

Professor Branestawm Stories

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Random House Children's Books

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PROFESSOR BRANESTAMM

STORIES



by
NORMAN HUNTER



*To the best of Readers - all Branestawm
fans throughout the world.*

The Professor Invents a Machine

PROFESSOR BRANESTAWM, LIKE all great men, had simple tastes. He wore simple trousers with two simple legs. His coat was simply fastened with safety pins because the buttons had simply fallen off. His head was simply bald and it simply shone like anything whenever the light caught it.

It was a wonderful head was the Professor's. He had a high forehead to make room for all the pairs of glasses he wore. A pair for reading by. A pair for writing by. A pair for out of doors. A pair for looking at you over the top of and another pair to look for the others when he mislaid them, which was often. For although the Professor was so clever, or perhaps *because* he was so clever, he was very absent-minded. He was so busy thinking of wonderful things like new diseases or new moons that he simply hadn't time to think of ordinary things like old spectacles.

He had very few friends because people found it so very difficult to talk to him. It was like being at a lecture or in a schoolroom. Every second word he said you couldn't understand and he asked you questions worse than any you'd ever find on an Exam paper.

But there was one man who was very fond of the Professor. And that was Colonel Dedshott of the Catapult Cavaliers, a very brave gentleman who never missed a train, an enemy, or an opportunity of getting into danger.

'Well, well,' the Colonel was saying to himself in his usual brisk military manner, as he strode along the road towards the house where the Professor lived, 'it's quite a time since I saw Branestawm.' (You can tell how friendly he was with the Professor to talk about him like that, not

saying Mr Branestawm or Professor Branestawm or Branestawm Esquire or anything.) 'I am glad he invited me.'

Yes, the Professor had invited him.

'Dear Dedshott,' ran the Professor's note. 'Come and see me tomorrow if you can. I have an invention that will change all our ideas of travel.'

You see the Professor could write quite simple, easy-to-understand letters when he liked. So the Colonel was going to have his ideas of travel changed.

He arrived at the Professor's house, when he got there, to the second. That was his military punctuality.

'The Professor's in his inventory, sir,' said Mrs Flittersnoop, the housekeeper, who opened the door. 'He'll be out directly.'

The words were no sooner out of her mouth than a deafening explosion rent the air and the Professor came out of his inventory. He came out rather more like a cannonball than a man welcoming a friend to his house, but he came out, which was the main thing. And most of the inventory came out with him.

When the smoke had cleared away the Professor put his hand to his head, pulled down the pair of glasses that he kept for looking at you over the top of, and looked at the Colonel over the top of them.

'Tut, tut,' he said, 'that was most unfortunate. I had a little too much of the whatever-it-is of the thingummy. I put plenty in to make sure there was enough. I'm afraid I've made rather a mess.'

'Not at all,' said the Colonel. It wasn't his inventory, so why should he mind? 'What do we do next?'

The Professor examined a piece of machinery that had landed on the geranium bed and pushed it into the back garden before replying.

'Happily nothing is damaged,' he said, 'so we can go on from where I left off. This is my new invention.' He patted

the machine, which looked something like a cross between a typewriter, an egg-timer, and a conjuring trick.

'Yes,' said the Colonel intelligently, wondering what it was all about.

'Listen,' went on the Professor, 'and I will explain.'

The Colonel sat down on the garden roller and started listening.

'If you travel by coach from this town to the next it takes two hours,' said the Professor. 'But if you go twice as fast it takes only one hour.'

'Of course,' said the Colonel.

'And if you go twice as fast as that it takes only half an hour.'

'Quite,' said the Colonel.

'And if you go fast enough it takes no time at all, so that you get there the moment you start. Very well ...' The Professor was warming up to his subject and he leaned forward excitedly. 'If you go still faster you will get there in less than no time so that you arrive there before you left here. Do you understand?'

'Perfectly,' said the Colonel, not understanding anything.

'Well then,' went on the Professor, wagging a long thin finger, 'that means that the farther you go, the sooner you will get there, and if you go far enough you will arrive several years ago.'

'Come on,' said the Colonel, getting up with his head going round and round at the very thought of it, 'let's start. I'd like to go back to a party I was at three years ago.'

The Professor, eager to demonstrate his machine, took out a toothpick, a marmalade spoon and a pair of scissors, and soon had the machine wound up and adjusted ready to start.

'Wait a minute,' he cried and ran into the house, coming out a moment later with a small box.

'Bombs,' he explained simply, 'my own invention. Each one will kill an army. We'll take them in case of danger. Are

you armed?’

The Colonel nodded and tapped his belt where he always carried his trusty catapult and a bag of bullets.

‘Aye,’ he said, and they got into the machine together, the Professor falling off on the other side and having to get on again, just as Mrs Flittersnoop came out with a cup of tea for each of them.

‘Right away,’ called the Professor, who knew all about railways, taking no notice of her.

The Colonel said nothing. He wasn’t able to, because as the machine shot off the ground such a gust of wind caught him in the mouth that he could hardly breathe, let alone call out things.

Blue and yellow smoke shot out from every part of the machine. Wheels whizzed. Levers clicked. Little bits of stuff went buzzing up and down and round and round. And far beneath them the landscape rushed by quicker and quicker until at last they could see nothing but a grey haze all round them.

On went the machine, but nothing else happened. On and on they whirled, and nothing happened. And it kept on happening over and over again, till everything was so nothing that neither of them could notice anything.

Presently the Professor thought it was time to stop, so he rang his bell and put the brake on.

Gradually everything began to be something. The grey haze went and the landscape came back and soon they were descending into the middle of a large field.

‘Are we there?’ asked the Colonel, getting his breath back and using some of it at once.

‘We must have passed it,’ said the Professor, peering down. ‘What’s going on down there?’

‘Why, it’s a battle,’ cried the Colonel, loosening his catapult in his belt. ‘But it isn’t a battle I remember fighting in. Anyway I can’t see me there and I should be there if I was, shouldn’t I?’

The Professor nodded his head, and then shook it to show that he understood.

'You weren't there,' he said, 'we're in Squiglatania, a foreign country. I know this battle. It happened two years ago. There was a revolution, but the King's troops beat the revolutionists. Those are the King's troops, the red ones.'

'Let's join in,' cried the Colonel, and at once he began firing off bullets from his catapult, while the Professor opened his box and rained his deadly bombs on the scene below, as the machine dropped slowly downwards.

Gock, boom, smack, pop, boom. Twack, boom, clack, plop, boom, went the bombs and the catapult bullets, and by the time the machine touched the ground there was hardly a soldier or a revolutionist left.

'Hurray,' yelled the Colonel, jumping out and rushing about, followed by the Professor.

'Hurray,' yelled a little band of revolutionists, who had been hiding behind some rocks. 'We've won, thanks to you.'

And before the Professor and the Colonel knew where they were, the revolutionists carried them off to the Palace and sat them on the King's throne, which happily was wide enough for both of them, as the King had been a very fat man.



'Hail, our Presidents!' they shouted.

And bands played, fireworks went off, people danced and ate more than was good for them, to celebrate the victory.

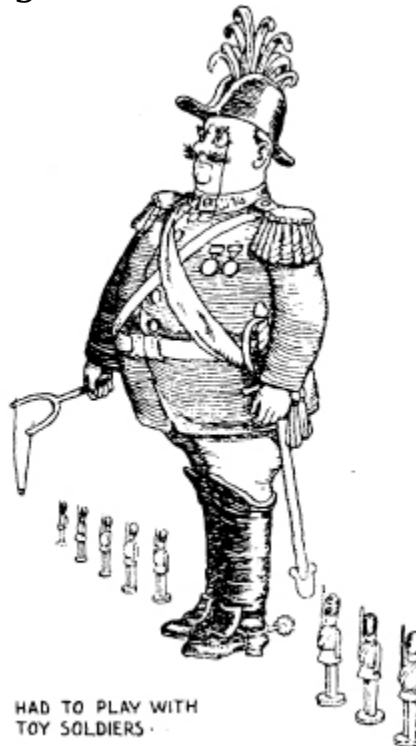
'This is all wrong, you know,' said the Professor, 'it was the King's troops who won really. We've done something nasty to history, I'm afraid. I had no idea we should alter the battle like that.'

'Never mind,' said the Colonel, who rather fancied himself as a President. 'Let's do some ruling.'

But whether it was that the Professor, although he knew so much about everything, didn't know enough about ruling; or whether it was that the Colonel, not being used to such high command, gave himself airs rather too much; or whether it was that the Revolutionist people, who didn't like being governed by one King, found it wasn't any more fun being governed by two Presidents, things didn't go at all well.

First there was trouble about who should wear the crown. It was too small for the Professor's brainy head, and too big for the Colonel's bullet head.

Then the Colonel wanted to review the troops and there weren't any troops. They'd all been blown to bits with the Professor's bombs or catapulted with the Colonel's catapult, so he had to play with toy soldiers from the Palace Nursery. And of course no real live Colonel cares much about that sort of thing.



Then the Professor wanted to go on inventing things, and there wasn't an inventory at the Palace and nobody knew how to make one, so he had to put up with the chicken-house at the end of the grounds. But by the time he had got his wonderful machine inside it there wasn't any more room, either for the Professor or for the chickens.

'I'm tired of this life,' said the Colonel one day. 'Let's do something else.'

'What can we do?' said the Professor. 'If we get on the machine we shall only go back earlier and earlier and have to wait longer and longer.'

Just then the Chief Revoluter came in, sword in one hand and a bunch of keys in the other.



'We've decided not to have any Presidents,' he said. 'You're dethroned. Your services are no longer required, take a week's notice.'

'Don't take any notice,' whispered the Colonel, who didn't see why they should be spoken to like that.

'We refuse,' said the Professor, looking at the Chief Revoluter through all his pairs of glasses at once, and wondering why he looked so dim and hazy and funny-shaped. 'Go away, there's something wrong with you. You must have been sleeping with your eyes open, or else you washed your face the wrong way round. You're all out of shape. Go away at once, we're busy.' And he started adding up threes by the dozen on his shirt-cuff to look as if he had a lot to do.

'Stay,' cried the Chief Revoluter, waving his keys by mistake and quickly changing hands and waving his sword instead, 'get off the throne or be thrown off.'

'Ha, ha!' laughed the Colonel, who always saw a joke if it was an easy one.

'Ho, ho!' cried the Chief Revoluter, who was now very much annoyed.

'Hum, hum,' said the Professor, 'four three's are twelve, five three's are fifteen, six three's are ... I do wish you'd go away and leave me to my accounts.'

'Guards!' cried the Chief Revoluter, banging his keys with his sword to make a jangling noise like an alarm.

'Yes?' asked the guards coming in.

'To the Dungeons with them,' cried the Chief Revoluter.

'Gr-r-r-r-r,' growled the guards, guessing that they were expected to be fierce. 'To the Dungeons,' and drawing their swords they rushed at the Colonel and the Professor, who got up and jumped out of the window.

'After them,' yelled the Chief Revoluter, standing aside to let the guards chase them.

They dashed across the croquet lawn, where a lot of the guards who didn't understand croquet caught their feet in the hoops and fell over, thus delaying the chase.

Through the grounds raced the Professor and the Colonel, down to the chicken-house where the machine was kept.

'We must get away,' panted the Professor, 'never mind where or when to.'

They clambered on the machine, and the Professor pulled some levers.

Zoom, crash, bang! A terrific explosion rent the air. The chicken-house vanished. So did the Palace of Squiglatania. So did everything. And the next minute the Colonel and the Professor were rolling on the Professor's lawn, and Mrs Flittersnoop was handing them a cup of tea each.

The day they first started had come round again and, of course, as they were on the Professor's lawn when they started, they had to be there again.

'One or two lumps?' asked Mrs Flittersnoop, meaning sugar.

'One on the back of my head and two on my knees,' answered the Professor, meaning bruises from his fall.



So they were all right again. The Colonel could go on commanding the Catapult Cavaliers, the Professor could go on inventing. But the people who write the history books had an awful time clearing up the tangle they'd made of Squiglatanian history by winning a battle for the side that really lost it.

From The Incredible Adventures of Professor Branestawm

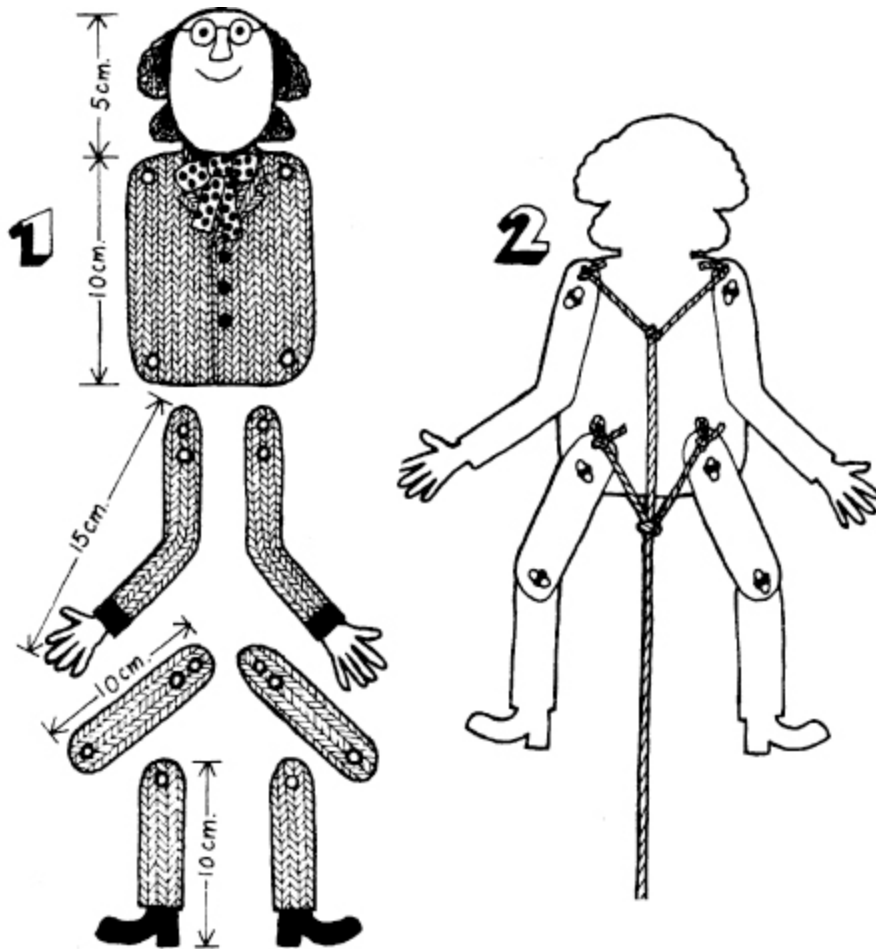
Professor Branestawm Having a Brilliant Idea

THIS IS A working model of the Professor showing how he acts when he has been hit with one of his famous and ingeniously disastrous ideas.

The first thing to do is to cut out the pieces of cardboard for the Professor's body, arms and legs. [Figure 1](#) shows how to do this, with the measurements. You can make the figure bigger but don't make it much smaller because a small figure is difficult to work. Paint the pieces on both sides.

Make holes in the pieces as shown in the diagram.

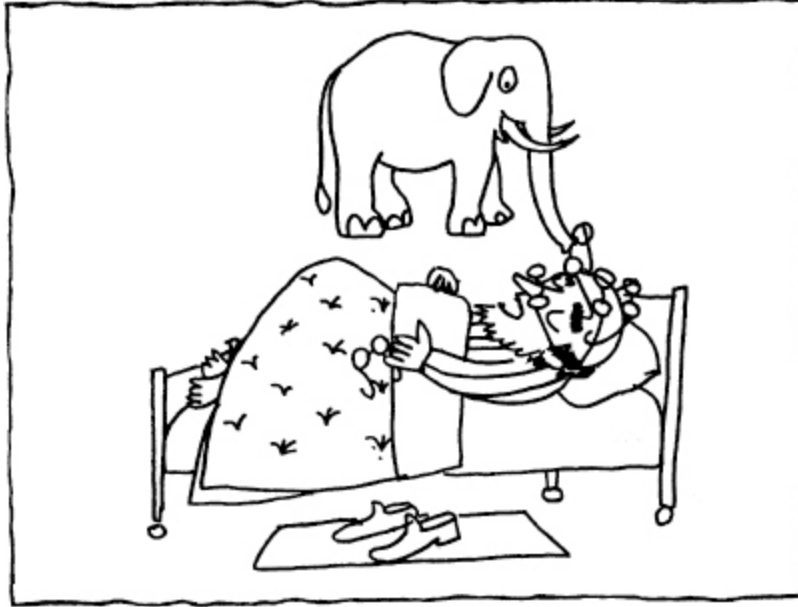
Now join the arms and legs to the body. This must be done so that they will move freely. Use the lower of the two holes at the top of the arms and legs as shown in [Figure 2](#). If Dad has a workshop you could get him to fix the pieces together with rivets so that they work easily. Otherwise you can fix them together with the kind of paper fasteners that push through and bend over, but see that the holes are large enough for the pieces to move freely and don't fasten them together at all tightly.



Now tie a piece of thick thread or thin string to the extra holes in the arms so that you have a loop of string hanging across the back of the figure. Do the same with the legs. Tie one end of a long piece of string round the centre of the loop between the arms. Carry the string down and tie it round the loop of string between the two legs. Arms and legs should be hanging down when this is done. [See Figure 2.](#)

Now if you hold the Professor with one hand by his head and with the other you pull the long string up and down you will see how excited the Professor gets when he has thought of a world-shaking new invention.

From Professor Branestawm's Do-It-Yourself Handbook



Why does Professor Branestawm sleep with his five pairs of spectacles on? *So that he can see what he is dreaming about.*

Professor Branestawm Up the Pole

PROFESSOR BRANESTAWM HAD a new next-door neighbour, Commander Hardaport (Retired), a ferociously enthusiastic, yachting sort of Commander. He wore a white-topped yachting cap all day, and sometimes all night if he forgot to take it off. And in his garden he had a flagstaff on which he flew a most elegant flag.

He got up every morning at sunrise to hoist the flag up the pole and was always most particular to lower it again at sunset, because leaving flags out all night is highly irregular and very bad manners. It was awkward for Commander Hardaport sometimes in the winter, when he went to tea with friends, because, right in the middle of tea and intensive talk about spinnakers and yardarms, sunset would come on. Then he had to dash home to lower his flag and by the time he got back his friends had finished the cakes (but no, of course, the yachting conversation, which, unlike flags, can quite properly go flying on all night).

'Flagstaff's looking a bit dirty,' he said to himself one morning. 'Most un-white flagstaff I've ever seen. This won't do at all. I'll have to get to action stations. But what course to set? Re-paint it? Then what? The flagstaff will get dirty again. His naval mind revolved rapidly both forward and astern. 'What I need', he said, 'is some flagstaff paint that won't get dirty. I know - I'll get Professor Branestawm to invent some. Right. Ahoy there, Professor Branestawm!' he shouted over the fence.

Mrs Flittersnoop, the Professor's housekeeper, was in the middle of hanging out the washing. 'I'm afraid Professor Branestawm is out,' she said. She wasn't afraid of

it really, but was actually glad because it gave her a chance to tidy the place up a bit. 'Can I give him a message when he comes back?'

'Thank you, but this is complicated,' said the Commander. 'I'd better send him a signal. Don't want to get things confused.' And he stumped into his house, and went into a tiny little room with a round porthole window and walls smothered in telescopes and charts and binnacles and bollards and hung about with warps and halliards.

'Dear Professor Branestawm,' he wrote, and was just going to ask the Professor to invent a never-get-dirty paint when an idea struck him amidships. After all, inventing a paint was rather a silly job for an inventing professor. The paint shop could do that. He had a much more important thing for Professor Branestawm to do.

He finished the letter, put it in an envelope, addressed it 'To Professor Branestawm. Message from the flagstaff', which was another of his seagoing jokes, and handed it over to Mrs Flittersnoop.

Then he wrote another letter to the paint shop saying, 'Will you please supply me with some white paint for my flagstaff. And I want paint that will never get dirty.' Then his pen, which had gone a bit scratchy, ran out of ink and he had to sign the note 'Hector Hardaport (Retired)' in pencil. But he used blue pencil to make it look as nautical as possible.

'Ah,' said Professor Branestawm, when he read the Commander's letter. 'A most interesting and unusual request.' He looked at the letter through each of his five pairs of spectacles and then through several pairs at once. 'The Commander wishes me to invent a flagstaff-painting machine,' he said.

'Well, I never, sir,' said Mrs Flittersnoop. 'These naval gentlemen have some very strange ideas at times. Or perhaps I should say rum ideas.' These seafaring jokes were catching.

Then the Professor went into his inventory to invent the flagstaff-painting machine.

'I could, of course, ah, do it by first inventing a gatepost-painting machine and then re-inventing it much taller,' he said to himself. 'Or I might just invent a painting machine with a special adjustment for height and width. But then again I could invent a machine through which one pushed the, um, ah, flagstaff to paint it, but that might be awkward as the Commander would possibly not want to take the flagstaff down.'

After inventing like this for a while, the Professor finally got down to the flagstaff-painting machine, which was a device that you rode rather like a bicycle and it climbed up the flagstaff while you did the painting.

Then he set off for the Great Pagwell High Street, thinking he might meet the Commander cruising about among the shops. And he hadn't got far when he met the Commander, rolling nautically down the High Street in a way that made you feel there was a heavy swell running, and that the High Street was taking it green over the bows. He was smoking a pipe that sent out such a smoke screen that the Professor wouldn't have seen him only he happened to be looking the other way. That caused him to run into the Commander, who bellowed, 'Hard astern both!', shook the Professor by the hand, and said, 'Fancy meeting you on a collision course, Professor! How's the machine coming on?'

'I, er, am glad to say it is all ready, Commander,' said the Professor. 'Where would you like it delivered?'

'On to the jolly old flagstaff!' cried the Commander, laughing like a ship's ventilator with the wind. 'I will go and arrange for you to carry out the operation.'

He gave the Professor a hearty seafaring clap on the back which shook all his spectacles off and, before the Professor had time to say anything, he was off in a cloud of heavy smoke.

The next day Professor Branestawm, accompanied by his flagstaff-painting machine, came over the fence. He was dressed in some painter's overalls, lent to him by Mrs Flittersnoop's sister Aggie's cousin Bert. They were on the big side and Mrs Flittersnoop had fixed them up with plenty of safety pins.

He looked up at the flagstaff, which appeared to be at least two miles high. Then he clamped the painting machine round the bottom of the flagstaff and got into the saddle.

'Here's the paint,' said the Commander, giving him a tin with a handle on it. 'And a brush.'

'Er, ah, thank you,' said the Professor. He put the tin of paint into the paint-holder on the machine and put the brush in his mouth so as to have both hands free to start the machine, which was necessary as the machine had innumerable buttons and levers.

He pulled two levers and twiddled a wheel. With a series of grunts, squeaks and rattles the machine began very slowly to climb the flagstaff and the Professor began to paint.

Squeak, rattle, zimzim, popetty clank, went the machine. *Slip, slop, slosh,* went the Professor with the paint brush.

'Avast there!' shouted the Commander. 'What are you starting at the bottom for?'

'Because one must always start at the bottom,' said the Professor. All the best copybooks say so. You could not have risen to become a Commander by starting at the top as an Admiral. There is also the ratio of height tolerance to speed to be considered. If, for instance,' he waved both hands and fell off the seat of the machine, 'if, for instance, you get into a motor car and start driving at a hundred miles an hour right away you are liable to, um, ah, have an accident because you have not had time to accustom yourself to the speed.'

‘Hrmmph. Quite,’ said a voice from behind. It was the Professor’s old friend, Colonel Dedshott of the Catapult Cavaliers, who had just arrived on his horse, which was rather given to starting off at full speed if it could.

‘So,’ said the Professor, climbing back on the seat of the painting machine, ‘you start slowly and gradually build up the speed, and so become used to the fast movement by degrees.’

He was nine inches up the flagstaff when Mrs Flittersnoop from next door called out, ‘Telephone, sir,’ and the Professor had to go rushing in to answer the telephone. But it was only the Vicar to ask how the flagstaff-painting was going.

Next the Professor was two feet nine inches up the flagstaff when Mrs Flittersnoop called out that lemonade and sponge cakes were ready. So they all knocked off for a lemonade-break, which is the same as a coffee-break but sometimes takes longer. It certainly did this time because no sooner had Commander Hardaport finished a stirring yarn about naval escapades than Colonel Dedshott, not to be outdone by a mere sailor, opened fire with an intrepid story about fighting against dreadful odds in the desert. And that reminded the Professor of the time he invented an outrageous cactus that put umbrellas up if you watered it.

So, after all that, the lemonade-break lasted until lunch-time. Mrs Flittersnoop said she had just made one of her special steak and kidney puddings, and had new potatoes and peas to go with it, and a frightfully fancy trifle to follow it. Neither the military nor the naval part of the party could resist that, and even the Professor actually ate lunch because his mind wasn’t entirely on the flagstaff-painting project.

And they all ate so much they went to sleep afterwards and woke up only just in time for tea. Then the Vicar called to see how they were getting on and the Headmaster of Pagwell College came round with advice about flagstaffs,