, and the brothers retired to a little distance, and sat on another boat.

The Herr fixed his gleaming eyes upon Gordon Gay.

"I haf seen te trick tat you play upon my friend Pfalz," he exclaimed.

Gordon Gay looked surprised.

"Trick, sir!" he exclaimed.

"Ja, ja! You have hide a packet in te cliff, making him tink tat it vas mein papers tat you have hidden dere—"

"I didn't tell him so, sir," said Gay. "I suppose there's no reason why I shouldn't stack old rubbish away in a hole in the cliff, is there, sir? It keeps the camp tidy to get rid of old newspapers and things, sir. Dr. Monk gave us a lecture the other day on keeping the camp tidy, sir."

The German ground his teeth.

"Listen to me, Gay. I must have dem papers. If you vill return dem to me I giff you twenty pounds in gold."

"If I had them, sir, I shouldn't need a reward for returning them."

"You refuse?"

"I haven't anything more to say, sir."

"Den you have sent dem away alretty, ain't it?" asked the German, with a gleam of keen anxiety in his eyes which did not escape Gordon Gay.

"No, sir. I've had nothing to do with them."

"I do not believe it. You do not play this trick if you know noting of dem. Listen to me, poy! You vill return dose papers, or you vill be sorry for it."

"I haven't anything more to say, sir."

The German clenched his hand. For a moment it looked as if he would spring upon the junior. Gordon Gay backed away a step or two, and his eyes glittered. Harry and Jack Wootton rose from their seats upon the adjacent boat.

But the German master restrained himself.

"Very well!" he said. "You vill not give me pack dem papers. I have discover since tat dere vas a banknote in tat packet I have lost—a banknote of ten pounds."

"Yes, sir."

"I demand te return of tat money."

"I know nothing about it."

"Very well! I shall speak to te Head!"

And the German master strode away. Wootton major and Jack Wootton rejoined their chum. There was a deep line in Gordon Gay's forehead now.

"What did he want?" asked Jack.

"His rotten papers. He says now there was a banknote among them," said Gordon Gay.

"Phew!"

"I don't believe him," said Gay quietly. "I believe he has worked that up because he thinks I've got the papers, and he'll frighten me into handing them back. But he says he's going to speak to the Head about it."

## CHAPTER 27.

### Amazing!

THE Cornstalks strolled back to the school camp with thoughtful brows. Mont Blong met them with a smiling face.

"You look ferry zoughtful, my shum," he remarked, taking Gordon Gay's arm affectionately.

"Yes. Where have you been, Mont Blong?"

The French junior grinned.

"I have been in ze tent," he said.

"What are you grinning at?" asked Wootton major, mystified.

"Ze shoke."

"What joke?"

"Perhaps I tell you presently. Ah! Here is our good friend ze Sherman!"

Herr Hentzel was coming from the direction of the Head's quarters. Mont Blong suddenly rushed away, and, apparently not seeing the German, he rushed into him.

"Ach!" gasped Herr Hentzel, staggering back.

Mont Blong threw his whole weight upon him, and they crashed to the ground together. The French junior sprawled over the German, clutching at him wildly.

"Ach! Help! Ow!"

Mont Blong scrambled off the gasping German. His manner was terrified and apologetic. Herr Hentzel's face was convulsed with fury.

"Helas! It is ze great misfortune!" gasped Mont Blong. "I am sorry zat have happen! I am desolated!"

"Ach! You pig! Beast!" spluttered the infuriated German. "I trash you! Oh!"

"Monsieur——"

"Beast! Hound! I beat you——"

"Monsieur——"

The German master scrambled up, and grasped at the French junior. Mont Blong dodged behind the Cornstalks.

"Monsieur——"

"Ach! Take five hundret Sherman lines for tat clumsiness!" exclaimed Herr Hentzel. "Gay, you vill follow me to te Head."

"Yes, sir," said Gordon Gay quietly.

The German master strode into the Head's marquee. Dr. Monk was

sitting at his writing-table, but he was not writing. There was a deeply-troubled look upon his kind old face.

"Gay," he said, "Herr Hentzel has acquainted me with a very serious matter."

"Yes, sir."

"He is still convinced that you took those papers, and he has asked my permission to call in the police to search your tent and your person for the banknote."

Gordon Gay flushed crimson.

"I'm quite ready, sir," he said steadily. "I didn't take the papers, and I know nothing about a banknote."

"Herr Hentzel has given me the number," said Dr. Monk, referring to a slip of paper on his table—"00012468. You are willing to be searched for it, Gay?"

"Certainly, sir."

"This is a most unpleasant affair," continued the Head quietly. "But I cannot refuse Herr Hentzel every opportunity of recovering his property."

"I don't believe he's lost it, sir!" burst out Gordon Gay, losing control of his temper for a moment. "I don't believe he had the note at all!"

"Silence, Gay! Herr Hentzel had the note undoubtedly, as I paid it to him myself as his salary," said the Head. "I made a note of the number at the time, as I always do when using banknotes. Undoubtedly a banknote of that number, of the value of ten pounds, was in Herr Hentzel's possession a few days ago."

"Oh!" said Gordon Gay.

"It was only natural that he should keep it in his strong-box among his papers for safety, and that it should be stolen along with them," resumed the Head. "What I cannot credit is his belief that the theft was performed by a boy belonging to this school. But for the sake of your own good name, Gay, every investigation must be made."

"I am ready for it, sir."

"Very well. Call in Corporal Cutts, please, Herr Hentzel."

"Ja, ja, mein Herr!" said the German master, with a savage glance at Gordon Gay, and a gleam of malicious triumph in his eyes.

The old corporal, the school porter of Rylcombe Grammar School, came in, cap in hand. He gave Gordon Gay a commiserating look. There was a crowd gathering outside the tent, and evidently the news was spreading over the school camp, and the corporal knew all about it already.

"You will kindly search Master Gay, and lay on the table everything you find about him, Cutts," said the Head.

"Yes, sir."

Gordon Gay shivered as the corporal approached him apologetically.

He was conscious of innocence—he was convinced in his own mind that the German master had trumped up the story of the missing banknote to get him into trouble.

And yet to be searched like a criminal was horribly humiliating.

"Sorry, Master Gay!" mumbled old Cutts. "Doofy, sir."

Gay nodded.

"It's all right, Cutts. Go ahead!"

The corporal searched him.

Many articles were found in the schoolboy's pockets, including a ball of string, some chocolates, a penknife, several bullseyes stuck together in paper, and other articles of the same sort.

But there was no trace of a banknote.

"I think that it is more likely to be in his tent, sir," said Herr Hentzel.

"Very well," said the Head, rising. "Restore Master Gay his property, Cutts, and follow me."

"Yes, sir."

The Head crossed over to the junior tents, and entered Gordon Gay's quarters. The Cornstalk and the corporal and the German master followed him, and behind them came a crowd of Grammarians, seniors and juniors. Word had flown through the camp that Gordon Gay was being searched for a missing banknote. Some of the fellows, like Carker, of the Fourth, and Hake, of the Sixth, grinned with satisfaction at the news; but the greater part of the fellows were angry and indignant at the mere idea of it. There was a deep and general groan for the German master, as the school watched him go into Gordon Gay's tent.

"Search the tent, Cutts," said the Head.

"Yes, sir," said the corporal.

He proceeded to the search. Dr. Monk and Herr Hentzel and Gordon Gay watched him in silence.

Beds and bags and boxes were turned out, and Gordon Gay's own box came in for special attention.

The corporal turned out every article it contained, and announced that the banknote was not there, and the German master uttered a sharp exclamation.

"Look again!"

"I've looked once, sir," said Corporal Cutts.

"Look again. It must be dere!"

"It isn't there, sir."

"Herr Doctor, order tat he look again, I demand!"

"Search through the box again, Cutts," said the Head.

"Werry well, sir."

The corporal rather sulkily turned out the box again, and the German master watched him with starting eyes.

It was perfectly evident that he fully expected the banknote to be found in Gordon Gay's box, and that he was amazed at its non-appearance.

The corporal, with deliberate care, turned out every separate article, holding them up to show to the German master.

But the banknote did not appear.

"It is ferry strange," muttered the German master hoarsely.

"I do not consider it strange at all," said the Head tartly. "I do not suspect Gordon Gay of dishonesty for one moment, and I have only consented to these proceedings to clear him of any possible suspicion."

There was a cheer from the crowd of fellows outside the tent.

"Bravo!"

"I—I cannot understand it," muttered the German, passing his hand across his brow, which was damp with perspiration. "It is strange. I know tat te banknote is here."

"It is evidently not here," said the Head.

Mont Blong stepped into the opening of the tent.

"May I suggest, Monsieur le Docteur?" he exclaimed.

Dr. Monk glanced at him.

"Have you anything to say about this matter, Blanc?"

"I suggest, sir," said Mont Blong, "I zink zat it is possible zat Herr Hentzel he put ze note somevere, and forget all about zat."

"Fool!" muttered Herr Hentzel.

"Kindly use milder expressions, Herr Hentzel," said the Head sharply.

"I think Blanc's suggestion is quite probable. But——"

"I zink zat Herr Hentzel should be searched now, sir," said Mont Blong.

"He have not proved yet zat ze banknote is really lost. Perhaps it is zat it is in vun of ze pockets of Herr Hentzel all ze time."

Gordon Gay looked at his French chum. Mont Blong closed one eye for a moment, and the Cornstalk understood. He was to back up Mont Blong, and although he did not see what the French junior was driving at, he was quite willing to follow his lead. It could do no harm, if it did no good.

"Nonsense!" said Herr Hentzel gruffly. "Te poy do not talk to sense."

"If you please, sir," said Gordon Gay quickly, "Herr Hentzel has put me under suspicion by saying that he has lost a banknote for ten pounds, and that he thinks I have taken it. I think very likely he's got it about him all the time. It's only fair play, sir, for him to be searched as well as me."

"Hear, hear!" shouted the crowd outside.

Herr Hentzel turned purple.

"It is all nonsense!" he exclaimed fiercely. "Gay have stolen tat banknote and hidden it."

"And I say that the banknote hasn't been stolen at all, and that you've got this up against me out of sheer spite!" retorted Gordon Gay.

The Head frowned.

"Silence, Gay! You must not say that."

"Let him let the corporal prove that he hasn't got the banknote about him all the time, then," said Gay. "It's only cricket."

The Head glanced at Herr Hentzel.

"I haf no objection," said the German master savagely. "It is only folly, and te waste of time, but tat is all. I am ready, but it is nonsense."

"Of course, if it should be a case of careless oversight, it is a very serious matter for the boy you have accused, Herr Hentzel."

"Let te corporal search, if you choose, sir."

"If you do not object—"

"Of course he objects!" came a voice from outside. "He's got the note in his trousers'-pocket all the time."

"Silence!" called out Mr. Hilton.

"Under the circumstances, Herr Hentzel, I think it would be as well to demonstrate to the school that you have not the note about you," said the Head.

"I am retty!"

"Very well. You know what to do, Cutts."

"Yes, sir," said the corporal.

And he approached the German master with much more willingness than he had approached the young Cornstalk. And he went through the German's pockets with great keenness. He uttered a sharp exclamation as something crisp rustled under his fingers in the outside pocket of the German's loose coat.

"Somethin' here, sir," he said.

"Is it a banknote, Cutts?" asked the Head.

"Yes, sir."

Corporal Cutts withdrew his hand from Herr Hentzel's coat-pocket, and held up a crisp Bank of England note.

There was a yell outside the tent.

"He's found it!"

The German gazed at the note with staring eyes. If it had been a spectre, it could not have startled and amazed him more.

"Let me see the number," said the Head.

He compared the number on the banknote with the number on the slip of paper he held in his hand.

"00012468," he said quietly. "It is the same!"

## CHAPTER 28.

## Mont Blong's Little Game.

**H**ERR HENTZEL made a strange, husky noise in his throat. He looked as if he were going to faint for a moment. His knees knocked together, and he staggered.

"Ach!" he muttered. "Ach! Mein Gott!"

The Head gave him a stern look.

"There is your banknote, Herr Hentzel."

"Ach!"

"It is the one paid you by me—the one you stated you had lost among the missing papers from your box—the one you have accused Gordon Gay of stealing! It was in your own pocket, where you have evidently thrust it thoughtlessly," said the Head. "Herr Hentzel, I cannot find words to express my opinion of your criminal carelessness. I suspect that the papers you have stated to be missing will turn out not to be missing at all, but placed somewhere with equal carelessness. I decline to allow another word to be said on the subject, or any further investigation to be made. And if you bring another accusation against a boy in this school, Herr Hentzel, I shall ask you to resign your position here."

The German turned white.

He had never been spoken to like that in public before, and indeed it was the first time the kind old Head had so lashed anyone with his tongue.

But he was indignant now, and he wanted to make his meaning clear. And he certainly succeeded in making it clear enough.

There was a yell outside the tent.

"Hurrah!"

"Make him apologise!"

The German gritted his teeth.

"Quite right!" said the Head. "Under the circumstances, Herr Hentzel, I think you cannot do less than express to Gordon Gay your regret for what has happened, and for your wicked and unjust suspicion of him."

Herr Hentzel seemed to choke for a moment.

"I am sorry, Gay," he muttered at last.

"Very well, sir," said Gay.

Dr. Monk paused for a moment as he left the tent, and regarded the crowd of Grammarians. He held up his hand.

"Boys," he said, in his clear voice, "you have all seen what has happened! Gordon Gay remains without the slightest suspicion upon his name. It was a most careless mistake to make upon the part of Herr Hentzel. Gay is quite cleared of any possible suspicion."

He walked on.

"Hurrah!" shouted the Grammarians.

"Bravo, Gay!"

"Good old Cornstalk!"

"Hurrah!"

Herr Hentzel strode away clenching his hands, and with a dazed expression upon his face. The Grammarians gave him a groan, but he did not even notice it. He had too much to think about just then.

Gordon Gay was cheered loudly as he came out of the tent. The Old Co. clapped him on the back, and Punter, of the Fifth, came up to him specially to congratulate him. Gordon Gay had never been so popular in the school as he was at that moment.

He left his friends as soon as he could, and drew his chums away for a quiet talk. There were some points in the affair that worried him considerably,



and he knew that Mont Blong could explain. The chums sat down on the sands at a distance from the camp, Mont Blong grinning with quiet satisfaction the while.

"Now then, Monty," said Gordon Gay, "I want to know what this means! How did you know that Hentzel had the banknote about him all the time?"

Mont Blong chuckled.

"If it hadn't been found on him, I should be under suspicion now, although it wasn't found in my quarters," said Gay. "It was a suggestion right in the nick of time, Monty, old man."

"Zat's all right. I know ze game from ze beginning," said Mont Blong cheerfully. "While you go for ze stroll in ze shore after lessons, I stay in ze camp. Ze Sherman master he vatch to find ze missing papers, and I vatch him, but he not see me, n'est-ce-pas. I vatch him walk about, and at last he dodge into ze tent of my shums."

Gordon Gay started.

"Into my tent?"

"Oui, oui!"

"But—but, why?"

Mont Blong chuckled.

"Zat is vat I zink—why? I creep behind ze tent, vere zere is zat lectle slit in ze canvas, and vatch. And I see—vat you zink?"

"Blessed if I know!"

"Looking for his papers, I suppose," said Jack Wootton.

Mont Blong shook his head.

"Non, non. Zat is not it! I see him open Gay's box—my shum's box—and take a banknote out of his pocket and put it among ze shirts of my shum."

The three Cornstalks uttered a shout.

"What!"

"Zat is vat he did," said Mont Blong. "Zen I understand zat he get up a scheme against my shum, because he zink zat Gay have ze missing papers, and zat he frighten him into giving zem back, n'est-ce-pas! But I zink to myself somezing else, isn't it? After zat he is gone, I go into ze tent, and take zat banknote, and put it in my pocket, vous savez!"

"Good heavens!" muttered Gordon Gay.

"But I'm blessed if I see how it got out of your pocket into Herr Hentzel's!" said Jack Wootton.

The French junior gave a prolonged chuckle.

"Is it not zat you see me run into him, ven you come into ze camp?" he asked. "I run into him, and biff!—biff!—ovair he go viz himself. And while zat ve struggle on ze ground, I push ze banknote into his pocket and he know nozzing."

"My hat!"

"Well of all the deep bounders!" said Wootton major. "Blessed if I should ever have thought of a dodge like that!"

"I zink of him," said Mont Blong cheerfully. "It is necessary to have ze long spoon ven zat you sup viz ze Old Nick, as you say in ze English proverb. He is a very deep rascal, but moi, Gustave Blanc—I am more deep!"

Gordon Gay looked very pale.

"My hat!" he said. "If you hadn't done that, Mont Blong, the ten-pound note would have been found in my tent."

"Oui, oui!"

"Great Scott!" said Wootton major. "The awful scoundrel! I say, we oughtn't to keep this to ourselves. The villain ought to be shown up!"

"Non, non."

"He might try some rotten trick like that again," said Wootton major wrathfully.

"I zink zat if he make more accusations, ze doctor decline to listen," grinned Mont Blong. "Ze Head is vat you call fed-up viz zem."

"Yes, but he ought to be exposed."

"Non, non. He deny it. Vat zen? His vord against mine. It is not sensible. Bettair to make ze fool of him in zis vay."

Gordon Gay nodded.

"I'd like to show him up to the whole school," he said. "But it would want a lot of proof, an accusation of that sort against a master. Better let it alone. But we'll keep an eye on the awful rascal."

"I zink zat there is a prison waiting for him," said Mont Blong cheerfully. "Until zen, ve keep ze open eye on ze rascal, my dear shums."

Gordon Gay gripped the French junior's hand.

"You've saved me from an awful hole, Mont Blong," he said. "I shall never forget this!"

Mont Blong beamed.

"Zat is all right!" he exclaimed. "I kiss my shum!"

And he did, and Gordon Gay bore it nobly.

## CHAPTER 29.

### The Early Birds.

GORDON GAY burst into a sudden chuckle.

The Fourth Form of the Grammar School were coming out of the big marquee after morning lessons.

The school camp looked very bright and cheerful in the sunshine, and away seaward the wide waters rolled and glistened, dotted with white sails, and blurs of smoke from passing steamers.

"Wherefore cachinnatest thou?" inquired Wootton major, glancing at his chum.

Gordon Gay chuckled again.

"It's a half-holiday to-day," he remarked.

"Quite so. But——"

"The sea looks quite ripping, doesn't it?"

"It does—it do."

"Then why not have a boat out this afternoon?" said Gordon Gay. "We could get a sail right out to sea, and perhaps have a run along the coast as far as the Blackwater—even get into the Thames and have a look at Canvey Island."

Wootton major laughed.

"That would be a big order, unless we were blown away in a gale," he remarked. "It's a good idea to have a boat out. But what is there to cackle about?"

"I was thinking of Herr Hentzel."

"Thinking of asking him to steer for us?" asked Jack Wootton, with a grin.

"Ha, ha! No. But you know how he has been keeping his eyes on us ever since his precious papers were missing."

"Yes, rather—the silly ass!"

"Well, if we get a boat out, and put a lunch-basket in it, he's bound to think that his precious papers are in the lunch-basket——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And it would be the joke of the season to see him pulling out after us, or one of his fat friends!"

And the young rascals of the Fourth immediately decided to have a boat out that afternoon, and let Herr Hentzel see them carry a big lunch-basket on board.

Tadpole decided to come. He said he would be able to get some extra good colour effects by studying the shore from the sea, and asked Gay to be sure to put his easel and canvas into the boat. To which Gay replied that if he found any easels in the boat, he would drop them into the sea, and their owner with them.

Tadpole blinked at him.

"Now, my dear Gay, let us argue the point——" he began.

"Br-r-r-r-r! You can bring a sketch-book if you like, on condition you don't ask us to look at your sketches," said Gordon Gay.

"My dear Gay——"

"And that you don't talk art," said Wootton major. "This is going to be a pleasure trip, you know."

"My dear Wootton——"

"You coming, Mont Blong?" asked Gordon Gay.

"It is viz pleasure zat I sall come viz my shums," said the French junior, nodding.

"Good! That will be five of us," said Gordon Gay. "Mont Blong can steer, and we can row, if there isn't enough wind. And Tadpole can shut up."

"My dear Gay——"

"There goes the dinner call," said Wootton major, as Corporal Cutts's bugle sounded through the camp. "Come on! We'll go down immediately after dinner and arrange with old Hawksey about the boat, Gay. Hawksey's boat is the best on the beach."

"Yes, rather."

The chums of the Fourth trooped off towards the mess-tent. The longer the Grammar School stayed under canvas, the better the Grammarians were growing to like it. In the old Grammar School at Rylcombe the surroundings had been pleasant enough, but it was ripping to be by the sea—not merely for a holiday, but for their daily life. They could never get tired of seeing the wide North Sea and feeling the sea-breezes on their cheeks when they came out of lessons.

Frank Monk & Co. met them as they were going in to dinner. The Old Co. were looking very cheerful.

"We're going for a little trip this afternoon," Monk remarked. "One of you fellows can come and steer for us, if you like."

Gordon Gay smiled.

"Going out to sea?"

"Yes, we're going to have old Hawksey's boat——"

"Eh?"

"It's the best on the beach," Frank Monk explained genially.

"Yes, I'm aware of that," said Gordon Gay grimly.

"I've ordered it to be quite ready at two," said Monk. "One of you fellows can come and steer, if you like. Couldn't trust you to row."

"Go hon!"

"If the wind gets up a little we shall be able to sail, you know. I expect we shall have a ripping time!"

Gordon Gay grinned.

"I hope you will," he remarked.

Gordon Gay & Co. whispered among themselves to a considerable extent during dinner. Mr. Adams called them to order once or twice. Herr Hentzel watched them from his place at the next table with a very sour expression. During the last few days the German master's temper had been growing sourer and sourer. The loss of his precious papers was evidently weighing upon his mind. True, he was pretty certain that they had not yet been sent out of the camp. His confederates were watching for that. But so long as they remained hidden, he knew that he was in danger. Those papers had only to be sent to the authorities in London for the whole treacherous scheme of spying to be exposed. And the trouble of it weighed upon the mind of the master spy.

After dinner the Corustalk Co. left the mess tent, and strolled away. It was at quarter to two that they presented themselves on the beach, Tadpole with a sketch-book and a colour-box bulging out his big pockets. Tadpole affected a loose style of dress, very untidy, as becoming a great artist.

Frank Monk & Co. had not yet appeared. They had ordered the boat for two, and they were not in a hurry.

Old Hawksey, the fisherman, was seated upon the gunwale of the boat, smoking his pipe, when the juniors came up. He touched his hat to them.

"You the young gentlemen for the boat?" he asked.

Gordon Gay nodded.

"Yes, we're those identical young gentlemen," he said. "My friend Monk engaged you, I think?"

"Yes, that was the name, sir. He said two o'clock."

"It's the early bird that catches the worm," Gordon Gay explained.

"Run the boat out, old son. Put in the basket, Harry."

Wootton major put the lunch-basket into the boat, and coats were put in. The fisherman, with the assistance of the juniors, ran the boat down the shingle. Gordon Gay & Co. piled into it as it splashed in the water, and took in the oars.

"Ship the rudder, Taddy," said Gay.

"Certainly, my dear Gay."

Tadpole took the rudder from the fisherman, but seemed to be extremely uncertain what to do with it. Tadpole was great on Impressionism and even Futurism in art, but he was not great on seamanship.

"Stick it in, fathead!" said Gay.

"My dear Gay, where does it go?"

"Oh, you ass!"

"Don't you know it's a new kind of seat, specially invented for artists going out to sea sketching?" demanded Wootton major.

"Dear me! That is very remarkable!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Gay. "Oh, you ass!"

Tadpole was putting down the rudder to use as a seat, when Gay jerked it away, and slammed it into place. Tadpole gazed at it in astonishment.

"My dear Gay, I shall refuse to sit on it if it is placed in that very dangerous position!" he exclaimed.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Gordon Gay pushed Tadpole down in the stern, and put the lines in his hands.

"You sit there and steer, and shut up!" he exclaimed.

"My dear Gay——"

"Br-r-r-r-r——"

There was a shout from the beach.

"Hi, there!. Gerrouit of our boat!"

The Old Co. had arrived.

"Shove off!" said Gordon Gay hurriedly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the Cornstalk Co. shoved off.

### CHAPTER 30.

#### "The Sun Dodger."

**F**RANK MONK & CO. came dashing at full-speed down to the beach. Lane was carrying a lunch-basket, and Carboy had several coats and rugs over his arm.

Frank Monk, having nothing to carry, forged ahead, and came tearing down to the shore as if he were on the cider-path, waving his hands and yelling.

"Yah! You bounders! Gerrout of our boat! Yah! Stop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He, he, he!" cackled Mont Blong. "It is to laugh! He, he, he!"

"Get out, you rotters! Shove them out, Hawksey! That's our boat!"

Mr. Hawksey looked astonished.

"Ain't you the same young gentlemen?" he demanded.

"No!" roared Monk. "Those bounders have got our boat!"

"My heye!"

"Turn 'em out!" roared Lane.

"Chuck the rotters out of our boat!" shrieked Carboy.

The rivals of the Fourth tore down to the beach. But Gordon Gay & Co. had shoved the boat well off, and it was dancing upon the waves a dozen yards from the shore. The Old Co. halted upon the sands, with the water creaming over their boots, and roared:

"Come back!"

"Give us our boat!"

"Yah! Thieves!"

Gordon Gay kissed his hand to the infuriated Grammarians.

"It's all right!" he called out. "We want this boat; it's the best on the beach, you know. We're going to pay for it, of course."

"Look here—"

"The early bird catches the worm!" said Wootton major. "We belong to the N.O.E.B.—the Noble Order of Early Birds."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you like to swim, we'll throw you a line!" said Jack Wootton.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Or we'll take one of you to steer!" said Gordon Gay generously. "Of course, we couldn't trust you to row!"

Frank Monk & Co. looked as if they were in danger of going into convulsions as they stood upon the wet sands and waved their hands and roared:

"Come back!"

"Yah! Rotters!"

"You've stolen our boat!"

"Yah! Come back and be licked!"

"Yah!"

The Cornstalk Co. kissed the tips of their fingers gently and sweetly to their infuriated rivals, and Mont Blong waved his cap and bowed.

Then the boat glided out to sea, Gordon Gay and Wootton major pulling at the oars.

The yells of the Old Co. died away in the distance. Old Hawksey, assured of payment whoever had the boat, returned to his pipe with great philosophy. But it was a long time before Frank Monk & Co. ceased to yell after the boat, and resolved to satisfy themselves with another.

They dwindled to mere marionettes as the boat pulled farther and farther out. Gordon Gay rested on his oar and gazed back at the beach.

The figures of the Old Co. could still be seen, backed by the white tents of the school camp in the distance.

The Cornstalk chuckled.

"I think we did them that time!" he remarked.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I zink zat you arc right, my shum," exclaimed Mont Blong. "I zink zat in ze joy of my heart I embrace you."

"Here, keep off!"

"I kees my shum——"

Gordon Gay started rowing again hurriedly. His oar bumped on the chest of the French junior, and Mont Blong sat down in the bottom of the boat.

"Ow!" he gasped. "My shum!"

"Sorry!" said the Cornstalk blandly. "You shouldn't get too near a chap when he's rowing, you know!"

"Groo!"

"Hallo!" exclaimed Jack Wootton. "Look there!"

"What on earth is it?"

The juniors ceased rowing.

From the headland, where they had seen the signal lights flashing to the German ship on that eventful night they were never likely to forget, there came sudden strange flashes of light.

They were too far from the headland to see the ledge, or the cave that opened from it; or a signaller, if he were standing there. But they could see the flashes of light, evidently made by a burnished glass in the bright sunshine.

"It's a signal!" Gordon Gay exclaimed.

"The sun dodgers!" shouted Wootton major.

"The what?"

"Sun dodgers—the heliograph, you know. They use that system for signalling in the Army. If we knew the code we could read it.

The juniors gazed at one another in amazement.

"It must be old Hentzel!" said Gordon Gay, after a pause, during which he watched the flashes from the headland intently. "Nobody else would be likely to be sending signals from the cliff out to sea."

"Quite certain?"

"As it's daytime, he's using the heliograph instead of electric lights," said Gay. "But whom is he signalling to?"

They turned their gaze out to sea.

Once or twice they thought they caught a responsive flash, but they were not sure. The flashes from the headland faded away.

"My hat!" said Gordon Gay, in a low voice. "I had an idea that some of Hentzel's friends might follow us in a boat to watch us——"

"They haven't done it," said Wootton major.

"No. Is it possible this signalling is to some vessel instead—that some vessel out there is going to look for us?"

"My word!"

"It seems rather thick," said Jack Wootton. "But—but if the German thinks we've got his papers, and if they're valuable——"

"He does think so."

"Then——"

"I zink zat ve are in danger, my shums," said Mont Blong. "It is zat ve do not go very far from ze shore, n'est-ce-pas?"

"I don't see that we could be hurt, anyway," said Jack Wootton.

"Suppose they searched the boat. They wouldn't find anything. I suppose they dare not do us any harm?"

Gordon Gay looked thoughtful.

"Look!" said Wootton major suddenly.

Wootton major was pointing to the north, past the great headland at the mouth of the river. The throb of engines could be heard over the water, and a steamer was gliding past the headland, and crossing the expanse of blue water, as if to pass between the juniors' boat and the beach. The juniors had not noticed the steamer before. It was a very ordinary-looking tramp-steamer, and looked as if it were engaged in the coast trade between the Thames and Hull or Yarmouth.

"What about her?" asked Jack.

"She's changed her course a little, and she's going to cut us off from the beach," said Wootton major.

Gordon Gay drew a deep breath.

"Do you think that's the vessel the signalling was to?"

Wootton major nodded.

"We can soon prove it," said Jack Wootton. "Let's pull for the beach, and see if they follow us."

"Good!"

Jack Wootton jerked Tadpole away from the rudder-lines and took his place. Gay and Wootton minor bent to their oars. The boat turned, and the juniors rowed shoreward.

Tadpole viewed this proceeding in great surprise.

"My dear fellows, are we returning?" he exclaimed.

"Oh, dry up, Taddy! Don't ask questions."

"Well, I really have no objection, as I have left my cobalt in the tent," said Tadpole. "Of course, a sketch cannot be painted without cobalt."

"Blow cobalt!"

"My dear Gay——"

"Br-r-r-r! Shut up!"

"I zink zat ze steamer mark us," murmured Mont Blong.

The tramp-steamer changed her course slightly, still keeping on to cut the boat off from the beach.

She was so close now that the juniors, as they pulled, could see the faces of the men looking over the sides, and they could see that they were foreign faces, and watching the boat with intense interest.

## CHAPTER 31.

### In the Hands of the Enemy.

**T**ADPOLE uttered a sudden cry of alarm.

"My dear fellows," he exclaimed, apparently seeing the steamer for the first time, "you are running right into that ship!"

"Go hon!" growled Gordon Gay, tugging at his oar.

"But you will be run down——"

"Cheese it!"

Tadpole stared blankly at his companions and then at the ship. There was no doubt that the boat would be run down if both the boat and the tramp-steamer kept on their courses unchanged.

And the steamer evidently did not mean to budge. She was so much faster than the boat that it was easy for her to interpose her bulk between the juniors and the beach.

The Grammarians rested upon their oars at last.

"No good running right on and getting smashed up," said Gay grimly. "She's after us, and we can't help ourselves now."

The boat rocked on the wash of the steamer. The vessel rounded to close to the oscillating boat, and the captain shouted from the bridge.

"Boat ahoy!"

He shouted in English, but with a guttural German accent. Gordon Gay stood up in the boat to reply.

"Hallo! What do you want? Can't you keep on your own side? Do you want all the blessed sea?"

"We pick you up."

"We don't want to be picked up."

"You will come alongside," shouted the German skipper.

"I tell you we don't want to be picked up."

"Tat will make no difference. We shall pick you up, and if you not come on board we will run down tat boat."

"Phew!" murmured Wootton major.

"My—my goodness!" ejaculated Tadpole, in amazement. "That man must be mad! What does he mean, Gay?"

"He means mischief," said Gordon Gay grimly.

"But—but this is a—unlawful proceeding," stammered Tadpole. "Call out to him that he is not allowed to do anything of the kind. Let us argue the point—"

"Oh, cheese it, Taddy!" Gordon Gay looked at the German skipper as he glared down from the bridge of the tramp-steamer. "Keep off!" he shouted back. "We won't come on board!"

"No fear!" murmured Jack Wootton.

Mont Blong shook his head.

"He vill not let us go," he muttered. "It is zat ve are in ze hands of ze enemy, my shums."

"Will you come aboard?" shouted the German skipper.

"No!"

"Then take the consequences!"

The tramp-steamer swung round, and headed directly for the boat.

"My hat!" Jack Wootton exclaimed. "He means business, Gay."

"I say, Gay, old man, we shall have to go on board," muttered Harry Wootton. "It's no good being run down, you know."

"I know that," said Gordon Gay. He waved his hand to the steamer and shouted: "We will come on board, under protest."

It was high time—the steamer was almost upon the boat. But it stopped, and the boat floated alongside. A ladder was let down, and the Grammarian juniors climbed up the side.

The skipper rapped out an order in German. Two seamen descended into the boat, and passed up the side all the belongings of the juniors. Then one of them stove a hole in the boat, and as they clambered up it filled with water.

"Goodness gracious!" exclaimed Tadpole, who was lost in amazement. "The boat is sinking, Gay! How ever are we to get ashore?"

The boat settled down in the water.

The steamer held on its way. The German skipper fixed a frowning glance upon the Grammarian juniors.

"You have a packet?" he exclaimed.



"We've got several," said Gordon Gay. "Did you pick us up to steal our lunch?"

Wootton major and minor chuckled. The German skipper scowled.

"Where are de papers?"

"Blessed if I know!"

The captain muttered something in his beard.

"You'll have to take us ashore now," said Gordon Gay, "and you'll have to pay for that boat."

"We shall certainly inform the police," said Tadpole. "You have acted illegally, my good man, and put us to great inconvenience."

The German captain smiled grimly.

"You will not find it so easy to inform der police," he said. "Unless I have dem papers, you do not go ashore again. Tell me where they are, and I send to seek dem."

"I don't know where they are," said Gordon Gay.

"Den you stay aboard dis ship until you do know!"

"Do you mean that you are going to kidnap us?" demanded Gordon Gay, in amazement.

"You are prisoners here till I have dem papers."

"But, you rotten hound—"

Gordon Gay was interrupted. At a sign from the German captain three or four seamen threw themselves upon the Grammarians, and the juniors were dragged below. In a minute more they were shut up in a state-room, and the door locked upon them.

They were prisoners now, with a vengeance!

## CHAPTER 32.

### Kidnapped!

THE early rays of the sun glimmered in at the porthole, and Gordon Gay awoke from an uneasy slumber.

Gordon Gay & Co. had slept uncomfortably enough upon the floor, and twice during the night they had been visited by the German skipper of the steamer.

He had only come to repeat what he had said on deck, and Gordon Gay had made the same reply—that he had not taken the papers, did not know where they were, and so could not give them up.

Then the Grammarian juniors had been left alone till the morning.

Gordon Gay was the first to awaken.

The Germans had left the juniors unbound for the night, but they had locked them in, and Gay trying the door as soon as he rose, found it still locked on the outside.

He crossed over to the porthole, and looked out.

The sun was shining upon the gleaming waters, and he could see the sea and the sky, but no trace of land.

Where were they?

Had the steamer turned her stern upon the English shore during the night, and taken them away to sea?

It looked like it. Gordon Gay thought of the anxiety his friends would be feeling in the school under canvas, and he compressed his lips. Jack Wootton sat up on the hard floor and yawned.

"Nothing to eat, I suppose?" he remarked.

"Nix!"

"Mon Dieu!" said Mont Blong. "J'ai faim, moi—I am hungry, too, viz myself. But I zink ve get nozzing."

Gordon Gay started.

"You don't think they mean to starve us?" he exclaimed.

"Oui, oui, my shum."

"My hat! But—"

"Why?" demanded Wootton major.

"Zey want ze papers."

"But we haven't got them," said Gordon Gay.

"I zink perhaps zey give us nozzing till zey are satisfy," said Mont Blong.

"I hope not, my shums, but I zink zat."

"Phew!"

"But we can't give up the papers when we've not got them," said Jack Wootton. "I suppose you could tell them something about these papers if you liked, Mont Blong."

The French junior smiled.

"Perhaps," he said, "zat is so. But even if I wish, I not able to tell zem how to get ze papers."

"Why not?" asked Gay.

"Because zey are sent to London."

"Oh!"

"Then you took them?" exclaimed Wootton major.

The French junior nodded.

"But—but you—"

"You see, zey are not what Herr Hentzel have say," explained Mont Blong. "Ze papers zat he lose he have said are private papers of his—zat he write. It is not so. Zey are maps and plans for ze German Admiralty."

"Oh!"

"And zey are quite safe," said Mont Blong cheerfully. "Zey are on ze way to London by zis time, and vatever happen to us, zey are safe."

Footsteps were heard outside the door in a few minutes, and the door was unlocked.

The door was pushed open, and the German skipper appeared. He frowned darkly at the Grammarian juniors.

"Vat is it tat you vant?" he asked.

"Brekker!" said the juniors, in one voice.

That was evidently a new word to the German, and he looked puzzled.

"Breakfast!" explained Gordon Gay. "Grub, you know."

"Tommy!" said Wootton major.

"Food!" said Wootton minor.

"I am exceedingly hungry, sir," said Tadpole. "You have no right to detain us here against our will, and—"

"Oh, cheese it, Taddy!" said Gordon Gay.

"My dear Gay—"

The German skipper smiled gimly.

"You get no food on my ship!" he said.

"Do you mean to starve us?" exclaimed Gordon Gay indignantly.

"Ja, ja!"

"Then there'll be trouble!"

The German laughed.

Gordon Gay's eyes gleamed.

"Back up, kids!" he shouted.

And, with a spring like a tiger, he was upon the German.

## CHAPTER 33.

## The Upper Hand.

GORDON GAY'S sudden attack took the German skipper completely by surprise. He staggered back in the alley-way, and went with a crash to the floor, with the Cornstalk on top of him. He struggled furiously, and tried to get his hand into his pocket, but the other juniors were upon him in a moment. He was dragged into the state-room, and the juniors piled on him.

There was a hoarse shout in German, and a rush of feet outside; but Mont Blong, in a twinkling, changed the key to the inside of the door, closed it, and locked it. The next moment there was a heavy blow outside, and an angry voice in German called out for the door to be opened.

The German skipper was struggling fiercely in the grasp of the four Grammarians. If he could have succeeded in drawing his revolver, he would certainly have used it. But he had no chance.

Wootton major had a tight grip on his right wrist, and Jack Wootton hung on to his left arm. Gordon Gay had him by the throat, and Mont Blong had hold of his hair from behind. He rolled and struggled on the floor, dragging the juniors to and fro, till he was exhausted. Tadpole did not take part in the tussle. He stood looking on in a dazed condition, evidently hardly knowing whether he was upon his head or his heels.

"Dear me!" he gasped, a dozen times. "My dear fellows! Oh, dear!"

The German's struggles subsided at last.

He lay upon his back, helpless, with the juniors piling on him; and Gordon Gay felt for the skipper's revolver and jerked it away.

The German made another effort, and Gay calmly placed the muzzle of the revolver to his neck.

A wave of pallor swept over the skipper's face.

"Take that away!" he panted. "It is loaded."

"Better keep still, then."

"Take it away! It might—might—"

"Yes, if you jolt my arm it might go off," assented Gordon Gay agreeably. "Quite likely. Better take it calmly, hadn't you?"

The German ceased to move.

His eyes glittered with rage as they were turned upon the cool Cornstalk, who held the revolver with a steady hand.

Crash!

It was a fierce attack upon the door from without.

"Call out to your men to leave the door alone," said Gay.

"I will not."

"Do you want this pistol to go off?"

"You—you dare not—"

"Stand clear, you fellows, while I blow his brains out, if he has any," said Gordon Gay, handling the trigger of the revolver.

The German gave a gasp of terror. He did not believe that Gordon Gay would shoot him, but he thought it very likely that the revolver might go off, thus carelessly handled by a schoolboy. Which was exactly the impression Gordon Gay wished to give him.

"Stop!" gasped the skipper. "Turn that pistol another way."

"Tell them to clear, then."

"Ja, ja, ja!"

The German shouted to the men outside, in German, and the heavy blows upon the door ceased. A deep buzz of guttural voices could still be heard.

"Just now, you've got us, and we've got you," said Gordon Gay. "We shall have to make an exchange of prisoners, you know."

"Good egg!" said Wootton major.

"Zat is a good idea, my shum," said Mont-Blong. "But I do not see how it is zat ve sall do zat."

"Where there's a will there's a way, you know. We've got to get off this ship. I suppose the Deutschers up there will not be able to get on without their skipper, and they can't get him out of this cabin unless we let them. Make sure of this rotter first—tie up his hands and feet."

The German skipper began to struggle again.

Gordon Gay jammed the barrel of the revolver into his mouth, looking down upon the German with a very grim expression.

"My finger's on the trigger," he said. "You know what will happen if you struggle. Better keep still!"

The German spluttered.

But, furious as he was, he took that good advice. He did not want the revolver to go off, and send a bullet crashing through his head.

Wootton major and Mont Blong bound the German hand and foot, using their handkerchiefs and his own belt for the purpose.

Then Gordon Gay rose to his feet. The skipper of the tramp steamer lay helpless on the floor, writhing in his bonds, and foaming with rage.

"Ach! But you shall suffer for all dis!" he ground out between his teeth.

Gordon Gay nodded.

"You'll do the suffering for the present," he said. "Mind, when your men come along again, you're to order them to keep off. If there's any danger of their breaking in and collaring us, you'll get what's in this pistol. We're not going to be kidnapped, my Deutscher friend. Before you manage that, somebody will get hurt. We're going to be taken back to Essex."

He stepped to the porthole, and scanned the horizon.

So far as he could see, there was nothing but water round the steamer now, and he saw a passing steamer in the distance. But his view from the porthole was limited, and the tramp might have been near land for all he knew.

He put the hand holding the revolver out of the porthole, and pulled the trigger.

Bang!

The bullet flashed away into the water, and a little curl of smoke rose.

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#### CHAPTER 34,

#### The Whip Hand.

**B**ANG!

He pulled the trigger again.

"What are you doing?" exclaimed Wootton major.

"There's an English steamer yonder. I'm trying to attract her attention. I'll keep one bullet for our friend on the floor, in case he asks for it."

Gordon Gay looked anxiously from the porthole.

But the distant steamer kept on her way, without a sign, and passed out of the range of his vision. It had been but a slight hope, and it had come to nothing.

The German skipper looked at him with a savage sneer.

"Dey do not hear!" he said.

The Cornstalk nodded.

"Looks not!" he agreed. "But I've got three cartridges left, you beauty, if you give us any trouble. Look here, we're going to be taken back to England."

"Nein!"

"Your men are still outside the door. It sounds like the monkey-house at the Zoo," said Gordon Gay. "You will call out to them, and order them to get back to the Essex coast, where you picked us up, immediately."

"Never!"

"You've got to," said Gordon Gay, grimly. "Do you fellows agree? It looks to me as if it's our only chance."

"If you can make the brute do it," said Wootton major.

"He shall smart if he don't," said Gay, between his teeth. "He's kidnapped us; may mean to murder us, for all we know. We're not going to stand on ceremony with him. Will you give your men the order I have said, captain?"

"No!" yelled the German.

"Then you're going to be licked until you do."

"Vat?" screamed the German.

"You're going to give that order to your men, or you're going to be licked until you do give in," said Gordon Gay. The Cornstalk took off his belt. "Now, then, turn him over! Now, Herr Captain, will you order your men outside to make for the coast?"

"No!"

"For the last time!"

"No!"

"Then you'll smart for it!"

Gordon Gay swung his arm. The belt was a light one, but it was quite heavy enough to inflict a severe licking. Gay's arm swept down, and there was a terrific yell from the German skipper as the belt lashed across his broad back.

"Yarroop!"

Lash! Lash! Lash!

"Ow! Yow! Oh!"

"Will you do as I want?" asked Gay grimly.

"Ow! Oh! Mein himmel! Ja, ja, you young Englisher fiend! Ja, ja!" yelled the enraged and amazed captain. He had never dreamed that the Cornstalk would carry out his threat, but he had discovered his mistake now.

"Give the orders, then."

The German yelled out in his own language.

A voice replied from the alley-way outside, and there was a sound of receding feet.

The juniors waited anxiously.

Gordon Gay looked from the porthole. The steamer was changing her course. She swung round, and the change of position brought a new view to the porthole, where Gordon Gay was standing. In the distance the summits of the Essex hills caught his eye, and he knew that he was not far from English land. The steamer had evidently only been marking time during the night, standing off and on near the shore. Probably the skipper did not want to get out of communication with Herr Hentzel.

"Good!" exclaimed Gordon Gay. "I believe we're not ten miles out, you fellows. Hurray!"

The steamer glided on through the water, and the German skipper lay upon the floor of the cabin, regarding the Grammarians with eyes that scintillated with rage.

## CHAPTER 35.

## A Bid for Liberty.

GORDON GAY stood at the porthole, watching the shore as it drew nearer.

The German crew were evidently obeying the orders shouted to them by their imprisoned skipper, and the steamer was drawing rapidly nearer to the shore. It would not be long before it would glide by the headland near the school camp. And then?

There was a mocking sneer on the face of the German. When the steamer dropped anchor close to the shore, the juniors would have to get out of the state-room, and then the German crew would be able to seize them. Probably the skipper had shouted instructions to them to that effect, along with his orders to steam back to the coast. The German evidently believed that he held the trump card, in spite of the momentary success of the juniors. And his savage look showed how bitterly he would repay the humiliation he had endured at their hands, when his chance came.

But Gordon Gay's brain was busy.

He could read quite easily in the German's face what was passing in the man's mind, but it did not trouble him.

His comrades looked at him anxiously. They had won the game so far, owing to the coolness and courage of their leader. But they, as well as the German, did not quite see how they were to escape from the steamer at the finish.

The steamer glided on, and the coast, as Gay watched it from the porthole, came nearer and nearer, clearer and clearer.

The big headland loomed up on the right, and once or twice he caught a glimpse of white in the sun along the shore, and knew that it was the school under canvas.

His heart beat at the sight.

There were his old friends and comrades, gathered at their lessons at that hour, and short as the time of separation really was, Gordon Gay felt as if he had been long absent.

The sight of the white canvas gleaming in the sun cheered him.

"We're close in now," he remarked.

"Right in the bay," said Wootton major.

There was a tap at the door outside, and a hoarse voice called in German.

"Tell him to anchor!" said Gordon Gay.

The German skipper snapped his teeth, and obeyed.

The steamer throbbed to a stop, and anchored within easy sight of the boats drawn up on the shore. The water was too shallow to allow her to approach nearer, or Gordon Gay would have made them do so. The German skipper watched Gay with blazing eyes.

"You come to the end of your tether now, you Englisher cub!" he hissed.

"Not quite," said Gordon Gay cheerfully. "Now, you fellows, kick your boots off!"

"What for?" demanded Wootton major.

"We've got to swim for it."

"Phew!"

"We're less than three-quarters of a mile out," said Gay, "and we're all first-class swimmers. Taddy can swim, and we can help him if he needs it."

"My dear Gay——"

"It hasn't occurred to our Deutscher friend here that the porthole is big enough for kids of our size to get through," said Gay, keeping his eyes

upon the German. "But you see, Herr Captain, you fat Dutchies couldn't squeeze through it to save your lives; but we shall be able to do it quite easily. Ah, would you!"

The German skipper, his face convulsed with rage, opened his mouth to yell a warning to his men, to warn them of what Gordon Gay intended. But Gay was ready for him.

As the German's mouth opened, he jammed his handkerchief into it, and rammed it in tight, and the German's attempted yell died away in a feeble spluttering.

Gordon Gay extracted a length of twine from his pocket, and tied it round the German skipper's head, fastening the gag in its place very securely. He had no intention whatever of standing upon ceremony with the man; and if the ruffian was hurt, that was his own look-out, as Gordon Gay regarded it. The German lay wriggling on the floor, spluttering in a choked way, only inarticulate gasps escaping him.

"That keeps you quiet for a bit," said Gay. "Now, you chaps, are you ready?"

"Yes, rather."

"Drop one at a time from the porthole. You can squeeze through all right. Lucky we haven't got Fatty Wynn of St. Jim's in the party. You ready, Taddy?"

Tadpole shivered.

"My dear Gay—"

"Come on! There's no time to lose."

"I—I—"

"Buck up!" roared Gordon Gay.

"But—but I am a very poor swimmer, and—and—"

"You're a pretty poor everything," agreed Gordon Gay. "But you've got to swim this time, and we'll help you. Come on!"

"Suppose—"

"Oh, blow supposing! You go first, Harry, and I'll chuck Taddy after you."

"But—but suppose they fire on us from the deck!" gasped Tadpole.

Gordon Gay laughed.

"They won't!" he said. "We're too close to the shore for that. There are a dozen fishermen watching the steamer at this minute, and wondering what she's doing here. They wouldn't dare to commit murder with half Netherby looking on—and, anyway, we've got to risk it. Do you want to stay here?"

"No,—no, but—"

"Then come on."

And Gordon Gay grasped the hesitating Tadpole by the shoulders, and propelled him forcibly towards the porthole.

"Ow!" moaned Tadpole. "Is the water very cold, Gay?"

"You'll see when you get into it."

"Oh! Ow!"

"Shut up, for goodness' sake! Go it, Harry!"

"I'm off!"

Harry Wootton squeezed himself out of the porthole, and dived head first into the sea. Jack Wootton followed him immediately, and the brothers swam there together, close by the side of the ship. Mont Blong was the third, and he dropped into the sea feet first, squeezing out backwards through the porthole, and hanging on for a moment before he let go. Then Gordon Gay pushed Tadpole through.

The German skipper watched him, choking with rage

Tadpole hesitated, but he had to make up his mind to it. He dived perforce, with a push behind from Gordon Gay. Fortunately the drop was not great, and the Woottons seized him as he rose, puffing and panting, to the surface.

Gordon Gay turned to the German skipper with a grin.

"Good-bye, uncle," he said carefully. "I shall see you again, perhaps, if I ever pay a visit to the Old Bailey. Keep your pecker up."

The skipper's eyes spoke volumes of rage, but his tongue was still.

Gordon Gay squeezed himself out of the porthole, and dived, and rose in the water among his comrades. The German skipper's pistol was dropped into the sea. The five juniors swam together away from the side of the steamer, and above, by the rail, three or four of the German seamen stared down at them in amazement.

An officer rushed down to knock on the cabin door and demand instructions, which the gagged skipper could not give. Some of the Germans rushed to lower a boat. Gordon Gay had expected that.

"Buck up!" he said. "It may be touch and go now, and if they should get us on board that steamer again, we shall have a fearful time."

"Yes, rather!" gasped Wootton major.

"Leave Taddy to me," said Gay. "I'll shove him along. The rest of you make for the beach as hard as you can go. If one of us gets ashore, it's enough to make those rotters let us all alone. They don't want the police on 'em."

"Good!"

The Grammarian juniors struck out for the shore with all their strength, gliding swiftly through the calm water.

Behind them, the boat plumped down from the German steamer, and there was a rattle of oars in rowlocks, and a splash of hurried rowing. But time had been taken to lower the boat, and the swimmers had a start. They were making the best use of it, and the sound of the rowers in pursuit urged them to greater efforts. And now there were people on shore staring towards them, and watching the strange race in amazement.

## CHAPTER 36.

### A Near Thing.

**G**ORDON GAY & CO. swam hard for the shore.

Behind them the German oarsmen were pulling hard, and but for the start the juniors had gained, the pursuers would certainly have been successful.

Gay glanced back over the shining water.

The boat was coming on fast, and a German mate was standing up in the bows with a boat-hook in his hand, and his face set in a grim expression.

"Oh, dear!" gasped Tadpole. "I—I got some water in my mouth then, and—and——"

"Swim, you idiot!"

"I—I can't—I—don't d-drag me along—gr—ooo——"

Tadpole had no chance to speak further.

Gordon Gay was propelling him through the water as fast as he could; and Wootton major and minor and Mont Blong were already ahead. Harry Wootton paused for his chum.

"Get on!" gasped Gordon Gay. "Get ashore—if I'm collared, you can get help——"



"But—"

"Get on!"

"Right-ho!" said Wootton major.

And he swam on his fastest.

Jack Wootton and Mont Blong were close to the shore now. A fisherman was putting out in his boat to help the juniors. There was a shout from the direction of the school under canvas. Frank Monk, Lane, and Carboy came racing down to the shore. They were coming out for a morning bathe, when they caught sight of the swimmers, the German ship, and the pursuing boat.

Amazed as they were by the strange spectacle, they lost no time. They dashed down to the shingle at top speed.

"Buck up, Gay!" roared Frank Monk.

"We're coming!"

"Oh, quite!" gasped Carboy.

Gordon Gay, burdened with the helpless Tadpole, was lagging far behind his chums now. They would have stopped for him, but for his own order; and it was evidently best for some, at least, to make sure of escape, in order to get help for Gay if he was recaptured.

The German boat was close behind the swimmer, and he had still fifty yards to cover. He pushed on desperately, his teeth set, his eyes gleaming through the spray.

Monk, Lane, and Carboy halted on the shore.

"The boat's after them!" muttered Monk, setting his teeth. "Some of that gang of German spies, of course. Get up some stones."

"Good!"

Gay swam on his fastest.

The shore was thick with shingle. Frank Monk stopped, and caught up a round stone in his hand, and took aim at the man standing up in the bows of the German boat. He was getting the boat-hook ready to catch at Gordon Gay, evidently intending to fasten on to the Cornstalk and drag him back, careless if he was hurt. It was no time for tender measures. The stone flew from Frank Monk's hand, unerring as a bullet from a crack rifleman, and struck the German full in the face.

"Ach!"

The unexpected crash in the face sent the German staggering back in the boat, and he fell heavily among the rowers.

In an instant all was confusion.

One of the oarsmen caught a crab, and another lost his oar. The boat swung round, and the German mate scrambled to his feet with blood on his face.

Whiz, whiz, whiz!

Monk, Lane, and Carboy were hurling the stones fast now. Every missile flew into the boat, and there were yells of pain from the German seamen.

Crash, crash!

"Ach!"

"Mein Gott!"

Jack Wootton and Mont Blong scrambled through the sand to the shore. Without stopping to shake the water from themselves, they grasped up stones and began pelting the German boat.

In a second or two more, Harry Wootton joined them.

The fusillade from six juniors, all of them good shots, told upon the German boat's crew.

They were in utter confusion, and only yells and thumps from the enraged mate made the seamen bend to their oars again, and resume the pursuit of Gordon Gay in the face of the whizzing volleys of stones.

Crash, crash! Whiz! Crash!

Gay had gained ground during the Germans' confusion, and he was close in shore now. The fisherman, who had put out his boat, dragged Gay into it, with Tadpole, and ran his craft upon the sand. The Grammarians rushed down to it in a crowd, stones in their hands, to defend it in case the Germans came further.

But the Germans were done.

They had no chance against the schoolboys and the fisherman; and already the alarm had spread to the school camp, and a hundred fellows or more were racing towards the spot.

The boat pulled off.

Gordon Gay staggered ashore with Tadpole.

Back to the tramp-steamer went the defeated boat, and quickly the steamer turned her stern upon the shore and steamed away into the North Sea. For in a few minutes the telegraph would be at work, and the lawless rascals would be searched for along the coast. They had failed, and only rapid flight could save them now.

"My hat!" gasped Gordon Gay. "That was a near thing! Thank you, Monkey, old man! Jolly lucky for us this was your washing-day."

Monk chuckled. He handed his bathing-towel to Gordon Gay.

"We thought you were drowned," he said.

"Oh, dear," gasped Tadpole, "I have had a most unpleasant experience! You allowed a great deal of water to get into my mouth, Gay."

"Not enough to stop it," remarked Wootton major.

"My dear Wootton—"

"Come on, my infants," said Frank Monk. "The Head will be jolly glad to see you; I can tell you the pater's been fearfully anxious."

And the dripping heroes were marched into camp.

## CHAPTER 37.

### Herr Hentzel is Surprised.

THE story Gordon Gay & Co. had to tell amazed the school under canvas.

They had to tell it to the Head, and then to nearly everybody else in the school; and finally to the Netherby police who came to hear the particulars.

Herr Hentzel was not in the school just then, having gone away on business of his own for a few hours—business the nature of which the juniors could guess.

The German master, therefore, knew nothing of the escape of the kidnapped juniors.

And Gordon Gay & Co. did not mention his name.

They knew that Herr Otto Hentzel had been acting in collusion with the skipper of the German tramp steamer; but they had no proof of it. And such an accusation would have required the clearest and strongest evidence.

They therefore did not mention Herr Hentzel's missing papers as being the cause of their kidnapping by the Germans.

They simply stated the fact.

And the police took up the matter with considerable energy, and the description of the tramp-steamer was flashed far and wide on the telegraph-lines.

Gordon Gay & Co. were the heroes of the hour.

They had been kidnapped and they had escaped by a combination of luck and pluck; and that day the Grammarians talked of nothing else.

Monk grinned at Gordon Gay as the Fourth went into the big marquee for afternoon lessons. Gordon Gay & Co. were going in with the rest, with the exception of Tadpole, who had caught a cold and was allowed to lie up.

"German this afternoon," Monk remarked.

"What about that?"

"The Herr hasn't come back yet," Monk explained. "He will come in—and find you fellows here! It will be rather a surprise for him."

The Cornstalk Co. chuckled.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Zat will be ferry funny," grinned Mont Blong. "He will zink zat it is a ghost zat he see in ze daylight."

From Monk & Co., of course, Gordon Gay had not kept any secret. They knew that the German master was at the bottom of the kidnapping.

The Cornstalks grinned with anticipation as the time came round for the German lesson. The first lesson in the afternoon was with Mr. Adams, and when it was over it was time for the German master to come into the marquee. The Fourth were therefore all in their places when Herr Hentzel, who had only just returned to the school camp from Netherby, came into the tent. The German master was very careful not to neglect his duties as a teacher, which were so effectual a screen for his other work as a foreign spy. He reached the school camp, therefore, in time for the lesson, and hurried into the tent just as Mr. Adams was preparing to leave.

"Is it tat I am late?" asked Herr Hentzel.

"Just in time," said Mr. Adams cheerily.

"Tat is goot!"

Mr. Adams quitted the tent, and the German master turned towards the class. The Fourth were all in their places, and Gordon Gay & Co. were looking very demure. As the German turned towards them he caught sight of the three Cornstalks and Mont Blong suddenly.

There was nothing to prepare him for the shock.

He stared blankly at the four juniors and uttered a husky, rasping cry.

For a moment it appeared as if he could not believe his eyes at seeing the juniors, whom he had believed far away in the hands of the kidnapers, sitting in their usual places in the Fourth Form.

He staggered back, his sallow face going quite white.

"Ach! Mein Gott!" he exclaimed.

Gordon Gay rose and bowed politely to the German master.

"Good-afternoon, sir!"

"Gay!"

"Yes, sir."

"You are—are here!"

"Yes, sir."

"But—but— Ach! I tink tat you— Ach!" The German checked himself. It would not have been prudent for him to say where he had thought the juniors to be. "I—I tink you have been missing, is it not? I hear tat te poat was wreck."

"Yes, sir."

"But you come back—isn't it?"

"Yes, sir. We escaped."

"Escaped?"

"Yes, sir."

"I not understand tat," said the German master. "Is it not tat you wreck in te poat?"

"No, sir; we were kidnapped."

"Ach! Is tat possible?"

"Yes, sir," said Gordon Gay cheerfully. "We were kidnapped by a set of horrible scoundrels, sir—a set of utter rascals, sir!"

"Beastly rotters, sir!" said Wootton minor.

"Unspeakable skunks, sir!" said Jack Wootton.

"Zat is so, sir—zey was dirty rascals, sir."

The German master gritted his teeth. He could not very well resent openly that complimentary description of his friends and confederates.

"Is tat so?" he gasped.

"Yes, sir."

"And how did you escape, mein poys?"

"Oh, we dished and diddled them, sir!" said Gordon Gay cheerfully.

"Of course, they weren't up to our form."

"Ach!"

"If we'd had a dozen of our chaps there we'd have captured the giddy steamer, and brought them all home prisoners, sir," said Wootton major.

"Yes, razzer!"

"What-ho!"

The German master's eyes gleamed.

"I tink tat we go on mit te lesson," he said. "I congratulate you upon tat good fortune, Gay. You are a very fortunate poy."

"Yes, sir."

And the German lesson was taken.

But Herr Hentzel was very much abstracted during the lesson, and frequently he cast uneasy glances at the Cornstalk Co.

The German master knew perfectly well that the kidnappers on the steamer must have revealed to Gordon Gay what they had captured him for—to recover the papers taken from the German master's tent.

And he wondered why the juniors had not said so, and accused him of being a party to the kidnapping.

He left the tent immediately the lesson was over, with a clouded brow.

Anxieties were thickening round Otto Hentzel. His papers—the maps and photographs which he and Franz Pfalz had gathered with so much care, ready to be transmitted to the German War Office—had been taken, and he could not recover them. Every day that elapsed rendered his position more precarious. For, once those papers were in the hands of the authorities in London, his spy work would be known, and his arrest would follow. More than once he had thought of flight; but while a chance remained of recovering the papers he dared not fly. For he knew what would be his reception in Berlin if he went there empty-handed and unsuccessful. For a man who failed the German Spy Bureau had no use!

And Herr Hentzel still hoped that the papers had not been taken out of the camp. He and his confederates had watched so carefully that he was persuaded that the missing papers were still concealed about the camp—indeed, he was not sure that the person who had purloined them knew the full value and significance of them. If he recovered them his work as a spy would be well rewarded, and could continue; if they were lodged in the British War Office he was a ruined man!

No wonder the wrinkles were deepening in the brow of the German master of Rylcombe Grammar School.

Gordon Gay looked thoughtful as the Fourth Form came out after last lesson.

"We've got to keep an eye on Hentzel," he remarked to his chums.

"He's failed this time; but he may not fail next."

Mont Blong grinned.

"Perhaps it is zat zere vill be no next time," he remarked.

"He won't give up looking for the papers, Mont Blong."

"It is zat ze papers are out of his reach now, n'est-ce-pas."

"How so?"

Mont Blong's voice sank to a whisper.

"Ze Shermans vatch ze camp so zat I not able to send zem away," he murmured. "And if it is zat zere is a packet sent by post, I know vell zat somehow zat scoundrel vill find ze means of taking it."

"Then you couldn't have sent it?"

"I have not sent it—but it is gone."

Gordon Gay looked puzzled.

"Blessed if I understand," he said. "If you haven't sent the packet away, how can it have gone?"

The French junior chuckled.

"It is zat I am deep," he said. "I bury him in ze sand—you understand?"

"Yes."

"Zen I send a lettair to a friend."

"Yes?"

"And zat friend he come in ze night and dig up ze packet and take it away wiz him."

"Oh!" said Gordon Gay.

"Since zat ve have been kidnap I look in ze place, and it is gone," said Mont Blong cheerfully. "And I have receive a letter zat it is all right to-day."

Gordon Gay drew a deep breath.

"Then the papers are——"

"Zey are at ze War Office in London."

"My hat!"

"Then Herr Hentzel——"

"I zink zat he may be arrest at any minute," said Mont Blong. "But ve not say a vord. It vill be all right."

"By Jove!"

Gordon Gay caught sight of the German master as the juniors sauntered upon the beach. Herr Hentzel's brow was deeply contracted; he was walking along slowly, buried in thought. Gordon Gay felt that the man had some idea of his danger, though certainly he did not know how near it was. Herr Hentzel still believed, or at least hoped, that the papers were in the school camp.

And already the hand of justice was stretched out to seize him.

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## CHAPTER 38.

### Chucked Out!

"**B** LONG!"

Gordon Gay & Co. were making tea in their tent, when Carker of the Fourth looked in. The juniors were enjoying tea in the tent as much as tea in the old study at the Grammar School at Rylcombe.

Mont Blong looked round.

"It is vat you address me, Carkair?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Vat is it zat you vant?"

"I don't want anything," grunted the bully of the Fourth. "But Herr Hentzel says you're to take him your lines."

Mont Blong looked puzzled.

"I have no lines," he said. "I have not had ze lines given to me."

Carker shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, that's his message," he said. "You can buzz off, and I'll have that camp-stool."

"Zat is my seat."

"Well, I'm going to have it," said Carker, with a glare of defiance round the tent. "I'm ready for tea."

"I zink——"

"Never mind what you zink," said Carker. "Are you going to old Hentzel?"

"I zink zat zat is a shape."

"A what?" demanded Carker.

"Vat you call a shape."

"Oh, a jape!" growled Carker. "Blessed if I can understand your lingo. Look here! It's not a jape, and you're going to Hentzel, and I'm going to have that camp-stool. I see you've got sardines for tea. I like sardines."

"I zink I sit here."

"Rats!"

Carker jerked the camp-stool from under the French junior, and Mont Blong sprawled upon the ground with a loud yell.

"Ah, mon dieu!"

"Now, buzz off!" said Carker.

"Ciel!"

Mont Blong jumped up and rushed at his old enemy.

In a moment they had closed, and were struggling in the confined space of the tent.

There was a roar from the Cornstalk Co. The tents in the canvas school were not planned for rough-and-tumble encounters inside them.

"Look out!" roared Gordon Gay.

"Chuck it!"

"My dear Carker!" said Tadpole mildly. "You really have no right——"

Crash!

Mont Blong had succeeded in throwing his burly antagonist.

Unfortunately he threw him fairly into the midst of the preparations for tea. There was a crash of crockery and a crash of Carker.

"Yaroo!"

"Mon Dieu!"

"You asses!"

"Gerrout!"

Mont Blong disengaged himself from Carker and jumped up, gasping.

"Helas! It is zat I am sorry, my shums! But it is all ze fault of zat Carkair."

Carker sat up amid the ruins of the tea-things. There were cakes and tarts and sardines strewn around him like the leaves in Vallombrosa.

"Ow!" he gasped. "Yow!"

"You rotter!" roared Gordon Gay wrathfully. "What do you mean by mucking up our feed like this?"

"Groo! Blow your feed!"

"You—you—you——"

"Well, he's mucked up the feed, so he may as well have what's left!" exclaimed Wootton major, seizing a squashed jam-tart and dabbing it in Carker's face.

"Groo!" gasped Carker. "Oh!"

"Give him the rest!"

"And the sardines!"

"And the jam!"

"Yaroo!" roared Carker, as he was pelted from all sides. "Yow! Stoppit! Gerroff! Lemme gerrup! Yowp!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Carker staggered to his feet. He was jammy and sticky all over, and jam clung in festoons to his hair. Sardines were slipping down his back. He rubbed the jam out of his eyes, and made a furious rush at Wootton major.

Three strong pairs of hands seized him, and he was whirled off his feet, and hurled forth from the tent.

He went flying out, and landed upon the sand, and sprawled there, followed by a yell of laughter from the Cornstalk Co.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Groo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Carker jumped up in a fury and charged back into the tent. He stumbled over the broken tea-things and reeled, and before he could recover himself the Cornstalks seized him again, and he was swung into the air and hurled forth.

But this time he did not fall upon the sand. A burly figure darkened the opening of the tent as he went whirling out, and the juniors—too late—saw Otto Hentzel.

Bump!

Herr Hentzel went over backwards, and Carker rolled over him, smearing him with jam and sardine oil.

"Ach!"

"Oh, dear!"

"Mein Gott!"

"My hat!"

"Hurrah!" roared Gordon Gay & Co.

They could not help it. If it had been the Head himself who had been bowled over by Carker, they could not have helped it.

Herr Hentzel staggered to his feet.

He grasped the gasping Carker by the collar with the left hand, and spanked him with the right with tremendous spansks.

Whack, whack, whack!

"Yowp, ow, yowp!"

Carker tore himself loose, yelling, and fled. The German master gasped.

"Dere!" he panted. "Tat vill teach you! And you poys—"

"Sorry, sir!" said Gordon Gay demurely. "We didn't see you coming, sir, when we chucked Carker out."

"You take five hundret lines!" roared Herr Hentzel.

"Eh?"

"Five hundret lines!"

"Oh, sir!"

"You jolly well won't stay out of prison long enough to ask for them, anyway," murmured Jack Wootton, under his breath.

"Vat you say, Wootton?"

"I, sir!"

"Ja, ja—you! You say someting mit yourself!"

"It's a pleasant evening, sir, for the time of year," said Wootton minor blandly.

"Take five hundret lines, too."

"Thank you, sir."

"Blanc! Is tat French poy here?"

"Oui, oui, me voici," said Mont Blong politely.

"I send Carker to fetch you."

"Oui, oui."

"You have not come?"

"I zink zat it is a shape, sir."

"Come mit me at vunce. I cane you tat you have not come ven I send for you."

Mont Blong made a grimace to his chums.

"Very well, sir; I come viz you," he said.

The German master strode away, and Mont Blong followed him to his tent.

## CHAPTER 39.

### The Trap!

**G**USTAVE BLANC eyed the German master warily as he stood before him in his tent. The French junior did not know what Herr Hentzel wanted, but he was on the look-out for trouble.

Herr Hentzel sat down, with his back to the light, looking at the French junior with his little, keen, light-blue eyes.

"You have not done dose lines, Blanc!" he said.

"It is not zat I have ze lines, monsieur," said Mont Blong very respectfully.

"I giff you feefty lines."

"No, sir; I not remember zat."

"Perhaps I forget," said the German master. "Ach, it is notting. But it is all right if you do me vun little favour."

"Yes, sir?"

"I vant you to go into Netherby, to take a message for me."

"Certainly, sir."

"Do you know te photograph shop of Herr Franz Pfalz?"

"Oui, oui."

"You vill take tis note dere," said the German master, drawing a sealed envelope from his pocket. "Vait for an answer. Mr. Pfalz vill give you a packet of negatives tat he has developed for me."

Mont Blong's eyes gleamed for a moment.

"Oui, monsieur."

"Take care of dem negatives. Dey are ferry valuable."

"Oh, monsieur, certainly!"

"Go at vunce, and hurry pack."

"I will run, monsieur."

Mont Blong took the envelope, and turned to leave the tent. The German master rose.

"Von moment!" he said. "I vill come te part of te vay mit you, mein poy."

"Thank you, sir."

The German master came out of the tent. The dusk was falling on the school camp by the sea. Crowds of fellows were coming in from the seashore and the headland. The German master walked with Mont Blong to the sands outside the school camp, and then stopped. Mont Blong had been looking for an opportunity to speak to his chums before leaving the camp, but under the circumstances he had had no chance. Perhaps that was Herr Hentzel's object.

"Go now," said the German master; "and take care of dem negatives."

"Yes, sir."



The German master stood watching Mont Blong for some moments as the slim figure of the French junior hurried on towards the village of Netherby.

Not till Mont Blong was out of sight in the direction of the village did Herr Hentzel turn back to the camp.

He stopped and chatted with Delamere of the Sixth.

"I have given Blanc leave to stay out of the camp till eight o'clock, Delamere," he said. "He wants to do some pizness in Netherby."

"Very well, sir," said the captain of the school.

"So you know, if he miss call-over."

"Yes, Herr Hentzel."

And the German master, after a remark about the weather, strolled on into the camp. There was a very unpleasant gleam in his eyes.

"I tink tat is all right at last," he murmured. "I tink tat tat young spy want ferry much to see dem negatives. Ha, ha, ha!"

And Herr Hentzel, in high good-humour, returned to his tent, and sat down at his camp-table to write a letter. A few minutes later, Gordon Gay of the Fourth looked into the tent.

"Vat is it tat you vant, Gay?" asked Herr Hentzel sharply.

"Can Blanc come now, sir?" asked Gay.

"Blanc? He is not here."

Gordon Gay looked surprised.

"I thought he was with you, sir. He was coming back to tea."

"He have ask me for permission to go to the village, to buy something for tea," said Herr Hentzel. "I giff him leave."

"Thank you, sir."

Gordon Gay departed.

"Where's Mont Blong?" asked Wootton major, as Gay came into the Fourth Form tent.

"Gone to the tuck-shop in Netherby."

"Oh, good! We shall have something for tea, after all. Carker has made a muck of most of the stuff we had."

"Good; we'll wait for Mont Blong."

Gordon Gay & Co. waited for Mont Blong, but the French junior did not come. They had their tea at last without him. The sun had gone down over the low hills inland, and darkness was falling upon the sea.

"The blessed ass is a long time," said Gordon Gay. "He won't be back for calling-over. There goes the bugle."

"Blessed if I know what's keeping him!" said Jack Wootton. "He could have bought up the whole shop and brought the stuff here by this time."

"Yes, rather!"

The chums of the Fourth went to take their places for calling-over. Delamere of the Sixth was taking call-over, and he did not call out Blanc's name. The omission surprised the chums of the Fourth.

But later in the evening, when bedtime for the juniors came, Delamere of the Sixth looked into Gordon Gay's tent.

"Has Blanc come back?" he asked.

"I haven't seen him," said Gay.

"Herr Hentzel gave him leave to stay out till eight," said Delamere. "He ought to have been back before this, though."

"He went to the tuck-shop in the village," said Gay.

"Yes; he ought to be back. You kids get off to bed."

"Right-ho!"

The captain of the Grammar School walked away. Gordon Gay and his comrades exchanged an anxious look.

"It's jolly queer that Mont Blong hasn't come back," said Wootton major.

"Jolly queer!" said Gordon Gay, wrinkling his brows.

"I—I suppose nothing can have happened?" said Wootton hesitatingly.

"Hardly. He's safe enough in the village."

"Only it was Hentzel said he'd gone there. Perhaps——"

Gordon Gay shook his head.

"Hentzel wasn't suspicious of Mont Blong," he said. "It was us he suspected of taking his papers. Besides, he hasn't been out of the camp himself. He's been in all the time. He can't have followed Mont Blong."

"No; I suppose he's all right. It's queer, though."

Gordon Gay & Co. went to bed at the same time as the rest of the Fourth. But the Cornstalks did not sleep.

It was very strange that the French junior had not returned, and they could not help feeling uneasy.

Was it possible that Herr Hentzel had discovered or suspected that it was the apparently inoffensive French junior who had taken his papers, and was this a new trick of the gang of spies who infested the neighbourhood of the camp? After the kidnapping of the Cornstalk Co. on the German steamer Gordon Gay was prepared for anything.

The camp became more silent as the night advanced. Gordon Gay, unable to endure the anxiety, rose from his bed at last and dressed himself. Jack Wootton sat up.

"Where are you going?" he asked.

"Only to ask if anything's been heard of Mont Blong."

"Good!"

Gordon Gay left the tent.

The school under canvas was dark and silent. Only in some of the masters' tents there was still a light burning. Gordon Gay caught the sound of voices, and drew back into the shadow of a tent as he caught sight of Delamere in conversation with the Head.

"Well, Delamere?" Dr. Monk asked.

"I've been to the tuckshop in Netherby, sir," said the Grammar School captain. "Blanc did not go there, as he was supposed to do. They have seen nothing of him. I inquired in two or three places in Netherby, but nobody seems to have seen him."

"Then the boy could not have gone to the village," said the Head.

"I think not, sir."

"It is very curious. He stated to Herr Hentzel that he wished to go there to purchase provisions at the shop."

"He must have altered his mind, sir, or else he was taking Herr Hentzel in. I hope he wasn't duffer enough to go wandering round the headland."

"He might have been caught by the tide in that case!" exclaimed the Head anxiously.

"That's what I was thinking of, sir."

"He had better be searched for, Delamere. If he has met with an accident, he must be found. If this is a foolish prank, he shall be severely punished for giving us this trouble and anxiety."

Gordon Gay stole back to his tent, his face very pale.

"Any news?" asked the two Woottons together, peering at Gordon Gay in the darkness, as he came into the tent.

"Yes," muttered Gay. "Delamere's been to Netherby for him. He hasn't been to the tuck-shop and nobody's seen him in Netherby."

"My hat!"

"It's some new trick of Hentzel's," said Gordon Gay tensely. "Get up, you fellows. We're going to look for Mont Blong!"

## CHAPTER 40.

## In the Hands of the Enemy.

**M**ONT BLONG arrived in the village of Netherby, and made his way at once to the little shop of the German photographer. Herr Franz Pfalz did a photographing business in the village, and sold views of the coast to tourists—a very clever cover for his real occupation in the Secret Service of Berlin. The German was in his shop when Gustave Blanc entered with the letter from Herr Hentzel.

Pfalz looked at the French junior with keen eyes in which there was a peculiar glitter.

"Vat is it, young gentleman?" he asked. "You want to buy a camera?"

"Thank you, no."

"You have te films tat you vish me to develop, ain't it, den?"

Mont Blong smiled.

"No, sir. I have brought you a letter from Herr Hentzel, and I am to wait for some negatives you have for him."

"Oh, is tat it? Please step into te parlour and wait a few minutes," said the German photographer. "I will see if te films are finished."

Mont Blong nodded, and entered the parlour behind the shop. The room was used as a show-room by the photographer, and there were photographs and enlargements on all the walls. Herr Pfalz had apparently been just about to close his shop. He turned out the light in the shop as he followed the French boy into the back room.

"Goot! Pray take tat chair."

Herr Pfalz turned away to examine a string of negatives that lay upon a table near at hand. He bent over them, scanning them; and Mont Blong sat down in the chair to wait. He had his back towards a door that led into an adjoining room.

Although Mont Blong did not suspect treachery, he was always on the alert, and the sound of a slight creak made him turn his head.

The door into the adjoining room had opened softly.

Two men came into the show-room, and at the sight of them Mont Blong sprang to his feet. They were advancing towards his chair, and their intention to seize him from behind was only too evident in their manner.

The French junior understood.

He made one spring towards the door into the shop. But Franz Pfalz was nearer to it, and with a swift movement he interposed.

"Nein, nein!" he said, with a sarcastic grin. "Tat is not so easy."

"Let me pass!" shouted Mont Blong. "Laissez moi passer! I—"

"Nein; I tink not."

The two Germans were springing towards Mont Blong. The French junior made a desperate rush to dash Pfalz aside and rush past him through the shop into the street. The German photographer grasped him and held him fast in spite of his struggles.

He shouted to his two confederates.

Mont Blong struggled furiously, and he almost succeeded in tearing himself from the grasp of the photographer.

But before he could do so the other two rascals were upon him.

Three pairs of hands grasped the French boy, and he was whirled off his feet and borne back into the room. He shouted for help.

"A moi—a moi! Help—help!"

"Stop tat!" growled Pfalz, striking the boy a savage blow across the mouth. "That you are silent."

"Ciel! Help! A moi!"

Herr Pfalz crammed his handkerchief into the junior's mouth, and Mont

Blong's cries died away "in choked-silence. The photographer muttered something in German, and one of his confederates drew straps from his pocket, and buckled them about the ankles and wrists of the French junior. Mont Blong, with his hands and feet strapped and helpless, stood powerless in the grasp of the spies.

Herr Pfalz grinned.

"I tink tat we have you now!" he remarked.

Mont Blong's eyes glittered with rage, but he could not speak.

"Take him down," said Pfalz, in German.

The two rascals raised Mont Blong in their arms, and carried him into the further room. Franz Pfalz took up a lamp, and opened a door upon a dark and evil-smelling stone staircase. The prisoner was carried down, Herr Pfalz holding up the lamp to light the way. Down the stairs into a deep, dark cellar Mont Blong was borne, and thrown roughly upon the brick floor.

"Tat is all right."

The German photographer grinned down at his victim.

"I tink tat you are ferry cunning," he said. "But I tink tat dere are odders tat are more cunning, ain't it?"

He turned to his companions, and spoke in German.

"Go and inform Herr Hentzel."

The two ruffians left the cellar.

Leaving the French junior lying bound upon the floor, Herr Pfalz followed his confederates up the stairs, and the door above closed, and Mont Blong heard a key turn.

He was alone in the darkness.

He lay for some moments, exhausted by his struggles with the German spies, and recovering his breath.

Then he struggled up into a sitting posture.

He realised that he was a helpless prisoner; that he was utterly at the mercy of the scoundrels who had kidnapped him.

The cellar evidently had no outlet save by the staircase, and there was a locked door above. The heaviness of the air showed how ill the ventilation was. But if there had been another outlet, the French junior could not have sought for it. The straps were buckled round his wrists and ankles with cruel tightness, and he could not even stand upon his feet unaided.

He wriggled his way along the floor to the wall, and sat there, leaning back against the cold, chilly bricks.

His face was very pale now.

The action of the kidnappers was a warning that they knew him in his true character, and he knew that he had everything to fear from them. He had understood what Pfalz said to his confederates in German; he knew that Herr Otto Hentzel had been sent for. He was to expect a visit from the German master. It was Herr Hentzel who had planned this from the beginning. The pretended message to the photographer was a trick to lure him into the power of the kidnappers.

Mont Blong's eyes glittered with rage as he thought of it.

He had fallen easily into the trap. The German master had said that Pfalz would give him a packet of negatives to take back to the school camp; that had been an additional bait. It enraged the junior to realise how he had been deceived by his wily enemy. But there was no help for it now.

He knew what Herr Hentzel wanted—the missing papers—those papers which, as Mont Blong realised with a feeling of exultation now, were already in the hands of the British War Office authorities.

The junior waited.

The cold contact of the bricks in the damp cellar chilled him; the straps were cramping his limbs, but he waited with unfaltering courage.

There was a sound at last on the stone stairs. He heard the door above unlocked, and then there came the glimmer of a light.

There were footsteps on the stairs. The door was relocked above; and then the footsteps came down, and the light glimmered into the dark cellar.

Mont Blong's eyes were fastened upon the dim figure as it appeared behind the descending lamp upon the stairs. It was Herr Hentzel.

The German master stepped into the cellar, and placed the lamp upon a ledge on the wall, where the rays fell upon the white face of the prisoner. Then he turned upon Mont Blong, and regarded him with gleaming eyes.

"I tink I reckon mit you now," he said, between his teeth.

Mont Blong looked at him in silence. The gag in his mouth prevented utterance. Herr Hentzel stooped, and plucked it from his mouth.

"Now you can speak!" he snapped.

"Zank you, sir," said Mont Blong. "Zank you zat you come to set me free. I zink zat ze photographer have gone mad, and he play zis trick on me."

Herr Hentzel smiled disagreeably.

"Tat is no use," he said. "You cannot bluff mit me, Blanc. You know vy it is tat you are here. You are a prisoner—te same as on te Sherman ship, but tis time you not escape."

"What have I done, sir?"

"You have stolen mein papers, mein photographs," said the German master, bending towards him, his eyes gleaming. "I want dem back."

"I, sir?"

"Ja, ja, you! I know you now. You have deceive me for ferry long. Vunce or twice it come into my mind tat you vas a spy—but den you seemed so foolish and so infantile. I tink tat is not possible. But now I know!"

"A spy sir," exclaimed Mont Blong, apparently in the greatest astonishment.

The German master nodded.

"Ja, ja!" he said. "I have found you out. It is not tat Australian who take my papers; it is not Gordon Gay, as I have tink. It is you!"

"Monsieur!"

"Vere are mein papers?"

"Oh, monsieur!"

The German master clenched his hand.

"Listen to me," he said. "No vun knows vere you are. No vun suspect. If you die here, in dis cellar, and you are bury under dem bricks, no vun vill know. You understand?"

"Oui!"

"Your life for te papers!" said Herr Hentzel.

"Monsieur!"

"You tink tat I am not in earnest?" said the German master, grinding his teeth. "I tell you tat I know you, poy. I know tat you are te son of a French detective employed by the Quai d'Orsay; I know tat you are sent to England to show tat tere are Sherman spies at vork on te coast here, tat te sleepy British Government never suspect. I know all tat now, though I not know him before. I know tat you have my papers, and tat you know dey are my ruin unless I find dem. Vere are dey?"

Mont Blong was silent.

"Your life for dem papers!" said Herr Hentzel. "Give dem up, or you perish in dis cellar, and no one vill know!"

"You dare not!"

The German gritted his teeth.

"You will see!" he said, his eyes burning. "Mind, not a morsel of food, not a drop of drink for you till dem papers are in my hands! Tat is all. I leave you now to tink of it. I see you vunce more in te morning, and you tell me vere to find te papers."

Mont Blong did not reply, and the German master picked up the lamp and left the cellar. Once more the French junior was in darkness and solitude.

He set his teeth. He knew that Otto Hentzel meant every word he said—that unless the papers were given up the terrible threat would be fulfilled. But there was a factor in the problem upon which Otto Hentzel did not reckon. Already the incriminating papers were in the hands of the authorities; already the warrant was issued for the arrest of the German spy. Would the arrest come in time to save Mont Blong? Upon that question now hung the issues of life or of death for the French junior!

## CHAPTER 41.

### A Surprise for the School.

GORDON GAY & CO. came back into the school camp tired and weary, and troubled in mind. They had searched for Mont Blong as well as they could in the darkness of the lonely shore, but they had not found him. It was long past midnight when they gave up the search, and returned to their tent in the school camp. Tadpole was sleeping soundly, and he did not waken as the three juniors came in.

Gordon Gay sank down upon his bed.

"Where can he be?" he muttered.

"Goodness knows!"

"It's Herr Hentzel's work," said Gay, with conviction. "Herr Hentzel sent him away from the camp—I know that. It's another trick like that they played upon us in the German steamer, only they've got Mont Blong by himself this time."

"They can't have—have——" Wootton major faltered.

"No; I don't think they'd dare to hurt him. He is a prisoner somewhere, the same as we were on the steamer. They want the papers, you know."

"What are you going to do?"

"Blessed if I know. If he doesn't turn up by the morning, I think we ought to go to the Head, and tell him plainly what we know about Herr Hentzel."

"He won't believe it," said Wootton major, with a shake of the head.

"We've got no proof."

"We must do our best."

It was not very far from morning now. The juniors threw themselves upon their beds to rest, and in spite of their anxious thoughts they fell asleep from sheer weariness.

The call of the bugle, blown by Corporal Cutts, called them back to the waking world ere long, and they rose. The morning sun was shining over the school camp. Gordon Gay hurried out of the tent. He met Delamere in the camp, and stopped him.

"Has Blanc come back yet?" he asked.

The captain of the Grammar School shook his head.

"No," he replied. "Do you know anything of his whereabouts, Gay?"

"No. But I have a suspicion what's happened to him," said Gordon Gay. "I want to see the Head as soon as he rises."

Delamere looked at him sharply.

"Do you think that something has happened to the French kid?" he asked.

"Yes. You remember what happened to us on the steamer?"

Delamere started.

"But those rascals are gone," he said. "The police have been searching for that steamer, and there is no trace of it to be found. It must be in a German port."

"Those rotters may be gone, but they've left other rotters behind them," said Gordon Gay; "and they've got Mont Blong."

"Come with me," said Delamere abruptly.

He led Gordon Gay to the Head's tent. The Head was already up, and his kind old face was very anxious and worn.

"No news of Blanc, Delamere?" he asked.

"None, sir."

"This is terrible," said the Head. "I cannot help thinking that something has happened to him."

"Gay thinks so, sir, and he thinks he can tell you something about the matter," said the Grammar School captain.

Dr. Monk looked inquiringly at Gordon Gay.

"What do you know about the matter, Gay?"

Before Gordon Gay could reply Corporal Cutts put his head into the tent.

"Inspector Keen, sir," he said.

"Dear me! Show him in," said the Head, puzzled. "Pray wait a moment, Gay."

Inspector Keen entered the tent. He was a short, thick-set man, with very sharp grey eyes and a ruddy face. The Head bowed to him.

"Please excuse me, Dr. Monk," said the inspector. "I am sorry I have come upon somewhat unpleasant business. You have a German master in this school, by name Otto Hentzel?"

"Yes," said the Head.

Gordon Gay started. Outside the tent he caught sight of a constable in plain clothes—easily recognised as a constable, in spite of the plain clothes. The Cornstalk understood. The blow was falling upon the spy of Berlin!

"I have a warrant for his arrest, sir," said the inspector.

"What?"

"Here is my authority."

The Head looked dazed.

"The—the arrest of Herr Hentzel!" he exclaimed. "But—but what—what is the charge against my German master?"

"He is charged with being a spy in England, in the employ of a foreign government, sir."

"Good heavens!"

"My hat!" murmured Delamere. "Herr Hentzel a spy! Great Scott!"

"It—it must be a mistake!" exclaimed the Head. "Herr Hentzel came to me with the best recommendations. I have every reason to believe that he is a most respectable man."

The inspector smiled.

"Unless he gave that impression here, sir, he would not be of much use to his employers as a spy," he said. "The case is quite complete against him—maps, plans, and photographs which he has taken for the service of his government are now in our possession, together with letters he has written and received."

"Dear me!"

"Where is he?"

"I think he has not risen yet," said the Head. "This is most amazing! I am sure Herr Hentzel will be able to clear himself from this charge—I sincerely trust so. But, of course, you must do your duty. Delamere, will you see if Herr Hentzel is in his tent?"

"I will go with you, young gentleman," said the inspector with a smile. "I do not wish to give him an opportunity of bolting."

"This way, then, sir."  
"My hat!" murmured Gordon Gay, following them out of the Head's tent. "The giddy Deutscher has come a cropper at last. We shall find Mont Blong now."

"What's the row?" asked Wootton major, catching Gordon Gay by the arm.

"That's an inspector of police, and he's come to arrest Herr Hentzel."

"Oh, good!"  
"By Jove!" exclaimed Frank Monk. "It's come at last! Where's Mont Blong, you fellows? He ought to be on in this scene."

Gay's face clouded.  
"He's been missing all night," he said.

"Great Scott! Herr Hentzel will have to account for that!"

"Yes, rather!"  
"Come on," said Lane. "Let's be in at the death. The policeman may want somebody to lend a hand."

The chums of the Fourth hurried towards Herr Hentzel's tent. The German master was up, and he was standing in the opening of the tent, looking out, as the inspector arrived, with the plain-clothes constable at his heels.

"Herr Hentzel?" said Inspector Keen inquiringly.

"Ja, ja, mein Herr."

"I have a warrant for your arrest!"

The German master staggered back.

"Mein Gott! Vat?"

"I'm sorry I shall have to put the handcuffs on," said the inspector. There was a clink of steel. "I cannot afford to run risks. But I have a closed cab waiting near at hand. You had better come quietly."

"But—but dis is an outrage!" exclaimed Herr Hentzel. "It is all right—I know tat I cannot resist. But vat is the charge?"

"Spying for a foreign Government."

"It is false."

The inspector smiled.

"You will be given a fair trial, of course," he said. "Everybody gets that in England. You had better be careful what you say, as it may be used in evidence against you. Hold out your wrists, please."

"But—but I protest——"

"Come, sir; I have no time to waste."

"Very well. But vun question I ask—is dere any evidence on dis subject, or else is it only suspicion?"

"Heaps of evidence, from what I know," said the inspector. "I'm afraid the game is up, my man."

"Ach!"

The German master held out his wrists for the handcuffs; and then with a sudden spring he rushed at the inspector, thrust him aside, and sprang past him. The apparent submission of the German had taken Inspector Keen off his guard; he staggered and fell, and the plain-clothes man behind him



made a clutch at the German a moment too late. Herr Hentzel dashed away at top speed, running like a deer.

There was a yell from Gordon Gay.

"After him!"

## CHAPTER 42.

### The Arrest of Herr Hentzel.

"AFTER him!"

The Fourth-Formers rushed in pursuit.

Gordon Gay and the two Woottons, and Monk and Lane and Carboy, dashed after the fleeing spy, and Delamere of the Sixth joined in the chase.

Herr Hentzel might have escaped the inspector and the constable; but he was not likely to escape the finest runners in Rylcombe Grammar School.

He was outside the school camp in a few seconds, hatless, breathless, running like a deer, with the seven Grammarians strung out on his track.

Herr Hentzel glanced back as he reached the shore. He gritted his teeth at the sight of the captain of the school and the half-dozen juniors tearing along furiously after him, with the inspector and the constable, further behind, also running their hardest. The inspector's face was red with rage.

"Stop him!" he roared.

"What-ho!" shouted back Gordon Gay.

The German master tore on. He was taking the path along the shore to the headland. Behind them, the canvas camp, crowded with staring fellows, vanished as they swept round the base of the headland, the wet sand grinding under their boots. The tide was going out, and the sand was covered with pools of water and masses of seaweed.

Gordon Gay guessed where the German was going. In his desperate position, the spy had no choice. To seek his confederates in Netherby was simply to draw his own fate upon them as well; and his only chance was to reach the cave in the headland, where there were many hidden recesses in which he might hope to elude pursuit. But it was a long run, and the German was close pressed.

Closer and closer came the juniors to the fleeing spy.

Lane had dropped behind, and then Carboy, breathless from the race. Jack Wootton was the next to give in. They fell back, and ran more slowly with the two policemen. But Gordon Gay and Frank Monk were forging ahead, and Delamere was just behind them; and the trio were closing in on the desperate spy.

Herr Hentzel shot a glance over his shoulder.

Gordon Gay was within a dozen yards; the fleet Cornstalk was well ahead of his comrades now. And though the junior was, of course, no match for the burly German when he overtook him, there was no doubt that he would be able to hold him long enough for the others to come up.

Otto Hentzel's eyes blazed with fury.

He halted, his boots grinding in the sand, his breath coming in short, fierce gasps. He swung round, his hand going into the inside of his coat. It came out again with something in it that flashed and glittered in the sun.

"Tat you stand back!" he panted. "Stop, or I shoot!"

Gordon Gay halted involuntarily.

It was a revolver that gleamed in the desperate man's hand, and the barrel bore full upon the Cornstalk junior.

"Back!" shrieked the German.

Gordon Gay stumbled and fell upon his knees, his hands clawing at the sand. Delamere and Frank Monk stopped dead. But Gordon Gay's stumble was a trick which the German did not guess in time. His hand closed upon a jagged stone, and without rising he hurled it with deadly aim. Before Otto Hentzel knew that it was coming, the heavy stone struck his arm, and the revolver went flying from his grasp. Herr Hentzel uttered a yell of pain, and clasped his arm with his left hand.

"Good for you, Gay!" yelled Delamere. "Come on."

They rushed at the German.

Otto Hentzel made a spring towards the revolver, which had fallen into the sand. But he had no time to seize it. Even as he stooped for it, Gordon Gay struck him, and he rolled over on the ground.

Delamere and Monk were upon him in a second more, pinning him down. Gordon Gay picked up the revolver, and jerked it out of reach of the struggling German.

"Hold him!" he panted. "We've got him now."

Herr Hentzel was struggling furiously with Frank Monk and the captain of the school. But the two together were more than a match for him, and in a few moments Wootton major came up and piled on the spy. Inspector Keen and the constable panted up and found the German, breathless and exhausted, still struggling feebly in the grasp of his captors.

Click!

The German's wrists were dragged together, and the handcuffs clicked fast upon them.

Herr Hentzel ceased to struggle.

The game was up now, and he attempted no further resistance. The juniors released him and he lay handcuffed on the sand, panting for breath. Inspector Keen took the revolver from the hand of Gordon Gay.

"This will be useful as evidence," he remarked. "I think you've about reached the end of your tether now, you beauty!"

"Ach! I have done my duty to my country!" snarled Herr Hentzel.

"Rats!" said Gordon Gay contemptuously. "Spying isn't any man's duty. Men do that kind of work for money, not from duty. Rats!"

"What-ho!" said Frank Monk. "Rats—and many of 'em!"

The German ground his teeth.

"We'll get this beauty to the station," said the inspector.

"Hold on!" exclaimed Gordon Gay.

"What is it?"

"You got the information about this villain from Mont Blong—Gustave Blanc, I mean," said Gay.

The inspector looked at him curiously.

"What do you know about it?" he asked.

"We're in the secret."

"Indeed!"

"Yes. We were in the cave up here when this villain was showing a German officer about," said Gordon Gay. "We've seen him signalling to a German ship. Mont Blong had to let us know that he was doing detective work looking after this scoundrel."

"Ach!" murmured Otto Hentzel. "And I never knew!"

"Mont Blong has disappeared," said Gordon Gay. "Herr Hentzel sent him out of the school last night, and he never came back. I'm certain that Herr Hentzel knows where he is. It's a trick to get his papers back."

The inspector laughed.

"The papers! They were in the hands of the authorities before the

warrant was issued for Hentzel's arrest," he said. "But this is serious about Blanc. Do you know what has become of Blanc, Hentzel?"

The German smiled sourly.

"I answer no questions!" he said.

The inspector frowned sternly.

"You had better tell us where to find Gustave Blanc," he exclaimed.

"I say nothing."

"Do you know where he is?"

"Find out!"

"Do you know if the rascal has any accomplices in this district?" he asked.

"I understand that he has——"

"Yes," exclaimed Gordon Gay immediately. "He's very thick with a German photographer in Netherby, named Franz Pfalz."

"We have that name from Blanc," said the inspector with a nod. "I think we will put this scoundrel in safe keeping, and pay a visit to Herr Pfalz."

"Good!" exclaimed Gordon Gay. "May we come? We may be able to lend some assistance, sir, if it is needed."

"Certainly if you have your master's permission."

"We can stay out till chapel, anyway."

"Come then."

Inspector Keen raised the handcuffed German to his feet. With the constable's hand upon his arm, and the inspector watching him like a cat, the captured spy was walked away to where the inspector's cab was waiting. The German was put into it with the policeman, whom Mr. Keen instructed to take the prisoner to the railway-station, there to wait for him.

"Now show me where this man Pfalz's place is," said the inspector.

"This way!" said Gordon Gay eagerly.

"Not open yet," said the detective with a smile, as they halted before the little photographer's shop. "Well, we'll soon alter that."

He struck a heavy, rattling blow on the door.

A window above opened, and the head of Franz Pfalz was put out.

"Vat is it?" he exclaimed, looking in amazement at the ruddy inspector, with the crowd of juniors round him, outside the shop door.

"You're wanted," said the inspector tersely.

"But—but vat——"

"Come and open the door at once!"

The German's eyes were glittering. He understood, and his first thought was that the inspector had a warrant for his arrest in his pocket.

"Vait vun moment," he exclaimed.

He closed the window.

Several minutes passed, and the inspector knocked at the door again. Gordon Gay and Wootton major passed round the side of the house, suspecting very strongly that the German photographer was making use of the interval to make his escape. Gordon Gay gave a shout as he caught sight of Pfalz in the garden. The German was leaping the fence at the end of the garden, and as Gay shouted he disappeared among the trees.

"He's gone!" yelled Gordon Gay.

The inspector joined him.

"I anticipated that," he said. "I have no authority to touch him. But as he is gone I think we may take the liberty of looking into his house."

And the inspector passed in at the back door, which had been left open by the German photographer in his flight. The juniors followed him in fast. Inspector Keen stopped at the locked door at the top of the cellar steps. He turned the key, and looked down the dark, narrow staircase.

"Get a light," he said briefly.

Gordon Gay found a lamp and lit it. The inspector took the lamp in his hand, and descended the stairs. Gordon Gay & Co. followed.

"Mont Blong!" called out Gordon Gay. "Mont Blong, old man! Are you here?"

There was a faint voice from the darkness.

"My shum!"

#### CHAPTER 43.

##### Laying a Snare—Caught.

GORDON GAY rushed down the narrow stairs. The light of the lamp revealed his unfortunate chum, stretched on the floor in his bonds.

"My shum! Zank goodness zat you have come!"

"Poor old Mont Blong!"

Gordon Gay knelt beside the French junior, and unfastened the straps that secured his wrists and ankles.

Mont Blong groaned with the pain as he tried to stretch his cramped limbs.

"Ceil! Zis is very bad!" he murmured. "But I shall be all right."

"Let me help you up."

Mont Blong with some difficulty stood upon his feet. He exchanged a nod with Inspector Keen; it was evident that they had met before.

"You have been in the wars, sir," said the inspector. "I suppose it was Otto Hentzel who fixed you up like this?"

"His confederate Pfalz and two ozzer rascals," said Mont Blong. "But vere is Herr Hentzel? He has not escaped?"

The inspector chuckled.

"No fear! We've got him safe."

"Zat is good."

"And there'll soon be a warrant out for Mister Pfalz," said the inspector. "I shall leave a man in charge of these premises. Your friends will see you back to the school."

"Good!"

Mont Blong walked with some difficulty as his chums helped him out of the cellar. But in spite of the pain in his cramped limbs, he was in high spirits.

"Zat rascal is arrested," he said, as they left the photographer's shop and emerged into the street. "He vill do no more mischief. I zink zat ven ze papers are all examined zere vill be trouble for Herr Hentzel. Ze prison is ready for him. And as for me—my vork is done here."

Gordon Gay looked alarmed.

"You're not going to leave the Grammar School, Mont Blong?" he exclaimed.

"You sha'n't!" said Wootton major warmly. "We'll jolly well keep you, whether you like it or not! We can't afford to lose you, kid."

"Not quite!" said Carboy.

Mont Blong grinned.

"I should like to stay," he confessed. "I came to zis country to do my work, but now zat it is done I like mooch to stay at ze Grammar School. I zink zat I ask my fazzer zat I stay here."

"Good egg!" said Gordon Gay. "And we'll send him a round robin, if you like, explaining that you can't go, anyway."

"I do not like to leave my dear shums," said Mont Blong affectionately. "You have save me from to starve. Zey give me no food."

"Poor old Mont Blong!" said Monk. "Here's a tuck-shop. Come in!" And the rescued junior was marched into the village shop, and the juniors piled up the good things round him, with a really reckless disregard of expense.

Mont Blong did justice to the feed.

Then the chums of the Fourth walked back to the school under canvas. They were late for first lesson, but under the circumstances that little omission was likely to be overlooked.

They marched Mont Blong in triumph into the camp, and the French junior hurried at once to the Head's tent.

"Here he is, sir," announced Gordon Gay. "We've found him, sir."

"Dear me!" said the Head. "I am very glad to see you again, Blanc. Where have you been?"

Mont Blong explained.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Dr. Monk. "What an utter rascal the man was! I was hoping that the charge against Herr Hentzel might turn out to be a mistake; but I am afraid I must give up that idea now. If you do not feel well enough for lessons this morning, Blanc, you shall be excused."

"It is all right, monsieur. I not suffair mooch," said Mont Blong; and he went into the Fourth Form marquee with Gordon Gay & Co.

Mont Blong was the synosure of all eyes that morning.

His kidnapping by the German was the talk of the school camp, and it added an interest to the amazing news of the arrest of Herr Hentzel upon the charge of being a spy in the service of the Berlin Government.

After morning school Mont Blong was surrounded by eager crowds of fellows, who wanted detailed accounts of his adventures from the beginning to the end, and Mont Blong did not have a moment to himself till dinner-time.

In the mess-tent he found time to whisper to Gordon Gay.

"You vill come viz me affair dinnair, I zink."

"Certainly," said Gordon Gay. "Whither?"

"I zink zat I make ze search in ze cave on ze headland," said Mont Blong. "I zink zat perhaps zere is somezing zere zat Herr Hentzel have left, n'est-ce-pas?"

"I shouldn't wonder," said Gay, with a nod. "But you won't find it easy to get away from the fellows after dinner. We shall have to dodge them."

"I zink so."

After dinner there were many inquiring youths looking for Mont Blong, and when he strolled out of the school camp with Gordon Gay & Co., quite a number of them accompanied him. The French junior was almost provoked out of his usual urbane politeness. He did not want to take a crowd of the Fourth to visit the cave on the headland.

"Chuck it till to-night," Gordon Gay advised; and Mont Blong assented.

There would have been a German lesson that afternoon, and the Fourth Form felt the absence of Herr Hentzel, but they did not deplore it.

As Wootton major remarked, the afternoon passed rippingly without him, and he hoped that the Head would be a long time getting a new German master.

The chums of the Fourth had tea in Gordon Gay's tent, and after that they found an opportunity of leaving the camp without attracting attention.

They sauntered along the shore towards the headland, and Gordon Gay smiled grimly at the sight of a steam launch in the inlet.

"It's the German boat," Wootton major remarked.

"They must have heard about Herr Hentzel's arrest by this time," said

Jack Wootton. "I shouldn't wonder if they're hanging on here till dark, if there's anything left in the cave."

Mont Blong nodded.

"Zat is vat I zink," he said. "Zey not dare to go zere in ze daylight, as zere are detectives watching. But at night——"

"We shall be there first!" grinned Gordon Gay.

"Zat is so."

It was already growing dusk as the Grammarian juniors reached the cliff under the opening of the cave above.

The tide was coming in fast, and the launch was now nearer the shore. But in the dusk it was impossible for the Germans aboard to observe the juniors on the face of the cliff.

Gordon Gay & Co. climbed the cliff, as they had done upon the night when they were caught by the tide, and ere long they found themselves in the mouth of the cavern.

Wootton major took a bicycle-lantern from under his jacket. Mont Blong tapped him on the arm.

"Ne pas encore," he murmured. "Not yet! Zey vill see it from ze launch."

"Right-ho!"

Gordon Gay's eyes gleamed.

"My hat!" he whispered. "I've got a wheeze."

"Vat is zat?"

"You remember the German officer who came ashore, the night we were hidden here, and jawed with Herr Hentzel in the cave?"

"Oui, oui!"

"He came in that launch. Herr Hentzel made signals to him from the ledge outside the cave."

"Zat is so."

"You understand that light signal bizney—you said so."

"Quite right, my shum."

"Well, couldn't you make the signals?" asked Gordon Gay eagerly, his eyes gleaming. "You've got an electric-lamp, and you know the code."

Mont Blong looked puzzled.

"Zat is quite true," he said; "but——"

"They must know that Herr Hentzel has been arrested. But suppose you signal to him to come ashore—same as Hentzel was doing last time. He will take it that you are Hentzel, and that you have escaped."

"Mon Dieu!"

"They don't know that we know anything about this cave, or their meeting here," Gordon Gay went on excitedly. "If the German sees the signals, he'll come, as sure as a gun, and we can bag him. It would be ripping to have the ringleader—the chief of the whole bizney, who has superintended all the spy work here."

"Ciel! My shum!" exclaimed Mont Blong, rushing at Gordon Gay, and embracing him. "My lofed shum! It is you zat have ze excellent ideas!"

"Yow! Leggo!"

"Ciel! I must kees my shum——"

"Ow!"

"My shum! Ve vill do zat. I make ze signals quite easy," said Mont Blong.

"Hold on," said Jack Wootton. "Suppose two or three of them come, and they have revolvers, if they cut up rusty——"

"The officer will land alone, same as he did before," said Gordon Gay.

"We shall collar him. We can easily prevent anybody else getting into

the cave from the boat. And there's a way out on the land side. We can find it."

"Good egg!"

"If the German chap has a pistol, we shall have to chance it. We're not afraid."

"No fear. But——"

"We can biff him on the napper with a rock if he cuts up rusty."

"Oh, good!"

"Time to signal the launch, Mont Blong."

"Zat is so, my shum."

Mont Blong took out his electric-lamp, and stepped upon the ledge outside the cave. In the deep dusk the light flashed to and fro. Mysterious enough to the eyes of the Grammarian juniors, who did not understand the code; but as easy as the alphabet to Mont Blong, and to the Germans on the launch.

Gordon Gay & Co. listened.

Complete darkness had now fallen, and the sea and the shore were wrapped in gloom.

Mont Blong had come in from the ledge. Light signals had flashed back from the launch, and then again darkness reigned.

"Hark!" murmured Mont Blong.

Clearly through the silence of the darkness came the regular splash of oars. The boat was approaching the cave.

The tide was not yet at the full, but the water was high enough for an active man to scramble from the boat into the cave. The Grammarians nerved themselves for the encounter. Who the German officer was they did not know, but they knew that Herr Hentzel's employer was some man in authority, probably some prominent military personage, whose capture and exposure would cause a sensation.

The honour of laying him by the heels, and putting an end to his rascally proceedings on the British coast, appealed to the imagination of the juniors. The German officer would be a greater prize than Herr Hentzel himself.

"I suppose he's taken you for old Hentzel?" Gordon Gay murmured.

Mont Blong chuckled again.

"Oui, oui, my shum! I talk to him as Herr Hentzel talk, vous savez, and he tink zat I have escape from ze English police."

"My hat!"

"It isn't so easy to escape from the police, and that waster will find it out when we get him into chokey," murmured Wootton major.

"Yes, rather."

"Hush!" said Mont Blong. "Zey must not hear! Hark!"

There was a sound of bumping and scraping without. The tide had carried the German boat close to the rock under the opening of the cave, and the seamen were fending it off with the oars.

A sharp, commanding voice called out in German.

Mont Blong did not move.

"Aren't you going to answer?" whispered Gordon Gay. "You can pitch them their own lingo."

"But not ze voice of ze spy," said Mont Blong shrewdly. "I say nozzing."

"But——"

"He's coming!" breathed Wootton.

The juniors' eyes were fixed upon the opening of the cave, where the dark sky glimmered a little lighter than the deep gloom that surrounded them in the cavern.

A head rose to view, and the shoulders followed, and the stranger climbed upon the ledge of rock. He rose to full view there, dimly outlined against the dusk of the sky, and the juniors heard the grinding of his boots upon the rock.

They knew the military figure again. It was the German officer who had accompanied Herr Hentzel into the depths of the cavern. The man stood peering into the darkness of the cave, as if in doubt. He had come ashore from the launch in answer to the signal, and he was surprised not to find the signaller there.

The juniors did not move.

The German officer stepped into the cave at last, and struck a match.

The light glimmered out over the boulders and the walls of shaggy rock. It glimmered, too, upon the white, strained faces of the juniors, and the German uttered a sharp cry of surprise. The match went out!

At the same moment Gordon Gay leaped upon the German, and his sudden spring sent the man staggering backwards. He fell heavily to the ground, with the Cornstalk sprawling across him.

"Back up!" panted Gordon Gay.

Mont Blong was only a second behind him.

Bang!

There was a flash in the darkness—the report of a pistol, and a crash in the cave as the random bullet chipped on the rock.

Wootton major and minor piled on the German the next moment. Mont Blong had a grip on the man's wrist, and was forcing his hand to the ground, to prevent him from using the pistol again.

"Ach!"

"Hold him down!" gasped Wootton major.

"Mind the pistol!"

"I have ze hand viz ze pistol," said Mont Blong breathlessly. "Ah, now I have ze pistol!"

With four fellows piling upon him, the German officer had no chance. His struggles died away, and Gordon Gay jerked a rope from his pocket, dragged the man's hands together, and tied the wrists tightly.

Then he stood up, and gasped for breath.

"Got him!"

"Hurray!"

The cavern rang with the cheers of the Grammarians.

Jack Wootton lighted the bicycle-lantern, and Mont Blong turned on the light of his electric-lantern. The light gleamed upon the red and furious face of the prisoner. He was wrenching at the bonds on his wrists, but he could not break them. He scrambled to his feet, with his hands still bound, and stood gasping and glaring at the four Grammarians.

"What does this mean?" he exclaimed hoarsely, in English.

Gordon Gay grinned.

"It means that you're a prisoner," he replied.

"But what—what—"

"Herr Hentzel is a prisoner, too," said Gordon Gay. "You are going to join him in chokey, to stand your trial for spying."

"It vas I who make ze signals," said Mont Blong, chuckling. "It is zat you are caught in ze trap, mon ami."

The German ground his teeth.

"Come on," said Wootton major. "Let's get him away. There may be a crowd of the rotters here soon, as soon as that boat gets back to the launch."

"Hold!" exclaimed the German hoarsely. "Listen! I—I will pay you a thousand marks for my freedom."



"You've given me some marks already," said Gordon Gay, rubbing his nose. "I don't want any more for one."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Five thousand marks——"

"Five thousand rats!" said Wootton major scornfully. "You're a rotten spy, and you're going to prison. Bring the brute along!"

"Listen! I am an officer. I am high in the service. I will pay you anything for my freedom—any price you name!"

"You are priceless!" grinned Gordon Gay.

"Will you let me go?"

"No fear!"

The German set his teeth, and made a desperate spring towards the opening of the cave. It was evidently his intention to fling himself into the sea, bound as he was, and it would have been certain death. But the juniors grasped him, and dragged him back.

"Blessed wild-cat," said Gordon Gay, panting. "We shall have to tie his legs, too! Anybody got a cord?"

"I've got a belt," said Wootton major, "and we can use Mont Blong's necktie. It's about two yards long."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My shum——"

"All hands to the mill," said Gordon Gay. "Any old thing will do! We mustn't let him jib."

With various articles the officer's ankles were shackled, so that he could walk, but could no longer kick at his captors. Then the juniors dragged him to his feet.

"March!" said Gordon Gay.

"Ach! I will not move one step!"

"Anybody got a pin?"

"Here you are!"

"Yah! Ow! Yoop!" roared the German, as Gordon Gay inserted half an inch of the pin into one of his fat limbs.

"Will you march now?" asked the Cornstalk cheerfully.

"Nein! Nein! Ow! Yow! Yah! Ja, ja, ja!"

And the prisoner marched.

#### CHAPTER 44.

##### Captured from the Enemy.

**M**ONT BLONG led the way carrying a light, and the three Cornstalks followed him, with their grasp upon the prisoner. The German officer, white with rage, stumbled and shambled along in the midst of his captors.

Gordon Gay uttered an exclamation. By the side of the tunnel were two boxes.

Mont Blong's eyes gleamed as he looked at the boxes.

He set his light down, and was upon his knees before one of them in a moment, fumbling with the locks.

The box was open in a couple of minutes.

The contents were papers of all kinds—letters, mostly in German, and maps and plans, and strange measurements of creeks and inlets with depths of water at various tides.

"My hat!" said Gordon Gay, looking over the shoulder of the French junior. "There's enough evidence there to convict a whole army."

Mont Blong grinned with satisfaction.

"Yes, razzer," he said. "Ve take zese boxes viz us; zey are not too heavy

to carry away. It is not safe to leave zem here; as zere vill be some of zose rascals zat come to look for zat spy."

Gordon Gay swung up one of the boxes.

"You take the other, Harry," he said.

Wootton major picked up the second box.

"Hark!" exclaimed Jack Wootton, holding up his hand.

There was a sound from the darkness behind them. It was a vague, faint sound; but the juniors knew what it meant. Germans had rowed from the launch to seek for the captured officer, and they were already in the cave.

"Better buzz off!" grinned Gordon Gay.

"Yes, razzer! Come on, my shums."

With the captured boxes, and the stumbling prisoner cursing in their midst, the juniors hurried on through the cave.

"We're well out of that!" gasped Gordon Gay. "Now, where are we going to take this rotter, Mont Blong? You're leader this time."

"He might get away if you took him to the police-station," said Wootton major. "Let's have him in the camp."

Mont Blong nodded.

"Zat is right," he said. "I vill go to ze village and send ze telegram for ze police, and until zey come, he can be kept in ze camp."

"Good egg!"

"Mind zat you keep him safe while zat I am gone," said Mont Blong anxiously.

"You bet!"

"I come back quick."

"That's all right! Buzz off!"

Mont Blong ran towards the village, and Gordon Gay & Co. propelled their unwilling prisoner towards the school under canvas.

Delamere, the captain of the school, met them as they entered the camp.

"Where have you young rascals been?" he demanded. "The Head has been alarmed about you again. Why, what—who—"

He broke off in astonishment at the sight of the German officer.

"Prisoner of war!" explained Gordon Gay airily.

"Picked him up on the beach," said Jack Wootton.

"Great Scott! Who is it?"

"A confederate of Herr Hentzel's—the man who employed him, and used to take his letters away in a steam-launch," said Gordon Gay—"a bigger prize than old Hentzel himself. We've got to keep him safe till the police come."

"My hat!" exclaimed Delamere. "You youngsters take the cake, and no mistake! You'd better come and explain to the Head. Where's young Blanc?"

"Gone to telegraph for the police."

"Bring him along to the Head's tent," said Delamere.

The prisoner was marched into the Head's tent. Dr. Monk heard the story the juniors had to tell, in utter amazement.

"Bless my soul!" he exclaimed. "You have done very well, my lads; though I should certainly not have given you permission to undertake so perilous a task. You must not do anything of the kind again."

"Certainly not, sir!" agreed Gordon Gay meekly.

It was a safe enough promise to make; the circumstances were certainly not likely to arise again.

"The man shall be kept safe until the police come for him," said the Head.

"May we stay with him and watch him, sir?" suggested Gordon Gay.

"He tried to shoot us when we bagged him. He's a dangerous customer."

"Certainly!" said the Head. "And you had better keep his hands tied."

"What-ho—I—I mean, yes, sir!"

And the German officer was kept under strict watch and guard that evening. All the Grammarians came to have a look at him, watching him like hawks.

"You bounders! exclaimed Frank Monk. "You ought to have let us into this!"

Gordon Gay laughed.

"We've managed it all right, Monkey, old man," he said. "We'll take you along next time we go looking for German spies, though."

"Takes a Cornstalk to deal with a matter of this kind, you know," said Wootton major loftily.

"Rats!" said Frank Monk. "If we'd been there, I dare say we should have caught half a dozen of 'em!"

"Oh, quite!" said Carboy.

Here comes Mont Blong!" sang out Lane.

"The French junior came up breathless. "It is all right," he announced. "In an hour zey take him away. Ve rottair safe till zen."

"What-ho!" said Gordon Gay. "We will!"

they did.

It was late before Gordon Gay turned in; but before he went to bed he had the satisfaction of seeing the German spy taken away in charge of the Police. And the Cornstalk Co. slept the sleep of satisfaction that night

## CHAPTER 45.

### Back to Rylcombe!

**A**T last the day came when the tents were struck and boxes were packed and the school under canvas bade farewell to the encampment by the waves of the North Sea.

When the Grammarians crowded into the special train at Netherby Station, the Cornstalks and the Old Co. occupied the same carriage, on the best of terms.

The Grammarians crowded the windows of the train as it started from the station, and looked back upon the village of Netherby, and the wide-stretching sands of the seashore, and the blue waves rolling beyond.

"Well, we've had a jolly time there," said Gordon Gay cheerfully; "and perhaps next summer we'll be under canvas again."

"Good!" said Frank Monk. "And we're going back to school without Herr Hentzel; and that's a clear gain. The new German master is much better."

"Heaps!" said Gordon Gay. "Herr Hentzel is in chokey, which is a very suitable place for him. And we owe it to Mont Blong; if it hadn't been for Mont Blong, he might still be doing his beastly spying!"

"Good old Mont Blong!" said Wootton major. "I zink zat he take ze

cake, n'est-ce-pas!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My shums——" began Mont Blong.

"Hear, hear!"

"My lofed shums——"

"Bravo!"

"My beloved shums, ve have had ze good time by ze sea, but as your lofely

English vezzer is so fond of ze rain, I zink zat it is a good zing to get under ze roofs again," said the French junior. "I zink zat ven we get to ze Grammar School, ve give ze ripping house-warming, and ask oyer zose garcons from St. Jim's, and have ze high old time. Vat is it zat you zink, my shums?"

"I zink it's a ripping wheeze," grinned Gordon Gay. "Hurrah!"

When the train rolled into the old station at Rylcombe, there were juniors on the platform to meet the returning Grammarians—Tom Merry & Co., of St. Jim's. They shook hands with much cordiality. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, had a hatbox in his hand. He opened it, and took out a silk topper, which he presented to the astonished Mont Blong.

"Vat is zat?" asked Gustave Blanc, in amazement.

"Bai Jove!" said D'Arcy. "Don't you wemembah, deah boy? You left your toppah behind on the station when you went away!"

"Mon Dieu!"

"I wegardedit as my duty to mind it for you," explained D'Arcy; "here it is, deah boy. I assure you that I've taken the gweatest care o'm"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Gordon Gay. "Good old Gussy!"

"Weally, Gay——"

"I zank you, my shum!" said Mont Blong. "My shums, I zink z make all our shums come to ze school for ze celebration, n'est-ce-pas?"

"Hear, hear!"

And Tom Merry & Co. accompanied the Grammarians to the Grammar School, and cheerfully helped them to celebrate their home-coming; and they parted quite late, on the best of terms. And Gordon Gay & Co. resumed their old life under the roof of the Grammar School, with many pleasant recollections of their experiences in the School under Canvas!

THE END.

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