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ST. JIM'S TO THE RESCUE!

DOUBLE-
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TALE OF
TOM MERRY

BY
MARTIN
CLIFFORD.



NO. 4.

D'ARCY IS

VOL. 1.

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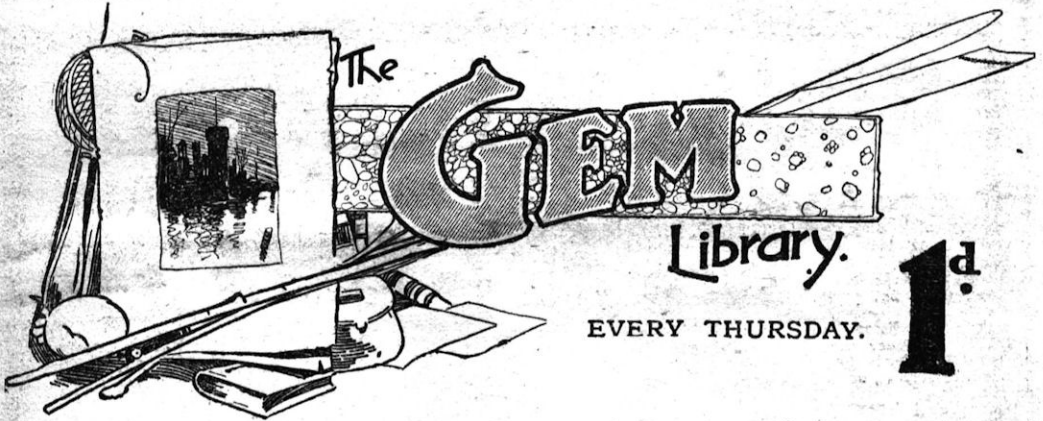
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NEXT
THURSDAY:

"D'ARCY THE DUDE."

By
MARTIN CLIFFORD.



A Complete Story for Everyone, and Every Story a Gem!



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A Double-Length Complete Tale
of Tom Merry's Schooldays.

— BY —

MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1.

A Deputation from the Grammar School.

W HERE'S Tom Merry?"
"Hallo, what do you Grammar cads want?"
"Where's Tom Merry?"
"Blessed if I know!" said Blake. "But if you've
got any business here, kid, you can speak to me—as head of
the juniors of St. Jim's—"
"Rats! Where's Tom Merry?"
Blake turned red.

He was standing in the ancient gateway of St. Jim's, with
Horries, Digby, and D'Arcy, his chums in Study No. 6 in
the School House. Three youths had just come up the road,
whom Blake immediately recognised as Monk, Lane, and
Carboy, of Rylcombe Grammar School. The chums of Study
No. 6 naturally prepared for hostilities at the sight of the
Grammarians, but Frank Monk showed at once that his
mission was a peaceful one by elevating a more or less white
handkerchief on the end of a walking-cane. Under cover of
this flag of truce, the three Grammarians halted and de-
manded information as to the whereabouts of Tom Merry.

"Now, look here," said Blake, wagging his forefinger
warningly at Frank Monk; "it's all very well to come here
with a rag on the end of a walking-stick—"
"Where's Tom Merry?"

"But that flag of truce won't save you from a licking if
you cheek a chap like me, so I warn you."

Frank Monk looked Blake up and down in a way that the
St. Jim's junior found extremely irritating.

"Let me see," said the Grammar youth reflectively; "who
are you?"

Blake turned redder.

"You know very well whom I am!" he snapped. "What
are you rotting about now, you Grammar cad?"

"I believe I have seen you before," said Monk. "Your
name's Cake, or Snake, or something, isn't it?"

"My name's Blake, and I can wipe up the road with any
kid in Rylcombe Grammar School!" said Blake, rather
excitedly.

"Dear me; the child is getting angry!" said Frank Monk.
"But, really, I did not come here to argue with you, little
boy. Where's Tom Merry?"

"Little boy, hey? I'll—"

"Where's Tom Merry?"

"Weally," said D'Arcy, fixing his eyeglass into his right
eye and scanning the Grammarians; "weally, I wergard that
as an opprobrious expression, F'rank Monk. And I con-
sidah that Blake would be justified in diswegardin' the flag
of twuce and givin' you a feashful thwashin' unless you
apologise."

"Good!" said Digby. "I'll hold your jacket, Blake."

Frank Monk waved his hand soothingly.

"My dear kids—"

"Who are you calling kids?"

"My beloved youths, then," said Monk. "Anything for a
quiet life. I want to see Tom Merry."

"Rats! We can't allow wasters like you into the grounds
of St. Jim's," said Blake, shaking his head. "Dogs and

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tramps are not admitted here, and the same applies to Grammar School kids!"

"Yaas, watah!" said D'Arcy. "You had bettah ttravel, deah boys! We are not as a wule particulah whom we speak to, but we draw the line at Gwammah cads! Pway ttravel!"

"Where's Tom Merry?"

Blake frowned darkly.

"As head of the juniors of St. Jim's, I am quite competent to deal with the matter, whatever it is," he remarked. "Therefore you are not going to see Tom Merry."

"That's wight," said D'Arcy, nodding his head so emphatically that his eyeglass dropped off. "We absolutely wufuse to let you see Tom Mewwy."

"We're going to see him," said Monk, "if we have to stay here all the afternoon!"

"What-ho!" chimed in Carboy. "We're the bearers of a challenge from the Grammar School to St. Jim's!"

"And we're not going till we've had an answer!" said Lane.

Blake's eyes glistened with the light of battle.

"Well, whatever the challenge is, you can consider it accepted!" he exclaimed. "We can give you the kybosh at football, or cricket, or hockey, or any other game you like to mention!"

"Yaas, watah!"

"We'll meet you on the footer-field, or the cinder-path, with or without gloves—"

"Yaas, watah!"

"We'll meet you—"

"My dear chap, I haven't time to listen to a catalogue of the things you can't do!" exclaimed Monk. "Where's Tom Merry?"

"You're not going to see Tom Merry. As head of the juniors of St. Jim's, I am the proper person to receive your challenge!"

"You are not a proper person!"

"Weally, Fwank Monk, do you mean to insinuate that my friend Blake is an impwopah person?" demanded Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Ha, ha! No, but—"

"Where's Tom Merry?" said Carboy.

"Tom Merry's the head of the juniors here," said Lane.

"It's Tom Merry we've got to see, so—"

"That's where you make your mistake," said Blake warmly. "I told you that I am head of the juniors of St. Jim's!"

"Then you told him a fearful whopper!" broke in a familiar voice, as Figgins & Co., of the New House, came up to the gateway. "I'm surprised at you, Blake!"

Blake turned a glare upon Figgins.

"What's that, Figgins? What are you shoving in your oar for?"

"Simply to correct your statement," said Figgins placidly.

"You see, as chief of the New House juniors, I am naturally the head of St. Jim's juniors; the New House being cock-house at St. Jim's!"

"The New House being what?" demanded four wrathful voices.

"Cock-house at St. Jim's."

"Now look here, Figgins, I haven't time to wipe up the ground with you now—"

"That's rather lucky for you, Blake, as you'd probably find it a job a big bit above your weight!"

"But I'll find time," said Blake darkly, "if you don't sheer off while I'm talking to this deputation from the Grammar School!"

"That's right," exclaimed Frank Monk heartily; "go for him, Blake! Go for each other, all of you! It will be as good as a dog-fight, and will be quite worth the walk over here from the Grammar School!"

"Weally, Fwank Monk—"

"Oh, dry up, D'Arcy!" said Figgins. "If this is a deputation from the Grammar School, I'm the proper person to receive it, and you School House kids can take a back seat! Now, what's it all about, Monkey?"

"We want to see Tom Merry!"

"What do you want to see Tom Merry for?"

"Because he's head of the lower school here."

"Your mistake; I'm the head!"

"Rats!"

Figgins's eyes sparkled.

"Did you say 'Rats' to me, Frank Monk?"

"Yes, I did."

"Then take your jacket off, and—"

"Flag of truce."

"That's all very well, but—"

"Pway stand back, Figgins; you must respect a flag of truce!" said D'Arcy, tapping the New House junior on the chest. "Pway do not disgwace St. Jim's more than you can

help! Of course, you New House wottahs are a standin' disgwace—"

"And you're a sitting one!" said Figgins, giving D'Arcy a rap on the chest that placed him in a sitting position on the spot.

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed the swell of the School House, scrambling to his feet. "Figgins, you wotten boundah, you have struck me!"

"Go hon!" said Figgins.

"Yaas, watah! Pway remove your jacket, as I am goin' to administrah a feahful thwashin'!"

"That's all right; I'll take it with my coat on!" grinned Figgins.

"Pway hold my hat, Hewwies! Hold my jacket, Digby; do not wumple it more than you can help. Blake, take my tie, please. Now, Figgins!"

And having divested himself of hat, jacket, and tie, the swell of the School House rushed at the redoubtable Figgins.

CHAPTER 2.

Tom Merry Accepts the Challenge.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY was in deadly earnest. His dignity—or his "dig," as he would have called it—had been cruelly insulted, and he was determined to inflict a punishment upon Figgins which should ring through the New House.

He did not stop to calculate that the chief of the New House juniors was about twice his match. Figgins was a formidable opponent for Blake or Tom Merry, and he could have dusted the ground with D'Arcy without much trouble. D'Arcy never stopped to consider a little circumstance like that when it was a question of "dig," with him. He rushed straight at Figgins, hitting out with right and left.

The "Co." looked on, grinning, and so did Blake, Herries, and Digby. The Grammar School fellows outside the gateway watched the scene with great interest.

Figgins did not hit out.

He brushed aside the drives of the School House swell, and then his long arms were thrown round D'Arcy, and they wrestled chest to chest.

D'Arcy struggled to get his arms free, but he could not. Figgins's powerful grip was round him, pinning his arms to his sides, and he was quite helpless to use his fists.

"Welease me!" exclaimed D'Arcy, struggling furiously.

"Welease me, Figgins! I insist upon bein' immediately weleased, so that I can thwash you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Figgins. "That's cool!"

"Welease me, you feahful boundah!"

"Will you promise to be good, then?"

"Certainly not! I distinctly wufuse to be good! I am goin' to give you a feahful thwashin', Figgins! Welease me, or I shall lose my beastly tempah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Welease me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blake, Hewwies, Dig—wescue!" shouted D'Arcy.

The School House chums left off laughing to go to the rescue; they could not disregard a call like that. But as soon as they made a movement, so did the Co. Figgins's chums—Kerr, Wynn, and Marmaduke Smythe, known far and wide as the "Co."—rushed to stop them, and in a moment more there was a general scrimmage in progress.

The Grammar School juniors stood by and applauded.

"Bravo!" shouted Frank Monk, clapping his hands. "Go it, Figgins!"

"Go it, Blake!"

"Buck up, Gussy!"

"Stick to it, Fatty Wynn!"

But the rivals of St. Jim's were too incensed to heed the laughter and cheers of the Grammarians. They were too busily engaged to heed anything, as a matter of fact. They did not notice three youths, who came down from the direction of the School House and stood staring at them with much amusement. But Monk did.

"There's Tom Merry?" he exclaimed.

Tom Merry it was, with his chums Manners and Lowther. The Terrible Three stood looking on with great interest. Frank Monk waved his hand to Tom Merry.

"We can get in now, while those kids are punching one another's heads," he said. "Come on!"

And the three Grammarians entered the gateway.

"Hallo, what do you want?" asked Tom Merry.

"We're a deputation from the Grammar School. You needn't trouble to roll back your cuffs, Lowther; we've come under a flag of truce."

Lowther grinned.

"And what do you want?"

"We're bringing you a challenge from the school."

Tom Merry looked at his watch.

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THURSDAY:

"D'ARCY THE DUDE."

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"Here, I say, give me back my book!" exclaimed Skimpole.

"Well, we've got an engagement," he said; "but we can give you ten minutes, if that's enough?"

"Quite enough!"

"Come up into the study, then."

"Certainly!"

It was a half-holiday at St. Jim's, and the old quadrangle was pretty full. There were many curious stares bestowed upon the Grammarians as they walked with Tom Merry and his chums into the School House. But the convoy of the Terrible Three was sufficient to render them safe.

Tom Merry opened the door of his study. A fire was burning in the grate—very necessary in the cold March afternoon. The hero of the Shell waved his hand hospitably.

"Come in, you bouncers!"

Monk, Lane, and Carboy came in.

"Please sit down!"

Three chairs were forthcoming. Monk, Lane, and Carboy grinned, and sat down in great state. Tom Merry sat on the corner of the table. Monty Lowther leaned against the mantelpiece. Manners sat on the window-ledge. When the chums of the Shell had company they usually borrowed chairs or stools from other studies up and down the corridor. But this was a sudden visit.

"Now, go ahead!" said Tom Merry. "We can't stay long, you know, as we have an appointment with a lady."

Frank Monk stared.

"Eh? All three of you?"

"Certainly!"

The Grammarians cackled.

"So you've been following Gussy's example, and falling in love—and all three with the same lady! Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry laughed.

"Not exactly that," he replied. "The lady we are going to see is a widow of sixty-five, and deaf."

"My word! Have you many of that sort on your visiting-list?"

"Only one. I expect you know her—most of Rylcombe

does—old Dame Humphreys, the widow of a soldier who was killed in Zululand before we were born. She's pretty hard-up, you know, and has a hard time of it."

Frank Monk nodded.

"Yes, I know. They were talking of a subscription one—"

"But it was never done," remarked Carboy.

"Exactly!" said Tom Merry. "And we've been thinking that something might be done. I don't know exactly what. But something ought to be done, that's certain. The War Office ought to look after her, and if they won't, they ought to be made to. However, that's not business. What's this challenge you've come about?"

"It's a challenge from the Grammar School to St. Jim's, and it includes seniors as well as juniors, if they care to come in," said Frank Monk. "You beat us once on the footer field—"

"Twice!" said Lowther.

"Yes, so it was—twice. I don't know quite how it came about—"

"I could tell you. We were the better team, you know; that accounts for it."

"Rats! But never mind that. You beat us at footer, by some peculiar chance, and now we're going to give you a chance to show what you can do in other lines. We want you to meet us in general athletics. Everything you can do we'll meet you at—running, walking, jumping, anything and everything."

"Boxing and fencin'," said Carboy.

"Shooting and swimming," added Lane.

"Everything," said Monk. "We've thought it over, and we've come to the conclusion that it's about the best way to put you kids in your places. You've got a curious idea into your heads that your old school is equal to ours—"

"Nothing of the sort!" said Tom Merry promptly.

"Eh? Do you mean to say—"

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"I never said that St. Jim's was equal to the Grammar School."

"Well, if you admit that it isn't—"

"Of course I admit that it isn't. If St. Jim's were equal to the Grammar School, the Grammar School would be equal to St. Jim's—which certainly is not the case. My dear chap, St. Jim's is superior to the Grammar School. That's how the case stands."

"Ch, go and eat coke!" growled Frank Monk. "You refuse to admit that we are top school, and we reckon that by licking you all along the line, at every kind of athletics, we shall put you in your place, and make you sing properly small."

"I'm afraid it will work out the other way," said Tom Merry thoughtfully. "It is the Grammar School that will get licked all along the line."

Frank Monk sniffed.

"We'll risk that, Merry. Do you accept the challenge?"

"Rather!"

"That's settled, then. Now, about the time. A half-holiday won't be long enough for the sports; we shall have to have a whole one."

Tom Merry whistled.

"We haven't another whole holiday this term."

"But on a special occasion like this the Head would grant you one, if you put it to him as an old sport."

"Ha, ha! We'll try! But if we can get it, can you fellows get it on the same day?"

"I think so. I shall put it to my pater," said Frank Monk, who was the son of the headmaster of Rylcombe Grammar School. "I think I shall be able to bring him round all right."

"Good! We'll manage to get the whole holiday, if we have to go on strike in the school," said Tom Merry. "It will have to be done, and Dr. Holmes will see reason if we put it to him nicely. Now, time's up, I'm sorry to say. I find your conversation extraordinarily interesting, and I should like to keep it up all the afternoon, but—"

"But we should be bored to death, I'm afraid," said Monk politely, "so we'll trot."

"Oh, we'll see you down to the gate! I don't want the fellows to rag you, as you've come here specially to give us a chance of showing up the Grammar School."

And the chums of the Shell escorted the three Grammarians to the gates of St. Jim's. The disputing Fourth-Formers had evidently reached the end of their tussle, for they were not in sight now. But as Tom Merry said good-bye to the Grammarians, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came from the direction of the School House, and joined the chums of the Shell at the gate.

CHAPTER 3.

The Sad Case of Arthur Augustus.

TOM MERRY gave a whistle of amazement at the sight of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. The swell of the School House presented a most unusual spectacle. Round one of his eyes was a dark purple patch. D'Arcy had a black eye!

The Terrible Three stared at him, and broke into a chuckle.

"Oh, Gussy," exclaimed Tom Merry, "this is too good! Where did you get that eye?"

"Black, but comely," said Lowther.

"It's black, but that's no matter," said Manners, chanting the old song.

D'Arcy tried to screw his eyeglass into his eye, but in vain. The swelling round it prevented the rim from sticking there. The monocle dropped to the end of its cord.

"Oh, pway don't wot, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus plaintively. "Do I look wewy howwid?"

"Rotten!" said Tom Merry.

"Shocking!" said Lowther.

"Filthy!" said Manners.

"Bai Jove, do I weally, you know? It's feahful, deah boys! I don't quite know how I got this black eye. We all got mixed up somehow, and it was eithah Blake's elbow or Howwies's knee that banged me in the eye and made me in this awful state."

"Too bad!"

"I've been huntin' through the School House for a waw steak to put on it," said D'Arcy miserably; "but they haven't one, you know. I'm going down to the village for one. Isn't it feahful? I know that I look a howwid sight, and it puts me quite into a fluttah."

"Too awfully bad! It must be so painful to be put into a fluttah," said Tom Merry gravely.

"Yaas, wathah! Are you goin' down to Wylcombe? I will come with you."

"Not with that eye," said Lowther. "We don't want to

be taken for a lot of hooligans just coming home from a row."

"Oh, weally, Lowthah—"

"What-ho!" exclaimed Manners emphatically. "When we get into Rylcombe, they'll think you've just been chucked out of a pub, or something."

"Oh, weally, Mannahs—"

"Rather!" said Tom Merry. "Respectable chaps like us have to keep up appearances, you know, Gussy. It doesn't matter so much for a fellow like you."

"Oh, weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Still, on second thoughts we'll take him along," said Tom Merry. "Of course, it's really Blake's business to look after his own tame lunatic."

"I wufuse to be chawactewised as a lunatic!"

"But we'll take you along, D'Arcy, on condition that you agree to get behind a tree if we meet anybody we know."

"I wufuse to do anythin' of the sort!"

"Well, we'll risk it. Come along!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

And the four juniors left the school gates and walked down to the village. The lane was not a well-frequented one, but they were certain to meet a few people; and, as luck would have it, among the few they met were Pilcher, Craggs, and Grimes, the village youths with whom the St. Jim's juniors had had many a rub.

They stopped and stared at D'Arcy. The swell of St. Jim's hastily clapped his handkerchief to his eye as he caught sight of the village trio, and Grimes, Craggs, and Pilcher were naturally surprised to see D'Arcy walking along with a handkerchief to his eye.

"My word!" said Pilcher. "What is the matter with the dear little infant?"

"Perhaps he's lost a ha'penny?" suggested Craggs.

"How sad to see the poor boy crying!" said Grimes.

D'Arcy turned crimson.

"You howwid cads!" he exclaimed. "How dare you suggest that I am cwyin'?"

"Well, what are you doing with that handkerchief to your eye, then?" demanded Pilcher.

"I wufuse to enlighten you on that point!"

"Weep, dear baby—weep!" said Craggs.

"I wufuse to weep! Pway pass on, and welieve me of your pwesenec!" said D'Arcy haughtily. "I weward you as feahful blackguards!"

"Weep, my pretty one—"

"Bai jove," exclaimed D'Arcy, "I'll— Oh, dear!"

In his excitement he had taken the handkerchief from his eye, and the blackened optio was fully revealed to the astonished gaze of Pilcher, Craggs, and Grimes.

The village youths gave a simultaneous yell.

"My word, a black eye!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gussy with a black eye!"

Pilcher, Craggs, and Grimes seemed to be overcome by the sight. They fell against one another, and wept with laughter. D'Arcy, with a face like a peony, strode onward. His companions were giggling hysterically.

"I weally do not see the cause for this untimely mewwiment," said D'Arcy stiffly. "I must say that I wish you would cease, you fellows. I weward it as far fwom bein' a laughin' mattah."

"Hs, ha, ha!"

"I fail entirely to see the comic aspect of the mattah at all!"

"Of course you do," said Tom Merry. "But if we had a looking-glass here, Gussy, you'd see it all right!"

"I weward that as a fawvulous remark."

"By Jove," said Lowther, "we could make up something on this for the Weekly. I'll make my contribution a poem on the subject."

"I shall wufuse to allow anythin' of the kind, Lowthah!"

"I sha'n't ask you, kid. Let's see, how does this go:

"There's a kid we all know well enough,

Who's a regular hooligan rough,

The trophies he'll prize

Are thick ears and black eyes,

And he—"

"I wufuse to allow you to pwoceed, Lowthah!"

"And he—"

"I distinctly wufuse to allow you to compose anythin' so extremly diswepcteful!" said D'Arcy. "You three boundahs nevah treat me with pwopah respect, but a fellow must dwaw a line somewhere."

"Hallo! Here's the butcher's shop!" said Tom Merry, interrupting the dispute.

A fat and ruddy man in a blue apron came forward as the four juniors halted outside his shop.

"What can I do for you, young gentlemen?"

"This chap wants a pound of beef to put in his eye," said Lowther, indicating D'Arcy.

"Nothin' of the sort!" said the swell of St. Jim's. "I want a waw beef-steak to put on my eye, my good man. I have had an—accident."

The fat butcher grinned.

"I'll get you a nice juicy one, young gent."

"But I say, are you going to wear it in the street?" asked Tom Merry. "We shall have all Rylcombe following us if you do."

"I am afraid I cannot considah a minor point like that, Tom Mewwy, when it is a question of a black eye."

"Ha, ha! Well, I don't mind!"

"Pewhaps, though, it would be bettah to go back to the school in a cab," said D'Arcy thoughtfully. "Pway, call me a cab, my good man!"

The good man grinned.

The only cab in Rylcombe was the ancient station hack, and that was a good distance away.

"I am afraid it can't be done, sir! Shall I fasten on the steak for you?"

"Weally, this is most annoyin'! Tom Mewwy, will you go to the station and fetch that covious old go-cart there?" Tom Merry winked at his comrades.

"I'm afraid we've no time," he said, looking at his watch. "We're late for our appointment as it is, and you wouldn't like us to keep a lady waiting, Gussy."

"Wathah not! I should wogard such an action as unjustifiable undah any circois."

"So, you see, it can't be done. But we'll take you along with us."

"I shall look a shockin' sight."

"Never mind; it's only five minutes' walk to the station."

"But weally—"

"I'm afraid there's nothing else to be done, Gussy. Give me the steak, please; I will fix it on. Give me your handkerchiefs, you chaps."

"Pway, do not use my handkerchief, Tom Mewwy! It is a silk one, and I am afraid you will spoil it. You can use your own!"

"Certainly!" said Tom Merry, jerking Gussy's handkerchief out of his pocket. "But I'll use yours first! Now, is that your eye?"

"You wottah! You have jammed the beastly steak wight in my eye!"

"Well, where did you want it—on the back of your head?"

"Weally, you need not be so wuff! I am afraid I shall not like that stickin' there, Tom Mewwy. Pewhaps I had better take it to St. Jim's, and fasten it on there."

"It will be too late then to do your eye any good."

"But I shall look such a widoiculous sight!"

"Not much worse than usual, you know!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Here you are! Keep your fat head still while I tie the handkerchiefs! I think that will be all right."

"You have covahed up both my eyes!"

"That's all right; the bandage wouldn't be really quite safe, unless it went right round the wood—round your head, I mean!"

"But I weally cannot see now!"

"Not necessary; we are going to guide you."

"But weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Oh, come along! Dame Humphreys will think we have forgotten her, and it will be all your fault, Gussy."

And Tom Merry paid the grinning butcher, and led the bandaged swell of St. Jim's from the shop.

CHAPTER 4.

Monty's Little Joke—And Tom Merry's Brilliant Idea.

D'ARCY'S appearance, with a big, bulging steak fastened over his right eye with four knotted handkerchiefs, was sufficiently remarkable, and it was not long in attracting attention. The children of Rylcombe took a great interest in the matter, and began to follow the juniors, and the old folk came to their doors and looked out, and grinned at the curious sight.

D'Arcy heard the remarks that his appearance called forth, and his face, where it was not covered by the bandages, gradually assumed a beautifully crimson hue.

The chums of the Shell maintained a perfect gravity of countenance as they marched Arthur Augustus onward.

"Weally, I think you had bettah move this bandage a little, Tom Mewwy," said Arthur Augustus. "I would wathah be able to see where I am goin'."

"Oh, what rot," said Tom Merry, "when we're taking all the trouble to guide you! I really think you're rather ungrateful, Gussy."

"I don't want to be ungrateful, but—"

"Here you are!" exclaimed Monty Lowther. "Here's your carriage!"

Lowther signed to a youth in a small grocer's cart, who

was looking on at the scene in wonder. The grocer's lad had often delivered goods at the school, and Lowther knew him by sight. He halted his cart, and Lowther whispered to him, and a half-crown changed hands.

"Where is the hack, Tom Mewwy?"

"Come on!" said Lowther. "Let me give you a hand in!"

"Thank you vewy much! I shall be weally glad to get out of sight of these wude people who are passin' wemarks upon me."

"Of course, you will."

"Here, I say—" began Tom Merry dubiously, as Lowther assisted the unsuspecting swell of St. Jim's into the grocer's cart.

"Say nothing!" retorted Lowther. "This is my jape—I mean, I am going to do my best for Gussy, who has been honourably wounded in the cause of the School House by one of the New House rotters!"

"Weally, I think it was Blake's elbow, or else Hewwies's knee—"

"Never mind; I've paid your fare!"

"That is weally vewy good of you, Lowthah! Pewwaps you are not such a wotten boundah as I have always taken you for!"

"Oh, sit down! Don't move that bandage at all, or the beef-steak will come off, and then you'll probably have a black eye for a week."

"I will be vewy careful. But I weally wish that I could see!"

"What rot! What do you want to see for, when you have a reliable driver to take you straight to St. Jim's and deliver you there?"

"Yaas, that's vewy true."

"You'll take the best care of your passenger, driver?"

"Certainly, sir!" grinned the grocer's boy.

"Deliver him at the School House at St. Jim's."

"Yes, sir."

Lowther had hurriedly written a few words on a sheet of paper with a pencil. He pinned the paper on D'Arcy's collar, unseen and unsuspected by the blindfolded swell of St. Jim's.

Tom Merry and Manners broke into a chuckle as they read the message.

"Damaged goods! Quite useless! To be delivered to Study No. 6, School House, St. Jim's! With the compliments of Merry, Manners, and Lowther!"

"I say, Lowthah, this hack feels diffwent somehow. The seat is vewy hard," said Arthur Augustus, who was sitting on a box in the grocer's cart.

"Never mind that," said Lowther. "I suppose they've taken the stuffing away."

"But I say, you know, it's vewy dwaughty."

"Well, you can complain, and no mistake! Get on, driver, and get him to the school as quickly as possible!"

"Certainly, sir!"

And the grocer-boy whipped up his horse, and the cart dashed away, with the swell of the School House sitting in it, and a yell of laughter from the gathering crowd followed it. The Terrible Three shrieked. The unconsciousness of Arthur Augustus was the funniest part of the matter.

"But it's really too bad," said Tom Merry, gasping. "I say—"

"Oh, rats!" said Lowther. "It's one up against Study No. 6, anyway. Now, let's get on and see Dame Humphreys—we're a quarter of an hour late."

"By Jove, yes; buck up!"

And the chums of the Shell made their way to the cottage tenanted by Mrs. Humphreys, while the grocer's cart vanished down the lane to St. Jim's.

Dame Humphreys was a well-known character in Rylcombe. She was a soldier's widow, and had a small pension—so small that, as Tom Merry had put it, you required a microscope to see it with. She was always in want, and subsisted chiefly upon charity; an extremely uncertain source of income.

The case appealed to Tom Merry. He had determined that something should be done, though exactly what he did not know. But when Tom Merry, of St. Jim's, set his mind upon anything, it usually came off. His present purpose in visiting the dame's cottage was to bring her the proceeds of a "whip-round" in the School House at St. Jim's, to meet her current week's rent, the dame's landlord being a hard man, who would have turned his own grandmother out of doors if she had been his tenant and had not paid him regularly.

"Here you are!" exclaimed Tom Merry, halting before the cottage.

The little place faced the south-west, and the old dame was seated in the doorway to enjoy the glimpse of spring sunshine. She did not hear the approach of the boys, but she smiled amiably when they appeared before her.

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"How do you do, dame?" asked Tom Merry, as the Terrible Three raised their caps.

"Yes, it's a nice day," agreed the dame, who was extremely deaf. "Very nice for March, young gentlemen."

"Are you well to-day?"
"Got anything to sell to-day? No, Master Merry; I don't keep a shop. I did. Let me see, it was fourteen years ago come Michaelmas that I closed it."

"I hope you are well, dame?" bawled Tom Merry.
"Yes, I'm trying to tell you."
"My word," said Lowther, "you need a megaphone here, Tom!"

"We thought we'd come to see you, Mrs. Humphreys," said Tom, in his loudest tones. "You remember I told you I would come this afternoon?"

"Yes, it's a sunny afternoon for March."
"We've brought you a little present."
"Yes, very pleasant indeed."
"I say we've brought you a little present from the school."

"The cold is indeed something cruel at times, Master Merry."

Tom Merry gasped.
"Better give it up," said Manners. "Try dumb show."
And the hero of the Shell thought he had better.

He took out his little leather purse, and poured the contents into the dame's lap. Mrs. Humphreys looked amazed.
"It's for your rent, Mrs. Humphreys," shouted Tom.

"I can't quite hear."
"It's for your rent on Saturday."
"A little louder. My hearing is not so good as it was."
"It's for your rent."

"Yes, it shall be spent, certainly. It is very kind of you, Master Merry. I must pay my landlord on Saturday, or he will turn me out in my old age."

"That's what we've brought it for."
"Yes, he is very hard on the poor."
"My hat!" said Lowther. "This will kill me! Say good-bye, Tommy, and let's travel before you split my ear-drums."

Tom Merry looked rather exhausted. He had the kindest heart in the world, but Dame Humphrey's deafness was certainly a little trying to the nerves.

"Good-bye, dame!" he shouted.
"You are right, Master Merry, it is a shame."
"Good-bye!"

"Oh, no, I'm not going to cry; this will see me over till next week, at least, and perhaps the clergyman will help me then!"

"Good-bye! I say, good-bye!"
"Oh, yes; I am always careful to keep my feet dry, on account of the rheumatics!"

Tom Merry gave it up.
"Dumb show does it," said Monty Lowther. "We'll all bow together, and then she'll see that we're taking our leave."

"Good wheeze!"
The three juniors stood in a row and took off their caps solemnly, and bowed to the old lady. Then they went down the street.

"Good-bye!" shrilled the old dame. "Dear me! They are very kind lads, but they might have said good-bye! But nobody cares for an old woman like me."

The Terrible Three strolled away towards St. Jim's. Tom Merry's brow was very thoughtful.

"I say, chaps!" he exclaimed. "It's a crying shame about Dame Humphreys. Something ought to be done for her."

"Right-ho!" said Manners. "But I really don't see what we can do, besides raise a small sum every now and then."
"The Government ought to be made to do something."

"Good!" said Lowther. "Ask Dr. Holmes for a day off, and go up to Whitehall and make 'em!"
"Don't be an ass! The thing is to draw public attention to the matter, if we could think of a way."

"You'll have to appeal to the Press," said Manners.
"Jolly good wheeze!" exclaimed Lowther. "We'll appeal to the Press—have a leading article on the subject in the next number of 'Tom Merry's Weekly'—"

"Look here, Lowther, this isn't a laughing matter—"
"I know it isn't, old kid; and if there were anything to be done I'd do it like a shot," said Lowther; "but there isn't."

Tom Merry pushed his cap on to the back of his head and ran his fingers through his curly hair; a trick he had when he was trying to think things out.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed.
Manners and Lowther looked at him.

"Hallo! What's got hold of you now, Tom?"

"I've got an idea!"
"Your own?"
"Yes, ass! It's a way of raising a fund for Dame Humphreys—"

"Go ahead!"
"You remember that challenge Monk has brought over to us—"

"What's that got to do with the washing?"
"This much—it's a way! We'll get up the sports' competition, with prizes and so forth for the winners, and charge an entrance fee for every chap who goes in for anything—"

"Suppose he goes in for a wash—"
"Ass! Every chap who goes in for one of the contests. Say a bob for a junior, two bob for a senior, and five bob for a master—"

"Yes; I can see the masters entering into the thing."
"I don't see why not. We'll all write home to our relations for things to give as prizes. My old governess, Miss Fawcett, will send things down by the barrelful if I ask her. It's a ripping idea! We'll rig up all kinds of contests, and everybody who likes can enter, whether he belongs to St. Jim's or to the Grammar School, or to the village, or—"

"Or Jericho—"
"I tell you, we shall raise quite a sum that way, and it will be ripping fun, too! We'll leave the next number of the 'Weekly' till after the sports, so that we can chronicle our victories in it—"

"Suppose we don't have any?"
"I'm not going to suppose anything of the kind. We're going to lick the Grammarians all along the line. We'll send down the copy for the 'Weekly' to the printer as usual, so that he can get it set up, and tell him to leave a page for the report on the sports. Then we can write it out after they're over, and a chap can cycle down with it. It's a good wheeze. And look here; with such a giddy, laudable object for the holding of the sports, the Head can't refuse us a whole holiday."

"Tommy, my son, you have some good ideas sometimes—"
"It's a ripping wheeze," exclaimed Manners heartily, "and, if being our idea, we shall be able to crow over Study No. 6, and Figgins & Co.—"

"Exactly. We come out on top, as usual."
"Come on," said Lowther. "Let's get back to St. Jim's and talk it over with the fellows. It's too good an idea to lose. We'll strike while the iron's hot!"

And the Terrible Three hurried to the school.

CHAPTER 5.

The Return of Arthur Augustus.

"I WONDER where that young ass has got to?" Jack Blake, of Study No. 6, remarked to his chums, Herries and Digby.

"Blessed if I know!" said Digby. "He had a black eye last time I saw him—"

"So he had when I saw him," said Herries.
"How remarkable!" said Blake sarcastically. "It must have been the same black eye, you know!"

"I suppose it was," said Herries, who was rather dense. "He got it in the scrap with Figgins & Co. at the gate, you know. The young ass said it was either your elbow or my knee that did it, or else your knee or my elbow, I forget which—"

"It doesn't matter much which, so long as he got it," Blake remarked. "But the question is, where is he?"
"Perhaps he's gone to do something for his black eye."
"Shouldn't wonder," said Digby. "I advised him to go and bury it. Perhaps he's gone and done it. What do you want him for, Blake?"

Blake turned his trousers' pockets inside out.
"Oh, I see!"

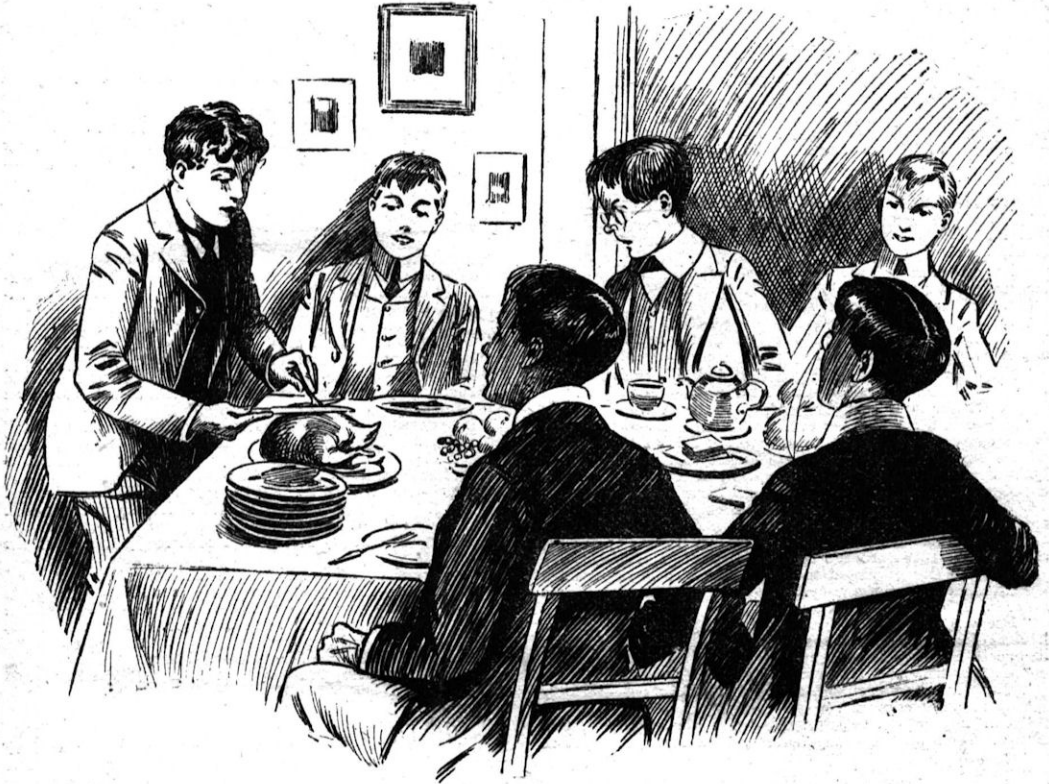
"Still, if either of you kids has enough tin to stand a feed at the school shop, I'm willing to give D'Arcy his head," said Blake.

"Stony!" said Herries, with Spartan brevity.
"Busted!" said Digby, with a sigh.

Blake surveyed them with a glance of patient disdain.
"You're a nice pair of duffers for a chap to chum with!" he exclaimed. "Both of you stony when a chap feels just inclined to feed on a dozen or so tarts, and when the millionaire of the family has bunked off somewhere with a black eye! Aren't you ashamed of yourselves?"

"Why, you boulder, you're broke yourself—"
"Oh, don't argue!" said Blake hastily. "Let's go and look for Gussy. If he's gone out, we may spot him from the gate. Hallo, there comes old Sandysugar's cart, and—"

and— My only ancient aunt! What's that in it?"



"Who says fowl?" asked Tom Merry.
 "Fowl!" came in a chorus.

The three juniors stared at the cart in amazement. It was the vehicle belonging to Mr. Sanders, the grocer of Rylcombe, playfully nicknamed Sandysugar by the St. Jim's juniors. The grocer's boy, with a smile that apparently wouldn't come off, was driving, and behind him in the cart sat Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of the School House, bandaged and blindfolded.

There was a rush of boys round the cart at once. Figgins & Co., who had finished football practice and were strolling round, were the first on the scene. A universal howl of laughter greeted the swell of the School House.

Figgins stopped the pony, and the juniors were packed round the cart; and Blake and his chums had all their work cut out to get near it.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Figgins. "It's Gussy, the one and only! Where did you get that funny thing, young Sandysugar?"

"There's a label on it," said Kerr.

"By Jove, so there is!"

"Read it out, Figgy!" cackled Fatty Wynn.

"Right-ho! 'Damaged goods,'" read out Figgins.

"Quite useless. To be delivered to Study No. 6, School House, St. Jim's. With the compliments of Merry, Manners, and Lowther."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors.

"Weally, deah boys—"

Blake fought his way through the crowd, and reached up and seized D'Arcy by the arm and gave him a shake.

"You utter ass!" he shouted. "How did you—"

"Pway let go my arm! I do not like to be touched so wuffly," said D'Arcy. "I cannot see who it is, but unless I am immediately released I shall stwike him."

"You utter idiot—"

"I wufuse to be called an uttah idiot—"

"Who fixed you up like this—"

"Tom Mewwy vewy kindly fastened a waw steak ovah my eye, and Lowthah genewously placed me in this hack and paid my fare to the coll."

"He placed you in what?"

"In this hack!"

"You—you—you howling ass—"

"I distinctly wufuse to be wogarded as a howlin' ass—"
 "You not in a hack, you're in the grocer's cart from Rylcombe!" roared Blake; while the juniors shrieked with laughter.

D'Arcy gave a jump.

"What's that, dear boy?"

Blake snatched the bandage from his eyes. The beef-steak dropped into the cart. D'Arcy gazed round him in utter bewilderment.

"Bai Jove!" he exclaimed. "Bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Figgins & Co. "Hear us smile! Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy's almost idiotic look of bewilderment was distinctly funny. He seemed so surprised to find himself in the grocer's cart that the boys simply shrieked.

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "That feahful wotthah Lowthah must have played a twick on me!"

"You—you—you unspeakable ass!"

"I cannot wogard myself as an unspeakable ass. I was blindfolded, you see. Tom Mewwy said the steak would come off if I wemoved the bandage—"

The juniors roared again.

"I thought the seat was wathah hardah than usual," said D'Arcy, "and I certainly found it vewy dwaughty, but I nevah—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pway don't make that feahful wov, Figgins! I think that if you want to make a feahful wov like that you ought to go into some lonely place—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Dear me!" said a voice on the edge of the shrieking crowd. "What is that?"

It was Mr. Railton of the School House. The boys parted respectfully for the housemaster to approach. Blake hastily snipped off the label and put it in his pocket. The Terrible

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Three had "japed" Study No. 6, but Blake was not the one to get them into hot water over it.

Mr. Railton's brow was rather severe as he looked at the swell of St. Jim's still sitting in the grocer's cart.

"What does this mean?" he demanded.

"I have unfortunately met with an accident, sir," said D'Arcy. "Eithah Blake's elbow or Hewvies' knee—I can't quite make out which—stwuuck me in the eye."

"How could Blake's elbow or Herries' knee strike you in the eye, D'Arcy?" asked the School House master, staring at him. "Don't be absurd!"

"It's quite cowwect, sir. We wera havin' a little scwap."

"Oh, I see! But it is not that discoloration of your eye that I am referring to. What do you mean by coming here in a grocer's cart?"

"I weally did not feel up to walkin', sir," said D'Arcy languidly. "I should have found it most exhaustin'."

Mr. Railton could not help smiling.

"Well, get out of that ridiculous position at once!" he said. "And don't let it happen again, or you'll hear from me, D'Arcy!"

"Certainly, sir! I assuah you that I shall nevah let anythin' of the kind happen again, if I can possibly help it."

And Arthur Augustus jumped out of the cart.

The grocer's boy, having delivered his goods, so to speak, drove away. Mr. Railton went into the School House, still with a smile upon his face. He guessed that it was some juniors' joke, and he was not the kind of master to inquire too closely into the matter, unless real harm had been done.

D'Arcy was glad to go into the School House, too, to escape the torrent of chaff from Figgins & Co., and the rest of the juniors. He sank down, gasping, in Study No. 6, and his comrades gathered round him with grim looks.

"I am weally gwatified to see you look so sewious, deah boys!" said D'Arcy unsuspectingly. "This is a sewious mattah. My dig, has been outwaged."

"I'm not thinking of your dig, you ass!" said Blake.

"What I'm thinking is, that you've made this study look idiotic in the eyes of the school."

"Wats! How could I help it?"

"Well, I suppose you can't help being an ass—"

"I object to that term!"

"You're going to get something else you object to, too. You've shown up this study before all St. Jim's, and you're going to be ragged!"

"Rather!" said Digby. "Are you ready, Gussy?"

"Right-ho!" exclaimed Herries heartily. "That exactly meets the case!"

D'Arcy looked alarmed as his three chums closed round him.

"I wufuse to be wagged!" he exclaimed. "I distinctly and uttably wufuse to be wagged! I considah—"

"Are you ready?"

"Pwaw be weasonable, deah boys! It would be vewy much bettah to wag Tom Mewwy and Mannahs and Lowthah!"

"Well, there's something in that," agreed Blake, pausing.

"Where are the bounders? We'll teach 'em to make a bigger fool of you than Nature did, though that wanted some doing."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Let's get them into this study if we can," said Digby thoughtfully. "That treacle we had the other day from Dame Taggles is really no good, you know, since Herries spilt his can of cycle oil into the basin."

"Well, I thought it would do for visitors—"

"No, old chap; it's too bad for that. I tried some on Gore, and he made a face like a gargyle. It will come in handy just now, though, if we can get the Terrible Three into this room. They can have it applied externally. We want to give them a lesson when they start showing up our study."

"Of course! D'Arcy, being such an ass—"

"I weally object—"

"It's a temptation to them to jape him. Still, we must stand up for our own, even if he's a howling jackass!"

"Blake, I distinctly wufuse to—"

"So I think the treacle idea is all right. We must get them into the study, though, and be all ready for them when they come."

"I will manage that for you, deah boys," said D'Arcy. "I must go and change my beastly clothes, you know. I feel vewy wotten, and I think I want a wash, too. But leave that mattah to me. I'll contwive to twap the Tewwible Thwee."

"How are you going to do it, image?"

"I weally do not know yet; but a fellow of tact and judgment is required for a thing like this, and so you had certainly bettah leave it in my hands."

And D'Arcy left the study.

CHAPTER 6.

A Slight Mistake.

BLAKE, Herries, and Digby were still discussing the matter ten minutes later, when Arthur Augustus burst into Study No. 6 excitedly. The swell of the School House had changed his clothes and washed his face in that—for him—remarkably short space of time. His black eye was as much in evidence as ever, and it gave a peculiar aspect to his aristocratic visage; but D'Arcy had forgotten it for the moment.

"I say, deah boys, they're comin'!"

"Who are coming?" asked Blake.

"Tom Mewwy, Mannahs, and Lowthah."

"Coming here?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Blake rose from the corner of the table. He looked suspiciously at the swell of the School House, but D'Arcy's excitement was evidently genuine.

"I say, you're not japing, I suppose?" asked Blake.

"Certainly not, deah boy! They're weally comin'!"

"How did you manage it?" asked Digby.

"As a mattah of fact, I did not manage it at all," said D'Arcy. "I just found them comin' here, and huwvied on like anythin' to tell you to be weady."

"Do you mean they're coming here of their own accord?"

"Yaas, wathah! They're comin' down the cowwidah, and I heard Tom Mewwy say that they would come and see Blake first before goin' ovah to the New House."

"There's something on, I suppose," said Blake, grinning.

"There'll be something more on soon—treacle, for instance. It will be on them. Ready!"

The chums of Study No. 6 were soon ready to receive the enemy.

The jar of treacle, which was unfortunately not good enough even for visitors, since Herries had spilt his cycle oil into it, was placed in readiness upon a chair, and the four chums gathered just inside the door. Blake turned the gas down to a mere glimmer.

"Don't make a sound!" whispered Blake. "They'll think there's nobody here, but they'll look in to make sure, and then—"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Not a word! I can hear them in the passage!"

The footsteps of the new-comers could be heard outside. D'Arcy's information was evidently correct.

In the gloom of the dim study the four juniors waited breathlessly.

There was a knock at the door.

"Don't wewpy, you fellows," said D'Arcy. "They—oooo—gooo—oooo—" He broke off, as Blake's hand was jammed upon his mouth.

"Shut up, you ass!" whispered Blake fiercely.

"I wufuse to—oooooooo!"

The knock was repeated on the door.

Silence reigned in the study.

Then the door was opened, and a face looked in.

Whom it was the juniors, of course, could not discern in the gloom, but Blake immediately guessed that Tom Merry smelt a rat, and was not going to enter the study until he had reconnoitred.

There was evidently no time to be wasted. Blake sprang forward, and in a second his arms were round the neck of the dim figure, and it was dragged headlong into the study.

"Quick!" yelled Blake. "I've got him!"

He went to the floor with a bump along with the visitor.

"Quick—the treacle!"

"I've got the twacle!" shouted D'Arcy excitedly.

He snatched the jar off the chair, and sprang to pour it over the new-comer. Blake, being so close to the enemy, naturally received a full share of it; but that the swell of St. Jim's was too excited to take note of.

Blake gave a fearful yell as the horrible, sticky compound smothered over his face, and his yell was echoed by his opponent, who received a generous portion round his neck.

"You young rascals!"

D'Arcy gave a jump.

The voice was not the voice of Tom Merry, but of Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's.

"Bai Jove!" gasped D'Arcy.

"My word!" ejaculated Digby. "Kildare!"

"The captain!" exclaimed Herries.

"What—what does this mean?"

Kildare was really angry for once. He tore himself loose from the amazed and scared Blake, and staggered to his feet. The treacle was clinging lovingly round his neck.

ANSWERS

NEXT
THURSDAY

"D'ARCY THE

DUDE."

A Double-Length Tale of
Tom Merry's Schooldays.

D'Arcy, in his amazement and terror, stood like a statue, the treacle-jar in his hands, still pouring out its contents over Blake.

Digby turned up the gas. Blake squirmed away and jumped up. He was treacly from head to foot. The juniors stared at Kildare. He was treacly, too, and his face was crimson with anger.

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed D'Arcy, the first to find his voice. "Bai Jove, Kildare, we're feahfully sowwy, you know."

"How dare you—?"

"It was all a mistake!" said Blake ruefully. "We had turned down the light and prepared this little reception for Tom Merry—"

"Yaas, watah!"

"And then you came in instead. We really couldn't guess that it was you in the dark. I hope you—you don't mind."

"Don't mind!" roared Kildare. "I'm smothered with treacle!"

"So am I! That ass, D'Arcy has given me more than you—"

"Accidents will happen, deah boy!"

"You utter ass!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"I—I'll deal with you young scoundrels presently!" exclaimed Kildare. "I came to speak to you about the football, and—oh, it's too bad for words! Any other Sixth-Former, I verily believe, would skin you for this!"

"You're such a jolly good fellow, Kildare!"

"Yes, I know, when you want me to let you off! I—oh, confound you! This stuff is running down the back of my neck!"

"Ha, ha! I—I mean, I'm so sorry—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's the matter here?"

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther, appeared in the doorway. They stared in amazement. Kildare brushed past them, leaving a trail of treacle on Lowther's sleeve, and disappeared. The captain of St. Jim's was blessed with a true Irish good temper, but it had been put to a severe strain this time by the little mistake in Study No. 6.

"You howwid boundahs!" exclaimed D'Arcy. "A nice mess you've got us into! If you had been more punctual you would have got that tweacle instead of Kildare."

"Well, that would have been a ripping reward for punctuality; so, of course, we're sorry we're late!" said Tom Merry. "I can see you kids have made another bungle, as usual. If you'd take my advice you'd give up japing. You can't manage the easiest sort of a jape, for toffee."

Blake was too busy trying to get the treacle off his face to reply. D'Arcy looked round at his chums for support.

"The wottahs are here now, deah boys!" he exclaimed. "There is no reason why we should not cawwy out our owginal intention, and wag them."

"Rats!" growled Digby.

"Weally, Digby—"

"It's pax now!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "We've come here to talk over a most important subject. We're thinking of—"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" groaned Blake. "Don't talk to me! I shall never get this treacle out of my hair, I know. If you want to do me a great favour, take D'Arcy into a quiet corner, and kill him."

"Blake, I wogard that as a fewocious speech."

"I regard you as a ferocious ass! It's not fair that we should have you here all the time. Tom Merry ought to have you in his study for a bit, and then the New House ought to take a turn. You'll make me an old man before my time. I can feel my hair turning grey already."

"Now, Blake, don't be wicidulous; you know—"

"Here, have some of your confounded treacle!" yelled the exasperated Blake; and he rushed at D'Arcy and clasped him round the neck.

"Welcase me, you howwid wuffian!"

"Not till you've got your share of the treacle," said Blake, rubbing his sticky countenance over D'Arcy's aristocratic features. "Is that all right?"

"It is not all right," exclaimed D'Arcy, tearing himself away, his face streaked and sticky. "Blake, I wogard you as a beast—a feahful beast!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I shall no longah tweek you as a fwind."

"Well, that will be a comfort. I don't know what you've come to talk about, Tom Merry."

"It's a great idea—"

"Good! I'm going to get a wash, and you can talk while I'm gone. If you can get it finished by the time I get back, I shall take it as a personal favour."

"Look here, Blake—"

But Jack Blake was gone.

"Yaas, bai Jove, and I think I want a wash, too!" said D'Arcy. "I shall have to change my collah, too, and my

waistcoat. This one is quite wumped, and there is tweacle on it. I wogard it as vewy inconsiderate of you to be so late, Tom Mowwy, and to cause us to make such a feahful blundah by your beastly unpunctuality."

And D'Arcy walked away indignantly. The Terrible Three burst into a laugh.

"Well, we've got an important matter to talk over, but we want to talk to you all together," said Tom Merry, addressing Digby and Herries. "Will you fellows come to tea in our study? We've got something rather good. My old governess has sent me a hamper from Huckleberry Heath, and there's a fowl and some other things. Will you come?"

"Will we?" said Digby. "Rather!"

"Right-ho!" exclaimed Herries. "We'll come, and bring Blake and D'Arcy. When?"

"Ten minutes."

"Good!"

And the Terrible Three walked away to their own quarters. Ten minutes later tea was ready in Tom Merry's study, and a fragrant scent greeted the nostrils of four Fourth-Formers as they came up the passage.

CHAPTER 7.

A Feed in Tom Merry's Study.

TOM MERRY'S door stood hospitably open, and Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy looked in, and smiled sweetly at the sight of the tea-table.

The fowl occupied the place of honour, and it was flanked by delicacies which showed how generously the hamper from Huckleberry Heath had been packed.

"Bai Jove," said D'Arcy, "this looks weally wippin', you know! I hear fwom Dig. that you have invited us to tea, Tom Mewwy."

"Exactly."

"We are vewy pleased to come, although, as a wule, we are wathah particulah whom we mix with."

Digby kicked the swell of the School House. D'Arcy turned his eyes upon him.

"Pway what was the wesson of that wuf action, Digby?"

"Oh, come in!" said Tom Merry. "Sit down. We've borrowed four seats from Gore's study. There's room for all."

"Bai Jove, that was decent of Gore, as you are not on vewy good terms with him, you know, deah boy!"

"Oh, we didn't ask him!" said Tom Merry coolly. "When it's a question of getting in seats for a tea-party, you can't afford to stand upon ceremony."

"Better to sit on a form," said Monty Lowther, the incurable punster of the Shell.

D'Arcy put up his eyeglass, holding it with finger and thumb, as he was not able to screw it into his damaged eye. He looked round the study.

"Where is the form?" he asked. "I have not the slightest objection to sittin' on a form, if it would add to the general convenience of the honowable company."

"There isn't any form."

"But Lowthah said it would be bettah to sit on a form."

"Oh, that's Lowther's way! Here's a chair."

"But, weally, I am quite willin' to sit on a form, if there is one. What did you mean, Lowthah, by sayin' it is bettah to sit on a beastly form, you know, if there isn't a form in the beastly study?"

"Oh, rats!" said Lowther. "That's one of my best puns—stand on a ceremony, sit on a form. See it?"

"No, I weally do not see it, and Tom Mewwy says there is not a form in the study at all, and so—"

"My only hat! Anybody got a hammer and chisel? I shall want 'em to get a joke into Gussy's head."

"I fail to see where there is any joke in sayin' that there is a form in the study if there is weally not one in the woom at all. It seems to me more like an untwuth than a beastly joke, you know."

"Ass!" howled Lowther. "I tell you—"

"Don't tell him," said Tom Merry; "the tea's made, and—"

"But he can't see the point."

"Well, it's not necessary for him to see it, is it?"

"But I'm going to explain."

"My dear chap—"

"He's got to see that joke," said Lowther determinedly, "if it takes all night. Now, you young ass, look here—form is another word for ceremony, and therefore there is a pun involved—"

"Vewy much involved, I should think, deah boy, as I weally cannot see it at all," said D'Arcy, shaking his head.

"Will you let me explain?"

"No, I think not, deah boy. I would wathah take your word for it. If you say you have made a pun, I have no doubt that the statement is quite cowwect."

Kindly fill in the Order Form in this issue.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake.

"I tell you——" shrieked Lowther.

"Pway don't, dear boy! I am quite weady for tea, and I weally have no time to listen to any silly punnin'. Pway wefwain' fwom explainin'."

Lowther made a rush at D'Arcy, seized him by the shoulders, and pinned him wriggling against the wall.

"Now, listen, you utter ass! Form being another word for ceremony, and also the name of a thing you sit on, there is a pun involved in the use of the two words—thus, to stand upon a form—that is to say, to sit upon a form and stand upon a ceremony—or, rather, to stand upon a——"

"Pway welaase me, Lowthah!"

"Can't you see it yet? If you stand upon a form——"

"I have not the slightest intention of standin' upon a form. You are wuffin' my collah and disawwangan' my tie. If I were not a guest in this respected study, I should stwike you violently. Pway welaase me."

"If you sit upon a form——"

"Tom Mewwy says that there isn't one in the study."

D'Arcy jerked himself loose and rearranged his collar and tie. Lowther was red in the face with his efforts to penetrate the apparent stupidity of the swell of the School House. Blake, Herries, and Digby were shrieking. They had a suspicion that Arthur Augustus was not nearly so dense as he pretended to be.

"Here, sit down!" exclaimed Tom Merry, down whose cheeks the tears were trickling. "You two fellows would make an Egyptian mummy cackle. Sit down!"

"Yaas, wathah; but am I to sit upon a chair or a cewmony—I mean a form?" asked D'Arcy, looking round tranquilly.

"Of all the utter idiots!" growled Lowther. "That's one of my best puns."

"Bai Jove, I shouldn't like to hear the worst one, then."

"You dense ass!"

"Are you always as polite as that to a visitah, Lowthah?"

"Oh, really," said Lowther, looking confused, "I forgot. I beg your pardon."

"Gwanted fweely, deah boy, on condition that you don't make any more of your beastly puns. They take too long to explain."

"Who says fowl?" asked Tom Merry, clicking a carving-knife, borrowed from Kildare's study, upon a steel surreptitiously purloined from the kitchen.

"Fowl!" came in a chorus.

Tom Merry carved well. He had been taught to do so under the careful eye of Miss Priscilla Fawcett, and he had often found it a useful accomplishment. The way he made a not particularly large fowl go round among seven juniors was a miracle. Fortunately, there was ham and beef, there were sausage-rolls and tongue, to supply any deficiency.

"Ripping!" said Blake. "If you ever want to swap, Tom Merry, I've got a couple of old uncles I'll change for your governess."

"Yaas, wathah! I wegard Miss Pwiscillah as a weally valuable person to have about the house," said D'Arcy.

"Tom Mewwy's feeds are always quite the thing, I must say, but this one is extwa wippin'. I weally think that, aafh bein' tweated so well, we can afford to make a sacrifice, and so if Lowthah likes he may explain his pun."

"Rats!" said Lowther. "Go and eat coke!"

"I should certainly not do anythin' of the kind, when there is such a wippin' feed as this on the table. I wegard the suggestion as wicidulous."

There was a tap on the door of the study as D'Arcy spoke. It opened to reveal Skimpole, of the Shell. Skimpole looked in, and hesitated to enter as he saw that a tea-party was in progress.

Tom Merry made him a hospitable sign.

"Come in, kid!"

Skimpole was a rather curious lad. His enormous forehead, which seemed to occupy nearly half his face, denoted vast brain power, or else the presence, as Blake had put it, of a reservoir. Skimpole was a fellow with theories, and his latest was Socialism. His peculiarities formed endless topics in the Shell, and furnished the juniors with food for laughter; but he was so good-natured and obliging that nobody could help liking him. Even Gore, his study-mate and the cad of the Form, half liked Skimpole.

"Come in, Skimmy!"

"I didn't know you had anything on, Merry."

"Thought he was taking a bath?" asked Lowther.

"I mean, I didn't know there was a party on," explained Skimpole, who took everything with absolute seriousness. "I looked in to ask you if you knew anything about the chairs belonging to our study. They're gone."

"By Jove, are they? What can have become of them?"

"I really don't know; I suppose someone must have borrowed them."

"Ha, ha! I shouldn't wonder if you are right, Skimpole. Are these chairs anything like them?"

"They are indeed, Merry—remarkably like."

"Well, come and sit on one of them, Skimpole, and join us at tea. We've borrowed your chairs, old kid; but, as a true Socialist, of course you don't mind that, and you would regard it as a mere matter of form to ask permission, wouldn't you?"

"Oh, no, Merry; courtesy is a great point in the creed of every true Socialist," said Skimpole. "But you are quite welcome, of course. I don't know what Gore will say, as I think he is going to bring Mellish to tea, and they will probably want something to sit upon!"

"Bai Jove, they had better sit upon a form!"

"But I shall really be glad to join you," said Skimpole, coming in and closing the door. "You see, I'm rather hard up. Gore says that he wants all the grub we have in the study, as he's got Mellish coming to tea, and he says that a true Socialist ought to be willing to give away anything to anybody. Of course, that's carrying the thing too far; but he says he will punch my head if I object, and, as a Socialist, I object to violence. I should really have to go without my tea."

"Here you are, old kid. You can have half a chair, if you don't mind sitting next to a bloated aristocrat."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"I haven't the slightest objection," said Skimpole, sitting down between Lowther and D'Arcy on half the chair of each. "I hope to convert D'Arcy to Socialism some day."

"Bai Jove——"

"Don't start now," said Blake. "You'll spoil the feed."

"Ah," said Skimpole, "when I look at these happy faces and this well-filled board, and think of the toiling millions and the famished children——"

"Shut up!" shrieked Tom Merry.

"The famished children——"

"Shut up, you ass! You'll take my appetite away; and this is a ripping fowl. Can't you keep your mouth shut, and feed?"

"How on earth is he to keep his mouth shut and feed?" remonstrated Lowther. "That's really asking too much, Tom."

"The famished millions——"

Blake skiffily hurled a fragment of pie-crust across the table, catching the eloquent Skimpole in the open mouth. Skimpole gasped and gurgled, and turned crimson, and the flow of his oratory was cut short on the spot.

"Feed away," said Blake, "before he gets going again. If he starts on that topic any more we shall have to gag him. There's a time for all things, and especially a time to shut up, Skimpole. Hallo! Here's some more of them!"

The door was kicked open, and Gore and Mellish glared into the study.

"I thought so!" roared Gore. "Here are our chairs. You rotters!"

"Couldn't be helped," said Tom Merry. "We had to have them. Don't be a cad, Gore—I mean, not a bigger one than you can help!"

"Give us those blessed chairs!"

"Wouldn't you care to stay to tea?"

Gore calmed down with remarkable suddenness.

"Oh, that alters the case, of course," he said, surveying the well-spread table with a hungry eye, and glancing at the fresh supplies waiting on the window-ledge and the shelf. "What do you say, Mellish?"

"Oh, of course, I'm always willing to accept an invitation from Tom Merry," said Mellish, grinning amiably.

"We'll be very pleased, Merry."

"What are you going to sit on, though?"

"Bettah sit on a form, bai Jove!"

"Or on Skimpole," said Blake. "Whenever he starts on the toiling millions gag he wants sitting on, you know."

"Scout in some of the studies, and commander a couple of chairs," said Tom Merry. "You can look in any of the Shell studies. Bring 'em along."

"Right-ho!"

And Gore and Mellish vanished, and soon returned with a couple of chairs, the property of some individual at that moment absent from his quarters. Gore had a couple of plates, too, and Mellish carried cups and saucers.

Tom Merry's study was the roomiest of any in the Shell, and there was room for the company, with a little arranging. The fowl was gone, but there was plenty more, and Gore and Mellish received liberal helpings.

Under the circumstances, both of them were inclined to be agreeable for once in their lives; and, the happy feed being in full swing, Blake remembered him that Tom Merry had asked them to the study specially to communicate a brilliant idea, and that nothing had been said about it so

far; and it was Blake who generously broached the subject.

"What price that idea?" he asked.

"What idea?" said Tom Merry.

"Why, the idea you were going to tell us about."

"By Jove, I'd forgotten! Yes, I've got a ripping idea—one that will have to be taken up by the whole school," said Tom Merry, laying down his knife. "I'd have asked Figgins & Co. over, too, but we want it clearly understood that the idea started in the School House, of course."

"Yaas, wathah! I dare say it is a vewy wotten ideah, but—"

"Silence for the chair!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Shut up, Gussy!" said Blake. "You're dead in this act. Go on, Tom Merry!"

CHAPTER 8. Carried Unanimously.

TOM MERRY glanced round at the juniors. There was interest in every face; almost as much interest in what Tom Merry was going to say as in the feed, which is saying a great deal. Even D'Arcy refrained from interrupting.

"It's a rather important matter, kids," said Tom Merry—"a matter in which the country having neglected its duty, St. Jim's is going to see right done."

There was a general gasp of amazement. Tom Merry was known as a junior with ideas, and some of his "wheezes" had been sufficiently startling; but as yet he had never proposed any undertaking of national importance. The juniors waited eagerly for him to go on.

"England expects every man to do his duty," went on Tom Merry; "but England does not always do her duty herself, as in the present case."

"Bravo!" exclaimed Skimpole. "I understand, and I am awfully glad, Merry."

"What on earth are you glad about, Skimpole?"

"I can see it all. You have been converted to Socialism, and—"

"Rats! Nothing of the kind."

"Oh," said Skimpole, looking disappointed, "go on!"

"So I will, if you give me a chance. As for Socialism, I don't know much about it, and I have a very hazy notion as to what it is; and so I fancy you have, too."

"Let me explain—"

"Not much! What I was going to say is, that there is an old lady in the village of Ryloombe known to you all—"

"Mother Murphy?" asked Blake, naming the old lady who kept the village tuck-shop, and who was certainly well known to the juniors of St. Jim's.

Tom Merry laughed.

"No, Dame Humphreys, the widow of a soldier who was killed in Zululand before we were born."

"Poor chap! So he never saw us!" said Lowther sadly.

"Shut up, Lowther! I say, Dame Humphreys ought to be provided for, and she isn't. She has some measly rag of a pension, about enough to keep her in toffee."

"Toffee! Scott! She's rather old for toffee!"

"Ass, I am speaking figuratively. About enough to keep her in toffee if she ate toffee," said Tom Merry. "She has a hard landlord, too, which comes rough on an old soul who hasn't any tin. You see, if an old lady of sixty-five is turned out of doors it is a serious business."

"I should say so!" exclaimed Skimpole. "That's where Socialism comes in."

"It's where you go out if you don't keep quiet!"

"I can see that you're on the road to the light, Tom Merry," went on the enthusiastic Skimpole, unheeding. "Under Socialism every old man and old woman would be supported on an old age pension."

"Bai Jove, that would be wippin', you know! But where would all the beastly money come from, deah boy?" Skimpole sniffed.

"Out of the taxes, of course—taxes on the bloated rich."

"My deah boy, I have met lots of wich men, and I nevah noticed them to be in the slightest degwee bloated. My govannah is vewy wich, but he is quite slim, and I am awfully awistocwatic myself, and you see that I have a slendah figah."

"When I say bloated, I don't mean bloated—"

"Bai Jove, I wondah what he does mean when he says bloated?"

"I don't mean physically bloated," shouted Skimpole. "I mean—"

"Nevah mind what you mean, deah boy. You're intewwuptin' Tom Mewwy."

"I mean metaphorically bloated!" shouted Skimpole.

"Bai Jove, what a beastly shockin' state to be in!"

"Bloated with the loot of the toiling millions!" hooted Skimpole. "I could talk on this subject for hours."

"I should be surprised if you found any listenahs."

"Money!" snorted Skimpole. "There's lots of money. Taxes, my boy. Fellows like you would have to do with fewer fancy waistcoats and less champagne."

"But weally, deah boy, I have only fifteen fancy waistcoats, and I weally don't see how I could do without a modewate vawiety like that; and as for champagne, there weally isn't any in Study No. 6 at the pwesenent moment, and I think the Head would be quite angwy if he evah found any there."

"Oh, he means metaphorical champagne!" grinned Lowther.

"If you don't shut up and let me get on," bawled Tom Merry, "I shall postpone the meeting, and adjourn the feed."

"Order!" shouted Blake. "Order for the chair!"

"Yaas, wathah! Shut up, Skimpole, like a good fellow!"

"Silence!"

"Certainly! Don't talk any more, Lowthah!"

"Shut up!"

"I'm shuttin' them up, deah boy."

"Dry up, D'Arcy! You go on like a gramophone. Get on, Tom Merry!"

"I was saying," said Tom Merry, "that Dame Humphreys ought to be provided for somehow, and if there isn't enough money in the country to pension an old woman, it's time the country shut up shop and retired from business."

"Hear, hear!"

"But as the case stands, Dame Humphreys hasn't any tin, and so St. Jim's is coming to the rescue. We're going to raise a fund—"

"Oh!"

"Not in the usual way of a whip round. Frank Monk came over from the Grammar School to-day with a challenge to us to meet them at all kinds of athletic sports, and we accepted."

"Yaas, wathah! It was through that I got my black eye."

"But it has since occurred to me that it would be a ripping wheeze to make a big affair of the thing, and charge an entrance fee, and so on, and make the events open to all-comers," said Tom Merry. "By that means we shall get a heap of fun out of it, have a high old time, lick the Grammarians, and raise a tidy sum of money—all proceeds in cash to go to Dame Humphreys."

"By Jove, what a ripping idea!" exclaimed Blake.

"Well, yes, I thought myself it was rather ripping," said Tom Merry modestly. "I'm glad to see that you like it."

"It's stunning!" said Blake. "What puzzles me, though, is how you came by the idea? If it had been mine, or Digby's, or even D'Arcy's—"

"Well, you see, it required a brain to think of it, so it couldn't very well start in Study No. 6," explained Tom Merry; "but if you think it's good, and are willing to lend a hand to carry it through—"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"There's no reason why we shouldn't make a big success of it."

"It's a good wheeze," said Gore. "But how are you going to hold a big affair like that without a whole holiday?"

"We're going to get a whole holiday."

"Have you asked the Head?" queried Blake.

"We're going to ask him. I wanted to suggest it to you fellows, with the idea of getting up a deputation on the subject to wait on Dr. Holmes—"

"Ripping!"

"And put it to him like an old sport."

"I shouldn't use those words if I were you—" began Herries.

"Fathead! I don't mean to. I believe he will give us the holiday for such a jolly good purpose. Then we shall have to form a Sports Committee to get the thing up, and we'll ask Kildare to be chairman."

"Good! Kildare's a jolly good fellow, and having the captain of the school on the committee will give the thing a tone," said Blake thoughtfully.

"That's how I look at it. We don't want to confine this matter to the juniors. Some of the Grammar School seniors will be ready to take part, and some of ours must do the same. The more that enter for the events, the more cash we shall raise for the fund."

"But I say, old son, if we let the seniors into it they will want to take the management of the matter out of our hands."

"Well, come to think of it, I should think a committee of the Sixth Form could look after the affair quite as well as we could," Monty Lowther said seriously.

Tom Merry laughed.

"I shouldn't wonder," he said. "Anyway, we'll have Kildare in, if he'll come. But about that deputation to the Head?"

Kindly fill in the Order Form in this issue.

"It's a good wheeze, and we'll all go!"

"I think the New House ought to be represented," said Tom Merry. "If we settle the matter now, I'll send a note over to Figgins on the subject."

"Good! But when is the deputation to get going?"

"Bettah stwike while the iwon's hot, deah boys! Why not let the dep. go to-night?"

"Good!" said Tom Merry. "I think we may as well lose no time. I'll see what Figgins has to say about the matter, and then we'll make up the deputation."

And so it was agreed. And when tea was finished in Tom Merry's study, a note was sent over to Figgins, in the New House, which was promptly answered by Figgins in person, and he brought the Co. with him. Figgins & Co. simply jumped at the idea, and the united juniors were not long in making up the deputation.

CHAPTER 9.

The Deputation.

DR. HOLMES, Head of St. Jim's, was seated in his study, busy with examination-papers. He had returned to his study after dinner to deal with them, and had just finished one section and stopped for a little rest, when a tap came at his door.

"Come in!" said the Head, thinking that it was probably only Mr. Railton, the housemaster of the School House, with whom he greatly liked an evening chat.

The door opened, but it was not Mr. Railton who entered. Dr. Holmes glanced in some surprise at the junior who presented himself.

"Merry!" he ejaculated.

"Yes, sir; may I come in?"

"Oh, certainly!"

Tom Merry entered the room; and, to the doctor's amazement, he was followed by Blake, Herries, D'Arcy, and Digby. But that was not all. Following them came Manners and Lowther. Then came four New House juniors—Figgins, Kerr, Wynn, and Marmaduke.

Eleven Lower School boys were there in all, and the doctor naturally looked amazed at this invasion of his study.

"Close the door, Fatty," said Tom Merry, looking round.

Fatty Wynn obeyed.

"Dear me," said the Head; "this is a most singular proceeding, Merry! May I ask what is the meaning of it?"

"Yes, sir. We are a deputation—"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Shut up, Gussy, old chap!"

"I wufuse to shut up, when our respected headmastah asks us for an explanation!" said D'Arcy, with dignity.

The Head adjusted his pince-nez and stared at the deputation of the Lower School.

"You are a—a what?" he asked, hardly knowing whether to believe his ears or not.

"A deputation, sir."

"Yaas, a dep., sir, from the Lower School."

"But—what—"

"If you will allow me to explain, sir—"

"Please do, and at once, Merry. I should be sorry to think that you have done this from impertinence!"

"Oh, sir! I hope—"

"Well, go on, Merry, and explain yourself."

"Pewpaws it would be bettah if I explained, sir. I can put the thing much more clearly and concisely than Tom Mewwy can, as I have more tact!"

"I think Merry is quite capable—"

"With your permish., sir, I weally think—"

"Pray be silent, D'Arcy. You may go on, Tom Merry."

"Certainly, sir. We have come in a deputation representing—representing—" Tom Merry paused for a moment.

"Representing both houses at St. Jim's," said Figgins.

"That's it, sir; representing both houses at St. Jim's; to ask whether you would have the kindness to grant the school a whole holiday—"

"What!" exclaimed the amazed Head. "What did you say, Merry?"

"A whole holiday, sir, for a special purpose."

"A weally vewy laudable purpose, sir."

"Shut up, D'Arcy!"

"You're not makin' the thing clear to our respected headmastah, Tom Mewwy. A little explanation is wuequid."

"There's an old dame living in the village, sir," said Tom Merry, "who ought to have an old-age pension, and hasn't one—"

"It's Dame Humphreys, sir," said Figgins.

"And she's howwibly stony, sir."

"We're thinking of getting up some sports in conjunction with the Grammar School," went on Tom Merry, "and devoting the proceeds to the relief of Dame Humphreys."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And that will set the old lady on her feet again," said Blake. "It's a good object, sir, and we're going to get Kildare to take a hand."

"So we want you to grant us a whole holiday for the purpose, sir," said Tom Merry.

The Head rubbed his chin thoughtfully.

"Ahem! With whom did this idea originate?" he asked.

"It was my idea, sir," said Tom modestly.

"The object is a laudable one," said the Head. "I have heard of the case of Dame Humphreys, and regard it as a hard one."

"We regard it as a cwyng scandal, sir!"

"Exactly. I should not object to any reasonable plan being devised to help the old lady," said the doctor. "But a whole holiday granted to the school is a very unusual request, and—"

"We hope you won't refuse, sir. Dr. Monk is certain to give the Grammar lads a holiday for the purpose if you grant St. Jim's one."

"Ah, that would make a difference, of course! But I am afraid you have not reflected very long over this matter, my lads."

"Oh, yes, we have, sir; it's about two hours since the idea first came into my mind!" said Tom Merry ingeniously.

The doctor smiled.

"There are many difficulties in the way," he remarked.

"There will be a certain amount of expense in holding the affair—"

"We shall have a whip round to cover that, sir."

"Yaas, wathah! A whip wound!"

"Then if the whole school is to turn out, and the Grammar lads are to come over, there will be a tremendous crowd—"

"The more the merrier, sir."

"Perhaps so, in a sense, but it may lead to disputes."

"Not on such an occasion, sir."

"My dear lad, you may have the best intentions in the world, but I know how disputes between the New House and the School House have a habit of breaking out at all times; in season and out of season."

"Oh, sir, we'd make it pax for the day; and when we make it pax we never break it!" said Tom Merry. And Figgins nodded an emphatic assent.

"Yes, I believe you; but I have heard, too, that there is a rivalry in the School House itself, between two studies in the Fourth Form and the Shell."

Tom Merry and Blake coloured.

"Oh, sir, we would make it pax with the bounders!" said Blake. "I mean we'd have a truce with Tom Merry for the day."

"Yaas, wathah!"

The doctor stroked his chin.

"Well, well, I know I could trust you to keep your word," he said; "but could you answer for the rest of the juniors?"

"If they made a row when I told 'em not to—" began Figgins.

"Oh, that's all right, sir," said Tom Merry; "they have to hop to our tune, sir, or get their heads punched! We'll answer for them."

"Yaas, wathah! If they made any bothah on such an important occasion, sir, I should considah it my duty to give them a feahful thwashin'!"

The Head looked directly at Arthur Augustus.

"What have you been doing to your eye, D'Arcy?"

"Nothin', sir."

"It is quite black!" said the doctor severely.

"Yaas, but I did not do it myself, sir," said D'Arcy innocently.

Dr. Holmes coughed.

"I did not suppose you did, D'Arcy. I suppose you have been fighting, instead of setting a good example to the younger boys?"

"Yaas, wathah—I mean it was quite an accident, sir. I wuegarded it as impewative to thwash Figgins—"

"Ring off, you ass," whispered Lowther.

"I wufuse to wing off, Lowthah! I am explainin' the mattah to our respected Head, and I shall be obliged if you do not intewwupt! I wuegarded it as impewative to thwash Figgins, sir, and that led to a wow."

"Led to a what?"

"A wow, sir! We had a feahful wow—"

"Can any of you explain to me what a wow is?" asked the doctor, looking utterly puzzled. "I have heard of a bow-wow, but really—"

"He means a row, sir," grinned Lowther.

"Oh, a row? I see!"

"Yaas, wathah! We had a feahful wow, and either Blake's elbow or Hewwies' knee, stwuck me violently in the eye, sir. It was weally an accident, and—"

"That will do, D'Arcy. You will take fifty lines for fighting."

"But I was not fighting with Blake or Hewwies, sir!"

"You were fighting with somebody."

"But weally, Dr. Holmes, if you will allow me to point out—"

"You need not trouble, D'Arcy."

"For your own sake, sir, I must insist upon speakin'!" said D'Arcy.

His companions gasped, and Dr. Holmes fixed upon him a glare that the basilisk might have envied.

"D'Arcy!"

"Yaas, Doctah Holmes, I must weally insist— Stop tweadin' on my foot, Tom Mewwy! You are hurtin' my toes, and I am sure you are spoilin' my boot; I am wathah particular about my boots! If you poke me in the wibs again, Blake, I shall stwike you!"

"You may go on, D'Arcy."

"Thank you, sir. It is vewy hard to explain while these wuff boundahs keep on jostlin' a fellow and intewwuptin' him. If I were not a weally patient chap I should wefuse to wogard them as fwends, considahin' their wotten treatment of me. They vewy seldom tweat me with weally pwopah wewpect. But, as I was sayin', I should not like to see a gentleman whom I wewpect so highly do anythin' dishonowable—"

"D'Arcy!"

"Yaas, wathah, sir! I don't mind doin' fifty lines, or a hundred for that matter; but, weally, that is not the point. In comin' here I wan the wisk of your spottin' my black eye, and it was weally twustin' to your honah, you know."

"D'Arcy! I really—"

"That is how the case stands, sir," said D'Arcy firmly. "I twusted to your honah, and as one gentleman to anothah."

"You need not do the lines, D'Arcy."

"Thank you, sir. I thought that you would see the mattah in a pwopah light as soon as I pointed— Tom Mewwy, you are hurtin' my arm! Leave off pinchin' me at once, or I shall get angwy and thwash you!"

"That will do, D'Arcy. Merry, I think, upon the whole, a holiday might be arranged, but the proceedings would be of too extensive a character to be left in the hands of boys of the junior Forms."

Tom Merry's face fell a little.

"You see," went on the Head, kindly enough, "there would be so much to be seen to; and even if the rivals of St. Jim's keep the peace, the Grammar School boys might quarrel."

Tom Merry scratched his curly head thoughtfully.

"Well, yes, sir, but we'd appoint some fellows to act as policemen."

"Yaas, wathah, a lot of fellows who don't entah for the events," said D'Arcy. "There's Wynn, for instance; he's too fat to entah."

"And there's you," said the Falstaff of the New House indignantly. "You're too fat-headed."

"I wefuse to—"

"Silence, D'Arcy! It is a good suggestion, Merry; but, all the same, if the affair takes place, I shall have to place it under the control of a housemaster, with a committee, perhaps, of boys in the Sixth Form."

The deputation looked at one another in dismay. This was taking the matter out of their hands with a vengeance.

"Well, I dare say you know best, sir," said Tom Merry. "Perhaps it would be a bit above our weight. So long as it comes off, and we raise a fund for Dame Humphreys, it really doesn't matter in whose hands it is."

"Yaas, wathah! And it will weally save us a lot of twouble, and we shall be free to have a wippin' time."

"Something in that," said Figgins. "I was rather uneasy all along at the idea of havin' the thing managed by you School House fellows."

"And I felt a bit nervous at lettin' you New House rotters have a hand in it," Monty Lowther remarked, in a thoughtful way.

"Silence, boys! I will ask Mr. Railton or Mr. Ratchiff." "Mr. Railton, please, sir," said Tom Merry eagerly; "he is much more fond of sports than the New House master, sir."

"That's so, sir," said Figgins. "We'd all prefer Mr. Railton to take the head in a matter of this kind, sir, if you will allow us to say so."

"Perhaps it is more in Mr. Railton's line," assented the Head. "Mind, I do not promise, but I will speak to Mr. Railton about it this evening, and we will see what can be done. That is all I can say at present."

"Thank you, sir," said Tom Merry gratefully. "I know you'll do the best you can for us, sir, and if you decide the

thing can't be done, we shall know you have a good reason."

"That is a very proper view to take of the matter, Merry," said Dr. Holmes, more pleased than he cared to show by the implicit faith in him the junior's words unconsciously betrayed. "I shall certainly do my best to help you in the matter, especially as the object in view is such an extremely laudable one. You may go, boys."

"Thank you, sir. Good-night!"

"Good-night!"

And the deputation withdrew, and the Head of St. Jim's was left to his work again.

CHAPTER 10.

A Special Prize.

THE juniors of St. Jim's waited anxiously for the result of Dr. Holmes's consultation with Mr. Railton; but the Head did not keep them waiting long. The next day it was announced to the school that a whole holiday would be granted, in order to allow sports to be held in support of a fund for Dame Humphreys, the precise date to be fixed later."

"Good!" said Tom Merry. "The Head is a brick. Of course, he will have to communicate with Dr. Monk before he decides upon the date. It will have to suit the Grammar School as well as ourselves."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"It's a bit rough taking the matter right out of our hands like this," Blake remarked. "It seems that Railton is going to manage it, and Kildare is to be his henchman."

"Never mind; it will induce many of the Upper Form fellows to enter, who wouldn't have come into the thing while it was under junior management," said Tom Merry sagely.

"Well, there's something in that, certainly."

"You are quite wight, Tom Mewwy. The Uppah Form fellows would have cut the whole beastly mattah, you know; but with Waitton and Kildare at the head of it, they can't vewy well do anythin' of the sort. We shall wope in a fearful lot of entwance fees."

"Rather! And the rules we've made will be adhered to, you know—the seniors pay more than the juniors, and the masters more than the seniors, if they enter. We'll have a fixed tariff. And now the question of prizes is to be dealt with."

"Yaas, we shall have to have some wippin' pwizes. I think an especially valuable pwesent ought to be pwovided for the winnah of the high jump."

"I don't see why."

"Oh, yaas, you know, I am pwetty certain that I shall win that, and—"

"I can see you doing it," Blake remarked. "Why, Figgins could beat you by a foot or more. Fatty's about your mark."

"Then there is the quartah mile; I am pwetty sure of that," persisted D'Arcy. "I shall want a new jigгах this summah, so I think the pwize ought to be a bicycle."

"You young ass! Kerr could run you off your legs."

"Then there's the obstacle wace," said D'Arcy. "That's a dead cert for me, deah boys, and I shall want a decent pwize."

"You're going to enter for all of them—eh?"

"Yaas, wathah, to say nothin' of the water jump, and the swimming contest, and the shootin' and fencin'."

"You'll have your work cut out, then," said Tom Merry, laughing; "as everything's got to be crammed into one day, some of the events will have to come off simultaneously."

D'Arcy shook his head.

"Oh, no, Tom Mewwy, that won't do at all!" he said. "I shall insist upon bein' given time to go in for everythin' I entah for."

"Rats! As you wouldn't win anythin' in any case—"

"But I intend to weally twy, and when I twy hard enough I always succeed, deah boy."

"Try not to be an ass, then."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"I say, what about the prizes?" said Monty Lowther, coming up. "We ought to get them ready, Tom. Some of us have things that will do, of course. Blake can put up his punchin'-ball."

"Can I?" said Blake emphatically.

"Certainly, my dear fellow, and D'Arcy can offer a set of fancy waistcoats."

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

"Herries can subscribe his cornet."

"No fear!" said Herries. "If you like I'll arrange musical honours on the occasion, and give a cornet section."

"Will you?" said Tom Merry. "There'll be a sudden

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death in the Herries' family if you try it on, that's all I've got to say."

"You haven't heard me practice lately," said Herries. "I'm getting a really wonderful tone in that cornet. If you heard me doing the Grand March from 'Tannhauser' as a cornet solo, it would make you open your eyes."

"And shut my ears," said Tom Merry. "Grand marches as cornet solos are barred. The best thing you can do with that cornet is to bury it. About the prizes, I suggest that every fellow writes home to his relations, and asks them to send him everything they can that would be of use. I know Miss Fawcett will turn up trumps on an occasion like this. I shall only have to write."

"Good!" agreed Blake. "And we'll all do the same."

It was a good plan, and it was acted upon. Tom Merry's old governess, Miss Priscilla Fawcett, replied to his letter at once, promising to do everything, and also undertaking to come down to St. Jim's on sports day, to see her ward distinguish himself. Her brother from India, Mr. Francis Fawcett, would bring her down, she said, and the boys of the School House, who had already made the acquaintance of the Anglo-Indian, were glad to hear it.

"Bai Jove, how wippin'!" exclaimed D'Arcy, when he heard the news. "We ought all to have our friends and relations down here to see the fun, and I'll ask my cousin Ethel to come. She can come down with Miss Pwiscillah, as she did before."

"Splendid!" exclaimed Figgins enthusiastically.

"Yaas, it will be wathah splendid," said D'Arcy, looking somewhat coldly at the New House junior; "but I wealdy do not see where you will come in, Figgins. Ethel is my cousin, you know."

"She can't help that," said Figgins, "and I'd be the last to remind her of an unpleasant thing like that."

D'Arcy screwed his eyeglass into his eye, which was by this time nearly well, and gave the humorous Figgins a stony glare.

"I wegard that remark as distinctly wotten, Figgins."

"Never mind, old kid!" said Figgins, giving him a hearty slap on the back, which made the swell of the School House stagger. "You can't help being an ass, you know."

"If you stwike me in that wuff mannah again, Figgins, I shall quawwel with you, and be seriously angwy."

"Oh, don't!" said Figgins. "You know how terrible you are when you are angry. Tornadoes are not in it. I'm not going to ask my governor down."

"I think you ought to do so, Figgins; I do wealdy. He would take it as a mark of respect."

"But I can't very well—"

"My deah boy, make it a point to do it."

"But he couldn't come, you see; he's in India."

"Oh! That makes a great difference, of course."

"No reason why we shouldn't all have our people here, all of them that can come," Tom Merry said thoughtfully; "the description will make a fine article for the 'Weekly,' when it's all over."

"Yaas, wathah; I'll w'ite it up for you."

"No, you won't, Gussy; that's my business."

"It has often stwuck me, Tom Mewwy, that you have too good an opinion of your litewawy abilities," said D'Arcy, shaking his head. "I should be the last fellow in the world to wun anybody down, but wealdy I think you are wathah conceited, you know."

"We can't all be as modest as you are, Gussy. But I'll tell you what—I shall write the article, but it will have to be taken down to the printer's office afterwards, and you can buzz down on your bike with it, like a good fellow."

"Certainly, Tom Mewwy; anythin' to oblige."

"Right-ho! Equal division of labour, you see," smiled Tom Merry. "I'm going to write some letters now. You'd better all do the same, and we'll have a big crowd down here on the great day."

"Yaas, wathah!"

The idea caught on. Half the fellows wrote home and asked their people to come down, and most of those invited accepted. There was certain to be a strong feminine contingent on the day when the Grammar School met St. Jim's, adorning the playing-fields of the old college. Among others, Cousin Ethel promised to come down with Miss Fawcett, and the School House chums were delighted.

The arrangements for the meeting of the rival schools went on apace in the capable hands of Mr. Railton and Kildare. As a matter of fact, the juniors were scarcely old enough to manage such an affair as this had now grown into, and it took up a great deal of Mr. Railton's time. But the School House master was good-nature itself, and he was heartily in sympathy with the object of the sports.

Wednesday, usually a half-holiday, was fixed for the occasion, after letters had passed between Dr. Holmes and

the Head of the Grammar School. The two headmasters were old friends, and so the matter was easily arranged. All St. Jim's looked forward to the date, and so did the Grammar School, for that matter.

Frank Monk came over with Lane and Carboy to talk the matter over on Saturday afternoon. "Pax" had been established between the two schools till after the famous Wednesday.

"It's all going on swimmingly," said Tom Merry, as he shook hands heartily with Monk. "We are going to give you the licking of your lives."

"Or receive the licking of yours," said Frank Monk, with equal geniality.

Tom Merry laughed.

"We shall see," he remarked.

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy, with a wise shake of the head. "We shall see what we shall see, deah boy."

"Go hon!" said Monk. "Did you work that all out in your own brain, Gussy, without the aid of a net?"

"Wealdy, Frank Monk—"

"We're getting the prizes down now, Monk," Tom Merry went on. "Miss Fawcett has sent a lot of things already—skates and footballs and cricket bats. No; she didn't select them herself, so you needn't look alarmed. Mr. Dodds, the curate of Huckleberry Heath, saw to that, and they're all right. She's going to send down something else to-day, and she said in her letter that it would be better than the other things, but I'm blessed if I know what it is."

There was a thump at the door of the study, and Taggles, the school porter, appeared, with a box on his shoulder.

"This is for you, Master Merry."

"Stick it on the table, Taggles."

"There you are, Master Merry."

"Thank you, Taggles; you needn't wait!"

"Them stairs is very tiring, Master Merry."

"Yes; I've found 'em so."

"That box is a 'eavy weight, too."

"You'd find yourself able to stand a heavy weight better, Taggles, if you gave up drink," said Tom Merry solemnly.

"That's a valuable tip, but I give it to you for nothing!" Taggles frowned darkly, and turned to the door.

"I say, Gussy, aren't you going to give Taggles a tip?" said Tom Merry.

Arthur Augustus stared.

"Wealdy, Tom Mewwy—"

"Give him threepence, and tell him not to squander it in filthy liquor," said Tom Merry. "As a matter of fact, I'm stony, but I'll settle when Lowther comes in."

"Yaas, wathah! I'm afwaid I could not give anybody so small a tip as threepence, Tom Mewwy. Here's a shillin' for you, Taggles, and mind you do not squandah it in filthy liquah, deah boy."

"You're a gentleman, you are, sir!" said Taggles, slipping the shilling into his waistcoat-pocket.

"Thank you, Taggles!" said D'Arcy languidly. "I wealdy did not wequire any information on that point, but I am glad to have the opinion of a well-informed person like yourself; I am, wealdy!"

Taggles stared at Arthur Augustus, as if he could not quite make him out, and went away.

Frank Monk giggled.

"Well, you are a holy ass, Gussy!" said Tom Merry. "I owe you a shilling now. And Taggles didn't even say that I was a gentleman."

"Too bad!" said Frank Monk.

"This box is from Miss Fawcett," went on Tom Merry, cutting the string. "I dare say it contains that valuable article I was speaking about. We'll see!"

He soon had the box open. It contained several cricket bats, and some articles of personal attire for Tom himself. He put the latter aside hastily. Then he found what he was in search of—a neat little box, with a lock and key, and a note tied to it.

He glanced at the note.

"This is it!" he exclaimed. "The special prize, and Miss Fawcett thinks it ought to be awarded for the biggest feat—"

"Bai Jove, then, Figgins ought to have it! He's got the biggest feet!"

"F-e-a-t, ass, not f-e-e-t!" said Tom Merry. "This must really be something special. It doesn't look like a dressing-case. I wonder what it is? I'll soon see!"

He lifted the little box out, and unlocked it, the juniors watching him curiously. On the inside of the leather-lined lid was an inscription in gilt letters, "The Boy's Own Medicine Chest."

Tom Merry stared at the valuable prize in dismay.

"My word," said Frank Monk, "let's have a look at it! Boxes of pills, jars of cold-cream, bottles of medicine!



D'Arcy fixed his monocle in his eye, and stared after Figgins and Cousin Ethel as they strolled away. "Well, bai Jove!" he murmured.

CHAPTER 11.

D'Arcy is Not Left Out.

THE idea had certainly originated with Tom Merry, but as time passed on he could hardly recognise his own idea, so developed and amplified had it become. The management had passed out of his own hands, and the scheme was extended on all sides. The committee of juniors was left with nothing to do, while the arrangements for the fete were in the hands of the School House master and a committee of seniors.

It was, in fact, a great deal like the progress of a snowball downhill, gathering snow as it rolled, till the snowball grew to be a regular avalanche. The affair filled every mind at St. Jim's, and was discussed and discussed again from the top boy in the Sixth to the youngest fag in the Third Form.

Mr. Railton, an athlete and a sportsman to the finger-tips, took a great interest in the affair, and under his able management it went ahead swimmingly. Tom Merry and his chums had to acknowledge that the affair was really too big for them to handle alone. But the School House master was tactful. He asked Tom Merry to join the committee as representative of the Lower School, and that set matters right.

Of course, the selection of Tom Merry as Lower School member did not pass without shakings of the head among

Hallo! What's this? Dr. Bones's Purple Pills for Pink Persons! Dr. Bones's Terra-cotta Tabloids for Tiny Tots! My only Panama hat! I should like to take this as first prize!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" howled Carboy and Lane. "You'd better send that back, Tom Merry," went on Carboy, "and say you'd prefer some toffee or a balloon!"

Tom Merry shook his head.

"Can't be did! Can't look a gift-horse in the mouth! Miss Fawcett has the kindest heart in the world, and I wouldn't refuse anything she sent for anything."

"But you can't offer that awful thing as a prize!"

"Yes, I can. If you win it, you're not bound to eat the pills or drink the medicine. You could use the box to keep white mice in."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

And Miss Fawcett's special gift figured in the list of prizes.

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the juniors. Figgins, Blake, and D'Arcy, at least, were convinced that they would have filled the post better.

"You see, deah boy," D'Arcy took the trouble to explain, "what is wequired is a fellow of tact and judgment, and though I wouldn't dream of puttin' myself forward in any way, yet for the sake of the coll. I think I ought to be on the comm."

To which Tom Merry's cheerful and elegant reply was "Rats!"

"Of course, what Gussy says is all rot!" Blake observed. "I am the chap—"

D'Arcy turned his eyeglass upon Blake.

"Pway, pardon me, Blake, but what were you pleased to remark?"

"I said that what you said is all rot!"

"I wofuse to have my remarks chawactewised as wot!"

"Blake's right," said Tom Merry. "Anyway, the question's settled now, as Mr. Railton has selected me."

"Yaas, but that can be awwanged all wight; you can wesign!"

"No fear!"

"I put it to you for the sake of the coll., Tom. Mewwy. A fellow is called upon to make small sacwifices for the good of the coll. You know that I should make a fah bettah membah of the beastly committee—"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Blake. "The question is—"

"I wegard your intewwuption as distinctly wude, Blake!"

"Well, you never leave off, you know. Besides, you're talking rot. Why can't you cheese it?"

"I uttably wofuse to cheese it!"

Tom Merry walked away laughing, and left them still arguing. The hero of the Shell had no intention of resigning his seat on the committee in order to secure the valuable services of either Blake or D'Arcy. Figgins had something to say on the subject, too, but he found Tom Merry as immovable as a rock.

The juniors had made a list of events for the fete-day which would have taken up something like a week, and Mr. Railton cut them down with a merciless pencil.

Kildare had been made treasurer, and Tom Merry & Co. constituted themselves canvassers for entrants and entrance-fees.

"You see, you can enter if you like, without turning up for the event," they explained to everybody. "The entrance-fees swell the fund for Dame Humphreys, and it's all for the good of the cause."

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy, when Tom Merry explained to him. "But I shall weally insist upon all the events bein' wun one aftah another, so that I can twy my luck in all that I entah for."

"Can't be done, kid!"

"But you have not yet awwanged the ordah of the events."

"We shall settle that in the next committee meeting," said Tom Merry.

"My word!" said Digby. "Tom Merry will want a larger size in hats if his head goes on swelling at this rate!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry moistened his pencil.

"Never mind that! Am I to put you down for the obstacle race, D'Arcy?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And the quarter-mile?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"What about the cycle race?"

"I am goin' in for that, deah boy! I weally think that there isn't a juniah in this school or the Gwammah School who wides a jiggah as I do!"

"Quite right!" said Lowther, grinning. "You've hit it, D'Arcy. Of course, the spectators may mistake it for a comic entertainment—"

"Pway, don't be wude, Lowthah! What is the next, Tom Mewwy?"

"The swimming contest. Are you going in for that?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"But you can't swim," exclaimed Herries.

"I have been learnin' lately, since the time I was nearly drowned in the wivah," said D'Arcy. "You wemembah that fearful time, when Tom Mewwy so heroically jumped in and spoiled his clothes to wescue me."

"What about the fencing?" asked Manners.

"Put me down for that, too, deah boy."

"And the boxing?"

"Yaas, wathah! I fancy myself with the gloves on."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry.

D'Arcy gave him a frigid look.

"I weally do not see anythin' to gwain at in that remark, Tom Mewwy. I can wemembah an occasion upon which I gawe you a feahful thwashin' in this wewy study."

"So can I," grinned Tom Merry. "It makes me shudder yet when I think of it. Very well, you're in for the boxing; it's all for the good of the cause."

"Stop a minute," said Lowther; "I want to ask you something."

"Get on, then! What is it?"

"Why should a rook take lessons in voice production?"

"Why, you utter ass, is this a time for conundrums?"

"It's a jolly good pun," said Lowther; "one of the best I've ever made, and that's saying a lot. Why should a rook—"

"Oh, blow your rooks! The next item is the wrestling."

"You haven't answered my—"

"And I'm not going to. Are you going in for the wrestling, D'Arcy?"

"Yaas, wathah! I wathah fancy myself as a w'estlah, you know."

"Good! The next is—"

"Why should a rook—"

"Shut up! Then comes the high jump. I really should like to see you enter for that, Gussy! It will be a sight for gods and men and little fishes!"

"If that remark is meant in a dispawagin' sense, Tom Mewwy—"

"Not at all. Shall I put your name down?"

"Certainly, deah boy! I wathah fancy myself—"

"What about the water jump?"

"Yaas, wathah! I particularly fancy myself at—"

"Rather!" exclaimed Digby. "Gussy is bound to make a splash at that."

"Ha, ha! Next—"

"Why should a rook—"

"Are you going to shut up about your silly rook, Lowther, or are you not?"

"Not!" said Lowther obstinately. "It's a good pun wasted on feeble intellects, but you're going to have it, all the same."

"Don't waste it on us."

"Why should a rook—"

"I tell you—"

"Why should a rook—"

"Oh, let him get it over!" exclaimed Manners. "He won't be happy till he gets it. Lowther, old kid, buck up, and have it over as soon as possible."

"Why should a rook take lessons in voice production?" demanded Lowther victoriously.

"Blessed if I know," said Tom Merry.

"I weally fail to see any special reason why a wook should take lessons in voice production," said D'Arcy thoughtfully. "Is there an answer, Lowthah?"

"Of course there is, fathead!"

"I object to the term fathead, as wantin' in pwopah wespact—"

"Why should a rook—"

"Give it up," said several voices.

"Sure you can't guess?"

"Yaas, wathah! Pway get it ovah as quickly as poss., Lowthah. We all give it up, wenny, deah boy."

"Why, for the good of the cause," said Lowther.

Not a smile was visible in Study No. 6. Six grave faces looked at Lowther in stony silence. Lowther's genial grin faded away.

"Can't you see it?" he demanded.

"See what?" asked Manners.

"The pun," said Lowther, turning red.

"What pun?"

"Why, the conundrum. You see—"

"Blessed if I see," said Herries. "First you said it was a conundrum, and then you said it was a pun. I maintain that it can't be both."

"Quite impos., deah boy."

"You utter asses, can't you see? For the good of the cause—see? C-A-W-S, caws—that's the row a rook makes when he's cawing."

"Yaas, I've heard wooks cawing in the twees behind the chapel," said D'Arcy. "But I don't believe any of them evah had any lessons in voice production. I don't believe it is poss. to teach a wook as you teach a pawwot."

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy shook his head gravely.

"C-A-W-S, caws!" bawled Lowther, and C-A-U-S-E, cause. For the good of the cause—see? For the good of the caws! It's a really ripping conundrum!"

"It may be," said Tom Merry, with the air of one making a concession. "Lowther made it, so he ought to know. We'll take his word for it."

"You utter asses!"

"I, for one, object to bein' called an uttiah ass, because I can't see why a wook should have lessons in cawing," said D'Arcy. "Lowthah had bettah ask it over again. Let me see—why should a wook have lessons in caws—"

"Ass! Why should a rook have lessons in voice—"
 "Rats! Why should suffering humanity be bothered by Lowther's rotten conundrums?" demanded Blake. "Can you find an answer to that, Lowther?"
 "Is it a conundrum, or a pun?" asked D'Arcy.
 "If I told you what I think of your brains—" began Lowther.
 "Pwaj don't, deah boy. Let's get on with the washin'."
 "That's what I think," said Manners. "Blessed if I see why we should stop talking business for the sake of a discussion upon the habits of rooks and things. This isn't a natural history lesson."
 "Just what I think," agreed Herries. "If Lowther wants to talk about rooks, he ought to choose a more appropriate time."
 "Oh, you asses!" growled Lowther. "Shut up, and go on!"

"I don't see how we can shut up and go on at the same time, Lowthah."
 "Throwing the hammer next," said Tom Merry. "Are you going in for that, Gussy?"
 "Yaas, certainly. I wathah fancy myself at throwin' the hammah, deah boys."

Tom Merry ran through a very long list of events, and Arthur Augustus entered for all of them. When he had finished, the others put their names down.

"Twenty-one shillings, please," said Tom Merry, with a businesslike air.
 "Bai Jove! Are you talking to me, Tom Mewwy?"
 "Certainly! You've entered for twenty-one events, and it will stand you in a guinea, so hand over, and I'll give you a receipt."

"Well, it's all for the good of the cause," said D'Arcy. "I am goin' to write to my governah to come down, you know, to see me weflect glowy upon the family, and he can't wufuse to stand me a fivah on such an occasion. Here's your guinea."

And D'Arcy paid up promptly. Herries, Digby, and Blake raised twelve shillings among them, so that the contribution from Study No. 6 was a substantial one.

CHAPTER 12.

Mr. Railton Enters for the Mile.

MR. RAILTON took his pipe out of his mouth as a tap came at his study door.

"Come in," he said, in his deep tones.
 Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther came in. The Terrible Three were looking their mildest and gentlest, by which the experienced housemaster knew that they had something in their minds, and were rather dubious about their reception.

"Come in, my lads! Can I do anything for you?"
 "Yes, sir," said Tom Merry. "It's about the fete."
 "I thought all matters connected with that were settled at the committee meetings, Merry," the housemaster remarked.

"This is an unofficial matter, sir."
 "Well, go on."

"We've just learned something about the Grammar cads, sir—I mean, about the Grammar School fellows," said Tom Merry. "They're going to try to do us. We picked up the information almost by chance."

"I had my eyes open, you see," Lowther remarked.
 "Yes, it was really Lowther who scouted it out."

"Well, well, and what is the information?"
 "You know, sir, that the events are open to all comers," said Tom Merry. "Seniors and juniors can enter alike, and so can the masters; if they want to. Some fellows from the village, too, have entered."

Mr. Railton smiled.
 "I don't suppose the Form masters are likely to enter, however, Merry."

"That's where the Grammarians think they are going to score, sir," said the hero of the Shell. "It's in the mile that we expect to score—or did expect. We got Kildare to enter, and, of course, Kildare could run any Grammarian off his legs. Their best man in that line is Dibson, and he can't run with Kildare for toffee—I mean he can't put up a run anything like Kildare's."

"Then St. Jim's ought to score," the housemaster remarked.

"Only Frank Monk has done us," Tom Merry said, ruefully. "He's taken advantage of the fact that anybody can enter, and persuaded one of the Grammar School junior masters to enter for the mile."

"Ah!" said Mr. Railton, rubbing his chin thoughtfully.
 "The chap is Wimpole, sir—quite a young man, and in good form. He was known as a runner at Cambridge, so I

hear, and, of course, he will be able to walk away from even Kildare, good as he is."

"I suppose so."
 "It's a rather sharp business on Monk's part," went on Tom Merry. "As the case stands at present, the Grammarians are sure of the mile. Of course, it isn't the prize we care for—"

Manners and Lowther grinned, rather to Mr. Railton's surprise. He did not know that the prize for the mile race was the medicine-chest sent down by Miss Priscilla Fawcett.

"It's the honour of the thing," said Tom Merry, with a frown at his chums. "We're not going to have St. Jim's colours lowered like that."

"It would be rather hard,"
 "So we thought, sir—"

Tom Merry paused.
 "We thought—," said Lowther.

"That's it," said Manners. "We thought—"
 The Terrible Three came to a dead stop. A humorous twinkle appeared in Mr. Railton's genial eyes.

"Well, what did you think?" he asked.
 "We—we thought that we would—"

Tom Merry paused again.
 "Go on, Merry."

"It seems like a cheek, sir."
 "I am sure you would not mean it that way."

"Oh, no, sir! Well, sir, we thought that—that we would try and get a St. Jim's master to enter for the mile, so as to catch the Grammarians—a master who was a jolly good athlete, and could make rings round their man."

Mr. Railton looked gravely thoughtful.
 "Do you think there is such a one at St. Jim's, Merry?"

"Oh, I know there is, sir!" said Tom Merry promptly.
 "Rather!" said Lowther.

And Manners said: "What-ho!"
 "Then I should advise you to ask him to enter for the mile," said Mr. Railton. "I suppose it is my advice you want?"

"Would you, sir? Will you enter, then?" asked Tom Merry eagerly.

"I?" said the housemaster, laughing.
 "Yes, sir! You are an old Blue, and you could walk over Wimpole if you liked, and it would make the Grammarians simply green."

"I really don't know, Merry, whether it would be quite in accordance with my position to seek to make the Grammarians go simply green," said Mr. Railton, with perfect gravity.

Tom Merry blushed.
 "I don't mean exactly that, sir. But it would uphold St. Jim's colours, and we all want to do that. We don't want to see the old school licked."

"That is quite true."
 "You have played for St. Jim's First Eleven, sir, so there's really no reason why you shouldn't run for the mile, is there?"

"No, I suppose not."
 "Then you will enter, sir?"

"Ahem! I suppose, under the circumstances, I must," said Mr. Railton, smiling. "Of course, I may be beaten. I haven't seen Mr. Wimpole run."

"I have, sir, and I know he's not up to your form," said Tom Merry joyfully. "We shall go one better than the Grammarians this time. If you should get left, it can't be helped; but I am sure you will win. Thank you so much! Then I may put your name down?"

"Certainly."
 And the housemaster turned towards the fire again, as a hint that the interview was closed. But Tom Merry was not quite finished.

"There's another little matter, sir."
 Mr. Railton looked round.

"Well, what is it now, Merry?"
 "About entering for the mile, sir."

"But we have already settled that."
 "Yes, but there is one point—we are going to put your name down as an entrant for the event."

"Exactly! I have given you permission to do so."
 "And so the—the—"

"Surely that is all, Merry?"
 "Well, no, sir, there's the—the—"

"The what?"
 "The entrance-fee, sir," said Tom Merry.

The housemaster burst into a laugh.
 "I had forgotten that, Merry, and it was quite right of you to remind me." He put his hand into his pocket.

"I understand that you are collecting fees for the committee. I think the amount is a shilling?"
 "A shilling for juniors, sir."

"Ah, and what is it for seniors?"

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"Half-a-crown, sir."

Mr. Railton took a half-crown from his pocket. The Terrible Three exchanged expressive glances, and Tom Merry returned to the attack.

"The fact is, sir, the entrance-fee is fixed higher for masters than for seniors."

"Oh, indeed!"

"Yes, sir. But, under the circumstances, as we have asked you as a personal favour to enter, we don't think that you ought to be dish'd for half-a-sovereign."

"Dished, Merry?"

"Excuse me, sir, I mean done—that is to say, I don't think we ought to screw a half-sovereign out of you, as we asked you to enter; so if you stand half-a-crown, we want to make up the rest of the entrance-fee ourselves."

"That's the idea!" said Manners and Lowther at once.

Mr. Railton laughed good-humouredly.

"I quite understand your view of the matter, Merry, but I cannot allow you to pay my entrance-fee," he said, putting the half-crown back into his pocket and opening his sovereign purse. "I must certainly pay up myself. It is for a good cause, at all events. Can you change a sovereign for me?"

He laid a sovereign on the table. The boys looked doubtfully at one another.

"If you please, sir," said Tom Merry diffidently, "we'd rather—"

"Ahem! It is really not a question of what you would rather, Merry, but of what I would rather," Mr. Railton remarked.

"Oh, sir, if you look at it like that—"

"I do, Merry. Can you change this sovereign?"

"We'll see, sir."

Tom Merry went through his pockets, and produced ninnence. Manners followed suit, and turned out a shilling and a ball of string. Lowther's product was one-and-three-pence, with the addition of a penknife and a bag of caramels.

"I'm afraid we haven't quite enough, sir," said Tom Merry.

"Not even with the caramels thrown in," murmured Lowther.

A voice was heard passing the study door, which was ajar.

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Hallo, that's D'Arcy!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "He'll give us change. Here, D'Arcy! May I call him in, sir?"

"Certainly!"

D'Arcy came into the study, Herries waiting for him outside. The swell of the School House was always rolling in wealth, so he was pretty certain to have the required coin about him.

"What do you want, Tom Mewwy?" he asked.

"We want a half-sovereign to give to Mr. Railton."

"Bai Jove, do you weally?" asked D'Arcy, in amazement. It did not occur to him that Tom Merry wanted to give the housemaster change, and he was really surprised to learn that the housemaster was borrowing a half-sovereign from the juniors.

"Yes. Have you got one?"

"Yaas, wathah, and I shall be vewy pleased to lend it to Mr. Wailton."

"Ass! We don't want you to lend it," said Tom Merry, in a fierce whisper, not knowing exactly how the housemaster might take D'Arcy's absurd misapprehension.

"I dare say you don't, Tom Mewwy, but I don't see why I shouldn't lend it as much as you, as I esteem our respected housemastah as highly as you do, deah boy."

"You utter idiot!"

"I wufuse to be called an uttah idiot. I am vewy pleased to oblige you in this small mattah, Mr. Wailton, and I should be glad to make it a sovewign, if you like."

"What!" ejaculated Mr. Railton.

"I should be vewy pleased to make it a sovewign, sir. I am quite flush just now, and I am always willin' to oblige a gentleman whom I wespsect so much."

Mr. Railton stared at D'Arcy.

"Is it possible, D'Arcy, that you imagine that I want to borrow money?" he asked.

"Yaas, wathah, sir, and I should be weally delighted to oblige you with a loan; and I should take it as a weal favah if you would wemembah me whenever you are stony."

"D'Arcy! I supposed you do not mean to be impertinent?"

"I weward impertinence, sir, as a failin' no gentleman could possibly possess," said Arthur Augustus.

"Then—well, well, explain to him, Merry."

"We want to give Mr. Railton change for a sovewign, ass!" bawled Tom Merry.

"Oh, I see! I weally fail to perceive why you could not tell me that before," said D'Arcy. "Now I have put my foot in it, and I am afraid Mr. Wailton will be in a beastly tempah, you know."

The housemaster laughed.

"My dear D'Arcy," he said, "I am obliged for your good intentions, and not in a temper, as you call it, at all. But I should advise you to think twice before you offer loans to a master. You may go, boys."

And, having handed over the half-sovereign change, the juniors quitted the study. In the passage they glared at Arthur Augustus.

"You howling ass!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Fancy—"

"I wufuse to be wewarded as a howlin' ass."

"It's a wonder Mr. Railton didn't knock your silly head off," said Lowther.

Arthur Augustus looked anxious.

"Do you think I have appeahed wude to Mr. Wailton?" he asked.

"Of course you have."

"Do you think so, Tom Mewwy?"

"Certainly I do."

"Bai Jove, I shall have to apologise, then."

And D'Arcy turned back towards the study and knocked before they could stop him. Then the Terrible Three grasped him.

"Come in!" said Mr. Railton's voice from within.

"Come away, you ass!"

"I cannot, be so wude as to come away aftah knockin' at the door," said D'Arcy, struggling in the grasp of the Terrible Three. "I must apologise, too—"

"Come away!"

"I distinctly wufuse—"

"Come in!" called out Mr. Railton again, impatiently.

"Let me go!"

There was no help for it. D'Arcy opened the door and looked in.

"Pway, pardon me for twoublin' you, sir," he exclaimed, "but—"

"Well, well, what is it?" asked the housemaster testily.

"Tom Mewwy is undah the impression that I was wude to you, and I am afraid that you may share that ewwoneous impression."

"You may go, D'Arcy."

"Certainly, sir, but I wish to point out—"

"That will do."

"And to apologise—"

"You may go."

"Most sincerely and from the bottom of my heart for any seemin' impertinence, and to explain—"

"Will you go?" exclaimed Mr. Railton, rising from his chair.

"Yaas, wathah, but—"

The housemaster made a stride towards the door. D'Arcy hurriedly closed it and went along the passage. Then the Terrible Three seized him and ran him along at full speed. D'Arcy struggled and called on Herries for aid; but his struggles were futile, and Herries only grinned.

The chums of the Shell ran him along to the end of the passage, and left him sitting there, with his collar and tie hanging out, quite bewildered.

"You uttah wuffians!" gasped D'Arcy. "I shall wufuse to speak to you again! Hewwies, I no longah weward you as a friend. Bai Jove, they are gone! I feel quite wumped and wuffed! Still, I did quite wight in apologisein' to Mr. Wailton, and I am glad I did not omit it."

And the swell of the School House gathered himself up and hurried away to change his collar.

CHAPTER 13.

The Great Day.

"MY dearest Tommy!" Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther had just come out from breakfast on the eventful Wednesday, when the voice of Miss Priscilla Fawcett fell upon their ears.

Miss Fawcett had just alighted from the station hack and entered the School House, and with her were her brother, Mr. Francis Fawcett of Boggleywallabad, and D'Arcy's cousin, Ethel Cleveland.

Miss Fawcett came straight at Tom Merry, and folded him in a motherly embrace.

"My darling Tommy! And how are you after this long time?"

Manners and Lowther looked on with great admiration. Tom Merry coloured to the ears, almost certain that he detected a slight twinkle in the eyes of Cousin Ethel.

"I'm—I'm ripping!" gasped Tom Merry. "And it isn't a long time; it's only a week or so since I saw you last."

"It seems a long time to me, my dearest boy. I have been so anxious about your darling health. Are you sure you are keeping yourself well wrapped up against these dreadful March winds?"

"Oh, yes, that's all right!"

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A Double-Length Tale of
Tom Merry's Schooldays.



"Bai Jove, you know," remarked D'Arcy, "I don't know how I shall show up!"

"You are not forgetting your chest-protector?"
 "No, no."
 "You are sure you have it on now?"
 Tom Merry jumped back, as Miss Fawcett made a motion to see for herself.
 "It's all right, dear!" gasped Tom Merry. "How—how nice and early you are! How do you do, Cousin Ethel? And you, Uncle Frank?"
 Uncle Frank was grinning. He shook hands with the Terrible Three, and then with the chums of Study No. 6, who came pouring out into the hall.
 "It will be a fine day for the sports," Uncle Frank remarked. "Now, my dear sister, we must go and pay our respects to the doctor."
 "I shall see you again soon, dear Tommy."
 "I hope so, dear."
 "Mind you do not go out without your cap, darling. I see you have had your hair cut. Was it not rather dangerous in this windy weather, Tommy?"
 "Oh, I never catch cold."
 "But you must not be reckless. You know how delicate you are."
 "Pray come!" said Mr. Fawcett.
 And the visitors were shown to the Head's quarters. Tom Merry drew a deep breath. Manners and Lowther were grinning like monkeys.
 "Blessed if I can see anything to snigger at," said Tom Merry.
 "Of course you can't," said Blake; "that's not to be expected. It's funny, all the same. But she is a dear old

soul, and I don't think, you know, kids, that Tom Merry ought to vex her by going out without a chest-protector."
 "Or by recklessly getting his hair cut in March," said Digby.
 "Or by getting his beastly feet wet, or anythin' of that kind, you know, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.
 "Oh, go and eat coke!" said Tom Merry, walking away.
 Most of St. Jim's had already turned out. As so much was to be got through in a single day, the sports were to begin at an early hour. The visitors were arriving early, and by half-past ten most of them were present.
 The weather, which had been watched anxiously by the St. Jim's juniors for days past, had turned out almost perfect—cold, but fine and sunny.
 There was a loud cheer when the Grammarians arrived. All the time since breakfast the Grammarians had been arriving in two and threes, but soon after ten came Frank Monk and his chums and a large party. They came in a big brake, and with them was Mr. Wimpole, the junior master, who had entered for the mile.
 Soon after the brake arrived, several competitors from the village appeared on the scene, including Craggs, Pilcher, and Grimes.
 Seldom had so goodly a crowd gathered upon the grounds of St. Jim's. Amid the boys, of all ages and sizes and varieties of costume, appeared the gayer garb and hats of the feminine contingent. Nearly every competitor had a sister or a mother or a cousin anxious to see him distinguish himself.
 "Is your governor coming down, after all, D'Arcy?"

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asked Figgins, coming up to Arthur Augustus, who was talking to his cousin near the pavilion, which was gaily decorated with bunting, the work of Tom Merry & Co.

D'Arcy glanced at him with some disfavour. He suspected the long-legged chief of the New House juniors of having found favour in the eyes of Cousin Ethel—a thing D'Arcy could not comprehend while he was himself about, and was inclined to attribute to the well-known contrariness of the gentle sex.

"Yaas, wathah, Figgins! He can't get here in the mornin', but he's goin' to awwive in his car soon aftah lunch."

"Glad to hear it! Remember me to him if there are any fivers knocking about. I wonder whether you would care to see the—the grounds, Miss Cleveland?"

"I should, very much," said Cousin Ethel.

"Weally, Figgins—"

"Time for you to get ready, if you're in the first event, Gussy," said Figgins.

"Yaas, but weally—"

"We sha'n't miss seeing you," said Figgins; "I'll take care of that. Isn't it turning out a jolly day for March, Cousin Ethel?"

"It is, indeed!" said the girl brightly.

D'Arcy fixed his monocle in his eye, and stared after them as they strolled away.

"Well, bai Jove!" he murmured.

He seemed to turn into an eyeglassed statue, staring after Figgins and his prize. He was roused by a sudden slap on the shoulder that made him stagger.

"Kerr, you woltah, what do you mean by stwikin' me so wuffly?"

"Do you want to be left out?" demanded the Scottish partner in Figgins & Co. "It's time to get into your things."

"Oh, I see! Thank you vewy much, Kerr! I was thinkin'—"

"My dear chap, don't start any unaccustomed exercises on a day like this. You'll be put off your form."

"Weally, Kerr—"

"Oh, come on!"

And Kerr dragged D'Arcy away. The commencement of the day's proceedings was near at hand. The doctor was on the scene, and with him were most of the masters, and Miss Fawcett and Uncle Frank, all smiles and good-humour.

Miss Priscilla's eyes sometimes sought anxiously for Tom Merry, and the Head of St. Jim's observed it.

"Your ward is certain to distinguish himself to-day, I think, Miss Fawcett," remarked Dr. Holmes. "You know, this was really his idea at the start, though it has grown a rather bigger affair than he anticipated."

"Yes, I am aware of that, and it was just like my darling Tommy's kind heart," said Miss Fawcett.

"Exactly! You are quite right."

"But I am anxious lest he should over-exert himself," said Miss Priscilla. "As you know, doctor, Tom is a most delicate lad."

"Really, Miss Fawcett, I cannot help thinking otherwise. A sturdier or healthier lad—"

"Ah, yes; that may be an outward and deceptive appearance of health!" said the old lady, shaking her head. "Over-exertion may have serious results."

"Stuff!" said Mr. Francis Fawcett, with brotherly candour.

"Really, my dear Francis—"

"Tom is as right as rain!"

"Men do not see these things with women's eyes," said Miss Fawcett, with another grave shake of the head.

"I do not really know much about athletic matters," went on Miss Priscilla, giving a piece of information that was hardly required; "but I really hope that Tommy will not try to take too many runs or score too many goals to-day."

Dr. Holmes assured her that neither was likely to happen. But the expression of Miss Priscilla's face showed that she still had her doubts.

CHAPTER 14.

Tom Merry Wins.

WE shall not describe in detail the events of the morning. The first important event was the cycle race, which was specially interesting from the number of the competitors and the quality of them—Frank Monk, Tom Merry, Lowther, Carboy, Blake, and D'Arcy being among the entries.

Arthur Augustus, determined to carry off some prize or other, had already appeared in three contests, but had failed to get to the top in any of them. But he was quite hopeful still, and he quite fancied his chance in the bicycle race.

The track was a good one, and there was a general movement of interest as the ten competitors wheeled out their machines. Kildare was starter, but there seemed to be some difficulty about the starting, chiefly due to D'Arcy getting into everybody's way.

His machine was a splendid one, but how he would handle it was another matter. The captain of St. Jim's was about to give the signal, when D'Arcy discovered that his saddle was too high, and claimed a respite. His next discovery was that he had left his tool-bag somewhere, and he had to call upon Blake to help him. The saddle was adjusted, and all was ready at last.

"Ready?" called out Kildare.

"Yaas, wathah!"

There was a buzz from the crowded ground.

"They're off!"

They were—D'Arcy in a double sense. Why his bicycle should have chosen that particular moment to curl up was a mystery which no one took the trouble to elucidate. Perhaps it was due to the obstinate temper sometimes observable in bicycles when one wants them to behave specially well. At all events, D'Arcy was off, and the starters left him behind, lying on the track and lovingly embracing his handle-bars.

Arthur Augustus looked at the sky, and then staggered to his feet. His machine was doubled up, and the swell of the School House had several bruises distributed over his person. He stared after the starters.

"Come back!" he bawled.

There was a yell of laughter.

"Come back!" shouted D'Arcy. "That was a false start!"

"Rot!" said Kildare. "You were off!"

"Yaas, wathah! I fell off!"

"The start was all right. You were a clumsy young ass!"

Arthur Augustus jammed his monocle into his eye, and turned it upon the captain of St. Jim's with a stony glare.

"Pwaw, what did you call me, Kildare?"

"A clumsy young ass."

"I object to that descwip, bein' applied to me. I was simply feelin' to see if I had my monocle safe when the beastly jigga seemed to cwumple up."

"No wonder, you young duffer!"

"I have a yewy gweat wespert for you, Kildare, but I must wefuse to allow anybody to chawactewise me as a young duffah!"

"Get off the track!"

"Pwaw, why should I huwwy myself to get off the track?"

"You ass! You're in the way!" shouted Kildare. "They'll be round soon. Get off the track, and take your silly bike away!"

"Weally, Kildare—"

"Get off!" roared a hundred voices.

D'Arcy took a leisurely survey of the shouters, with his monocle in his eye.

"Weally, my fwends—"

"Get off!"

"Under the circs., I must absolutely wefuse to huwwy! Pwaw, wefuse my shoudlah, Kildare! You are wumplin' my beastly Norfolk-jacket!"

"I'll rumple your neck if you don't clear out!" growled Kildare.

And Arthur Augustus, yielding to superior force, retreated with his machine. He joined Figgins and Ethel, who were standing near the starting-point, looking on. Figgins was grinning, and there was a twinkle in Cousin Ethel's eye.

"Do you wogard that as a fair start, Figgins?" asked D'Arcy.

"Certainly!" said Figgins.

"I weally think we ought to have started ovah again," said D'Arcy, shaking his head. "As a mattah of fact—"

"Hurrah! Tom Merry leads!"

"Bwavo!" shouted D'Arcy, forgetting that he thought he ought to have been in the race. "Bwavo, Tom Merry! Go it, Monkey! Buck up, Blake!"

Three of the cyclists had tailed off in the first lap, and had wheeled their machines away. In the second lap another



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NEXT
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rode off, but five stuck it out for a longer time. Then Carboy found himself too far behind for a chance, and gave it up.

The race now remained between four riders—Merry, Monk, Lowther, and Blake. Blake shot ahead, and D'Arcy clapped his hands with glee.

"Go it, deah boy! Wemembah the honah of Study No. 6!" he shouted.

"Buck up, Blake!" yelled Digby and Herries. But Blake had shot his bolt. Past him went Tom Merry and Monk, and Blake was seen to slacken. For half a lap he rode neck-and-neck with Monty Lowther, and then, both of them being hopelessly behind, they rode from the track.

Tom Merry and Frank Monk had it between them now. Both were splendid riders, and they put all they knew into it. It was riding as fine as is often seen on a professional cycle-track. There were loud cheers, loud clappings of hands.

The champions of the Grammar School and St. Jim's were watched by hundreds of keen eyes, and there was a breathless hush when the bell rang for the last lap.

"Tom Merry wins!"

"Monk wins!"

"Buck up, Merry!"

"Go it, Monkey!"

Neck and neck now, but Tom Merry's front wheel was creeping ahead. Half a length and a whole length—a length and a half! The hero of the Shell had saved himself for that last spurt, and that last spurt did it.

"Hurrah!"

"Merry! Merry! Bravo, Merry!"

"Bai Jove," said D'Arcy, turning to Cousin Ethel, "Tom Merry has won by a length and three-quarters, at least, and I wealdy do not think that I should have done much bettah if I had wealdy started!"

and strongly expressed, but the swell of the School House was immovable.

"I have entahed for the wace," he said, "and I should wegard it as dewogatory to my dig. to wetwead now."

"But all the other entries have gone out," said Blake. "No fellow stands a chance against Wimpole, and especially against Mr. Railton. They have it between them."

"I wealdy do not see why I should not stand a chance."

"Ass!" said Digby.

"I wefuse to be called an ass!"

"Now, D'Arcy, do the sensible thing, and scratch yourself!"

"Scratch myself! What do you mean?"

"Scratch your name—I mean scratch it out of the race."

"Oh, I see! I am wealdy sowwy that I cannot oblige you, Blake."

"If you make the New House cackle at us, you image, we'll make Study No. 6 warm for you afterwards!" said Blake threateningly.

"It would not be consistent with my dig. to allow myself to be moved by threats," said D'Arcy. "Pway excuse me now, as I must get into my wunning things."

"Did you ever see such an obstinate image?" exclaimed Blake, as D'Arcy walked imperturbably away. "Nothing will keep him from running, and against two opponents like Wimpole and an old Blue! Hallo, Figgins, what are you looking for?"

"Have you seen Skimpole?" asked Figgins.

"Skimpole! What do you want Skimpole for? He's not entered for any of the events, is he?" asked Blake.

Figgins laughed.

"Oh, no! But you know he's our chief policeman, and he has disappeared, and his force are disbanding themselves."

"Ha, ha! Not likely to be a row, is there?"

"I don't know," said Figgins dubiously. "Some of the

UNTIL I SAY "STOP!"

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THIS BOOK!

P.T.O.

And Cousin Ethel cordially agreed with him.

Tom Merry was looking red and somewhat blown after the hard run, but he was a good deal fresher than Monk.

Loud cheers followed the two cyclists as they disappeared. Both had ridden well, and Frank Monk fully deserved his second prize. And as loud as any rang the cheers of the defeated competitors.

CHAPTER 15.

D'Arcy Does Not Win.

LUNCH-TIME came, and that meal had never been a merrier one at St. Jim's. Time had not been found for half the events, and it was clear that some of the less important items would have to be cut out of the programme. But that possibility had been already foreseen, and the entrance fees were to swell the fund all the same. Tom Merry sat between Miss Priscilla and Cousin Ethel at lunch, and Ethel divided her attention between the winner of the bicycle race and the great Figgins, who was on the other side. Arthur Augustus had simply no chance; which was hard lines on Augustus, considering that Ethel was his cousin, and he had always regarded her as something in the light of private property.

The afternoon was as fine as the morning, and warmer, which was all the more pleasant. The first event was to be the mile, and it excited great interest. Kildare had withdrawn when Mr. Railton entered his name, knowing that he stood no chance against the School House master; but Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was not so modest. D'Arcy had entered for the mile, and he meant to run in it.

It was in vain that the chums in Study No. 6 represented to him their views on the subject. Their views were strong,

Grammar kids were arguing with some of our Third Form fags just now about the result of a football match, and the argument was waxing strong!"

Blake looked concerned.

"My hat; I hope there won't be any trouble to disturb the harmony of the day!" he exclaimed. "I suppose we can't depend upon the small fry to keep the peace. Where has that ass Skimpole got to? How dare he take on the job of chief constable and then go off like this!"

"Better look for him," suggested Digby.

"Right-ho! We're all in the next event after the mile, and we sha'n't be able to look after keeping the peace then. I say, Manners, have you seen Skimpole?"

"Yes," said Manners halting. "I saw him go behind the pavilion with a book under his arm a while ago, just after lunch."

"Come on, kids, and we'll rout him out!"

Half a dozen juniors went round the pavilion to look for Skimpole, and there, sure enough, was the amateur Socialist of St. Jim's, sitting on a bench with a big book on his knees perusing it eagerly.

Blake jerked it out of his hand.

"Here, I say, give me my book," exclaimed Skimpole; "I was just getting to a most interesting part! The author says that unless Socialism comes in during the next ten years it will be too late to save the British Empire from falling to pieces!"

"Horrid!" said Blake. "I'm sorry to hear that the poor old empire is on its last legs, but we haven't time to look after it now. You—"

"But really, Blake, it is a most important question. The aggregation of capital in the hands of fewer and fewer extremely rich men is certain to lead, in the course of time to—"

Kindly fill in the Order Form in this issue.

"Never mind the aggregation of capital."

"But it is the most important question of modern times!"

"Not so important as keeping the Grammar School kids from fighting with the Third Form fags," said Blake severely.

"My dear Blake—"

"Nice sort of a chief constable you are!"

"Dear me, I forgot! Really, I only took the post on in a moment of good-natured weakness!" said the amateur Socialist. "I am opposed to the police on principle, as a matter of fact. You see, under Socialism there will be no police! Everybody having enough of everything, there will be no need to steal, and we shall abolish policemen, and burglars, and judges, and executioners—"

"And how will you keep quarrelsome fellows from fighting with one another?"

Skimpole rubbed his nose thoughtfully.

"I haven't thought that out yet."

"Think it out some other time, old fellow, and come and do your duty now," said Blake. "You're chief constable, and you've got to keep the peace. Come on!"

"Certainly, Blake. As a true Socialist, I am bound to accede to every reasonable request made by a fellow-creature."

"Come on, then, and don't talk so much!" said Blake.

"As a true Socialist, I am bound to talk."

"By Jove, I believe you are! There will be a run on gags when Socialism comes in!" said Blake. "Do come along!"

And Skimpole was bundled away. Twenty juniors who were not entered for any of the events of the day had been formed into an amateur police force to keep order, and Skimpole was the chief. In his keen concern as to what was to become of the British Empire in ten years' time, he had forgotten his duties, but now that he was reminded he threw

"My dear Blake, I was bound to do somethin' for the honah of Study No. 6!" he said. "And, weally, I wathah fancy myself on the cindah-path, you know!"

Blake snorted. It was useless to argue with Arthur Augustus. He had other things to think of, too, for the race was full of interest. Mr. Railton was the finest athlete at St. Jim's, but Wimpole of the Grammar School was very good. For some time the event was in doubt, but at last it became apparent that the School House master was the better man of the two.

Mr. Wimpole stuck it out gallantly, but it became more and more evident that he was out-classed by the St. Jim's representative.

Frank Monk thumped Tom Merry on the back as they stood looking on. Tom Merry grinned at him amiably.

"Tit for tat!" he remarked cheerily. "I fancy our move checkmates you, Monkey!"

"You're right," said Monk ruefully; "I never thought you'd be up to the wheeze, you see! Never mind, if you have the mile, we'll have the quarter, and there are plenty of ways yet for us to beat you!"

A cheer rose and swelled over the ground.

"St. Jim's wins!"

"Hurrah!"

Mr. Railton was well ahead. The Grammar School master was fagging on behind, but Mr. Railton had a good yard when his breast touched the tape.

"Hurrah!"

"Good old St. Jim's!"

"Hurrah!"

The School House master had won—the famous machine-chest! And there were chuckles mingled with the cheers that greeted him.

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himself into the matter. It was time, for some of the more youthful of the Grammarians had already almost come to blows with some of the St. Jim's fags on a football question.

While Skimpole was looking after his police force, the mile race started. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, heedless of frowns, turned up for the race in running garb, with his eyeglass stuck in his eye. Mr. Railton smiled, and Mr. Wimpole, of the Grammar School, stared at him as if he had been some curious zoological specimen.

"What is that little boy doing here, Mr. Railton?" the Grammar School master inquired.

Mr. Railton laughed.

"He is entered for the race. The others have scratched, but D'Arcy thinks he will have a chance."

"Yaas, wathah, sir!" said Arthur Augustus innocently. "I wathah fancy myself at the mile, you know. And pway do not be offended, Mr. Wimpole, if I explain that I am not a little boy. I am nearly as big as Tom Mewwy, and I'm in the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, you know."

But it was time to start. A cheer greeted the start, followed by a loud laugh as D'Arcy—of course!—was seen to drop behind in the first half-dozen strides. The two athletes simply walked away from him, and D'Arcy was left standing in the track. There was a yell of derision from St. Jim's and Grammar School alike.

"Get off!"

"Go and bury yourself!"

"Yah!"

D'Arcy jammed his monocle in his eye, took a slow survey of the grinning crowd to testify to his supreme indifference to their opinion on that matter or any other, and then slowly walked off the course.

"Nice sort of an ass you are, ain't you?" said Blake.

D'Arcy looked at him frigidly.

CHAPTER 16.

The End of a Great Day.

THE two most important events so far had been won by St. Jim's, and so the home crowd were exceedingly well pleased with themselves. Some of the smaller events had been pulled off by the Grammar School, but the honours so far decidedly rested with St. Jim's. But the visitors were sportsmen. There was no annoyance shown to mar the good-fellowship of the occasion. The only disputes were among the younger fags, and they were disputing not for any specific reason, but because, as Blake put it, it was their nature to. Skimpole and his amateur police found themselves required more than once to stop an incipient "row."

Arthur Augustus, of course, had to distinguish himself in the eyes of his "governah," who had arrived in his motor-car soon after lunch, and joined Dr. Holmes. Lord Eastwood fixed an eyeglass in his eye as he saw his hopeful son among the starters for the quarter-mile. The resemblance between father and son was then very striking.

"By Jove," exclaimed Lord Eastwood; "that's Arthur!"

"Dear me, so it is!" said Lady Eastwood.

"He has entered for everything, auntie!" said Cousin Ethel demurely. "Arthur is really distinguishing himself to-day! Of course, he is not winning anything, but he does not care for a minor point like that!"

Lord Eastwood laughed.

"By Jove, they're off!"

The quarter-mile was well contested, but it was known from the start that Figgins would win. And win he did, with Monty Lowther a good second.

D'Arcy came in last, but he was by no means dismayed. As he explained afterwards, it had struck him soon after starting, that he must not exhaust himself, as he would



"I shall be simply a spectatah for the west of the afternoon," said D'Arcy. "I weally think I have done enough to uphold the honah of Study No. 6, you know."

require his strength for throwing the hammer, to say nothing of the other contests he was entered for. When it came to throwing the hammer, D'Arcy was all there. The hammer was big and heavy, and D'Arcy did not feel quite so confident after he had tested the weight of it.

"Bai Jove, you know," he remarked, "I don't know how I shall show up at th'owin' a beastly sledge-hammah about. I could manage bettah with a—"

"A tack-hammer," suggested Kerr.

"Well, yaas, wathah!"

D'Arcy gave the hammer a trial swing, and there was a yell from Manners. D'Arcy looked round at him.

"Bai Jove, Mannahs, did I knock you? I'm sowwy."

"You—you—"

"I'm weally sowwy, Mannahs, but, weally, you should not get in the way."

"Hand over that hammer," said Kildare. "Now, then."

The contest was well entered for. Figgins & Co. showed up well in it, and so did Study No. 6, and Monk, Lane, and Carboy all did well. D'Arcy threw it about six feet. Then came Pilcher, Craggs, and Grimes. Craggs and Grimes fell far short of Figgins's distance, but the burly Pilcher easily won.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus, patting his old enemy on the shoulder. "I congwatulate you, Pilchah. You are a bettah sort of fellow than you look, you know. I should nevah have imagined you to have so much stwength, f'rom the way you slouch about, you know."

"Shut up, D'Arcy," said Kildare sharply.

"But I am complimentin' Pilchah," said Arthur Augustus.

"Oh, I don't mind the young ass!" grinned Pilcher. D'Arcy stared at him.

"If you are callin' me an ass, Pilchah—"

But the chums of Study No. 6 dragged him away before he could finish.

"I am goin' in for the water jump now, deah boys," said D'Arcy.

Blake grinned.

"The water jump's all over, kid."

"Now, you know, Blake, that I insisted upon bein' given a chance."

"Go hon!" grinned Blake. "I'm afraid it's all over, all the same."

"Then I shall wequest Mr. Waitton to have it twied ovah again."

"You're only just in time for the boxing."

"Bai Jove, I must not miss that!"

D'Arcy did not miss the boxing, but the fencing was over at the same time, and several other events escaped the swell of St. Jim's. Father Time would wait for no one, and the afternoon was already growing old.

The high jump was won by Kildare, and the long jump by Monteith, of the New House. Then came the obstacle race, in which Arthur Augustus was bound to distinguish himself. The way he plumped into the hedge, and fell over the fence, and splashed into the water, made the spectators scream; but D'Arcy, although hopelessly beaten, turned up

quite cheerfully at the finish, soaked to the skin, scratched and covered with mud, but perfectly satisfied with himself. And the swell of St. Jim's admitted himself to be fagged at last—indeed, he confided to Blake that he had found the day most exhausting, when he joined him after changing his clothes.

"I shall be simply a spectatah for the west of the aftahnoon," he said. "I weally think I have done enough to uphold the honah of Study No. 6, you know."

"Quite enough," said Blake.

"Bai Jove, what is all that wov about?" said D'Arcy, looking round. "Some of the youngsters seem to be fightin', Blake."

It was true. Skimpole had been on duty for a long time, but at last he had retreated into a corner somewhere with a book, and the fags had taken advantage of it. The argument on the subject of the respective merits of St. Jim's and the Grammar School on the football field was renewed, and became more excited every moment, till it ended in several of the youngsters rolling over on the ground in deadly struggle.

"Police!" roared Blake.

"Where's Skimpole?" shouted Figgins.

But the amateur Socialist either did not hear, or did not heed. Blake, Herries, and Figgins rushed to separate the combatants, and Fatty Wynn and Marmaduke and Manners came to their aid.

"Stop this!" exclaimed Blake. "Stop it, I say!" "We must stop them before the visitors notice anything!" exclaimed Frank Monk, coming up. "Better hit out!"

"Good idea!" said Figgins.

And they rushed among the combatants, hitting out right and left. This drastic measure was effective. The howling fags separated, and fled in various directions. The spot was cleared in next to no time, and the juniors, like the Romans of old, had made a solitude and called it peace.

The gusk of that eventful day was now descending, and the proceedings drew to a close. Some of the items on the programme remained there, but that could not be helped. Everyone was satisfied, and that was the great thing.

In the dusk of the evening the visitors began to depart. The juniors gathered round to cheer as Miss Priscilla and Brother Frank drove away with Ethel. Lord and Lady Eastwood also had an ovation, and D'Arcy joined in cheering his "governah," and waved his hand with a five-pound-note in it as the motor-car buzzed away.

Then Tom Merry tapped him on the shoulder.

"Hallo, Tom Mewwy!" said Gussy. "I haven't seen you for some time. What have you been doin' with yourself, you know?"

"Writing out the account of the sports for the 'Weekly,'" said Tom Merry. "Here it is. You remember you were going to take it down to the printer's, don't you?"

"Yaas, wathah! You have done it pweety quickly."

"I had it sketched out, and only had to fill in the names of the winners of the events," explained Tom Merry. "The printer has all the rest of the magazine set up, and he's promised to get this knocked off to-night, and to let me have the copies in the morning. Only you must get it to him before seven."

"Certainly," said D'Arcy. "I'll get my bike."

And he thrust the manuscript into his pocket, and hurried off for his machine. Tom Merry could not very well leave St. Jim's himself just then, as he was wanted for many things. As he turned away from the spot, three figures came out from the shadow of the gateway of St. Jim's. They were Monk, Lane, and Carboy. There was a curious grin on the features of Frank Monk.

"You heard that?" he said, looking at his comrades.

"Rather!" said Carboy and Lane.

"Tom Merry has filled in the names of the winners, and the copy is to be printed in their giddy school magazine."

"Well, what about it?" said Carboy. "What are you thinking of?"

"Fax ends with the competitions," said Monk. "It was clearly understood that the truce ended as soon as we left the grounds of St. Jim's."

"Yes; but what—"

"Well, let's go and say good-bye!" grinned Monk. "We want to be a little ahead of Gussy on the road."

"Why, on earth?" demanded his puzzled comrades.

"Oh, only just to get hold of that paper before it gets to the printer's, and alter the names of the winners on it," said Frank Monk carelessly.

Lane and Carboy burst into a laugh.

"Good wheeze!" they exclaimed together. And the three Grammarians hastened to say farewell to their entertainers at St. Jim's, and to take their leave.

Five minutes after they were gone, D'Arcy wheeled his bicycle out of the gates, mounted, and pedalled away up the dark lane to Rylcombe.

"**B**AI JOVE!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy uttered the exclamation suddenly, as three dark figures leaped from the hedges, and he was seized, just as the lights of Rylcombe came in sight.

He was gripped by two pairs of strong hands, his arms pinned down to his sides, and he was held helplessly on the saddle of the bicycle while the third of his assailants went carefully through his pockets.

"Bai Jove!" said D'Arcy, with remarkable coolness, under the circumstances, "I suppose you are wascally high-way wobbahs. Pway do not take my gold watch, as it was a pwesent from my respected governah. If you will give me your card, I will ask my governah to send you a cheque for the value to your pwivate address."

There was a chuckle in the darkness. A hand had glided into D'Arcy's breast-pocket, and purloined the paper Tom Merry had given him.

D'Arcy uttered an exclamation.

"Pway don't take that papah, deah boys—I mean, you wotten wascals! It is not a banknote. I have a fivah in my twousahs-pocket, but that is only a papah for the pwintah chap."

Another chuckle. Then Arthur Augustus was lifted off his bicycle, and dropped into the dry ditch, amid the fern and bracken. Then the three mysterious desperadoes vanished, taking the bicycle with them.

D'Arcy, considerably amazed, crawled out of the ditch. He had not been robbed, except of the paper for the printer's, and the bicycle. His gold watch, his fiver, and his money were not touched.

"My hat!" murmured the swell of St. Jim's. "They are the most cwicious wobbahs I have evah heard of! Weally, it was vewy considewate of them to leave me my gold watch. Of course, they mistook the papah for a beastly banknote, but it is wemarkable that they did not take the watch."

As it was useless to go on to the printer's without the paper, D'Arcy turned his steps homeward toward St. Jim's. Little did he dream that while he was tramping schoolwards along the long, dark lane, Frank Monk, mounted on his bicycle, dashed up to the printer's office in Rylcombe, and delivered a paper there, "from Tom Merry."

Arthur Augustus had nearly reached the gates of St. Jim's, when he heard the buzz of a bicycle bell behind him. He jumped out of the road, and the cyclist whizzed on. A few minutes later he reached the school gates, and found Taggles, the porter, closing them. Lock-up had been left later than usual that evening, and D'Arcy was just in time. Taggles was staring in amazement at a bicycle that was leaning against the gates.

"My jigguh!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, in amazement.

Sure enough, it was his bicycle. He realised that the cyclist who had flown past him in the lane must have been the bicycle thief, coming to restore his plunder. D'Arcy was utterly bewildered. Unheeding the curious questions of the porter, he wheeled his machine in, and put it away, and then went to acquaint Tom Merry with the unfortunate loss of the paper.

The Terrible Three were at tea, and Study No. 6 were with them, and Figgins & Co. had joined the party. It was a merry meeting in Tom Merry's study, and the hero of the Shell was not disposed to complain.

"Well, it can't be helped," he said, when D'Arcy explained his misadventure. "But they were no more high-way robbers than you are."

"But they wobbah me, Tom Mewwy!"

"They brought the bicycle back."

"Yaas, wathah! But powwaps they knew who I am, and were afraid that I should be extwemely angwy; and, you know, I am wathah a dangewous fellow when I lose my tempah."

"Ha, ha! Perhaps so! I suppose it was some joke of the Grammarians."

"Bai Jove, I never thought of that, deah boy!"

"It doesn't matter. We shall have to wait another day for the 'Weekly,' that's all," said Tom Merry. "You're stopping Figgy's song, so sit down and have your tea."

"Wight-ho! I am quite willin' to hear Figgins sing. I would do anythin' for fiwendship on a day like this, deah boy!"

"Why, what do you mean, you apology for an ass?" demanded Figgins wrathfully.

"He doesn't mean anything," said Tom Merry hastily. "Fill yourself up with cake, Gussy, and don't talk any more."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Silence for the song!"

And quite a merry evening was spent in the study, till the time came all too soon for parting—a happy finish to a very happy day.

The rising-bell was not a welcome sound to the boys of St. Jim's the next morning.

After breakfast Tom Merry was informed that a bulky parcel had arrived for him from Rylcombe, and he took a hasty look at it before going in to morning school. It was from the printer's and evidently contained the latest edition of the "Weekly," which had been promised for that morning, on condition that the report of the sports went in before seven the previous evening.

Tom Merry stared at the consignment in surprise. Unless Gussy had gone to sleep on his bicycle and dreamed the whole occurrence, the report could never have gone in, and yet the printer could not have finished off the "Weekly" without it. Tom Merry did not know what to think; but there was no time to look into the matter then. He had barely opened the parcel when he was called away to morning school.

In class he mentioned to Manners and Lowther the arrival of the parcel from the printer's, and they were as amazed as he. Unfortunately Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell, detected him talking on the subject, and Tom was given a quarter of an hour's detention. When the Shell went out after morning school, Tom Merry remained at his desk; but he left as soon as he could, and hurried to his study. He met Arthur Augustus in the passage.

"I am just goin' to your study, Tom Mewwy," D'Arcy remarked; "I hear that the papah has come out, aftah all. I am weally surprised, for I certainly nevah took in the weport."

"Blessed if I know how to account for it!" said Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove, yes; it is certainly vewy stwange!" said D'Arcy, as he kept pace with the swift strides of the hero of the Shell. "Are you feelin' vewy fagged to-day, Mewwy?"

"Not verry," said Tom, laughing.

"I am, wathah. I felt howbly next-dayish when the wisin-bell went this mornin'," said D'Arcy. "Hallo, there seems to be a wow in your study!"

There was certainly a row. The fellows had not waited for the arrival of Tom Merry; the parcel had been opened, and the copies were passing from hand to hand, amid exclamations of wrath and indignation.

"What's the mattah, deah boys?" inquired D'Arcy.

No one answered the swell of the School House. There was a rush to surround Tom Merry, and copies of the "Weekly" were thrust into his face.

"You utter ass!" roared French, of the New House. "Call yourself an editor!"

"Call yourself a reporter!" hooted Kerr.

"What do you mean by it?" yelled Blake.

"Yaas, wathah, what do you mean by it, Tom Mewwy? I don't quite know what Blake is dwivin' at, but what do you mean by it, anyway, deah boy?"

"What's the row?" demanded the bewildered Tom Merry. "Has anything gone wrong?"

"I should say so!" howled Lowther. "Look here—at the report!"

"But the report didn't go in."

"It's in right enough," said Figgins. "Here it is; but there's Grammarian names as winners of every event."

"What?"

"Look for yourself."

Tom Merry stared at the report as if he could hardly believe his eyes, as was indeed the case.

There was the report of the previous day's proceedings, just as he had drawn it up himself, with the exception that the names of the real winners had been taken out, and Grammarian names substituted. Where Grammarians had won the names had, of course, been left alone. But according to the report in their own "Weekly," St. Jim's had not had a single victory on that famous day.

Tom Merry gasped.

"The report's been altered!" he exclaimed. "It was all right when I gave it to Gussy to take to the printer's office."

"Bai Jove! Then it must have been the Gwammarians who collahed me last night, and Fwank Monk must have altered the weport and taken it in himself," ejaculated D'Arcy.

Figgins burst into a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha! It's a good jape, though it's against us. Our own 'Weekly,' too. Never mind! We might have known what to expect when we left the matter in the hands of a School House fellow."

"Yes, rather!" said the Co. in chorus. "The School House were bound to muck it up somehow."

"Weally, Figgins—"

"You champion ass!" exclaimed Tom Merry wrathfully. "You ought to have known—"

"Well, so ought you, for that matter," said Blake; "Gussy told you all about what had happened when he came in."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, I was busy. But never mind, it can't be helped," said Tom Merry, laughing, "and it's a jolly good joke, anyway. We shall have to have another edition of the 'Weekly' printed, that's all. And we'll put in it a good article on Grammarian cheek, and send a copy over to the Grammar School."

"Yaas, wathah! And I weally think you had bettah let me w'ite that article, Tom Mewwy," said Arthur Augustus.

CHAPTER 18.

How it Ended.

WE cannot better conclude our story than with the following extract from a famous London daily paper:

"Some curious information reaches us from our Sussex correspondent. It appears that a certain Dame Humphreys, the widow of a soldier killed in Zululand, and living in the village of Rylcombe, had fallen into a state of complete destitution. The neglect of the Government to provide for the widow of one of our gallant defenders, who had lost his life for his country, moved the indignation of certain lads belonging to a neighbouring school, who determined to do something for the poor old soul. A fete was organised, of which the proceeds were to be devoted to a fund for the old lady. The idea was, we believe, first mooted by a junior named Merry, but the affair was finally taken in hand by the school authorities, and managed under the joint supervision of the headmasters of St. James's Collegiate School and the Rylcombe Grammar School. The affair was a great success, and a sum of no less than £24 10s. was gained for this very deserving fund. We heartily congratulate the boys of these two schools upon their success, in this attempt to right a wrong; but we are happy to state that representations having been made at the War Office, we have reason to believe that provision will be properly made for Mrs. Humphreys. This is quite owing to public attention having been drawn to the matter, and Mrs. Humphreys will certainly owe the comfort of her declining years to these kind-hearted schoolboys, and chiefly to the junior who originated the idea, whose name, we believe, is Merry."

Which was very gratifying to the junior whose name was Merry when he received a copy of the paper from Miss Fawcett, with that paragraph heavily underscored.

THE END.

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Tempest Headland is a large school standing in an exposed position of Britain's coast.

A fearful storm is raging outside, when Cyril Conway tells Herr Ludvig, who is taking the class for German, that he can see from the window a ship being driven ashore. Dr. Buchanan, the headmaster, Herr Ludvig, and the boys immediately make their way to the cliff, but on reaching there they find that the ship has sunk. However, the Head is instrumental in saving a little black boy. He is taken to the school, and notes to the amount of £1,000, with a request that they may be used for his up-bringing, are found on him. A medical man examines the nigger, and he finds the boy has had such a shock to his system as to affect all memory of the past. Billy Barnes and Cyril Conway decide to name their new schoolmate Snowy White Adonis Venus. He is taken as a fag by Graft, a bully.

One day Herr Ludvig's class is upset by four huge rats escaping from Billy Barnes's desk. Cyril and Venus try to capture the rodents, and at an exciting moment are interrupted by the Head.

He demands an explanation. "If you please, sir," murmured Billy, "they are my rats. They would have been all right if it hadn't been for Snigg. He let them loose. He will shove his nose into everybody's business but his own."

(Now go on with the story.)

Cyril explains matters to the Doctor.

"Nonsense! It was not your business to bring four rats into the room!" retorted the Head.

"I think they have escaped all right, sir," said Cyril. "There's a hole in that cupboard, and I saw the little jokers go in there. I believe you will find them gone all right now."

The doctor did not view the matter so philosophically. He did not care to have four rats roaming about the college. Knowing a good deal of natural history, he knew that he would have four hundred rats in a very short space of time, and that little lot would soon blossom into thousands. Compounded interest is nothing to rats for increasing!

"Why did you let the rats loose?" demanded the doctor.

"I didn't, sir. I was keeping the little fellows in my desk."

"Keeping rats in your desk?"

"Only temporarily, sir; I was not going to keep them there always. Only, you see, I hadn't got a cage for them."

"Kindly let the lesson proceed, Herr Ludvig," said Dr. Buchanan, taking a chair by the master's desk.

That was a most surprising lesson. Herr Ludvig did his best, and his best was very good. The boys did their best, and their best was very bad—with the exception of Cyril. He could speak German as well as Dr. Buchanan could, and far better than any boy in that great college, when he liked. He liked on that occasion, and the lesson ended with a little conversation between the two masters and Cyril. Every boy listened as intently as though he understood that conversation, and Herr Ludvig beamed on his promising pupil; then he dismissed the class, and as Billy was trying to get out first, the doctor ordered him to come to his study at two o'clock. It was a nasty hour; Billy knew that from past experience.

"A very clever lad, Herr Ludvig!" exclaimed the doctor, speaking of Cyril.

"Ach; it is so! He speaks German excellently! You notice it? And mind you tis, tat boy can learn vat he likes. It is te same mit te oter masters. They tell me so. Ven he

chooses—you have it?—he can learn vat he pleases. Give him something difficult, he will learn it. How, I know not. He very seldom seems to work."

"There is no doubt that he has very great ability!" said Dr. Buchanan. "I must deal with the other matter; I will not have classes upset like this. I know that boys never know where to draw the line, and I shall make what allowance I can for Barnes; but I shall severely cane him. What do you think about putting Conway into the higher Form for German?"

"Oh, leave me von boy in tis class. There is no doubt tat he is far te best German scholar in te college, and Monsieur Dupin tells me he is his best French scholar. I shall not keep te boy back; you could not. He learns mit conversation mit me after class, but he vill try to answer in English. However, ve are getting on. Leave me von boy to break te monotony."

"He shall not be moved yet, Herr Ludvig!" exclaimed the doctor, placing his hand on the German master's shoulder. "A master's life is not such an easy one as many suppose. I shall cane that lad."

Then the doctor sighed as he walked away, for he hated having to chastise an unruly pupil; but he was the first to maintain the discipline of the college.

Dr. Buchanan, than whom a kinder and juster man never lived, was seated in his study, and his cane was close beside him. The college clock was chiming two—the fatal hour for Billy. The doctor could hear whispering voices in the passage. At the first toll of the bell, Billy, Cyril, and Venus entered the study, and the doctor looked surprised. They stopped at the doorway, and he motioned them towards the hearthrug.

"I ordered Barnes to come to my study," observed the doctor. "I do not know why you have also come, Conway."

"I am particeps criminis, sir."

"And you, my lad?"

"Yes, sah," answered Venus, to whom the inquiry was addressed. "I'm all dat!"

"All what?"

"I dunno de exact meaning ob de German words, but if it's anything like rat hunter, I'm all dat. Yah—ah—ah—ough!"

"What have you to say for yourself, Barnes?" demanded the doctor, ignoring Venus's laugh, which he strove to turn to a cough.

"If you please, sir, I am sorry!"

"It is such a poor excuse," observed the doctor, sighing. "We are all sorry for our faults after they have occurred. But you understand, Barnes, we must be punished for them. Have you anything else to say?"

"No, sir."

"I shall cane you."

"One moment, sir!" exclaimed Cyril. "I know all the rights of the thing, and I don't believe Billy deserves a whacking. Of course, it's not an important matter, because boys are bound to be camed, more or less—"

"Not if they do not grossly misbehave themselves."

"Granted, sir, and that is where it comes in. I don't mind Billy being camed, but—"

"I do!" growled Billy.

"Oh, do shut up—I mean, be quiet!" growled Cyril. "What I mean to say, sir, is that Billy has not been guilty of gross misbehaviour. I dare say he deserves a caning for half a dozen other things, but I don't believe that he really deserves one for this. Mind you, if he does, I deserve it far worse, because I tried to scatter those rats. Now, Bill;

NEXT
THURSDAY:

"D'ARCY THE DUDE."

A Double-Length Tale of
Tom Merry's Schooldays.

never tried to scatter them. If it had not been for another fellow he would have kept them in his desk, and made a cage for them."

"You tell me that he did not bring them into the classroom with the object of creating a disturbance?"

"I feel perfectly sure of that, sir. Billy is a chump—I mean, he's the most thick-headed ass—donkey—sort of simple that you ever came across."

"I do not think that you are doing yourself justice for rhetoric, Conway."

"It doesn't matter twopence, sir! I am going to give you the truth. I am not going to try to convince you that Billy doesn't deserve a flogging, if he does; and I'm not going to try to convince you against your convictions, for the simple reason that no boy could be so stupid. All you want are the facts of the case. I don't care whether Billy gets a whacking or not, if he deserves it—"

"I do!" growled Billy. "I would much rather not have one, whether I deserve it or not."

"I would like to ask you one question, Barnes," observed the doctor, fixing his eyes on the culprit. "Do you consider you deserve a flogging for what has occurred this morning?"

"I suppose so. Cyril says I don't, sir, and he's a clever chap. I would advise you to take his advice. All I know is, that I don't deserve it as much as the one I didn't get for breaking bounds the night before last; but that was because I was not caught."

"It's too awful!" groaned Cyril. "Honesty is the proper thing, but such awful simplicity does not give a chap a fair chance. Why, sir, you ought to give me forty floggings straight away."

"Let me catch you, my lad!"

"That's always what I try for you not to do, sir. All the same, I say that Billy does not deserve a thrashing."

"Cyril Conway," exclaimed the doctor, after a pause, "all the years you have been at this college—and you came as a very little boy, the youngest in the college, if I remember aright—you have never told me a lie. I have found you absolutely truthful. You know, my lad, it is painful to my feelings to cane a boy. Now, Conway, if you assure me on your honour that Barnes does not deserve a caning, I will take your word for it."

"Well, sir, I spoke without looking at the thing properly. I said that Billy did not deserve a caning. I should have said that I thought so from my point of view. I don't believe he does; but you will know whether he does or not. I don't care about him getting the caning, but I wouldn't like a chap to get one that he did not really deserve."

"Why do you think Barnes does not deserve to be caned for misconduct, that, to my mind, appears very serious?"

"Well, sir, they were rat-hunting down the river, and Billy happened to be that way. You might almost tell by the look of him that he had been that way, or thereabouts. At any rate, he got sorry for the rats, because they had not got a chance. They had got four in a cage, and Billy tells me he felt sort of sorry for them; so he gave his last five bob—his last five shillings, and bought those rats. Now, Billy likes animals. He told me that he was sorry for the poor bipeds—"

"Bipeds!" gasped the doctor.

"Well, sir, I am only telling you what Billy said. He was getting technical, and I vow he said he was sorter sorry for the poor bipeds. It is not my language; it is Billy's."

"It is shocking!"

"Yes, sir; but it would have been more shocking if those bipeds had not had Billy's last five bob—ahem!—shillings spent upon them."

"Cyril Conway," cried the doctor, taking off his glasses, and gazing at his daring pupil, "you are the most plausible boy that I have ever known, and I have known many thousands of boys. Go away, all of you, and if such a thing occurs again—I mean, such a disturbance in the class, I shall punish the delinquents with the utmost severity."

"Blest if I can understand it!" growled Billy, when they bowed themselves from the room. "You are a caution, Cyril; you are really! I believe you could talk over an angry tiger."

"But I didn't talk the doc. over, Billy!" said Cyril. "I merely gave him facts."

"But he knew the facts. Dash it all, he'd seen them! He felt one of them. I saw the blood on his hand."

"Billy, I told the doc. the truth," said Cyril. "I can't explain to you why he let you off, except that you were kind to rats."

"But they weren't kind to him. One of 'em bit him."

"Pooh! You don't know the doc. He wouldn't care if he was half killed, so long as the thing was an accident. Now, it's no good talking about it. The fact remains that he is satisfied; so are we, and there you get the end of it."

"But how did it happen, Cyril?" inquired Venus, when they were alone.

"Why, don't you see, Venus," exclaimed Cyril, "I told the doc. the truth, and the truth redounded to Billy's credit, because it proved that Billy was fond of biped animals with four legs. It was a kind action. Billy did not want rats. He merely bought them to save them from being torn to pieces by dogs, and I know he gave his last five bob for the brutes, because he borrowed sixpence from me. He will pay back next Saturday. I know Billy. He is an ass, and won't learn, or can't; but he is downright honest. Now, the doctor took the thing in its proper light. He always does. You can't fool the doc. Personally I have never tried, but I know you can't, because I know other fellows who have tried to do it, and have failed. He told me to take you in hand, and I promised. He likes you because he saved your life by one of the bravest actions I have ever seen, and I called him a maniac to his face that night for doing it. Well, I pledged the doc. my word, and I shall keep it, in the sense in which I pledged it, and in which he meant it. He did not mean that I was to keep you from all mischief, because he knew jolly well I would be about the last boy in this college who would be able to do so; but he meant that I was to act as a sort of friend to you."

"He wanted me to teach you by example that you must speak the truth. It is ridiculous to do otherwise, let alone the other aspects of the thing. People must find you out. Look at Billy. He blurted out that he had broken bounds. Well, that means a caning; but the doc. passed it, because Billy blurted out the truth. The doctor would not convict him on his own evidence. Personally I should despise myself for lying. There is something so contemptible in it. Bother it all, if you get into a scrape, confess up, and you will find that it is the honest and the proper thing to do. The honest thing must be the proper one. If you have got to get a licking, it's better to have it with a clear conscience than a bad one."

"Mind, don't imagine for a moment that the doc. would let you off for a scrape that deserved a licking. I have confessed to many a one, and faken my whacking. If I had lied to him, I should have got the whacking all the same; but he would not trust you on a future occasion. See? Let him be able to say of you what he said of me this afternoon—that he had never found you speak falsely to him. Stick to the truth, Venus. Brave chaps ought always to do that. My mother would be able to speak to you better on the subject. You don't remember anything about your mother; all the same, the advice I am giving you is right. Now, let's come and have a lark. Let's stir up Mopps, or smash windows. After all, we are only schoolboys!"

A Hunting Party.

The Fourth were busily engaged with their examination papers, and about the only boy who looked anything like happy in the class was Cyril Conway.

They had been thus employed for a very short time, when Cyril neatly folded his paper, placed it on the master's desk, made him a most polite bow, and walked towards the door.

Mr. Napier, the senior master, was conducting the examination.

"Conway!" he cried.

"Sir?" observed that worthy, turning and making another bow, quite as polite as the first.

"Surely you have not finished your paper already?"

"Pardon, sir, yes; quite easy. I understood that when our papers were finished that we were to have the remainder of the day to ourselves."

"That is so; but wait a moment."

Mr. Napier opened the paper, and a pleased expression came over his face. It was not only neat, but every question was correctly though concisely answered.

"You can go, my lad," he exclaimed.

Cyril did so, but he took up a position outside the door, from which he could watch proceedings.

Venus folded his paper just as neatly, walked up to the master's desk, placed the paper on it, then made a bow that he intended to be a second edition of Cyril's.

"Here, you come back, Venus!" cried Mr. Napier. "I don't believe that you have answered all the questions."

"Yes, sah; ebery one dat I knew."

"Humph! You appear to have been answering some that you did not know at the same time. What's this word that you have put against some of them?"

"Dat's 'dunno,' sah. You see, dose questions dat I wasn't quite certain ob I put dunno against, so dat you might see dat I had taken pains wid dem."

"I am afraid you have not tried."

"Golly, sah, dat's de worst mistake you eber made 'bout

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