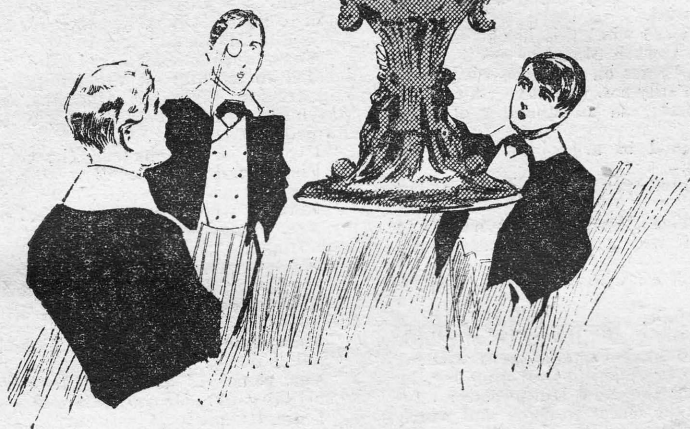


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THE D'ARCY CUP

A splendid
extra long,
complete
school tale
of—



TOM
MERRY
& Co.
at St. Jim's

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1.

Arthur Augustus Writes Home.

"WEALLY must wequest you, deah boys, to keep this wotten table steady!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of St. Jim's. "Mannahs, please get off the table, and sit on the sofab—"

"I tell you," declared Tom Merry soberly—"I tell you, Blake, the idea has only to get a decent start, and it'll become as popular as ice-cream after a cricket match."

"I agree with you there, Merry, my son," said Jack Blake heartily. "Ever since that big match came off at Wayland, the fellows have been talking about nothing except water polo. The game would catch on at St. Jim's right enough if we can get a good start."

"Mewwy, deah boy, you are shakin' the wotten table—"

"Dry up, Gussie; we are talking Business."

"I wefuse to dwy up, and I wefuse to have this wotten table shaken by Mannahs. How can I w'ite to the patah

"Oh, don't trouble about Gussy, Merry!" said Blake, jerking his thumb towards the elegant form of Arthur Augustus. "He's in a wound up mood. The point is, what's to be done? It is an excellent idea of mine that the first water polo match played at St. Jim's should be between the School House and the New House, but we want something to lift the wheeze out of being a wheeze—I mean, something to give it an official flavour and cause the seniors to open their eyes."

"Very well put, Blake," said Herbert Skimpole, the brainy man of the Shell. "I might even say excellently put."

"Yes; only it's piffle," said Tom Merry. "Still, I see what young Blake was driving at."

"You don't say so, young Merry?"

"Yes, kid, I do. If we just let it get about that the two Houses are playing a water polo match, the fellows will take about as much notice of it as they do of Skimmy's Socialism. Dry up, Skimmy! I repeat what I said before, what we want is a shield or a cup or something to be played for each season—"

"And as I also said before, you might as well whistle for a breeze," said Jack Blake; "that is, unless you feel like presenting one yourself, Merry?"

"Thanks, Blake, for the suggestion; but the fact is, one funny merchant in the coll. is enough, and Lowther is still at large. What we want is a pot of some sort—"

"Weally, Mewwy, I considah it wathah bad form to bang your fist on the table when I am w'itin' to the patah!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "I considah it weally wotten form as a mattah of fact. And, Mannahs, I must wequest you to get off the table instantly. If you wefuse, I have no alternative but to thwash you— Ow!"

Without evincing an answer, Manners, of the Shell Form, sprang down from the table, the result being that the small table had made a short retrograde movement. At the conclusion of this the edge had caught Arthur Augustus on the last buttoned button of his elaborate waistcoat, and had caused the swell of St. Jim's to jab his pen violently through the letter he was writing.

"You wottah, Mannahs! You wank outsiders! Blake, I must wequest you as a fwient to second me—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus had risen to his feet, a wrathful expression on his face. Manners stood by himself near the window, his knees knocking against one another in pretended fear. The others yelled with laughter—that is, with the exception of Skimpole. St. Jim's amateur Socialist had also risen to his feet.

"Control yourself, D'Arcy!" he exclaimed, laying a hand on the other's shoulder. "Please control yourself. I am convinced that the affair was an accident."

"I intend to thwash him," said Arthur Augustus coldly. "I intend to administah a fearful thwashing."

"I shall prevent you from doing anything so brutal, D'Arcy. I shall use force if necessary, much as I dislike that method of carrying a point."

"Weally, Skimmy, I can't see what this has to do with you, deah boy. If I wish to thwash Mannahs—"

"Oh, sit down, Gus, and let's get on with the washing!" laughed Tom Merry. "For a silly ass, you have your funny moods; but we're out for ideas; not an epidemic of thick ears."

Arthur Augustus was inclined to argue the point, but Manners rose to the occasion.

"I am sorry, Gus. Of course, you are a silly ass, but you can't help it. I'm sorry."

"There, Gussy," grinned Tom Merry, "what more can you want than that? Get on with your letter, and don't talk."

"Yaas, wathah! I must get on with the lettah, because it's wathah important."

Tom Merry turned to Skimpole.

"Can't you think of something, Skimmy?" he asked. "These other fellows seem to have come in here without their brains. We want a cup or something to play for, or an original way of challenging the New House cads; anything to make a stir and get the chaps to come and watch the first game of water polo played at St. Jim's."

"Couldn't a deputation wait upon Dr. Holmes—"

"What for?"

"I was coming to that. Wait upon Dr. Holmes with a politely-worded request for a cup? Really, you know, the doctor would have no right to refuse the request, because it is for the common good. As that famous German Socialist says—"

"Does he? Well, why doesn't he go in a home?" said Tom Merry. "We have about as much chance of getting a pot from the doctor as we have sense from Skimmy. No offence, Skimmy. No, Blake, I'm afraid there's nothing for it; we must just have the game known as a friendly, and try to work the fellows up as best we can. Oh, do ring off, Gussy!"

"I have finished my lettah, deah boy."

"Write another, then, only for goodness' sake dry up. We're in a muddle without you; with you chaos would be reigning again. Dry up, ass!"

"I wefuse to dwy up, Tom Mewwy, and undah the circs. I considah it wude of you in the extweme to wequest my doing so. I will wead you the lettah I have w'ritten to the patah."

"My hat! What for?"

"I will wead parts of it—that is—"

"Blake," exclaimed Merry, "has it been out in the sun much? I mean—"

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NEXT THURSDAY: "TOM MERRY'S TRIP TO PARIS." MARTIN ^{By} CLIFFORD.

Arthur Augustus coughed.

"Ahem! 'Dear Patah,—Not long ago a wepresentsative match was played at Wayland by two well-known watah polo teams, and a good many of the St. Jim's juniors watched the game. It was wipping, and we have decided to twy and start the game heah. Tom Mewwy thinks the first game ought to be between the School House and the New House, but to make the mattah a success, we wathah think there ought to be a cup to play for. We should considah it a great honah if you would wpesent one."

"Twisting this will weach you in time for you to get a cup and send it by passengah twain to-morrow. Believe me, youah affectionate son—" The west is of a pwivate nature, deah boys."

At first Tom Merry was inclined to shout with laughter at the wording of the letter, then he wanted to bang Arthur Augustus on the shoulder and call him by endearing names. Evidently the swell of the School House expected something of this, for he got up; but the Shell fellow appeared to have changed his mind again.

"I wathah think the patah will wise to the occasion all wight," Arthur Augustus said. "I shall pwobably wiah him in the mornin' to wemind him. Don't you think the ideah is wathah wippin', deah boys?"

"In a way it is tremendous," said Tom Merry quietly.

"I don't like subbing on your pater, though, Gussy."

"Wats, deah boy! The patah will be delighted."

"Humph! I don't know so much about that. In any case, I think that letter might be worded better. Made less abrupt, you know."

"Tom Mewwy," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity, "I wespsect your fwientship, and I wespsect you for othah weasons, but you must admit that I know in what stwain to w'ite to my patah."

"Yes; but—"

"Then the mattah is settled," said D'Arcy airily. "I wefuse to listen to anythin' you have to say. Personally, I considah that lettah as weemarkably deah, and if there is one thin' more than anothah my patah likes, it is cleanness in lettah w'itin'. I am goin' to expwess the lettah, so that it will be delivahed to-night."

"Well, it's jolly decent of you, Gussy, and Manners ought to have his head punched for shaking the table. Yes, you ought, Manners."

"Yaas, wathah, bai Jove! But undah the circs., I have decided to let him off the feahful thwashing he deserves. You are safe fwom me, Mannahs, deah boy!"

Manners did his best to look relieved, then Jack Blake chipped in.

"I've got it, you chaps! The very thing!"

"Fiah ahead, deah boy!"

"Nothing wheezy, mind!"

"Nothing wheezy ever comes out of Study No. 6. Merry, my son, except when you happen to be leaving it," said Jack Blake. "I propose that we spread the news that the first of the annual cup matches between the two Houses comes off next Saturday, but in the meantime a water polo match is to be played between Figgins's team and Blake's seven—"

"Merry's seven, you mean, Blake!"

"No, I don't!"

"Yes, you do!" exclaimed Tom Merry warmly. "Don't be so jolly silly. Of course it will be Merry's team!"

"I don't think! It was my idea!"

"You'd better be careful, Blake. Sit down, Skimpole!"

"No, Merry, I must refuse to sit down," said the amateur Socialist, and various other "ists," blinking through his huge spectacles at the heated juniors. "As an interested listener to the foregoing argument, I should like to propose that neither of you captain the School House team."

"Eh?"

"What's that?"

"I should like to propose in addition," went on Skimpole, "that in recognition of D'Arcy's magnanimous offer to provide the school with a cup, that he be asked out of courtesy to captain us. I put it to the meeting, gentlemen."

"Bai Jove!"

"Humph!"

"Ahem!"

Tom Merry and Jack Blake looked at one another, and nodded instantly.

"Good idea, Skimmy!" said the Shell fellow quietly. "I should like to second Skimpole's proposal. If you are all agreeable, we'll ask the one and only to captain us."

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus, blushing to a beautiful scarlet. "Bai Jove!"

The swell of St. Jim's was a very popular fellow with almost every one, but, somehow, it was not often that honour was thrust upon him in that way. It was not his way to take a back seat in matters of importance, but it



The juniors scrambled down the steep sides of the old quarry, each in turn helping their girl chum.

was also not his luck to often find himself in a front one. Arthur Augustus was a little overcome.

"Yes, rather!" sang out the fellows, grinning good-naturedly.

"You're skipper, Gus!"

"We aren't going to take a refusal!"

Arthur Augustus felt that the occasion required some slight speech, and he rose to his feet. He was a little too surprised to collect his thoughts, and started somewhat at random. He had used the phrase "deah boys," had audibly mumbled something about an auspicious occasion, then every one said "Hear, hear!" and refused to let him go on.

"That's all right, Gus!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "You save your breath for polo; you'll need it, I can tell you. I take it, Blake, your idea of a trial game is to aid both sides getting out the best seven for the cup game?"

"That's the ticket. None of us have ever played water polo—unless you can call throwing a footer ball about at each other in the river, polo—and what we want to do is to get hold of the black horses who aren't going in for the transformation act and pan out rabbits. If I were Gussy

I'd just pick the best swimmers and watch 'em in the water."

"Yaas, wathah! I'll think the mattah ovah carefully," said Arthur Augustus faintly, for he was only in the recovering stage. "I shall take some time in considahin'—"

"That's the style," said Tom Merry, winking at the others. "Don't be rash, you know."

"Bai Jove, wathah not! I shall make a point of not bein' wash—"

"Then we can get on with the next biz. Of course, we shall want a referee—it's the sort of game where one is jolly well needed, I can tell you. I wonder if it would be a cheek to ask Kildare?"

"Kildare knows nothing about water polo, Merry," said Skimpole.

"Monteith, then—"

"Monteith asked me the rules himself when we were at the Wayland Baths watching the exhibition game," went on the brainy man of the Shell. "I have a proposal, but—"

"Fire it off, kid."

"Well, as a matter of fact, I would be willing to accept the responsible post myself," ventured Skimpole, glancing No. 83.

from one to another to see how his proposal would be taken.

"You?"

"Yes, Blake——"

"But you don't know hockey from noughts and crosses, or a leg break from a goal-post—you don't know anything about games!"

"Excuse me, Blake, I have studied water polo considerably during the last few days," corrected Skimpole. "My reason for doing so was that I was completely astounded at the very exhausted condition the players were in after the game at Wayland. When you consider that they were only in the water eighteen minutes, taking the time allowed for fouls, it really was surprising. I should like to study the game at close quarters, and note the stages this curious exhaustion advances in. In my book on the degeneration of mankind, I have a chapter devoted to an Englishman's worship of games, and——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ho, ho, ho!"

"Of all the funny asses!" chortled Tom Merry. "Never mind, Skimmy, I don't suppose you can help it. Shall we let him ref, you chaps?"

"Might as well," laughed Blake. "Only look up the rules and all that, Skimmy."

"Yes, Blake—yes, I will, indeed," said Skimpole. "I am very pleased that my proposal has been accepted. In fact——"

"Don't mention it," said Tom Merry, glancing at the other curiously.

Herbert Skimpole was one of the puzzles of St. Jim's. He was really clever in his way—that is, he was brilliant in grasping and expounding a wild, new theory. On the other hand, any thesis with a suspicion of sanity and reasonableness about it was below him, and he took no notice of it. Still, he seemed very keen about the water-polo.

"The ref. part of the business being settled," said Tom Merry, making for the door, "the next thing is to get out a challenge to stir up Figgins and the other New House people. That is your part, Gussy."

"Wight-ho, deah boy! Thank you, Skimmy, for offahin' to wef. for us. I considah it wippin' of you."

But it was really that offer of Skimpole's which caused all the subsequent trouble.

CHAPTER 2.

Gore's Modesty.

"**B**AI JOVE!" muttered Arthur Augustus. "Bai Jove!" He was wandering down the corridor after tea by himself, still a little overcome by the honour thrust upon him.

"But it was wippin' of Skimmay—weally wippin'! I wegard Skimmay as a remarkably sensible fellow, bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus walked on for a few more yards, trying to get used to the idea that he was captain of a water-polo team.

"There is anothah mattah I might have mentioned at the meetin', too," he soliloquised. "I have nevah played watah polo in my life. I——"

"Hallo, D'Arcy, old man!"

Arthur Augustus started and turned hastily. Gore, the cad of St. Jim's, was standing behind him, trying to smile in a friendly fashion. Arthur Augustus glanced cautiously at him, for the friendly greeting was unusual. It looked almost as if Gore wanted to borrow something.

"Nice day, isn't it?" remarked Gore almost affectionately, after a pause. "For the time of the year, I mean."

"Well, it's wainin', isn't it, an' the time of the yeah is Septembah, deah boy."

"Ha, ha, ha! Yes, that's what I meant, old man. Ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus thought for a moment or two, then his face brightened up.

"Hah, hah, hah!" he laughed. "I am sowwy, Goah, but I didn't see the joke. Ha, ha! But I watah think I must be goin', you know. As a mattah of fact, I have watah important biz on hand at pwesent."

"About choosing your team for the polo match?"

"Yaas, watahah!"

"That's the style," said Gore heartily. "You can't give too much thought to getting the seven together. Care to come in my room and have a snack of something?"

Arthur Augustus looked puzzled. He never remembered Gore having given an invitation of that nature before,

but the swell of the School House was a generous fellow, and always accepted unknown motives as good ones.

"I considah that watah wipping of you, deah boy," he said; "but, undah the circs., I am afwaid I shall have to wefuse. As a mattah of fact, I have just had tea."

"Well, I'll stroll along with you, old chap. Ahem! Got any idea yet as to whom you are going to play to-morrow?"

"No, bai Jove! I watah think I shall play in goal myself, because I have a long weach, an' Tom Mewwy said I was petty fair at stopping the wotten ball once in the wivah——"

"Jingo, yes! You must play in goal, of course! We couldn't do without you, Gussy!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Rather! Er—water polo is my favourite game, you know. Like it better than cricket any day of the week."

"Weally! Have you played much, Goah?" asked Arthur Augustus, pulling out his note-book. "It is my intention to wake up the best team I can, and if a man can play watah polo, I don't care whether he is a wotah or not."

Gore scowled, but he managed to control himself, and even succeeded in smiling in a ghastly sort of way.

"That's the true sporting instinct, that is, Gussy," he said. "Yes, I have played a great deal at home."

"Bai Jove, I wegard that as wipping heahin', deah boy."

"I play half," went on Gore. "If you're short, or anything like that, I shall be glad to turn out for you. I rather fancy I could hold my own against any fellow in the college at water polo."

"I will beah that in mind, deah boy. Thank you for the information."

Gore hesitated.

"Shall we consider it as settled that I play half for you, then?" he said, with an elaborate carelessness. "I don't mind playing in the least. Er—I hope you won't think I'm bragging, you know, but it's an open sort of secret at home that I might have been chosen for my county if it hadn't been for a row I had with the chairman of the selection committee—a rank outsider, you know. Er—that's between ourselves, old man," he added, rather hastily. "I wouldn't like it to get about, in case the fellows thought I'd been bragging."

"Yaas, watahah! Yaas, Goah, undah the circs., I watah think you had bettah play half to-morrow—that is, I'll considah the mattah carefully, and——"

"That's all right, then!" exclaimed Gore. "Let me know the time the match starts. So long!"

"Well, I nevah!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "I watah think I call that jumping to a conclusion. Still, if he were nearly selected to play for his countay—— Bai Jove!"

Someone had come up behind, and something heavy had fallen on his shoulder. It was Mellish's hand, Mellish being a toady to Gore, and a bird of the same feather.

"Hallo, Gussy, old man!"

"Hallo!" panted Arthur Augustus. "Weally, Mellish, I must wequest you in futuah to gweet me with less vigouah. You have wumped my coat, and put me in a fluttah!"

"I'm sorry, Gus, I am really," said Mellish, who was inclined to whine on occasion. "I wouldn't have rumped your coat for anything, that I wouldn't!"

"Well, undah those circs., I considah that there is nothin' more to be said, deah boy."

"That's decent of you, old chap."

"No, Mellish, it is merely a mattah of dig. with me. If a fellow apologise, I nevah say anythin' furthah. Have you seen Tom Mewwy since tea?"

"No, I haven't. I'll tell him you want him when I do. Congratulations, old man, on being chosen to captain the polo team for to-morrow. We couldn't have got a better man even amongst the seniors."

"Bai Jove!"

"No, it's a fact we couldn't," went on Mellish, warning to his task, and finding it an easier job to dissemble than Gore had done. "I'm not the fellow to throw soft soap about, as you know; but I'd sooner play in a team captained by you than one captained by anybody else in the coll., I would, indeed."

"Weally, Mellish——"

"I've always said, Gussy, old chap—— But that doesn't matter. A fine game, water polo!"

"Yaas, watahah, bai Jove!"

"Have you played much yourself?"

"No, deah boy; as a mattah of fact, I haven't played at all, except at a sort of pwactice. I shall keep goal, and as I can stay in the watah without gettin' cold, I watah think I shall sewamble through all wight."

"Of course you will. It's an easy game to pick up, although I remember when I first started——"

Mellish paused, and waited for Arthur Augustus to bite. Arthur Augustus obliged instantly.

ANSWERS

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 88.

NEXT THURSDAY: "TOM MERRY'S TRIP TO PARIS." MARTIN CLIFFORD.

By

"You play watah polo, then, Mellish?"

"Oh, rather! I think it's my favourite game. I play half-back, you know."

"Weally—"

"Have you got your backs yet, Gussy?"

"Well, as a mattah of fact—"

"Well, I don't mind playing, old man," said Mellish pleasantly. "Left back, mind. You might lend me a swimming costume, too; mine's moth-eaten!"

Mellish walked away, and Arthur Augustus put his monocle in his eye.

"Bai Jove!" he mused. "I watah think Mellish selected himself to play. I think I will wetire to my woom and think the mattah ovah."

"Cheer-ho, Gussy!"

"Hallo, Blake, deah boy!"

"Nice sort of day for young ducks, isn't it?" grinned the chief of Study No. 6. "Been out yourself? Oh, but about that polo. You can put me down centre-forward."

"No, deah boy, I am afwaid I can't," said the polo captain. "You see—"

"No," said Blake frigidly, "I do not see, D'Arcy. Why can't you put me down centre-forward?"

"Because Tom Mewwy wants to play there, deah boy."

"Tell Tom Mewwy to go and watch the flowers grow."

"Yaas, watah; but I'm afwaid he would wefuse to do anythin' so wiculous."

"Play the ass on the wing, then."

"But he asked me as a favah to play him at centah-forward, Blake deah boy."

"Then he can go to sleep again and dream about it. I play centre-forward. Oh, Digby and Herries are looking for you."

Digby and Herries shared Study No. 6 with Blake and Arthur Augustus, and they came hurrying up at that moment. Herries pushed Blake aside.

"How are you, Gussy, old man?" he exclaimed, seizing the other's hand and shaking it. "You are looking fit, and no mistake. I play centre-forward."

"Bai Jove, Herries, but I have two centah-forwards already."

"Then put me back, or half, or somewhere," said Herries obligingly. "It doesn't make much difference to me where I play. I'm as good in one position as another."

"I don't think."

"No, Blake, you can't," said Herries. "What's the matter with you, Dig?"

Digby had taken Arthur Augustus's other hand, and was shaking it gravely.

"Anything I can do for you, Gussy, I'll do it," he said, in a voice which thrilled with affection. "Give it a name, and consider it done. I'd prefer playing forward somewhere, but suit yourself so long as I am in the team. Stand Blake or Herries down if you haven't room."

"Want a thick ear, Dig?" asked Herries.

"Quite willing to take any you can give, kid. It's settled I play, then, Gussy?"

"Bai Jove!"

"Good! I'll unearh my swimming costume. What do you want, Lowther?"

"Permission to be alive, young Digby," said the humorist of the Shell, sauntering up with Manners, "also permission to congratulate dear old Gussy on his lately acquired honour. Manners and I have been talking this polo over, Gus."

"That is remarkably decent of you an' Mannahs, and if you have any suggestions to offah—"

"We have. We have decided to play back—both of us. It'll make the defence pretty strong. I rather wanted to get some footer practice to-morrow, but in the circumstances, I don't mind making a sacrifice for the good of the House. I will play if only out of friendship for you, old chap."

"Hear, hear!" said Manners. "You needn't worry about me either. I shall be there in time for the start."

"Weally, Mannahs, much as your fwiendly suggestion pleases me—"

"Don't mention it, old man! Just consider the matter settled. Oh, I say, Reilly of the Fourth is hunting about for you."

"Bai Jove!"

"And young Wally, Curly Gibson, and Jameson of the Third," grinned Lowther. "They all seemed pretty anxious to find you."

"Weally?"

"Yes, weally. Then there was Dudley, also of the Third, and five other chaps from the Fourth, not to mention Kerruish, and one or two more. Where are you off to?"

"I am goin' to my studah, deah boys!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus hastily. "Undah the circs., I considah the best thing I can do is to go to my studah, and I must wequest you all to wefuse to tell where I am."

"Hallo! What's the matter, ass—dear old Gussy, I mean?"

"Nothin' is the mattah, Lowthah, but I wish to go to my studah, and lock the dooh. And wegardin' the watah polo, I have only decided upon one position as yet, bai Jove!"

"Centre-forward?"

"No; he means back."

"No, Blake, I do not mean centah-forward," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "And I do not mean back, Lowthah. I was weferring to the posish of goal-keeper!"

And the swell of St. Jim's retired to his room more than a little unnerved at the task which lay before him of selectin' his team for the next day.

CHAPTER 3.

The Firmness of Arthur Augustus.

"S EEN D'Arcy, Blake?"

"Is Gussy anywhere about, Merry?"

Inquiries as to the whereabouts of Arthur Augustus were innumerable that evening, and kindly solicitations as to the state of his health and spirits uncountable. Jack Blake listened to each fresh inquirer and grinned.

"Gussy is non est, Reilly, my son," he said, as the time for bed approached. "But if you will leave word as to which place, bar centre-forward, you would like to play in to-morrow's match, I'll pass it along to the one and only when I meet him."

"Water polo? Sure, and how did you know it was about that I wanted to speak to him, Merry?" asked the junior from Belfast.

"I was struck by a brain wave, and guessed, kid," laughed the Fourth-Former. "Twenty-eight people have been asking for Gussy since it got out that he was to be captain. You're the twenty-ninth."

"Well, and where is he, old man?"

"Non est!" said Blake. "If you don't find him there have a hunt round the college."

"You are a rotter, Blake! Look here, tell Gussy I play goal when I play."

"When you play! Have you ever played?"

"No," said Reilly hastily. "But I intend to play goal when I start."

"Which won't be for some time yet," chuckled Blake. "The goal-keeping job is booked. Gussy is going to play there himself, and you can't expect him to stand himself down for someone else, who has never played, can he, Skimmy?"

"Yes, Blake, he can," said Skimpole. "It is what D'Arcy ought to do if he is convinced."

"It's what D'Arcy won't do, I'll wager my old-age pension, and chance it."

"Of course," went on Skimpole, speaking absently, "human nature is yet in its primitive state when one considers how perfect that nature could become, must become, when selfishness is eliminated from all human motives, when the great ego no longer rules man's actions, and—"

"There, Reilly," said Blake gravely, "what did I tell you? You see Skimmy's point?"

"Faith, no! I'm blest if I do, because I wasn't listening."

"Neither was I; but there was a point, wasn't there, Skimmy?"

"Of course there was, and—"

"Then why not hang your hat on it? Hallo, there goes the bell! Good-night, Reilly!"

"Look here, tell Gussy I can play forward or half just as well as I play goal."

"Ha, ha, ha! I'll tell him, kid, though he'll have too much sense to believe that you can play anywhere. No offence, you know."

Reilly looked as if there had been an offence, and as if it had been taken, but before he could say anything more, Blake wandered away. He tried to enter Study No. 6, but found the door securely locked.

"Who is there, deah boy?"

"I—Blake!"

"Anybody with you? Any wottah who wants to play watah-polo, I mean?"

"No ass—old chap! No, I'm a solo, as it were! Good! My hat!"

Arthur Augustus had opened the door cautiously, and once his chum was inside had locked it again. The spectacle which had called forth Blake's exclamation of surprise was a collection of twisted notes lying on the floor.

"Yaas, bai Jove! They were all pushed undah the dooh," explained Arthur Augustus. "I wefused to open the dooh, and so the fellahs w'ote notes, and pushed them into the woom. They are wequests for places in to-morrow's watah polo team."

"Jingo! You must be hayin' a time, kid."

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"Yaas, wathah! I've six centah-forwards to choose fwom, and—"

"That place won't give you any trouble, though."

"No, Tom Mewwy—"

"Merry!" exclaimed Blake, in indignant surprise. "You promised to play me there!"

"Yaas, wathah! Only Mewwy says I pwomised him befoah!"

"Rot! Piffle! Just as if you would. Tom Merry has made a mistake."

"Yaas, wathah! I will point that out to him. Bothah! There goes the wretched bell!"

The pair left the study, Jack Blake affectionately linking his arm in that of Arthur Augustus.

"Yes, rather! Don't forget, Gussy, rub it in if Merry tries any old rot on with you. Be firm, and tell him you'd like to play him centre-forward, only you have the good of the House to consider, and must choose the better man. Don't let him soft-soap you, or anything like that."

"Bai Jove! Wathah not! I'd like to meet the fellow who could get wound me with soft soap, bai Jove!"

"That's the style!" grinned Jack Blake. "Hallo, there's Merry himself hanging about at the bottom of the stairs. Ten to half a one he's looking for you, Gussy!"

"Yaas, wathah! I think it decidedly pwobable that he is. I pwopose we go the othah way."

"What! You aren't afraid of standing up for your convictions, are you, Gussy? Take my advice and go and settle it once and for all. Just walk past as if you didn't see him, and when he stops you be as firm as a giddy rock. I'll slip up the other staircase."

"Stop, Blake! Stop, deah boy! Wotten!"

Arthur Augustus stood where he was in the centre of the corridor for a moment or two, watching Tom Merry at the other end. Tom Merry appeared to be minutely examining a drawing some junior penman had executed on the wall. After a moment or two, Arthur Augustus returned his monacle to his eye, and squared his shoulders.

"I will wandah past wapidly, and wefuse to stop," he decided. "I considah that, undah the circs, that is the most bwainy course to adopt. Yaas, wathah!"

He hurried along, almost gained the stairs, his head turned away from Merry, when a strong hand fell on his shoulder.

"My hat, if it isn't Gus!"

"Yaas, wathah! But I am in wathah a huwvy, Mewwy, deah boy. I haven't a beastly minute to spare, bai Jove!"

"Which way are you going?" asked the Shell fellow grimly.

"Up the stairs to the dormay."

"Good! I'll come with you. Settled on your team for to-morrow yet?"

"No!"

"Then the sooner you do settle the better," said Tom Merry severely. "Of course you have decided to play me centre-forward?"

"Well, as a matter of fact, deah boy—"

"Oh, Gussy!" said the Shell fellow gravely, shaking his head. "You don't mean to tell me that you have been weak enough to listen to Blake's blarney? I'd never have thought it of you—never!"

"Weally, Mewwy, I wathah think I am the last fellow in the world to listen to anyone's blarney."

"So I always thought; but if you have been letting Blake get round you."

"Weally, deah boy, Blake could nevah get wound me. I should wefuse to listen to a fellah who was twying to get wound me. I should considah it dewogatory to my dig; and I twust I should always select the bettah man."

"Then why haven't you settled to play me?" asked Tom Merry, raising his eyebrows in surprise.

"Well, as a mattah of fact—"

"Blake has been getting round you," finished the hero of the Shell sadly. "I am disappointed in you, Gussy, bitterly disappointed."

"Bai Jove! Now you mention it, I wathah think Blake did twy to get wound me," said Arthur Augustus, after a moment's pause, during which they had almost gained the Fourth Form dormitory. "I do weally."

"I don't wish to say anything against Blake, who is not a bad youngster in many ways," said Merry thoughtfully, "but knowing him as I do, I think there can be no doubt that he did try to get round you. It's—ahem!—a thing I should scorn to do myself, and should anyone have tried it on me I should know how to answer him."

"Bai Jove!"

"Yes, I should indeed," said Tom Merry indignantly. "I should instantly play someone else in his place, and put the soft-soaper out on the wing, I would, whatever happened."

"Yaas, wathah! Undah the circs, you suggest it would serve the wottah wight."

"Then I am to take it I play centre, and Blake goes on the wing?"

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NEXT THURSDAY: "TOM MERRY'S TRIP TO PARIS." By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"Well, weally—"

"Gussy, don't be weak—don't be weak, whatever you are! You are captain. What you say is to be must be. I should be very sorry to think that a chum of mine was got round by Blake."

"Yaas, bai Jove! But there is no feah of that, deah boy. I can be as firm as a rock."

"What's a wock? Oh, a rock! Well, think carefully, and make your decision."

"Yaas, wathah! Undah the circs."—said Arthur Augustus—"undah the circs., I considah that you are the bettah man, and so I shall select you to play centah-forward, and Jack Blake on the wing!"

"Hooray!" said Tom Merry. "Good-night, ass!"

And he pelted off at top speed.

"Twying to get wound me, bai Jove!" he muttered, emphasising the "me." "Like his cheek. I shall wemonstwah with him!"

And as Blake was in the dormitory when Arthur Augustus entered, he had not long to wait for his remonstrance. Blake listened and sighed, then he began to talk in a sad, disappointed voice.

He pointed out that Arthur Augustus did not know his real friends, that he was unstable, and that a wily tongue could claim him as victim at will. He said he viewed Arthur Augustus's future with a very grave eye. Arthur Augustus was duly impressed, and Blake warmed up.

He hinted that Merry had tried to get round him, and that the hero of the Shell had shown himself in his true colours at last, that it would really be for Merry's good to teach him a lesson and convince him at any cost that, after all, ambition was merely a form of selfishness. Here Skimpole chipped in.

"Exactly!" he exclaimed, turning with his collar half off. "Isn't that the message I have been trying to give the world? Ambition! What has ambition ever done for the world except to cause wars and internal strife. Under a Socialistic regime—"

"Suppose you ring off?" suggested Blake.

"Really, Blake—"

"Yes, really. You can choose between that and a thick ear. Gussy, I am surprised that a fellow like Merry should have twisted you round his little finger, painfully surprised. Jingo! If I were you, do you know what I would do?"

"No, deah boy!"

"Why," grinned Jack Blake, "I would kick Tom Merry out, play me centre-forward, and make the rotter go out on the wing, that's what I'd do."

"Bai Jove! That is pwecisely what Tom Mewwy said. But I wathah think I will do it!"

"Of course you will!" said Jack severely. "Any fellow with a grain of spirit would."

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus again. "But I can't; the mattah has passed fwom my hands."

"What do you mean?"

"Why, deah boy, I have given my word that Mewwy shall play centah-forward—I did weally!"

"Well, but under the circumstances—"

"Weally, Blake," said Arthur Augustus, in surprise—"weally, Blake, I am surprisid at you ofahin' such a suggestion. No circs. wawwant a man bweaking his word. Tom Mewwy may be a wottah—in fact, I wathah think he is; but I cannot move in the mattah now. I gave my word; I wegwet havin' done so, but it cannot be helped."

Jack Blake looked back at Arthur Augustus in silence for a moment or two, then he delivered himself of his opinion.

"Of all the shrieking, utter asses, Gussy," he said, "you are the finest example—"

"Weally, Blake—"

"I have ever met."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Oh, ring off, duffer!" growled Blake. "I don't suppose you can help it, though."

And Blake went on undressing.

"Bai Jove," the swell of St. Jim's thought. "It weally is remarkable, but I wathah think Blake is upset. I wondah what has wuffed him the wong way?"

Then Kildare came round to see that the lights were out, and the fellows retired to bed to dream of the first water-polo match which was to be played at St. Jim's the following afternoon.

CHAPTER 4.

The First Water-Polo Match at St. Jim's.

"B AI Jove, what a wippin' day for the watah-polo!" Arthur Augustus gave vent to these words early the following morning, and they had a far-reaching effect. In the first place they awoke the other fellows in the dormitory, and in the second place the other fellows crowded round Arthur Augustus and reminded him of the promises he had made about the composition of his seven.

For the rest of the morning the polo captain had much to put up with, his forbearance was tried to almost the breaking.

"I tell you, Weilly, you wottah," he exclaimed, as the hour for dinner approached, "you can't play! The team is: Myself, goal; Digby and Lowthah, backs; Mellish, half; Mannahs, Mewwy, and Hewwies, forwards. I have w'ritten the team out, and stuck it on the board, deah boy, so—"

"But you promised me a place, D'Arcy," shouted Reilly wrathfully—"yes, you did!"

"No, I didn't!"

"You as good as promised it, anyway!"

"No, weally, deah boy, I did nothin' of the sort! Bai Jove, he seemed wathah wuffed!"

At that moment Tom Merry sauntered up and clapped Arthur Augustus vigorously on the shoulder. Arthur Augustus winced, and looked aggrieved; but before he could complain, Merry came to the point.

"Everything ready, Gus?"

"Yaas, wathah. Blake is a bit watty about havin' to play on the wing, but I wathah think he will get ovah that. He's on the wight wing, so ought to get some goals with his wight hand."

"Oh, Blake'll live his rattiness down all right," grinned the Shell fellow. "I mean, are all your arrangements made for the game?"

"Yaas, wathah! I had a lettah ffrom Figgins, of the New House, this mornin', sayin' he'd be weady to start at three o'clock, and Skimmay is weadin' up the wules of the game now."

"But the goal-posts and marking out the playing pitch in the river?"

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry. "You don't mean to say you've forgotten about getting some goal-posts? And the ball? Have you got a ball?"

Arthur Augustus was too overcome to speak. He had been so pestered since his election to the captaincy, that he had forgotten about everything excepting the selection of his team. Like all other St. Jim's sportsmen, he had been accustomed to have all arrangements for the games such as cricket and football, made for him. He was completely flustered.

Tom Merry laughed in huge delight.

"You harmless ass, Gussy!" he chuckled. "Of course, Blake and I knew the sort of bird we were making skipper, and we took you in hand. The goal-posts, marking-out corks, and ball are all right."

"But, Mewwy—"

"I tell you they are," laughed the hero of the Shell. "Blake and I slipped over to Wayland before brekker this morning on our bicycles, and borrowed the things from the baths attendant. They are being rigged up on the river now by Taggles, who is in a beast of a temper."

The relief of Arthur Augustus was so intense that Tom Merry patted him on the back.

"That's all right, kid," he said. "You're a decent sort, and it isn't your fault you're a howling ass. Mind you lead us to victory, though."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus faintly, gradually recovering. "I considah it was wippin' of you and Blake—"

"Don't mention it! And there goes the gong for dinner!"

Dinner was an anxious meal for the poloists that day—so anxious that several of them forgot to eat. One or two of the meaner spirits, who considered they ought to be in the team, cut Arthur Augustus dead; but the captain was too excited to notice such a minor matter, while the majority of unselected School House juniors, though hinting that a grave mistake had been made, hoped ardently for victory.

Herbert Skimpole, the referee, ate his dinner by fits and starts, a book on water polo on his knees. Skimpole felt a little uncertain. He had discovered that there are at least eleven ways in which a foul can be committed at water polo, and how he was to remember them all, he did not know.

"But surely," he mused, his finger on the place in his book—"surely a man who has mastered Socialism, as I have, must be able to master the rules of a game, even of water polo? Let me see, you must not push a man under the water unless he has the ball in his hand. Dear me, I consider that a very good rule. I shall enforce it to the uttermost rigour of the law."

Then Mr. Lathom gave the signal of dismissal, and the fellows hurried out of the college.

There was, of course, no dressing-room near the river, so the School House team changed in Study No. 6; then they put on overcoats or macintoshes, and sallied forth not a little nervous. Skimpole was with them, his book of rules under his arm, and a huge whistle in his pocket.

At the river-bank a cheery voice greeted D'Arcy's seven,

and the wiry, lengthy form of Figgins, the New House leader of juniors, came in view.

"Cheer-ho! Brought the ambulance, Merry?"

"No, old chap. We've decided to carry you home afterwards. Get you there all the sooner, you know."

"Ah," sighed Lowther, the humorist of the Shell, "Merry always was a wit! He can't help it; neither can we. Who is refing?"

"Skimpole, ass!"

"Skimpoleass? Don't know him! Oh, that there! Skimpoleass, mind you don't make a single mistake. I say, you fellows, it's a pity there's a first eleven cricket match on to-day—we sha'n't get any of the seniors to watch us, after all."

"Well, that weally doesn't mattah," said Arthur Augustus. "This is only a twial game; the weal match is next Saturday, for the cup my patah is pwesenting."

"Yes, of course," said Figgins. "Jolly sporting of your pater, Gussy. Seven minutes each way, isn't it, excluding fouls?"

"Yes," said Skimpole, hastily turning over the leaves of his rule-book—"yes, that is correct."

"Well, we're ready as soon as you are, Gussy," said Figgins. "And may the better team win!"

"Yaas, wathah! Heah, heah! Are you weady?"

"Yes, kid!"

"All in, then!" sang out Skimpole, and in they all dived, the School House fellows in white caps, and Figgins' team in blue.

A beautiful stretch of the Ryll had been chosen for the match, the portion roped in with the corks looking even clearer and bluer than the rest, while each bank was lined with expectant juniors.

Under the corks the fellows dived and took up their positions in the opposite goals.

Skimpole clambered into his light boat, which was to be rowed up and down by Reilly.

"Hurry up, ass!" called out Figgins. "We don't want to get cold before we start. Here, where are you off to?"

"Dear me, I have left the whistle on the river-bank!" exclaimed Skimpole. "How careless of me! Row back as rapidly as you can, Reilly!"

Skimpole obtained his whistle, gained the course again, then remembered that the ball was also on the river-bank. Jack Blake and one or two of the others became wrathful at that, and likened the brainy man of the Shell to many things; but at last Skimpole was ready to start, and he carefully threw the ball into what he considered to be the centre of the pitch. But Skimpole was short-sighted, and he gave the New House a decided advantage.

Figgins got the ball, and "back-flipped" it to one of his backs, then they all swam furiously towards Arthur Augustus. Wynn, the fat junior from the New House, swam quite well, and was as buoyant as a cork, and he dribbled the ball down the centre. Mellish went for him, and Wynn promptly swam over his opponent, causing him to swallow more water than he had ever done at one time in his life before.

Then, when Mellish came up again at last choking and spluttering, Figgins pushed him down in the excitement of the moment.

It was a rank foul, and although Skimpole whistled loudly, Mellish could not hear him, being somewhere at the bottom of the river. He came up again at last, choking with anger.

Skimpole whistled as loudly as he could, and ordered a foul.

"Who for, ass?" panted Tom Merry.

Skimpole did not know.

He was inclined to think both sides had offended, and some humorist, who was an ardent footballer, suggested throwing the ball up.

"An excellent idea," said Skimpole, taking the advice literally. "Give me the ball, please."

The ball was thrown to him; then Skimpole restarted the game. He did so by throwing the ball rather excitedly into Mellish's face.

"Dear me," gasped the amateur referee, "I can't give a foul against myself for rough play, though I believe I have caused Mellish to drown. No, there he is!"

And there Mellish was. He rose to the surface in a very excited frame of mind, and promptly grasped Figgins round the neck to prevent himself sinking again.

They came up locked in one another's arms, and gasping. Then Skimpole made a mistake. He gave a foul against Tom Merry, who wasn't within three yards of the spot.

A whole chorus of yells and shouts greeted the decision from the river-bank, and Skimpole hastily turned over the leaves of his book of rules.

He learnt by means of a footnote there that it was a sign of weakness in a referee to alter his decision, and might possibly lead to the players getting out of hand; and Skimpole refused to run the risk.

"My only aunt!" panted Tom Merry. "I never touched the ball or anyone! Ha, ha, ha!"

Skimpole had whistled for the free throw to be taken, and as Herries happened to have the ball at the time, the School House back at once took it. As the foul had been given against his own side, there was a general outcry at this; but Skimpole had noticed nothing wrong.

After that there were so many fouls that no referee living could have kept pace with them. All the fellows in the water could swim well, but scarcely one of them had had enough practice with a polo ball to be able to throw it, and as each waited, ball in hand, endeavouring to keep his head above water, someone else would come floundering up. Then someone else always acted in exactly the same way. He first knocked the ball out of his opponent's hand, then swam over him and pushed him down towards the bottom of the river.

Skimpole glanced at his page on hints to referees, and became possessed of the knowledge that too much whistle often spoils a game, that minor infringements had sometimes better be left unseen. Consequently he gave up whistling, and took to looking at his watch, to see how time was getting on. He remembered then that he had forgotten to take the time at the start, and would have to depend on his judgment to guess the initial few minutes. As things panned out, this slight discrepancy on the part of Skimpole did not matter, for the trend of the first water-polo match at St. Jim's took a sudden turn.

Figgins accidentally kicked Mellish in the ribs as he tried to dribble past him, and Mellish acted as he would not have cared to in a calmer moment. He hit out at Figgins, and caught that usually excellently tempered junior on the side of the head with his fist.

Figgins was only human. He flung the heavy, wet ball at the other's head, and missed him. Just behind Mellish Tom Merry was treading water, and before he could put up his hand to defend himself, the ball caught him in the face.

"Ow!" howled Tom Merry before he sank. "Ow!"

"Foul! Foul, you rotter!"

"Play on!" shouted Skimpole, who was still trying to work out the time question. "Play on!"

Tom Merry came to the surface then, spluttering and wrathful. Under the impression that it was Lowther who had wrought the shameful deed, he trudged furiously towards the New House fellow, flung his arms round his neck, and pushed him down.

Then Mellish succeeded in ducking Fatty Wynn, apparently because his ribs still ached where Figgins had kicked him.

"Bai Jove, you fellahs!" gasped Arthur Augustus, swimming away from goal. "Stop fightin', deah boys; this is watah-polo, not a sowap."

"All right, Tom Merry; all right, you rotter!"

"Who threw that ball in my face?"

"All right, Figgins, you rotter!"

"You shrieking lunatic, Herries!"

"I pwotest!" shouted Arthur Augustus. "As captain of the School House, I pwotest. Skimmay, whistle them up, you watah duffah!"

"Play on!" said Skimpole, a long, slender finger on his watch. "Only three seconds to go. Play on!"

Then he whistled loudly.

"The first half is ovah, deah boys!" cried Arthur Augustus. "Pway desist, Mellish, you wottah! Ow!"

Kerr had excitedly ducked Arthur Augustus from behind, and because he had not been expecting it, Arthur Augustus had taken in huge draughts of the Ryll.

When Arthur Augustus had recovered, he appeared to have forgotten his recent attitude towards the combatants. He at once became one of them. It was only then that Skimpole grasped the situation.

"Dear me, what are they doing?" he gasped.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Reilly. "Look at 'em! They're ducking each other in turn. Ha, ha, ha!"

Skimpole instantly blew a series of terrific blasts on his whistle, and seemed surprised that no notice was taken of them.

"I shall order them all out of the water, Reilly," he exclaimed severely. "I have the power to do so. Row in amongst them while I lift up this rope of corks. Tom Merry, leave the water!"

"Who threw that ball at me?"

"Bai Jove, you wottah!"

"My only hat!"

"Leave the water, Blake—leave the water instantly! Row up, Reilly! Row up as hard as you can!"

Reilly obeyed. It was unwise of him, for no sooner had he shipped his sculls than Fatty Wynn grasped the side of the light boat.

The boat listed violently, and Reilly was almost shot overboard. That excited the junior from Belfast.

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NEXT THURSDAY: "TOM MERRY'S TRIP TO PARIS." By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"Leave go!" he yelled. "Sure, and if you don't leave go, Wynn—"

Then Tom Merry also caught hold of the side of the boat. As Figgins attempted to duck him at the same moment, the boat gave a still further list, then gracefully turned turtle, and Reilly and Skimpole vanished into the depths.

At that point in the scene a figure in a Master of Arts gown appeared on the river bank, an elderly figure, who appeared to be trying to make up his mind whether to be the more surprised or angry. It was Dr. Holmes, the headmaster of St. Jim's, and a hush fell on the excited crowd of juniors lining the banks.

At first Dr. Holmes could not believe that fourteen of his pupils were fighting in the water; then, as he caught sight of Tom Merry's usually cheery face, he came to the conclusion that he must believe it.

"Boys!" he thundered. "Boys, how dare you!"

"Figgins, I weward you as a w'etch!"

"Who threw that ball at me?"

"All right, Kerr!"

"Boys—boys, come out of the water instantly!"

"Bai Jove," gasped Arthur Augustus, "that was the doctah's voice.

"Yes, and that's the doctor himself!" gasped Herries.

The fight stopped now, the juniors panting; then a bumpy head and a pair of spectacles came from beneath the boat.

"Catch hold of me, someone!" panted Skimpole. "Catch hold of me, or I shall sink again!"

"There you are, ass!" growled Tom Merry. "Where's Reilly?"

"At the bottom of the rivah, I watah think," groaned Arthur Augustus.

The Irish junior came up grinning, but he looked solemn enough when he caught sight of the doctor.

"Boys," thundered Dr. Holmes, in an awful voice again—"boys, come ashore instantly!"

They did not answer, but swam for the river bank in various frames of mind.

"Merry what is the meaning of this disgraceful scene?" next demanded the doctor. "What are you doing in the river?"

"Playing w-water-polo, sir—at least, we started playing that."

"And concluded with a fight. Each of you has two hundred lines to write. Where did you obtain those goal-posts and the ball?"

"From the Wayland baths, sir."

"Then see that they are sent back again at the earliest opportunity," went on the doctor, angrier than he usually allowed himself to become. "I forbid water-polo being played again by you juniors. You understand that? Now go back to the college, and show me the lines before breakfast-to-morrow."

And he strode away in great anger.

CHAPTER 5.

In Search of an Idea.

"B AI Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus. "Bai Jove, I weward that as wotten—wotten in the extreme!"

"Yes, ass, so do I!" growled Blake. "Pretty fine polo captain you are, and no mistake! Why didn't you keep the fellows in hand?"

"Well, weally, Blake, aftah the mannah in which you behaved—"

"Oh, go and eat coke! But I don't blame you as much as I do Skimmy. Skimmy, you ought to be boiled in oil for being such an ass."

"Dear me, I fail to see—"

"Why didn't you keep the game under control, you shrieker?" demanded Jack Blake, beginning to laugh.

"I whistled as hard as I could, and I ordered you and Tom Merry out of the water."

"Like your blessed cheek to think of it, then. Anyhow, it's done now, and it's no good locking the stable door after the horse is stolen—I mean, it's too late to chain you and Gussy up."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Oh, ring off! What do you think about it, Merry?"

"That you are a set of shrieking duffers," exclaimed the hero of the Shell. "My hat, it was the most exciting time we've had for a long time. Personally, I blame no one but Gussy; he should have kept the players in hand," he added, with a grin.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"What's the use of having a captain if he doesn't assert himself?"

"You wottahs wefused to listen."

"Of course we did," said Herries. "Do you think we were going to listen to a tailor's dummy like you?"

"Bai Jove," said Arthur Augustus, screwing his monocle



Tom Merry caught hold of the side of the referee's boat, and Skimpole shot gracefully out of it, and vanished into the depths of the river.

into his wet eye—"bai Jove, Hewwies, but you are sailing wathah close to the bordah line of good form. I do not want to thwash you, but—"

"Oh, come on, and let's get changed," growled Tom Merry. "Of all the rotten games in this world, water-polo is the rottenest. I shall never feel thirsty again."

The combined teams had slipped on their overcoats, and were making for the college. They were being followed by a large crowd of chuckling juniors.

As the college gates were gained, Skimpole spoke his mind.

"One moment, please," he said, with a severe cough. "I have something to say."

"Not Socialism?" said Tom Merry uneasily. "Don't say it's a speech on Socialism."

"No, Merry, I do not wish to discuss a social question. All I wish to observe is that I have refereed my last polo match. I do not consider I was supported in a sportsman-like manner."

"No, ass, you were doused in the river like an eel instead."

"In fact," went on Skimpole, taking no notice of the interruption—"in fact, I was not supported at all. I distinctly ordered you and Blake out of the water, and you

refused to obey. Therefore, I hand over the whistle—the— No, I cannot do that, because I have lost it in the river. But I resign. I have refereed my last polo match."

"My dear kid," chuckled Tom Merry, "don't waste your breath telling us that. We knew it before. If anyone will start a subscription for providing Skimpole with a keeper in future, I am ready to contribute half-a-crown. My opinion of the whole thing is rotten."

Jack Blake, Herries, Digby, and Arthur Augustus entertained similar opinions, and retired to Study No. 6 in uncommunicative frames of mind. Arthur Augustus flung off his coat.

He looked sternly at his fellow poloists, and his fellow poloists eyed him up and down, but none of them said anything. Then they got to work with towels.

Arthur Augustus had got as far as trousers and waistcoat before his eye encountered an object which under ordinary circumstances would have attracted attention the moment the chums had entered the study. It was a square, brown-paper parcel.

"For you, too, Gussy," exclaimed Jack Blake. "Perhaps it's the collar and chain at last."

"Weally, Blake, deah boy, some of your wemarks cannot be considahed in any othah light but that of wibald and No. 88.

widiculous," said Arthur Augustus, unfastening his parcel. "If you will only look at the mattah pwopahly, you will see that it was your wotten behaviours which— Bai Jove!"

"What's up?"

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Herries.

"Phew! It's the polo cup."

"Yaas, wathah, and a note fwom the patah saying he hopes it will meet with our appvoval, bai Jove. Well, if this isn't wotten in the extreme, I wathah think nothin' is."

The chums looked at one another blankly. There was the polo cup all right, a beautiful, solid silver affair, which must have cost twenty guineas, and the doctor had decreed that there was to be no more water polo at St. Jim's.

"What on earth is to be done?" exclaimed Blake. "This is the limit, and no mistake. You'll have to send the pot back, Gussy."

"No feah, bai Jove! That would wuffle the patah wathah a gweat deal, and I don't want to wuffle the patah. It is bad form; and besides, if I weturn this pot, the next time I wite for anythin' in a huwwy, the patah will want to considah the mattah, and it may not be convenient to me, deah boys."

Blake laughed.

"What a head you have, Gussy," he said, "and what a kindly heart not to want to ruffle the pater. But the fact remains, you'll have to send that pot back."

"I shall flatly wefuse to do anythin' of the sort, Blake."

"But you must, ass. You can't keep a cup like that for yourself when it has been presented to the coll., can you?"

"Of course not, bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus, looking puzzled. "I wathah think we are up a twee, deah boy."

"Anyway, there is only one thing to be done, Gussy, and you'll have to do it."

"If you are weterferring to your pwoposal about sendin' the pot back to the patah, I must wefuse to entahtain it," said Arthur Augustus. "No, Blake, I weally mean what I say, and you know me well enough to know that I can be as firm as a wock."

"As obstinate as a mule, you mean. But listen to reason, ass."

"I wefuse to listen to weason. I wefuse to listen to anythin' about sendin' the pot back. Bai Jove, you've no ideah how watty the patah would feel. I must wefuse to make my patah feel watty, even to please you, Blake, deah boy; so the mattah is settled."

"All right, then. What are you going to do about it?"

"I wathah think I don't know. I wonder if the patah would object if we waffled for it?"

"Waffled for it! What's waffled? Oh, raffled! Yes, you duffer, he would object. And besides, raffling isn't an athletic sport."

"No, Blake, I wathah think it wouldn't come undah that headin'. You are wight; waffling is out of the question."

"What about going to the doctor, and asking him to let us play water polo, after all?" asked Herries innocently.

"What do you think of that, Gussy?"

"Wippin'! Of course, that is what must be done, bai Jove. I wpropose we wait heah while Hewwies intahviews the doctah and wemonstwaters—"

"Not too quickly, Gussy, old man," said Herries. "My proposal is that we wait here while you interview the doctor. We all know your tactful ways."

But Arthur Augustus was not to be guiled. He had seen the expression on Dr. Holmes's face when the free fight in the water had been stopped, and he did not want to see a similar expression for some time. He flatly refused to visit the doctor, and Herries hinted that he was selfish. This was also without avail. Arthur Augustus refused with praiseworthy firmness.

"I weward the pwoposal made by Hewwies as widiculous," he exclaimed. "I considah that no one but an uttah duffah would have thought of such a pwoposal. I must wefuse to have anythin' to do with it."

"Then what on earth are you going to do, Gussy?" inquired Jack Blake. "You've told us what you won't do; let's hear what you will do now."

"I don't know, deah boy. I haven't considahed the mattah yet, but I wathah think some sort of a wace ought to take the place of the watah polo. A cwoss-countwy wun, for instance."

"We've had a cross-country run at St. Jim's since the flood, ass!"

"Yaas, wathah! I did not mean a cwoss-countwy wun exactly, but somethin' of that nature."

"A cross-country walk, then?"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Well, that's about the only form of athletics there isn't a pot for at St. Jim's," laughed Jack Blake. "No, Gussy; if you're looking for a new way of competing for this ripping cup, you'd better give it up and let some one else look for

you. Still, when you come to think of it, I suppose there must be something new."

"Yaas, wathah! A wun backwards, for instance!"

Blake looked at his chum sadly.

"Yes, there is that, isn't there, Gussy? And then there's also a long jump on the back of your neck—not to say cup ties at draughts. But I take it we want somethin' sensible!"

"Yaas, wathah! I wpropose we considah the mattah!"

Blake looked anxiously at the fire-screen before the grate, Arthur Augustus gazed up at the ceiling, and the other pair looked out of the window. For five minutes they sat in silence, then Blake broke the pause.

"Bothered if I can think of anything!" he exclaimed. "I'd sort of set my mind on this polo, and I can't get rid of the idea! What is to-morrow?"

"Wednesday, deah boy!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "You don't mean to say that you have forgotten that we are to take Cousin Ethel to the quawwy to see that cave, have you?"

"Of course I haven't, ass! I propose we put the matter before Cousin Ethel, you chaps! Cousin Ethel is ripping at helping a fellow with ideas!"

"Yaas, wathah! I considah that a wemarkably good ideah, Blake!"

"Of course it is!" grinned Blake. "Then the matter is settled until to-morrow afternoon. What do you say if we go and get a little footer practice until tea?"

This was also greeted as a good idea, and the four promptly finished dressing, and sallied forth to the magnificent playing-pitches which were the pride of St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 6.

D'Arcy's Mistake.

"HA, HA, HA!" going to have some more water polo, Gussy?"

"Doesn't he look a freak?"

"Look at his tie," said Mellish, grinning hugely; "and his socks!"

Arthur Augustus walked on across the quad., his nose slightly in the air, and his monocle sparkling in the strong afternoon sun. He did not deign to notice Mellish, or his remarks.

Mellish, and the one or two who were with him, followed Arthur Augustus up, talking loudly.

"His bags would want some beating!"

"And you couldn't beat his brand new blazer if you tried!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus turned, glanced at them, and strolled on, and this time Mellish and his companions did not follow. Standing by the gates were Blake, Tom Merry, and Figgins, all neater than usual, and all glancing impatiently up at the college clock.

"Come on, Gussy!"

"Come on, you ass! We shall be late, and it's a decent walk! My hat!"

"Phew!" whistled Figgins.

Blake blinked solemnly at Arthur Augustus, then held his hands before his eyes.

"Take it away!" he moaned. "Please take it away!"

"Weally, deah boys, I fail to see what is causing this widiculous mirth! I twust my twousahs are cwaised in the pwopah place?"

"And you will not chain it up, Blake!" said Figgins. "How many times have I not told you to buy it a collar?"

"Weally, Figgins, undah the circs., I weward your wemarks as not only widiculous, but vergin' on bad form! Is anythin' the mattah with me? Is my blazah cwoked, or my tie uneven? Do you know, I wathah think I ought to

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have won to a blue wibbon on my panamah instead of this wed on account of the colour of my socks, bai Jove!"

The other three did not answer. As a matter of fact, there was nothing to be said, for Arthur Augustus had never in his life exhibited such a striking exterior.

His blazer was the latest thing in its way—made to order, and of an original colour-scheme which included the hues violet, yellow, and a blue, but which, nevertheless, was tasteful—his socks were of shot silk, and so past description, while tie and panama hat-band were of delicate red silk. And in addition to this Arthur Augustus had carefully parted his hair in the approved Continental style—that is to say, in the exact centre, and right back almost to the neck.

Tom Merry looked at his own clean flannels, and noted that he had not been as careful as he might have been in folding them up. Then he looked back at Arthur Augustus.

"You haven't your equal, Gussy!"

"Thank goodness he hasn't!" grinned Blake. "But come on, we shall be late."

"Weally, though, deah boys, am I all wight?"

"I should say no!"

"Cover up those socks, Gussy!" said Figgins, turning away. "Please cover up those socks!"

"Weally, Figgins—"

"There's one thing, anyway," said Tom Merry. "When Cousin Ethel sees you she'll just shriek with laughter, Gussy."

"I wathah think Cousin Ethel will do nothin' of the kind, Mewwy! Cousin Ethel would nevah shwiek with laughtah at anyone—"

"She will at you, kid, and chance it! But we've wasted enough time, and the sooner we get a move on us the better! The grub's in the gym."

"Yaas, wathah—and that weminds me! I have forgotten somethin'! I won't be a moment, deah boys!"

"Two minutes are all we're going to wait, Gussy! Be a second more than that, and you'll find us gone!"

"I will wun like anythin'!" said Arthur Augustus.

He was back again within the stipulated time, carrying a small leather bag of the football-bag shape. The others were armed with scouting haversacks loaded with provisions, and a start was made.

It was a magnificent afternoon, and quite warm. The foliage, too, was almost as green as it had been the previous month, for the autumn was coming in easily, and had not yet browned the trees and caused the leaves to fall, while the cloudless sky seemed to offer all that was needed to raise the juniors' spirits to the highest possible point.

It was the day after the fiasco in the river, and though the rival polo teams had had much to put up with that morning from the chaff of those who had not been selected to play, the prospects of a picnic spent with their girl-chum, Arthur Augustus's cousin, compensated for all.

"And it will be wathah wippin' to see the cave itself, apart from the picnic!" said Arthur Augustus, as they swung along at a steady three and a half miles an hour. "I heah it is wathah wattling!"

"Wattling? What's—oh, rattling!" laughed Tom Merry. "Yes, they are all that! You see, Figgy, there's been a landslip in the quarry, and it has left a ripping cave! Cousin Ethel wrote to the one and only, and said we were to take her there this afternoon—that's it, isn't it, Gussy?"

"Yaas, wathah! Cousin Ethel is stayin' at Cleveland Lodge, you know!"

"So I hear," said Figgins, slaughtering wild flowers with his stick. "Did—did Cousin Ethel say anything about my coming with you, Gussy?"

"Of course she didn't!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "She specially asked that I should be one of the party, I believe—"

"I don't think!" growled Blake. "Not much! The only name mentioned in her note to Gussy was mine, as a matter of fact, so you two kids needn't get excited with one another!"

"No, wathah not!" said Arthur Augustus. "An' Jack Blake is wight, too! Cousin Ethel did mention his name! She said she hoped Blake hadn't got a swelled head on account of the cricket score he wan up against Figgins' team last week, and then added that I wasn't to give Blake that message—bai Jove, and now I have given it!"

"Yes," growled Blake, "you have, haven't you, you prize duffer! But suppose you chaps stop chuckling and step it out!"

There was a winding Sussex lane, which led from Cleveland Lodge and joined the high road on the way to the quarry, and it was at this point of juncture, Arthur Augustus said, they were to meet Cousin Ethel. As was correct, the juniors gained the lane a few minutes before time, and they sat down on an ancient tree-trunk to wait.

Tom Merry glanced in at the mouth of his haversack.

"Hope you've got some decent provisions, Figgy," he

said. "You can bet we shall all be jolly hungry by the time we've done the cave. My hat, this seems all right!"

"Oh, you can put Gussy's panama on it, the grub 's all right!" laughed Figgins. "I just collected the money from you fellows, handed it over to Fatty Wynn, and asked him to do his best on the commission of a seed-cake. Fatty said he knew just the things Cousin Ethel likes."

"Yaas, wathah! I considah that wathah a good idea on your part, Figgay! Wynn is a wondah at gettin' pwovisions togethah! Bai Jove, there's someone comin' up the lane!"

He jumped to his feet, "straightened" his tie, which had never been anything but straight, and gave his panama hat a still more decided tilt in the right direction.

Tom Merry even brushed his trouser-knees, whilst Figgins actually blushed a little. He always did, somehow, when Cousin Ethel was approaching.

"I wondah if it would be more cowwect if we were to wondah on and meet her?" suggested Arthur Augustus thoughtfully. "I wathah think it would!"

"No, better wait here," muttered Figgins. "I—I say, you chaps, is there a mark on my collar?"

"Yes, I should think there was," said Tom Merry, without looking. "I thought at first you'd got one of those spotted collars on!"

"Don't be an ass, Merry!"

Jack Blake gave his coat a hasty tug, adjusted his hat for the last time, and stepped in front of the others to be the first to greet Cousin Ethel. Tom Merry pulled him back, and Arthur Augustus waved them both aside.

"As Cousin Ethel's cousin, deah boys," he remarked with dignity; "as Cousin Ethel's cousin, I must insist that I be allowed to greet her first of all! Weally, Mewwy, I am suw-pwised—not to say astounded—that you—bai Jove!"

"My hat!"

"Phew!"

The footsteps were quite close by now, then the cause of the footsteps came round the corner.

He was a big man, of middle-age, unshaved, unwashed, unwholesome-looking. He was quite stout, with a flabby, very unpleasant face, and he was carrying a red spotted handkerchief—in which his change of wardrobe was packed—by means of a short stick held over the shoulder umbrella fashion.

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus again. "Bai—Jove!"

Anyone less like Cousin Ethel than that tramp could not have been found in all Sussex:

"And here is another of them!"

"Let 'em all come!" grinned Tom Merry. "It would be a kindness to have a whip round and stand 'em a bath between 'em! My only aunt, there's a third!"

"I wathah think there must be an epidemic of twamps!" chuckled Arthur Augustus. And because no one smiled he repeated his remark.

"Oh, ring off, ass!" muttered Tom Merry. "I say, you fellows, I hope Cousin Ethel didn't meet these roughs!"

"No, wathah not! But she couldn't have done—othahwise she would be in fwont by now, deah boy!"

"Humph!"

Tom Merry did not say so, but he felt relieved. There are tramps and tramps to be found in Sussex, and these were obviously the less desirable brand.

"Arternoon, young gentlemen!" began the first, grinning broadly. "Got anything to spare for a hard-working man wot's down on his luck and worn to a shadder looking for a job? Anything nice and tasty in that bag, for instance?"

"No, I haven't," said Merry sharply.

"Don't be 'asty, Charles," said the tramp sadly, rubbing the back of his grimy hand across his eyes; "remember we was brothers once!"

The other tramps roared with laughter, and the chums turned away and began to saunter down the lane.

Figgins gritted his teeth.

"I don't like Cousin Ethel passing that gang, even with us, Gussy!" he whispered. "Isn't there another way round?"

"No, deah boy, I am afwaid there isn't. But it will be quite all wight. I shall glance at the twamps as we pass, and I don't think they will say anythin' afftah that. Bai Jove, here she is!"

The chums hurried forward to meet a wonderfully pretty girl of about their own age. She was dressed in some sort of a white, summery attire which the juniors would have found difficult to describe, but which one and all were ready to admit was ripping, and, to cap it all, she was Cousin Ethel herself.

At that moment she was trying to look severe, and at the same time she could not help laughing.

"Arthur," she exclaimed, shaking hands with them, "what do you mean by it?"

"Mean by what, Cousin Ethel?"

"By not meeting me where I told you to?" went on the girl very severely. "I particularly asked you to meet me at the bottom of this lane——"

"Bai Jove, and we have been waitin' at the top!"

"But why?"

"I thought you said in your lettah that we were to meet you at the top of the lane. I did weally, Cousin Ethel."

"Which proves you do not read my letters," said the girl. "Yes, it does! I won't listen to any excuses. 'Top of the lane' cannot look like 'bottom of the lane,' even when I write it. And a lot of horrid tramps passed me. Fancy not reading my letters!"

"Yes, fancy not reading her letters!"

"You are an awful ass, Gussy!" muttered Figgins, under his breath.

"Bai Jove, deah boy——"

"Bothered if I can understand it. Catch me not reading any of Cousin Ethel's letters."

"But I have never written you any," smiled the girl pleasantly.

"No, of course not," floundered Figgins. "I mean, fancy me not reading anyone's letters except Tom Merry's when he's away on a holiday. I mean——"

"Yes," said Cousin Ethel sweetly, "we are all relieved to learn you read your letters. Suppose we walk on, shall we?"

"Yaas, wathah, bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, waving Jack Blake aside. "Allow me to walk next to my cousin, Blake, deah boy, because I wish to explain that I did wead her—her wippin' lettah. As a mattah of fact——"

Cousin Ethel glanced up at the excited speaker, then looked down again. She did not for a moment think that Arthur Augustus had failed to read her letter, but it was obvious to all that he had misread it, and Cousin Ethel considered that he ought not to have done so.

"And besides," she mused, "Arthur is much too volatile at times; and it was horrid passing those tramps. Arthur must be paid out, I am afraid."

At that moment Cousin Ethel looked round with a start. Seated on a pile of stones already cracked for road repairing, were the three tramps, smoking thoughtfully. The chums walked on, and, much to Figgins's relief, nothing was said. That was while they were within hearing. The moment they had rounded the bend, the tramp the juniors had seen first turned to the others.

"Wot about follerin' 'em up, mates?"

"Wot's the use, 'Enery?"

"'Ow do I know but they might drop somethin'—an' they might choose a lonely road."

The other two looked at one another, then one of them rose to his feet.

"I'm hon, 'Enery," he said firmly. "I'm hon to anything in reason, but if it's a walking tour them youngsters have in their minds, I aren't hon. I feel a bit wore down to-day."

"Yes," said 'Enery sympathetically. "But you do go the pace with the work, you do. 'Eld a 'orse's 'ead last Easter, didn't you?"

And they chuckled again, but they took the same road the St. Jim's juniors and their girl chum had taken, all the same.

CHAPTER 7.

The Picnic.

"WEALLY, Cousin Ethel, I did wead your lettah! I give you my word of honouah that I wead your lettah!"

Cousin Ethel laughed in her pretty way, but shook her head.

"You have made that remark about a dozen times since we saw those horrid tramps, Arthur," she laughed, "but you haven't convinced me. If you did read my letter you misread it. Isn't it lovely up here?"

"Yaas, wathah! But about that lettah——"

"There is nothing about that letter; the affair is finished, Arthur, and I shall refuse to listen to another remark on it."

"Yes, do dry up, Gussy!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Weally, Mewwy, I must considah that we mark as wude—wude in the extweme!"

"Then I take it back," grinned the hero of the Shell. "I'll take back anything I've said during the last three years if only you'll dry up. I—I say, Cousin Ethel, isn't it ripping? That sun shining on the old Ryll, I mean."

"Yes, isn't it?" answered the girl, looking down from the heights of the hill to the silver streak the river formed as it wound its tortuous way through the hills and woods. "I think it is awfully nice of you all to take me to the quarry when I am sure you would much rather be playing cricket."

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Of course, they all hastened to assure her that that was not the case, Figgins being loudest of them all—so loud, in fact, as to cause the other juniors to stop and stare. Figgins blushed then, and before he spoke again they had gained the brink of the quarry.

There was a time when it had been a very stiff climb down to the bottom of the huge excavation, an impossible climb for a girl, but a heavy landship had altered all this, and, with care, Cousin Ethel would have little difficulty in gaining the depths. And as they scrambled down, each junior in turn helping their girl chum, they felt that it was good to be alive on this perfect September afternoon, so quiet and magnificent did the quarry silence appear to them.

All manner of foliage had taken root between the giant boulders of stone since the last blow with pick had been struck; but the spring, which had been of such great use to the quarrymen in the past, still bubbled from the sandstone side. Cousin Ethel noticed this at once.

"Oh, I do hope you have brought some tea and a kettle and things!" she exclaimed. "It will be simply splendid to light our own fire! Have you?"

"Yes, rather!" answered Figgins gleefully. "I left all arrangements of that nature to Fatty Wynn, and in matters of grub—provisions, Wynn can be relied upon. What shall we do first?"

"See the cave, of course. That is what we are here for."

"Yaas, wathah! But about that lettah? I weally did wead it, Cousin Ethel!"

"Dry up, Gussy!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Yes, ring off, Gus!"

"Cousin Ethel has had enough of that subject," muttered Jack Blake. "Personally, if I had made an ass of myself, I wouldn't keep talking about it. I'd lie low, and let someone else do the talking. I suppose that is the cave over there?"

"Yaas, wathah! I propose we explore it at once."

"Right-ho!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Let's leave the haversacks where we are going to have tea—I mean, it's no use carrying them about with us. Do you think this will be a decent place to have tea, Cousin Ethel?"

"No, I do not," laughed the girl. "I think there is a much better place right over there near the spring and by the fallen tree, so that we shall not have far to go for wood for the fire. And you call yourself a scout, Tom Merry!"

The Shell fellow laughed in turn. He knew that Cousin Ethel delighted in chaffing them all in turn, but apart from that, there was a lot in what she said. They all walked over to the spot indicated, and, with a sigh of relief, Jack Blake dropped his haversack on the grass.

"Thank goodness I've got rid of that at last!" he said. "Put your bag down in the same place, Gussy."

"No, deah boy. Undah the cires. I wathah think I will conceal it behind this wock."

"What on earth for? What's in the bag, by the way?"

"Somethin' I want to show Cousin Ethel, deah boy. No, Cousin Ethel, I must wefuse to explain now—I weally must wefuse——"

"But——"

"How like a girl!" murmured Jack Blake; and that settled the matter as far as Cousin Ethel was concerned.

"I don't want to know what is in the bag!" she exclaimed indifferently. "I wouldn't listen if Arthur tried to tell me. I suppose you wouldn't like us to roll the rock on your bag to make it doubly secure, would you, Arthur?"

"Bai Jove, no!"

"Then we will proceed to explore the cave," decided the girl.

Figgins had brought his bicycle lamp, and once this was lighted, the party made their way into the darkness. Almost at the moment the last of them disappeared, three grimy faces came in view at the brink of the quarry above, as if the owners of the faces were lying down, and were just as anxious to see as they were not to be seen.

The faces in the distance looked remarkably like those of the tramps the chums had passed on their way from the lane.

"You—you'll have to be pretty careful, Cousin Ethel," said Figgins, as they made their way into the cave. "There are an awful lot of loose stones about."

"Oh, I am all right, thank you!"

"Yes, but—— Ow!"

Figgins had trodden on one of the loose stones he had mentioned, with one foot, and had then thoughtlessly put the other foot into a deep hole. It was some time before he was able to extricate himself, and it was also some time before he cautioned Cousin Ethel to be careful again. Arthur Augustus seemed to think there was humour in the incident, and chuckled until Figgins wanted to slay him.

"Dry up, ass!" he whispered fiercely in D'Arcy's ear. "Dry up, or there'll be trouble."

"Hah hah, hah! But it was wemarkably funny, deah boy! I—"

"Dry up, I tell you!"

"Certainly, Figgay; but undah the circs. you must admit—
Wow! Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus had also trodden in an unsuspected hole, and the accident caused him to knock the bicycle lamp out of Figgins's hand and drop his own panama hat.

The others were some little way ahead by now, for Jack Blake's voice sounded quite distant.

"Hurry up, Figgay, with the lamp! Cousin Ethel is surrounded with yawning chasms."

"Right-ho old man! You are a shrieking lunatic, Gussy!" he added, under his breath. "Where's the rotten lamp?"

"Heah, deah boy!"

Figgins lighted it hastily, and hurried forward, while Arthur Augustus called loudly to him.

"Stop, Figgay! Stop, you uttah ass! I can't find my panamah!"

"Put out a reward," growled Figgins.

"But weally—"

"Don't put out a reward, then. I don't care what you do so long as you don't walk near me. I'm coming, Blake!"

"About time, too. Cousin Ethel is fairly hedged in with yawning chasms. There, you can come this way, Cousin Ethel."

"Thank you!" smiled the girl to Figgins; and in the pale circle cast by the bicycle lamp, that smile was so effective that Figgins forgot all about Arthur Augustus and his panama. They went on without the swell of the School House.

The cave came up to every one's expectations, and an exciting quarter of an hour passed rapidly. Figgins hadn't fallen more than six times, and once the lamp burnt for three consecutive minutes, but apart from that nothing unexpected happened. Then they all began to think of returning to the quarry itself.

"We've explored about all there is to be explored," said Tom Merry, "and hunger is overtaking Blake. Consequently I propose a return to earth."

"Don't be an ass," said Blake. "I'm not a bit hungry. It's Figgins who keeps sighing with hunger."

"No, it isn't. I couldn't touch anything. I'll punch your head for that, Blake, when I get you home!" added Figgins, in what he took to be a whisper. "You just see if I don't."

"Don't whisper," said Cousin Ethel coolly. "There is an echo, and I can hear every word you are saying. Aren't any of you hungry?"

"Rather not!"

"I should think not."

"Not an atom."

"What a pity," said Cousin Ethel, scrambling over some loose boulders, "because I don't think I was ever so hungry in my life, and I sha'n't like to eat the ripping things Wynn will have provided for us if all you others haven't any appetite. But it doesn't matter; I shall be able to have another tea when I get back to Cleveland Lodge!"

Blake and Figgins glared at one another in the semi-darkness. Tom Merry glared at both of them.

"And if I were to say I was starving, it wouldn't be an exaggeration," he mused. "It's that ass Blake's fault."

"Are we going in the right direction?" asked Cousin Ethel; and from her tone of voice no one would have ever thought that she knew what was passing through her chums' minds. "We don't want to get lost, you know."

"Yes, this is all right!" sang out Merry. "There's the hole Figgins tumbled in as we came down. No, it isn't though! Anyway, there's a light ahead, so it must be all right!"

The lamp was not needed now, for there was a faint gleam of daylight ahead, and they made for this as quickly as they could. A few moments later they found themselves in the quarry again, but not at the spot they had left it.

They had accidentally discovered a new outlet which necessitated a walk of some hundred yards or so round the boulders to the place where the haversacks had been left.

Cousin Ethel led the way.

"I am sorry you are not hungry," she said again. "Of course, if you like, we will not wait for tea, but go back at once. I mean, there is nothing much more unpleasant for boys than to have to sit down to a picnic when they are not hungry, and watch a girl who is—"

"What is that?" said Blake wearily. "I thought I heard some voices."

Cousin Ethel was about ten yards ahead by this time,

having made her way between two huge boulders, and she had now turned sharply at right-angles.

The St. Jim's fellows could not see what it was that attracted their girl chum's attention, but they could distinctly see her pretty face.

There was such an expression of indignant amazement upon it, that Tom Merry opened his mouth and forgot to close it again.

CHAPTER 8.

The D'Arcy Cup.

"WHAT'S the matter, Cousin Ethel?"

"What's happened?"

"Look!" exclaimed the girl, in amazement. "Oh, just look at them!"

Tom Merry recovered himself, and clambered up beside Cousin Ethel. The next moment he was looking down upon the scene which would have raised wrath in a saint.

On the grass lay three haversacks, practically empty now, and a few yards from them sat the three tramps they had encountered earlier that afternoon. That was startling enough, but what was considerably more startling was that the three tramps were eating at express speed, and their meal consisted of dainty iced cakes—selected after much careful thought, by Fatty Wynn, especially for Cousin Ethel's enjoyment—fascinating-looking puffs and open jam-tarts, and sausage-rolls, which had made Wynn sigh as he had packed them up in the haversacks. Figgins glared, his eyes starting from his head.

"Of all the cheek—"

Then the horror of the thing dawned upon all the juniors. Their tea—the climax of the whole outing—was being wolfed by three stout and dirty tramps!

"Let me pass, Merry!" cried Blake. "Come on!"

"You are not to do anything of the kind!"

The juniors stopped, glanced at their girl chum, and then at one another. Cousin Ethel's face was quite white.

"My hat!" muttered Tom Merry. "A scrap is out of the question, Figgay!"

Figgins nodded.

Anything of the nature of a fight most certainly was out of the question with Cousin Ethel present. But what was to be done?

At that moment a yell went up from the other side of the feasting tramps.

"Bai Jove! Of all the cheek—"

"Gussy has turned up!" exclaimed Figgins. "He must have found his way back to the main opening. Hallo, Gussy!"

"You wank outsiders!" came back an excited yell as the form of Arthur Augustus, much dishevelled and travel-stained, dashed up to the tramps. "You w'etches! Stop! Stop eatin', I tell you!"

Arthur Augustus had been through much since he had knocked the bicycle-lamp from Figgins's hand, and the spectacle of three tramps eating his prospective tea, proved the last straw.

"Stop eatin', or I shall administah a feahful thwashing! Stop, I ordah you!"

By this time the other three St. Jim's fellows had scrambled down from the higher ground, leaving Cousin Ethel up above.

"Lie down, Gussy!"

"I wufuse to lie down, Tom Mewwy, and, undah the circs., I am surprised at you suggestin' that I should lie down. That wottah is eatin' Cousin Ethel's tea!"

"Look here, you ruffians!" exclaimed Blake. "I suppose you know you have stolen those provisions, and that you'll get landed in a police-court?"

"'Allo, Charles? 'Ow goes it, my pippin? Wot was that remark about stealing?"

"So you have—you've stolen our things, and, by Jingo, we'll make you sit up for it, you dirty loafers!"

"You 'ear that, 'Energy? 'E called us dirty loafers, he did!"

"Wot language!" murmured Henry, turning his eyes up to the sky, then lowering them again to attend to a sausage-roll. "Remarkable wot these youngsters do pick up, to be sure!"

The other two tramps sighed loudly, and it was as much as Blake could do to prevent himself flying at "'Energy" and rolling him off the rock he was seated upon.

"And as for stealing," went on one of the loafers, "tell it to your grandmother! We found these things, we did, and it is against human nature to let good grub go bad. Anyhow, the young lady ken jine us if she will, an' what's left over you youngsters ken dewide. I can't say fairer, ken I, 'Energy?"

"'Energy" said he couldn't, then Arthur Augustus put a word in.

"You are wottahs of the first watah, and if my cousin weren't pwsent, I should thwash you as you deserve."

"Saying that doesn't help, Gussy," muttered Tom Merry. "The point is, what is to be done? I'm not going to touch anything those dirty brutes have handled, and there's no need to ask Cousin Ethel. We are fairly dished!"

"Let's see what Cousin Ethel says about it," said Figgins. "My hat, though, if ever I get a chance to make those cads sit up, I sha'n't miss it!"

Cousin Ethel appeared unsympathetic, although unselfish. "Of course, it is regrettable," she said pleasantly, "but it really does not matter in the least."

"Doesn't matter?" gasped Tom Merry. "It doesn't matter that a gang of tramps have sneaked our tea?"

"No, of course it doesn't matter. You are not hungry, any of you! You told me so yourself."

"But you," began Figgins faintly—"you said—"
"Oh, it does not matter about me!" smiled their girl chum. "I can easily wait for tea until I get home."

Then the juniors roused their hands in their pockets, and glared at the happy tramps.

Figgins repeated his previous remark, and so voiced the sentiments of all.

"If only I get a chance of paying that lot out," he muttered wrathfully, "my hat, there'll be some earthquakes then! I—I say, Cousin Ethel, as a matter of fact, when we said we weren't hungry—"

"Yes," agreed Tom Merry, "when we said we weren't hungry—"

"When we said we weren't hungry—" murmured Blake, conscious that he was exhibiting a decided weakness in repeating what others had said instead of thinking for himself.

"You meant," said Cousin Ethel, "you meant that you were on the verge of starving, and told fibs about it. That is rather like a boy, you know, and I think it serves you right. But it does not serve me right, and so we'll have our tea after all."

"Bai Jove, how can we, seeing those w'etches are wolfing it against time?"

"By foraging for yourselves, Arthur. Let me see, have they touched our kettle and the packet of tea?"

Tom Merry peered round the rock again.

"No, they haven't touched that" he said. "And the sugar and bottle of milk are all right. They are in Figgins's haversack."

"That is good. Please go and ask them if we may have it."

"Ask them?" gasped Tom Merry. "Ask—"
But his indignation overcame him, and he sprang down to the lower ground.

"Look here, you hulking loafers," he said, in a low voice, "we're going to have those haversacks. If you kick up a shindy—well, some of us'll join in. See?"

"Charles, you ken have the 'aversacks, if you don't make a fuss about the grub to the police. Me an' these gentlemen are on a tour—a walking tour, and we don't want to be detained to explain matters. Take the 'aversacks, and make it quits, an' I'll shake hands."

Tom Merry took the haversacks, but he did not shake hands. He shook his fist instead.

"Don't you worry," he said. "We sha'n't trouble the police. But we shall trouble you one of these days, you see if we don't, you rotten thieves."

It went fearfully against the grain with the Shell fellow to have to take this set-back lying down, as it were, but there really was nothing else to do about it. With the exception of Arthur Augustus, the chums did not trouble much about what was considered "the thing," but a fight which would necessarily have been a stirring one with Ethel present, was something so very much not the thing, that none of them would have thought of starting it. The St. Jim's juniors liked to stand well in the eyes of their girl chum, which was as it ought to be.

Tom Merry came back with the three haversacks, and Cousin Ethel opened them.

"It might have been worse," she said pleasantly. "All the things for making tea are here, and there is one cake and some biscuits. It really is rather fun."

The juniors looked at the one small cake and the biscuits, and failed to note the humour. Arthur Augustus screwed his monocle into his eye and looked at the others.

"I w'opose that we adjourn to the top of the quawwy, deah boys," he said. "I must w'efuse to allow my cousin to have tea in the same quawwy as those twamps."

"Right-ho, if Cousin Ethel is willing."

The girl was, and by the time they had gained the quarry brink again, Tom Merry suddenly remembered that there was a farmhouse near by. He was off like a flash for it, and as Arthur Augustus had a sovereign in his pocket, the tea was augmented with simple country fare, which was never beaten yet in a London restaurant.

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The fire was kindled, the kettle of pure spring water boiled, and because she was a girl with a girl's love for beauty, Cousin Ethel spent a few minutes decorating the tablecloth with wild flowers from the hedge. It made a great difference in the look of the thing.

And as they had had to work for their tea, it came with all the greater welcome; and it was not until they had practically finished, that Jack Blake remembered the business of the afternoon.

"My hat, I was nearly forgetting!" he exclaimed. "Cousin Ethel, we want you to help us out of a difficulty. Gussy's pater very kindly presented us with a silver—"

"Bai Jove!" suddenly yelled Arthur Augustus. "I have left it behind a wock!"

"What?"

"You've left what?"

"Behind a wock!"

"Phew!" whistled Tom Merry, staring. "You've left a wock—a rock behind a wock—rock—"

"No, you uttah duffah!" shouted Arthur Augustus, even forgetting the presence of Cousin Ethel in his excitement.

"I tell you, deah boy, I have left it behind a wock."

He was on his feet in a flash, and was pelting off towards the point at which the descent to the quarry was the easiest, as hard as he could go. Tom Merry watched him in blank amazement.

"Whatever has he gone for?" asked Cousin Ethel.

"I don't know. Have you any idea, Blake?"

"Not the ghost of a one. There he goes!"

The four watched Arthur Augustus scramble quickly down the quarry side, and could see that the tramps were also watching him. Arthur Augustus did not appear to notice this, for he began to saunter as soon as he had gained level ground again, and he was making directly for the three tramps.

"Look here, Blake, we ought to have gone with him!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "I believe—"

"What's he doing now?"

"Rummaging behind that rock for something. My hat, of course! He's gone for the bag he hid behind the rocks!"

Cousin Ethel laughed and nodded.

"How silly of us not to think of it before!" she exclaimed.

"Yes, he has the bag in his hand now. But—but what is he running for?"

The others could not say. Arthur Augustus certainly was running at top speed, glancing over his shoulder every few yards at the tramps. The tramps had risen to their feet in surprise, but were showing no signs of following, and as Arthur Augustus had about fifty yards start by now, he ought to have been satisfied.

But the swell of St. Jim's appeared to be in a cautious frame of mind for once. He ran all the way back to his chums above him, and dropped panting on the grass.

"But I have wecovahed it, deah boys—I have wecovahed it at great wisk."

"My hat, Gussy! What's it all about?"

"Those twamps—if they had seen it they would have wun off with it, bai Jove! They would weally; I could wead it in their eyes!"

"Oh, they would! They would! Run off with anything if they had thought it worth their while," laughed Tom Merry. "I could read that in their eyes, too. But what is in that bag? Provisions?"

"No, deah boy; the silvah cup my patah pwsented to St. Jim's for the watah polo—yaas, weally."

"My hat!"

Tom Merry gasped with astonishment, and Jack Blake thoughtfully wiped his brow. Cousin Ethel looked from one to the other.

"Please explain!" she exclaimed. "What silver cup?"

"Why, the one we were speaking about—or just going to speak about when Gussy started on his Marathon," said Tom Merry. "Gussy's pater gave a ripping cup for water polo, but owing—owing to a slight difference we had in a trial match yesterday, water polo is barred for ever and ever. What did you want to lug the cup all the way here for, Gussy?"

"To show Cousin Ethel, of course, deah boy," explained Arthur Augustus, opening his football-bag. "There!"

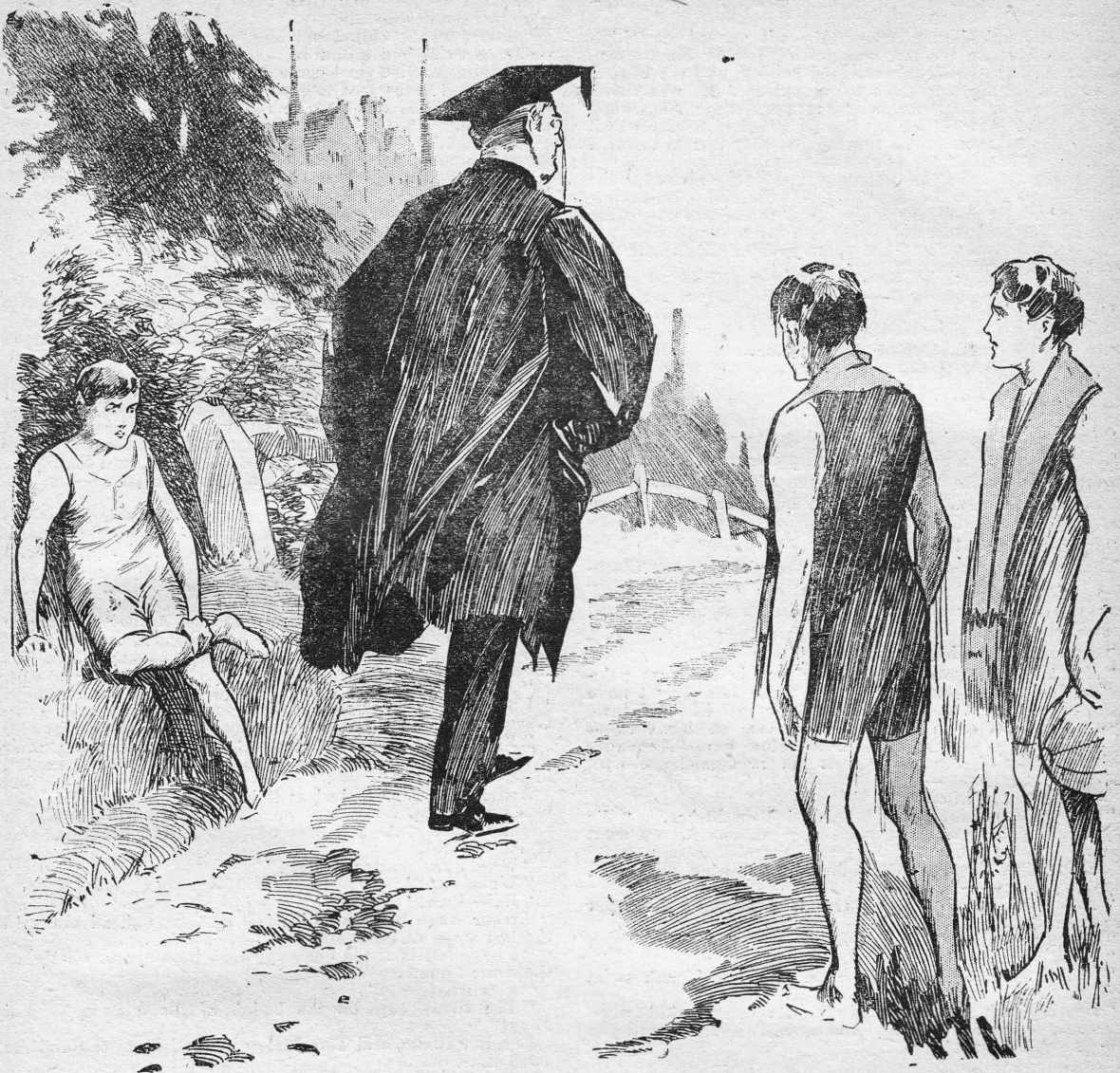
Cousin Ethel duly admired the beautiful piece of silver, then told Arthur Augustus to put it away again.

"It was very kind of you to bring it to show me, but please don't show it to the tramps," she said. "I can see you want me to do something for you?"

"Yaas, watah!"

"Read that last letter I wrote to you, for instance?" asked Cousin Ethel; and it was only by all talking together that Tom Merry, Blake, and Figgins succeeded in preventing Arthur Augustus indulging in another apology.

"Yes, Cousin Ethel," said Tom Merry hastily, "we want some of your ripping ideas. What can we do with the cup?"



"I forbid water polo being played again by you juniors! You understand that?" And Dr. Holmes strode away in anger.

There are pots for every possible race at St. Jim's, and Gussy flatly refuses to send it back to his pater. I believe he wants to keep the thing for himself."

"No, weally, such an ideah nevah entahed my head; I give you my word of honouah it didn't. I can't send the cup back, because it would wuffle the patah."

"I agree with Arthur in that," said Cousin Ethel decidedly. "It wouldn't be quite nice to send the cup back after it had been so kindly presented, saying that it wasn't wanted, would it? And you would have to explain that—that you had a slight difference in the river, too."

"Yaas, bai Jove! It would be remarkably unpleasant."

"No, you must keep the cup, and you must think of some novel way of competing for it," went on their girl chum, looking down into the quarry depths, her chin on her hands. "I think it ought to be some swimming race—don't you?"

"But there are pots for swimming," objected Tom Merry. "Both for long and short distance."

"What is the long-distance race—how long, I mean?"

"Only half a mile, I think for juniors, but—"

"Then why not have a really long-distance race?" exclaimed Cousin Ethel, looking up. "Isn't there a race in the Thames each year—the swim through London? Well, then, why not have a swim through Rylcombe for the cup?"

"My hat!"

"Wipping—"

"Yes," continued Cousin Ethel, "you could all start from somewhere up the river, then swim as best you could right through the little town and finish—say, by the mill. Would three miles be too much?"

"No, wathah not. I considah thwee miles as nothin', deah boy—Cousin Ethel, I mean."

"What do you others say?"

"Splendid!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "That's just the sort of idea we've been trying for since the water-polo was barred. 'A swim through Rylcombe' is the very thing to stir the fellows up. Cousin Ethel, you're wonderful at ideas."

"Yes, rather!" said Figgins.

"Well," laughed the girl, jumping up, "we can talk over the details as we go along, because we really must think about getting back now. And those horrid tramps are leaving the quarry, too, and we don't want to pass them again."

"No," said Jack Blake darkly. "But I rather think we shall meet again one of these days, and then 'Energy and I are going to square accounts. But that's absolutely a ripping idea of yours about the swim, Cousin Ethel. I

don't believe I could have thought of a better one myself—ahem!"

They all laughed, not because the wit was of very high order, but because the sun was getting low in the western heavens, and the shadows were lengthening, and the beautiful hues a setting sun gives to an autumn sky was theirs to enjoy. The difficulty arising from Arthur Augustus's cup, too, had been settled by Cousin Ethel in a way which appealed to all, and spirits ran high as they turned towards the grey old walls of St. Jim's once again.

So enthusiastic did the juniors wax over the plans for the swim through Rylcombe, that they all talked at once, Arthur Augustus louder than them all. And there was one other thing Arthur Augustus did which had far-reaching effects.

He walked away from the quarry brink with both his hands in his blazer-pockets.

CHAPTER 9.

Qualms of Conscience.

"MY hat!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Mind you, I don't like admitting it, but Cousin Ethel fairly did us."

"In the mattah of ideahs, deah boy?"

"Yes, rather! A swim through Rylcombe will look jolly warm on the notice-board, and I can see the whole school getting excited about it. I vote we spread the news broadcast at once."

"Bai Jove, yaas!"

The juniors had said good-bye to the girl chum at Cleveland Lodge, and were almost in the college grounds. Before Tom Merry could speak again Skimpole appeared in sight.

"Skimmy—cheer-ho, Skimmy!"

"No, Merry, I must refuse to referee in the next polo-match," said the brainy man of the Shell firmly. "I have made up my mind to take no part in games in the future. Wynn has been quite personal on several occasions about my refereeing yesterday, and I must refuse to make enemies with my fellow-beings. That is not in accordance with Socialistic doctrines—"

"Heah, heah, Skimmay!"

"Only ring off for a bit," finished Tom Merry. "We don't want you to ref., ass, not being insane. All we want you to do is to tell the fellows that there is to be a swim of three miles through Rylcombe, on Saturday afternoon, open to juniors—"

"Yaas, wathah, and the pwize is a twenty-guinea pot pwesented by my patah."

"Twenty guineas?"

"Yaas, wathah—"

"Then I shall enter for the race. Oh, but I can't swim—"

"Ha, ha, ha! Swimming is almost necessary, kid, when you come to think of it, too. But spread the news, will you— I say, Wynn?"

"Hallo!"

"There's to be a swim of three miles through Rylcombe on Saturday. Twenty-guinea cup first prize, and a prize thick ear for any slacker who gives up."

"A twenty-guinea—you're rotting!"

"No! It's fact. Gussy's pater presented the pot, didn't he, Gussy?"

"Yaas, wathah! Lowthah—Lowthah, deah boy!"

"What-ho, Gussy, old ass!"

"Weally, Lowthah— But I will let your wudeness pass, undah the circs. There's to be a wipping swim thwough Wylcombe, on Saturday aftahnoon—"

Lowther expressed first his incredulity, then his amazement and joy, and so did every other junior the four met. By the time the four had gained the college itself practically all the juniors of St. Jim's had heard the news, and enthusiasm rose instantly. Even Jack Blake was surprised at the excitement Cousin Ethel's plan was greeted with.

"Almost as good as the water polo I'd set my heart on," he whispered, as they went on to the preparation-room, the four having arranged to "cut" tea that afternoon. "The thing now is to arrange times, et cetera. I vote we have a jaw over it in No. 6 afterwards."

"Yaas, wathah! Tom Mewwy said he was comin' in any case, and intended bwinging Lowthah and Mannahs!"

"My hat! Never mind, we can turn Herries and Digby out to make room for them."

"I don't think," murmured Herries and Digby. And then they thought it as well to do some work.

Once prep. was over a general sort of movement was made for Study No. 6, and Tom Merry & Co. turned up on the point of time.

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NEXT THURSDAY: "TOM MERRY'S TRIP TO PARIS." MARTIN CLIFFORD. By CLIFFORD.

Blake was just about to close the door, when it was thumped open violently.

"Sorry, kid!" called out Figgins cheerfully. "But it occurred to us you might be wanting to talk matters over, so we thought we'd give you a look up."

"My hat!" muttered Blake. "Anyone, to hear you talk, would think this was a home for lost kids. But come in—if you can."

"But don't if you can't," said Lowthah; but he was frowned upon for his effort.

Somehow the new-comers—Figgins and his faithful lieutenants, Fatty Wynn and Kerr—found a resting-place in Study No. 6, and Jack Blake shut the door.

"We aren't having any more in," he laughed. "It's a difficult matter to breathe, as it is. I suppose I am to take the chair, Merry?"

"No, old chap; I'm taking it myself, as it happens—"

"I don't think," said Figgins, who had slipped into the chair at the head of the table while the others had been talking. "Silence, please, and let's get on with the business of the evening."

Tom Merry and Jack Blake were inclined to argue the point about the chairmanship, but Figgins waved them aside.

"Silence, I said, please! I shall have you turned out of the room, Blake, if you don't shut up! Gentlemen, owing to the very rotten manner in which Gussy and Skimpole between them managed to muddle the water polo—"

"Well, I nevah—"

"It has been suggested that a swim through Rylcombe should take the place of the water polo arranged for next Saturday; the prize, of course, being the ripping cup Gussy's pater kindly presented to us."

"Heah, heah!—I mean, don't mention it, deah boy. The wotten pot is nothin'—the wotten—"

A curious change was taking place on Arthur Augustus's expressive face, and his monocle had dropped from his eye. He looked as if he could see something uncanny which was invisible to the others.

"Jolly good idea, I call it!" said Fatty Wynn cheerily. "I think an official sort of letter ought to be written to Gussy's pater, too, thanking him for the pot, you chaps."

"Yes, rather!" agreed Kerr. "And let's have a look at it, Gussy—to sort of urge us on to noble endeavours, and all that! My hat!"

Arthur Augustus looked as if he were in pain. His face was screwed up in various puckers, and he had his mouth slightly open. As a matter of fact, Arthur Augustus was trying to think.

"What's the matter, Gussy?"

"What's up?"

"Bai—Jove!"

Arthur Augustus was on his feet by now, well advanced in the last stage of excitement.

"I have left it at the quawwy, deah boys—yaas, weally, at the wotten quawwy!"

"Left what, ass?"

"The silvah cup—on the bwink of the quawwy! Bai Jove!"

Figgins, Blake, and Tom Merry jumped up at one and the same time.

"You left the cup at the quarry?" gasped the Shell fellow.

"You mean to say you've left a twenty-guinea cup at the quarry? Oh, you utter ass, Gussy!"

"Why didn't you wemind me, Tom Mewwy? I considah that you are partly to blame in not weminding me!"

"Some one hit it with something, please!" groaned Jack Blake. "Gussy, are you certain you left it there?"

"Yaas, wathah! I wemembah distinctly comin' away fwom the wotten quawwy with my hands in my blazah-pockets!"

"Jingo, he did, too!" muttered Figgins.

"Yaas, wathah! And the question is, what is to be done, deah boys?"

"To be done!" almost shouted Jack Blake. "Oh, Gussy, why ever were you born?"

"Don't be widiculous, please, Blake," said Arthur Augustus coldly. "This is an important mattah—one affect-ing a twenty-guinea silvah cup, and— Bai Jove, those twamps! They will have collahed the cup!"

At first the others thought it extremely likely that such was the case, then Tom Merry shook his head.

"No, I don't think that on second thoughts," he exclaimed.

"You see, the tramps would leave the quarry by the same way—the easiest way—and, of course, they would keep to the road. That would mean they wouldn't pass within twenty yards of the spot where that hopeless idiot left the cup."

"Weally, Mewwy—"

"Dry up, ass; you've done enough damage for one day, and no mistake! Don't upset the meeting with your cackle on top of it! What had we better do, Blake—go and tell the doctor at once?"

"Yes. My hat, what about the picnic, though?"

"Humph!"

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus hastily. "Wath-ehav we do, we can't tell the doctah! The quawwy is out of bounds, deah boys, and that would mean a wotten wigg'in' from the doctah!"

"Yes, but we must get the cup back. I mean— I say, Blake, if the tramps didn't find the pot, it's pretty likely no one else did, because I don't suppose three people go near that spot a week!"

"Yes, that's a fact! I propose we get our bicycles out and scorch over to the quarry as hard as we can."

"Imposs., deah boy! In anothah ten minutes suppah will be weady, and aftahwards we shall have to wétire to our wespéctive dormays,—and it is dark, too!"

"Our only aunts!" muttered Blake. "Look here, I propose we make a clean breast of having broken bounds to the doc., and ask for leave to go and look for the cup!"

"Imposs. again, deah boy! I uttably wéfuse to allow a clean breast to be made of havin' broken bounds!"

"Oh, you lie down! I've told you before you've done enough damage for one day!"

"Undah the circs. I must wéfuse to lie down," said Arthur Augustus firmly. "I must ask you, as fwiends, not to ask the doctah for permish. to go out!"

"But—"

"Please heah what I have to say, Tom Mewwy. I considah that the chances are that the silvah cup has been found and removed, and as I am partly to blame—though I considah Tom Mewwy ought to have weminded me as we came away—I shall make it my biz. to see that anothah cup is pprovided!"

"What do you mean by that, Gussy?" asked Tom Merry, looking at the other curiously. "How can you see that anothah cup is provided?"

"By w'iting anothah lettah to the patah, deah boy!"

"Nét much, you won't!" said the Shell fellow quietly.

"I'm going to stand out against that to the last gasp! What would your pater think of us sponging on him like that, ass?"

"But I considah it a matter of personal dig.—"

"Then catch that personal dig. and wring its neck! I'm not going to agree to your asking for anothah cup, and I don't think any fellow in the coll. would!"

"No, by Jove!"

"Rather not!"

The cries were so decided that Arthur Augustus had to submit.

"Well, I have made my offah," he said, "and I considah it wathah wippin' of you to wéfuse it, though wathah widiculous. I must now wéquest you not to go to the doctah about the mattah!"

"But I say, what about this?" began Tom Merry. "It's dark now, and if the cup hasn't already been found it's not likely to be found during the next hour or so. What do you say if one of us slips down to the bicycle-shed, sneaks our grids before Taggles locks up for the night and hides them somewhere, then, when lights are out, break bounds and go and have a cup-hunt? Is it an idea?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"It's an idea, certainly," admitted Blake, "and I don't suppose you can help it being a rotten one, Merry! I hardly like the idea of a twenty-guinea cup lying out in the open. What I want to know is, why can't we go to the doctor about it, and telephone to the police-station, or something?"

"Weally, Blake, I am supwised at your suggestin' such a wotten course, deah boy!"

"Well, why can't we—and why is it a rotten course?"

"Because," said Arthur Augustus quietly, "because it would bring Cousin Ethel's name into the mattah! We wroke bounds in goin' to the quawwy at all, and, as Cousin Ethel suggested the picnic—well, bai Jove, she would feel wathah uncomfortable about the mattah!"

"Phew! Never thought of that, Gussy!"

"And as for goin' to the police," went on Arthur Augustus, "well, suppose the cup has been collahed—there might be a beastly police-court case ovah the mattah, and Cousin Ethel might be summoned as a witness. That is why I wemarked that the course you suggested was wotten, Blake."

They all looked at Arthur Augustus in silence for a moment or two, then Tom Merry banged him on the shoulder. "Good for you, Gus!" was all he said. Then he turned to the others. "What do you chaps say to my plan about breaking bounds in the dead of night?"

"That's the ticket!"

"Nothing else for it, as far as I can see," agreed Blake. "How many of us had better go?"

"Oh, not the lot, of course, or we should be bound to be spotted! Say the four of us who were at the picnic?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And you can take my bulldog with you if you like," said Herries. "He's a marvel at tracking people down!"

"No, thanks, kid—we shall have Gussy, and he's enough of

a handful for us! Look here, Blake, will you slip down and work things about the bicycles? I had a bit of an argument with Taggles this morning!"

"Right-ho!"

"And— What is it, Wally?"

D'Arcy minor had opened the door at that moment, and was poking a rather inky countenance into the room.

"Cheer-ho, you cripples!" he said cheerily. "Is young Merry here?"

"Look here, young 'un—"

"Oh, I thought I recognised his old face! You have my sympathy, Merry! The doctor wants to see you in his room at once!"

"Wants to see me?"

"Yes," grinned Wally. "Funny taste, hasn't he? I say, isn't it rotten about that water-polo being barred? Oh, I've heard about the swim through Rylcombe, and it's a good wheeze, but water-polo is the game for me! I call it measly of the doctor myself!"

"I'll give him your opinion, kid!" grinned Tom Merry, making for the door. "The doctor is always ready to listen to good advice! See you fellows later!"

The others nodded, and Tom Merry made his way to the Head's room, not without qualms of conscience.

CHAPTER 10.

Meeting Old Friends Again.

"IN the beginning of time," said Tom Merry, sitting down on the bed; "in the beginning of time we had permission to play as much water-polo as we wanted to, but nothing to play for. Then Gussy—that freak there—got us a cup, and we were not allowed to play water-polo for it. And now," he added wearily, "now we have permission to play water-polo for a cup 'generously presented' by Gussy's papa, to quote the Head, and the cup is lost."

"What do you mean, kid?" exclaimed Jack Blake. "Drop playing the ass and speak sensibly!"

"I have. The doctor has heard about the cup, and so has given us permission to play water-polo under proper supervision, and is himself coming to watch the game. It was to tell me that that he wanted me in his room after prep. this evening."

"My hat!"

"Well, I nevah! You didn't explain that the cup was missin', Mewwy?"

"No, ass, I did not. I had half a mind to, but I didn't. I just said nothing, and tried to think."

"Then the doctor believes that we still have the cup?"

"Of course he does, Blake," said Tom Merry. "And that's the beastly point. When you come to think of it, Gussy, the howling lunatic there, didn't lose his own cup, but a cup which had been presented to the college. It doesn't matter an atom that his pater was the presenter—it was the property of the coll. the moment it had been given. And now tell me Gussy oughtn't to be in a padded room! There is one other point—the doctor has told the Sixth-Formers all about the cup!"

"Phew!"

Jack Blake rammed his hands in his pockets and looked serious. None of them had had a chance to speak to Tom Merry since his visit to Dr. Holmes's room until now, and so they were the last almost to hear the news.

There was a moment's painful silence, then Tom Merry moved towards the door.

"There'll be a fair old shindy about this, you see if there isn't," he said. "I expect the doctor will flay Gussy alive."

"Don't be widiculous!" said Arthur Augustus. "It can do no mannah of good to be widiculous—and we may wécovah the pot to-night!"

"Oh, we may—and there may be an earthquake! Did you see about the grids, Blake?"

"Yes, I worked that all right. All four are hidden under the bushes in the doctor's private garden."

"Good! Then all we can do is to hope for the best. If there is no best, and the cup has gone for good, I'd run away from school if I were you, Gussy—I would really."

"I shall wéfuse to wun away from school—I shall wéfuse to do anythin' of the kind! I shall face the wotten music!"

"Humph! Yes, it will be rotten music—a sort of cake-walk on your neck! Eleven o'clock, then, Blake—in the doctor's front garden?"

"Right-ho!"

"So-long, for the present! If you can find time to slay Gussy, you have my permission to do so!"

"Weally, deah boy—"

But the "deah boy" had gone.

Fortunately for Arthur Augustus it was deemed policy to keep the affair of the lost cup a secret, and so nothing further

was said about the matter when the other fellows came in. Then the four chums of Study No. 6 began to undress for bed.

A prefect looked into the dormitory after a time to see that lights were out, and was struck by the steady snoring. But that particular prefect was a guileless fellow, and accepted all things on their surface value, so he did not notice that Jack Blake and his chums were watching out of the corners of their eyes. Then, as the prefect closed the door, Blake turned to Arthur Augustus.

"Keep awake, mind, ass!" he whispered. "There's to be no more goating about!"

"Weally, Blake, your remark is uncalled for! I wathah think I am not in the habit of goatin' about!"

"Well, keep awake, then."

"Of course I shall keep awake," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "I am wathah surprised at your suggestin'—"

"That's all right, kid; don't even shut your eyes."

The indignation which stirred in the breast of Arthur Augustus kept him awake for about twenty minutes; then he began to doze, and a few moments later to sleep soundly.

Jack Blake, as became the leader of the Dog Patrol of Boy Scouts, found no difficulty in keeping awake; and when he heard the college clock strike a quarter to eleven, he scrambled out of bed.

"Asleep, of course," he muttered, looking at Arthur Augustus. "Hard cheese, for Gussy"

And without wasting time, Jack Blake coolly yanked his chum from his bed, and bumped him down on the floor.

"Bai Jove!"

"Don't make a row, ass; it's a quarter to eleven."

"I shall thwash you, Blake; I shall thwash you what-evah beastly wow I make. I wegard it as wotten to wake a fellow suddenly and bump him on the beastly floor."

"Dry up, ass"

"I wefuse to dwy up—I wefuse—I am all in a fluttah."

"Well, get in some togs as well, Gussy, and don't wake the others. We haven't any too much time."

Arthur Augustus was inclined to argue the point at first, but as he gradually recovered from the "flutter" his sudden awakening had put him in, he agreed to listen to reason.

"But how are we to leave the coll, deah boy?" he whispered. "By the staircase window?"

"Of course!"

"Wight-ho! But I wathah think we are going woudn the sun to meet the moon, you know. I doubt wethah we shall find that cup, but I feel certain that if I were to wite anothah lettah to the patah, pointing out that the cup was lost, he would wise to the occasion."

"Yes; only we aren't going to have any of that, Gussy, as I've told you before. You get dressed, and leave the thinking to someone more used to it. I'm going to shove on tennis-shoes, so as not to make a noise in the corridors."

"Bai Jove, that is wathah a wipping idea!"

"Well, dry up, and don't go to sleep again."

It did not take them long to dress, nor was much time wasted in creeping along the corridor to the staircase window; and once that was gained, the chance of being seen was not great. They had gained the college grounds just as the clock struck the hour.

"Pelt along for all you're worth, Gussy," whispered Blake. "Figgins and Merry will be on time to a minute. What's up now?"

"Wow! I've kicked a wretched bwick."

"Never mind. Perhaps you didn't hurt it. Cheer-ho, young Merry!"

"Hail, young Blake! Is Figgins with you?"

"No, kid," said Figgins's voice from behind, "he's with himself. Lead the way to the bicycles, Blake, and be prepared for the scorch of your lives."

Blake led them to where he had concealed the bicycles, and a few moments later lamps were lighted, and they were bowling along the high-road towards the quarry at a fine pace. They took the main road because the going was better, although it was a trifle further than the other way, and this decision prevented their evening run from being without incident.

They were nearing Rylcombe, when voices raised in happy song fell on their ears.

"Jump off!" whispered Tom Merry, jamming on his brakes. "Ten to one they are some farm-hands coming from the public-house down there. We don't want to be seen, kids."

"Bai Jove, I wathah think we shall be seen, deah boys. The wottahs are comin' this way."

"Humph! Oh, here we are!"

Spinning his machine round, Tom Merry pushed open a gate leading to a field, and so made a hurried way to the other side of the fence. The next moment the others had joined him.

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NEXT THURSDAY: "TOM MERRY'S TRIP TO PARIS." By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"Out with the lights," whispered Jack Blake, "and don't speak. If it's any of Hodges' farm-hands, they'd split."

Tom Merry nodded. Anyway, it was no use running unnecessary risks.

The singers came on in a leisurely manner, warbling something about planting seeds in the gardens of hearts; and to say the least of it, the voices were untrained. They were also uncertain, as if the singers had spent much time in the public-house.

"Have a look at 'em," whispered Tom Merry. "They are passing now."

"Bai Jove!" muttered Arthur Augustus. "Well, I nevah!"

"Phew!"

"They are the tramps who sneaked our tea," said Figgins, under his breath. "They are, for a pension."

"Right for you, my son," said Tom Merry, thinking quickly. "It looks as if they haven't the cup. I reckon they would have cleared out of the locality at the double if they'd found it."

"Humph! It might be bluff. Hang that song!"

"Energy was singing at the top of his voice, and what that voice lacked in technique it made up for in volume. The chums watched them saunter past in some perplexity.

"What's to be done, deah boys?" murmured Arthur Augustus. "Personally I would wathah like to thwash the outsiders for sneakin' our tea, bai Jove."

"The cup must come first," said Tom Merry. "Do you or don't you think they have the cup, Blake?"

"Blest if I know what to think. What do you say, Figg?"

"They may and they mayn't have it, but I reckon it isn't a chance to throw away," said the New House fellow. "I vote a couple of us follow the tramps, and the other two slip off to the quarry and see if the pot is still there. We can meet again, say, at the top of the lane where we saw Cousin Ethel this afternoon."

"Good for you, kid," said Tom Merry. "Yes, that's the ticket. You come with me to the quarry, Gussy, and Figgins and Blake track the tramps down. I expect they are making for somewhere to sleep for the night. It'll most likely be a ditch, or something. You'll be able to keep up with them all right."

"Yes, it won't be a difficult job to track idiots singing at the tops of their voices," laughed Blake. "But come on, Figg! Wheel the grids, or we shall come to grief unless we light the lamps, and that wouldn't do. So long, you chaps!"

The chums separated hastily, Tom Merry and Arthur Augustus lighting their bicycle lamps and pedalling up towards the quarry as hard as they could go.

CHAPTER 11.

In Farmer Hodges' Barn.

"B AI Jove, there they are, Tom Mewwy!" "Yes, here we are all right," sang out Figgins excitedly, "and here we've been for the last ten minutes. Any luck?"

"No fear, deah boy; the wotten cup isn't there."

"Phew!"

"Yes," said Tom Merry quietly, "the cup has been found, right enough, but not by us. We scoured the place where we had tea over and over again."

"Yaas, wathah; but about the twamps? Have they got it, Figg?"

"How do I know, ass? I don't think they have. We followed them quite easily without being seen, and somehow I don't think they know any more about the cup than we do; but, of course, there's no saying."

"Bai Jove!"

"Dry up, Gussy!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Where did you leave the rotters?"

"Snoring peacefully in a barn belonging to Farmer Hodges," grinned Figgins. "Weren't they just making a noise, too—eh, Blake?"

"My hat, yes. We had a good look in at them; then, to make sure they wouldn't sneak off before we could find you fellows, we tied up the door. The question is now, what on earth are we to do?"

"Yes, that is the question."

"Yaas, wathah; I considah that is the question myself," said Arthur Augustus, "and undah the cires.—"

"Yes, old Gus, undah the cires, you'd better lie down, as it were," laughed Tom Merry. "I propose we all slip back and have a look at these tramps. We'll find out whether they have the cup or not somehow, and we'll make it warm for them in any case. I haven't forgotten about that tea. I say, though, Gussy, your goating about has let us in for something this time, and no mistake."

"You should have weminded me about the cup when we

came away," said Arthur Augustus coolly. "I blame you entirely, Tom Mewwy, for not weminding me; but I have ofahed to w'ite to the patah."

"Oh, do ring off!" growled Blake. "We've told you we aren't going to let you sub. on the pater for us, not by long chalks, kid."

"Of course not!" agreed Figgins, mounting his bicycle. "You can put that idea out of your head, Gussy. Don't trouble about speed limits, you chaps."

It was an easy run down to Farmer Hodges' place, and at Blake's suggestion they left their bicycles just inside the field. Then they made their way towards the barn Figgins indicated. As they neared it, gentle snores met their ears, and Tom Merry gritted his teeth.

"They did us out of our tea," he muttered; "we'll do 'em out of their beauty-sleep now. You are sure the door is secure, Figgy?"

"As secure as a bank."

"Good! My hat, what's that there?"

"A hosepipe," said Figgins, looking surprised. "Nothing to get excited about in a hosepipe. Did you take it for a snake or something?"

"Hah, hah, hah!" chuckled Arthur Augustus. "I considah that wathah humorous, deah boy."

"You would, Gussy," said Tom Merry, catching up the end of the hosepipe. "My hat, if only we could find a tap somewhere, Blake!"

"You mean— Good egg! There's wisdom in the idea if only we can find a tap."

"Well, I wathah think there is a tap ovah there by the stable door, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus, "though what good a beastly tap can do in gettin' back the cup I don't know."

Tom Merry was not listening. He was dragging the hosepipe across to the stable as quietly as he could instead; then they all could see him kneeling down, engaged in tying the hosepipe to the tap.

"Bai Jove, I gwasp the ideah now!" murmured Arthur Augustus, picking up his end of the hosepipe. "And a wattling good ideah it is, I considah. It is our intention to squirt watah, on the wetchad twamps through the window, bai Jove!"

"It is, Gussy."

"Wippin'! I weward it as simply wippin'!"

Then something happened which Arthur Augustus could not at first account for. Jack Blake's cap shot off his head as if a gust of wind had caught it, his face puckered up, and he uttered a gasp.

"Oh! You ass! O-h!"

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "Bai Jove, there's water comin' fwom somewhere!"

"Stop!" choked Blake. "Turn the hosepipe away, ass! Oh, you utter duffer!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled Figgins. "Ho, ho—"

Then he stopped laughing. Arthur Augustus, in attempting to escape Jack Blake with the stream of water, caught Figgins just under the left ear. From that moment Figgins failed to see the humour of the thing.

"Take it away from him!" he growled. "Take it away from him! Phew! You ought to be boiled in oil, you utter ass!"

"Weally, Figgins, deah boy, the whole mattah was an accident, and I will expwess my wegwets," said Arthur Augustus, "but I must wewuse to be boiled in—"

"So you ought to be. Ha, ha! Look at him now!"

"Bai Jove!" muttered Arthur Augustus. "Bai Jove, I am ddownin' myself! Tom Mewwy, I weward you as an uttah duffah! Why didn't you tell me you were going to turn on the beastly watah?"

"Because I didn't want to have old Hodges on our track, Gussy," said the Shell fellow. "I wasn't going to yell half across the farmyard to please you or anybody. And you'll wake those tramps in a minute with that row."

"I don't care who I wake. I considah it wank bad form on your part, Tom Mewwy, not to have warned me. I considah—"

"Well, consider to yourself, then," said Tom pleasantly. "I say, Blake, there is a decent pressure of water here, and no mistake. It ought to startle 'Eneery and his chums. The point is, how to get the window open."

"No need," said Figgins. "One of the panes of glass is broken."

"Good egg! Listen a moment."

They listened, and caught the sounds of the steady snoring again. It was not quite as loud as it had been, but it was very steady. Tom Merry climbed on a wheelbarrow, and the others crowded up after him; then with a quick movement the hero of the Shell got the hosepipe through the broken window.

'Eneery, the humorist, happened to be the sleeper nearest the door, and by the smile on his face was evidently dreaming of some happy land where work is unknown. Then 'Eneery, the humorist, awoke.

Full in the face the stream of water caught him, and Tom Merry kept him neatly covered, much as the limelight operator manipulates his apparatus. 'Eneery tried to shout. A stream of water went down his throat, and if there was one thing 'Eneery disliked more than another, it was water, whether for internal or external use.

"Stop it!" he managed to gasp at last. "For 'eaven's sake, stop it!"

"Wot's the matter, 'Eneery? Ow! O-w!"

"Let 'em have it!" chuckled Blake. "Douse 'em for all you're worth, old man!"

"Yaas, wathah. I considah we have a perfect wight to douse them, sein' the vewwy wotten mannah in which they sneaked our tea. Hah, hah, hah!"

The juniors' eyes had become accustomed to the dark by now, and it happened that a young moon had just risen, and was shining in through the window, so they had a good view of what was taking place in the barn.

The tramps sprang to their feet, and after the manner of their kind, tried to retreat from the unpleasantness. They failed. Tom Merry followed them up in fine style, and it was not long before 'Eneery began to have wild theories about the barn gradually filling with water until they were drowned.

"The door!" he gasped. "Try the door, for 'Eaven's sake!"

One of them did, under difficulties, and amidst much water, and had to give it up.

"We're caught, 'Eneery—caught like rats in a trap!"

Then Tom Merry turned the water towards a blank wall.

"I want to talk to you roughs," he said briskly, "and you'd better answer truthfully for once in your lives, because, as you said, you are fairly caught this time. Did you find anything at the quarry this afternoon?"

"Bless me 'at, it's the lads whose grub we stole—found," muttered one of the tramps.

"Oh, we know you stole our tea," said Tom Merry, "and we've paid you out for that with this hosepipe. What we want to know now, is, did you take anything else—a brown leather bag, for instance?"

"Yaas, wathah, with a silver cup in it!"

"Dry up! Oh, you are an ass, Gussy!"

"Well, so there was a silvah cup in the beastly bag. I know that, because I put it there myself, deah boy. I don't see what there is to get watty about, and I must wewuse to be chawactahwised as an ass, Mewwy!"

"So you are. Did any of you three loafers find the cup, then? You'd better own up if you did, and I dare say you'll get a bit of a reward; if you don't own up—well, there'll be trouble, I can tell you!"

"S'elp me—"

"No, there's no need to start that. Just give a plain answer. Did you find the cup?"

"No, we didn't; an' it's libel 'intin' that we did."

"Where did you go after we'd left?"

"To a pub, of course, and—"

"Which one?"

"The one near the town, an' look you here—"

Tom Merry turned to Blake.

"I believe he's speaking the truth," he said. "None of them would ever think of going to the spot where we had tea, because it would be right out of their way. It's no sort of use making that row. You'll only have Farmer Hodges out of bed, and that'll mean more trouble for sleeping in his barn!"

The tramps were inclined to rave, but they were sensible enough to see that there was a lot in what Tom Merry said, and so they tried to bluff the matter.

"Let us out, an' we won't say nothin' about the water," whined one of them. "Undo the door."

Tom Merry grinned.

'Eneery might be a man of his word, but he did not look it, and none of them felt in the mood for a free fight with three tramps at that time of night. Still, they were no further in their attempts to recover the lost cup.

"Anyway," said Tom Merry quietly, "I feel certain these rotters haven't the thing, so I don't see the use of staying here any longer. Are you there, 'Eneery?"

"Of course I'm 'ere!"

"Then stay there!" said the Shell fellow. "If you wait long enough, the door might come unfastened, only I wouldn't make a noise if I were you. Farmer Hodges is a big man, and has a dog or two. Don't sleep on your backs, it makes you snore."

"Hah, hah, hah!" chuckled Arthur Augustus. "I considah that wemarkably funny! Bai Jove, where are you goin', deah boy?"

"To turn off the water, of course! Walk towards the bicycles," he added, in a whisper. "Get them out in the road, then I'll let the tramps loose. I may have to make a run for it, so get ready to mount in double quick time."

The others nodded, but there was no need for the caution No. 88.

'Enerey and his companions were too wet and unhappy to show fight, and they accepted their liberation in the same spirit they had taken their wetting. They each threatened a lot, but did nothing.

Tom Merry did not wait to hear their remarks, but cut off towards the others, and a few seconds later they were pedalling for St. Jim's again.

There was silence for some time, then Arthur Augustus broke it.

"Wathah a case of misfiah, I considah," he said. "We are no nearah gettin' the cup back than we were before we started, bai Jove!"

"No, Gussy," said Tom Merry; "and we never shall be any nearer unless we go to the doctor and let him put the police to work!"

"Wot—wank wot; and, besides, it's settled that we can't go to the police on account of Cousin Ethel."

"Then it's also settled that we've seen the last of the D'Arcy Cup."

"I don't agree. I wathah think we shall wecovah the pot all wight, and if not, a lettah to the patah—"

"If you are branching out again on the tack, Gussy, you may as well dry up before you begin," said Figgins. "You know our opinions on that score. There's the coll, by Jove! I say, Blake, shall Merry and I look you up in Study No. 6 to-morrow morning?"

"If you like."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus. "We'll talk the mattah ovah coolly!"

"Humph!" grunted Tom Merry. "It's my opinion we've been doing nothing but talk matters over since you were ass enough to lose the blessed cup. I suppose we shall have to hide the grids where Blake hid them in the first place, and trust to luck it doesn't rain. See you in your room after brekker, then, Blake?"

"Right, ho! Good-night kid!"

And they parted, at least three of the four more than a little exercised as to what ought to be done.

CHAPTER 12.

The D'Arcy Cup Turns Up.

FOR goodness' sake, Gussy, don't keep harping on one string! Why can't we tell the doctor about the picnic, and say nothing at all about Cousin Ethel?"

"Because I considah it would not be the thing, Blake, deah boy."

"Hang what you consider!"

"Hang Gussy, too, if you have time," said Tom Merry. "Blest if I know what is to be done. The whole coll is talking about nothing except this polo-match to-morrow, and the doctor and Kildare were speaking about your pater's generosity only just now, as I came along the passage, Gussy. I tell you we shall look small over this, and no mistake."

"Yaas, I wathah think we shall," admitted Arthur Augustus. "But that does not altah the case. You gave me your pwomise not to go to the doctah, and—Come in, deah boy!"

The "deah boy" came in. He happened to be Dr. Holmes, the respected head-master of St. Jim's.

"Good-morning, boys," he said, smiling at Arthur Augustus's expression of concern. "You haven't shown me the D'Arcy Cup yet."

Tom Merry was standing up at the time, but he sat down at that—sat down limply as if overtaken by faintness. Jack Blake took out his handkerchief, and wiped his forehead, and Figgins tried to convince himself that it was a dream, and that he would wake up soon.

"You have it here, D'Arcy?"

"H-have what heah, doctah?"

"The cup, of course. I understand it arrived the other day."

"Yaas, wathah—yaas, it awwived all wight. It came by passengah-twain, bai Jove!"

"Yes, by passenger-twain—train," said Tom Merry.

Jack Blake thought it unnecessary to repeat the remark, so merely nodded, and Figgins looked fixedly out of the window.

"Well, please let me see it," went on Dr. Holmes. "It is extremely generous of your father, D'Arcy—extremely generous. I—Where is the cup, Blake?"

"Well, as a mattah of fact, sir—"

"As a matter of fact—"

"Please answer me instantly, Blake," said Dr. Holmes, who had been a school-master too long not to have suspicions which were easily raised. "Where is the cup?"

Blake tried to say something, then sighed with relief. Someone was tapping at the door. The shortest respite was better than none at all.

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NEXT THURSDAY: "TOM MERRY'S TRIP TO PARIS." By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"Come in," he said. "What shall I say, Merry?" he added, in a gaspy sort of whisper. "Please tell me what to say."

"The only thing I can think of," returned the Shell fellow wearily, "is to pretend to be dumb, or have a fit."

"Silly ass!"

Then a series of the most astonishing expressions that ever appeared on a human face flickered across the aristocratic features of Arthur Augustus. He was looking across the room at the doorway in which stood Taggles, the porter; but it was not at Taggles Arthur Augustus was glaring. It was at a brown leather bag he was carrying.

"Bai Jove!"

"For Master D'Arcy, sir!" snuffled Taggles.

Arthur Augustus was across the room in a flash.

"Bai Jove!" he shouted. "It's turned up—the wotten pot—I mean— Bai Jove!"

He wrenched open the bag, and there lay the beautiful cup his father had presented for the water-polo games. Arthur Augustus seemed so amazed that Tom Merry thought the doctor would demand an explanation, and so acted promptly.

"Yes, doctor, that is the cup," he said hurriedly. "Isn't it a grand one?"

"It is, indeed, Merry. The winning team ought to be proud of a trophy such as this is. But I think it will be the wiser course if I take it into my room with me. It is the property of the school now, D'Arcy."

"Yaas, wathah! Taggles, where on earth—"

"Lie down, ass," muttered Jack Blake, almost fiercely, as Dr. Holmes removed the cup from the bag, and left the room. "My hat, Gussy, if I hadn't yanked you down in your chair, you'd have given the whole show away after all!"

"Yaas, wathah—I mean nothin' of the sort!"

"Wait a minute, Taggles!" sang out Tom Merry. "Where did this bag come from?"

"Cleveland Lodge, an' there's a note tied on to the handles."

Tom Merry seized the bag, and snatched off the note, which was twisted up in an artistic fashion.

"It's for you, Gussy!"

"For me, bai Jove! Well, I nevah!"

"Read it out, ass!"

"Yaas, wathah! 'Dear Arthur,—I am weturnin' the D'Arcy Cup, and I twust you will wead this lettah more carefully than you wead my last one. I considah boys should not be careless, and so took the opportunity of wepvoving you for misweadin' my vevy nicely-worded lettah. Hopin' you have all been severely fwightened about the loss of the cup, believe me, yours vevy sincerely,—Cousin Ethel.'"

"My—my hat!" said Blake faintly; then, without further remark, they all burst into roars of laughter.

It was just the thing Cousin Ethel would delight in doing, and not one of the quartet of juniors was void of a sense of humour.

They could enjoy a joke they were playing on other people, but then they could also laugh heartily when someone was turning the tables on them.

"Bai Jove, though, I wondah how she managed to cawwy the bag home?" remarked Arthur Augustus after a bit. "It wasn't a small bag, you know."

"Oh, trust Cousin Ethel!" said Figgins quietly. "She had a shawl which she wouldn't let me carry for her, I remember, so I suppose the bag was under that."

"Yes, you can trust Cousin Ethel to work a wheeze properly," laughed Tom Merry. "But her time will come. We must remember this in the future."

"Yaas, wathah!" agreed Arthur Augustus. "I have been in a beastly fwight about that cup, because I am wiahin' to the patah to-day for a fivah in ordah to stand a spweed to both polo teams aftah the game, and if I had to wiah for a cup at the same time, he might have cut up wough."

"Ha, ha, ha! Yes, I suppose he might. Kids, if we don't massacre those New House rotters to-morrow after this—"

"Eh?" exclaimed Figgins. "What's that?"

"If we don't massacre the New House bounders, may I be boiled in oil!"

"You'll probably be drowned before half-time, my son, so don't trouble. We shall just walk over you—"

"Weally, Figgins, that is widiculous. Bothah, there goes the bell for first school, and I have my team to pick for the match!"

For the rest of that day, and all the following Saturday morning, there was only one subject of conversation at St. Jim's, and that one subject was water polo. There were no half measures about the fellows' keenness, but it was kept within bounds this time. Arthur Augustus and Figgins were allowed to select their respective teams in peace.



"They were all pushed undah the doah," explained Arthur Augustus. "They are wequests for places in to-mowwow's water-polo team!"

CHAPTER 13.

The Second Water Polo Match.

ANOTHER perfect day that Saturday proved to be, with cloudless skies from which an almost summer sun shone, making the fellows who were not to play still more envious of those who were.

Skimpole had relented, and had offered his services as referee again, but they were declined, a tried man from Wayland being preferred, and, punctually to time, his boat was rowed in mid-stream.

Arthur Augustus glanced round at his men, a flush of excitement on his face.

"I wathah think we are stwongah than last time, deah boy," he said to Blake. "Lowthah half in place of Mellish is an impovement—"

"Yes, old chap, only don't tell Mellish so. He's behind us."

"Is he, bai Jove! I must apologise."

But there was no time, for the referee gave the signal at that moment.

"All in!"

And in they dived neatly, to the accompaniment of the cheers of nearly all the fellows at St. Jim's, for this time there was no cricket match to prevent the seniors from watching.

Figgins had won the toss, and placed his opponents with the sun in their faces; then the referee glanced from one goalful of anxious juniors to the other.

"Ready?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Yes!"

Splash! The ball was in play, right in the centre of the river, and an exciting race between Tom Merry and Figgins

instantly took place. Figgins's long arm gained him the opening advantage, and he threw the ball backwards just as the Shell fellow was upon him. Then on he swam, ready for the forward throw.

Kerr was the man who had the ball, and, being a Scotchman, he knew how to keep his head. He dribbled the ball until there was a chance of his losing it, then neatly threw it a foot or so before the trudging Figgins.

Digby was marking his man like a shadow, but once again Figgins's long arm served him well. He sent in a stinging shot just as he was pushed down.

"Goal!"

"No!"

"Good old Gussy! Well played, D'Arcy!"

Arthur Augustus had saved like a veteran, and, being wise in his generation was content to drop the ball just in front of Herries.

Herries promptly swung out to Blake on the wing, and, beating his man well, the leader of the Fourth Form juniors tried a shot.

It was well saved, and so the game swayed, first in favour of one side and then in favour of the other.

Of course, the polo was not of very high order compared with the game most of the fellows had seen at Wayland, but it was infinitely more interesting to the Saints, and when the teams changed over after the first seven minutes with the score sheet blank, the cheering was terrific.

But exciting as the first half had been, the second portion caused it to be forgotten, for almost from the first throw, Tom Merry scored. Then before the cheers had died away, Figgins equalised, beating Arthur Augustus with a shot the Fourth-Former never saw. That seemed to be all that was needed to make the fellows play as if life itself depended on their efforts.

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NEXT THURSDAY: "TOM MERRY'S TRIP TO PARIS." By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

Time after time the rival sets of forwards made for goal, but the defence of both sides was sound enough for anything, and five of the seven minutes of the second half had gone before the score of one all was altered, then it was Figgins who again brought about the downfall of the School House.

Suddenly he found himself with the ball, and a clear swim down of ten yards or so before him. Quick as lightning he got away, then was on the point of doing what he had often done before, swing the ball out to his wing man. But almost as he had the ball in his hand, Figgins caught sight of a pretty girlish figure in a pale-blue muslin frock, standing on the river bank, and a pretty, excited face. It was Cousin Ethel, as keenly interested as the wildest young fag from the Third Form.

Figgins unconsciously gritted his teeth, and instead of passing out, swam on. This was unexpected by Lowther, and the Shell fellow found himself beaten, then Figgins trudged furiously towards Digby.

Digby hesitated. He knew enough about water polo to know that it is fatal for a back to leave his man; but, then, the leader of the New House juniors was getting perilously near D'Arcy's charge.

"Go for him!" shouted Herries.

But it was too late. Figgins had the ball in the air, and the next instant he had slammed it past Arthur Augustus with a force which would have beaten a much better goalie than the chum from Study No. 6.

The New House fellows cheered to the echo, and a thrill of pleasure passed through Figgins's wiry form as he turned in the water.

Cousin Ethel was clapping her hands with the rest!

"Good shot, kid!" breathed Tom Merry, in a sort of gasp as they swam past each other on their way to their respective goals. "Quite of the mustard brand!"

"On the play we don't deserve to lick you, Tom—"

"No, Figgy, and you haven't licked us—yet. For all you're worth, Blake!"

The referee started the game briskly, and this time Tom Merry gained the ball. It was a near thing, but it was his hand which scooped the ball out of the water, and it meant a good deal to his team that it was.

"Wing it, Lowther!" he panted, back-flipping wildly. "My hat!"

But Lowther did not wing the ball. He held it until Tom Merry had swum past his man, then neatly dropped the ball before him.

There could be no doubt about it, Lowther had been at fault when Figgins had put his side ahead. Lowther would have been the first to have admitted that to anyone, for he was every inch a sportsman, but as it happened there was no need to admit it. With that one pass to Tom Merry the Shell humorist atoned for all his past polo sins, and the shouts of applause must have thrilled him.

"Pass, Merry!"

"Wing it, man!"

But Tom Merry knew better than that. Blake and his other forward were being marked like shadows, while he had just a few inches of rope, and he had the ball. To pass was not the game in those circumstances. He just went on instead.

Fatty Wynn made a grand effort to knock the ball from his hand, and even succeeded in touching it with the tips of his fingers, but it was too late. Tom Merry had got his throw in, and the next thing he saw as he came up was that the School House partisans on the river bank were hurling their caps in the air and yelling various remarks at the top of their voices.

The scores were equal once more.

The referee was glancing at his watch, but the game was not over yet.

"The ball, please!" he called out sharply; and Blake flung it to him.

Then they waited for the restart. None of them knew whether there was half a minute or two minutes to go, but there could not be much more of it. Then there was a splash, and the ball was in the centre once again.

Wildly the two rival centres swam for it, and Figgins just got there, half a stroke ahead, but this time it was not enough. Tom Merry seemed to fling himself upon the ball, and brushed it out of the New House fellow's hand as he swam furiously past him.

Wynn did not mean to let Tom Merry get away again, and was on him like a flash, then Tom Merry threw out to Jack Blake.

Blake had been watching the referee, and had seen him finger his whistle as if it were only a matter of seconds now, and that decided the wing man.

"Now for it!" he muttered, and he let fly.

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It was a very long shot, but it was beautifully judged.

With a great effort the New House goalkeeper tried to get his hand to the ball, but it was beyond his reach, and an instant later it was in the corner of the net.

"All out!" called the referee, and the fellows swam for the side, confident now that the excitement was over that they could not have kept afloat another minute.

They had played themselves out, and when sportsmen are willing to do that for the honour of their side—well, the least anti-sportsmen say against games the better.

"My hat!" gasped Tom Merry. "It's over at last, and I can't say I'm sorry. I thought I was going to sink for good that last time."

"But we've won, deah boys. We've beaten them, and that's all that mattahs!"

"Oh, it's all very well for you to talk, Gussy!" laughed Tom Merry, as they scrambled out of the river to take their mackintoshes from the fellows who had been minding them. "You've been treading water all the afternoon, not floundering about. There's Cousin Ethel, by Jove!"

"Yaas, wathah! But I weally can't speak to her with my hair wet and wumped. I pwopose we wave, and—"

But Cousin Ethel ordained it otherwise. As the polo teams moved to where the doctor was standing, she stopped her cousin with a laugh.

"Well played, Arthur!" she exclaimed. "You did awfully well, and I am so glad the School House won."

Figgins was passing at that moment, and he looked a trifle glum, then just as he was getting out of earshot, he heard Cousin Ethel's voice again.

"But I hardly think you quite deserved to beat them," she was saying rather loudly. "You mustn't tell him I said so, but Figgins played rather well, don't you think?"

And Figgins walked on hurriedly, grinning.

But the fellows were collecting round Dr. Holmes by now, for the Head meant to present the D'Arcy Cup in the open, and not in Hall. Arthur Augustus saw what was to happen, and was struck by a point.

"Bai Jove, Tom Mewwy," he exclaimed, catching his chums up, "I wathah think it is impos. for me to take the cup seein' my patah pwesented it—"

"Rot, ass! That has nothing to do with you who gave the thing."

"Well, weally—"

"Oh, you dream again, old kid! Blake?"

"Cheer-ho!"

"Keep near Gussy, will you," said Tom Merry. "He's going to lay hands on the D'Arcy-Cup again, and it will be safer if someone lays hands on him at the same time. We don't want another fiasco with the pot."

And, somewhat to the doctor's surprise, Jack Blake took the advice in a literal sense, for when Arthur Augustus stepped forward to receive the cup, Jack went with him, holding his arm. Then, as soon as the swell of the School House had received the cup, his chum gently but firmly took it from him.

"You may look at it, Gussy," he said; "you may even touch it, but only when someone older and wiser has hold of it. Are you trying to say something?"

"Yaas, wathah! I wish to wemark that I considah you wathah an uttah duffah, deah boy, but undah the circs.—the glorious circs.—I am willin' to let it pass. Tea will be weady at five, bai Jove!"

"Tea! What tea?"

"The spwead I am givin' in honouah of the gweat polo match, deah boy. The fivah awwived by express all wight, and Figgins and his team have accepted invites. Bai Jove, I wathah think it ought to become a custom at St. Jim's that the winning team at watah polo stand a tea to the othahs!"

"Ah! There's wisdom in that, Gussy!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Only as the next cup match doesn't come off until next year," laughed Tom Merry, "I propose we don't worry about that just yet. Hallo, Cousin Ethel is driving off with the Cleveland Lodge people, so we may as well get."

"Hear, hear!" sang out Jack Blake. "I say, hasn't it been ripping?"

Every one agreed that it had, then they hurriedly changed and got ready for a splendid spread in Study No. 6. There is not space enough to describe that tea; but, then, there is no need to.

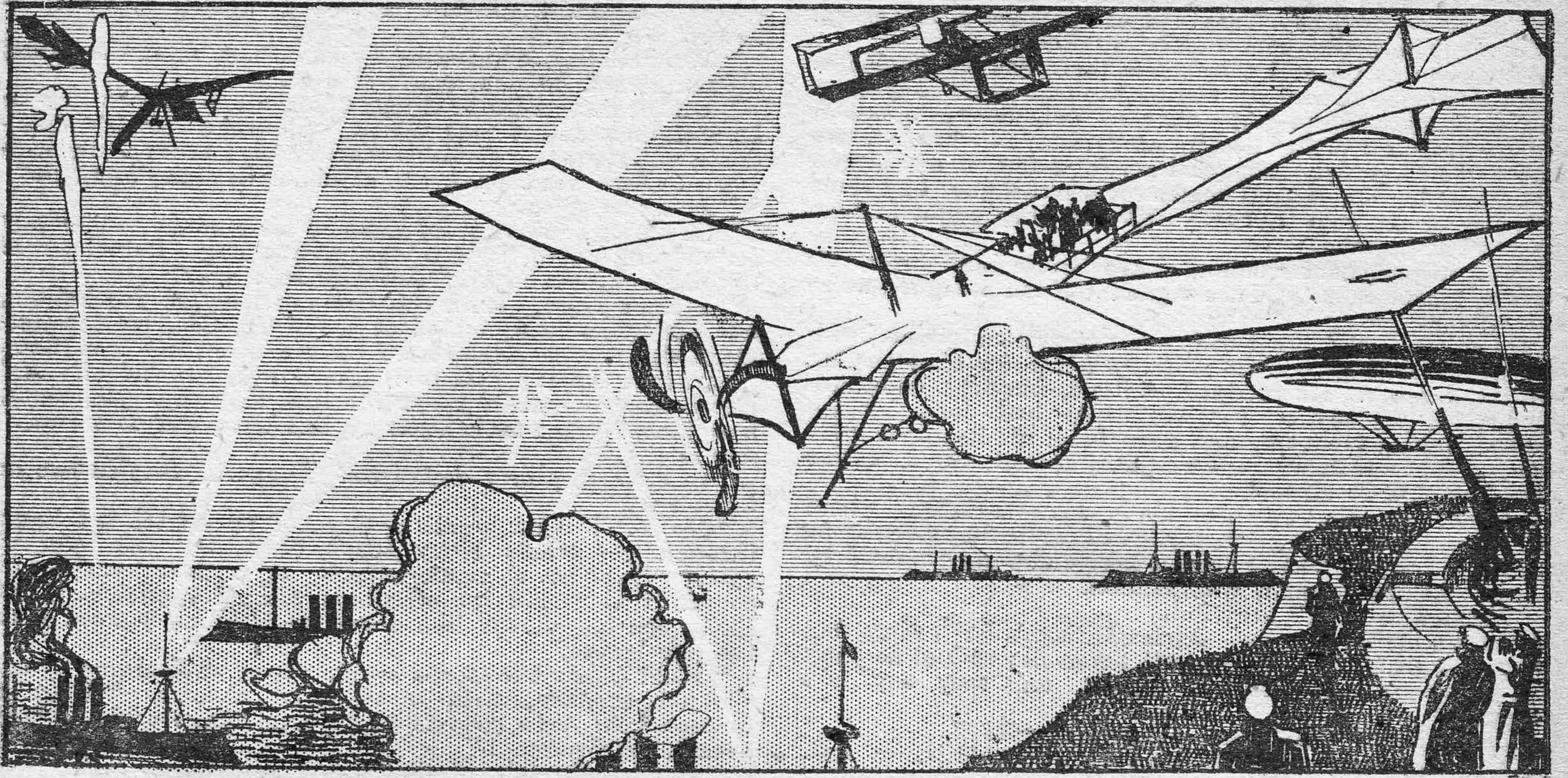
Arthur Augustus had very wisely left all arrangements in the experienced hands of Fatty Wynn once again, and, without saying much, Fatty Wynn had surpassed himself.

THE END.

(Another long, complete Tale of Tom Merry & Co. next Thursday, entitled "Tom Merry's Trip to Paris." Order your copy in advance. Price One Penny.)

NEXT THURSDAY: "TOM MERRY'S TRIP TO PARIS." By MARTIN GLIFFORD.

"BRITAIN AT BAY" is concluded on Pages 27 & 28. "BRITAIN'S REVENGE" is a Sequel to the Story.



BRITAIN'S REVENGE!

By JOHN TREGELLIS.

CHAPTER 1.

In which the Union Jack was Carried into the Invader's Country—How Two Cadets Stopped the Escape of a Great Personage.

On the afternoon of August 10th, 1909, the flags were flying upon every staff that would hold one throughout the City of London. From every church that was not in ruins, the populace was filing out, after attending, in deep gratitude, the thanksgiving services that followed upon the news that the British forces had triumphed at last over the German invader, who for so many months had dominated England.

The awful signs of the conflict that had raged were still plain to see. The wrecked buildings and gaping rents in the walls of houses told of the recently-ended struggle, where the newly-armed millions of London had overwhelmed the Kaiser's troops, and the gutters were still dark with blood.

Von Krantz, the German commander-in-chief, was a prisoner, with all that remained of his troops—horse, foot, and guns.

At that hour the two young scouts, Aubrey Villiers—better known as "Sam Slick"—and his brother Stephen, once cadets of the Greyfriars Rifle Corps, and who had distinguished themselves so often during the war that their names were household words, both for favouring luck and unflinching courage, were sitting in the first-floor room of a house on the south side of the Thames.

The room had been placed at their disposal by a railway staff-officer at Waterloo Station, and, indeed, the boys were so popular that they could have taken up their quarters in any house in London, and been welcome. There were far more rooms, now, than people to put in them.

Sam, seated at the table, was turning over a sheet of "The Daily Mail," an edition of which, under great difficulties, had been printed and published in South London throughout the war.

He learned many things he did not know from his copy, for though the brothers had been in the thick of the final great fight, in which Von Krantz and Prince Johann were defeated, they knew no more of the happenings throughout

England than had come within their vision during the stress of the battle.

"It's all over," said Sam, tossing the paper aside. "The victory lies with Britain, and a truce has been called between the two countries. The rest is only settlin' the terms of peace."

"Terms!" echoed Stephen, rising. "We shall ask pretty steep terms, I should think." He stood by the window, and looked out over the ruins and desolation of London. "It'll take half a century to pay for all this!"

"It's reckoned to have cost Britain hundreds of millions," Sam replied, "countin' loss of trade and all. Besides, quite 400,000 lives, first and last."

"Germany shall pay for it!" said Stephen bitterly.

"There might be a difficulty about that yet," opined Sam.

"Why? We're the victors! We hold the whip-hand. The Kaiser's army is in our own hands, an' his navy is at the bottom of the sea."

"Talkin' of the navy," said Sam, "we had some spankin' times with good old Bobby Cavendish, didn't we?"

"Not sure that wasn't the best part of it all," replied Stephen, thinking of their adventures with the young naval officer in the swift destroyer, and afterwards aboard the captured cruiser Furst Moltke.

"I hope we'll come across him again soon, and have a yarn over old times. Wonder what he's got to do now? Be a long time before we see him, I reckon. Yes; come in!" said Sam, as a knock sounded at the door.

An orderly entered with a telegram, and handed it to Sam, who tore it open.

"By George, it's from Cavendish himself!" cried Sam. "Listen to this!"

He read out from the telegram:
"Am patrolling the East Coast to stop escaping prisoners. If you would care to join me, go Woolwich and board T.B. 80, which sails to meet me to-night. CAVENDISH."

"By gum!" exclaimed Stephen. "Torpedo-boat No. 80, lyin' at Woolwich, eh? Let's go!"

"Right you are!" cried Sam. "I'll be only too glad to get on the briny for a short spell."

"I thought we were shoved on the shelf, now this truce is No. 88.

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on. But there's always brisk work where Bobby is. Let's go right away!"

The boys threw a few belongings into a dunnage-sack, and left the house at once. They had campaigned long enough to be ready to march at a moment's notice.

As rapidly as possible they made their way to Woolwich. The darkness was already falling, and on their way Sam announced that before going on, they were bound to call at the headquarters of the League of Britons, in whose service they had temporarily been, and get their formal discharge.

Mulholland, the famous leader of the League, had done so much for the boys that they felt that they ought to take nothing for granted.

"The torpedo-boat wouldn't leave before high-water, it's certain," said Sam. "Once signed off the League, we're independent."

Mulholland, as it happened, was not present at the head-office, and the boys had to wait two hours for him, chafing with impatience. He turned up at last, however, congratulated them warmly on the work they had done for the League, signed them off, and gave them his heartiest good wishes. He was sorry to lose them, though the League's usefulness was at an end.

Straightway, the brothers made for Woolwich, where they found No. 80, a grim, squat looking little vessel, lying against a wharf. They boarded her, and were received by a smart-looking gunner, who saluted.

"When d'ye sail?" said Sam.

"On the high-water, sir. At least, them's our orders, but we're in a fix. Our commander's taken ill; so bad he can't sail. He's at the hospital ashore, an' they say he's delirious."

"That's bad! Who is he—a sub-lieutenant?"

"No, sir, only a warrant-officer. The trouble is, we can't seem to get another in time. Officers is very short. What with the losses, and the fleet away blockadin' the German ports. An' Commander Cavendish's orders was strict. We was to meet him off the Mouse Lightship at daybreak."

"She must go, somehow, then," said Stephen.

"Look here," said Sam. "I'll take her down myself! There's no channel on the coast here I don't know, an' a run to the Mouse is nothin'. I'll deliver her to Commander Cavendish there, and then he can put his own sub. in command. One thing's certain, he must not fail to get her."

It was a bold suggestion, and in ordinary times of peace would have caused any fleet commander to have a fit. But the gunner knew Sam, and his abilities, and was only too glad to make sure of sailing on time.

"Very good, sir," he said, saluting, "you'll take full command o' course, sir. High-water in half an hour."

"Right! Have her ready to start directly the ebb begins."

The brothers' kit-bag had already been taken below, and a meal—torpedo-fashion—was served them at once.

"This is a gorgeous piece of nerve," said Stephen, grinning, "but Bobby'll be pleased!"

They cast off from the wharf as soon as the tide turned. It was close on midnight, and the torpedo-boat, with Sam and Stephen on the bridge, threaded her way out into mid-channel, and turned her head eastwards down the Thames.

"What orders did Commander Cavendish give the warrant-officer? Do you know?" asked Sam, of the gunner.

"Yes, sir! We was to go dead-slow down river, an' not show up at the Mouse before daybreak at earliest. We were to carry no lights, sir."

"Wonder what all those precautions are for?" murmured Sam. "We'll carry 'em out, of course."

"Quite like old times," said Stephen; and the gunner, whose name was Williams, grinned respectfully.

"What vessel has Commander Cavendish got?" inquired Sam.

"A thirty-knot destroyer, sir—the Wraith."

"Only a destroyer?" said Stephen. "Should have thought they'd give him a big ship after his services in the Furst Moltke."

"He'll get the first that's open, no doubt," said Sam. "But for keepin' patrol for prisoners, an' scourin' the coast, he's got to have somethin' swift, an' only a destroyer would do. I believe he really prefers one to any big ship, too."

Quietly, and in total darkness, the torpedo-boat went on her way down the long miles of the Thames towards the sea. Very gentle was her pace for the present, and the short summer night was far advanced when the salt breezes of the lower reaches were met, and the Chapman Light-house, standing on the Canvey sands, came in sight.

"What times we've had down here!" said Stephen reflectively. "It was hot work, some of it. Remember the cruiser battle off Sheppey, yonder?"

"Yes; and our scoutin' expedition ashore at Rochford, on the left there," said Sam, "when we reconnoitred the

Kaiser's headquarters at Boleyn Hall Towers, where he was directin' the campaign."

"And he jolly nearly caught us, an' finished our little career," added Stephen. "I say, I wonder where he is now?"

"The bulletins reported he'd cleared out, after the defeat of Von Krantz at Kingston," said Sam.

"I'll bet he was out of it long before that—as soon as ever he saw that defeat was likely," returned Stephen confidently. "It was no good his stayin' then; he was only here when Britain was supposed to be under Germany's thumb."

"Think so?"

"Of course! You bet he'd got all his arrangements ready for nipping out of it if things went wrong. I dare swear the Kaiser's safe back in Germany days ago."

"I don't know. With the German navy at the bottom, and our Fleet in command of the North Sea, his arrangements for leavin' might have come a cropper," said Sam, "especially as the disasters ashore were so sudden. An' he's a way of hangin' on to the last, they say. Of course, he's probably got back home by this time, but only just, I should say."

"In a warship or a destroyer? Supposin' they've two or three left?"

"No fear! How would a German war-vessel get home through our whole Navy that's blockadin' the German coast? No; in a steam-trawler, or a fishin'-smack, of course, that would go anywhere without suspicion. Most likely one has shoved him across to Belgium yesterday or the day before."

"What a pity our troops couldn't have nabbed him!" exclaimed Stephen, with a regretful chuckle. "What a hostage he'd have been to make good terms over, if he'd been taken prisoner!"

"Too late to talk of that now," said Sam. "He took jolly good care not to be nabbed. There's the east lightening already. It's nearly dawn. We're right on time."

Southend was passed, the Nore left to starboard, and the dark, open sea lay wide before No. 80's head, already growing lighter with the first streaks of dawn. As the grey light increased, Sam rang for greater speed, and very soon the Mouse Lightship, swinging at her great cables six miles off the Essex coast, was seen ahead, guarding the tail of the Barrows shoal, and showing a winking green light of great power.

"Don't see anything of Cavendish," said Sam, sweeping the horizon, "but there ain't much daylight to see anything by yet."

"Goin' to heave-to till he turns up?"

"I tell you what we'll do," said Sam, "we'll run right alongside the lightship, an' make fast to her with a couple of ropes, an' wait there. The sea's dead smooth."

The great, red-painted iron vessel was soon reached. Her crew were just lowering the big green lantern that worked up and down the mast, for its work for the night was done. The lightship's men hailed the torpedo-boat eagerly for news.

Sam called to them to hang some fend-offs over the side, and soon No. 80 was riding comfortably alongside the big iron hulk, on the side farthest from the land. The lonely Trinity House crew aboard her were only too delighted to have her company. They had been placed on the lightship soon after the defeat of the German fleet, and knew scarcely anything of what had since happened on land. They listened with greedy ears while No. 80's men enlightened them.

"Rum thing!" said Sam presently. "No sign of Cavendish's destroyer. He's generally on time, too. D'you see anything of her?"

"Not a vessel in sight at all," said Stephen, "barring that sail yonder."

He pointed to a small vessel that was coming out from the land across the Maplins, a long way off, but heading towards the Mouse Light. "Roach River oyster smack, she looks like."

"Must have come out through the Havens," said Sam thoughtfully. "She's pickin' up a nice breeze."

There was nothing else to be seen, and for some time Sam watched the smack while his brother talked to the lightship's skipper. Presently Stephen was struck by Sam's attentive-

ness. "What are you starin' at the smack for?" said the younger cadet. "Bobby hasn't swapped his destroyer for her, has he? Hallo, she's altered her course! She's cuttin' right across towards the Kent coast, instead of sailin' right out to sea past us. What for, I wonder?"

"Just so—what for?" said Sam. "Because she's caught sight of us, I believe. She didn't notice us before, because the lightship shelters us; but now she can see what we are."

"Why should a Burnham oyster-smack be scared of us? She can see we ain't German."

"That's what I'd like to know," Sam replied. "We'll overhaul that joker, an' have a look at him. Maybe he's what Bobby's sent here to stop. Cast off, there!"

The torpedo-boat surged ahead, and at a swift pace went surging down towards the smack. The latter bore away more than ever, and headed south towards the Kentish shoals. She was a fast, yacht-like cutter, such as belong to the Essex oyster fisheries.

"Get me the strongest pair of glasses you've got, Williams," said Sam.

And when the binoculars came, he focussed them on the smack. Suddenly he gave vent to a sharp exclamation.

"What is it?" said Stephen, whose eyes were keen. "Carries three hands, don't she? Someone put his head through the cabin-hatch just now—that's a fourth. Did you spot him through the glasses?"

"I did," said Sam, his voice quivering with excitement—a rare thing for him.

"What then?" queried Stephen, struck by his brother's strained, eager face.

"It was only a glimpse," said Sam, in a low voice, "but if that wasn't the very person we were speaking of an hour back, call me a Dutchman! It isn't a face to forget, once you've seen him. He's on that smack, I'll swear to it!"

"Great guns!" exclaimed Stephen. "Do you mean it's the—"

"Yes, I do! Williams, pitch a shell across that smack's bows, and heave her to."

The gunner, who was already standing by the six-pounder forward, clapped in the cartridge, and took a quick sight. There was a sharp, ringing report, and the shell went singing across the smack's bows.

She made no attempt to stop, but bore away still farther towards the land.

Bang went the six-pounder again, and this time the smack's bowsprit was cut clean away, and her jib and head-gear fell across her bows in a mass. She luffed head to wind, and lay like a crippled duck, while the torpedo-boat raced alongside.

"There's Cavendish comin' up!" cried Stephen, pointing to a destroyer racing up the Swin channel towards them.

Sam had no time to spare her a glance; his attention was riveted on the smack. Three rough-looking, bearded longshoremen, in sea-boots and jumpers, glowered savagely at the torpedo-boat.

"What's this 'ere mean?" shouted the skipper, with an oath, as Sam ran his vessel alongside. "Ain't you had enough firin' at the Germans, that you must stop English fishermen wot's gettin' an honest livin'?"

"We've had plenty of firing at the Germans, my man," said Sam; "and you've got one of them aboard here. We're going to have him out of it. Make fast there, Williams."

The smack's skipper denied it with a volley of oaths, and her crew looked savage and uneasy. Sam took no notice, but saw the smack made fast to his own vessel's side, and then he and Stephen boarded her.

"Now, then," he said, drawing his revolver, "I'm going to search this craft through from deck-planks to keel, to find the person I'm after! Open that hatch!"

The skipper and crew made as if they would refuse, and for a moment things looked ugly. But realising how useless was resistance, the skipper, muttering under his breath, went towards the hatch.

Before he could reach it, it opened from below of its own accord, the head and shoulders of a tall man in the uniform of a German field-marshal on active service appeared through the hatchway, and he stepped quietly on deck.

"Great Scott!" gasped Williams, standing to his gun aboard No. 80. "It's the Kaiser!"

The tall man turned to Sam, with a sharp, commanding air.

"Did you stop this vessel?" he said, in a clear voice, and in perfect English.

"I did!" said Sam.

He showed no sign of the wild exultation that filled him. One glance was enough to show who the captive was. The strong, square face, upturned moustache, and erect frame, were those of Wilhelm, Emperor of Germany.

"Then," he said commandingly, "I ask you to be good enough to let me proceed at once, without further hindrance. The war is over. Peace reigns, and hostilities are ended by agreement on both sides. You have no right to recommence them by an act of this kind."

The commanding manner of the speaker was that of a great monarch, accustomed to control fleets and armies, and there was the ring of majesty in it. But it did not make any impression on Sam or his torpedo-boat.

"Peace has not been declared, sir," said Sam curtly—"only a truce."

"Peace will follow as soon as matters settle themselves, and will be permanent," said the Kaiser, with an impatient frown. "Draw off, and let me proceed, sir!"

"We shall possibly make the better peace while we have possession of your Majesty's person," said Sam grimly. "You are my prisoner, sir. I am now going to take you back to London, and I ask for your parole."

There was silence for some moments, and the Emperor looked grimly at his young captor. What Wilhelm thought in that short time, there is no saying. It is certain that he saw his last chance gone, and the country he had just left, and which he had hoped to hold in his grip, not only lost to him now, but to receive him back as a prisoner, under guard. Great monarch though he was, the young cadet standing before him in war-worn khaki, was his master. Yet all his kingly dignity remained. He did not move a muscle, nor tried to argue further, for he knew where the power lay.

"Very well," he said quietly, "you have my parole."

Sam bowed coldly. He was glad to have the parole, though his gorge always rose at the man who had deluged Britain with blood for the sake of his ambition.

"The cabin of the torpedo-boat will be set apart for you," said Sam, "if you will now be good enough to go aboard."

The Kaiser turned without another word, and, passing on to the vessel's deck, entered her hatchway, and went below. The fishermen on the smack, who had been listening with all their ears, stared after him open-mouthed.

"Great Scott!" whispered the skipper excitedly to his mate. "Was it the Kaiser himself? If we'd known that, we'd ha' charged him ten times more!"

"Wouldn't ha' done us much good now this naval beggar's spoiled the whole show," growled the other man. "The dickens take him!"

Sam saw the Kaiser aboard, nodded to Stephen to follow him, and then turned to the sullen smacksmen.

"As for you," said Sam, in disgusted tones, "I'll deal with you on the spot. You lose your vessel for this business, and a very cheap get-off at that. Launch your jolly-boat off the deck there, and get into her, all four of you!"

"Why, what 'arm ha' we done, governor?" whined the skipper, dropping his blustering manner. "We never supposed there was anything wrong. How were we to know he was the Hemperor?"

"You knew he was a German officer, and let him bribe you to smuggle him out of Essex!" said Sam sharply. "You were ready to do your country a bad turn for money, and in times like these, when better men have been giving their lives in hundreds to save the nation. It's lucky we've few like you, or Britain would be under the thumb of Germany to-day! Off with you! Cast loose there!" he said, stepping back aboard the torpedo-boat.

The smack's skipper burst into a torrent of foul language, in which he cursed Sam, the torpedo-boat, the Navy, and everything connected with it.

"Another word, and I'll rig a spar and hang you out of hand!" said Sam sternly. "It's what you deserve, and what you'd get if you were caught at this game ashore! Get into your boat and pull back to Essex. There's a naval regular officer on that destroyer yonder," he added grimly, "who'll string you up sharp enough if you're here when he arrives. Train the gun, Williams, and give her a few shells along the water-line."

The smack's crew, seeing there was no hope for it, tumbled into their boat in a great hurry, and pulled landwards. Williams at once put four shells from the six-pounder gun plump into the smack as she drifted away, and the water rushing violently into the breaches in her hull, she up-ended herself and went down with surprising quickness.

Hardly had the water closed over her, when the destroyer, which had been racing up with all the speed she could muster, swung round and hove-to alongside the torpedo-boat. Bob Cavendish, the young officer with whom the boys had seen so much service, was on her bridge, as alert and spruce as ever. He had been watching the two vessels intently through his glasses as his vessel approached, and thought he recognised the Kaiser, although he could hardly believe his eyes.

"Sam ahoy!" he hailed eagerly. "Am I dreaming, or did I see straight? Was that really Willy?"

"Yes, as right as rain," said Sam. "We've got him in the cabin."

"Great Jupiter! Set your whole ship's company to lean against the door, stokers an' all!"

"It's all right. He's given his parole."

"Well done, by Jingo! This is the biggest score of the whole campaign. You've put a trump card in the hands of the Government, you two! How on earth did it happen?"

Sam told him in a few words how they had become suspicious of the smack and brought her to answer for herself.

"Simply immense!" said Cavendish. "If anybody but you done it, I'd be jealous enough to fire into you, pretty near. I should have been just too late."

"Your warrant-officer's sick at Woolwich, so I brought the

craft down myself," said Sam. "Thought I'd better. What now?"

"Great thing is to get Royal captive up to headquarters. You'd better turn right around and start at once. Nothing's half so important as that. Won't do for me to leave the coast, but you're safe as anybody to take him along."

"Right-oh! We'll put off further palaver till we next meet," said Sam, calling up the engine-room. "Full speed! Head her for the Nore, coxswain."

Followed by Cavendish's hearty good wishes, No. 80 raced away for the Thames mouth again, and was soon bowling along past Southend and Canvey Island.

The long voyage up the salt reaches of the estuary was made as quickly as possible, nor did the boys concern themselves about their prisoner below, or put any guard over him. They had the word of a king, and they knew by former experience that it was as good as an armoury of shackles and leg-irons. Not till the murk of London was reached again, and the wrecked Tower Bridge was in sight, did Sam leave the bridge. Then he gave the command of the ship to Williams, and went below to see his captive.

The Kaiser was sitting on the hard, leather cushions of a locker berth, quietly smoking a cigar, and he nodded slightly as Sam entered.

"I ought to know your face, and your brother's too," he said, glancing at Sam. "If I remember, we met on the Blackwater a long time ago, and later your brother came under my notice at Boleyn Towers."

"That's so, sir," replied Sam. "I made a great mistake in not having you shot at the time."

"Even emperors may make mistakes, sir," said Sam, with a dry smile. "We'll hope there'll be no more need of shooting now."

"That remains to be seen," said the Kaiser, as drily as Sam. "Your morning's work may not make so much difference as you think."

"You mentioned the nearness of peace, sir," said Sam. "Still, these are arrangements I don't know much about. I leave them to my betters. We shall reach the wharf shortly, and I must send you to headquarters, if you please. There's a naval greatcoat in the cabin. I thought you might like to wear it and turn up the collar, so that you would not be recognised on the way."

The Kaiser smiled. "And then, sir, if the terms are good enough, and all goes well, you'll be able to go, and nobody need know you were captured at all," said Sam simply. "Of course, I and my men will say nothing. The Government can settle the rest."

"Thank you, I will accept the greatcoat," said the Emperor; "the other matter you mention is hardly worth discussing. Still, for the present, I am glad to find myself in the hands of a gentleman."

Sam left the cabin, and very shortly afterwards No. 80, not making any stop at her starting-place of Woolwich, brought up instead against the Old Swan Pier, at London Bridge, and made fast.

Sam at once wrote a formal letter to Lord Ripley, who, he knew, was now at the War Office, as follows:

"To the Right Honourable the Earl Ripley, War Office, Pall Mall.

"Lieutenant Villiers, late Greyfriars Cadets, in temporary command torpedo-boat No. 80, begs to report the capture of Kaiser Wilhelm, Emperor of Germany, off the Mouse Light while attempting to leave the country on a fishing-vessel. At present a prisoner on parole on board No. 80.

"Lieutenant Villiers begs instructions in regard to the matter, and a suitable escort to relieve him of his prisoner."

This was sent off post-haste by Williams, the gunner, and in a short time the bluejacket returned, an escort of cavalry and a closed carriage close behind him, and gave Sam a letter, which was opened, and ran thus, in confidential vein, quite unofficial:

"Dear Aubrey,—My warmest congratulations. You have probably done a better service for the Empire even than you dream of. For the present, say not a word about the matter to anyone. Keep it entirely secret, and tell your crew they are expected by the Admiralty to do the same. See your prisoner into the carriage which I send, and give him some sort of a wrap which will ensure his not being recognised.

"For the same reason, better sever your connection with No. 80, and stay ashore for a day or two. I will see the service you have rendered is thoroughly acknowledged and rewarded later on. In the meantime—silence. Yours sincerely,

"RIPLEY."

"That's all right," said Sam, with a sigh of relief. And five minutes later he saw the carriage drive away with its armed and mounted escort, not a soul among the curious bystanders who watched the disembarkment having the slightest inkling who the august prisoner was. "We've got to get out of this Steve, and the Admiralty must send along an officer to take No. 80 back to Bob. Call the crew below."

Sam spoke to them pithily, and in a few words told that the occurrence of the day, which naturally they thoroughly understood, was to be kept absolutely secret, by orders from headquarters. There was no need to say more. The men were accustomed to obey orders, and had ample sense to see the importance of the matter. They then took leave of the crew, who were heartily sorry to lose them.

"Though whether the thing can be kept as dark elsewhere is another matter," said Sam, as they walked back to their own quarters south of the river. "I'm beginnin' to think I ought to have either kept those confounded treacherous fishermen prisoners, too, or else shot them."

"P'raps it won't matter so very much," said Stephen. "Here, let's get a paper an' see if they've concluded peace yet, an' what the terms are."

"Ay, that's what we're waitin' for now," said Sam, "the terms."

He was right. The entire nation, resting upon its weapons amid the smoking ruins of its cities, was waiting eagerly, anxiously, to hear what terms Germany would offer for peace.

CHAPTER 2. Terms!

The two brothers were sitting in their parlour in Tooley Street on the evening of the third day after they had quitted the torpedo-boat, and both of them, though idle for the time being, were feeling more impatient and restless than they ever had before a risky piece of scouting or a great battle.

They, like thousands of others, were still waiting hour by hour for the news that never seemed to come. London was beginning to awake a little from its ruined state. Shops were opening again, food was pouring into the country from scores of ships, trade was even commencing to revive a little.

The want and poverty were still very great, though the rich had never been so generous, and every man who had anything to give, shared it with his poorer brethren, so that much distress was averted. If the war had caused great misery and trials, it also brought out many noble qualities and splendid sacrifices. Never had the British people, rich and poor, great and small, been so closely bound together.

But the two Governments, British and German, were still conferring, and though the newspapers were full of rumours and reports, nothing final was announced. The truce held, but it was only a truce, not a peace, and it looked as if the countries were at a deadlock.

"Are we never goin' to get it straight?" cried Stephen. "They're licked! We ought to force 'em to take our terms!"

"I reckon that's just the trouble," said Sam. "Our fleet's blockadin' the German coast, but it can't steam overland an' attack Berlin and the big cities."

"Everybody's gettin' very sick at bein' kept in the dark so long," said Stephen. "Hallo, here's the evening paper—now for it!" he added, as "The Evening News" was brought up to the room.

He opened it eagerly. "The Kaiser a Prisoner at St. James's!" he read out from the top headline.

"Hallo! It's been given out, then. Or else discovered by somebody!" exclaimed Sam.

"The rumour, circulated yesterday, that the German Emperor had been captured, we are now able to confirm," read Stephen, from the paper. "The Kaiser has been in custody for some days. Great secrecy has been observed so far. It is said that his capture is due to those extremely fortunate and skilful young scouts, the Villiers brothers. If so, the nation owes them another debt of gratitude."

"Never mind that," said Sam impatiently; "isn't there anything about the terms?"

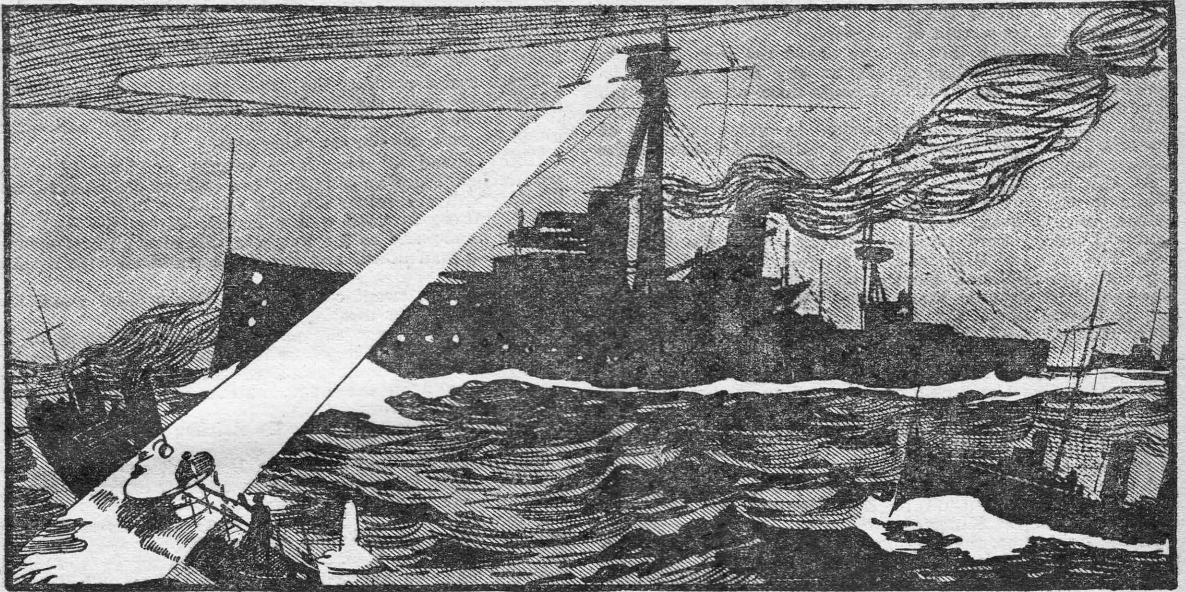
"Only a rumour about the terms we're askin' Germany," said Stephen; "nothing fixed. We're demandin' first a money indemnity—doesn't say how much—an' second, that Germany must clear out of Holland an' the Netherlands, and there are hints about other things."

"That ain't much," growled Sam.

(Another long instalment of this powerful war story next Thursday. Please order your copy of THE GEM Library in advance.)

First Read this Story, and then turn to page 23 and commence "Britain's Revenge," by John Tregellis.

BRITAIN AT BAY.



A Powerful and Stirring War Story.

WHAT HAS HAPPENED IN THIS STORY.

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 from London by Von Krantz, the German commander. At the time when this instalment opens, Sam and Stephen are making their way to Long Ditton, to join the Fusiliers' bivouac. The two boys are impressed by the preparations Lord Ripley has made for the defeat of the German army.

(Now go on with the story.)

Conclusion.

Sam and Steve had no notion of bringing themselves to Lord Ripley's notice at such a time, but one of his staff-officers caught sight of them, and they were called to the tent.

The commander-in-chief thanked them in a few words for the report they had sent, and which had been of great use, and, giving them his congratulations, bade them hurry on to the Fusiliers, who would be glad of their services. The boys did so, finding their old friends bivouacked behind some earthworks near the river, and amongst the first to greet them was the adjutant, Devine.

"What, back again!" he cried, wringing their hands delightedly. "We sent word for you, but hardly hoped you'd be able to reach us. Turned up, like bad pennies—eh, what? There'll be work for you to-night, young 'uns; and when to-morrow dawns, I think we shall be at the final grip with the Germans. We've got a section of Frontiersmen attached to us, and I'll put you with 'em. They're just your sort. Come and grub, for goodness knows when we'll get another meal!"

The brothers were sent out separately on scouting duty soon after, and they learned things, not so much of the Germans, but of their own side, which amazed them.

"It looks as if all Britain were here," said Sam that evening to Devine, "an' yet Ripley's got his League men so well placed an' kept back that I don't believe any of the German scouts have got an inkling how many they are."

"They've been moved in during the night," said Devine, "and to-night there'll be as many more. We're keepin' the Germans busy with a snipin' fire all along five miles of the river. No, their scouts don't get across much. If they do, they don't get back again."

"If all these masses of Leaguers can shoot, the Germans'll be flattened," said Stephen.

"Ah, that's it," said Devine gravely—"if they can shoot. But they can only be moved like a mob. They know nothing of field work, and you can believe me, if they're used at the wrong time, or a blunder's made, all those legions of Leaguers might well be slaughtered like sheep, and broken up for good. But Ripley's a marvel. I believe he'll win with 'em. None of us have much of a guess what his plans are; but I'd back him."

All through that dark and windless night the boys lay out with the score of Frontiersmen on a hillside over the river, and kept up a slow, steady fire on the enemy's lines.

Right away from Maidenhead to London the crackling of snipers' rifles was heard. It was done to keep the Germans busy, and hold their attention.

Meanwhile, through the dark hours the troops silently filled the country behind the lines of riflemen.

When day dawned all was in readiness, and the boys saw below them a corps of Royal Engineers swiftly throwing a pontoon bridge across the river.

They were fired on by the German patrols at once, but from houses and hillocks and copses all around sprang a cross-fire of rifles that silenced the German pickets.

More Germans were hurried forward to the attack, only to be beaten down and wiped out by a storm of shells from two Colonial batteries—New Zealanders—that had been placed for the purpose.

That bridge, which was quickly finished and guarded, was only one of many. Another was thrown across at Kingston, and under cover of a fierce British artillery fire troops were pushed across rapidly.

Then, as the dawn rose, the boys, from their high position, were able to see how the battle ended.

"By the holy iron," cried Sam, amazed at what he saw, "Ripley's goin' to pull it off! Look at the Leaguers away to the left of us there! 'This is goin' to be the biggest fight since Waterloo!"

The roll of guns and the drumming of musketry increased

No. 88.

NEXT THURSDAY:

"TOM MERRY'S TRIP TO PARIS."

MARTIN CLIFFORD

By

along all the miles of front. The battle was stupendous; and later in the day it became plain, from the position, that the Germans must either conquer utterly, or be swept from the face of the earth.

Amid the roar of the battle and the swift moving of the battalions, Lord Ripley was carrying out a masterly plan with amazing coolness and skill.

He kept the main German Army pinned to their position by the menace of his 500,000 Leaguers, who were facing the enemy at long range, having come slowly up from the west, on the north side of the river, and ready to fall on the Germans by sheer weight of numbers.

On such a force Prince Johann dared not turn his back, for he believed it might attack at any hour, and to be caught while moving by such a huge mass of men was too dangerous.

The British Leaguers were backed by great numbers of batteries, which were keeping up a galling shell-fire on the enemy, who replied with their heavy field-guns.

All this was happening far up the river, around Staines. While it was going on, the British Regular and Colonial troops, having bridged the river in several places much nearer London, were pouring rapidly across the Thames near Kingston and Richmond, horse, foot, and guns streaming over the pontoons, beating back the second force of Germans that opposed them there, and soon they were in full possession of all that side of the river, strengthening every moment, and threatening Prince Johann's left flank and rear.

It was about this time that Prince Johann received urgent orders from his Commander-in-Chief, Von Krantz, to fall back on London, and support him without delay, Von Krantz finding himself terribly hard pressed by the increasing hordes of the League of Britons, who threatened to recapture London altogether.

Prince Johann tried to obey, and moved back on London, but found himself cut off by the Regulars and Colonials who had crossed at Kingston.

At the same time, the huge mass of Leaguers further west advanced upon Johann as soon as he gave way.

Fully half the League men paid a terrible price for their advance. They were caught by the fire of several rear-guards posted with guns, and, brave as they were, they were nothing but a mob, and moved slowly and with confusion.

A whole brigade of Prussian cavalry swept down on them, riding through them and cutting them to pieces with awful slaughter, and driving thousands into the river.

The rest, however, managed to work their way round, and gave Prince Johann a hot time of it.

If the Leaguers came to grief in the open, it was not so with the Regulars. They inflicted tremendous loss on the German columns, and soon a terrific battle was raging at far closer quarters. The German Army found itself between two fires.

Now it was that the Fusiliers and the regiments with them were moved across the river, and the boys, with their corps of Frontiersmen, were placed on a hill, whence they poured a sharp fire into the drab legions of the German troops, which were now falling into confusion under the terrible hammering they received.

"They're trapped! By gum, Ripley's bucketing 'em to pieces!" cried Sam.

It was a large force, the pick of the German Army, that was left behind to cover the retreat of the others, who, however, were now nearly surrounded, and had no choice but to get into London as fast as they could, where the League awaited them.

The brigade that remained on the boys' front had expected to hold off the British attack, and then to get away. But by the skill of Lord Ripley and his officers it was so cut off that it had no choice but to fight to the last.

It was the final stand of the Germans, and slowly the British attack closed round it and beat it down. It melted like wax before the sun.

On a little hillock the German standard, the emblem of the pitiless legions that had ravaged Britain, fluttered in the breeze. Around it was the remnant of the Prussian Guards.

When the general advance was sounded, the Fusiliers, ever in the post of honour, were in the front of the charging line, and the two young scouts and the Frontiersmen were close on the Fusiliers' left.

Sam, whose rifle-lock was smashed by a bullet, had snatched up a dead Dragoon's sabre, and gripped it fiercely as he dashed along, with Stephen at his side.

In front were the Guards—the big, grey-coated Prussians—fighting like fiends.

There was a clash as the two regiments came together, a fierce cheer from the Fusiliers, and the Prussian line was bent, broken, and trampled underfoot. No man either asked or gave quarter on either side.

Right ahead of him, Sam caught a vision of a big-moustached Prussian gripping the staff of the colours, and blazing with a revolver into the attacking line.

Sam sprang forward with a bound, seizing the staff with his left hand; and as the Prussian turned the pistol on him he cut the man down, and lifted the standard with a shout of triumph.

The Fusiliers swept over the hill like a tidal wave, and the Prussians were utterly wiped out.

Far and wide over the plain the German troops of all brigades were in full flight, falling back on London, leaving nearly half their numbers on the field of battle, dead or wounded; and in the huge, half-ruined city the League awaited the survivors.

The bugles rang clear over the stricken field. The victory was to Britain.

The troops who had crossed at Long Ditton—the Fusiliers and those with them—were bidden to draw back and occupy their bivouac fronting the river.

Sam, capturing a Dragoon's horse that came trotting past, mounted himself and Stephen on it, and, with the German standard held aloft and fluttering in the wind, galloped back to the bivouac, with the cheers of six regiments greeting the boys as they passed.

All night the Fusiliers lay out on the hillside in the warm autumn darkness, awaiting orders and news. Some wondered why they were not pushed on. Others guessed the reason.

Throughout the next day guard was mounted, and the dull murmur of the distant city came across the plain.

How were things going? What had become of the beaten German forces? What were the Government doing? Every man asked eagerly for news, but it was some time before anyone could reach the troops.

Then, at last, a roar of cheering was heard all along the line. Men came up from the troop-trains with the long-awaited-for news on posters and bulletins, plain for all to see.

From end to end of Britain the glad tidings travelled, and each bulletin told its tale:

SURRENDER OF THE
GERMAN ARMY!

VON KRANTZ ASKS
FOR TERMS.


REPORTED FLIGHT OF
THE KAISER.

BRITAIN VICTORIOUS!

The Eagle's wings were
trailing in the dust!

THE END.

(Now turn to page
23 and read the
opening chapters of
BRITAIN'S REVENGE,
the sequel to this
grand war story, by
John Tregellis.



HOW DO YOU DO?

WHOM TO WRITE TO—The Editor, "GEM" Library, 23-9, Bouverie Street, Fleet Street, London, who will be pleased to hear from you.

TOM MERRY'S TRIP TO PARIS.

A very useful uncle is the means of giving the juniors of St. Jim's a surprise, and needless to say they follow it up with unequalled zeal. The result! Well, you'll see next week, when you read

TOM MERRY'S TRIP TO PARIS. *The Editor*