The Territorials at St. Jim's.

THE GEM LIBRARY 1d

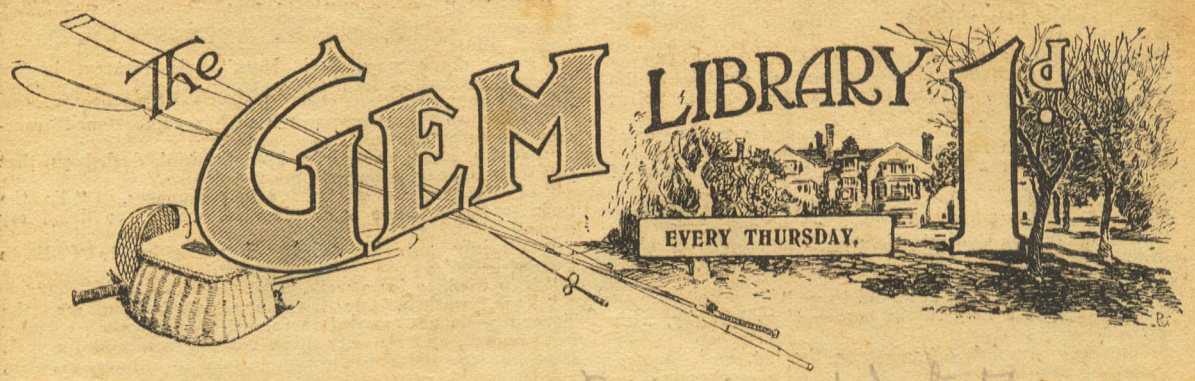
VOL. 3.
NO. 74.

A TALE OF THE TERRIBLE THREE.

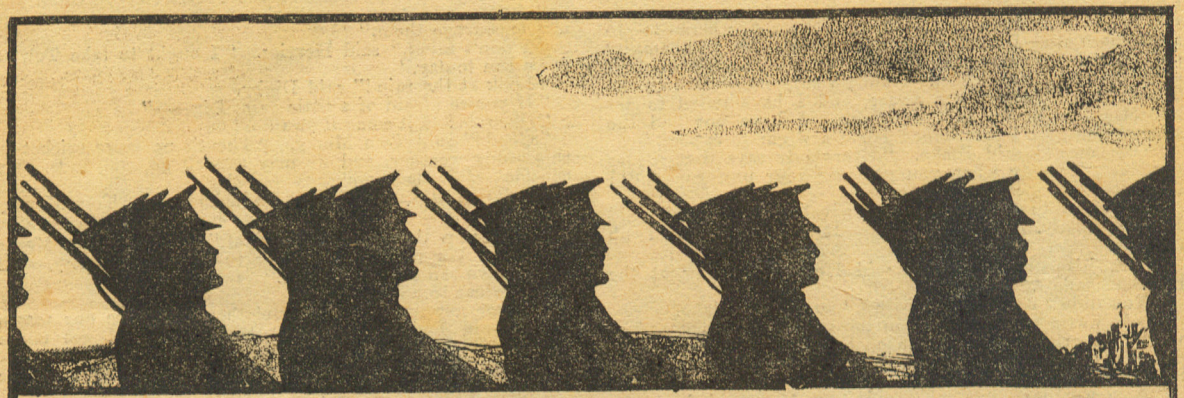
Grand Long, Complete Tale by MARTIN CLIFFORD.

TOM MERRY & CO.'S OPEN-AIR CONCERT.

Be sure and mention this paper when communicating with advertisers.



Complete Stories for Everyone, and Every Story a Gem!



THE TERRITORIALS AT ST. JIM'S

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

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1.
D'Arcy Takes a Party.

"LOOKS like rain," said Jack Blake.

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy looked anxiously out of the window of Study No. 6 in the School House. He had been seated quietly in the armchair for the last five minutes, carefully polishing a silk hat, but at Blake's remark he jumped up as if moved by an electric shock.

There was a drift of dark clouds across the sky, and fellows in flannels on the cricket-ground were looking uneasily skyward. But even the cricketers were not looking so anxious as D'Arcy, of the Fourth.

"Bai Jove! How wotten!"

Jack Blake looked at him sympathetically.

"Horrid, isn't it?" he said. "I suppose you were going to take that topper out for a walk? It is rough."

"Weally, Blake——"

"Never mind; wait till the clouds roll by," said Blake cheerfully. "While you're waiting, you can go and fill the kettle, and we can have some tea."

"I am afwaid it will be imposs. for me to fill the kettle, Blake. I must be off."

"Yes, you must be," Jack Blake agreed cordially. "I've been keeping an eye on you for some time past, and I've been driven to the conclusion that you must be off. It's a sad case, but as a chum I'm willing to contribute to the expense of a strait-waistcoat."

"I did not mean my wemark in that sense, Blake, as you are perfectly well aware. I must be off, as I have a wathah important appointment. But now the question awises," continued Arthur Augustus, with another anxious glance out of the window, "shall I go in a silk hat, or in a——"

"Cab?"

"Pway don't be an ass, Blake. I have got to get as far as Codicote Common, and I was thinkin' that I would take a gentle stwoll. If it is goin' to wain, pewwaps I had bettah put on some stoutah things."

"Yes, rather. There's Fatty Wynn of the New House ——"

"I weally do not compwehend——"

"He's one of the stoutest things at St. Jim's," explained Blake.

"Pway do not wot. Upon the whole, I think I will take a toppah, and wisk it. That toppah I bought in Livahpool is showin' signs of wear, so I will take that, on second thoughts, in case it gets wet."

And Arthur Augustus opened his famous hat-box, and stowed away the topper he had been carefully brushing for

five minutes or more. Blake, Herries, and Digby, his study-mates, watched him with smiling interest. He fished out his second-best week-day topper; for there was still a third one, the glorious and unequalled topper in which D'Arcy went to church on Sundays. Unconscious or heedless of the three grinning faces, Arthur Augustus proceeded to polish the silk hat.

The drift of dark clouds grew darker, and a spattering of rain-drops sent the fellows in the quadrangle running for shelter. There was a blur of wet on the window-panes of No. 6.

"Rain!"

"Bai Jove! Wotten!"

"Jolly muddy on Codicote Common this afternoon, when it rains," said Jack Blake. "I don't envy you your stroll there, Gussy."

"You see, deah boys, I'm bound to go."

"Oh, if there's a lady in the case——" said Digby, with a chuckle.

Arthur Augustus left off polishing the hat, and jammed his monocle into his right eye, and turned it upon Digby.

"Digby, deah boy, I wegard that wemark as fwivolous and diswespectful. There is no lady in the case. I am goin' to see the Tewwitowials in camp."

"The which?" asked Blake.

"In what?" demanded Digby.

"The Tewwitowials in camp. You may wemembah that my eldah bwothah, Lord Conway, is a Tewwitowial captain," said D'Arcy calmly. "His company is camped on Codicote Common to-day. They're undertakin' a march, you know, on their own—fwom somewhere—I forget where—to—to somewhere else—I don't wemember where. They're campin' on Codicote Common this evenin', you see, and I thought I ought to go and see them. I am gweatly intewested in the Tewwitowials, as you are aware, and I have twied to get the ideah taken up at the school. I have not had the genewal support I considahed I had a wight to expect."

"Oh, come!" said Blake. "Everybody says that it's as good as a comedy when you get into your uniform, and I don't see what more you can expect."

"I wefuse to weply to such fwivolous wemarks," said D'Arcy loftily. "Bai Jove! It is wainin', and no mistake."

"Yes, it's coming down," said Herries, looking at the blurred window.

"You didn't expect it to go up," suggested Blake.

There was a tramp of feet in the passage and a growl of voices. A cricket-bat bumped on the door of Study No. 6, and sent it flying open. Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther looked in glumly and grimly.

"Nice weather, isn't it?" said Tom Merry, shaking the rain-drops from his curly hair. "Looks like lasting for the night, too."

The chums of the Shell came into the study. Tom Merry tossed his bat into a corner, Manners dropped a ball on the table, and Lowther sat in the armchair with a grunt, and jerked it up before the fire. The chums of the Fourth had a good fire going ready for tea.

Blake, Herries, and Digby looked at the Shell fellows in silence. The proceedings of the Terrible Three seemed to take them aback. As for Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, he was too troubled in mind between the weather and the silk hat he was brushing, to have any eyes for the Terrible Three.

"You fellows want anything?" asked Jack Blake at last.

"No," said Tom Merry, drawing a chair to the fire and sitting down. "I'm all right, for one."

"I could do with a cup of hot tea," said Manners.

"You've made a mistake," said Blake, in a tone of heavy sarcasm. "This is our study—No. 6 in the Fourth Form passage. Your den is further up, in the next passage. Do you prefer to walk there, or to be helped from behind by four pairs of boots? It's for you to choose."

Tom Merry laughed.

"All right, my son; we've come in here because you've got a fire going, and there's no fire in our study," he explained. "You youngsters can take a run."

Blake did not take a run; he took a cricket-stump, and looked warlike. Herries picked up a dog-whip—a brand-new dog-whip, which he had bought for his bulldog Towser, and had never had the heart to use, though Towser could certainly have "done" with it, as Herries's chums frequently pointed out to him. Digby reached up the poker from the grate. The chums of the Shell eyed these proceedings with smiling and unalarmed faces.

"Gussy——"

"Pway don't bothah me now, Blake! I am busy—I must be off!"

"Get a hat-brush, or something, and back us up. We're going to fire these Shell-fish out."

"Weally, Blake——"

Tom Merry held up his hand.

"Pax!"

"That's all very well," said Blake, incensed, "to march into a chap's study, and take possession of it, and then say 'pax.' Blow pax!"

"Pway don't wow, deah boys," said D'Arcy, having finished his hat at last, and putting it on. "Pway don't let your angwy passions wise. I have been thinkin'——"

"O day worthy to be marked with a white stone!" murmured Monty Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah—I have been thinkin', deah boys, that you wottahs may come with me if you like."

"Where are you going?" asked Manners. "To the tuckshop? I'll come with pleasure, when I've dried my boots."

"Certainly not, Mannahs. I am goin' to Codicote Common——"

"Nice weather for a walk."

"Yaas, wathah, but it's important. You see, the Tewwitowials are camped there, with my bwothah Conway in command, and I weally think I ought to pay him a visit. It encouwages the Tewwitowials to take an intewest in them, you know."

"Ha ha! If the Territorial Forces of the United Kingdom knew that you took an interest in them, Gussy, the movement would go ahead by leaps and bounds. I suppose we all ought to walk down to Codicote and encourage Lord Conway."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"It's not a bad wheeze," said Blake thoughtfully. "I haven't had a chance of seeing the Territorials in camp yet, you know, and they say they're worth seeing. Let's go and encourage them."

"I don't mind," said Herries. "I ought to take Towser for a run to-day."

"Look at the rain!" said Digby.

"If you're afraid of a little rain, Dig——"

"Oh, rats! I'll come if you do."

"Good!" said Tom Merry. "There's no more cricket in this giddy weather, and we may as well go, too, kids. We can look after these youngsters——"

"I should uttahly wefuse to be looked aftah, Tom Mewwy——"

"And keep them out of mischief," went on Tom Merry calmly. "We went to Coventry to look after Gussy, so I suppose we can go to Codicote."

"I wefuse to admit——"

"Better get into our oldest clothes, and take our macs., then," said Lowther, rising. "We can't all get under Gussy's silk hat."

"You'd better leave that topper at home, Gussy, and take a cap with flaps——"

"I uttahly wefuse to take a flap with caps—I mean a fap with claps—that is to say, a clap——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wegard the Tewwitowials as worthy of gweat wespect, and any decent chap visitin' a Tewwitowial camp ought to go in a toppah."

"We shall have to get as much respectability as possible out of one topper," said Tom Merry. "I'm going in a flap with caps."

"I'll buzz off and get Towser," said Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies——"

"He needs a run, you know."

"But in the rain!" urged Blake.

"Oh, Towser likes the rain!"

"Oh, bring him, then; after all, there's a chance he may slip into some ditch and get drowned," said Blake resignedly.

And Herries fetched Towser. The Terrible Three hurried off to prepare for the walk, and came back in a short time with macintoshes round them, and wearing the thickest boots they could muster.

The Fourth-Formers were equipped in either macs or thick coats, and wore caps; with the exception of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

The swell of St. Jim's was possessed with the idea that he must do honour to the Territorial Forces of Great Britain and Ireland by going to the camp on Codicote Common dressed with even more than his usual elegance.

The downpour of rain rather disconcerted his plans, but did not change his determination.

He had donned his second-best topper—which was more new than most of the new toppers in the other studies—but that was the only concession he had made to the weather.

His trousers were as nicely creased, his waistcoat as gorgeous in hue, his necktie as startling in pattern as ever, and his collar was as high, and his cuffs were as spotless, and his boots as dainty. His overcoat was a marvel for fit and style, and his spats were the last word in elegant footgear. There was no doubt that the swell of St. Jim's looked a picture as he came out into the hall ready to start. What he would look like after a tramp in the rain over a muddy common, however, was another question.

The Gem Library.—No. 74.

NEXT WEEK: "GUSSY'S GUEST."

A Splendid Tale of Tom Merry & Co By Martin Clifford.

"Now, then, Gussy," said Blake, "are you going to keep the peace?" "Certainly not; I absolutely wefuse to keep the peace!" "Give us that inkpot, Kangaroo!" cried Blake.

Splash! Splash!

The rain was beating on the hall windows. A group of fellows who had scoured in from the quadrangle when it came on, stared at the juniors as they gathered in the hall to wait for Herries.

"My only hat!" said Harry Noble, the Australian junior, more familiarly known as "Kangaroo." "You're not going out in this!"

"Yaas, wathah."

"Why not jump into the fountain—you'll get just as wet without the trouble of walking?" suggested Gore humourously.

"Weally, Goah——"

"What's the game?" asked Clifton Dane. "Is it a test-match in mud-gathering, or what?"

"Nothin' of the sort, deah boy. I'm goin' to visit the Tewwitowial camp on Codicote Common, and I'm takin' these chaps. They're goin' to learn to wuff it."

"Good!" said Harry Noble. "I'll come!"

"Weally, Kangawoo——"

"I haven't seen any live Territorials, except your brother Jim——"

"My bwothah's name is not Jim," said D'Arcy; "my bwothah is Lord Conway."

"My mistake," said the Cornstalk blandly. "Anyway, I'm coming to see the Terriers. I'm a judge of dogs."

"Weally, deah boy——"

"Gr-r-r-r-r!"

"There's Herries's gryphon," said Blake, applying that fearsome name to the famous bulldog. "Come on, you chaps! Got an umbrella, D'Arcy?"

"Yaas, wathah."

"Get a move on, then!"

"I'm leadah of this partay, Blake?"

"Well, lead, then," said Blake, giving his elegant chum a shove towards the door. "The place of a leader isn't in the rear, fumbling with an umbrella."

"Pway don't be a wuff beast! I can't get it open."

"Keep it shut, then. Come on!"

"Wait a moment, deah boy."

D'Arcy wrestled with the umbrella. It came open with a rush, so to speak, and the end jabbed Lowther in the ribs. Lowther gave a yell that might almost have been heard by the Territorials on Codicote Common.

"Bai Jove! I'm sowwy, Lowther!"

"You utter ass! You've nearly punctured me!"

"I'm sowwy; but I wefuse to be called an ass! I——"

"Dear me," said Mr. Railton, the House-master of the

School House, coming out of his study; "you juniors are not going out in this rain, surely?"

"Yaas, wathah, sir," said D'Arcy, raising his silk hat in his graceful way. "I'm going to the Tewwitowial camp on the common, sir, to see my bwothah Conway. I'm takin' these youngstahs——"

"But really, D'Arcy!" said the House-master, with a glance at the dripping windows.

"It's all wight, sir. I want to teach them to wuff it."

Mr. Railton smiled.

"Well, I shall not forbid you to go, but I think you will be sorry for it."

"Shouldn't wonder," murmured Tom Merry, as they headed for the quad. "We're generally doing things we're sorry for. My hat! How it rains!"

"If you're afwaid of the wain, Tom Mewwy——"

"Rats! I'm game!"

"Pway keep up with me. I've got my umbrella to hold, and I can't keep on lookin' wound for you," said D'Arcy, who never could get the idea out of his head that it was his duty to look after his comrades. "I should be sowwy to lose any of you."

"The sorrow would be all on your side, Gussy."

"Weally, Lowthah——"

A growl of thunder from the far-off heavens rumbled over the quadrangle. The rain, which had been doing very well hitherto, seemed to take a fresh lease of energy. It came down in sheets.

But not one of the juniors liked to confess that he would rather be indoors. They headed for the gates, and reached them, and went out into the road.

Then, amid the lashing rain, they turned their faces towards Codicote Common.

— —

CHAPTER 2.
Through the Rain.

SPLASH!
Trickle!
Splash!

They were the only sounds the eight juniors heard as they tramped through the lane, save for an occasional whine from Herries's bulldog.

Herries had said that Towser liked the rain, but judging from his looks, his liking for it was not very keen.

He tugged at his chain several times, as if he would have liked to cut back to St. Jim's, but Herries kept a grip on it.

"Bai Jove, it's coming down!" gasped D'Arcy, as they reached the stile, which gave admission to the footpath through the wood; a short cut to Codicote Common.

"Wet, isn't it?" said Kangaroo. "I've always noticed that about rain—it's the same in Australia as in England—wet!"

"Weally, Kangawoo——"

"And jolly wet," gasped Tom Merry, as, in spite of all his muffling, a trickle of water ran down the back of his neck. "OOOOOOCH!"

"What's the mattah, deah boy?"

"Water—down neck—ugh!"

"Pway don't make a fuss ovah a twifle, deah boy. I twust we shall all be Tewwiahs when we gwow up, and we shall have to learn to wuff it. Ow! Wow! Wow! Yow!"

"What on earth's the matter with you?"

"A nasty wet bwanch has stwuck me in the face. Ow—wow—yow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake. "Can't you learn to wuff it?"

"Oh, come; don't make a fuss over a trifle!" grinned Tom Merry.

"I don't call this a twifle. Bai Jove, my boots are covahed with mud."

"Amazing! They ought to be nice and clean and polished, after walking through a quarter of a mile of mud," said Monty Lowther sarcastically.

Gr-r-r-r!

"Ow! Keep that wotten beast away, Hewwies!"

"Bosh! What's the matter with Towser?"

"He's all right," grinned Blake.

"The bwute was snuffin' wound my legs. The howwid beast has no wespect whatevah for a fellow's twousahs."

"He only wants to get under the umbrella," said Digby. "Can't you give a dog a share of your umbrella?"

"Rot," said Herries warmly. "Towser doesn't want anything of the sort. Towser's not a mollycoddle; are you, Towsy, old boy?"

"Gr-r-r-r!" said Towsy, old boy.

"Rats!" said Jack Blake. "I'll bet Gussy's Sunday topper that Towser would give a week's biscuits to buzz off."

"Piffle!"

"Let go the chain, then, and see."

"Oh, rats! Towser would stick to me through thick and thin," said Herries. "He'd stick to his master if it was raining Gatling guns, wouldn't you, Towsy?"

"I don't think!" remarked Blake, as he climbed over the stile.

"I'll try if you like," said Herries excitedly.

"Go it, then!"

Herries defiantly threw down the chain.

"Now, then, Towsy; stick to me," he said.

Towser blinked at him, and jerked at the chain. Finding that there was no hold on it, he turned back towards St. Jim's and started off at a run.

Herries gave a shout.

"Towser! Towser! Come back! Towser!"

Towser took no notice. He was dashing away towards the school at a pace that made pursuit hopeless. The clink of the dragging chain died away.

"He expects me to whistle him back, you see," explained Herries.

"Oh, don't do that!"

"Rats! I'm not going to let Towser think I'm neglecting him. You'll see him come bounding back."

"Ahem!" murmured Tom Merry.

Herries gave a piercing whistle.

He gave it twice, and thrice, and then a somewhat confused look came upon his face. There was no sign of Towser.

D'Arcy wiped his eyeglass, and put it up. Herries glared at him irritably.

"What are you sticking up that window-pane for?" he demanded.

"Pway don't be watty, deah boy. I'm waitin' to see Towsah come boundin' back."

"Towser isn't one of your rotten mongrels that haven't a will of their own," said Herries disdainfully. "Towser will come back when he thinks he will, and not before. He's a dog with some sense."

"Ha, ha ha!"

"I don't see what you're cackling at, Blake."

"Of course you don't—Towser's gone," chuckled Blake. "Towser is like the King in the British Constitution—he can do no wrong. Never mind; let's get on. Your trousers are safe now, Gussy."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Herries grunted, and jumped over the stile—into a puddle—sending a splash of muddy water over Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"You howwid ass!" gasped D'Arcy. "I——"

"Oh, learn to rough it!" grinned Blake. "Come on!"

"I am howwibly wet and muddy."

"That's nothing to what it will be later on," said Harry Noble cheerfully. "Just wait till you get on the common."

"On second thoughts, deah boys, as you all want to go back so much, pewwaps we'd bettah weturn to St. Jim's."

Jack Blake chuckled.

"Not much, my son. You don't crawl out of it like that! Come on!"

"Weally, Blake, I was not twyin' to cwawl, but——"

"Come on," said Blake, linking arms affectionately with his chum. "You're not going back. You've let us in for this, and now you're going through with it."

And the juniors tramped on.

They could not get much muddier than they were. Mud was splashed upon them waist-high so thickly that it disguised their clothes. The macintoshes were soaked and dripping, and hung cloggily round the juniors.

Arthur Augustus's coat swung limply round him. His trousers were wet, and his boots were full of water. The impression his elegant attire was to have made upon the Territorials probably never would be made now.

Under the circumstances, D'Arcy really thought that a return to the school was the most advisable course.

But his companions thought differently. D'Arcy had brought them there, and they were more than half-way to the camp. It was better to see it through now—and it would be a much-needed lesson to Arthur Augustus. A spirit of adventure, too, was entering into the matter. Nature seemed to be doing her best to discourage them, and drive them back. It was "up" to Tom Merry & Co. to show what stuff they were made of.

Under the trees that overhung the footpath they did not feel the rain so much. But the mud was appalling—and the wind was rising higher, and it made the boughs groan and crackle round them.

In the roar of the wind and the trees it was difficult to hear one another's voices.

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed D'Arcy, as they came out of the woodland footpath upon the slope of the Castle Hill. "This is gettin' weally thick, you know! On second thoughts, I don't know whethah I shall be a Tewwiah when I gwow up!

The Gem Library.—No. 74.

They must get their clothes absolutely wuined if they have to turn out to meet the enemy in weathah like this!"

Splash, splash, splash!

On the hillside, the rain came dashing upon them with renewed force.

Arthur Augustus cast a glance towards the ruined castle on the hill, dimly visible in the dusk and the dashing rain.

"Suppose we go and have a look at the wuins, deah boys?"

"Yes, and wait there till the rain stops!" grinned Tom Merry. "I know you, my son! You'll keep straight on!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"Keep on," said Blake, dragging on his chum's arm as he slackened down. "We've got to get home before midnight, you know."

"I was thinkin' we might dwop in at Wayland for some wefweshment——"

"Refreshments are off. Come on."

"Weally, Blake——"

"Kim on!" said Blake, with a jerk that nearly overturned Arthur Augustus in the mire.

The School House swell's expostulations were lost in the roar of the wind.

Leaving the lights of Wayland town behind, and the ruins of the castle on the hill, the chums stepped out for the common, by the road past the chalk-pits.

Splash, splash, splash!

"Bai Jove! I'm simply wunnin' watah!"

They were all as limp as rags. The macintoshes were as wet inside as out. Their boots were full, their trousers clung limply round their legs, the umbrellas were blown round and round by the gale.

"My hat!" gasped Digby. "What a walk we're having!"

"Stick it out, deah boys—don't give in!"

"I'm not giving in, ass!"

"I wefuse to be called an—— Ow! Wow! Gerroooh!"

"What on earth——"

"Hold him!"

"Great Scott!"

Arthur Augustus was gone!

CHAPTER 3.
Two in Trouble.

TOM MERRY turned pale.

In the dark and the rain the juniors had been skirting one of the pits on the edge of the common—old, disused pits that ought to have been fenced in, but never were—taking a short cut away from the footpath. But the rain had made the soil slippery, and D'Arcy had slipped—and before his chums could save him, he had slid away from them and disapeared into a black, yawning pit. The juniors stopped, horror-stricken for the moment.

Blake turned quickly towards the pit, but Tom Merry caught his arm and dragged him back.

"Look out, it's as slippery as glass!"

Blake shouted to his vanished chum:

"D'Arcy! Gussy! Gussy, answer, for Heaven's sake!"

"Weally, Blake——"

The voice was faint and gasping, but it rolled a weight from the hearts of the juniors. They had feared, in those terrible moments, that D'Arcy had met with a serious accident, but the reply assured them that he was safe.

"Are you all right, Gussy?" called out Tom Merry.

"I wegard that question as widiculous, Tom Mewwy!" came back the voice from the darkness of the excavation. "I am in a howwid posish! I am standin' up to my knees in watah, and am covahed with filthy mud!"

"Better than a broken neck, you ass!".

"I decline to be called an ass. Undah the circs——"

"How far down are you?"

"I am at the bottom of the pit, deah boy!"

"Ass!" growled Blake. "We didn't think you were suspended like Mahomet's coffin in mid-air! Do you know how deep the pit is?"

"I came down too quickly to have a chance of measuwin' it, deah boy! I haven't the faintest ideah!"

Tom Merry laughed.

"Well, he's not hurt, or he wouldn't start being funny," he remarked. "Think one of you chaps could get near enough the edge to see how far down he is? We might be able to yank him out."

"See if you can do it."

"Well, you're a more active chap than I am, Blake."

"Yes, at times like this," said Jack Blake sarcastically. "I'll look on and see you do it."

"So will I," said Digby heartily. "I'll back anybody up to that extent."

Tom Merry laughed, and approached the edge of the pit. The ground sloped down to the verge, and it was wet and slippery. The dashing rain, too, made the task more difficult. But Tom, planting his heels firmly in the yielding soil, approached the edge safely, and peered down into the gloom.

A glimmer in the depths caught his eye, and he grinned as he recognised D'Arcy's eyeglass. It was almost all that he could see of D'Arcy.

The junior was not six feet below him.

"Hallo, Gussy!"

"Hallo, deah boy! Can you give me a hand out?"

"Well, I'll try! I shall have to lie down and reach down to you," said Tom Merry doubtfully. "You'll have to reach up, hold my hands, and pull yourself up. If I can stick it, can you manage the climb?"

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy! But you'll wuin your clothes!"

"I don't see how they can be ruined much more than they are at present!" grinned Tom Merry. "So long as you don't yank me into the pit, it's all right!"

"I am hardly likely to do that, Tom Mewwy! I only hope you will not tumble in on top of me, and make mattahs worse!"

"Well, here goes!"

Tom Merry, heroically regardless of his macintosh, laid down on the verge of the pit and extended one arm downwards to D'Arcy.

The junior below reached up, and was just able to grasp his hand. With this assistance, and with the other hand grabbing at the side of the pit, D'Arcy might have climbed in safety to the top, but just as he started he dropped his eyeglass.

He made a grab at it with his free hand, and thus threw all his weight upon the hand that was grasping Tom Merry's.

The sudden jerk had its natural result.

Tom Merry was plucked from his far from secure hold, and rolled headlong into the pit.

Splash!

The hero of the Shell soused into a foot of water, in a sitting posture, and the swell of St. Jim's did likewise.

"Bai Jove!"

Tom Merry jumped up.

"You shrieking idiot!" he roared.

NEXT WEEK: **"GUSSY'S GUEST."** A Splendid Tale of Tom Merry & Co. By Martin Clifford.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"
"What did you drag me in for?"
"Why didn't you pull me out?"
"You jerked me——"
"You didn't wesist the weight——"
"You utter ass——"
"I wefuse to——"
"Hallo!" roared a voice above. "Are you Johnnies going to stay there all night?"
"The silly ass has dragged me in!"
"The feahful duffah has failed to pull me out!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Weally, deah boys, there is no cause for wibald laughtah. I am vewy wet—vewy wet indeed!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry and D'Arcy did not laugh, but the juniors above were shouting with merriment. They had seen Tom Merry's heels disappear, and the sight had seemed funny. But it was a serious case, all the same. There were two in the pit instead of one, and rescue was as far off as ever. Added to that, the juniors were getting steadily wetter and wetter as they stood there in the pouring rain.

"Oh, stop your cackling!" called out Tom Merry. "Help us out!"

"Can't you help one another out?" called back Harry Noble. "You climb on Gussy's shoulders, or let Gussy climb on yours, or both together!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wefuse to have a howwid muddy ass climbin' on my beastly shouldahs!"

"I'll jump on your neck for two pins!" said Tom Merry. "You ass! First you fall in yourself, and then you yank me in! Look here, your coat is as thick with mud as your boots, and can't get muddier. Stand up, and let me climb."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"
"Come, don't be a cad, old chap!"
"Oh, vewy well—but I don't like the ideah!"

And D'Arcy stood as firmly as he could while Tom Merry climbed on his shoulders and made a grasp at the slippery, yielding soil above. But it was too flabby to afford a secure hold—his fingers glided through the mud uncaught.

"Bai Jove, my foot's slippin', deah boy!"
"Steady on!"
"I—I can't! Bai Jove!"
Splash!

Tom Merry came down into the pool again with a mighty splash. He spluttered and scrambled up.

"You terrific dummy! Can't you even stand still?"
"I wefuse to be called a tewwific dummy! I——"
"Can't you get out?" shouted Blake.
"No. You'll have to get a rope from somewhere."
"By Jove! You might as well ask for an aeroplane!"
"Hold on," said Kangaroo. "What about the Territorial camp? They're not far from here, and they'd help us in a jiffy!"

Blake gave the Australian a hearty slap on the back, which very nearly sent him to join Tom Merry and D'Arcy.

"Jolly good idea!" he exclaimed. "Come on to the camp!"

"Tom Merry!" called out the Cornstalk. "Stick to it for a bit! We're going for help!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Buck up, then!" said Tom Merry. "If I'm left here long with D'Arcy, the temptation to drown him will be too strong to resist!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"We'll stay here, and mark the spot," said Lowther, loth to leave his best chum in such a predicament. "You fellows go!"

"Right-ho!"

And leaving Monty Lowther and Manners doing sentry-go in the rain by the pit, Kangaroo and Blake, Herries and Digby set off in search of the Territorial camp.

CHAPTER 4.

The Territorials to the Rescue.

NIGHT had now fallen on the common, and with the fall of darkness the wind and the rain increased in force. Round the boys the ground was a slough—a "Slough of Despond," as Blake remarked. They had rather rashly taken a short cut, and there was a sea of mire under and around them. The famous Pilgrim in his Progress did not find the slough more miry and baffling than the juniors of St. Jim's found it.

But they kept steadily on. D'Arcy had told them as much as he knew about the location of the camp, and they knew in which direction to bear, though it was not easy to find one's way on the dark and rainy expanse.

"I suppose we shall see the camp-fires," Herries remarked hopefully.

Blake snorted.

"Yes; they'll have some ripping camp-fires on a night like this," he said. "They'll flourish in this rain!"

"Then how the deuce are we to find the camp?" demanded Digby.

"Oh, they'll have some lights or other! It's jolly certain the camp-fires will be out!"

"If Towser had come with us, he'd have guided us there in a jiffy!" said Herries. "You remember how he tracked down the burglars that time, Blake?"

"The kippers, you mean!"

"Look here——"

"Well, Towser isn't with us!" said Kangaroo, interposing to stop the argument, which always grew a warm one on that subject. Herries could stand jokes about his cornet and about his big feet; but when anybody traduced Towser, there was certain to be trouble. "Look here! Isn't that a light?"

They peered eagerly through the rain.

In the darkness of the wide expanse a light was certainly glimmering, and they were cheered by the thought that it was in the camp of the Territorials.

"Buck up!" said Blake. "Oh, my hat! Did you ever see so much mud?"

They tramped and squelched through the mud towards the light.

As they drew nearer other lights came into sight, and then the dim forms of tents could be made out.

It was undoubtedly the Territorial camp.

The juniors felt inclined to cheer as they realised it. In fine weather, the camp was an easy walk from St. Jim's, and it ought to have been a pleasant stroll. It had been a very unpleasant tramp, owing to the unseasonableness of the weather. But they had arrived at last, and that was something.

They squelched on towards the camp, and started back as a figure loomed up in their path, and a faint glint in the darkness showed a rifle-barrel.

"Halt!"

It was a sentry.

"Hallo, old cock!" said Blake, rather disrespectfully, considering that he was addressing a member of his Majesty's Territorial Forces. "Fancy meeting you!"

And the juniors chuckled.

The sentry loomed up more distinctly.

"Who goes there?"

"Nobody, old son; we're coming!" said Kangaroo. "Four good little boys, in search of a kind friend. Are you Lord Conway's company?"

"Yes," said the Terrier.

"Good! We were coming to visit your camp, and some of us have taken a tumble into a chalk-pit," explained Kangaroo. "We want help, and a rope."

The sentry hesitated for a moment.

"Follow me!" he said, after peering at the boys in the gloom.

And they followed him into the camp.

The Terriers seemed to be all under canvas, out of the rain. A niff of smoke showed that there had been a camp-fire, but there was no glimmer of it now. A tall and handsome young man in khaki and putties came out of a tent, and the juniors knew him at once. It was Lord Conway, the elder brother of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who had been their guide, philosopher, and friend in a recent journey they had made to Coventry, the famous cycle town of the Midlands.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Lord Conway, putting up an eyeglass, which made him look remarkably like Arthur Augustus even in the gloom. "You youngsters!"

"Rather a rotten time for looking in on a chap, isn't it?" said Blake. "But Gussy was at the bottom of it. He's at the bottom of a chalk-pit now!"

"By Jove!"

Jack Blake explained D'Arcy's predicament. Conway's manner became brisk at once.

"You youngsters, get under cover!" he exclaimed. "I'll send a file of men and get the young duffer out as quickly as possible."

"We'd rather go with them, if you don't mind, sir," said Jack. "They'll want us to show them the way."

"Just as you like, my lads."

Conway rapped out orders. The prompt way in which they were obeyed showed that the Territorial training made good soldiers of young civilians, and that the Terriers were not afraid of wind and rain.

A sergeant and a file of men in one minute were quite ready to go, provided with lanterns and a coil of rope.

"You shall have some hot supper when you get in," said Lord Conway, with a smile. "Now, get off with Sergeant Baker!"

"Right you are, sir!"

And the juniors tramped off cheerily with the rescuers.

They guided the Terriers as quickly as possible to the chalk-pit. Lowther and Manners were tramping to and fro unsheltered in the rain to keep themselves warm.

"Hallo!" said Manners. "Here you are again! You've been gone about three hours!"

Kangaroo chuckled.

"Half an hour," he said.

"Well, it seems like three hours!" grumbled Lowther. "I'm wet! We shall have a lovely set of colds to-morrow!"

The Terriers were getting to work promptly. A lighted lantern was lowered over the edge of the pit on the end of a strong, knotted rope.

"Got the lantern?" sang out the sergeant.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Can you climb up, or shall we pull you?"

"I'll climb up," said Tom Merry. "Keep it taut!"

"Steady, there!"

The Territorials held the rope fast, standing immovable in the pouring rain, while Tom Merry climbed up hand over hand.

He was on the surface in a minute or less, dripping with water, but cheery as ever.

"My hat!" he gasped. "This has been a time! I'm soaked! And the mud—— Great Scott! Awfully obliged to you chaps for coming to the rescue!"

The sergeant chuckled.

"Yes; you wouldn't have liked a night in there, my lad," he said.

"Pway lowah the wope for me!" said D'Arcy, from the pit. "I am wathah afwaid I am catchin' cold!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shall we pull you up, sir?"

"Yaas, wathah! I am afwaid I am too exhausted to climb!"

They dragged him out. He clung to the rope, and was pulled over the edge of the pit and through the mud. The amount of mire he collected in his passage was astonishing. He looked a mass of it when he was landed, gasping like a fish, and probably wished that he had climbed.

"Bai Jove! This is absolutely howwid!" he said. "I have been wet the whole time I have been in that howwid place, deah boys, and I feel vewy wotten!"

"You look pretty rotten, too!" said Kangaroo, surveying him in the lanternlight. "Never mind, there's some warm grub at the camp, so get a move on! Jolly lucky for you there were a lot of chaps willing to come out in the rain and rescue you."

"Yaas, wathah! I am extwemely obliged to them! I have always maintained that the Tewwitowial movement was a gweat movement, and have always done my best to encouwage it. I am now wewarded, deah boys!"

And the juniors set off towards the camp, and the Terriers, for some reason, were chuckling as they went with them. Perhaps they found something comical in Arthur Augustus's views, or perhaps they were pleased to hear that he encouraged the Territorial movement.

CHAPTER 5.

In Camp.

LORD CONWAY looked out of his tent into the pouring rain and the darkness. The wind was rising higher, and it lashed the raindrops into his face. There was a slight shade on the handsome face of the young Territorial captain. There had been several times a rumble of thunder in the distance, and a streak or two of lightning had been visible across the murky sky.

The downpour seemed like the herald of a serious storm. So far, there had only been discomfort, but worse probably remained behind. As a matter of fact, Conway had to wait in camp on Codicote Common till he received orders for resuming his march, and the common looked like becoming a very uncomfortable abode shortly.

The young captain had chosen his camping-ground skilfully, or it would have been flooded by this time; but there was danger now that the tents would be simply blown away if the gale increased in force.

"Bai Jove! I'm jollay glad to get here, deah boys!"

Lord Conway smiled as he heard his brother's voice.

The bedraggled juniors came into the light of the tent, and a remarkable-looking party they were.

Arthur Augustus especially was a sight that might have made an Egyptian mummy smile, as Jack Blake put it.

His elegant clothes were soaked, dripping, and reeking with mire, his boots were invisible under their caking of mud, his silk hat was drenched and battered and muddy. His face was clotted with mud to a piebald aspect. Lord Conway grinned as he saw him.

"By Jove! Is that you, Arthur?"

"Yaas, wathah—what's left of me, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus feebly, as he shook hands with his elder brother. "I am afwaid I look a shockin' sight."

"I must say you do, begad!"

"Yaas, it's howwid, isn't it, especially as I was dwessed vewy carefully for the occasion? I twust you will excuse my pwesentin' myself in your camp in such a fearful state, Conway?"

Conway laughed.

"Certainly, Arthur! I suppose it cannot be helped. You should never have come out in such weather."

"Well, my object, weally, was to teach these youngstahs to wuff it!"

"You seem to have been roughing it yourself most of all! But get those wet things off, all of you, and I'll find you something else!" said the captain. "I can scrape up some change of clothes for all of you, but they won't be much of a fit. Still, the chief thing is not to catch cold."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You're awfully good!" said Tom Merry gratefully. "We didn't think it would be quite as bad as this, and we're sorry to give you all this trouble!"

"Oh, that's nothing! I'm glad to see you!"

The juniors stripped in the tent, and after a rub down with rough towels, they felt very much better. Lord Conway found them a change of clothes, but the garments he found were decidedly odd. He had not anticipated an inroad of schoolboys in need of new attire, and the clothes he provided were intended for men—and Terriers. The juniors, therefore, presented a decidedly queer appearance when they had donned their new garb.

But they were dry—that was the chief thing. They were hungry, too, and they joined Lord Conway at supper, with keen appetites. The meal was frugal, but it was washed down with hot coffee, which made them feel very much better.

Meanwhile, the rain was steadily descending, and wind was growing wilder. The tent-poles seemed to shake as the canvas bagged and sagged. Lord Conway's lieutenant came into the tent and consulted with his chief in low tones. He was a sturdy young farmer's son of Eastwood, his father being a tenant of Conway's father, and he looked a fine young soldier in khaki. Lord Conway's face was grave when he rejoined the boys.

"Bai Jove! I know that chap's face," remarked Arthur Augustus. "It's young Greene, of Easthorpe. Wemarkably good soldier he makes, too. Do you think I should look well in putties, Blake?"

"I haven't given the subject the deep thought it requires, old man," said Blake solemnly. "I must think it out on some nice, quiet afternoon when I haven't anything else to do."

"Pway don't wot, deah boy. Of course, that has a gweat deal to do with whethah I become a Tewwitowial when I gwow up."

"Better become a policeman," said Monty Lowther, with a shake of the head. "Blue's your colour, you know."

"Weally, Lowthah——"

Tom Merry rose to his feet.

"It's more than time we were off," he said.

"Listen to the wain, deah boy."

"If we wait here till the rain stops, we shall have to encroach on Lord Conway's hospitality for a couple of days, very likely," laughed Tom. "Get a move on."

"I feel wathah fatigued. I've got an ache in my leg."

"You'll have an ache in your nose if you don't move. We're awfully obliged, sir," Tom Merry went on, speaking to Captain Lord Conway. "You've done us down rippingly, and it was more than we deserved after invading you in this way."

"But you can't go out in this rain," said Lord Conway, as a fresh gust made the tent rock. "Listen to the wind."

"We've got to get to the school, sir. We can get back through it all right. My hat! I thought the tent was coming down then."

"Yaas, wathah! If your tent blows down, Conway, you had bettah bwing your men to St. Jim's," said Arthur Augustus. "You have a wight to billet Tewwitowials in case of necessity, you know."

Lord Conway laughed.

"I will think of it, Arthur."

"It's a good idea," said Tom Merry. "You could camp in the quad, or we could put you up in the studies."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"My word, how it blows!" said Digby, putting his head out of the tent, and pulling it in again quickly. "Still, we've got to go through it."

"Better put on the macs again," said Kangaroo. "Likewise the umbrella. The other things——"

"I can send them up to the school to-morrow, if you like," said Lord Conway.

"Thanks, awfully, sir."

The juniors prepared to start. The fact that coats and macintoshes were wet through, did not matter very much, as if they had been dry they would not have remained so

many minutes in the rain. Lord Conway allowed his young guests to depart with some misgivings. But, as a matter of fact, it was doubtful whether the Territorial tents would afford shelter much longer to anyone. As they were taking leave of their kind host, the boys were startled by a crash, and there was a shout and a glimmering of lanterns in the darkness.

"Well, good-bye," said Conway. "That's a tent down, and I must see to it."

And the juniors departed.

They breasted the wind, and bent their heads to the lashing rain; and Blake took one arm of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and Tom Merry took the other. The swell of St. Jim's expostulated in vain.

"Weally, deah boys, I do not wequire assistance, and weally——"

"I'm blessed if I care what you require or don't require," said Jack Blake cheerfully. "I'm going to help you all the same, anyway."

"Weally, Blake——"

"Same here," said Tom Merry. "You're not going to slide into any more chalky pits, and yank me down to keep you company, if I can help it."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"'Nuff said! We're going to help you. Come on!"

"I wefuse to take a step while you are holdin' me in this widiculous way," said Arthur Augustus firmly, and he stopped—for a moment. It was only for a moment, for Tom Merry and Blake were marching on, and he perforce went with them. He fell forward, and was dragged along a few paces, and then he struggled to his feet again.

"You uttah wottahs——"

"Kim on!"

"If you do not immediately welease me, I shall stwike you!"

"I don't see how you'll manage it," grinned Tom Merry, keeping a tight grip on D'Arcy's right arm, while Blake held his left, "unless you start butting with your head like a billygoat."

"I shall wefuse to wegard you as a fwiend——"

"Go hon!"

"Fwom this moment, Tom Mewwy, I dwop your acquaintance."

"Good!"

And the swell of St. Jim's was still marched on remorselessly in the grasp of the juniors, whose acquaintance he had dropped. Thus they fared on through the rainy night.

Meanwhile, there was trouble in the Territorial camp.

The tent that had blown down was only the first of a series, for the gale was rising every moment, and now more and more ropes and pegs were giving way.

Tent after tent collapsed in the furious wind, several of them being blown clean away, the canvas tossing and flapping away on the wide common.

There was no sleep for the Territorials that night.

For matters were growing worse instead of better as the night advanced, and it began to be clear to Lord Conway that the camp would soon be untenable.

CHAPTER 6.
The Return.

TING-A-LING!

Taggles, the porter, growled.

The gates were locked—had been locked for a long time—and Taggles was solacing himself for the labours of the day with a glass of gin-and-water—a very little water, and a great deal of gin. The sudden ring at the bell made Taggles start, and more of the gin-and-water went over his beard than into his mouth. Some of it went into his collar, and Taggles growled, and growled again.

"Blow 'em!" said Taggles.

Ting-a-ling! Buzz!

"Blow 'em!"

Taggles set down the glass, and proceeded to the gates. He didn't like going out in the rain, and he didn't like leaving his gin-and-water. Eight youthful faces, caked with mud, looked at him between the bars.

"Taggles! Taggles! Buck up! We're getting wet!"

"Yaas, wathah, Taggay, deah boy! This wain is vewy wet!"

"Blow 'em!" said Taggles.

"Huwwy up, old chap!"

"Which the Head's a-waitin' for yer," said Taggles, as he admitted the drenched and muddy juniors. "He told me to tell yer. Nice goings hon, he says."

Tom Merry laughed, in spite of the rain.

"Yes, I fancy I can hear the Head saying that," he remarked. "It's so exactly what the Head would say."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Nice goings hon, says the 'Ead," repeated Taggles. The Gem Library.—No. 74.

"'Send them young rips to me the moment they comes in, Taggles,' he says to me."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors went in, a draggled crowd. They did not doubt that the Head had given orders for them to go in to him, although Taggles had put into the doctor's mouth some expressions that would have amazed the old gentleman if he had heard them.

The quadrangle was a sea of rain. The force of the downpour was less now, and it gave signs of coming to an end; but the wind howled among the ivied walls of St. Jim's, and clattered down fragments of masonry from the ruined tower.

"Nice state the cricket-ground'll be in to-morrow," growled Kangaroo.

"Oh, nevah mind the cwicket-gwound," said D'Arcy. "Our clothes are certain to shwink feahfully aftah this, even if they are fit to be worn at all."

Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, met them as they crawled despondently into the School House. He stared at them.

"Great Columbus!" he gasped. "Who—what—how——"

"Yes, here we are," said Tom Merry, as cheerfully as he could. "The weather's rather wet, isn't it?"

"It's a thing you often notice about rainy weather," said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Kildare roared.

"Well, you horrid-looking little sweeps! You're to go in to the Head, but, my aunt! He won't want you to soil his carpet with yourselves in that state!"

"Do we weally look vewy bad, Kildare, deah boy?"

"Oh, no, quite a picture! Take off those sopping macintoshes, for goodness' sake! Have you been specially collecting up all the mud you possibly could?"

"No; we've left some on the road," said Blake, glancing down at his clothes. "Not much, I think, though, from the amount we've got here."

"What—what—what are those clothes?" exclaimed Kildare, as the juniors stripped off their drenched outer garments. "Where—where did you get them?"

"Borrowed them."

"From whom?"

"The Tewwitowial Forces of his Majesty King Edward the Seventh," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "They were meant for gwown-up persons, and so the fit is not good."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But I see no cause whatevah for wibald laughtah."

"Ha, ha, ha!

"Ah, have the juniors come in?" said Mr. Railton, coming into the hall. "I—— Dear me! Whatever—— Ha, ha, ha!"

The House-master laughed—he could not help it.

The appearance of Tom Merry & Co., clad in all sorts of odd garments too large for them, was ludicrous in the extreme.

"But you are to go in to the Head," said Mr. Railton, checking his laugh. "Dear me! You are very wet and muddy! Take them in, Kildare."

"In that state, sir?" said the Sixth-Former doubtfully.

"Ahem! Dr. Holmes said at once," said Mr. Railton. "He will probably not detain them long. Take them in."

"Yes, sir."

Kildare conveyed the juniors to the Head's study. He tapped, and opened the door, and the light from the study fell in a stream upon the draggled truants.

Dr. Holmes gave them one look, and then rose from his seat, carefully adjusted his glasses, and gave them another. Then he seemed to be struggling with some internal spasm.

"Bless my soul!" he said at last. "Is—is that really

you, Merry? Is that you, D'Arcy? My dear boys, how did you get into that state?"

"It's raining, sir," said Tom Merry diffidently.

The Head coughed.

"Ye-es, I am aware that it is raining." He could hardly fail to be aware of it, with the raindrops splashing like hail against his study windows. "But—but—dear me, you are positively drenched! And—and those clothes! I presume you have obtained a change of clothes somewhere. Most extraordinary!"

"Yaas, wathah, sir! I twust you will excuse us appeawin' before you in such extwemely wotten attire, sir. It was a gweat emergency."

"You are—er—late."

"We meant to be in by locking-up, sir," said Tom Merry penitently, "but D'Arcy insisted upon falling into chalk-pits, and it was no good trying to stop him."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"And the weather made us slow, sir. Such a lot of mud, sir. We're all really very sorry, sir."

"Very sorry indeed, sir."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Ahem! You seem to have been punished enough. I suppose it was not so much your fault that you are late, as you assure me you could not help it."

"Honour bwight, sir!"

"Ahem! You may go. Go straight to bed; get those wet things off as quickly as possible, and rub yourselves dry. Really, I should not be surprised if you have very serious colds to-morrow. You will—er—deserve it."

"Good-night, sir, and thank you!"

"Good-night, my boys!"

The juniors gladly retired. It was not yet bedtime, but they were fatigued enough to be willing to go to bed early for once.

They squelched upstairs in their wet boots, and fellows came from all sides to look at them and grin.

"Look jolly, don't they?" grinned Gore. "Is it raining, Gussy?"

"Yaas, wathah, Goah," said D'Arcy innocently; "it is wainin' vewy hard."

"And is the rain wet?"

"Weally, Goah——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors cleaned themselves down as well as they could, rubbed themselves into a warm glow with rough towels, and tumbled into bed.

There they dropped off to a sound sleep an hour before their usual bedtime, and they slept like tops till a sudden awakening came.

CHAPTER 7.

The Invaders.

MIDNIGHT had come, and the rain had ceased. All St. Jim's was running water. After the rain stopped, the trickle of the water could still be heard on all sides, in gutters and pipes. Everything was overflowing. The wind, too, had partly dropped, though there was still an endless rustling of trees and ivy, and a wild wailing round the old chimneys.

The boys of St. Jim's slept the sleep of the just.

Tom Merry & Co. were safe in the arms of Morpheus, and round them the other fellows were sleeping soundly enough. The last light had been extinguished, and the School House was black and silent. Over the way, the New House was equally still, and nothing stirred in the wide quadrangle but the windy trees and the trickling water.

The porter's lodge was silent too. Taggles had long been in bed, having disposed half an hour ago of his final glass of gin-and-water. Taggles was a strict teetotaller, according to his own account, and he attributed the hue of his nose to faithfully doing his duty in all weathers, rain or fine. It was not his fault if his nose got weatherbeaten, and inclined to red. But it has been said by a humorous gentleman that the teetotaller's favourite drink is gin-and-water, so perhaps Taggles was only living up to his professions. Probably that last glass of gin-and-water had made Taggles a little more sleepy than he would otherwise have been, for the bell rang twice or thrice without his hearing it.

Ting-ting-ting-ting!

Jangle-jangle!

Clang! Clang!

When Taggles issued from his lodge at last, his nose was glowing red, and his eyes were gleaming. He was muffled up in a big coat, had slippers on, and a nightcap, and his appearance would probably have moved mirth in the daytime. He carried a lantern in one hand, and a big stick in the other.

Who could be ringing at the gates of St. Jim's at that hour was a mystery to him, but the ringing was so sustained and imperative that he knew it must be somebody who really wanted admission. His first thought had been that it was a tramp on the high-road, inclined to mischief.

"Blow 'em!" said Taggles. "Young himps! It's another of them blessed juniors stayed out late, a-ringing an honest man outer his bed at midnight. Blow 'em!" He took a tight grip on the stick, and grinned savagely. "I'll teach 'em!"

Taggles, at that hour of the night, was entitled to consider anybody who tried to get in as a burglar. He intended to treat the ringer of the bell as a burglar. By keeping his light off the applicant for admission, he could pretend not to know him, and could give him two or three sound thwacks with the stick before discovering that he was a fellow belonging to St. Jim's. There was solace in the thought, for being called out of his bed at midnight.

Taggles set the lantern down, so that its rays did not fall on the gates, and then turned the key. Dimly a form loomed up before him in the darkness. The stick whirled round, and came with a mighty thwack across somebody's shoulders.

"There, you scoundrel!" ejaculated Taggles. "Burglars! Thieves!"

"Ow!"

"I'll teach you to—— My heye!"

Before Taggles could strike another blow, the stick was wrenched out of his hand, and he was seized in a grip of iron.

Taggles shivered all over with terror.

It was not a boy, but a man, who had grasped him, and Taggles was as a child in his hands. It rushed into the porter's mind that it was really a burglar.

"Oh! Leggo! Chuck it! Help!"

"Silence, you fool!"

"Help!" gasped Taggles. "Burglars!"

"You duffer!" growled the voice. "We're not burglars! Do burglars come ringing at the bell in this part of the country, begad?"

"Help! Who—who are you?" gasped Taggles.

"Look!"

Taggles' terrified eyes peered through the gloom as the strong hands released him.

In blank amazement he saw that the dim form before him was in military uniform, and that there were other forms behind—dozens, scores of them, standing ranked, with rifles on their shoulders.

They were soldiers!

Taggles almost jumped off the ground.

What in the name of wonder could a company of troops be demanding admission at the gates of St. Jim's for, in the middle of the night?

There was only one possible explanation. The Germans had landed!

Taggles was a great reader of newspapers, and he knew that the Germans were going to land some day—that the great invasion of German waiters and restaurant-keepers would be followed by another invasion of a more military character, all in good time. This sudden surprise of St. Jim's was a proof that the moment of national danger had arrived at last! Perhaps the confusion of being suddenly awakened from sleep, and the influence of the gin-and-water, had something to do with the conclusion Taggles so hastily jumped to.

"Wh-wh-wh-what do you want here?" he gasped.

"Quarters," said the tall officer, who certainly spoke excellent English. "We—hold on! Come back! What's the matter with the man?"

For Taggles had suddenly bolted.

Away he went into the darkness of the quad, half expecting to hear the crack—crack of rifles behind him as he ran.

But the enemy did not fire. The officer rubbed his chin in amazement.

"Begad, the man's mad! March!"

And the invaders marched in after Taggles.

But the terrified porter was well ahead. He dashed up the steps of the school-house and clamoured at the door.

Ring! Ring! Bang! Bang! Bang!

"Help! Murder! Germans! Help!"

Bang! bang! bang!

A dozen sleepers awoke at once.

Mr. Railton put his head out of the window.

"Who is there?" he called out.

"Help! Murder! Fire! Thieves! Germans!

"Dear me! That is Taggles! Is the man intoxicated or is there something wrong?" muttered the alarmed housemaster. "I have several times suspected him of indulging in strong drink. What a terrible noise he is making."

Bang! bang! bang!

"Help! Germans! Thieves! Fire!"

Crash! crash!

Mr. Railton hastily threw on some clothes and ran downstairs. He switched on the electric light and opened the door. Taggles staggered in, almost collapsing with terror.

But he had presence of mind enough to slam the door and lock it again, and put the chain up, and shoot the bolts.

Then he sank into a seat with a gasp.

"Oh lor'! Wot a night!"

Mr. Railton looked at him sternly.

"Taggles! What is the matter?"

"The Germans!"

"What?"

"They've landed, sir."

"Are you mad—or intoxicated?"

"They're marching into the quad, sir," said Taggles, faintly. "It give me a turn when I opened the gate, sir. I was nearly bayoneted by some of them—I tried to defend the gates, sir——"

"I am convinced that you have been drinking."

"I bleeve I'm wounded," said Taggles. "I struck down three or four of 'em—I think I must have killed one. He groaned in German——"

"He did what?"

"I—I mean, he groaned, sir, and—and they were talking German. I narrowly escaped with my life."

"Taggles! Go to bed at once."

Taggles staggered to his feet.

"They'll shoot me, sir, if I go out. They'll be here in a minute. We've got to defend the 'ouse," said Taggles, valiantly. As a matter of fact, his brain was in a whirl between excitement and gin-and-water—and the gin had imparted to him a courage that in his sober moments would have been conspicuous by its absence. "We've got to keep 'em out, sir, for Hengland, 'Ome, and Beauty, sir."

"You—you stupid fellow——"

Taggles dragged the hall seat and a couple of chairs to the door, and jammed them there, the House-master watching him in blank astonishment.

Then he laid violent hands upon the hall-stand, but that was too heavy for him to move unaided, and he looked to Mr. Railton for assistance.

"Lend a 'and, sir!" he panted.

"What for?"

"To barrycade the door, sir. They'll be 'ere in a jiffy."

"Taggles——"

"Lend a 'and, sir, for Hengland, 'Ome and Beauty!"

"You—you—dear me! What can I say? He is evidently drunk!"

"Which I'm a teetotaller, sir," said Taggles; "and never touches anything stronger than tea. Whoever says I drank 'arf a bottle of gin this evening, lies. It wasn't 'arf a bottle. I hopens the gate, sir, and you could have knocked me down with a feyver when I see the Germans."

"Germans!"

"Yes, sir—thousands of 'em! I killed two or three——"

"Taggles!"

"And 'ere's a 'ole in my coat where one of 'em ran his bayonet through!" said Taggles, whose imagination was very vivid when it was inspired by gin-and-water. "I wonder I hescaped with my life! Lend a 'and, sir."

"I shall certainly do nothing of the sort. Boys!" Mr. Railton turned to the staircase. Needless to say, the disturbance at such an hour had awakened nearly all the boys, and they were crowding on the staircase, wondering what was the matter. "Boys, you need not be alarmed! This man is intoxicated, and I shall report his conduct to Dr. Holmes in the morning. It is simply outrageous! Taggles, I am shocked—astounded!"

"Which the Germans are in the quad, sir——"

"Don't be ridiculous! Go back to bed, and——"

"Listen, then, sir!" said Taggles triumphantly.

He held up his hand.

The House-master listened, and in spite of himself he gave a violent start.

Through the wind in the quadrangle there came a steady, regular sound—the sound of marching feet.

Tramp, tramp, tramp!

"Dear me!" gasped Mr. Railton. "It—it certainly sounds like soldiers!"

Tramp, tramp, tramp!

CHAPTER 8.

Unexpected Guests.

TRAMP, tramp, tramp!

It was the regular tread of soldiers, there wasn't the slightest doubt of that.

They were marching in the quadrangle of St. Jim's, and the wind brought the sound clearly towards the School House.

Taggles's face was triumphant, and Mr. Railton's was a study. He did not believe that the Germans had landed, but there certainly were troops in the quad.

The boys crowding on the staircase looked startled.

"My hat!" said Tom Merry. "It can't be the Germans! We all know they're coming some day, but they haven't finished their fleet yet."

The Gem Library.—No. 74.

"They may have come over in aeroplanes," said Skimpole.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Of course," said Kangaroo, "they would march on a public school first of all; they'd leave London and Portsmouth alone, and march on a school! It's so likely, isn't it?"

Tom Merry laughed.

"Well, not very! Whom can the bounders be, then?"

"Bai Jove!"

"Trod on something, Gussy?"

"Certainly not, Tom Mewwy. An ideah has just flashed into my bwain."

"Plenty of room there for it to flash," remarked Blake.

"Weally, Blake——"

Tramp, tramp, tramp!

The steady tread was approaching the School House. Doubtless the invaders could see the lights gleaming from within.

"Halt!"

"Yaas, wathah! I'm sure now."

"Sure of what, Gussy?"

"I know whom those boundahs are."

"Expound, then."

"They're the Tewwiahs!"

"The—the what?"

"The Tewwitowials! I think it is vewy likely they've taken advantage of my permish. to come and billet at St. Jim's——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, deah boys, I think it's vewy pwob."

"Ha, ha! Quite likely; but I don't think your permission had much to do with it," chuckled Blake. "Hallo! There they are!"

Knock!

It was a summons at the door.

Mr. Railton was already lifting away the articles Taggles had placed there to strengthen the defence of the lock and the bolts and chain.

He unfastened the door at the knock. Taggles gasped.

"Don't unlock it, sir! They may fire!"

"Nonsense!"

"I was nearly bayoneted, sir!"

Mr. Railton did not reply. He pulled back the bolts, and turned the key. Taggles tried to take cover behind the hall-stand. The great door swung open, and there was a blaze of electric light into the dark, windy quadrangle.

A handsome young officer stood on the steps.

"Bai Jove! It's my bwothah Conway!"

Lord Conway gave Mr. Railton a cheery salute.

"Good-evening, sir! Ahem! I am afraid I have disturbed you, and somewhat frightened your porter."

Mr. Railton smiled.

"Yes. He imagines that you are German troops, and has been trying to persuade me to barricade the house against you."

Lord Conway laughed heartily.

"We are Territorials, sir. We have been camped on Codicote Common, but the camp has been wrecked and flooded by this fearful storm. We are looking for quarters."

"Ah! I understand!"

"As this school is the nearest place, I have ventured to disturb you, sir," said the young Territorial captain. "I do not want to put you to a great deal of inconvenience, though. If you cannot find us quarters, I will march on to the village, and see what can be done there."

"How many are you?"

"Ninety-five all told."

"You would hardly find accommodation for so many in the village, I think," said Mr. Railton, with a smile. "Nineteen or twenty would tax the resources of Rylcombe. But there is no necessity for putting them to the test. I can assure you, on Dr. Holmes's behalf, of a warm welcome here. The doctor——"

"I am here, Mr. Railton," said the Head, coming along the passage fully dressed. He, too, had been awakened, but had stopped to complete his toilet before coming down. "What is this?"

"Territorials in search of quarters, sir."

"Very good! You are welcome to the best we can do," said Dr. Holmes. "Dear me! It is Lord Conway!"

He shook hands with the young man.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy hurried down the stairs. As brother of the Territorial captain, he felt that he was bound to take part in the proceedings.

"If you please, sir——"

"Ah! D'Arcy! You—er—may go back to bed."

"Yaas, sir. If you please, sir, we should be vewy pleased to give up our dorm. to the Tewwiahs, sir. We appwove of the Tewwiahs, sir, and I should be willin' to pig in with the Shell, sir, and let 'em have the Fourth Form dorm., sir."

"Really, D'Arcy——"

"You shrieking ass!" roared Tom Merry. "What did you drag me in for!" "Why didn't you pull me out?"
"Hallo!" roared a voice above. "Are you two Johnnies going to stay there all night?"

"I should be vewy pleased, sir. There are a lot of beds in the Fourth Form dorm., sir, and they can have them all."

"Hark at the young bounder," muttered Blake. "Blessed if he doesn't talk as if the whole dorm. belonged to him."

"Ahem!" said the Head. "I fear that juniors' beds would hardly be large enough for these gentlemen."

"Bai Jove! I nevah thought of that, sir."

"But the dormitory would be a very suitable place. Tell your Form-fellows that they may remove into the Shell dormitory for to-night, D'Arcy."

"Yaas, wathah, sir!"

"Good!" said Blake, as he turned to go upstairs. "I don't mind; anything for the sake of the country."

"You haven't much to grumble at," said Monty Lowther. "We're making the giddy sacrifice. Blessed if I see how we can put up with these worms in our dorm."

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"Oh, we can stand it!" said Tom Merry magnanimously. "Every Britisher is called upon to do something to help on the Territorials, and we'll do that."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"Bring your things into our dorm., my son," said Manners. "We'll put up with you. We can stand it."

And the chums of the Shell walked off to their dormitory before Arthur Augustus could find suitable words to reply.

CHAPTER 9.

D'Arcy Knows the Proper Thing to do.

THE Fourth Form turned out of their quarters cheerfully. The beds, it is true, were not of much use to the Territorials. But the bedding was all right, and the shelter was the chief thing. The Fifth Form also turned in with the Sixth, which made another room for disposal. The same arrangements were made over in the New House—Fourth and Fifth turning out to make room—and with four dormitories at their disposal, the Territorials were mostly provided for. The officers were accommodated with rooms to themselves, and some of the troops camped in the gymnasium, and a few in odd rooms. In a short time they were all disposed of for the night, and they were soon sleeping the sleep of the fatigued. But sleep did not so soon return to the juniors' eyelids.

The arrival of the Territorials was an exciting occurrence. There had never been soldiers billeted in St. Jim's before, and the knowledge that a whole company of Territorials was quartered there was keenly exciting to the juniors.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had assumed a sort of proprietorship over the Terriers, on account of his relationship to their captain, and he in especial was thinking seriously about the matter.

In the crowded Shell dormitory in the School House there

was a buzz of talk, while the school clock chimed out the small hours.

Arthur Augustus was silent for a time, thinking it out, and when he spoke at last, Jack Blake was also speaking. But the swell of St. Jim's did not notice such a trifle as that.

"I say, deah boys——"

"Dry up, Gussy! Can't you hear your uncle talking?" demanded Blake.

"Yaas, but I was about to make a wemark——"

"It will keep, I suppose?"

"It is wathah important——"

"Never mind—tell us next week."

"I wefuse to tell you next week, Blake. I wegard you as a fwivolous ass. I say, Tom Mewwy——"

"Who's that speaking to me?" demanded Tom Merry, in the dark.

"You know my voice well enough, you ass."

"It sounds like D'Arcy's voice."

"It is my voice!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, exasperated. "This is no time for wottin', you uttah wottah!"

"Are you D'Arcy?"

"You know I am, you feahful duffah!"

"Well, don't address me," said Tom Merry. "That chap D'Arcy dropped my acquaintance this evening, and I haven't seen him pick it up since. I don't know any ass of the name of D'Arcy."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"Look here, young 'un, I'm not particular, but I can't be addressed in this familiar way by fellows I don't know. Chuck it."

"I shall wefuse to speak to you again, Tom Mewwy. I wegard you as an ass, and these fellows as a set of cacklin' duffahs. I have an important wemark to make——"

"Make it to a fellow you know, then."

"You uttah wottah! On second thoughts, I am willin' to wesume our acquaintance, if you will agwee to tweat me with pwopah wespect."

"Your apology is accepted."

"Bai Jove, I wasn't apologisin'! That wasn't an apology! I——"

"Never mind, it's accepted all the same! Now you can make your remark—go ahead!" said Tom Merry graciously.

"I was goin' to say that we ought to make a bit of a celebwation, now that the Tewwiahs are heah! It would only be the pwopah thing, to show that we appwove of the Tewwitowial scheme!"

"Yes, I suppose it would be grateful and comforting to them to know that we approve," said Tom Merry thoughtfully.

"Pway don't wot, deah boy. They would natuwally be gwatified by any little show of fwiendly welcome. I was thinkin' that we might have the officahs to a feed in the studay——"

"Bravo!"

"I am glad you like the idea. I was thinkin', too, of a sort of entertainment. It would not be quite the thing for us to give a smokin' concert——"

"Ha, ha, ha! I think not!"

"But we could give a concert, at which the chaps would be allowed to smoke——'

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, deah boys——"

"What's the difference between a smoking concert and a concert where you smoke?" bawled Jack Blake.

"Well, as a mattah of fact, deah boy, there isn't much diffewence, only in name," said Arthur Augustus. "But, of ccurse, the name is evewythin'. Shakespeare says, 'What's in a name?' But that is only one of the ewwahs I have found in Shakespeare, who is, in my opinion, a vewy ovahwated man. If we pwoposed to the Head——"

"Can't—he's a married man."

"I wegard that as an uttahly fwivolous wemark, Monty Lowthah! If we pwoposed to the Head to give a smokin' concert, he would be vewy pwopahly shocked, and would absolutely wefuse. But if we pwopose to give a concert where the Tewwitowials would be allowed to smoke, that's a diffewent mattah. I am convinced that the Head would consent at once."

"Very likely. There's something in a name, after all, and Shakespeare was off-side," said Tom Merry. "But who's going to give the concert?"

"Well, of course, I should be at the head of it——"

"You would sing?" asked Lowther.

"I should be vewy pleased to give a few tenah solos."

"Good wheeze! I think there's not been a better idea than that proposed for some time!" said Lowther heartily. "The Territorials are out to face hardships, for training, and if they can stand Gussy's tenor solos, they'll simply smile at the German machine-guns!"

"Weally, Lowthah——"

The Gem Library.—No. 74.

"You must put it to them, Gussy, that it's in the form of training, and will do them good in the long run."

"I wefuse to discuss the mattah with a fwivolous ass! Do all you fellows agwee to the ideah of a non-smokin' concert where they can smoke?"

"Ha, ha! Yes."

"Then that is settled, deah boys. I wathah think the Tewwitowials will enjoy their quartahs at St. Jim's!"

"I don't think!" murmured Monty Lowther.

But Arthur Augustus's idea was taken up with enthusiasm. Some of the fellows belonged to a dramatic society, with Tom Merry at its head, and they had given entertainments before, in rivalry with the juniors of the New House.

They felt that it was "up" to them to stand as good a show as possible for the entertainment of the Territorials, to make the latter feel quite at home at St. Jim's.

And so D'Arcy's idea was adopted, and before they went to sleep the juniors had discussed it in all its bearings.

The next morning, when the rising-bell went, there were few juniors who remained to be awakened. Curiosity brought most of them downstairs early, to see something of the guests who had arrived so unexpectedly in the middle of the night.

There were a good many of the Terriers to be seen in the quadrangle. Fine, upstanding fellows most of them were, and looking very little the worse for their stormy experiences over-night.

Taggles, in the sober light of the morning, looked upon them with a different eye, and when he caught sight of Tom Merry and his chums in the quad., he blushed till his cheeks were almost as red as his nose.

"Good-morning, Taggy!" said Monty Lowther cheerily. "Seen any more Germans?"

Taggles growled something indistinctly.

"What's become of the chaps you killed last night?" went on Lowther mercilessly. "You said two or three, I think?"

"Cheeky young himps!" said Taggles.

"As they've turned out to be Territorials, there'll be trouble about that, Taggy," said Lowther, shaking his head. "It's wilful murder, you know—or manslaughter, at any rate. I wonder you don't cut and run."

"Young himps!"

"Why don't you disguise yourself as an honest man, Taggles, and bunk before it's too late?"

Taggles went into his lodge and slammed the door with a slam that could be heard across the quadrangle, and the Terrible Three chuckled and strolled on.

Figgins & Co. were coming out of the New House. There were about thirty Territorials quartered in the New House—that being much the smaller of the two Houses at St. Jim's.

"Hallo! This is rather startling, isn't it?" said Figgins affably. "Territorials billeted on the school!"

"Have they put any in the New House, then?"

"Yes, about thirty—nice chaps, most of them."

"Poor fellows!"

"Eh? What are you talking about?"

"Rather rough to shove them into that old casual ward," said Manners. "You New House kids must try to behave yourselves a little, Figgy, while they are there."

"Oh, come off!" said Figgins. "Look here, I've got an idea! They'll be here for a day or two, I hear. What about getting up some sort of welcome entertainment, for them?"

"Ancient history!" said Tom Merry sweetly. "We had that idea last night, and we've worked it out and settled the whole matter—with the exception of making the arrangement."

"Well, for the sake of making it a success, we're willing to run it for you," said Figgins. "Here's Kerr, the best actor and impersonator ever seen off the stage—can imitate anybody, from a bishop to a dustman. I was thinking of a variety entertainment, with Kerr doing some of his impersonating turns."

"I'd be willing to oblige," said Kerr modestly.

"I was thinking of a feed," remarked Fatty Wynn. "Entertainments are all right, but what you really need, you know, is a feed. I get awfully hungry myself in this kind of weather and at this time of the year, and I daresay those chaps in khaki feel the same."

"Rather a tall order to stand a feed to a whole company of Territorials," said Tom Merry, laughing.

"Well, we could have a subscription, you know, and the masters—even the Head—could be asked to contribute on such an occasion."

"Rats!" said Figgins. "The entertainment's the wheeze! I heard some of the Terrier chaps saying that General Pepperton might be looking in. He's in charge of the Territorial contingents manœuvring on the Downs, you know, and he's supposed to be in this neighbourhood just now. We could ask him, and it would give the show a real leg-up if we got a real live general there."

"Good—all general officers admitted free!" said Tom

Merry. "Only it's us who are giving the entertainment, you know!"

"Rats!"

"My dear ass——"

"You see, it's our idea. You chaps can help."

"Now, look here, Figgins, you know you're talking piffle," said Tom Merry warmly. "You can't give entertainments any more than you can make fig puddings."

"If you say I can't make fig-puddings——" began Figgins, with equal warmth.

"Oh, you can make 'em!" said Lowther. "But when it comes to eating 'em——"

"Look here, Lowther——"

"Well, never mind the fig-puddings," said Tom Merry. "It being admitted that you New House chaps can't give entertainments for toffee, we——"

"But it isn't—we didn't—we—I——"

"Therefore the School House will be giving the show. The fact is, Gussy is already talking to his noble brother on the subject. We've captured the Terriers, you see—we've got influence."

"We're jolly well not going to stand——"

"You needn't stand—there will be seats provided at the entertainment for everybody. But we can make room on the list for Kerr's impersonations—I admit he does them rippingly. You can give us a song, and Fatty Wynn a cake-walk."

"But it's our show——"

"Oh, no, it's ours!"

"You School House ass, I tell you——"

"Yes, but I tell you——"

The argument was growing warm, and some of the Territorials in the quad were looking curiously towards the juniors, expecting a display of fisticuffs; but just then the breakfast-bell rang, and the disputants separated. They walked away to their respective Houses to breakfast, and the threatened row was averted. But the School House fellows and the New House chums remained possessed with the determination to give the entertainment and to be at the head of it, and so there was a lively prospect of trouble between the rivals of St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 10.

Blake Puts It Straight to Figgins.

DURING lessons that morning, the attention of many fellows in the Fourth and the Shell wandered from the matters they ought to have been fixing their undivided minds upon. They were thinking of the Territorials quartered at the school, and of the plans formed by the Terrible Three and Study No. 6 in unison for their entertainment. Lord Conway had already promised to come to tea in Study No. 6, if he could find time. As for the attendance at the non-smoking concert, that was certain to be large. Captain Lord Conway had assured Arthur Augustus solemnly that his men would take it as a compliment and a pleasure. Monty Lowther expressed doubts about the pleasure when D'Arcy reported Conway's reply, but no one minded Lowther.

Little had been arranged besides D'Arcy's tenor solos. Indeed, D'Arcy would have been quite pleased to fill up the concert all by himself; but that idea did not appeal to the rest. They all wanted a show; and Lowther said that too many tenor solos would be simply cruelty to animals. So during morning lessons the juniors thought it out—to the great detriment of their work in class. They earned a very good crop of lines; but when classes were dismissed, they weren't thinking about lines. They had more important matters to think of.

Immediately after morning school, Herries disappeared. It might have been supposed that he was gone to feed his bulldog; but such was not the case. Weird and mysterious sounds proceeding from Study No. 6 gave warning that he was practising on his cornet. His chums were undecided whether the bulldog or the cornet was the most awful thing about Herries; they now unanimously decided in favour of the cornet. Blast on blast came from the study, and Blake tried to open the door, and found it locked. He kicked at the lower panels.

"Herries! I say, Herries!"

"Hallo!"

"Don't do it, old man!"

"I'm practising the cornet."

"Couldn't you practise a recitation instead," asked Blake, through the keyhole, "or a hornpipe?"

"I'm going to give a cornet solo at the Territorial concert."

"I think it would be better if you gave a skirt dance, or something."

To this suggestion Herries deigned to make no reply. The cornet recommenced, and Blake fled with his fingers in his ears.

"Bai Jove!" said D'Arcy. "You know, that boundah had the feahful cheek to offah to play a cornet obbligato to one of my tenah solos, you know."

"Well, if it drowned the solo, we might stand the cornet——"

"Weally, Blake——"

"It's having one after the other that's so killing," said Digby. "Still, it would be good training for the Terriers. They have to learn to rough it."

"Weally, Dig——"

"Figgins's lot don't seem to be going to come into line," Blake remarked. "We shall get out of hearing Figgy's 'cello. But Kerr would be an acquisition. That chap can do anything, though he's a New House waster. But we can't have him with Figgins, and we can't have Figgins without allowing him to boss the show. These New House chaps have so much cheek."

"Yaas, wathah! As head of the affair, I——"

"Oh, come off, Gussy! You've got as much cheek as Figgins."

"It was my ideah, deah boy——"

"I believe the first bare suggestion did come from you," said Blake thoughtfully.

D'Arcy turned his eyeglass upon his chum, but Blake walked away thoughtfully, and was not withered, as he ought to have been. Tom Merry had just come out of the Shell Form-room, and Blake hailed him.

"I say, Merry." Tom Merry turned a cheerful face towards the Fourth-Former. "We'd better go over and put it straight to Figgins, I think. At a time like this, we don't want any House rows to mar the harmony of the proceedings."

Tom Merry nodded.

"I was just thinking so myself."

"Let's go over, then."

There was a sound of tramping feet in the quadrangle as the juniors went out. The Terriers were drilling.

Tom Merry and Blake stopped a few minutes to watch them, and to hear Captain Lord Conway rapping out orders in a manner very different from his usual soft and courteous tones, and then they strolled on to the New House.

Some New House fellows gave them rather hostile looks, but, taking no notice of them, the School House boys proceeded upstairs to Figgins's study. The door of that famous apartment was open, and the voices of Figgins & Co. could be heard proceeding from it.

There was a burst of laughter, which seemed to indicate that Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn were enjoying some joke among themselves.

"Could you do it, Kerr, though?" asked the voice of Figgins.

"I think so."

"It would be risky."

"I don't care."

"The chap is about your size," Figgins went on. "Of course, the boots and the hat would make you look taller. But——" Figgins broke off suddenly. "Hallo! School House rotters!"

Tom Merry and Blake came into the study. Figgins & Co. turned very red, and looked decidedly confused.

It was easy to tell from their looks that they had been discussing something which was to be "up against" the School House, when they were interrupted.

"Hallo!" grunted Figgins. "What do you want?"

"Come over to speak to you, my son," said Tom Merry. "What was that you were chattering about?"

"Never mind—a little matter of our own," said Figgins. "Perhaps we'll tell you some day. What do you want to speak about?"

"It's about the concert."

"Oh! You want us to take it in hand?"

"Rats! We want you kids to lend a hand, and help. We're willing to take you in——"

"Ha, ha, ha! You can't do it!"

"Oh, don't be funny! We're willing to give you a show, to show that both the Houses at St. Jim's are united on the subject of the Territorials. This is a time when all England should speak with one voice," said Tom Merry, with a dim remembrance of something he had read in the newspapers. "The great heart of the nation beats as one—no. I mean——"

"Ha, ha, ha! You're getting mixed."

"Look here, Figgins——"

"We don't want to be hard on you," said Figgins magnanimously. "If you can't run the concert without our assistance, we——"

"Bosh! Of course we can!"

"We're willing to manage——"

"Oh, come off! If you manage concerts like you make fig-puddings——"

"Oh, get off that subject! If you School House kids only knew your true place in this school——"

NEXT WEEK: **"GUSSY'S GUEST."**

A Splendid Tale of Tom Merry & Co. By Martin Clifford.

"We're the cock House at St. Jim's," said Blake heatedly. "And I'm willing to fight anybody who says we're not."

"You're not," said Figgins with a grin.

That was enough for Blake.

He forgot for the moment that he had come there on a peaceful mission to "put it straight" to Figgins; and he went for the leader of the New House juniors.

Figgins was on his feet in a moment.

"Here, hold on!" shouted Kerr. "You——"

But the old rivals were already at grips.

They whirled round the study in deadly combat, and there was a shout and a clatter of footsteps in the passage.

"School House rotters!"

"Kick them out!"

French and Pratt, and half a dozen more juniors crowded into the study. Blake was yanked away from Figgins, and bundled into the passage. Tom Merry rushed to his aid, and was promptly bundled after him.

"School House cads!"

"Outside with them!"

"Kick them out!"

And Tom Merry and Blake went whirling towards the stairs in a crowd of New House fellows. Figgins looked after them from the door of his study, wiping a red patch from his nose, with a grin.

"Good-bye!" he called out.

The School House boys did not reply. They were too breathless. They went rolling out of the New House, and in the quad they beat a hasty retreat, followed by yells and catcalls from the New House.

"My hat!" gasped Jack Blake, when they were safe on their own side again. "I feel rather dusty."

"I've been through a lawn-mower, I think," panted Tom Merry. "The rotters! Nice, ripping idea of yours to pay Figgins a call, I don't think."

"The beasts! They've got something on, and they don't want to come into the concert!" growled Blake. "Never mind, we'll give an extra good ripping one, and make 'em sing small."

And this idea somewhat comforted the dusty and dishevelled heroes of the School House.

CHAPTER 11.

What is the Wheeze?

THAT Figgins & Co. certainly had "something on" could not be doubted by observant juniors of the School House. Before dinner, Kerr was seen to mount his bicycle, and ride swiftly in the direction of the village. He did not return in time for dinner in the New House, and the chums heard later that he had been given an imposition for missing dinner in hall.

Now, it was a half-holiday that afternoon at St. Jim's, so why had Kerr risked and received that impot, instead of leaving his ride till the afternoon?

Evidently there was something on, and the cycling to Rylcombe had something to do with it.

And someone had observed, too, that when Kerr came in, he had a huge bundle strapped upon a carrier behind his bike.

The wiseacres of the School House, when they heard that, jumped to a conclusion at once.

"It's a feed!" said Jack Blake.

And the others agreed that it looked like it.

The New House juniors might even intend standing an extensive feed to the whole of the company of the Territorials quartered at St. Jim's. The big parcel Kerr had brought in might have contained large supplies, and more could be obtained at the school shop —ad lib, as far as their funds went.

Whether that was Figgins's intention, or whether he was simply standing a feed in the New House, remained a secret. Lord Conway did not seem to have been approached in the matter at all, and that cast doubt upon Blake's theory. It was Monty Lowther who threw further light on the subject. Lowther had thought it out carefully.

"Most likely Figgy's going to stand a House feed," he said, "to keep his side away from the concert. He wants to keep the New House fellows off, so as not to give us a show of having the whole school backing us up."

"Yaas, wathah! I wegard that as vewy pwob.," said Arthur Augustus. "I must say it's not cwicket on the part of Figgins."

"I dare say Lowther's right," said Blake. "Never mind, Figgins & Co. can stew in their own juice, and we'll break the record with a ripping concert."

"Yaas, wathah! I weally think, though, I ought to go ovah and tell Figgins that I wegard his conduct as not bein' cwicket."

"Good! Buzz over at once and tell him, Gussy," said Blake cordially. "We got chucked out just before dinner. But you——"

"I should wefuse to be chucked out."

"Exactly! Go over and give Figgins the straight tip."

"Hem! I think, upon second thoughts, deah boy, that I will give Figgins the stwaight tip when I meet him in the quad."

And Arthur Augustus did not pay that visit to the New House.

If he had done so, he would have met with a very rough reception, for the New House juniors were on their guard.

A dozen or more Fourth-Formers belonging to the New House were in the secret that was being kept so carefully from the School House.

These faithful followers of the great Figgins were on the watch in the New House, half a dozen of them in the porch, and the rest on the stairs or in the passage.

Any School House scout who had attempted to penetrate to Figgins's study would have gone out of the New House "on his neck," in the promptest possible manner.

To make assurance doubly sure, the door of Figgins's study was locked on the inside.

Within the locked study, the three chums were busy.

The bundle Kerr had brought from Rylcombe was on the table, opened, and the New House juniors were spreading out the contents with gleeful chuckles.

It was not a feed!

But even Fatty Wynn was showing as much glee as if it had been one, and the most plentiful one imaginable.

The bundle contained clothes—apparently a military uniform, and as the articles were taken out and smoothed carefully, Figgins compared them with the clothing of the figure in a photograph he held in his hand.

The photograph was a large and extremely well-executed one, cut out of a page of the "Daily Mirror," and it represented General Pepperton, the brigadier in command of the Territorials at that time engaged in manœuvres on the Downs.

The general, who was an old Indian veteran, was a decidedly small man in stature. He had a pair of fierce-looking white moustaches, and thick, heavy brows under which his eyes looked out with a glance like a rapier. The general had the reputation of being a martinet, and among the Teritorials who were going to join his forces there were many stories in circulation concerning him. Figgins & Co. had heard the Terriers talking on the subject in the quad at St. Jim's, and that had put into Figgins's head the most daring "wheeze" that even Figgins & Co. had ever dreamed of perpetrating.

What that "wheeze" was, will be seen later.

Figgins & Co, were chuckling over it in great glee.

"It's not exact," said Figgins, "but then, with the props you've got in stock, and with all of us altering and sewing, the thing can be managed."

"Yes, rather," said Fatty Wynn. "This is better than a feed."

"Certainly," said Kerr, "we can manage it. It will be in the dusk, too, you know; and, besides, they'd never dream of anything of the sort."

"Ha, ha! No."

"Of course, there's some risk; but that can't be helped."

"Blow the risk! It's a jape that will make the School House simply squirm," chuckled Figgins.

"As for the voice, I've got that a treat," said Kerr. "You see, I've met the man. My father knows him, and I've spoken to him a dozen times or more."

"Ripping!"

"It will go off all right, you'll see. We can manage elevators in the boots to make me a couple of inches taller, and padding will make me fat enough. The thing will work like a charm."

"Ha, ha ha!"

"Hallo! What's the row?"

There was a sound of excited voices outside the house.

Figgins ran to the window, in time to see Reilly of the School House violently ejected from the porch below.

The Irish junior picked himself up rather dazedly, and brandished a fist at the group of grinning juniors in the doorway.

"Faith, and I'll tackle any two of yez that come out!" he shouted.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins chuckled.

"That's a chap who's come to see what's going on," he remarked. "The School House cads have a suspicion."

"They'll never suspect the truth," grinned Kerr.

"Not much."

Reilly, feeling considerably rumpled, returned to the School House. He looked in at Tom Merry's study, where half a dozen juniors were gathered.

"Faith, and I couldn't get into the New House," he said. "They've got a lot of fellows on guard in the doorway."

Jack Blake whistled.

"That proves there's something up," he remarked.

Dr. Holmes carefully adjusted his glasses and looked at the juniors. Then he seemed to be struggling with some internal spasm. "Bless my soul!" he said at last. "Is that really you, boys? How did you get into that state?" "It's—it's raining, sir!" said Tom Merry, diffidently.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Was Figgins there?" asked Tom Merry.

"No, but I saw the gossoon grinning from his window as I came away."

"Then he's in his study. What on earth can he be up to?" said Tom Merry, in perplexity. "If we had somebody like Kerr on our side, we could send a scout in disguise."

"Bai Jove, I could go in disguise, Tom Merry. I wouldn't mind the twouble of disguisin' myself as a page or a chimney-sweepah——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I am wathah an adept at disguises, deah boy. You have seen me do somethin' in that line yourself——"

"Yes, I have; it was enough to make a feline quadruped expire with excessive merriment," said Tom Merry solemnly.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"Never mind Figgins & Co," said Manners. "Let 'em eat coke! We've got to get on with the rehearsals."

"Yes, that's so."

But a little later Clifton Dane looked into the study, and he had some news to tell.

"Figgins & Co. have just gone out," he said.

"Gone out!"

"Yes. They were carrying three big bags between them. I asked them if they were going on an excursion, and they said I could go and eat coke; which meant, I suppose, that I needn't ask questions," said Clifton Dane, laughing.

"Blessed if I can guess what they're up to," said Harry Noble, with a puzzled wrinkle in his brow; "but, I dare say it doesn't matter."

"If they're gone, deah boys, we needn't bothah about them. Let them wip."

And Tom Merry & Co., who had plenty of things to think about, decided to let their rivals of the New House "rip."

CHAPTER 12.

Wally Makes a Suggestion.

TOM MERRY & CO. had, indeed, plenty of things to worry about, without worrying about the mysterious doings of Figgins & Co., of the New House. The concert had been decided upon, and it only remained to settle the details; but those details wanted a lot of settling, as it proved.

In the first place, it had to be decided where to hold the concert. The only place in the school large enough to hold such an audience was the great hall, and even that would have been crammed if, as the juniors hoped, the greater part of the school turned up as well as nearly a hundred Territorials.

But, as a matter of fact, the hall could not be had. The Head always made as many concessions as he could to the boys, but even Tom Merry & Co. did not care to ask for the loan of the great hall.

Had it been a play they were enacting, before an admiring audience of their sisters and cousins and aunts, it would have been a different matter; but the juniors had a feeling that the Head might not take their concert to the Territorial Forces in a serious light.

If the Sixth, or even the Fifth, had had a hand in it, the matter might have had more weight; but, as Tom Merry observed, it was useless to attempt to disguise from themselves the fact that the master did not attach sufficient importance to the Lower Forms in the school.

The Head would very likely consider it impertinence on the part of the Fourth Form and the Shell to think of giving a concert to the Territorials at all. There was no telling how the masters might look at these things.

"We couldn't have the hall," said Tom Merry, to the anxious conclave sitting in his study, "so we needn't ask for it. As we can't have it, we may as well be careful to preserve the dignity of the Lower School."

"Yaas, wathah! I am quite in agweement with my fwiend Mewwy in this mattah. The Lowah School ought to look aftah its dig."

"What about the gym.?" asked Kangaroo.

Tom Merry looked very thoughtful.

"Well, we could manage it in the gym.," he admitted; "but then, fellows in the Fifth and Sixth will be there as usual. We could kick out the fags, but it's no good telling Upper Form fellows that we want the gym. to ourselves. They wouldn't listen to us."

"To say nothing of the thick ears we should get if we told them to get out," grinned Blake. "We can't have the gym."

"Then where are we going to give the giddy concert?" demanded Lowther. "I suppose even Blake wouldn't think of trying to cram a hundred Territorials into one of the junior studies."

"Or into the box-room," said Manners.

"Hallo!" said a cheery voice at the door, and the youngest scion of the house of D'Arcy came in. "Hallo! I——"

D'Arcy turned his eyeglass upon the intruder.

His glance was severe, but D'Arcy minor did not seem to be abashed by it. Wally D'Arcy was not easily abashed by anything.

"Got a pane in your eye, Gus?"

"Weally, Wally——"

"You see, I want to——"

"Pway wetire, Wally. We are vewy busy."

"I want to——"

"You are intewwuptin' a most important discussion. Pway get out of the study, or I shall have no wesource but to give you a feahful thwashin'."

"I want to——"

Arthur Augustus rose from his seat.

"Pway excuse me a few minutes, deah boys, while I hurl this cheeky young wastah out of the woom," he said.

"Hold on!" said Tom Merry, laughing. "Perhaps Wally has something to tell us."

"Bai Jove, I nevah thought of that!"

"Go ahead, Wally, and cut it short."

The hero of the Third Form at St. Jim's grinned serenely.

"Right-ho! I heard what you were jawing about as I came along. I've got a suggestion to make."

"Make it, and scoot."

"Yaas, wathah! If you have a suggestion to make, Wally, you have my permish to go ahead, deah boy."

"I could manage it all right without your permish, cocky," said Wally, cheerfully. "I hear that you are looking out for talent for a concert——"

"Then you've heard wrong," said Tom Merry grimly. "We're not. We're supplied with all the talent we want."

"Your mistake, sonny. You want me to do a hornpipe," said Wally. "Think it over, and you'll see that's correct."

"Weally, Wally——"

"Now, don't you begin, Gussy."

"You uttah young wascal——"

"Cheese it! Do you want that hornpipe, Tom Merry, or do you want the Third Form to mess-up the concert?"

Monty Lowther stretched his hand out towards a cricket-stump. Wally eyed him warily, and got a little nearer the door.

Tom Merry laughed.

"Now, Wally, we don't want to lick you—but scoot!"

"Lucky for some people you don't want to lick me, too. There might be some free samples of the Wally left-handers distributed in this study; besides, I've got another suggestion to make. The Head won't let you kick up a row in the big hall——"

"That is an extwemely diswespectful way of puttin' it, Wally."

"Facts are facts, cocky; and you can't have the gym.—the chaps would all drop off the horizontal bars like ripe apples when Gussy started his tenor solos."

"I wefuse to allow this young wascal to——"

"Ring off, Gussy. I was going to suggest that you make the concert an al-fresco one—in the open air, you know," said Wally, translating for the benefit of those who knew no Italian. "There hasn't been any rain to-day, and the sun has been blazing, and the ground's as dry as anything. It would be ripping."

"Bai Jove!"

"Yes, by Jove!" said Tom Merry. "It's not a bad idea."

"I wonder it never occurred to me," remarked Blake. "I suppose I should have thought of it in a minute or two."

"I suppose you wouldn't," remarked Wally.

It was really a good idea.

The terrific storm of the preceding night, which had driven the Territorials to St. Jim's for shelter, had really been the reason why the juniors had not thought of an open-air entertainment.

But, as Wally pointed out, the storm was quite gone, and most of the traces of it had vanished. It had only been a passing thunderstorm after all. The sun had been bright that morning, and now it was blazing. Before evening, if not already dry, the ground would be like a brick.

There was no reason why the concert should not be al-fresco, and the suggestion solved at once the greatest difficulty of the young entertainers.

Wally grinned with satisfaction as he read the approval in the faces of the Shell and Fourth-Formers fellows assembled in Tom Merry's study.

"Well, how do you like the idea?" he asked.

"Jolly good," said Tom Merry frankly. "There will be plenty of room for all the Terriers, and for the whole school too. They can sit on the ground, but we can get garden-seats and cushions for distinguished guests."

"Yaas, wathah! If the Head comes he must be tweated with pwopah wespect."

"I fancy I can see the Head sitting on the grass to hear Gussy singin' tenor solos," remarked Lowther, and there was a general giggle.

"Weally, Lowthah, there would be nothin' extwaordinawy in that," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "I know for a fact that the Head has been to the Opewa in London to hear Cawuso sing. That shows that he has a gweat taste for weally good tenor singin'."

"Well, if the Head comes, we'll get a chocolate-box or a tea canister or something for him to sit on," said Kangaroo. "We needn't bother about that. Al-fresco's the idea—I think we ought to let Wally perform his giddy hornpipe as a reward."

"Yaas, wathah! I do not wegard a hornpipe with complete appwoval, but I think that undah the circs we can give my young bwothah a show."

"Passed unanimously," said Tom Merry. "You can go and practise your hornpipe, Wally. We'll shove you down on the programme."

The Gem Library.—No. 74.

NEXT WEEK: **"GUSSY'S GUEST."**

"What-ho," said Wally, and he went his way whistling—with a piercing whistle—that drew many fierce yells from the Shell studies as he passed them. But D'Arcy minor did not mind.

Tom Merry drew a sheet of paper and pen and ink towards him. He dipped the pen in the ink, and then gnawed the handle thoughtfully.

"Now then, about the programme."

"Yaas, wathah!"

And the conclave turned their attention to that important matter.

CHAPTER 13.

The Programme.

"I WAS thinkin' that my name would be a good one to head the list," Arthur Augustus remarked, modestly, looking over Tom Merry's shoulder. "It would show the audience the kind of entahtainment they have to expect."

"H'm!" said Lowther, doubtfully. "But that would be a bit rough on the rest of the entertainers, if the audience go out after the first item."

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"We'll let young Wally begin with the hornpipe," said Tom Merry. "I don't suppose he will cut much of a figure, but he won't do any harm. Something must be going on while the audience are getting to their seats."

"Yaas, wathah! So long as the name of D'Arcy heads the list, it will be all wight. We want to make the thing look wespectable."

Tom Merry chuckled.

"Good old Gussy! Now, next item; Herries with his cornet. After that, the audience will think that even D'Arcy's solos aren't so bad."

"Look here," began Herries, wrathfully.

"I don't know," said Lowther. "The audience may change their minds about staying. Herries ought to be left till last, so as to make sure of clearing the place quickly when the concert's over."

"If you jolly well want a thick ear, Lowther——"

"Order!"

"Yaas, ordah, deah boys. Lowthah's jokes are vewy painful and hard to stand, but the chap can't help it. Some chaps are born like that, and you have to be patient with them."

"Exactly," said Tom Merry. "And Lowther's jokes are no worse than Gussy's solos. Third item, a cake-walk by Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, Esquire, Dealer in Fancy Waistcoats and Ties——"

"Tom Mewwy——"

"Fourth item——"

"Hold on, you wottah! I wefuse to be descwibed as a dealah in fancy waistcoats and ties——"

"Well, we'll leave that out. Fourth item——"

"Hold on! I wefuse to give a cake-walk."

"But you cake-walk better than you solo, you know."

"I wefuse to appeah in an attitude of juvenile woystewing before an audience of the hewoic defendahs of our native countwy."

"They'll roar!"

"I wefuse to be woared at."

"Now, look here, Gussy, don't be unreasonable. The Territorials have a jolly hard time of it in training, and if they can get a good laugh, they're entitled to it."

"I wefuse to be the subject of a good laugh to anybody. I am goin' to give them some songs suitable for the occasion. 'Let Me Like a Soldier Fall'——"

"Won't do," said Lowther. "They haven't brought an ambulance, and——"

"Weally Lowthah——"

"Now, look here, Gussy——"

"I wefuse to look there, Tom Mewwy. The next song I was thinkin' of is the famous Tewwitowial Song, 'What's the Mattah with England?' I have a copy of it twansposed into my key so as to bring in my top B-flat."

"It'll be a question of What's the Matter with the Terriers, if you work that B-flat on them," groaned Manners.

"Weally, Mannahs——"

"I suppose we must let the duffer have his way," said Tom Merry. "I think your voice would sound better in a cake-walk, Gussy."

"Pway don't be widiculous, deah boy."

"Then we'll shove Gussy down for Soldier Fall," said Tom Merry, thoughtfully. "I only hope there won't be any casualties. General Pepperton may be coming to St. Jim's, and it would be horrid if he found half the contingent stretched on the grass, gruesome corpusses——"

"Fourth item," said Blake. "I don't want to put myself forward in any way, but I am quite willing to supply the fourth item. My mouth-organ——"

"I rather think mouth-organs ought to be barred at a Territorial concert," said Tom Merry. "What do you fellows think?"

"Rats!" said Jack Blake promptly.

"Yes, rats," said Digby. "Blake can play the mouth-organ a treat. I vote for a mouth-organ solo."

"I can do the 'Bridal March from Lohengrin,'" said Blake, producing the mouth-organ from his pocket. "Just you fellows hear."

"Never mind now—we——"

Buzzz-z-z-z-z-z-z-z!

"We'll take your word for it——"

Buzz-z-z-z-z-z-z-z!

"Hold on," roared Tom Merry. "It—it will sound better in the open air. Shut up! I'll put you down for a mouth-organ solo."

Blake lowered the instrument of torture.

"Oh, all right. But if you're not satisfied, I don't mind playing the Bridal Chorus right through, and the march from Tannhauser, to show you what I can do."

"It's all right; we'll take it on trust. Fifth item, a recitation by Henry Manners."

"Right-ho!" said Manners.

Jack Blake sniffed.

"Look here, no 'Boys on the Burning Deck,'" he said. "That sort of stuff won't do for the Territorials. Besides, you've done that young bounder on the burning deck to death already."

"I wasn't thinking of the 'Boy on the Burning Deck,'" said Manners, indignantly. "I'm going to give them something ripping—say 'Alexander's Feast!'"

"Never heard of it," said Blake, cheerfully. "Is it a music-hall piece?"

"You—you—you utter Philistine!" gasped Manners.

"Too long," said Tom Merry. "You might give them the first and last verses——"

"That I jolly well wouldn't," said Manners, justly indignant at the proposition to mutilate Dryden's masterpiece. "I'd rather shove in the 'Burning Deck.'"

"Better have something comic," said Digby. "What about that poem Gussy put in the Weekly—'Ode to a Lovely Girl'?"

"You uttah ass! That isn't comic, it's sewious."

"Well, it doesn't matter whether it's serious or comic, so long as it makes 'em laugh. I know I jolly well laughed over it."

"I wefuse to have my sewious poem wecited in a humowous spiwit."

"That's all right," said Manners. "I wouldn't recite it to save my life, old man. Look here, put down some extracts from Shakespeare for me."

"Good: that will do. They won't like it, but they can't grumble at Shakespeare. That's where you have a pull on 'em," chuckled Tom Merry. "Sixth item——"

"Bettah put me down for that, deah boy. I could give you 'Mein Lieber Schwan,' from Lohengwin——"

"You've had your whack already."

"That is wathah a coarse way of puttin' it; but as a mattah of fact, deah boy, we want this concert to be a success. Bettah give the audience somethin' weally good as often as you can. I shall have had a west by that time, and shall be quite weady to give anothah solo."

"Yes, but the audience won't be ready. No good presuming too far on their patience; besides, their strength may not hold out. You——"

"I will give the 'Lieber Schwan,'" said D'Arcy, unheeding. "I flattah myself that I sing that solo vewy well. I shall be vewy pleased to wun ovah a few bars to show you——"

"Please don't!"

"Yaas, upon the whole, I think I will. 'Nun sei bedankt, mein lieber Schwan——'" began D'Arcy, in that remarkable tenor voice which was well-known in the School House. "'Sie durch die weiter Fluth zuruck'—— Ow!"

The solo came to an abrupt stop as Lowther gently jammed the end of a cricket stump into the soloist's ribs.

Arthur Augustus jumped up.

"Lowthah! You wude ass——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pway excuse me a moment, deah boys, while I thwash Lowthah," said the swell of the School House, pushing back his cuffs. "I——"

Blake jammed the excited junior back into his chair with a bump.

"Sit down!"

"Welease me, Blake! I——"

"Sit down!"

Arthur Augustus struggled violently. But Digby lent his aid, and he was pinned down by the grasp of two strong pairs of hands.

"Sit down," said Blake. "Now then, are you going to keep the peace?"

"Certainly not. I absolutely wefuse to keep the peace."

"Give us that ink-pot, Kangaroo."

No. 74.

"Certainly: here you are."

"If you put that ink near me, you howwid wottah, I——"

"Are you going to keep the peace, then?"

"Yaas, wathah! On second thoughts I will not thwash Lowthah."

Arthur Augustus was released, and he was too busy putting his collar and necktie straight to resume the interrupted tenor solo. Tom Merry chewed the handle of his pen and considered the next item.

"Sixth item, 'Caro Nome,' sung by the Australian soprano, Madame Melba," he said, scribbling it down.

They stared at him.

"On the gramophone," explained Tom Merry. "I've got a ripping Melba record. And on a patriotic occasion like this the Colonies ought to be represented."

"Hear, hear!" said Kangaroo.

"Seventh item——" said Blake.

But he was interrupted. The door of the study was flung open, and Bernard Glyn put his head in.

"Here, come out, you slackers!"

"Eh? What's wanted?"

"You are—all of you! Come out!"

"Weally, Glyn, you are intewwuptin' an important meetin'! Pway scoot!"

"Kildare sent me to call out all the slackers!" grinned Glyn. "The Territorials are going to do some manœuvring in the quad, and the Head thinks it will do the fellows good to see it."

"Bai Jove, that altahs the case!"

"The whole school's turning out. Come on!"

"Wight-ho, deah boy!"

"Right you are!" said Tom Merry promptly. "We'll finish drawing up the programme at tea. Come on, kids!"

And Tom Merry & Co. hurried out to join the crowd in the quadrangle.

CHAPTER 14.

Figgins is Mysterious.

TRAMP! Tramp! Tramp!

The Territorials were standing ranked in the quadrangle, and a fine soldierly-looking set of fellows they were.

Captain Lord Conway, while awaiting instructions from General Pepperton, was not allowing his men to be idle.

He had intended to keep them on the "go," and it had occurred to the Head of St. Jim's that it would be useful to the boys to be spectators of their evolutions, if only to help to foster the patriotic spirit among them.

The Territorial captain handled his men with an ease that one would not have expected of him from his easy and affable manners in private life.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy looked upon his elder brother with an eye of pride.

"Bai Jove!" he remarked, as he stood with the crowd of juniors before the School House. "I've made up my mind!"

"Didn't know you had one!" yawned Lowther. "What have you made it up about?"

"Weally, Lowthah, if there were woom in this cwowd, I should give you a feahful thwashin' for that wotten wemark! I have made up my mind that I shall be a Tewwitowial officah when I gwow up. The uniform suits my bwothah womarkably well, and he is vewy like me. I am quite settled on that point now."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"Hallo, you young wasters!" said a genial voice behind, and they saw the rugged but good-tempered face of the great Figgins at their elbow. "Trying to pick up a little military knowledge to work off in the gym. drill?"

"Weally, Figgins——"

"They go through it well," said Figgins, eyeing the Territorials critically. "Your brother makes a decent officer, Gussy. Why didn't you tell us there were some sensible chaps in your family?"

"I wegard that womark as——"

"All that giddy marching and counter-marching will make them jolly hungry," said Fatty Wynn, who was with his long-legged chum. "It's a pity we couldn't work up that idea about standing them a feed."

Blake looked at him suspiciously.

"You've been working up something, you New House worms!" he said. "What's the little game?"

"Eh?" said Figgins innocently. "Little game?"

"Yes. Where's Kerr?"

"Kerr! Oh, he's knocking about somewhere!"

"Oh, more mystery!" said Tom Merry. "We know as well as you do that you've got something on, long legs!"

"Of course!" said Figgins. "The weather's warm, but I could hardly go about with nothing on. You see——"

"Oh, don't be funny, Figgy! You can leave rotten jokes to Monty Lowther!" said Blake. "What's the wheeze?"

"What wheeze?"

"The one you rotters have been scheming all day!" growled Blake.

"All day?" said Figgins.

"Well, a jolly long time, anyway!"

"A long time?"

"Blessed if he isn't turning into a giddy parrot, and repeating everything that's said to him!" exclaimed Blake, in amazement and disgust. "What's the matter with you, you long-legged apology for a hop-pole?"

"I'm quite well, thanks! How are you?"

"You silly ass——"

"Nice weather we're having!" said Figgins. "It was raining last night, and I heard that there were some silly duffers who didn't know enough to go in when it rained!"

"Weally, Figgins——"

Tramp! Tramp! Tramp!

"Stand back there!"

The juniors hastily crowded back as a body of Territorials wheeled round and almost marched upon them. They flattened themselves back against the grey old stone walls of the School House.

"Good boys!" said Figgins.. "Beats your Regular army hollow! I wonder whether General Pepperton will look in to-day?"

"Never mind Pepperton!" said Blake. "Are you fellows coming to the concert?"

"What concert?"

"The Territorial concert, a non-smoking concert, where the audience will be allowed to smoke—the grown-up part of it, of course!" said Jack Blake. "Kids like you will be expected to behave yourselves!"

"We don't recognise the concert!" said Figgins loftily. "If the New House were asked to take the head of it, we might be induced to think of it!"

"Yes; that's likely to happen—I don't think!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Still, we might give you a look in," said Figgins. "What time is it?"

"Half-past seven," said Tom Merry.

"And where?"

"In the grounds—al-fresco, you know."

"Good! I dare say we shall give you a look in. Can you give us the approximate times of Gussy's solos? We'd like to know when to expect them."

"I am vewy glad to hear you expwess a wish to hear my solos, Figgins!"

"Rats! I want to dodge 'em!"

"Weally, Figgins——"

"You'll behave yourselves if you come to the concert?" said Blake suspiciously. "No making a row, you know, or trying to wreck the show. We've got to keep up appearances before the Territorials."

"My dear chap, if you're going to be respectable, I'll do my best to help you keep up appearances, and take in the public!" said Figgins generously.

"Well, that's all right," said Tom Merry, while Blake glared wrathfully at the generous Figgins. "We know you've got some wheeze on——"

"You're getting jolly suspicious in your old age!"

"Well, what have you been confabbing about, then?"

"Who's been confabbing?"

"You have, and you had a lot of bounders keeping watch on your study! They chucked Reilly out on his neck!"

"Well, of course, we couldn't allow School House fellows in a respectable House! Nothing new in that, surely?"

"I wegard that womark as uttahly dewogatowy! And I believe that Kerr is hangin' about somewhere cawwyin' out some wotten scheme. I suggest that we give Figgins and Fatty Wynn the fwog's-march!"

"Good idea!"

But Figgins and Fatty Wynn promptly scuttled away. They were grinning gleefully as they beat a retreat, and it was impossible for the School House fellows to doubt that they, indeed, had a wheeze in hand, and one that was expected to score over the rival juniors.

But what it was even Tom Merry could not guess.

Figgins & Co. would not be likely to make a disturbance at the concert when there were strangers present who did not belong to the school. Besides, any disturbance could be met and dealt with by the School House boys, who were greatly in the majority.

What scheme Figgins had devised, therefore, remained a secret, and Blake even suggested that the New House chums

---

The Gem Library.—No. 74.

NEXT WEEK: "GUSSY'S GUEST."

were only "pulling their leg," and that there was nothing on at all.

Yet the knowing looks of a great many of the New House juniors seemed to hint that they were in expectation of the happening of something very interesting.

"Never mind!" said Blake, as the crowd in the quadrangle broke up. "Let 'em chop chips! We've got to think of the concert."

And think of the concert they did, and during the next few hours they were too busy making final arrangements to have any time to think about Figgins & Co.

CHAPTER 15.

Arthur Augustus Dresses for the Occasion.

TOM MERRY was in high spirits as the hour fixed for the al-fresco concert drew near. All seemde to be going well.

The final arrangement of the programme had been made. D'Arcy had been persuaded that three tenor solos were as much as the audience could reasonably be expected to stand from him, and the other artistes had been reduced to reason. The programme was drawn up, and a considerable number of copies had been reproduced on Tom Merry's copying-machine for distribution among the audience.

The programme had a most imposing heading, which was read with pride by all the juniors of the School House, and which was supposed popularly to have made an impression even upon the Sixth who had seen it.

It ran as follows:

"GRAND CONCERT.

"Given by the Juniors of St. Jim's to our Gallant Guests, the Territorial Forces of his Majesty King Edward VII.

"The following list of artistes have consented to appear."

Then followed a list of the generous artistes, and the items they had kindly consented to furnish.

The list was a very long one, and there was no doubt it would be a ripping concert if the artistes were up to the work they had set themselves.

The programme bore at the end the important announcement:

"All grown-up members of the audience allowed to smoke. Boys are expected to behave themselves."

When the copies of the programme came into the hands of the Territorials there was a great deal of chuckling.

The gracious permission to smoke seemed to contain a hint that the smokers would not be considered to be behaving themselves, though that wasn't at all what Tom Merry had meant.

But the Terriers took it genially, and there was no doubt that all or nearly all of them would turn up at the concert.

It was likely to be a beautiful evening, and a concert in the open air, with liberty to smoke, was a far from unpleasant way of passing an hour or two. The place chosen for the entertainment was very pleasant, too.

On an expanse of rich green grass, under the shade of big, ancient oaks and elms, the entertainers were making their preparations.

As many chairs and forms as could be begged, borrowed, or raided were conveyed there, as well as cushions and hassocks.

But it would be no hardship to sit in the rich, thick, soft grass, which was well dried by the blazing sun of a summer's afternoon.

Captain Lord Conway and his lieutenants had signified their intention of being present, for part of the time, at least, and it was expected that some of the masters would give the concert a look-in.

The juniors of the School House were going to turn up in full force, and most likely the New House would be well represented. Tom Merry thought that on such an occasion the upper Forms ought to rally round, and he told Kildare so. The captain of St. Jim's laughed good-humouredly.

"I'll come with pleasure," he said. "I don't promise to stay all the time. But I'll give you a look in. Thanks for the invitation."

"Bring some of the Sixth with you, Kildare," urged Tom Merry. "It's really backing up the Territorials, you know."

"Ahem! Yes, in a way! I'll bring Darrel and Rushden, and I'll speak a word to the others."

"Thanks awfully. That's ripping."

Meanwhile, Blake had put the same request to Lefevre, of the Fifth. Lefevre asked whether Arthur Augustus would be giving any tenor solos.

Blake hesitated. He wanted the Fifth Form to show up at the concert, and he was afraid that the tenor solos would prove a bar. Still, he could not prevaricate on the subject, especially as the programmes were already issued, with D'Arcy's three tenor solos plainly inserted therein.

"Well, yes," he said, "Gussy is giving us 'Soldier Fall,' and 'Lieber Schwan,' and 'Am Stillen Herd,' from the 'Meistersinger.' But you're not bound to stay and listen to him, you know. You can just stroll away while he's up."

Lefevre chuckled.

"My dear kid, I wouldn't miss D'Arcy's solos for worlds. That's why I asked. I'll bring a dozen fellows to hear him. Why, I've never come across anything funnier in my natural. That's what I say. A good laugh is worth the trouble of strolling across the quad any day."

It wasn't a very complimentary way of putting it, but Blake had to be satisfied. At all events, it would be a representative audience, whether they came to laugh or to admire.

"Are the Fifth Form chaps comin'?" asked Arthur Augustus, when Blake rejoined him after his visit to Lefevre's study.

"Yes, rather, my son. Lefevre asked me especially if you would be doing any solos, and said he was coming specially to hear them."

"Bai Jove, that shows jolly good taste on Lefevre's part," said D'Arcy. "I nevah thought he was much of a musical chap. Pewwaps it would be a good ideah to shove in a few more tenah solos, Blake."

"That's a jolly big perhaps."

"You could make woom on the pwogwamme by cuttin' out Mannahs' wecitation, or Digby's song."

"Yes, let me see you do it," said Digby warmly.

"Weally, Dig, a fellow ought to be pwepared to make sacwifices for the common good. This is a patwiotic occasion."

"Well, we're all making sacrifices, by putting you on the programme. I don't see what more you want."

"Weally, Dig——"

"Here, it's time to get along to the rendezvous," said Blake.

"You are intewwuptin' me, Blake."

"Well, I can't remain silent for the rest of my life, you know," said Jack cheerfully. "I am bound to interrupt you some time."

"I wegard that wemark as——"

"I'm off. Come on, Dig."

"Pway wait a little while for me, deah boys. Of course, it will be necessary on an occasion like this to go in evenin'-dwess."

"I'm going in Etons."

"Same here," said Dig.

"In that case, it will wemain for me to keep up the dig. of this studay and the Fourth Form genewally. I sha'n't keep you waiting more than thwee-quartahs of an hour, deah boys."

"You're right, there," grinned Blake. "You won't keep me waiting three-quarters of a second, as a matter of fact. Come on, Dig. Come on, Herries."

"Buck up, kids," said Kangaroo, looking in at the door. "Tom Merry's sent me for you. Ain't you ready, Gussy?"

"Hardly weady, deah boy. I am goin' to change into evenin'-dwess. You can come up and lend me a hand if you like."

"Yes—I don't think. It's a long time since I had a job as a lady's maid, and I'm out of practice," grinned the Cornstalk; and he vanished.

"I wegard that as extwemely disobligin' of Kangawoo. You can come up and help me dwess, if you like, Blake."

"I don't."

"Then you, Hewwies."

But Herries was already gone. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was left alone in the study, and he sniffed and went out. In the passage he encountered his younger brother, Wally, and he could not help staring. A wondrous change had come over the inkiest and untidiest fag in the Third Form at St. Jim's.

Wally was nicely dressed, his hair was nicely parted, and his face was marvellously clean, his collar as white as Gussy's own, and his necktie almost straight.

"Bai Jove! Wally, you look wippin'!"

"Yes, don't I?" said Wally evidently greatly pleased with himself. "This has taken me nearly ten minutes. I wish Cousin Ethel or the governor could see me now."

"Yaas, wathah! If you would keep like that, I should be extwemely pleased. You can come up and help me dwess, if you like."

"No fear," said Wally cheerfully. "I haven't four hours and a half to spare, and I shouldn't know how to do your hair, anyway."

"Weally, Wally——"

"I'm off!"

And Wally scuttled down the passage. And Arthur Augustus went up to dress unaided, and naturally he was a long time about it. But when he surveyed himself in the big glass in Study No. 6, he thought that the result was worth it.

"Bai Jove!" he murmured. "I weally think I look wathah wippin'."

And, throwing a light dust coat over his evening clothes, the swell of St. Jim's made his way to the scene of the grand concert.

CHAPTER 16.

The Territorial Concert.

IT was, indeed, an impressive scene.

The dusk was falling, but there was still a red glow in the western sky, and the quadrangle was quite light. The Territorials, released from duty, had turned up in strong force, and were taking their ease on the grass or in the chairs.

Crowds of fellows of St. Jim's, belonging to all Forms, and to both Houses, were standing about in groups, or lying on the thick grass.

There could be no complaint about the size of the audience. There were not far short of three hundred persons assembled round the spot on which the performance was to take place.

There all the skill of the juniors had been taxed to make a goodly show.

A platform of chairs, benches, and planks had been erected under one of the big elms, and adorned with coloured paper chains and flags. There were cheap Union Jacks galore, and several Australian flags, the latter supplied by Kangaroo—or, at least, by his assistance, as most of the flags were home-made.

At the back of the platform was Tom Merry's gramophone. There was a curtained space behind which the artists could retire, and from which they could emerge to receive their calls.

Unfortunately, it had not been found possible to obtain a piano for the accompaniments, but that could not be helped. As D'Arcy said, the singing was the thing, and there was always his tuning-fork.

From the branches of the big elm innumerable Chinese lanterns had been hung, and they shed a gentle and effective light upon the scene.

All was prepared when Arthur Augustus D'Arcy arrived upon the scene.

He joined his comrades behind the little screen, and threw off his light coat, appearing resplendent in evening attire, with a fabulously high collar and diamonds glistening in his expansive shirt-front.

There was a call from the audience, and the voice of Figgins was recognised.

"Kick off, you chaps! You're late already!"

"Bai Jove! I think I had bettah step out and wepwimand Figgins for diswespect," said Arthur Augustus.

Blake yanked him back.

"You'd better stick where you are," he said. "Now——"

"Weally, Blake——"

"Play up!" came a shout from the youngest part of the audience. "On the ball!"

"Tom Merry! Play up, Tom Merry!"

Tom Merry stepped out into view.

Clifton Dane and Reilly led a cheer to greet him, and it was taken up, and Tom Merry bowed his acknowledgments.

Lord Conway put up his eyeglass to look at him, and Tom felt a trifle disconcerted under that eyeglass and three hundred pairs of eyes, but he went on bravely with his introductory remarks.

"Gentlemen——"

"Hear, hear!" shouted Figgins.

"Hurrah!"

"Gentlemen of the Territorial Forces of his Majesty King Edward——"

"Hurrah! God save the King!"

"Hear, hear!"

The cheers and shouting came from the juniors of St. Jim's, who were determined to back up Tom Merry if noise could do it. The Territorials were mostly grinning good-humouredly.

"Gentlemen of the Territorial Forces, the inclemency of the weather having driven you to take up your quarters at St. Jim's, the whole school wishes you to understand how they appreciate the honour you have done them, and we trust that you will be pleased by our humble efforts to provide a slight entertainment in an amateur way."

"And hope there will be no serious casualties," said a voice from the back of the crowd, recognisable as Figgins's.

And there were loud cheers and laughing.

"Master Wally D'Arcy will first oblige with a tenor solo——"

"A hornpipe, you ass!" said a voice in a stage whisper from behind the screen. Tom Merry, who was a little confused by the laughter and cheers, had made a slip, but he hastened to rectify it.

"Sorry. Master Wally D'Arcy will execute a tenor hornpipe——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I mean a hornpipe solo——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, come off," said the voice from the screen.

And Tom Merry went off, amid the cheers from the audience. The cheers were prolonged when Wally made his appearance. His chums in the Third Form delighted to do him honour, and their shouts made the quadrangle ring. They did not cease till Wally yelled to them to shut up, and then the vociferous welcome died away.

Wally hornpiped to his own satisfaction, and was cheered by the audience. Then there were grave looks as Herries was seen to appear with his cornet.

According to the programme, Herries was to play "A Rose at Last!" arranged as a cornet solo. But fellows who knew the tune didn't know Herries' version of it. It was generally supposed that Herries had changed his mind, and while the solo went on, there was a fierce controversy among some of the audience—the junior portion—as to whether he was playing "Killarney" or "The Last Rose of Summer." All things come to an end, and so did Herries' solo with the cornet, and the audience in their relief, gave him a cheer that sent him away highly pleased with himself. He offered Tom Merry to put in another solo later, but Tom Merry did not seem to hear what he said.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came next. Lord Conway was observed to smile as his elegant younger brother appeared in the light of the Chinese lanterns.

For some minutes D'Arcy had been tapping his tuning-fork behind the screen, to make sure of his note, and he was quite ready to start.

"Yaas, let me like a soldier fall!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Shut up, you wottahs! You are intewwuptin' me."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Order! order!"

"Yaas, let me like a soldier fall!"

The Territorials were grinning. But they were very good-humoured. The stalwart forms in khaki, reclining at their ease, looked the picture of comfort, and smoke was ascending from many pipes.

Arthur Augustus, having obtained silence, went gaily on with his solo.

He was only half-way through the first verse, however, when a sudden interruption came.

"Hem, hem! Who's in command of this detachment? Hem, hem! What?"

It was a dry staccato voice.

Lord Conway swung round as if electrified, and the Territorials sprang to their feet.

D'Arcy's solo died away in a wail of surprise.

A diminutive figure, which ought to have been that of a British general, if uniforms went for anything, strutted into the dim light.

His face was dark, as if it had been burned brown by the tropical sun, and covered with deep wrinkles.

His moustaches were white, and curled up fiercely from his mouth.

He carried a gold-rimmed eyeglass, which he now jammed in his eye to stare at the startled Territorials.

From a dozen dismayed lips the name dropped:

"General Pepperton!"

Silence fell upon the concert party.

It was evident that the Brigadier was angry, for his brown face was puckered up, and he sniffed and snorted expressively.

"Huh! hem! Who's in command here! Huh! What?"

The Territorials sprang to attention at once.

Lord Conway saluted the brigadier.

As it happened he had never met General Pepperton, but he knew the famous officer from hearsay and from photographs.

Diminutive in stature as he knew the general to be, he had hardly expected to see him so slight a man: but there he was!

The general strutted forward.

The juniors and even the seniors of St. Jim's eyed him with awe.

This was little Pepperton, the martinet, the fiery-tempered little veteran of the Indian frontier, the hero of a hundred fights on the Afghan border.

And he was angry!

Perhaps the scene of ease and good humour he had suddenly come upon had roused the temper—always peppery—of the little martinet.

His eyeglass glittered round him accusingly.

Lord Conway looked slightly annoyed, but he did not allow the expression to more than flash over his face.

He knew the value of discipline, and it was his place to set an example to his men by taking anything that came from his general "lying down."

The Gem Library.—No. 74.

"Huh! Captain Lord Conway, I believe."

Lord Conway saluted.

"Huh! Your men are slack, sir. Very slack. What?"

"I am sorry you think so, sir," said Lord Conway, quietly. "A little relaxation under the circumstances——"

"Huh! Slack, sir! What?"

The brigadier turned his eyeglass upon the Territorials.

"Huh! I don't blame you—huh—but you're slack! Form up, there! Where's your sergeant? Is your sergeant asleep! Huh! Can your men stand in their ranks, Captain, or can they not? What?"

Lord Conway rapped out an order, and the Territorials formed up in a twinkling. They had no arms with them, but their bearing was soldierly enough to please the most exacting general.

The little martinet surveyed them through his eyeglass, and was pleased to grunt approval.

"Good! Very good! I congratulate you on the behaviour of your men, Conway. I do indeed! Huh! Very soldierly! Never seen anything finer, begad. What?"

The Terriers, naturally enough, looked pleased.

The reputation of General Pepperton was so wide-spread that praise from him was rightly considered praise indeed.

If the veteran of fifty years' warfare said he had never seen anything better, they must indeed be in good form.

Lord Conway looked gratified.

The general's manner had not been complimentary at first, but he remembered to have heard that Pepperton's bark was always worse than his bite.

"Thank you, sir."

"Not at all, Conway! Huh! Praise where praise is due, begad. I will take command of your company for a few minutes, and put them through their paces. Huh! No objection, hey? What?"

"They will regard it as a great honour, sir."

"Hem! Huh! Begad! 'Tention!"

The Territorials stood at attention.

"Huh! Er—advance—march! Smash up all this rubbish, begad—clear all that stuff away!"

The general pointed with his cane to the platform erected for the concert.

There was a gasp of amazement from the entertainers.

It was echoed among the audience.

The Territorials looked astounded.

But a soldier's first duty is to obey, and they obeyed! They advanced upon the concert platform at the double.

CHAPTER 17.

An Amazing Brigadier.

"BAI Jove!"

"My only hat!"

"Great Christopher Columbus!"

"The man's mad!"

"Mad as a March hare!"

Such were the ejaculations among the concert givers, as the Territorials bore down upon their platform, constructed and adorned with so much care.

"They can't mean it!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove! The bwigadiah's off his wockah."

"Hold on there!" roared Kangaroo, as the Terriers laid violent hands upon the platform. "Chuck it!"

"Orders, sir!"

"You can't bust up our show."

"Orders!"

"Bai Jove! Genewal Peppahton, I wegard you as no gentleman, sir. You have no wight to give ordahs like this."

"Shut up, Gussy."

"I wefuse to shut up! I wegard Peppahton as a feahful boundah! I insist upon givin' him my opinion."

"Huh! Make haste there—have it all down! Knock it to pieces! Huh! What?"

"Come off, Gussy," said Tom Merry, dragging the indignant junior away. "The chaps have got orders."

"We ought to wesist——"

"Rats! Come off."

The Territorials lost no time. The platform was not built to resist an attack, and it speedily went to pieces.

The juniors looked on in blank dismay and astonishment.

Lord Conway seemed petrified.

He could not venture a word of opposition to the brigadier, but his feelings were visible in his face.

He was absolutely astounded.

The only possible explanation was that the general had been drinking too much wine, or else that he had had sunstroke during the late manœuvres on the Downs.

The Terriers were as amazed as their captain.

But their place was to obey orders: and they obeyed. The concert platform was demolished, and the Chinese lanterns hurled far and wide.

The general grunted satisfaction.

"Huh! Good! Now—er—form sixes."

They looked at him.

"I mean—er—form fours! Quick march! As you were! 'Tention!"

Lord Conway jumped.

To hear the general issuing orders like that confirmed him in his suspicion, that General Pepperton had been drinking.

"March!" said the general hastily, apparently realising that his orders were a little mixed. "Forward! Huh! March on the—the School House! Advance!"

Astounded as the Territorials were, they had nothing to do but to obey. They marched towards the School House, the little brigadier strutting along at their head.

"By Jove!" gasped Lord Conway, rubbing his forehead. "By Jove!"

"Great Scott!" murmured his sub. "It's sunstroke."

"March!" rapped out the general. "Attack in—er—skirmishing order! Advance into the School House, and—er—er—and clear out all the junior studies!"

"My only hat!" gasped Blake.

"Bai Jove!"

Mr. Railton appeared on the steps of the School House.

He was looking amazed, and the Terriers paused. The general was observed to step back a little out of the light of the windows.

"What is all this?" said the House-master.

"Huh! I am—er—General Pepperton! What?"

Mr. Railton looked at him.

"I do not understand this. I——"

"Huh! What! Right wheel—right about face! March!"

The bewildered Territorials wheeled round obediently.

"Double quick!" roared the general. "What!"

The Terriers bore right down upon the crowd of boys, who scattered to escape being knocked over by the marching warriors, with one exception. That exception, of course, was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

The swell of St. Jim's stood his ground.

"Get off, Gussy!" shouted Blake, from the distance.

"I wefuse to get off, deah boy!"

"Clear the way there!" called out General Pepperton. "Clear!"

"I uttahly wefuse to do anythin' of the sort, Genewal Peppahton, and I wegard you as no gentleman!"

The brigadier pointed his cane at the junior.

"Seize that ruffian!"

"Wuffian! Bai Jove——"

NEXT WEEK: **"GUSSY'S GUEST."**

A Splendid Tale of Tom Merry & Co.
By Martin Clifford.

"Duck him in the fountain!"

"What! I—I wefuse—— Ow!"

The citizen soldiers obeyed orders as promptly as veterans could have done. The swell of St. Jim's was seized in strong hands, and ducked, vainly struggling, in the fountain.

He was set upon his feet again, with his beautiful evening-clothes dripping, and his shirt a limp rag.

"Bai—bai Jove!" he gasped.

"March!"

"You uttah wottah! I wegard you as a cad—an uttah cad! I——"

D'Arcy was hustled out of the way, and the Territorials marched on.

The general rapped out orders, but curiously enough for so old a soldier, he seemed to be quite ignorant of the rudiments of his profession. His orders when they were obeyed, threw the Terriers into utter confusion.

The ranks broke up, and the men bumped into one another, and the general rapped out uncomplimentary remarks.

"Bai Jove!" muttered D'Arcy feebly. "The man's mad!"

"He must be off his rocker!" said Tom Merry, in an awed tone. "Sunstroke, of course! He's got all his men mixed up now!"

"He doesn't seem to understand how to handle them a bit!"

"I wegard him as an uttah ass!"

"There's something wrong here!" said Kangaroo. "I suppose that chap is really General Pepperton, and no giddy joker?"

"Oh, he's known everywhere!"

"Yaas, wathah! I've seen him before, at a weview, and he's Peppahton, wight enough. But he's certainly off his wockah!"

"Hallo! What's that?"

"Phew!"

It was a voice so exactly like the general's that it might have been taken for an echo of it.

"Huh! What! What's all this—hey? What!"

General Pepperton was observed to give a jump.

Through the dusk came a diminutive general officer—from the direction of the gates—diminutive, but a size larger than the brigadier.

Otherwise, he was exactly the counterpart of the general.

He was dressed the same, he had a similar cane and eye-glass, and his brown and wrinkled face and white moustache were simply a reproduction.

He came along with the same strut, and stopped dead as he saw his double!

"Huh! What!"

There was a roar.

Two General Peppertons stood confronting one another, and on the face of the latest comer thunderclouds were gathering.

"By Jove!" gasped Lord Conway. "Duped!"

CHAPTER 18.

The Impostor.

EVERY eye was fixed upon the two generals.

Which was the real General Pepperton it was impossible to tell by looking at them, but the ridiculous orders the first-comer had given were a plain enough indication that he was the sham.

Lord Conway strode forward.

"Seize that man!"

But it was not so easy to seize him. The sham general had bolted.

Lord Conway's voice rang out again.

"Guard the gate! Seize him!"

Some of the Territorials rushed to guard the gate, the only means by which the sham general could escape from the school grounds. Others dashed after him, but he was swift, and in a moment he had vanished into the New House.

"Search for him!" shouted Lord Conway.

"Huh! What does this mean, begad? What!"

Lord Conway explained.

The rage of General Pepperton, when he learned that he had been personated by a daring practical joker, knew no bounds.

He strutted, he stamped, and he said things under his moustache. He ordered a search for the offender to be made. The Head, whom the uproar had brought out of doors, gladly seconded him. He ordered the boys to join in the search, and they were willing enough to obey.

The whole school rang with confusion.

It was certain that the impostor had taken refuge in the New House, and that House was ransacked from top to bottom.

But the search was unsuccessful.

The Gem Library.—No. 74.

A crowd of fellows poured along the Fourth Form passage, and every study was looked into carefully.

Tom Merry and Kangaroo and D'Arcy and a host of others were there, and they looked into Figgins's study.

Figgins & Co. were there.

At the first alarm Figgins and Wynn had dashed into the New House, and they were in their study now, and Kerr was with them.

Kerr, apparently, was suffering from toothache, for his face was bound up till only his nose was visible.

Figgins had just thrust a big bundle into the cupboard, and was standing before the door of it.

"Hallo!" said Tom Merry, as he rushed in. "Have you seen the rotter?"

"What rotter?"

"The chap who was personating General Pepperton!"

"Are you hunting for him?"

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy! It was only a wotten jokah, aftah all, and I have had a fearful duckin', and my clothes have been wuined, to say nothin' of the concert bein' messed up!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a very strange expression upon Kangaroo's face.

He crossed over to Kerr, his gaze fixed very intently upon the bound-up face.

"Got the toothache, Kerr?"

"Gr-r-r!"

"Has he got the toothache, Figgins?"

"Can't you see his face is bound up?" said Figgins.

"Yes, but—— H'm! What's in the cupboard?"

"Nothing—only our things!"

"What's in this bundle?" asked Kangaroo, opening the cupboard door.

"You let that bundle alone!" said Figgins. "It's private property! I suppose you don't suspect the fellow of hiding in that bundle?"

"Bai Jove——"

"Look here, get out of this study!"

It was evident that there was no one there besides Figgins & Co., and the searchers retired; but Tom Merry, Kangaroo, and Blake remained behind. Tom Merry closed the door.

"You cheeky young rascals!" he said, in measured tones.

"What do you mean?"

"Of all the cheeky larrikins I've ever met, these bounders take the cake!" said Kangaroo. "You'd better get that grease-paint off your face, Kerr—the toothache dodge isn't much good, except for an emergency!"

"And you'd better hide that bundle, in case somebody discovers there's a general's uniform in it!" said Blake.

Figgins drew a deep breath.

"You've bowled us out!" he said. "Keep it dark, for goodness' sake! We planned the jape only to mess up the concert, but that ass Kerr seems to have lost his head! We never meant him to go so far."

Kerr chuckled.

"Blessed if I meant to carry it so far," said Kerr; "but when I got fairly going, I was sort of carried away. It would have been all right if the original hadn't turned up like that. I was going to order the Terriers out scouting, and then dodge away."

"You cheeky young bounder!"

"Well, it was a good jape!" grinned Figgins. "But if it comes out, there'll be a row. Keep the fellows away from our study till Kerr's got his face cleaned. It was a close thing getting the clothes off before he was found. He had his own on underneath, or he'd have been given away."

The joke of Figgins & Co. was up against the School House, but the School House boys had no hesitation in helping to save Kerr from discovery.

Schoolboy honour required as much of them, and they were quite ready to help the joker who had scored off them to escape detection.

The search went on, the boys of St. Jim's joining in it heartily—almost all of them without a suspicion of the real facts of the case.

Needless to say, the culprit was not found.

The search ceased at last, and the Territorials went to their quarters, and the boys of St. Jim's to bed.

The next morning the Terriers were on the march.

All St. Jim's turned out to cheer them as they marched away, and they parted with much goodwill on both sides.

The impersonation of General Pepperton greatly exercised many minds at St. Jim's, and the masters who discussed it little dreamed that there were fellows in the Fourth Form and the Shell who could have enlightened them if they had chosen.

But, needless to say, they did not choose.

THE END.

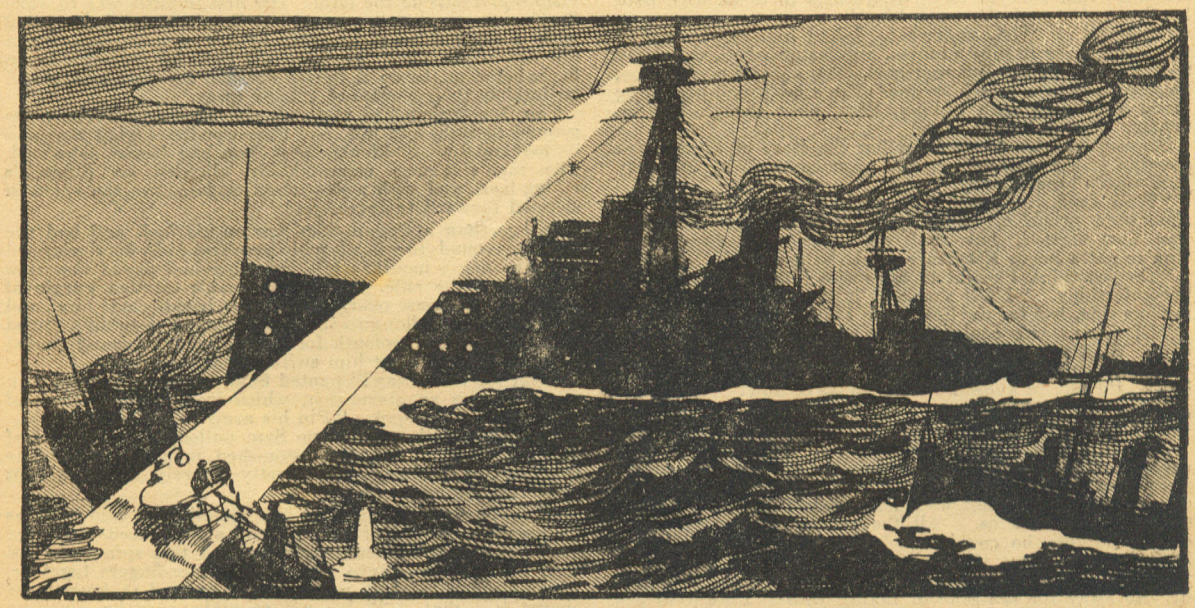
(Another splendid long tale of the Boys of St. Jim's next Thursday, entitled, "Gussy's Guest," by Martin Clifford. Order in advance. Price One Penny.)

NEXT WEEK: **"GUSSY'S GUEST."**

A Splendid Tale of Tom Merry & Co. By Martin Clifford.

Please tell your Friends about this Story.

BRITAIN AT BAY.



A Powerful and Stirring War Story.

THE FIRST CHAPTERS.

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 instalment opens, Sam and Stephen had just managed to make their escape, by a trick, from Boleyn House, a lonely place on the Essex marshes which the Kaiser had made his headquarters in England. The boys succeeded in dodging the Uhlans sent to pursue them by dint of keeping well under cover of the woods.

(Now go on with the Story.)

A Risky Journey.

The boys travelled at a fair pace until well out of range of the Uhlans, and when the woods came to an end, there was a long stretch of small fields and low hedgerows before them, right away over the pleasant Essex uplands. Away to their left, a couple of miles distant, was the broad mouth of the Thames off Southend.

Sam stopped and took a quick glance round at the sky, and felt the rising wind. The former was so overcast and dark that very little could be seen.

"We'll make the most of this," he said. "The dawn'll be pretty late with all this cloud and scud; there won't be much daylight to speak of before an hour and a half. Stick to me, and light out as quick as you can, for the farther we can get from Boleyn before day breaks the better. It'll mean lying up till next night if the beggars prove as thick hereabouts as I think they are. Step out!"

They broke into a steady, fast run, and both being in first-class training, besides having had a good rest and sleep on the Sausage all the afternoon before, the boys made short miles of it. They only halted to take a survey—as far as the darkness would let them—of the country ahead whenever they came to a piece of higher ground, and twice they made a detour to avoid small outpost camps of Germans.

The enemy were evidently in full force about Southend, which Sam and Stephen gave a wide berth to, and soon the boys had to strike farther inland, for the hilly ridge stretching along above the marshes that fronted the Thames was well guarded, and had two or three batteries on it.

"They don't seem to be on the look-out for us here," said Stephen. "I wonder if the old bird has telephoned along to warn 'em? But I suppose he doesn't think his precious Uhlans could miss catching us, and this is the last direction he'd expect us to take."

"What old bird?" said Sam, as they ran.

"I'll tell you about him presently," was Stephen's reply; and they devoted themselves to the journey without further parley.

Rayleigh was passed, a good way to the left, for the boys were heading westwards in the direction of London, and soon the ruins of Hadleigh Castle showed against the sky to the south ard. They were out of sight of river and sea now, but still journeying parallel with the mouth of the Thames. The long run was beginning to tell on them when Pitsea was neared, and the grey light behind them in the east warned the brothers that the day was at hand.

And with the first blink of it came reveille, in the German fashion. Bugle after bugle rang out from the distant camps and outposts, and up by the batteries. Already the drab-coated soldiers were moving abroad, and Sam nodded to his brother as they halted beyond Pitsea to look about them.

"It's just as I thought," he said; "they're thicker here than anywhere. Yonder's our goal, down at Thames Haven; but it's no use going there across the marshes in broad daylight, nor waiting by the tide to get picked up. If Bob Cavendish comes for us at all it'll be after dark. Things are getting pretty thick round about us, and the sooner we're in cover the better."

He led the way to a snug little spinney on the south side of a slope that gave them a view over the marshes to the Lower Hope, where the distant river shone in the grey light of morning. It took them a short stalk to reach the spinney, as some German sappers were in the way, but once inside they settled themselves on a bed of dry leaves under a bush just by the outskirts, and made themselves at home.

"Here we are," said Sam, "snug as a bug in a rug; and I don't think those gentry in the drab coats are likely to trouble us any more. I can tell you I've been just bursting with curiosity all the way along to know what you were up to in that office, and why we had five minutes' start, as you said. We got it, too."

No. 74.

"Yes," said Stephen, "on the word of a king. I didn't think he'd go back on it."

"A king!" exclaimed Sam under his breath. "Do you mean—— By gum! Then it was the Kaiser!"

"Did you think he was at Boleyn, then?"

"I'd got the idea into my head, from what Ned told us, an' that was why I was so anxious to go an' see. We knew he was in England. So he was the man who directed the war from Boleyn, then, where he's in touch with both his fleet an' army! You saw him?"

"Saw him! Well, somewhat. I had him at the end of this carbine for twenty minutes, wondering whether I ought to pull the trigger. But somehow, even against my carbine, he seemed to be a match for me. I'm a bit proud of having made a bargain with a king, Sam, even though he's an enemy. This is how it was."

Stephen told his amazed brother the story of the strange meeting in the estate-office, and what came of it. It fairly took Sam's breath away.

"Well done, by James!" he said. "Steve, I've many a time been proud of havin' you for a brother since this war first started, but that absolutely caps everything. You've got a nerve Kitchener might be proud of."

"Do you think I ought to have shot him?" said Stephen uncomfortably. "I felt somehow it'd have only been right for our side, but for the life of me I couldn't do it."

"Of course you couldn't! Why, you'd have been no better than one of his own butcherin' commanders, like Von Weisshaus. And you actually struck that bargain with him? I'd like to know what he thinks of you!"

"Don't see that matters. But he held to the contract. His word was good."

"The Kaiser's a gentleman, anyhow," said Sam, "whatever his beastly ambition has brought on us. Shouldn't wonder if he's privately a bit glad we weren't caught—though there's no doubt we'd have been shot quick enough once they did get us. All the same, he gave you that chance because he couldn't help himself. Your carbine'd have made as short work of him as of his meanest camp-follower; and it'd have done his cause no good to chuck his life away for the sake of taking yours. I want to get this report to headquarters as soon as I can; and I won't forget it's your show."

"Well, remember I gave my word to say nothing about the bargain, except to you," said Stephen. "We can report all we know about Boleyn—which ain't much—but I said I'd keep my meeting with him to myself, and the result of it."

"That's all right," said Sam. "Your little interview wouldn't be of any value to the commander-in-chief to know, and we can't be less straight than the Kaiser. Fair play's a jewel. All we need report is what we know of Boleyn and the troops, and that the Kaiser directs things from there. An' in spite of what you say, I don't believe he meant us to get away, or even dreamt that we could. However, there's nothing more to be done till we get out of this and on to our own ground, an' that'll keep our hands full for a bit. Which reminds me that I'm beastly hungry, and we've nothing to eat."

"Not so bad as that," said Stephen, producing a generous portion of black German sausage from his pocket and some ship's biscuit. "I pouched these out of the torpedo-boat's stores just before we started; an' though it's not the sort of food I exactly hanker after, it's wonderful stuff for keepin' you going."

"You've scored all the honours this trip. I even forgot to victual us," said Sam, as they divided the food and ate it thankfully. "However, you've done a real good stroke, and we've done what we came to do. Here's luck!"

There was a pool of rainwater in the centre of the spinney, to which they crawled and drank their fill after eating. Then they made their way back to the bush again.

"I fancy I've swallowed down a few tadpoles," said Sam. "However, they're probably very nourishing, an' we've nothing to grumble at. An' now, as we ought to be pretty safe here, an' there's nothing to be done till nightfall, we may as well snooze. We're both about dead-beat."

In less than about twenty seconds both the young scouts were sound asleep. Sam, at least, might have been less sound than his brother, though he got as much rest. Sam's sleep was always rather like that of a watchdog, and he was able to spring clear awake and ready for action at the faintest alarm.

Twice during the next few hours did he open his eyes and watch a fatigue-party of Germans who were out foraging, and who passed within a hundred yards of the spinney. Stephen slept solidly till three in the afternoon, however, and after a crawl to the pool for another drink, came back and slept again till dusk.

It was just growing dark, and Sam was thinking of making ready for the start, when a prowling German rifleman, who seemed to be looking for something he had lost, passed close along by the side of the spinney, approaching close to the bush the boys lay in. Stephen was still asleep, and, luckily, he never was wont to snore, nor even to breathe heavily.

Sam lay quiet as a sitting partridge, waiting for the man to pass by, when suddenly he noticed that one of his brother's feet was sticking out too far, and was plainly visible just outside the bush. His first impulse was to wake Stephen gently, but it was too late for that, and Sam waited with a good deal of anxiety, hoping the German would not notice the foot. At the same time he quite made up his mind what to do if it was noticed, for an alarm would be fatal to their chance of getting away.

The German walked along slowly, his eyes searching the ground to right and left, and Sam wondered what he could be looking for. Suddenly, what Sam had feared happened. The man's glance unmistakably alighted on Stephen's riding-boot, and with a smothered exclamation the rifleman stepped forward to investigate.

In less than a second Sam was on his feet, and had the German round the head with one arm, his hand clapped over the man's mouth, while the other had seized the wrist which held the rifle. Before the man's startled gurgle of astonishment was over, Sam had backheeled him and brought him headlong to the ground, one hand still gripped over the German's mouth for dear life. The sound roused Stephen, and brought him swiftly to the rescue.

"Get the rifle away!" panted Sam, who feared more than anything else an alarm-shot, which would bring others of the enemy to the spot. "Pin his arms to his sides!"

The moment that was done Sam pulled up a tuft of turf and crammed it into the astonished man's mouth. The German had bitten his hand pretty severely, but Sam kept him from crying an alarm.

"Bite on that, if you must bite something," said Sam, as he inserted the sod of earth, "you stodge-faced moucher! Who asked you to come sniffing round this spinney? Out with his bootlace, Steve, an' tie his little fingers together, while I strap his belt round his figurehead to keep those cherry lips shut. We've got to make sure he gives no alarm before we leave him."

They trussed the German up securely, and very scared he looked. When it was done Sam carried him into the middle of the spinney, and laid him down by the pool.

"You can think yourself lucky," said Sam. "Some folks'd chuck you into the pool; and it's what we ought to do to make sure you don't give us away. However, I don't think your pals'll spot you before morning, so turn over an' dream of your happy Fatherland. You've only yourself to thank. Come on, Steve."

"How did it happen? Did he go for us?" said Stephen, as they left the place.

"Your fairy foot was sticking a yard out of the bush, you young ass," replied Sam, "and he nearly fell over it. Now, keep your head shut, an' let's get down to Thames Haven as quickly as we can."

It was dark enough for any purpose by this time, and as Sam had a good idea of how the Germans were placed, not much time was lost in getting towards the great river. They easily passed a couple of returning files of riflemen who were making for Pitsea, and soon the two scouts had left the uplands, and were upon the marshes that stretched away to the river-wall.

Pitsea Creek and the lonely Kynoch factory were a long way to their left; and the boys threaded their way very carefully among the marshland dykes, keeping a bright look-out on every side. It was plain that a good many Germans were about, for twice they had to hide in a reed-bed while a party of what seemed to be Engineers went by.

"I hope they won't be too much in force at Thames Haven," said Sam pensively. "We look like having a job!"

"I should think we're too early. Wouldn't it have been better to wait in the spinney till midnight? Bob Cavendish was to have come much later than this, if he comes at all."

"We can't count on him, for he mayn't be able to turn up, an' if he didn't we should miss the tide. There's still water enough this ebb for us to get away if we can find a boat. Used to be plenty of boats between the creek and the Mucking Light. I want to get out of it with this news as soon as we can."

Thames Haven is only a deserted pier with a branch line running to it from the Tilbury and Southend Railway, now disused. It was built for unloading cattle and taking them to London by train, but it did not pay, and the scheme was abandoned. Deep water runs close to the shore, and the pier remains, but it is only a lonely, derelict spot among the Thames-side marshes.

NEXT WEEK: "CUSSY'S GUEST."

A Splendid Tale of Tom Merry & Co.
By Martin Clifford.

But when the boys, with great caution, reached the river-wall, they found the place was strongly held by the Germans. Away to their left was the pier, and they could just make out a couple of machine-guns mounted on it, evidently to prevent any landing, and a small camp of two or three tents at the pier's shoreward end, next the deserted station.

"This is awkward!" muttered Sam. "I made a mistake in settling on Thames Haven for a rendezvous. An' yet it's one of the few places where there's water enough close in at all times of tides. We may get spotted at any moment, though."

"There's a boat lyin' at the stores not two hundred yards along to the right," said Stephen, whose eyes were of the keenest. "I can see the loom of her, an' she's not tended. Tied to a post, I reckon. She'll be one o' their boats."

"Yes; and there's a sentry patrollin' the wall between us and her."

"Plenty more boats at the pier, I expect. But we can't get at those."

"No; that one to the right is our only chance. We must get it somehow. We shall soon be dropped on if we stay here."

How to do it, however, was a puzzle. They were between two fires. One sentry was patrolling back and forth from the direction of the pier, and coming to within a score yards of where the boys lay, on his outward beat. On the other side a second sentry had a beat of a couple of hundred yards, passing the boat each time as he paced along the top of the embankment that kept out the high tides.

To strike inland again and come round on to the point where the boat lay was not possible, for a wide, deep dyke skirted the landward side of the embankment, and could only be crossed at a very few places. The boys watched the patrolling German for two or three rounds, and saw that at every other one he disappeared for a few moments into some sort of structure that stood back on a sort of flange of the embankment.

"As I'm alive, he's got a sentry-box there!" murmured Stephen. "The luxurious beggar! Who on earth gives sentry-boxes to patrols out in the open?"

"Shouldn't wonder," said Sam. "It's a dickens of a bleak, exposed place this, on a stormy March night, with a cold gale blowin' up the sleet, same as last week. A chap wouldn't be able to see much, except from shelter."

"Then it's something they've knocked together out of spare boardin' from the station," said Stephen. "I say! Why not coop him in it? It's not far from the boat, an' we could make a dash for her afterwards."

A grin spread over Sam's face.

"Well, it'd be better than havin' a scuffle with him on the wall an' chancing a rifle-shot!" he chuckled. "Come on, an' we'll try!"

The Stern Chase.

They did a long, cautious creep along by the side of the reedy dyke at the embankment's foot on the landward side, pausing and scarcely breathing when the sentry passed above. They might have dashed over the bank and seized the boat when he was at the other end, but there was no certainty that it held any oars, in which case he would run up and have them at his mercy while they drifted. Stephen's plan appealed to Sam.

They reached a point opposite the bank of the sentry-box, and could see it was a fairly heavy, movable structure. Twice the sentry passed it by, but on the third beat he entered, possibly for a surreptitious whiff at a pipe.

"Now then!" whispered Stephen.

They darted up the bank, and putting all their weight against the sentry-box, suddenly heaved it over on its face. There was a yell, a muffled outburst of strong language, and a violent sound of kicking inside the prostrate box. Then the boys darted over the bank and ran like greyhounds to the boat.

Already the crack of rifle-shots from the sentries nearer the pier were giving the alarm when the boys jumped in and cast off the painter; while the prisoner in the sentry-box kicked and roared and bellowed.

"By gosh!" cried Stephen. "The oars are chained down an' locked!"

The noise on shore redoubled, and the rifleman in the overturned sentry-box was making uproar enough for twenty. His rifle went off inside with a muffled bang, and the box itself was heaving about on the embankment like a snail's shell, though the imprisoned German could not get purchase enough to lift it.

"Shove off with your foot!" exclaimed Sam. "Quick! —before those beggars are down on us! Paddle her out with your hands—anything! Get her out into the tide-way!"

He strained with all his might at the fastened oars. They were not tied down with rope, unluckily, but made fast to one of the thwarts with several turns of chain, which was fastened with a padlock. Sam could not budge them.

"We shall be a fine pot-shot for those beauties ashore," said Stephen, paddling away busily with a floor-board, "unless you can get those oars out!"

Sam nearly wrenched the thwart off in his struggles, but the sculls would not come up. Then, to his joy, he saw a piece of metal on the boat's floor. It was the galvanised-iron tiller that fitted the rudder-head, and snatching it up, he thrust one end under the chain and levered with all his might. The links snapped, and the oars were free. The boys thrust them hastily into the rowlocks, and pulled as they had never pulled before.

They were none too soon. Already several bullets from the wall were plunking into the water around them, and men were running along the bank from Thames Haven as fast as they could put their boots to the ground.

"Put your back into it!" panted Sam, whose oars were bending strongly as he put his whole weight into the strokes. "Get her well out! They won't hit us on a night like this—they'll barely see us at all!"

Already the boat was a long way from the shore, and in the full current of the tide. She showed up scarcely at all to those ashore, who were looking towards her on a long downward slant, with the black water as a background; and the boys thanked their good luck that there was not as much as a star to give any light. The salt tide was ruffled by a strong southerly breeze, and the riflemen ashore had nothing better to shoot at than a dull blur and the sound of the distant oars. German service rifles are not at their best on a dark night.

Plenty of bullets flew around, most of them wide, but one ripped through the boat's side under Sam's raised arm, and another glanced off Stephen's port rowlock, and sped away screaming into the night. These were only chance shots, however, and every yard put the fugitives farther out of danger. On a moonlit, or even a starlit night the boat and its crew would have had no hope whatever.

"Keep bearing on your side!" said Stephen. "The tide's settin' us down past Thames Haven, an' those machine-guns on the pier'll be another song altogether if they can spot us. They will be able to squirt lead backwards and forwards till they get us."

"It's the boats I fear most," returned Sam, tugging away and heading towards the distant Kentish shore. "They've plenty of men to pull, an' I can hear one putting out now."

"An' see her, too!" added Stephen, as a boat a good deal larger than their own came flying out from the Thames Haven shore. "They make row enough. Which is our best course—up river?"

"No, no! Pull like blazes straight across an' slightly downwards!" returned Sam, quickening his stroke with an effort. "No good meetin' the tide when they've more power than we. Get on to the Blyth Flats, if we can, an' run for it."

Stephen wondered how they were to escape the pursuers' rifles when floundering over the soft mud on the Kentish side, but he did not say so. The Germans' boat came floundering along in their wake, still a good distance off.

"Lucky they're a crew of soldiers!" said Stephen. "There's one beauty caught a crab an' put 'em off their stroke. If there were fewer of 'em, an' it wasn't so dark, I believe my carbine'd be enough to stop 'em. But they're too many."

"Don't talk—pull!" said Sam; and they made the boat fairly fly. Some shots were fired at them from the pursuing boat, but seeing these had no effect, and that they were easily overtaking the fugitives, the Germans stopped shooting, and devoted themselves to capturing the escaping craft, which was quite at their mercy.

"Looks like a firin'-party for us, after all!" muttered Stephen. "However, we can settle one or two before they grab us."

It was plain, none the less, that they had no hope of overcoming the whole boatload before they were overpowered themselves, and equally plain that they would never reach the Kentish shore, or anywhere near it. Clumsily as the pursuers' craft was handled, she had six oars manned, and two oars cannot hope to outdistance six. Moreover, the Germans' craft was long, light, and fast—apparently a Navy-built boat—while the one the boys were in was a heavy old longshore tub.

On came the Germans, with great splashing and a very bad stroke, but their boat flew along through the gloom at two yards to the boys' one. They could hear the man in command urging the rowers, and saw the dull gleam of

steel. The spiked helmets of the men were plainly visible, and the pursuers were not twenty yards away.

"They've got us!" panted Stephen. "Shall we in oars an' loose off at 'em? If we're to be shot, we'll send three or four on the road ahead of us!"

Before Sam could reply, the tall red sails of a fishing-smack loomed through the darkness, ploughing swiftly up the river from seaward, a short distance away. An exclamation rose to Stephen's lips, for so suddenly did the vessel appear through the gloom that she was like an apparition.

What followed happened while a man might count the fingers on his hand. The smack swerved round in a rapid sweep, her hull heeled over, and the foam flying from her bows. There was a guttural shout, a loud crash, and she rode right over the German boat with its clumsy crew, and cut it clean in half.

"Great guns!" cried Sam, running in his oar and standing up. "I'll be shot if it isn't the Maid of Essex!"

The bawling and commotion as the powerful little ship surged over the enemy's boat was immense, but very short. The men were struggling in the water and being rapidly left behind, all save one big, helmeted German, who grasped the smack's lee shrouds as she heeled over, and was clambering on to her deck. The boys saw the blade of an oar whirl upwards and descend heavily on him, and the German dropped back. The smack came dashing on towards the boys.

"Greyfriars ahoy!" hailed Ned's voice. "Be that you?"

Stephen let off a yell that echoed all down the tideway, and the Maid of Essex luffed round sharply and lay along side the boys' boat.

"Nip aboard sharp, young gents!" said Ned. "Let's be out o' this!"

The brothers were on deck in a moment, and away went the smack again, abandoning the boat to drift where she liked.

"We'll leave her as a legacy to those ducks in the water," said Sam; "an' if they can get into her they'll deserve it. Hallo! They will, too—there's one got hold of her now!"

"I chucked the oars overboard before I jumped out!" remarked Stephen. "I'll lay a trifle against their finding 'em in the dark, so they're welcome to navigate her whenever the tide lets 'em. Ned, old chap, I want that fist of yours to shake till I pull it off! How in the world did you come on us just then? We didn't expect you for hours yet!"

"I thought I'd come up an' see, havin' nothing else to do!" said the marshman, chuckling. "I was main anxious about you gents. Mr. Cavendish is followin' on with the old steam-kettle, but he couldn't get away yet, an' I thought I'd run up an' anchor somewhere off the Mucking, so as to be handy in case you turned up earlier an' wanted to get off. I knew as you'd come!"

"You were pretty sure of it, then, old chap," said Sam, "for I'm a bit surprised myself that we're here."

"Tut! I never doubted you'd be too many for the Dutchies, sir!" said Ned. "However, as I was comin' up past the Scar Elbow I heard the shots ashore, an' saw that boat comin' along in full chase, with her crew rowin' like a lot o' Bank Holiday trippers, an' says I to myself: 'Our young gents are the cause o' this, for a guinea!' There's a fine breeze, an' they were too keen on the chase to keep a look-out, so I was into 'em before you could say knife. One big swab tried to board me, but I didn't want no passengers, an' used the blade of an oar to him just to let him know. He took the hint."

"I should say so!" answered Stephen. "We could hear the whack from where we were. Well, Ned, you pulled us right out of the stew when we really thought they'd got us beat, an' it's just words to give you any thanks for that. Shake again, old cock! Sam, our little expedition has wound up very prettily!"

"How did it pan out, sir?" said Ned eagerly. "Did you get to Boleyn?"

"You bet we did! An', as you put us on the track so neatly, it's only fair to tell you that your swell who pulls the strings at Boleyn Hall, is—guess who?"

"Von Kantry, by any chance?" said Ned.

"The Emperor of Germany."

"Great soles an' flounders!" gasped the smacksman. "Is that truth? Have you got his blessed scalp?"

"No, not quite," said Stephen, grinning; "though I came pretty near. However, never mind that."

"Glory! What a go!" exclaimed Ned. "How will he get—— There's Muster Cavendish a-comin' up," he said, suddenly breaking off, as a long black hull hove in sight, driving rapidly from the direction of Sheerness.

"The Sausage—so it is!" said Stephen. "He's early, too—or p'ra'ps he's comin' to look after you. Good business! Let's get alongside as soon as we can! Our news won't keep."

The Gem Library.—No. 74.

The torpedo-boat sighted the smack at the same time, and, heading in to the quiet water under the lee of the Blyth Sand, lay-to while the Maid luffed alongside, in response to a hail from Ned. A couple of warps were thrown overboard, and the smack made fast.

"Holy pokers! Is it you?" cried Cavendish, as the brothers sprang on to the iron decks. "I'm uncommon glad to see you chaps safe—it's more than I ever expected."

"Ah, you haven't the touchin' faith in us that Ned has!" replied Sam. "He never doubted our gettin' through—though I must say I did more than once. But you're early, old fellow! We were wishin', not long ago, that we'd fixed the meetin' a lot sooner, for things were pretty thick at Thames Haven. However, here we are, an' it's been a very successful little trip."

"What's the result?" said Cavendish quickly.

"If you can leave your Number One to watch on deck a few minutes, an' come below, I'll tell you," said Sam; "or, rather, my brother will, for it's his show. An' it's pretty private news."

They went below, and, without any delay, Stephen told the lieutenant briefly the story of their venture to Boleyn on the night before, and the escape. When he had finished, Cavendish gave a long whistle.

"Gloriana!" he said. "The Kaiser, eh? This is the biggest piece of news you've struck yet! An' he runs the whole show from Boleyn, then? Are you sure it was he?"

Stephen nodded.

"It seems to me there's a bit more behind that you haven't told me," said the young naval officer.

"That's so," confessed Stephen; "but it doesn't affect the situation at all, an' I'm under honour not to repeat it!"

"All right, old chap! But this is simply great!" said Cavendish. "I don't quite know what our brass-bound betters would make of it, but they ought to know at once. Nobody knew where the Kaiser was directin' the war from, an' there's a notion about that he's not in this country at all. We'd better get you in with your report, and not lose any time."

"Just what I was thinking," said Sam, "and I think we ought to take it right to headquarters, too. We could get to Lord Ripley with it in a few hours. Ned, are you game for another cruise right up river to London?"

"Game for anything with you aboard, sir," said the smacksman.

"Right! Bob, I suppose you'll have to stick to the lower waters down here, in case you an' the craft are wanted; so will you take the news right away to Colonel Vincent at Sheerness? It ought to be useful to him, an' he can communicate it to headquarters, too, in case anything happened to us. But we'll be with Lord Ripley by daylight."

"Right!" said Cavendish. "I'll start at once. Are you chaps goin' to be long up at the Smoke?"

"Depends what's goin' on up there, an' whether we're roped in for a shore job. But it won't be a great while before we're down here among the salt again, I expect. There'll be big doings in the Fleet when the last big scrap comes."

"Wish you luck, anyhow!" said Cavendish. "An' I hope we'll all live to chuck the Sausage at the German admiral's flagship when the great day comes. So-long, then! The flood tide's makin', an' you'll carry it right up to London."

The brothers and Ned dropped back aboard the smack, the ropes were cast off, and as the jib ran up the Maid of Essex's bows, she paid off, and stood away smartly into the Channel. The torpedo-boat soon vanished in the opposite direction towards Sheerness, and the smack's crew kept a smart look-out till they were above Thames Haven, keeping well over towards the other shore. To their glee they caught sight of the boat which Sam and Stephen had abandoned, a good way off, drifting on the current, and holding a woe-begone crew of damp Germans, who were vainly trying to paddle themselves shorewards with the floorboards. However, those aboard the Maid of Essex took no further notice of her, and soon the smack had cleared the Point, and was running up the Lower Hope.

"We've a fair wind an' tide," said Ned. "The only thing we've got to fear is the guns on the German side, Essex way, an' they aren't likely to spot us on a night like this if we keep to the Kentish shore. It's quite a pleasure cruise!"

"By the same token I'm as hollow as a drum inside, an' ravening hungry," said Stephen; "though we've been too busy to think of that, up to date. That breakfast off black sausage in the spinney feels like ancient history. Got anything to eat, Ned?"

"Just put your fist on this tiller for a spell, sir," said the smacksman, "an' I'll cook ye both a real fat meal in two shakes. Bein' idle this afternoon, I did an hour's trawling off the Little Nore, an' got a rare good haul o' codling an' soles. I'll lay they go down well!"

He disappeared below, and busied himself over the glowing

stove in the little fo'c'sle. Like most smacksmen, Ned was a capital cook, and when he came out and took the helm again, the boys went in and found a huge, piping-hot dish of fried fish and a jug of steaming coffee on the swing-table in the cabin, together with plenty of biscuit.

"You're the brickiest brick on top of the waters, Ned!" called Stephen through the doors, as he fell to. "The pal who'll save a chap from a boatload of slaughterin' Germans, an' feed him like this, ought to be made a giddy duke! Sam, watch me get outside this little lot!"

Sam was much too busy himself to watch anybody, and for half an hour neither of the boys spoke. At the end of that time they lay back with sighs of content, and about four pounds of fish and a quart of coffee had gone the way of all flesh. After the sort of food—often none at all—they had had of late, that meal was uncommonly grateful.

"In fact, it's absolute giddy luxury," said Stephen. "I must say fightin' at sea has a big pull over any other sort, for as long as you're alive, you're sure of your grub. We'd better give Ned a spell, an' take the tiller while he feeds."

"We're goin' to a place where grub's a lot scarcer than anywhere else in the whole blessed country," said Sam, as they went on deck; "which isn't exactly cheerful. However, we mustn't think of our tummies first, if there's any work to be done; but I hope it won't be long before we get to sea again."

Ned had had a meal an hour before, and did not want another; so all three sat on deck while the smack glided along the dark channel, with a favouring breeze behind, and a strong tide under her.

"There's Gravesend," said Sam, as the dark town was passed, its frontage crowded with merchant shipping that dare not go to sea while the enemy's ships were still off the coast. "'Member the giddy ovation they gave us when we came up on the Blaine Castle? All the grub she had in her hold is used up by this time, I reckon."

"Ay, but there'll be some more in soon," remarked Ned. "Now the German ships are cleared from the Thames, blockade-running'll be a much easier job than when you ran that owd steamer up—the one you sunk in the Medway. By the way, they was blowin' the last of her up just before the British cruisers arrived."

"Very kind of 'em. They'll have cleared her out o' the way just in time for our ships," said Sam. "However, it's the Kaiser's crow's-nest at Boleyn we've got to occupy ourselves with now, an' the sooner we get to Lord Ripley's quarters, the better I shall be pleased."

The dark hours went by, and the Maid of Essex slipped along at a good pace, meeting with no incident on the way. She was practically out of sight of the Essex or German shore as she hugged the southern side in the darkness, and not a shot nor a challenge greeted her. The distance by water was considerable, the night was not young when she started, and the dawn was breaking when she passed Woolwich. It was full daylight, and all the world was awake when Tower Bridge was once more sighted.

"How quiet the old city looks!" said Stephen. "An' what a wreck it's in! Not a gunshot to be heard or anything. How are matters, I wonder?"

"Main bad, by all accounts," said Ned. "The folk are starvin' worse than ever, the Germans are keepin' 'em under, and the fightin' outside the city don't seem to make much difference."

"My word! It doesn't seem as if even six German Army corps, with all the guns in Prussia, could keep this huge town under their thumb," said Stephen, "even though they've beaten it!"

"It ain't so beaten as you think," said Sam grimly. "There's a day of reckonin' coming for those gentry in drab coats. Luff her in for the Surrey Docks, Ned—we needn't go above bridge this time. The handier for slipping away, the better."

The Maid's sails ran down as she ran in through the lower open dock-gate, after a challenge from some men in a boat and a sentry on the quay.

But the boys were recognised in a moment, for it was here that the Blaine Castle had been brought; and no sooner was the smack moored than several Service men besieged her, eager for news. Sam could not stop to palaver, but he told them in a few words of the victory at Sheerness—it did not seem to have reached them—and asked if his old friends the Fusiliers were still at the Tower Bridge.

"There's a couple of companies of 'em there," was the answer, "for it's a ticklish place to hold, and needs good men. Most of the battalion is away up the river, though."

Leaving Ned in charge of his smack, the brothers pushed on at once through the streets. Used as they were to the seamy side of the campaign, what they saw on their way did not cheer them up. The look of desolation in the streets, the closed shops—many of them looted by the mob and left as mere shells—the gaunt, hunger-stricken faces, all told their tale. Here and there crowds had collected, and excited speechmakers were haranguing them; but what the speakers had to say, Sam and Stephen could not wait to hear.

"It's only a few days since we were here last," said Stephen, "four or five, isn't it? But things look a heap worse. I can hear firin' somewhere to the westward, can't you? Hallo, there's the bridge-guard! The Fusiliers are lookin' pretty well shop-worn."

If the men of the fine old regiment showed signs of wear, there was nothing slack about them; they looked more soldierly, alert, and keen than ever. The long vigil and the deadly campaign had taken the parade gloss off them, and doubled the fine war polish they took a pride in.

"Gosh! What a lucky chap a commander 'd be if he could take the pick of the Army for just one job!" said Stephen fervently. "The Fusiliers, one of the best Highland regiments—say the Black Watch—the Dublins, an' the Welsh Borderers. I'd be sorry to be the enemy!"

"Pickin' an' choosin' ain't fair," said Sam. "Scores of the regiments you hear less about are as good—anyway, a chap or a regiment can only do their best. There's Devine, or I'm a Dutchman!"

It was indeed the adjutant of the Fusiliers, their old friend, who came out of his guard-house to meet them.

"Great scissors! Is it you?" he said heartily, shaking hands. "You young rips, I'm glad to see your innocent an' downy faces again. Not but what you look pretty hard now. Where bound?"

"We want to reach Lord Ripley as soon as possible," said Sam. "We've news for him."

"Have you, though? Then you'll have to look very slippy. He's leavin' London some time this mornin'; but you'll find him at his quarters if you're lucky. He's not here much, you see—the forces are nearly all outside now, guardin' the Thames above London. There's a lot of on-and-off fighting going forward."

"Then let's hurry," said Stephen, starting off at once.

"I'll come after you at once," said Devine. "I've got to go to headquarters now an' report, an' my subaltern's left in charge. Catch you up in a minute."

The boys, however, came upon a light transport-waggon just after they started, and hitching on behind it, were taken the greater part of the way at a good round pace, for the waggon was in a hurry. They reached headquarters there a good while before Devine, and went straight to the staff-officers' quarters. It had become a recognised thing that the boys brought useful news with them when they did turn up, and word was taken at once to Lord Ripley that the Villiers' scouts had special news from the Thames mouth. It was not everybody who could have got the ear of the Commander-in-Chief just then.

"I say," said Stephen, to his brother, while they waited, "you've got to handle this for me, Sam! I want you to give the report—you can do it better than I, an' it'll be beastly awkward for me—you know why."

"All right. I wish you'd tackle it yourself though," said Sam reluctantly, "for it's your scoop, an' not mine. However, I'll put all the credit to you."

"Blow the credit! We're out to do the best we can for our Service—who wants credit?" said Stephen. "I shall go and stow myself somewhere till the interview's over, an' it won't be any use callin' me up."

The orderly arrived at that moment, and Sam was taken without a moment's delay before Lord Ripley. The grey-haired old warrior, who was in full kit for departure, welcomed the boy with a kindly nod.

"Still piling up your record, Lieutenant Villiers," he said. "I've heard of the services you and your brother rendered on Sheppey, and they are not forgotten, you may be sure. Any fresh reports?"

"Yes, sir," said Sam, saluting. "The German magazine at Paglesham is blown up, and their reserves of high-power explosives destroyed."

"Ah!" said the Commander-in-Chief abruptly. "Is that so? I had news that a great explosion occurred on their side of the water two nights ago. But do you mean to say you had a hand in that?"

"Lieutenant Cavendish torpedoed the magazine, sir," said Sam, and in a few words he told of the night journey through the creeks in the captured German vessel, and the exploding of the great store at Paglesham.

"Amazing!" said Lord Ripley. "I was informed of this from Sheerness. A splendid piece of work!"

"But what I chiefly came to report, sir, is that the Kaiser is at Boleyn Hall, with a full installation of wireless telegraphy and cables, and signalling apparatus. He directs the war from there. It was my brother Stephen who came across him, sir, and can vouch for him."

"The Kaiser at Boleyn!"

Sam gave a brief account of the reasons he had for suspecting it beforehand; the approach upon Boleyn Hall, his capture, and Stephen's rescue of him.

"Is your brother absolutely certain?"

"Quite, sir. It's not the first time we've seen him—we were aboard his yacht once in the Bladewater. You may be absolutely sure it is he."

"There can be no doubt of it, from what you say," replied Lord Ripley keenly, and he put several more questions, which Sam answered fully.

"This is the best news yet! He will not direct the war much longer from Boleyn," added the Commander-in-Chief grimly. "If he has not already deserted it, the fleet shall send him a few visiting-cards, and we'll draw him like a badger." Lord Ripley checked himself. "You have surpassed yourselves this time, you and your brother. Anything more?"

"That's all, sir—except that the Germans have mounted more guns along the heights above Leigh and Benfleet, and have a strong outpost at Thames-Haven. A few shells from a cruiser would settle the latter, though."

"Good! What have you in hand now?"

"We're not attached at present, sir, unless you'll give us a job."

"I prefer to give you a free hand. I'm not going to waste you on routine work. You know, of course, that you can look to any corps in the field for assistance and what supplies you need. I must go now—I know it will not be long before I hear more from you."

Sam saluted and went out. Stephen appeared from nowhere in particular and joined him, hearing briefly the result of the interview. Just as they were leaving the place, Devine of the Fusiliers, who had not needed to see the Commander-in-Chief, but made his report to a staff-officer, overtook them.

"Been before the old man again?" he said. "Anything fresh ahead of you?"

"We're not tied down to anything; he gives us carte blanche," said Sam; "but I hope he doesn't expect too much of us. It's largely luck that gives us these chances."

"You put so much jump into 'em that you make the luck turn up trumps," said the adjutant. "That's how it seems to me. Goin' down river again?"

"Don't know. I wonder if we couldn't be of some use in London first?" said Sam, who was much impressed with the misery he had seen round him on the way from the docks. "We know the ropes pretty well. How are things here, really?"

"Awful!" said Devine gravely, "the starvation an' bloodshed an' beastliness are enough to make one almost give up hope—an' I'm no chicken, as you know."

"The Germans haven't got a footing this side of the river?"

"No, we're able to hold 'em back there. They don't try much, though, knowing it's useless, an' would do 'em no good."

"How do the Londoners behave?"

"Wonderfully well on the whole, an' patient as heroes, though their condition is awful. But it's on the other side of the river they feel it most. They're in the hands of the Kaiser there."

"What, are there any Londoners on the north side still?"

"A million or so. They aren't all over this side, as you seem to think. A great many stayed, an' lots of folks flocked in from the country round, which is like a desert. In parts of the West End things go on almost as usual. I don't mean to say folks are worse off that side as regards food—they may be even better, as there are fewer of 'em, an' the rich people who can get food still by payin' for it, are helpin' the poor all they can. But it's the German rule that makes the trouble."

"What do they do?"

"The beggars are absolutely merciless. You see, with so many starvin' an' ruined Londoners about, it's only natural there should be rows.

"Some German soldiers jeered at the Londoners, or started looting. Then there was an outbreak, an' everybody in sight went for the Germans, and overpowered an' killed them. Of course, it could only end one way—they'd no proper weapons, an' swarms of Germans were hurried to the spot, an' shot 'em down by dozens, an' made several prisoners."

"What happened then?"

"The prisoners were sentenced on the spot, stuck against the wall, an' shot. Women an' boys with them, too—anybody who was in the street an' got caught."

"Great heavens!" said Stephen, in horror; "you don't mean they shot women!"

"They did, an' several times lately, women an' girls, too. The people are desperate, an' the outbreaks have been happening more often. A lot of 'em got rifles from somewhere, an' barricaded both ends of a street off Covent Garden, an' held out against the German battalions for half a day; women and boys fighting behind the men at the barriers. The Prussians bayonetted 'em to the last one, but they lost a lot of men before they did it. My word!" said Devine, his eyes flashing. "I'd have given something to be in that scrap with my men, even though we were wiped out with the rest! But of course, we're stuck here, guarding the south."

"Is it all like that?" said Sam, who looked unusually white as he listened.

"The Germans are doin' it more an' more. Von Krantz is determined to stamp 'em into submission, an' terrorise them, so at the smallest sign of a row there are firing-parties right an' left. Prisoners are taken an' shot down in batches—old men an' young together, girls an' youngsters. No mercy's shown."

"They know what a powder-mine they're sitting on!" muttered Sam.

"Yes, an' the fools are going the worst way to work," said Devine grimly. "They haven't learnt that the more you corner a Briton the more dangerous he is, an' that you can't bully him into licking your boots. If only the citizens could get hold of rifles, or even knives enough, I believe they'd swamp the Germans yet. But they've no weapons, an' they're watched day an' night. Nobody's allowed to meet together, an' the German troops patrol every street."

"Where are the bulk of our troops?"

"Fightin' for all they're worth to keep the Germans from crossin' the Thames out Staines an' Richmond way, for if they get their guns across an' in position, South London would be shelled an' smashed, an' our last hope would go. We can hold 'em back, too; they can't cross. But it's in North London, in the City, that the real tragedy is goin' on. The Germans have got their heel on us, as I tell you. It's hard to say how things do stand there, for the guards on both sides are a barrier between us; but they couldn't be much worse."

The two brothers looked at each other.

"Sam," said Stephen, "let's go into North London, and see for ourselves."

"Just what I was thinking," said Sam.

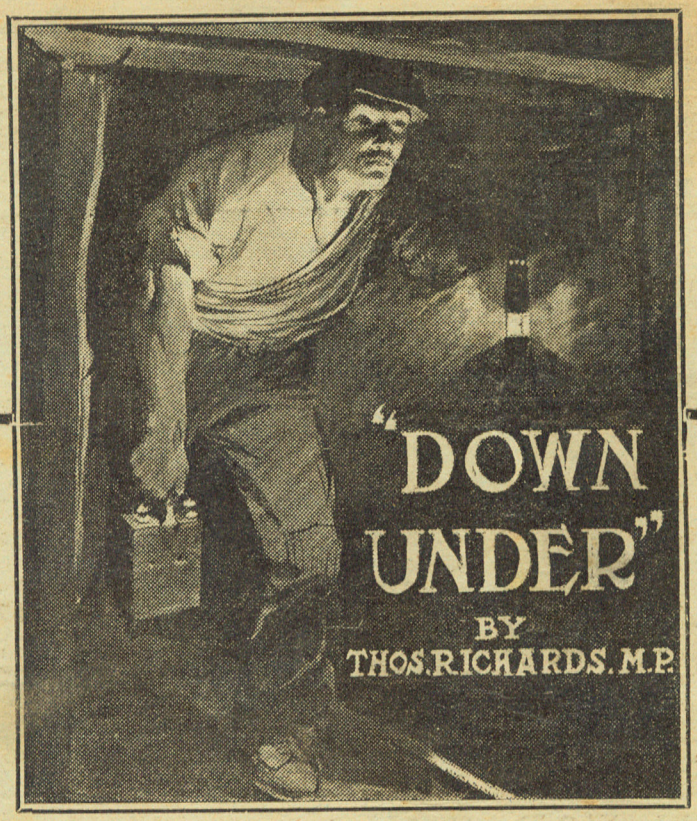
"You!" exclaimed Devine. "Why, my dear chaps, you of all people would stand no earthly! You'd be recognised in no time!"

"I don't believe that," said Sam. "We don't flatter ourselves we're known to the whole blessed German army, or a quarter of it. We can't go in our uniforms, of course—that'd be useless. But we'll go in plain clothes, whether or no."

"I hope you'll think better of it," said Devine, "for it'll be your last blessed excursion on this earth, an' I don't see what good you could do. Besides, there's no crossin' any of the bridges, back or forward."

(Another long instalment of this splendid serial next week.)

Printed and published weekly by the Proprietors, 23, Bouverie Street, London, England. Subscription, 4s. 4d. per annum.
Saturday, July 10th, 1909.



75 Miners Perished

in the Maypole Colliery, near Wigan, on August 18th last year. Do you know WHY the life of the man who gets your coal is always in peril? Do you know the terrible risks he runs every day?

Thomas Richards, M.P.

(Miners' Representative for West Monmouth)

has written a series of special articles, entitled "Down Under," dealing with the dangers, discomforts, and grievances of the coal miners. These articles are illustrated, and contain some very startling revelations which will come as a surprise to those who are not aware of the conditions of life in a coal mine. The first appears in this week's

Penny Pictorial.

Out To-Morrow.