

CONTINUOUS
VARIETY!
YOUR FAVOURITE
STARS -
TOM MERRY & Co
INSIDE!

The GEM

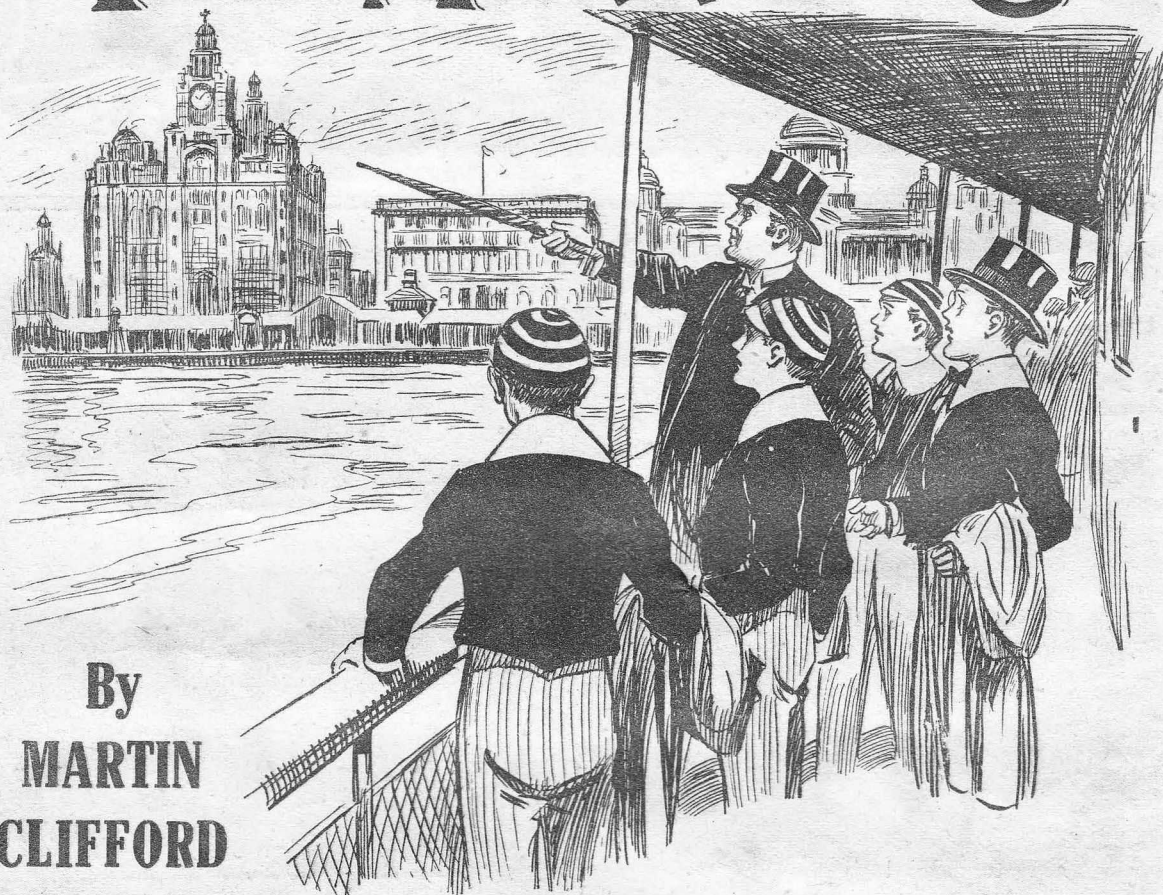
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A
GALLANT
RESCUE!

'ERBERT RAGS, A LIVERPOOL RAGAMUFFIN, PROVES A FRIEND—

TOM MERRY & CO



By
**MARTIN
CLIFFORD**

When Tom Merry saves young 'Erbert's life, he regards it as all in the day's work.
But 'Erbert is for ever grateful, and he pluckily proves his gratitude
when Tom Merry & Co. run into trouble!

CHAPTER 1.

Tom Merry's Letter!

THE March wind was blowing great guns in the quadrangle at St. Jim's. The old elms, on which the spring green was beginning to show, groaned and creaked.

The wind wailed round the chimney-pots, and shook the windows of the School House. Blagg, the postman, zig-zagged across from the gates with a letter in his hand. The wind was strong, and Blagg was short and stout, and he crossed the quad in a series of short tacks like a heavy old "wind-jammer" beating up-river against the wind.

From the study window in the School House half a dozen juniors watched his progress with great interest.

In the windows of Study No. 6 were Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy of the Fourth Form. Tom Merry, Lowther, and Manners of the Shell were also in the study. The juniors were all looking out of the window, discussing the interesting question whether Blagg, the postman, would ever reach the School House, or whether the March wind would be too much for him.

The struggle was doubtful. Blagg came on valiantly, but a furious gust would catch him and stop his career, and leave him floundering and gasping. His face was growing redder and redder from his exertions, and the pauses he made to take breath were longer and longer.

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"He's sticking to it," said Tom Merry admiringly. "If I were a sporting man, I would lay two to one that he does it. I wonder who that letter's for?"

"For me, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I have witten to my wespected govannah for a fivah, and I have no doubt that that is it."

"It doesn't look like a registered letter," said Blake. "It's the only one there is for the School House, I suppose, and Blagg's got it out ready in the porch at the gate. I shouldn't wonder if it's for me. I asked the mater to send me a postal order nearly a week ago."

"I'm expecting a letter from my uncle in Ireland," Digby remarked—"my Uncle Murphy. I believe he's coming over to see me."

"And I'm expecting a remittance from Huckleberry Heath," Tom Merry remarked thoughtfully. "I must say I hope it's for me."

"Well, I hope it contains a remittance from somebody for somebody," said Monty Lowther. "It might be for any of us. I've got an uncle who turns up trumps sometimes."

"As a matter of fact, deah boys, I suppose we are all expecting remittances," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Bai Jove, Blagg is doin' it! He'll be at the door in one more lap."

"Tell you what," said Blake suddenly. "The letter may be for any of us—"

"Or none of us," said Lowther.

"Exactly. It may be for any of us, and if it contains

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in LIVERPOOL!

a remittance, it will come like—like corn in Egypt, in these hard times."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Then I'll tell you what—I'll toss you fellows, odd man out, for the letter," said Blake. "What do you say?"

"Rats!" was what Lowther said.

"Bai Jove," said Arthur Augustus, "it's a sportin' offah, and I'm willin' to take you on. You see, deah boys, we can't all have the lettah."

"And very likely it contains nothing but parental or avuncular advice," remarked Manners, "and if it does, anybody's welcome to my little bit."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, what do you say?" demanded Blake. "We can't all have the lettah."

"The most natural thing would be to let the owner have it," suggested Tom Merry.

Blake sniffed.

"Oh, if you don't want to take your chance, Tom Merry—"

"Rats! I'll risk it!"

"All of you agreed?" asked Blake, taking a penny out of his pocket—the last one he had there. "Blagg's nearly at the door!"

"Yes."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Good! Then go ahead! Heads are out," said Blake. "I suppose you've all got a penny?"

"Bai Jove, I haven't, deah boy! I suppose half-a-crown will do?"

"Yes, ass, I suppose it will. Go ahead!"

"Pway wait a moment, deah boys. I have a wemark to make—"

"Buck up, then," said Tom Merry. "What is it?"

"I want to point out to Blake that I wefuse to be called an ass. I—"

"Oh, ring off! Now—"

"I wefuse to wing off. I—"

"Order!" roared Blake. "Blagg's knocking! Buck up!"

The coins spun. There were three heads, and they belonged to Manners, Lowther, and Herries. They grunted and pocketed the coins. They were out. Four coins spun again, and then there was growling from Blake and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. They were out.

D'Arcy gazed thoughtfully at the coin he had spun.

"Upon the whole, Tom Mewwy—"

"That's all right, you're out!"

"Upon second thoughts, I think that tails should be out," said D'Arcy. "Of course, it is only a suggestion."

"Ha, ha, ha! Of all the duffers—"

"I decline to be chawactewised as a duffah. As a mattah of fact—"

"Go ahead, Dig," said Tom Merry. "It's between us now."

"Right you are!"

The coins spun for the third time. Digby showed the portrait of King George, and grunted. On Tom Merry's penny the figure of Britannia was uppermost.

"You've got it!" grunted Dig.

"Good! The letter's mine!"

The juniors looked out of the window. Blagg was crossing to the gates. As the wind was now behind him, he was going along at speed, in an ambling trot that he evidently could not check if he had wanted to. The wind had a good target in his portly figure, and he bore down on the gates like a ship under full sail, and running free.

The letter had been delivered. Now, the letter might have been for any of the hundred odd souls that dwelt in the School House at St. Jim's; but the juniors in Study No. 6 had a feeling that it was for them. They were so badly in want of a remittance that they would have taken it as a distinct grievance if the letter had not been for one of their number.

D'Arcy's half-crown was the last coin of any great value that remained among them.

"Well, it's Tom Merry's letter," said Digby. "If it's from my Uncle Murphy, Tom Merry will have to receive him when he comes to St. Jim's, that's all."

"And if it's from my pater, with a shoal of advice to extravagant youths," said Blake, "Tom Merry can follow the advice."

"Bai Jove! Now I come to think of it, my govannah is more likely to send me a lectuah than a fivah this time, as I had one last week," said Arthur Augustus. "Howevah, we stick to the awwangement. Tom Mewwy is quite welcome to the lectuah."

"And if it's for me," chuckled Herries, "it's a recipe for preventing distemper in dogs. And Tom Merry can have it!"

"And if it's for me—" began Manners.

"Oh, rats!" said Tom Merry. "You're jolly generous, all of you. Suppose we go down and get the letter, and see if it's for any of us?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

The juniors moved towards the door. At the same moment there came a thump upon it, and a youth with a huge forehead, and huge spectacles ornamenting it, came in. It was Skimpole of the Shell, and he had a letter in his hand.

"Is Digby here? Ah, I see he is! There is a letter for you, Digby. I thought I would bring it up for you, as you did not know the postman had been."

"Thanks," said Digby, with a grimace. "You can give it to Tom Merry."

"But it is for you," said Skimpole, looking puzzled. "I wished to do you a slight favour, Digby, by bringing up this letter. I also thought that perhaps it contained a remittance, possibly of considerable magnitude, and in that case I intended to borrow two guineas of you. I particularly want to buy Professor Lottoff Boshski's book on Determinism—"

"You can borrow it of Tom Merry, then," grinned Digby. "That's your letter, Merry."

Tom held the letter in his hand.

"Oh, that's off!" he said. "The letter's from Cork, by the postmark, and it must be from your uncle. You can have it."

Digby shook his head decidedly.

"Not much! He writes a rotten hand, for one thing, and it's hard to read. You've won the letter, and you're going to read it."

"Yaas, wathah! We all wefuse to allow Tom Mewwy to go back on his bargain!"

"Oh, very well!" said the chief of the Terrible Three, laughing, and he opened the letter.

It was clear at once that there was no remittance in it. It contained a letter in a decidedly cramped hand, and the signature was Michael Murphy.

"Now, look here, Dig, it's your letter—"

"Rats!" said Dig cheerfully. "I'll listen, if you like, if you prefer to read it out loud. But I'm blessed if I'm going to read it!"

"Yaas, wathah! Wead it out, Tom Mewwy! There is no wemittance in it, but that may turn out to be an ovah-sight. If it does not turn out to be an ovah-sight, I should wecomend Digby to wite a cwushin' wreply."

"Here goes, then!"

And Tom Merry glanced over the letter, and a glimmer of fun came into his eyes as he did so. There was evidently something of great interest in that letter from Dig's Irish uncle.

CHAPTER 2.

Digby Interviews the Head!

"MY dear nephew—"
 "That's me," said Dig, with a nod.
 "Rats!" said Tom Merry warmly. "It's me! This letter is mine, isn't it?"

"Ye-e-es; but—"

"Very well, then, I'm the dear nephew. Don't interrupt me when I'm reading out my uncle's letter!" said Tom Merry severely. "My dear nephew,—As I told you in my previous letter, I shall be in England on business for a

few days; but I find that the time will be too short for me to visit London as I originally intended. As my business is connected with shipping from Liverpool, I shall have to remain in that city during the short time I am in England—"

Digby whistled.

"Then I shan't see him."

"Blessed if I know what you want to see my uncle for!" said Tom Merry. "You seem to take a lot of interest in my relations."

"Oh, get on with the washing!"

"In England. I wish, however, to see you very much, and I have written to Dr. Holmes, your headmaster, to ask his permission for you to come up to Liverpool and meet me here."

"Hurrah!"

"I will take you about and show you the city as far as possible, and, anyway, I hope you will enjoy your visit to the greatest commercial city in the world!"

"Won't I, rather!" shouted Digby, executing a double shuffle in his delight. "My hat, it will be ripping!"

"Blessed if I know what you're capering about!" said Tom Merry. "Of course, it's kind of you to take an interest in my little excursion."

"Eh? Your what?"

"My little excursion."

"Your—yours?"

"Of course, I'm going!" said Tom Merry blandly. "This is my letter, you know."

Digby's face was a study. There was a general roar of laughter.

"Bai Jove, Tom Mewwy's wight," said D'Arcy. "It's his beastlay lettah!"

"Still, I may be able to take Digby," said Tom Merry condescendingly. "Listen to the rest of the letter. 'As it would be a long journey for you to make alone, I have asked Dr. Holmes to allow some of your friends to accompany you, and I have little doubt that he will accede to my request. I, of course, shall undertake to be responsible for the party while in Liverpool. I shall meet the train which arrives in Lime Street Station at five p.m. on Tuesday. As there will probably be a crowd, you and your friends must wait in one spot till I come to you, after alighting from the train. I have enclosed a banknote for twenty-five pounds in my letter to Dr. Holmes for the expenses of the journey.'"

"Twenty-five pounds!" roared Digby.

"Bai Jove! Twenty-five pounds, deah boys!"

Binks, the School House buttons, knocked at the door. He informed Digby that the Head wished to see him in his study. Digby whistled.

"It's about the letter from nunky, of course," he said. "I'm jolly glad I've had this letter, or I should have thought I was wanted in the Head's study for something else."

"Yaas, watah!"

"I suppose I'd better go," said Tom Merry thoughtfully.

"You?" said Dig, staring. "Don't be an ass, you know!"

"Well, it's my letter. Still, as a matter of form, you can go, Dig, as the Head would probably be surprised to see me."

And Digby went.

He tapped on Dr. Holmes' door, and then entered the study. The Head turned his chair round to face the junior.

"Ah, it is you, Digby! I have had a letter this morning from your uncle, Mr. Murphy, but I have only just found time to attend to it."

"Yes, sir," said Digby.

"Mr. Murphy is in Liverpool, and he wishes to see you there to-morrow. I see no reason for not acceding to his request."

"Thank you, sir!"

"He suggests that you should take some of your companions with you," said the Head musingly. "That is a good idea, but I must know whom you would select, so that I can consult their Form masters. Only boys whose progress in their studies permits of an extra holiday being taken can be allowed to go. Whom would you suggest, Digby?"

"Blake and Herries and D'Arcy, sir."

"Very well, I will speak to Mr. Latham on the subject."

"And—perhaps it would be safer, sir, to have some Upper Form fellows," ventured Digby.

The Head nodded.

"Quite so, Digby, and I am glad to see you thus thoughtful. Juniors as a rule prefer to keep by themselves, and not to go with the seniors. I suppose you are thinking of someone in the Sixth—some prefect?"

"N-n-no, sir!" stammered Digby. "I—I was thinking of the Shell, sir—Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther."

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"Ah, a Junior Form! I thought—"

"I shouldn't like to bother anybody in the Sixth, sir," said Digby eagerly, "or—the Fifth, either. The seven of us will be able to look after ourselves."

"You have—er—no one else to suggest?"

"Oh, yes, sir! There's Figgins & Co. of the New House—"

"Ahem! I did not mean exactly that. I am afraid I could not possibly extend permission to more than seven juniors," said Dr. Holmes. "I meant— But no matter, I will consult the Form masters, and if they permit their boys to leave for a couple of days you have my consent. Your uncle has sent a remittance to pay the expenses. I thought it a very large one, but if you are taking so many companions you will need it all. I will hand it to you to-morrow."

"Thank you, sir!" said Digby; and he left the study, highly delighted.

He closed the door, and rushed off to communicate the good news.

On the way to the Common-room he was buttonholed a score or more times.

Digby had never realised before how many friends he had at St. Jim's, or how affectionately they were attached to him. They had been, perhaps, shy, of showing their deep attachment before, but since the arrival of the twenty-five-pound note and the invitation to take a little party to Liverpool had been noised abroad they were no longer backward in coming forward.

Fellows he hardly knew nodded to him most affectionately; chaps whose names he couldn't remember slapped him familiarly on the back and addressed him as "old fellow." Fifth-Formers—usually very standoffish towards the Fourth—made an exception in favour of Arthur Digby.

The invitations to a study tea that reached Digby that evening would have more than satisfied Fatty Wynn of the New House.

"I say, Digby"—it was the voice of Lefevre of the Fifth as he came into the junior room—"I want to speak to you particularly."

Digby made a grimace at the Terrible Three and Blake & Co., and allowed the genial Fifth-Former to draw him aside.

Lefevre was looking very friendly.

"We're getting up a bit of a feed in my study," he said.

"Turner and Raynes are with me. We want you to come."

At any other time the invitation to a feed in a Fifth Form study would have been flattering indeed to a Fourth-Former; this evening Digby was not impressed.

"Thanks," he said quite coolly, "but—"

"You can bring your friends if you like," said Lefevre.

Digby hesitated a moment, then a glimmer of fun shot into his eyes. The Fifth-Former was thinking only of Digby's study-mates, of course—three friends. Dig was thinking otherwise.

"Right-ho!" he said cordially. "That alters it, of course. If I can bring my friends I'll be jolly glad to come. What's the feed like?"

"Ripping, though I say it—and plenty."

"Good! We'll come. When is it?"

"Say a quarter of an hour from now?"

"Right you are!"

And Lefevre walked away looking satisfied.

Digby rejoined his chums and explained both about Lefevre's invitation and the idea that had come into his mind. And there was a chuckle among the juniors that would have made the Fifth-Former suspicious if he had been still there to hear it.

CHAPTER 3.

Digby Brings a Few Friends!

"JOLLY good!" said Lefevre in a tone of satisfaction.

He looked round his study. The table was laid with a spotless cloth and gleaming cutlery. Plates and cups and saucers were there in abundance.

There were good things on the table, and heaps more of good things on the bookshelves, turned into a sideboard for the time being.

Turner and Raynes shared Lefevre's satisfaction. It was a large study and well supplied, for none of them was short of money. And it was worth while standing a good feed to a few juniors for the sake of a trip to Liverpool.

Freedom from school restraints for a couple of days, and an exciting excursion thrown in—it was really worth the trouble of making much of a Fourth Form kid.

"It's a bit of a come-down to our personal dignity," Lefevre remarked. "The other fellows will chip us for having Fourth Form fags to tea. But it's worth it. That's what I say."

"Yes, rather!" said Raynes.

"If we were only sure," said Turner musingly. "You see, we mayn't get to Liverpool over it, after all."
 "We shall have to work it. Of course, a Fourth Form kid will be flattered, and perhaps lose his head at being taken so much notice of by us."
 "Yes, I suppose he will."
 "And then we can— 'Sh! Here he is!"
 Digby tapped at the door and entered the study. He had on a clean collar and a genial smile, and his hair was nicely brushed.
 "Hope I'm in time," he remarked.
 "Good time," said Lefevre. "Glad to see you."
 "Glad to see you," said Raynes and Turner.
 "Thank you!" said Dig. "Very pleased to come, I'm sure."

"Exactly! The others are coming."
 "Oh!" said Lefevre.
 Manners came in with Herries.
 Lefevre exchanged glances with his study-mates, but all three of them screwed up polite smiles and greeted the guests with great courtesy.
 Chairs were placed for them at the table, and they sat down demurely in a row.
 "May as well make the tea, Raynes," said Lefevre.
 "This is the lot."
 "Oh, not at all!" said Digby, with an agreeable smile.
 "The others will be here in a jiffy, though, and so you may as well make the tea. Jolly good of you fellows to invite a party of us like this!"
 "Oh, don't mention it!" murmured Lefevre.



A gust of wind lifted D'Arcy's topper and sent it spinning. "Bai Jove! Stop it!" Arthur Augustus was dashing after it, and was just about to hurl himself right under a horse and van when Mr. Murphy caught him by the shoulder and pulled him back! "Hold on!" said Mr. Murphy. "D'you want to be run over?!"

"Your friends—aren't they able to come?" asked Lefevre, who wouldn't have been disappointed if it had turned out so.
 "Oh, they're coming!" said Digby blandly. "They may get here different times, as I insisted upon all of them putting clean collars on. We don't have tea in a Fifth Form study every day, and, of course, we want to do you credit."
 "Of course," assented Lefevre unsuspectingly.
 The door was pushed wider open and Monty Lowther came in. He had the cleanest of clean collars on, and his smile was a smile that wouldn't come off. He nodded in his genial way to the Fifth Form fellows, who stared at him.
 Lefevre was just about to ask him what he wanted, when Dig explained.
 "One of my friends, Lefevre."
 "Oh!" said Lefevre. "I understood——"

Tom Merry came in next with Figgins of the New House. The sight of a New House fellow made Lefevre jump, but Dig with a wave of the hand presented his friends.
 Tom Merry and Figgins, after saying how pleased they were to come, sat down at the table. The table was getting a little crowded now, but the juniors squeezed up to make room.
 A minute later three more juniors strolled in—Kerr and Wynn of the New House and Jack Blake.
 Lefevre smiled a sickly smile, and Raynes murmured something in a confidential tone to the teapot.
 "We may as well begin," said Lefevre in a marked tone.
 "We're all here now."
 "The others won't be long," said Digby cheerfully.
 "The others?" said Lefevre, Raynes, and Turner simultaneously.
 "Yes; you said I was to bring my friends."
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"Oh, of course!" said Lefevre hastily.

"Gussy and his young brother are coming, and Finn of the Shell. I thought you'd like to see Finn of the Shell. He'll tell you wonderful stories about things that never happened in Arizona. And Skimpole— Hallo! Here they are."

Buck Finn came in with Skimpole. The latter blinked round amiably through his big spectacles.

"Dear me! Quite a party," he said. "This is very hospitable of you, Lefevre."

Lefevre murmured something indistinctly. The door opened once more, to admit the swell of the School House and his cheerful young brother. D'Arcy major was a great swell, to do full honour to the occasion; and D'Arcy minor had washed his face, combed his hair, and changed his collar, and looked very much the better for it.

"Vewy glad to see you, Lefevre, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus, turning his eyeglass upon the unhappy owner of the study. "It's weally wippin' of you to entain the Lowah Forms in this genevous way. I think we're all here now, deah boys."

"Yes; that's the lot," said Digby. "I'm afraid we're a bit of a crowd, Lefevre."

"Oh, n-n-not at all!" stammered Lefevre.

But in spite of Lefevre's polite assurance, the Fifth-Formers looked blue.

The juniors, by squeezing and sitting on one another's knees, managed to find room round the table. But there was no room for any of the three hosts, and it did not look as if there would be anything for them to eat if they could find room. Generous as the supplies were, Digby had brought enough of his friends easily to dispose of everything in the study.

The juniors appeared to be quite unconscious of causing any embarrassment to their hosts. Lefevre, Turner, and Raynes waited on them, supplying them with eatables, and filling up their cups. Lefevre borrowed more cups and plates along the passage, and some of the juniors willingly shared the same cup to save trouble.

They seemed to have brought pretty good appetites with them, too. The three Fifth-Formers were kept pretty busy supplying their wants.

Want of nerve had never been the weakness of any member of the party. They asked cheerfully for what they wanted.

"You can fill up my cup again, Lefevre."

"Yaas, wathah! And mine, too."

"Ham this way!"

"Pass the eggs, you fellows!"

"Cake! Cake!"

"I say, Raynes, old man, another cup of tea, please."

"You can fill mine while you're about it."

"I weally think I should like anothah—ah—apple."

"Don't stand on ceremony," said Digby encouragingly. "My friend Lefevre only wants to make you comfy. Don't you, Lefevre?"

Lefevre made no reply. Perhaps he was too busy. The piles of eatables steadily decreased, and the frequent calls for tea reduced the contents of the teapot to the colour of water. There was a general complaint on that subject, and Lefevre put in more tea.

"That is wathah bettah," said D'Arcy. "I don't dwink much tea as a yule, as it is bad for the beastly nerves, you know. But as Lefevre is so pwessin'—"

"Exactly!" said Lowther. "I can't refuse a host who presses things on you and looks so jolly agreeable all the time. I will have some more ham."

There was a habble of tongues in the study. Fellows came along the passage in amazement and looked in, wondering what was up; and they stared at the sight of the convivial party of juniors and the red, perspiring faces of Lefevre, Raynes, and Turner.

The only junior who was not talking was Fatty Wynn.

Fatty Wynn was too busy to talk. He was hungry, and the amount he stowed away seemed to make very little difference to his hunger, for he went steadily ahead, without slackening speed.

"I guess this is O.K.!" Buck Finn remarked, as he pushed his chair away from the table at last.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I hope you've enjoyed yourself," said Digby. "When my friend Lefevre invites a little party, he likes them to enjoy themselves. Don't you, Lefevre?"

"Well, I suppose we must be going," said Tom Merry. "We don't like to tear ourselves away."

"I've never enjoyed anything so much in my life," said Monty Lowther. "It isn't only the feed, though that was good, but Lefevre's sweet smiles and boundless hospitality—"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I don't often feed with a Fifth-Former," remarked

Wally, "but I really think I've been too distant to the Fifth. I shall often drop in and see Lefevre now."

"Thanks awfully, Lefevre, old chap. It was ripping!" said Buck Finn.

And the guests took their leave. Digby was the last to go, and he was at the door when Lefevre tapped him on the shoulder.

"Hold on a minute, Digby!"

"Certainly!" said the junior.

"You're going to Liverpool to-morrow?" Lefevre had meant to approach the topic delicately during tea, but he had had no opportunity. "Now, I think you ought to have a senior with you for safety's sake."

"Yes. Ain't it a pity the party's made up, and the number's fixed?" said Digby. "If it had been otherwise I should have been so glad for you to come, Lefevre, after the stunning feed you've stood us."

And Digby marched off before Lefevre could find his voice to reply.

The Fifth-Former turned back into the study and surveyed the wreck of the feast. Then he turned to his study-mates.

"What do you think?" he said.

"Don't ask me what I think," said Turner. "I couldn't express it in polite language. Of all the chumps—"

"Of all the insufferable duffers!" said Raynes.

"How could I help it?" demanded Lefevre indignantly.

"How could I foresee—"

But Turner and Raynes did not listen. They stamped out of the study, leaving Lefevre alone with the wreck of the feast.

CHAPTER 4.

Skimpole Is Determined!

EARLY the following windy March morning the Terrible Three and the chums of Study No. 6—who had been granted leave for the occasion—were ready to start for Liverpool.

They had to leave St. Jim's before first lesson, so there was quite a crowd to see them off. They looked very cheerful and fit in their coats and travelling-caps, with the exception of Arthur Augustus, who, of course, sported the shiniest of silk toppers, careless of the danger it was exposed to in the wind.

A crowd of fellows belonging to both Houses accompanied the seven adventurers to the gate. Dr. Holmes had given Tom Merry full directions as to trains and other matters, and he knew that he could rely upon the hero of the Shell. And as each member of the party knew that he could rely upon himself, they were sure to be quite safe.

Figgins & Co. took an affectionate leave of the School House chums. Blake whispered something to Figgins as he caught sight of Wally with his coat on, and Figgins grinned and nodded. Skimpole was not to be seen.

Herries wore a slightly worried look. He had given way to general persuasion on the subject of Towser, and he anxiously reminded Kerr of a promise to look after the bulldog while he was away. Kerr reassured him, but Herries couldn't help feeling a little uneasy. He had a premonition that Towser would bite Kerr, and that after that the Scottish junior wouldn't be so tender with him.

"Well, off you go," said Figgins. "Wish you a jolly time!"

"Thank you vewy much, Figgins, deah boy!"

"I say," exclaimed Fatty Wynn anxiously, "you won't forget to bring back some toffee, Dig?"

"Toffee?" said Digby.

Fatty Wynn looked at him with keen reproach.

"Yes, Everton toffee," he said. "I've tasted most kinds of toffee in my time, but I haven't had any of the genuine Everton toffee from Everton. You're going to Liverpool, and so you'll be at Everton, and you can get it on the spot."

"All right," said Dig. "I won't forget."

"You can bring as much as you like," said Fatty Wynn.

"Yes, rather! I'll make a special point of it," assured Digby.

And the juniors set out.

The crowd watched them from the gates, and waved their caps.

There was a sudden pounding of feet on the road, and a plump youth raced after the juniors.

Tom Merry & Co. were already some distance up the lane when they heard the footsteps, and they stopped and turned round.

Fatty Wynn—for it was he—halted, breathless.

"What is it?" called back Tom Merry.

"The toffee!" shouted Fatty Wynn. "You won't forget the toffee—the Everton toffee!"

"Ha, ha, ha! No!"

And the juniors tramped on again.

There was a struggle proceeding in the gateway when Fatty Wynn returned. Wally D'Arcy, who had determined

to join the party bound for Liverpool, was wriggling in the grasp of Figgins and Kerr.

"No, you don't!" said Figgins genially.

"Leggo!"

"Rats!"

"Look here, I can go out on the road if I like."

Figgins chuckled.

"Yes, but you can't go to Liverpool. You're staying here, my son. I promised Blake. He thought you'd try to butt in on the party!"

And Figgins & Co. gently marched the glaring but helpless Third-Former back to the School House. There they stopped, and Figgins wagged a warning finger at the leader of the Third Form.

"You'll stay here," he said. "I've saved you from a

his hat flying off, and his monocle dangling at the end of its cord.

"Just in time," said Tom Merry cheerfully. "You'd have been left behind in another tick."

D'Arcy extricated himself from many legs and feet and rose, looking somewhat crumpled and very excited.

"Tom Mewwy, I weward you as a beast!"

The hero of the Shell looked surprised.

"But I've saved you from being left behind, Gussy."

"You have wumped my coat and weduced me to a vevy dustay state. I weward you as a howwid wottah!"

Tom Merry grinned as he settled back in his seat. The juniors had the carriage to themselves. The train was rushing along at a great rate Londonwards, and D'Arcy, who had some thought of stepping out again, changed his



A shrill voice rang from the crowd. "This way, young gent—'ere 'e is!" "Bai Jove! Herbert Wags!" gasped D'Arcy. The ragamuffin was clinging to a huge ruffian, who was striking savagely at him and striving to shake him off; but Tom Merry sprang forward and seized the ruffian by the collar!

flogging. You bolted once before. You won't get off so cheap another time. Now—"

Meanwhile, Tom Merry & Co. had reached Rylcombe Station and boarded the train for London. Although they would have been glad to have some more of their friends with them, they were cheerful, and, in fact, in the best of spirits.

"Bai Jove! How windy it is!" ejaculated D'Arcy, putting his head out of the carriage window as the train glided out of the station. "I shall have to hang on to my toppah!"

"Shouldn't bother!" said Blake. "Your travelling-cap's in your bag!"

"I should wufese to go to Liverpool in a cap."

The juniors had to change trains several times to reach Euston. At the first change—at Wayland Junction—D'Arcy was the last to get into the carriage. He was delayed a moment by a gust of wind that nearly took his hat off. As he was about to step in he glanced in amazement at a figure that was popping into a carriage some distance down the train.

The swell of St. Jim's put his foot back on the platform and stared along the train.

A porter was running to close the door, and Tom Merry grasped D'Arcy by the shoulder and yanked him in, and the door slammed behind him.

Arthur Augustus sprawled across several pairs of knees,

mind. He sat down and dusted the knees of his trousers, and then polished his hat on a velvet pad he extracted from an inner pocket of his coat.

"What on earth were you hanging back for?" demanded Lowther.

"I saw someone skippin' into the twain."

"Well, we didn't expect to be the only passengers."

"That is a fivivolous wemark, Lowthah! I mean I saw someone I know—someone I was vevy much surprised to sec," explained D'Arcy.

"Who was it—your tailor?"

"It was Skimpole."

There was a general exclamation of amazement.

"Skimpole!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Surely the ass cannot have followed us!" exclaimed Tom Merry, wrinkling his brows. "He was saying something yesterday about guiding us round Liverpool. I never thought of asking Figgins & Co. to look after him."

"Oh, I dare say Gussy was mistaken!" said Blake. "He generally is—as you will admit yourself, Gussy."

"I wufese to admit anythin' of the sort. I wemembah when we were in Amewicah—"

"Travellers' tales are barred," said Monty Lowther.

"I wemembah when we were in Amewicah," said Arthur

Augustus unheeding, "that wascal Captain Puntah was followin' us, and I saw him on the twain and none of you saw him, and I was wight, and you were wong!"

"Which only proves that you're wrong now," said Blake. "Miracles never happen twice in the same place. Skimmy's in the Shell-room at St. Jim's, grinding Latin."

"Vewy well, you will see!"

At the next change the juniors all looked out for Skimmy. There were only two minutes for the change, and they had no time to waste. Tom Merry and Blake at the same moment caught sight of a pair of thin legs, a shabby overcoat, and a pair of big spectacles, as a youth skipped into the train.

There was no doubt on the subject now—it was Skimpole!

"The utter ass!" said Tom Merry as the train rushed on. "He'll get into a row over this. He'll have to go back from London."

The juniors at last reached Euston. Their train was to start from the London Midland and Scottish Station, and they had twenty minutes before the start. They filled in the time at the buffet, laying in a supply of provisions, internally, to last them for part of the journey.

Then Tom Merry went to the telegraph-office to wire for lunch-baskets to be placed in the train for them.

The juniors had planted their belongings down in the compartment of the corridor train. While at the buffet they kept an eye open for Skimpole.

Five minutes before the train was timed to start Tom Merry caught sight of a hurrying figure in the distance, and at the same moment the genius of the Shell caught sight of him.

Tom waved his hand, and Skimpole hurried towards him. "Dear me!" gasped Skimpole. "I was afraid I had lost you! I think I must have got into the wrong station, as after I got into the train I learned of the guard that it was going to Hampstead."

"To where?"

"Hampstead! I got out just in time."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake. "The ass had wandered into the Tube station. Did you think you were going to Liverpool underground, Skimmy?"

"Well, really, I was very much surprised at going down in the lift," said Skimpole; "but I was thinking of the important bearing of the discovery of the Determinist theory upon human relations, and so did not pay much attention to my surroundings. I am very glad I have found you, however. This is probably the right station?"

"Yes, probably. There's our train, at all events."

"And it's very kind of you to come all this way to see us off, Skimmy," said Manners solemnly. "It will be a long, lonely journey for you back to St. Jim's."

Skimpole blinked at him.

"Really, Manners, I have no intention of going back to St. Jim's!"

"Going to take lodgings in London?" asked Lowther.

"Certainly not. I'm going to Liverpool. I felt that it was my duty to accompany you in order to give you the benefit of an older and wiser head; and, besides, the journey would be gratifying to me personally."

"I hope you didn't forget to ask permission," grinned Blake.

"I had no time to do so; and, besides, it would probably have been refused. I trust," said Skimpole, "that you are as pleased to have me with you as I am to come."

"Ahem!" said Tom Merry. "We should naturally rejoice in your company, Skimmy, especially if you tell us all about Determinism on the way. But I really think it would be well, healthier for you to get back to St. Jim's and apologise to Mr. Linton while you've got the chance."

Skimpole shook his head.

"Really, Merry—"

"Here, we've got to get in!" exclaimed Digby. "Come on!"

The juniors ran for the train. Skimpole ran with them, entered the carriage, and plumped into the special corner seat that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had reserved for himself.

The swell of St. Jim's looked at him expressively, but the short-sighted junior did not notice it.

Tom Merry shook him by the shoulder.

"Look here, are you really coming, Skimmy?"

"Yes, of course—I've taken my ticket."

"By Jove, then, that settles it! Where on earth did you get the tin from?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Gore lent it to me. Gore seemed to think there was something very humorous in my following you, and he lent his assistance. I did not see where the humour came in, but I was glad of his financial assistance. I assured him that Digby would repay him."

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,307.

"Did you?" said Digby grimly. "Then you had a jolly lot of assurance, and Gore must be an ass!"

"Well, I gave him my microscope as security," said Skimpole. "He can sell it for three pounds if he wishes, so he does not stand to lose."

"And have you any tin to come back with?"

"None at all."

Tom Merry did not ask any more questions. It was useless to argue with Skimpole.

The train glided out of the station a couple of minutes later, and the juniors of St. Jim's were en route for Liverpool.

CHAPTER 5.

The Arrival!

THROUGH the windy, sunny day and the dusk of the afternoon the train dashed on and on.

The journey seemed endless, and even the cheerful juniors began to be tired. The corridor enabled them to stretch their legs at times, and the ample lunches satisfied the wants of the inner man.

The ever varying landscape was of keen interest to the young travellers. But hour after hour of railway travelling tells upon the most cheerful disposition. They were longing for Liverpool and rest.

Skimpole indeed was happy in his books. He was following the powerful reasonings of Professor Lottoff Boshski's works, and when he wanted a rest from reading he worked out problems in his head.

Arthur Augustus persisted in looking out of the window, to the imminent risk of his topper. He was interested in the advertisements along the line, and indeed it was curious to watch how they began and ended. Some wonderful specifics were advertised for a distance of a hundred miles from London on station walls and hoardings, and certain baking-powders and ketchups accompanied the juniors as far as Rugby. Then at various points new advertisements would begin, belonging to Northern advertisers, and accompany the travellers for a certain distance, and then cease. Only a famous soap and an equally famous brand of pills, so far as D'Arcy observed, stretched all the way from London to Liverpool. And curiously enough the advertisements, ugly enough as they were, gave the juniors a feeling that they weren't so far from home.

Blake indeed, who belonged to the North, felt more at home the more he drew north of the Trent. And he spent some time in explaining to Tom Merry that though the country they were travelling through was ripping, it wasn't half so ripping as some parts of Yorkshire he could point out.

"Hallo! Here we are!"

The train had been slowing down, and it clattered to a halt.

"Lime Street Station!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove! It isn't as big as Waterloo!"

"I dare say it's big enough for the traffic," said Tom Merry.

"That's where you're mistaken," said Blake; "it isn't. Everything in the North is growing, you see. We don't stick in the mud like you chaps in the South. Everything swells—"

"Including the heads?"

"Look here, Tom Merry—"

"Gather your props, my son. I expect to see my uncle every minute," said Tom Merry, unheeding the wrathful tones of Jack Blake. "Dig, don't forget to point out my uncle as soon as you see him, as I've never seen him before."

Digby chuckled.

"Right you are!"

The juniors gaily enough tumbled out of the train. The station was crowded, and people jostled one another every inch of the way. The juniors, mindful of the warning in Uncle Murphy's letter, kept together. Skimpole, it is true, started wandering off, but Blake took an affectionate grip on his ear, and stopped him. Arthur Augustus, who had lost his hat en route, thought he had better rush off to a hat shop before meeting Mr. Murphy; but Digby and Herries linked arms with him, and anchored him to the spot.

The crowd gradually cleared off, and a little later a stout gentleman with a ruddy, jovial face, decidedly auburn hair, and a silk hat came quickly towards the group of juniors from St. Jim's.

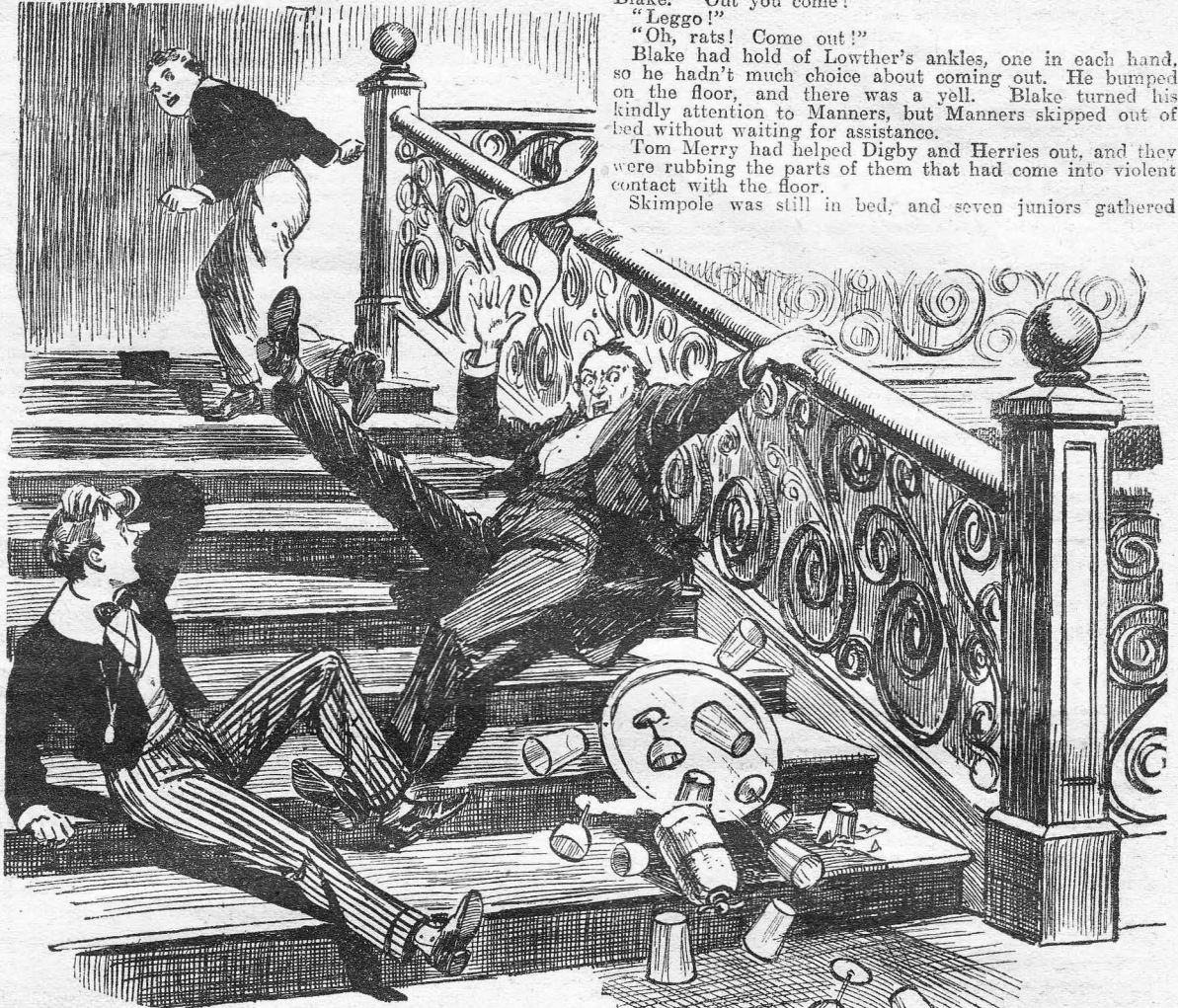
"Faith, and I've found ye!" he exclaimed, in a rich accent. "Dig, is that you, you young rascal?"

"Hallo, nunky!" said Dig. And he shook hands with the stout gentleman, and presented his friends in turn.

Tom Merry had a feeling that Mr. Murphy might be surprised at the number of the party, but the jovial Irishman seemed to think that the more there were the merrier it was. He welcomed them all heartily, and, having seen

that they had all their belongings, he marched them out of the station.

Half an hour later the juniors, having removed their travel stains after the journey, sat down as spick and span as a row of new pins to an excellent dinner at the Palatial Hotel, where Mr. Murphy was staying; and Dig's Irish uncle proved an excellent host.



Arthur Augustus dashed on and ran right into Albert. The waiter staggered and fell, and there was a crash of smashing glass. "Ow!" gasped Albert. "My heye!" "Bai Jove!" muttered Arthur Augustus in dismay.

CHAPTER 6.
In Liverpool!

"UP you get!"

"Bai Jove! It isn't wisin'-bell, deah boys?"

"Ha, ha, ha! Where do you think you are?"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy— Bai Jove, I forgot we were in Livahpool!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, sitting up and rubbing his eyes. "What's the time?"

"Nine o'clock."

"Gweat Scott!"

Arthur Augustus yawned. The others kept him company. Tom Merry was the only fellow up, so far. Mr. Murphy had wisely determined to allow the juniors to have a long sleep after the day's journey. They had gone to bed early the evening of their arrival, and had slept like tops, and had not been called in the morning.

Tom Merry was usually an early riser, but he did not turn out till nine.

"Yaw-w-w-w!" said Arthur Augustus sleepily. "I weally hope Mr. Murphy will not wegard it as bad form on our part stayin' in bed like this?"

"Groo-oo-oo!" said Jack Blake. "Quiet there! As it's so late, we may as well stay in bed till ten o'clock while we're about it. Ow! Leggo these bedclothes, Tom Merry, you sweep!"

"So I will when they're off!"

"Leggo! Ow! It's cold! Leggo, you beast, and I'll get up!" And Jack Blake tumbled out of bed and yawned, and shook himself together. "Now, then, you lazy bouncers, get up!"

"Lemme alone!" said Lowther drowsily.

"No fear! Blessed if I can see what a chap wants to stick in bed for on a fine sunny March morning!" said Blake. "Out you come!"

"Leggo!"

"Oh, rats! Come out!"

Blake had hold of Lowther's ankles, one in each hand, so he hadn't much choice about coming out. He bumped on the floor, and there was a yell. Blake turned his kindly attention to Manners, but Manners skipped out of bed without waiting for assistance.

Tom Merry had helped Digby and Herries out, and they were rubbing the parts of them that had come into violent contact with the floor.

Skimpole was still in bed, and seven juniors gathered

round him. All those who were up felt, of course, a virtuous indignation at the laziness of anybody who wasn't. But Skimpole was not asleep. He blinked at them.

"Don't disturb me for a while," he said. "I am thinking, I am turning over in my mind some of the pressing problems of the hour. Under a Determinist regime, I am trying to think whether there would be any other way of depriving a man of his liberty except by imprisoning him. I am turning over—"

He was; he turned over bodily, and rolled out of bed.

"Really, Blake! Really, Tom Merry—"

"Time to get up," said Tom Merry cheerfully. "Are you going to leave breakfast till lunch-time?"

"You have caused me to come into contact with the floor in a way that has produced considerable pain in my bones."

"Sorry! It's my heredity, I suppose, or Blake's environment. Anyway, as a Determinist, you can't possibly blame either of us; so don't complain."

And Skimpole began to think that out; and the hero of the Shell turned away grinning. Skimpole was a Determinist, but he was not very clear on some points, Professor Lottoff Boshski having neglected to explain in his book how a man could be imprisoned without being deprived of his liberty, or deprived of his liberty without being imprisoned.

The juniors went down to breakfast. They were feeling pretty fit after their long rest, and quite ready for adventures. Mr. Murphy, who was filling up his short stay in Liverpool with business, had gone out; but a benevolent waiter had the interests of the juniors at heart.

Arthur Augustus had named the waiter Albert, because he resembled a man he had met named William. Albert looked after the juniors as if he had been their parent, moved thereto by a substantial tip from Mr. Murphy and an expectation of another.

From the windows the juniors could catch an early glimpse of the great city—of St. George's Place and its magnificent spaces and buildings.

Arthur Augustus was much impressed.

"Bai Jove! That looks like Nelson's Monument in Twafalgah Square ovah there!" he said. "What is it, Blake, deah boy?"

"Wellington Monument."

"Bai Jove! And what's the weally handsome big buildin'?"

"St. George's Hall."

"Bai Jove! And I see you have electwic twams heah."

Blake did not reply to that. He found no suitable words ready at the moment.

"Where are the slums?" asked D'Arcy. "I hear that you have slums in Livahpool quite as bad as in London, you know."

"Are you going slumming?" asked Blake sarcastically.

"Bai Jove! I don't see why not. I expect to receive a wemittance from my governah here and I should like to make somebody feel glad that I came to Livahpool," said the swell of St. Jim's. "I should like to see the slums. I have seen the slums in London, and when I gnow up and get into the House of Lords—if I evah do, which is not

vevvy likely, as I have an eldah bwothah—I shall have the mattah seen to."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I see no cause for wibald mewwiment in that wemark. And I have quite made up my mind to see the slums before I leave Livahpool. As a future politician, and pwobably Ministah—pewwvaps Pwemiah—I wegard it as necessary to see the weal state of affaiah, in ordah to improve mattahs as soon as I have the powah."

And nothing could move D'Arcy from his determination to go slumming before he left Liverpool. What would happen to the swell of St. Jim's if he went investigating into the toughest quarters of the town was a question, and Tom Merry and Blake agreed tacitly to keep an eye on him and prevent any such little excursion on his part.

"Hallo! Here comes my uncle!" said Tom Merry cheerfully, as Mr. Murphy entered the room. "Good-morning, sir!"

"Good-morning, my lads, and the top of the morning to you!" said Mr. Murphy, beaming. "I hope you've had a good night's rest."

"Yaas, wathah! Albert is lookin' aftah us wippingly, sir."

"Albert?" asked Mr. Murphy, looking puzzled.

"Yaas, sir; the waitah, you know. I have chwistened him Albert, sir, because he beahs such a stwikin' wesemblance to a waitah at my governah's club, sir, named William."

Mr. Murphy, apparently, did not see the connection, but he nodded.

"Very good! Now, are you lads inclined for a little run through the city? Of course, you would like to see the Liverpool football team play? They are playing on the home ground this afternoon, as it fortunately happens—playing a visiting team from the South. Everton are playing away. I shan't be able to come with you, as I have business in Water Street this afternoon, but I am sure you will be careful not to get into mischief."

The juniors all looked horrified at the idea of getting into mischief. To judge by their expressions, mischief and they were complete strangers.

"But I am free for the rest of the morning," said Mr. Murphy. "I will have a cup of coffee, and then if you are ready we will start, and I will be your guide."

"Yaas, wathah, sir!"

While Mr. Murphy was drinking his cup of coffee, D'Arcy made a hurried and anxious inquiry of Albert as to the whereabouts of the nearest hatter's. And by the time Mr. Murphy was ready, the swell of St. Jim's came in, smiling, in a brand-new topper.

CHAPTER 7.

'Erbert!

LIVERPOOL was very bright and very windy in the March morning. The wind was blowing from the estuary of the Mersey.

The juniors of St. Jim's looked round them with keen interest as they walked down Lime Street, past the imposing facade of St. George's Hall. Quite a gale was blowing round the corner from William Brown Street, and Arthur Augustus had to clutch at his new silk hat several times.

"Bai Jove! This is wathah wuff, you know!" he said breathlessly.

Tom Merry laughed.

"You should have stuck to the cap, ass!"

"Weally, Tom Mewvy, I wegard it as impewative to look as respectable as poss, in honah of our fwiend Mr. Murphy. Bai Jove! How it's blowin'!"

And Arthur Augustus clutched at his topper again.

"Faith, and it's windy!" said Mr. Murphy. "This corner has been nicknamed Cape Horn, and faith, it's deserving the name. Sure, there goes your hat!"

Arthur Augustus made another clutch—too late! A gust of wind lifted his topper, and sent it spinning into the wide street.

"Bai Jove! Stop it!"

But there was no chance of stopping it. The hat was flying before the wind, and it spun out into the traffic long before it could be caught.

Arthur Augustus was dashing after it, when Mr. Murphy caught him by the shoulder and pulled him back. It was necessary, for the street was busy, and Arthur Augustus had been about to rush fairly under a horse and van.

"Hold on!" said Mr. Murphy. "Do you want to be run over?"

"Weally, my deah sir— Bwavo, my lad! I will give you a shillin' if you bwing back my hat!"

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A ragged street urchin had dashed after the flying topper. He was a rather good-looking, though extremely dirty lad of about thirteen, in a pair of trousers which had once belonged to a full-grown man, and had been cut short for his use, and an old coat whose tails almost touched the ground. His feet and his head were bare. The stains of days—or perhaps weeks—were on his face, but from the dirt accumulated there his bright brown eyes twinkled acutely and merrily.

He looked a curious little figure as he dashed in pursuit of the hat, and the juniors stopped to watch him.

Twice he nearly came up with the troublesome topper, and then the playful breeze lifted it again and whirled it on. The little ragamuffin darted amid the traffic like one who bore a charmed life.

The topper was suffering—it bumped against a motor-van, and was kicked by a horse, and mud was trailing all over it. Still, the street arab kept up the pursuit.

"Go it!" exclaimed Blake. "On the ball!"

"Bai Jove! I am afwaid I shan't be able to weah that wotten hat again! I wegard this as a most unfortunate occurrence!"

"Go it, kid!"

"Stick to it!"

The silk hat was whirling back to them now, caught by a swirl of the wind. After it came the street urchin, his face glowing with exertion, and his eyes bright with excitement. He was within a dozen paces of the juniors when his foot slipped on a piece of orange-peel thrown down by some careless passer-by, and he fell, stumbling forward, and crashed down on his face in the road.

A tradesman's van was passing by, and the driver in vain tried to pull his horse up.

What happened next passed like a flash.

While the group of juniors, petrified by the imminence of a terrible accident, stood spellbound, Tom Merry suddenly sprang into the road.

The hero of the Shell did not stop to think.

There was a life in danger—and that was enough for him—and Tom Merry acted upon the impulse of the moment, and the fortune that is said to favour the brave stood his friend in that wild moment.

His grip was on the bit, and the horse's head swung round as he dragged on it with all his strength.

The van turned in its own length, the horse rearing wildly over Tom Merry, and then crashing to the ground on its side.

A cry of horror broke from the juniors.

The street arab had escaped injury, the wheel of the van missing him by about an inch as the vehicle whirled round. But Tom Merry?

For the moment it seemed as if the brave lad must be crushed under the falling horse, but he sprang away in time.

"Bai Jove!"

Tom Merry staggered breathlessly back towards the pavement, and Monty Lowther caught him as he fell. The horse was on the ground, struggling wildly.

The driver was quickly on the ground, but already a workman had rushed forward and caught the struggling horse, and was stilling it.

The animal was dragged to its feet, trembling in every limb. Mr. Murphy lifted the scared urchin to safety, and he stood looking dazed and bewildered.

There was a crowd round the spot in a few seconds.

Tom Merry stood breathing hard, a little flushed, but quite unhurt, and feeling considerably discomfited by the praises his prompt action was eliciting. His chums slapped him on the back, knocking out what little breath was left in him.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy turned his attention to the street arab. He felt in his pockets for a more valuable coin than the shilling he had promised for the recovery of that hat. As for the silk topper, that was a thing of the past—the horse had fallen on it.

"Bai Jove, that was awfully plucky of you, Tom Mewwy," D'Arcy remarked; "and this youngstah has had a feahful fwight. I am sowwy you have had a feahful fwight, youngstah! Pway accept this small reward, deah boy!"

The boy looked at him.

"I didn't get the 'at, sir!" he gasped.

"You neahly got wun ovah, though!" It was wathah weckless of you. As a mattah of fact, I would wathah have lost the toppah than have you wun ovah, though it is the only toppah I have at pwesent."

And Arthur Augustus pressed a coin into the grimy hand of the urchin.

The boy, dazed from the accident, accepted it mechanically, and his fist closed over it without his looking at it.

(Continued on next page.)



Send your Jokes to—

"THE GEM JESTER,"

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London, E.C.4. (Comp.)

Half-a-crown will be paid for every joke that appears in this column.

BIRCH WOULD!

Science Master: "Trees contribute greatly to the heat of the atmosphere."

Sammy: "Yes, sir; the birch has often warmed me up!"
LEONARD BURDETT, 24, Lorrimore Road, Walworth, S.E.15.

OBVIOUSLY!

Private: "The enemy are as thick as peas, sir. What shall we do?"

Sergeant: "Shell them, man; shell them!"
FRED HORNBY, 4, Mercer Place, Deysbrook Lane, West Derby, Liverpool.

QUITE SO!

Uncle: "What is a mirror, Tommy?"

Tommy: "I don't know."

Uncle: "What do you look at to see if your face is clean when you've washed it?"

Tommy: "The towel!"
HAROLD ROBINSON, 77, Rochdale Road, Ripponden, Halifax.

CLEVER!

Boxer: "I've kept a book with the accounts of all my fights in it."

Friend: "Oh, I see. A sort of scrap-book!"

J. WALKER, 101, Gillshill Road, Hull, Yorks.

A SMART ANSWER!

Fat Man: "Don't you think I look a little pale?"

Doctor: "You look more like a big tub to me!"

EDWIN INGRAM, 449, Bickershaw Lane, Bickershaw, near Wigan, Lancs.

AN EXPLANATION!

Teacher (to boy asked to draw a cow eating grass): "But, John, you haven't drawn anything. Where's the grass?"

John: "The cow's eaten it all, teacher!"

Teacher: "Then where's the cow?"

John: "Please, teacher, the cow's gone to find some more grass!"

GEORGE DANIELS, 16, Westminster Buildings, Marshall Street, Golden Square, W.1.

THE LONG AND SHORT OF IT!

Housewife (to new maid): "Good gracious, Mary, what a long pie. It's much too big for me!"

Mary: "Yes, ma'am, I know, but I couldn't get any shorter rhubarb!"

G. MORREN, 65, Semley Road, Norbury, S.W.16.

EASY!

Farm Labourer (on top of haystack): "How be Oi agoin' to get down, Garge?"

Garge: "Shut yer eyes, Willium, and walk about a bit!"
E. INKSTER, Oakdene, Burnley Road, Moreton, near Birkenhead.

TOM MERRY & CO. IN LIVERPOOL!

(Continued from page 11.)

Mr. Murphy, greatly relieved to find that Tom Merry was not hurt, gathered his proteges and resumed his way.

The vanman drove off, and the crowd dispersed. Tom Merry gave the street arab a cheery nod as he turned away, and the boy stepped after him quickly.

"You stopped the 'oss, sir," he said. "You saved my life!"

"I don't know about that, kid; I stopped the horse."

"I 'ope you ain't hurt, sir?"

"Not a bit!"

The party walked on. Arthur Augustus kept an anxious eye open for a hatter's. They had not proceeded a dozen yards when a patter of bare feet was heard behind them, and the street arab came tearing up.

"Old on, sir!" he gasped. "Old on a minute!"

Arthur Augustus stopped.

"What is the mattah, deah boy?"

The lad took the half-crown D'Arcy had pressed into his hand.

"You gimme this, sir!"

D'Arcy glanced at it.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"It's a half-crown, sir!"

"I am quite awah of that, youngstah!"

The boy stared.

"I—I thought you meant to give me a shilling, sir!"

"Not at all! That's all wight!"

The street urchin looked at the coin and at D'Arcy, and then at the coin again, as if he could not quite believe his eyes and ears. A half-crown was evidently quite a new possession to him.

"Thanky, sir!" he faltered. "You're—you're very kind, sir! I'm to have this?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Thanky kindly, sir!"

"Bai Jove!" said D'Arcy. "You are a vewy honest lad, youngstah! What is your name?"

"'Erbert, sir!"

"Herbert! But you have another name?"

The lad shook his head.

"Not as I knows on, sir!"

"But surely you are called something else?" urged D'Arcy.

"Oh, yes, sir! I'm called Rags sometimes!"

"Wags! What a vewy peculiah name! The youngstah's name is Herbert Wags, deah boys! I wogard him as a vewy decent little chap! Dig, old fellow, pway give him a half-crown, will you, as I have wun out of cash?"

"With pleasure!" said Digby cheerfully.

'Erbert jumped as the second half-crown was presented.

"Oh, sir!"

And, leaving the ragamuffin staring at his wonderful wealth, which seemed to him like a dream from the "Arabian Nights," the party proceeded on their way.

CHAPTER 8.

Round the Town!

MR. MURPHY knew Liverpool well, having resided in the great city once, and frequently visiting it on business since then.

He was an ideal cicerone, having endless good nature and seemingly endless purse. He was very fond of his nephew, as could be easily seen, and he was willing to take any amount of trouble to make the visit a pleasant one to Dig and his friends.

After Arthur Augustus had been rendered easier in his mind by the purchase of a silk hat, the juniors and their guide walked along Dale Street towards the docks. They passed through Water Street, and listened with great interest to Mr. Murphy's description of the immense business done there, and so arrived at the pierhead.

Prince's Dock made them open their eyes, as also did the immense landing-stages; and they could have spent hours gazing at the wide Mersey and the endless docks, and the equally endless shipping of all sizes and varieties.

That the shipping trade of Liverpool was immense they, of course, knew, but it had never been brought so clearly home to their minds.

Mr. Murphy explained that the best and most extensive view of the docks was to be obtained by a journey on the Liverpool electric overhead railway, and the juniors cheerfully mounted the steps. It reminded Tom Merry of his visit to New York, but from the train windows a glorious view was obtained that put into the shade anything he had seen on the other side of the Atlantic—to his mind, at least.

"Bai Jove!" remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "We could do with something of this kind in London, you know!"

"What Liverpool thinks to-day all England thinks to-morrow," remarked Lowther.

"Well, weally, this is wippin', you know! How long is this waylay, Mr. Murphy?"

"Seven miles, I believe."

"Bai Jove!"

"It runs from Seaforth Sands to Dingle," explained Mr. Murphy.

"My hat! Are there docks all the way?"

Mr. Murphy laughed.

"Yes, certainly!"

"And some more ovah in Birkenhead?"

"Yes; heaps more!"

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus was not easily impressed, but he was certainly impressed now. He asked endless questions. Skimpole asked questions, too, and jotted down the answers in a notebook. Having lost the volume of Professor Lottoff Boshski, Skimmy was giving the wonderful truths of Determinism a rest, and had decided to make notes for a book of travels dealing with Liverpool.

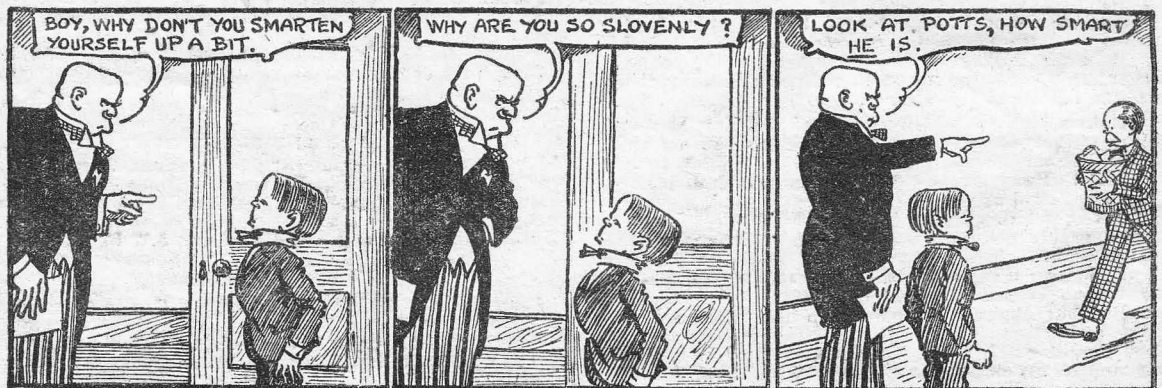
With that important object in view, he asked Mr. Murphy questions which the worthy gentleman had to rack his brains to answer. Although he had lived much in Liverpool, it had never occurred to him to count the population, and he was unable to satisfy Skimpole upon that point, and neither could he give him the average number of accidents on the electric tramways, nor the amount of casual labour employed at the docks.

"And what about the slums?" asked Skimpole.

"Eh?" asked Mr. Murphy, who was getting a little tired of answering Skimpole's questions.

"I should like to have some particulars which will come

Potts, the Office Boy!



in useful for the great book I am writing," explained Skimpole.

The Irish gentleman laughed. "Don't mind Skimmy, uncle!" said Digby. "He was born like that."

"Yaas, wathah! We all wegard Skimmay as an ass, sir."

"Really, D'Arcy—"

"Pway wing off, deah boy!"

"But the subject is an important one."

Tom Merry took a grip on Skimpole's shoulder.

"Look out of the window, Skimmy."

"Yes," said Skimmy, looking out of the train window, in some surprise.

"What can you see?"

"I can see docks, Merry."

"Rather a big drop, isn't it?"

"Yes; I should say a fall would be instantly fatal. But I am in no danger of falling down there, Merry."

"That's where you make a mistake. You are. You've got to keep quiet, or I shall sling you out of the window."

"Really, Merry—"

"You are getting on our nerves. Keep your head shut!"

"But, really—"

"Out you go, then!"

"Ow! Oh! Pray don't be so rough! I will refrain from—"

"Good! Mind you do!"

And Skimpole was silenced for the time.

The juniors could very well have spent hours on the electric overhead railway; but there were other attractions, and after a short journey they descended.

Mr. Murphy guided them over an immense ocean liner lying near the pierhead, and then it was time to return to the hotel for lunch.

They returned by tram, which landed them opposite their hotel.

The morning's excursion had made the juniors hungry, and they were quite ready for a substantial lunch.

Albert looked after them with his usual care, and the boys did full justice to a meal that would have made Fatty Wynn's mouth water.

After lunch Mr. Murphy had to leave them; but he gave them full directions how to get to the football ground, with the time of the kick-off, and the juniors had no doubt that they would be able to look after themselves perfectly well for the afternoon.

"We may as well start early," said Tom Merry. "There's pretty certain to be a crowd, though it's a midweek match."

"Yaas, wathah! I am sowwy we shall not be able to see Evahton play, too—"

"They're playing away to-day."

"Yaas, it is unfortunate, as we could have obtained a supply of Evahton toffee for Fatty Wynn at the same time."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Ass! You can get Everton toffee anywhere, without going to Everton; and Everton football team don't play in Everton, anyway; their ground is up near the Liverpool Football Club's ground."

"Bai Jove, is it weally?"

"Yes, ass!"

"I should be sowwy to spoil the harmony of this expedish," said D'Arcy; "but I must point out to you, Tom Mewwy, that I uttably wufuse to be called an ass!"

"I wish you'd refuse to be one," said Tom Merry cheerfully. "Why don't you try that instead?"

"I wegard that wemark as wudah than your pveious wemark, and unless you withdaw it, I am afraid that I

shall have no alternative but to administah a feahful thwashin'!"

"Oh, go and chop chips!" I'm going up to put my coat on."

"I insist—"

"Right-ho! You can go on insisting; but we're starting in a few minutes."

And Tom Merry went upstairs three at a time. Arthur Augustus jammed his eyeglass into his eye, and started in hot pursuit.

Tom Merry quickened his pace, and nearly ran into Albert, who was descending the stairs with a tray full of glasses. He dodged just in time, and ran on; but Arthur Augustus was in too great a hurry to see Albert or his tray.

He dashed on, and ran right into the waiter. Albert staggered, and there was a terrific crash of smashing glass.

"Ow!" gasped Albert. "My heye!"

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sat on the stairs, looking dazed. Albert, the waiter, clung desperately to the banisters. The tray rolled downstairs with its burden, glasses smashing on every step.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry. "You've done it now, Gussy!"

"Bai Jove! Weally—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wegard you as wholly wespensible, Tom Mewwy, and I shall uttably wufuse to pay for the bwekages!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My heye!" gasped Albert. "My honly heye!"

"I am extwemely sowwy, Albert, deah boy!"

"So am I," said Albert, rubbing his aching bones. "I'm 'urt."

"I am sincerely sowwy. I twust you are not sewiously hurt?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Tom Mewwy, I wegard your laughtah as uttably heartless, when our fwient Albert is pwobably sewiously hurt."

"I am seriously 'urt," said Albert. "I shall put them glasses down to Mr. Murphy's account; but what about my bones?"

"You can put them down to D'Arcy's account," said Jack Blake, coming on the scene. "How many broken?"

"Weally, Blake—"

"I'm 'urt!" growled Albert.

"Pway accept this five shillings, deah boy, and—"

"Thank you, sir!"

Albert's countenance brightened, and his injuries seemed to vanish all of a sudden. He set to work collecting up the broken glass, and the juniors went upstairs to prepare for their excursion to the football ground.

"You see what comes of losing your temper, Gussy," said Tom Merry admonishingly, as he towelled his face.

"You might have caused Albert terrible internal injuries by biffing into him like that."

"I wegard it as wholly your fault, Tom Mewwy, and unless you make the 'amende honowable' I shall thwash you!"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Blake. "No time to waste now. We've got to get off, or we shall be late for the match."

Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass frigidly upon his chum.

"I should be sowwy to be late for the match, but I could not let that intahere with a question that concerns my personal dig, Blake."

"Oh, rats! Ring off!"

"I wufuse to wing off! I wegard Tom Mewwy as a wank

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"HOLED" THAT ONE!



outsidah, and I have no alternative but to give him a feahful thwashin'!"

"Oh, come on, then, and get it over!" said Tom Merry, soaking a sponge with water. "I'm ready!"

"Pway thwow aside that sponge."

"You can't expect me to thwow up the sponge until I'm beaten," said Tom Merry, in a tone of remonstrance. "Now, be reasonable, Gussy!"

"Pway don't be an ass!"

"Come on!"

"I wufuse to come on while you hold that sponge in your hand. I have a feelin' that you intend to play some wotten pwactical joke, with the intention of spoilin' my clothes."

"Very well; then I'll come on if you won't."

And Tom Merry, sponge in hand, advanced to the attack. D'Arcy retreated, keeping a wary and uneasy eye on the dripping sponge. He shuddered at the thought of its coming in contact with his gorgeous waistcoat.

"Pway don't be a beast, Tom Mewwy!"

"I'm coming on! Don't run away!"

"I wufuse to be touched by that beastlay sponge! Keep off, you howwid wottah!"

"Rats! You started it, and now—"

"Upon second thoughts, I will let you off the thwashin'."

"Not good enough! I don't want to be let off!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy— Pway keep away! I—I—"

"I am willing to let the matter drop if you apologise,"

said Tom Merry magnanimously.

"I wufuse to do anything of the sort."

"Very well, then, here goes!"

"I—I—I— Upon second thoughts, I apologise, you wottah!"

"Good! Pardon is granted," said Tom Merry. "But, mind, you must behave yourself better in future."

D'Arcy did not reply. He could think of nothing sufficiently expressive to do justice to his feelings. And the dispute being thus terminated, the juniors of St. Jim's put on their coats and caps, and sallied forth.

CHAPTER 9.

At the Football Ground!

TOM MERRY & CO. climbed to the upper deck of a tram, which bore them at a great rate in a north-easterly direction.

The tram was boarded en route by a good many other people, whose conversation showed that they were on the same errand. There was a great crowd about the Anfield Road, and it was plain that, though it was a mid-week match on the Liverpool ground, it was to be well attended.

Tom Merry & Co. were in good time, and they obtained good seats in the grand stand, and proceeded to make themselves comfortable. The afternoon was cold, but clear and fine—an ideal day for a good football match.

"Kick-off in five minutes," said Jack Blake, looking at his watch. "We're lucky. What are you looking like a scalded cat for, Gussy?"

"Weally, Blake, I was not awah that I was lookin' like a scalded cat. I was thinkin' that I should like a foot-warmah."

"You ought to have brought one in your waistcoat pocket, then!"

"Pway don't be widiculous, Blake! My comfort would be considerably increased by a foot-warmah, but I am quite capable of wuffin' it."

"You are quite right, D'Arcy," said Skimpole seriously. "The cessation of motion naturally exercises a stagnating effect upon the circulation of the blood, and—"

"Hallo, here come the boys!"

"You are interrupting me, Merry. I was explaining—"

"I know I am, Skimmy. Here they are! Shut up, old chap! I say, Blake, do you know any of these chaps by sight?"

"Yes, rather!"

Jack Blake looked over the men in the red shirts and white knickers. He had seen Liverpool play before. He knew most of the men by sight, and he assumed a certain air of importance as he pointed them out to his comrades.

"That chap's Scott—he keeps goal. Those two chaps talking are Steel and Done, backs. Good boys, both—I've seen 'em before."

"They look a wathah nice set," said Arthur Augustus. "I weally think we are pwobably goin' to see a good game."

"There's Barton, Hodgson, Bruton, Wright, and Smith, forwards," said Blake, pointing out the men, who were punting a ball about. "Morrison, Bradshaw, McDougall are the halves, if I remember. And they're a jolly good team, and they'll make Gussy open his eyes when they begin."

Liverpool were playing a team from the South, and they turned out in blue shirts and white knickers. They were a fine-looking set of players, too, and there was every prospect of a good game.

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Needless to say, the juniors of St. Jim's looked on from the moment of the kick-off with the keenest interest. St. Jim's was a Soccer school, and the juniors knew well that much was to be learned from watching the play of good professional teams. And this game was lively and keenly interesting from the start.

Liverpool had the wind against them, but in spite of that circumstance they seemed to carry all before them in the first quarter of an hour. The visitors were confined to their own half, and the red shirts of Liverpool made determined attacks on goal, which were with difficulty checked.

There was a roar of cheering from the packed enclosures when a Liverpool forward was seen to make an almost unaided run up the field, beating the defence in a masterly way.



D'Arcy suddenly gripped Tom Merry's arm. "Look!" The Hemling's "doss-house." With him were other figures, one Arthur.

"Go it, Smith!"

"Good old Smithy!"

"Bravo!"

Jack Blake was on his feet now, watching. His eyes were gleaming.

"That's Smith!" he exclaimed. "He'll be through! Hurrah!"

"Sit down there, can't you?"

It was a piping, youthful voice from behind—a voice whose tones seemed familiar to the ears of the juniors.

Blake looked round wrathfully.

Some distance behind, a ragged youth was standing, and his dirty face was aglow with excitement, and his dark eyes glittering as he watched the field.

"Sit down in front, can't yer?"

"My hat, it's that kid again!"

"Bai Jove, it's Herbert Wags!"

Herbert Rags it was. The youth still wore the same vast trousers and dilapidated coat, but his face was a shade

cleaner. He had evidently expended a portion of his newly-acquired wealth in a visit to the football ground, to see his team play. Even the ragamuffin of the streets could take a pride in his own team.

"Ere, you with the clean collar on," went on 'Erbert humorously; "you sit down!"

"Bai Jove! Cheeky young beggah!"

At that moment 'Erbert recognised whom he was addressing, and his expression changed. The impudence gave place to a look of real contrition. He touched his ragged hair to the juniors—he had no cap. Arthur Augustus raised his silk topper in reply. The lad was a cheeky little ragamuffin, but Gussy was nothing if not polite.

"You ring off, young shaver!" called out Jack Blake.

"Yes, sir. Didn't know yer, sir," said 'Erbert.



Figure of the vagrant appeared from the doorway of Frau and was easily recognised as Choker Bill. "Bai Jove!" muttered D'Arcy.

Blake sat down.

By this time the defending backs had robbed Smith of the ball, and the visitors had cleared, and the game had gone to midfield again. But the red shirts were still attacking, and the visitors had all they could do to hold their own.

"Wippin'!" said Arthur Augustus, his eyeglass never leaving the struggle. "I wergard this as weally wippin', deah boys!"

"Jolly good," agreed Blake. "But you should see a Yorkshire team!"

"Wats! I don't want to dispwage a Yorkshire team, but I weally think that this is quite up to Yorkshire form!"

"That's all you know, Gussy—and I won't give you a thick ear, though you have earned it. You see, in Yorkshire—"

"Bravo!" shouted Tom Merry. "Go it!"

"In Yorkshire—"

"On the ball! Bravo!"

"In Yorkshire, we—"

"Bwavo! Wippin'! Goal!"

And even Jack Blake left off singing the praises of his native county to cheer a goal neatly scored by Liverpool. It was the only goal of the half, and when the interval came the home team were leading one to nil.

Digby produced a packet of Everton toffee, which the juniors were very glad to discuss just then. Even Arthur Augustus consented to take a chunk, and to put it into his aristocratic mouth.

"Good," said Manners; "more!"

"Here you are!"

"Bai Jove, I wathah like this!"

"Yes, it's good!"

"And some over this way, then!" called out a voice from the rear.

Tom Merry turned round smiling, and sent a chunk of toffee towards 'Erbert, who caught it deftly. The ragamuffin instantly transferred it to his capacious mouth, and grinned his thanks.

But the juniors were all attention again when the teams turned out for the second half.

Liverpool had the wifid behind them now, and they took full advantage of it. They came down the field irresistibly, and twice the leather went in from shots that the visiting goalie could not stop.

Cheer upon cheer rang from the crowded enclosures.

Liverpool were having things all their own way now. The visitors put up a good fight, but they were outclassed. The Northern team made rings round them; and yet again the leather went home.

Most enthusiastic of all, probably, was 'Erbert. He clapped his grimy hands and yelled approval in the shrillest of shrill voices—calling the players by name, and encouraging them with various slangy expressions, which were not always complimentary.

"Go it, Long Legs! Don't stand still—you ain't a telegraph-pole! Good old stick o' celery! 'E ain't a telegraph-pole! 'E ain't taken root, arter all! Bravo! Buck up, Smithy—I'm a-watchin' yer! Go it, Mac—put the speed on!"

"Bai Jove," murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, "that youngstah has cheek enough for a whole regiment!"

The whistle went at last, leaving Liverpool victors by five goals to one—a result that was enthusiastically cheered by the crowd.

The spectators streamed out of the enclosures, and the juniors of St. Jim's went with the rest in the direction of Anfield Road.

A rough-looking man brushed against D'Arcy just outside the gates, and the swell of St. Jim's uttered an exclamation as his silk hat was nearly knocked off.

"Weally, my deah fellow—"

He set his hat straight; the man was gone. Tom Merry uttered an exclamation.

"Where's your watch?"

The gold watch-chain was dangling—the watch was gone. Arthur Augustus stared at it in dismay. His coat was open, and his pocket had been picked.

"Bai Jove, that wascal has collahed my tickah!"

CHAPTER 10.

'Erbert Intervenes!

TOM MERRY looked quickly round.

The crowd was thick, and the rough-looking man was gone, but only a few seconds had elapsed, and he could not have gone far.

A shrill voice rang from the crowd.

"This way, young gent—ere 'e is!"

"Bai Jove, Herbert Wags!"

The ragamuffin was clinging to a ruffian, who was striving furiously to shake him off. It was evident that 'Erbert had seen the robbery, and fastened upon the thief. In a moment the juniors of St. Jim's were on the spot, and an excited crowd gathered round. The ruffian struck the boy savagely, in an endeavour to throw him off, but Tom Merry soon put a stop to that.

He caught the man by the shoulders, and, powerful ruffian as he was, the junior jerked him to earth.

The man yelled as he went down with a heavy bump that must have hurt him, and 'Erbert jerked himself loose.

"'E's got it!" he gasped. "I saw 'im nick it!"

"Bai Jove, give me my watch, you wascal!"

"I ain't seen it!"

"It ain't no good, Choker Bill," said 'Erbert, "I seed you. And you ain't goin' to 'ave the young gent's watch."

Choker Bill struggled desperately, but Blake, Herries, and Lowther lent Tom Merry a hand, and the ruffian was pinned down, gasping with rage.

"Search him!" exclaimed a dozen voices.

"What-ho!" said Lowther. "I'll jolly soon see if he's got it!"

It did not take him long to find the watch—it turned out of the first pocket that Monty Lowther plunged his hand into, and Arthur Augustus uttered an exclamation of relief. The watch had been a present from his father, and had cost twenty-five guineas, and so the swell of St. Jim's was naturally a little anxious about it.

"Thank you, Lowthah!" D'Arcy attached the watch to the chain again. "Bai Jove, I have had one or two nawwow escapes with that watch, but it would have been gone this time, but for this weally wippin' youngstah!"

"Lemme go!" grunted Choker Bill.

"Hold him," said Tom Merry quietly. "Here comes a policeman."

Choker Bill struggled. But he could not get loose.

"Lemme go!" he gasped. "I won't do it no more! Oh, you just wait, Rags,—you just wait! I'll do for you when I come out!"

'Erbert grinned.

"You won't come out for three months, Bill."

"I'll do you in when I come out," said Choker Bill.

"You'll 'and me over, will you? You wait till I come out, and you'll make a 'ole in the Mersey! You wait!"

The grin died off 'Erbert's face. There was no mistaking the deadly determination in the ruffian's voice and look.

The police came up, and the circumstances being explained to him he took the captured ruffian into custody.

The juniors had to give their names and addresses, as they would be wanted when the pickpocket appeared before the magistrate, and then Choker Bill was marched off.

The crowd dispersed, and the juniors of St. Jim's were left alone with 'Erbert. The boy was looking very thoughtful.

Tom Merry dropped a hand on his shoulder.

"Aren't you afraid that brute may keep his word, Herbert?" he asked.

The lad laughed shortly.

"Can't be 'elped," he said.

"Bai Jove! I would wathah have lost the watch than harm should come to that youngstah," said D'Arcy anxiously. "It is weally vevy thoughtless of the authorities to allow a ruffian like that to go free at all." He turned to the ragamuffin. "Where do you live, my lad?"

"Green Alley, sir."

"And where is that?"

"Off the Arkle Road, sir, and that's off the Scotland Road."

"I weally do not know where that is," said D'Arcy. "But I should like your address, my boy. What numbah in Green Alley?"

"No. 1, sir—old Frau Hemling's."

"Oh, I must weally turn this mattah ovah in my mind!" said Arthur Augustus. "You are a vevy decent little chap, and I cannot allow you to come to gwief on my account. Does that wuffianly person live neah you?"

'Erbert grinned.

"E dosses at Frau Hemling's, sir. It's a cheap place, where all sorts of folks 'ang out. 'E's a garotter and pickpocket, Choker Bill is—that's why 'is pals call 'im Choker Bill. 'E'll be down on me, but I don't care. 'E'll go to quod for three months over this, and I'll be far enough from Frau Hemling's when 'e comes out."

"Pway lend me ten shillings, Digbay, to pwesent to this deservin' youngstah."

"My 'at!" said 'Erbert, opening his eyes.

"I twust," said D'Arcy, "that you are expendin' the money you have earned to-day with circumspection, and not wastin' it in weckless extwavgance."

'Erbert grinned, but his grin was non-committal.

Digby handed over the ten shillings, and D'Arcy presented it to the ragamuffin, who departed at a pace that was a cross between a run and a hornpipe.

"Good kid," said Blake. "I wish we could do something for him. What about getting back to the hotel now? I'm jolly hungry!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

And the chums boarded a tram, which bore them swiftly on their homeward route. But they were a little less cheery now. They could not help thinking of Herbert Rags, and the injustice of Fate.

Arthur Augustus was very glad to have recovered his watch, but when he thought of the savage face and furious voice of Choker Bill he felt a weighing, anxious fear for what might happen to the street arab when the thief came out of prison.

Mr. Murphy was at the hotel, and a friend was with him when the juniors reached it, and so for the present they did not mention their adventure at the football ground in Anfield Road.

Mr. Murphy's friend was a stout gentleman, with a kindly face and very keen eyes, and the boys learned that his name was Glyn, and that he was a shipowner. He took a great interest in the juniors, and he dined with them and turned the talk upon St. Jim's, asking them many questions about the school.

The juniors learned with delight that Mr. Glyn had placed a box at the Shakespeare Theatre at the disposal of Mr. Murphy and his young friends, and after dinner, when Mr. Glyn had taken his leave, they prepared to go thither.

"Faith, and you notice that Mr. Glyn was interested in your school," said Mr. Murphy, smiling. "Sure, he has a boy he is thinking of sending there."

"Ah, is that it?" said Tom Merry. "We'll make him welcome."

"You see, Mr. Glyn has inherited an estate in Sussex," explained the Irish merchant, "and as he's about to retire from active business he's going there to live, and his boy will go to St. Jim's. He is a millionaire, and, faith, he'll be a good friend to you, I'm thinking. But it's time to get ready for the theatre."

The juniors went upstairs, D'Arcy with a cloud on his brow. He did not speak until they were in their room.

"I twust, Blake, that you are sowwy now," he remarked. Blake stared at him.

"What am I to be sorry for?" he demanded.

"The doocid awkward posish you have placed me in."

"What's the matter?"

"We are going to the theatre—"

"You needn't come if you don't want to. Stay at home and talk 'isms' with Skimmy."

"Very good!" said Skimpole. "I should not mind missing the theatre if D'Arcy would prefer to remain at home and have his mind opened upon important subjects. I should be glad to read him the notes I have made for the two hundred and ninetieth chapter of my work on Determinism."

"There's a chance for you, Gussy! You can't miss that!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Or I would recapitulate to him what I have already read of Professor Lotoff Boshski's work," said Skimpole. "I—"

"Pway wing off, deah boy!"

"Really, D'Arcy, I am willing to take any trouble to improve your mind and awaken your intelligence. The task would be difficult, no doubt—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But I would use my best endeavours, and I have no doubt that in the long run—"

"Weally, Skimmy, I wish you would wing off. Blake, you uttah ass, you know perfectly well that I have no intention of stayin' in to be bored by Skimpole."

"Really, D'Arcy—"

"Pway don't intewwupt me, Skimmy. What I was wewewin' to, Blake, is the howwid circumstance that I have no evenin' clothes with me—"

"Horrid!"

"I was goin' to bwing evenin' clothes, but owin' to your wotten conduct in allowin' me only one bag I was not able to do so."

"Well, we're all in the same boat," said Tom Merry cheerfully.

"Yaas, but I should have been vevy pleased to have at least one membah of the party lookin' wespectable. I wegard Blake as a beast. I considah that he has placed me in a doocid awkward posish."

"Sorry," said Blake. "I'll do anything I can. You've got a pair of black trousers, and I can make you an evening waistcoat. Anybody got a pair of scissors?"

"There's a pair here."

"Thanks! Now hand me D'Arcy's waistcoat."

"Don't do anythin' of the sort. Tom Mewwy. Give me that waistcoat, Blake! What are you goin' to do, you wottah?"

"I'm going to make it into an evening waistcoat for you."

"I wefuse to let you! If you touch it with those scissahs, I shall no longah wegard you as a fiwend."

"But don't you want to go in evening dress?"

"You uttah ass! Let go my beastlay waistcoat!"

Arthur Augustus tugged at the garment in dispute. Blake let go suddenly, and Gussy sat on the floor.

"Ow-wow-wow!"

"Well, just as you like," said Blake, throwing down the scissors. "I only wanted to get you out of a doocid awkward position. What are you sitting down for, Gussy? If you're tired we'll see you to bed, if you like, before we go to the theatre."

D'Arcy did not reply. He could not think of words sufficiently expressive. He rose slowly and dressed for the theatre. And though he had no evening clothes, he really looked very nice when he had finished.

(Continued on page 19.)

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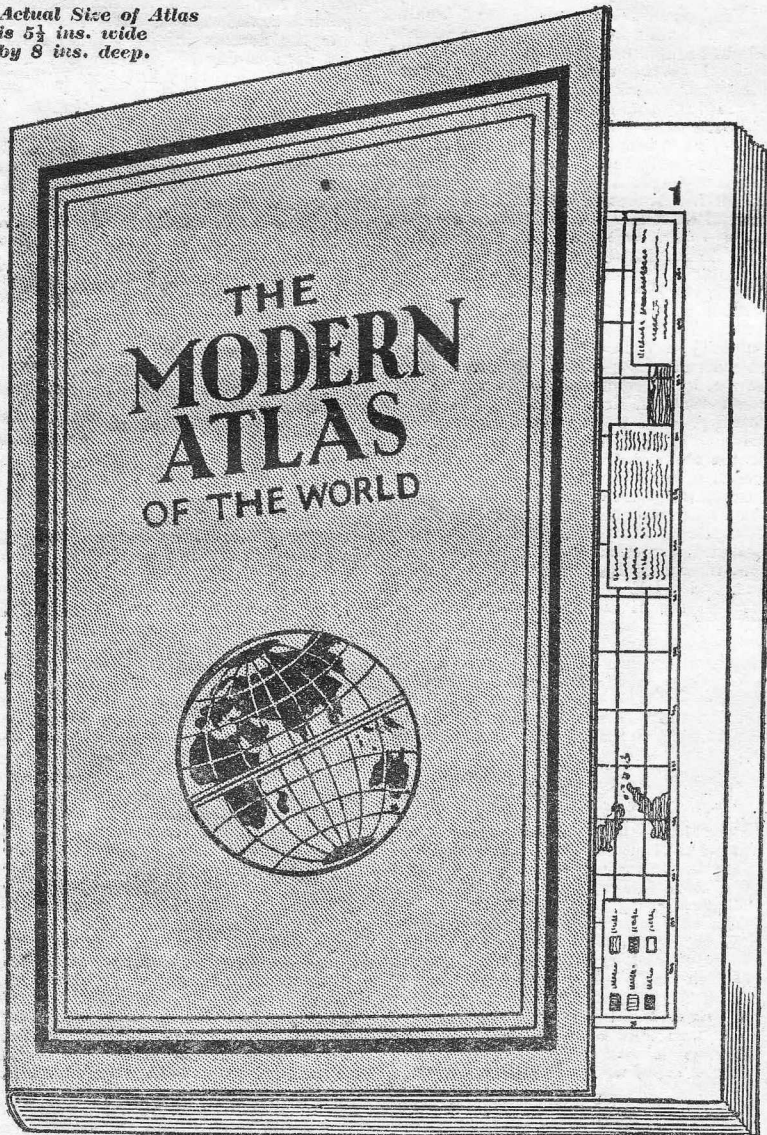
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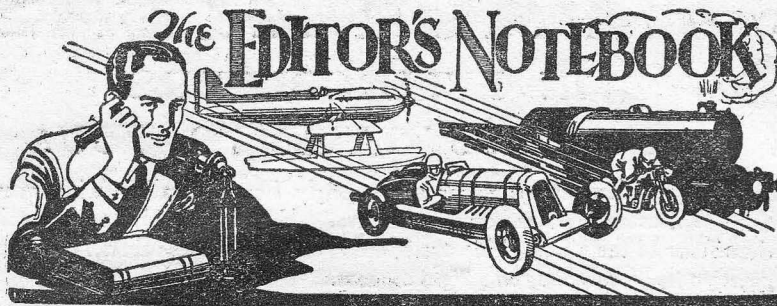
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THE EDITOR.

CUT OUT THE COUPON ON PAGE 19 AND KEEP IT BY YOU!

A PAGE FROM—



Address all letters: The Editor, The GEM, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

HALLO, chums! Well, what do you think of your Editor's latest offer? I refer, of course, to the "Modern Atlas of the World," which will be presented to every reader who collects the requisite eight coupons. Believe me, this Atlas in full colours is really worth having. It shows every country under the sun, is a handy reference at all times, whilst its size—5½ ins. wide by 8 ins. deep—is just right for the pocket. Make up your minds to qualify for this beautiful Atlas to-day. In other words, cut out the coupon from page 19, keep it by you, and then make certain of seven more coupons. Five of these will appear in the next five issues of the GEM. The remaining two you can secure either from "Modern Boy" or "Magnet." But in any case turn to page 17 and read the details of this wonderful offer. After that, I shall be very surprised if you don't take advantage of it.

"THE SPYFLYERS!"

Last week I made mention of the grand new serial I have booked to follow the series of South Seas stories now appearing in the GEM. "The Spyflyers" is one of the finest stories of the Great War I have ever had the pleasure of reading. Without hesitation I recommend it to all GEM readers, whatever their individual tastes might be, as being a masterpiece of writing, based on facts acquired by the author, while he was engaged on active service during the tragic years, 1914-1918.

WRITTEN BY A BRILLIANT PILOT!

W. E. Johns, the author, was a flying officer of no mean reputation. What he doesn't know about Britain's deeds in the air during the Great War is not worth knowing, for his records have been kept and collected over a period of years. His knowledge of the "other side"—the Germans, their fighting planes fighting methods—will amaze you. Into his wonderful story he has woven a "spy" theme which will fascinate you the moment you start to read "The Spyflyers." Tell your pals about this coming treat; make sure of your own copy of the GEM as well, and then, when you have sampled the opening chapters, fire your opinions into me. When does this story start? Make a note of it—

IT APPEARS IN A FORTNIGHT'S TIME!

In the meantime, you will find another thrill-packed yarn, by Cecil Fanshawe, another ripping long complete story of Tom Merry & Co., entitled:

"SMUGGLED TO SCHOOL!"

and, of course, the usual column of jokes
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submitted by readers who receive in exchange half-a-crown apiece. Don't miss next week's GEM—it's the best yet!

BRAVO, BRITANNIA!

Yes, sir! Bravo again and again! Now we hold a hat-trick of flying records. Flight-Lieutenant Stainforth did his bit when his super-marine Rolls-Royce seaplane attained the almost incredible speed of 407.5 m.p.h. Mr. Cyril Unwins followed suit, when, in his Vickers Vespa plane, he reached an altitude of 43,976 feet. And now, thanks to plucky Squadron-Leader Gayford and his companion, Flight-Lieutenant Nicholetts, we have bagged the world's long-distance non-stop flight record of 5,340 miles covered in 57½ hours in the giant Fairey-Napier monoplane. Over jungle, mountain, and desert, the last-named pilots steered their service plane without fuss, without the usual blowing of trumpets and wild publicity, which usually attends these record attempts—from Cranwell aerodrome, in Lincolnshire, to Walvis Bay, in South-West Africa. Only shortage of petrol stopped these gallant airmen from reaching Cape Town. As it was, they had beaten the world's long-distance non-stop record previously held by the Americans, Messrs. Boardman and Polando. Bravo! The Fairey-Napier monoplane weighed as much as eight tons and a half, fully loaded. Just think of it. Fifty years ago, if anyone had suggested that eight tons and a half of anything could hurtle through the air at an average speed of 100 miles an hour and remain hurtling, so to speak, for 57½ hours, he would have been shut up in a lunatic asylum, like as not. Once more, Britishers—a rousing British cheer for Squadron-Leader Gayford and Flight-Lieutenant Nicholetts, who brought us the hat-trick of the air!

WILY "W. G."

As cricket, leg-theory, Test squabbles, and so on, have been some of the main topics of conversation these days, it won't come amiss if I mention a story I heard about the celebrated cricketer, Dr. W. G. Grace. In a match at the Crystal Palace, "W. G." tried all he knew to bowl out an obstinate batsman, but in vain. The batsman looked as if he would stay at the crease all day, the next day, and so on. The sun was shining strongly, and during a lull in the game, Dr. Grace went up to the batsman and said: "Freddy, this is the first time I have ever seen a wild duck fly over the Crystal Palace." "Freddy" immediately looked full into the sun, saw nothing except a lurid glare, and—was out the very next ball!

A DIRTY TRICK!

Smugglers do a pretty good business running contraband across the Belgium frontier into Germany, but they have their bad times. For instance, a party of smugglers took their car, laden with coffee, cigarettes, etc., across the German frontier without mishap, and then pulled up at a wayside cafe for much-needed refreshment. While they took their ease, another car roared up and out of it streamed a number of men who said they were Customs officers. The spokesman commanded the smugglers to hand over their contraband cargo, and he was promptly obeyed. The Customs officers drove off and disappeared. Later the discomfited smugglers learned that they had been tricked. The Customs officers were, in reality, smugglers like themselves!

THE FOOTER FAN!

He was unconscious when they took him into the hospital and for half an hour the doctors worked like niggers applying artificial respiration. Suddenly the patient regained consciousness. His first words made the doctors jump—"What's West Ham done to-day?" Incidentally, West Ham had won; they had beaten Southampton by 3 goals to 1.

TROUBLE WITH HIS TAIL!

John G. Marlow wrote to me in the week, asking me if I could suggest any method of preventing his dog from nibbling at his tail. I'll explain further. The dog in question had had a slight operation on its tail, but as fast as the bandages were put on, so Fido nibbled and tore them off. My correspondent was in despair; he thought the wound would never heal, so I dropped him a line pronto. It was only a week or so ago that I saw a picture of a dog with a strange-looking collar round its neck. Really, it was a lady's straw hat which had been fixed round the dog's neck to stop it biting its tail. The wide-spreading brim of the straw hat completely hid the dog's tail from view, for one thing, and made biting a matter of practical impossibility. I passed on this information to my correspondent and hope he will find it useful. Make a note of it, you fellows with dogs, as it will very likely come in useful some time or another.

SUBMARINE HUNTERS!

It is not generally known that during the Great War sea lions were specially trained to detect the presence of submarines. These underwater craft made a peculiar buzzing sound as they slid beneath the waves, so the trainer of the sea lions made buzzers which gave out a similar noise. At a word of command from their trainer the sea lions would flash through the sea in the direction of the buzzers, locating them without difficulty. But there arose a big difficulty. The sea lions would make straight for the buzzers, always providing that no fish were encountered on the way. If fish did turn up then the sea lions forgot all about the business of submarine chasing and started to chase fish instead. The trainer—he was a Captain James Woodward, who died last month at the ripe old age of eighty-two—persevered, however. He stopped the fish-chasing business when submarine chasing was the order of the day, by muzzling his sea lions with piano wire. Believe it or not, these trained sea lions were more efficient in locating enemy submarines than mechanical detecting instruments.

TOM MERRY & CO. IN LIVERPOOL!

(Continued from page 16.)

CHAPTER 11.

Choker Bill Again!

TOM MERRY & CO. enjoyed their evening at the Shakespeare Theatre.

It came to an end all too soon for them. Skimpole, indeed, was sitting at the back of the box making notes for the two hundred and ninetieth chapter of his great work on Determinism, and did not know what the play was about. But the others lost nothing of it, and they were feeling very contented when they left the theatre. They walked back after it was over with Mr. Murphy. Dig walked with his uncle, and the rest of the juniors followed. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy buttoned up his coat before coming out, partly on account of the cold, but partly to secure the famous "tickah." He did not want to leave that in Liverpool when he went back to St. Jim's.

The streets were pretty full of people, and the boys jostled, and were jostled.

Arthur Augustus uttered a sudden exclamation as he caught sight of a rough, bristly face under a battered bowler hat.

"Bai Jove!"

"Hallo! What's the trouble?" asked Blake.

"I just saw Chokah Bill."

"Stuff! Choker Bill's in prison, and he'll come up before the magistrate to-morrow morning," said Tom Merry.

"I have told you, Tom Mewwy, that I just saw Chokah Bill!"

"But he's under arrest."

"He may have escaped from the policeman."

"Well, let's see," said Tom Merry. "If he dodged into that doorway he's there now, as he hasn't come out."

"Very clearly put, Merry," said Skimpole. "I regard that as an exactly logical statement, worthy of Professor Lotoff Boshski himself. You see—"

"Oh, wing off, Skimmay! The wottah is certainly there, Tom Mewwy, and my ideah is that he dodged in there because a policeman's comin' along. Of course, if he has escaped awrest, the police are lookin' for him."

"Well, we'll look for him, too."

And Tom Merry, carelessly enough, strode towards the somewhat deep and dark entry to a shop—now, of course, closed for the night—which D'Arcy had pointed out.

Then he started back. In the dusk of the doorway was a crouching figure; and in an instant it had sprung out, dashing Tom Merry aside, and was racing down the street.

"My hat, it's he!"

"I told you so, deah boy! Aftah him!"

It was not of much use going after Choker Bill. He was running like a greyhound, and he disappeared round a corner before the juniors could even shout: "Stop thief!"

D'Arcy ran a few paces, and then stopped.

"It's no good," said Tom Merry.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, you ought to have gwipped him!"

"Stuff! You ought to have stood by in case he dodged me!"

"Wats! All you chaps ought to have stood wound—"

"Blessed if I see the use of jawing about what we ought to have done!" said Herries. "He's gone now, so we may as well get in to supper."

"Good weeze!" said Blake heartily. "Come on!"

And they hastened their steps to overtake Mr. Murphy and Digby. They arrived at the hotel together, and found supper ready, and Albert, the waiter, all smiles.

At St. Jim's the juniors, when they had supper, had plain bread and cheese; but the fare was better now. Mr. Murphy was hospitality itself—perhaps, in fact, too hospitable for the good of the youthful digestions under his charge.

Arthur Augustus was unaccountably silent during the supper. Tom Merry related to Mr. Murphy the occurrence at the football ground, and the discovery that Choker Bill must have escaped from the policeman, who had been taking him to the lock-up. There was no doubt that a notification to that effect would reach them in the morning, as D'Arcy was bound to appear to charge the man if he were still in custody.

"You are quite sure it was the same man?" asked Mr. Murphy thoughtfully.

"Yaas, wathah, sir!"

"Oh, yes!" said Tom Merry. "I'd know his face anywhere. It's about the most villainous face I've seen. And I can't help thinking of that poor little chap who saved D'Arcy's watch, and what the brute may do to him."

"He is not likely to venture back into his usual haunts, as the police would look for him there," said Mr. Murphy.

And that rather relieved the minds of the juniors. But the thoughtful shade remained on the brow of Arthur Augustus. Tom Merry and Blake guessed that there was something at work in his brain, but what it was they could not guess. Nor did the swell of St. Jim's appear to be in any hurry to enlighten them.

The juniors went up to bed, Mr. Murphy bidding them good-night at the door of their room. Herries and Manners and Skimpole commenced to undress at once, but Arthur Augustus sat down with an air of reflection. And Tom Merry and Blake and Lowther and Digby watched him with interest.

"Well, what's the answer?" asked Lowther, at last.

"Eh?" said D'Arcy, starting from his reverie.

"What's the answer?"

"The answah to what, deah boy?"

"The problem, to be sure."

"I do not quite appwehend your meanin', Lowthah. What problem?"

"Weren't you working something out in algebra?" asked Lowther.

"No; I was not doin' anythin' of the sort," answered D'Arcy. "I was thinkin', and I have decided at last what I had bettah do."

"Good! What is it? Bed is a rather good idea at this time of night. But perhaps you would prefer a stroll round the docks, or a walk to Stanley Park?"

"Pway don't be funny, Lowthah! This is a serious

Cut This Out and Keep it by You!



mattah. I am thinkin' of that youngstah who saved my tickah."

"Don't jaw, Gussy, old chap," said Herries, getting into bed. "We've had a pretty full day, and I'm tired. I want to go to sleep."

"I am wathah fatigued also, Hewwies, but I must considah my duty. I feel in honah bound to look aftah that youngstah."

"You can't look after him to-night."

"Yaas, wathah! That is exactly what I am goin' to do!"

They stared blankly at him. There was an extremely determined expression upon the face of Arthur Augustus; and when he looked like that they knew from of old that he was past argument.

"What on earth are you thinking of doing?" asked Tom Merry, at length.

"Pway allow me to explain, deah boys! It is perfectly cleah that Chokah Bill is fwee, and that youngstah p'wably thinks he is locked up all the time. Now you know how savage the wuffian looked when he was arrested. I think that he was in earnest in all he said about gettin' even with Herbert Wags."

"Ye-es; but you remember what Mr. Murphy said—he won't dare to go back to his usual haunts, where the police will look for him."

"How do we know that they know where he lives at all? We know because Herbert Wags told us, but the police may not know."

"Well, I didn't think of that."

"Yaas; you wequiah a bwain like mine to think of these things. My ideah is that the wuffian will go back to Gween Alley, wherevah that may be, and hide there—what they call lie low, you know—till the police have done lookin' for him. And he may see Herbert Wags there at any moment, as he lives there. It is quite poss that young Wags' life is in dangah. And, anyway, the wuffian will do him some feahful injuw if he gets a chance."

Tom Merry looked grave.

"But I don't see what we can do, Gussy."

"I know what I am goin' to do, Tom Mewwy, and you can back me up or not, as you like."

"Oh, go on!"

"I am goin' to look for young Wags."

"Now, don't be an ass, Gussy!"

"I uttably wefuse to be wegardeed as an ass. I should be sowwy to have to thwash you before startin' on my dangewous expedish, but—"

"My dear kid, you can't go; it's too late!"

"It may be vey much too late to-mowwow, as fah as Wags is concerned. If we were to heah of his body bein' pickid up in the Mersey—"

"I don't suppose the brute would go as far as that, even if he got a chance," said Tom Merry, with a shudder. "At the same time, I don't like to think of the kid falling in with him. But—"

"I am goin' to Gween Alley to find him!" said D'Arcy resolutely.

"But look here—"

"It's no good arguin', Tom Mewwy. I've made up my mind. I should like one of you to come with me, but—"

"If you go, I go," said Tom Merry quietly; "but—"

"I don't want to dwaw you into dangah against your will."

"Rats! I shall go!"

"And I," said Blake.

"And all of us," said Monty Lowther quickly.

"Certainly!" said Skimpole. "I shall be very happy to visit this apparently low quarter and study the customs of the natives."

"Oh, wing off, Skimmay! We can't take a large party, Lowthah, as it would attwact too much attention. Tom Mewwy and Blake will be enough."

"And I'll go instead of Gussy," said Digby.

D'Arcy turned his eyeglass upon his chum.

"I wegard that as an extremely wotten joke, Dig."

"It's not a joke; I mean it."

"Then I wegard you as an ass. I am goin', of course, as the affah would be hardly likely to succeed without my leadin'. You othahs had bettah go to bed, and I twust we shall weturn shortly and bwing Herbert Wags with us."

There was some demur; but it was clear that the whole party could not very well go, and it was finally arranged that the expedition should consist of three—Tom Merry, Jack Blake, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. And, this being settled, the three juniors prepared to start.

CHAPTER 12.

A Midnight Expedition!

TOM MERRY put his coat and cap on, a doubtful expression on his face.

He was concerned for the safety of the little Liverpool ragamuffin, and he was quite ready for an adventure, anyway. But he was more reflecting than Arthur Augustus, and he could not help realising how reckless the expedition was. Yet at the thought of the honest lad, Erbert, in the hands of Choker Bill, he felt that he would face any danger, known or unknown, to save him.

The lad had earned the hatred of the savage ruffian to save D'Arcy's watch, in return for the kindness he had received at the hands of the juniors of St. Jim's. And Tom Merry could not help feeling that they were, in a sense, responsible for him.

What was to be done with the lad when he was found and rescued was a question the juniors did not ask themselves. Sufficient for the time was the evil thereof. The rest could be thought out later.

"I'm weady, deah boys!" said D'Arcy, as he gave his silk hat a final polish before putting it on.

Jack Blake glared at him.

"Are you going down into slumland in a topper at this time of night?" he demanded.

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

"Take it off, ass! We want to attract as little attention as possible."

"Yaas, wathah! I admit that you are quite wight, Blake. At the same time, I wish you to distinctly undahstand that I absolutely decline to be addressed as an ass."

"Oh, get on with the washing!"

"Yes," said Tom Merry. "We want to get out before the hotel closes, or there will be a bother. We shall have to slip out quietly."

"Mr. Murphy would stop you if he saw you," said Lowther; "there's not much doubt on that point."

"I weally feel a little uneasy at goin' out without askin' his permish," said D'Arcy thoughtfully. "But as he would pwobably wefuse it, it is no use askin' it. If our conduct appeahs in any way diswepetful, our excuse is that we are in honah bound to look atah that youngstah."

"Good!" said Blake. "We'll start when Gussy's finished talking!"

"I am finished talkin' now," said D'Arcy, with dignity.

So they started.

It was not difficult to slip out of the hotel, and they walked quickly away down the wide street, in case their departure should have been observed. Their hearts were beating with suppressed excitement.

The hour was late, and Liverpool was asleep for the most part.

Here and there were lighted windows of hotels and restaurants, and taxis were still rattling about, busily picking up theatre passengers. Arthur Augustus made a sign to a taximan, and the man drew up by the pavement, at some distance from the hotel.

Tom Merry caught the swell of St. Jim's by the arm.

"What on carth—" he began.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, as I am leadah of this expedish—"

"Rats! We can't go to a place like Green Alley in a taxi."

"We can go most of the way in a taxi, deah boy, and leave the drivah waitin' for us at the place neawest to Gween Alley that he can get to."

"Taxi, sir?" said the driver.

"Yaas, wathah! Pway get in, you chaps, while I speak to the dwivah. Have you evah heard of a place called Gween Alley, dwivah?"

"N-n-no, sir."

"Have you evah heard of a place called Arkle Woad, then?"

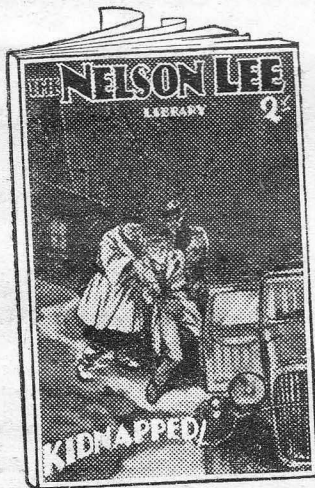
"Arkle Road! Yes, sir. It's right up the Scotland Road—a long way from here."

"Pway dwive us there."

The three juniors entered the taxi, which dashed along by St. George's Hall, and turned into William Brown Street and then into Byrom Street. From Byrom Street it rattled on into the Scotland Road.

Where they were going the juniors had not the faintest idea. This part of Liverpool was quite unknown to them, and in the darkness of the late night they could see little or nothing of their surroundings.

Scotland Road seemed a long road to them. Arkle Road seemed long, too, and as they passed along it they could not help observing that their surroundings grew poorer and poorer. The few people they passed looked at the taxi as if such a vehicle was an uncommon visitor to the street.



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At that instant Tom Merry struck out with all his strength, straight from the shoulder. Crash! The impact of his knuckles made Tom's hand ache, but it sent the ruffian reeling back! "Line up!" muttered Tom Merry. "It's business now!"

The driver pulled up at last in the gloom of the ill-lighted thoroughfare.

D'Arcy popped his head out of the window.

"Are you there, dwivah?"

"This is the end of Arkle Road, sir!"

"Bai Jove! And can't you see Gween Alley?"

"No, sir. It must be one of the little turnings yonder. I should advise you not to go there, sir."

"Thank you vevy much, dwivah!"

Arthur Augustus stepped out of the taxi, and his comrades followed. D'Arcy looked round him through his eyeglass.

The juniors were surrounded by mean houses—a striking and depressing contrast to the great and wealthy Liverpool they had seen during the day.

But in the gloom of the dark night little could be seen distinctly. A tattered figure came slinking along, and stopped and stared in curiosity at the lights of the taxi.

The juniors glanced at it, and shivered at the sight of the dirty, evil face and the torn rags through which the cold night wind blew.

"Poor fellow!" murmured D'Arcy. "Here's a shillin' for you, my man!"

The vagrant took the shilling, stared at D'Arcy, and hurried off.

Arthur Augustus looked at the wondering taximan.

"I want you to wait here for us," he said. "We are goin' to see a fwiend in Gween Alley, and we shall return pwesently."

"It's a dangerous neighbourhood, sir."

"Yaas, wathah! Wait here for us."

"But—" began the taximan.

D'Arcy waved his gloved hand.

"It's all wight! You wait here."

"Yes, sir; but—"

"Come on, deah boys!"

"Wait a moment, sir!" exclaimed the taximan. "You see—"

"Weally, my deah fellow, you are a bore!" said D'Arcy. "I dare say it is a dangewous locality, but that can't be helped. It's all wight."

"But if you please—"

"Oh, come on, deah boys; we can't stay here all night!" "What about my fare?" bawled the taximan, speaking out at last.

"Bai Jove! I forgot about that! It's all wight, dwivah! I'll pay you altogether when we come back, and you can dwive us home."

"Will you?" grinned the driver. "You'll pay me now, sir!"

"I twust," said D'Arcy, with great dignity—"I twust, dwivah, that you do not doubt my honah!"

"Pay the fare, then!" said the taximan.

"Weally, my deah fellow—"

"Oh, pay him, and shut up, Gussy!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "You don't want to stand here, arguing all night!"

"Vevy well, but I wegard it as extremely bad form of the dwivah to hint that we might be bilkans!"

Arthur Augustus paid the fare—having borrowed some money of Digby before leaving the hotel—so generously that the taxi-driver opened his eyes, and wondered more than ever whom his strange passengers might be. However, he was only too willing to wait now, and as the juniors walked away they left him standing by his taxi and staring curiously after them.

Under a dim lamp, at a short distance, the vagrant was standing, biting the shilling D'Arcy had given him, apparently doubting the genuineness of a coin so easily obtained.

D'Arcy tapped him on the arm, and the man turned, with a start.

"Pway can you diwect us to Gween Alley?" asked D'Arcy politely.

The man stared at him.

"Yes," he said slowly; "but you'd better not go there."

"I particulahly desiah to visit a fwiend stayin' at Fwaw

Hemling's residence in that street," said Arthur Augustus. "Powwaps you could show us the way?"

The man chuckled.

"You mightn't find it so easy to get away agin," he said.

"We are willin' to wisk that. If you show us the way I will pwsent you with half-a-crown!"

"I'm on, sir! This way!"

And the vagrant let the way at a brisk trot, and the juniors of St. Jim's followed him—two of them, at least, with serious misgivings in their breasts.

CHAPTER 13.

In Danger!

"MY hat!" murmured Tom Merry. "Where are we getting into?"

"Bai Jove! This looks wathah wotten!"

"Beastly!" said Blake. "I wish I'd thought of bringing a life-preserver or something!"

"Yaas; I should like my twusty wevolvah now!" said D'Arcy. "I dare say I shall weally need it more here than I evah did in Amewicah!"

"Jolly glad you haven't got it! There may be danger enough without that."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Shut up!" whispered Tom Merry. "Your beautiful accent gives us away, Gussy. We may pass in the dark without notice if you keep your chin-music turned off!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Cheese it!"

And D'Arcy sniffed and was silent. Their surroundings were indeed sufficient to alarm anyone of weak nerves. The alley was deep and dark, evil to the sight and to the smell. The roadway, such as it was, seemed to be used as a receptacle for all kinds of rubbish and garbage by the inhabitants.

On the broken pavement a man, evidently intoxicated, lay asleep, his feet in the gutter, and breathing stertorously. From one house, or, rather, hovel, wher, a light burned, the sounds of savage quarrelling could be heard.

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The sounds had not alarmed Green Alley—the neighbourhood was probably too used to such outbreaks. The vagrant turned his head and looked at the juniors, with a queer gleam in his eyes that they did not notice.

"There's the 'ouse, gents!" he whispered.

He stopped before a rambling, broken-down edifice of hideous aspect. The windows were almost innocent of glass, foul rags being stuffed into innumerable gaps, and fluttering and rustling in the wind. Two or three lights could be seen from the building, and a raucous voice raised in a brutal song came faintly to the ear.

"That is Frau Hemling's?" asked Tom Merry.

"That's it, sir!"

"We want to see a kid who lives there," said Tom Merry abruptly—"a kid called 'Erbert, or Rags. Do you know him?"

The vagrant shook his head.

"You don't want to go in there, sir," he said, in a husky voice. "You don't know the kind of people there, sir. This ain't a safe place for the likes of you, sir. Look 'ere, if you like to wait, I'll go in and see if the kid's there and bring 'im out to you!"

"Bai Jove, that's a wathah good ideah!" said Arthur Augustus. "I regard that as a wippin' suggestion!"

Tom Merry nodded.

"Good! That's all right!"

Jack Blake nodded keenly at the vagrant. Blake was a keener reader of character than D'Arcy, perhaps than Tom Merry. There was something the Yorkshire lad did not like in the manner of the vagrant.

But, after all, it was evidently safer for the boys not to enter the place. It was evidently a "doss-house" of the lowest type, frequented by foreign sailors and the scum of the streets of Liverpool.

It was very probable that 'Erbert was the only honest person there. And it was probable, too, that Choker Bill was in the house, and if he saw the juniors he was very likely to raise a hue-and-cry against them. To be attacked by a gang of roughs was not a pleasant prospect.

"Well, go in," said Blake shortly. "We'll wait."

"I'll show you where to wait, gents," whispered the husky-voiced vagrant. And he pointed towards a dark yard opening beside the building. "You'll be outer sight in there."

"Yaas, wathah! Huwwy up, then!"

The juniors stepped into the yard, and the vagrant moved away.

Blake looked after him and saw him enter the house.

"Come out of this!" he said shortly.

"Weally, Blake, we have awwanged to wait here for Herbert Wags."

"That fellow is more likely to return with half a dozen rascals of his own kidney," said Blake. "We can watch from over the way."

"Bai Jove! Do you think he would be wascal enough to give us away?"

"It's as likely as not, anyway! He can see that we're worth robbing. We ought to have got some shabby clothes for an expedition like this."

The juniors crossed the dark alley. In the shadow of one of the hovels opposite they watched the building for the reappearance of the vagrant. If he came out alone, or with 'Erbert, they would know it was all right. Otherwise—

Blake suddenly gripped Tom Merry's arm.

"Look!"

The slinking figure of the vagrant appeared from the dimly-lit doorway of Frau Hemling's "doss-house." There were three other figures with it, and one of them, in spite of the dim light, was easily recognised. That burly form and bullet head could belong to no one but Choker Bill.

"Bai Jove!" muttered Arthur Augustus. "The uttah wascal! I shall wufuse to give him the half-crown now!"

"We shall be jolly lucky if we get away from here," muttered Tom Merry. "We were fools to come! Look at the villain!"

The vagrant and his companions were hurrying directly towards the yard where the juniors had been left. They disappeared into it, and then there was a sound of angry voices. They had discovered that the birds had flown.

Tom Merry breathed hard.

What was to be done? To make a run for it, and dash down the alley with three or four roughs in pursuit—it was not to be thought of. Fresh foes might appear from any corner—they would be cut off.

Strategy was the only thing, and Tom Merry, as he realised it, drew his companions deeper into the shadow of the hovel.

"We shall have to hook it," he muttered. "It's no good making a run for it—we shouldn't have an earthly!"

"You're right, I'm afwaid!"

"Right-ho!" muttered Blake. "There's an alley beside this house—let's get into it, and there may be a way out at the back."

"What about Herbert Wags, deah boys?"

"Ass! We shall have to see about him another time. We mayn't get out of this alive as it is."

"I wufuse to be called an ass—"

"Oh, come on!"

And Arthur Augustus was dragged into the narrow alley beside the hovel. It was not more than two feet wide, and was utterly dark and noisome. There was no other way open to the juniors, for Choker Bill and his friends had come out of the yard, and were looking about for them and cursing audibly at their ill-success.

Two or three semi-intoxicated men came out of the house Choker Bill had issued from, and the juniors caught a glimpse of a negro and an Italian in the gang. More than ever they realised how reckless they had been in venturing into such a place. But it was too late to think of that now.

They pressed on down the narrow alley till Tom Merry stopped with a low, muttered exclamation of dismay. His outstretched hands had touched the brickwork. He felt in vain for an opening.

The juniors had reached the end of a cul-de-sac—a blind alley. There was no outlet!

"My only hat!" murmured Jack Blake.

"Bai Jove! We shall have to twy anothah way, deah boys!"

Tom Merry caught D'Arcy by the arm and dragged him back as he was about to retrace his steps.

"Too late!" he muttered.

It was, indeed, too late. In the dim light at the end of the brick-walled passage a burly form could be seen. It was Choker Bill!

The juniors were cornered!

CHAPTER 14.

Facing the Foe!

TOM MERRY gritted his teeth.

"Quiet!" he whispered. "He may not see us!"

With bated breath the juniors crouched in the dark end of the alley, close to the grimy bricks.

Choker Bill's burly form almost filled up the passage from side to side as he came in, treading lightly, his head a little bent forward to listen.

Would he see them?

He certainly could not see. The passage was dark as pitch, shadowed on one side by a high brick wall, on the other by the side of the house. And their breathing was hushed—he could not hear them.

The ruffian stopped. He seemed to be fumbling in his pockets.

A voice came from the end of the brick passage.

"Can you see 'em, Bill?"

"No," grunted the ruffian.

"Come this way, then!"

The juniors breathed again. Then again their hearts sank as Choker Bill replied, without moving from his position:

"'Old on a tick! I'm goin' ter strike a light!"

That was what he was fumbling for—his matchbox. Tom Merry's teeth came together hard. The ruffian was bound to see them now.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus.

Tom Merry pressed his arm as a warning to be quiet, and then stepped silently forward towards Choker Bill, his hands hard clenched.

When the ruffian saw him he would not have time to act. Tom Merry, at least, would get his blow in first and knock out his most dangerous foe before the rush came.

Scratch!

The match glimmered forth and flickered on the grimy brickwork that shut in the boys and their burly foe. It showed the rough, bristly face of Choker Bill, and the tense features of Tom Merry directly in front of him. The ruffian started a little and dropped the match. At the same instant Tom Merry struck out with all his strength, straight from the shoulder.

Crash!

The impact of the knuckles between the ruffian's eyes made Tom's hand ache, and it sent the rough reeling blindly back. And as he reeled Tom Merry sprang forward, and his left came up in a terrific upper-cut which landed on the point of Choker Bill's chin and fairly flung him out of the passage to the pavement.

The burly form of the ruffian crashed down at the feet of his followers, and Tom Merry reeled back to Blake and D'Arcy.

"Line up!" he whispered. "It's business now!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I'm ready," muttered Blake, pushing back his cuffs, his teeth hard set. "Let them rush us—we'll show them how we hit at St. Jim's."

But the gang seemed in no hurry to make the rush.

Choker Bill still lay on the broken pavement, nursing his jaw with his hand and muttering curses that made the boys' flesh creep as they listened. His companions were gathered round him and looking doubtfully into the black passage. They evidently had no taste to venture recklessly near the fists that had laid out the powerful ruffian, the terror of Green Alley, on his back.

"Hang it!" muttered Blake. "There must be a way out of this passage! They wouldn't build a blind alley for nothing! Keep on guard while I see!"

"Right you are! I couldn't find it!"

Blake felt over the brickwork with his hands. It seemed certain that there must be some outlet, but in the blackness it was impossible to see it. His hands came at last in contact with woodwork instead of brick.

"Have you found it?" whispered Tom Merry, as Blake gave a low exclamation.

"Yes; there's a door."

"Can you open it?"

"I'm trying."

And Jack Blake tried hard. But the door was evidently bolted or barred on the other side, for it would not budge an inch.

The junior hurled his weight upon it and reeled back, dizzy from the shock. The door did not even creak.

"It wouldn't open!" he muttered desperately.

"Look out! They're coming!"

A tattered form appeared in the opening of the passage, showing dimly against the less opaque darkness beyond. It was that of the vagrant who had trapped the juniors.

Tom Merry's eyes glinted. He stepped quickly forward, and delivered a blow as the rascal peered into the passage.

"Oh!"

The man cried out and staggered back, and fell with a crash on the ground.

There was an outbreak of oaths.

"Good!" whispered Blake. "Oh, if we had a few of the fellows from St. Jim's here, we'd clear out the whole gang of them!"

"Yaas, wathah! I say, deah boys, I'm sowwy I bwrought you into this—"

"Never mind that, Gussy!" Tom Merry's brain was working rapidly. "Couldn't we climb over that beastly wall? We might if we have time. I'll give you a bunk up, Blake."

"Right-ho! Let's try it."

Up went Blake on Tom Merry's shoulders, while D'Arcy watched for an attack. The gang outside doubtless knew that there was no escape, for they did not hurry to come to close quarters.

Blake stood on Tom Merry's shoulders, and reached his hands above. But he did not touch the top of the wall. The sound of a movement at the mouth of the cul-de-sac made him jump down quickly. The enemy were coming.

It was Choker Bill who was entering the dark recess. The ruffian, brute as he was, had pluck. The others hung back; they had not seen the juniors, and from what they had witnessed of Tom Merry's defence, they probably doubted the vagrant's information that the party consisted only of boys.

Choker Bill felt his way forward in the dark with both hands outstretched. His burly form loomed up in the shadow, and the juniors, feeling that it was better to attack than to wait to be attacked, hurled themselves upon him.

A bludgeon swept through the air and narrowly missed Tom Merry's head. His fist swept up and caught the rough under the jaw, jarring his teeth together, and Choker Bill cursed and grappled with him.

But Blake kicked his legs from under him as Tom Merry closed, and the burly scoundrel went down in a heap.

Tom Merry wrenched the bludgeon away, and it crashed down in the dark, upon what part of the wretch Tom neither knew nor cared. But the blow hurt, for Choker Bill gasped and yelled, and squirmed out of the grasp of the juniors and out of the passage.

Tom Merry sprang to his feet, breathing hard.

"One up to us!" he muttered breathlessly.

There was a babble of voices now in Green Alley. The disturbance had brought a crowd to the spot, and the voices showed the juniors what kind of a crowd it was.

Brave as the lads were, their hearts were heavy. For the moment they had held their own; but they were pinned in now, surrounded by the savage denizens of the place, and all escape was cut off.

There was a sound above, as of someone scraping over the high wall.

(Continued on page 28.)

LOOK OUT FOR FIREWORKS WHEN BATTLER BART MEETS—

NARADA THE GIANT!



By
CECIL FANSHAW.

Narada is the black Giant of the Forests—but he finds that Battler, British to the backbone, is just one too many for him!

CHAPTER 1. The Raid!

"**S**PLENDID!" observed big Bart Crewison, known throughout the South Seas as "Battler." "I think we shall do a roaring trade on Tahar Island, Dick, old lad," and he rubbed his square chin and chuckled.

In fact, the outlook was promising.

It seemed that all the soot-coloured inhabitants of Tahar Island were turning out in full force to welcome the brothers and their trading schooner.

There seemed nothing suspicious about that joyful greeting.

Even Battler didn't smell a rat. And the herculean Battler was no novice.

Battler and young Dick, clad in oil-grimed ducks, stood on the deck of the Radio Ray with their five brown-skinned Kanaka deck hands.

Delightedly they watched the island shore swiftly grow closer. They looked at the green wall of jungle, seeing feathery palms and a line of dim hills in the distance. They saw the sandy foreshore swarming with dusky figures, saw a fleet of canoes putting out to meet them. Joyful whoops rang in their ears above the thunder of the reef.

The dandy of the crowd was wizened old Buri-Buri, the chief, who sported a pig's tusk skewered through his nose, dabs of red paint on his chest, blue paint on his lips, and trailed behind him an ancient musket.

"You make um plenty trade, master?" old Buri-Buri grinned to Battler. "You got um plenty tobacco? Plenty paint?"

"Good feller trade, Buri-Buri!" Battler grinned reply, waving a ham-like fist to his queer stock of goods. "Plenty clocks, and as much ship's paint as you want, you old blighter. I want coconuts in exchange, and fifty 'boys' to work along a plantation—savvy? I done bring fine things too much."

"Huh! Me look um!" Buri-Buri grunted doubtfully, and paddled off, trailing his musket.

But his black subjects were delighted. With yelps of glee they pounced on the brothers' goods, sniffing the tobacco, shaking the alarm-clocks, tossing top-hats and bales of calico from hand to hand. As Battler had expected, the nails were the trump card. Handfuls of nails the islanders

grabbed, and hammered them into their club-heads, with the sharp ends outwards, thus making them very formidable weapons.

Suddenly, however, an unusual thing happened.

Old Buri-Buri gave a piercing, bird-like shriek, which seemed to be a signal. It was. As one man, the islanders promptly pounced on the nearest goods; then overboard they leapt, hugging alarm-clocks, swathed in calico, some wearing top-hats, others with hats full of nails and screws.

"Great boilers!" roared Battler. "The stiff's are off!"

They were. And they had pinched every trade article in sight.

There was no catching the nimble black crooks. Even as the brothers and their crew dashed forward, the Tahar Islanders sprang into their canoes, then paddled vigorously for shore.

It all happened quick as winking, and over their shoulders the savages whooped insults as they fled. Old Buri-Buri waved a clock in mockery.

"Ya-ya!" he squawked, meaning: "Stung you, old scout!"

It was the cheek that riled Battler, made him clench his huge fists. It was not so much the wholesale robbery. It was the accompanying jeers that made his sun-bronzed face crimson with fury.

"By guns, I'll have all that junk back!" he muttered. "And give old Buri-Buri what for."

Swiftly a boat was lowered for pursuit. But the pursuers went armed with rifles and sticks of dynamite, for suddenly it struck Battler there might be something behind this unusual game. Buri-Buri's crowd might be purposely luring their pursuers into the jungle, intending to ambush them, then seize and plunder the schooner.

Battler lost no time, however. He and young Dick and three of the Kanakas pulled lustily for shore, shouting at the islanders, and firing shots over their heads.

But the islanders landed, then legged it up the sand, whooping, with their plunder. Long before Battler's boat was beached, the last savage had vanished with tobacco and calico worth hundreds of pounds. Buri-Buri was the last to scamper into the jungle, dragging his musket, a top-hat crammed on his woolly head.

"I'll knock his block off!" roared Battler. "And paint him blue all over! Blowed if I don't!" And his teeth clenched on his odorous cigar.

But what surprised him, directly the pursuers landed, was

the fact that no missiles came whizzing out of the jungle. There sounded no whoops or threats from its interior.

Silence reigned on the sun-scorched beach. The jungle had swallowed the looters up as though they never existed.

This fact struck Battler, used to savage ways, as sinister. It seemed plain there was some dark game on.

But Battler didn't hesitate. Eyes blazing under his sun-helmet, he searched around for some jungle path, found one, then plunged into it, leading his party.

The path was little more than a wild pig run, a leafy tunnel, mushy underfoot, and with a low roof of laced creepers and wild vines. And it wound like a snake up and down steep hills.

Suddenly the jungle thinned, and there was no longer any need to hack through undergrowth with axes or cane-knives. A few minutes later Battler and young Dick could see a crude garden, planted with sweet potatoes, coconut palms, and pumpkins.

They knew they were near Buri-Buri's jungle village. All burst into the clearing, gripping their rifles and axes, to form a line, but they could see no huts.

"Where the thump is the village?" gasped Dick.

Battler chuckled grimly.

"Up there, old lad!" he grinned, and pointed to the tree-tops.

Sure enough, Buri-Buri's folk all lived up trees. Gigantic trees stood here and there around the clearing. As he craned his head back, Dick saw huts of all sizes built in the forks of lofty branches. The huts were well thatched with grass, and had little platforms at the door of each; but the ladders by which the owners ascended had plainly been removed.

"Then the blighters are at home!" shouted Battler. "Come on, m'lads, we'll chop 'em down, if they won't come down! Hi, up there, Buri-Buri! You give 'em back trade junk one-time, my word! You no come down, we knock seven bells outa your village, my lad!"

Forward rushed the brothers, with their Kanakas, and stalwart Tokelau Jim threatened the foundations of the nearest tree-house with a large axe.

That moment a yell sounded from above. Over the edge of the lofty platform was thrust the blue-daubed face of old Buri-Buri, grinning under a shiny top-hat.

"You get to blazes outa this fella garden!" grinned the old rascal. "What name you sing out along me?"

CHAPTER 2.

Ambush!

"ARE you coming down?" roared Battler, in reply.

"No savvy!" grinned Buri-Buri, from his perch.

"Cut his shack down, lads!" snapped Battler.

Instantly, with hearty vigour, Tokelau Jim applied his axe, and the foundations of Buri-Buri's home quivered.

Instantly yelps sounded from all sides. On every house platform there suddenly appeared a hooting bunch of islanders, and right heartily were the brothers pelted.

Ripe fish whistled in their ears, and drummed on their bodies. They were pelted with rotten pumpkins, paw-paws, and all around sounded the thuds of falling coconuts.

No spears or clubs came, however. Battler and Tokelau Jim plied their axes lustily. But just as Buri-Buri's home seemed in real danger of collapse, bringing his family to earth, Buri-Buri himself sued for peace.

Once again he thrust his face, painted like a mandrill's, over his doorstep.

"Stop um!" he yelled down. "Suppose we give um back things belong you, then you go to blazes one time—eh?"

Battler promised to retire, if everything was returned in good order and carried back to his schooner. But he added the condition that fifty recruits were to be supplied for the planter in Gilbert Islands, of whom Buri-Buri was to be one.

"No fear!" said Buri-Buri.

"All right!" barked Battler, hefting his axe.

"Woi!" Buri-Buri roared in panic, and yelled to his subjects to return the plunder.

Yelps sounded from above, then the plunder came hurtling down amongst the brothers and their Kanakas. In vain they shouted to the islanders to bring the stuff down quietly. For some minutes it rained alarm-clocks, top-hats, nails and screws, sticks of tobacco, and bundles of calico—all the loot from the Radio Ray.

It was all returned. Battler glared in fury as the clocks bounced on the ground, and the shining toppers collapsed like mushrooms.

He roared up that the damage must be made good, that Buri-Buri and the recruits were to come down in-stanter. And down came all the islanders—about two hundred of them.

This prompt surrender seemed almost too good to be true.

So it proved to be in fact.

Hardly were the soot-coloured savages on the ground, making a fine show of helping the brothers and the Kanakas to gather up the loot, than old Buri-Buri uttered another of his parrot-like war shouts.

There followed a rush of feet, and a storm of yells.

Before Battler, young Dick, and the Kanakas quite grasped what was in the wind, they found themselves attacked by a whooping horde. On all sides they saw black, leaping figures, with fuzzy hair plaited in strings like pen-wipers, with ears and limbs adorned with shell ornaments. They saw a forest of brandished clubs, found black hands grabbing at their waists and legs.

"Grab um one time No hurt um!" yelled old Buri-Buri, capering excitedly and brandishing his musket.

Furiously the brothers struck out. The treachery of the Tahar Islanders made big Battler see red, made the old scar on his cheek—legacy of a head-hunter's throwing-stone—glow crimson with fury. He fired quickly, dropped an islander, yelling; but there was no more chance for shooting, for whites, browns, and blacks were all mixed up in one whirling dog-fight.

Battler was as strong as ten ordinary men, however, and for some seconds he towered above the yelling throng, lashing out with his clubbed rifle. Savages clung to his waist and legs, and hung on grimly, trying to pull him down. He shook them off, smashed them down like ninepins, only to be seized again by others.

The clearing in the tropical jungle rang to the sound of yells, thuds, trampling feet, and hissing breath. And suddenly Dick saw the ugly, highly coloured face of old Buri-Buri before him, and fiercely the lad punched that rascal on the nose.

Buri-Buri sat down with a startled grunt. A moment later, however, the black, shell-decked crowd broke over the brothers and their Kanakas like a wave in a whirling mass.

All was over. Battler's party went down fighting under a hundred savage figures, crashing amidst the heaps of trade goods. At last they were dragged to their feet, torn and dishevelled, their arms secured with ropes of wild vine.

Breathing heavily, teeth clenched, Battler glared round. It struck him as somewhat strange that the islanders had used neither spears nor war clubs, although many of them had been stunned and otherwise damaged.

He wondered what was coming—whether all were destined to be "kai-kaied," (otherwise eaten), and to have their nappers removed to embellish Buri-Buri's aerial home, or the tribal juju house.

"My fault, old scouts!" he gritted. "I led you into this mess. But I had no notion Buri-Buri's crowd had turned cannibal or head-hunters. Of course, the looting was a frame-up to get us here."

"I wish the thump we'd chopped him down!" Dick gasped furiously.

"Same here, old lad. But we're still alive and full of pep, as Buri-Buri'll learn if I get half a chance. I hope the old bounder's only after a ransom, after all."

That moment the old bounder presented himself before his prisoners, still dragging his ancient musket. He didn't seem to bear any malice for Dick's punch on the nose.

He eyed the captives shrewdly, seeming lost in delighted admiration of Battler's size and strength, and grinned cheerfully at them with blue lips.

"Now me speak um along you," he grinned. "You be good fella friend along me—eh? Me be good fella friend along you. We be two good fella friends like blazes."

"What?" roared Battler. "What the hump are you getting at, you old image? Me bang um head belong you first chance—savvy?"

In fact, the astonishing offer was a bit thick, coming on top of the theft of trade goods of considerable value, damage to the same, and a wanton, treacherous attack.

But Buri-Buri continued to grin. All the crinkly headed savages grinned at their captives' bewilderment.

"No be cross, master," Buri-Buri grinned, leaning on his musket, his pinched topper at a rakish angle. "You be plenty strong fella for fight. Plenty guns, plenty bang-bang stick belong you. All right. Bimeby that fella Narada coming to knock seven bells outa us fellas, and brothers belong him altogether devil-devil too much. You help us fight um—eh? We too much fright along that fella Narada."

Battler gasped in indignation.

Even he was astonished for once, though he had thought he knew all the comic tricks of savage islanders; and gasps of indignation burst from Dick and the Kanakas.

It was at last plain that the brothers were required to be old Buri-Buri's allies. They were expected to aid the tree-dwellers against some dreaded inland foe—a race of giant cannibals, whom they called Narada and his devil-devils. For this purpose they had been trapped.

Hence the looting of the trade goods, the luring of

Battler's party into Buri-Buri's village. And hence the reason no weapons had been used in the scrimmage, nor the captives hurt.

"Help you rascals? No fear! Gammon!" roared Battler. "And if you don't let us go and pay for those damaged clocks and other stuff instanter, you'll be sorry, my lad."

But Buri-Buri only stood on one leg, scratched his head, and grinned again.

Then the old rascal admitted he had never had any intention of supplying black labour for the distant Gilberti Island plantation, for his subjects were averse to work. He admitted that the whole welcome was a frame-up, to collar some useful allies to fight the terrible Narada.

"No, you think you help us against him Narada," he chuckled. "Now you can walk about garden, friends along us. Me keep um guns. Me give um guns back when Narada come. Savvy?"

And the brothers and their Kanakas were set free.

But they found that in fact their rifles and sticks of dynamite had been safely hidden. They were royal guests, quite at liberty to stroll about Buri-Buri's tree-village, but they couldn't leave it.

CHAPTER 3.

The End of Narada!

"WE must find our rifles, and the axes, and dynamite, Dick, old lad," Battler growled. "Then we'll turn the tables on our confounded host pronto. I'll make him my guest, by gum!"

Plainly that was the key of the situation.

But neither the brothers nor their Kanakas could find the stolen weapons, though they searched everywhere. They pretended to dig the garden, and rooted up pumpkins and sweet potatoes until told digging was taboo. They searched the grass and around the ugly totems in vain.

Taboo also was the juju house—the only building in the village not up a tree. It was a thatched, gabled structure erected on stilts, which raised it about ten feet above ground. Approached by a rickety ladder, it was adorned with carved paddles, strangely carved king-posts, strips of matting, dried fish, and stuffed crocodiles.

It was very private, and the brothers were kept at a distance by resolute guards.

Despite their annoyance, Battler and Dick could not help a growing liking for the crinkly haired islanders, who were plainly in high glee at having scored a trick.

At last, however, on the sixth evening in the village, Battler suddenly clenched his big fists. His eyes flashed at a thought.

"I believe the things are up in old Buri-Buri's henroost!" He laughed grimly, smacking his thigh. "We'll raid him after dark."

"That's a notion!" Dick chuckled delightedly.

The brothers waited for darkness, then they stole from the hut built for them on the ground in the middle of the village.

It was a warm, tropical evening, with bright stars spangling the velvet sky. Fireflies jazzed to and fro in the darkness; the only sound was bull-frogs croaking in a swamp.

Barefooted, Battler and Dick stole through the great trees on which the villagers' huts were perched. They knew the village exits were still guarded by watchful sentries. Unobserved in the village, however, they reached the foot of the great tree atop of which the rascally old chief roosted.

Buri-Buri had drawn up his ladder when retiring. But Battler started to climb silently.

He reached the platform of the thatched house in the forked branches, and inched his head above it.

That very instant an alarming din broke out all around.

There sounded the blowing of war-conches, the beating of drums, a wild chorus of savage howls, and the ringing cracks of Snider-rifle shots. From the jungle burst jets of flame, and bullets whistled in all directions.

The village was attacked.

Narada's threatened raid had come at last, without any warning.

And Battler's party had not had their weapons returned! So astonished was Battler at the sudden din—he had forgotten about Narada—that he nearly dropped from his perch.

"Buck up, old scout!" Dick bawled from below. "Have you got the guns? We're coppered without 'em!"

"Where the blazes have you hidden them, you mug, Buri-Buri?" Battler roared.

But a din of shooting and yelling drowned all voices. The devil-devil raiders were plainly rushing the Tahar

Islander guards on the edge of the jungle, and howls and shrieks made the night hideous.

That moment Tokelau Jim and the other Kanakas came running from their huts. Tokelau Jim spotted Dick and Battler aloft. He hated the black islanders, who had so cunningly trapped them, and saw no reason to be spitted in their defence.

"Come on, masters!" he roared. "Now we can run along jungle like blazes! My word, this Buri-Buri crew close-up finish. Then bush-fellahs walk about too much."

Now indeed flight was easy for Battler's party. But all at once Battler and Dick had changed their minds.

They had come to like their monkey-minded hosts, almost to admire the cute frame-up by which they had been trapped. They had come to know some of the Tahar Islanders by their nicknames, and had eaten their food, such as it was.

The idea of leaving their hosts in the lurch to the diabolical raiders was unpleasant to Battler. Still more so was the idea of losing his weapons and all the trade-junk for good.

But there was now no time to discover the weapons. Startled from sleep, old Buri-Buri darted from his hut with his ancient musket, to bang away into the darkness below, and nearly blow Battler's head off.

Just in time Battler saved himself by dropping. He landed thud beside Dick to the sound of a thunderclap from above, just as the invaders burst into the village.

Gigantic ruffians they were, ebony-black, brandishing torches, spears, and clubs studded with sharks' teeth, and their towering head-dresses of feathers made them look enormous. On all sides sounded bloodthirsty roars, and to Dick the night was full of wildly rushing forms.

"Grab clubs—anything, my lads!" Battler roared. "The paddles in that juju house! Maybe we'll find some weapons. If only that chump Buri-Buri hadn't hidden our—"

He rushed for the gabled juju house, followed by Dick and the Kanakas. There were now no guards to stop them, for Buri-Buri's crowd had been taken by surprise, and were running.

Up the rickety ladder scrambled Battler's party, to dive into the dark interior.

That moment the giant invaders came roaring into the village, led by Narada himself—a huge, black demon, wearing little but turtle-shell bangles and feathers. Narada in his feathers looked a foot taller even than Battler. At once he led his head-hunting crew to attack the foundations of the village.

In a moment flames were roaring in the grass and licking up the totems and trees. To save themselves from being burnt alive the surprised Tahar Islanders came scrambling down, to dash wildly for the jungle.

But Narada's gang had got them on the hop, and clubbed and speared the rascally islanders as they landed. Amidst frightful din the raiders ran amok through the village, destroying the gardens and setting fire to everything in sight.

Out of the thatched juju house Battler's party came jumping, to see a scene like an inferno. They brandished clubs and spears, which they had managed to grab up inside that dark structure even as its thatched walls caught fire.

All round they saw trees crashing down, saw the occupants of the falling houses shot through the air, to be pounced on by the giant invaders as they landed.

Everywhere desperate fights were raging, to the sound of drumming, crash of flames and rifle-shots. And suddenly there was a terrific bang.

Even as Tokelau Jim leapt down the ladder from the juju house, that flimsy structure exploded behind him.

With a deafening roar the walls blew out and the roof shot skywards. A red sheet of flame gushed upwards, then it rained fragments of paddles, coconut matting, portions of fish, and stuffed crocodiles.

All the weird things stored in the juju house to scare off ghosts and demons suddenly took flight and vanished.

"Great humming-birds! What's happened?" Dick shouted above the racket.

But they had no time to wonder, for the gigantic invaders had plainly got the upper hand.

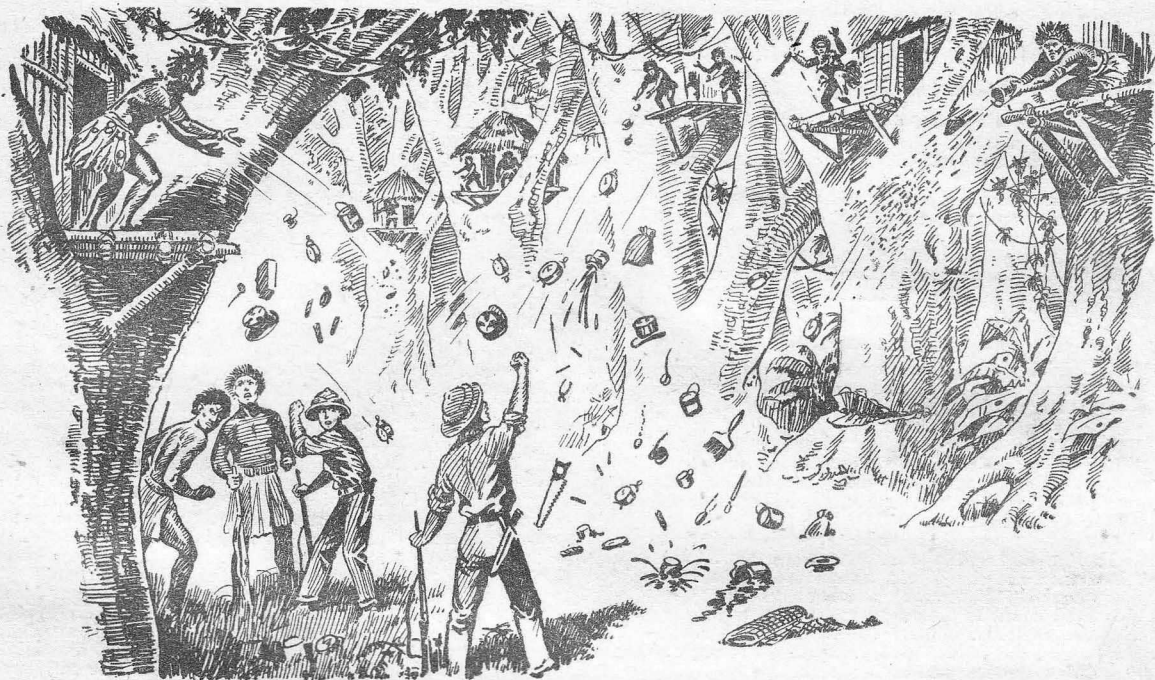
Battler and Dick rushed with their Kanakas into the fray, hewing and smiting, and yelling encouragement to the islanders of the coast. But Narada's gang were making hay of the coast islanders, and hunting them all over the place.

"Catch um head!" roared the giant Narada, prancing like a demon. "Knock seven bells outa these salt-water fellas! Bang um too much!"

"No, you don't, you blighters!" Battler thundered.

A moment later, as he rushed forward ahead of his party, smiting out with his club, Battler saw a familiar figure scudding away through the gloom.

It was old Buri-Buri, glancing over his shoulder, his blue-



"Woi!" Buri-Buri roared in panic, and yelled to his subjects to return the plunder. Yelps sounded from above, then the plunder came hurtling down amongst the brothers and their Kanakas. For some minutes it rained alarm-clocks, top-hats, nails, screws, and sticks of tobacco!

and-red features set in a mask of fright, still trailing his old musket. The wizened old rascal was legging it for the jungle like a hunted cat.

But he was short and bow-legged. And Narada spotted his departure, and bounded whooping after him.

"No you don't, my lad!" Battler gritted. "I want Buri-Buri alive. He owes me a lot for damages!"

That instant Battler spotted a better club lying on the ground. It was one of those which had been fixed up with nails on its nob—a very nasty weapon. Battler snatched it up with a joyous grin, and dashed after Narada.

He came up behind the gigantic savage just as the latter felled old Buri-Buri and made to whip his block off with a curved cane knife. Battler uttered a shout, and round whirled Narada, resplendent in great feathers and turtle-shell, with a shout of surprise.

Astonished was Narada to see a white fellow. He was still more astonished to find himself challenged, for everyone in his experience had kept clear of him. But directly he saw Battler had only a club he bounded into the air with a roar of savage glee, then charged.

Battler leapt to meet him. His blood was up. Sight of the falling huts and massacre of the dazed inhabitants had roused him to almost a frenzy.

Almost without knowing it he uttered a ringing war-shout.

Sizz! Narada's cane knife whistled past his ear as he ducked.

A moment later their clubs crashed together. Then, while the village burnt and all around was a din of fighting, they stood up to each other like lions. They hewed and swiped at each other, as though both were savages.

Battler dodged and ducked like lightning. Amazingly swift on his feet he was for so big a man. But Narada was used to fighting with a club, and he bore in at Battler with flailing blows, whooping.

Any of those blows would have crushed Battler's head like an eggshell. But he dodged most, caught others with his own club, which he whirled round his head, forming a guard nothing could pass. And thrice he brought his bristling weapon down on Narada's body, causing the giant savage to bellow in pain and astonishment.

This was something Narada had not expected. But suddenly, with a lightning swipe, he dashed Battler's club from his hand. Then he sprang in with a shout of triumph.

Running up, Dick uttered a yell of dismay. His huge-framed brother seemed done for at last.

But Battler dodged Narada's terrific swipe, then leapt in and clinched. Locked together the huge black and the huge white rocked to and fro. Battler gasped, heaved, and his iron muscles bulged like bands on arms and shoulders.

It seemed they were evenly matched. Battler pounded

Narada with his granite fists; Narada retaliated by sinking his teeth into Battler's neck.

They broke apart, grimed and bleeding, caught up their clubs again, leapt at each other like tigers. But suddenly Battler feinted with his nail-studded club at Narada's stomach—a trick that baffled the savage. Then up came Battler's club again, quick as lightning, and down on the feathered head of the giant savage it crashed with stunning force.

Narada went down like a log, his great head-dress slashed to ribbons.

Over and over he rolled, then lay motionless.

A whoop of amazement burst from Dick, as Battler stood gasping. It would have seemed impossible for even Battler to defeat the terrible Narada with only a club. But the thing had been done. And that moment shouts of amazement and dismay sounded from Narada's followers, who saw their chief's fall.

"Woi! Narada done finish!" yelled Buri-Buri's crowd, in delighted wonder.

The raiders began to run, thinking the fall of their invincible chief spelt disaster. And Buri-Buri's crowd at once found new courage and turned on them. They hunted the giant raiders away into the jungle, giving them beans. Old Buri-Buri came round, and rose in time to see the rout, to see the brothers and their Kanakas in hot pursuit of his old enemies.

Later Battler demanded that all the trade-goods that could be found should be carried to his schooner, and that fifty of the islanders were to come as recruits for the planter in the Gilbert Islands.

Spellbound with admiration, every islander volunteered, but Battler only took fifty. No trade goods could now be found, however, but old Buri-Buri made good their loss by presenting Battler with a dozen first-rate pearls.

"My hat, I forgot the rifles and axes and things!" Battler shouted, when the excitement was over and his party were once more back aboard the Radio Ray. "You old rotter, Buri-Buri, where did you hide 'em?"

"All gone bang!" Buri-Buri grinned uncomfortably. "Along juju house, gun he stop, bang-bang, stick he stop!"

"In the juju house all the time!" Battler roared, laughing. "Six sticks of dynamite! So that's what went up. I wondered at the time. And we nearly went up, too, confound you! If you hadn't hid our guns your village wouldn't have been burnt!"

"Easy build more huts!" grinned the toothless old rascal. "Got um Narada head—Narada club!"

(Battler Bart goes on an ape-catching expedition in next week's thrilling South Sea yarn, so look out for thrills!)

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TOM MERRY & CO. IN LIVERPOOL!

(Continued from page 23.)

Tom Merry started. "They're coming from behind, too," he muttered. "Look out!" But the next moment came a whispering voice from above. "Are yer there, young gents?" Tom Merry uttered a cry. It was the voice of 'Erbert! "Bai Jove!" murmured D'Arcy. "It's young Wags!"

CHAPTER 15.

'Erbert is Adopted!

ERBERT leaned down breathlessly over the wall. He heard the voices, and knew that the juniors were there now.

Tom Merry looked up. "We're here, kid," he said. "Can you help us?" "Rather!" said 'Erbert. "I'm glad I've found yer, young gents. I've crep' over the wall from the old warehouse. There's a door be'ind yer, and I'll 'ave it open in a jiffy."

"That will save us." There was a sound of 'Erbert scraping down the wall. Then a fumbling at the other side of the door. The juniors listened with beating hearts, almost too excited to breathe. At any moment might come a combined rush of the roughs, which they could not hope to resist. Then they would be overcome, beaten, trampled on—murdered, perhaps. They knew it, and the sudden and unexpected coming of 'Erbert meant life instead of death.

They had come to Green Alley to save 'Erbert, and he was saving them instead. It was a curious freak of fortune.

The fumbling ceased, and the door swung open. In the dimness of the opening the roused head and absurd coat of the ragamuffin could be seen. He whispered hoarsely and excitedly to the juniors.

"Kim on, afore they git yer!" The 'chums' needed no bidding. Tom Merry pushed Blake and D'Arcy through the opening, and followed himself. 'Erbert closed the door and shot the rusty, shrieking bolts.

"Safe now, young gents," he said, with a chuckle. "You're all right! But what on earth did yer kim to Green Alley for?"

"We came to find you," said Tom Merry. The ragamuffin stared.

"Me! Yer kiddin'."

"My friend Mewwy speaks the pweicse twuth, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus. "Havin' discovahed that Chokah Bill was not in 'pwisson,' as we had supposed, we natuwallly considahed that you were in pweil from the wuffian, and we came to take you away to where you would be safe."

"And ran into danger ourselves, from which you have saved us," said Blake, shaking hands with the ragamuffin.

"Strike me plink!" said 'Erbert, with a chuckle. "Fancy you swells comin' to Green Alley! The wonder is you wasn't

murdered. I tell yer, the perlice don't like comin' to the alley, they don't. I wasn't in no danger, neither. I knoo Choker Bill wasn't nabbed arter all. My pals warned me 'e was lookin' fer me, and when I kim 'ome to-night I didn't go into Frau Hemling's, where 'e was—not arf. I jest lay up in a doorway in the court, and that's where I was when I 'eard the awful row them blokes made, and I crawled out to see what was up. 'Corse, soon as I 'eard wot they were sayin' I knoo you was 'ere in a fix. Choker Bill was a-cussin' you, and swearin' he'd mark you for havin' 'anded 'im over to the perlice, though 'e got away. Then I knoo it must be you young gents 'ere, and you might knock me over with a toothpick, you might. Then I crawled over the walls to git to you, knowin' 'ow you was fixed in Slider Smith's passage."

"And you saved our lives," said Tom Merry soberly.

'Erbert chuckled.

"Well, that gang wouldn't 'ave left much of yer," he remarked. "You're well outer that. Fancy you comin' there to save me!" He chuckled again, and indeed, the juniors could not help admitting that his mirth was natural.

"Skuse me, young gents. It was orful good of yer; I knoo you're real gents."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Look here, Herbert, you're not going back to Green Alley—"

"Not arf," chuckled 'Erbert. "No fear! I ain't got no friends there, anyway, and it's a safe place for me to keep out of, as soon as I've got my things from Frau Hemling's. I can't afford to lose them things, and I shall get a chance to dodge in and get 'em when Choker Bill ain't round."

"You're not going back there at all," said Tom Merry. "Look here, kid, wouldn't you like to cut that life—get out of it altogether, and have decent clothes to wear, and enough grub to eat, and a roof over your head, and friends who will stand by you—chaps like ourselves, for instance?"

"But—but—but," stammered 'Erbert, "I'm a ragged street kid. You young gents can't do nothin' for me!"

"We can—and will—if you'll let us."

"You—you—you're not kiddin'?" said 'Erbert tremulously.

"You can rely on us, kid," said Tom Merry. "My old governess would take you in like a shot, if I asked her."

"And I am assuahed that my governah would pvide for the youngstah with pleasuah."

"He's going to be provided for," said Blake determinedly.

"If I have to take him into Study No. 6 at St. Jim's."

"If you mean it," said 'Erbert hoarsely. "I'll come—I'll come. Oh—" He broke off. The careless, happy-go-lucky manners of the street arab were gone, and the boy burst into a passion of tears.

That did not last long. With the tears wet on his lashes, and making pale streaks down his grimy face, 'Erbert looked at the juniors.

"Gawd bless yer!" he whispered. "You don't know what this means to me! But Gawd bless yer!"

THE END.

(*'Erbert Rags is smuggled into St. Jim's in next week's amazing yarn of Tom Merry and Co. entitled: "SMUGGLED TO SCHOOL!" Don't miss this fine yarn. It's a wow!*)

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