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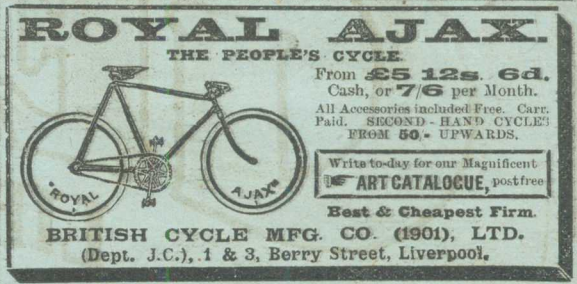
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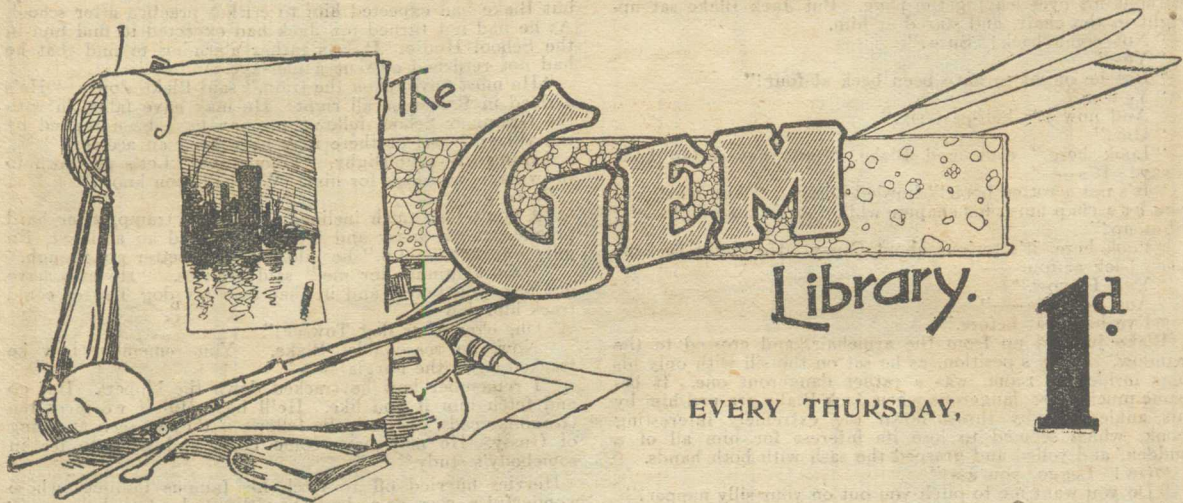
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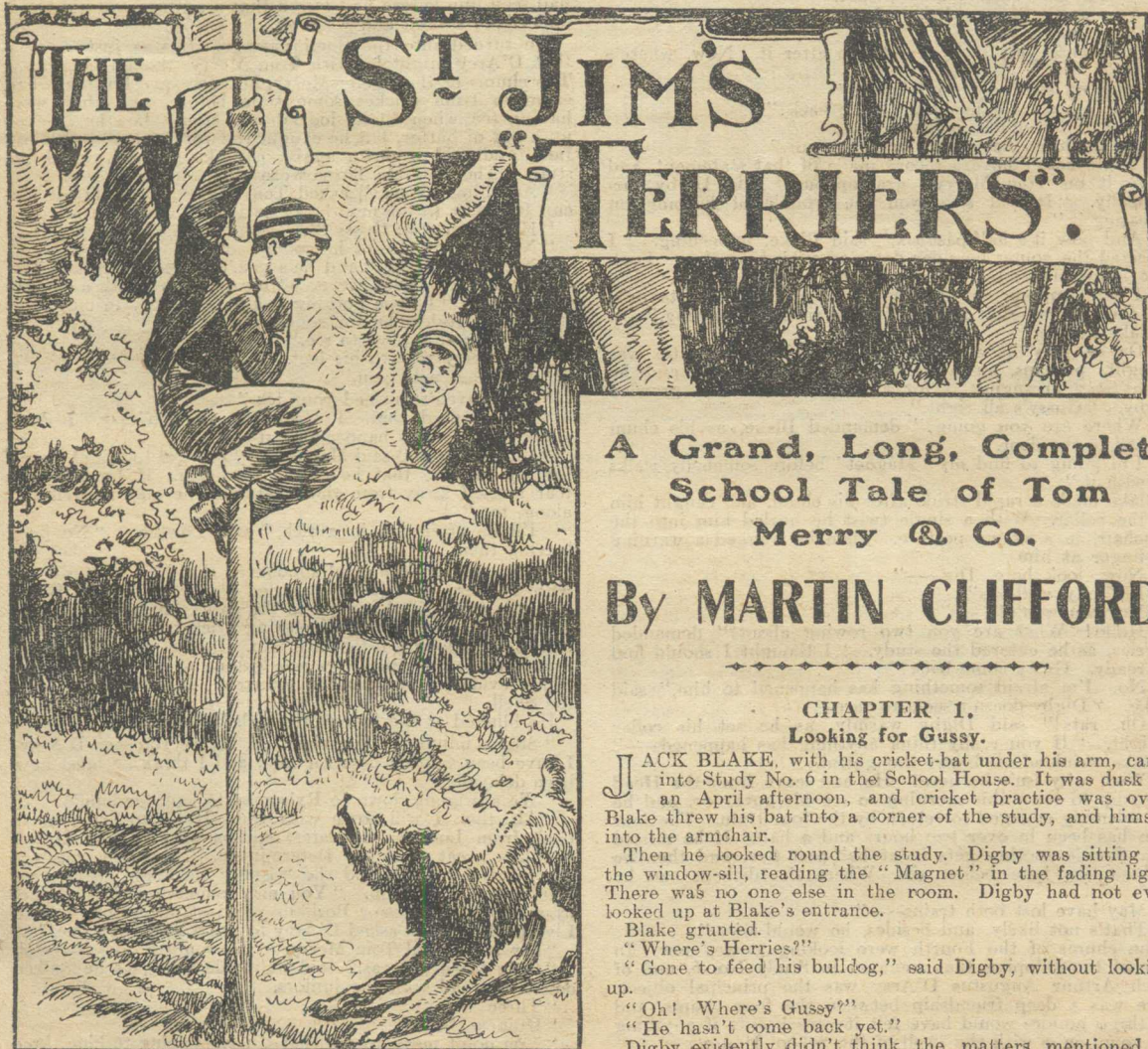
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A Grand, Long, Complete
School Tale of Tom
Merry & Co.

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CHAPTER 1.
Looking for Gussy.

JACK BLAKE, with his cricket-bat under his arm, came into Study No. 6 in the School House. It was dusk on an April afternoon, and cricket practice was over. Blake threw his bat into a corner of the study, and himself into the armchair.

Then he looked round the study. Digby was sitting on the window-sill, reading the "Magnet" in the fading light. There was no one else in the room. Digby had not even looked up at Blake's entrance.

Blake grunted.

"Where's Herries?"

"Gone to feed his bulldog," said Digby, without looking up.

"Oh! Where's Gussy?"

"He hasn't come back yet."

Digby evidently didn't think the matters mentioned of

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sufficient import to interrupt his reading, for he answered without his eyes leaving the page. But Jack Blake sat upright in the chair, and stared at him.

"Not come back! Sure?"

"Yes."

"But he ought to have been back at four!"

"Ye-e-es."

"And now it's half-past six."

"Um!"

"Look here," exclaimed Blake, "put that rotten book away! It's—"

"It's not a rotten book!" howled Digby. "And why can't you let a chap finish his chapter while there's some light left? Shut up!"

"Look here, it's serious about Gussy. He ought to have been back at four—"

"Yes, I know."

"And now it's—"

"I've had that before."

Blake jumped up from the armchair, and crossed to the window. Digby's position, as he sat on the sill with only his legs inside the room, was a rather dangerous one. It became much more dangerous when Jack Blake grasped him by his ankles. Digby threw down the extremely interesting book, which seemed to lose its interest for him all of a sudden, and yelled and grasped the sash with both hands.

"Ow! Leggo, you ass!"

"Do you want me to pitch you out on your silly napper?" demanded Blake.

"Oh, leggo! You'll break my neck!"

"Well, then, get down and answer me like a sensible chap," said Blake severely.

He released Digby's ankles, and Dig slid into the room, looking extremely discontented, and rather inclined to commit assault and battery on the spot.

"You ass!" he growled. "Now my paper's gone down into the quad."

"You were jolly lucky not to go after it. Now, where's Gussy?"

"How on earth should I know?"

"Are you certain he hasn't come back?"

"Well, I haven't seen him."

"He ought to have been back by four."

"You'd better have a record made of that statement, and shove it on Tom Merry's gramophone," said Digby sarcastically. "It will save you the trouble of keeping on repeating it."

"And now it's half-past six," said Blake, unheeding. "I expected the young bunder down to cricket practice. Look here, something must have happened to him."

"I don't suppose so. He may have called in at a tailor's, and then he wouldn't notice how the time was passing."

Blake grinned.

"Or he may have stopped to see whether his tie was straight, perhaps, in a looking-glass somewhere, and he might stay arranging it for a couple of hours!" growled Digby. "Gussy's all right."

"Where are you going?" demanded Blake, as his chum crossed to the door.

"I'm going to find my 'Magnet' before somebody walks off with it."

Blake made a rapid stride after his chum, and caught him by the collar. With a single twist he hurled him into the armchair, in a sitting posture. Then he wagged a warning forefinger at him.

"Now, look here, Dig—"

"I'll jolly well—"

"No, you won't!"

"Hallo! What are you two rowing about?" demanded Herries, as he entered the study. "I thought I should find tea ready. Gussy come back?"

"No. I'm afraid something has happened to him," said Blake. "Digby doesn't seem to care—"

"Oh, rats!" said Digby warmly, as he set his collar straight. "If you really think anything has happened—"

Blake wrinkled his brows thoughtfully.

"Well, why isn't he here? He had leave from the Head to go up to town this morning to see his governor, and he was solemnly engaged to return by the four train. The four train has been in over two hours and a half. If he missed that, there's another gets in at half-past five, and then he ought to be here before six. Where the dickens can he be?"

"May have lost both trains—"

"That's not likely, and besides, he would wire."

The chums of the Fourth were looking grave, now. In spite of the chipping that went on in Study No. 6, and of which Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was the principal object, there was a deep friendship between the four chums, and the three juniors would have felt it very keenly if anything had gone amiss with the swell of the School House.

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Grand Story of Life
in the British Army—

Arthur Augustus had been away on leave the whole day, but Blake had expected him to cricket practice after school. As he had not turned up, Jack had expected to find him in the School House. It was rather alarming to find that he had not returned or sent a message.

"He must have taken the train," said Blake slowly. "He's arrived in Rylcombe all right. He may have fallen in with the Grammar School fellows, or may have been ragged by the village boys; or there may have been an accident."

"Hang it," said Digby. "I hope not! Let's go down to the village, and look for him. We shall soon know."

Blake grunted.

"I don't feel much inclined for a long tramp, after hard practice at the nets; and if he hasn't had an accident, I'll jolly well pound him," he said. "We'd better go, though."

"Wait a minute for me," said Herries. "He may have got lost, you know, and in that case my dog Towser could track him down."

"Oh, blow your dog Towser!"

"Now, be reasonable, Blake. You remember how he tracked down the burglars—"

"I remember how he tracked down the kippers. But go and fetch him if you like. He'll be useful if we meet the Grammar cads. I'll ask the fellows if they've seen anything of Gussy. He may have come back, and gone to tea in somebody's study."

Herries hurried off to fetch his famous bulldog, whose wonderful powers as a sleuth-hound found a firm believer in Herries himself—though perhaps in nobody else.

Blake and Digby inquired up and down the Fourth Form passage for Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. But no one had seen him lately. Reilly of the Fourth, indeed, gave them hope for a moment, replying in the affirmative to the question as to whether he had seen D'Arcy. But it turned out that he had seen him before first lesson that morning, and not since, and Blake sniffed and went on.

He turned into the Shell passage. It was just possible that D'Arcy might be with Tom Merry, though not likely. The chums of the Shell—Merry, Manners, and Lowther—had come in from cricket some time before, and they were having tea when Blake looked in. Monty Lowther picked up a pat of butter, but he caught the worried look on Blake's face, and laid it down again. Blake glanced round the study. The Terrible Three were alone there.

"Anything wrong?" asked Tom Merry, stopping his tea-cup half-way to his mouth, as he looked at Blake.

"Have you seen Gussy?"

"Not lately. Hasn't he come back?"

"No," said Jack, "and he's nearly three hours late."

"By Jove!" Tom Merry set his cup down with a click in the saucer. "I hope nothing has happened. He may have stopped in Rylcombe for something or other."

"We're going down to see."

Tom Merry rose to his feet.

"I'll come with you."

"You haven't finished your tea."

"Never mind that. I'm anxious about Gussy. I don't suppose anything's happened, but—"

"I'll come, too," said Manners. "I've got to call at Pyro's for my camera, that he's been repairing. If Lowther can tear himself away from those sardines, he may as well trot along, too."

"I'll be after you in a tick," said Lowther. "No good leaving them."

A whistle from the quad announced that Herries was ready with Towser. The juniors hurried out of the School House into the sunset, and crossed to the gates. Figgins & Co., of the New House, were still playing cricket, though the batting was growing a little uncertain. In the gateway a youth in a large pair of spectacles was leaning against the old grey stone, evidently waiting for someone. It was Skimpole of the Shell.

He blinked at the juniors through his spectacles.

"Stop a minute!" he exclaimed. "Have you seen D'Arcy? I have been waiting here for him, and I think he must have been delayed."

"We are going down to Rylcombe to look for him."

"Ah, then I will come with you. He is to bring me a book from London—the latest edition of Professor Lottoff Boshki's great work on Determinism." Skimpole was the genius of the Shell, and the "isms" he knew about were fearful and wonderful. "You may remember, Merry, that by volume of Professor Boshki's was lost during our trip to Liverpool. I have asked D'Arcy to bring me a new one."

"My hat!" said Tom Merry. "How much does it cost?"

"Only three guineas," said Skimpole airily, as he walked down the road with the juniors.

"Three which?"

"Guineas."

"You don't mean to say that Gussy is going to blue three



"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, "I wathah think that's ripping, you know!" "Splendid fit, sir!" said Mr. Trimpy, rubbing his hands.

guineas on a rotten book for you!" exclaimed Manners, in amazement.

"Oh, dear, no. My previous copy was bought at a great bargain; it was published at three guineas, but I had the good fortune to find it marked in a publisher's remainder list at two and six, and so I was able to purchase that wonderful work. Such a thing is not likely to happen again, but I have asked D'Arcy to call in at the publisher's office, and ask them for a free copy."

"Eh?"
"As Socialists and Determinists they cannot sincerely refuse a free copy of a great and useful work to anyone who requires it," explained Skimpole. "I am assured that D'Arcy will bring the book, unless he has forgotten it."

The juniors chuckled. Skimpole was a Socialist, and went the full length of his opinions. But when he expected gentlemen of Socialistic tendencies who were engaged in business to follow his example, he probably expected a little too much. It is a hard world, and opinions cannot always be fully carried out in practice. But Skimpole had no doubts.

The chums kept their eyes open for D'Arcy as they went down the lane, but there was no sign of him. They entered the village street, and the first thing that caught their eyes was a horse being held by a lad outside Mr. Trimpy's shop.

Mr. Trimpy was the local tailor, who was frequently patronised by the boys of St. Jim's. The juniors stopped. They knew that horse. It was Badger—a fiery animal that had caused its owner, a livery-stable keeper in Rylcombe,

considerable trouble and loss till it was mastered by Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. For Arthur Augustus, swell and dandy as he undoubtedly was, knew as much about horses as any jockey or trainer at Newmarket, and he had pluck enough for a whole regiment. And since he had mastered Badger, and ridden him in a steeplechase, the grateful owner had pressed him to take the horse out whenever he chose, and D'Arcy had frequently availed himself of the offer. And the sight of Badger made the juniors think at once that D'Arcy might have delayed in the village for the sake of having a ride in the fine April weather.

Jack Blake halted at once.

"This looks like Gussy!" he exclaimed. "Hallo, kid! Whom are you holding that hoss for?"

The village lad touched his cap.

"Master D'Arcy, sir."

Blake heaved a sigh of relief.

"Then he's all right! The young bouncer has got home, and he's been staying here to have a ride. The young waster! I'll jolly well thump him for making me anxious about him!"

"Dear me!" murmured Skimpole. "I hope he has not mislaid my volume in attending to this trivial amusement."

Manners crossed the street to Pyro's to get his camera. Blake questioned the boy at the horse's head as to the whereabouts of Arthur Augustus.

"Has he been riding Badger?" he asked.

"Not yet, sir. He sent word to the stables to bring the hoss 'ere, sir. I've been waiting 'ere for an hour or more."

"Then where is D'Arcy?" exclaimed Blake, in astonishment. The lad jerked his thumb towards the tailor's shop.

"He's in there, sir."

"Oh! Has he been there long?"

"All the time I've been here, sir—and earlier."

Blake snorted. D'Arcy had kept them waiting for him, had cut cricket practice and made his chums anxious, and all for the purpose, apparently, of trying on new clothes. No wonder Blake snorted. He strode straight towards the shop, and looked in, his comrades following, and as they caught a view of the interior they stopped in blank amazement.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was there. But—

CHAPTER 2.

Something Like a Surprise!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY was there!

But for a moment the chums hardly knew him, and they doubted whether the familiar features really belonged to the elegant junior of St. Jim's.

They were accustomed to seeing Arthur Augustus in garb that was a little out of the common. His waistcoats were the most gorgeous ever seen in the county. His silk hats were the talk of the school. His neckties were the envy and despair of the dandies of the Sixth.

Had the swell of St. Jim's been trying on anything extra fashionable—anything in the way of fancy waistcoats, starting ties, high collars, or waisted coats—the juniors would not have been surprised.

But—

It was really D'Arcy! He was clad in a military uniform that suited him down to the ground; there was no denying that. He looked a perfect picture!

But D'Arcy in a uniform!

The smart Hussar jacket, the riding-breeches and boots, and the handsome busby, struck the juniors with blank astonishment. And in the eye of the strangely-clad swell of St. Jim's gleamed the monocle that was seldom absent from it.

D'Arcy was in the little fitting-room of Mr. Trimpy, opening off the shop, and open to the view of the juniors as they looked in.

He was standing before a wall-glass, turning round and surveying himself from every possible point of view.

He was holding up his sword and sabretasche out of the way, and turning slowly round, apparently greatly satisfied by what he saw in the glass.

Mr. Trimpy, with his glasses on his nose, was rubbing his hands as he stood in tailor-like attitude, looking on and admiring his customer.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I wathah think that's wippin', you know!"

"Splendid fit, sir!" said Mr. Trimpy.

"I think it suits me."

"Wonderfully!"

"The twousahs are weally amazingly good!"

"Excellent!"

"The boote couldn't be bettah."

"Impossible!"

"The busby suits my style of features wippingly, I think."

"Couldn't be improved upon."

"I wathah agwee with you, Mr. Twimpy," said D'Arcy, turning from the glass at last. "You have done vewy well with these things, considewin' that I purchased them weady-made in London, and you have been only about a couple of hours altewin' and fittin' them."

The tailor rubbed his hands.

"I think I have done pretty well, sir."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was a roar of laughter from the shop.

Arthur Augustus started, and looked round.

Half a dozen amazed and amused faces were staring at him, and the girl at the cash-desk in the shop was smiling. D'Arcy jammed his eyeglass tighter into his eye, and stared frigidly at his friends from St. Jim's.

"Weally, deah boys—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I fail to see any weason for this wibald laughtah—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Oh, carry me home to die!" murmured Jack Blake, wiping his eyes. "I always thought Gussy was a little loose in the crumpeit, but I never—never—"

"Blake, I wegard you—"

"Never thought he would come to this," said Blake, weeping. "Dig, old son, go to the police-station for a strait-jacket and a stretcher."

THE GEM LIBRARY—No. 63.

Grand Story of Life
in the British Army—

"You uttah ass—"

"It will break my heart to part with him, but we can't have him in the study in this frame of mind. Colney Hatch is the only place."

"I suppose he will have to go there," said Digby sadly.

"I shall uttably wefuse to go to Colney Hatch."

"You'll be taken, my son. Sad that he should come to this so young!" sobbed Blake. "Of course, it was bound to come in the long run, but—"

"Weally, deah boys—"

"But we hoped for better things," said Tom Merry. "This is what comes of Gussy fancying he has a tenor voice. This is what results from his singing 'Let me like a Soldier fall.' This—"

"I have a weamarkable tenah voice—"

"Poor, poor kid!" said Lowther. "Let's get him away quietly, and—"

"I uttably wefuse to be got away quietly. If you uttah wottahs would listen while I explain—"

"He'll explain that he's the Kaiser, you know," said Digby. "It takes them like that. He's got it bad, too!"

"Weally, Digby—"

"I wish you'd get that strait-jacket. He'll want it."

"Listen to me—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy glared at the chums of St. Jim's. Mr. Trimpy was trying to conceal his smiles, and the cash-girl had retired to a spot where she could laugh freely.

"If you uttah asses will listen—"

"Look here," said Tom Merry, "it's no good trying to persuade us that you're not off your rocker. I suppose we can believe the evidence of our own eyes?"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"If you're not off your silly rocker, what's up? Are you going to a fancy-dress ball?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Certainly not!"

"Then what's the little game?"

"You have tweated me with such diswespect that I weally doubt if you are entitled to an explanation—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Howevah, as I shall want your assistance in cawwysin' out my gweat ideah—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pway don't make that wow, deah boys. As I shall want your assistance in cawwysin' out my ideah, I shall condescend to explain. You behold me—"

"We do!" murmured Blake. "We does!"

"Pway don't intewwupt me with fwiwulous weamarks, Blake. You behold me in the attire of the commandah-in-chief—"

"I knew it!" exclaimed Digby.

"Weally, Dig, you cannot have known anything about it, as—"

"I knew it! I knew he had taken it like that—they always do! If he didn't think he was the Kaiser or the Emperor of China, he was bound to think he was a commander-in-chief—"

"I wegard you as an ass, Dig. I—"

"Yes, he's got it very bad," said Tom Merry sympathetically. "The queer thing is that he showed no sign of mental aberration this morning."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy. Pway give me your attention. I am weawin' the uniform of the Commandah-in-chief of St. Jim's Tewwitowials."

"St. Jim's what?"

"St. Jim's Tewwitowials!"

They could only stare at him.

In common with the rest of the country, they had heard a great deal lately of the Territorial Force, and they had wished, some of them, that they were old enough to join it. But as schoolboys weren't eligible for the Home Guard, they hadn't entertained the idea; and D'Arcy's words simply astounded them. They had been "rotting" at first, but now the fear really began to creep upon them that D'Arcy was wandering a little.

"I say, old chap," said Blake tenderly, "come home quietly, and—"

"I uttably wefuse to do anythin' of the sort."

"Take it calmly!" urged Tom Merry. "We don't blame you. Everybody gets a bit rocky at times. But don't make a disturbance!"

"You feahful ass!"

"You're wasting Mr. Trimpy's time!"

"Bai Jove, yaas! I had forgotten that. I will explain to you outside, before I mount my horse, deah boys. Pway pwecede me. Mr. Twimpy, I beg to apologise for the wow these wottahs have been makin' in your weespactable establishment. I am, as a make, select in my circle of fwiends, not to say swaggah. But these wottahs—"

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"Come on, Gussy!"

"I am comin' in a minute. You will please send on my bill to the coll, Mr. Twimpay."

"Yes, sir! Certainly, sir," said Mr. Trimpy, rubbing his hands.

D'Arcy took a last glance into the glass.

There was no fault to be found. Everything was perfectly fitting. He carried his sword in his hand in the scabbard as he nodded to the smiling tailor, and walked out of the shop after the chums of St. Jim's. The boy who was holding the horse gave it up to D'Arcy, and he was about to vault into the saddle, when Jack Blake and Tom Merry grasped him together, and held him back.

Arthur Augustus struggled in their grasp.

"Pway release me, deah boys!"

"Hold on!"

"Release me at once! I——"

"Not till you've explained, you duffer. If you're really mad——"

"I am not weally mad, you cwass idiot."

"Then you're jolly well going to explain what you're up to before you get on that gee-gee!" said Blake determinedly.

"Can't you see that all Rylcombe is coming along to stare at you? What's the little game?"

"Pway release me, and I will explain, deah boys."

They released him, but they stood round in a compact circle while he explained.

CHAPTER 3.

The New Territorial!

JACK BLAKE had been right in saying that Rylcombe was taking a great interest in the strangely-attired swell of St. Jim's.

In the sunset, most of the good folks of the village were at their doors, and they were unaccustomed to the sight of a gallant Hussar of fifteen, and so it was natural they should stare and pass remarks.

Villagers, boys, and dogs assembled from all quarters to the scene, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was the cynosure of all eyes.

That did not perturb the swell of St. Jim's in the least. He was accustomed to attracting admiring glances.

He jammed his monocle into his eye with one hand, holding the bridle of the restive Badger with the other.

"Now," exclaimed Blake, "just explain yourself! What do you mean by failing to turn up at the time arranged, and now by coming along in this rig? Didn't you catch the train in London?"

"I caught the twain all wight. I have been delayed here——"

"Getting into those togs?"

"Yaas, wathah! You see, I purchased them in town, and they had to be altered considerably before they were a perfect fit. Mr. Twimpay and I have been labouwin' ovah that important task for a long time, evah since I awvived in Wylcombe, as a mattah of fact."

"But why?" howled Blake. "What are you guying for?"

"I wefuse to be chawactewised as a guy!"

"Are you going to explain, or——"

"Yaas, wathah, if you don't intewwupt me. I have already informed you that this is the uniform of the commandah-in-chief——"

"Oh, get off that!"

"The Commandah-in-chief of the St. Jim's Tewwitowials!" pursued Arthur Augustus, unheeding. "I wathah think it is wippin', myself. As a mattah of fact——"

"Will you come to the point?" roared Tom Merry.

"I am comin' to it as fast as I can, deah boy, considewin' the wude way I am continually intewwupted. As a mattah of fact, the ideah came into my head when I was talkin' to my govahnah to-day. I dare say you know why he's in town. He's takin' a gweat intewest in the new Tewwitowial scheme. He was tellin' me about it, and the ideah flashed into my bwain that it would be a wippin' wheeze to have a Tewwitorial contingent at St. Jim's."

"Oh!"

"The more I thought about the scheme the bettah I liked it. You see——"

"But—but, fathead, we're not old enough. We shouldn't be allowed——"

"My deah Mewwy, I wasn't thinkin' of a regular Tewwitowial regiment," said the swell of St. Jim's, with a patient smile. "I was thinkin' of an auxiliary force of Boy Tewwitowials."

"Oh!"

"Somethin' on the lines of the Boy Scouts, you know, but more militawy, and more gwown-up," explained D'Arcy. "Somethin' on the lines of the pwopah Tewwitowials, only pwwaps bettah."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There is nothin' to cackle at in that remark, Monty Lowthah. I think it is a wippin' ideah, and I mean to make it a success at St. Jim's. Of course, I shall be commandah-in-chief."

"But—but this rig——"

D'Arcy smiled a satisfied smile.

"That's where my military ability comes in, deah boys. You see, you can always attract wecwuits by makin' a vow with a bwass band, and pawadin' the sweets, and so on. I couldn't get a bwass band, but I thought of an ideah just as good. I am goin' to St. Jim's mounted on Badger, and in full militawy fashion, and I wathah think that it will wake the old place up."

"My only hat!" gasped Merry. "I rather think it will."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"But—but what will the Head say?" exclaimed Blake, almost dazed by the sheer audacity of D'Arcy's scheme.

"Weally, Blake, I don't see why the Head should mind."

"What! Not mind a giddy kid in the Fourth prancing into the quadrangle like a Hussar!"

"As a patwiotic head-mastah, Dr. Holmes will back me up."

"More likely to cane you, you ass!"

"I wefuse to be called an ass. Besides——"

"There'll be a row if you prance back to the school like this," said Digby. "Better take the duds off again, and go back clothed, and in your right mind."

"Weally, Dig——"

"Yes, rather!" said Blake. "You'd make a little too much of a sensation, Gussy——"

"As a mattah of fact, it is my intention to make a sensation," said D'Arcy. "That is the vewy ideah! That is how they are wecwuitin' evewywhere for the Tewwitowials. The biggah the sensation the bettah I shall like it."

"Ha, ha, ha! Then you'll like it."

"I want to wake the place up, and impress upon the fellows the necessity of formin' a corps in case the country should be invaded," explained D'Arcy. "I suppose there's no fellow here who wouldn't turn out and fight if the fowein' foe came?"

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"Really," said Skimpole, "I should have to consider, as a Socialist, whether—"

"Pway don't talk wot, Skimmay. I am goin' to wake up the coll, and impress a sense of their duty upon the fellows. I am goin' to hold a meetin' to-night, to explain the scheme of the St. Jim's Tewwitowials, and I should be glad if all you fellows would attend. Now I'm off!"

And Arthur Augustus sprang into the saddle.

"Get down!" shouted Tom Merry. "You can't go to St. Jim's in that rig!"

"Pway stand clear!"

"I tell you—"

"I am afraid you may get hurt if you don't stand clear, deah boys."

Blake dragged Tom Merry back. Badger was "cavorting" in a rather dangerous way, and his heels were no respecters of persons.

D'Arcy saluted the staring juniors and the grinning crowd of villagers.

"Pway follow me, deah boys!"

And he rode off.

There was a yell from the crowd, and the juniors stared at one another. Manners, who had his camera under his arm, snapped D'Arcy at once.

"I must have a plate of this," he gasped. "I'll have it enlarged and hang it up in the study! My hat!"

D'Arcy made a handsome figure as he rode down the street on the fiery steed, and some of the villagers cheered as well as grinned. D'Arcy saluted the cheerers. The juniors dashed after him.

"My only hat!" gasped Tom Merry. "What on earth will they say at St. Jim's when he gets in like that?"

"Can't guess!" murmured Blake. "I only hope he won't ride down any of the prefects, or trample on the House-master."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let's buck up, and get in," gurgled Lowther. "This will be worth seeing! My only hat! I never expected this, even of Gussy!"

"But the idea isn't bad," remarked Tom Merry, as they hurried after the horseman. "St. Jim's Territorials might be made something of."

"With Gussy as commander-in-chief!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We might make something of it," said Blake. "If he cares to leave the idea in my hands—"

"In mine, I suppose you mean."

"I don't mean anything of the sort. I—"

"Don't be funny! Of course—"

"Look here—"

"Buck up!" exclaimed Herries. "He's getting ahead. We want to be in at the death."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And ceasing the argument, which had threatened to become excited, the juniors broke into a run, and kept pace with the dashing Territorial.

CHAPTER 4.

Arthur Augustus Causes a Sensation.

"WHAT?—Why?—Who?—How?"

"My Aunt Maria!"

"My old hat!"

"Waal, carry me home to die!"

"What is it?"

"Who is it?"

"Why is it?"

These exclamations, and many more of the same sort, rang in the quadrangle at St. Jim's as a horseman rode in through the old stone gateway. It was too dark, now, for cricket, but there was plenty of light for the juniors to linger out of doors in groups in the pleasant April evening, and the quadrangle was crowded. Most of the fellows of both Houses were out of doors, and when the cavalryman dashed in at the gates, there was a general stare in his direction.

The amazed exclamations had no effect on Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

He felt that he was creating a furore, and he was considerably pleased thereby.

The fiery steed caracolled through the quadrangle, and there was a rush of fellows on all sides to view the strange apparition.

"My only hat!" roared Gore, of the Shell. "It's D'Arcy!"

"D'Arcy! My word!"

"What's the matter with him?"

"I guess he's balmy," remarked Buck Finn, the youth from America. "I kinder guess it's a case."

"Right off his rocker," said Clifton Dane, the new boy

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in the Shell, laughing till the tears came into his eyes.

"There's no other explanation."

"Pway cleah the way, deah boys!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He wants to be a military man!"

"Let him like a soldier fall!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Badger caracolled, and D'Arcy sat the steed like a rock. There was no doubt about the quality of his horsemanship. The fellows laughed, but they could not help but admire the way Arthur Augustus handled the horse, which no one else there would have ventured to mount. The uproar in the quadrangle brought Dr. Holmes to his study window, and he looked out upon the scene in amazement. Mr. Railton, the master of the School House, who was with him, was equally astonished.

"That is D'Arcy!" he exclaimed. "What can it possibly mean?"

"Some absurd freak!" said the Head. "Dear me! Yet the boy makes a very handsome figure!"

"Come off, Gussy!"

"Tell us what it means!"

"What's the little game?"

Figgins & Co. came dashing upon the scene. Figgins had a pea-shooter, and he caught D'Arcy under the chin with a missile from it. The swell of St. Jim's uttered a sharp exclamation and started back, involuntarily dragging on the reins in doing so. Badger reared on his hind legs, and there was a shout of alarm.

"My hat!" gasped Figgins. "I never—oh!"

Badger came down again with a crash on his front feet. He reared and pawed, and the juniors crowded back frantically out of reach. Fatty Wynn was knocked flying by Gore in his haste, and he rolled on the ground fairly at the feet of the horse.

Figgins turned white as death. He sprang forward, but it was not needed.

D'Arcy had seen Fatty Wynn's danger, and he dragged the caracolled steed round in time, and Badger's forefeet crashed on the ground, instead of on Fatty Wynn. Figgins and Kerr dragged the Welsh junior away.

"My hat!" muttered Figgins. "I—"

"Weally, deah boys—"

"Dear me!" said Dr. Holmes, who had caught his breath for a moment. "The boy rides wonderfully well! But what can it possibly mean?"

"I will ascertain," said Mr. Railton, leaving the study.

There were others who wanted to know what it meant. Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, and Monteith, the head prefect of the New House, arrived upon the spot at the same moment, and before the House-master.

Arthur Augustus was nothing if not polite to his seniors. He saluted Kildare and the New House prefect.

Kildare could not help grinning.

"What on earth does this masquerade mean, D'Arcy?" he exclaimed.

"What masquewade, deah boy?"

"This—this rig-out!"

"I regard it as watah diswespectful to allude to my wippin' uniform as a 'wig-out'!" said D'Arcy, with dignity. "Howevah, I don't mind explainin' that this is the uniform of the Commandah-in-chief of the Tewwitowials of St. Jim's!"

Kildare looked dazed.

"The Territorials of St. Jim's?"

"Yaas, watah!"

"My hat!" said Monteith.

"Weally, Monteith, there is nothin' to be surprised at! As the whole countwy is enwollin' itself undah the bannah of the Tewwitowial Army, there is weally no reason why the boys of this coll. should not do the same!"

"Well, of all the—"

Mr. Railton's voice broke in

"D'Arcy!"

"Yaas, sir!" And D'Arcy saluted his House-master.

Mr. Railton frowned.

"What does this mean?"

"I was just explainin' to Kildare, sir, that I am now dressed in the uniform of the St. Jim's Tewwitowials—"

"D'Arcy!"

"Yaas, sir. I have formed the wippin' scheme of enlistin' a school corps to back up the Tewwitowials in case the Germans come—"

"In—in case what?"

"It is quite poss. that the countwy may be invaded, sir," said D'Arcy; "and, in that case, it behoves all true Bwitons to be weady. 'Weady, aye weady' is to be the motto of the St. Jim's Tewwitowials."

"Dear me!"

"I am going to be the commandah-in-chief—"

"Really, D'Arcy," said Mr. Railton; "I hardly know what to say, but really—"



D'Arcy waved his sword. "Charge, deah boys!" he cried, and sprang fairly upon the barricade.

"I twust, sir," said Arthur Augustus, "that you have no objections to the youngstahs of the coll. bein' enrolled by me undah the flag of their country? Wemembah, sir, that the country may be in dangah—"

"Really—"

"And the St. Jim's Tewwitowials will welflect honah and glowy on the old school, sir! Undah my command, they—"

But the School House-master did not stay to hear any more. He retreated into the School House.

D'Arcy looked round upon the grinning crowd.

"I weally fail to see any cause for this wibald mewwiment!" he said. "I wathah think I have effected my purpose of wakin' the school up!"

"Ha, ha, ha! You have!"

"Gentlemen of St. Jim's—"

"Ha, ha, ha! Go it! Speech!"

"Gentlemen—fwriends, Bwitons, countwymen—I appeal to all twue patwiotis to attend a meetin' I am callin' in the gym. affah tea, on the subject of formin' a St. Jim's corps of Tewwitowials!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Not here," said Lowther, grinning; "in the gym!"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"I guess I'll come," said Buck Finn. "It ain't a bad idea, and I don't mind taking the matter in hand and running it."

"I was thinking the same," observed Figgins. "You see, it will need a New House chap to—"

"Weally, Figgins—"

"It's all right, Gussy; we'll see to it."

"I guess so."

"You will do nothin' of the sort, deah boys! This mattah is in my hands," said D'Arcy, slipping from the horse. "I am awwangin' the whole affair. As I have already wemarked, I am commandah-in-chief!"

"Of course, that's all rot! Now—"

"Wats! Tom Mewwy, will you lead this horse to Taggles's lodge? It is to wemain there until they send for it fwom the village."

Tom Merry laughed and shook his head.

"Not much, my son! You can lead him yourself! I don't like the look of him!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"And then," said Blake severely, "get those silly togs off, and come up to the study and have your tea!"

"Wats! I am comin' up to the study to have my tea, but I am not goin' to take my uniform off. I shall require it on to address the meetin' in the gym."

And D'Arcy led the horse away, and the juniors, laughing and discussing the matter, went in to tea.

CHAPTER 5.

A Territorial Meeting.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY had intended to make a sensation, and he had certainly made it. He had come back from London full of the new idea of the Territorials, and determined to impress that idea upon St. Jim's generally. And in fact the whole school was talking

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of the matter—but whether the swell of the School House would succeed in raising his corps was another matter. That remained to be seen. And meanwhile the school displayed the keenest interest in Arthur Augustus and his wonderful uniform.

It was startling, but it wasn't against any known rule for a junior to attire himself as a gallant Hussar, and take tea in his own study in that attire; and so, though the prefects had looked askance at him, D'Arcy was not interfered with.

Neither did Mr. Railton come down heavily, as some of the juniors had expected. The House-master laughed over the matter and let it alone, judging that the uniform would soon disappear of its own accord, without any interference from him.

But Arthur Augustus was in deadly earnest. He absolutely refused to change his garb at the representations of his chums, and he sat down to tea in Study No. 6 in riding-boots and tight jacket, only removing his bushy. This was placed upon the desk near him, so that he could keep a fatherly eye on it, and it was evident that D'Arcy regarded it with as much admiration as if it had been the silkiest and shiniest of his silk hats.

Needless to say, the news that D'Arcy was taking tea in No. 6 in full uniform made Jack Blake's study the centre of attraction for the whole House. Fellows came along and looked in in crowds, and it was simply impossible for the Fourth-Formers to keep the door shut. As fast as it was closed upon some, others arrived, equally eager to see the sights, and it was kicked open again.

Blake gave it up at last in despair, and the door was allowed to remain open, and D'Arcy sat in full view of the crowd in the passage.

Not that the swell of St. Jim's cared. He was quite content to sit there and eat his meal in the public view, and gratified by the evident interest the fellows took in the new Commander-in-chief of the St. Jim's Territorials.

The fact that they were mostly grinning did not disturb him at all. Arthur Augustus was accustomed to grinning. The fellows would grin at his fancy waistcoats and his wonderful ties, and he was used to it. He looked round with a placid smile at times, and when he did so a cackle would run through the crowd in the passage.

"Looks as natural as life, doesn't he?" said Gore.

D'Arcy glanced round.

"Weally, Goah, I wegard that we mark—"

"If can talk, too!" said Gore, with an air of astonishment.

"This new thing Blake has got in his study can talk!"

"Weally, Goah—"

"Here, let's get in!" said a brisk voice in the passage.

"I want to see that brother of mine! I hear he's at it again!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was D'Arcy minor of the Third—the inky-fingered, and sometimes inky-featured Wally—the scamp of the Lower School. He pushed his way unceremoniously through the Fourth Formers and Shell fellows in the passage, and came into the study. He stared blankly at Arthur Augustus.

"Gus!"

"Yaas, deah boy, here I am."

"Well, of all the asses—"

"Weally, Wally—"

"I hear you've joined the Territorials," said Wally, with a grin.

"Not exactly that, Wally. I am goin' to form a corps of Tewwitowials for St. Jim's. I shall be glad if you will come to the meetin' in the gym. aftah tea, and bring along your wagamuffins of the Third Form."

"My only Aunt Jane!" said Wally, still staring at his brother. "You've done it this time, Gus. I wonder what the governor would say?"

"I pwesume that Lord Eastwood would approve of my patwiotic intentions," said Arthur Augustus, rising from the table. "In fact, I hinted at somethin' of the sort to the governah to-day, and he pwesented me with a fivah—"

"To make you leave off talking?"

"Certainly not. To help in cawwvin' out the scheme."

"Did you mention the uniform to him?"

"No; that was an aftah-thought."

"Well, you look ripping," said Wally admiringly. "You'd do rippingly for a galanty-show, or something of that sort."

"I wufuse to listen to these widiculous we marks. I am weady to go to the meetin', you fellows," said D'Arcy, belting on his sword and sabretasche—a proceeding that was viewed with open admiration by the fellows in the passage.

"My only Aunt Jane!" said Wally. "That isn't a real sword, Gus!"

D'Arcy sniffed.

"I should hardly be likely to cawwy wound a spoof sword, Wally."

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"But—but you may go and kill somebody with it when you get excited! You know what you are, Gus!"

"Weally, Wally—"

"You'll get excited about it, and think you're a real Territorial cutting down the Prussians, and then off goes Blake's napper."

"Pway don't be a widiculous young ass! As a mattah of fact, in case of accidents, I have had the edge taken off, and the point broken," confessed Arthur Augustus. "I can easily have it sharpened up again if the country is invaded, and it is necessary for me to lead the St. Jim's Tewwitowials against the foweign foe."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wufuse to listen any longah to this wibald laughin'," said the commander-in-chief of the St. Jim's Territorials haughtily. "I am goin' to the meetin' in the gym., deah boys. Pway follow me."

"Yes, rather!" said his chums in unison. "We wouldn't miss it for wourlds."

"I twust," said D'Arcy, looking round—"I twust that you are not comin' to the meetin' in a spiwit of mockewy."

"Not a bit! I'm coming in a cricket-cap."

"And I in a silk hat," said Digby.

"Pway don't wot, you wottahs. Come on."

Arthur Augustus arranged his bushy before the glass to his satisfaction—a proceeding that occupied some minutes. Gore inquired from the passage whether he would take as long to get ready when the Germans came, and there was a fresh cackle. D'Arcy disdained to notice it. Carrying sword and sabretasche in his left hand, he strode from the study, and the giggling juniors made way for him.

"See the Conquering Hero comes!" giggled Mellish, of the Fourth, and the juniors roared.

Needless to say, Arthur Augustus had a numerous following as he went downstairs, and out into the dusky quadrangle.

The whole crowd were after him, and more and more came from all quarters. The uniform did it; and as a matter of fact, D'Arcy had judged well when he had hit upon that as a device for awakening general interest in the matter.

D'Arcy in Etons and a silk hat would have found it very difficult to get a dozen fellows to form a meeting and listen to his speech. D'Arcy in uniform and bushy had the whole Lower School at his heels, and a sprinkling of seniors, too.

What did it matter if they were grinning? The youngsters would have their fun. They could grin as much as they liked, so long as they rallied round the swell of St. Jim's and formed a Territorial corps.

There was plenty of room in the gym. for a public meeting, without disturbing the fellows who were there for exercise. Many of the latter left off, and came around to stare at D'Arcy and hear what he had to say.

The New House were not wanting, either. As a rule, Figgins & Co., of the New House, attended School House meetings solely for the purpose of wrecking them. But now curiosity drew them to the spot. And Figgins recommended his comrades to give the School House swell a chance.

"After all," said Figgins, "the Territorial idea is a ripping one, and we're all patriots here, aren't we?"

"We are!" said Kerr. "We is!"

"Don't you be funny, Kerr. Suppose the invaders came and descended upon an Englishman's home like the wolf on the fold," said Figgins severely. "Of course, we know that the Navy is our first line of defence. But that's no reason why the Fourth Form at St. Jim's shouldn't be the second line."

"Ha, ha! Good!"

"Still, it's a good wheeze," said Fatty Wynn, who had

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been thinking it out. "Suppose we got up training-marches, and so on? You see, we should have to have a commissariat department, and I could attend to that. A march for training, and a big feed in the open air, in the fine weather—"

"Trust you to think of the feed, old chap."

"Well, you know, a fellow can't fight unless he eats," said Patty Wynn. "The commissariat is really the most important department in the Army. And in case of invasion, as the War Office is pretty certain to break down under the strain, there ought to be somebody able to take up the matter and run it."

"Certainly! And I dare say Gussy could deal with an invasion as well as the War Office, if he got his chance," agreed Figgins. "Anyway, let's let him explain himself; we can rag him afterwards if we want to."

"Right you are," said Kerr.

"Besides, I like the idea. And if he likes to take us on as leaders, we'll run the thing and make it a success."

And so Figgins & Co. attended the meeting in the gym in an unusually placable mood.

The meeting was well attended, otherwise. Nearly all the juniors were there, and as St. Jim's was a large school, the crowd was great.

Arthur Augustus had jammed his monocle into his eye, and was looking over the crowd with great satisfaction, as he stood elevated upon a stool.

"Bai Jove!" he said. "This is wippin'. I am glad to see such enthusiasm. Tom Mewwy, I shall be glad if you will take the post of chairman."

"Oh, really, Gussy—"

"I will take no wefusal. I wegard you as a pwopah person to be a chairman, and you can pwesent me to the meetin' in the wegulah way. Of course, you will take care to cut your wemarks short."

"We'll see to that," said Blake. "Same with you, Gussy."

D'Arcy turned his eyeglass upon Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Don't bother, old man; we'll see that you don't run on too long."

"I shall uttably wefuse to let you see to anythin' of the sort, Blake. As a mattah of fact, I have a gweat many points to explain. I have w'ritten my speech out in the twain comin' down, and have a gweat many important points to touch upon."

"Pray allow me a front place," said a meek voice, as Skimpole tried to get through the crowd. "I am the oppo—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Turn him out!"

"I object strongly to being turned out. As a sincere Socialist, I demand the right to talk as long as I please, until I am exhausted in the glorious cause," said Skimpole. "Besides, if D'Arcy is to state one side of the case, the other side ought to be stated."

"Yaas, wathah! Let the silly ass come forward, deah boys!"

"Really, D'Arcy, that is hardly a polite expression. You see—"

"Pway wing off now, Skimmay. You can have your turn latah, at wepylin' to my wemarks. Shut up now. Gentlemen—"

"Whom are you calling gentlemen?" asked Digby.

"I am addressin' the meetin'."

"What price the chairman?"

"Bai Jove, I forgot! Pway get to business, Tom Mewwy."

"Certainly." Tom Merry stepped up, and called for silence. Something like a subdued buzz was produced, in the place of the previous babel, which was as near silence as a junior meeting ever got. "Gentlemen of St. Jim's—"

"Hear, hear!"

"As chairman of this meeting—"

"Bravo!"

"I beg to introduce a gentleman you have never seen before—"

"Oh!"

"Bai Jove, Tom Mewwy—"

"Order!" roared Jack Blake.

"Yaas, wathah! Ordah, deah boys!"

"A gentleman you have never seen before," pursued Tom Merry calmly. "With Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the dude of the School House, you are well acquainted—"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Hear, hear!"

"But with Field-Marshal D'Arcy, Commander-in-chief of the St. Jim's Territorials, you are not acquainted yet."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Bai Jove! I—"

"I, therefore, beg to introduce Field-Marshal D'Arcy to the meeting," said Tom Merry, with a perfectly serious face, and not the ghost of a smile. "He has come down here to form a second line of defence in case the Navy breaks down in war-time."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He has the splendid idea of enrolling the juniors of St. Jim's in a Territorial Force for the defence of these shores—"

"Hurrah!"

"And who knows," went on Tom Merry, warming to his subject—"who knows but what, when we have beaten Germany—"

"Hurrah!"

"We may carry the war into the enemy's country, and— and capture Berlin—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And annex the German Empire to the cricket-ground of St. Jim's—"

The juniors roared.

It was some minutes before a voice could be heard again, and the rest of Tom Merry's introductory remarks were lost. There was a lull at last, and D'Arcy stepped upon his stool again, and jammed his monocle into his eye to survey the meeting.

CHAPTER 6.

D'Arcy—Military Expert.

"GENTLEMEN of the Lowah Forms of St. Jim's—"

"Go it!"

"On the ball!"

"Gentleman, I am glad to see so wippin' an attendance to-night at this most important meetin'. I don't think I exaggwate in statin' that the Tewwitowial scheme is the most important that has been bwouched in modern times."

"Hear, hear!"

"I want this movement to extend all over the countwy, and in particulah I desire St. Jim's to set an example to Gweat Bwitain—"

"Faith, and what about ould Ireland?" demanded Reilly of the Fourth.

"Sowwy, Weilly! I should have said the United Kingdom. I should be fah fwom tweatin' with diswespect the countwy fwom which some of our bwavest soldiers came in the time of war," said D'Arcy gracefully. "I stand cowwected."

"Hear, hear!"

"I want St. Jim's to set a wippin' example to the United Kingdom," went on D'Arcy, that important point being settled. "So far, the Tewwitowial movement is confined to gwown-ups. But a schoolboy contingent would be a wippin' ideal, and I think we ought to be the first to cawwy it out, and set a shinin' example to Gweat—United Kingdom. I twust," said D'Arcy, looking round through his eyeglass, "I twust that I shall not have to defend the Tewwitowial scheme itself against any opposition within the walls of St. Jim's."

"Really, D'Arcy—"

"Shut up, Skimmy!"

"Order!"

"I have thought out the subject vewy carefully," said D'Arcy, when Skimpole was suppressed, "and I have come to the conclusion that the gentlemen who originated the ideah of a Tewwitowial Army were wegulah geniuses. They will waise an army of unprofessional soldiers to defend the countwy. There is a common delusion that professional soldiers are more useful in war time than amateurs. This is a gweat mistake, as I shall pwocceed to pwove."

"Really, D'Arcy—"

"Shut up, Skimmy!"

"Order!"

"I have thought out the subject vewy carefully," said D'Arcy, when Skimpole was suppressed, "and I have come to the conclusion that the gentlemen who originated the ideah of a Tewwitowial Army were wegulah geniuses. They will waise an army of unprofessional soldiers to defend the countwy. There is a common delusion that professional soldiers are more useful in war time than amateurs. This is a gweat mistake, as I shall pwocceed to pwove."

There was a movement of interest, and less buzzing.

"Go it, Gussy!" said Tom Merry.

"In the first place, a professional soldier has not so much intewest in defendin' the countwy. He has the motive of patriotism. But a citizen soldier has just as much patriotism, and he has also his personal pwoperty to defend. Therefore he has a double motive. Then as to twainin'. It is a common ideah that the twainin' of a soldier enables him to fight bettah than a beginnah. As a mattah of fact, it makes him worse—"

"Oh!"

"As I shall pwocceed to pwove—"

"Go it!"

"The professional soldier is shut up in bawwacks, and lives a life which, in compawison with that of a citizen soldier, must be called a stunted one. He learns all kinds of dwillin' which may or may not be useful in war time. He does not learn initiative. But in a countwy like England, where the fightin' is certain to be among hedges and ditches, in small parties mostly, and under covah, what is weally wanted is a twainin' to enable men to fight like the Boers in South Africa, and for that purpose the less dwillin' and

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the more independence we give to the soldier, the most likely he is to turn out dangewous to an enemy."

"Go it!"

"There is also this gweat argument, dwawn fwom a careful study of histowy—"

"This is what comes of working for exams," murmured Jack Blake. "A chap gets chock full of knowledge, and wants to work it off on an unoffending public—"

"Order!"

"I shall pwove fwom instances taken fwom histowy, fwom the earliest times down to the pwsent, that a pwofessional army is only usefual as an instwument of attack, and is pwactically usefual as a defendin' force," said D'Arcy.

"Buck up, old son! It's only two hours to bedtime!"

"Weally, Figgins—"

"Ordah!"

Order was restored. The curious statements of Arthur Augustus had excited attention, and at all events they showed that the swell of St. Jim's had given the matter some thought.

The juniors listened with increasing interest as Arthur Augustus proceeded to make out his case.

"I shall pwove," he went on, "that in case of invasion, the pwofessional army has always pwoved usefual, and that an invadah has nevah been turned out of a countwy unless the people have wised to the occasion and formed some sort of a Tewwitowial force."

"Hear, hear!"

"To begin fah enough back, take the case of Wome—"

"I don't remember as far back as the Roman Empire," said Kerr. And there was a laugh. But Arthur Augustus did not heed.

"Take the case of Wome. When ewevy Woman was a soldier—"

"By Jove, that must have been an army of Amazons, or Suffragettes!" exclaimed Figgins.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I did not say woman, I said Woman!" exclaimed D'Arcy. "When ewevy inhabitant of Wome was a soldier, they had the finest army in the world—and they conquered the world. That was a citizen army, and when there was no war, the soldiers went back to their work. But in the latah ages, we find that Wome had a standin' army of pwofessional twoops. And even the Third Form kids know enough of Woman histowy to know that the pwofessional army could not defend her fwom the barbawians."

"Case made out," said the chairman. "Get on!"

"Take the case of Gweece. You know all about Xerxes and his invasion with an army numbewin' millions. What happened? The Gweecks cut them to pieces. The odds were hundweds to one, and yet the Gweecks conquered. Because they were citizen soldiers, fightin' for hearth and home! But you all know what happened to Gweece when she came to depend upon mercenary soldiers."

"Go it, Gussy! Next man in!"

"The next man—I mean the next case, is that of Italy in the Middle Ages. When the citizens fought their own battles, they were few and pwosperous. When they took to employin' paid twoops, they were conquered and oppwessed."

As the juniors of St. Jim's knew decidedly little about the history of Italy in the Middle Ages, there was no one to controvert D'Arcy's statement.

The swell of St. Jim's proceeded triumphantly.

"Next we come to the gweatest standin' army of modern times—that of Fwedewick the Gweat of Pwussia. Fwedewick the Gweat fought sevewal countwies for seven years, and finished as winnah of the Seven Years War. He was hard up for soldiers all the time, and he shoved any old thing into a uniform and sent it to fight. But when peace was established, he pwocceeded to form the gweatest and most highly-twained of standin' armies. The Pwussian Army and its wonderfual efficiency became a pwoverb all ovah Europe. No othah twoops were supposed to be able to stand against them. And when the Fwench Wevolutiun came, and the wevolutiunary army overwan Pwussia undah Napoleon the Pwussian Army was smashed up in a few days, and the countwy conquered, a vewy short time aftah Fwedewick the Gweat had died, leavin' an army he believed iwesistible. You know what the Fwench Wevolutiunary Army was made of—chaps who went stwaight fwom the plough and the countah to the fwontiers, and in their first battles some of them did not know how to discharge a gun. They had had more twainin' by the time they conquered Pwussia, but they were still what might pwopahly be called a Tewwitowial Force."

"Got it all down beautifully, hasn't he?" said Blake, in great admiration. "It must have taken him hours to think all that out."

"Faith, and it's right he is!"

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"Go it, Gussy! Any more coming on?"

"Yaas, wathah! Finally, we will take the case of Napoleon's army—aftah he had thwown ovah his pwinciples and become empewor. He had a highly-twained army, the largest and best in Europe. He had ceased to twust the people, and welied upon pwofessional twoops—with the usual wwsult. Fwance was invaded, and the finest pwofessional army in the world was cut to pieces. And latah still, the Battle of Waterloo showed how usefual a wweguh army was to wwsist an invasion. I could wefer, too, to the case of William Tell, to the War of the Spanish Succession, to the Franco-German war of our own times, as cases in point, but I will not take up the time of the meetin'—"

"Hear, hear!"

"I wathah think I have pwoved my point, which is this—that a countwy which wrelies on a standin' army for defence is doomed! A pwofessional army is usefual to send abwoad, to attack somebody else's countwy, but it is uttaly usefual for home defence. A big defeat smashes up a wweguh army, as in the case of Jena, of Austerlitz, of Waterloo, of Sedan. But a defeat only makes citizen soldiers fight harder, as in the cases of William Tell and Gawibaldi, of William Wallace of Scotland—"

"Hear, hear!" said Kerr.

"And hundweds of othah cases. Napoleon bwoke up the Pwussian army and conquered Pwussia. The German people wrose and kicked him out. He conquered Spain, and the peasants armed themselves and fought on aftah the wweguh soldiers had all been done in or wun away. Bismarck and his gweenahs conquered Fwance in 1870, because they had only a wweguh army to deal with, and the people did not wwise against them. Ewery instance in histowy pwoves that a citizen army is wrequired for home defence, and therefore no patwiotic Bwiton can wrefuse to support the Tewwitowial Army."

"Hear, hear!"

"Hurrah for the Territorials!"

As there was no contradiction, D'Arcy was held to have made out his point. The juniors cheered him, and cheered the Territorials, and some of them began to sing the latest Territorial song, and "What's the Matter with England?" rang through the gym. with the force of hundreds of lungs.

CHAPTER 7.

Rival Claims.

THE RE was no doubt that the meeting was enthusiastic. The juniors had laughed and cheered themselves into the best of tempers, and, after all, they were all inclined to back up any scheme for helping the Territorials. And to have a hand in some way in the national movement was an attractive idea to the juniors. St. Jim's had formed sevewal successful patrols of Boy Scouts. Why shouldn't they go a step further and form a corps of Young Territorials? The idea might catch on, too, and spread over the country, and there would be glory for them. And so the enthusiasm of the meeting waxed high.

The song was roared out, and when silence was at last partially restored, the swell of the School House spoke again, with glistening eyes.

"I wregard this enthusiasm as a wippin' sign, deah boys! I considah that the St. Jim's Tewwitowials will take the biscuit."

"Hear, hear!"

"Is there any here so base that he would not be free?" pursued D'Arcy, in his excitement parodying the speech of Brutus. "If so, let him speak, for him have I offended. Is there anyone here so fatheaded that he would not be a Bwiton? If any, speak, for him have I offended."

"Bravo!"

"As there is no opposition, I pwocceed—"

"Hold on!" Skimpole jerked himself away from Reilly and Clifton Dane, who were holding him, and moved forward. "Hold on! As a sincere Socialist—"

"Order!"

"Shut up!"

"Chuck him out!"

Arthur Augustus waved his hand.

"Ordah, deah boys! It is quite in accordance with the wules for a Tewwitowial meetin' to be intewwupted by Socialists."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let him speak, and I will demolish his arguments, and then you can chuck the silly ass out."

"Go it, Skimmy!"

"Buck up!"

"Certainly." Skimpole adjusted his spectacles, and blinked at the grinning crowd. "In the first place, I object to militarism in any shape or form."



D'Arcy made a handsome figure as he rode down the street on his fiery steed, and some of the villagers cheered as well as grinned.

"Rats!"
 "Bosh!"
 "I should, therefore, refuse to join the Territorials."
 "Ha, ha! They don't want wrecks!"
 "I regard that observation as almost rude. I should refuse to join the Territorial Force, because I have no country to defend."
 "Oh!"
 "I am a native of—"
 "Bedlam."
 "Really, I wish you would not interrupt me! I am a native of England, but does one inch of England belong to me? Certainly not. I have to pay rent for the privilege of living in my own country. What should I fight for if the enemy came? For the landlord's land and the capitalist's capital? My dear friends—"
 "Get off!"
 "My dear friends, when the land is nationalised, and the whole nation has an equal freedom to use it, then it will be worth the while of an Englishman to fight for it. But until then—"
 "Ring off!"
 "Travel!"
 "Chuck him out!"
 "Yaas, wathah! As the son of a landownah, I wogard Skimmay's remarks as sheer wot. Chuck him out!"
 "Really—I protest—freedom of speech— Ow—wow!"
 And Skimpole disappeared.
 The Socialist interruption being thus got rid of, the Territorial business proceeded. Skimpole's remarks had rather increased than diminished the enthusiasm. There

was a general tendency to back up D'Arcy. There was, of course, much diversity of opinion as to the identity of the commander-in-chief. Reilly maintained that as Irish soldiers were the best in the world, an Irish chap ought to be leader, while Kerr averred that owing to Scottish soldiers being unequalled anywhere, he was the fellow for field-marshal. Fatty Wynn, however, pointed out the undoubted fact that Welsh soldiers were superior to all others, and claimed the post for himself on those grounds. After that, it wasn't of much use for Blake to declare that the indisputable superiority of English troops gave him the claim.

The argument grew heated, and in the midst of national claims came the still more important claims of the rival Houses. To Figgins & Co. it was sun-clear that the head of St. Jim's Territorials ought to belong to the New House. They treated that as a point past all argument—a position that was warmly disputed by the School House.

Jack Blake pointed out heatedly that the School House was nearly twice as large as the New House; but Kerr, who had read Ibsen, brought forward that great writer's argument that majorities were always in the wrong. Tom Merry suggested that the balance of superiority in every respect was with the School House, but Figgins & Co. disputed that statement all along the line.

In the din of conflicting argument, Arthur Augustus in vain tried to make his voice heard.

"Well, it's no good arguing with those New House duffers," exclaimed Blake at last, in disgust. "If they can't see common-sense—"

"You haven't shown us any."

"Weally, deah boys—"

"Look here," exclaimed Clifton Dane, "as the point will never be settled satisfactorily, why not agree to let D'Arcy have the leadership, as it is his idea."

"Yaas, wathah! I wegard that as a valuable suggestion."

"Well, we might fix it that way," said Blake slowly; "there's certainly something in that."

"I agree there," said Tom Merry. "If I'm not appointed, I admit that Gussy is the next best man for the job."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Faith, and let it go at that, then!" exclaimed Reilly.

"Hands up for Gussy as Commander-in-chief of St. Jim's Territorials!"

Blake and Tom Merry elevated their hands, as an example to the rest, and then the rest of the School House hands went up.

But the New House hands remained grimly down.

Wrathful glares were bestowed upon the New House party by the backers of the claims of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"If you fellows are looking for trouble—" began Blake. "There's lots ready for you," said Tom Merry. "Blessed if I can see why you can't be reasonable for once."

"You see, it isn't a personal matter with us," said Figgins, in a tone of explanation. "If that was all, I'd give in myself, for the good of the cause. But it's a question of the dignity of the New House."

"Hear, hear!" shouted the Co.

"That's where the rub comes in," said Figgins. "Personal considerations, of course, could not be allowed to weigh on an occasion like this."

"Of course not!" said Lowther sarcastically.

"Weally, I sympathise with Figgins to a certain extent, deah boys. I can undahstand a fellow bein' vevy careful of his dig. But in this case—"

"It's the dignity of the House," said Figgins. "I don't push my own claims. So long as a New House chap takes the lead, I'm satisfied."

"Wats!"

"And unless that point is conceded, I shall consider it my duty to decline to join the Territorials."

"Go and eat coke, then!"

"I shall immediately proceed," said Figgins, rather excitedly, "to form an opposition, and invade the Territory—"

"Yah!"

"My hat," exclaimed Tom Merry, "that's not a bad idea! If the New House takes up the role of invaders, we shall be able to give the School House Territorials some training. Of course, we should lick them hollow, and—"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Would you?" demanded Figgins warmly. "We'll jolly well see whether you would! We're up against you, anyway. I'm going to form a rival force, and if you lick us, you're welcome to take the lead."

"That's agreed! We shall lick you."

"Wathah, bai Jove!"

"Well, try, that's all, and then we'll join you," said Figgins. "But I don't think the New House will be any the worse for the lickings you can give us."

"Faith, and we may as well start now!"

"Come on, then!"

"Huwwah! Down with the wottahs, deah boys!"

"Hold on there!" shouted Kildare, coming into the gym. "Stop that rowing at once! If you begin fighting here, I'll gate you all for a fortnight!"

The scrimmage ceased as suddenly as it had commenced. "It's all wight, Kildare!" said Arthur Augustus, saluting the captain of St. Jim's. "I shall keep my twoops in ordah."

Kildare laughed.

"Mind you do! It's high time this meeting broke up. Cut, all of you!"

And the meeting did break up.

CHAPTER 8.

The Territorials Get Wet.

THE refusal of Figgins & Co. to join the Territorials of St. Jim's did not make any difference to the recruiting in the School House—or, rather, it helped it on. The fellows understood that it had become a House matter, and they threw themselves into it with added keenness.

The fact, too, that there was an opposition added zest to the movement. If the St. Jim's Territorials were formed and trained, they would naturally want to fight somebody, and who so handy as the New House crowd?

They would have an opportunity of showing upon the New House juniors what they would do if the invaders landed on the shores of England.

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And the day after D'Arcy's return to St. Jim's with the new wheeze, while the excitement of the meeting in the gym, still lasted, the first steps were taken to form the Territorial force.

The commander-in-chief having been decided upon, the initial difficulty was overcome, though it must be confessed that D'Arcy's knowledge of training and of military tactics was limited.

But then, as he explained, drilling and training were all very well in their way, but they had never enabled a regular army to deal successfully with an invader. If the best soldiers in the world have been formed of fellows fresh taken from the shop and the plough, and put through a little training, then that was a proof that the standing army system was a mistake. And D'Arcy, who had made a study of the subject for the sake of his argument, was ready with no end of instances from the history of nearly every country in the world to prove his point. Tom Merry, who was the son of a soldier, was inclined to dispute his sweeping assertions; but D'Arcy challenged him to find any instance in history in which a professional army had met and defeated a serious invasion. And Tom Merry, after turning the subject over carefully in his mind, was compelled to confess that he couldn't think of one, while Arthur Augustus was simply crammed with instances on the other side—of an army hastily drawn from the common people having met and defeated mighty armaments, after great struggles, perhaps, but none the less successfully.

And so, as the new commander-in-chief's ideal was an army of independent fellows, held together by a thin veneer of training, he was able to realise it to some extent—for certainly the juniors of St. Jim's weren't inclined to make hard work of it.

The less drilling they had, the better they liked it, and so on this system all parties were pleased.

"You see, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus, "it's all vevy well to learn to stand in a wov, and march in a wank, but as a mattah of fact twoops nevah stand in a wov except in militawy manoeuvres, and so forth. What you want is to learn to march, to shoot, and to obey ordahs; but then the ordahs ought to be sensible ones, and not the kind the twoops get fwom our War Office. We can get plenty of pwactice at marchin', at takin' covah, and signallin', and so on; and as for the shootin'—"

"We shall have to practise with pea-shooters," said Tom Merry.

"Pway don't be funnaw, Tom Mewwy; we shall have to get wifes."

"Eh?"

"With Mowwis tubes, of course."

"But—"

"And practise till we become dead shots."

"Or shot dead," suggested Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pway be sewious, deah boys. I am goin' to intahview the Head this aftahnoon, and ask his permish to arm the Tewwitowials of St. Jim's with wifes."

"My dear ass—"

"I wufuse to be addressed as an ass."

"You can have the dummy guns in the gym, for practice, but you won't be allowed to do any shooting."

"That is strictly necessary."

"The Head won't consent."

"I shall put it to him as a patwiot."

"He may put it to you with a cane."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, I twust that Dr. Holmes will see the mattah in a pwopah light. As my governah takes a deep intewest in the Tewwitowial movement, I have no doubt that I could persuade him to tweat us to the wifes, if the Head gawe us his permish to use firearms."

"He won't! He might if we practised under the supervision of a master."

"Wafs! That would mess up the whole thing."

"Well, you'll see."

It was a half-holiday that day, and D'Arcy intended to put his recruits through their paces in the quad after dinner.

He had scores of names down on his list, and recruits were in plenty, and after dinner, prepared for fun, they crowded into the quad. It was a fine sunny April afternoon, but even the attractions of the cricket-field were overcome by the interest and novelty of the new idea.

Arthur Augustus, of course, came out in full uniform.

Interested glances followed him from all quarters, and his followers received him with a cheer. It had been made known that a feed was to follow the first training, and that was all that was needed to make the St. Jim's Territorials roll up in scores for the early manoeuvres.

From the direction of the New House Figgins & Co. watched the young Territorials as they began to form up.

Jack Blake suggested a march past the New House, singing the new Territorial song, and D'Arcy adopted the idea.

"I wegard that as a good ideah!" he remarked. "As

soon as you have learned to stand in ordah, I'll march you past. Ger-rer-r-r!"

At least, that was what it sounded like. D'Arcy had picked up the exact tone of the drill-sergeant.

"They're at it!" chuckled Figgins. "Now, if some of us could chip them into coming over here—"

"Better call up the fellows, then," said Kerr.

"That's all right. Taggles has been using the garden-hose round the corner of the house, and it's still fixed there. If we could induce the St. Jim's Terriers to come within range of it—"

"Ha, ha! Good!"

"It would damp their ardour a little, I think," grinned Figgins. "They're going to lick us hollow, you know. That would be a good start for them."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good wheeze!" said Fatty Wynn. "You go and handle the hose, Figgins, and be all ready to bring the front end round the corner as soon as we've got the bounders over here. We can chip them into chasing us!"

"Right-ho!"

And Figgins disappeared round the corner of the New House.

Kerr and Fatty Wynn, and several other New House fellows, strolled over towards the School House, to look on at the evolutions of the Territorials.

Many of the juniors had a tincture of military order from drilling in the gym., and so they were able to form up in something like order.

Arthur Augustus drilled them in a way that showed that he had seen the thing done, and picked up the manner of it.

"Bai Jove! I don't think I evah saw such a lot of helpless duffahs! Weilly, your legs were made for you to stand on, not to be hung about like bags of old clothes—"

"Faith, I—"

"Silence in the wanks! Can't you stand straight, Hancock? You'd bettah go and find a wall to lean up against if you can't!"

"Look here—" began Hancock fiercely.

"Ordah, there! Where in the world did you learn to hunch your shoulders like that, Mannahs?"

"Why, you—"

"Don't keep on shiftin' fwom one foot to the othah, Lowthah! This isn't an acwobatic performance!"

"You—you—"

"Tom Mewwy, keep your eyes fwont! Eyes fwont, dummy!"

Tom Merry looked daggers.

"That's bettah! Weally, Digby, I wish you would twy to look more like a soldier and less like a bag of washin'!"

"Knows his men, don't he?" grinned Kerr. "You'll never make even toy soldiers of them, Gussy!"

"Keep back there, you civilians!" roared D'Arcy, turning round fiercely.

The New House fellows fairly jumped.

"Civilians! My hat!" gasped Fatty Wynn.

"March!" rapped out D'Arcy. "Clear those civilians off the dwill-ground!"

And, at the side of the front rank, D'Arcy set the example.

The School House juniors willingly marched straight at the New House fellows, who crowded back. They would have been tramped over otherwise.

They had to retreat, or be walked on; but, as it happened, this just suited their own game of drawing the School House Terriers over towards the New House, round the corner of which Figgins was waiting with his thumb on the nozzle of the garden-hose.

"Quick march!" rapped out D'Arcy.

"Strike up!" said Blake. "Give 'em the chorus! Bravo for us, and down with the New House and the foreign foe!"

And the St. Jim's Territorials, marching past the facade of the New House, burst into the chorus of the popular Territorial song, with a roar that made it audible in every corner of the old school:

"What's the matter with England?

Who fears the foreign drum?

From counter and farm, at the first alarm,

The Territorials come!

There's nothing wrong with the country,

Her sons know how to fight!

What's the matter with England?

She's all right!"

The last line was repeated and roared out again and again, with the full force of youthful lungs.

"She's all right!"

"She may be!" grinned Kerr. "But you chaps won't be in a minute! You'll be all wrong, and all wet!"

"Chorus again!" roared Blake.

"Go it, Figgy!" shrieked Kerr.

Figgins came round the corner, nozzle in hand.

Swish!

The New House juniors had darted off. The swish of the water was quite unexpected on the part of the Territorials.

Swish! Swish!

The first jet of it smote Arthur Augustus, and fairly bowled him over.

The commander-in-chief of the School House Terriers sat down in the quad, with his soaking busby on the back of his head, and streams of water running down his neck.

"Bai Jove!" he gasped.

Swish! Swish! Swish!

The powerful jet streamed up and down the ranks of the Terriers.

They were ready to face most things, including the Prussian cannon if the Kaiser invaded these shores, but they weren't ready for sweeping streams of cold water that soaked and choked and blinded them.

They reeled and staggered right and left under the unexpected attack, many of them fairly bowled over and rolling on the ground.

There was no facing the fire.

Tom Merry and several others made a dash towards Figgins, but he aimed the jet of water with scientific skill, and they were sent flying.

The ranks broke, and the Terriers made the hottest haste to get out of the line of the hose.

The water played on them as they went till they were out of range.

Arthur Augustus was the last to run.

His dignity as commander-in-chief of the St. Jim's Terriers was at stake, and he staggered to his feet and rushed at Figgins.

Twice the steaming water smote him and rolled him over, and he struggled on; but even the grit of the swell of the School House wasn't equal to the strain.

He turned and followed his troops, and the water played on him behind, hurrying his flight in the direction of the School House.

Figgins, with tears of laughter in his eyes, turned off the water.

The New House juniors were yelling with triumph and glee.

"Hear us smile!" roared Kerr. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins flung down the hose, and wept tears of merriment.

"My only hat! Ha, ha, ha!"

And while the New House triumphed a draggled crowd retreated dismally to the School House. There were grinning fellows looking on as D'Arcy led his soaked and sopping followers home. It was the first essay of the St. Jim's Territorials, and it could not be called a striking success.

CHAPTER 9.

Arthur Augustus Interviews the Head.

"HA, ha, ha!"

"Is it raining, Gussy?"

"Or have you been taking a bath with your clothes on?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy made no reply to the ribald remarks that greeted him. He almost crawled into the School House.

It seemed to him as if all the senior portion of the House had gathered in the hall or on the stairs to witness his discomfiture.

As he went in, dripping with water, followed by his draggled Terriers, Gore and Mellish and several other juniors who hadn't joined the force greeted him, and there was a shout of laughter through the House.

Kildare, of the Sixth, was talking to Darrel in the passage, and the two seniors left off talking to burst into a roar of laughter. Mr. Raitton came to the door of his study, and retreated again with a very audible smile. Herr Schneider was coming downstairs, and he stopped to hold up his fat hands in amazement. Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth, came out into the passage, and looked, and wiped his spectacles, and looked again.

Arthur Augustus, feeling as if life were not worth living, dragged himself upstairs, and the rest of the School House Terriers disappeared as quickly as possible.

They left the whole House laughing heartily.

D'Arcy went into No. 6 in the Fourth Form passage, and threw his dripping busby on the floor.

"Bai Jove!" he ejaculated.

Blake grunted expressively.

"Nice, isn't it?" he remarked.

"I wegard it as wotten!"

"Might have expected it!" said Digby. "This is just what D'Arcy was likely to lead us into. We've only got ourselves to blame."

"Right-ho!" said Herries. "Of all the asses——"

"Weally, Hewwies——"

"Of all the cuckoos!" said Tom Merry, looking in at the door. "Of all the never-sufficiently-to-be-jumped-on idiots——"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"Oh, go and boil yourself!" said Monty Lowther. "This is Gussy's first essay in commander-in-chiefship! Yah!"

"Bah!" said Manners.

"Faith, and it's wet we are!" said Reilly. "Sure, and we might give Gussy the frog's march up and down the passage! It would be a relief intirely!"

"Good wheeze!"

"I should uttably wufese to be fwog's marched up and down the passage, Weilly! I wegard you as a wottah! Tom Mewwy——"

"Oh, seat! I'm wet!"

"I am feahfully wet myself, and I gweatly feah that my beastly uniform will be absolutely wined——"

"Blow your uniform!"

"Pway don't be a beast, Tom Mewwy! If it shwinks——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There is nothin' to gwinn at in that extwemely unpleasant possibility! I wegard you as a set of gwumblin' wottahs!"

"And how do you regard yourself?" asked Lowther. "A really ripping sort of a leader, I suppose?"

"Yaas, wathah! You see——"

"Yes; I see a champion fathead!"

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"Oh, give the chap a chance!" said Clifton Dane. "Figgins took him by surprise, but then he took us by surprise, too. None of us had any idea that the bounder was lurking round the corner with the hose."

"That's so," said Tom Merry. "But it's a leader's business to foresee these things. What's he a leader for?"

"Yaas; but we must have a beginnin' to ewerything!" said Arthur Augustus. "We're not goin' to take this lyn' down, deah boys; we are goin' to make the wottahs sing small!"

"I don't think!" remarked Lowther.

"Oh, we know that," said Blake. "You never do."

"I mean——"

"Never mind what you mean; you've stated a fact. You don't think—you haven't the necessary apparatus."

"If you're looking for a thick ear, Blake——"

"Oh, come on!" said Tom Merry, passing his arm through his chum's. "If we stay here talking we shall catch cold."

"I'm not going——"

"No, you're coming! Come on!"

And Tom Merry dragged his chum away. Arthur Augustus stripped off his smart-jacket—which did not look very smart now—and squeezed out the water, and hung it on a chair back before the fire to dry.

"I shall have to go and change my things," he remarked. "I am fwightfully wet!"

And he left the study.

Blake, Herries, and Digby thought they couldn't do better than follow his example. The study was left untenanted. Five minutes later, Mellish of the Fourth looked in on passing. He found the study empty, and D'Arcy's jacket steaming away before the fire.

For a moment the cad of the Fourth, who was on the worst possible terms with the chums of Study No. 6, was tempted to give the chair a push, and send the jacket into the grate to scorch.

But as he looked at it a new idea flashed into his mind.

He stepped away softly, and joined Gore in the passage. Gore shared his study with Skimpole and Clifton Dane. Dane, the boy from Canada, had queer pets—little snakes that he frequently carried in his pocket, and which, though quite harmless, were terrifying enough to look at, to those unaccustomed to the reptiles.

Gore grinned as Mellish whispered to him his new idea.

Five minutes later, the Fourth Form cad looked into No. 6 again. The room was still empty. The jacket was almost dry now. Mellish had one of Clifton Dane's little reptiles in his hand, and he proceeded to put it into the inside pocket of the jacket hanging on the chair.

The reptile, accustomed to sleeping in a pocket, and gratified by the warmth of the snug place, immediately curled up there, and went to sleep.

Mellish grinned as he left the study.

The reptile was likely to sleep there undisturbed—until D'Arcy put his jacket on. Then the ructions would begin. And although D'Arcy had seen Dane's snakes, and knew that

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they were harmless, the sudden discovery of a snake about his person was pretty certain to give him a shock. Arthur Augustus had already had one severe shock through those snakes.

It was ten minutes later that the chums of Study No. 6, dry and re-clothed, returned to their quarters.

Arthur Augustus was in his ordinary clothes now, and he hung up the others to dry before the fire.

Jack Blake recommended him to leave them to dry of their own accord, as there would then be less danger of shrinkage, but the swell of St. Jim's shook his head.

"Imposs., deah boy! I want to wear them again."

Blake snorted.

"Haven't you had enough Territorialing for one afternoon, fathead?"

"I wufese to be addressed as a fathead."

"Haven't you had enough?" roared Blake.

"Certainly not. We have suffahed a defeat at the hands of the foweign foe, but we have got to avenge it, deah boys."

"Well, you are a sticker!" said Blake grudgingly. "I suppose we shall have to back you up."

"Yes, wathah! I shall insist upon the Tewwitowials backin' me up. Besides, there is the feed I pwomised the fellows aftah the first pwactice. I shall have to be in full dweess for that."

"What about the grub?" asked Blake.

"That's all wight. I left the selection to Dame Taggles, and ordahed any amount up to two pound ten," said D'Arcy.

"The gwub is put in the box-woom till we're weady. While I'm gone to speak to the Head, you fellows might as well get weady for the feed. There's too many fellows for a study, and I was thinkin' of a feed in the woodshed."

"Good! So you're going to the Head?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

And D'Arcy went. Upon reflection he had decided that it would be best to pay his visit to Dr. Holmes in Etons. He left the uniform to dry while he went. Dr. Holmes was in his study, chatting with Mr. Railton, when D'Arcy tapped at the door, and he bade the junior enter.

"Ah, it is you, D'Arcy," said Dr. Holmes, putting on his glasses, and taking a serious look at the elegant junior.

"Yaas, wathah, sir. I should like to speak to you, with your kind permish, sir."

"Pray go on!"

"Yaas, sir. You may have heard that I am gettin' up a Tewwitowial Force at St. Jim's, sir."

Dr. Holmes smiled.

"Yes, I have certainly heard something of it, D'Arcy."

"We are goin' to twain, sir, so as to be able to back up the grown-up Tewwitowials in case of invasion. One of the pwincipal parts of a Tewwitowial's twainin' is to learn to shoot. You agree to that, sir?"

"Yes, I suppose so."

"I have ewevy hope, sir, that my govannah will pwovide the funds for findin' wives for the youngstahs, if you will allow us to use them."

Dr. Holmes's face became very grave.

"I am afraid I could not allow that, D'Arcy."

"Pway considah, sir! It is necessary for ewevy twue Bwiton to learn to shoot, so that he can help to defend his countwy in case necessity awises."

"Yes, certainly; I agree to that," said Dr. Holmes, smiling. "Every Englishman ought to be able to shoot; but I am afraid that I could not trust firearms into the hands of boys in the junior Forms."

"They would soon get used to handlin' them, sir."

"I fear that there would be a few fatalities first."

"Well, sir, if any chap were accidentally shot, it would weally be dyin' for one's countwy, so it would be all wight."

"I hardly think the lads' parents would look at it in that light, D'Arcy."

"N-n-no, sir; pewhaps not. But some people are nevah satisfied, sir."

Dr. Holmes laughed slightly.

"I cannot allow you the use of loaded firearms, D'Arcy; but if the boys of this school seriously think of taking up rifle practice, I should be the last to stand in their way. They will be permitted to take regular practice at targets under the supervision of a master. That is the best I can say."

"Vewy well, sir. I—I suppose you know best, sir," said D'Arcy, a little crestfallen.

"I am glad you think so," said the Head drily. "You may go."

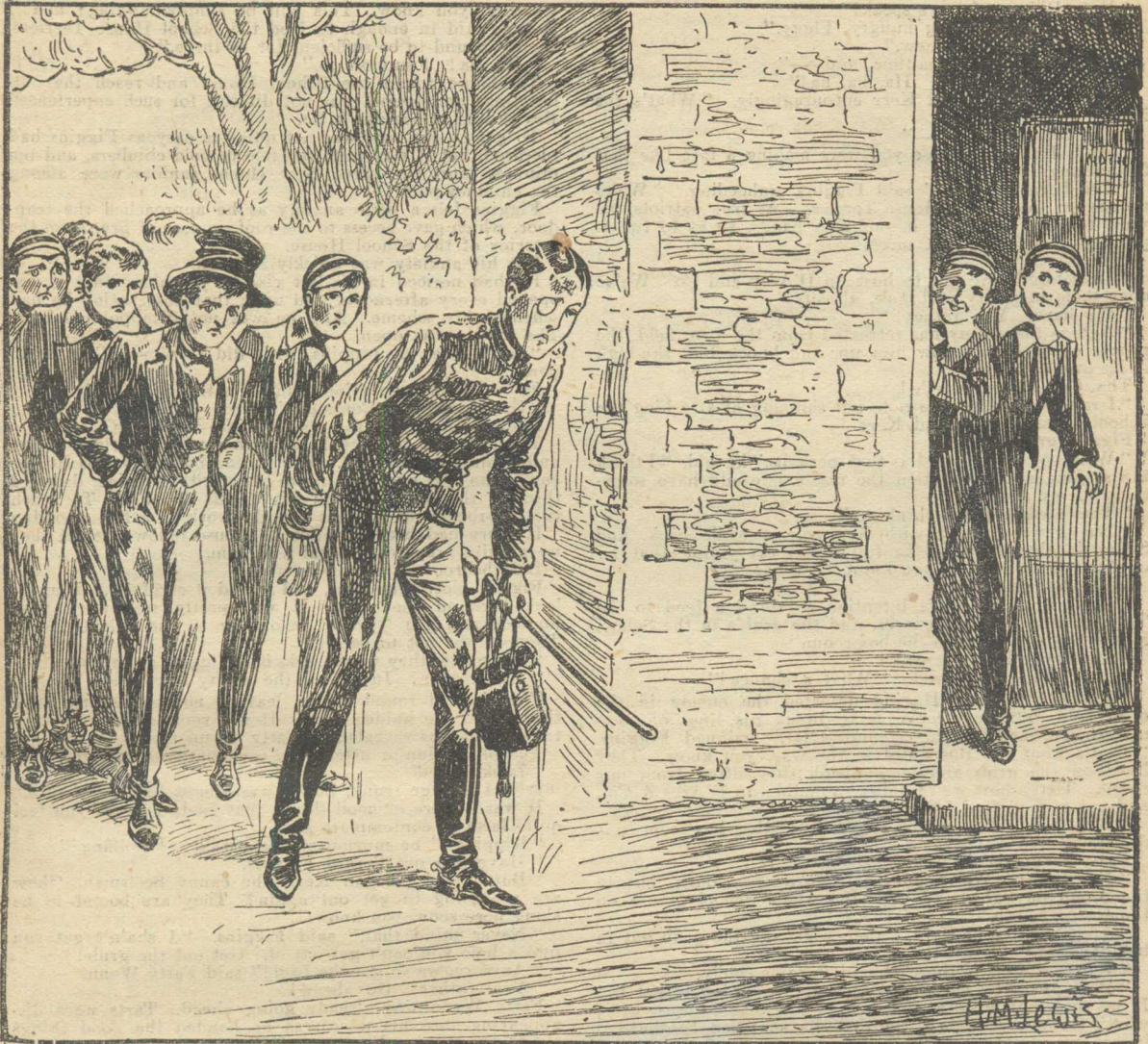
"Thank you, sir!"

And D'Arcy left the study. The Head looked at the House-master, and both laughed.

"The lad's idea is good," Dr. Holmes remarked; "but I can imagine the result of a House scrimmage if the juniors

"ONE OF THE RANKS!"

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As D'Arcy led his soaked and sopping followers dismally home, there was a shout of laughter through the School House.

had loaded firearms in their hands. The holocaust would be terrific."

"I think so, sir. I hope the shooting practice will be taken up, however. I should be very glad to devote some of my spare time to seeing to it."

Arthur Augustus returned to Study No. 6. His chums were not there; they had gone to the woodshed to make preparations for the feast of the Territorials.

D'Arcy examined his military clothes. They were dry enough to put on, and though they had certainly shrunk a little, it was not a great matter. The junior changed his clothes in the study, and was satisfied when he surveyed his reflection in the glass.

"Bai Jove! It's all wight!"

And he left the study to look for his chums. Mr. Lathom's door was open, in the lower passage, and as D'Arcy passed the Form-master called him into his study.

"D'Arcy, pray step in!"

D'Arcy stepped in, doffing his busby.

"Yaas, sir."

Mr. Lathom looked at him severely over his glasses. He was busy writing, and he had paused for a moment to call D'Arcy into the room.

"D'Arcy, I did not expect to see you in that—that attire."

"It's my uniform as a Tewwitowial of St. Jim's, sir."

"H'm! Ahem! Never mind. As the Doctor has not objected, I suppose I need not; but the disturbance in the quadrangle a short time ago—"

"It was nothin' sir—"

"Ahem! I have a different opinion."

"If you will allow me to explain, sir—"

"Wait there till I have finished this paper, D'Arcy, and then I shall have time to attend to you."

"Vewy well, sir."

And Arthur Augustus, standing at attention, waited. And as he stood, a strange tickling made itself felt on his chest, and then under his arm. A cold perspiration broke out over D'Arcy. What had he got in his jacket?

CHAPTER 10.

The Invaders.

FIGGINS was standing with his hands deep in his trousers' pockets, and a thoughtful frown wrinkling his manly brow. Kerr and Fatty Wynn watched him curiously. They could see that a mighty thought was working in their leader's brain, and at such a moment they would not interrupt him. For any scheme for "busting" the School House Terriers, and getting the leadership into the hands of the New House, would have been very welcome to them. The Territorial idea was a ripping one, but it would never be a success unless a New House chap commanded—that was a foregone conclusion.

And so the Co. waited. Figgins was not in a hurry to speak. Presently a grin dawned on his thoughtful face.

"It's coming!" murmured Kerr.

"Jolly good thing, too," muttered Fatty Wynn. "I'm getting hungry."

"Eh? Did you fellows speak?"

"I said I was getting hungry, Figgy."

"Oh, that's nothing new."

"You see, it's past tea-time, and—"

"H'm! Yes! Good! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go it, Figgy!" said Kerr encouragingly. "What's the idea?"

"I've been thinking—"

"Well, I didn't suppose you were making a face like that for nothing."

"I've been thinking," said Figgins, unheeding. "We're up against the School House Terriers. As true patriots, we want to have the thing in our own hands, so as to run it properly, and make it a success."

"Exactly!"

"Therefore we've got to bust up D'Arcy and Co. We've done them in pretty well once, already."

"We have. Yes, rather!"

"And as the enemy has retreated from the open field, the proper caper is to follow him up, and knock him sky-high in his own quarters."

The Co. looked startled.

"I say, Figgins, you're not—not thinking of attacking the School House!" ventured Kerr.

Figgins grinned.

"Well, not quite so bad as that, perhaps," he said. "I think the seniors, not to mention the masters, would have something to say about it."

"That's what I was thinking."

"But I was jawing with Skimpole a while back, and Skimpole always relates in full detail everything that he ought to keep dark, as you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, it was Gussy's intention to stand a feed to the Terriers after the manoeuvres, and the grub's in the School House ready, packed in the box-room."

Fatty Wynn looked greedy.

"Is it?" he murmured. "What a chance!"

"That's the idea. Having defeated the enemy in the open field, our next move is to break his lines of communication, and lift his commissariat," grinned Figgins.

"That's what the Boers did in the war, you know. They lived on the grub and ammunition they lifted from our chaps. That's how we're going to double up D'Arcy & Co., and get a good feed into the bargain!"

"But how? We couldn't get into the box-room undetected."

Fatty Wynn shook his head.

"No, Figgy. We've done it before after dark, but in the broad daylight, and with the whole School House on the warpath, too."

"And then," said Kerr, "there's getting the grub out in the daylight."

"Why not scoff it there?" said Figgins coolly.

"Well, yes, why not? But how are we going to get in? If we show our noses at the door of the School House after what's happened to-day, we shall be snatched baldheaded before we could say 'What's the matter with England?' They're looking for a chance to get at us, as it is."

"I don't propose to walk into the School House. That's what I've been thinking out. You know it's possible to get on the roof from the outbuildings at the back, and then there's the fire-scuttle in the roof—"

"Fastened," said Kerr.

Figgins shook his head.

"I know it's been open every day since this ripping fine weather set in, to air the top passages. You know what a musty old den the School House is in places; it's five or six hundred years older than the New House. Now, the trapdoor opens on the same passage as the top box-room, and that's the room where the young duffers have hidden their grub."

Fatty Wynn gave Figgins a slap on the back that made him stagger.

"Here, hold on!" shouted Figgins. "What are you up to?"

"I couldn't help it," said Fatty Wynn. "Why, you're a great general, Figgy! They ought to be glad to get you to command the Terriers. They ought to jump at the chance. A chap who can think of a wheeze like this ought to have a gold medal."

"Well, I think it's a pretty good wheeze, but you needn't knock my backbone through my shirt-front," said Figgins. "Let's get to business now. Shall we take anybody with us?"

"Better go it alone, in case of accidents. It's a ticklish business, crawling over the roof."

"Right you are! Come on!"

"My hat," said Fatty Wynn, rubbing his plump hands. "We only had a few sausages for tea, and some bacon and eggs, and I'm awfully hungry! I get hungry in this April THE GEM LIBRARY—No. 63.

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weather, you know. This will be simply ripping; and if Gussy's laid in enough to feed the School House Terriers, there's bound to be sufficient for us three."

"Ha, ha! I suppose so."

To dodge round the School House and reach the outbuildings undetected, was not difficult for such experienced Boy Scouts as Figgins & Co.

To get on the roof was not quite as easy as Figgins had pictured, but it was quite possible to bold climbers, and ten minutes later the three New House juniors were among the chimney-pots.

Figgins felt a little anxiety as he approached the trapdoor, which gave access to the roof, in case of fire, from the interior of the School House.

But his anxiety was quickly relieved.

He had noticed in his last visit to the house that it was opened every afternoon, and upon that observation he had schemed his scheme. And he was not disappointed now. The scuttle was open.

"Look here, my pippins, what did I tell you?" he whispered.

Fatty Wynn gave a fat grunt of satisfaction.

"Good enough! Come on!"

They looked down the opening into the house.

There was a passage below, from which various rooms and a staircase opened. The junior box-room was at the end. The passage was quite deserted. Figgins dropped through the opening, and his chums followed. To reach the box-room and enter it was the work of a few seconds.

If there had been any School House fellow present they were quite prepared to deal with him.

But the room was empty.

Figgins closed the door, and looked it carefully. Then he looked round the room. It was pretty well filled with lumber, and the "grub" belonging to the School House Terriers was not to be seen.

"Of course, they would hide it," Figgins remarked.

"Yes, rather! In one of the empty boxes most likely."

They looked round for it, leaving no box unturned till they found the hidden store. It was reposing in an empty trunk, and was revealed as Fatty Wynn raised the lid.

The plump junior uttered an exclamation of delight.

"Look here!"

It was a large trunk, but it was almost full.

It was a store of good things that made Fatty Wynn feel quite faint to contemplate it.

"Ripping!" he murmured ecstatically. "Spiffing!"

"Have 'em out!" said Figgins.

"But, I say," began Kerr, the canny Scotsman, "how are we going to get out again? They are bound to be along here soon, you know."

"Never mind that," said Figgins. "I sha'n't get you into a hole you can't get out of. Get out the grub!"

"Anyway, we've got the feed!" said Fatty Wynn.

"Yes, rather! Go ahead!"

Fatty Wynn was already going ahead. Tarts were disappearing into his mouth as he handed the good things out of the trunk. Figgins & Co. were soon busy, and they hardly noticed how the minutes flew.

But there came an interruption to the feast at length.

There was a sound of footsteps in the passage, and of the handle of the door turning. Then it turned again, and rattled sharply.

"Hang it!" said a voice outside. "I can't get this door open!"

Figgins & Co. grinned at one another.

It was the voice of Tom Merry.

CHAPTER 11.

A Snake at Close Quarters.

MEANWHILE, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was standing where we left him—inside Mr. Lathom's room, waiting for the master to finish writing and attend to him. The swell of St. Jim's wouldn't have minded waiting, as far as that went, although the time was drawing near for the celebration in the woodshed. But he was feeling extremely uncomfortable, and he could not stand still for a moment. There was something in his jacket—what it was he didn't know—but he knew that it made him wriggle with utter discomfort and uneasiness.

"Bai Jove," murmured Arthur Augustus, "what evah can be the mattah? There is somethin' howwid in my jacket; it feels like a beastly snake!"

ANSWERS

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There was no doubt about it. The creature, whatever it was, had wriggled out of his pocket, and was exploring the recesses of his upper clothing.

Mr. Lathom did not notice the junior's uneasiness at first. He seemed to be dealing with some difficult problem in his work, for his brow was deeply wrinkled, and he had apparently forgotten the presence of Arthur Augustus.

But the junior's prolonged wriggling disturbed him at last. He lifted his head and looked sternly at D'Arcy.

"Cannot you keep still, D'Arcy?"

"Ya-a-a-as, sir!" said D'Arcy.

"Then do so."

"Ya-a-a-as, wathah, sir!"

Mr. Lathom resumed his writing. D'Arcy stood still for about a second, and then he wriggled again convulsively.

"D'Arcy!" rapped out the Fourth Form-master.

"Ya-a-as, sir!"

"Keep still!"

"Yaas, sir!"

The swell of St. Jim's made a great effort, and stood still. The strange, alarming tickling was under his arm now, and going down to his elbow. The creature, whatever it was, was going down his sleeve.

D'Arcy was in a cold perspiration now.

There was no doubt that it was a snake of some kind, and he thought of Clifton Dane and his reptiles. No doubt one of them had got loose, or else Dane had put it in D'Arcy's jacket for a joke. That was more likely. The Canadian lad was not exactly the sort to play uncomfortable practical jokes; but that really seemed the most probable explanation. D'Arcy mentally promised the new fellow a fearful thrashing as the reptile wriggled down his arm.

Dane had declared that the little creatures did not bite, and weren't at all dangerous, but he might be mistaken. It wasn't pleasant to put the little reptile to the test in this way, at all events.

D'Arcy shivered and wriggled again as it curled round his wrist.

The sleeve was somewhat close-fitting, and the reptile did not find an easy escape. Mr. Lathom started and looked up angrily.

"If you cannot wait a few minutes without twisting and wriggling in that absurd manner, D'Arcy, I shall cane you!"

"Weally, sir——"

"Not a word!"

"But if you please——"

"Another word, D'Arcy, and I shall cane you!"

"Yaas, sir; but——"

Mr. Lathom rose from his chair, and took up a cane from the table, his eyes gleaming from behind his spectacles.

"Very well, D'Arcy, as you prefer to be punished——"

"Not at all, sir. I—I——"

"Hold out your hand!"

"Yaaaaas, sir; but——"

"Hold out your hand!" thundered the master of the Fourth.

And Arthur Augustus gave a jump and obeyed. He held out his hand, and at the same moment the little head of the reptile was protruded from his cuff.

The master of the Fourth saw it, and jumped,

"Wh-wh-what is that?" he gasped.

"What is what, sir?"

The reptile had wriggled free, and dropped to the floor. Mr. Lathom made a spring to escape, and knocked over his chair, and gave a howl.

"Help!" he gasped. "Snakes! Dear me, I shall be bitten! Help!"

"It's all wight, sir!" exclaimed D'Arcy. "I'll collar him, sir!"

And Arthur Augustus bravely attacked the snake, grasping it round the neck with a firm grasp. Mr. Lathom uttered a cry.

"Be careful, D'Arcy! Don't touch it! It may be poisonous!"

"It's all wight, sir."

"Dear me! You are a brave lad. I——"

"I'll cawwy him off, sir."

"But——"

But Arthur Augustus did not stay to listen. Keeping his hold firm on the snake's neck, he carried the wriggling reptile out of the study, leaving the little Form-master gasping with mingled alarm and relief.

In the passage, D'Arcy met Clifton Dane, who uttered an exclamation at the sight of the snake.

"Ah, there he is!" he exclaimed. "What are you——"

"Take the wotten beast!" said D'Arcy. "I wegard you as a wotten wathah."

"What do you mean?" demanded Dane, as he took the

snake, and began to pet and coax it, for the little creature was as frightened as anybody. "What have you been doing with my pet?"

D'Arcy jammed his eyeglass into his eye, and stared at Dane with an expression that might have abashed a gargoyle.

"Weally, Dane——"

"He wouldn't hurt you," said Dane. "But you've frightened him. Hear him hissing?"

"The beastly weptile! If you put him in my jacket again——"

"Eh?"

"I shall give you a feahful thwashin'."

"Who put him in your jacket?" demanded Dane. "I didn't! I've just missed him from the study, and I was looking round for him when I met you."

"Then it must have been some othah wottah."

"Boys!" Mr. Lathom was looking out of the study at them, still very nervous. "Be very careful of that creature. It must be killed at once."

Dane gave a jump.

"Killed, sir!"

"Yes, certainly. It is dangerous——"

"It's all right, sir. It's not poisonous," said Dane eagerly. "It's only a pet, sir, and we're allowed to keep pets."

"Oh! Are you sure it's harmless, Dane?"

"Yes, sir," said the Shell boy. "I brought him from Canada, sir. He's all right. Somebody took him out of my study for a silly joke."

"Oh, in that case, take him back, and take better care of him. I did not know it was a tame snake."

"You can stroke his head, sir," said Clifton Dane, bringing the snake towards the Form-master. "You'll see he's quite harmless."

Mr. Lathom stepped back hastily into the study.

"I will—er—accept your assurance on the point, Dane," he said. "You may—er—go. You may—er—go, too, D'Arcy."

"Thank you vewy much, sir."

Mr. Lathom closed his door. Clifton Dane carried away his queer pet, and Arthur Augustus, glad to be out of the threatened "wiggling," for which he had been called into his Form-master's study, went to look for his chums. Glyn, of the Shell—the new boy from Liverpool—met him in the passage, and stopped him.

"Hallo, where have you been, D'Arcy? Come on!"

"What's the mattah, deah boy?"

"There's a raid!"

"Weally? Who's waidin' whom?"

"New House bounders!" exclaimed Glyn excitedly. "Come on!"

"But where? How——"

"In the box-room."

"The box-woom?" howled D'Arcy. "Aftah the gwub?"

"Yes. Buck up!"

But Arthur Augustus did not need telling to buck up. He dashed on ahead, his scabbard clattering on the stairs as he dashed up three at a time, and Glyn following him.

CHAPTER 12.

Rough on the Commander-in-Chief.

HERE was a crowd in the top passage. Tom Merry and Blake had gone together to the box-room to take out the provisions, and the door refusing to open, it did not take them long to guess that it was locked on the inside. A raid by Mellish was what the juniors suspected at first; but the chuckles from within were recognised as proceeding from Figgins & Co. And then the School House Terriers knew that was a House raid.

They wrenched and kicked at the door, but it was in vain. There was no chance of Figgins & Co. opening it. To murmured threats through the keyhole only mocking chuckles replied.

"My only hat!" said Tom Merry, in disgust. "Figgins is getting a first-class nerve on him, and no mistake! Fancy raiding us in broad daylight."

"How did he get here?" said Herries.

Blake jerked his thumb towards the open scuttle.

"That's the way he got here. He couldn't have come upstairs, or some of us would have spotted him."

"Bai Jove, deah boys! Is that door locked?"

"No, we're holding it shut," said Monty Lowther, in a sarcastic tone.

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"Figgy's in there, scoffing the grub," said Blake. "Now then, you giddy commander-in-chief, just deal with the situation. It's an invasion of the Home Territory, and there's a chance for the Terriers to distinguish themselves, I don't think."

"Pway stand back, deah boys!"

"Oh, rats!"

"If you say wats to your commander-in-chief, Digby, you will get a feahful thwashin'. Pway give me elbow woom."

"Oh, give him his head!" said Tom Merry resignedly.

"He's welcome to it," observed Lowther. "It's not much use to anybody."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Oh, go ahead, and tackle the invaders!"

D'Arcy approached the door, and tapped. He looked an imposing figure in uniform and sword and busby, but his followers were not admiring him. They were more inclined to chip him for the impasse matters had come to. The School House Territorials had been enrolled to resist invasion. Here was their own House invaded, and the invaders were entrenched, and could not be shifted. It was one up against the Terriers with a vengeance.

There was a cheery voice from within in answer to the polite tap of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Hallo, kid!"

"Pway open this door, deah boys!"

"Rats!"

"Weally, Figgins—"

"Ha, ha, ha! Hear us smile! Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you venture to lay hands on the gwub—"

"We've done it, my son. We're enjoying ourselves. This is spoiling the Egyptians, you know! Carrying the war into the enemy's country. We're scoffing the supplies of the Territorials! Wolfing the commissariat! Fatty is doing the work of a whole army! He's making a regular wreck of the grub!"

There was a growl of wrath in the passage.

The juniors knew Fatty Wynn of old, and they could guess the havoc that would be the result of his attack upon the store of excellent things in the trunk.

D'Arcy pursed his lips thoughtfully.

As commander-in-chief of the Territorials of St. Jim's, he was certainly called upon to do something; but what form that something should take he hadn't the faintest idea.

Meanwhile, the feast was going on merrily in the box-room. The juniors in the passage could even hear the champing of active jaws, and the sounds of bottles of currant wine opening, and gurgling into mugs.

"My word!" said Digby. "Fancy us standing here while they're wolfing the tommy!"

"It's because we've got such a ripping leader," explained Monty Lowther. "I rather think we'd better sack Gussy and take on Figgins! We should have a chance of touching our own food, then."

"Silence in the wanks!" said D'Arcy.

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

"I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort. We can't bweak in the door, because it would make too much wow, and it's impos, anyway," said D'Arcy, with an air of reflection.

"Wonderful!" said Manners. "He's worked all that out in his head, and without the aid of a net!"

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"May as well give up the idea of seeing the feed," said Tom Merry. "Still, I don't see how Figgins & Co. can get away. We'll make 'em pay for the feed."

"Yaas, wathah! I don't suppose they'd have the cheek to try to escape by the window in the daylight; but some of you can go and watch outside in case. You go, Dig, and Hewwies, and Weilly and Glyn!"

The juniors named looked at D'Arcy. But it occurred to them that they might as well be in the quadrangle as in the passage, and so they went. There was a tap on the inside of the box-room door.

"You kids still there?" sang out Figgins.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We're finished here," said Figgins. "We've had a nice feed, thank you, and enjoyed it very much. We're much obliged to the School House Territorials."

"Yes, rather!" said the Co. through the keyhole.

"Wats! You can't get away, you wottahs! We shall collah you as you come out," said D'Arcy. "I have always regarded it as quite poss. for an invadah to land in this countwy, but impos. for him to get away again. And that is the case now, you wottahs! You can't get out!"

Figgins chuckled, and the Co. echoed his chuckle.

"We're going to make terms with you, Gussy."

"Wats! I wefuse to make terms with an invadah. No quartah to a beastly invadah! That is the motto of the Tewwitowials."

"Hear, hear!" said the juniors crammal in the passage. And they prepared for business. They had been done by the enemy; but their time was coming. If Figgins & Co. ran the gauntlet of the crowd that was waiting for them to come out, Figgins & Co. would pay dearly for that feed!

"We're waitin' for you," said Arthur Augustus. "We don't mind waiting a bit. We'll give you a feahful thwashin' when you come out."

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"We're going to make terms."

"I uttably wefuse to do anythin' of the sort. No terms to an invadah!"

"What-ho!" said the Terriers.

"Hold on!" chuckled Figgins, through the keyhole. "We've scoffed about the fifth part of your tommy. The rest is all right."

"Vewy good! Now—"

"But it won't be all right unless you make terms with us," said Figgins. "If you give us a safe-conduct back to our own House, here's the grub ready for you, except what Fatty's jammed into his pockets. But if you don't, we're going to light a fire and burn it all up!"

"Bai Jove!"

"So you can take your choice."

"I wefuse! No terms to a beastly invadah! You can destroy the gwub, and we will make you w'iggle for it when we collah you, you boundahs!"

"Can they?" exclaimed Blake wrathfully. "We're not going to lose all the feed, you ass. Why—"

"I wefuse to be called an ass!"

"Well, dummy, then! Duffer! Fathead! You've got yourself into a hole, and now you want to lose all the feed! Rats! Make terms with Figgins!"

"No terms to a beastly invadah!"

"Light a fire in the grate, Kerr," Figgins was heard to say within the box-room. "Jam that old wood in, and then put the things on it. Start with the meat-pies, as they'll burn."

"Right you are, Figgy!"

"Hold on!" shouted Tom Merry. "We'll make terms!"

"Nothin' of the sort!" shrieked D'Arcy. "No terms to an invadah! Silence in the wanks!"

"Rats!" "Bosh!" "Go and eat coke!"

"Silence in the wanks! I wefuse—"

"Piffle! We're not going to lose all the feed! Make terms!"

"I wefuse! No quartah to an invadah! Silence in the wanks! I wefuse to make terms, or to be dictated to by a set of wotten mutineers! Shut up! Ordah!"

"My dear dummy," said Blake, "we can't let them waste all that grub! Principle's a good thing, but you seem to forget that we haven't had our tea, and there's nothing in the study, and tea in Hall is over! I don't feel exactly inclined to go till supper-time with an empty tummy!"

"You can't expect us to stand an aching void like that, Gussy," said Tom Merry. "It's no good refusing to admit the soft impeachment when you're licked! Make terms with the enemy."

"I absolutely wefuse to do anythin' of the sort!"

"My dear ass—"

"I decline to be chawactewised as an ass! Undah the circs—"

"Collar him!"

"Pway don't mutiny, or I shall have to administah a feahful thwashin' to all the Tewwiahs! Welease me!"

"You'll be taking on a big job, then!" chuckled Blake.

"Yank him off!"

"I wefuse! Welease me, you wottahs! I absolutely—ow—wow!"

The commander-in-chief of the School House Territorials went struggling along the passage in the grasp of a dozen grinning Terriers. Blake tapped at the door.

"It's all right, Figgy! Let the grub alone! We make terms! Give you my word for a free pass out of the School House!"

"What about your giddy commander-in-chief?" chuckled Figgins.

"He's deposed at present."

"Nothin' of the—ow—sort! I wefuse to—wow—ow—ow!"

"Keep that duffer quiet!"

"Sit on his head, Manners!"

"Jam his busby into his mouth!"

"I wefuse! I—I—groo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's all right, Figgy," said Tom Merry, laughing; "you can come out!"

"Right you are!"

Figgins, with a complete reliance on the good faith of the School House chums, unlocked the door and came out. Kerr and Wynn followed him. Fatty Wynn's pockets were bulging, and it was perfectly evident that he had taken enough of the provisions to make a second good feed in the New House.

But the word of the Terriers was sacred. They had given their parole, and the New House raiders were as safe as if they had been in Figgins's own study.

Figgins & Co. grinned genially at the baffled Terriers.

"Thanks, awfully!" said Figgins. "It was a good feed!"

"Ripping!" said Kerr.

"First-rate!" said Fatty Wynn, with a fat, comfortable smile. "I've never enjoyed anything quite so much in my life! Good-bye!"

The School House fellows glared. Figgins glanced along the passage, and stared.

"What's that—that all those chaps are sitting on?" he asked.

"Oh, that's only Gussy!"

"Only our commander-in-chief," said Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins & Co. walked away. Arthur Augustus was allowed to rise when they were clear of the School House, and he got upon his feet, looking very dazed and dusty and dishevelled.

"You feahful wottahs—"

"Go and get a brush-down, Gussy!"

"I wufuse to go and get a bwush-down! I wegard you as a set of mutinous wascals! I have a good mind to thwash you all!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I disband you!" shouted D'Arcy, waving his hand excitedly. "The School House Tewwiah has ceased to exist! Go!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Leaving the swell of St. Jim's in a state of excitement bordering on frenzy, the juniors crowded into the box-room. Figgins & Co. had left the greater part of the provisions—even Fatty Wynn's capacity was limited. The good things were conveyed in state to the woodshed, and there the Territorial feast commenced. But it was not graced by the presence of the commander-in-chief. Like Achilles sulking in his tent, Field Marshal D'Arcy held disdainfully aloof from the feasting Terriers.

CHAPTER 13.

A Challenge from Figgins.

BLAKE, Herries, and Digby came into Study No. 6, followed by the Terrible Three. The feast in the woodshed had been a great success, and, in spite of the raid of Figgins & Co., there had been enough to go round. The juniors were very well satisfied with themselves, with the Territorial scheme, and things generally. Now they were a little concerned about Arthur Augustus. Their way of dealing with their commander-in-chief had been a little high-handed, and, after all, D'Arcy had been the founder of the feast. Jack Blake had suggested coaxing Gussy into a good temper again, and the others had agreed. That much at least was due to the Territorial Field-Marshal.

Arthur Augustus was in the study, but he did not look round when the juniors entered. His dignity had received a severe shock, and had not yet recovered from it. He had been shaking the dust out of his bushy when the juniors came along the passage, and he immediately picked up a book and affected to be greatly interested in it, and he had his eyes fixed on the open page when they came in.

Blake gave a discreet little cough.

Arthur Augustus went on staring at the page. As a matter of fact, he wasn't reading—the book having been hastily taken up, with the wrong end uppermost.

"Hallo, kid!" said Tom Merry.

There was no reply.

"It's been a ripping feed!" said Digby.

"So sorry you couldn't come, Gussy!" Herries observed.

"It wasn't really enjoyable at all without Gussy!" Monty Lowther remarked, winking out of the study window at the pigeons in the quadrangle.

"No," said Manners thoughtfully. "Our commander-in-chief in uniform would have—would have given the thing a tone."

"Just what I was thinking!"

"We want to know the time fixed for the next training, too!"

"And the next feed!"

"Of course, we've got to get level with Figgins & Co., and we shall want Gussy to lead us against the foe!"

But D'Arcy remained deaf to the voice of the charmer. He kept his gaze rigidly fixed upon the book, and did not appear to hear a single word that was said, or even to be aware that the juniors were in the study at all.

Blake went over and glanced at the book.

"Awfully interesting, Gussy, I suppose?" he observed.

"Yaas, watahah!" said D'Arcy, driven to reply at last.

"Is that why you are reading it upside-down?"

D'Arcy turned scarlet, and the juniors burst into a roar of laughter. The swell of St. Jim's clumped the book down on the table. He rose to his feet, jammed his monocle into his eye, and regarded the juniors with a withering look.

"I wegard you as a set of wottahs!" he said, in measured

tones of disdain. "I no longah considah you in the light of fwields!"

"Unsay those cruel words!" murmured Monty Lowther. "I wufuse to listen to wibald wemarks, Lowthah! I wegard you as wank outsiders! Pway do not bothah me!"

"But what have we done?" asked Tom Merry innocently.

"You know vevy well what you have done, Tom Mewwy! I wufuse to waste my bweath weplyn' to fwivolous questions!"

"We've enjoyed the feed!"

Arthur Augustus sniffed.

"I suppose that's what's wrong," said Lowther gravely. "Gussy is growing mean in his old age. He's thinking—"

"Nothin' of the sort!"

"He didn't want to have that feed scoffed—"

"You are quite wrong, Lowthah!"

"Of course," went on Lowther, unheeding, "if that's the way D'Arcy looks at it, we owe him an apology. How much did the grub cost, Gussy?"

"Name your figure," said Manners solemnly.

"I wufuse to do anythin' of the sort! You know vevy well—"

"I think it must have been nearly ten shillings," said Jack Blake, wrinkling his brow as if in the midst of a mighty mental calculation.

"You ass! It was nearly three pounds."

"Ah! We owe Gussy three pounds."

"You don't!" shrieked D'Arcy. "You owe me nothin'! I don't—"

"We shall have to get up a subscription all round to raise it," said Blake. "Of course, it's a lot of money for Gussy to lose—"

"He can't be expected to do it," agreed Tom Merry.

"I've got a five-bob bit towards it. You fellows—"

"You—you wottahs! You know vevy well—"

"That's all right, Gussy. Don't you be alarmed. We'll see that you don't lose anything," said Digby consolingly.

"You—you—"

Arthur Augustus's words failed him. In his excitement he dropped his eyeglass to the end of its cord, and picked it up and tried to jam it in the wrong eye. The juniors went on calmly with their calculations.

There was nothing D'Arcy abhorred so much as anything approaching to meanness, as his friends knew very well. He grew almost frantic in his attempts to explain that he wasn't thinking about the feed at all. But they would not listen. They went on adding figures, each naming the amount of his contribution.

"H'm! Only thirty bob the lot," said Blake. "Perhaps D'Arcy will wait for the rest. If we let you have thirty bob down, Gussy—"

"You—you—you wottah!"

"Will you give us time over the rest?"

"I'll give you a feahful thwashin'!" shrieked D'Arcy. "I know you are only wottin'! I wasn't thinkin'—"

"But there was something the matter with you," said Blake positively. "You were on your dig, about something. Don't deny it."

"I—I wasn't goin' to deny it!" sputtered D'Arcy, quite taken aback at being placed in the wrong in this way. "I—I—I—"

"You see, chaps, I was right!"

"We can raise thirty bob at once, and—"

"I wufuse to touch it! You are only wottin'! I was simply wescentin' your wascally mutinous twreatment!"

"Oh, come, Gussy! Of course we believe you, but—"

"I think the less Gussy says about it the better," said Tom Merry, shaking his head. "We're ready to refund—"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, I—I—I wufuse—"

"Then let the matter drop," suggested Tom Merry.

"Aftah your wascally diswepful twreatment of your commandah-in-chief, I shall wufuse to let the mattah drop. I—"

"Very well, we'll refund—"

"I tell you, it isn't that—"

"We're quite willing to take your word for it, Gussy, if you care to let the whole subject drop," said Tom Merry, with an air of magnanimity. "That's the fairest I can say."

"I agree with Tom Merry," said Blake.

"Undah the circs, as you persist in misunderstandin' me, I am willin' to let the mattah dwop," said Arthur Augustus. "I weally fail to see, howehav, how I can wegard you as fwields aftah what has occurred."

"But what are we to do for a commander-in-chief?" asked Lowther, looking very dismayed.

"You can look for anothah one," said D'Arcy loftily.

"Oh, no, we want a first-class one, and we can't be satisfied with any inferior goods," said Tom Merry, shaking his head.

"Well, weally, Tom Mewwy, if you put it like that—"

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"That's exactly how I do put it, Gussy."
 "Vewy well; in that case, I will consent to wesume the chief command of the St. Jim's Tewwitowials," said Arthur Augustus graciously. "I wegard you as a set of wottahs, but weally—"

"We werry tell you how we regard you," said Lowther. "We're too polite."

"Weally, Lowthah—"
 There was a kick at the open door, and Jameson of the Third came in. Jameson was a New House fag, and the letter he carried in his hand showed that he had come in the quality of Mercury.

"Hallo!" he said, in his cheeky way.
 "Hallo!" said Tom Merry. "Hand me that ruler, Blake."

"Here, hold on!" exclaimed Jameson, retreating a pace. "I've brought you a letter from Figgias, and I'm to wait for an answer."

"Hand it over, then," said Blake, "and keep your head shut."

"It's for Gussy."
 "Pway give it to me, deah boy."

D'Arcy took the letter, and slit the envelope open with a paper-knife. The others looked on in great interest. They didn't know what the chief of the New House juniors should be writing to Arthur Augustus about, unless it was a letter to make fun of the late defeat of the Terriers.

D'Arcy read the letter and his brows wrinkled.
 "Vewy good!" he exclaimed. "We'll be there."
 "What's it about?" demanded Tom Merry.

D'Arcy turned his eyeglass thoughtfully on the hero of the Shell.

"I weally don't know whether I can confide militawy secwets to a subordinate," he remarked. "You will have your instructions on the day of battle."

"On the day of which?"
 "The day of battle, deah boy. Yaas, wathah! We'll be there, Jameson. You can tell Figgins we accept the challenge, and the St. Jim's Tewwitowials will be on the spot on Saturday aftahnoon, and will make hay of him."

"I don't think," remarked Jameson, putting his tongue into his cheek.

And he took himself off just in time to escape a lunge from Monty Lowther's boot.

The juniors looked at Arthur Augustus expressively. There was great danger at that moment that there would be another mutiny, and that the Commander-in-chief of the St. Jim's Territorials would be compelled to acquaint his subordinates with his important military secrets.

Fortunately, before the juniors took that unmlitary step, Arthur Augustus relented. He passed the letter to Tom Merry.

"Wead it out, deah boy," he said languidly. "I wegard it as a feahful piece of impertinence on the part of the New House wottahs."

Tom Merry read out the letter.

"Dear Terrier," he read. "We, the juniors of the cock-house at St. Jim's, do hereby challenge the School House mongrels—otherwise called terriers—to a pitched battle in Rylecombe Wood on Saturday afternoon."

"The School House rotters having the advantage of numbers, will be expected to make the attack, and if they succeed in routing us, we're all willing to join the Terriers under D'Arcy's command."

"If you accept this challenge, let us know by messenger; if you refuse it, kindly climb down and leave the Territorial management in the hands of New House fellows, who are more fit for the work. If you accept, it is pax until three o'clock on Saturday afternoon."

"(Signed) C. FIGGINS."

"Cheek!" said Tom Merry.
 "Nerve!" remarked Manners.
 "Of course, we accept," said Blake. "Blessed if I can quite see Figgy's little game. We outnumber the New House kids nearly two to one, and he can't expect to have any chance against us in a fair scrap."

"Yaas, wathah! I suppose the boundah's gettin' a swelled head because he's been wathah successful so fah."

"I suppose that's it."
 "He'll jolly soon come down off his perch," grinned Lowther. "Wait till we get a fair chance at them in the wood, that's all."

"Bai Jove! Yaas, wathah!"

CHAPTER 14.

What's in the Wind?

ALL the School House Territorials were of one mind about accepting the challenge from Figgins & Co. It looked as if Figgins had developed a swelled head on the strength of his success, and had bitten off more than THE GEM LIBRARY—No. 63.

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he could chew, in slang parlance, this time. And the School House Terriers resolved to make him wriggle over it.

If the New House were defeated in the coming struggle, Figgins & Co. were pledged to join the Terriers, without making any more conditions about the leadership, and that afforded the School House chums great satisfaction.

To bring the New House into line was to make the scheme a complete success, and to score a victory for their House. And so everybody was just as determined as D'Arcy to meet the enemy on Saturday afternoon and pulverise them.

They were quite willing, too, to agree to making it "pax" till Saturday.

It gave them time for some more training, and getting into form. And the prospect of triumphing over the rival House gave an added zest to the Territorial scheme.

The School House juniors trained, and marched, and paraded in the quad, and the New House fellows let them alone. They chipped them a little, it is true—that was only to be expected—and they made endless fun of D'Arcy and his busby; but the matter stopped short at chipping, and went no further. There were no more rows.

And the School House were not slow to chip back. They twitted their rivals with being Little Englanders and outsiders and unpatriotic wasters and so forth; and so there was always a lively exchange of compliments.

Both sides were looking forward eagerly to Saturday afternoon, when the contest was to take place.

Figgins & Co. amicably arranged the details with the School House Terriers. The New House fellows were to have half-an-hour's start, and then the Territorials were to follow them to the wood, hunt them down, and attack them, and knock them out if they could.

They had no doubt whatever about being able to do so; for, besides their complete confidence in their own prowess, they were nearly two to one in point of numbers, and there was no restriction about using their whole force.

If the New House troop were not defeated by tea-time, the School House were to own up that they were a failure, and to allow the Territorials to pass over to the New House command.

It was a fair arrangement, and both sides meant to observe it scrupulously, but Tom Merry & Co. could not quite understand what Figgins & Co. were getting at.

It might be swelled head; and there was no doubt that swelled head was not an uncommon complaint in either House at St. Jim's. But Figgins & Co. seemed so very confident about the result?

It was rumoured that Figgins was already designing the uniform he was to wear as Commander-in-chief of the St. Jim's Territorials, and that Fatty Wynn was making plans for the feast of inauguration.

And Tom Merry confessed that he didn't quite "catch on."

"It's all wight," said Arthur Augustus, in his confident way. "They won't have the ghost of a chance, deah boys. We shall wipe up the ground with them, the same as we should do with a foweyn foe."

"But Figgins isn't a chump," urged Tom Merry. "He knows as well as I do that he can't tackle such big odds in a stand-up fight."

"It's swelled head, deah boy."
 "I'm afraid it may be some trick as well."
 "I don't see what twick Figgins can possibly be playin'."
 "Neither do I, but it looks like one to me."
 "Oh, that's all wight!" said Arthur Augustus comfortably. "You can wely upon me to tell you what's the pwopah thing to do. We shall give the New House a feahful thwashin', and the wottahs will wun like anythin'."

But Tom Merry was not quite satisfied. He talked it over with Manners and Lowther, and both of them agreed that Figgins & Co. were probably up to some little game, but confessed themselves unable to guess what the little game in question might be.

"Well, there's something on," said Tom Merry decidedly. "Suppose we go and have a look round the wood, and see if there's anything suspicious in the place. I hear that Figgins & Co. have been down there several times."

"May as well," said Lowther. "It's a fine afternoon for a walk."

"Come on, then."
 It was after school on Friday. The following day was the day of battle, and Tom Merry was really a little anxious. D'Arcy was quite satisfied, but Tom Merry did not exactly rely upon D'Arcy's generalship.

At the gate the Terrible Three came in sight of Figgins & Co., who were just going out. The New House trio exchanged glances, and halted. Figgins gave the chums of the Shell an affable glance.

"Going for a little walk?" he asked politely.
 "Yes, just for a stroll," said Tom Merry carelessly.
 "Coming our way?"

"That depends on which way you're going. Down to the village?"

"No. We thought of a stroll in the wood."

"Ahem! I'm afraid we can't come, then."

"Sorry! Go and get your hair cut, then."

And the Terrible Three strolled down the lane. As soon as they were out of earshot of Figgins & Co., Tom Merry spoke.

"They were going to the wood, kids."

"Yes, rather," said Manners emphatically. "They're staying back now just because we're going. They didn't want us to see them."

"That's it! That shows there's something on."

"And we'll jolly soon find out what it is."

Bow-wow! Gr-r-r!

"Hallo! There's young Wally!"

D'Arcy minor was strolling along the lane, with Pongo at his heels. Pongo had just caught sight of a village dog, and was giving him a doggy greeting. The scamp of the Third grinned at the Terrible Three.

"Where are you off to?" asked Lowther suspiciously.

"Scouting," said Wally. "Figgins & Co. are up to something in the wood, and I'm going to see what it is. I'm backing up Gus this time; honour of the family, you know. Better have old Gus for leader than a silly Shellfish."

Manners made a dive at the cheerful Third-Former, but Wally dodged, and the chums of the Shell strode on, leaving Wally grinning. They entered the footpath through the wood by the stile, and began their investigations.

Exactly what to look for the chums did not know; they were only certain that there was something afoot which it behoved them to discover.

They commenced the investigations thoroughly, with all the care and skill of experienced Boy Scouts; but the wood was, as far as they could see, quite innocent of any trap of any kind.

Tom Merry had some idea that Figgins & Co. might have been preparing some elaborate ambush for the School House Territorials to march into; but there was no sign of anything of the sort.

"Hallo! What's that?" exclaimed Lowther suddenly.

Bow-wow-wow! Gr-r-r! Br-r-r! Bow-wow!

"Elp, 'elp!"

"Pongo!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "That mongrel again!"

"And 'Erbert!" grinned Manners.

They hurried in the direction of the disturbance, through thick bushes and ferns towards a glade in the heart of the wood. They knew the voice of Kirkdale—otherwise known as 'Erbert—the boy whom Tom Merry & Co. had brought to St. Jim's after rescuing him from a slum life. Nothing would induce 'Erbert to put an aspirate before a vowel, though Tom Merry did not despair of his picking it up in time.

"My hat!" exclaimed Lowther, as they burst out into the glade. "Look there!"

In the glade a high pole was planted firmly in the earth. It had been evidently driven deep into the ground, a hole being dug for the purpose, and the earth stamped down hard round the foot of the pole. Clinging to the pole was 'Erbert, and Pongo was barking round the foot, making jumps up at him.

"'Elp, 'elp!" gasped 'Erbert, evidently in great alarm.

Bow-wow! Gr-r-r-gr-r-r!

"'Elp! I can't 'old on 'ere!"

Tom Merry dashed towards Pongo. A grinning face was looking from behind the trunk of a neighbouring tree, and it belonged to Wally. He came out in time to catch up Pongo and save him from Tom Merry's boot.

'Erbert slid to the ground with a gasp of relief.

"Thank you, Master Merry."

"It's all right," said Wally. "He wouldn't hurt you."

"Wouldn't 'e," said Kirkdale, with a far from favourable glance at the dog. "'E'd 'ave 'ad my leg if I 'adn't shinned up the pole!"

"Well, suppose he had. A bite isn't so much to make a fuss about," said Wally airily. "Dogs will be dogs, you know."

"You'll see that that beast will be found drowned one of these days, young 'un," said Tom Merry. "Do you know who put this pole up here?"

Wally shook his head.

"Blessed if I know. Some giddy ass who hadn't much to do with his time, I suppose. It can't be much use to anybody here."

"I was lookin' at it, Master Merry," said Kirkdale. "I see Master Figgins come this way yesterday. He borrowed a spade of the woodman by Rylcombe."

"Then it was Figgins!"

"That's it," said Manners. "But I'm blessed if I know

what on earth they are going to do with this pole, unless it's to shin up when they're licked."

The chums of the Shell stared at it in amazement. That it formed some part in Figgins's scheme they did not doubt; but how? That was a question they could not answer. A further hunt through the wood revealed no trace of any secret schemes on the part of the foe, and the chums of the Shell returned to the school in a very puzzled frame of mind.

CHAPTER 15.

Marching to Battle.

THE Territorials of St. Jim's were thinking more about the affair of the afternoon than of their lessons on Saturday morning. Mr. Linton had occasion to distribute lines with a liberal hand in the Shell, and Mr. Lathom was not behindhand with the Fourth. But little did the Terriers care for lines just then. They were thinking of battle and victory, and the lines could be left over till the evening. Glad enough were they when classes were dismissed for the day, and they were at liberty to follow their own inclinations.

Immediately after dinner, Arthur Augustus hurried upstairs and changed into his uniform of commander-in-chief. Mr. Trimpy had been from Rylcombe to see to it, and set right the damage that had been done to it, and now the swell of St. Jim's looked as trim and handsome as ever. He surveyed his reflection in the glass with considerable satisfaction, and wished that his Cousin Ethel were there to see him. Blake, Herries, and Digby came into the study, and he turned to them for friendly criticism.

"Do you think this looks wippin', deah boys?" he asked.

"Not yet," said Blake. "I dare say it will rip soon enough when we get to work."

"I did not mean—"

"Never mind; your apology is accepted."

"Weally, Blake—"

"I'm going in a cricket cap," said Blake. "It won't look so imposing as a bushy, but it will be more comfy. It's going to be warm this afternoon. Have you found out yet what little game the enemy are up to, Gussy?"

"That's all wight, Blake. You wely on me."

"Then you haven't looked into the matter at all?"

"That's all wight, I tell you."

"Ain't he just like a real big gun at the War Office?" said Blake admiringly. "You have to open your mouth and shut your eyes, you know, and we'll muddle through somehow. When D'Arcy gets into the House of Lords, they ought to make him Minister of War. He's just cut out for the post. He'd never foresee anything, and always be surprised at a thing after it happened. Gussy, old man, you're wasted at school. Your place is in the War Office, it is really."

"Pway don't be funnay, Blake. I assure you that we shall lick the enemy, and covah the St. Jim's Tewwitowials with glory."

"Come on, then; let's go and look for the glory. The chaps are waiting."

Tom Merry looked in at the door.

"Is the general ready? The battalions are ready for action."

"Pway don't speak in that wickulous way, Tom Mewey, I wegard it as diswespectful to the Tewwitowials."

"Is that ass ever coming?" roared a voice up the stairs.

"Pway don't be wude to your commandah-in-chief, Glyn, or I shall have you placed undah awwest."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I am weady now." D'Arcy picked up his scabbard, which always interfered considerably with his legs unless he carried it carefully in his hand. "Follow me!"

They followed him. Arthur Augustus walked with something of a strut, as was pardonable under the circumstances, and Blake & Co. fell into line behind him, and strutted down the passage after him.

They strutted down the stairs, and out into the quad. A roar of laughter greeted them.

"Bai Jove!" D'Arcy looked round, perplexed by the merriment, and caught Blake and his companions still in the attitude of strutting. "Bai Jove! You wottahs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wegard you as beasts. Form up, there!"

"Right you are! Take your feet out of the way, Lowther."

"Keep your hoofs to yourself."

"Elbows out of my ribs, please."

"Ordah! Ordah in the wanks!"

D'Arcy licked his men into shape at last. As a matter of fact, they could form in very good order if they liked, though they did not always choose to do so. The swell of St. Jim's walked up and down before the troop, with his

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monocle in his eye, and surveyed them and made disparaging remarks.

"I wegard you as a set of dummies," he observed. "Stand upright, Wally—I mean Pwivate D'Arcy minor! Sergeant Blake, pway stand at attention! Lowthah, stop that absurd gwinning'. This is not a Punch and Judy show."

"Sorry," said Lowther. "My mistake."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence in the wanks! I will not have this wiculous laughah. I did not see anythin' to laugh at—"

"Where's your pocket mirror?"

"Ordah! If you can possibly march in time—"

"Ring off, Gussy!" said a voice from the ranks. "Figgins & Co. have had more than the start they bargained for."

"Wing off yourself, Dane, or I shall have you placed undah awwest. Now then—march! Quick time!"

The juniors marched—so suddenly that they marched right upon Arthur Augustus before he had time to get out of the way.

Manners bified against him heavily, and he sat down on the ground, and Lowther marched over him, and Reilly stood on his legs.

"Ow! Gerroff! Oh!"

"Well, you told us to march quick."

"You wank wottahs! I wefuse to allow this wibaldwy!" exclaimed D'Arcy, staggering to his feet and dusting his riding-breeches with his gloves. "As you were!"

He dusted himself, while the Territorials grinned and chuckled. He kept them waiting three or four minutes, and then, taking his proper place, he gave the word to advance.

The St. Jim's Territorials marched.

As they crossed the quadrangle, they were under the gaze of many eyes, and they took care to keep in excellent time.

Dr. Holmes was looking out of his study window, and he looked again, and smiled with something like satisfaction, as he turned to Mr. Railton.

"Really, the boys look very soldierlike," he said. "This training can only result in good, Railton."

The House-master nodded.

"I quite agree with you, sir."

"I suppose they are going on a training march through the lanes," said the Head, as he watched the young Terriers marching through the great gateway. "It is an excellent way of spending a half-holiday. I am afraid that D'Arcy's attire, however, may excite some comment."

"Very possibly," said Mr. Railton, laughing. "But there are too many of them, I think, to be interfered with by the country lads, so they will be all right."

"Yes, I quite approve of this idea of a quiet and peaceful march through the quiet countryside," said the Head.

Dr. Holmes was far from guessing the real purport of the quiet and peaceful march. The Terriers wheeled into the road, and took up the route towards the wood.

Naturally enough, D'Arcy's uniform attracted considerable attention. But the village lads contented themselves with chipping from a distance. The numerous array of Terriers displayed various weapons—bats and stumps and stuffed stockings—and they were altogether too dangerous to be tackled. Even a group of Grammar School juniors whom they encountered beat a prompt retreat, and left them severely alone.

The Terriers sent a yell of derision after the disappearing Grammar School caps, and marched on feeling very satisfied with themselves.

"I wathah think Figgins & Co. will be inclined to wun, too, when they see us," Arthur Augustus remarked to Sergeant Blake.

"When they see you, you mean," Blake observed.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Perhaps it would be only fair to them to shove a mask on."

"Pway don't be funny!"

"Or a fire-screen, or something."

"Silence in the wanks!"

They reached the stile on the footpath. To follow the footpath through the wood they had to form twos. D'Arcy rapped out orders, and he was rapping away when a sharp, clear bugle-note rang through the wood.

Ta-ra-ra-ara-ta!

"My only Aunt Jane," ejaculated Wally, "that's Figgy's bugle!"

"Defiance from the enemy!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"That shows he's not afraid. It's to guide us to the spot."

"I suppose Figgy thinks we're lost," Lowther remarked.

"We had to wait such a jolly long time while our commander-in-chief was curling his hair."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence! I wathah think that is the enemy, deah boys."

Ta-ra-ta-ra-ra-ara-ta!

"It's Figgins's bugle right enough! Come on!"

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"I am commandah-in-chief here, Blake. Come on!"

And Arthur Augustus led the way.

They marched on, taking a track through the wood that led them in the direction of the bugle, which was still calling every few moments.

It was a bold defiance from Figgins & Co., and at once disabused the Terriers of any notion of an ambush in the wood. Figgy wouldn't sound his bugle to guide them to an ambush.

The New House fighting-men were ready for a battle, and apparently all the School House Terriers had to do was to wade in and wipe up the ground with them. But still Tom Merry had his doubts. It wasn't like Figgins to give himself away so utterly. There must be some trick about it.

The Terriers marched into the glade where Tom Merry had discovered the pole the previous day. But the pole was not standing solitary in the green glade now. The Terriers halted, and stared at the scene before them in blank amazement and dismay.

From the enemy came a yell of defiance.

"This way! Come on!"

But the Terriers did not come on.

CHAPTER 16.

Bravo, Terriers!

F IGGINS & CO. had indeed been preparing a surprise for the guileless commander-in-chief of the St. Jim's Territorials.

They had had only a brief start of the Terriers, but they had done well in it. The pole in the glade was surmounted now by a flag that fluttered in the breeze, and the flagstaff formed the centre of a fortified camp.

In front of the astonished Terriers was a barricade composed of branches, saplings, old benches, and every kind of article Figgins & Co. had been able to secrete near the spot during the past few days.

For the work had not been done all at once, that was quite clear. The materials of the barricade had been brought there secretly, and stacked away in hidden corners till wanted; that had been the secret work of Figgins & Co. Now they had only had to drag them out and pile up the barricade.

The camp was ingeniously planned, with no small military skill on the part of the astute Figgins.

Clumps of trees defended it in various places, and formed strong supports for the barricade, which circled the camp, and allowed no opening anywhere. And a second glance at the barrier showed that it was not so flimsy as it appeared at first sight. For a thick wire was interlaced amid the branches and chunks and logs of wood, and fastened to the trees, and it ran round and round the camp, forming an almost impenetrable barrier.

Tom Merry stared at the defence of the New House crowd, and simply gasped.

"My only hat!"

Real soldiers, charging in the way of business, would not have found it easy to carry that camp by storm. And there were few of the St. Jim's Terriers who did not feel that the task before them was tons above their weight.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated D'Arcy.

Figgins looked at them over the top of the barricade, and grinned.

"Hallo! So you've come!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, we're ready! Are we ready?" called out Figgins.

"What-ho!" roared fifty throats behind him. "Hoch!"

"What on earth are they grunting like that for?" asked Lowther.

"We're not grunting," exclaimed Figgins indignantly; "that's a German cheer."

"Oh, is it? Sounds more like an English grunt."

"We're the Germans, you see," Figgins explained.

"We're the giddy invaders, and we've entrenched ourselves on English soil. It's up to you to turn us out, or else climb down and turn over the Territorial command to the New House. That's the agreement."

"Yes, rather," said Kerr, "and we're ready."

"Bai Jove!"

"My hat," said Blake, "Gussy has got us into a ripping mess this time!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"It's as Figgy says—that's the agreement, and we keep to it," said Tom Merry. "We've got till tea-time to rout the New House rotters."

"Take your time," said Figgins blandly, "there's a couple of hours yet. I sounded the bugle because I thought perhaps you'd lost your way in the wood."

"Oh, no," said Monty Lowther; "we were waiting while our general scented his handkerchief."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"ONE OF THE RANKS!"

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"If you like to chuck the thing up now, we'll agree," said Figgins. "Of course, it must be admitted that we've outgeneraled you, and you will have to sing small. I have given the order for my commander-in-chief uniform."

"You will have to wescind that ordah, Figgins."

"Ha, ha! Are you going to try to turn us out of this?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Don't be funny, Gussy—funnier than you were born, I mean. All St. Jim's couldn't turn us out of a position like this," said Figgins good-humouredly. "I would undertake to hold this camp against the Sixth."

And the Terriers were rather inclined to agree with Figgins, with the exception of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. D'Arcy could be obstinate when he liked; and he often liked. He never wavered for a moment. He had come there to give battle to the New House; and give battle he would, if he had to do it alone.

But there was a long pause.

In the camp the fortified juniors were chuckling. They had a German flag—manufactured in Figgins's study—waving from the flagstaff, and German eagles raised in all quarters. They were German invaders for the time being, and it looked as if they would get the better of the Territorials.

The latter retired a little up the glade, to hold a council of war. Most of them were of opinion that it was utterly impossible to carry the New House position by assault, and that they might as well admit themselves licked, and have done with it. Even Tom Merry was not optimistic.

"We can't do it," he said. "You see, there's no breaking down the barricade, with the wire run through it. They've got cans of water to chuck over us, and peashooters, and clods, too. Then they've got cricket-bats and stumps, in case we come to close quarters, and we could never get over the barricade, unless we had extraordinary luck. But I'm quite willing to try, if you fellows are. We shall only be licked, and I'm not afraid of a few hard knocks."

"That's so!" said Blake. "There's a sporting chance!"

"Yaas, wathah! As a mattah of fact, this situation frequently awises when England goes to war," said the commander-in-chief, turning his monocle disdainfully upon Lowther. "You see, we nevah do foresee anythin', and we have to make up for blunders in the management by courage in the field of battle. It is quite poss. that I might have foreseen this, but it's all wight. I depend on your pluck to cawwy the enemy's position."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Well, it's the usual way," he remarked. "If Gussy wants to preserve the traditions of the War Office, I don't see why he shouldn't. We'll attack, and trust to luck. We may turn the boudners out."

"That's wight, Tom Mewwy! I wegard it as extwemely prob. that we shall lick the wottahs: and anyway, we can only be licked. And wemembah that I shall be leadin' you."

"Of course, that makes a great difference!"

"Don't be funny, Blake, at a moment like this. Are you fellows all weady?"

"Oh, yes!" said Dane. "We're in for it, and we may as well go on. We can only be licked."

"Tom Mewwy, you will take thirty fellows, and attack the camp in the rear as soon as we have fairly started," said Arthur Augustus. "Don't show yourselves till we're wight on the bawwicade. Then pewhaps you will be able to take the wottahs by surpwise. You other fellows, follow me!"

"But I say, Gussy—"

"Pway don't dispute with your commandah-in-chief, Tom Mewwy. Cut off!"

"Oh, right you are!" laughed Tom Merry. "Come on, some of you chaps."

He drew off his contingent into the wood. D'Arcy allowed them time to make a detour to get round to the other side of the camp. The movement was quite visible to Figgins, who posted his followers carefully for the defence. But he had to divide his force for the purpose, and there were, of course, fewer to face the frontal attack D'Arcy meant to deliver.

Arthur Augustus drew his sword.

"Are you all weady?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Then—charge!"

"Hurrah!"

Arthur Augustus led the way, and the School House Territorials charged.

"Line up!" roared Figgins.

"Hurrah!"

The Territorials were going at such a rate that they would have found it difficult to stop if they had wanted to.

But the defence was vigorous. Cans of water and clods of muddy earth greeted the assailants, and sent them reeling back—soaked, dripping, muddy. Squirts hurled muddy

water after them, and clouds of pepper were scattered in their faces.

Desperate as the charge was, the juniors reeled back from the barricade.

From within the amateur zareba rose a yell of victory.

"They're running!"

It was answered by a shout from Tom Merry.

"Go for the rotters!"

And Tom Merry & Co. rushed to the attack on the other side of the camp. The New House fellows met them with a reception like that given to D'Arcy & Co. But it was a diversion, and it gave the Terriers time to rally.

D'Arcy waved his sword.

"Charge!"

And he sprang fairly upon the barricade. He waved his sword there to encourage his followers, and with a yell the Territorials rushed on.

A splash of water smote D'Arcy in the face, and he staggered, and fell upon the barricade. His sword rolled in one direction, and his busby in another, but the swell of St. Jim's himself rolled inside the camp.

He was pounced upon at once, but he struggled desperately, yelling to his followers for rescue. Blake rolled over into the camp, and hit out right and left. The juniors had brandished various weapons at the beginning of the combat, but when they came to close quarters they dropped them, and relied upon the good old British weapon—the fist!

Blake was followed by Digby and Reilly, Herries and Clifton Dane, and then Buck Finn and Glyn rolled after them, and after that a perfect flood of School House juniors.

The barricade had not been breached, but entrance had been found; and while the leaders, who had gained a footing within, were fighting against odds, the rest of the Terriers were clambering after them to back them up.

Figgins & Co. performed prodigies of valour, but it was of no avail. The tide of battle had turned against them.

The odds were against the New House fellows now; the advantage was with the Terriers. The German flags were trampled under foot. Wally scrambled up the flagstaff amid cheers, and dragged down the foreign colours that fluttered there, and jerked a Union Jack out from under his jacket, and set it floating in the breeze. The Terriers yelled themselves hoarse with triumph as their colours blew out in the wind over the captured camp.

"Victowly!" shouted D'Arcy. "Bai Jove, victowly!"

"Hurrah!"

Figgins & Co. were on the ground, and heavily sat on. Some of the defenders had fled, many had been captured, and a few were still fighting in corners, but the victory of the Territorials was indisputable.

Jack Blake grasped D'Arcy's busby, and waved it in the air.

"What's the matter with England?" he roared.

And from the victorious Terriers came back an answering roar:

"She's all right!"

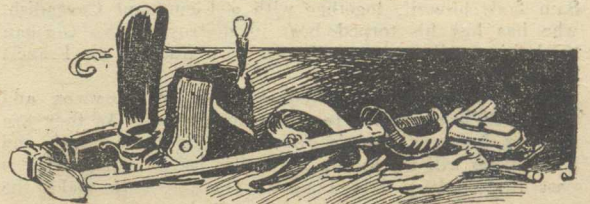
"Lemme gerrup!" gasped Figgins. "It's all right; we're licked, and I give in. Blessed if I thought you'd do it, though!"

"Weally, Figgins, you might have guessed that the Tewwitowials would nevah allow a fowegen flag to float on English soil!" said Arthur Augustus. "Howevah, it's all wight. The invadahs have been licked, deah boys, and Figgins & Co. are goin' to join the St. Jim's Tewwiahs."

And they did.

Figgins was a fellow of his word; and that very afternoon, after the worst of the signs of the combat had been removed—no light task, by the way—New House and School House fraternised at a convivial meeting in the woodshed, and Figgins himself proposed the health—in ginger-beer—of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, Commander-in-Chief of the St. Jim's Terriers—a health that was drunk with the wildest enthusiasm.

THE END.



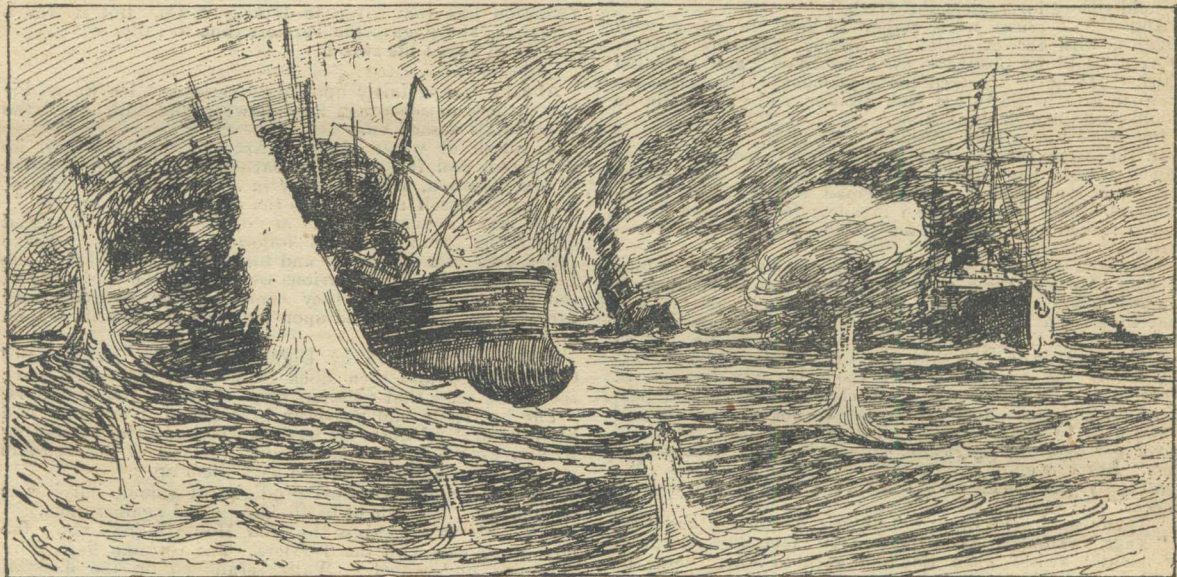
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Sam and Stephen Villiers, two cadets of Greyfriars School, by a combination of luck and pluck render valuable service to the British Army during the great German invasion. They are appointed special scouts to the Army, which is forced back on London by Von Krantz, the German commander

At the time when this account opens,

London had been Bombarded and Carried.

Von Krantz had entered the City with his troops, and from the flagstaff on that famous building the German flag floated, where none but British colours had been seen since London was built. London Bridge was blown up, and across the great river the remained of the British troops and the half-starved millions of London waited in grim silence for the next move.

Sam and Stephen are chafing at their enforced inactivity, when Ned of Northey, a young Essex marshman, and an old friend of theirs, sails up the Thames in his smack, the Maid of Essex, with a despatch he has captured from a German. This contains useful information of the landing of another German Army Corps, and Sam, having shown it to Lord Ripley, is given permission to go down river.

The boys have many exciting adventures, and one day Sam finds himself, together with a Lieutenant Cavendish, who has lost his torpedo-boat in destroying two German battleships, called to an interview with Admiral Sir Francis Frobisher.

The two are complimented on their performances, and Cavendish is appointed to a fine new ship. As they are retiring, however, Sam is called back by the admiral, and asked if he will try to run a steamer laden with provisions past the blockade into London. He agrees to make the attempt, and, rejoining Cavendish, tells him what he is commissioned to do.

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The Voyage of the Blaine Castle.

“Phew! That takes the shine off my fine new destroyer,” said Cavendish. “Wish I could come with you!”

“I wish you could, old chap. Can't you work it?”

“No good. It don't do to argue with Frankie. I expect he's got some special service for me. He might have let me escort this fat steamer of yours, though, blow it all!”

“'Fraid that wouldn't do, old chap. It's a case for willness, not guns. I don't suppose I can pull it off, but still— Maid of Essex, ahoy!”

The smack let fly her jib, and stood in for the flagship, Ned pulling away in the dinghy.

“Uncommon good time we've had together, even though it's been short,” said Cavendish, accompanying Sam to the side. “If I've the ghost of a chance, an' you come through this show without gettin' filled up with German lead, I'll drop on you again somewhere.”

“Mind you do,” said Sam, as they exchanged a warm hand-grip.

“I fancy if we both live, it won't be long before we're on the job again,” said Cavendish cheerfully, “unless one of us gets pipped. So-long, old cock-bird!”

Sam was aboard the Maid of Essex inside a couple of minutes, and Ned turned her away for the Rutland immediately, at Sam's urgent request. Stephen was burning to know what the orders were.

“A game that suits us all the way!” said the cadet enthusiastically. “An', by gum, we'll have to hump ourselves if we mean to bring it off! Here's the gist of it.”

He told them as shortly as he could what Sir Francis's orders were, and they were as enthusiastic as he, at once.

“My eye! There'll be more excitement on that ship than on any ironclad,” said Stephen. “She don't even carry a gun, I suppose?”

“An' you're goin' on that collier? I do call that hard luck, gents!” said Ned dimly. “I'd give a couple o' fingers to be in the game.”

“Well, come on, then!” said Sam.

“How can I? I can't leave the Maid o' Essex alone to go ashore an' be wrecked. She's all I've got in the world. Now, if I could sail you straight to Dunkirk—”

“Won't do, Ned. It'd take three times as long. Got to

obey the admiral's orders. I'll buy you another smack, if you'll leave this one."

Ned shook his head gloomily.

"She's kept me since I was a kid, an' she's saved our lives twice over. I'd feel like a murderer, leavin' her to founder with no one at the helm." He was silent for a few moments. "Well, gents, as I can't come with you, I shall put you aboard, an' then turn back for the Thames again. You're goin' that way," he added, "an' I reckon you'll want me."

"You can't go back there with the Maid, Ned," exclaimed Stephen. "You'll be run in an' shot!"

"I reckon I know what I'm about," said the marshman stolidly. "That's your collier, ain't it?" he added. "I s'p'ose you'll go straight on to her?"

A grimy Belgian ship was lying motionless, a breadth or two away from the cruiser Rutland, which was coaling from her in the usual manner in which warships coal at sea.

"A bit rum, a Belgian supplyin' our Navy with coal, isn't it?" said Stephen. "I wonder she dares do it."

"She didn't come out to do it," said Sam. "Most likely she was bound up Channel with a freight of it, an' Frankie stopped her an' offered to buy up the cargo at war prices. That saves the supply at Dover, where they haven't too much. You bet the Belgian was willin' enough to deal, an' pocket a fat profit for the owners. Look, they're wavin' to us already. They've got their orders from the Rutland, by Frankie's signals."

"The Government pay for it all," chuckled Stephen, getting ready to go on board; "an' for our passage, too, I s'p'ose? We've never had any pay for our precious services, so I hope they'll do us well on the Belgian. Our fares'll be cheap if we get that steamer through to London."

The Maid of Essex luffed close alongside, and after taking a reluctant leave of Ned, the brothers found themselves on the grimy decks of the collier, where a nervous little Belgian shipmaster received them.

"You'll put us ashore at Dunkirk—eh, captain?" said Sam, shaking hands with him.

"Yes—yes!" said the skipper, looking on with a worried air, as the last of the coal was transhipped. "I like better to be out of dese seas some more! If dese Germans find I sell coal to der British, it was ver' bad for me."

"Can't make fat profits without some risk," said Sam, waving to the Maid of Essex as she careened away over the swells. In another ten minutes the collier had coiled down all her gear, and was steaming away through the Straits towards Calais as fast as her engines could drive her.

Sam was badly in need of food and rest. He soon obtained the former, a meal being set out for him in the captain's cabin, which was now occupied only by the boys, for the worried skipper stayed on the bridge. While he ate, Sam told his brother all that had happened since they swam off to the Kronprinz Karl.

"I call it a blessed swindle!" said Stephen. "While Ned an' I were in a holy stew, thinkin' you were shot or drowned, you were both havin' a ripping time all the while, an' saw all sorts of fightin'."

"Ripping time!" said Sam. "Well, I'd have given a trifle to be out of it once or twice, especially when they were goin' to execute us. Still, there was certainly some sport, an' Frankie was pleased. We ought to be in Dunkirk in three hours, at this rate. It's only twenty miles beyond Calais. An' as there's nothing to do in the meantime, an' I'm dog-tired, I shall turn in."

He did so forthwith, and Stephen also being short of rest, both of them slept like logs, till a steward, who looked more like a stoker, came and woke them up with the news that Dunkirk was close under the lee.

They went on deck, and found the collier hove-to in Dunkirk Roads, with the narrow harbour entrance between the two long, black piers a quarter of a mile to their right. The skipper announced that he could not enter the harbour, but would put them ashore by boat, and in spite of the payment order he had received from the Rutland for their passage, he was uncommonly glad to get rid of them.

The boys did not care how they were landed so long as it was done quickly, and after a wet pull over the bar they found themselves ashore by the docks. Sam made inquiries, and it was not long before they found a big, 2,000-ton cargo-steamer lying near the dock gates, with the title Blaine Castle on her bows. A big pile of cases and crates lay beside her on the quay, and the leisurely French stevedores were getting it aboard as if they had a week to do it in.

"The lazy dogs haven't got all the stuff aboard yet!" said Sam, striding over the gangway. "We'll wake things up here shortly. Can you tell me where the skipper is, and the agent's office?" he said to one of the crew, who looked at him curiously.

A pale-faced man, in shore-clothes, smoking a rank, black cigar, strolled forward as he heard the question.

"What do you want with the agent?" he said in longshore French. He was a Belgian by nationality.

"To see him at once," said Sam shortly.

"I am he. My name is Vanhoek. What business have you on this vessel? Are you a spy?"

"I am not a spy," said Sam drily; "although I know this ship's destination as well as you do." He jerked his head westwards in the direction of England. "And I'm here to take her over."

"You?" sneered the agent contemptuously. "Have you brought your nurse with you?"

"You'll need a surgeon, not a nurse, my man, if you're not more civil," said Sam unpleasantly. "Now take off that face and make yourself useful. There's my authority."

He handed over Sir Francis's letter. The agent read it, his face changed, and he became cringingly civil.

"A thousand pardons, m'sieur!" he said humbly. "I am your most obedient servant. One moment while I instruct the captain."

He called down from the chart-house a small, stolid, squat little man in master-mariner's uniform, gave him the letter, and introduced him as Captain Briggs.

"M'sieur le capitaine," said the agent, with many gestures; "this gentleman comes, as you see, from headquarters. M'sieur Villiers, the capitaine will act entirely under your instructions."

"That's right, sir," said the skipper to Sam, in an uninterested voice. "I'll handle the ship, you give the orders, an' you take the responsibility. 'Nuff said! What d'you want done?"

"Get the rest of that cargo under hatches at once, if you please," said Sam, "and raise steam without delay. We have to start on this afternoon's tide!"

The captain turned without a word, and started to carry out his orders. There was no time to lose if they meant to save the tide, and Sam went to the foredeck and addressed the stevedores.

"Hurrp yourselves there, you lazy dogs! Going to be all day getting that scrap of freight aboard? Put your backs into it, you mud-turtles, before I come and handle you!"

Within ten minutes the lash of Sam's tongue had set the whole ship buzzing like a beehive, and three times the work was got through. He had a fine knack of driving men, and he used it as he never had before.

One hour hence, the Blaine Castle had warped out of dock, and was steaming out between the pierheads. She turned and steered westwards to the Dyke Lightship, where she dropped the pilot the authorities forced her to carry so far, and then, under Sam's orders, the ship was headed full speed for England and the North Foreland.

"At last!" he said, with a sigh of relief. "Shouldn't have been surprised at anything happening between here and Dunkirk, but now we know what we're about."

"What do you think of the skipper?" said Stephen.

"A very useful machine, though you couldn't call him a man. He can obey instructions, an' don't look as if he'd brains enough to be scared. I wouldn't give him the job of running her through, though."

"She's a fine big ship!" said Stephen, looking over the vessel appreciatively. "D'you think she holds enough food to make much difference to London?"

"Bless you, yes! They've got the right sorts of stuff in her; she's packed tight, deep laden, an' carries enough to feed an army. There'll be a rare old jubilee if we get her up the Thames."

"If! I say, ain't it queer, her comin' from a French port? I thought that sort of thing wasn't allowed."

"If she was a war-ship it wouldn't be, or if she were carryin' arms or coal. But food ain't contraband of war. It's a commercial deal, an' it's her own funeral if she's caught tryin' to run the blockade. Her owners lose her. Wouldn't affect the French Government."

"I've been thinkin'," said Stephen, "that it's rum the French haven't joined us in the war. They were supposed to be allies of ours, weren't they?"

"Yes, she is. But, you see, the blow fell so suddenly that she can't do anything. The same day that Germany invaded Britain, a million German soldiers were suddenly moved up to the French frontiers, ready to sweep in an' mop up France if she showed any signs of helpin' us."

"Didn't France dare try?"

"She couldn't spare a man to help us if she'd got to fight Germany at home. Germany's half as powerful again as France, on land. An' she wasn't ready—Germany would have wiped her out, an' can now. The Kaiser's troops in Britain, though they're swampin' our little toy Army, are hardly missed in Germany."

"What about the French Fleet? Couldn't that have helped?"

"If it did, France'd be invaded by land at once, an' ruined. She ain't an island. France and Britain together,

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warned in time, could tackle Germany in a very different way. But we were paralysed at the first go off, for we'd our hands full when we woke up an' found five German Army Corps had entered England in the night. No; we were caught nappin', an' we've got to pay for it. We depended on the sea for a barrier, but once it was crossed we began to find out what a fix we were in. However, it's no good jawin' about that now. Our present job is to get this ship-load of grub up to London, where the folks are starving."

"Will you have the usual lamps lit?" said the stolid little skipper, coming up to Sam, for the sun had set and the dusk was drawing in.

"No—no lamps, skipper!" said Sam. "I must trouble you to douse every spark of light on board as well. I want all the dead-lights shut, and tarpaulins hauled over the hatches and skylights."

"Ay, ay!" said the skipper, and gave the order to the first mate at once.

"You understand, captain, that we're about to try and run the blockade?" said Sam. "We've got to do it, or sink. I shall have to take charge of the wheel and course when we arrive off the Thames, so I'll take a turn at the helm now, to see how she handles."

"Ay, ay!" said the skipper again. "You're responsible, I'm told. And as long as you don't look to me for help, except in running the ship, I don't care what's done. Dodging warships is out of my line!"

"Can you depend on your crew? Because, if there's any panic or mutiny when it comes to taking risks, we shall have to keep our end up with our revolvers. This ship's got to go through or go down. She ain't going to fall into the hands of the Germans. So any man who refuses an order will be shot without any further talk."

"They know what they're in for, sir. They ain't the sort that's careful of their skins. A hard lot!"

"All the better. We shall soon see how hard they are. Look, Steve! There go Frankie's ships!"

As they drew across towards the north of the Goodwins, Sir Francis's big cruisers were seen steaming rapidly down-Channel to the westward. The Blaine Castle dipped her flag, and received an answering salute from the Terrific.

"An' that's good-bye!" said Stephen. "They're off! We'd get no help from them, anyway. We're very much on our own. I'm just beginning to realise how jolly helpless we are."

"Yes," said Sam. "The smallest torpedo-boat afloat can steam right up to us an' blow this fat old tramp out of the water with a single Whitehead, an' all we could do would be to look on. Keep her up to the nor'rard, skipper, close to the Foreland. I'm goin' to try Queen's Channel."

The big steamer held on her way at a rapid rate, and it had been dark about an hour when she doubled round the North Foreland for the run to the mouth of the Thames. But once clear of the Foreland, Sam rung off his engines.

"We'll have to lie-to here," he said, "an' wait our chance. The tide isn't high enough yet for the Queen's Channel."

"Will a big ship like this go through it?" said Stephen.

"Yes, when the tide's flowed an hour there'll be water enough up by the Pan, by the time we get there. If we do get through, we shall carry this tide right up to London. But I'm beginning to think more an' more that we've bitten off a bigger piece than we can chew," said Sam.

"So it seems to me. How the dickens is a big steamer like this to get through the German squadron an' torpedo-boat in a narrow place like Thames mouth'd beat a conjurer," replied Stephen. "An' the long an' short is, that it can't be done."

Sam made no reply. They waited for a considerable time, while the young flood ran up from the North Sea. The night was black as pitch, and presently the distant beat of a screw reached them, away to the northward.

"Warship?" said Stephen anxiously.

Sam looked long, and was just able to make out the dim shape of a large vessel a good way off, making for the Thames. Luckily it was impossible for her crew to see the Blaine Castle, on account of the dark background of cliffs behind her. Sam watched her through his night-glasses.

"A cargo-steamer, like ourselves," he said; "that's all I can make out. A fast vessel, though."

"A German transport, carryin' stores an' ammunition for the Kaiser's troops?" suggested Stephen.

"That's about it, no doubt. Wonder she didn't fall in with any of our ships. All lights doused, same as us. By gum, though, they're not!"

On the foremast of the stranger three vertical lights went up slowly to the masthead, and remained fixed, one above the other. The middle one was red, the other two green. And the ship's ordinary side-lights appeared also.

"She's in her own squadron's waters now, an' ain't afraid to show her lights, I suppose," said Stephen, "for fear of

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in the British Army—

running something down. But those red and green lamps, what the dickens are they? It ain't the arrangement a ship in tow carries, nor a trawler's lights. Never seen it before."

"My eye!" said Sam suddenly. "There's no doubt what it is. That must be the private signal the Kaiser's transports are ordered to show, so they sha'n't get torpedoed by their own fleet by mistake at night."

"Is it, though?" exclaimed Stephen. "Well, it's worth chancing. Why shouldn't we put up the same?"

"What a gorgeous bluff if it comes off!" said Sam, chuckling. "Skipper, run up two green and a red light to the fore-mast head, the red in the middle!"

"Ay, ay!"

"Ring on those engines, and steer due north for the Queen's Channel!"

In another minute the Blaine Castle was under way again, and within twenty minutes she had turned north-west through the Queen's Channel, one of the many passages leading to the Thames through the sandbanks that block the approach, but one seldom used, especially at night.

The other steamer being fast, and having a good start, was out of sight ahead; nor did Sam want to catch her up. "They're on the watch, off the Nore," said Stephen, pointing to where the rays from the searchlights on the German warships were sweeping across the sky and sea, far in front. "Think we shall pass the Germans?"

"They've captured several British ships, an' used some of 'em for transports. So the name alone won't give us away. Skipper, serve out oilskins an' sou'-westers to all the crew, an' get into some yourself. Send us a couple of suits up here."

"There's a sup of rain fallin'," said Stephen, with a nod, "an' all men look alike in oilskins. That ought to help us a good bit. I say, we're drawin' near."

"That other transport goin' up ahead of us is a piece of luck," said Sam. "They'll pass her all right, an' they'll be the less suspicious of us."

Rapidly the Nore Lightship—now a mere wooden hulk, with a fixed light, since the destroying of the old one—was neared, and two or three fussy torpedo-boats came surging past the Blaine Castle, and circling silently about her. It was ticklish work. There was no saying when one of these wasps of the sea might decide to launch a hundred pounds of gun-cotton at her.

Then one of the long truncheons of light that sprouted from the foretops of the two German battleships off the Nore travelled up to the Blaine Castle, wavered, and rested on her, lighting her up as clear as the noonday.

Stout as were the hearts on board her, most of them beat faster then. With eyes dazzled by the light, and ears strained for the thundering outburst of guns, they waited breathlessly.

The three lights had been seen from afar, and now the steamer was under inspection. The light followed her as she surged along up Sea Reach. A long black destroyer came leaping out from beside the cruisers, and raced close alongside.

"What ship, and where bound?" came the sharp hail from her bridge.

"Blaine Castle. To Tilbury, with stores for the troops—m-m-m!—Colonel Pilmitz," replied Sam, in a thick, mumbly voice, but in pure German.

"Make haste, or you'll lose your tide," came the answer from the destroyer, as she swerved away and steamed back.

"Bluffed, by thunder!" muttered the skipper solemnly.

"They've let us through!" exclaimed Stephen, drawing a full breath of relief. "By gum, those lights have saved us!"

Sam could have danced with delight. The Blaine Castle went ploughing ahead past Canvey Island, and, the rain having cleared, the moon came out, and the night grew finer.

"Better get out of these oilies," he said, casting off his own. "No sailorman keeps 'em on longer than he can help, an' we should look suspicious. Besides, we're past the inspection."

The oilskins were doffed and stowed; but Stephen looked doubtful as the ship neared Lower Hope Point.

"I don't much agree with that last, Sam," he said, "unless that torpedo-boat's been taken off."

"The one we dodged when we first came down in the Maid of Essex?"

"Yes. She's the real guard of the Thames. It's said she has orders to stop and board all vessels goin' above the Point, an' she patrols the Lower Hope day an' night. She'd board us even if we were the Kaiser's yacht."

"I haven't forgotten her," said Sam quietly. "She's our worst danger, by a long chalk."

"She'll torpedo us if we don't stop."

"Yes. But we're not out at sea. The Lower Hope is a

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narrow place. It's long odds, I know, but we must trust to luck—an' cheek. When the—"

"There she is, by gum!" muttered Stephen, as, with the helm hard-a-port, the Blaine Castle surged round the Point into the Lower Hope Reach.

Right before her, slinking through the dark, was a low, black shadow—the torpedo-boat. The Blaine Castle was almost on top of her. Swinging sharply round, the armed vessel fired a shot from her six-pounder across the great steamer's bows, and ran right athwart her.

"Ship ahoy!" cried a harsh German voice. "Heave-to, and lower your gangway! Refuse and I sink you!"

"Down your helm—hard down!" hissed Sam in the skipper's ear, as both of them spun the wheel over.

The spokes whirled round, and the Blaine Castle, with every inch of power her engines could give her, bore hard to the left, right upon the torpedo-boat.

A shout of alarm rose from the German's deck, and the swift, steel vessel shot astern.

Too late. The distance was too short, and Sam had judged his course to a foot. With a splitting crash the Blaine Castle's bows cut into the torpedo-boat before she could man either gun or tubes, and the great iron stem of the steamer shored her clean in two, and drove over her foundering hull as an elephant crushes the life out of a leopard.

How Sam Ran the Blockade.

The crash of the collision was hardly heard a hundred yards away, and the throb of the great steamer's screw seemed to grind remorselessly over the foundering vessel. The shriek of panic from the torpedo-boat's decks was drowned as the waves swept over her, and she was gone.

flash on the night sky. More likely still, they've got a look-out ashore, who saw the thing happen an' would send a message down Sea Reach to the Fleet."

"How?"

"By flash-light signals. An' it wouldn't take another torpedo-boat five minutes—especially if she'd been followin' us, to—"

"By gum! There she is!" said Stephen, pointing back down the Hope, where a lean shadow came swiftly swinging round the point and heading up river. "Talk of the devil!"

Sam cast a single glance back at the new-comer, which at once flashed a searchlight on to the Blaine Castle and started in hot pursuit.

"Destroyer," he said briefly; "they mean makin' sure of us this time. But I think we shall do it. Skipper, isn't there some private signal arranged, to let our forces know what ship this is, and when she arrives? There must be!"

"Ay, sir. Triangle o' three red lights at the mainmast head," said the captain stolidly.

"Up with 'em, then, an' down with that German sign at the fore!" cried Sam. "Get a move on you," he added, "unless you want to smell the bottom of the river. There go the guns!"

Rat—tat—tat—tat—tat! went the destroyer's quickfirs, and then the twelve-pounder opened smartly as the sights came on. They soon found the Blaine Castle and poured their lead into her, but the great steamer was a good mile and a half ahead, nearly up to the Ovens Buoy, when the German appeared.

The Blaine Castle, her huge bulk scarcely covered by the destroyer's small searchlight, was so big that the light guns aboard the German could not rake her decks. Even the twelve-pounder shells went banging and rattling

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"Wiped out," said Sam calmly. "We ought to thank her for givin' us the chance. Hard over again, skipper."

The wheel spun round once more as the Blaine Castle swung back into her course, and dashed onward up the Tower Hope. Astern, where the torpedo-boat had sunk, nothing was to be seen but slow, swirling eddies, smooth with floating oil and streaked with ashes. The little, squat skipper looked back, and delivered himself of his first speech for several hours.

"Neat," he said pensively—"very neat. Out o' my line, but very neat."

"Give her more steam," said Sam; "they're slackenin' in the engine-room. Bid them keep it up harder than ever."

"You ain't goin' to look for the torpedo-boat's crew then, Sam?" said Stephen, who knew his brother was generally strict on rendering all possible mercy after a fight.

"They must sink or swim, as the luck chances," said Sam, his eyes fixed ahead. "There are a hundred thousand or so in London whose lives depend on our gettin' this ship through with her freight. Two minutes' delay may wreck the whole run."

"An' better ten thousand o' those German rats go to their graves than one Britisher," muttered the bo'sun, who was standing close by, "who'd stand by to pick up Dutchies in the Lower Hope?"

"That's the last of their outposts, isn't it?" said Stephen joyfully. "Bluffed through, at last! Are we likely to be chased?"

"If they learn what's happened, down by the Nore. Not else."

"But will they be able to tell?"

"More likely than not. The noise, when we cut down that craft, wouldn't carry far; but there was the glare of her engines when we sliced her open—it always shows like a

through her plates without doing much harm, and the mighty iron tramp surged along at a fast sixteen knots as though a pea-shooter were firing at her.

"Her guns won't sink us in an hour!" said Stephen cheerfully. "Let 'em hammer away; she ain't gaining."

"Tisn't her guns we have to fear, it's her torpedo-tubes," replied Sam, urging the men to hurry with the red lights which were being made ready at the foot of the mainmast; "and as for gaining on us, where are your eyes? She's goin' twenty-seven knots to our sixteen, an' pickin' us up hand over fist. One good fat Schwartzkopf torpedo hove in under our engine-rooms 'll lay the Blaine Castle on the bottom inside ten minutes. Hurry with those lights there, you crawlers! By gum! But if I'd time I'd teach you to work Navy fashion! I'd curl your hair, my beauties!"

Stephen grinned as he looked back at the destroyer, but the grin did not last. She was, as Sam said, overhauling them rapidly. There was nothing they could do. The German, once within range, could torpedo her as often as he pleased, nor could the steamer do anything to defend herself.

"She's got us, then," said Stephen gloomily, as the firing ceased. "He's gettin' ready; he must be pretty nearly within torpedo range now. We're done, I s'pose?"

"I think we shall just do it," said Sam coolly, watching the three red lights travelling up to the mainmast's head as the man in charge hauled on the halyards to which they were attached. The blood-red triangle climbed steadily to the very truck of the mast and stayed there. "Unless they've gone to sleep in the forts," he added, "which ain't likely."

"Forts! What forts? The Germans'?"

"No, Gravesend. Right ahead of us. Ah, there goes his first torpedo! Hard a starboard, skipper!"

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

NEXT THURSDAY:

"THE ST. JIM'S INVENTOR."

The Blaine Castle swung sharply round the Owens Buoy, and turned into Gravesend Reach. She turned only in the nick of time, for a stream of air-bubbles came sizzling along the surface just past her stern, and a few moments later there was a tremendous thud as an old deserted County Council mud-hopper—the vessels that carry the dredged-up mud out to sea—lying at anchor near the buoy, suddenly heeled over and sank, a great spout of water leaping up beside her.

"Torpedoed!" said the bo'sun, staring.
"She got what was meant for us," said Sam, grinning; "more expense for the ratepayers. We turned just in time to avoid that, an' she was in the way. The German's shut off from us for the moment. But here we are in range of Gravesend, an' if they don't spot our signal soon, the Blaine Castle's a goner; for that destroyer'll be round the bend in thirty seconds."

"But 'd'you mean to say we still hold any forts on the Thames?" cried Stephen.

"Yes, the Gravesend masked batteries, the best on the river—or did when we came down in the Maid. If they're gone, we're gone, too. There comes the avenger."

Round the Owens Buoy swung the German destroyer, and her searchlight came full upon the steamer once more. It was a breathless moment for all concerned. She was in easy torpedo-range now, and the Blaine Castle could not hope to dodge a second time.

But hardly had the nose of the destroyer showed itself round the point, when she herself was suddenly lit up by two dazzling searchlights, that seemed to sprout out of the darkness of Gravesend, on the left side of the reach. And almost at the same moment opened the crash! crash! crash! of powerful quickfiring guns.

The boys heard the shells howl past them through the darkness, while, in the brilliant circle of light which lit up the racing destroyer, they saw her stagger and crumple up, as if she were suddenly stamped on by some invisible foot.

"They've got her! She's goin' down!" cried Stephen exultingly.

Under that hail of shells the German withered like a scrap of paper in a furnace blast. She stopped, swayed, and began to go down rapidly. The upper works were all shot away, and her long hull riddled like a sieve.

When the Gravesend searchlights first lit on her, the boys saw the torpedo-crew at one of the tubes, letting go with a second of their deadly weapons; but the gunfire from the masked forts was too heavy for them, and where the torpedo went, none knew. In forty seconds more the German destroyer was on her way to the bottom, a mass of twisted iron and rivets.

"Gosh! Isn't that great?" cried Stephen, swinging off his cap with a cheer. "An' I thought she'd got us, sure as a gun! Wasn't it blazin' good practice, too? It ain't only the Navy that can shoot!"

"Good old Gravesend!" said Sam. "I never had much fear of their letting us down, once we came round within touch of the guns."
"We're though the wood at last."

"Yes, barrin' a shot or two from the land forces on the Essex side as we go up, maybe. But they ain't likely to trouble us much, an' even if we had to beach her we'd do it on the Kent shore now, an' our people'd get the freight all right. Hark to that!"

As the great steamer tore on past Gravesend, one of the searchlights rested on her and followed her, while the other swept the channel in search of enemies. From the darkness of the distant shore and quays a long, ringing cheer was borne over the water, and reached the Blaine Castle, swelling from a hundred throats through the night, though the steamer's crew not see a single one of the cheerers.

"Give 'em three back!" said Sam; and the

blockade-runner's crew sent three hurrahs for answer. The searchlights followed the Blaine Castle up to Northfleet Marshes, and then another picked her up, but dropped her at once.

"That's right," remarked Sam, who had been growing restless under the glare of the lights. "Hope they'll let us alone now—we don't want to be shown to every German shore-battery in Essex."

"I never even knew we'd got any guns left at Gravesend," said Stephen.

"Yes, the masked batteries for repellin' torpedo-boat attacks. Lots of neat little redoubts, properly hidden. The Germans haven't got across the Thames, as you know. They've smashed up the big Tilbury forts opposite, an' they hold all that shore—the north or Essex side. But they haven't been able to hurt the little twelve-pounder batteries round Gravesend, an' so their destroyers are still unable to come up Gravesend Reach. The Lower Hope's as far up as they can command."

"They've got Sheerness an' the Medway's mouth, though."

"Yes; but they had to have that, so they landed a big force there at the very first, an' managed to surprise it. Comes of not bein' ready—same old song. They lost a frightful lot of men, but they took it, an' the place is practically a German base now—as we know jolly well. Let her fall off a point, skipper. I hope I sha'n't put this ship on the mud anywhere, but she draws a dickens of a lot of water."

The young day was breaking in the east behind them, far over the flat marshlands stretching towards the sea. Ahead, the dark pall hanging over London was still in the gloom; but as the dawn brightened the Blaine Castle swept on past Barking and Woolwich, and soon the outskirts of the great city were entered.

From the heights beyond Upminster on the north side, two or three big guns spoke, but the shells did nothing more than plunge into the river within twenty yards. The Blaine Castle was all but out of range, and the next reach put her beyond their power altogether.

Scouting-parties were seen again and again on the tall embankments that shut in the great river, and several times a volley of rifle bullets was sent at the Blaine Castle. But Sam had had breastworks of flour sacks eight feet thick built up on the wide bridge of the steamer, and round the iron wheelhouse, where he now retired to steer, abandoning the other wheel. Stephen, with his beloved carbine, picked off four or five men on the way up, but the stray volleys from the shore spent themselves on the piles of flour sacks.

"The bread'll be a bit heavy," remarked Sam; "but the Londoners mustn't mind a little lead in their flour—a good solid meal is what they want, and not puff pastry. Eh? We've kept it dry for 'em, anyway. Lucky most of the German troops an' the heavy guns are out to the north an' west of London."

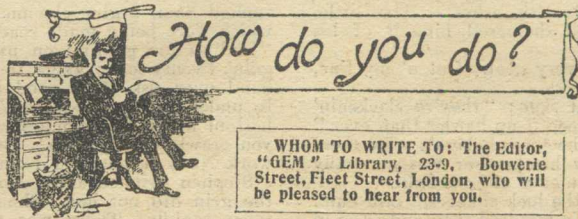
"They didn't reckon on any ship gettin' past their giddy blockade," said Stephen. "Sounds as if our folk were expectin' us here, don't it!" he added, as a cheering crowd was passed on Woolwich Pier, waving to the steamer.

Not till the steamer was berthed, however—nor even then—would they relax their vigilance. A field-gun opened fire on them from between two warehouses on the German side at one point; but the steamer was beyond reach of it in a few seconds, and it was not long before the Tower Bridge came in sight, and the docks on the south side.

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