

"CHUMS ON THE ROAD!" THIS WEEK'S RIPPING YARN OF ST. JIM'S !

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

The GEM

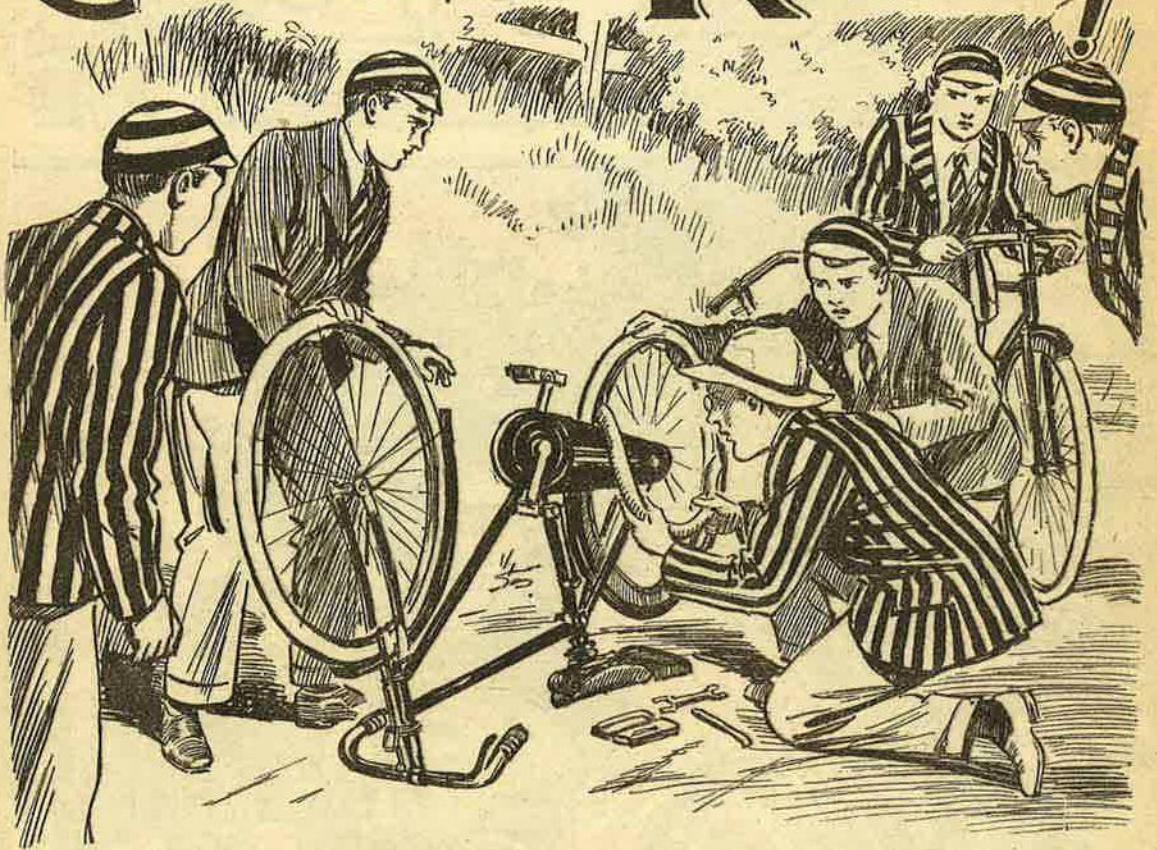
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**FATTY
TAKES IT EASY!**

START NOW ON THIS SPLENDID OPEN-AIR YARN OF TOM MERRY--

CHUMS ON THE ROAD!



It's a long way from St. Jim's to Coventry by push bike, but Tom Merry & Co. don't care about that! They wouldn't mind cycling twice the distance to uphold the honour of the Lower School at St. Jim's!

CHAPTER 1.

D'Arcy's Brother Is Sent to Coventry!

GUSSY! Where's Gussy?" Tom Merry, of the Shell Form at St. Jim's, put his head in at the door of Study No. 6 in the Fourth Form passage. There was a letter in Tom Merry's hand, and a smile of anticipation upon his face.

There were four fellows in the study, and three of them looked round as Tom Merry spoke. The three were Blake, Herries, and Digby. The fourth, who did not look round, was trying on a new necktie before the study glass, and this was far too important a business for Arthur Augustus D'Arcy to allow it to be interrupted.

"Gussy! Gussy!"

"Bai Jove, I weally think this will do, deah boys!" said D'Arcy, in a tone of satisfaction. "It's awfully important to get a necktie that weally suits you—quite as important as the cut of a fellow's waistcoat."

"I say, Gussy—"

"You see, the pwedominant colour in a necktie ought to repeat the colour in a fellow's eyes," said D'Arcy. "If a necktie matches the colour of the eyes, it is genewally all right. It's a most important point."

"I say, Gussy! Gussy! Gus!"

"Upon the whole, I think this necktie will do," said

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D'Arcy, addressing his grinning chums, and apparently quite unconscious of the presence of Tom Merry in the doorway. "What do you think, Blake?"

"I think you're an ass, old chap!" said Blake affably.

"Weally, Blake—"

"No extra charge for candour. Can't you bear Tom Merry bawling at you like a bargee?"

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy, glancing round to the door at last. "I'm sowwy, Tom Mewwy, but you have caught me in a wathah inopportune moment. I have had these neckties sent down from Bond Street to-day, and I have to weturn those that do not suit. It is wathah bad form to keep a twadesman waitin' for the weturn of goods sent on approval, and so I weally cannot be intewwupted just now."

"You unutterable ass—"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"The next time there's a letter for you, you won't catch me bringing it upstairs in a hurry," said Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove! Is that a lettah for me?"

"Yes, ass!"

"I am extwemely obliged to you, deah boy, and undah the cires I will ovahlook that wathah oppwobwious expwession. Pway hand me the lettah!"

Tom Merry handed over the letter, and D'Arcy slung the necktie over his arm as he took it. He jammed his eyeglasses into his eye and glanced at his chums.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"Will you excuse me, deah boys, while I wead this lettah?"

"Certainly, old man!" said Blake. "Don't mind us. It's as good as play to watch you, any day!"

D'Arcy looked at him fixedly.

"Upon my word, Blake—"

"I'm waiting," remarked Tom Merry.

"You needn't wait, deah boy."

"That's all you know," said Tom Merry cheerfully. "I didn't bring that letter upstairs on purely philanthropic principles. There's a famine in cash in my study, and I was going to offer to change the fiver for you—that is, of course, if your noble governor has turned up trumps this time."

And Tom Merry sat down on a corner of the study table to wait. He sat down rather heavily, which was rather unfortunate, for Digby and Herries were writing out German impots, and the bump on the table scattered ink from their pens over the sheets, as well as zigzagging lines on the paper. There was a howl at once.

"You utter ass!" howled Digby. "Do you think I can show this to Schneider now?"

"Oh, that's all right!"

"All right? Look at it!"

"Well, that last scratch looks a little spider-leggy," admitted Tom Merry. "But it only looks a little more German than the rest, you know."

"Bai Jove!"

"Hallo! Is it a fiver?"

"Certainly not!"

"A tenner, then?"

"Wats! This lettah is not fwom my governah; it's fwom my bwothah," said D'Arcy, as he slit the envelope with a paper-knife. "I haven't looked into it yet. Pewwaps there may be a postal ordah in it, and if so I shall be vewy happy to make you a loan, Tom Mewwy."

"Your brother," said Digby. "You don't mean young Wally of the Third?"

"Wally would be hardly likely to wite to me fwom the Third Form Woom, Dig. This lettah is fwom my eldah bwothah."

"I didn't know you had such an article," said Dig. "What use do you put it to?"

"Pway don't be an ass, Dig! I am quite certain that I have mentioned Lord Conway to you. I was thinkin' of goin' on a huntin' twip to Canadah with him, if I could get permish from the Head, and takin' you fellows."

Blake threw his arm round D'Arcy's neck.

"I always loved you, Gus!" he sobbed.

"You uttah ass—"

"My heart yearned for you the moment you came to the school."

"You feahful duffah—"

"And now you're my bonnie boy, and I can't let you out of my sight," said Blake tenderly. "When is the trip to Canadah coming off?"

"It is not comin' off at all."

Blake released his chum.

"Well, you—you welsler! Do you mean to say that you've cajoled me into that touching display of affection for nothing?" he demanded.

"I wegard you as an uttah ass, and if you wumple my jacket again I shall have no wecourse but to give you a feahful thwashin'! You have cwumpled this new necktie, too. The twip to Canadah has been put off, owin' to Lord Conway takin' up a Tewwitowial Army commission. He is an officah in the local wewgiment, and is givin' lots of time to it, partly because it's the duty of a D'Arcy to stand up for his country in the time of dangah, and partly, as Voltaire says: 'Pour encourager les autres.'"

"Pour encourager les autres," said Blake dizzily.

"Fancy Gussy quoting Voltaire at a chap in a friendly talk. Why can't you say 'To encourage the others' in English?"

"Because I pwefer to wender a quotation in the owiginal," said D'Arcy, with dignity. "But if you will wing off for a minute or two, I will look at Conway's lettah."

"Go ahead!" said Tom Merry. "If there's a postal order put my name down for it."

D'Arcy took out the letter and unfolded it and glanced over it. An expression of surprise crossed his face, and he uttered an exclamation.

"Bai Jove!"

"Nothing wrong, I hope?" said Blake.

"Bai Jove! He's been sent to Coventry!"

"Eh? Who has?"

"My bwothah Conway."

The juniors looked serious. They did not know much about military matters, but for an officer to be "sent to Coventry," they knew was a serious matter. Although the chums were fond enough of "rotting" their aristocratic chum when all was serene, in a time of trouble they would never have dreamed of it.

"I say, that's rotten!" said Tom Merry. "What's the row? Has he fallen out with the other officers in his battalion?"

"Not that I'm aware of, deah boy."

"Is it in connection with the Territorials?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"What has he been doing, then?"

"Nothin' that I know of."

"Then why have they sent him to Coventry?"

"To select cycles for a newly formed Cyclist Scout Corps."

"Eh?"

D'Arcy looked round in surprise.

"To select cycles for the Cyclist Scout Corps," he said. "Nothin' surpwisin' in that, surely. My bwothah is a wippin' amatawh cyclist, and what he doesn't know about machines isn't weally worth knowin', you know. It is perfectly natuwal that he should be sent to Coventry to select the machines."

"You ass!" roared Tom Merry. "I thought—"

"I wefuse to be called an ass!"

"I thought you meant that he had been sent to Coventry."

"So I did—so he has!"

"Ass!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"You shrieking duffer!" said Blake, in disgust. "I thought you meant he was sent to Coventry—cut, you ass! Not spoken to."

"My bwothah Conway would hardly be likely to be sent to Coventry in that sense," said D'Arcy, with dignity. "I wegard that as a widiculous misappwehension."

"So Conway has gone to Coventry to select bicycles for the Cyclist Scout Corps," said Tom Merry. "Well, I don't see what you wanted to be surprised about it for, if he's only been sent to Coventry in that sense."

"Yaas, but he wants me to go."

"Oh! And us, I suppose," said Blake.

"Well, he says, if the Head will permit it, he would like me to go there while he is there, as it would be a pleasant little wun for me, and it's a fine place to see," said D'Arcy.

"But the chief weason is that my Cousin Ethel is goin'. She is goin' to have her governess to look aftah her, certainly, but the company of an ancient and respectable govahness is not exhilawatin', howwah useful; and as my bwothah Conway will be pwetty busy the whole time, he thinks it would be bettah if I were there. He says that if I can bwing a few fwends, the more the mewwier."

"Gussy, your brother Conway is a brick."

"Yaas, I have always wegardad him as wathah a bwick, deah boys. I have always tweated him with the respect due to an eldah bwothah, although my youngah bwothah Wally nevah weally tweats me like that. Of course, it all depends on getting the Head's permish whethah we can go or not. I have no doubt he will allow me to go, as it is necessary for me to escort Cousin Ethel; but about you fellows—"

"We shall have to think about it, and find a way," said Blake. "When are you to go?"

"To-morrow. Conway has enclosed a fivah for expenses."

"How many farcs can you pay out of a fiver?" said Tom Merry. "That's really the question to be settled."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"There's us three," said Blake meditatively. "Lemme see, shall I take any of those Shellfish, or shan't I?"

"Weally, Blake—"

"That's all right," said Tom Merry. "Manners and Lowther and I are coming. We should be nervous about you if you went alone."

Jack Blake snorted.

"Only will the Head give permission?" said Digby. "That's the point to be settled before we make up the party."

"Yaas, wathah!"

And upon that point the juniors set their wits to work in earnest.

CHAPTER 2.

D'Arcy Gets in the Way!

"GET out of the way, there!"

It was a shout on the cycle track at St. Jim's, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who was strolling across the track in a leisurely manner, turned his head calmly and looked at the shouter.

A racing-tandem machine was bearing down upon him, with a long-legged junior working away in front, and a shorter, but equally sturdy, fellow behind. They were Figgins and Kerr of the New House, and they seemed to be going round the track for a wager, to judge by the pace they were putting on.

"Ting-ting-ting!"

"Get off, there!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stood in the middle of the track and adjusted his eyeglass.

"I uttaly wefuse to get out of the way," he said. "I wegard you—"

The tandem swerved and escaped a collision by a couple of inches, and Figgins shook a fist wildly at the swell of St. Jim's as he passed.

"You utter ass!" he roared.

"You shrieking duffer!" yelled Kerr.

"Weally, you wottahs—"

But the tandem was gone.

D'Arcy gazed after it through his monocle, with indignation in his face.

"Bai Jove! That sort of thing throws me into quite a fluttah!" he murmured. "I shall certainly thwash Figgins and Kerr when I meet them again!"

"Hi, hi, hi!"

The swell of St. Jim's looked round.

Harry Noble and Clifton Dane, on another tandem, were racing up, evidently in pursuit of Figgins and Kerr—or else Figgins and Kerr were in pursuit of them, and well behind. Noble, the Australian—more commonly known as "Kangaroo"—was working away like a steam-engine, well backed up by Clifton Dane.

"Hi, hi, hi!" roared Kangaroo.

"Clear the track!" yelled Clifton Dane.

"Bai Jove! I weally—"

Whiz! went the tandem, past the swell of St. Jim's, and as it passed, Kangaroo's hand shot out, and D'Arcy's silk hat was knocked off backwards.

"You uttah wottah!" exclaimed D'Arcy, clutching at his hat. "Bai Jove! I'll give you a feahful thwashin'!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The laugh floated back as the cyclists swept on. D'Arcy picked up his hat—it was ruffled and dusty. He proceeded to polish it with a silk handkerchief, and as he did so Figgins and Kerr came whirling round again.

"Buzz off there, ass!" shouted Figgins.

"I wefuse to— Ow!"

A push on the chest as the tandem went by made D'Arcy sit down. He jumped up like a jack-in-the-box, and tore frantically after the tandem, bent on vengeance. He might as well have chased an express train. A roar of laughter drew his attention to the fact that several juniors had gathered to watch him, and he ceased running, very red and breathless, and came off the track.

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther, the chums of the Shell, greeted him with a roar of laughter.

"I see no weason for this wibald mewwiment," said D'Arcy. "I have been tweated with gwoss diswespect!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go it, Kangaroo!" shouted Tom Merry, as the Cornstalk's tandem came round again. "Go it! You're winning!"

The Australian grinned as he shot by.

D'Arcy dusted his hat and jammed it on his head.

"I am goin' to give those wottahs a feahful thwashin' shortly!" he remarked.

"My dear ass—"

"I wefuse to be called an ass."

"But it's a race," explained Tom Merry. "You've nearly interfered with the race. Do you call yourself a sportsman?"

"Bai Jove, you know, I didn't know it was a wace!" said D'Arcy, his expression changing at once. "I wegarded it as cheek on the part of those New House boundahs to tell me to get out of the way!"

"You might have mucked up a sporting event," said Tom Merry solemnly. "We should have had to post you up in the junior clubs as no sportsman."

"Pway don't wot, deah boy! I shall expwess my wegwet to the fellows when the wace is ovah." D'Arcy clapped his hands as the cycles swept round. "Bwavo! Bwavo! Who is ahead, Tom Merry?"

"Ha, ha, ha! Noble's ahead, of course; he ought to be, as it's Shell fellows against the Fourth."

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"Bai Jove! I don't know!" said D'Arcy, jealous for the honour of his Form. "I think Figgins and Kerr have a chance, though they are New House wottahs. How many laps?"

"Six—and Noble's done half the distance."

"Go it, Figgins! Buck up, Fourth Form!" roared Jack Blake, arriving on the scene. "Don't let the measly Shellfish beat you! Put it on!"

"Go it, Kangaroo!" roared the chums of the Shell in unison. "Lick those Fourth Form kids hollow! Go it!"

"Fifth lap!" said Tom Merry. "Cornstalk's got a good fifty yards in hand. The kids won't be able to crawl over that."

"Rats to you!" said Fatty Wynn, the Welsh partner in the famous firm of Figgins & Co., coming up at a run, with a basket in his hand. "I didn't know that they had started. I got delayed in the tuckshop—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I jst stayed to have a little bite," said Fatty Wynn, rather aggressively. "I get so jolly hungry this April weather. Go it, Figgy," he went on, as the cyclists swept by. "I've got a jolly nice snack here for you when you've finished—cold sausage and ham."

But Figgins did not hear nor heed. He was putting all his beef into it now. So was Kerr, whose muscular, wiry legs were working away like piston-rods. With their teeth set and their faces hard, they dashed by at top speed.

"They're gaining!" said Fatty Wynn, absently plunging his hand into the little basket, and taking out one of the sausage-and-ham sandwiches he had brought for the gallant riders. "They'll beat the Shellfish!"

"Rats!" said the Terrible Three together.

"Buck up, Figgins! Put your beef into it!"

"Yaas, wathah! Go it, deah boy!"

Noble and Clifton Dane swept round on the last lap. Figgins and Kerr worked away like demons to gain ground, and they gained, hand over hand. But the advantage on the side of the Cornstalk was too great. They shot past the post while the New House chums laboured twenty yards in the rear. There was a ringing cheer from Tom Merry & Co.

Fatty Wynn, who had been absently eating sandwiches all the time, grunted. Figgins and Kerr slackened down and jumped off, and rushed towards the group of juniors. They shook a pair of big fists in the face of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"You ass!" roared Figgins.

"You dummy!" yelled Kerr.

"Weally, deah boys—"

"You lost us nearly a second by sticking on the track like a howling idiot!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry. "A second wouldn't have made much difference. You're licked to the wide, my sons!"

"Bosh!"

"I am extremely sowwy if I got in the way, deah boys," said D'Arcy, with dignity. "I was not aware that it was a wace. Had I been aware that it was a wace, I should have been extremely careful to keep off the track."

"You howling duffer!"

"I wefuse to be addressed as a howlin' duffah. I have expwessed my wegwet, as one gentleman to another, and I think that ought to be satisfactory."

"It's all right, kids," said Noble, coming up with a face like a poppy from his exertions. "You did jolly well, Figgins, and it was a close thing. Don't stand about here catching cold."

"I've got a snack here, Figgy," said Fatty Wynn consolingly. "I've got a—a—a—" He broke off, and looked into the basket, and at half a sandwich in his fingers. The basket was empty, and that half-sandwich was all that remained. In the excitement of the moment Fatty Wynn had unconsciously eaten the whole lot. "I—I—I—hem! Come in and have tea, old chap."

Figgins grunted, and turned away.

D'Arcy made a step after him and tapped him on the shoulder.

"Weally, Figgins, deah boy, I am awfully sowwy—"

Figgins grinned.

"Oh, it's all right, Gus! I suppose you can't help being an ass."

"Oh, weally—"

And Figgins, followed by Kerr, wheeled his machine away.

Arthur Augustus looked rather severely at his grinning chums.

"I fail to see any weason for this diswespectful gwinnin'," he remarked. "It was weally a most unfortunate occawwence. I owe Figgins some slight wepawation, and I shall try to awwange it for him to come to Coventwy with me."

"Hallo, what's that?" asked Noble. "You're going to Coventry?"

"Yaas, wathah! My bwothah Conway has been sent to

Coventry to select machines for the Cyclist Scout Corps, and I am goin' to pay him a visit there. deah boy!"

"Good! I'll come with you!"

"Weally, Kangaroo—"

"That's all right," said Kangaroo blandly. "Don't trouble to thank me. I shall be glad to come."

"I was not goin' to—"

"The place is worth seeing, too; one of the oldest cities in England, and the seat of the cycle and motor industries," said Kangaroo. "As a stranger in the land, I want to see as much as possible of your manners and customs in the country. Let me see—it was at Coventry that Lady Godiva godived, wasn't it?"

"Yaas, but—"

"And Peeping Tom, too. I know the yarn. I should like to see the place, first-rate."

"Yaas, but—"

the lengthening of the days locking-up was growing later at St. Jim's, and there was ample time for a good long spin after school.

But it was evident to both of them that there was something working in the mind of the Australian junior. He was gnawing his upper lip, a sure sign with him that he was thinking deeply.

"Well, what is it?" asked Bernard Glyn at last.

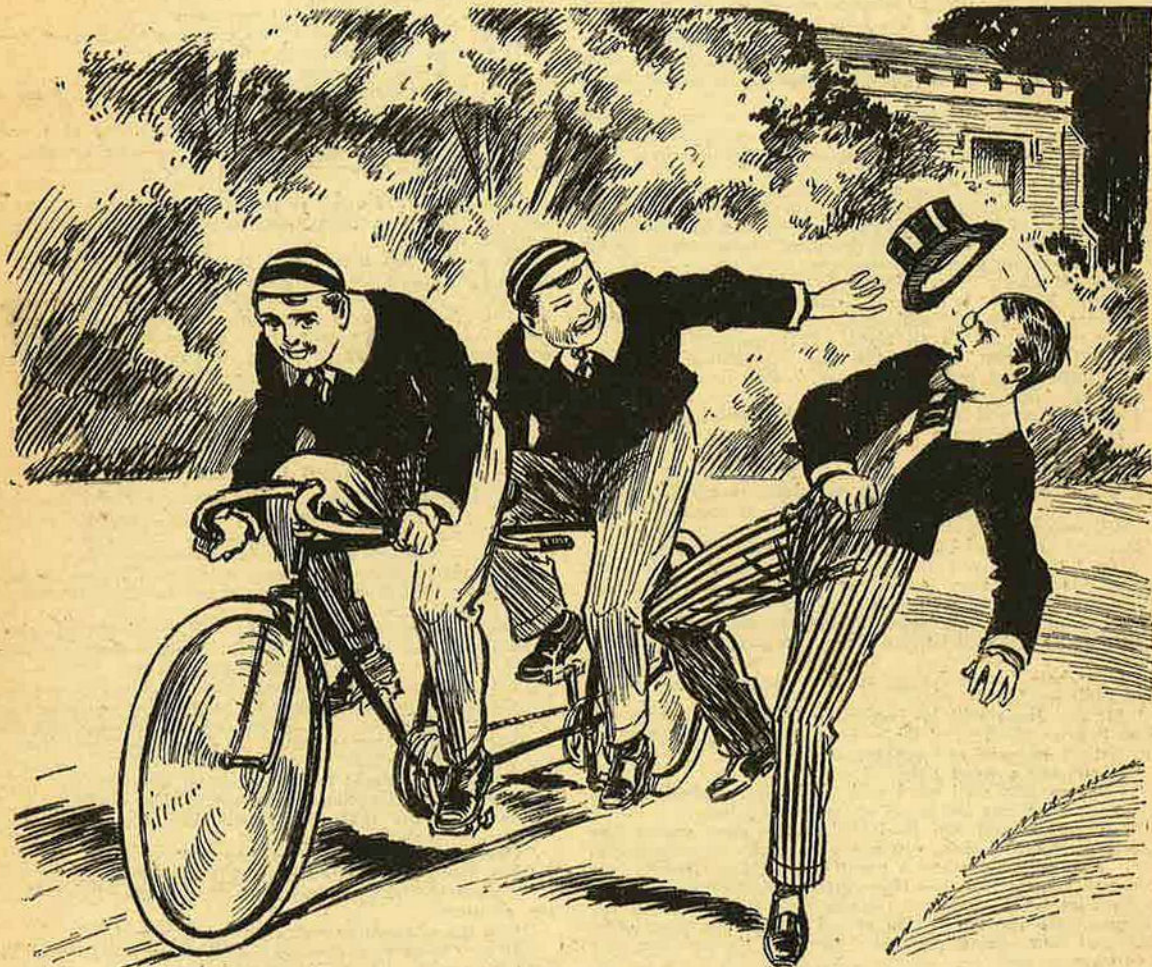
"Eh?" said Kargaroo, with a start. "What's that?"

"You've been making a face like a gargoyle for three minutes fifteen seconds," said Glyn, looking at his watch. "Is it a new kind of facial gymnastics, or have you been thinking?"

"Thinking!" said the Cornstalk. "It's about Gussy. His elder brother has been sent to Coventry."

"Phew! What's he been doing?"

"To select machines for some Territorial Corps or other."



"Bai Jove! I weally——" Whiz! The tandem flew by the swell of St. Jim's, and as it passed Kangaroo's hand shot out and D'Arcy's silk hat was knocked off his head. "You uttah wottaha!" shrieked D'Arcy.

"Good! It's settled!"

And Kangaroo walked away with his machine, apparently not hearing D'Arcy's attempted protests.

D'Arcy looked after him through his monocle.

"Bai Jove! Is it settled?" he said. "I wogard that chap as a boundah! There is nothin' whatever to laugh at, Tom Mewwy!"

CHAPTER 3.

Harry Noble, Hero!

HARRY NOBLE leaned back against the old grey stone of the gateway at St. Jim's, with his hands thrust deep into his trousers pockets, and a thoughtful frown on his face.

His chums, Bernard Glyn and Clifton Dane, looked at him curiously, and waited for him to speak. Dane had been about to propose a cycle run round the woods; for, with

"Oh!"

"And Gussy's going to run down to see him."

"Lucky young beggar!" said Glyn.

"I'm going with him."

"Oh! He's asked you?"

"No; I asked myself—same thing, you know. I'm going with him. I can settle it with Gussy when I get time; but there's the Head. I can't bolt, as young Wally did once, from what I hear; it's not the game. But I must go. The question is, how to get the Head's permission for a run to the Midlands?"

Clifton Dane shook his head.

"Not easy," he said. "It will mean a couple of days, I suppose, and cutting classes. It would be jolly to go, but—Hallo! What's that?"

Clatter, clatter, clatter!

The boys looked along the road that ran past the school gates. A trap was dashing towards them at full speed, with

a girl sitting alone in it, and holding the reins. Bernard Glyn uttered an exclamation.

"That's the governor's trap, and, by George, that's my sister Edith! What on earth is she driving at that rate for?"

Kangaroo's sunburnt cheek paled a little.

"My hat, the horse is running away!"

"Phew!"

Clatter, clatter, clatter!

There was no doubt about it. The animal had the bit between its teeth, and was dashing along at a terrific pace, while the girl, with a face like chalk, was striving in vain to control it.

Glyn went deadly white.

"Good heavens, my sister——"

Kangaroo sprang out into the road.

"Get back!" shrieked Glyn. "You'll be killed! Oh!"

There was no time for more; the maddened horse was dashing past. Swift and straight as an arrow, Kangaroo sprang at its head, and his grip fastened upon the bridle like a vice. Down came the tossing head—down, down—with the weight of the sturdy Cornstalk upon it; but still the horse dashed on, dragging the boy in its career along the hard road.

It was a terrible strain upon the boy, but he clung on like grim death. And the pace slackened, the wild clatter died away, and the animal, trembling in every limb, drew to a halt at last.

Glyn and Clifton Dane were dashing after the trap, but they were far behind. Kangaroo, covered with dust, and with a streak of blood on his forehead—from a blow received but unfelt in the wild excitement—stood at the horse's head, still with an iron grip upon the rein.

"It's all right, Miss Glyn!" he said. He would have raised his hat, but it lay in the dust far back on the road. His voice was shaking with excitement, though he tried to render it calm. "It's all right. He's quiet."

"Oh, thank you!" said the girl, in shivering tones. "You have saved my life, I think." She descended from the trap. "But you are hurt."

Kangaroo passed his hand across his forehead.

"It's nothing—only a scratch."

"Let me look at it."

She wiped the dust from the cut. Fortunately it was, as Kangaroo had said, merely a scratch. But Edith Glyn bound it up with his own handkerchief as carefully as if it had been a dangerous wound.

Bernard Glyn and Clifton Dane came up breathless.

"Oh, I thought you were a goner, sis!" said Glyn gaspingly, his face very white, in spite of his exertions. "Kangaroo, old son, you're a giddy hero!"

"Oh, shut up," said Noble; "don't be an ass!"

"So you are," said Clifton Dane; "a giddy hero, and no mistake."

"Look here," said Kangaroo ferociously, "if you begin that piffle——"

"All St. Jim's will be beginning it soon, when we tell them," grinned Glyn. "Do you think you're going to save my sister's life and say nothing about it?"

"If you say a word I'll——"

"You can jolly well bet I will. I'll tell everybody in the school, from Binks the boots up to Mr. Railton."

"No need to tell Mr. Railton," said a deep voice; "he knows already. Noble, you are a hero, if ever there was one. You must have had a great fright, Miss Glyn."

It was Mr. Railton, the Housemaster of the School House at St. Jim's. He had just stepped over the stile from the footpath into the road. He raised his hat to Miss Glyn, who had now almost recovered herself. Edith Glyn was a courageous girl, but for the moment her perilous adventure had blanched her cheeks.

"Yes," she said, in a low voice. "I was very frightened. A motor-car startled my horse, and he bolted suddenly before I was aware, and—and I think I should have been killed but for this brave lad."

"I saw it all. I think it very likely. Will you allow me to drive you home, Miss Glyn? You are not in a state to drive now."

"Thank you very much!" The girl gave Kangaroo her hand. "I shall not forget this," she said. "You might have been killed—trampled on. The wonder is that you were not. I shall never forget this."

"Nor I, Noble," said Mr. Railton.

He assisted the girl into the trap, and drove away, leaving the three juniors standing in the road. Harry Noble looked very red and uncomfortable. He jammed his hands into his pockets and almost glared at his chums.

"Now, look here," he said seriously, "since we were shoved together in the end study they call us the New Firm, and we've pulled together pretty well so far. But I warn you that there will be trouble in the end study if a word more is said about this rot."

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"If you call it rot saving my sister's life——"

"I don't mean that, but there's not going to be any jaw on the subject. I only did what either of you fellows would have done if you'd been quick enough——"

"But we weren't. You're a giddy——"

"Hero!" said Clifton Dane.

Kangaroo took his hands out of his pockets. He closed one fist, and held it up for inspection.

"See those knuckles?" he said. "You've seen me give the Cornstalk upper-cut, as Tom Merry calls it. Well, I shall jam those knuckles on to every mouth that utters the word hero again in my hearing. Honest Injun!"

"But you are a——"

"Mind!" said the Australian warningly.

"Hero!" said Glyn defiantly.

Biff!

The Cornstalk was as good as his word, and Bernard Glyn went rolling in the dust.

He sat up, looking rather bewildered.

"Well, of all the beasts!" he ejaculated, "you—you——"

"I warned you, you know."

Clifton Dane, grinning, helped his fallen chum to his feet. Glyn looked a little uncertain, but finally burst into a laugh.

"Well, if you hadn't saved Edie's life, I'd give you a licking that would make you see whole solar systems," he said. "As you're a——"

"Look out!"

"Ha, ha, ha! I mean as you did save her life, I'll let you off; but you're a fatheaded, howling ass, and that's my opinion of you."

"I don't mind that," said the Cornstalk urbanely. "I think I'll go and get a dust down now; I need it."

And he strolled back to the gates of St. Jim's, his chums following. There were many inquiries, as Kangaroo crossed the quadrangle, as to the cause of the bandage round his forehead, and to each and every inquiry the Cornstalk made the stereotyped reply: "Go and eat coke!" which left the inquirers no wiser than it found them.

CHAPTER 4.

Ways and Means!

"THERE won't be any time for prep this evening," Tom Merry remarked, in a thoughtful sort of way, as he poured the water in the teapot.

Manners and Lowther looked at him.

"There'll be time for a row to-morrow, then," grinned Lowther. "What bee have you got in your bonnet this time, Thomas, my son?"

"It's about going to Coventry. D'Arcy's got permission from the Head, so I hear, but Dr. Holmes doesn't seem to think it necessary for anybody to go with him."

"Oh, that's bosh, of course; these Fourth-Formers can't be allowed to go about alone on long railway-journeys like this," said Manners, shaking his head. "Besides, the place is more than worth a visit. A chap who once lived in Coventry told me that a visit to Coventry was an education in itself. He ought to know, as he lived there. Well, we're here for educational purposes, and so——"

"Better point that out to the Head," said Lowther.

"Hallo, where's that cake?"

"Cake! Isn't it in the cupboard?"

"No; there's only a few crumbs left on the plate."

"Then some bounder has scooped it. Never mind, there's the sardines."

"One tin of sardines won't go round very far."

"If they come as far as me it will be all right," said Tom Merry affably. "Luckily, there's plenty of bread. We've got no visitors coming here this evening."

"Bai Jove!"

"That's where you make a little mistake, my son."

And Arthur Augustus and Blake came in, followed by Horries and Digby.

The Terrible Three did not seem particularly gratified. "Sorry!" said Tom Merry. "We've nothing to give you. Try next door."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"It's all right," grinned Blake. "Gussy has changed his fiver."

"Yaas, wathah; and I shall be vevy pleased to lend you any little sum, Tom Mewwy."

"Good! Chuck over five bob till better times. Lowther, cut down to the shop and bring the best you can get for five bob. I'll see if I can get the kettle to boil while you're gone. You kids stay to tea?"

"Thanks! As you're so pressing, we will," said Jack Blake. "We really came for a council of war, but we can eat while we jaw. It's about our little excursion to Coventry. The Head has given Gussy permission to go."

"Yaas, wathah; but he has declined to see the necessity of my takin' anybody with me," explained D'Arcy. "I had

wesolved to take the fellahs in my own study, but it would be bad form to go without permish."

"Shocking bad form," said Blake solemnly. "We've never done anything in our little lives without permish."

"Pway don't wot, Blake; this is a sowious mattah. If you can make any suggestions for making the Head atlah his mind, Tom Mewwy, I shall be vewy pleased to take you, too."

"Where there's a will there's a way," said Tom Merry thoughtfully. "We've got to go; the difficulty is how to make the Head see reason. Hallo! Not at home!"

In spite of that greeting, the three juniors who had just come along from the end study came in. They wore affable grins, and had evidently come to tea.

"Thanks, we'll stay, as you're so polite about it," said Kangaroo. "The fact is, the grub has run out in the end study."

"So we've run out also," remarked Bernard Glyn.

"Besides, there's that little excursion to Coventry," added Clifton Dane. "We're coming, you know, and the question of arranging it with the Head has to be settled."

D'Arcy turned his eyeglass upon the New Firm.

"Weally, deah boys—"

"That's all right, old son," said Kangaroo. "We wouldn't think of deserting you at such a moment. We've given the Form master a hint on the subject, but he didn't seem to catch on. Said some piffle about studies not being interrupted. That's just like a Form master; they're unreasonable animals."

"Yans, wathah; but—"

"The fact is," said Blake, "we've got to think of a way. We've no great objection to you Shellfish coming, if you can think of a dodge. I thought we'd put our heads together over it, Merry."

"Certainly, my son."

Tom Merry was leaning over the table towards Blake, laying the tablecloth. Kangaroo gave Blake a sudden push, and his head and Tom Merry's "came together" with a "biff" that made both of them see stars.

"Oh!" roared Blake.

"Ow!" yelled Tom Merry.

"Sorry—"

"Ow! Oh! Ow! You uttah ass—"

"What did you do that for, you frabjous dummy?"

"I thought you wanted to put your heads together—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove, you know, I wogard that as wathah funnaw!"

Blake rubbed his head, and Tom Merry rubbed his. They glared at the humorous Cornstalk, and Tom Merry explained at some length what he thought of him. But Kangaroo only grinned.

"I'll chuck that thing out of the study, if you like, Tom Merry," said Blake, pushing back his cuffs.

"Pway let there be peace, deah boys. We have important mattahs to settle, and there is no time for waggin'."

"Besides, you mustn't handle Kangaroo; he's a—wounded—he—" began Glyn, when the Australian's fist flashed out and caught him on the chest, and he went in a sitting posture into Tom Merry's armchair with a bump that made that article of furniture moan again.

"Ow!" roared Glyn.

"Keep off the grass, then," said the Cornstalk warningly.

The juniors gazed at them in astonishment. They knew nothing of the adventure of the runaway horse, or of the rules Kangaroo had laid down on the subject.

"Is that a new game?" asked Tom Merry.

"Not exactly," grinned Kangaroo. "It's a sort of education; really, I'm teaching these chaps that silence is golden, and that chipping is barred. Hallo! Are you expecting more visitors?"

"No; but they're coming, all the same, apparently," said Tom Merry, in a tone of resignation.

Figgins & Co. of the New House came in—or, rather, they squeezed in, for the study was getting crowded now, and there was very little room for the newcomers.

Manners opened the window to its fullest extent, in a very pointed manner, to cool the crowded room.

"H'm! I'll have a notice put up in the corridor—'Standing room only,' I think," Tom Merry remarked.

"I see you're at home," said Figgins, taking no heed of that remark. "I sent Fatty over here a while back to see, and you were out!"

"Oh, that's where the cake went!"

Fatty Wynn coloured.

"Well, I was rather hungry," he said. "I always get so jolly hungry this weather. If you'd like to get another one, I don't mind cutting down to the school shop for you."

"Declined with thanks. What do you say, Figgy? You can have anything but room—there isn't any room."

"It's about that little excursion to Coventry," said Figgins.

"We're coming, you know—"

"Bai Jove!"

"And we want to put our heads together over it, and get leave," said Figgins. "We thought we'd talk it over."

"Weally, Figgins—"

"That's all right, Gussy; we'll come with you. Of course, we shall expect you to behave yourself."

"I uttally wefuse to behave myself. I—I—I—mean—"

"Here's Lowther with the grub. All you fellows staying to tea? You can sit on one another's knees, and Gussy can get under the table, too."

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

"Herries can sit on the window-sill—there's room for both his feet outside, and—"

"Look here, you let my feet alone!"

"Better give me a little more room while I'm making the tea, or— What's the matter, Gussy?"

"Ow! You have spilt some watah on my twousahs!"

"Sorry, I needed it all, and now some's wasted. Eh? Your trousers? Oh, never mind your trousers! I was thinking of the tea."

"Is there a performance or something here?" asked Monty Lowther, as he squeezed in with his parcels. "I suppose I haven't got to the pit door of a theatre by mistake?"

"Ha, ha, ha! No. This is a council of war, on the subject of sending a party to Coventry."

"Hadn't we better put a notice on the board, and call a meeting of the whole school in the big hall?" suggested Lowther sarcastically. "If the whole population of St. Jim's is to be transferred to Coventry, that's the easiest way of arranging it."

"Oh, there's only thirteen of us—"

"Unlucky number," said Digby, with a shake of the head. "I think perhaps Gussy had better stay behind."

"I should absolutely wefuse—"

"Oh, that's all right; Cousin Ethel will make it fourteen!" said Blake. "Gussy can come."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Well, tea's ready," said Tom Merry. "Sit down, if you can find anything to sit on; and eat, if you can find anything to eat. Some of you can have cups, and some can have saucers. Would you mind having your sardines in the fire-shovel, D'Arcy?"

"I should object vewy stwongly."

"Well, well; there's the kettle-lid, you can have that. I suppose you wouldn't mind eating them with a pen-knife?"

"I should wefuse—"

"Is Gussy always like that when you take him out to tea, Blake?" asked Figgins.

Blake shook his head sadly.

"Very often," he said. "Gussy's company manners are a great worry to me. Of course, I always insist upon his behaving decently in Study No. 6; but he gets obstreperous in company, as a rule."

"Blake, I should be sowwy to intewwupt the harmony of the pvesent meetin', but if you compel me to thwash you, I—"

"Order!"

"Give him a bun or something," said Blake, with a fatherly air. "If you give him a bun with currants in it, that always keeps him quiet."

"I uttally wefuse to accept a bun with cawwants in it."

"Here's your tea, Gussy."

"Ow!"

"What's the matter now?"

"You have splashed me again."

"Never mind; lucky it's the same trousers," said Tom Merry cheerfully. "Fall to, my sons; if you can find anything to fall to."

And the crowded tea-party proceeded with more or less harmony.

CHAPTER 5.

The Deputation!

EXCEPT for demands of helpings of various kinds, there was very little talking among the juniors. Most of them were hungry, and they had something better to do than talk.

But five shillings worth of provisions, even when backed up with unlimited bread-and-butter, and a couple of tins of sardines, did not keep thirteen juniors busy for long. A scarcity set in very quickly, but all the guests politely declared that they had had enough. Only Fatty Wynn was looking round him with hungry eyes.

"I believe there's another sardine in the cupboard," said Monty Lowther thoughtfully. "Did you notice it when you had the cake, Fatty?"

"N-no, I didn't!"

"H'm, it's a pity; it's been there a week or more, and it ought to be finished up."

"I—I think I've had enough, Lowther, thank you."

"What about the council of war?" asked Kangaroo, getting off the window-seat. "This has been a ripping feed, but what about business?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"What price a deputation to the Head?" asked Tom Merry thoughtfully. "If we all go in a body, it may impress him."

"Bai Jove, that's a good ideah! I will be the spokesman, as you will wequiah a fellow of tact and judgment to put it to him swaight."

"Better leave the talking to me," said Blake. "You see—"

"Are you kids ready?" asked Tom Merry. "No need to waste time. If we're not going to Coventry, I suppose we shall have to do some prep."

"Come on," said Blake, "if Fatty Wynn has finished casting regretful glances at the jam-pot."

Fatty Wynn started and coloured.

"I—I was just thinking—" he murmured.

"Never mind thinking now—this is the time for action. Get into line, you chaps; you can't walk to the Head's study like a giddy crowd to the sixpenny gate of a football ground."

"Yaas, wathah! Pway get into ordah, deah boys, and I will diweet you."

"No, you won't, Gussy! Line up, there!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Silence in the ranks! March!" cried Tom Merry.

And by way of showing unmistakably who was leader, he marched on ahead, and tapped at the door of the Head's study.

The deep voice of the Head bade them enter. Mr. Railton was in the study, and he started at sight of the crowd of juniors.

"Dear me!" said the Head. "What does this mean?" And he turned his gold-rimmed pince-nez upon the juniors, and some of them wished they hadn't come. But there was nerve enough in Kangaroo for a whole army.

"If you please, sir, we're a deputation."

"Yaas, wathah, sir, a deputation fwom—"

"Ahem! I think—"

"Pway hear me out, sir—"

"Ring off, Gussy! Let Kangaroo speak!"

"I wefuse to let Kangaroo speak. It is necessawy to explain this mattah to Dr. Holmes bwiefly and succintly."

"Really, boys—"

"Yaas, sir. You see—"

"You see, sir," said Figgins, "we—"

"We've taken the liberty of coming to you, sir," said Blake, "to explain—"

"Exactly!" said Tom Merry. "If you please, sir—"

"We think—"

"We should like—"

"It's like this, sir—"

The Head raised his hand. Most of the above remarks had been made simultaneously, and it was hard to disentangle any meaning from them.

"If you have anything to say to me, boys, please elect a spokesman, and the others can remain outside the study."

"Yaas, wathah, sir! I think—"

"Get outside, Gussy!"

"I am explainin' to Doctah Holmes—"

"This way, fathhead!"

"Perhaps Noble had better remain," said Dr. Holmes.

"I wish to speak to Noble, and was about to send for him, in any case."

"Weally, sir—"

"You may go, D'Arcy."

"Thank you, sir; but I was goin' to explain— Pway don't jerk my arm in that wuff mannah, Blake! Leave off tuggin' at my sleeve, Tom Mewwy. I wefuse—" But the swell of the School House got no farther, being forcibly yanked out of the study by Tom Merry and Jack Blake.

"Well, this is rotten!" said Figgins, as he closed the door, and left the Cornstalk in the study. "The Head's going to give Kangaroo a lecture, I suppose. Not much of an opening for asking for leave."

And the juniors glumly agreed that it was "rotten."

CHAPTER 6.

For Valour!

HARRY NOBLE was feeling a little uneasy himself. He had not been called up to the Head's study hitherto; but there were certain little relaxations of the rules of the college which the Cornstalk allowed himself, which might be the cause of his being "called up" at any time.

The end study, since it had been occupied by the New Firm, had been the scene of the plotting of many a "jape."

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The Cornstalk stood looking as demure as he could, with his eyes on the carpet.

"Mr. Railton has just reported your conduct to me, Noble," said Dr. Holmes, turning his glance upon the Australian.

"Ye-es, sir," said Kangaroo, cudgelling his brains to discover which of his many little delinquencies Mr. Railton was likeliest to have discovered and reported to the Head of St. Jim's. "I'm sorry, sir."

"Sorry, Noble?"

"Yes, sir. If it was the—the flooding of the bath-room, sir, I—I—"

"The what?"

"So you were responsible for that?" said Mr. Railton, with a smile.

"I—I—I—"

"Ahem!" said Dr. Holmes. "I think Noble is misapprehending my meaning. I did not wish to see you to punish you, Noble."

Kangaroo brightened up considerably. He had a great respect for Dr. Holmes, and though he was quite ready to take any punishment, he did not like the idea of getting into the Head's black books.

"Mr. Railton has reported your conduct to me," went on the Head. "I am referring to your heroic conduct in risking your life to stop a runaway horse."

The Cornstalk turned crimson. That matter had quite gone out of his head, in the interest and excitement of getting up the deputation.

"Oh, sir, that wasn't worth mentioning!"

"You probably saved Miss Glyn's life. I was about to send for you, Noble, to express my deep sense of pride that a boy belonging to Lower Form here should have acted in such a gallant way," said Dr. Holmes. "Your Form-fellows should be proud of you, Noble. Your headmaster is."

"And your Housemaster," said Mr. Railton.

Kangaroo looked extremely uncomfortable. Like many lads who are capable of brave deeds, to be praised gave him a sense of discomfort.

"You're very kind, sir," he said. "I—I—I— really acted without thinking, sir."

Dr. Holmes smiled.

"If you had stopped to think you would probably have been too late to save Miss Glyn," he remarked. "You acted like a hero, Noble, without stopping to count the cost. I am only thankful that you were not injured. I wish it were in my power to reward you in some way; but that, I know, you would not wish. But, now," went on the Head, changing the subject, "what is this deputation about? Are you dissatisfied with something?"

"Oh, no, sir; nothing of the sort!" said Noble eagerly.

"We—we—came—"

He paused. After what the Head had said, he felt decidedly awkward about asking a favour at Dr. Holmes' hands. It might be misconstrued.

"Well," said Dr. Holmes, looking at him kindly, "what is it, Noble? I should certainly be pleased to do anything in my power for you."

"It's—it's—it's nothing, sir!"

"Come, come! You did not come here for nothing."

Kangaroo was crimson and silent. Dr. Holmes glanced at Mr. Railton in a puzzled way, and the Housemaster came to the rescue.

"I think, perhaps, Noble is diffident about asking for something because he is afraid it may look like asking for a reward for his brave action," said Mr. Railton quietly.

"Come, come, Noble, speak out! You need have no doubts upon that score. Stay! Call in Merry, Mr. Railton, and he shall explain."

The Housemaster opened the door and called in Tom Merry. The hero of the Shell came in, looking a little surprised.

"Merry, please speak for the deputation," said the Head, smiling. "What is it you came to ask me?"

"If—if you please, sir, as D'Arcy is going to Coventry, we—we thought we ought to go and look after him, sir."

"Ahem! How many of you?"

"Only about twelve, sir."

"Certainly D'Arcy would be well taken care of. I am afraid that in any other circumstances I should be compelled to refuse this request, Merry. Although I approve of occasional breaks in the school work, and believe that as much can be learned by travel as in the class-rooms, I think that enough has been done in that way lately. But after what Noble has done—after his heroic conduct in risking his life to save Miss Edith Glyn—I shall grant this holiday as a public acknowledgment of his courage."

Tom Merry looked bewildered.

"I—I never heard of that, sir!" he exclaimed. "Kangaroo—I mean Noble—has been as mum as an oyster about it."

"Modesty generally accompanies courage," said Dr. Holmes, with a smile. "Noble stopped a runaway horse, and saved Miss Glyn from a terrible accident at the

imminent risk of being trampled to death himself. Noble, you have my permission to make this excursion, and to take a dozen companions with you."

"Thank you, sir."

The juniors left the study. Tom Merry closed the door behind him, and then gave Harry Noble a glare.

"What have you been keeping it dark for?" he demanded.

"Oh, rats!"

"Keepin' what dark, deah boy?"

"Oh, shut up!" growled Kangaroo.

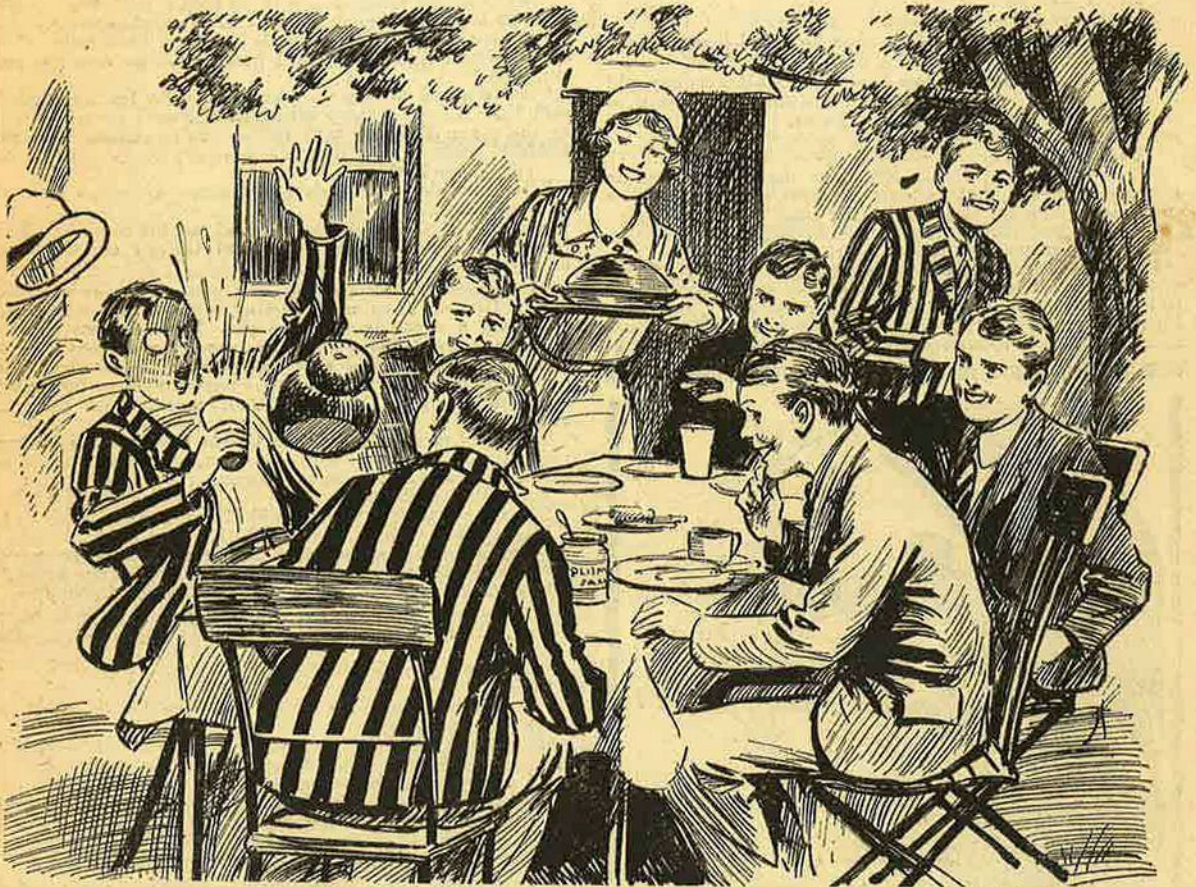
"Bosh! Kangaroo has been going about performing all sorts of heroic deeds in his spare time," explained Tom Merry. "He saves young ladies' lives just as any other chap

"Undah the circs, Kangaroo, as you are a hewo, I will not thwash you for that oppwobvious expression."

"Lemme get down!"

"Wats!"

Round and round the quadrangle they carried him in the dusk. As the story spread, loud cheers greeted the Australian on all sides. He began to take it good-humouredly at last, and endured half an hour of "processioning" without further grumbles. And when it was over the juniors, breathless and excited, gathered in Tom Merry's study. There was no prep to do that evening, but there was a more important matter to be settled—ways and means.



Tom Merry pitched the loaf across. It was intended to catch Fatty Wynn on the chin, but the Welsh junior dodged it and it landed with a crash on the table right in front of Arthur Augustus, who was in the act of raising his glass. "Oh!" gasped the Swell of St. Jim's.

would—would eat muffins, or feed a bulldog. He saved Glyn's sister from an accident, and the Head has given us leave—"

"Hurrah!"

"All on Noble's account."

"Good old Australia!"

"Bai Jove, I veward Kangawoo as a mewitowious youngstah, and I suggest that we cawwy him shouldah-high, deah boys!"

"Rats! Stop it! Chuck it! Leggo! Br-r-r!"

Kangaroo's expostulations and threats were of no avail. Tom Merry and Bernard Glyn and Figgins hoisted him on their shoulders, and the rest formed a sort of triumphal procession behind. They marched out into the quadrangle, and there was a rush from all sides to inquire into the matter.

"He's a giddy hero!" exclaimed Tom Merry to all comers. "He was hiding his light under a bushel, but we've found him out!"

"Yaas, wathah! He saved Miss Glyn ffrom feahful pewils at the wisk of his life."

"I didn't!" roared Kangaroo. "Very likely the trap wouldn't have upset at all!"

"I decline to owedit that statement. He is a wathah un-gwacious beast, deah boys, but he is a hewo."

"You ass!"

Funds being low, it was decided, after a lengthy discussion, that the party should cycle to Coventry.

CHAPTER 7.

On the Road!

MR. RAILTON gave Tom Merry a cheerful nod the next morning as he came downstairs.

"Good-morning, Merry! What train are you intending to catch this morning?" asked the School House master.

"We're not going by train, sir," said Tom Merry cheerily. "The fares would be too steep. We're going to bike it."

Mr. Railton started a little.

"You are going to cycle to Coventry?"

"Yes, sir," Tom Merry paused. "I suppose there's no objection, sir?"

"H'm! I must think about that. At all events, I must mention it to the Head. A train journey is one matter, but going by road is another. I am afraid you may get into mischief."

"Mischief, sir!" said Tom Merry, with superb astonishment, as if mischief was a thing that never even entered into the minds of the fellows in the Shell.

The Housemaster smiled.

"Yes, Merry. It is a serious matter to trust a dozen juniors on the road without an elder to look after them."

"I say, sir, could you come?" said Tom Merry eagerly. "It was ripping the time you came to spend a week-end at D'Arcy's place, sir!"

The Housemaster laughed and shook his head.

"I'm afraid that would not be possible, Merry, though I should certainly like to do so, and I take your wish as a great compliment. I think we may manage for a senior to accompany you."

"Yes, sir, if you think it necessary," said Tom Merry. "If Kildare or Darrell would come, it would be all right."

"I will speak to Kildare, then."

"Thank you, sir!"

Tom Merry joined his chums.

Blake looked a little serious when he heard that a senior was to be in the party.

"You see, you never know how these Sixth-Formers will behave themselves," he said. "Still, Kildare is the best of the bunch, and Darrell's not a bad sort. I hope it will be one of them."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"If they sent that beast Knox, or that cad Sefton, it would be rotten! Still, as there are over a dozen of us, we could leave him for dead along the road."

"Ha, ha, ha! But I think it will be Kildare!"

And so it turned out to be.

The captain of St. Jim's was a great cyclist, and the run of a hundred miles would not have been a hard day's ride to him. He had duties enough to do at St. Jim's, but these his fellow prefects were willing to relieve him of. There was no cricket fixture to interfere with the excursion; and so, as



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he obtained leave from the Housemaster, the captain of the school was willing enough to be "sent to Coventry."

He came down to the bicycle shed, where the juniors were getting their machines ready, and pulled his own bicycle off the stand.

The juniors turned towards him eagerly.

"Are you coming, Kildare?"

"Yes."

Tom Merry threw his cap into the air.

"Hurrah!"

"Bai Jove—yes! Huwah!"

Kildare laughed good-humouredly.

"I shall keep you in order," he said. "No monkey tricks, you know."

"We shall not wequiah keepin' in ordah, deah boy! I am goin' to look aftah these youngstahs. I suppose you will be able to stick it out?" said Arthur Augustus doubtfully. "If so, I wathah think you and I had bettah go stwaight on, pewwaps."

"We're going to stop at a half-way town for the night," said Tom Merry. "Stony Stratford or Fenny Stratford will be the place, I should say; but as you're coming with us, Kildare, we'll let you decide."

"Thank you!"

"But I would wathah do the distance without a stop, if Kildare can stick it out."

Kildare only laughed, and wheeled out his machine. The juniors followed. Fatty Wynn had Gussy's old machine, and Herries had Skimpole's.

They wheeled their bicycles in a sort of parade past the School House. They were starting before first lessons, and there was a crowd to see them off. Many envious glances were cast towards them, but it was good-natured envy.

All St. Jim's agreed that Kangaroo fully deserved the reward of heroism. The juniors cheered them as they went down to the gates, wheeling their machines in cheerful array.

The party mounted in the road. The postman was coming along from the village with the morning letters, and there was a general shout from the juniors.

"Any for us, Blagg?"

"One for Master D'Arcy," said Blagg, feeling in his bag.

"Thank you, Blagg, deah boy! Hand it ovah!"

Blagg handed over the letter, and went on into the gates.

"Pway excuso me a few minutes, while I wead the lettah," said Arthur Augustus, feeling in his pocket for a penknife.

"Oh, leave it till presently!" said Figgins. "We want to get on. You don't want to stop here reading a lot of piffle now."

"It's fwom my Cousin Ethel."

"Oh!"

"And if you wegard a lettah fwom my Cousin Ethel as piffle, Figgins—"

"I don't," said Figgins, turning very red. "How was I to know it was from Miss Cleveland, ass?"

"I wefuse to be called an ass! I—"

"Read the letter," said Kildare. "We've got to do fifty or sixty miles to-day, and you kids will not have too much time by dark."

"Yaas, wathah! Can someone lend me a papah-knife?"

"I've lost the one I usually wear on my watch-chain," said Kerr sarcastically.

"Weally, Kerr—"

"Open it with your thumb, ass!"

"I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort. Pway lend me your penknife, Dig!"

"Here you are, ass!"

"I wefuse—"

"Come, come, be quick!" said Kildare.

"Certainly, deah boy!"

D'Arcy opened the letter and read it through, and then folded it and put it in his pocket. Figgins' eyes watched it hungrily till it was out of sight. Arthur Augustus mounted his machine.

"I'm ready, deah boys."

"Aren't you going to read out the letter?" demanded Blake.

"There's no time—we're in a huwwy. Pway don't keep me waitin'."

They pedalled off. Through Rylcombe High Street they went at a spanking pace, scattering dogs and cats and cackling geese on all sides, and then whizzing along a wide country road.

"We'll put up for the night at Fennay Stwatford, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus, adjusting his Panama hat with one hand, and holding the centre of his handlebars with the other.

"That's for Kildare to settle."

"But we weally must stop at Fennay Stwatford. I shall be obliged to insist upon it."

Kildare looked round.

"Do you particularly want a thick ear, D'Arcy?"

"Certainly not, Kildare. But we weally must put up for the night because—"

"Nuff said!"

"Because—"

"Oh, ring off," said Jack Blake, "and hold your machine better, ass! If you run into me, I'll squash you."

"I should uttally wefuse to me squashed. We must weally stay at Fennay Stwatford to-night, because—"

"Will you ring off?" roared Figgins.

"I wefuse to wing off. I— Bai Jove!"

"What's the matter now, image?"

"There's somethin' wong with my tyre. It's goin' flat."

"Like rider, like tyre," said Monty Lowther.

"Weally, Lowther—"

D'Arcy jumped off his machine. The rest stopped impatiently. D'Arcy's back tyre was as flat as a pancake.

"Bai Jove, you know, this is vewy wemarkable! That was a new tyre, and it has only been widden once."

"There's a tack sticking in it now," grunted Kangaroo.

"What an ass you are to go about collecting tacks with your tyres!"

"How the dickens did tacks come in the road!" said Blake.

"Of course, if there's a tack in the road, Gussy's bound to find it."

"I wefuse to admit that I am to blame. I— Bai Jove, you know, I weally think I know how that beastly puncture came there! It was Gore! I wemembah now, he was laughing at some joke when we started off. I trust I do not wong him by the suspish, but certainly it looks to me as if he punctuahed my tyre for a wotten joke before we started."

"You utter ass! What did you let him come near you for?" said Tom Merry crossly. "You ought to have known."

"Weally, I do not see—"

"Turn the machine up," said Kildare. "Let's get it mended. If this is how we begin the journey, I dare say we shall turn up at Coventry some time after Christmas."

And D'Arcy's machine was reversed by the roadside, and the juniors gathered round it while the puncture was repaired.

The tyre was slipped on at last, and the machine was ready for use. D'Arcy mounted, and the party rode on once more.

It was a fine day, and very pleasant riding in the early morning. The road was in good condition, and so were the riders. The ground was covered in good style, but the more enthusiastic juniors, who wished to go ahead like steam, were called to order by the St. Jim's captain.

Kildare had mapped out the route, and there were plenty of long miles to get over; and on a long ride "slow and steady" was the motto.

Arthur Augustus clicked in his low gear as the party ascended the first considerable hill. Figgins, who had not changed gear, worked on as before, with drops of perspiration clotting his forehead.

The swell of St. Jim's looked round at him.

"Shall I give you a hand, Figgins, deah boy?" he asked.

Figgins grunted.

"I'm feelin' pwetty fwesh, you know," said D'Arcy. "It's no good faggin' yourself out almost at the start fwom a feelin' of false pwide, Figgins. Let me help you."

Another grunt from Figgins.

"I could take your arm, and fwee-wheel you up the hill, if you like," said D'Arcy, who set no limit to the conceptions of his powers as a cyclist.

"Look here," said Figgins exasperated, "when I want help, I shall ask, and when I don't want it, I shan't ask."

"Yaas, I perfectly undahstand that," assented Arthur Augustus, "but I feel that you are withheld by a feelin' of false pwide fwom acceptin' the help you need. I should be vewy pleased to help you."

"B-r-r-r!"

"That is not an intelligible wemark, Figgins! Pway allow me to take your arm and fwee-wheel you for a bit!"

"You unutterable ass!"

"Weally, Figgins—"

"When I want help, I'll ask a chap stronger than myself— not a giddy tailor's dummy, who can't mend a puncture!" said Figgins.

"I weward that wemark as uttally wude, Figgins. Blake, deah boy, you are lookin' wathash fagged, shall I help you?"

"Go and eat coke!"

"Bai Jove! I'll help you, if you like, Glyn!"

"Rats!" said the Liverpool lad cheerily. "You're more in want of help yourself! I'll help you!"

"Vewy good!" said D'Arcy, accepting the offer at once, and rather taking Bernard Glyn aback. "This is beginnin' to feel like work, as a mattah of fact! I shall be vewy glad of your assistance!"

And Glyn had to keep his word.

Arthur Augustus took that hill very easily, but Bernard Glyn was puffing, and had a face like a beetroot, at the top.

(Continued on the next page.)



Send your Jokes to—
"THE GEM JESTER,"
 5, Carmelite Street,
 London, E.C.4. (Comp.)

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

OBLIGING!

Nervous Passenger: "Oh, I've pulled the communication cord by mistake, and they will fine me five pounds!"
 Bright Young Man: "Give me three pounds and I'll faint!"
 W. HUGGINS, 14, The Triangle, Bournemouth.

NOT WHAT HE MEANT!

Very Red-Faced Man (to fishmonger): "D'you serve lobsters?"
 Fishmonger: "Yes, sir, we serve anyone!"
 J. L. TANNER, 66, Northampton Road, Croydon, Surrey.

HELPFUL!

Pat bought a chicken house and got two friends to help him carry it home. Half-way there one of the friends noticed Pat was missing.
 "Where's Pat?" he asked.
 Voice from inside chicken house: "Sure, and Oi'm here, carryin' the perches!"
 ARTHUR SYSON, Sennowe Park, Guist, Norfolk.

TRUTHFUL!

Man (entering leather shop with bag): "How much is this bag worth?"
 Shopkeeper: "One-and-sixpence."
 Man: "Thanks. I found it outside your shop marked ten-and-six!"
 L. MIDGLEY, 51a, Algiers Road, Ladywell, S.E.13.

COOL!

Employer (sternly): "Is that your cigarette end on the floor?"
 Office Boy: "No, sir! You can have it; you saw it first!"
 T. HOWARTH, 16, Johnson Street, Tyldesley, Lanes.

JUMPY!

Policeman (to driver of baby car): "Your car keeps jumping about, sir!"
 Driver: "Yes, I know, constable. I've got hiccoughs!"
 T. BILLINGHAM, 6, Berrywood Farm, Duston, Northampton.

HE DID!

Teacher: "Why are you late, Tommy?"
 Tommy: "I was hurrying to school when I saw a notice."
 Teacher: "What did the notice say?"
 Tommy: "'Go Slow. School Ahead!'"
 DAVID ROGERS, The Croft, The Avenue, Carmarthen, South Wales.

EVER BEEN HAD?

Diner: "Waiter, what's this soup?"
 Waiter: "It's bean soup, sir!"
 Diner: "I don't care what it's been, I want to know what it is now!"
 FRED TOWNSHEND, 18, Alfred Street, St. Helens, Lanes.
 THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,314.

"Thank you vewy much, Glyn!" said D'Arcy, as they came out on the flat. "That has prevented me from gwoin' uncomfortably hot, and I am vewy gratefule!"
To which Glyn made no reply—he had no breath left.

CHAPTER 8.

D'Arcy Spills the Milk!

"**H**ALT!" said Kildare, a couple of hours later. The pace of the party was slackening a little. They were keeping together, and so the pace, of course, was that of the slowest rider.

All the juniors were beginning to feel the imperative demands of the inner man, and Kildare's order was received gladly enough, and instantly obeyed.

A tea-house looked invitingly out from green trees and flowers from the side of the dusty road. The juniors wheeled their machines into the garden, and left them in a group, and sat down among the little tables under the trees.

They had breakfasted once at St. Jim's, but they were quite ready to breakfast again now, and they did so, upon ham and eggs and bread-and-butter galore.

Fatty Wynn had been looking a little troubled in mind during the past hour, and he had confided to Figgins that cycling always made him extra hungry. Now his fat face beamed like the full moon, and he cast almost adoring glances at the pretty girl who waited on the travellers, and who brought him new laid eggs without stint.

"By George," said Fatty Wynn, "this is a better way of spending the fiveer than on railway fares!"

"Yaas, wathah!"
"I think I'll have a couple more eggs, miss!"
"Better have the whole farmyard while you're about it," said Figgins. "That will make twenty-five, won't it?"

"Oh, come, Figgins—I've only had eight as yet!" said Fatty Wynn.

"By Jove, you must be simply famishing still!" said Tom Merry sympathetically. "Here, take this loaf to go on with!" And he pitched the loaf across.

It was intended to catch Fatty Wynn under the chin, but the Welsh junior dodged it, and it crashed down on the table just in front of Arthur Augustus, who was in the act of raising a glass of milk to his lips.

The swell of St. Jim's naturally gave a great jump, and the milk shot down in a stream over the front of his jacket. D'Arcy gave a yell, and the glass went to the ground with a crash, and broke into a dozen pieces.

The elegant junior stood with the milk streaming down him, and his appearance was greeted with a roar of laughter from the rest.

"Bai Jove! My jacket's wuined!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Who thwew that loaf?"
"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I demand to know who thwew that beastly loaf!" shouted D'Arcy. "I am goin' to give him a feahful thwashin'!"

"Better mop up the milk," suggested Monty Lowther. "I'll lend you an oilrag, if you like."

D'Arcy did not accept that offer. He mopped up the milk with a silk handkerchief, soaking it into a limp rag, and hung the handkerchief up on a bough to dry in the sun. Then his eyeglass glimmered wrathfully upon the grinning juniors.

"Who thwew that loaf?"

"You've asked us that before," said Monty Lowther, shaking his head. "Haven't you got a new one?"

"I am not askin' you comundwuns, Lowthah. Who thwew that loaf?"

"I don't know if I ought to tell you," said Tom Merry meditatively. "You are so terrible when you are roused, you know."

"I insist upon givin' the careless ass a feahful thwashin'!"

"Well, you won't go for me if I tell you?" asked Tom Merry anxiously.

"Certainly not! I shall take it as a gweat favour!"

"Sure?" said Tom Merry dubiously.

"Yaas, wathah! Who thwew that loaf?"

"Honour bright?"

"Yaas, certainly, honah bwight, deah boy! Who thwew that loaf?"

"Well, as a mattab of fact, I did."

"Eh?"

"I did," said Tom Merry cheerfully. "As it's too hot to wipe the ground with you, in addition, remember you've passed your word."

The juniors shrieked at D'Arcy's expression.

"I wogard you as havin' taken me in, Tom Mewwy!"

"Go bon!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Howevah, I shall keep my word; but you have had a vewy nawwow escape of gettin' a feahful thwashin'!"

"Good! Can I leave off trembling now?"

"Pway don't wot, deah boy!"

Kildare rose to his feet.

"Time!" he said.

"Yaas, wathah, Kildare! Pway give me the account, deah boy—I mean deah gal!"

The dear girl smiled, and made up the account, which came to a considerable sum; but it was Kildare who took it and paid it. D'Arcy was inclined to remonstrate, but it was part of his code never to dispute with his elders—unless, of course, it was a matter of personal "dig"—so he let it pass.

Much refreshed by their ample meal and long drinks of lemonade and ginger-beer, the young cyclists resumed their way.

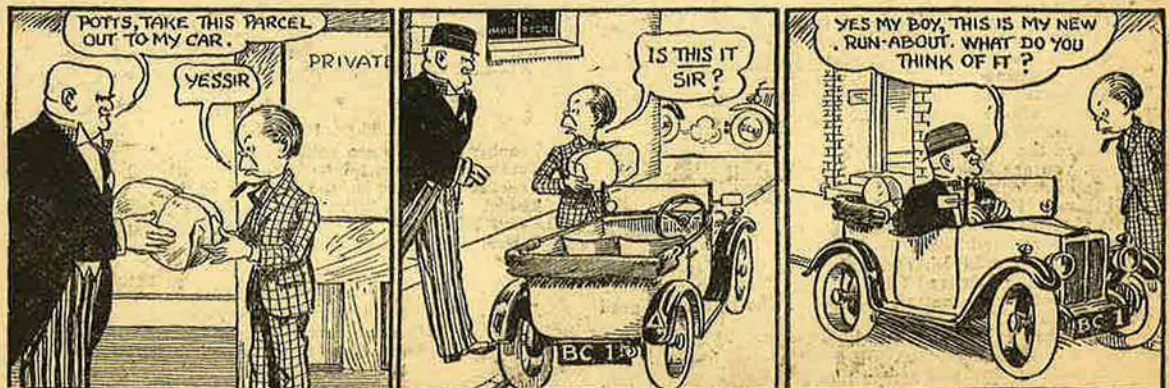
Fortunately, there were no more punctures during the morning. Even Skimpole's bike, ridden by Herries, was holding out well. Considering that the machine belonged to a fellow who had wonderful original ideas on the subject of machinery, it was in pretty good condition. Skimpole had a way of cleaning his bike by turning the garden hose on it, but he had fortunately forgotten to clean it for the last few weeks, and it had been put in order by combined efforts on the part of all the juniors.

Tom Merry had provided a new front tyre, and Lowther a new back one. Manners had found a brake for it, and Herries a lamp, and Digby a pump. New pedals had been provided by Bernard Glyn, and a new chain by Clifton Dane. Upon the whole, Skimpole was likely to benefit to the value of a few pounds by lending his machine to Herries for the ride to Coventry.

Figgins and Kerr on their tandem, and Kangaroo and Glyn on theirs, travelled very easily, though at the hills D'Arcy several times renewed his kind offers to help Figgins. Indeed, at the fifth or sixth repetition of D'Arcy's kindness, he was heard to murmur something about punching heads.

The midday rest was taken among the chalk hills of Buckinghamshire, in the midst of the exquisite scenery of the beautiful county.

Potts, the Office Boy!



Fatty Wynn did full justice to the dinner, and, indeed, so did most of the juniors, and when it was over, no one was particularly inclined to move. The sun was very hot, and the juniors, who were in caps, looked enviously at the shady Panama worn by Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"We ought to take it in turns with that Panama, you know," Fatty Wynn remarked, as he lay down to rest in the long grass of the inn garden after dinner. "Gussy can have my straw hat, and welcome."

"I am afraid it would not be a good fit, dear boy." "Suppose we put the Panama up to a raffle?" suggested Lowther.

"I should wefuse to have my hat raffled." "The voice of the majority, you know," said Tom Merry, shaking his head. "The hat will have to be raffled."

"I wefuse to allow anythin' of the sort!" Blake whisked off the hat and sent it spinning among the juniors.

Arthur Augustus started to his feet. "Weally, Blake—"

"Sit down, my son: we're taking it in turns with that Panama," said Blake. "Here's my straw. I take the Panama first."

"Oh, rats!" said Tom Merry warmly. "As leader of the party—"

"Come, talk sense, old chap!" said Kangaroo. "I don't think there's much doubt as to who's leader of the party—after Kildare, of course."

"I'm glad to see you take a sensible view of the matter, Kangy," said Figgins graciously. "Of course, a New House follow—"

"More rats!" said Kangaroo unceremoniously. "I was thinking of myself, of course."

"If you're going to talk piffle—"

D'Arcy picked up his hat while the dispute was still raging. He replaced it on his head, with a grin.

"I'm willin' to let it go by turns when you've settled who's leadah, dear boys," he said. "I wathah think I shan't be bothahed about it."

And he was right. The dispute soon grew into an argument respecting the merits of the rival Houses at St. Jim's, and the rival claims of the Shell and the Fourth Form, and it looked like growing into a fistical encounter by the time Kildare gave the word to take the road again.

Fatty Wynn did not rise with the others. He stirred, but only rolled over to a more comfortable posture. He had eaten a dinner that surprised even his friends, and that dinner was avenging itself now.

"Hardly time to start yet, is it, Kildare?" he ventured. "High time."

"What about another half an hour's rest, as it's so hot?" "Stuff!"

"Better to ride in the cool of the evening," argued Fatty Wynn. "It doesn't matter if we get in after dark. It's a pleasure to ride after dark."

"Get up!" "By the way, I always ride faster after I've had a good rest. If you fellows go on, I'll take a bit of a snooze, and scorch after you and catch you up," said Fatty Wynn.

Kildare laughed, and, stooping, jerked the fat junior to his feet. "You won't stay behind," he said. "Get on your jigger!"

"But—I—but—" "Come on, Fatty!" grinned Figgins. "You can take a

turn on the tandem, behind, and I won't make you work too hard at first."

And Fatty Wynn, somewhat comforted, climbed on the tandem.

CHAPTER 9.

D'Arcy Has an Idea!

THE afternoon was very warm, but the weather was splendid. Lanes and roads vanished under the whirling wheels, and those of the juniors who were beginning to feel the miles did not complain. Nobody wanted to be reminded afterwards that he had failed to "stick it out." D'Arcy was the most frank.

"Bai Jove! You know, I believe I am beginnin' to feel a little fatigued!" said Arthur Augustus, fanning himself with his Panama as he rose.

"Go hon!" said Blake. "You're not going to give in, if that's what you mean. Study No. 6 has to be in at the death."

"Yaas, wathah! I was not thinkin' of givin' in, dear boy. I was merely statin' a fact. If you felt inclined to fivee-wheel me for a few miles I should not object."

"No? I can see myself doing it!" "I will change with you for a bit if you like, Wynn," said Arthur Augustus. "Figgins is such a stwong chap that he can easily get along without assistance."

Figgins chuckled. "If I'm such a strong chap, what were you offering to help me for all the morning?" he inquired.

"I only wanted to be obligin', dear boy. I am quite willin' to take a west on the wear seat of your tandem."

"The willingness is all on your side, dear boy," grinned Figgins. "I may be jolly strong when it suits you, but I should be jolly weak—in the head—if I lugged a duffer along in this sun!"

"I wefuse to be alluded to as a duffah." "Ass, then, or fathead."

"You are weally takin' an unfair advantage, Figgins, as the weathah is too warm for me to thwash you."

"That's lucky for—somebody." They rode on. D'Arcy, as a matter of fact, was as good a rider as anybody in the party, and he was always in good condition. But the long miles were beginning to tell, and Arthur Augustus had a rooted objection to exertion.

"Bai Jove! These tyres are holdin' out well," he remarked presently. "In such a crowd of machines, one would expect a puncture evvery now and then."

Tom Merry chuckled. "I hope there won't be any more," he said. "You'll have to find a better excuse than that, old chap."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—" "Ha, ha, ha!" shouted the juniors.

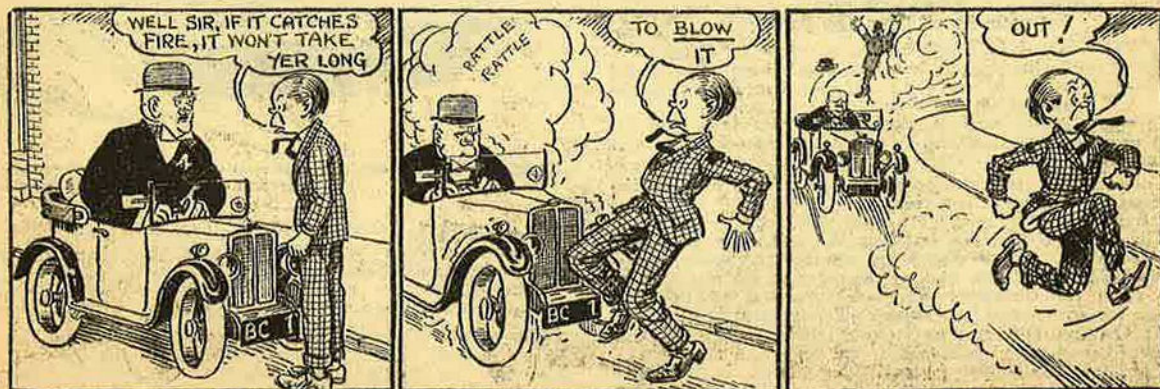
"I fail to see any weason for this wibald laughtah." "Ha, ha, ha!"

There was silence for a time as they pedalled on. No punctures occurred. Figgins looked round suspiciously at Fatty Wynn.

"It's about time you put some beef into it, I think, Fatty," he remarked.

"Oh, I was working away!" "It wasn't a good way, then; try some other way. I can't drag a prize porpoise about all the afternoon on my own, you know."

WHAT A BLOW!



And Fatty Wynn sighed and set to work.
"What we weally want is a twailah," said D'Arcy. "I could wide vewy comfortably in a twailah behind Kangawoo's tandem."

"I don't think!" remarked Kangaroo.
"How many miles is it to Fennay Stwatford now, Kildare?" asked D'Arcy.

Kildare was working away at a level pace, apparently without any exertion at all.

"About thirty," he said.

"Bai Jove!"

"We shall get into the North Road at Fenny Stratford," Kildare observed. "I don't see why we shouldn't keep on as far as Stony Stratford, though, before we stop."

"Bai Jove, I do! I—"

"Oh, don't cave in, Gussy!" said Figgins. "Of course, you School House chaps don't count for much as cyclists, but you might think of the honour of the Fourth Form."

"Weally, Figgins—"

"Study No. 6 never gives in," said Blake calmly. "Gussy will keep on, or else he will be left for dead."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Stick up for the honour of your House, Gussy," said Tom Merry encouragingly. "Of course, you Fourth Form kids are bound to get fagged, but really—"

"Weally, Tom Merry—"

"Stick it out," said Kangaroo. "Naturally a Cornstalk can ride you off your legs, but you ought to do the best you can for the Old Country."

"Weally, Kangaroo—"

"Keep your breath for riding," said Digby. "Get on!"

"I insist upon stayin' at Fenny Stwatford to-night. You fellows can wide on to Stonay Stwatford if you like."

"Look here—"

"You see, Cousin Ethel—"

"What about Cousin Ethel?"

"She and her governess are at Fennay Stwatford, stayin' with some people, as she told me in her lettah this mornin'—"

"You utter ass! Why didn't you tell us that before?" exclaimed Figgins. "Of course, we shall stay at Fenny Stratford to-night."

"There's no special weason for you to stay. In fact, I wathah think it's a good ideah for you to go on to the next town."

"No fear!"

"I was thinkin'," explained D'Arcy, "that I would hire a twailah in Fennay Stwatford, and take Cousin Ethel in it, if she would come. I may be able to get one, and I think it would be rather a joke. And her governess can go on by twain and meet us at Coventry."

"Good wheeze!" said Tom Merry heartily. "I'll take Cousin Ethel in a trailer—"

"Stuff!" said Figgins. "I suppose we don't want a girl to have an accident, do we? I shall take her, of course."

"I shall wefuse to give my permish for anythin' of the sort, Figgins. Ethel is my cousin, a fact you seem to sometimes forget."

"That's all very well," remarked Kangaroo. "I can't help thinking, though, that the strongest chap and the best rider ought to pull the trailer. Still, suppose we leave it to Cousin Ethel, and she can decide to have me if she likes."

"I weward you as a conceited ass, Kangawoo."

"I wouldn't tell you how I regard you, Gussy," said the Cornstalk blandly. "It couldn't be put in polite language." The cyclists laughed, and rode on.

CHAPTER 10.

Cousin Ethel Joins the Party!

"COUSIN ETHEL!"

A charming girl was looking from a little gabled window of an old house as the dusty cyclists laboured up the street.

It was Figgins who caught sight of her first, and his cap came off at once, and in his enthusiasm he waved it round his head.

Cousin Ethel saw the waving cap, and looked at the cyclists, and seemed surprised.

"Bai Jove, it's Ethel!"

The girl waved her hand and smiled, and the cyclists rode on to the inn. Cousin Ethel was staying with some friends in the old-world town, and on the morrow she was to take the train for Coventry. She was surprised and pleased to see her cousin and his chums at Fenny Stratford.

At the inn D'Arcy was looking thoughtful as he dismounted, and gave his machine into charge of the boots.

"It would be only the pwopah thing to look in on Cousin Ethel this evenin'," he remarked, as they went into the inn.

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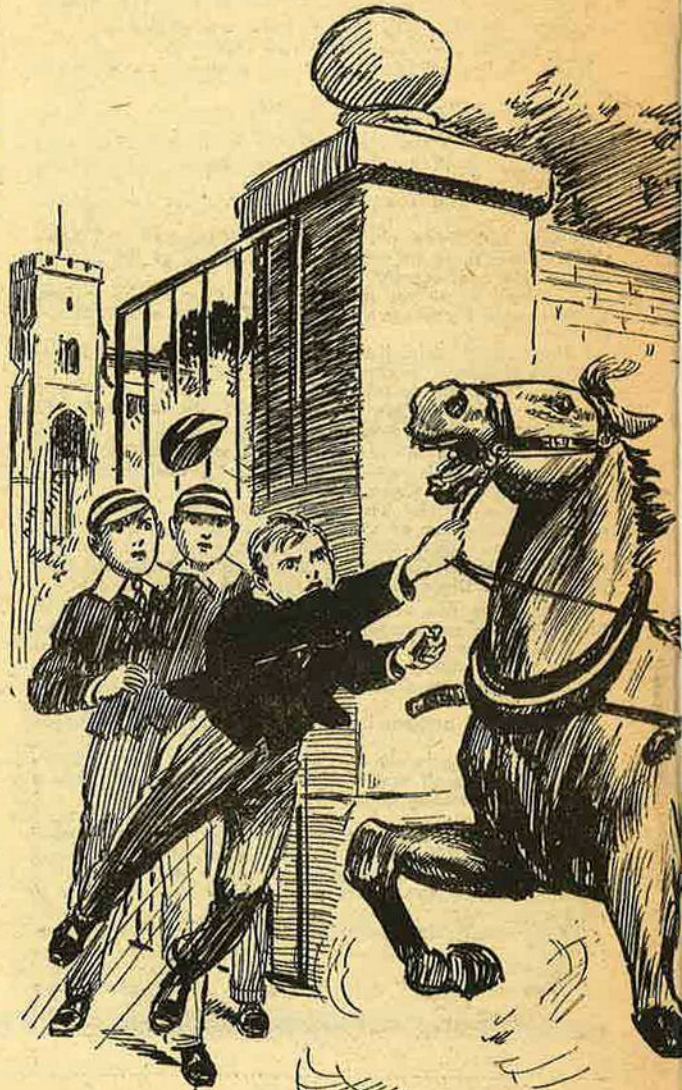
"Yes, rather!" said Figgins heartily. "I'll come with you."

Arthur Augustus glanced at him.

"Thank you vewy much, Figgins; but I think it would be bettah for me to go alone!"

"Oh, stuff!" said Kangaroo. "Of course, you can't very well take a New House fellow into a respectable house, but a chap about my size—"

"Oh, come off!" said Tom Merry. "Gussy can only take one fellow with him, and, of course, he's going to take his Uncle Tom."



Kangaroo sprang out into the road. "Get back!" shrieked Glyn. Glyn sprang at the maddened horse's head, and

"Wats, deah boy! I'm goin' to take—"

"Me," said Jack Blake. "I wonder you chaps could think anything different."

"Wats!"

"Look here, Gussy—"

"I'm goin' to take Kildare if he will come. You kids can go to bed. You'll want a good west to be up early in the mornin' to finish the wide."

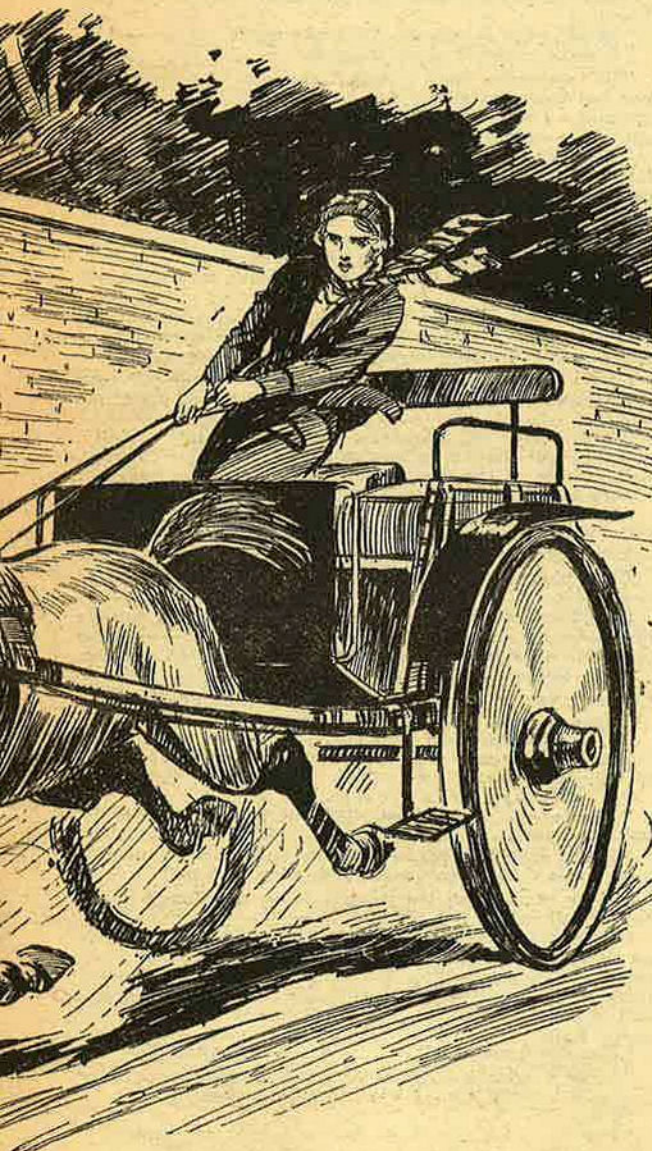
They nearly massacred him on the spot; but the remembrance that he was Ethel's cousin restrained them.

After a substantial supper, Arthur Augustus spent nearly an hour upon his toilet, and when he finally issued from the inn he was a pretty picture to look at.

Kildare had declined the honour offered him, as he was a stranger to D'Arcy's friends, and also as he wasn't inclined to leave the juniors to themselves for any considerable time. D'Arcy was firm in his resolution not to take any of the "youngstahs." He wasn't often allowed to have his charming cousin to himself, but this time there was no gainsaying him.

The juniors looked after their machines while he was gone. They cleaned them and oiled them ready for the morrow, and Blake, in a burst of friendship, attended to D'Arcy's machine for him.

This was exceedingly kind, as D'Arcy had declined to take him to see Ethel, and he hoped that Gussy would



ou'll be killed!" Swift and straight as an arrow the Australian rip fastened upon the bridle like a vice!

feel the "coals of fire" on his head. It was about ten o'clock when Arthur Augustus came back, and he was wearing a pleasant smile.

The juniors gathered round him inquiringly.

"Well?" said Blake.

"It's all wight, deah boys. I have had a wippin' evening, and my fwiends were vewy glad I came. I sang the 'Pwize Song' f'wom the 'Meistersingah.'"

"Then they must have been gladder still when you went," remarked Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Never mind what you sang," said Tom Merry. "What about Cousin Ethel? Is she coming on with us in the morning?"

"Yaas, wathah! My fwiends are goin' to lend me a twailah, and I am goin' to take Ethel on to Coventry in it."

"You!" said Figgins, in a decidedly disparaging tone.

"Yaas, wathah! Why not—pway?"

"You'll find it hard enough to get to Coventry yourself, without taking a trailer. You'd better leave it to me."

"Wats! I certainly wefuse to do anythin' of the sort!"

"Better let me have a go at it," said Kangaroo. "The best rider in a party ought to have a job of that sort."

"Did Cousin Ethel mention any of us?" asked Figgins, colouring.

"Yaas, wathah! She sent her kind wegards."

"To—to me?"

"To all of you. My Cousin Ethel is a wemarkably good-tempahed gal—"

"She is, rather!"

"Still, it's wemarkable how she can stand you claps. Good-night, deah boys!"

And the chums of St. Jim's went to bed.

They slept very comfortably in the old inn, and when they woke in the morning many of them were conscious of a certain stiffness in the limbs that reminded them they had had a long ride the previous day. Fatty Wynn yawned when Kildare called him, and blinked out of bed at the captain of St. Jim's.

"I—I say, Kildare!" he said slowly. "Don't you think—er—think—"

"Sometimes," said Kildare, laughing. "I think it's time to get up now, for instance."

"Yes; but—but don't you think it would be a ripping idea to spend the day in this place, and start the journey again to-morrow? You see, it's an awfully interesting old place, and—and we needn't get up so early. And I could—Ow! Wow!"

Fatty Wynn rolled out of bed, as Kildare tilted it. He landed on the floor in a heap of bedclothes, and lay for some moments, grunting. Then he proceeded to dress himself, and made no more suggestions about passing the day in Fenny Stratford.

Arthur Augustus looked cautiously out of bed as Kildare came into the room. He was sharing the bed with Blake and Digby, space being limited.

"Not time to get up yet, is it, Kildare, deah boy?"

"Yes, quite!"

"I have been wathah uncomfy, as Blake insists upon puttin' his wotten knees into the small of my back. Pewwaps it would be bettah for these boundahs to get up first, and give me an extwa half-hour. It doesn't take me long to dwess, you know."

"Up you get!"

"You have not weplied to my wemark. An extwa half-hour—Blake, you wottah, take your wotten feet out of my back!"

Blake only chuckled, and, with his feet in D'Arcy's back, pushed the swell of St. Jim's out of bed. D'Arcy scrambled on the floor, gasping. He jumped up wrathfully, and groped for his eyeglass.

"Blake, you wottah! If you are lookin' for a feahful thwashin'—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy glowered, and Kildare left the room, laughing. And there were strained relations among the Fourth-Formers as they performed their toilet. Arthur Augustus made himself look very nice. He was to call for Ethel, and bring her away in the trailer, and he wanted to look his best. And he did look a picture when he had finished.

After breakfast he wieweled his machine out.

"Bai Jove, the boots has cleaned this jiggah up a tweat!" he remarked. "Wemind me to give him a decent tip, will you, Blake?"

"Certainly!" said Jack Blake.

D'Arcy pedalled down the old street. The juniors brought out their machines, and Kildare settled the bill. The party waited for Arthur Augustus to arrive with his cousin.

There was the buzz of a bicycle bell.

"Here they come!"

D'Arcy, with a handsome trailer hitched behind his machine, was coming down the street at a rattling pace; and in the trailer, under a green sunshade, could be seen the graceful form and fair face of Cousin Ethel.

D'Arcy came to a halt with a flourish.

Cousin Ethel stepped out of the trailer, and replied cheerily to the enthusiastic greetings of the juniors.

Arthur Augustus beckoned the boots to him and pressed half-a-crown in his hand.

"Thank you vevy much, too!" he said, in his graceful way.

"Thank you kindly, sir!" said the astonished boots. Jack Blake chuckled, and D'Arcy looked at him as he prepared to mount his machine again.

"I fail to see any cause for mewmwent, Blake!" he remarked. "The chap has cleaned up my machine wippingly!"

"Ha, ha, ha! You see, I cleaned it last night!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Never mind; I dare say the chap doesn't get many half-crowns!" grinned Blake.

"If you are weady, Ethel—" said D'Arcy.

"Certainly!" said the girl brightly.

Kildare was looking at the swell of St. Jim's in a rather doubtful way.

"Do you think you are up to that, D'Arcy?" he asked.

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy!"

"Do you care to risk it, Miss Cleveland?"

"Oh, certainly! Arthur will soon get tired, and—"

"I should wufuse to get tired! I—I mean, I shall certainly not get tired, Ethel. Pway take your seat, deah gal!"

"You'd better let me take the trailer," said Figgins persuasively.

"Oh, you go and eat coke, deah boy!"

And the party started.

CHAPTER 11.

A Look at Coventry!

THE ride to Coventry was uneventful, but Arthur Augustus was very tired by the time that city was reached.

That evening the party from St. Jim's went to bed early. They were not tired, of course—there never was an amateur cyclist who was tired—but it was a good idea to get to bed early, so as to rise early to explore the city on the following morning. So they went.

Kildare, who really was not tired, stayed up later, chatting with Lord Conway. The elder brother of Arthur Augustus seemed to have taken a fancy to the sturdy captain of St. Jim's. They had matters of interest to discuss, too. In a short time Lord Conway and the Territorials were to camp near St. Jim's, and it was very probable that the old school would see something of them there.

Kildare was greatly interested in everything appertaining to the Territorial Army, and he had a very pleasant talk with Lord Conway, till eleven o'clock sounded the time for bed.

Lord Conway had made full preparations for D'Arcy and his friends. He had not known the precise number that were coming, and perhaps the array of cyclists surprised him a little, but he was as hospitable as Gussy himself. Two large rooms had been packed with beds for the party, Kildare having a room for himself.

The juniors found their quarters very comfortable, and they slept the sleep of the just. They had intended to rise very early; but, as a matter of fact, it was nine o'clock when Tom Merry, the first to wake, sat up in bed.

"Hallo! What's the time?" he ejaculated.

There was a yawn from Arthur Augustus.

"Call me a little latalah, deah boy! I can't get up at sunrise like this!"

"Ha, ha, ha! It's nine!" said Tom Merry, looking at his watch.

"Imposs, deah boy! I feel wathah sleepay!"

"Up you get; no slacking here!" said Tom Merry severely, as he hopped out of bed. "Nice asses we shall look if Cousin Ethel's down first!"

"Bai Jove, I nevah thought of that!"

And D'Arcy jumped up. He dutifully dragged the clothes off Blake, Digby, and Herries, and there was a roar of protest.

"Lemme me alone, you young ass!"

"Geroff!"

"I'm sleepy!"

"Pway don't be heastlay slackahs, deah boys! It's nine o'clock! I think this laziness in young fellows of your age is disgustin'!"

"Well, we're in Coventry!" said Blake, rubbing his eyes as he stepped to the window and looked out. The morning was bright and clear, and, as the room was a high one, the juniors had a view over the roofs of Coventry. "Hallo, there are the three spires!"

"What three spiahs, deah boy?"

Jack Blake sniffed.

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"Don't you know that Coventry is called 'The City of the Three Spires'?" he demanded. "I'm surprised at you, Gussy!"

"Lot of geography they teach you kids in the Fourth Form!" yawned Manners.

"Weally, Mannahs, that would not come undah the head of geogwaphy. I wathah think it would be topogwaphy."

"There are the three spires!" said Blake. "You can see them all from this window! Hallo, here's the noble duke!"

Blake alluded in this disrespectful way to Lord Conway, who came in, fully dressed and with a cheerful smile upon his face.

"Ah, I see you're awake!" he remarked. "I was going to give you a call before, but Ethel thought you would be tired."

"Ethel—thought—we—would—be—tired!" murmured Tom Merry.

"Ethel," said Kangaroo, "thought we would be—"

"Is Ethel down?" asked Figgins.

"Oh, yes; since eight o'clock!" said Lord Conway. "If you feel fresh enough after your ride, we'll have a trot this morning. I have an appointment after lunch, but I can give you the morning."

"Thanks vevy much, Conway! By the way, are those the famous three spiahs of Coventry? I dare say you know that Coventry is called 'The City of Thwee Spiahs.'"

"Is it?" said Lord Conway.

"Yaas, wathah! You don't mean to say that you haven't heard that, deah boy?" said D'Arcy, in surprise.

"Why, you hadn't heard it yourself five minutes ago!" roared Figgins.

"Pway don't shout at me, Figgins. It thwows my nerves into a fluttah. I cannot reply to a remark that is shouted at me. Are these the famous three spiahs, Conway?"

Lord Conway adjusted his eyeglass—which made him look more like Arthur Augustus than ever—and looked out of the window.

"Yes, that's St. Michael's, and that's Holy Trinity, and that—er—that's a factory chimney," said Lord Conway, with a smile. "The third spire's out of sight from here."

Jack Blake reddened.

"Ha, ha, ha! I wathah think that you had bettah look twice next time, deah boy, before affording topogwaphical information!" said Arthur Augustus.

Blake plunged his face into his wash-basin, and so changed the subject.

Lord Conway left them to dress, and in about a quarter of an hour the juniors were going downstairs—with the exception of D'Arcy, who was still before the looking-glass.

Blake looked back at him.

"Don't you want any brekker, Gussy?" he asked.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Then why don't you come?"

"How can I come when I'm awwangan' my tie? Don't be wicidulous, deah boy!"

"We shall start out pretty early."

"I am afraid I could not allow you to start out till I'm weady to come, deah boy, in case you get into mischief! I— Bai Jove, I wegard it as quite wude of Blake to slide away down the banistahs when I'm talkin' to him!"

D'Arcy came down ten minutes later, and found breakfast in full swing.

Cousin Ethel was seated at the table, with her governess on one side and Figgins on the other. D'Arcy looked expressively at Figgins, but the New House junior did not appear to notice it. He was very busy looking after Cousin Ethel, and seemed to be in the best of spirits—as, indeed, all the party were.

"Late, as usual, Arthur," said Lord Conway.

"Yaas, a minute or so, deah boy! I don't mind your beginnin' without me. I'm looking for a chair!"

"Waiter!"

"Pewwaps Figgins has finished?" Arthur Augustus remarked.

"Not a bit of it!" said Figgins cheerfully. "I'm not finished, and shan't be for some time! There's a chair for you!"

Arthur Augustus gave Figgins another expressive look and sat down, farthest of all from Cousin Ethel.

D'Arcy, besides being generally late for meals, was a slow eater, and so he had hardly started when Lord Conway rose from the table.

"I don't want to hurry anybody," the young man remarked, "but it's the time we fixed for starting."

"We're all ready, I think," said Cousin Ethel brightly.

"I will go and put my hat on."

"I'm not weady!"

"You can stay and keep Fatty company, Gus," said

Figgins considerably. "I know Fatty won't leave the table so long as there's anything eatable on it."

"I'm rather peckish this morning," said Fatty Wynn. "I don't know how it is, but I always seem to get hungry this weather."

"I don't know about you fellows goin' out alone," said D'Arcy. "You're in a swange town, and—"

"Then leave your breakfast," suggested Blake. "You oughtn't to have been late."

"I decline to leave my breakfast."

"I'll stay with you," said Fatty Wynn. "They're going to St. Michael's first, and we can cut on and catch them up there."

"Vewy good!"

And the party left the hotel without D'Arcy.

Fatty Wynn was keeping his waiter busy. D'Arcy finished his breakfast in the course of time, but Fatty Wynn was far from finished.

"You're not going yet?" said Fatty Wynn, looking up from his sixth or seventh plate as D'Arcy rose.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh, hold on a minute! I shall be finished soon!"

"Vewy well; but buck up!"

"These fish-cakes are ripping!" said Fatty Wynn. "I've heard that Coventry is famous for pork-pies, too. Won't you try a pork-pie?"

"I'm finished, thank you!"

"Oh, stuff! You haven't eaten half as much as I have!" said Fatty Wynn.

"Bai Jove, I should hope not!" said D'Arcy involuntarily.

"Waiter, waiter!"

"Yessir!"

"Have you any pork-pies?"

"Yessir, prime, sir!"

"Bring me a couple, please!"

"I tell you I don't want one, Wynn!" said Arthur Augustus, with emphasis.

Fatty Wynn nodded.

"That's all right," he said. "I can manage two."

"We're going to lunch at one," said D'Arcy, rather sarcastically. "Wouldn't it be a wathah good ideah to give your jaws a bit of a west before lunch?"

"I get so jolly hungry this weather, you know!"

D'Arcy waited while Fatty Wynn finished the pork-pies. His politeness was great, but his patience showed signs of giving way.

Fatty Wynn grinned with satisfaction as he demolished the last pie.

"This is really ripping!" he said. "You ought to have one, Gussy!"

"No, thanks, deah boy!"

"Look here, I'll have another with you, if you'd like to have one, after all!"

"No, no, no!"

"Well, don't be grumpy about it. I'm only thinking of you. They are simply ripping, and the loss is yours. Look here, if you won't have another one, you might wait while I do. I think I ought to have another."

"I shall have to be off."

"I suppose you can wait five minutes?"

"Bai Jove, I won't!" said D'Arcy, his politeness quite giving out at last. "I wefuse to wait anothah minute. If you want to go on gorgin' pork-pies, you can do it by yourself!"

"Oh, very well, I'll come!" said Fatty Wynn, rising. "Mind, if I get hungry before lunch it will be your fault."

"Oh, pway come on!"

They left the hotel.

Arthur Augustus caught sight of his reflection in a shop window, and paused. Fatty Wynn, who was quite willing to make haste now that there was nothing more to eat, looked round at him impatiently.

"I say, D'Arcy, let's get on, or they may have left the place. We don't want to waste all the morning. You were in a hurry just now. What are you looking at in that window?"

"My reflection, deah boy. I was thinkin'—"

"Oh, come on! We're late."

"I was wondewin' whethah I should buy a silk hat," said D'Arcy, unheeding. "A Panama is wippin' for cycle widin', but I don't know whethah it's sufficiently dwessy to walk about with a lady. What do you think?"

"I think we'd better be getting on."

"That's not the point. The weal question is—how would a silk hat look with a Norfolk jacket and knickahs?" said D'Arcy doubtfully.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You don't think it would be quite au fait?"

"I think you would look a bigger ass than you do now, old chap, and that's saying a lot. Come on!"

"Weally, Wynn—"

"Oh, I'm off!"

And Fatty Wynn marched off. And Arthur Augustus, tearing himself away from the shop window, followed him. He overtook his plump friend.

"Do you know the way to St. Michael's?" he asked.

"Blessed if I do! Let's ask somebody—or, better still, take a cab. I suppose you can stand the cab fare?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Here's a cab, then!"

And they took it. In five minutes it deposited them at the door of St. Michael's.

CHAPTER 12.

Information for D'Arcy!

TOM MERRY & Co. were about to leave the place when Arthur Augustus and Fatty Wynn alighted from the cab. They were just emerging into Pepper Lane, greatly pleased with their inspection of the old church.

A strange city is Coventry, where the relics of a past that extends into the dim mists of antiquity are seen side by side with one of the most thriving of modern industries. The city of ancient buildings and of modern motor works is full of strange incongruities. On this account it is especially interesting to visitors, and so it was to the juniors of St. Jim's.

The Twentieth Century seemed to jostle the Dark Ages at every turn, and the legend of Lady Godiva seemed strangely out of place amid the whir and buzz of strenuous manufacture.

Jack Blake caught sight of the latecomers as they came out of St. Michael's.

"Hallo, here's Gus!"

"I'm so sowwy I am so late!" said Arthur Augustus. "I was detained at the hotel by Fatty Wynn, who insisted upon makin' sewwal more meals."

"Good old Fatty!"

"Are you just goin' into the place?"

"No, we're just coming out of it!" grinned Blake. "We're going over a cycle factory next; your noble brother's got permission."

"But I wanted to see this church. It's a wippin' place, and the spiah is the tallest of the three spials."

"Well, you can't climb the spire," said Kangaroo, shaking his head solemnly. "You would spoil your clothes."

"Weally, Kangaroo—"

"It's all right, Gussy," said Blake, linking his arm affectionately in his cum's. "I've had a good look over the place, and I'll tell you all about it."

"That will hardly be the same thing, Blake."

"Just as good, my son. The tower is in the perpendicular style—"

"I should hardly have expected it to be howizontal—"

"Ass! That's a style of architecture. The length—"

"I wefuse to be called an ass."

"The length is two hundred and ninety-three feet—the length of the church, you know, not the tower. The tower is—is—is— What the dickens is the height of the tower, Kangaroo?"

"Three hundred and three feet," said the Australian, who was keenly interested in every antiquarian detail.

"Good! The breadth of the church is—is—is— What the dickens is the breadth of the church, Wallaby?"

"Hundred and twenty-seven feet."

"Good again! It took twenty-two centuries to build—"

"Twenty-two years!" shouted Tom Merry.

"Well, I knew it was twenty-two something," said Blake. "I thought twenty-two centuries would be a rather long time, too. It was commenced in—in—in—"

"Coventry."

"Ass! In the year thirteen—or fourteen—or fifteen—"

"Thirteen hundred and seventy-three," said Kangaroo.

"There you are, Gussy. You know all about it now, and without the trouble of walking about the place and getting a crick in the neck," said Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"That's all right. We're going over a big cycle factory next."

"I would wathah—"

"Now don't be obstinate, Gussy. I can tell you all about it as we go along. When you enter, the proper reflection to make is: 'If these ancient walls could only speak, what strange tales they could tell!' When you look from the tower you have to say: 'What eyes from these windows have beheld the barons of old riding in the panopy of war!'"

"I wegard you as an unpoetic ass, Blake!"

"Your mistake; this is poetry. I know exactly the right reflection for the right moment, and I'm just the chap to show you round places full of historic interest," said Blake.

(Continued on page 19.)

NEWS AND VIEWS FROM—



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

HALLO, chums! I've got another tip-top programme of good things in store for you next Wednesday. In the first place there is an excellent long story of Tom Merry & Co. entitled:

"THE RIVAL SCHOOLS!"
By Martin Clifford.

The rival schools, of course, are St. Jim's and the Grammar School, and this rivalry brings about some astonishing results. You'll find hundred per cent entertainment in this grand story. The same applies to the next chapters of

"THE SPY-FLYERS!"
By W. E. Johns.

For thrills you can't beat this grand yarn of the Great War. Tell all your pals about it. Have you sent me a joke yet? Remember I award half-a-crown to each reader whose joke "gets past me." In next week's GEM you will find another column of "rib-tickers" sent in by GEM readers, also another comic strip featuring Potts. Yes, sir, next Wednesday's GEM is great—it's the best yet, so don't miss it!

THE TENDER SPOT!

Tony Swisakaus and his brother John had a fancy to visit the Franklin Park Zoo, so off they trotted. Both of them were rather smitten by Lillian, a hefty Russian bear, who seemed easy to tease with apples and an occasional poking with a stick. But Lillian got fed up with this treatment. Waiting her opportunity she suddenly shot out a paw and seized Tony. Next moment the youngster was dragged through the bars of the cage. This is where brother John came out strong! With seven-year-old courage—for that's his age—he grabbed up a piece of iron piping, squeezed through the bars and went to his brother's rescue. Wallop! He gave Lillian the bear a resounding whack over the boko which made that very surprised female drop Tony and back into a corner. And there she stayed until a keeper came along and dragged the rather badly mauled Tony out of the cage. Full marks go to brother John for his pluck!

THE SIX-FOOT CLUB!

Every member of this novel Bradford club must stand seventy-two inches in his socks. One of the purposes of this club is to form a protest against the inadequate head room in tramcars and buses, the skimpy log room in cinemas and the small chairs in restaurants. These six-footers have our sympathy—they are overlooked.

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in these matters. But what about the average height man watching a footer match if he happens to be directly behind one of these six-footers. What's his remedy?

GROOOOH! THE DENTIST IS HERE!

That's what the 240 children from the Edmonton district said to themselves when the school medical officer ordered them to attend the dentist for teeth extraction. And out of the 240 guess how many turned up for treatment? Eighty—just a third!

SHOCKING!

Gangsters have been busy threatening to kidnap a rich American unless he hands over the useful sum of £10,000—and you know what gangsters are in America; they make quite a useful income out of the kidnapping business. But the intended victim, whom this par concerns, was not intimidated. Straightway he had a moat dug round his country mansion and filled with water. Through the moat water he sends a constant flow of electricity which would give any kidnapper jippo should he try to swim across under cover of darkness to do his dirty work. Cute notion? Rather!

MONEYED AMUSEMENT!

Boys will be boys—we all know that. But imagine the feelings of two fond American parents when, on arriving home, they found their little hopeful, aged five, looking unusually happy and contented. There was a reason for it—a £260 reason, so to speak. It appears that this mischievous five-year-old had come across his father's wad of dollar notes and had passed the time away by tearing them to fragments. Did he get a hiding? Well, ask yourself!

HE THOUGHT THEY WERE BANDITS!

"What have you got there?" demanded one of two stalwart-looking men as they came across a man with a suitcase walking along the road at a very early hour. The reply was: "What's that got to do with you?" and the man with the suitcase prepared for trouble. He was told that the two men who had accosted him were policemen but he wasn't a bit convinced. In his own mind he put them down as bandits. He bolted, was caught up with, and then a terrific scrap ensued. It was a passing motorist who straightened out the trouble. The two men were actually bona fide policemen; the man with the suitcase was quite an innocent, law-abiding member of the community. In fact he was a coffee-stall keeper going home

after his hard day's work with his takings in the suitcase! The fight ended with apologies all round—and, I suppose, a few bruises!

A DIAMOND FARM!

It was as far back as 1873 that a Mr. Sam Wemmer looked at a farm in the Transvaal and wondered whether it would pay him to buy it. You see the seller wanted £7 for that farm and, in those days, £7 was a lot of money. Mr. Wemmer eventually decided to speculate his £7 and the farm became his. Then money began to pour into its new owner's pockets, for the farm turned out to be rich in diamonds! Something like £60,000 of the glittering gems were taken from it and that meant, of course, a fortune for Mr. Sam Wemmer. How would you like to meet up with a farm like that?

TIME LIMIT!

A coloured gentleman who had occasion to "visit" one of our Law Courts some time ago took the oath in the usual way, thus swearing to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Later on it was proved that he had committed perjury. What do you think his defence to that charge was? He declared that as he had taken the oath on Monday he couldn't have committed perjury on Tuesday! Original defence, what, but the learned judge held that there was no time limit for the truth once the oath had been taken.

THEN HE FELT MAD!

Tinkle, tinkle! It was obviously the sound of falling money on the shop floor. A good-natured gentleman hearing the money fall stooped and retrieved it, and seeing a lady standing near told her that she must have dropped the money. The good lady, looking a trifle amazed, took the money, thanked the finder and then made herself scarce. The gentleman proceeded to do his own shopping, but when he had purchased the articles he required and felt in his pocket for the money with which to pay for them, all he discovered was a large hole! When that alarming discovery fully came home to him he realised that it was his own money he had heard fall—his own money he had so kindly handed to the surprised lady!

THE ONE-MAN SUB!

It's owned by an American inventor and its overall length is only ten feet. Yes, it is a submarine—it really does the disappearing trick, for it can dive to a distance of fifteen feet and can come up to the surface again when the one-man crew has had enough of underwater cruising. He controls his sub while he is lying flat on his back, with his head poked up somewhere in the conning tower.

"THE MYSTERY MASTER!"

Have you seen to-day's super issue of the "Nelson Lee Library"? If not, take a tip from me and sample a copy. It contains many star attractions, the chief of which is a sparkling school story featuring the popular chums of St. Frank's. This grand yarn, the first of a record-breaking "rebellion" series, is much too good to miss. It deals with the advent at the school of a new mystery master. At first Nipper & Co. are prepared to do anything to give him a hearty welcome, but once they have sampled his tyrannical methods they are prepared to do anything to get rid of him again! You'll enjoy no end the adventures of Nipper & Co. Ask for the "Nelson Lee" to-day.

YOUR EDITOR.

CHUMS ON THE ROAD!

(Continued from page 17.)

"Here, this way!" said Glyn, looking round. "We're going to have a look at Holy Trinity next. Come on, Gussy!"

"Wight you are, deah boy!"

After an inspection of that fine church, the party looked at the ruins near it. Even Blake was impressed by the information that the ruins were those of a monastery founded in the eleventh century by Earl Leofric, the husband of the famous Lady Godiva.

"Jolly interesting old place," remarked Kangaroo.

"You haven't anything quite so old in Melbourne, have you?" asked Monty Lowther innocently.

But Kangaroo only laughed.

"I suppose it's true about Lady Godiva?" he remarked meditatively.

"Yaas, wathah! I suppose you know Tennyson's poem on the subject? I know it by heart," said D'Arcy modestly. "I used to wecite it when I was pwactisin' wecitations. I will wecite it to you as we go along, if you like."

"You're awfully good—"

"Not at all, deah boy. It begins:

"I waited for the twain at Coventry—"

"I'll get on and join Figgins, I think," said Blake, quickening his pace.

Kangaroo and Glyn followed his example, and D'Arcy stopped reciting.

"Unpoetical lot of wottahs!" he murmured. "I say, Wynn, deah boy, where are we going next?"

"There's only one place, I suppose, next."

"Oh, I don't know. There are a great many places of interest in this city. I—"

"But there's only one place next!"

"Do you mean St. Maw's Hall?"

"No, I don't!"

"Or the cycle factory—"

"Of course not! I mean somewhere for lunch!"

"Bai Jove! It's not twelve yet!"

"I'm getting hungry!"

"Pewwags you'd better have a waitah followin' you about with a handcart with pork-pies on it," D'Arcy suggested sarcastically.

Fatty Wynn sighed.

"By Jove! I jolly well wish I could!"

"There's an automatic machine, deah boy. Get some chocolates."

"Well, I suppose that's better than nothing. I can get a dozen packets or so. Lend me some coppers, will you?"

Arthur Augustus handed over all the pennies he could find in his pockets, and hurried on after his friends, leaving Fatty Wynn clicking away at the automatic machine as if he meant to exhaust its contents.

CHAPTER 13.

A Run to Kenilworth!

COVENTRY was a place full of interest to the juniors from St. Jim's—too full for the ground to be got over quickly.

The visit to the cycle factory was postponed till the following morning, and as Lord Conway was occupied in the afternoon, the boys were left on their own until after lunch.

Lord Conway was engaged upon the question of the machines for the Cyclist Scout Corps, which were being built under his eye, so to speak; and he had asked Kildare to spend the afternoon with him, which the captain of St. Jim's was very glad to do—only being a little uneasy in his mind about Tom Merry & Co.

After all, he had really only come with the juniors to see that they did not get into any mischief on the road, and at Coventry his duties properly ended. There were enough in the party, in all conscience, to look after one another, and upon the whole he thought that they might have the afternoon unwatched.

When the boys discovered what was in his mind, they were full of assurance that they would be as good as the little boys in a goody story-book.

"You see, Kildare, deah boy, I'll look aftah them," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Undah my eye they'll be all wight."

"I was thinking of taking them on a run to Kenilworth," said Kangaroo. "I'm bound to see Kenilworth while I'm here."

"Cousin Ethel will be with us," said Figgins. "We're

not likely to get into any rows with Miss Cleveland in the party."

"Well, I suppose I can trust you?" said Kildare dubiously. "Yaas, wathah! That remark weally implies a doubt of our capacity to look aftah ourselves, Kildare; which is somewhat dispwagin'—"

"Better settle who's to be head-cook-and-bottle-washer for the afternoon," Jack Blake suggested. "That may save trouble."

"Yaas, that's a good ideah."

Kildare laughed.

"Good! I'll appoint a captain," he said. "It's quite understood that the orders of the skipper are to be obeyed?"

"Oh, yes; we'll play the game."

"Yaas, wathah! Who's the captain, Kildare?"

The juniors waited anxiously for the verdict. They did not quite understand the smile on Kildare's face.

"Miss Cleveland!"

"What!"

"Bai Jove!"

"You are all in charge of Miss Cleveland for the afternoon," said Kildare, with a wave of the hand. "Miss Cleveland, I hold you responsible for these youngsters."

Miss Cleveland laughed merrily.

"I will look after them," she said.

The juniors looked a little sheepish. But there was no getting out of it, and they had to accept the girl as skipper.

Lord Conway and Kildare walked away, laughing. Arthur Augustus looked after them, shaking his head.

"Now, what's the programme?" said Kangaroo briskly.

"What price Kenilworth?" said Figgins.

"Or a run to Birmingham," said Monty Lowther. "I've never seen Brum."

"Leamington isn't a bad idea," said D'Arcy. "I've got an aunt who lives in Leamington. You may have heard of my Aunt Adelina."

"About a million times," assented Blake. "But I don't think we want to fill up an afternoon visiting your Aunt Adelina—to say nothing of what your Aunt Adelina would think if a dozen dusty bouncers suddenly burst in on her in a quiet and select circle of Leamington."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Haven't you forgotten one thing?" asked Cousin Ethel sweetly.

"No. What is it?"

"Why, to consult your captain."

"Oh!" Jack Blake smiled a sickly smile. "Certainly!"

"Yaas, wathah! I am weally surprisid at you, Blake. Pway give us diwecions for the aftahnoon, Ethel," said D'Arcy gracefully.

"We'll put it to the vote," said Cousin Ethel. "I should like to go to Kenilworth, but—"

"Hands up for Kenilworth!" shouted Figgins.

Every junior put his hands up; Figgins, in his enthusiasm, putting up two. Cousin Ethel smiled.

"I suppose we can get a lady's machine," she remarked. "I don't want to come in the trailer. It is only a short ride—about five miles."

"Yaas, wathah! I'll see about it at once, Ethel."

"Perhaps I'd better," said Blake. "You know what hired bikes are, and they'll work off the oldest and the crockiest machine on Gus."

"Weally, Blake, you can leave it to me. I'll be back in ten minutes—by the time Ethel has her hat on."

And Arthur Augustus was as good as his word. As the crowd of juniors gathered with their machines outside the hotel, Arthur Augustus walked up with a splendid bicycle. It was the latest thing in Sunbeams, and looked as new as a new pin.

The juniors of St. Jim's gazed at it in amazement.

"My word!" said Blake. "Do you mean to say you get a machine like that on hire? How much? A guinea an hour?"

"No, deah boy. I—"

"Why, the chap must be off his rocker to let out a machine like that on hire!" said Figgins. "It's a perfectly new machine."

"Yaas, wathah! You see—"

Jack Blake clapped his elegant chum on the back.

"Well, you beat us this time!" he exclaimed. "That's a sixteen-guinea machine, as good as new. How did you do it?"

"You see, I haven't hired it—"

"What!"

"I've bought it."

"Bought it!" said Blake dazedly. "Bought it!"

"Yaas, wathah! I tried to get a decent machine on hire, but it was no good. Some of them were pwetty good, but not good enough for Ethel, you know."

"Oh dear, Arthur!" said Ethel. "Have you paid—"

"That's all wight," said Arthur Augustus airily. "I've referred them to my governah. I hadn't any tin to

pay for the machine. My governah will send them a cheque. He's always sendin' cheques to people, you know, and one more won't make any difference. They knew I was Conway's bwothah, and that made it all wright. They would have let me bwing away all their stock if I liked."

"But, really, Arthur—"
"It's all wright, deah gal! The governah won't cut up wusty when he knows it's for you. Pway allow me to make you a pwsent of this machine!" said D'Arcy, with a princely wave of the hand.

Cousin Ethel could not help laughing, and the juniors laughed, too. D'Arcy's way of solving the difficulty was very like D'Arcy. However, the machine was purchased now, and there was no help for it. It exactly suited Cousin Ethel—D'Arcy knowing the exact measurement of her own machine at home. The girl mounted, and the machine worked like a charm, and she could not but be delighted with it.

They rode out of Coventry on the southern road, with their faces to Kenilworth. It is a fine road for cyclists, and the juniors enjoyed the run immensely. Half-way they rode over the famous Gibbet Hill, and then descended gaily towards Kenilworth.

"Hold on!" shouted Fatty Wynn suddenly.

"Eh? What? Why?"

"Hold on! You'll pass the place."

Somewhat surprised, the juniors jammed their brakes on. They could not see the castle yet, but they imagined from Fatty Wynn's excited manner that he had caught sight of some historic relic of wonderful interest that they had nearly missed. The whole party dismounted.

"What is it?" demanded Tom Merry.

Fatty Wynn mopped his warm brow.

"Can't you see it?"

Tom Merry looked round him in amazement. He could see trees and hilly slopes and green fields, and a glimpse of Kenilworth ruins through the trees, but he could see nothing to cause the excitement of Fatty Wynn.

"Blessed if I can see anything!" he said. "What is it, Fatty?"

"Well, you must be as blind as a bat," said the fat Fourth-Former. "Can't you see that?" He pointed. "Look! It's plain enough!"

"You—you utter ass!" exclaimed Tom Merry, in disgust.

Fatty Wynn was pointing to a large signboard that showed at the roadside. It bore the legend:

"Refreshments."

CHAPTER 14.

The Misadventures of D'Arcy!

"REFRESHMENTS!"

It was an inspiring word—to Fatty Wynn. After the first moment of wrath, when they discovered what they had been stopped for, the juniors burst into a laugh.

Fatty Wynn was quite serious. He, for one, didn't see anything comical in the matter.

"Is that what you've stopped us for?" said Kangaroo.

"Of course; I'm hungry!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Are we to stop for tea, skipper?"

Cousin Ethel laughed.

"Yes, certainly, before exploring the ruins!"

And the party had tea under the shade of the big trees, and an enjoyable tea it was. Fatty Wynn had done himself justice at lunch, but he came out very strong at tea-time, all the same. With bread-and-butter and fresh eggs, and jam and marmalade, and watercress fresh from the stream, a sybarite might have enjoyed the meal.

Fatty Wynn was not finished when the others were, and they left their bicycles in the garden, and walked on to the ruins, leaving the fat Fourth-Former to finish at his leisure.

Fatty Wynn continued his meal. His capacity astounded the waitress, and two or three other waitresses came peeping through the trees to see Fatty at work. He finished at last, looking extremely satisfied with himself, a little shiny, and very sleepy.

"I think I'll have a snooze under the trees before I go after them," he murmured. "I want to be pretty fresh for routing among the old ruins."

And he curled up in the shade in the long grass, and in about two seconds was fast asleep.

Meanwhile, Cousin Ethel & Co. had reached the ruins, and were exploring them with great zest—especially Kangaroo. The Australian lad was very interested indeed, and very keen to know the past history of Kenilworth, and Monty Lowther obligingly made up some for him on the spot. He was in the midst of a very interesting narrative of the doings of King John, Dudley Earl of Leicester, and Simon de Montfort, putting them all together in the story, when Arthur Augustus interrupted them.

"I am sowsy to intewwupt you, Lowthah," said D'Arcy,

"but weally I cannot allow you to take the stwangan in in this way."

"Oh, go and eat coke!" growled Lowther.

"I wefuse to do anything of the sort. I—"

"It's all right," grinned Kangaroo. "I was only letting him run on, Gussy. I was just wondering where he would stop."

After that Monty Lowther gave no more particulars of the past history of Kenilworth.

Cousin Ethel, however, who had read on the subject, told Kangaroo much about it, and the Cornstalk listened with keen interest. They rambled over the ruins, and looked into the dark vaults, and Monty Lowther unshung his camera.

"I'm going to take home some pictures of this," he remarked. "Would you mind standing anywhere else but just in front of the camera, Gussy? I can take you at St. Jim's when I want to test the strength of the machine."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"If Cousin Ethel would sit in this old embrasure among the ivy, it would make a pretty picture," said Monty Lowther.

"I'll sit there, deah boy, if you like, and—"

"I said a pretty picture," said Lowther. "Not a study in duifers. Miss Ethel—"

"Certainly!" said Ethel cheerily.

She sat down in the place indicated. The recess of the old wall was in a crumbling state, and D'Arcy was a little anxious.

"Sure you are safe there, Ethel?"

"Yes, quite, thank you!"

"I weally considah—"

"Sit still," said Lowther, squinting into the view-finder.

"That's lovely! Can you remain like that a minute?"

"As long as you like."

"Weally, Ethel," said D'Arcy, starting forward, as Lowther clicked the camera. "I do not considah you safe. What are you makin' that wow for, Lowthah?"

"You utter ass!" roared Lowther. "You've spoiled the picture!"

"I wefuse to be called an uttah ass!"

"Will you get out of the way?"

"Certainly not! I—"

Monty Lowther laid the camera on a block of masonry, and rushed at Arthur Augustus. Since he had taken up photography, he had become even more enthusiastic than Manners had been of old, and to have his work interrupted in this way made him "wrathy." The swell of St. Jim's started back, caught his foot in a rut, and sat down violently upon the ground.

"Bai Jove!" he gasped.

Kangaroo pushed Lowther back.

"Rows are barred," he said laconically. "Skipper, call Lowther to order!"

"Order, Lowther, please," said Cousin Ethel sweetly.

Lowther turned crimson.

"Sorry," he said, "but—that young ass is enough to turn a chap's hair grey."

"I decline to be alluded to as a young ass, Lowthah," gasped D'Arcy, struggling to his feet, "and if I had not promised Kildare to obey Cousin Ethel's ordahs, I would give you a fearful thwashin'! You have caused me to sit down violently, and I have torn a hole in my twou—"

"Order!"

"In my knick—"

"Shut up!"

"In my clothes," amended D'Arcy. "I wegard it as bein' your fault, you uttah wottah! I shall thwash you when we get back to the coll."

"Will you shut up now, you ass, and let me take the photograph?" roared Lowther.

"Yes, do be quiet, Arthur," said Cousin Ethel.

"Weally, Ethel, you might let a fellow finish—"

"But we shall have to be home by dusk," said Ethel sweetly.

This was too much. D'Arcy almost snorted as he turned away. Then he suddenly remembered the tear in his garments, and swung back again, with his face to Cousin Ethel. His face was scarlet.

"Bai Jove!" he murmured, in great distress. "Tom Mewwy! Blake! Dig!"

"What's the matter?"

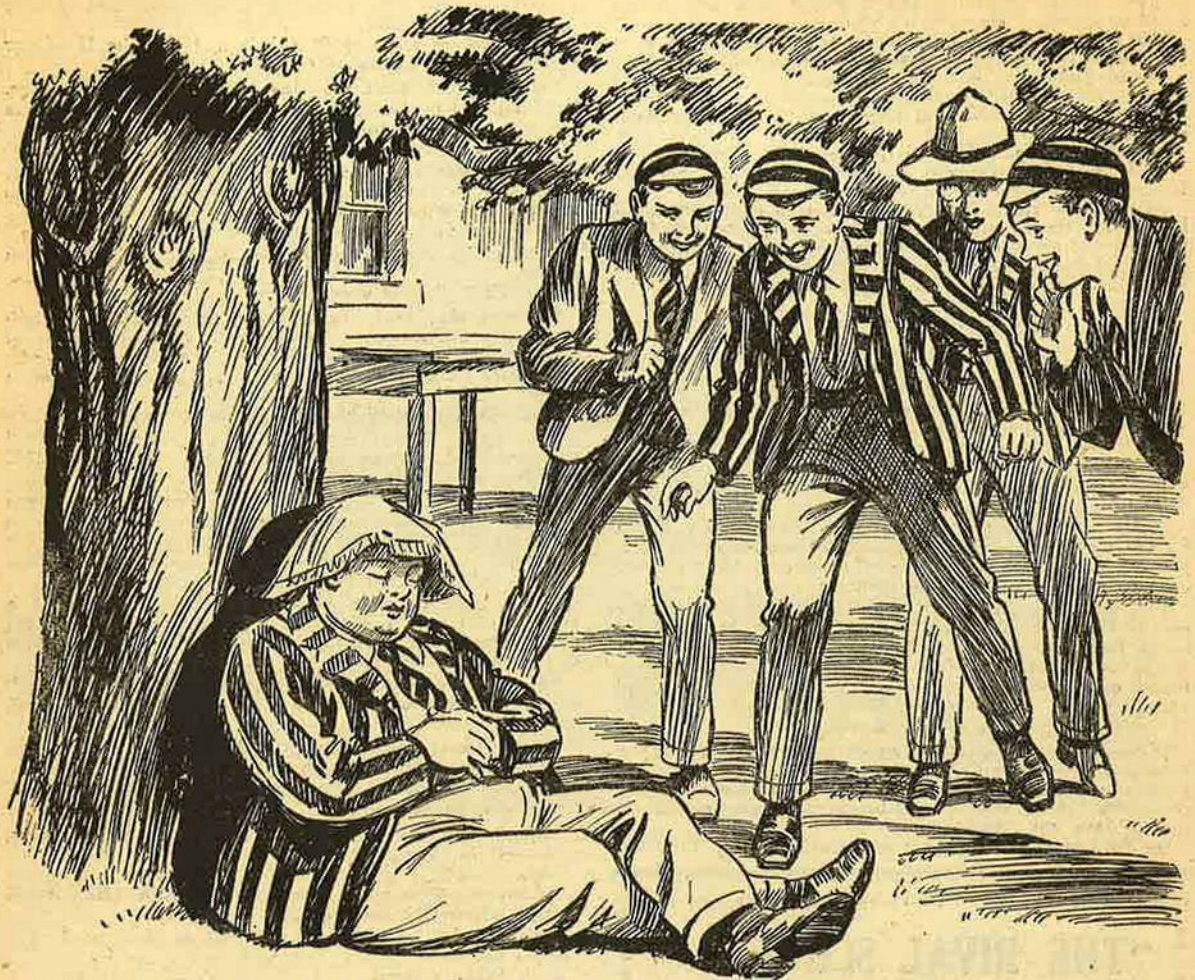
"I've torn a hole in my twousahs," whispered D'Arcy.

"Can you help me?"

"Sorry; I forgot to bring my sewing-machine," said Jack Blake.

"Pway don't wot, deah boy! I've torn a gweat gash in my knickahs, you know, on a beastlay sharp stone," said D'Arcy. As a matter of fact there was a tear about an inch long in his Norfolk knickers, and the jacket covered it, but D'Arcy was distressed. His chums were properly sympathetic. "What am I to do, deah boys?"

"Better back away, like a giddy horse, till you get round



As they entered the shady garden the first sight that met the eyes of Tom Merry & Co. was the plump form of Fatty Wynn fast asleep under a tree with a handkerchief over his head. "Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the chums of St. Jim's.

the wall yonder," said Tom Merry seriously. "Then cut and run for it."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"I'll pin it up for you, if you like," said Blake generously. "I've got some pins, though I've left my sewing-machine at home. Look here! Get behind the wall there, out of sight, and I'll collect all the pins the fellows have, and come and pin you up."

"You are a weal chum, Blake."

"Of course I am, Buzz off!"

Arthur Augustus backed away till a mass of masonry hid him from sight of Cousin Ethel, who was contentedly being photographed. D'Arcy halted, out of sight, and anxiously waited for Blake to join him.

Blake and Monty Lowther came along together, and both of them were well supplied with pins.

"Here we are!" said Blake cheerily. "Better lie down—over Lowther's knee—and I shall be able to negotiate the tear."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Arthur Augustus obeyed Blake's directions, and Blake set to work with the pins.

There was a fearful yell from D'Arcy, and he kicked and struggled wildly.

"Anything the matter, Gussy?"

"You—you uttah beast! You stuck a pin in me!"

"If you're going to make a fuss about a little pain—"

"Pway be more careful, deah boy. Ow!"

"What is it now?"

"You have pwicked me again!"

"You must be jolly clumsy to keep on getting pricked like that, Gussy. Never mind; it's done now. I've put three pins in you."

"Vevy good!"

Arthur Augustus rose with great relief. Monty Lowther was grinning, but D'Arcy did not deign to take notice of his grins. They rejoined the rest of the party, and as Lowther had used up all his films by this time, the photography was

at an end. The party explored the ruins contentedly for about another hour, and then walked back to the place where they had had tea.

As they entered the shady garden, the first thing that caught their eyes was the plump form of Fatty Wynn fast asleep under the trees, with a handkerchief over his head.

Korr shook him by the shoulder.

"Groc-roo!" murmured Wynn. "Lemme alone! 'Tain't rising-bell yet!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Get up, Fatty!"

Fatty Wynn sat up and blinked sleepily in the sunshine.

"By George, I've been asleep!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ready to go to Kenilworth Castle?" asked Fatty, rubbing his eyes. "I'm ready, if you are. I feel better after a few minutes' nap."

The juniors roared with laughter. Fatty Wynn looked at them wonderingly.

"What's the joke?" he demanded. "I'm ready to start."

"Ha, ha, ha!" gasped Figgins. "We've been—and come back! Ha, ha, ha!"

"You started first, I know. You mean, you've come back for me."

"You young ass! You've been asleep two hours," said Kangaroo. "We're just going to start for Coventry, when we've had another cup of tea."

"M-m-m-m-m-m-my hat!" said Fatty Wynn, amazed.

"Never mind, I'll tell you all about it," said Blake. "Sit down, Gussy, and rest a bit; we can't carry you home, you know."

"I vegard that as a fivivolous wemark, Blake. Howevah, I will certainly west a little."

Arthur Augustus sank into a seat, and the next moment leaped to his feet, with a fiendish yell.

Cousin Ethel looked at him in alarm.

"Good gracious! What is the matter, Arthur?"

"Ow! Wow! Yow! Wow! Nothin', deah gal. I—I—I sat on somethin' sharp, that's all!"

And Arthur Augustus bestowed a wrathful glare upon Blake and Lowther, who were nearly in convulsions. He understood perfectly well that this was a little joke of his chums. He remained standing.

"Won't you sit down and rest, Gussy?" said Blake persuasively.

D'Arcy gave him a fixed glare through his eyeglass. "No, Blake, I will not sit down and west," he said frigidly. "I uttably wefuse to sit down and west!"

And D'Arcy remained standing. Before he mounted his bicycle for the homeward ride, he contrived to withdraw into a quiet corner and pull out all the pins Blake had so kindly fastened in his garments. And during the ride back to Coventry he did not speak a word to Jack Blake.

CHAPTER 15.

Good-bye to Coventry!

WE should require at least ten times the space at our disposal to follow the chums of St. Jim's step by step through their stay in the famous city of the three spires. And even then we should not have exhausted the points of interest in the capital of the Midlands.

Under the guidance of Lord Conway the cyclists visited a famous motor works, with buildings of endless extent, one of the centres of a gigantic industry; and over many another live of busy men their guide led them.

They saw Coventry at work and Coventry at play, and the end of the visit to the old yet modern city came all too soon. In the great factories Bernard Glyn could have spent weeks without tiring, while Cousin Ethel and Kangaroo found more to interest them in old-world churches and ancient streets. And wherever Cousin Ethel was interested, of course Figgins was interested, too.

D'Arcy's idea of spending an extra day in the city by returning on the railway instead of a wheel was voted a good one, and unanimously adopted. And Lord Conway cheerfully "played up" to his brother's suggestion that he should stand the "racket."

On the last afternoon about nine-tenths of what they had

intended to see still remained to be seen, and Arthur Augustus had an idea.

"Suppose we wish to St. Jim's and ask the Head for another week?" he suggested.

"Suppose you don't play the young ass," said Kildare, laughing. "I can imagine what the reply would be. We're catching the train to-morrow morning."

"Weally, Kildare—"

"We'll come back another time," said Bernard Glyn. "I've got an uncle in Birmingham, and I'll get him to invite a crowd for a week-end some time."

"Bai Jove, that's a good ideah, deah boy!"

"Got many more things on the list, Blake?" asked Tom Merry.

Jack Blake looked over his list.

"Lemme see; yes. Three more factories and Dunlop's place—two old churches—three lots of ruins—the effigy of Peeping Tom in Smithfield Street—ride to Stivichall—walk to Spencer Park—Stoneleigh Abbey—and about twenty more items."

"Bai Jove, we shall have a busy day to-day!"

They had. In the evening they gathered again, tired and contented, and feeling that they had done very well, considering, in their trip to Coventry.

Lord Conway had concluded his business there, and was returning to London, and he came in the same train as the juniors. He had the pleasure of taking tickets for the whole party and their machines, and the amount he paid out was fabulous; but he was quite cheerful about it.

"Your brother's quite an old sport!" Blake remarked to D'Arcy. "I say, I wish you'd get him to come to St. Jim's some time, so that we could make a little return for his hospitality."

"Yaas, wathah!" assented D'Arcy. "The Tewwitowials will be manoeuvrin' near St. Jim's in a week or two, and we might entahtain them, you know."

"Good!" said Blake heartily. "I can see us entertaining a company of Territorials in Study No. 6—or a whole battalion, for that matter. No need to draw a line anywhere!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Jump in!" shouted Blake. "Buck up! Do you want to be left in Coventry?"

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus made a rush for the train. He jumped in and gasped for breath.

"All wight!" he exclaimed. "Come in, deah boy! The twain's not movin' yet."

Jack Blake nodded.

"That's all right; it doesn't start for five minutes yet."

Arthur Augustus looked at him fixedly.

"Was that a wotten joke, Blake?"

"Certainly not!"

"Oh! In that case I will ovallook it."

"It wasn't a rotten joke," explained Blake; "it was a jolly good joke—see?"

"No, I don't see anythin' of the sort! I wegard you—"

"Now, then, no language," said Blake, holding up his hand; "Cousin Ethel's coming!"

"I wasn't goin' to—"

"Hush!"

"I tell you I wasn't goin'—" shrieked D'Arcy.

"Quiet! Here's Cousin Ethel!"

"I tell you—"

"Calm yourself, old chap!"

"Yes, do be calm, Arthur!" said Cousin Ethel.

And Arthur Augustus, feeling the hopelessness of attempting to justify himself, relapsed into silence, and did not speak again till the train was a mile out of the city.

Then Blake gave him a friendly dig in the ribs.

"Not ratty, old chap?"

D'Arcy's face relaxed.

"Well, weally, Blake, you know, you do exaspewate a fellow; but, upon the whole, I shall continue to wegard you as a fwend. We've had a wippin' time."

"We have, my son—we have!"

"I shall always remember Coventry," said Cousin Ethel softly.

And from the windows the juniors of St. Jim's and their girl chum looked back at the three tall spires till they disappeared from sight.

THE END.

(Another great story of Tom Merry & Co. by famous Martin Clifford will appear in next week's GEM! See column one of this page!)

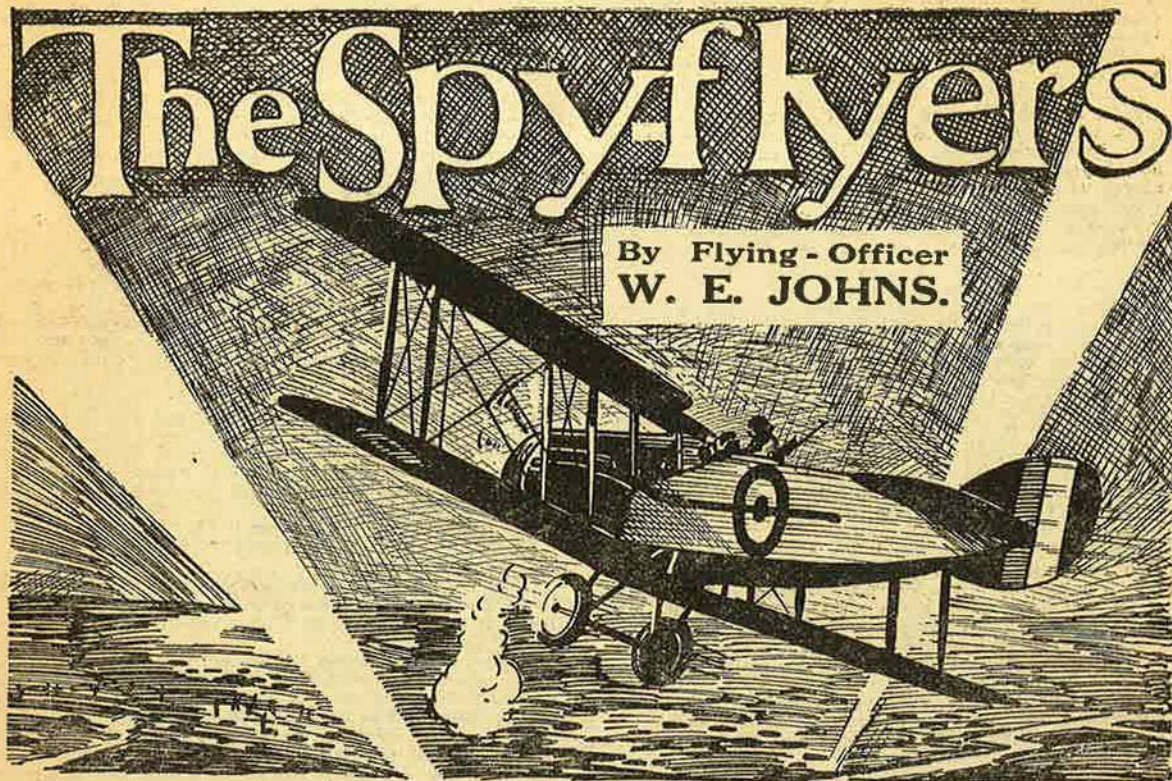
"THE RIVAL SCHOOLS!"



St. Jim's v. Grammarians! The Old rivalry breaks out again with a vengeance in next week's ripping yarn of Tom Merry & Co.! The Grammarians start off with a great victory—but Tom Merry's got an amazing scheme for retaliation up his sleeve!

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BIG THRILLS IN THE AIR WAR!



REX LOVELL and TONY FOSTER are chosen by MAJOR TREVOR for Secret Service work in the air. They become suspicious of an English officer, CAPTAIN FAIRFAX, but Trevor tells them that he is above suspicion. Dressed in German uniforms and flying a German plane, Rex and Tony land on a German aerodrome. A British SE5 machine also lands, and Fairfax gets out! Rex and Tony hold him up and take some papers from him. Then they rush to their machine and fly off.

Robbed!

AS Rex shot the Hannoverana up into the air, Tony leaned across and bellowed into his pilot's ear: "That was a narrow squeak! You know, you'll kill both of us one of these days!"

Rex turned a grinning face to Tony.

"Probably!" he bellowed above the noise of the engine. He made a wide climbing turn, and pointed down as he did so. On the ground in front of the hangar stood Fairfax and a group of mechanics, staring upwards. He waved mockingly in farewell, and then headed for the lines, climbing steeply. "I'm going to climb to eighteen thousand, and glide over!" he yelled to Tony. "I don't want to run intoarchie, or any of our scout patrols near the ground!" And Tony nodded understandingly.

Even so, they had to turn back twice into the German lines to avoid patrols of British scouts, and it took them nearly an hour to reach Neuville. They glided down to a smooth landing, and taxied straight up to the hangar door.

"Well, that's that!" said Rex quietly, as he took off his flying kit and hung it over the lower plane. "Let's go and change. The cat's out of the bag now, and no mistake. Let's go along and see the major. I felt it in my bones that we were on the track of that SE5," he declared, as they made their way towards the major's office. "I thought you both couldn't be mistaken about Fairfax. Great, Scott! Just imagine it, a spy in Divisional H.Q.! But there, it's happened often enough in history," he observed sagely. "Someone is going to get his nose twisted over this business, if I know anything. It'll shake the major up, too, when we tell him."

They returned the salute of the orderly on duty at the outer door, and hurried to the major's room. Rex knocked sharply.

"Come in!" called a voice cheerfully. Rex pushed the door right open, and they made as if to enter. Instead, they stopped dead, and stood rooted to the ground, staring in utter, dumb amazement. In the armchair, with a book on his lap and his feet resting comfortably on the major's desk, sat an officer. It was Captain Fairfax.

"Hallo! It's you, Lovell—and you, Frazier!" he called cheerfully. "Where have you sprung from? What's the

matter with you?" he went on. "What are you staring at? You look as if you had seen a ghost!"

Rex took a slow pace forward into the room. For a second or two he struggled with himself, unable to speak, so great had been the shock.

"And where the devil have you sprung from?" he said at last, in a strained voice. "How long have you been here?"

"Oh, about half an hour, I suppose!" replied Fairfax easily. "I've just brought orders over from H.Q., but I wanted a word with the major, and as he was out, I decided to wait until he came back. I had to get his signature for orders, anyway," he added casually, rising and yawning. "I wish he'd get a move on. I shall be late for dinner. Have a cigarette?" he said, holding out his case. "What's the matter with you?" he said again, eyeing Rex curiously, after a moment's pause. "Have I got small-pox or something?"

"Oh, no, it's nothing!" replied Rex stonily. "I expected to find the major here, that's all."

"Well, don't look so peeved about it; he'll be here in a minute," replied Fairfax evenly. "Ah, here he is now! Hallo, major!"

The major looked around in surprise as he entered. "Quite a party, eh?" he chuckled. "Well, Fairfax, what brought you over? Do you want to see the general?"

"No; I've just brought the doings over; here they are. Sign on the dotted line, please. Thanks!"

Fairfax put the orders in his pocket, and moved towards the door.

"Where are you going?" asked Rex coolly.

"Back to H.Q., of course. Why?"

"Oh, nothing! I just wondered if we should see you over at our place to-night. We've a guest night on, that's all."

"Sorry I can't manage to-night. See you another time. Good-bye, sir! Good-bye, chaps!" called Fairfax, as he closed the door behind him.

"Pardon me, sir—" began Rex.

"Just a minute, while I sign these documents," broke in the major. "My orderly is waiting for them."

"Now," he said, five minutes later, as he flung his pen on the desk, "what—"

But Rex wasn't listening. He was staring at an S E 5 which had taxied out and turned into the wind at the lower end of the aerodrome. Even as he watched, the engine roared, the tail lifted, and the machine rose gracefully into the air.

"Where did I leave my flying coat, Tony?" asked Rex, with a start.

"Down in the hangar on the Bristol," replied Tony.

With a brisk "Pardon me, sir!" Rex, with Tony at his heels, was sprinting for dear life down the line of hangars. They burst into the one in which they had left the Bristol, and hurried towards the machine. Their flying-kit was exactly as they had left it.

Rex snatched up his flying-coat and thrust his hand into the pocket; a cry of dismay broke from his lips.

"They're gone!" he muttered, through his clenched teeth.

"You mean the plans—"

"What else, idiot?" snarled Rex. "Sorry, old boy, I didn't mean that!" he went on quickly; "but I'm a bit upset. We took a pretty big risk to get those papers, which, incidentally, were our only hope of proving anything against Fairfax—and now he's got 'em back again. It's no earthly use going after him in the Bristol; he's half-way home already." He paused and scratched his head reflectively. "The fact is, Tony," he went on slowly, "this business is getting a bit beyond us. I can't stand many more of these shocks. When I saw Fairfax sitting in that chair I nearly dropped dead, and that's a fact."

"So did I," admitted Tony ruefully. "I'm beginning to think he's got a double."

"He's got something!" said Rex bitterly. "A man can't be in two places at once, and if that wasn't Fairfax at Varne then I'll eat my hat! Yet when we get here he's here. Wait a minute, though—he might have done it. Yes, he might have raced straight back near the ground in the S E, while we were climbing for height; and then we had to waste time because of those S E 5's and Camels. That was it. He dashed straight off behind us, with the object of getting here first and getting the papers back. What a nerve the fellow must have! Let's see, he said he was going back to H.Q., didn't he? We'll soon prove the truth of that. He's in the S E 5, I should say."

"How are you going to find out?" exclaimed Tony. "If

he went back to headquarters, as he said, he should be there by now. Let's go and ring him up," replied Rex.

"Here, what are you boys up to?" said the major irritably as they entered. "I can't have you dashing in and out of my office like this."

"May I use your phone, sir?" asked Rex civilly.

"Certainly."

Rex put the call through to divisional headquarters.

"I want Captain Fairfax's office, please!" he said curtly to the orderly who answered him.

"Here you are, sir," said the telephone orderly.

"Hallo, yes!" called a voice.

"Is that Captain Fairfax's office?" asked Rex.

"Yes, it is."

"Is Captain Fairfax there?"

"Yes, he is. Do you wish to speak to him?"

"Did you say he was there?" exclaimed Rex incredulously.

"Yes, I said he was—he is here now. Do you want to speak to him or do you not?"

"No, it doesn't matter, thanks," replied Rex, after a moment's pause, slowly hanging up the receiver. He turned to see Major Trevor looking at him, with an expression of marked disapproval.

"What are you worrying Captain Fairfax about?" said the major shortly. "Have you still got that bee in your bonnet? Didn't I tell you the other night—"

"Yes, I know, sir," broke in Rex; "but, believe me, I had a reason for ringing up, a good reason. I just had an idea I wanted to verify, and this confirms it. Thanks very much. Good-night, sir!"

He moved towards the door.

"Have you anything to report?"

Rex shook his head.

"No, sir. I may have struck the trail, or I may not," he said slowly. "At present it is a bit difficult to follow, but if it leads to anything I'll let you know," he added, as he left the room.

"This is getting worse and worse!" muttered Rex mournfully, when they reached home. "There is more in this espionage business than meets the eye. You heard me on the phone? You know as well as I do that unless we're crazy, and rushing about on a fool's errand, Fairfax ought to have been in that S E 5. We saw him set off by car for headquarters. He couldn't have come back and flown there in the S E 5, because there's no landing ground there, and, anyway, they want those papers he's got in Germany, not at Divisional Headquarters."

"I am as sure as I am sitting here that that S E 5 went straight off to Varne, and those papers are now in the hands of the German Intelligence people. Of course, there is always the possibility that he did go back to H.Q. and handed the papers over to someone else—one of his assistants—with instructions to take them back to Varne; yet somehow that doesn't strike me as likely."

"I'll tell you straight, Tony, that when that fellow at the other end of the phone told me that Fairfax was actually there—and he said it in the most matter-of-fact way—it completely upset all my calculations. I had made up my mind that he was going to say 'No, I'm sorry, he isn't back yet.'"

"Well, that's how it stands, and I am beginning to get a feeling that we are just on the fringe of something pretty deep."

Tony nodded.

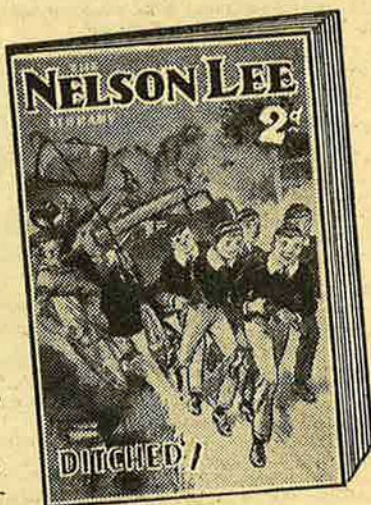
"It's getting a bit too much for me," he said anxiously. "And, like you, I've got the feeling that we are on the track of something. This spying is a cunning game; you've got to be cunning, or you don't last long. It is a one-man game, one man playing a lone hand against the rest of the world. You can believe nobody and trust nobody; it doesn't do to talk when your life is going to pay for the first slip."

"Well, we've learned this much to-day, anyway; we know they've got a D H 4, and a Bristol Fighter at Varne, and your hunch was dead right when you said that Varne was the place where this thing starts from. What we've got to do is to find the connecting-link over this side. That Bristol and the D H are used by the Germans to land over this side of the line, and often, too, you may depend on that. If we can find one of them over here, on the ground, or the S E 5, for that matter, and watch the people that fly them, we shall know a lot more."

"You're right," agreed Rex. "It's the only thing we can do, but if all we discover is that they are flown by Fairfax, it is going to be a tricky business. He is as slippery as an eel, that chap. How are we going to identify the D H or the Bristol if we do see them over this side of the lines—that's what I want to know."

"Let us go back and get the numbers of the machines. What fools we were not to do that while we were there!" cried Tony.

"Go back! Are you mad? We can never land at Varne again. We should be arrested and shot before our tail-skid



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was on the ground. Do you suppose that Fairfax, or whoever the chap is, hasn't told them all about us by now? Of course he has.

"I'm beginning to think that the hold-up was a mistake. Fairfax knows now we've spotted him, and every Boche aerodrome between Belgium and Switzerland is buzzing like a beehive. No, we've blotted our copy-books for landing in Germany."

"Good lor', of course we have!" agreed Tony gloomily. "To tell you the truth, I'd forgotten that."

"Knowing the numbers of the machines wouldn't help us much now, I'm afraid!" said Rex bitterly. "Fairfax knows that we've got his SE 5 spotted, and that we saw the other two machines over at Varne. Obviously, the first thing he would do would be to alter their appearance, particularly the numbers. It's going to be harder than ever, now they know we have seen those kites."

"Well, those machines are our only chance; we've got to be able to identify them, or we are absolutely unstuck!"

"What do you suggest doing—going over and painting the wings red, or something?"

Tony shook his head.

"There's an easier way than that," he answered.

"How?"

"Wait a minute. Let me see; there are three SE 5 Squadrons, two Bristols, and two DH 4 Squadrons along this section of line, and that covers a good many miles. This is the area over which the enemy are working! I don't think they are operating any farther afield than this sector. Very well! If every one of our machines had a distinguishing mark on it, such as a black stripe across the top of the centre section and across the fuselage behind the ring markings, we should know very well that any machine not wearing that stripe was up to no good. It wouldn't be very much trouble for squadrons to put that mark on; it wouldn't take more than a quarter of an hour to do the whole job. Trevor could easily get it put in Orders that no machine was to leave the ground to-morrow morning until that stripe was put on," concluded Tony emphatically.

"There are times when you are positively brilliant," declared Rex, "and this is one of them. We'll go and see the major about it right away and ask him to get it put in to-night's Orders. If that fails we've only one card left."

"What's that?"

"We shall have to go over the other side again and take another look round Varne Aerodrome. We couldn't do it openly, of course—it would have to be done at night; although I have an idea that those British machines are only used in the daytime when there is something of a very urgent nature to be done. There wouldn't be much point in using them at night; they could use their own machines then. I don't quite know what we could do, but it isn't much use sitting over here waiting for them."

"Dare we risk landing over there?"

"It'll be no worse than the night trips we've done before. We have gone too far now to hope to get away with it if we are caught. If our identification scheme fails we shall have to go over there and have another prowl round," said Rex vigorously, rising to his feet and picking up his cap. "Come on, let's go and get this black stripe scheme fixed up with the major."

Adventure by Night!

REX leaned over the rail of the mess veranda and eyed the clear, starlight night moodily.

"It annoys me," he said in an undertone to Tony,

"to think that we know so much and get so little.

Even now there might be something going on over at Varne that would give us a clue to the whole thing."

It was the night following the inauguration of their "black stripe" scheme. In order to have the scheme carried out they had found it necessary to tell Major Trevor of their discovery of the British machines in the German hangar, and after he had got over his surprise he not only agreed to their scheme but complimented them on it, and took steps for the immediate carrying out of the order by which all Bristol Fighters, DH 4's, and SE 5's in that sector of the front were required to wear the identification mark.

Dawn the following morning had found Rex and Tony eagerly pursuing their quest among the clouds, and, although they encountered several lone machines of the type they sought, the black stripes were always well in evidence. Naturally, one had also been painted on their own Bristol Fighter, and Tony could not restrain a smile when, on passing another Bristol Fighter, the observer had pointed to his own stripe, with a grin, and raised his thumbs high in the air. Tony smiled back, and wondered what the fellow would have thought had he known the real reason of what must have sounded a strange order and a ridiculous fad on the part of the authorities.

They had been involved in two combats, and in one of them Rex had shot down an Albatross, but without the usual feeling of satisfaction that follows a victory; and after three patrols of over two hours each they had returned home at dusk, weary and dispirited with the failure of their quest.

"Why not drop a 230lb. bomb on that end hangar right now?" exclaimed Tony, in a flash of inspiration.

"And wipe out the only clue we have!" sneered Rex sarcastically. "A fat lot of good that would do! They'd soon get some more machines, and then we should be worse off than ever. No, that won't do. Our only chance of breaking up this scheme lies in catching those machines red-handed. We shall soon have to be doing something about it, though. I have a feeling that Trevor is not too pleased with us; he is beginning to look at us as if we were wasting our time—and his."

"Well, what else do you suggest?" asked Tony, shrugging his shoulders.

"As far as I can see, there is only one thing we can do," replied Rex, "and that is to go over and have a prowl around the Boche aerodrome at Varne and try to learn something there."

"What—now?"

"Well, I didn't necessarily mean now, but it might as well be now as to-morrow," answered Rex. "We can't go openly, of course. We should have to land in a field somewhere within walking distance of the aerodrome, and then hang about, hoping for something to turn up. We might as well take the Hannoverana, and wear the uniforms. They know us on the aerodrome, so the result would be the same whatever we were wearing; but if we happened to run into anybody outside the aerodrome the uniforms might enable us to pass unsuspected. It wouldn't matter much if we were seen, except by the officers at Varne and the mechanics who saw us the day we held up Fairfax over there. Even the mechanics would think twice before they laid hands on two officers."

"Come on, then," replied Tony impatiently. "I agree with you; we shan't learn much standing here."

"All right. Give me five minutes to look up a landing-field in the map-room," answered Rex, "and we'll get off right away."

The night was still young when they took off on their nocturnal voyage of exploration. Following their method of the previous occasion, they climbed very high, and then glided quietly over the German lines in the direction of their objective. Rex picked out his field dropped down in a wide spiral, and made a faultless landing. As the machine ran to a standstill near the edge of the field there was a guttural chorus of surprise, and several figures hurried towards them. Rex saw the figures too late, for he was far too close to the hedge to attempt to take off again. He leaned back in his cockpit and beckoned to Tony.

"We've bought it this time," he said softly. "But don't lose your head; leave this to me."

He turned, and leaning far out of his cockpit:

"Hi, you, there!" he shouted. "Come and give me a hand with this machine!"

He was standing by the engine, swearing fluently in German, when the troops, as they turned out to be, arrived. "Who are you?" he said briskly, taking the bull by the horns.

"The 119th Field Anti-aircraft Section, Herr Leutnant," came the reply, and an N.C.O. detached himself from the party.

"Two cylinders are giving us trouble—dirty plugs, I expect," stated Rex tersely. "I shall have to walk over to Varne and get some tools; that's our nearest aerodrome," he went on. "Keep an eye on this machine, and don't let anybody touch it!" he cautioned them sternly.

"Jawohl, Leutnant!" replied the man, with a smart salute. "Our gun is over there in the corner, and I can easily leave a guard with the machine."

"Good!" Rex marched off, closely followed by Tony, without another word to the German.

"Good job we were in the Hannoverana and not in the Bristol," he observed coolly, as they strolled along. "They'll guard that machine with their lives, if I know anything about German discipline. It is surprising what the sight of an officer's uniform does with them. But go steady now; we aren't far away. I don't want to barge into Fairfax or Von Henkel. We'll work our way round the back first, and see what is happening in that end hangar. After that we'll have a squint at the mess through the window."

Quickly but cautiously they made their way to the hangar that concealed the British machines. A yellow light streamed feebly through the window. Crouching low, they crept stealthily along until they were under it, and then slowly raised themselves, until they could peer over the sill. Their eyes fell on a little group of four or five mechanics

in greasy overalls, lounging near the DH 4, in the light of a solitary electric bulb. Vaguely they could see the dim outline of the Bristol Fighter beyond it, but it was not that which caused Rex to catch his breath with a sudden hiss. "Look!" he whispered hoarsely. "The black stripe! No wonder we couldn't find any of their machines to-day."

Tony's grip on Rex's arm instinctively tightened as he saw that his pilot was right. Down the side of the fuselage, behind the ring markings, was the stripe. He turned his eyes upwards and could just see the end of the stripe over the leading edge of the centre-section of the top plane.

Before he had time to speak, the door at the far end of the hangar was flung open, and Von Henkel, followed by an Unter-Offizier, entered. The mechanics sprang to their feet and stood to attention.

"Stand easy!" said the Lieutenant, with a wave of his cane. "I shall not fly to-night, so you can dismiss. Do not leave camp, though, in case I need you."

And, turning on his heel again, he disappeared into the darkness.

Tony felt Rex nudge him gently in the ribs. The mechanics began packing up their things—one a toolbox, another an oilcan, and so on.

"Let us see where Von Henkel goes!" whispered Rex, and started sidling along the hangar.

He had almost reached the tarmac, when a dog rushed out at him, barking furiously. There was a quick cessation of sound inside the hangar, and Rex, knowing that the men had heard the alarm, realised instantly that any further attempt at concealment was out of the question. He strode boldly into the light at the hangar door, praying that none of the mechanics had seen him before, or remembered him in connection with the Fairfax affair.

"Down—down!" he shouted, at the still barking dog, aiming a vicious blow at its ribs with his foot in typical German fashion as he entered the hangar. "Which of you men painted these marks on Lieutenant von Henkel's machine?" he asked tersely, indicating the black stripe with his finger.

"I did, Lieutenant," said one of them nervously, standing stiffly to attention; and Rex gathered the impression that Von Henkel was no easy master to work for.

"I just met him on the tarmac," continued Rex, as if impatient to depart. "He was in a hurry, and could not return, but he forgot to ask you to do a small job for him. Have you any red dope?"

"Jawohl, Lieutenant." "Good! He wants the axle hub of each machine painted red—a moment's work—and then you may go. Oh, and you are not to mention this to a soul, he says. Do you understand?"

"Jawohl, Lieutenant."

"Gootnacht!"

"Gootnacht, Lieutenant!"

As Rex was about to turn something made him glance up at the window through which he had been peering only a few moments before.

Framed in the dim light, his lips parted in a sardonic smile, was the face of Captain Fairfax. Fortunately, the mechanics had their backs towards him and could not see him. Before Rex had recovered from the shock the expression of Fairfax's face changed to one of surprise, and then it sank down out of sight.

Rex thrust his hand in the pocket of his jacket and marched stiffly towards the open door. He knew that the game was up, that before he could reach the door Fairfax would be there, and would have given the alarm. Well, he'll get what's coming to him! thought Rex grimly, resolved that the instant Fairfax appeared in the doorway he would shoot; that would mean one spy less, anyhow. With his hand firmly grasping the butt of his revolver, he reached the door, but still Fairfax had not appeared. For a moment he paused in uncertainty. Where was Tony?

Coming to a quick decision, he turned, and, crouching low, revolver in hand, sprang round the end of the hangar. Again he pulled up in amazement; there was no one in sight!

Bending low, he ran down the side of the hangar and round to the back. A figure rose up in the darkness just in front of him, and his finger was already tightening on the trigger when Tony's voice, quivering with excitement, broke the silence.

"I've got him, whoever he is!" he said, with a quick, sibilant hiss.

"Didn't you see his face?" whispered Rex, taking a pace forward. His foot struck against something metal, and he stooped and picked it up. It was an electric torch. "Look!" he whispered, and, shielding the rays with his coat, turned the light on the face of the unconscious man. "Look!" he grunted again grimly, as the beam revealed the pale face of Fairfax, and he heard Tony's swift intake of breath. "What did you do, Tony?" he asked.

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"I saw someone peeping in. I was behind there in the bushes, and he didn't see me. It seemed certain that he couldn't be up to any good, so I crept up behind him and landed him one on the back of the nut with my gun."

"Good! Hark!" Footsteps were approaching. Thrusting the torch into his pocket, Rex, with Tony at his heels, dashed away into the undergrowth which skirted the road behind the hangars. Hardly daring to breathe, they flung themselves down and lay still until the footsteps had halted.

There was a cessation of sound in the hangar, and Rex caught a few words of a sharply snapped order.

"It's the orderly officer doing his rounds!" he muttered.

Presently they heard the sound of military boots receding down the tarmac in front of the sheds.

"It's all right, he's gone!" breathed Rex, in Tony's ear, as he rose to his feet.

Like an Indian, he crept back to the rear of the hangar, where Captain Fairfax was still lying prone on the ground, and risked another peep into the hangar. Only one mechanic remained, and he was just painting the last of the four axle hubs.

Hurrying back to Tony, Rex caught him by the arm and stood listening intently for a moment.

"I should like to have a squint into the mess," he whispered; "but I don't think we dare risk it. We've done enough for one night. I expect Von Henkel is down there in the mess with the others, but Fairfax is here, and I should like to know how he got here. Did he come in the S E 5? And if he did, where is it? That's what I should like to know. It isn't in the sheds, and it isn't on the tarmac. Never mind, let's get along. We'll think about that later."

Taking all reasonable precautions, they returned to the field where they had left the Hannoverana, and a glance showed them it was still in the same place; two soldiers with fixed bayonets were standing on guard by the propeller. Several others were examining the sinister-looking machine with interest, the Unter-Offizier standing some little distance away in conversation with another uniformed figure. Rex hurried up to them.

"Everything all right, sergeant-major?" he asked brightly.

"Yes, I think so," replied a voice that brought Rex to a dead stop, and sent little icy shivers running down his spine. Almost as if it had been timed, the moon burst out from behind a cloud and flooded the scene with a pale light. Rex looked into the smiling face of Lieutenant von Henkel. His lips went bone dry, and his mind raced at feverish speed, but before he could act, the lieutenant had continued: "Why, hallo, Wistmann, it's you, is it?" he said. "I hear you have had a forced landing—engine trouble. I don't think anybody has touched the machine. Have you got what you want from our workshop?"

"Yes, thanks!" nodded Rex, his brain in a whirl. Why didn't the fellow get it over and done with? Why the suspense? He had but to say a word and a dozen hands would come forward to drag them away to a place from which their last journey would be to face a firing-party before a blank wall. In order to gain time and to bear out his story, he lifted up the engine cowl and tinkered for some minutes with the sparking plugs. "She should be all right now," he said casually, determined to carry on the bluff to the bitter end.

"Good, I hope you'll get back all right," said Von Henkel, stepping back. "We had word at the mess that there was a machine down here somewhere, and Hauptmann von Rasberg asked me to walk along and see if we could do anything. Cheerio—happy landings."

Unable to believe his ears, Rex climbed into the cockpit, while Tony, behaving like a man in a dream, took his place at the propeller. To say that Rex was dazed would be a very inadequate description of his feelings at the moment. Von Henkel's manner was utterly incomprehensible to him, unless, of course, Fairfax had not reported the hold-up incident in the hangar, which seemed incredible. "Contact!" he said mechanically, still hardly daring to think that Von Henkel intended letting them go. The Mercedes engine started off with its usual powerful roar, and Tony hurried round to his seat. With a parting wave of his hand, Rex swung round into the wind, and a moment later was in the air heading for the lines and safety.

For some time he was unable to think clearly, so great had been the shock of first seeing Von Henkel standing by the machine, and then his friendly attitude which terminated in allowing them to depart, apparently the best of friends. The whole thing was hard to believe. That Fairfax had not reported the incident in the hangar when he had been robbed, seemed the only possible explanation. What curious motive lay behind his failing to take such an obvious step was beyond Rex's capacity to solve, he decided, as he threaded his way between the inevitable searchlight beams, and raced across the line.

Shielding the light with his coat, Rex turned the torch on the face of the unconscious man. "Look!" he whispered to Tony as the beam revealed the pale face of Fairfax. "Gosh!" gasped Tony. "It's Fairfax!"



Tony had said nothing. Only once, when Rex had looked round at him, he shook his head sadly and threw up his hands with a gesture of amazement as if the whole business was beyond him, too—as indeed it was.

"Well, we haven't wasted our time," observed Rex, after they had put the machine in the shed. "We've learned something and we've done something. The major was right when he said that information was leaking back to the enemy; it is certainly doing that. The black stripe business is a good example. Those bands must have been painted on yesterday, which means that the Boche know all about the order almost as soon as it was issued. Taking the numbers of those machines would not have helped us either; they've both been repainted. The paint on them was still wet when we were there—I made a point of looking. Still, if those red marks on the hubs aren't spotted, they will tell us all we need to know, although we shall have to fly fairly close to them, but that shouldn't be very difficult."

"What on earth made you think of painting the hubs?" asked Tony suddenly.

"Goodness knows," replied Rex. "It was a sort of inspiration. When that confounded dog rushed out and started kicking up that row, I thought it was all up, and no mistake; the only thing to do was to play a big bluff. I took the bull by the horns and walked straight into the hangar. I had to say something, and a row of coloured dope tins in the corner no doubt suggested the idea to me. The main thing is, it worked. I can't understand Von Henkel, though. You could have knocked me down with a feather when I saw him standing there; but let us muster our facts, the things we know, and see how they look."

"First of all we've discovered British machines on a German aerodrome, and we know that they are being used by the enemy. Why? We don't know for certain, but we have every reason to suppose that they are used for carrying people to and fro between the German back areas and our own. When do they operate? I should say by day, or there would be no need to use them at all—they might as well use Boche machines if they are doing it by night."

"Let us say that it sometimes happens that a job has got to be done in a hurry, something really urgent. If it is in the daytime they simply wheel out one of our machines, knowing that it can do pretty well as it likes over our side

of the line without attracting attention. That means they must have a landing ground somewhere, and when we know where that is, we shall know a lot. That's what we've got to find. When we've spotted that, we can put the whole thing in Trevor's hands."

"We learnt something else to-night. Von Henkel is flying those machines—that's his job. At least, it is either him or Fairfax, but I suspect that Fairfax only works in the S E 5. Both Von Henkel and Fairfax are in this game up to the eyes. Taking it all round, we haven't done so badly. We know they are using our machines, we know where they are, and we know at least one of the pilots."

"Fairfax is the big conundrum. It's hard to see just where he fits in. Are there two Fairfax's, two men so much alike that we can't tell them apart, or is Fairfax, who is a trusted officer at Divisional Headquarters, the same Fairfax as we think we see over the lines? Everything points to the latter, yet there are one or two posers that need answering if that is the case. One is that we have left Fairfax in Germany, yet when we got home he was here. He can't be in two places at once. Secondly, and this is the thing I can't get over, the day we took those plans off him someone came and got them back, and then went off in an S E 5. Who else could it be but Fairfax in that machine, yet while that machine was in the air he was in his office at Divisional Headquarters. When I rang up and they told me he was in, it fairly took the wind out of my sails."

"And now there is this last business. It begins to look as if he didn't say a word about us holding him up over at Varne. Why, I don't know, but if he had so much as opened his mouth Von Henkel would have been one of the first to hear about it. The fact that he was perfectly friendly to-night definitely proves that he knows nothing about that affair. It may be that Fairfax thought he could get those papers back—as indeed he did—without saying a word for fear of getting into trouble himself for letting us get away with them."

"The German Higher Command does not suffer bunglers gladly; all the same, Fairfax knows us, and he has only to open his mouth to get us shot if ever they lay hands on us. Well, that's how things stand at present; but I fancy they will begin to sort themselves out before long. One thing is

certain, we're skating on jolly thin ice; one false move, and no one will know what happens to us, and that is as likely to happen over this side of the line as the other. They've got men over both sides, don't forget, and one of them, at least, knows all about us—Fairfax. Well, I shall know more about him to-morrow."

"To-morrow! What are you going to do to-morrow?" asked Tony, in surprise.

"Wait and see," replied Rex mysteriously. "But let us get some sleep, I want to be on the move early."

A Chapter of Adventures!

IT was about nine o'clock the following morning when Rex and Tony stepped into the squadron car which they had requisitioned. With them were two mechanics of the squadron, a fitter and a rigger, whom Rex knew could be trusted. They drove to Maranique, and made their way to the hangar which housed the Hannoverana, where Rex set the mechanics about the duties for which he had brought them, which included a quick overhaul of the machine and the painting out of the existing numbers which were to be replaced with new ones.

"It is just a precaution in case Boche machines get instructions to keep an eye open for us," explained Rex to Tony.

Leaving the mechanics at work, they re-entered the car and made their way slowly through lines of transport to Divisional Headquarters, which was situated on the outskirts of Amiens. Leaving the car at the gate, they entered the big house that had been commandeered by the authorities.

"Which is Captain Fairfax's room?" Rex asked a hurrying orderly.

"The third on the right, sir," replied the man.

"Is he in?"

"Yes, sir!"

Rex looked at Tony and grimaced.

"Good heavens, I hope we're not making a mistake!" he whispered dubiously. "I should have thought that crack on the head you gave him last night would have put him in hospital for a week."

Just as they reached the door it was flung open, and Fairfax, smiling and debonair, appeared on the threshold.

"Hallo, hallo!" he cried brightly. "What brings you here?"

"Hallo, Fairfax!" grinned Rex. "Nothing in particular. I've just been down to Amiens to have a tooth out, and, passing here on my way back, I thought I'd look you up. Have a cigarette," he concluded, offering his case. "Look out! Sorry!" he cried, as the heavy silver case slipped through his fingers and fell with a crash on the stone floor. Fairfax stooped quickly, picked up the case, and handed it back.

"Hasn't hurt it," he observed, glancing at the hinges as he passed it over. "Well, it was nice of you to look in, but I've got to rush off now. See you next guest night, I hope. Cheerio!"

With a parting wave of his cane, he strode off, and the two boys returned slowly to their car. "If that man's a spy I'll eat my hat!" muttered Tony, shaking his head doubtfully as they threaded their way along the road. "If he is, then the man must be a marvel to act like that, knowing that we know what he do know."

"We shall soon know still more about it," observed Rex grimly, as he pulled up at Neuville and hurried towards Wing Headquarters. But instead of entering as he usually did through the front door, he made his way to a door at

the end of the building, through which a number of N.C.O. clerks could be seen at work. "Who is in charge here?" he asked quietly, as he entered.

"I am, sir," said a sergeant-major, stepping forward.

Rex took him on one side.

"I am working with Major Trevor," he said in an undertone.

"Yes, I know that, sir," replied the sergeant-major, nodding.

"Good, that will make it easier!" answered Rex. "Tell me, have you a finger-print department here?"

"Certainly, sir; come this way!" replied the sergeant-major at once, leading the way to a small room at the rear.

"Quite a laboratory, eh?" observed Rex, noting the rows of chemicals and apparatus that stood about.

"Quite, sir," agreed the N.C.O. "We have to do a lot of testing for invisible inks, you know."

Rex laid his cigarette-case on the table.

"I want you to examine the finger-prints on that for me, please," he said.

The sergeant-major opened the case flat on the table and dusted it lightly with some powder which he took out of a drawer, and then bent over it. "There are two sets of prints here, sir," he said.

"Yes, one of them is my own. You had better take my finger-prints so that you can identify them, and then I want you to have a good look at the others."

Rex pressed his fingers on an inking-pad which the N.C.O. brought, and then made a clear impression on a piece of white paper. "And now I want you to have a good look at this," went on Rex. And taking out of his pocket a silk handkerchief, unrolled it to disclose the metal torch which had been dropped by Fairfax behind the German hangar the previous night.

"Two sets again, eh?" observed the sergeant-major. "I can see yours, but it is fairly smothered with the others."

"Compare them with the case," said Rex quietly.

The sergeant-major placed the two articles side by side, and picked up a large magnifying-glass.

"They are the same finger-prints on both articles," he said, without hesitation.

"Ah!" Rex took a deep breath. "Thank you, sergeant-major, that was what I wanted to know. These other finger-prints are not known to you by any chance, I suppose?"

The sergeant-major bent closer and subjected the marks to an intense scrutiny, and the boys, watching him closely, saw him start and a curious expression spread over his face. Without a word, he crossed the room, unlocked a metal safe, and took from it a bulky volume. He placed the book on the table and turned the pages over rapidly until he came to the place for which he was evidently looking. He laid the cigarette case on the book.

"Yes, sir," said the sergeant-major in a curious voice, "we know those prints all right, and we should very much like to find the owner of them."

"What is his name?" asked Rex, in a voice which he tried hard to keep steady.

"At the Wilhelmstrasse he is known as No. 1,473," replied the sergeant-major grimly; "but we know him as Hauptmann Baron Gustav von Karnhofen, the cleverest Secret Service agent in the German corps since the master spy Wilhelm Stieber. Do you know where he is, sir?" asked the sergeant-major eagerly.

(Rex and Tony have proved that Fairfax is a German agent, but will they succeed in catching him? Read all about it in next week's thrilling instalment!)

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