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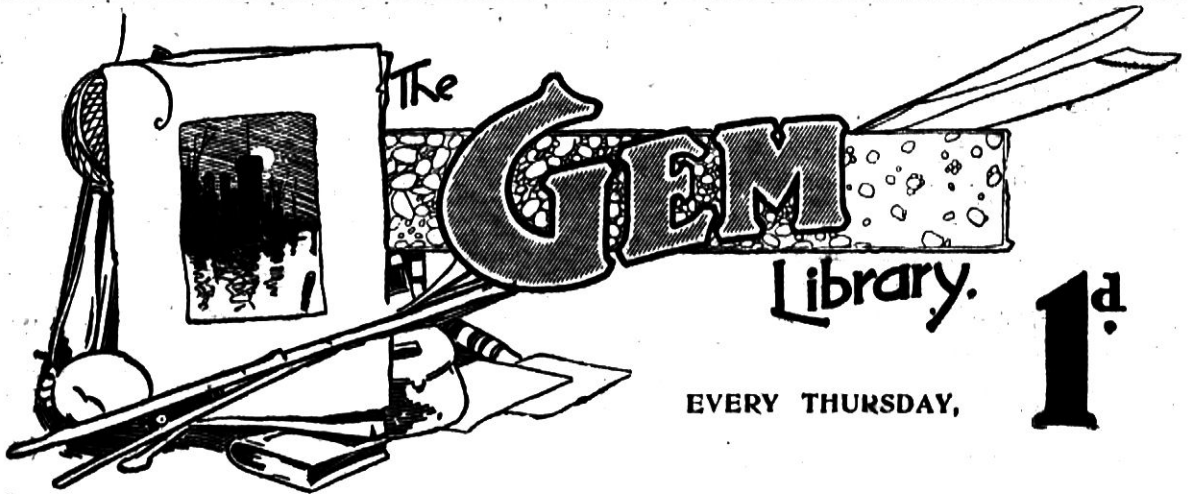
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The Son of a Sailor

A Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co.
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CHAPTER 1.

Arthur Augustus Raises the Wind.

"WUN!" gasped Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's. "The twain's comin' in! Wun like anythin'!"

And Arthur Augustus, holding his eyeglass with one hand and his silk hat with the other, sprinted down the old High Street of Wayland as if he wore on the cinder-path at St. Jim's.

Tom Merry and Jack Blake dashed after him.

"Hold on!" shouted Blake.

"Stop!" roared Tom Merry.

But Arthur Augustus was deaf to remonstrance. He dashed on at top speed to the station, and Tom Merry and Blake followed.

The three juniors, who were the leading lights of the junior football-club at St. Jim's, had been over to the market town of Wayland to negotiate for the purchase of some new goal-posts, and they had to catch their train back in order to get in before looking-up. The next train would have meant missing calling-over. Hence the excitement of Arthur Augustus.

He dashed into the station breathlessly, and bumped into a porter. The man staggered, and Arthur Augustus clutched him excitedly.

"Has the twain gone?"

"What train?" growled the porter.

"The twain for Wyloombe."

The man grunted.

"Tain't in yet!"

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus turned calmly towards Tom Merry and Blake, who had just arrived, puffing and blowing in the station.

"It's all wight, deah boys; there's no need to huwvy. The twain isn't in yet."

"You utter ass!" grunted Blake. "That's what I was trying to tell you. It's the London train that's just come in, not the local."

"You shrieking duffer!" said Tom Merry. "This isn't the first time you've bolted like a mad bull—"

"I uttally wefuse to be compared to a mad bull. I wefuse to be chawacterised as a duffish. There is nothin' like makin' sure in the mattah of catchin' a twain. If we lost our

A DOUBLE-LENGTH TALE OF TOM MERRY NEXT THURSDAY,

No. 54 (New Series.)

twain we should be late for callin' ovah, and that would mean a wiggin'."

"But the train isn't timed to go till six-thirty!" howled Blake.

"I am quite aware of that, deah boy."

"And it's only six-twenty now!"

"Yaas, wathah! I observe that it is now, Blake."

"Well, why couldn't you look at your watch instead of bolting off like a wild colt?"

"Bai Jove, you know, I nevah thought of that."

Jack Blake snorted.

"Weally, deah boy, I nevah thought of that, you know! But there is nothin' whatevah to be watty about," said Arthur Augustus. "We have caught the twain, at all events, so you need not out up wusty. Have you the tickets, Tom Mewwy?"

"No, of course not!"

"Have you the tickets, Blake?"

"Of course I haven't, fathed! How could I have them when you took them, and kept them in your charge?"

"Bai Jove, then, I'm alwaid they're gone! Yaas, I wemembah, now, I put them in the same pocket as my handkerchief. I must have flicked them out, you know, and nevah noticed it."

Tom Merry and Blake fixed their eyes upon Arthur Augustus with an expression which said things unutterable by the tongue.

"Bai Jove, they're weally gone," said D'Arcy, feeling carefully in his pocket. "I am sowwy, deah boys. It is all the more unfortunate because I haven't any money. I was nearly bwoke, and it took all I had left to get the return tickets to Wylcombe. I have only the sum of thwepence."

"You—you—you—"

"Pway don't be wude, Blake! You can take the tickets, as there is plenty of time to catch the twain, aftah all, and I will wefund the money at St. Jim's."

"But I haven't any tin!" hooted Blake. "I have spent the last tanner for those hot drinks ten minutes ago."

"Bai Jove! But Tom Mewwy—"

"I paid all I had at the shop as a deposit on the goal-posts," said Tom Merry. "I haven't even a copper left!"

"Weally, deah boys, I must say, I wegard this as wathah careles of you."

"Well, yes, we might have known that you would lose the tickets."

"I did not mean that—"

"What on earth's to be done?" exclaimed Tom Merry. "We might have walked back to the school if we had known Gussy was going to play the giddy goat, and started earlier. But he has reserved this for the last possible moment—"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Oh, he wants suffocating!" said Jack Blake. "If we walk now we sha'n't be home till near bedtime, and that will mean a gating for the next half-holiday. I've got a firm conviction that Gussy will be found drowned one of these days."

"Wats! I uttably wefuse to be found ddowned—I mean—"

"Dear me! Is this the ticket-office?"

It was a thin, rather querulous voice. A little old gentleman with white whiskers and spectacles was peering about in the dusky station. The juniors glanced at him. He was not alone. A lad of about Blake's age was with him—a well-formed, rather handsome lad, but whose face was clouded now as if with gloomy thoughts.

Arthur Augustus raised his silk hat to the old gentleman in his courtly way.

"This is the booking-office, my deah sir," he said politely.

"Thank you very much," said the old gentleman, peering at him; and he stopped at the little opening. "Can I book here for St. James's Collegiate School, please?"

The juniors of St. Jim's looked at him with interest then.

He was going to St. James's Collegiate School—St. Jim's for short—and they easily guessed that the lad with him was a new boy for St. Jim's.

A new boy was always interesting to an old boy, and there was something about this new boy that was rather interesting.

"Yes," said the clerk; "you take a ticket to Ryloombe."

"Thank you! I suppose I should have booked through to Ryloombe in the first place?"

"Yes, certainly!" said the clerk, yawning.

"Dear me! I was not aware it was necessary to change at Wayland, until a porter shouted out the information in a very gruff voice," said the old gentleman, mildly. "I am not accustomed to railway travelling."

"Do you want a ticket, sir?" said the clerk in the office, none too patiently.

"Yes—er—certainly! In fact, I require two."

"Well, you had better take them, and make room for the next gentleman," said the man satirically.

"Dear me, that is very true! I am sorry to be the cause of delaying anyone. Of course, I should really have booked through from Charing Cross in the first place. Indeed, I might have come from St. Pancras, which was nearer to my residence, having the choice of two lines, but that would have involved changing—"

"Will you take your ticket, please?"

"Yes, certainly! Two for Ryloombe, please! You are quite sure that Ryloombe is the proper station for St. James's Collegiate School?"

"Yes, that's all right."

"Of course, it would be very awkward for me to find myself stranded in a country place, perhaps, with no train to take me away—"

"Do you want a ticket, or do you not want a ticket?" bawled the clerk.

"Dear me, certainly. In fact, I require two."

The old gentleman laid down a sovereign at last, and the man in the office sulkily changed it, and handed out the tickets. Meanwhile, a new idea had flashed into the brain of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"I've thought of a way out of the fix, deah boys," he said confidently.

Blake grunted. He hadn't much faith in the ideas of his elegant chum as a rule.

"Go ahead!" said Tom Merry tersely.

"This respectable old gentleman is goin' to St. Jim's. Why shouldn't we bowwow the fare of him?"

The juniors stared at him.

"Borrow money of an absolute stranger!"

"Why not? He will know that we are St. Jim's boys, and I shall put it to him as one gentleman to another," said D'Arcy, with dignity.

Blake chuckled.

"Well, try him, that's all."

"I am goin' to."

And as the old gentleman turned away from the booking-office, Arthur Augustus approached him with a graceful bow.

"Pway excuse me, deah sir—"

"Eh? Do you wish to speak to me, my little man?"

Arthur Augustus turned pink. It was not gratifying to the swell of St. Jim's to be addressed as a little man. But he did not allow that to make any difference to his Chesterfieldian manners.

"Yaas, wathah, sir. My fwriends and I belong to St. Jim's—"

"Dear me! I am just going there, to take my nephew, James—"

The nephew James grunted audibly.

It was pretty clear that nephew James did not want to go to St. Jim's.

"Yaas, sir. We are weturnin' to the coll., but unfortunately we have lost our weturn tickets, and we are stwanded."

"Dear me! How unfortúnate!"

"Yaas, wathah! I am goin' to wequest you to take the tickets for us, my deah sir, the money to be wefunded when we awwive at the coll."

"Extraordinary!"

"I am aware, sir, that the wequest is somewhat unusual," said D'Arcy. "But as one gentleman to another, I expect you to wely upon my good faith."

The old gentleman peered at him through his glasses.

"Certainly!" he said. "I have no doubt whatever of your good faith. I shall be very pleased to take your tickets. Certainly!"

"Thank you vewy much, sir!"

"Thank you, sir!" said Tom Merry and Blake. They were really grateful. A walk to the school through the dark wood, and a row at the end of it, did not make a pleasant prospect.

The old gentleman smiled at them kindly enough.

"How many are there?" he asked. "Three? Very good. Please give me three more tickets to Ryloombe."

And the juniors, highly delighted, accompanied the old gentleman and his nephew to the platform, where the local train was to come in.

CHAPTER 2.

Arthur Augustus, Jack Blake, and Tom Merry are Kind to James.

TOM MERRY and his comrades looked with a great deal of interest at the lad who was to be a new boy at St. Jim's. They rather liked his looks, in spite of the gloomy shade that did not leave his face.

The uncle was evidently a kind-hearted, absent-minded old gentleman, a recluse from the busy world. But the nephew was keen, alert, and plainly enough knew how to take care of himself. With the freedom of a schoolboy,



"You—you rotter!" roared Lowther, "Manners hadn't mated me!"

Tom Merry spoke to him as they sat on one of the seats on the platform, waiting for the train.

"You are going to St. Jim's?" he asked.

The boy nodded.

"What Form? I belong to the Shell."

"I was in the Upper Fourth at my last school."

"Oh, you've been to school before?"

"Yes." The boy grinned a little. "I was sacked."

Tom Merry's face grew serious.

"You were sacked! Expelled, do you mean?"

The boy laughed.

"No, not exactly. I mean the head-master wouldn't take me back. I ran away, you see."

"You ran away from school?"

"Yes."

"You were badly treated?"

"No; they treated me all right."

Tom Merry looked at him.

"Then why on earth did you run away?"

"Because I wanted to go to sea."

"Bai Jove!" said D'Arcy. "What did you want to go to sea for?"

"My father was a sailor. I want to be one, too. I don't suppose I shall stay at St. Jim's, either. Why shouldn't I go to sea if I want to?"

"Because your elders think you shouldn't," said Arthur Augustus severely. "I am surprised at you. I wogard you as an ass!"

"What's your name?" asked Blake.

"Jim Ballantyne."

"Well, Jim Ballantyne, if you come into the Fourth at St. Jim's, we'll jolly soon cure you of running away," said Blake. "I'm the head of the Fourth Form—"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Don't interrupt me, Gussy, when I'm explaining things

to a new fellow. I'm the head of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, kid, and I keep 'em in order."

"You won't keep me in order," said Ballantyne.

"Won't I, by Jove—"

"Here, don't begin rowing now," said Tom Merry pacifically.

"Who's rowing?" demanded Blake.

"Keep your wool on!"

"Yaas, wathah! Pway don't cut up wusty ovah nothin', deah boy. Bai Jove! Here comes the twain!"

The local train was snorting in from a siding. It stopped at the platform, and Arthur Augustus politely opened a carriage door for Mr. Ballantyne. The juniors followed him in, and the porter banged the door.

The train rushed off in the dusk.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I wogard you as a friend in need, my deah sir. If there is any little favah I can do for you, you can command me."

"Dear me," said the old gentleman, peering through his glasses at the aristocratic countenance of Arthur Augustus. "That is very kind and polite of you, little boy. May I ask what Form you are in at St. James's Collegiate School?"

"The Fourth Form, sir," said Arthur Augustus, inwardly writhing at the "little boy," but outwardly all politeness. "I am, as a mattah of fact, the head of the Fourth Form, though Blake and Figgins both widiculously claim that posish."

"Well, of all the——" began Jack Blake.

"Pway don't intowwupt our respected friend, Blake."

"I am very much obliged to you, my dear lad," said Mr. Ballantyne. "You can indeed do me a service if you wish."

"We are all yours to command, deah sir."

"I am taking my nephew to the school," explained Mr. Ballantyne. "James is a good boy"—here James snorted—

"a very good boy, but he has curious fancies. He actually ran away from his last school because he wished to go to sea, and the head-master very naturally refused to take him back. If the head-master had flogged him, I do not see how I could have objected, though it would have been very painful to me."

"And jolly painful to him, I should say," grinned Blake. "Yes, indeed, very painful to both of us. Quite so. Fortunately, James was spared that punishment, but the head-master refused to take him back. It was very wrong indeed of James."

"It was shocking of James, sir," said Blake. "It was simply awful of James," murmured Tom Merry. "Yass, wathah! I wegard James as havin' acted in a diswespectful mannah."

James snorted. "I have striven in vain to induce James to promise not to run away from St. James's Collegiate School," went on Mr. Ballantyne. "He refuses."

"Yes, rather," said Jim Ballantyne. "I wegard it as bad form to wufuse to accede to the wequest of an uncle."

"Oh, rats!" "If you say wats to me—" "Well, I did say rats to you." "Then I fear I shall have no alternative but to administah a feahful thwashin'," said Arthur Augustus, rising from his seat.

Blake pushed him into it again. "Don't begin rowing now, Gussy." "I am not beginnin' wovin'. I am simply about to administah a little cowwotion to this young wottah—"

"Order!" said Tom Merry. "I'm surprised at you, Gussy. Where is your respect for your elders?"

"Vewy well, on second thoughts I will not thwash this young person till we awwive at St. Jim's," said D'Arcy.

"Dear me," said Mr. Ballantyne, "I hope you will not quarrel with my nephew. I am afraid James is a somewhat quarrelsome boy. He has such strong opinions. This absurd fancy about going to sea is very troublesome to me. But, as I was going to say, you could do me much service by keeping an eye on my nephew."

"They'd better not!" growled James. "Pray be silent, James." "Yass, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, turning his eyeglasses upon James. "I wegard it as extwemely diswespectful to intewwupt your uncle."

James growled. "It would be inexcusable for James to cause his new head-master such trouble," said the old gentleman. "But James is a headstrong boy. His poor father was headstrong. If you dear boys would keep an eye on James, and see that he does not do anything rash, I should be greatly obliged."

"Aftah your weally wippin' conduct towards us, sir, we should be ungwateful boundahs to wufuse," said Arthur Augustus. "We shall be vewy pleased indeed to keep an eye on the young wascal."

"Certainly," said Blake. "I am head of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, and you may depend upon it that I sha'n't allow anybody in my Form to play the giddy ox."

"Same here," declared Tom Merry. "As head of the juniors of the School House—"

"As what?" demanded Blake freezingly. "As head of the—"

"Rats!" "Of the juniors of the School House, I shall regard it as my duty to keep an eye on James. He sha'n't run away, I promise you."

"Yass, wathah! We all intend to be very kind to James," said D'Arcy. "Thank you so much!" said the old gentleman, beaming through his glasses. "I am very much obliged to you."

But James did not look obliged. In fact, he was muttering something or other about punching heads.

CHAPTER 3.
James Doesn't Like It.

MONTY LOWTHER and Manners were standing in the gateway at St. Jim's, looking down the road to the village, when the station hack came in sight. Jack Blake was seated beside the driver, and Lowther gave a whistle as he saw him. "Lazy beggars!" he said. "They've taken the hack back from the station. What was the matter with walking, I'd like to know?" The hack rolled up to the gate. Manners jerked the door open, and put his head into the dusky interior. "Now, then, you slackers— Oh, I beg your pardon, sir."

A face with white whiskers and spectacles glimmered before the abashed Manners. Mr. Ballantyne inclined his head a little.

"Eh? Did you address me?" "N-no," stammered Manners. "I was speaking to these duffers. Sorry, sir!"

"If you were addressin' me, Lowthah, I wufuse to be chawacterised as a slackah," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Oh, jump out!"

"We have accepted a wide in this vehicle at the invitation of this extwemely wippin' old gentleman, who also paid our fares fwom Wayland, Tom Mewwy havin' been careless with the weturn tickets. This is St. Jim's, Mr. Ballantyne. If you will kindly take your face away, Mannahs, the dwivah will pwoceed up to the house."

Manners took his face away, and the driver proceeded up to the house. Mr. Ballantyne alighted, and, accompanied by the gloomy James, was shown into the Head's room.

Lowther and Manners, curious about the new boy, questioned the three juniors, and they all explained at crce about James, and their promise to be kind to him.

Lowther chuckled. "This looks like being funny," he remarked. "James looks a determined young beggar, and he wasn't in a sweet temper. But I should hardly think he'd have the nerve to bolt from here."

"We are goin' to keep an eye on him, and if he begins, we must nip it in the beastly bud, deah boys. Will one of you lend me a sufficient sum to repay Mr. Ballantyne for his loan to us?"

"Here you are, Gussy, and don't lose it." "Weally, Lowthah, I am not likely to lose it," said Arthur Augustus, slipping the coins into his waistcoat-pocket. "Bai Jove! What is this in my pocket?"

The swell of St. Jim's drew out three return halves. "Bai Jove!"

"You—you unutterable ass!" said Tom Merry, in measured tones. "You had the tickets in your pocket all the time."

"Yass, it looks like it. I womembah now, I shoved them in my waistcoat-pocket in case they should get flicked out with my handkerchief, you know. It quite slipped my memow. Weally, Tom Mewwy, I think you might have thought of a simple thing like that."

"I? Why, you young duffer—"

"I wufuse to be called a duffah! These tickets are wasted now, owin' to your wank carelessness. Howevah, I hope it will be a lesson to you, so we will say no more about it. I shall have to wait in the cowwidah for Mr. Ballantyne when he comes out of the doctah's study, to wepay this little loan."

And Arthur Augustus, who was very particular about a matter of this sort, laid in wait for the old gentleman with great patience.

Meanwhile, Mr. Ballantyne was explaining matters to the Head.

Dr. Holmes, the Head of St. Jim's, was an acquaintance of Mr. Ballantyne's, though they had not met for many years, and he listened sympathetically to the old gentleman's explanation of his troubles.

"The difficulty is, that James has a curious fancy for going to sea," said Mr. Ballantyne. "It is probably because his father was a sailor."

"Quite possible." "He has given me a great deal of trouble at home on this account, and he once ran away in a trading vessel."

"Very wrong indeed." "Then I sent him to school, and he ran away from there, and the head-master very naturally refused to take him back."

"Quite naturally." "Now I have brought him to you, my dear Holmes. I am sure that if anyone can deal with him you can."

"I hope so," said the Head, turning to the gloomy James. "Now, my boy, you see that it is your guardian's wish for you to stay at this school."

James was silent. "Whatever your own wishes may be, they cannot count in a matter like this. I hope you are going to accept cheerfully what cannot be helped, and do your best to get on in your Form."

Still James did not speak. The Head waited a moment or two, and then he went on in a slightly raised tone.

"If you do your best here, Ballantyne, you will find yourself far from uncomfortable. If there is any nonsense, you must expect to suffer for it. I hope that you will be sensible."

He touched a bell, and James was sent in charge of a manservant to Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's.

Then the Head turned to Mr. Ballantyne.

"Now I am going to speak as a friend, and not as a schoolmaster," he said. "If the boy has such a keen desire to go to sea, why should you not send him there?"

Mr. Ballantyne shook his head decidedly.

"His poor father was drowned at sea," he said.

"But that is no reason to suppose that this lad will be."

"Perhaps not, but it is a risky calling."

"Doubtless; but some must follow it. Where would England be now if all our boys were kept at home because the sea is a risky calling?"

"Ye-es; but I think James had better remain at school," said Mr. Ballantyne. "At all events, we will see what can be done. I want you to do your best with him here, but if he is incorrigible, I suppose I must think of it."

It was some little time before Mr. Ballantyne took his leave, and when he did the Head accompanied him to the door. Arthur Augustus did not care to approach while the Head was with the visitor, so he followed the hack down to the gates. There, as Taggles opened the gates, he approached the door.

"Dear me! What is that?" said a voice from within the vehicle. "Ah, I see; it is that nice little boy again! What do you want, my little man?"

"I have the pleasure of returnin' that little loan, sir," said D'Arcy, "with my vewy best thanks for your great kindness."

"Ah, yes; I had quite forgotten it!" said Mr. Ballantyne, taking the money. "This is very right and proper of you. I think you are a nice lad, and I hope you will be a friend to my nephew James."

"Yaas, wathah, my deah sir! I will look aftah him."

"I am vewy much obliged."

"Not at all, my deah sir. You have placed me undah a great obligation. I will look aftah James. I have a vewy deal of lookin' aftah youngstahs to do, and I shall be vewy pleased to look aftah James as well. Good-bye!"

And Arthur Augustus raised his topper gracefully as the vehicle rolled on.

Mr. Ballantyne was gone, leaving his hopeful nephew to make a beginning at St. Jim's. James was not making a very good beginning. He had been taken to Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth, into which Form he was to enter. Little Mr. Lathom peered at him through his spectacles, and nodded.

"New boy!" he said. "Ah, yes, you are a new boy! I hope that we shall get on together, Valentino——"

"Ballantyne, sir."

"Ah, yes, Ballantyne! Yes, I see I have your name here, and it is certainly Ballantyne. You have been in the Fourth Form at another school, I understand?"

"Yes, sir."

"And why did you leave it?"

"I ran away, sir."

Mr. Lathom almost jumped.

"You—you—you ran away?"

"Yes, sir."

"I hope," said the Form-master severely—"I hope that there will be none of that nonsense here, Haseltine. Anything of the sort will be severely punished. Let me see, you do not know what study you are in, I suppose?"

"In your study, I thought, sir."

"My study! Dear me, the boy is very dense! I mean, you do not know which of the Fourth Form studies you are assigned to?"

"No, sir."

"H'm! The studies are very full up, too, just at present, and another new boy is expected next week. Ah, Blake! Blake!"

Jack Blake was passing the open door.

"Yes, sir?" he said, stopping and coming in.

"How many are there in your study, Blake—No. 6, is it not?"

"Yes, sir," said Blake, with an inward qualm. "We're awfully crowded, sir."

"Yes; most of the junior studies are crowded, I believe," said Mr. Lathom, with his benevolent smile. "How many are there in your study, Blake?"

"Four, sir; and Herries is a jolly big chap, and D'Arcy takes up a lot of room with his things, and Digby isn't a small size, either."

"I suppose you could find room for another?"

"I don't see how it could be done, sir. Of course, we should be very glad to have Ballantyne," said Blake, looking daggers at the new boy, "but I don't see how he could be crammed in, sir."

Ballantyne grinned.

"Hem!" said Mr. Lathom thoughtfully. "I will see what other arrangement can be made, Blake."

"Thank you, sir!"

"But for the present Ballantyne will come into Study No. 6!"

"Oh!"

"Will you take him with you, Blake, and show him where to put his belongings? Ballantyne, I will speak to the House-dame about your bed. I hope you will be comfortable in the School House, and I certainly hope that you will be a sensible lad and do your best to get on here."

And Jim Ballantyne left the study with Blake. In the passage, when the door had closed, Blake stopped and nodded at him.

"Well, of all the confounded cheek!" he growled.

"Fancy sticking that object in my study!"

"Serve you jolly well right!" said Ballantyne.

"Do you want a thick ear?"

"Rats!"

Blake clenched his fists for a moment. But he remembered that he was dealing with a new fellow, lonely among new surroundings, and unclenched them again.

"You'd better be a bit more careful," he said. "I've wiped up the ground with fellows for less cheek than that. Why they couldn't stick you over in the New House is a mystery to me. There's Figgins & Co. are only three in a study, and a waster like you would have been in the proper place over there! But come on; I've got to show you your confounded new quarters, confound you!"

And Blake marched off wrathfully, followed by the grinning new boy.

CHAPTER 4.

One Too Many.

STUDY NO. 6 was a very comfortable apartment. It was not large, certainly, but it was cosy, and it had a window that looked out on the wide quadrangle, and a firegrate. The latter was really a large grate, and very useful for cooking. Some of the junior studies had no grates at all, and the owners of Study No. 6 had always considered themselves in luck.

Three to a study was the usual number in the junior Forms. Space was limited at St. Jim's, as at most public schools. But as the youngsters generally chummed up, they did not mind close quarters. When study mates were on ill terms, as in the case of Gore and Skimpole, things certainly were uncomfortable. But there was nothing of that sort in Study No. 6 in the Fourth Form. Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy were true chums, though arguments sometimes waxed warm and excited in the study.

They were a little crowded, but very cosy. They had fallen into one another's ways, and a policy of give-and-take made things go pretty smoothly. To have a stranger thrust into the study upset everything. There was no room for him, and he was likely to fit in about as well as a square peg in a round hole.

So Jack Blake was thinking as he made his way towards the famous study with the new boy at his heels.

Herries and Digby had prepared a late tea for the juniors who had been to Wayland, and a savoury smell of frying sausages and chips proceeded from the study as Blake and his undesired protege approached it.

Jack Blake kicked open the door. Arthur Augustus was not there yet, and Herries was at the table cutting bread and butter, Digby at the fire tending the sausages. The incandescent burner on the gas-jet shed a soft and cheery light over the festive scene, and gleamed on the crockery and the tablecloth. The different pieces of crockery wares were of strange and diverse patterns, and the cloth had evidently seen service, but what did that matter? It was all very cosy and cheery, or would have been if Blake had not been worried by the new boy.

Digby looked round with a sausage on the end of a fork.

"Hallo, Blake! Have you got the pepper?"

"Yes," said Blake, dropping a pepper-castor on the table; "and I was nabbed by Lathom as I came back."

"Nothing wrong?"

"Yes; rotten!"

Digby and Herries looked concerned.

"Lines?"

"Licking?"

"No; new kid!"

"That?" asked Digby, with a nod of the head towards Jim Ballantyne, who stood in the doorway, looking curiously into the study. He was sniffing, too, the odour of the frying sausages. He was hungry after his journey down.

Digby's way of alluding to the new boy could not be considered complimentary, but Ballantyne only grinned. He was certainly not easily to be put out.

"Yes, that!" grunted Blake. "That's it!"

"Well, I don't see why that should worry you. It ain't particularly pretty to look at, but you needn't carry it about with you."

"It's coming into this study."

"For tea, do you mean?"

CHAPTER 5.

Bolted!

"No, for good."
Dig dropped the sausage from the end of his fork in his surprise and wrath.

"Coming into our study! There's four of us already."
"Rot!" exclaimed Herries, with equal heat. "Coming into No. 6! Piffle! There's no room for him. Besides, Lathom won't let me keep my bulldog in here, and I'm blessed if we're going to have a new kid."

"It's orders from Lathom."
"Lathom can go and eat coke. There's no room, I tell you."

"He can't come in."
"Look at him," said Blake, in measured tones—"look at him, grinning away there like a Cheshire cat! Looks as if he enjoys it."

"We'll jolly soon stop that," said Herries, clenching his big fists.

"You're welcome to try," said Ballantyne.
"The cheeky young beggar! I'll—"

"Bai Jove, deah boys, what's the mattah? Pway allow me to pass, young Ballantyne. This is my study."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy entered, and carefully put away his silk hat. He beamed round upon the chums of Study No. 6.

"I have wopaid that small loan to, Mr. Ballantyne," he said, "and I have wewened my pwomise to look aftah the new chap. I twust you will not think of wunnin' away from St. Jim's, Ballantyne. If you do, I shall have no alternative but to give you a feahful thwashin'."

"You couldn't thrash one side of me," said Jim Ballantyne.

"Weally, deah boy—"

"Look here," said Herries, "it can't be done. That chap's not coming into this study."

"If Blake has bwrought him to tea, Hewwies—"

"I haven't," said Blake; "he's shoved into this study. Lathom has shoved him in—to stay."

"But there's no room."
"We've got to find room."

"Impos, deah boy. Ballantyne himself will see that it is impos. You must go furthah on, deah boy."

"I'm here," said Ballantyne, "and here I stiek. You were mighty prompt in promising to see that I didn't bolt. This will give you your chance. I'm in this study as long as I stay at St. Jim's, anyway."

"Bai Jove, deah boys, that puts wathah a diffent complexion on the mattah."

Blake looked rueful.

"It does, and no mistake. The sooner the beast slopes the better it will be for us."

"Yes, rather!" said Herries and Dig at once.

Ballantyne came into the study and closed the door.

"Look here," he said, "we can easily fix this up. You don't want me in this study, and I'm sure I don't want to stay in such a cramped little den."

"Such a what?" shouted four voices in chorus.

"Cramped little den," said Jim. "Now—"

"I uttably wufuse to hold any discussion with a fellow who chawactewises my study as a cwamped little den."

"Well, never mind the den," said Ballantyne, "I don't want to stay here. My father was a sailor, and I'm going to be one. I'm not going to stay at this school. Now, you fellows could easily help me to hook it if you liked."

"Yes, but—"

"You don't want a fifth in this study. I don't want to stay here. Let's make it a bargain. Help me to clear."

The chums of Study No. 6 looked at one another. Then Jack Blake shook his head slowly.

"I must say I should be jolly glad to see the last of you," he said, "but we've promised your uncle."

"Yaas, wathah! We gave Mr. Ballantyne our word, you know, and we are in honah bound to stand by it. We are goin' to look after you."

Ballantyne sniffed

"You'll have your hands full, then."

"Wats, deah boy! We are goin' to see that you don't wun away, at any cost to our own comfort," said D'Arcy heroically. "And now, suppose you join us at tea, as you are goin' to belong to this study."

"But he's not," roared Herries. "I won't have him here."

"My dear Hewwies, it's bad form to buck against a Form-mastah; and besides, you know, we should have to give in, so we may as well take it with a good gwace. Pway be seated, Ballantyne. Pass the sausages, Dig, old fellow."

And the five juniors began tea.

BUCK FINN, the American chum in the Shell at St. Jim's, came along the passage whistling, with his hands in his pockets. He almost ran into a junior who came out of Study No. 6.

"Thunder!" said Buck Finn. "I guess you might look where you are going to, stranger."

The other looked at him.

"Whom do you happen to be?" he asked politely.

"I guess I'll ask you that question," said Buck Finn. "I haven't been here long, but I reckoned I knew all the chivvies in the School House. I haven't seen yours before."

"I'm a new boy. My name's Ballantyne."

"Oh, is it? Well, master new boy, don't you run into an old boy again, or you may find yourself knocked into the middle of next week. But hold on," added Finn hospitably. "If you're a new kid, it's all right. I don't want to rag you. I was ragged enough myself when I came here, goodness knows, and I don't want to pass it on, I guess. Where are you digging?"

"I've been put into No. 6 here."

Buck Finn chuckled.

"Weal, you'll be like an extra sardine in a tin, then. So you're in the Fourth Form, kid?"

"Yes. Are you?"

Buck Finn sniffed with all the conscious dignity of a Shell boy.

"I guess not; I'm in the Shell. But say, I'll show you round a bit if you like, as you're new here. Like the idea?"

"Yes, rather!" said Ballantyne, who had his own reasons for wishing to learn the ins and outs of St. Jim's. "I'd be awfully obliged."

"Good! Come on, then! I suppose you know this is the School House?" said Finn, rather enjoying his role of cicerone.

"There are two houses here, School House and New House. We're always having rows, you know, but we always get the best of it. Put on your cap to come out into the quad; it's chilly."

"Right-ho!"

The great quadrangle of St. Jim's was very dusky and cold. Jim Ballantyne looked about him with a great deal of interest.

"There's the window of your study," said Buck Finn, pointing up to a lighted window, from which strains of music were proceeding, "and that ghastly row is Herries's cornet."

Ballantyne laughed.

"Yes, he started it just after tea, and I thought I'd rather go for a walk. How do the others stand it?"

"Oh, they're chums, you know. What are you staring up at that drain-pipe for?"

"I was thinking that it might be possible to reach it from the sill of the window, and slide down into the quadrangle."

"I believe it's been done by one of those chaps; but it's jolly risky, and I should advise you not to try," said Buck Finn.

"Now, this is the New House over this way. Needn't go too close, or we may get collared."

"How do you get out of the grounds?"

"By the gate, of course."

"I mean, when you break bounds. I suppose you do that sometimes."

"Weal, I guess it has been done," said Buck Finn. "I don't mind showing you, but of course you'll keep it dark."

"I won't mention it to a soul," said Ballantyne, grinning.

"Weal, I'll show you if you like. Come round this way, though, and have a look at the New House."

Ballantyne bit his lip with impatience, but he assented. They crossed the dusky quad, and the New House of St. Jim's loomed before them. Ballantyne might have been interested at another time by the rival house at St. Jim's, and its endless feuds and frolics with the School House. But just then he was thinking of his own business.

"I guess that's the show," said Finn. "You see—Ow!"

Three figures loomed up in the gloom, and three pairs of hands collared the two juniors.

The pairs of hands belonged to Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn of the New House, who were just returning to their quarters from a visit to the school shop, and had at once espied School House caps on their side of the quad.

"Collar 'em!" grinned Figgins.

And the School House boys were promptly collared.

"Here, hold on!" exclaimed Buck Finn. "What the—"

"We're holding on. How dare you bring your disreputable School House carcasses over to the respectable side of the quad?" demanded Figgins.

"I guess—"

"Bump 'em!" said Kerr.

"Frog's march!" suggested Fatty Wynn.

"I guess I'll lick you!"

"Wrong!" chuckled Figgins. "Guess again!"

"Look here—" exclaimed Ballantyne.



Jim Ballantyne looked down at the dogs, and then at the juniors. The angry look faded from his face. He was a sportsman, and he could take a defeat. "You've done me!" he said.

"Hallo, this is a new kid! Treat him gently, as a stranger within the gates," said Figgins. "Don't jump on him, just bump him."

And Jim Ballantyne was promptly bumped.

Buck Finn was struggling desperately, but he was bumped the next minute, and he sprawled across Ballantyne.

Then the New House trio went on their way chuckling. They vanished into the house, and Buck Finn and Ballantyne staggered to their feet.

"My—my word!" gasped Jim. "Where are they?"

"Vamoosed, I reckon."

"The—the rotters!"

"Oh, soot," said Buck Finn; "it's only a House rag. Come on! You mustn't mind little things like that, you know."

"Oh, right you are!" said Ballantyne good-humouredly, as he set his collar straight. "I don't mind, if it's in the game. But I think we've had enough of the New House. Just show me the place where you bunk."

"This way, kid!"

And Buck Finn led the way to the school wall, at the spot where the gnarled old slanting oak made its ascent possible. Buck Finn was as keen and acute as a boy well could be, but he did not suspect what was in the mind of the other. He had no grounds whatever for suspicion, and he could hardly be blamed for it.

"Here's the oak, I guess," he remarked. "You see, by shoving yourself between the trunk and the wall, and getting a grip on the ivy, you get over. I suppose you know how to climb?"

"I've climbed all over the rigging of a ship."

"Gum! Have you?" said Buck Finn, with new interest: "You've been to sea?"

"Yes, and I mean to go again," said Ballantyne. Then he changed the topic abruptly. "I wonder if I could get up here? I think I could."

"I guess so, but there's nothing to get up for now. Come on, and let's have a look in at the tuckshop."

"Wait a bit; I'd like to try that climb. Give us a bunk up."

"Oh, all right!" Finn was always obliging. "Here you are, kid!"

He gave the required "bunk."

Jim Ballantyne drew himself up the wall with ease. The climb was nothing to one who could equal the feats of the most venturesome sailor on board a ship. He was on the top of the wall in a twinkling.

Buck Finn stared up at him. He could only dimly make out the form of the boy in the gloom.

"Waal, are you satisfied?" he asked. "You did it easily enough, I guess. Mind how you get down."

There was a chuckle from above.

"Thank you, I'm not coming down."

"Eh? Gum! What do you mean?"

"I'm off."

And Ballantyne was "off"—off the wall. He dropped into the road, and Buck Finn heard a patter of feet dying away in the direction of the village of Rylcombe.

The American junior stood for a full minute petrified. He was too amazed to move.

The flight of the new boy was so utterly unexpected. But Finn recovered himself at last, and clambered desperately up the wall. He glared after the fugitive, but Jim Ballantyne had vanished into the shadows of the night.

"Come back! You hear me? Come back, you galoot!"

But only the echo of Finn's own voice answered him. The footsteps of the new boy at St. Jim's had died away in the distance.

CHAPTER 6.

A Chess Problem.

TOM MERRY smacked Buck Finn on the shoulder. The American junior had just come into the School House, and he was looking decidedly "blue."

"Wherefore that worried brow?" demanded Tom Merry genially. "Have the raggers been ragging again?"

Buck Finn grinned.

"No. I guess they got as good as they gave, and they've not worried me lately. I reckon that's a-has-been."

"Then what's the row? Why do you wrinkle up your baby brow, and—"

"Gum! I'm blessed if I know what to think about it," confessed Buck Finn. "I'm a cool chap, as a rule, and ain't easily surprised. But just now—"

"What's happened?"

"Have you seen a new kid here—chap named Ballantyne?"

Tom Merry looked interested at once.

"Yes; rather," he said. "I came in the train with him from Wayland, with his uncle. What about him?"

"He's bolted?"

Tom Merry gave a shout.

"Bolted?"

"I guess so."

"But—but how? The gates are closed, and Taggles wouldn't open them to a kid," said Tom Merry. "How on earth did he get out?"

"I was showing him round—"

"You—you didn't show him the slanting oak?"

"I guess I did. Of course, I hadn't the faintest suspicion there was anything wrong with him, and I was just showing him round. Is he off his rocker?"

"No. He's set on going to sea, and he's brought here against his will. He meant to run away from the start."

Buck Finn whistled.

"Phew! The young galoot! I guess he was taking me in, then—so quiet and pleasant while I was showing him round—and all he wanted was—"

"To bolt. You were a duffer!"

"Gum! How was I to know?" demanded Finn. "I hadn't a suspicion. You ought to have told me—or somebody ought."

"It's Blake's fault. We all promised to keep an eye on him; and as he was put into Blake's study, Blake ought to be keeping the eye on him now. But look here, he's got to be fetched back."

"Blessed if I knew what to make of it when he slid," said Finn. "Do you really think he means to make it a clean vamoose?"

"I know he does. He'll make for the sea."

"Phew! There'll be a fearful row!"

"There will, if he isn't brought back before bedtime," said Tom Merry sternly. "He won't be missed till then. He's got to be brought back."

"I guess I'm willing to try, if you're game to break bounds and go after him."

"That's what I was thinking. I'll ask Manners and Lowther. Which way did he go?"

"Down the road towards the village."

"Good! He's making for the station. I believe he'll have to wait for a train. Will you look it out in the timetable in the hall while I fetch Manners and Lowther?"

"I guess so."

Tom Merry ran swiftly upstairs. He burst into his study, where Manners and Lowther were playing chess. They looked up.

"Don't make a row!" growled Lowther. "This beast will mate me if I'm not jolly careful! You can see he's thinking of it, by the rotten gleam in his silly eye!"

Manners chuckled.

"I've got you, old chap!"

"Rats! You haven't!"

"What about my rook?"

"Blow your rook! I've got my queen to shove in if I choose; and if I like to exchange queens, where are you then?"

"Bishop, my boy—bishop! You may as well chuck it."

"How can I play if you keep on jabbering, Manners?" demanded Lowther crossly.

"Here, chuck all that!" said Tom Merry. "I want you."

"Then you can go on wanting!" growled Lowther. "I'm going to finish this game if the college is on fire!"

"I'm ready when Monty is," said Manners, yawning. "The game's practically done. Monty is mate in two, however he moves."

"Bosh!" said Monty.

"Well, play it out, old chap—play it out. I don't mind."

"But I do!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Look here, that new kid, Ballantyne—"

"Blow the new kid, Ballantyne! Can't you see we're busy?"

"He's bolted."

"Let him bolt!"

"Now, look here, you can leave that game. Leave the pieces as they are, and finish it when you come back," said Tom Merry persuasively.

"Some silly ass will come in and knock the board over!"

"Hardly worth while, too," said Manners. "You see, Monty is mate in two—"

"I'm not!" shrieked Lowther. "I'm not mate at all, if I have time to think, without a set of silly geese cackling all round me!"

"Better chuck it up!"

"I won't chuck it up; but I'll jolly well slog you in the eye if you don't stop jawing, and give me a chance!"

"Oh, please yourself!" said Manners.

"Rats!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Who's chief in this study? I want you both to come with me and—"

"Shut up!" shrieked Lowther.

"But I tell you—"

"How can I think this out while you are jabbering away nineteen to the dozen?"

"Look here—"

There was a hurried step outside. Buck Finn burst into the study excitedly, with an open time-table in his hand.

"I say," he gasped, "there's a train goes at— By gum!"

He could not stop himself in his haste. He bumped right against the table upon which the chess-board rested.

"Look out!" roared Lowther.

But the warning came too late.

Buck Finn crashed against the table, and clutched at it to save himself. The chess-board went flying to the floor, and there was a scattering of pawns and pieces.

Monty Lowther jumped up in a rage. Manners remained quite calm. As he had mated his rival in two, he had reason to be calm; but Lowther, who was calculating a way out of a tight corner, was naturally excited.

He glared at Buck Finn for a moment, and glared at the overturned chess-board. Then he rushed at the American junior.

"You—you—you rotter!" he roared. "I'll knock your silly head off!"

"Here, hold on! I guess—Ow! Oh!"

They struggled furiously, Finn defending himself valiantly. Down they went with a bump on the floor, Finn undermost.

Lowther proceeded to bump him in a manner that was energetic and painful. Finn yelled and squirmed. Tom Merry and Manners looked on. Tom was laughing almost hysterically; and so was Manners. But Manners suddenly became serious. The combatants were rolling over the chess—and the chess were an ivory set belonging to Manners.

"Here, stop that!" shouted Manners. "You can have a scrum out in the passage if you like. Lend me a hand here, Tom."

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"Right you are. Ha, ha, ha!"

They dragged the combatants to the door, and rolled them out into the passage. There they separated, and rose to their feet, looking very dusty and dishevelled. They glared at one another, evidently on the point of renewing the conflict; but Tom Merry ran between them.

"Hold on—"

"He's busted up the game!" howled Lowther.

"It's all right," said Manners soothingly. "I had you mate in two."

So far from being consoled by this remark, Lowther rushed straight at Manners, hitting out. Tom Merry dragged him back in time.

"Quiet, ass!"

"I won't be quiet," howled Lowther—"not if he says he had me mate in two! I was going to change queens, and then—"

"Then I should have done you with my bishop."

"Utter rot! What about my knight?"

"Well, what about your knight?" said Manners pleasantly.

Lowther glared.

"You know jolly well that I could have interposed."

"Not without leaving your king in check with my rook."

"I never saw anything of the kind. Look here, let's shove the pieces back, and I'll show you. Your rook was on king's bishop's sixth."

"Seventh!"

"Sixth!"

"Seventh!"

"I tell you—"

"And I tell you—"

"Will you shut up?" roared Tom Merry, exasperated. "If you are going on like a pair of silly kids, I'll go to Study No. 6, and ask Blake to help me instead."

"I guess that's what we'd better do," said Buck Finn.

"Oh, rot!" said Manners. "We're ready. I don't mind the game being busted, as I had Lowther mate in—"

"Let me get at him!"

"Bosh! Listen to me! I want you to lend a hand, you pair of silly asses! Here, come along, and get your coats, for goodness' sake, and stop jawing!"

And Manners and Lowther came along.

CHAPTER 7.

A Hot Chase.

TOM MERRY kept a wary eye on the two chess players as they donned their coats and caps. He knew them of old. Football is an exciting game, but the wildest game of Rugby does not always lead to such intense excitement as a disputed game of chess. Manners was calm enough, but his calmness only enraged Lowther the more. Manners was an adept at the soft answer which increaseth wrath.

"Come out into the quad," said Tom Merry. "Don't make a show of it, though, I suppose, they'd only think we were going for a turn, to keep fit, if they saw us."

"What are we going out for, then?" asked Manners, as they went down the School House steps into the dusky quad.

"We're going to Rylcombe."

"Eh? What! To-night?"

"Yes. It's that confounded new kid, you know."

"What about him? Have you taken on the job of grandfather to him?" asked Monty Lowther.

"He's bolted."

"Well, he doesn't belong to our study, or even our Form. Why the dickens can't you let him bolt without upsetting a fellow's game of chess about it?"

"Because I promised to see that he didn't cut."

"More silly ass you, then!"

"Oh, don't be ratty, Monty! Look here, the silly kid's bent on going to sea, and he's been brought to St. Jim's against his will. He meant to bolt at the first chance, and he's done it. It will mean fearful ructions for him if the Head gets to know about it. I promised his uncle to see that he didn't cut. Blake ought to have looked after him, but, of course, everything is left to me. I'm going to get the young ass back, and save him a licking if I can."

"We'll jolly well give him a licking ourselves, then, for the trouble."

"Yes; that's a good idea," assented Tom. "Only, if possible, we want to keep the matter from the Head. Of course, the young ass has no chance of getting clear. The Head would inform the police, and he would be stopped in a day or two and dragged back here like a thief. We don't want a lot of talk to get into the papers, either, about fellows running away from St. Jim's. It gives a school a bad name."

"I guess so."

"Finn was ass enough to show him the way over the wall."

"I guess—"

"And, of course, he bolted. He's gone to Rylcombe, to try to get a train to London, of course. Did you look out the train, Finn?"

"I guess that's what I came to the study to tell you when that pesky galoot went for me like a wild-cat!"

"You shouldn't have upset a game—"

"Well," said Manners, "the game was practically over."

"Shut up!" said Tom Merry. "If you start that again, either of you, I'll knock your silly heads together! What about the train, Finn?"

"There's one goes at eight forty-five. That's why I buzzed in so quickly. We've got bare time to stop him."

"My hat! You're right. Get a move on!"

It did not take the chums of the Shell long to get over the wall. They dropped into the road, and ran swiftly through the shadows towards Rylcombe.

They had indeed very little time to get to the village to stop the fugitive. But they were good at a run, and the ground fairly flew beneath their feet.

Lowther and Manners forgot the chess in the excitement of the chase. They dashed into Rylcombe in fine style.

Manners paused for a moment to look at his watch.

"Quarter to nine!" he gasped.

"All right; the train's always a minute or so late. I can't hear it yet."

They dashed on to the station.

Tom Merry stopped breathlessly at the booking-office, and banged there. A leisurely young man blinked out at him.

"Has a kid taken a ticket for London here?" asked Tom quickly.

"Yes; ten minutes ago."

"Good! Come on, kids!"

The juniors dashed upon the platform.

A dusky figure rose from a seat, and two wary eyes were upon them at once. Jim Ballantyne was there, and he was prepared to dodge. There was a shriek of a train-whistle down the line.

"She's coming in!"

The rush and whirr of the train came nearer. Tom Merry dashed along the platform.

"There he is! Quick!"

The train rushed in. But Jim Ballantyne was cut off from the carriages, and he dodged just in time from Tom Merry's outstretched hand.

"Stop! Stop, I say, you young ass!"

But Ballantyne did not stop.

He ran along the platform, with four eager pursuers close on his track, putting all they knew into the run.

But Ballantyne was fleet and active. He reached the end of the platform, where a grassy slope led down to a stile giving admittance to Rylcombe Lane. Ballantyne did not know the ground, but it was an avenue of escape. He ran down the slope, and cleared the stile with a bound, and rolled over in the lane.

"After him!" yelled Tom Merry.

The four juniors tumbled headlong over the stile.

But Ballantyne had picked himself up, and was off like the wind.

Down the lane he went, with the panting juniors close behind.

It was a breathless chase.

But Ballantyne, good runner as he was, was no match for the champion athlete of the lower Forms at St. Jim's.

Tom Merry gained rapidly, and his outstretched hand tapped on Ballantyne's shoulder. The next clutch would have caught him, but Ballantyne had felt the tips of Tom's fingers, and he turned suddenly from the lane and plunged through a gap in the hedge.

Tom's grasp seized the empty air, and he reeled for a moment. But only for a moment; the next he was dashing through the hedge, on the track of the fugitive.

"Look out!" yelled Lowther. "He's making for the plank!"

A small stream—a feeder of the Ryll—bordered the wide, dark field, and it was crossed in one place by a single plank, less than a foot wide.

The plank had caught the eyes of the fugitive, and he was heading for it at a desperate run. After him went the juniors at top speed.

Ballantyne dashed across the plank. It was wet and slippery with mud, and he lost his foot and fell on his knees on the further side. Tom Merry was close behind—too close for safety. He stumbled over Ballantyne, and slipped from the plank into the water.

Splash!

Ballantyne was just dashing on again when he heard the splash, and turned round. Tom Merry came up in three feet of water, soaked to the skin, and gripped the plank.

Ballantyne saw that he was in no danger, and he ran on again; but Lowther was upon him now.

"Let go!" roared Ballantyne, as Monty Lowther's strong grasp closed upon his shoulder.

"Not this time!" grinned Lowther.

Ballantyne struggled. Buck Finn lent his aid to Lowther, while Manners dragged Tom Merry from the stream.

Ballantyne had no chance. He was pinioned, in spite of his struggles, and in a few minutes he was a helpless prisoner in the grasp of the juniors, breathless, dishevelled, but defiant. Tom Merry had scrambled out of the water, and stood shaking himself like a mastiff.

"Jolly good idea to give him a ducking, too!" growled Lowther.

Tom Merry shook his head. His teeth were chattering.

"No; it was an accident. It's all right. Bring him along! I shall have to sprint back to St. Jim's, or I shall catch a beastly cold! Atchoo-choo!"

"You're catching one already, I guess. Let's git!"

"I won't come!" exclaimed Ballantyne. "Leggo!"

"Will you walk or have the frog's-march?" asked Monty Lowther.

Ballantyne looked him in the eyes, and made up his mind in a moment.

"Right! I'll walk!"

And he did.

CHAPTER 8.

Caught.

"**H**ALLO! Did you hear that?"

It was Kildare, of the Sixth, the captain of St. Jim's, who asked the question. He was walking across to the New House with Monteith, when, through the silence of the quadrangle, a curious sound came to his ears.

Atchoo! Atchoo! Atchoo-o-o-o!

Monteith grinned.

"Yes," he said. "It sounded like a sneeze."

"Listen!"

Atchoo-choo-choo-o-o-o!

The sneeze was followed by the sound of a faint thud on the ground. The two seniors looked at one another.

"Somebody dropped from the wall," murmured the New House prefect.

"Come on!" said Kildare quietly.

And the two seniors strode towards the spot whence the sound proceeded. It was very dark in the quad, but as soon as they were near enough they saw a dark form standing by the wall, close to the slanting oak.

Two or three more were visible on top of the wall.

Kildare smiled grimly.

From the size of the dusky figures he knew that they were juniors, and he knew that he had discovered a party just returning from an excursion beyond bounds.

He waited. Form after form dropped from the wall, until five were gathered in the shadow of the old oak. Then a voice was heard.

"Quiet, there! If you keep on sneezing, Tom Merry——"

"How can I help it, ass?"

"I guess he's got a cold, and he can't help it. It's all the fault of that young pesky galoot Ballantyne!"

"Your own fault! Why couldn't you let me alone?"

Atchoo-choo-choo!

"I say, ring off, Tom! You'll alarm the whole giddy college!"

"How can I help it, you ass?"

"Don't ask me conundrums. Suppose Kildare should be trotting round the quad. It would mean trouble if he spotted us."

"Quite so!" said Kildare, coming forward, followed by Monteith.

Monty Lowther, who was the speaker, gave a jump.

"My hat! It's Kildare! There you are, Tom Merry! I told you what would happen if you didn't leave off sneezing!"

"You utter ass——"

"I have caught you, it seems," said Kildare quietly.

"Who are you? Let me see your faces! Merry, Lowther, Manners, Finn, Ballantyne! All School House boys!"

"Then I'll leave you to deal with them, Kildare," said Monteith.

And, with a nod, the New House prefect walked away.

Kildare fixed his eyes sternly upon the quintette.

"Now, what does this mean?"

"I don't know the answer to that one, Kildare," said Lowther, with his usual coolness. "Ask me another."

"Follow me to my study; or, rather, go and change your clothes first, Merry! You appear to be wet."

"I feel jolly wet, too!" growled Tom Merry.

"Then come to my study! Cut off!"

The juniors cut off. When the captain of St. Jim's spoke like that he was not to be trifled with. Kildare, with a stern brow, strode after them. He waited in his study for the delinquents to appear. Tom Merry hurried upstairs to get his wet clothes off.

The door of Study No. 6 was open, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was looking out into the passage. He stared at the sight of the dripping hero of the Shell.

"Bai Jove! You look wet, Tom Mewwy!"

"You're the second duffer who's noticed it!" said Tom Merry.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"My hat!" said Jack Blake, looking out at the crest-fallen juniors. "What's the row? Been swimming with your clothes on, Merry?"

"No, dummy! I've been after this new beast, Ballantyne, and he's led me a dance, and made me take a ducking."

"You don't mean to say he bolted already?" exclaimed Blake, in amazement.

"Yes, he did—owing to the excellent way you were looking after him!" growled Tom Merry. "Br-r-r-r!"

He ran on to the dormitory. Five minutes later the juniors presented themselves at Kildare's door. Tom Merry's nose was red, and his eyes were watery. He was sniffing and sneezing as if for a wager. The captain of the school looked at him grimly.

"And now, what does this mean?" he said. "I caught you returning from breaking bounds at night?"

"Yes, Kildare."

"What had you been doing?"

The juniors looked at one another.

They could easily have exculpated themselves by telling the exact truth, but that would have amounted to "sneaking" with regard to Jim Ballantyne.

"Well," said Kildare, "I'm waiting."

"The fact is," said Tom Merry, "we atchoo-choo-choo-o!"

"You what?"

"We—choo—choo—atchoo-o-o-o!"

"You had better explain, Finn."

"I guess I can do that," said Buck Finn. "The fact is, we—we were taking a little run—a kinder race, you know. Ballantyne ran first, and we ran after him."

Jim Ballantyne grinned.

Finn had stated the exact facts, but without giving the fugitive away.

"H'm!" said Kildare. "I haven't any objection to your entering into as many races as you like, but you know very well there's plenty of room in the quad. Where have you been?"

"I guess it was to the village."

"Very well; you'll have six each, and perhaps next time you'll decide to do your foot-racing on this side of the school wall."

"Phew!"

"You first, Lowther. Hold out your hand!"

"It's all right," said Jim Ballantyne boldly; "you needn't rag them, Kildare. It was all my fault."

Kildare looked at him.

"How was it your fault, Ballantyne?"

"I bolted. They came after me to fetch me back," said Ballantyne coolly. "You can lay into me, if you like. I've had it before."

Kildare looked long and hard at the new boy.

"You mean to say that you ran away from the school!" he exclaimed.

"Exactly!"

"And why?"

"Because I mean to go to sea."

"Oh, well, Master Ballantyne, what you say puts a different complexion on the matter. Do you bear him out in the statement, Tom Merry?"

"Yes, Kildare; that's how it is."

"I guess so."

"Very well. You lads have done well, and the Head will be obliged to you when he knows about it!"

"I say, Kildare, you're not going to tell the Head?"

The captain's face was very stern.

"I must report the matter," he said. "It is not as if Ballantyne was sorry for what he has done. It is plucky of him to own up, but he does not say he is sorry for having gone."

"I want to go to sea."

"You look a decent lad," said Kildare, musingly. "If you gave me your word not to go beyond bounds again, I should be inclined to trust you."

Ballantyne was silent.

"Come, my lad, what do you say?"

"I can't give it."

"Does that mean that you will bolt again if you have the chance?" demanded Kildare sternly.



"Look out!" roared Lowther. But the warning came too late; and as Buck Finn crashed against the table the chess-board went flying to the floor.

"Yes," said Jim, with the utmost frankness. "You can lick me if you like. The Head can lick me; but I'm going to sea all the same."

"Then I shall report the matter to Dr. Holmes, and I expect you will find your liberty considerably curtailed," said Kildare drily. "You may go now."

And the juniors went.

CHAPTER 9.

Arthur Augustus Has a Bright Thought.

JIM BALLANTYNE'S adventure was the talk of St. Jim's next day. Ballantyne, having owned up to the attempt to run away, there was no keeping the secret. Boys of all Forms looked with great interest upon the youth who had had nerve enough to run away from school.

But their interest was not wholly of an approving sort. They admired perhaps the new boy's nerve and pluck, but they all felt that running away from school was going a little bit too far.

"It's the beastly bad form, you know," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Of course, we know the young beggar has pluck; but wunnin' away from school is beastly bad form, deah boys!"

And the dear boys agreed that it was.

There was one individual, however, who gave the new boy his whole-hearted sympathy. That was Wally D'Arcy—D'Arcy minor, of the Third Form. He sought out the new boy in the Fourth that day, to explain his views on the subject to him. He met Ballantyne in the quad, and greeted him with a slap on the shoulder that made him stumble.

Jim Ballantyne turned round with a wrathful look, to meet the beaming look of the younger scion of the house of D'Arcy.

"You're the new kid in the Fourth, ain't you?" demanded D'Arcy minor.

"Yes," said Ballantyne, unclenching his fists as he realised that Wally's greeting was not meant in a hostile spirit.

"Good!" said Wally. "I've got a brother in your Form—Gussy. You must have seen Gussy D'Arcy. You tried to bolt last night?"

"Yes."

"Well, I think you're real grit," said Wally, digging him in the ribs. "I bolted myself once."

"Did you really?" said Jim, with interest.

"Yes, rather!" said Wally emphatically. "I bolted to London, after a tiff with Selby—Selby's the master of the Third, you know. I had a ripping time—selling papers for a living, you know. I like your pluck. Go it!"

"I mean to go it," said Ballantyne eagerly. "Can you tell me any way of bolting?"

"How did you get out last night?"

"I climbed the wall by the oak. I can't do that again; the porter has chained a dog there. I don't know whether it's on purpose."

Wally chuckled.

"You can bet your boots it's on purpose!"

"Do you know any other way?"

"Perhaps I do," said Wally, "and perhaps I don't. I like your pluck, kid, but I can't help you to bolt. That's a different matter. After all, as Gus says, it's bad form to bolt."

"If you know a way—"

"Can't be did, my son! Hallo, there's Dudley calling me!"

And D'Arcy minor vanished.

Jim Ballantyne looked disappointed. He had begun to hope something of the scamp of the Third. But even the careless little scallawag realised that it was bad form to "bolt," and would not lend his aid. All the same, Ballantyne's determination was not changed. He would go to sea!

He strolled round the quadrangle, but he observed that wherever he went, one, at least, of the chums of Study No. 6 was in sight.

He guessed that the Fourth-Formers had made up their minds to watch him, and he was furious inwardly; but there was no help for it, and he gave no outward sign of having observed the surveillance.

He arrived at the gates, and looked through the bars down

the road. Taggles, the porter, looked at him with a grin. Taggles had been warned of the curious proclivities of the new boy, and he was on his guard.

"Which them gates ain't going to be hopened, Master Ballantyne," said Taggles, with emphasis. "You can go back."

Ballantyne coloured a little. He looked squarely at the porter.

"Is a sovereign any good to you?" he asked.

"I should say so, Master Ballantyne," said Taggles, with visibly increased respect.

"Well, if you should happen to drop your keys for a few minutes, you'd find a sovereign along with them when you picked them up again."

Taggles shook his head.

He knew that it would be as much as his place was worth, and he did not intend to risk his comfortable berth at St. Jim's, even for a sovereign.

"Which you can't bribe me, Master Ballantyne," he said. "I'm above it. I'm a man of integrity. If you hofferred in a hundred pound—"

Ballantyne sniffed.

"I'm not likely to."

And he thrust his hands deep into his pockets, and walked away.

It began to look as if his going to sea was to remain a dream. He had not suffered very much for the previous night's escapade. The Head had talked to him very seriously. His pluck in owning up had saved him from the severe caning he would otherwise have received.

The Head's words had not been without their effect upon the boy.

He had gone to bed, dubious in mind, trying to think it out, trying to make up his mind that he would be a landman.

But in the morning all was changed again.

With the fresh morning breeze came the longing for the sea—that heart-longing which the true sailor knows. The blue waters, the boundless sky, the white sails, and the cheery voices of the sailors—all were ever present to his mind.

Within the walls of St. Jim's he chafed like a wild bird in a cage.

But there seemed to be no help for it.

He turned his steps slowly towards the School House as the dinner-bell rang. He noticed that Tom Merry was not at the Shell table, and remembered that he had not seen him that morning.

After dinner, passing Lowther and Manners, he stopped to inquire after the hero of the Shell. The chums gave him disconcerting glares.

"Anything wrong with Tom Merry?" Ballantyne asked.

"You ought to know!" growled Lowther. "I've a jolly good mind to give you the licking of your life now, only I promised Tom I wouldn't."

"Where is he?"

"In bed."

"Not ill!" exclaimed Ballantyne.

"Yes, ass! Do you think he's staying in bed for the fun of the thing?"

"By Jove!" exclaimed Ballantyne. "Was it the ducking last night?"

"Yes. Get along before I change your features for you."

Ballantyne grinned as he walked on. Arthur Augustus was coming along with a very thoughtful expression upon his face. He almost walked into Lowther and Manners before he saw them, and then he stopped.

"I was lookin' for you, deah boys," he said. "I suppose you know that Tom Mewwy is ill?"

Lowther sniffed.

"Yes, I suppose so, dummy!"

"I wefuse to be called a dummy."

"Oh, travel along!" growled Lowther, who seemed to be in an irritable mood that day. "I'm worried."

"Yaas, wathah; I quite undahstand that, deah boy. It's wathah wuff on Tom Mewwy to be out of the footah and the othah things, and I can quite compwehend that you feel it vewy much. I wemembah Hewwies was vewy iwritable when his dog Towsah was ill."

Lowther glared. He was worried about Tom Merry's illness, and he didn't like to have that illness placed on the same footing as the illness of Herries' dog Towser. But Arthur Augustus went on cheerfully.

"I wemembah Hewwies was awfully watty at the time, and he used to cut up wusty ovah nothin'. I was vewy sowwy for him, and I suggested killin' Towsah and buyin' another dog, and even that seemed to annoy him. But to return to Tom Mewwy. It is wathah wotten to have him laid up, and I don't twust these doctahs, you know. They always make a veal illness out of evewythin'. I was thinkin'—"

"Oh, don't pile it on!" said Lowther.

"I weward that as a wude wemark, Lowthah, but I excuse you, as you are wowedd about Towsah—I mean Tom Mewwy. I was thinkin' that what Tom Mewwy weally wants is a good, kind nurse."

"The House-dame is looking after him."

"Yaas, and the House-dame is a vewy wespactable and cweditable old lady, but what Tom Mewwy weally wants is a wippin' good nurse."

"Well, ass, where are we to find one?" demanded Lowther crossly.

"I have alweady found one."

"Whom?"

"Cousin Ethel."

"Cousin Ethel!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

CHAPTER 10.

Laid Up.

TOM MERRY was in bed. There was no doubt about it; the hero of the Shell was ill this time. His strong, healthy constitution usually threw off anything of the kind quite easily. He always kept himself fit, and illness was almost unknown to him. But the ducking in icy water after a hot chase, and the long journey home in his wet clothes, had done the business at last.

Tom Merry had caught a chill, and he was laid up. Whether the matter turned out seriously depended a great deal upon the care that was taken of him.

Tom Merry had begged the Head not to inform Miss Priscilla Fawcett, his old governess and guardian. At the news of her darling's illness, Miss Fawcett would have flown to St. Jim's, with enough medicine to kill a whole regiment of dragons.

Tom did not wish to cause her anxiety, and he didn't want any of Dr. Bones's Purple Pills for Peaky Patients, or any of the Green Globules for Sad Sufferers. And the Head had agreed to send no message to Huckleberry Heath unless the illness should become of sufficient seriousness.

Of that he was not much afraid. Tom Merry was too healthy, he believed, for the malady to get a good grip on him, unless he was careless. And the Head had impressed upon Tom that he must be careful, and he had impressed upon Mrs. Mimms the absolute necessity of looking after the patient well.

Mrs. Mimms certainly meant well, but she was a busy woman. The House-dame of a big House like the School House had plenty to do. She suggested sending for a nurse, and the Head reflected upon it. Meanwhile, Arthur Augustus had acted.

It was after afternoon school, and Tom Merry was in bed, propped up with pillows, and looking and feeling very blue.

He could hear the merry voices in the quadrangle. The days were getting longer now, and the boys were able to get a run after school.

Tom felt very much left out of it. As he thought of Jim Ballantyne, he did not bless him. It was all the fault of the new boy that he was laid up here.

The door opened, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came in on tiptoe.

He jammed his eyeglass into his eye, and looked towards Tom Merry's bed before approaching it. Tom was in a bed-room in the separate building used as a sanatorium at St. Jim's. He looked at Arthur Augustus, turning his head on the pillow, and the swell of the School House caught the glimmer of his eyes in the light.

"Bai Jove! You're awake, Tom Mewwy?"

"Yes, Gussy."

"How do you feel, deah boy?"

"Rotten."

"Yaas, I suppose it is wathah wotten to be shut up here," said D'Arcy sympathetically. "I have weceived Mr. Waitton's permish to come and speak to you."

"Good old Gussy!"

"I pwesume you have been feelin' lonely?"

"Yes, beastly."

"Lowthah and Mannahs want to come, and they are twyin' to pwevail on Waitton. But you mustn't be disturbed, you know. I wemembah when Towsah was ill Hewwies was vewy particulah about his not bein' disturbed. Of course, my conversation won't disturb you, Tom Mewwy."

Tom Merry smiled—his old smile.

"Not at all, Gussy. It's soothin'—not to say soporific."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy! But I excuse you, as you are laid up, deah boy. But pway don't make any more wotten jokes. I have some news for you."

"Go ahead!"

"It stwuck me—"

"What did?"

"A bwight thought."

"Where?"

"In my bwaïn, of course," said D'Arcy. "I was thinkin' about you, Tom Mewwy, and it stwuck me all of a sudden, you know. It flashed into my bwaïn, as good ideahs do, you know. You want a good nurse."

"Oh, I'm all right!"

"Yaas, but you want a good nurse. I hear that the Head is thinkin' of havin' a twained nurse for you."

Tom Merry groaned.

"Oh, scissors! Oh, figs! They'll make me ill among the lot of them. It's having all the paraphernalia of an illness round you that makes you ill."

"Yaas, but that's where my bwaight thought comes in. I have thought of a much betterah nurse. What do you think of Cousin Ethel?"

"She's a dear girl."

"Yaas; but what do you think of her as a nurse?"

Tom Merry almost jumped.

"Cousin Ethel! As a nurse!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"But she's not here."

"She will be soon."

"Why—how?"

"Because I wished for her this mornin'."

Tom Merry stared blankly at the swell of St. Jim's D'Arcy smiled the smile of complete self-satisfaction.

"You—you wired for Cousin Ethel!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"To—to nurse me!"

"Exactly!"

"She'll think it an awful cheek."

"Wats, deah boy! She'll come like anythin'. You know, Cousin Ethel is a jollay good nurse," said D'Arcy confidentially. "I was on the wooks once, and she nursed me and bwaight me wound all wight. She's a wippin' gal in ewevy way, and so patient, too. Look how she stands that fellow Figgins."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Yes, she's a dear girl, Gussy, but she will think it a cheek, and—and I couldn't think of giving her all that trouble."

"Wats, deah boy! Ethel is goin' to nurse you and bwing you wound. She'll talk to you, you know, and wead to you. She used to wead to me when I was wocky."

"What did she read?" asked Tom nervously, with a dreadful feeling that he was going through the ordeal of hearing the adventures of Good Little Dicky, the boy who never told a lie, or Bad Little William, the boy who robbed an orchard and was gored to death by a mad bull.

"Oh, wippin' things—the 'Magnet,' you know, and things like that. Good school stowies, you know."

Tom Merry's face cleared.

"Good! That's all right! When is she coming?"

"I am expectin' her ewevy minute, as a mattah of fact," said D'Arcy. "Bai Jove, I believe that is the cab in the quad now. I'll go and bwing her here as soon as poss., deah boy."

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy quitted the room, leaving Tom Merry in a decidedly more cheerful frame of mind.

CHAPTER 11.

A Quiet Time for the Patient.

JIM BALLANTYNE was coming slowly along the corridor. He saw D'Arcy come out of Tom Merry's room, and appeared to be at once interested in studying a picture on the wall. But the swell of St. Jim's did not even glance at him. He was hurrying on to greet Cousin Ethel.

Ballantyne waited till he was gone, and then walked on quietly to Tom Merry's room, tapped gently at the door, and entered. Tom Merry looked up.

Ballantyne came quickly in and closed the door, and walked up to the bed. His face was very serious.

"I say, old chap! I knew you were awake, as D'Arcy had just been in," he said. "I say, I'm sorry for this. It wasn't really my fault, you know. I couldn't help your tumbling into the water."

Tom Merry grinned.

"It's all right. I was feeling inclined to punch your head a few minutes ago, but it's all right now."

"Are you really bad?"

"No; only laying up in case I get worse," said Tom. "I'm feeling absolutely rotten, you know, and it will turn serious if I don't take care; that's all."

"That's enough, I should think. I'm awfully sorry it happened. I thought I'd come and tell you so, if I found you awake. That's all, Merry. I'm really sorry."

"Don't bother about it," said Tom Merry. "I shall be the envy of the house soon. Cousin Ethel is coming to look after me—D'Arcy's cousin, you know. It's all right. Hallo, who's that at the door?"

A large head, adorned by a large pair of spectacles, was inserted at the doorway. Skimpole, of the Shell, blinked round the room.

"Ah, I observe that you are not alone, Merry, and I presume that you are awake," he said. "I thought I had better look in to see you."

Jim Ballantyne nodded to Tom Merry, and left the room. Skimpole, the genius of St. Jim's, took his vacant chair.

"I am in a difficult position," he said. "I thought you would like to hear all about it, Merry, and advise me."

"Oh, go ahead!" said Tom Merry. Skimpole was a terrible bore, but Tom Merry was patient. Besides, now that afternoon school was over, he expected a succession of visitors, so Skimpole was not likely to be left long in undisturbed possession of the chair by the bedside.

"You remember that during our journey to America I compiled notes for a book of travels?" said Skimpole.

"Yes, I remember."

"I took up this idea to the exclusion of the Socialist propaganda in which I had previously interested myself. Now I am placed on the horns of a dilemma. It was my intention to write a book of Socialism which should revolutionise modern social condition. This is a great aim."

"You mightn't hit the mark, you know."

"Oh, there is no doubt about the effect of the book, once published. I had commenced it; in fact, I had already written the first four hundred and forty-five chapters, and was getting fairly into the subject, when the work was interrupted by the journey to the United States. Now that I am home again, I do not quite know whether to continue the book on Socialism, or to make use of my note-books in compiling a book of travels, to be entitled: 'Modern America, as Seen From Within.' Do you think the latter would be a good idea?"

"Excellent!" said Tom Merry heartily. "I should advise you to go at once and begin work on 'Modern America, as Seen From Within.'"

"But in that case the great book on Socialism would have to stand over."

"Well, let it stand over."

"Yes, but then arises the question," said the amateur Socialist of St. Jim's seriously—"then arises the pressing question—am I justified in leaving modern social conditions in their present state, while I busy myself upon a book of mere travels?"

"No, I suppose not. Better write the Socialism book first. Go and begin at once on the four hundred and forty-sixth chapter."

"Yes, but then arises the question, how am I to get it published? It would cost some hundreds of pounds, as it is hopeless to expect a publisher to bring out a book which will immediately be followed by a revolution. The profits on a book of travels would pay for the publication of the book on Socialism, however."

"Then bring out the book of travels first, and let the modern social system last a few weeks longer."

"But then arises the question—"

"Oh, dear!"

"The question whether, as a sincere Socialist, I am justified in taking the profits on a book of travels, even for the sake of a good cause. Under Socialism all profits will be nationalised, and, therefore, a Socialist must logically regard them as already national property, wrongfully withheld from the people."

"Ye-es. Better do the other bosh—I mean, the other book—first."

"True. But then arises the question—"

"Oh, dear—oh, dear!"

"But perhaps I fatigue you, Merry?"

"Not at all! I'm enjoying it. Go on. What's the question this time?"

"Then arises the question whether, in order—Dear me! If you must come in, Manners and Lowther, pray be quiet, as I am explaining to Merry the difficult position in which I find myself with regard to—Ow!"

Lowther jerked the amateur Socialist out of the chair.

"Cut!" he said, with Spartan brevity.

"Really, Lowther—"

"Cut! Under Socialism all chairs will be nationalised, and I claim this one as my share of the national property. Hook it!"

"It's all right; I'll kick him out," said Manners.

"You need not trouble, Manners; I will retire."

"Buck up, then!"

Skimpole retired. Lowther sat in the chair and Manners on the edge of the bed.

"Rotten to have you laid up like this, Tom," said Lowther. "We want to come and keep you company, and we've persuaded Railton that it's the best thing to do, and so we've come. We're to stay here if we won't excite you, so I suppose we'd better not talk too much. Would you like us to sit beside your bed and play a game of chess?"

Tom Merry grinned. "It might turn out more exciting than talking," he remarked.

"Oh, Manners would have more sense when you're ill—"

"And I should think even Lowther wouldn't be such an obstinate ass—"

"Of course, if Manners started playing the giddy ox again—"

"Oh, chuck it, Monty, old man! When I play a game of chess, all I want is to play it, and have a chap admit when he's licked. When I've got my man mate in two—"

"Has that ever happened in your experience?" asked Lowther, with elaborate sarcasm.

"Yes; it happened last night. I had you—"

"What about my queen?"

"Rats!"

"As for your bishop—"

"Rats!"

"Look here, Manners—"

"Look here, Lowther—"

"If you're going to begin that again—"

"If you're going to talk like a silly ass—"

"If you knew anything about chess, you'd know that my queen—"

"If you knew enough to know a Kieseritsky from a Ruy Lopez, you'd know jolly well that my bishop—"

"What about my knight?"

"What about my rook?"

"Look here—"

"Look here—"

Lowther had risen from the chair, and Manners had slid off the bed. Tom Merry grasped his pillow.

At that moment there was a gentle tap at the door ajar.

"May I come in?"

It was a sweet, girlish voice. Manners and Lowther turned to see Cousin Ethel looking at them from the door, with a smile upon her face and a glimmer of fun in her bright eyes.

CHAPTER 12.

Figgins Makes it a Point to be Quiet.

COUSIN ETHEL smiled demurely from the doorway, and Manners and Lowther turned very red. Tom Merry smiled a welcome.

"Please come in, Cousin Ethel. Manners and Lowther are done rowing."

"Shut up, you ass!" whispered Lowther fiercely.

"Ring off, you beast!" said Manners, in a whisper.

"Manners and Lowther have done rowing," went on Tom Merry calmly; "or if they haven't, they wouldn't mind finishing somewhere else. Would you, chaps?"

"You—"

"You—"

"I am so sorry you are ill, Tom," said Cousin Ethel gently, as she took Tom Merry's hand. "I have seen the Head, and Mrs. Holmes, and they both think it would be a good idea for me to look after you. So if you like—"

"Yes, rather!" said Tom Merry emphatically. "I don't mind being ill, a bit, if you look after me, Cousin Ethel."

Cousin Ethel laughed. "Well, I hope we shall soon have you well. But you must not be disturbed or excited. Manners and Lowther must run away."

"Oh, I say, you know!" said Lowther.

"We're awfully quiet chaps," said Manners. "We can sit in a room without making a sound, you know."

"Wats!" said Arthur Augustus. "You were makin' a feahful wov just now. I quite agree with Cousin Ethel. You must wun away; and you had bettah wun off like anythin'."

"Yes," said Cousin Ethel. "And you go with them, Arthur."

"Oh, weally, Ethel—"

"Ha, ha!" chuckled Lowther. "We're going. Come along, Gussy!"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

Lowther took one of D'Arcy's arms, and Manners took the other. They marched him off between them.

Cousin Ethel sat down.

"Now, I am to see that you are quite quiet, Tom," she said seriously. "You must not talk much, or get excited, and you must drink all that Dr. Short sends you."

The hero of the Shell made a wry face.

"Couldn't you get rid of it, Cousin Ethel?"

"No, you must take it, at regular times, too. I am to see to it. Do you feel inclined to go to sleep?"

"Not the least in the world."

"Would you like me to read to you?"

"Immensely."

"What shall I read? 'Hamlet,' or the 'Pilgrim's Progress'?"

"Jolly good things," said Tom Merry. "But I prefer something rather—rather easier while I'm ill, you know. Of course, I'm not really ill. This is only a bit of a cold."

Cousin Ethel smiled assent.

"Of course, Tom. You will throw it aside in a day or two. What shall I read, then? I bought this week's number of 'The Magnet' at the station."

"Good! Go it!"

There was a tap at the door, and a fat, pink face looked in. The face belonged to Fatty Wynn, of the New House. But the New House junior was not on the warpath now. He came in on tiptoe, looking terribly serious. He had a bag in his hands, which was bulging at the sides.

"I—I didn't know Miss Cleveland was here," he murmured. "I—I want to speak to you, Merry; just a minute."

"One minute, then," said Cousin Ethel. "I am Tom's nurse now, and he must not be disturbed."

"It's—it's about the grub. I heard that Tom was put on filthy doctor's stuff, so I've brought him something to eat. Look here!"

Fatty Wynn opened his bag, and showed it crammed with excellent things—for a youth who was well and had a good appetite. There were sausages and cold chips, part of a chicken, some tongue, half a rabbit-pie, and nicely-cut sandwiches galore.

Tom Merry looked at them and smiled.

"What do you think of that little lot?" grinned Fatty Wynn. "I was nearly half an hour getting them at the tuckshop. I tell you, I jolly near ate them myself on the way, they're so ripping; and I get so hungry in this February weather."

"Jolly nice," said Tom Merry; and he looked at Cousin Ethel.

Miss Cleveland held up her finger warningly.

"Take them away, Wynn."

"Eh?"

"Take them away."

"But—but I've brought the grub here for Tom Merry," stammered Fatty.

"Tom is ill. He mustn't eat anything that is not prescribed by the doctor."

"Oh, really, Cousin Ethel!" said Fatty Wynn, in tones of remonstrance. "When a fellow's ill there's nothing like a good feed to set him up on his pins again."

"Nonsense, Wynn!"

"Oh, come, now! I know Tom must be hungry. Why, this rabbit-pie will very likely revive him, and he may be able to come down to-morrow."

"I shouldn't wonder," murmured Tom Merry.

But Cousin Ethel shook her head decidedly.

"You must take it all away, Wynn."

"I say, be reasonable, you know," urged Fatty. "Suppose Tom had a couple of the sausages and a few chips?"

"It's no good, Fatty," said Tom, laughing. "I'm under doctor's orders, old chap. Thank you awfully for looking after me in this ripping manner. But it won't do."

Fatty Wynn looked extremely disappointed.

"Well, I've done my best," he said. "I know jolly well I've been ill myself, and a good feed always pulls me round. Some fellows say you feed a cold and starve a fever. That's all rot. You feed a cold and feed a fever. There's nothing like a good feed to revive you. I say, Miss Cleveland— Well, I must say I don't like to see a girl so determined. You might as well be a Suffragette, and have done with it," said Fatty Wynn indignantly. "Oh, all right, I'm going!"

And Fatty Wynn departed with his bag.

"Good old chap!" said Tom Merry. "Just like him!"

"He doesn't realise that you are really ill," said Ethel.

"Well, of course, I'm not exactly what you'd call ill," said Tom Merry, who had all a healthy boy's dislike for being considered an invalid. "This is just a little touch of a chill that has got into my neck, that's all."

"Of course," Cousin Ethel assented tactfully.

The room was very quiet. The window was open to the quadrangle, where the trees were showing the first green of spring. The sun was almost set, but the boys' voices could still be heard in the open. The light was subdued in the sick-room, burning under a shade. Cousin Ethel made a pretty picture as she sat there, in the subdued light, reading to Tom Merry.

Tom Merry lay back on his pillows, listening.

The soft, sweet voice was soothing to hear, and at times Cousin Ethel's cheeks dimpled, and a smile played round her lips, as she read. Tom Merry grinned with huge enjoyment over the story. But the reading was fated to be interrupted again. There was a faint tap at the door—so faint that neither heard it. It was repeated, and then the door opened, and a big junior looked in



"Yes!" said Blake, "old Lathom is shoving the new kid into this study!" Dig dropped the sausage from the end of his fork in his surprise and wrath. "Coming into our study!" he shouted. "Why there's four of us already!"

It was Figgins, of the New House—Figgins, with his rugged, good-natured face, his heavy feet, and his hands that he never seemed to quite know what to do with.

Figgins was looking unusually nervous, and he hesitated on the threshold. His face became scarlet as Cousin Ethel's eyes rose from the book and turned upon him.

"Hallo, old Figgy!" said Tom Merry. "I'm in clover, you see."

"Ye-e-es, I'm glad to hear you're ill, Merry," stammered Figgins, who never quite knew what he said or did when Cousin Ethel's eyes were upon him. "I—I mean I'm sorry you're in clover, old chap. I—I mean—"

"Thanks, Figgy!"

"I—I heard that Miss Cleveland was here, so I thought Tom Merry might like me to come and sit with him for a bit," stammered Figgins.

Tom Merry chuckled, and Cousin Ethel's cheeks dimpled a little.

"I—I hope I may stay," said Figgins. "Of course, I should sit down perfectly quietly, and not make a sound. Tom Merry knows what a quiet sort of chap I am about a place."

"I do, by Jove!" murmured Tom Merry.

Cousin Ethel looked undecided. Figgins came into the room, and shut the door, letting it inadvertently slip from his hand and slam. Then he knocked a jar over, and kicked against a chair.

"I'll make it a point to be quiet," stammered Figgins. "I'll just sit on the edge of the bed, and—"

He bumped down on the bed, and shook it violently. Cousin Ethel pursed up her lips. Figgins got off the bed and pulled up a chair, and knocked it against the bedpost. Then he sat down heavily.

"That's all right," said Tom Merry. "If you make it a point to be as quiet as that, Figgy, you'll do. We can't be much quieter, unless we get an earthquake over from Italy. It's all right."

"If—if—if I'm disturbing anybody—"

"Not a bit of it. Sit quiet, and listen to Cousin Ethel reading."

"If I may—"

"You may," said Cousin Ethel doubtfully. "But I don't know whether you can keep quiet, Figgins. I am sure Tom would like you to stay, but you mustn't make a sound."

"I won't move a limb."

"Very well, then. Shall I go on, Tom?"

"What-ho! Fire away!"

Cousin Ethel continued to read. Gradually, as he listened, Figgins's confusion died away. He was all right when Cousin Ethel was not looking at him. But he was not used to sitting still.

The room was very still. Tom Merry lay quiet enough on his pillows, and Cousin Ethel sat with the perfectly upright back of a well-trained girl. But Figgins was more used to the football-field and the gym. than to the sick-room. He felt that he must move—but he dared not.

He felt hot and cold all over. Pins and needles attacked his right foot, and he would have given worlds to move it, but he did not venture.

There was a feeling of cramp in his back—a bursting of perspiration on his hot forehead. The light of the room seemed to confuse his eyes. Pins and needles slowly crept up his calf to the knee.

He felt that he simply must move, or perish where he sat. He ventured to move the cramped leg at last. Of course, his boot clumped against the bedpost, with a clump that sounded like a cannon-shot in the quiet room.

Cousin Ethel looked up.

"I—I—I am sorry," stammered Figgins, turning the colour of a beetroot.

"Oh, don't worry!" said Tom Merry.

"I—I—I am going to keep quite still."

Cousin Ethel's voice went on steadily. Figgins wondered how on earth girls could sit still so long at a time, without getting the cramp, or shrieking. He was strongly inclined to scream himself.

The momentary movements had not banished the pins and needles.

It seemed to have made the painful visitation worse, and the cramped feeling was creeping along both legs now.

A cold sweat broke out over Figgins. He dared not move again, for his life; but he felt that if he did not do so he would go into violent hysterics.

The crisis came at last. The excruciating tickle of the pins and needles made him forget himself for a moment, and he jumped wildly up. His chair went over backwards with a crash, and knocked against a table, sending two medicine bottles to the floor with a crash that smashed them instantly.

"Oh, lor!" gasped Figgins. He dared not face Cousin Ethel after that. He made two long strides to the door, and disappeared. And the girl, after the first glance of amazement, broke into a rippling peal of laughter, in which Tom Merry joined. Figgins did not return to the sick-room.

CHAPTER 13.

In the Dead of Night.

"It strikes me," said Jack Blake, laying down the law in Study No. 6—"it strikes me—"

"Pway pardon me for intewwuptin' you, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, raising his hand, "but don't you think that wathah a vulgah expression? You might say that it occurs to me."

"What occurs to me?" "Whatever it is you are speakin' about. Stwikes me is a decidedly vulgah expression, and I should—it should be barred in this studay."

"Have you finished, ass?" "I decline to be called an ass. I was simply dwawin' your attention to a point of some importance. It stwikes me—I mean it occurs to me, that—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "I weally fail to see what you are cacklin' at, Dig." "Look in the looking-glass, then."

"Weally, Dig—"

"If Gussy ever leaves off talking," said Blake, in a tone of patient resignation, "I will tell you what struck me." "Sowwy, deah boy; pway pwoceed."

"It strikes me—or it occurs to me, as Gussy prefers that—it occurs to me that as Tom Merry is laid up, the duty of looking after that new boulder falls upon the chaps in this study."

"Yaas, wathah!" "Well, we've been watching him round pretty closely to-day," said Digby. "He's been nosing round every corner of the place. Taggles tied his bulldog up to the slanting oak, so he couldn't skip that way."

"He may try to work it to night." "Ah, bunking out of the dormitory when we're all asleep, I suppose?"

"That's it!" "Very likely," said Herries. "But I can make that all right. I'll take Towser into the dormitory with us to-night."

"You jolly well won't!" said Jack Blake, with emphasis. "I'd like to know how we are to sleep, with a raging beast in the dormitory."

"Towser isn't a raging beast. A nicer, quieter dog—"

"Wats, deah boy! I must say I agree with Blake on that point. Towshah is vewy cowwectly chawactewised as a wagin' beast. Besides, he might start gnawin' our clothes in the night. He has bitten my twousahs more than once."

"I suppose you looked at him." "Weally, Hewwie—"

"Towser in the dorm. is barred," said Blake decisively. "But one of us will have to stay awake to-night to keep an eye on the new kid. After a few days he is bound to settle down and stop playing the girkly goat; but the honour of this study is involved in keeping him here now. You see, we want to get rid of him out of this study, and we'd give a fortnight's pocket-money each to get him sent to sea, and that makes it a special point of honour with us to keep our promise to Mr. Ballantyne."

"Yaas, wathah! The fact that it is a painful stwuggle to keep a pwomise makes it all the more necessary to keep it."

"It's rotten, though," said Herries. "It's rough on us, and rough on him. I can't see why he shouldn't go to sea if he wants to. Lots of people go to sea."

"His uncle's afraid he might get drowned."

"Well, I suppose he could insure him."

Blake looked at Herries admiringly. "By Jove, you know, I dare say he hasn't thought of that," he said. "You might drop him a line suggesting it. Meanwhile, our honour is involved in seeing that nephew James doesn't do a guy. Which of you chaps is going to stay awake to-night?"

"As chief of the study, I vote for Blake," said Digby heartily.

"Do you?" said Blake unpleasantly. "The chief of the study assigns the duty to one of his followers, of course."

"Of course he doesn't." "Yaas, wathah! A chief's place is to do all the unpleasant duties, you know, to enocourage his followahs," said D'Arcy. "I vote for Blake."

"My sentiments exactly," agreed Herries. Jack Blake looked round at three innocent faces. He seemed on the verge of an explosion for a moment. But he calmed himself.

"We'll all remain awake," he said. "Come to think of it, one might drop off to sleep. We'll all remain awake, and stick it out together."

"Yaas, wathah! I wegard that suggestion as wathah wippin'."

And Herries and Dig, after some demur, assented. Ballantyne came into the study to do his preparation, and the discussion had to cease.

The self-sacrifice of the juniors in taking steps to prevent the new boy from running away was indeed great.

There wasn't room for five in the study. Ballantyne bothered them all; and, as a matter of fact, the new boy, in his quiet way, was bothering them just as much as he could. He thought he might as well get his "own" back for the way they had watched him during the day, and also he rightly considered that the more trouble he was, the less likely their watchfulness would be to continue.

He upset ink, he knocked over books and papers, he moved suddenly when they were working, and jolted the table, he sat on D'Arcy's silk hat, and he kicked over Herries' cornet, all in the space of one short hour.

When he left the study, the four chums looked at one another, breathing hard.

"And that's the unspeakable gnome we're going to try to keep here," said Blake.

"Bai Jove, you know, we were wathah hasty in makin' that pwomise to Mr. Ballantyne," remarked Arthur Augustus thoughtfully. "But we must stick to it, deah boys!"

And the "deah boys" reluctantly agreed that they must. At bedtime, Ballantyne quietly joined the Fourth Form going up to the dormitory, and he turned in with the rest. But there was a look in his eye that meant mischief, as Jack Blake was quite keen enough to see.

Kildare saw lights out in the Fourth Form-room. He gave Ballantyne a curious glance as he said good-night.

Half an hour after lights out Ballantyne sat up in bed. He peered to and fro in the darkness, and muttered:

"You fellows asleep?"

Three voices responded in unison: "Not much!"

And a fourth voice added: "Wathah not, deah boy!"

Jim Ballantyne settled himself down again. But he did not sleep. As the clock in the tower chimed out the hour of eleven he sat up again.

"Asleep, you chaps?" "Hardly!" said Blake.

"Not half!" said Digby. "Wathah not, deah boy!"

Herries did not reply. He was fast asleep.

Another long period of waiting. Ballantyne was too excited to sleep. But the chums of the Fourth were fighting against drowsiness heroically. They were determined not to allow slumber to creep upon them, but to boys tired with a hard day's work and play it was not easy to keep awake in the silent watches of the night.

Half-past eleven!

Ballantyne slipped from his bed. He made but slight sound, but that sound, slight as it was, was heard.

A voice came from the shadows of the long dormitory: "You needn't get up, you new kid."

"Bai Jove, wathah not! I've got an eye on you, deah boy."

Ballantyne gritted his teeth. But the next moment he grinned. Digby was evidently asleep now, as well as Herries. Only Blake and D'Arcy remaining wakeful.

Twelve!

It was midnight, and all St. Jim's was silent. Ballantyne lay wakeful, his heart beating. As the last stroke of midnight died away he slipped from his bed again.

ANSWERS

NEXT THURSDAY:

"THE TERRIBLE THREE'S REVOLT."

A Double-Length School Tale of Tom Merry & Co.

A drowsy voice sounded in the darkness:

"Chuck that, Ballantyne!"

Arthur Augustus had dropped off at last. But Jack Blake, like the last of the Old Guard, was still steadfast. Jim Ballantyne crept back into bed savagely.

Half-past twelve!

"You fellows asleep?"

It was a whisper from Ballantyne's bed.

But now there was no reply. Jack Blake, the last of the watchful four, was safe in the embrace of Morpheus.

Ballantyne grinned in the darkness. He crept out of bed, and hastily but silently donned his clothes. It did not take him long. His boots were downstairs, but he had placed a second pair under his bed ready. He was finished in a few minutes, and he crept to the door. His boots made a slight sound, and he paused and listened intently, his heart beating like a hammer.

But no sound or movement came from the juniors. They were fast asleep, and Ballantyne might probably have tramped heavily across the dormitory without waking them. But he didn't risk it. He trod slowly and carefully to the door.

He drew a deep breath as he gripped the handle. At last he was free—at last nothing lay in his path! To reach Study No. 6, to slide down the drain-pipe to the quad, and flee—all was easy before him.

He turned the handle of the door silently, and pulled.

He pulled again in amazement. The door usually opened easily enough. Now it seemed to be jammed. He pulled again with all his strength. But the door did not budge.

Ballantyne pulled, and pulled, and pulled. But there was nothing but a creak from the door to reward him. It would not open.

With feelings too deep for words the new boy at St. Jim's realised the truth. The door was locked on the outside!

CHAPTER 14.

More Self-Sacrifice.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY sat up in bed at the first clang of the rising-bell the following morning.

He fished out his eyeglass and jammed it into his drowsy eye, and glanced towards the new boy's bed.

Jim Ballantyne was there, fast asleep.

"It's all wight, Blake!" said D'Arcy, in a tone of relief. "The wottah is all wight! I must have fallen asleep last night!"

"Eh?" said Blake sleepily. "By Jove, I must have been asleep, too!"

"So was I!" said Herries, sitting up and rubbing his eyes. "It's curious, too, that I don't remember falling off!"

"But it's all wight," said D'Arcy. "Fortunately, I stayed awake long enough to see that the wottah did not hook it. It's all wight!"

Jim Ballantyne woke in time to hear D'Arcy's remark, and he grinned. If the dormitory door had not been locked on the outside the previous night the chums would not have found him in bed that morning.

The Fourth-Formers went down to breakfast. Tom Merry was not to be seen at the Shell table. He was still laid up. But Cousin Ethel was staying at St. Jim's to look after him, and there was more than one fellow who envied Tom Merry his illness.

"As a mattah of fact, the boundah's in clovah," said D'Arcy. "Cousin Ethel's a wippin' nurse, you know. I don't suppose Tom Mewwy will be in a feahful huvwvy to get well, eithah."

It was a half-holiday that day—a keen February day—and the weather was excellent for football.

To the football-field the thoughts of all the juniors turned as they left the class-rooms after morning lessons.

"It's a ripping afternoon!" Blake remarked. "After the wicked weather we've had, it's a chance to get in a really good practice match."

"Yaas, wathah, but—"

"Don't you start butting me, Gussy. You're coming out to footer practice, whether you're exhausted or not."

"I have no objection to footah practice, but—"

"Then blow your bute! You're not going out to get a new hat or a necktie this afternoon. You're going to practice."

"But—"

"Do you want to be left out of the Form team when we play the Shell?" demanded Blake indignantly.

"Certainly not, Blake, but—"

"Blessed if I ever saw a chap like Gussy for arguing!" exclaimed Blake, exasperated. "Whatever I say he starts butting—"

"But—"

"There he goes again, like a giddy gramophone with only one record—"

"Yaas, but—but you won't give me a chance to speak!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "I wegard your intewwup-tions as bein' in the worst of taste. I was goin' to say that if we all play footah, who is goin' to look aftah young Ballantyne?"

"My hat! I had forgotten that worm!"

"Yaas, I wathah thought you had, deah boy. If I didn't wemembah things, I weally do not know how we should get on at all."

"Look here, we can't give up an afternoon's footer to look after that young pig!" said Herries wrathfully.

"It's rot!" said Digby. "Why can't they let him go to sea?"

Blake look worried.

"It can't be helped," he said. "We've given our word to look after the blitherer. We didn't know what a big job it was going to be. But we've given our word. We've got to keep it."

"Do you mean to say we're to cut the footer?" demanded Digby, rather excitedly.

"No, you chaps can play," said Blake glumly. "I'll look after the beast!"

"Wathah not!" said D'Arcy instantly. "I'll keep you company, deah boy."

"Oh, that's bosh!" said Digby. "We'll stick to you, Jacky. If you cut, we all cut."

Jim Ballantyne passed them at that moment. Blake shook his fist at him, and Jim grinned as he passed on. He could see that he was getting on the nerves of the chums of Study No. 6, but that did not trouble him. Sooner or later he thought they would be willing to close one eye while he escaped.

During the half-holiday he was pretty certain, however, of finding an opportunity of bolting, even with the chums of the Fourth on the watch.

When most of the juniors were on the playing-grounds, and all of them more or less absorbed in their own pursuits, it would go hard but the would-be sailor could find his chance.

And the consequences of failure in case of recapture did not frighten him. He was willing to "face the music."

When the shouts of the juniors rang out from the football-field, Jack Blake and his chums looked at one another lugubriously.

Self-sacrifice had never seemed so hard as at that moment. "Absolutely rotten!" said Blake. "Fancy having to loaf about a whole afternoon, instead of going down to footer!"

"Suppose we go and pay Tom Mewwy a visit!" suggested Arthur Augustus. "That would be only kind, you know."

"Good idea! I suppose we needn't follow that Ballantyne beast about like shadows? He can be left alone for a minute or two."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We'll give him a jolly good hiding when he bolts again," said Digby; "and if he gets a bigger hiding every time, he'll drop it in the long run."

The four chaps made their way to the sanatorium.

Tom Merry was still in bed, but he was allowed to receive visitors for a short time, and, of course, he was glad to see the chums of the Fourth.

Cousin Ethel opened the door, and the boys entered on tiptoe. Mrs. Mimms was seated in an easy-chair by the fire sewing. Cousin Ethel had been reading to Tom. Tom was looking rather pale, but still cheerful, and he grinned pleasantly at the chums of the Fourth.

"Hallo! Why aren't you down at the footer?" he asked.

"Got to look after the new beast."

"Oh, I see!"

"Thought we'd give you a look-in, too," said Blake.

"How are you?"

"Ripping!"

"You're looking rather putty-coloured."

"Oh, that's only staying indoors, you know."

"I weally fail to see how you can be wippin' when you are ill, Tom Mewwy."

"Oh, I'm not exactly what you'd call ill. This is a cold, that's all, only it's got down my neck."

Jack Blake grinned.

"I hope we shall soon see you up again, Merry," he said. "You've got to play in the Form match, you know. We don't want to lick the Shell without you in the team."

"Don't you worry, my son! You won't lick the Shell!"

"We'll jolly well—" Cousin Ethel held up a warning finger, and Blake calmed down at once. "That's all right, Tommy, we mean business this time. Sorry you've got to stick indoors in this ripping footer weather."

"Oh, I'm all right," grinned Tom. "I'm jolly comfy here."

He looked comfortable. When the Fourth-Formers took their leave, Cousin Ethel's sweet voice went on reading, and Tom Merry listened very contentedly. He was feeling weak, and it was very restful there, and he thought, too, how gladly Figgins would have given up footer that afternoon to change places with him.

"I say, Ethel," he said, at the pause at the end of a chapter.

The girl looked at him.

"Yes, Tom?"

"It's awfully good of you to look after me like this."

"Nonsense! What should I do?"

"But you must be leaving a lot of things to come here all of a sudden and turn nurse," persisted Tom. "I'm jolly grateful, you know." He coloured. "I'm not much of a hand at jawing; but I'm really jolly grateful. All right, I'll shut up if you like. Go on with the yarn."

And Cousin Ethel smiled and read on.

CHAPTER 15.

Run Down.

JACK BLAKE glanced round the quadrangle as he came out of the School House. There were plenty of fellows in sight, but Jim Ballantyne was not among them. Lowther and Manners were going down to football, Lowther with a ball under his arm, and Blake tapped him on the shoulder.

"Have you seen the new kid?"

"Finn? Yes, he's yonder."

"I don't mean Finn. I mean the new kid in the Fourth."

"Oh, I never notice Fourth-Formers," said Lowther loftily. And he walked on, leaving Blake on the verge of an explosion.

"Pway, don't get watty, Blake," said D'Arcy. "There's no time to give Lowthah a thwashin'. Pway, have you seen Ballantyne, Weilly?"

"Sure I have," said the Irish junior, stopping. "I've just been speaking to him, bedad."

Blake drew a breath of relief.

"Then he's not bolted?"

"Faith, and he was there five minutes ago, anyway."

"Where is he?"

"I left him at the gate of the Head's garden. He was askin' me what was on the other side of the garden, and sure I told him."

"The young rotter! He's at it again. Come on, kids!"

And the chums of the Fourth dashed off, leaving Reilly staring after them in astonishment.

There was little doubt that Ballantyne was "at it again," as Blake expressed it.

There were too many watchful eyes for Ballantyne to hope to leave by the public gates. But by cutting across the Head's garden it was possible to leave St. Jim's by climbing the ivied wall.

If the junior crossed the garden undetected, the rest would be easy, as the practicable part of the wall was out of sight of windows.

Juniors were not allowed in the Head's garden, but that was not likely to trouble Jim Ballantyne just then. It did not trouble Blake & Co. either. They scrambled over the gate and dashed up the gravel path. There was a cry from D'Arcy.

"Pway hold on, deah boys! I've dwopped my toppah!"

The dear boys did not even answer.

They dashed right on, and D'Arcy stopped alone. He chased his topper and caught it, and dashed after them with the hat in his hand, and his eyeglass flying at the end of its cord.

There was a voice from down the garden—that of the Head's gardener, scandalised by the nerve of the juniors.

"Hi, there! Stop! Do you 'ear?"

The juniors heard, but they did not stop.

Onward they dashed, and Blake, Herries, and Digby scrambled one after another over the ivied wall.

The gardener rushed in pursuit, spade in hand.

Arthur Augustus was last, and he redoubled his efforts as he heard the angry gardener's footsteps pounding on the gravel behind.

He reached the wall, and took a desperate leap, and clambered over the ivy, and shivered all over as he heard the spade clump against the wall behind him.

He rolled over in the lane, his hat flying into the dust, and sat up feeling dazed.

"Pway hold on, deah boys! I am uttably exhausted."

But the juniors were tearing up the path to the road.

Arthur Augustus collected himself and his hat, and followed breathlessly.

Blake & Co. turned into the road, and looked along it in the direction of the village of Rylcombe.

"There he is!" roared Herries.

He pointed at a figure that was going up the road at a racing pace. It was Jim Ballantyne.

The wind carried Herries' voice to his ears, and he looked back over his shoulder, and quickened his pace as he caught sight of the chums of the Fourth.

"That's the beast!" said Blake, with much satisfaction. "We'll have him."

"Wight-ho!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "Wun, deah boys! Wun like anythin'!"

They dashed up the road.

Ballantyne was in good condition, and he gave them a good lead. But Blake was in splendid form and quite fresh.

Steadily he gained on the fugitive.

Ballantyne looked round, and saw Blake drawing closer.

A fierce look came over his face, and had Blake been alone, the runaway would undoubtedly have stopped and fought the matter out.

But he had no chance against four, and stopping meant being recaptured and marched back to the school.

So he redoubled his efforts, and dashed on at renewed speed. But steadily nearer and nearer came the beat of Blake's footsteps, and close behind him ran his chums.

Ballantyne realised that he would never reach the village; and if he did he could not fail to be cornered at the station. He caught sight of the stile giving admittance to the foot-path through Rylcombe Wood, and he turned from the road and cleared it at a bound.

"Good jump!" exclaimed Blake.

And he followed suit.

After him each of the juniors jumped the stile in turn. Arthur Augustus stumbling, and rolling on the grass, much to the detriment of his clothes.

Ballantyne was going down the path in fine style, but the steady pounding of footsteps behind him came nearer and nearer.

The junior suddenly turned from the path, and dashed along a scarcely-marked track, leading through the trees.

Jack Blake smiled grimly.

He knew that Ballantyne hoped to dodge him in the wood, among the trees and thickets, and had it been summer time he might have succeeded.

But now there was no foliage on the trees, no leaves on the thin, frozen-looking thickets, and the fugitive could be seen plainly enough between the leafless stems as he ran on.

"Keep together!" panted Blake. "We'll have him now."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Again Ballantyne turned. The track was hard going, and he was unable to lose himself to the sight of the pursuers.

He came out of the wood upon the road again, and took to the fields. The run was beginning to tell upon all the juniors now. The pace was slower, and they were breathing hard.

But they stuck to it with indomitable pluck. Ballantyne was determined not to be caught, and the pursuers were equally determined not to be beaten, and so the chase was certain to go on till either one or the other dropped.

Ballantyne crossed a plank over a wide-flowing ditch that bordered a farmyard, and stopped a moment to hurl the plank into the water. The chums of the Fourth stopped abruptly on the verge of the water.

Ballantyne gasped defiance from the other side.

"Done you! Go and eat coke!"

"Bai Jove!"

"We're going to jump this," said Blake, between his teeth. "Come back and get a run! Hallo! Look out, Ballantyne!"

Ballantyne turned round.

A farmer's man was rushing at him with a very red and angry face. The excited junior had hurled the plank into the water in the full view of the farmer's man, who was pitchforking straw near at hand.

The action seemed, to the farm hand, the very height of schoolboy nerve, and he was rushing at Ballantyne with vengeance in his eyes.

The junior dodged him, and dashed off.

"Come back, dang you!" roared the man.

And as Ballantyne did not stop he rushed in pursuit, still with the pitchfork in his hand.

The chums of Study No. 6 retreated to a distance from the ditch to get a run, and then dashed forward again.

It was a wide jump, but they were in a resolute humour, and they succeeded.

Clear across the wide-flowing water they sprang, landing with several inches to spare on the other side.

"Bai Jove, that's wippin'!" gasped D'Arcy. "I was afwaid we should get a duckin' like Tom Mewwy; and Cousin Ethel doesn't want to stay and nurse all the juniors of St. Jim's, you know."

CHAPTER 16.

Mr. Ballantyne Gives In.

"Come on!"
 "Yaas, wathah!"
 They were sprinting across the farmyard in a second or two more. Ballantyne was running well, with the angry farmhand close behind him. The St. Jim's juniors soon overtook the farmer's man.

Blake was grinning now.
 There was a wall ahead of the fugitive, and Blake, who knew the country well, knew what was on the other side of that wall.

"It's all right now," he panted. "That's Sir Neville Boyle's land on the other side. You know since the poaching affair, Sir Neville has had his ground guarded as if the birds were worth their weight in gold. Ballantyne will be stopped in two ticks if he gets over the wall."

"And if he doesn't?"
 "We shall have him."
 "Yaas, wathah!"

Ballantyne was close up to the wall now.
 It was not a high one. Ballantyne did not hesitate for a moment. He leaped at it, caught with his hands, and scrambled up.

The pursuers expected him to disappear on the other side. But he did not!

There was a sound of loud and angry barking from beyond the wall, and Blake burst into a breathless laugh.
 "He's stopped!"

Ballantyne remained sitting on the wall in dismay.
 The chains of St. Jim's arrived breathless, and looked over. Three or four savage-looking dogs were barking at Ballantyne, and leaping up in the endeavour to reach him with their teeth.

It was as much as Ballantyne's skin was worth to jump down amid the savage animals.
 "Got him!" gasped Jack Blake.

JIM BALLANTYNE looked down at the dogs, and looked back at the juniors. The angry look faded from his face. He was a sportsman, and he could take a defeat.

"You've done me," he said.
 "Yaas, wathah! Pway step down, deah boy."
 "I'll please myself about that," said Ballantyne.
 "You won't," said Blake grimly. "Here, you with the pitchfork, give him a prod or two, will you?"
 "Ees, dang him!" grinned the farmer's man.
 Ballantyne squirmed off the wall.
 "Hold on; I'm coming!"

He was on the ground in a moment, and the grasp of the juniors fastened upon him. The farmer's man reversed his pitchfork, with the evident intention of giving Ballantyne a drubbing with the handle; but Arthur Augustus D'Arcy interposed. He slipped a shilling into the horny hand of the son of toil, and the farmer's man grinned and took himself and his pitchfork off.

"Now, you're coming back to St. Jim's, young Ballantyne," said Blake. "Are you going to give your parole, or shall we march you home?"
 "I'm going to cut if I got a chance."
 "Take his arms, then."

And Ballantyne was marched away, with Blake holding one arm and Herries the other. Digby walked behind with D'Arcy, to cut off the escape of the new boy if he should contrive to get loose and bolt.

They entered the Rylcombe Road again, and proceeded in this order towards the school.

Ballantyne's eyes were very restless. He was looking for

(Continued on the next page.)



Result of the £50 "Gem" Football Competition.

A very large number of entries were received, and after very careful examination and checking of the lists, two readers tie for first place, having all correct, and thus dividing first and second prize.

It will be remembered that the first prize was £13, and second prize £6 10s. These amounts divided between the two successful competitors make two cash prizes of

£9 15s. to R. CLARK, Golf Place, Links Road, Tooting, S.W.

£9 15s. to G. A. CONST, 41, Gray's Inn Road, W.C.

WINNERS OF 5s. PRIZES.

The cash prizes of 5s. go to the following fifty-five readers with only one error, disposing of £13 15s.:

- W. Hodge, Elton Road, Bishopston, Bristol; H. Bloomfield, Norman Road, Greenwich; Ben Hamilton, Patambo Place, Cambusnethan, Wishaw, N.B.; Richard Williams, Bedeque Street, Belfast; E. J. Roe, Woburn House, Russell Avenue, St. Albans; W. Hamlyn, Wain Lane, Newton Abbot, Devon; H. E. Bailey, Stoughton Street, Highfields, Leicester; John Stride, Britannia Place, Bedford; A. Thomas, Golf Place, Links Road, Tooting, S.W.; Maxwell C. Sutherland, Grange Road, Ilford, Essex; R. Webster, Hatton Wall, Hatton Garden, E.C.; C. D. Const, Gray's Inn Road, W.C.; A. S. Martin, Radnor Street, Glasgow; S. Heath, Cavendish Road, Heavitree, Exeter; Miss Jean Salter, Harling Street, Camberwell, S.E.; H. Wynn, Castledine Road, Anerley, S.E.; Leonard Mortimer, Curzon Street, Nottingham; Charles Lewis, Portland Road, South Norwood, S.E.; Alfred Mortimer, Curzon Street, Nottingham; A. T. Jones, Stockwell Park Road, Brixton, S.W.; H. P. Greaves, Grange Street, Burton-on-Trent; Miss E. S. Briggs, Beechdale Road, Brixton Hill, S.W.; Jack Barker, Warnford Street, Wigan; Miss A. Barker, Warnford Street, Wigan; Harry Dixey, Great College Street, Camden Town, N.W.; C. Parsons, Hill Top, Norcot Road, Tilehurst, Berks; R. W. Ford, Sylvan Road, Hoe Street, Walthamstow, N.E.; Mrs. J. H. Barker, Warnford Street, Wigan; Fred J. Stroud, Fifth Street, Portsmouth; F. Cleveo, Fransfield Grove, Sydenham, S.E.; Chas. F. Widdrington, Wellmeadow Road, Catford, S.E.; H. Coulson, Francis Street, Nottingham Road, Derby; T. Rothwell, Dinorwic Road, Birkdale, Southport; David Wright, jun., Woodville Gardens, Langside, Glasgow; L. H. Spreckley, Hollis Street, New Basford, Nottingham; Frank Paine, Princes Street, Brighton; C. Const, Revelon Road, Brockley, S.E.; M. Chambers, South View, Melton Road, West Bridgford, Notts; E. Chambers, South View, Melton Road, West Bridgford, Notts; R. P. Crombie, Sidegate Lane, Haddington, N.B.; H. Swingler, Beech Avenue, Sherwood Rise, Nottingham; S. Swingler, Radford Road,

- Nottingham; John Craig, Gairbraid Avenue, Maryhill, Glasgow; Mrs. E. Manning, Beechdale Road, Brixton Hill, S.W.; T. Swingler, Beech Avenue, Sherwood Rise, Nottingham; Sydney H. Barker, Warnford Street, Wigan; Owen Jones, Stockwell Park Road, Brixton, S.W.; R. P. Crombie, Sidegate Lane, Haddington, N.B.; Jack Webster, Hatton Wall, Hatton Garden, E.C.; F. Chambers, South View, Melton Road, West Bridgford, Notts; L. H. Const, Gray's Inn Road, W.C.; T. A. Const, Gray's Inn Road, W.C.; W. Webster, Hatton Wall, Hatton Garden, E.C.; Arthur H. Const, Gray's Inn Road, W.C.; John E. Const, Gray's Inn Road, W.C.

Next come one hundred and forty-three readers with two errors. The division of the prize money among these one hundred and forty-three competitors works out within a fraction of 2s. 4d. each, so I have added a sum of £1 2s. 6d. to make the amount even, these readers thus receiving prizes of 2s. 6d. each.

TOTAL AMOUNT DISTRIBUTED.

	£	s.	d.
2 prizes of £9 15s.	18	10	0
55 " " 5s.	2	15	0
*143 " " 2s. 6d.	2	17	6
	£21	2	6

*Names and addresses of these winners will be published next week. Owing to pressure of space they have been unavoidably held over.

CORRECT LIST OF SOLUTIONS.

- Set 1.—Swan, Bell, Blott, Buckle, Walton, Key.
- Set 2.—Wood, Parker, Robinson, King, Maxwell, Gates.
- Set 3.—Blake, Miller, Handley, Wedlock, Needham, Hodges.
- Set 4.—Bridgeman, Ewing, Cotton, Dolby, Jarvis, Glover.
- Set 5.—Hammond, Powell, Liddell, Martin, Rhodes, Shand.
- Set 6.—Boyle, Steele, Lipsham, Peake, Hales, Boale.
- Set 7.—Biggar, Coxhead, Pickett, Spear, Bushell, Burch.
- Set 8.—McIntyre, Piercey, Bentley, Rayner, (Cancelled.) Bower.
- Set 9.—Sharpe, Mills, Curle, Garrett, Twigg, Lockhead.
- Set 10.—Fryer, Smith, Cannon, Ward, Fidler, Platt.
- Set 11.—Freeman, Tout, Barnes, Atterbury, Newlands, Saunders.
- Set 12.—Kitchen, Vincent, Millington, Windridge, Whittaker, Gofin.
- Set 13.—Hawkes, Yonson, Moles, Sutherland, Child, Bateup.

a chance to bolt, but the juniors held on to his arms in a way that was not to be argued with.

But at a corner in the lane there came a chance at last. The juniors crowded on to the path out of the way of a lumbering market-cart, and Ballantyne, with a tremendous wrench, tore himself loose and bolted.

"After him!" shrieked Blake.

Ballantyne dashed on, round the corner of the lane, and then there was a yell. A little gentleman in spectacles was walking towards the village, and Ballantyne, dashing round the corner, had rushed right into him and sent him flying.

He reeled back from the shock, and sat down in the mud; and Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, sat in the mud, too.

"Dear me! What has happened? Where are my glasses?"

"Collar him!" gasped Digby.

As Ballantyne staggered up he was collared. Blake helped Mr. Lathom to his feet, and Arthur Augustus picked up his glasses and handed them to him with a polite bow.

"Wh-h-what was it ran into me?" he exclaimed.

"I'm sorry, sir," said Jim.

The Form-master turned his spectacles upon the breathless new boy.

"Ah, it was you, Ballantyne! Oh, some more of your escapades, I suppose? You were forbidden to go beyond the school walls this afternoon."

Ballantyne was silent.

"You have run away again!"

Still the new boy did not speak.

Mr. Lathom's brow grew very stern.

"I am glad to see that your schoolfellows have prevented you from this act of disrespect to the college!" he exclaimed.

"You will come back with me, Ballantyne, and I shall take care that you do not escape again. I am ashamed of you!"

"I'm sorry, sir, but—"

"Not a word more. Come!"

And Mr. Lathom linked his arm in Ballantyne's, and the new boy was marched back to St. Jim's under the wing of the Form-master. Blake & Co. followed in silence.

"It's a licking for him, I expect," Blake remarked, as they entered the gates of St. Jim's. "But he's only got himself to thank."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And it would have been a worse licking if he had got away, and had to be hunted up and down the country before he was brought back. And he'd jolly well deserve it."

But it did not mean a licking, after all. Instead of that, Ballantyne was locked up in the Fourth Form dormitory; and Binks the boots was sent down to the village with a telegram.

The chums of Study No. 6 saw him go, and wondered. But they guessed the state of affairs, when a few hours later the station cab drove up with Mr. Ballantyne in it. The chums saw the old gentleman come in, and Arthur Augustus took off his hat very politely to him.

"He's come for Ballantyne!" Blake exclaimed, with conviction. "The Head's had enough of it—and so have we."

"Yaas, I wathah think you're wight, deah boy."

Blake certainly was right.

Mr. Ballantyne was shown into the Head's room, and Dr. Holmes shook hands with him cordially. But there was a determined look upon the doctor's face.

"I understand that James has been giving you trouble, Dr. Holmes," said Ballantyne, looking very worried.

"Yes, I must say so; hence my wire to you," said the Head. "He has made two attempts to run away, to my knowledge; perhaps others that I do not know of. On one occasion a boy in the Shell, in recapturing him, fell into a stream and has caught a severe chill, and is now laid up in the sanatorium. On the second occasion Master Ballantyne ran into his Form-master, and gave him a very severe shock. To be quite plain with you, I think James is a little too troublesome for St. Jim's."

Mr. Ballantyne nodded.

"I was afraid you would find him so," he said.

"I am willing to keep him, if you wish," said the doctor.

"But in that case I shall be compelled to adopt the severest measures with him. I shall flog him in public for his second attempt to escape, and shall curtail all his holidays. Do you wish me to proceed to such severe measures?"

Mr. Ballantyne looked very distressed.

"Dear me—dear me! Certainly not! The poor boy must not be flogged."

"As a matter of fact, Mr. Ballantyne, I think the punishment would be too severe for this peculiar case; though it would be the only way to check him. I am going to take a friend's liberty of speaking to you candidly."

"Pray go on."

"If the boy has such an intense desire to go to sea, why

not let him go? He will certainly get there sooner or later. If it is left till he comes of age, you cannot stop him then. He will go then, and become a sailor. And he will have spent years in cramming knowledge that will be useless to a sailor, and at the same time will be ignorant of all he might have learned to enable him to rise in his profession."

Mr. Ballantyne appeared to be struck by this remark.

"You are right," he said slowly. "I hoped that this longing for the sea would die away in time, but it appears now to be stronger than ever."

"That is undoubtedly the case."

"Then you would advise me to concede this point?"

"As a friend I should."

"Then I will do so. I had already thought of doing so if he failed here; and he certainly has failed."

Master James was sent for, and he was brought to the study in charge of the school sergeant. His face fell at the sight of his uncle, but the old gentleman's kindly smile reassured him.

"I hear that you have been giving your head-master a great deal of trouble, James."

The junior coloured deeply.

"I am sorry," he said. "I hope Dr. Holmes will believe that I am sorry. But—but, uncle, I—I can't stay here! I must go to sea. My father was a sailor, and I am sure he would wish me to follow his profession. If you would enter me on a training-ship I'd be as orderly and obedient as you could wish."

"I have decided to do so."

Jim's face lighted up wonderfully. He rushed at his uncle and hugged him.

"Hurrah!" he shouted, and the Head's study echoed again. "Hurrah! Good old uncle!"

"Dear me! You—you must not make such a noise in Dr. Holmes's study!" exclaimed the old gentleman.

"I—I am sorry, sir."

"I excuse you," said Dr. Holmes, with a smile. "You had better go and pack your box now, Ballantyne, and say good-bye to your friends. You will be returning to London with your uncle to-night."

"Thank you, sir—oh, thank you, uncle! You shall never regret this," said Jim earnestly. "I'll never be disobedient again—you shall see."

And he quitted the study.

He rushed into Study No. 6 with a whoop that made the chums of the Fourth jump up from their preparation.

"Hurrah! I'm going to sea!"

Blake had grasped a ruler, but he dropped it now.

"Are you?" he grunted. "Jolly good thing, too; it's saved you from a licking."

"Yaas, wathah! We shall all be sowwy to lose you—"

"Oh, draw it mild, Gussy!" said Dig. "We shall be jolly glad to have the study to ourselves again."

"Yaas, wathah! I am not denyin' that, Dig, but all the same we shall be sowwy to lose Ballantyne, and we hope we shall see him again."

"Oh, yes, rather!" said Blake heartily. "Any time you've got a run ashore, shipmate, you should give us a look in, and we'll stand you a study feed with all our heart."

"I won't forget!" grinned Ballantyne.

He packed his box with a light heart. Then he made his way to the sanatorium to say good-bye to Tom Merry.

Tom was sitting up in bed, propped with pillows, playing chess with Cousin Ethel. The hero of the Shell was looking decidedly better, and it was clear that his illness was not going to take a serious turn after all. Ballantyne came quietly in.

"I'm going," he said.

"Going? Where?"

"Home—and then to sea. It's all right."

Tom Merry held out his hand.

"Good!" he said. "I'm glad to hear it. Don't forget to give us a look in when you come ashore, you know."

And Cousin Ethel shook hands cordially with the would-be sailor.

"I'm sorry you owe all this to me," said Ballantyne.

Tom Merry laughed.

"Don't mention it; I'm comfy."

And he certainly did look comfy, as Ballantyne glanced back from the door. The soft tones of Cousin Ethel were heard as she moved a piece.

"Check!"

"By Jove!" said Tom Merry.

Ballantyne closed the door.

And a quarter of an hour later St. Jim's had seen the last of the junior who was the son of a sailor!

THE END.

(Another long, complete school story of Tom Merry & Co. next Thursday. Please order your copy of "The Gem" Library in advance. Price One Penny.)

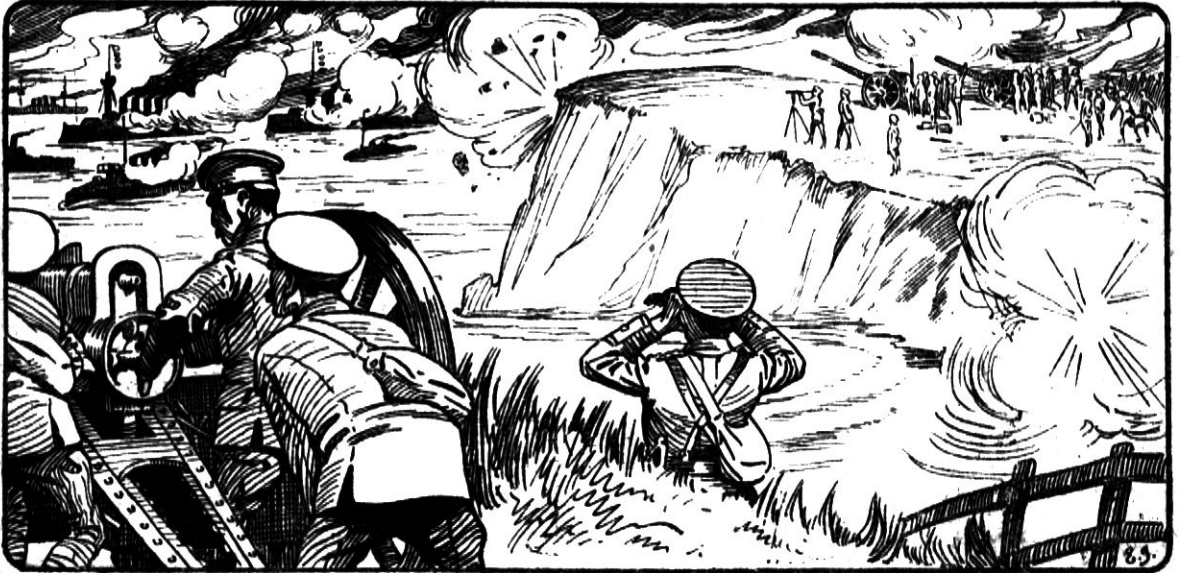
NEXT THURSDAY:

"THE TERRIBLE THREE'S REVOLT."

A Double-Length School Tale of Tom Merry & Co.

Please tell your Friends about this Story.—Ed.

BRITAIN INVADED!



A Powerful and Stirring War Story.

THE FIRST CHAPTERS.

The Greyfriars School Cadet Corps, commanded by Captain Sam Villiers, scout, are standing about in small groups, talking anxiously, when the clattering of hoofs is heard, and a young farmer from one of the homesteads on the cliffs comes galloping in on a sweating horse, and reins up hastily.

"The turniners are on us!"

he cries. "There's a whole fleet o' tugs an' barges an' ships o' war headin' in for Frinton Gap, wi' thousands o' men aboard! They're Germans, an' they're goin' to land!"

Captain Sam Villiers was at his side in a moment.

"How far off are they?"

"Four mile out when I left, and comin' in fast. I've tried to send messages at the telegraph offices, but none can't get through. They tells me all the wires is cut. Let me go! I must push on!"

Nearly all the boys are killed or captured when the first German column attack and capture the school.

However, Sam Villiers and his brother, Steve, manage to escape and gain the British lines.

General Sir Sholto Nugent manages for a time to keep the Germans in check.

At last Sir Sholto has enough men to fight a decisive battle, and makes a glorious victory of it. Bad news, however, comes from the north. There the British have suffered a terrible defeat.

The British Army retreats on Harlow in order to fight a decisive battle—as the German forces have commenced their march on London.

The battle opens, and in spite of heroic efforts, the Britishers are forced to retreat before the huge force of the Germans.

The two boy scouts watch, with white, drawn faces as troop after troop of Lord Gethin's scattered force retreat over the hills.

(Now go on with the Story.)

Surrender Demanded!

Over all the country the regiments that had never known defeat were now in flight, and what it cost their officers to bid them take the backward step none will ever know. Not one but would have preferred to stay and be wiped out of existence rather than give way. And yet they had to go.

Men of brass and steel, let alone flesh and blood, could not have held their own against that awful fire, nor the overpowering strength of the massed German forces under Von Krantz. It is of little avail now to give all the details of that fatal battle, nor how the British held out till regiment after regiment was annihilated.

The huge military machine which the Kaiser had spent his whole life in perfecting, and which had eluded the watch-dogs of the sea while the British Lion slept, now reaped its full harvest. The gallant little force of brave men, which was all Britain kept to guard the heart of her Empire, was swamped and thrown back.

"They're givin' way!" said Stephen, a lump in his throat. "Surely they'll rally, an' make their last stand, even though they're all wiped out!"

"I've no doubt Gethin would like that better," said Devine thickly, "an' he'd choose to die with 'em. But it's his duty to save what he can of them now, for there may be another chance later. He's lost too many; it's only butchery for him if he stays."

The bitterness of death was on the watchers as they saw the great retreat, and heard the bugles sounding the "Retire!" all along the line, while the German guns thundered after the scattered troops. Dreadful as the rout was, Lord Gethin had yet handled his men with masterly skill, for the Germans had counted on surrounding the British Army, and forcing a complete surrender. By the one loophole open to him Gethin skillfully averted that disaster, though at great loss, and he swiftly led his stricken forces clear and left them the way of escape open.

The Fusiliers, under orders, sent by galloper, left the trenches, and had to join in the general retreat. It was the

more bitter for them, since they had just tasted the fruits of victory. But the little triumph they had gained had to go down before the great disaster.

"They've struck their blow home at us at last," said Devine grimly, as he turned to go with his men. "The Germans have broken our last defence, and London's at their mercy!"

The Fusiliers left swiftly and in sullen silence; but Sam had no heart to go with them. He sat down on the breast-work and buried his face in his hands.

"I wonder where they are now," he thought bitterly. "those rulers of ours who cut down the country's defences, an' sneered at better men who warned 'em what was coming. The ones who believe Britain's always in the wrong, an' her enemies always right—I suppose they're satisfied, sittin' at home in Pall Mall, now that they've brought us to this!"

He choked as he sat in the deserted trenches and listened dully to the sound of the broken army retreating, his hands over his eyes to shut out the sight. He felt morally and physically sick, and I think at that moment he would have welcomed a bullet from a German rifle. Then he was aroused by Stephen's arm on his shoulder, and heard his brother's clear, boyish voice.

"Buck up, old boy!" said Stephen. "We've lost the fight, but we haven't lost the Empire! Those swabs over there are victors for to-day; but we've got 'em on this little island of ours, with the sea round us. How many do you think will ever get back to Germany?"

"By gum, you're right!" exclaimed Sam, springing to his feet. "They've beaten our little army, that never was beaten before, but they've the whole nation to face now!"

"We're not whacked yet, by long chalks," said Stephen; "so you and I will make ourselves useful, instead of sittin' down an' groanin'. Let's get away southward, for it won't do us any good to be nabbed by Von Krantz's men. The Kaiser & Co. have got too much against us."

"Let's be doin'!" cried Sam. "I shall go mad if I sit here an' think about it! Snaffle the breech-pin of that gun, Steve. We won't let 'em make use of the piece again; it's our trophy. Then we'll foot it, an' we haven't much time, either, for the Uhlans are scatterin' out after prisoners. By gum! What horse is that over there?"

"It's your black charger, or I'm a Dutchman!" cried Stephen, pausing as he breeched the gun to glance at a tall, black horse, two hundred yards away, that was cantering wildly along, with flying stirrups. "Of course, he broke from the Hussars' lines when they retired. He's lookin' for you!"

Sam put two fingers in his mouth and gave the long, rippling whistle that his horse knew well. At the first sound of it the black charger halted sharply, threw up his head, and, with a loud neigh, came galloping down towards his young master, wild with joy at finding Sam again.

"Look sharp with that gun, Steve. Uhlans comin' over the hill!" said Sam impatiently.

Stephen, however, had found one last shell in the near side-box, and was seized with a sudden idea of firing a parting shot at the enemy. He knew little of the breech-action of large guns, however, and did not close the block properly. Luckily for him, he stood a little aside as he pulled the lever, for the natural result was that the charge exploded backwards as well as forwards, and blew the breech clean out with a tremendous explosion, the mere force of which knocked Stephen head-over-heels backwards.

"Confounded young ass! What d'you want to mess about with it for?" cried Sam anxiously, grabbing him by the scruff of the neck as the boy rose slowly, and hauling him bodily across the saddle-bow. The black charger bounded ahead with his double load, and shot away like an arrow round the shoulder of the hill, pursued by a spatter of bullets from some sharpshooters across the valley.

"Great Scott!" said Stephen, spitting out some dust and gravel. "What a rotten gun! Never mind, it's done for for good now. All Woolwich Arsenal couk'n't mend it."

"If the breech-piece had hit you it'd have knocked you into kingdom come," grunted Sam. "Sit tight now. The Uhlans are streakin' out after us!"

"We'll shake that lot off before you can say knife," returned Stephen, looking back at the distant lancers. "Their horses are done up."

"They're pullin' up on us fast, with your weight all forward," returned Sam. "I've got to get you a mount, if we're to escape 'em. There are plenty goin' more's the pity."

There were indeed, for many a horse whose rider had long since bit the dust was galloping at large, and not far away to the right a little troop of wild-eyed chargers that had gathered together were crossing the path of the boys.

Sam swerved after them, and, singling out a big dappled grey, he rode alongside and caught the bridle.

Stephen, thoroughly shaken by the explosion of the gun, did not take three seconds to jump down and mount the troophorse. He shortened the stirrups as he rode, and in a very short time the two mounts were going as hard as they could, neck and neck, and the boys had such a good start that the Uhlans were forced to give up the chase and retire discomfited.

"Good-bye, you flat-hatted swabs!" said Stephen, waving his hand at the distant horsemen. "It's been your turn to-day, but we'll have a picnic waitin' for you before long that'll make you wish yourselves back in your giddy Fatherland! The British Lion takes more lickin' than you can give him!"

For a long time the boys rode on in silence, for their thoughts were gloomy enough. The dusk gradually closed down on that fatal day, and Sam struck out to the eastward, so as to keep in the country he knew best, for he was getting out of the district that was familiar to him. He thus skirted the left flank of the retiring British forces, and saw no more of them, save for one or two scouts or squads of mounted infantry.

"Where are we bound, Sam?" said Stephen at last. "London," replied his brother shortly; "the trouble'll be there now. There'll be no more fightin' in the open for a time."

"Won't Gethin make a last halt on the outskirts, an' try to check 'em?"

"How can he? The light corps of Von Krantz's army are hot on his heels now. Can't you hear the rearguard fightin'? The German commander'll have his guns on the northern heights in no time—there's no chance of stoppin' him out that way. Most likely he's there now. You may say he's got London already. That battle decided it."

"What will Gethin's force do—all that's left of it? Will it go into London?"

"No, of course not—it's no use there. He'll have to fall back south-westward, an' worry Von Krantz all he can. He won't be able to do much, though. There'll be plenty of troops in London—Irregulars an' Volunteers mostly."

"I s'pose Von Krantz'll be in the City to-morrow, then?" "Not he—until he's bombarded it! You can't march into a great city, with traps at every corner, an' street fightin' an' snippin' all over the place, until you've smashed it up well, an' driven the defenders back. Why, he'd get whole regiments wiped out if he tried it now!"

"What will he do, then?"

"Don't know yet; I'm not his private secretary," said Sam impatiently. "Maybe he'll try a bluff. But he's got his scheme all out an' dried an' ready, you can bet on that. The Germans had every step mapped out, an' every move arranged for, before they started across the North Sea. Their spies an' agents have been giving 'em the office for years past, an' they know Middlesex as well as they know Berlin. I'd bet even money the Kaiser is with Von Krantz now. He wasn't much hurt at Maldon."

"Pity we couldn't have sunk that yacht when she came sneakin' up the Blackwater," said Stephen moodily. "Those are the London lights ahead, ain't they? Don't see many of 'em, compared to what they used to be."

"No, trade an' everything's half paralysed, I expect," returned Sam. "That's Buckhurst Hill ahead—we're well out to the eastward."

They cantered on steadily, wondering what the morrow would bring. Both of them were tired out and bone-weary, but they pushed on till they came to the long rows of little villas in the eastern suburbs. The streets seemed almost deserted there, but further in, towards Leyton and Stratford, the swarming crowds filled the streets, and the boys, after being three times stopped by eager wayfarers, who caught at their bridles and demanded news, took to the back streets to avoid more delay.

Sam was anxious to get well in before putting up, but they were too dead-beat to go farther. Many places that usually took in travellers were shut up and abandoned, but the boys dismounted at a large commercial hostelry, where they and their horses were provided for. Their host eagerly demanded news of the fight, and the boys gave it him briefly, and demanded food.

"You're over-young to be at the front," said the landlord suspiciously. "What corps might you belong to?"

Sam told him. "What! The two youngsters that first tackled the Germans when they landed—the cadets that blew up the seawall, an' swamped out Von Adler!" exclaimed the landlord. "Gosh! But I reckernise yer faces—you've bin in every paper since the war started, portraits an' all! I'm proud to welcome yer, an', though grub an' horse-fodder's at

jewellery prices now, blow me tight if I takes a penny off you! You shall have the best I've got!"

"Thank-you're a good sort!" said Sam, nodding wearily, and trying to keep his eyes open; "but we aren't too poor to pay. If you'd do us a good turn, don't send any talkers in to worry us. Food an' a place to lie is all we want—any sort, so long as we get it at once."

The boys saw their horses stabled and fed, and then, before they were able to eat much themselves, they fell asleep over the victuals. It was a common enough state of affairs with them during the stress and strain of the campaign, and, thanks to their sound limbs and iron-hard condition, it did not affect them much.

Outside, beyond the reach of the great town, the mutter of far-distant musketry was still to be heard, as the landlord and his stableman carried the unconscious boys to their beds, but neither of them were in any condition to speculate on the fighting.

When they awoke it was broad daylight, and the brothers found they had slept eleven hours. Defeat or victory made little difference to the raging hunger that consumed them, and, though the fare they were able to get was poor enough, they made a hearty meal, and saddled their horses themselves. They could not make the landlord take any payment, and they parted from him with a hearty farewell.

"We're all poor these days," he said, "an' if you've money as you want to part with, give it to some poor chap that's had no food for days. I'm proud to ha' put up the two smartest kids that ever rode with the British Army. There'll be little enough bread for anybody till those German demons are trodden under or shoved back into the sea, an' I'll share my crust with anybody that helps to do it. I'm a cripple myself, but if they takes London I stays here till I see 'em come up the street, an' I'll make one vacancy in their ranks before they shoots me down!"

"There are plenty of his way of thinking," said Sam as the boys rode off westward; "an' that's where the Kaiser'll find the shoe pinches, when he fancies he's got us beaten. There isn't a man who won't give his life before he'll knuckle under to the German flag once the country finds itself cornered."

"Strikes me it's about as cornered now as ever it's likely to be," said Stephen. "Why, London looks like a dead city, as far as business goes."

"Nothin' dead about the people yet," remarked Sam. "Look at that mob round the shop there—what are they up to?"

As the boys rode past they saw the place was a provision shop, which had been shut up, and an angry, starved-looking crowd were raging round it, tearing down the shutters, and smashing the windows and doors. They poured into the shop, several of them being trodden under foot and half-killed in the process, and soon the entire place was stripped, the mob dividing up the goods among themselves.

"By gum, this is too thick!" exclaimed Sam, reining up. "Isn't there anybody to stop them?"

"Not a soul!" said a well-dressed man grimly, who was standing by. "The police are overpowered, an' you can't stop the mob, for they've risen all over London. You can't blame those fellows there, can you?" he added. "Since the first defeats, lots of the shopkeepers put up their prices to anything they chose. They thought they saw a chance to make their fortunes. You can't get a loaf of bread for eightpence, or a tin of meat for eight shillings. Result is, those men have been seein' their families starving at home, and they're out to get food for them at any cost. I hope they'll loot every shop in the neighbourhood!"

"Why aren't arms served out to them, an' a place found for them in the fighting-line?" said Stephen. "They could do some good there, an' be fed, too."

"You don't expect our precious Government to do anything as sensible as that, do you?" said the man bitterly. "It'll come to it soon, though, I fancy. They'll take the field with brickbats and pickaxes, if they can get nothing better, when the Germans enter London."

"They all seem pretty sure Von Krantz means to march in," said Stephen, as they rode on.

"Yes," said Sam; "but they don't realise that he won't do it till London's pulped into a jelly by his big guns. We don't get much news down here among the houses. I wish we could find out what's goin' to happen. There's been no sound of firin' all this morning."

"What's that mean?"

"Most likely they've arranged a truce or something, an' they're discussin' terms."

"Terms!" exclaimed Stephen sharply. "You don't mean we're goin' to surrender!"

"Not likely, I should hope," said Sam, with a grim smile; "though I dare say Von Krantz is countin' on it. He don't see what chance we've got now. Other nations have made that mistake when they tackled Britain."

"Yes, they complain we don't know when we're beaten," said Sam. "I say, look yonder! That's a troop of the Essex Yeomanry—dad's corps!"

Both boys at once galloped up abreast the troop, eager for news of their father. The men were weary, ragged, and stained with battle; horses badly used-up; but they rode erect as lances, and the brothers ranged quickly alongside Sergeant Scott, who had been with Captain Villiers in the first troop.

"Where's the captain?" cried Sam.

"Wounded, sir, but not dangerously," said the sergeant, saluting, as did the whole troop. "We had a set-to yesterday after the fight with two troops of Prussian Dragoons that tried to cut out one of our batteries. Captain Villiers led us in, an' we went slap at 'em. The guns were saved, but the captain was cut over the sword-arm an' left thigh. He'll get over it all right, sir."

"Good for the old dad!" said Stephen, his eyes glistening. "But where is he?"

"We brought him in, sir, an' he's now in Charing Cross, which is now a military hospital."

"Thank you, sergeant! Come on, Steve, let's get to him!" cried Sam. And the boys turned and rode south-westward by the shortest route they could. They were near Piccadilly Circus, having ridden right past the City, and, turning down through Leicester Square, they saw a newsboy running with a pile of papers, and shouting:

"Evenin' News! Speshul! Germans ahtside London! Von Krantz demands surrender! Latest news!"

"By gum!" said Sam, reining up. "We must get at this, Steve. The dad'll want news, too!"

A crowd had already besieged the boy, and were almost fighting for the papers at half-a-crown each. Sam rode right in amongst them, and was in time to get hold of a copy, which he took aside with Stephen, and opened it out as he sat on his horse. He read it aloud, his brother listening eagerly:

TWENTY GERMAN BATTERIES THREATEN LONDON!

'KAISER DEMANDS SURRENDER! 'ARE WE BEATEN?'

"Von Krantz, the German Commander-in-Chief, has followed up the crushing defeat he inflicted on Lord Gethin yesterday, and is now holding the northern heights with his full force.

"On the hills to the north of London are ten batteries of the heaviest and most powerful siege artillery owned by any army in the world, and ten other batteries of high-power field guns. The position is impregnable, and it is said that the Germans are masters of the situation. That we have yet to learn. Is our shame complete, or are there still worse things in store for us?"

"Von Krantz, we learn on the highest authority, has despatched the following demands to Lord Ripley, and also formally to the Lord Mayor:

"All British troops in London at present to disarm and surrender to General Von Krantz, at Highgate.

"All defences to be removed and dismantled, and London to submit at once to German military rule.

"The Mansion House to be surrendered as headquarters to the German staff. The Lord Mayor to surrender as hostage to General von Krantz.

"The keys of the Bank of England to be delivered to the German Commander-in-Chief.

"Further negotiations will then follow.

"Two hours allowed for consideration of General von Krantz's demands. If, at the end of that time, the British colours on the Mansion House are not hauled down, in token of surrender, the bombardment of London will commence without further parley."

"Two hours!" exclaimed Sam. "And the message was sent in at ten! It wants only six minutes to the hour now!"

"They'll never surrender, will they?" cried Stephen, his face pale with anxiety. "They'll never give London to the Kaiser without a blow?"

"Heaven forbid!" said Sam, riding on rapidly. "And yet one never knows nowadays what they'll do. The flags are still flying!"

The Mansion House was, of course, not in sight; but on every flagstaff, and from a window of nearly every house, the Union Jack fluttered in the breeze, while crowds of wayfarers gathered together at the corners and cheered for the colours. Many of them were armed.

The war-worn uniforms of the boys raised for them many a shout as they passed, and they were recognised by several of the crowds, and were cheered to the echo. Not a man there but was willing and eager to strike a blow for his city, though all knew that execution was the penalty. There was

no mistaking the temper of the people, and many threats were heard that if the authorities dared surrender, the Government offices would be pulled down and burnt by the mob, and the law taken into their own hands.

"What's the answer?" cried a thousand voices. But they knew they would learn it before the newspapers could publish it. The reply would be plain for all to see.

Here, in the West End and West Central, business was not so abandoned as it had been in the East. The streets were far emptier than usual, and many of the shops were shut. Cabs there were none—nearly all the horses had been seized and bought in by the War Office long ago—but motor-omnibuses were still plying and carrying passengers; a few dray-horse vans were working, and one or two private carriages.

"Twelve o'clock!" cried Stephen, as they rode down the Charing Cross Road. A hush of silence, of breathless expectancy, seemed to hang over the huge city. Then away from the north came the sound of a deep heavy boom. The bombardment of London had commenced.

That one shot was followed by a cannonade that seemed to shake the very sky. The boys stood listening for some minutes to the sound that few in the great city had ever dreamed they would hear—the cannon of an enemy at their very gates. "That's from the hills out beyond Highgate," said Sam gloomily; "they're shellin' Islington an' Clerkenwell, by the sound of it."

Suddenly a second bombardment broke out, the distant sound of guns coming from quite another direction. A long, whirring shriek was heard high in the air overhead, and a shell crashed into a thousand pieces somewhere beyond them.

"They're pitching their fire right home into the heart of us!" cried Stephen, as the brothers cantered out into Trafalgar Square, and even as they did so the unseen German guns opened in full chorus. They seemed to be making the Nelson Column and Charing Cross their mark in that quarter, and a fearful rain of high-explosive shells came dropping into the open streets and the great square.

A troop of Yeomanry, crossing the square, lost several men by the bursting of one huge projectile; but the wayfarers of the streets, taken by surprise, suffered most. They ran for their lives in all directions. A shell burst underneath a brougham, blowing it clean over on its side, and another deadly forty-pounder projectile crashed into a Vanguard omnibus that was racing across, and hurled many of its passengers to their death.

"Ride for the church!" cried Stephen. And as the brothers set spurs to their horses a small boy, in a piteous state of fright, came running blindly across them to try and escape the crashing shells.

"Here, young 'un, jump up in front!" cried Sam. And, catching the boy by the shoulder, the young scout lifted him on to the black horse and galloped for the shelter of the playgrounds beside St. Martin's Church. A shell burst with a deafening crash in front of them, and the black charger, with its double load, reared wildly and pawed the air.

The Capture of the Spy.

For one moment Sam could not have told whether he and the boy, or the horse, or all three were blown bodily into the next world, so stunning was the force of the explosion.

But the little fellow across his saddle-bow screamed loudly with fright, and the next moment the charger brought his fore-hoofs to the ground again, whinnying desperately, and shied away to the left. The horse was badly cut across the chest by flying fragments of shell, and was bleeding freely.

"Sam," cried Stephen, who had been several lengths behind at the moment, "are you wounded? My heavens, I thought you must be blown to bits!"

"Don't think I'm hurt!" gasped Sam, coughing as though his lungs were rent apart by the poisonous fumes.

"How on earth did it miss you?"

"Some of their shells are too powerful—they just blow into dust, an' don't do much damage," said Sam, drawing his sleeve across his face. "My skin's all peppered with iron-powder as fine as flour. If it had been an ordinary shell, I should be sausage-meat by now."

"That was ordinary enough, anyhow," put in Stephen, as a larger shell crashed against the column and blew away a mass of masonry that made the mighty stone pillar look as if a giant had bitten a piece out of its side. "Let's get out of this."

"You aren't hurt, kiddy, are you?" said Sam, to the little fellow in front of him, as they galloped away again, clattering right over the pavements.

"I don't fink so," gasped the youngster, who was trembling visibly; and then he pulled himself together. "I ain't afraid of the g-guns," he gulped, trying to sit up; "my daddy's a soldier. He's in the Fusiliers—Sergeant Kelly."

"Is he, by gum!" said Sam, as they turned the corner and rode swiftly round by the playground near the church. "Then your father'll tell you how he and I nearly caught the Kaiser in Maldon Town when he comes back after we've whacked the Germans. Hear that, Steve? Son of Kelly the big Irishman! Where d'you live, my little man?"

"With muvver, in the Borough. She moved there after Colchester was burnt. She sent me in to try an' get news of farver," said the small boy; and he tried to keep back his tears.

"Then you toddle back there as soon as you can," said Sam, setting him down. "You're out of reach of the shells now. Give your mother this bank-note to help out her allowance, an' tell her Sergeant Kelly's safe. He's hurt, but not dangerously, an' he's lyin' in hospital at Witham. He'll soon be out."

The small boy ran off in high glee at the news, and the two brothers made their way round to Charing Cross Hospital. The shells were dropping into the Strand now, bursting scores of panes of glass at every explosion, blowing whole storey-walls in, and creating wild havoc. The people everywhere were hurrying southwards towards the river in confusion and terror, taking with them what goods they could save.

Many were too scared to take anything, and simply took to their heels, leaving their rooms or shops behind. But for the tragedy and the shame that had fallen on London, it would have been comic to see them running like rabbits as the shells burst among the housetops.

"Yes, run, you fat beggars!" exclaimed Stephen. "Hook it while there's time. Now, p'r'aps you know what it's been like for us at the front for a couple of weeks past, while you've been tellin' each other how you'd have fought the giddy battles if you'd had Gethin's job!"

"I only hope they're the ones that voted for cuttin' down the Army an' Navy," said Sam grimly, watching a big fat man in black clothes running and screaming like a woman every time a shell burst within a hundred yards of him. "Gosh! But the Germans are pitching it in hot! Hitch the horses in the shelter of the alley-way here while we go an' see dad."

They presented themselves at the hospital, which was so rapidly filling up with maimed and broken humanity from the shell-torn streets that the boys felt ashamed to ask leave to visit. Indeed, there would have been no chance of getting permission had they not been recognised, and, after some delay, they reached their father's bedside, and there was a heartfelt greeting between the three.

"Only a chipped arm and thigh, laddies," he said. "The Dragoons cut me about a bit. As soon as they'll let me move, I shall clear out of here and make way for some of these poor fellows they're bringing in. I've heard the news. But tell me what you've done."

Sam told his father in a few words what had happened since they last met, and Captain Villiers' face flushed with pride.

"Well done, my sons!" he said. "The Old Country'll beat 'em yet. We shall never knuckle under to the Kaiser!"

"But aren't you in danger here, dad, while they're bombarding us?" said Stephen anxiously. "Can't we move you out?"

"The hospital's pretty safe. The beggars have enough decency to respect the Red Cross flag, and it's flying high enough for them to see. I shall soon mend, an', please Heaven, I'll be in time to help hunt those rascals into the sea at last! We'll ride together, boys, on that day!"

A nursing sister came forward, and the boys were obliged to go, after a hurried and affectionate leave-taking. They reached their horses, and rode out again by way of the narrower streets till they reached the Strand near St. Clement's Danes. The bombardment was still continuing, but the heaviest fire was now concentrated on the City, and few shells were falling where the boys were. The streets were far more empty, for most of the people had fled south across the bridges.

There were still a good many about, however, and as the boys neared the Law Courts they saw, to their surprise, a breathless and bareheaded man in torn clothes running blindly along the road, and gasping with terror.

"My aunt!" said Stephen. "If he's as scared as all that now, what'll he be when the shells really begin droppin' round him?"

"He isn't running for that," returned Sam. "There's a mob after him. Look, they've nearly got hold of him! Let's see what the row is."

A mad, infuriated mob of fifteen or twenty men were chasing the runaway with all their might, giving vent to hoarse shouts of rage as they ran. The fugitive seemed to have lost his head with terror, for he tried to bolt into a closed door, and was at once seized and held fast by the crowd.

"Lynch him! German spy!" shouted a dozen voices. "Up with him!"

"I'm not!" cried the captive wildly, the breath nearly buffeted out of him by the treatment he was getting. "I tell you that man's the spy, there! You fools, I'm a Britisher!"

"Liar! If you are one, you're a spy just the same! String him up!" yelled the crowd, beside themselves with anger. "Bring that rope here! Chuck it over the lamp-post!"

With deadly swiftness a noose was placed round the neck of the struggling captive, an active youth shinned up one of the tall electric light standards, passed one end of the rope over the ironwork, and let the cord down again.

"By gum, I can't stand this!" said Sam. "How do they know the poor beggar's a spy? He don't look like one. Come on, Steve!"

Sam spurred his charger right into the mob, with Stephen close behind him, and caught the rope with his hand just as three of the crowd were about to sway on it.

"Hold hard! Give the man a chance to show if he's a spy or not!" he cried.

"Get back, will you? Hands off the rope!" shouted the crowd, surging up round the boys. "What right have you to interfere?"

"The right of the King's Service!" said Sam. "Come, lads, you're all Britons, aren't you—you don't want to murder a man if he's innocent? Let somebody prove he's a spy before you lynch him! Who accuses him? What have you got to say, prisoner?"

"I'm no spy!" cried the man earnestly. "I'm a compositor on the 'Daily Mirror,' and all the comps in Fleet Street know me. I—"

"Liar! He's a spy of the cursed foreigners who're wreckin' London and ruinin' us all!" cried a voice close by. "String him up, lads, an' pay one of 'em out!"

"Up with him!" roared the mob, stung into rage again by the bitter words. But Sam hung on to the rope and drew his revolver.

"I tell you he's the spy!" cried the captive, wrenching one arm free and pointing at the man who had called on them to hang him. "I saw him in Chancery Lane signalling to another man who I know is a German, and I raised the cry of 'Spy!' When you came after us, he turned the cry on me as if you went for me—an' like a fool, I got frightened an' ran for it. I swear it's true!"

The crowd howled him down, but Sam darted one glance at the man whom the prisoner pointed to, and who was wedged in the mob. A startled exclamation broke from his lips, for that one look showed him his former German master at Greyfriars.

"It's Frittheim!" cried Stephen, and as the words left his lips, the man caught Sam's eye and turned white as death.

"By gum, the prisoner's right!" exclaimed Sam, spurring his horse through the crowd right up to Frittheim. "You've laid hands on the wrong man, lads. This is the German master of Greyfriars School, and a spy even before the war! It was he who signalled the news of the invasion from the old tower, for I caught him in the act, and it was he who cut the telegraph-wires at Frinton!"

"What!" roared the mob. "It's true!" cried Stephen. "An' he's turned you on to this man to save himself when he was spotted in the street, an', like a pack of fools, you've grabbed the wrong one."

Frittheim, now pale and trembling, tried to put on a bold front and denounce the boys as spies themselves. But the crowd turned on him like tigers. Many of them had read in the papers the story of the first warnings from Greyfriars and the landing at Frinton, and they remembered Frittheim's name. They were in no mood to weigh evidence—with the enemy at their gates they were ready to give short shrift to any spy, and they drowned his cries in an angry clamour.

"Up with him, then! Let the other one go, and swing him up in the rope! Death to all spies!"

But thoroughly as Frittheim deserved it, Sam's stomach rose at the thought of seeing him hung from a lamp-post by an enraged mob. All the soldierly instincts of the boy revolted at the idea, and he bent over and seized Frittheim by the shoulder just as they were dragging him under the rope.

"Hold on there!" cried Sam. "He's my prisoner more than yours, and I'm going to hand him over to the military authorities to be decently court-martialled and shot, if that's his fate."

"Get back, you puppy! He shall be hanged, an' before another minute's up!" shouted the crowd, their wrath turning upon Sam as they surged round. "Bring him to the crossbar!"

"An' I say you'll do nothing of the sort," said Sam; and, bending down, he jerked Frittheim across the front of his saddle and spurred his horse ahead. Stephen unslung his

carbiné and swung it round him, clearing a space. The crowd rallied again, furious with rage, and Sam drew his revolver.

It was an awkward moment for the boys. The enraged mob was powerful enough to pull them to pieces, and Sam could hardly bring himself to fire on his own countrymen. He saw their point of view, too, but he did not mean to surrender Frittheim to them.

"Let go of him!" roared the crowd. "Put him down an' drop that pistol, or we'll swing the pair o' you up beside him! Who are you to interfere?"

"Lieutenant and Sergeant Villiers, of the Greyfriars Cadets!" cried Sam. "We caught him before ever a German landed, and he escaped us after. Now we've got him again, an' he's our prisoner by right!"

How Sam Called at the War Office.

There was a moment's silent surprise, and then a roaring cheer from the crowd.

"What! The young rips that shelled the Germans at Frinton, an' caught Salzburg at Maldon! Are you them?"

"It's true! I know 'em by their pictures in the newspapers!" yelled more than one voice in the throng. They flocked round eagerly, shouting with delight.

"Three cheers for the young bulldogs! Shout, boys! The kids that made the Germans run!"

"They've got the right to take the spy, anyhow!" roared a big man, climbing on the base of the lamp-post. "Who says they haven't?"

"They know what they're about!" yelled a dozen voices. "Let 'em alone, they're all right! Chair 'em down the street!"

"Thank ye lads—there's no time for that!" called Sam. "Too much work ahead of us all. Clear a way through, there's good fellows!" he added, disarming Frittheim of a revolver that was in the man's hip pocket.

"But you ain't goin' to let the spy go?" cried a voice. "Not any! But I'm going to see him put in the right hands, as we'd all wish to be if the Germans caught us—not that we're spies."

"Clear the way for the young 'uns!" shouted a dozen men, roughly making a passage through the crowd. "They're right, sure enough! Good-luck to the Villiers brothers!"

"The same to you!" said Stephen, as he rode through them behind his brother. "And here's a parting tip. Get a gun apiece, arm yourselves, an' stand by to help the Old Country in her trouble; that's a heap better than cheerin' us, or cheerin' the flag, or cheerin' yourselves. There are cargoes of rifles comin' into South London."

The boys set spurs to their horses, and cantered away down through the Temple, and westwards once more along the Embankment, where the shells of the enemy scarcely reached. Great crowds of scared citizens, old men, women, and children, were in full flight across the bridges, making for the shelter of South London. As soon as the young scouts were clear of the Temple, Frittheim, who was lying across Sam's saddle bow like a sack, began to struggle violently, and all but freed himself.

"Now, look here," said Sam, dropping his reins, and pressing a revolver-muzzle to the spy's neck, "I'm not goin' to have any nonsense with you! If there's the smallest chance of your escapin' I shall plug you without any further parley."

"Let me go, I tell you—let me go!" cried Frittheim hoarsely. "It is all a mistake! I never was a spy, and I am not one now!"

"Considerin' I caught you signalin' with the Kaiser's private code at Greyfriars, an' first learnt of the comin' invasion by it, that strikes me as a pretty average lie," returned Sam. "You're only one of a hundred who got things ready for this raid while you were livin' on us, but I reckon you're one of the most important of 'em. An' what devilment you've been up to here in London since then I don't know, but you won't do any more of it."

"Put me down!" gasped the spy, breaking into incoherent curses. "I was your master once at Greyfriars—you cannot give me up!"

"Shut up, old Baked Fritters," said Stephen, "an' be thankful we saved you from bein' hung on the lamp-post. Many a better man than you is dead now through your dirty work; an' now you're caught you'd better take what comes an' not whine."

The spy relapsed into sullen silence, and Sam, leaving the reins on his charger's neck, and guiding him with his knees, kept a strict watch over him as they rode along.

"Where are you goin' to coop him?" asked Stephen. "Horse Guards' Barracks ought to be the nearest place," said Sam. "No good bothering any troops who are out on the march with captured spies."

"Leas trouble'd to chuck him in the river, an' let him swim to Germany!" grunted his brother.

"No," said Sam abruptly; "he's worked mischief enough. We owe it to our country to see he does no more. A fightin' man I respect, whatever his country, but a spy's another thing. If it hadn't been for him and his likes the streets wouldn't be full of slaughtered Londoners to-day. He shall have justice—no more or less."

To the Horse Guards they went straightway as fast as they could, but when they arrived they learned there was practically no one in charge who could attend to such business, for the troops were all out on service, and the barracks were now a military hospital. Sam was puzzled.

"Take the beggar right into Pall Mall now we're here," said Stephen, "and hand him over to the War Office. They ought to be glad to have him," added the boy ironically, "considerin' he knew all about the invasion before they did. He might teach 'em something."

"Good idea of yours, Steve," said Sam, wheeling round. "They ought to get him as good a court-martial an' firing-party as anybody, an' they're the bosses, anyhow. Look here, Fritthem, are you goin' to keep steady, or must I shoot you? It'll save me a lot of trouble."

A short interval brought them to the doors of the War Office, where a commissionaire with medals on his coat answered the boys' summons. Sam scribbled some lines on a piece of paper.

"Take that up to the chief, will you?" said Sam—"that is, if he hasn't scooted for the other side of the water," he added under his breath, with a grin.

There was much delay, and, indeed, the commissionaire seemed very surprised that the chief agreed to receive such visitors at all. Evidently, however, there was something in Sam's message that moved him, and the brothers were shown into the building.

"Keep in front of me," said Sam to Fritthem, pressing his revolver against the man's back, "and remember that your best chance now is to obey orders."

The spy walked sullenly before him, and the three were shown upstairs. Such a strange visit had certainly never been dreamed of in that historic building. The ante-room was passed through, and they were shown into the great man's sanctum.

The chief, a big, stout man, very well dressed, did not look so fat now as his portraits in the papers usually showed him. Perhaps the affairs of the past two weeks had made him a little thinner, and doubtless he had not slept so well. At any time he looked very unlike the head of a great nation's land defences, and, indeed, had never carried sword or rifle in his life. He glanced at the intruders, and frowned as he saw the youthful faces of the boys.

"State your business quickly!" he said. "I captured this spy in the streets, sir," said Sam—"or, rather, I took him from a crowd who were going to lynch him. I thought it right to bring him to headquarters, because he is one of the Kaiser's principal secret agents."

"It is false!" broke in Herr Fritthem quickly. "I am a respectable German-master, and a naturalised British subject! The whole thing is an idiotic mistake, and I—"

"Spy? Pooh!" exclaimed the chief. "Do I understand you have wasted my time at such a moment with nonsense like this?" he said angrily to Sam. "This note of yours states you have information of the greatest importance, and is signed Lieutenant Villiers, D.S.O.! How dare you—"

"Perfectly correct," said Sam. "I am Lieutenant Villiers, D.S.O. This spy is the same man I captured at Greyfriars in the act of signalling to his confederates on the eve of the invasion, and on whom I found the secret code. You know the story pretty well by now, I should think, though you refused to believe it at the time. It wasn't my wish to bring him here, but the Guards' Barracks are empty, and I supposed you ought to see him, as you owe the surprise chiefly to him, and the cutting of the telegraph-wires as well."

The chief turned purple as he stared at Sam. "And I have the honour to hand him over to you," concluded the cadet politely.

"I am a British subject, and I shall demand compensation for this outrage!" cried Fritthem. "It is all nonsense, and I am sure you will agree with me, sir, that these infants ought not to be allowed weapons at all. They brought me here as if I were a criminal!"

"So you are!" said Stephen. The chief bounced up out of his chair. He had few ideas outside an office, like a good many of his forerunners, and he had already heard much more about the two Greyfriars cadets than he liked.

"What business had you to arrest this man?" he cried. "And what business, in any case, had you to bring him

here with this cock-and-bull story? If you had any charge against him, you should have handed him over to the police. Go at once, and be thankful you are not in serious trouble over it!"

Sam drew a long breath. "We'll go," he said, "but the police certainly won't get him. I shall find a military commandant, and hand him over for court-martial. Come, Steve!"

"Do you mean to disobey me, sir?" cried the chief, who was fast losing his temper at the cadets' cool manner, while Fritthem appealed indignantly for protection. "If you are in the Service at all, you are under my orders!"

Sam's eyes sparkled dangerously, and he turned on the chief.

"That for your orders!" he said, snapping his fingers. "I obey better men! Have a care, or the mob will soon be here to pull the place about your ears. It is you, you fat shirker, who have brought the country to these disasters, and it would serve you right if you were shot alongside this prisoner here! He did the work his Sovereign paid him for, which is more than you have ever done!"

"An' I hope the excited crowd'll come an' turn you on its lap an' smack you," added Stephen. "May I be there to see it!"

"One good thing this war'll do—it'll clear out your sort from office for good an' all!" said Sam, throwing open the door. "An' that'll be cheap at the price!"

He marched his prisoner out, leaving the War Office magnate purple-faced and speechless. Down the wide staircase clattered the boys, and, untethering their horses from the lamp-post, they set off again, Sam pulling Fritthem once more across the saddle.

"Phew! That's done me a lot of good!" he said. "I've wanted to tell that beggar what I thought of him for many a long day!"

"It's just amazing!" said Stephen. "Fancy his refusing to take any notice of a dangerous spy! You'd have thought he'd have learned sense after the smash-up. How the dickens is it he hasn't been turned out?"

"The British nation don't turn their Ministers out when they're in a tight place for fear of makin' things worse. They're a jolly sight more loyal to their Governments than their precious Governments are to them."

"I've often thought it's a pity all the Governments can't be chucked overboard, an' the reins given to the King," said Stephen. "He'd soon straighten things out, bless him! I'd like to see it!"

"You just about hit it!" answered Sam. "However, this ain't a time to talk politics. I'm goin' to take this beggar over to Knightsbridge Barracks, an' if there's nobody there we shall have to try him ourselves, I think. I can't carry him round all day."

A rapid ride, part of it through a dropping shell-fire, brought them to Knightsbridge, and there they found that, though all the troops were out on service, a brevet-major, who was slightly wounded, was left in charge of the details and depot with a dozen men. He received Sam at once.

"The two Greyfriars cadets!" he exclaimed. "By Jove, I'm honoured to meet you! Let's have some news, for goodness' sake! I'm shut up in this forsaken hole while all the fighting is goin' on! Who's your prisoner?"

Sam told him briefly. The treatment the boys got here was very different. They were received as brother-officers, and the business attended to promptly and smartly. The major called up two of his men to take charge of Fritthem.

"Well done!" he said. "I'm glad you've got the fellow at last. I saw the account of his signalling and capture, and your exploits at Frinton. They were all in the newspapers on the third day of the war. Come into my quarters and write down your depositions before witnesses, an' then I needn't keep you any longer. We'll deal with the prisoner accordin' to justice after you've gone."

"Are you going to leave me to be shot?" cried Fritthem to the boys.

"You'll get a proper court-martial an' justice," said Sam dryly. "Your troops have shot many an innocent country-man for a spy without any trial at all."

"I shall soon be avenged!" raved the German, losing control of himself. "When the Kaiser's troops enter London, you English pigs will rue the day you were born! My people will make the gutters run with blood!"

"A good deal of it'll be their own, then, I reckon," said Stephen cheerfully.

Sam and the major made no reply, and the spy was removed, cursing and using threats. The brothers bade farewell to the officer, and went on their way back to the Embankment.

How the Germans Came Into London.

"I suppose it's right he should be shot?" said Stephen, rather pensively.

"Right!" said Sam sternly. "Look at the ruin all round you, an' you won't need any answer. It's true what he said—he's a British subject. Got himself made one. Think of the work he's done. Think of poor little Blobbs, blown to pieces in the Greyfriars tower. He followed a black-guard's trade for the sake of high pay, an' he's earned a black-guard's death. He couldn't be killed in fair fight, for fightin' wasn't his line. My aunt, how those guns are working!"

The bombardment, after a short pause, had begun again with a redoubled fury, concentrating itself chiefly on North London and the City. By this time the streets under fire were nearly empty of people, and the populace was swarming south over the river in black streams, on every bridge.

"Can't we do something?" said Stephen fretfully.

"We haven't done badly for one morning. The first thing now is to get our horses under cover, for they'll be no use to us in the streets. We must take 'em over the water."

"Will they be safe there?"

"From the enemy's guns, anyhow. South of the river's out of range of their batteries. They can never bombard South London, for there's no place they can bombard it from. The horses'll be safe there—unless they're eaten!" added Sam grimly.

"Eaten!"

"The siege of London's begun. A slice of horse—or anything else—is likely to be worth its weight in gold a week hence," said Sam drily. "We can't get any supplies in from the South. Kent's eaten up already, an' you know we

knew, the Germans would cease firing and enter the great city by masses and legions, to take it by storm.

Volunteers and armed citizens were assembling in thousands to help in the defence. There were far more men than rifles, but all who could carry a weapon armed themselves in some fashion. These massed chiefly on the south side of the Thames, to defend the great populace that had flocked there. All waited eagerly for news.

But news was nearly as scarce as food. The crowds were starving, and money could hardly buy a meal. Rations were served out in many places, and thousands of wealthy folk gave great sums of money to bring in food supplies from the West Country and relieve the distress.

Sam and Stephen helped to toil at the barricades with countless others, and when night fell they went away North to reconnoitre on their own account. Twice they went outside the limits of the town and scouted round the outskirts of the German position, once narrowly escaping capture. They reported to General Ripley, who was now in command in London, and who was glad of the boys' well-known skill at scouting.

Brave as the British troops were, and little as they cared for danger, their leader was forced often to withdraw them back to the Thames side by day, and leave the barricade-works. The shell fire would otherwise have wiped out such numbers of them as to leave London at the enemy's mercy when the final assault came. It was on the morning of the fourth day, after very heavy firing to the northward, that the news reached the boys, who were with one of the battalions of the Coldstream Guards. Their colonel was a cousin of Captain Villiers, and Sam, with his usual acuteness, had contrived to get himself and his brother attached to the famous regiment as messengers and scouts. The

STARTING SHORTLY,

"BRITAIN AT BAY!"

ANOTHER WAR STORY.

depend on foreign food. The Germans hold the Channel at present."

"What the dickens is our Navy doin' all this time?" said Stephen explosively. "We've heard nothing about it!"

"The first two squadrons were caught unawares by the heavy German fleet, as you know. Now we're massin' our ships together from all parts of the world," said Sam, "an' the fight for the command of the sea may happen any day or hour. It might even be goin' on now. The Navy authorities refuse any information whatever, for fear it might leak out to the Germans. They're right, too. It'll be the dickens of a big scrap when it begins."

"But we're bound to whack 'em!"

Sam looked grim.

"I should say so. Only the Germans have built so many huge, up-to-date battleships these last few years, while we've cut down ours, that after our late losses there ain't much odds either way. It'll be a death struggle, an' no mistake. Show that horse of yours along. We've got to pass under fire yonder."

Half an hour later found the boys south of the Thames, in the Borough, riding through the excited throngs of refugees. They made their way as quickly as possible to the quieter streets, and rode half-way to Rotherhithe before Sam found a place where he was content to leave the horses. He paid the stable-keeper in advance, and promised him a handsome sum for every day they were kept safe.

Here, as everywhere else, the boys found their name was enough, and all respect was paid to them. As Stephen remarked, it was astonishing how celebrated they seemed to be.

Then followed three days of suspense—awful days, during which the hammer and thud of the German guns scarcely ceased. It is not necessary to follow them out in detail. North London was devastated by the German guns, but everywhere, at the important points, troops and Engineers erected powerful barricades against the time when, they

corps were glad enough to welcome the boys, for they knew their record.

"I say," exclaimed Stephen, bursting in upon his brother as the first company was leaving its night quarters, "Gethin's got his forces together again an' made a night attack on the Germans outside! He had scarcely any men compared with their numbers, but he's made a dash in, wiped up two Prussian regiments, an' captured three batteries. He's joined Nugent again now, an' he'll be able to do 'em some damage."

"My aunt! An' we've been an' missed it!" said Sam. "I'd have given anything to be in that! There's a dickens of a scrap goin' on somewhere to the north now, by the firm, an' we're here slavin' at those barricades! I a'pose — Hallo, Brett! What's the news?" he exclaimed, as sharp orders were heard outside, and a Coldstream subaltern came hurrying in.

"Von Krantz has entered London!" said the lieutenant. "The bombardment's over, an' he's comin' in to take possession—if he can! Our troops are pushin' up forward to meet him, an' there's street fightin' all through the North an' Islington. Get your kit, quick, an' start!"

"Where are we bound?" cried Stephen.

"To man our barricade at the Royal Exchange. We guard the Bank, an' the Germans are makin' it their chief goal. Hurry, an' fall in!"

Ten seconds did not pass before the boys—Stephen with a pet carbine he had looted from the Knightsbridge depot—were striding out briskly alongside "A" Company, to the Coldstreams' quickstep. They passed rapidly down Holborn and Cheapside, and as they did so there was a new sound in the air. The boom of heavy guns and the crash of bursting shells had given place to the crisp crackle of musketry echoing down the streets.

"Are they all comin' in in a body?" said Stephen eagerly.

"Not all in one column, of course," returned the subaltern, beside whom they were marching. "A battalion

of 'em to every street, and it's said they've already broken through our chaps in Islington and Hornsey."

"D'you mean the troops have given way?"

"Mopped up, most likely!" said Sam grimly. "What can you expect? What's left of our Army ain't in London, an' couldn't do much good if it wore."

"But are we goin' to lose the town?"

"North London's bound to go—that was certain as soon as Gethin was driven back at Epping," said the subaltern gloomily. "South London, beyond the river, we can hold till all's blue, but this side's lost already, since the bombardment started."

"Then we're a sort of forlorn hope, with the other troops—just to hold Von Krantz back as long as possible?"

The subaltern nodded.

"That's about the size of it. London's an unprotected city, you see. It hasn't any forts or defences at all, an' it's at the mercy of a huge army like theirs, comin' from the north side. They'll mop us up, but we've got to put up a fight. We Coldstreams always guard the Bank—even in peace times I'm there by turns for the night with my men."

"But hasn't the gold been removed?" exclaimed Stephen.

"There are millions of pounds there!"

"Where else could it be put? There's been no time to do anything. There isn't much chance of their gettin' it out of the country, either, even if they get hold of it. They can't swallow it. Look! There's our barricade!"

The famous space round the Mansion House presented a strange sight on that day of days. Across Old Broad Street, stretching from side to side against the Royal Exchange on one side and the stone walls of the Bank on the other, was a formidable barricade of paving-stones, sandbags, and everything that could stop a shot, skilfully arranged and built. A Maxim gun was mounted at each end of it, and the subaltern and guard who had kept watch over it all night were awaiting the company.

At all the other openings were similar barriers. There was one across Princes Street, another across Cornhill to prevent the Germans coming down by the other side of the Exchange, and the boys knew that away to the northward street upon street was defended in the same way. But it was here that the chief defence was to be made. The Mansion House and Bank were the very heart of London. The roofs round about were lined with crouching sharpshooters.

"Here's where we shall peg out at last, I s'p'ose!" said Stephen, as they reached the Old Broad Street barrier. "Well, I'd rather do that than see the Kaiser's flag on the Mansion House. Who handles the Maxims? That's a job not many could beat you at, Sam, since Greyfriars."

But the Maxims and other defences were looked after by the Coldstreams themselves. The boys felt rather lost during the weary interval that followed, and the suspense of waiting for the attack. The veterans of the Coldstreams felt it, too, and all longed

to be at handgrips with the foe. They boded ill for many a German that day, those grim, bronzed faces that looked out over the barricade.

The noise of the street-fighting seemed to fill all London, though as yet the main struggle had hardly commenced, for it had not reached the City itself.

At last, after what seemed an age, a sharp-shooter on one of the roofs raised his rifle, and a shot rang out at the unseen foe, followed soon by many more. The sound of the approaching foe grew plainer, and at last, down the narrow roadway of Old Broad Street, a body of Prussians with fixed bayonets doubled into view. The cry rang out with a mighty relief from the barricade:

"Here they come!"

Stephen's carbine was the first to speak, for the moment the first Prussian showed himself round the bend of the street the boy took a quick snapshot, and the man pitched forward on to his face. Then followed a rapid, crackling fire from the rifles of the Coldstreams, and the bullets went whistling shrilly between the houses.

"Keep your fire low!" cried the company commander.

And the first rank of the Prussians broke and went down under the hail of bullets. Not a moment was left for thought, however. The full strength of the enemy's battalion came pouring round the corner, and they charged down towards the barricade with loud shouts of "Hoeh!" their bayonets gripped ready, and their heavy boots clattering along the paved street.

They were met with a rifle-fire that strewed the roadway with dead and dying. The Maxims opened with a rattle and a whirl, sweeping the narrow space with a leaden shower which, at that short range, drove through rank upon rank.

**NOW YOU'VE FINISHED
LEAVE ME IN A RAILWAY TRAIN.**

Urged by the shouts of their officers, the Prussians rushed onwards in spite of their losses, and those who fell were trampled under foot. The fierce, grim faces of the assailants were fixed on the barrier as they ran, and such swarms of them were there, that it was easy to see what the fate of the defenders would be if once the barricade were sealed.

But the fire that met them was too hot. Half-way up the street they seemed to stop dead and drop in heaps; while those behind still ran as fast as ever. It was as though they met with an invisible wall of death, and could not penetrate beyond it. They wavered, and began to break, and a rousing cheer rose from the defenders as the Prussians gave way and fell back for shelter in the by-streets; while the rifles and Maxims chased them to their holes like rabbits.

The first attack on the Coldstreams' barrier was repulsed, and the Prussians were in full flight, leaving the road heaped with their dead.

"They run, the beggars!" cried Stephen exultingly, firing off the last shot in his carbine rapidly. "They're cooked!"

"They'll come on again fast enough," returned the subaltern coolly; "but if the other barriers have thinned 'em out as much to the north of us as we've done here, Von Krantz 'll be finding himself short of men, an' that's what we want. Ah, they're tryin' a better dodge this time. They must be in a hurry, or they wouldn't have made that first attack straight away."

A sudden outburst of rifle-fire came from behind the Royal Exchange and the crossway into Throgmorton Street, and three or four of the Coldstreams who had showed themselves too freely above the barricade went down. The Prussians darted out again suddenly in full force, and, keeping to the middle of the road, charged at the barrier again with a rapid fire from their riflemen at the cross-streets, passing them on either side. It was a dangerous manœuvre for the charging companies, but it told on the defenders.

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The EDITOR.

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