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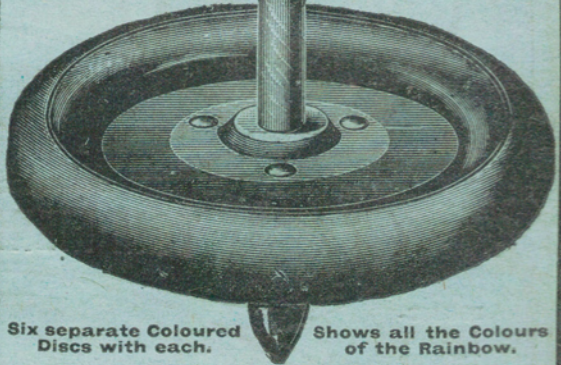
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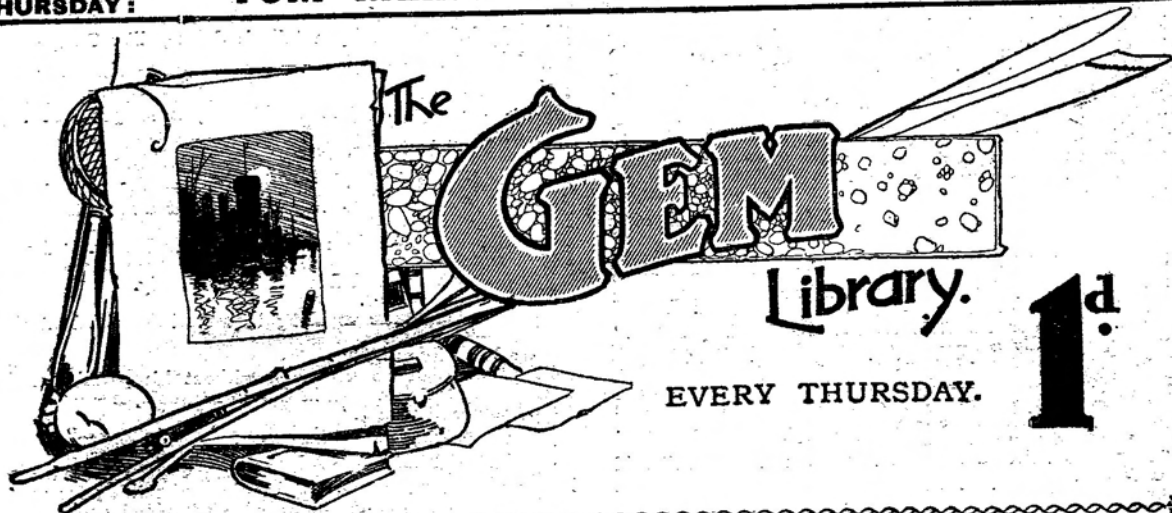
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CHAPTER 14

Arthur Augustus Stands On His Rights.

"COUSIN ETHEL!"
"Certainly, deah boy!"
"Coming here?"

"Yaas, wathah!"
"Good!" said Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther, with one voice.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of St. Jim's, was standing in the hall of the School House, with an open letter in his hand when the chums of the Shell came down the stairs. D'Arcy's face was beaming, and Tom Merry had stopped to ask him if it was good news, and the swell of the School House cheerfully imparted the information that Cousin Ethel was coming down to St. Jim's.

"Yaas, good, isn't it?" said D'Arcy, screwing his eyeglass into his eye and surveying the Terrible Three with a friendly grin. "It's weally vewy kind of Cousin Ethel to give us a look-in like this, deah boys."

"Rather!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "When is she coming?"

"This afternoon."
"Just to see us, I suppose?" said Manners.
"Well, no," said D'Arcy. "There's somethin' on, I think. She's got some plan or othah in her mind—somethin' to do with somethin' or othah, or somethin' of that sort, you know, Tom Mewwy."

"Oh, yes, that's quite lucid!" assented Tom.

"I can't quite make out what it is," said D'Arcy. "But I fancy she wants us to help her in somethin' or othah."

"Good! We're all ready!"
"Yaas, wathah! Of course, in a case of beauty in distress we all wish to the vescue like anythin'," said Arthur Augustus. "But I weally wish Ethel would explain a little more definitely, you know. I have suspected more than once that she does not feel a weally pwopah respect for my judgment."

"Oh, impossible!"

"Yaas, it is impos., pewwhaps, but the thought has cossed my mind," said D'Arcy, shaking his head. "Ethel says I'm to meet her at the station, and to tell all the boys that she wants their help."

"Right-ho!" said the Terrible Three heartily.

"Of course, that's all wight! Ethel is a wippin' girl, and she's weally vewy sensible for a girl," said D'Arcy. "When I talk to her, you know, I feel that she can understand all I say, and most girls haven't bwains enough for that, you know."

"I'm afraid I haven't brains enough always, Gussy," said Tom Merry modestly. "You're such an awfully deep chap, you know."

"I'm afraid I haven't brains enough always, Gussy," said Tom Merry modestly. "You're such an awfully deep chap, you know."

ANOTHER TALE OF TOM MERRY NEXT THURSDAY.

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D'Arcy smiled a satisfied smile.

"Yaas, I know I am wathah deep, Tom Mewwy. I'm to tell all the fellows they're wanted to help, but I can't tell them what they're wanted to help in, as I don't know myself. That's a wathah cuwious state of affaihs, isn't it?"

"Oh, no; that's all right!" said Monty Lowther. "Everybody will be willing to help. That's a dead cert."

"Oh, yes!" said Tom Merry. "Even the New House bounders will rally round us at a time like this!"

"Yaas, wathah! I suppose Figgins & Co. will wally wound like decent chaps," said Arthur Augustus. "I think Figgins wathah likes my Cousin Ethel, as a mattah of fact."

"And she rather likes Figgins," Manners remarked.

"Oh, no; nothin' of the sort, Mannahs! You are quite mistaken on that point. Ethel is vewy nice even to a wank outsidah, you know. You noticed that you yourself got on vewy well with her last Chwistmas at Hucklebewwy Heath."

"Why, you silly ass—"

"Pway don't use any oppwobwious expressions, Mannahs. Undah the circs., as I have to meet a lady this aftahnoon, I cannot give you a thwashin', as I do not wish to appeah before Cousin Ethel with a black eye or anythin' of that sort. She has such a way of laughin' at a chap."

"I suppose we're to come to the station with you?" said Tom Merry.

Arthur Augustus shook his head.

"No. Ethel says I'm to meet her, but she doesn't say anythin' about your boundahs."

"No; but, of course, it's understood!"

"Wats!" said D'Arcy, who could be obstinate when he liked. "It's not understood at all, deah boy. I'm goin' to meet Cousin Ethel at the beastly station, and I'm goin' alone."

"That's rather greedy of you, Gussy!"

"Nothin' of the sort!"

"Miss Ethel would naturally be pleased to see us—"

"I weally don't see why she should be," replied D'Arcy, looking at them with his eyeglass screwed into his eye. "I can't see anythin' about you to please anybody to look at. As I have said, Ethel is polite to all sorts of boundahs, but weally—"

"Are you looking for a thick ear, Gussy, to take to the station with you?"

"Certainly not, Lowtah! I wefuse to quawwel with any of your boundahs, as I must not wisk bein' disfigured this aftahnoon."

"But, really, Gussy, you ought to let us come to the station," said Tom Merry. "You could explain to Cousin Ethel that we were all anxious to be attentive."

"That's it," said Manners persuasively. "Don't be a pig, you know!"

"We only want to do the polite thing," said Lowther, in a wheedling tone.

But Arthur Augustus was adamant.

"I wefuse to take any of your boundahs with me!" he said firmly. "I am not even goin' to take any of the chaps in my own study, and I know Blake, Hewwies, and Digby will want to come. Which weminds me—I must go and tell them about it."

"But, I say, Gussy—"

"Look here, Adolphus—"

"I'm afwaid I haven't time to talk now, deah boys. It's past two already, and the twain comes in at half-past three. I have to change my clothes, too, before I start, and bwush my toppah."

"You young ass—"

But Arthur Augustus was walking away, leaving the chums of the Shell in a decidedly wrathful state of mind.

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther liked Cousin Ethel, and she liked them, and they were glad to hear that she was coming down to St. Jim's. They could hardly go to the station to meet her without being asked, when she had asked D'Arcy; but, of course, Arthur Augustus, as her cousin, could have taken along his friends. But Arthur Augustus apparently knew a thing worth two of that. He was to meet Cousin Ethel, and he meant to have the honour and glory all to himself, and to escort the young lady in triumph to St. Jim's, amid the envious stares of his friends.

"The young rotter!" exclaimed Manners wrathfully. "He knows he's got the whip-hand this time, and he means to use it."

"We can't go, except as Gussy's friends," said Lowther. "It would look forward. I shouldn't like to make a bad impression upon Miss Cleveland."

"Rather not!"

Tom Merry was looking very thoughtful, and he did not join in the remarks of his chums. Lowther looked at him rather sarcastically.

"This chap calls himself leader of our lot," he remarked. "Sets himself up as cock of the Shell. Nice leader, Manners!"

"Oh, ripping!" said Manners. "He sees us done like

this—absolutely done by a tailor's dummy like Gussy—and hasn't a word to say!"

"I think it's about time we deposed Tom Merry, and got a kid out of the Remove or the Third Form to lead us," remarked Lowther. "It would be just as good, at any rate!"

"A jolly sight better, perhaps!"

"The image can't even speak!"

"Oh, he's putting on that look like an owl to make us think he's thinking! But if he thinks we think he's thinking, I think he thinks—"

"Hallo, what's all the row?" asked Tom Merry. "I say, I've been thinking—"

"What with?" asked Lowther sarcastically.

Tom Merry laughed.

"Gussy won't take us along to meet Miss Ethel at the station—"

"We know he won't!"

"And we can't go with him without his permission—it would look rather forward in Cousin Ethel's eyes—"

"Of course it would!"

"But if anything prevented Gussy from going—"

"Eh?" ejaculated Manners and Lowther together.

"If anything prevented Gussy from going," repeated Tom Merry calmly, "it would be only the polite thing for us to go in his place, as, of course, Miss Cleveland couldn't be allowed to arrive at Rylcombe Station and find no one there to meet her and bring her to St. Jim's."

The next moment Tom Merry was reeling under a terrific slap on the shoulder from Lowther. He staggered, but a thump on the other shoulder from Manners set him right again. He gave a gasp.

"What the—how—why—"

"Hurrah!" shouted Lowther. "You've hit it!"

"You've hit me, you asses!" growled Tom Merry, rubbing his aching shoulders. "I've a jolly good mind to knock your silly heads together!"

"My dear chap, that's how we show our appreciation of your genius," said Lowther blandly. "Your ideas, as a rule, are rotten, but this time you have simply hit the nail on the head, and the wheeze is a regular ripper."

"Spiffing!" said Manners. "Of course, something might easily happen to keep Gussy from going to the station."

The Terrible Three burst into a simultaneous laugh.

"Such things have happened," grinned Lowther.

"And may happen again," said Tom Merry.

"He might get a thick ear and be unable to show up—"

"Or he might get tied up to a tree—"

"Or locked up in the gym. or the boot-room," said Tom Merry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Of course, it's impossible for us to be left out in the cold in a matter like this," said Tom Merry. "Gussy will have only himself to blame. Let's jaw it over, and get on to a good plan for keeping him here, and then all's plain sailing."

And the Terrible Three put their heads together and plotted a plot.

CHAPTER 2.

Blake is Left Out.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY walked away towards Study No. 6, the letter in his hand, looking and feeling exceedingly pleased with himself.

Cousin Ethel was coming down to St. Jim's! The girl had a standing invitation from the Head's wife, kindly Mrs. Holmes, to come whenever she chose; but her visits were not frequent, and they were always prized by the boys. Tom Merry and his friends were anxious to stand well in Cousin Ethel's eyes, and D'Arcy became a person of unusual importance on the strength of his cousinship.

The coming visit meant a great time for Arthur Augustus. D'Arcy had a weakness for falling in love on the slightest provocation, and he was more or less in love with Cousin Ethel, but for the life of him he had never been able to make out whether Ethel took him seriously or not.

At all events, the swell of the School House was determined that he, and he alone, was the fellow who would meet Cousin Ethel at the station and escort her to St. Jim's.

He entered Study No. 6, where Blake, Herries, and Digby were putting on their running-shoes for a little sprint, it being a half-holiday at St. Jim's, and a fine April afternoon. The beaming satisfaction in D'Arcy's face attracted the attention of the chums of the Fourth at once.

"Hallo! What's on?" asked Blake, looking at him.

"Found a threepenny bit in somebody's pocket, Gussy?"

"He's just heard of a new thing in fancy waistcoats," said Digby. "That's the only thing that would bring such a seraphic grin to his chivvy!"

"Or his governor has sent him a new silk topper as a birthday-present," remarked Herries.



Figgins looked inclined for a moment to commit assault and battery on the spot and possess himself of the bag by main force—but a pair of blue eyes were upon him.

"Oh, pway don't wot, deah boys——"

"Well, what is it then?"

"I've had a lettah fwom my Cousin Ethel——"

The chums of the Fourth were all attention at once.

"Good! What's the news?"

"She's comin' here!"

"Coming here?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Good again! But what for?"

"Well, pwincipally to see me, of course, but she has some plan in her bwain, too, which she wants us to help her with. She says I'm to tell you all, and ask you all if you will help her."

"Will we, rather!" said Blake emphatically. "What do you chaps say?"

"What-ho!" said Herries and Digby.

"But what are we to help in, Gussy?"

"Cousin Ethel doesn't say"

"Never mind; we'll help all the same. When is she coming to St. Jim's?"

"This aftahnoon, by the three-thirty at Wylcombe."

"Good! We'll all meet her."

Arthur Augustus gave a slight sniff.

"You won't do anythin' of the sort, Blake. Cousin Ethel

has asked me to meet the twain at the station, and she hasn't said a word about you. I've just told Tom Mewwy that he can't come."

"Why, you young rotter, of course we're coming."

Arthur Augustus shook his head.

"No, you're not, Blake. I can't take a cword, and I can't make distinctions in favah of any particulah person."

The Fourth-Formers looked at one another.

"My dear chap," said Blake, in a voice as gentle as the cooing dove, "we're not exactly what you'd call a crowd."

"Only four of us," said Digby insinuatingly, "including yourself, Gussy, if you're bound to come."

"Bound to come! Well, I wathah like that!"

"And Herries really wouldn't mind staying at home——"

"Wouldn't I?" said Herries.

"Well, you know you ought to attend to your cricket practice."

"That's so," said Blake; "I rather agree with Digby there. You ought to attend to your cricket practice, Herries, and it looks like being a fine day, you know. It's no good wasting the fine weather, and you don't want to be left out of the junior eleven in the summer matches."

"What about Digby's practice? His cricket is enough to make a bulldog weep!" said the indignant Herries.

NEXT
THURSDAY:

TOM MERRY AND ALAN WAYWARD.

"Well, I don't deny that there's something in that, too," admitted Blake. "I should say that you had better both get down to Littleaside and get in some really good, steady practice this afternoon, both at batting and bowling, while Gussy and I go down to the station and meet Cousin Ethel—"

"While you go and eat coke!" grunted Digby. "Of all the cheek!"

"Yaas, it is wathah a cheek of Blake," said Arthur Augustus. "I am not goin' to take him with me, deah boys—"

"I think you are, Gussy. Miss Cleveland will naturally expect you to have a friend with you."

"I don't suppose she will expect anythin' of the sort."

"And besides, I shall be there to protect you if you should meet any of the Grammar School cads, or those rough fellows in the village—"

"You are vewy kind, Blake, but I weally shall not require pwotectin'."

"Look here, you image—"

"I wefuse to be chwactewised as an image. I have now delivahed my cousin's message, so I will now—"

"Wait a minute, Gussy. As leader of this study, I naturally expect to have a finger in every pie."

"Yaas, I have often thought that it was wathah like your cheek you know, deah boy!"

"I think I ought to meet the lady at the station."

"I fail to see any necessity for anythin' of the kind. I wepeat that I cannot make any distinction in favah of a particulah person—"

"But I'm not a particulah person, Gussy, or I shouldn't care to be seen in Rylcombe with you," said Blake.

"I wegard that remark as wude and fwivolous, Blake. I wefuse to discuss the mattah furthah."

And Arthur Augustus turned towards the door.

"Where are you going, Image?"

"I am goin' to tell Figgins & Co. what Cousin Ethel asks of them. Of course, they are in it."

"Oh, of course! I noticed that Cousin Ethel thinks rather a lot of Figgins," said Digby rather maliciously.

Arthur Augustus screwed his monocle into his eye, and surveyed Digby through it.

"Digby, I fail to see any reason for you to make that absurd remark. Cousin Ethel probably weards Figgins as an extremely long-legged and somewhat clumsy duffah, who has not the faintest idea of how to dwess fashionably—"

"Ha, ha! I never noticed Cousin Ethel thought much of tailor's dummies!" said Blake.

"Blake, you are positively wude!"

"Oh, rats!"

"I am sowwy to implant the seeds of envy in your bweasts," said Arthur Augustus loftily. "You must wemembah that Ethel is my cousin, you know. The best way you can—"

"Oh, rats!"

"Vewy well; I am off, deah boys!"

"I know you are—off your silly rocker!"

D'Arcy deigned no answer to that last remark. He walked out of the study, and they heard him go downstairs. The chums of Study No. 6 were looking extremely disgusted.

"I suppose that's what he calls chummy?" said Blake.

"Rotten!" said Herries.

"Distinctly rotten!" said Digby. "I never thought Gussy had such nerve. This is the chap we've taken up and loved like a brother—the chap we've put up with, whose silk hats we've never bashed, whose neckties we've never inked—"

"Notwithstanding all provocations," said Blake.

"And this is our reward."

"Hallo, you chaps!" Tom Merry looked into the study.

"You're looking rather down in the dumps, kids."

"Who are you calling kids?" said Blake aggressively. He was in an aggressive mood.

Tom Merry laughed.

"Well, you're not looking very cheerful for a party of fellows going to meet one of the most charming girls in the world!" he exclaimed.

"Eh? Who told you we were going to meet anybody?"

"So you're not going, then?"

"No, we're not," grunted Blake. "Can't see why you Shell-fish need bother your heads about it, though. Funny how some kids can't mind their own business."

"Oh, keep your wool on," said Tom Merry good-naturedly.

"I was thinking of taking you into a wheeza."

"We're fed up with your wheezes, thanke, Tom Merry. I don't want to become an old man before my time, so we won't hear the wheeza, thank you!"

"Oh, vewy well, if you don't want to go and meet Miss Cleveland—"

Blake gave a jump.

"What! Is it a wheeze for getting round Gussy?"

"That's the cheese."

"Go ahead!" said Blake tersely.

"I take it that Gussy won't have you along with him, any more than he will have us," said Tom Merry. "He wants to do the little trick all on his lonesome, and bring Cousin Ethel here all by himself, and flaunt his success in our eyes, so to speak."

"Yes, something like that."

"Well, my idea is to take the job off his hands."

Blake shook his head.

"We can't go along without being asked," he said. "Gussy would show us up before Cousin Ethel. It would look too bad. As for persuading him, wild horses wouldn't do that, when the obstinate young rotter's made up his mind."

"Well, I've never seen a wild horse persuading anybody, so I can't say about that," confessed Tom Merry. "But I wasn't thinking of persuading him. I was thinking of locking him up in this study?"

"What?"

"What's the matter with locking him up here? If he can't get out to meet the lady, naturally his friends go in his place. We all go. I've taken you into this wheeze out of sheer good-nature, as we could have kidnapped Gussy in our own study—"

"H'm! Perhaps you could, and perhaps you couldn't!" said Blake, with a sniff. "Very likely we should have dropped on you and made you sit up."

"Well, anyway, what do you think of the wheeza?"

"Jolly good! We're on it—oh, kids?"

"My word!" said Digby. "Rather!"

"Right-ho!" said Herries.

Tom Merry grinned gleefully.

"Good! That's settled, then. Gussy's gone over to the New House to interview Figgins & Co. When he comes back—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

CHAPTER 3.

Figgins has an Idea.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY crossed the quadrangle to the New House, but he was not put to the trouble of going up to the study shared by Figgins, Kerr, Wynn, and Marmaduke Smythe, the famous quartette known all over St. Jim's as Figgins & Co. The four juniors were standing in a group outside the New House at St. Jim's. Figgins had a cricket bat under his arm, and was laying down the law on the subject of the great summer game, which at this time was beginning to excite general attention at St. Jim's. Football was a thing of the past season.

"You see, you have to hold it so," said Figgins, taking a cricket ball from Kerr's hand, "then throw back your hand so—"

"Ow!" ejaculated Fatty Wynn, as the back of Figgins's large hand biffed upon his nose. "What on earth are you up to, fathead?"

"I really wish you wouldn't get in the way, Fatty Wynn! I never saw such an awkward ass as you are in all my natural!" said Figgins, in a tone of remonstrance.

Fatty Wynn rubbed his nose ruefully.

"Seems to me you're, a clumsy ass, Figgins. But I say, I'm getting hungry—"

"I'm explaining how Kildare bowls—"

"Yes, that's all very well, but I get hungry in this April weather. Are you coming to the tuckshop, you chaps?"

"If you don't want to listen to me, Fatty Wynn, while I explain how Kildare took Monteith's wicket—"

"But I do want to listen to you, Figgy," said the Welsh partner in the Co. pacifically; "only I don't see why you couldn't explain in the tuckshop just as well as here."

"You greedy young rotter!"

"I don't see why you should call me greedy. This April weather makes me hungry. I didn't have much dinner, either—only some beef and potatoes, and a pie and some plum-pudding, and a few tarts and cream-puffs in the study afterwards, and that toffee and the nuts. I really—"



POLLIE GREEN

IS IN

This Week's

"Girls' Friend."

PRICE ONE PENNY.

"You throw back your hand like that—"

"Are you coming to the—"

"Will you shut up? You throw back your hand—"

"I say, I rather feel with Fatty on this occasion," observed Marmaduke. "I am a bit peckish myself—"

"You throw back your hand like that—"

"Look out for my napper, fathead!"

"Get your silly napper out of the way, then. Then you grip the ball like that, and let it go overhand like that! My only hat!"

Figgins let the ball go, to illustrate the movement, and it crashed against the silk hat of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who came up at that moment. D'Arcy gave a yell.

"Ow! My hat! You bwute! My toppah!"

The topper was rolling over in the mud of the quadrangle, and there was a shout from a number of New House youths as they dashed towards it.

Perhaps their intention was to restore it to D'Arcy; perhaps it wasn't. At all events, that hat was soon not worth restoring to anybody. Pratt was the lucky one who caught it, and he caught it by making a desperate bound and coming down upon it with both feet. There was a crash as he landed on it, and he pinned it to the ground under his heavy boots.

"Got it!" yelled Pratt.

"You howwid wascal!" roared D'Arcy. "You have wuined my hat!"

"Ha, ha!"

"Give me my toppah immediately!"

Two or three New House juniors were scrambling for the hat. French and Jimson tore it out from under the feet of the successful Pratt. They seemed to disagree as to the ownership of the recovered hat, for they pulled at it in opposite directions, and French gained the brim, while Jimson remained in possession of the crown. D'Arcy gave a wail of anguish.

"My toppah! Give me my beastly toppah, you wottahs!"

Figgins grinned.

"Give him his toppah, kids!" he exclaimed.

"Certainly," said Jimson, tossing his portion of the ruined silk topper to the swell of the School House. "There you are, Gussy!"

"There you are!" said French, adding his fragment, which caught D'Arcy under the chin. "You'll need a little secotine, and that hat will be as good as new."

And the New House juniors marched off laughing, leaving Arthur Augustus D'Arcy surveying the ruins of his hat with feelings too deep for words.

"Bai Jove, what a set of wottahs!" murmured the swell of the School House. "Figgins, I wegard you as seveal sorts of a beast!"

"Ha, ha, ha! It was quite an accident, Gussy. I was showing Kerr how Kildare bowled Monteith at practice this afternoon, and how was I to know that you were going to bring a silk hat into the discussion?"

"You are a wank wottah!"

"I'm really sorry, Gussy. It's lucky that you are rolling in money, and the price of a new topper is nothing to you. As a matter of fact, you'll be glad of an excuse to buy a new one. And really that was getting a little out of date, Gussy."

"Do you weally think so, Figgins?" asked the elegant swell of the School House, with real anxiety.

"Yes, rather. Why, you must have had it a fortnight! Bury the remains, Gussy, and get a new one in the latest style. That's my advice."

"Are you coming to the tuckshop, Figgins?"

"Oh, all right, Fatty. You—"

"Wait a minute, deah boys! I want to speak to you. That's weally why I came ovah here. As a wule, I am wathah select, not to say awaggah, in my selection of persons whom I honah with my conversation, but I have instructions to speak to you New House boundahs!"

"My dear chap, the best thing you can do is to take a return ticket to Colney Hatch—"

"Before we wipe up the ground with you!" said Kerr.

"I wufuse!"

"Oh, do come along, Figgins! I'm simply starving!"

"Pway do not huwvy away, deah boys! I have a message for you from a lady."

"Oho!" said Figgins. "Which of your latest mashes is that? The young lady in the draper's at Rykcombe, or the maid at the Golden Pig?"

"Pway don't be fwivolous, Figgins!"

"It's you who are fwivolous, young Don Giovanni, always."

"Pway don't wot! I have had a lettah fwom my Cousin Ethel."

Figgins & Co. became attentive at once, especially Figgins.

"Oh, that alters the case," said Figgins. "Any news? Does Cousin Ethel ask after me?"

D'Arcy sniffed.

"Why on earth should she ask aftah you, Figgins?" he said.

The New House leader turned a trifle red.

"Oh, I don't know. She might."

"I assure you, deah boy, that Cousin Ethel does not wemembah ewevy boundah she has met at this coll.," said Arthur Augustus.

"Oh, get on with the washing!" said Figgins. "What do you come telling us about the letter for, if there's nothing about us in it?"

"But there is something about you in it."

"Oh, is there?" said Figgins, with reviving interest. "Well, what is it? Spout it out! Get it off your padded chest, and don't be so beastly long-winded about it!"

"I wufuse to be chawactewised as long-winded!"

"Oh, come to the point!"

"It is extremely difficult for me to come to the point, when you keep on intewwupin' me," said D'Arcy. "Howevah, I will endeavah to do so. Cousin Ethel is comin' down to the coll.—"

"Hurrah!" shouted Figgins.

"Hurrah!" echoed the Co., waving their caps.

D'Arcy screwed his monocle into his eye and surveyed them with extreme disdain.

"I weally do not see any weason for this absurd demonstration," he said. "You will pwobably see vewy little of my cousin, as she will, of course, be with me most of the time. I simply want to give you Cousin Ethel's message, and I beg you to westwain yourselves, and act like Chwistians for a short time. Cousin Ethel wants us all to help her—"

"Help her in what?"

"I weally do not know, as I have explained already to Blake and Tom Mewwy. There is somethin' on, and we are to help her; but, of course, you New House boundahs can stand out of it if you like; in fact, it would pwobably be wathah bettah if you did—"

D'Arcy was interrupted. Figgins seized him by the shoulders, and ran him forcefully against the wall of the New House. The School House swell wriggled in the grip of the muscular Figgins.

"Pway welease me, Figgins!"

"What's all that rot?" demanded Figgins sternly.

"What's that about us standing out of it? Do you want us to frogs-march you up and down the quad?"

"I wufuse to be fwogs-marched up and down the beastly quad!"

"Mind, anything that Cousin Ethel wants done will be done, and it's as much our business as it is yours. Understand that?"

"Yaas, wathah! But weally you are wumplin' my collah!"

"Any question of anybody standing out of it—"

"You are soillin' my jacket against this beastly and extremely dirty wall!"

"Well, don't be a young ass!"

"I wufuse to be called an ass! I would not speak to you wotten boundahs at all, only I have to tell you Cousin Ethel's message!" said D'Arcy, wriggling out of Figgins's grip. "You are a wuff wottah, Figgins, and appeal to have not the slightest respect for a fellow's clothes. I have told you what is wanted."

"No, you haven't. You've only told us that there is something wanted."

"That is all I can tell you at pwsent. Cousin Ethel will tell you the west when she awwives. I must buzz off now."

"When is she coming?"

"By the half-past thwee twain at Wylcombe."

"Good! I suppose you're making up a party to go down to the station and meet her?" said Figgins, with a sparkle in his eyes.

Arthur Augustus shook his head.

"I am doin' nothin' of the sort, Figgins."

"But someone must—"

"I am goin' down to the beastly station to meet my cousin. I am goin' alone. Cousin Ethel asked me to come."

"Didn't she mention me?"

"No, she didn't mention you, or any other wottah!"

And D'Arcy turned to walk away towards the School House. Figgins gave him a friendly tap on the shoulder.

"I say, don't be in a hurry, old chap! I—I'm awfully sorry about that happening to your hat—I am, really."

"Oh, that's all wight, Figgins. Your apology is accepted."

"All right. Don't be in a hurry, though. I—"

"I'm awfraid I must buzz off, Figgins, or I shall be late for the twain."

"Why, there's heaps of time yet."

"Oh, I don't know. I have to change my clothes, you know. And—and I weally think I ought to have a shave," said D'Arcy, running his finger over his chin, which was as smooth as the surface of a marble or a billiard-ball.

The Co. nearly exploded, but Figgins remained as grave as a judge. Figgins could dissimulate sometimes.

"Yes, you are looking a bit rough about the chin, Gussy," said Figgins solemnly; "but, as I was saying, of course if you'd like me to come down with you to the station, I'd be pleased."

"We'd all be pleased!" said Kerr.

"Exactly!" said Marmaduke.

"That's right!" chimed in Fatty Wynn. "There would be plenty of time to call in at the tuckshop as we passed."

"Well, we don't want a crowd," said Figgins, with a shake of the head. "I think Gussy is quite right not to take a crowd, under the circumstances."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"But just one person—that's entirely different, of course. You'd like me to come along, Gussy."

"No, Figgins, I weally shouldn't like anythin' of the sort."

A dangerous gleam came into Figgins's eyes, but he remained calm and polite. His tone took on quite a wheedling expression.

"You see, Gussy, Cousin Ethel would take it as a bit of politeness for a New House fellow to come as well."

"I weally don't suppose that Cousin Ethel wemembahs that there is a New House at St. Jim's," said D'Arcy loftily.

Even Figgins nearly lost patience at this remark, but he managed to control himself. The wrathful Co. looked daggers at the swell of the School House.

"Now, Gussy, be a good chap!"

"I have before remarked, Figgins, that I have made up my mind to go alone, which I considah bettah, undah the circs. I have already wefused the Tewwible Thwee, to say nothing of my own chums in Study No. 6. If I were goin' to take anybody, I should take Blake. But I'm not. I'm goin' alone."

"You young rotter!" roared Figgins. "You—you—"

"Pway don't use those oppwobwious expressions, Figgins. I have no time to thwash you now," said D'Arcy, with great dignity.

"But, I say, Gussy, old chap—"

But Gussy old chap was already walking off towards the School House. Figgins & Co. looked at one another with expressive glances.

"Let's go after him and snatch him bald-headed," said Marmaduke.

"Good," said Kerr. "It would do him good to drag him round a bit in the mud, and give him a ducking in the fountain to clean him afterwards."

"Don't," said Figgins. "No time for that."

"I should think not," said Fatty Wynn. "I'm simply famishing, and you fellows must be hungry, too. Do come along to the tuckshop!"

"You horrid cormorant!" said Figgins. "Shut up a minute! No time for feeding now. That image won't take us along to the station to meet Cousin Ethel."

"The young rotter!"

"He's got the whip-hand this time, and he means to use it. It would look too bad for us to shove ourselves in before Cousin Ethel without being asked. But—"

"Couldn't we knock the young pig on the head, and go instead?"

"Yes, we might; but it wouldn't be easy to get at him in the School House, and, besides—"

Figgins paused, with a thoughtful shade on his brow.

"Besides what?" asked Kerr.

"Why, he's refused Blake and Tom Merry, just the same as he has us, and I shouldn't wonder if that wheeze has occurred to them."

"Shouldn't wonder."

"In that case, they'll all be hanging round the station to meet Cousin Ethel, and it might end in nothing better than a House row. We don't want anything of that sort before Cousin Ethel."

"By Jove, no!"

"I've got a really good, ripping idea—a first-rate, double-action, non-skidding idea!" said Figgins, emphatically. "You know the train from Huckleberry Heath changes at Wayland for the local train to Rylcombe. Cousin Ethel will have to change at Wayland, like everybody who comes by railway to this place. Now, if four fellows about our size were waiting for her on the platform at Wayland—"

"My hat!"

"With a trap outside to bring her on to the school without her coming by the local train to Rylcombe at all—"

"Hurrah!"

"Then," said Figgins, with a grin of satisfaction, "who-

ever happens to be waiting to meet her at Rylcombe, can go on waiting. He won't see anything of Cousin Ethel."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Whether it's Gussy, or Blake, or Tom Merry, or anybody else, or the lot together, they can wait for the empty train—empty so far as Cousin Ethel's concerned, I mean."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I should think it would be easy to persuade Miss Ethel to come from Wayland by trap instead of by train," said Figgins, with a grin. "It's a ripping afternoon, and the lanes are getting quite green and jolly. I can drive first-rate."

"You'd better let me drive, Figgins."

"Oh, don't be an ass, Kerr, old chap. I should consider myself responsible if there were any accidents. We don't want to damage a lady—"

"No; that's why I don't think you ought to drive."

"We'd better go to the tuckshop and have a bit of a feed first," said Fatty Wynn. "We shall get awfully hungry going all the way over to Wayland. Better have something in the trap, too, in case Cousin Ethel is hungry."

"Trust Fatty Wynn not to overlook a point like that," grinned Marmaduke.

"It's a most important point," said Fatty Wynn. "What I say is—"

"It's a go," said Kerr. "Let's get ready; and unless I'm much mistaken, we shall succeed in pulling the leg of those School House bounders this time. We can get the trap in Rylcombe and drive-over to Wayland in plenty of time. Come on."

And the four New House juniors, chuckling gleefully, went into their house to prepare for the trip. It really looked as if the astute Figgins would succeed this time in scoring a victory against the juniors of the School House.

CHAPTER 4.

Arthur Augustus is Left Behind.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS was used to attracting a certain amount of attention in the School House, but now he was both surprised and gratified by the unusual interest his chums took in his proceedings. Blake and his comrades seemed really unable to let him out of their sight; and the interest displayed by the Terrible Three was quite as keen. Arthur Augustus had changed his clothes, but that was merely a preliminary in his preparations for the expedition. His hair had to be carefully brushed and parted, and this was no light task. The waistcoat he was to wear had to be selected with great care from a dozen others, and advice taken upon the point from his chums. Blake and the rest were grave as judges when he appealed to them for their judgment.

They had followed him upstairs to watch him change, then they had followed him back to the study. He was bound to finish up there, because there was a large glass in the study, in which Gussy could view his elegant figure full length. Needless to say, such glasses were not provided by the school for the use of the juniors, and D'Arcy had himself stooed the expense of having it affixed there. Owing to exigencies of space, it was fastened upright to the wall. Twice during the diablo craze at St. Jim's, D'Arcy had been put to the expense of new glass for his mirror; but that was a mere trifle to the best-dressed fellow in the college. A fellow must expect to have to make sacrifices for his ideals.

D'Arcy turned over the fancy waistcoats with a thoughtful brow that befitted so serious a subject. Blake, Herries, Digby, and the chums of the Shell gathered round him with faces like owls.

"What do you think of that, deah boys?" asked D'Arcy, taking out a waistcoat that was certainly startling enough in pattern, whatever else might be said for it.

Tom Merry cocked his eye at it thoughtfully.

"Is that a waistcoat, Gussy?" he asked.

D'Arcy gave him a withering look.

"Yaas, wathah! Of course it is a waistcoat, Tom Mewwy! I wogard that question as fwivolous and wudiculous."

"Well, I thought perhaps it was a Red Indian's war-blanket, or something of that sort," said the hero of the Shell apologetically. "I judged by the colouring, you see. But if it is a waistcoat, I should certainly wear it."

"Rather!" said Blake heartily. "You cannot fail to make a sensation in a waistcoat like that, Gussy."

"Weally, Blake, my object on the pwesent occasion is not to make a sensation," said D'Arcy; "so long as I am extremely well-dressed, I shall be satisfied."

"Good! Then what do you say to this green-and-yellow one? There's something that I should call really artistic about that."

"I'm rather inclined to favour the crimson one with green spots," said Lowther thoughtfully. "Crimson suits Gussy's



"Got it!" yelled Pratt, as he landed on the hat. "You howwid wascal!" roared D'Arcy. "You have wuined my toppah!"

complexion, you know, and the green matches his intellect."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"What price this pink one with the coloured stripes?" said Digby.

"That was a guinea, deah boy," said D'Arcy, misunderstanding.

"Ha, ha! I mean, how would it do? It suits the shape of your nose."

"Weally, Digby—"

"Or here's the pale green one with the worked roses in crimson," said Manners. "That is something really novel in waistcoats."

"Yaas, wathah! I think upon the whole I shall select that one. Pway help me on with it, Hewwies."

"Certainly!" grinned Herries.

"Don't wumple it, deah boy. You are so wuff. Dear me, you are puttin' it on inside out, and my arm has gone through the w'ong place. You are so clumsy, Hewwies. Pewwaps I had bettah do it without assistance."

The waistcoat was donned. D'Arcy's choice in jackets was limited to three, so the selection did not take so long. Then he donned a light spring overcoat, and took a silk hat from the box.

"That will want brushing very carefully," said Blake, with a wink at his chums, who moved carelessly towards the door. "Don't neglect a point like that, Gussy."

"I don't intend to, Blake. Where is that beastly pad got to?"

"Brush it with your sleeve."

D'Arcy sniffed.

"That way of bwushin' a silk hat may suit you, Blake, but it does not suit me. Where is that beastly pad?"

"Oh, it must be somewhere."

"I was already aware of that, deah boy; but the mystery is where?"

"You'll be late, Gussy, if you stop looking for a pad."

"My deah chap, I couldn't go and meet Cousin Ethel in an unbwashed hat." D'Arcy looked at his big gold watch. "It is still five minutes to three, so I have plenty of time to meet the twain. I can, if necessawy give Taggles five shillin's to dwive me down in the twap—in fact, I think I shall do so in any case, as the woad will pwobably be wathah dusty, and I do not wish to wisk it."

"Well, good luck," said Blake, going to the door.

D'Arcy was looking for his hat pad. The juniors crowded out of the study. Blake was the last to go. He glanced back at the door.

"Why, there it is, Gussy, lying on the chair!"

"Bai Jove, so it is! One of you wottahs must have—"

"Ha, ha! Good-bye!"

"Don't wun away, deah boys! You can all walk down to the gates with me, if you like," said D'Arcy graciously. "I am weally sowdy that I cannot take you to the station with me, but I shall be quite gwatified by your company as far as the gate."

"Thank you, Gussy; but it's not good enough."

"Oh, wewy well, please yourselves, d.ah boys!"

Arthur Augustus was carefully brushing his silk hat. Blake closed the door, and if there was a faint click as it was locked on the outside, the swell of the School House was too busily engaged to notice it.

Blake chuckled as he joined his chums in the passage.

"Ready?" he asked.

"What-ho!" said Tom Merry, grinning. "All safe?"

"All sereno! The only thing that worries me is that I sha'n't see Gussy's face when he discovers that he can't get out of the study. But one can't have everything. Let's get our hats, and get along. No time to waste now."

"Right you are!"

Arthur Augustus, in sublime unconsciousness of the nefarious plot against him, went on brushing his hat till it shone again. Then he donned it, and took a survey of himself in the full-length glass.

NEXT
THURSDAY:

TOM MERRY AND ALAN WAYWARD.

The reflection there seemed to be very gratifying to look at, for the swell of the School House smiled with complete satisfaction.

D'Arcy did, indeed, look a picture. He had a really elegant figure, and his clothes were well-cut, and worn with much grace. The crease in his trousers was only equalled by the set of his coat, and the brightness of his hat outshone everything but the aggressive polish of his boots. From crown to toe D'Arcy looked perfect, his own particular line.

"Bai Jove," murmured Arthur Augustus, "without bein' conceited, I weally do think I look wathah wippin', you know. Cousin Ethel can't fail to notice the difference between a chap like me and a big, ill-dressed, careless wottah like Figgins. Yaas, wathah!"

And Arthur Augustus crossed to the door, and turned the handle. The door refused to open, and D'Arcy pulled at it very hard.

"Bai Jove, the beastly door's jammed! I haven't any time to waste, eithah. I say, out there! Blake! Tom Mewwy! Are you there?"

Only the echoes of his own voice answered him. He tugged at the door again, quite rumpling his lavender kid glove, but it did not budge. A horrid suspicion darted into the mind of the School House swell.

"Bai Jove! The howwid wottahs have locked me in!"

D'Arcy staggered back at the idea. It was stunning. There was only time for a sharp walk down to Rylcombe before Cousin Ethel's train came in, and here he was locked up in the study, unable to get out.

"Bai Jove! The wottahs! This is because I wouldn't take the wotten outsiders down to Wylcombe with me!" muttered Arthur Augustus. "I am absolutely disgusted with them, and if they do not immediately let me out I shall no longah wegard them as fwiends."

He thumped at the door frantically.

"Blake! Hewwies! Tom Mewwy! Let me out!"

No reply. In the hope that others, besides the chums, might hear him and come to the rescue, D'Arcy shouted at the top of his voice. But the hope was vain.

On a half-holiday the School House was naturally deserted, and the fine April weather had attracted everyone out of doors. The School House fellows were mostly out on the cricket-field, getting in a little early practice at the great summer game. There was no one to come to the rescue of the School House swell.

D'Arcy remembered that to go down to the gates the chums would have to pass in sight of the study window. He ran to the window and threw it up. He was just in time to see six youthful forms move under the elms.

"Blake! Hewwies! Digby! Tom Mewwy! You howwid wottahs!"

Blake glanced up to the window.

"Hallo, Gussy!"

"Blake, I insist—"

"Hallo! Anything the matter?"

"The mattah? You wottah! You know vevy well that—"

"You'll be late, Gussy," said Tom Merry. "You're cutting it rather fine, anyway. It's gone three."

"You—you—I can't get out of the beastly study!"

"Great Scott! Why can't you?"

"The beastly door is locked on the outside!"

"Too bad—absolutely too bad! Then you won't be able to go down to the station to meet Cousin Ethel," said Tom Merry gravely.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"But never mind," said the hero of the Shell encouragingly. "It's a pity you can't go, but we're not the fellows to neglect politeness to a lady. We'll go."

"Rather!" said Blake. "You needn't worry yourself on that score, Gussy. Cousin Ethel shall be met at the station all right."

"You howwid wottahs—"

"Now, that's what I call ungrateful," said Tom Merry.

"I look on this as returning good for evil. You wouldn't take us with you, and now we're offering to go for you because you're unfortunately prevented from coming—"

"I insist upon your immediately unlockin' that beastly door!"

Tom Merry looked at his watch.

"Sorry, Gussy, but I'm afraid there's no time," he said. "We shall have to cut off to get to the station in time. It would never do for Cousin Ethel to arrive and find nobody there to meet her. I put it to you."

"Unlock that—"

"Good-bye, Gussy!"

"Stop! Don't go! You wottahs—I mean, deah boys, open that door, and—and I'll take you all along with me to meet Cousin Ethel! I will weally! Yaas, wathah! Tom Mewwy! Bai Jove, they're gone! Blake! Blake! The

wottah won't answer! I shall wefuse to speak to the wottahs again. I despise them all feabfully! Bai Jove, they're weally gone!"

It was a fact; they were really gone. Tom Merry and Blake and their followers were marching out of the gates while Arthur Augustus was still calling, and in high good-humour they took the road to Rylcombe, to meet Cousin Ethel. But, meanwhile, what were Figgins & Co. doing?

CHAPTER 5.

Cousin Ethel.

"WAYLAND!" said Figgins, pointing with his whip. The sleepy little country town was in sight; sleepy enough now, though lively as a rule on market days. The trap, containing the New House quartette, was bowling along the green lane, the ribbons in the hands of the great Figgins.

Figgins & Co. had carried out their plan, so far, without a hitch of any kind. The New House chums were fortunately in funds, so there was no difficulty in that quarter. They had hired Mr. Grimes's roomy trap in Rylcombe, and Figgins had taken care that a decent pony was put between the shafts. Then he had driven over to the market town with the gleeful Co., in ample time to get to Wayland Junction to meet the train from Huckleberry Heath.

The drive was very pleasant through the country lanes in the bright, sunny April weather. Figgins, in spite of the doubts Kerr had expressed, handled the pony easily and well, and there were no mishaps. Wayland came in sight, and Figgins drove into the country town in great style, and brought the trap to a halt outside the station.

Figgins & Co. alighted. The station clock indicated ten minutes to three, and, as Figgins knew, the Huckleberry Heath train did not come in till close on three o'clock, when the local for Rylcombe was waiting ready for it. Figgins grinned, as he patted the sleek pony.

"Good time, kids!" he exclaimed. "Everything in the garden is simply lovely. We'll get on to the platform, of course, or Cousin Ethel may change trains without our knowing it. We've got to keep an eye open. Of course, if we were to lose her now, those School House rotters would have the grin of us!"

"We sha'n't lose her," said Kerr determinedly.

"Not much! You can stay and mind the pony, Kerr, in case of accidents."

"I think I really ought to come on to the platform, Figgins," said Kerr, in a very expressive tone.

"Now, don't be an ass, old fellow!" said Figgins, in a tone of mild remonstrance. "We don't want to find that the critter has bolted when we come out, do we?"

"Well, Fatty Wynn can look after the pony."

"I can't!" said the Welsh partner in the Co. promptly. "The refreshment-rooms are on the platform at this station, and there's just comfy time for me to get something to eat before the train comes in. I'm fearfully hungry. It's driving in the open air, I suppose."

"Perhaps Marmaduke—"

"Rats!" said Marmaduke promptly.

"Now, look here, Marmy—"

"I'm coming on the platform, Figgy."

"Oh, rats!" said Figgins, looking annoyed. "Somebody must look after the beastly trap! I suppose I had better give this cabby-man a tanner to do it. It's a waste."

"Why not look after the pony yourself, Figgy?"

"Eh?"

"We three can go on the platform and wait for Cousin Ethel," said Kerr. "We know her as well as you do. I don't suppose she particularly wants to see you, either, Figgy."

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CHAPTER 6.

Figgins & Co. Carry Off the Prize.

"Are you looking for a thick ear, Kerr?"
 "No, but—"
 "Well, you'll get one jolly sharp if you talk that rot," said Figgins. "Of course, I must go on the platform. I'll get the cabby to keep an eye on this restive charger. You'll see this beast doesn't bolt, won't you, cabby?"
 "Yes, sir," said the ancient Wayland cabman, touching his hat.
 "Good! I'll make it a tanner. Now do come into the station, kids, and stop arguing."
 "It was you who were arguing, Figgins."
 "Oh, give us a rest! I say, chappy, we want to go on the platform to meet the train from Huckleberry Heath."
 "Can't!" said the porter at the gate grumpily. "I know you young imps. You're not a-goin' on the platform if I know it."

"My dear chap—"
 "Be huff with you!"
 The Co. looked at their leader. At Rylcombe there was no difficulty in getting on the platform to meet a train, but here it was evidently different. Figgins showed a silver sixpence between finger and thumb.
 "Now, be a good chap—"
 "Be huff with you!"
 "This tanner—"
 "Get hout!" said the man, evidently not to be influenced by the voice of the charmer.
 "Look here, you pig," said Figgins, "we're going on that platform! It's important."
 "You're not! I know you himps! Get hout!"
 "Wait a minute, kids," said Figgins; "I'll fix it."
 He ran to the booking-office, and clumped down four pennies. In a few moments he was in possession of four single tickets for the next station down the line. With these in his possession he marched back, and distributed them one each to the Co. The ticket official glared at the astute Figgins. They had tickets now, and he could not refuse them admission to the platform. He clipped the tickets surlily, and Figgins & Co. marched on, grinning triumphantly.

"More ways of killing a cat than choking it with cream," said Figgins sententiously. "We've saved twopenny, and avoided being guilty of bribing an official in the course of his duty, so we ought to be satisfied. Still five minutes. You can go and get that feed, Fatty Wynn."

"Right-ho, Figg!"
 "Buck up, and don't come back with jam all over your mouth, and crumbs all over your waistcoat for Cousin Ethel to see," said Figgins, in a tone of admonition.

"Oh, I say, Figg—"
 "Shut up, and buzz off!"
 Fatty Wynn buzzed off. The other three juniors walked up and down the platform, and waited for the train to come in. Figgins uttered an exclamation when a puff of smoke was seen far up the line.

"There she comes!"
 "Good!" said Kerr and Marmaduke together.
 "I—I say," said Figgins, showing traces of nervousness very unusual in him. "Is—is my necktie straight, Kerr?"

Kerr glanced at it.
 "No. It never is, Figg."
 "You might just put it straight, will you, Kerr? There's a good chap!"

Kerr gave the necktie a jerk.
 "Hang it all, Kerr, you might be a little more careful with a chap's necktie!" said Figgins. "I'll bet it's just as much out of the straight now, on the other side."
 "H'm! So it is."

Kerr gave the necktie another jerk. It pulled right out, and the end came loose in Kerr's hand. Figgins gave a grunt.

"You clumsy ass!"
 "Sorry, Figg; I couldn't help it! I say, I forgot to change my collar before I came out. Is this one very soiled?" asked Kerr anxiously.

"Look at my necktie—"
 "Look at my collar—"
 "If you—"
 "Can't you—"
 "Hallo! Here's the train!" said Marmaduke, as the train rushed into the station with a buzz and a clatter. "And here comes Fatty Wynn—jammy as usual."

Fatty Wynn had seen the train come in, from the window of the refreshment saloon, and he had bolted his last jam-tart and darted out on the platform. There was jam on his hands and jam on his mouth, and jam on his right cheek. Fatty Wynn in his excitement was quite unconscious of it.

Figgins was making desperate attempts to get his necktie tied again. But the loose ends were still in his hands when the train stopped. A charming face looked out of a window, and two bright blue eyes lighted upon the juniors at once.

It was Cousin Ethel!

COUSIN ETHEL!"

Cousin Ethel smiled.

Whether it was pleasure at the unexpected sight of the juniors on the Wayland platform, or the sight of Figgins's public performance with the troublesome necktie, or the jam on the plump countenance of Fatty Wynn—whatever it was, Cousin Ethel smiled sweetly. There was a rush of the juniors to open the carriage door.

Of course, Kerr got in Fatty Wynn's way, and Fatty Wynn got in Marmaduke's way, and the Co. looked daggers at one another. Figgins opened the carriage door and assisted Cousin Ethel to alight, cap in hand. The ends of his necktie hung over his waistcoat, for the moment forgotten by the blushing Figgins.

For the great Figgins was blushing!

"Cousin Ethel!"
 "Figgins! What a surprise to see you here!"
 "Yes, rather!" said Figgins. "Quite an accident, you know—that is—of course—not exactly an accident, but—"

"You didn't know I was coming to the school?"
 "Oh, yes; Gussy told us, you know!"
 "I see. And you happened to be in Wayland, so—"
 "Well, no, we—we happened to drive over in a trap," explained Figgins.

Cousin Ethel smiled.
 "You see," said Figgins, growing more courageous—"you see, Miss Cleveland, it's such a really ripping day, that—that we thought you'd have had quite enough of train travelling by the time you got to this station, so—"

"So—," said Kerr.
 "You see—," said Marmaduke.
 "This is how it is," said Fatty Wynn. "We—"

"Exactly!" said Figgins.
 The girl looked from one to the other with a lurking smile in her eyes.

"I don't think I quite understand yet," she said. "I suppose I am very stupid."

"Exactly," stammered Figgins. "I mean—not at all. You see—"

"You see," said Kerr, "we—"
 "Shut up a minute, Kerr, old chap—"

"I'm explaining to Cousin Ethel—"
 "Yes, but—"
 "You see—," said Fatty Wynn.

Wynn broke off suddenly. Marmaduke was passing his hand over his mouth with mysterious gestures to indicate that Fatty Wynn's face was jammy, as a hint to get it cleaned before Cousin Ethel noticed it. Fatty Wynn hadn't the faintest idea what Marmaduke's gestures and significant looks implied.

"I say, are you ill, Marmy?" he asked anxiously.
 Cousin Ethel's eyes turned upon Marmaduke, and he dropped his hand suddenly from his mouth and turned red.

"No, you ass!" he muttered savagely.
 The girl looked at her little watch.

"I shall have to hurry to get the Rylcombe train," she said.

"That's just it!" said Figgins eagerly. "We thought you would have had quite enough of railway travelling by the time you got to Wayland—"

Cousin Ethel laughed.
 "Well, so I have, Figgins, as a matter of fact; but I suppose it is not possible to walk to St. Jim's, is it?"

"Not a bit of it; but it's possible to drive."
 "To drive?" said Cousin Ethel inquiringly.

"Yes, that's the wheeze—I mean the idea," said Figgins.
 "We've brought a trap over to Wayland on purpose to drive you to the school, Cousin Ethel."

The girl's eyes danced.
 "Have you really? How very kind of you, Figgins!"

Figgins turned positively crimson with pleasure.
 "It will be kind of you, Miss Cleveland, if you come in the trap," he said. "It's jolly driving along the country lanes. It's so—so fresh and sweet in the spring, you know; all Nature putting on her—her—her—" Figgins paused.

He had read a spring poem lately, and the imagery was still in his mind, but it had grown a little confused.

"I shall be glad to come, but—"
 "Oh, you can't say no, Miss Ethel! It's so much better than a stuffy train; and, besides, you know what a lot of accidents happen to the local trains!"

"Do they?"
 "Fearful!" said Figgins. "They—they rush along so recklessly, you know!"

"About a mile an hour," murmured Kerr.
 "There was a man killed on the Rylcombe line once," said Figgins vaguely; "a platelayer, or something. It happened a few years before I came to St. Jim's, I think."

You see, the line isn't really safe. But it's ripping bowling along in a trap through the lanes, when Nature has put on her—her—her—?”

“I should be glad, only—”

“I'll let you drive, if you like,” said Figgins, in a burst of devotion.

Cousin Ethel smiled. She knew what this meant to Figgins & Co., little as it sounded. For four boys to sit quietly in a trap and let a girl drive them, argued an extent of self-sacrifice seldom met with—a devotion not expressible in words!

“Yes, Figgins, but—”

“So you will come?”

“I am thinking of my cousin. I asked him to meet the train at Rylcombe, you see, and he would be so disappointed! It would be really rude—”

“Oh, Gussy!” said Figgins, in a tone that implied that until that moment he had completely forgotten the existence of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy; as, indeed, he had.

“My Cousin Arthur,” said Ethel. “I could not—”

“Oh, that's all right!” said the quick-witted Kerr. “It's extremely probable that Gussy won't be at the station at all, Cousin Ethel!”

“I hope he is not ill?”

“Oh, no! But I believe he will be prevented from meeting the train. You see—”

“Exactly,” said Figgins. “It's rather hard to explain, but we have the best of reasons to suppose that he won't be able to meet the train.”

The girl looked from one to the other.

“Why?” she asked quietly.

“Well, you see—” began Kerr.

“It's like this,” said Figgins. “Gussy refused to take anybody with him to meet the train—thought he could manage it better on his own—”

“And so it's very likely something may happen to prevent him from getting out of the School House in time—”

“The others may come in his place—”

“But, of course, they don't matter—”

“They can go and eat coke! I really fancy that Gussy won't get away in time to meet the train, Cousin Ethel!”

“There would be nobody at Rylcombe to meet you, in that case!”

“Of course, I could come in the train with you, while these chaps take the trap back to Rylcombe,” Figgins remarked thoughtfully.

“You mean I could go in the train, while you—”

“Now, don't talk piffle, Kerr!”

“Then don't you!”

“Really,” said Cousin Ethel, “I think I ought—”

There was a shriek of a train whistle. The girl started, and the juniors grinned with delight. A train at the opposite platform snorted and began to move.

“Is that—?”

“I'm sorry,” said the hypocritical Figgins, assuming an extremely solemn expression—“I'm really sorry! That's the Rylcombe train.”

“My train?”

“Yes; I'm afraid you've lost it!”

Cousin Ethel looked very grave.

“All my fault,” said Figgins penitently; “keeping you here talking, instead of taking you to your train. Luckily, there's the trap!”

“When is the next train; do you know?”

“They go every hour.”

“Dear me!” said Cousin Ethel.

“It would be as quick to go in the trap,” said Figgins.

“I'm so sorry we let the train go, like a lot of idiots—us, the idiots, of course!” he added hastily. “It was really Kerr's fault—”

“Well, I like that!” said Kerr. “You—”

“Oh, don't argue, Kerr! That's the worst of you Scotch chaps; you're always arguing! I suppose there's nothing for it but the trap, Miss Cleveland?”

“You feel sure my cousin—”

“I feel pretty certain he's still at St. Jim's,” said Figgins. “They wouldn't let him get away after—I—I mean I'm sure that something has happened to detain him. You know how accidents do happen?”

“Yes; at St. Jim's!” said Cousin Ethel demurely. “I suppose there is nothing for it but the trap, as you say. It is really very kind of you all!”

“Oh, not at all!” said Figgins. “The kindness is on your side.”

“Very well put!” said Fatty Wynn. “The kindness is—”

“So if one of you would be kind enough to get my bag—”

There was a rush of the juniors to seize the little traveling-bag. Figgins and Kerr, of course, knocked their heads together in their haste, and Marmaduke picked up the bag. Figgins looked inclined for a moment to commit assault and

battery on the spot and possess himself of the bag by main force. But Marmaduke was evidently prepared to resist any attempt to despoil him—and two gentle blue eyes were upon them. Figgins gave Marmaduke a look which expressed volumes of what he would do when he met him again quietly in the study of the New House, and then turned towards Cousin Ethel with a sweet smile.

“This way, Cousin Ethel,” he said.

“The refreshment room's this way!” said Fatty Wynn. “I am sure Cousin Ethel must be hungry after a long journey—”

“I had a lunch-basket in the train,” said Cousin Ethel.

“I should like to get to St. Jim's as soon as possible.” They left the station. Figgins handed Cousin Ethel into the trap, and, in the fulness of his heart, gave the old cabby a shilling instead of sixpence for looking after the pony. Then the juniors swarmed in, and Figgins took the ribbons. Figgins's heart beat with pride as he toolled the trap out of Wayland, with the girl seated by his side.

“I—I say, would you like to drive?” said Figgins hesitatingly, when they were safe out upon a quiet country road with few observers in sight.

The girl smiled.

“Oh, no, thank you; I'd rather you drove, Figgins!”

Figgins thought to himself that Cousin Ethel was a jolly sensible girl. That drive through the pleasant lanes to St. Jim's was the happiest time Figgins remembered in his life. Cousin Ethel seemed to enjoy it, too!

CHAPTER 7.

Done!

“TRAIN'S not in yet!” said Tom Merry. Six juniors of St. Jim's had arrived at Rylcombe Station. The station clock indicated twenty-seven minutes past three, so that the juniors had cut it pretty fine. But so long as they were in time, what did that matter?”

“Three minutes to wait!” said Blake, with a look of satisfaction. “I think I'll borrow a brush in the waiting-room and get some of this dust off. I never noticed Rylcombe Lane to be so dusty before!”

“It's the April breezes, I suppose,” Lowther remarked. “I'll be after you with that brush, Blake!”

“I say; I wish I'd thought of putting on a topper, instead of this beastly cricket-cap!” observed Digby. “Do you think Cousin Ethel will notice it, Lowther?”

“Oh, I don't suppose she'll notice you at all, old chap,” was Lowther's comforting assurance. “Your cap doesn't matter.”

“Look here, Lowther—”

“Silk toppers would have looked better,” said Manners, who was rejoicing in his thoughtfulness at having donned his Sunday “tile” before leaving the School House. “I think mine looks all right. But so long as there's one respectable-looking chap in the party to step forward and meet Cousin Ethel as she gets out of the train, it's all right.”

Some rather unpleasant looks were cast upon Manners as he made this remark. The others did not appear to see the matter in the same light.

“To my mind,” Lowther observed thoughtfully, “it looks rather vulgar to be wearing a topper on all possible occasions, especially on an April afternoon.”

“Just what I was thinking,” said Digby. “And it's so conspicuous, too,” Herries remarked. “The only fellow in a party to wear a topper naturally looks conspicuous. Now, a gentleman never looks conspicuous.”

“That's just it!” chimed in Blake, looking up from brushing his trousers. “Manners certainly looks conspicuous; and besides, that topper of his has seen its best days.”

“A jolly long time ago, too, I think,” said Digby, with a critical and decidedly disparaging glance at Manners's silk hat.

Manners turned red. “Oh, shut it!” he exclaimed. “You know jolly well you'd all be glad to have my topper, anyway, whether it looks conspicuous or not.”

“My dear chap, I wouldn't be found dead in it,” said Blake. “I really consider that it would be better for Manners to remain in the background.”

“Catch me!”

“Well, or else you ought to leave your topper somewhere, Manners. Cousin Ethel will only suppose that you have joined the hatless brigade, and—”

“That's better than looking conspicuous.”

“That topper is rather a sheeny cut, too.”

“Rather out of date, I think. Those flat brims—”

“Oh, chuck it!” growled Manners. “I'm going on the platform.”

“We're speaking for your good. We think—”

“Now, look here, Manners, old fellow—”

"Shut it!"

"We're speaking for your good. We think——"

But Manners marched off. The juniors followed, laughing, Blake having restored the dust-brush. Half-past three chimed out from Rylcombe church, but the train was not yet in sight. The local was usually late.

"I suppose I'd better open the carriage door for Cousin Ethel?" Tom Merry remarked. "You fellows can stand behind, and——"

Blake gave him an expressive look.

"I suppose you'd better do nothing of the sort, Tom Merry," he said. "As you are practically a new boy at St. Jim's——"

"New boy! Whom are you calling a new boy?" demanded Tom Merry indignantly.

"Well, you haven't been at the school as long as I have, anyway. You ought naturally to take a back seat, and speak when you're spoken to. The cheek of you kids in the Shell is something astounding."

"I've noticed that," Digby remarked, with hearty concurrence.

"Look here, Blake——"

"Hallo, here's the train!" exclaimed Lowther.

In an instant all eyes were upon the train from Wayland. It came puffing and blowing into the station, and several doors opened as it stopped. There seemed to be an unusual number of passengers—eight or nine, at the least. The juniors ran along the train looking for Cousin Ethel.

But Cousin Ethel was not to be seen. The passengers all alighted, and the chums scrutinized them as they passed out, but Cousin Ethel was not among them. They ran along the train peering into every carriage, but the carriages were empty. The guard waved his flag, and the train moved on. With feelings too deep to be expressed in words, the juniors stood in a group upon the platform and watched the train steam away down the line.

"Well, my hat!" exclaimed Blake.

"My only Panama aunt!" said Tom Merry.

"Is it possible that Gussy was diddling us?" said Monty Lowther thoughtfully. "Can this be a jape of the great Gustavus? Was he pulling our noble leg all the time?"

Tom Merry shook his head.

"No, Monty; he meant to come to the station himself. It's all right, as far as Gussy is concerned."

"Then what can have happened?"

"Blessed if I know."

"An accident?"

"There hasn't been any accident," said Blake, with a shake of the head. "We should hear something of it, I suppose?"

"Cousin Ethel may have lost her train," Manners suggested. "Girls do sometimes, you know."

"Not girls like Cousin Ethel."

"Well, she hasn't come, has she?"

"May have missed the junction at Wayland," said Tom Merry thoughtfully. "Sometimes the local gets off rather quick there, you know. Anybody know when the next train from Wayland comes in?"

"Half-past four," said Blake. "The locals run every hour."

Tom Merry gave a whistle.

"Then it'll be an hour to wait for the next."

"Better wait," said Blake. "We've stopped Gussy from coming, and we can't let Cousin Ethel arrive with nobody to meet her. Of course, you fellows can buzz off if you like. I will wait."

"I was just going to suggest the same thing," said Tom Merry blandly. "I wouldn't mind waiting alone, if you fellows wanted to get back."

"Go hon!" said Blake sarcastically. "Your kindness is really overpowering, Tom Merry."

"Not at all. I——"

"Well, I'm going for a stroll round Rylcombe," said Blake. "We may be able to get up a row with some of the Grammar cads to pass the time."

"I'm not coming," said Tom Merry promptly. "I'm not going to meet Cousin Ethel with a black eye or a thick ear, thank you."

"By George, I forgot that!"

"Better stick here," said Lowther. "We can play leap-frog up and down the platform."

"What about the porter?"

"If he interferes we'll snatch him bald-headed, or tip him a tanner."

"Good! We can't waste the time doing nothing."

But even with the resource of leap-frog on the platform, the time passed very slowly, and hung heavily upon the hands of the St. Jim's juniors. A row with the Grammar School boys would have enlivened the long wait, but it would never do to meet Cousin Ethel with the signs of warfare upon their faces. About three-quarters of the hour had elapsed, when Tom Merry uttered a sudden exclamation.

"Gussy!"

"By Jove, here he is!" grinned Blake.

It was indeed Arthur Augustus, as large as life. He marched upon the platform, and screwed his monocle into his eye, and took a survey of the waiting juniors, and then turned haughtily away. It was evident that the swell of the School House was very much offended, and did not intend to speak to them. That did not really seem to trouble them much, however.

"I say, Gussy," exclaimed Blake, "sorry we hadn't time to let you out, you know. We came away in such a hurry."

"Pway do not address me, Blake."

"But how did you get out?"

"A fellow came into the School House for a cwicket-bat, and he heard my cwies and came to the wescue," said D'Arcy. "I had been a pwisonah in the study for a feahful long time then, you howwid wascals."

"Too bad! Accidents will happen——"

"I weward you as a wotah. It was a long time befoah Walsh could find a key to fit the study door, as you had taken the key fwom the lock."

"You know a chap is absent-minded at times."

"I wefuse to weward it as absent-mindedness. It was a wotten joke," said D'Arcy, with dignity. "I cannot any longer weward you as a fwien. But it appeahs that my Cousin Ethel has not awwid by that twain, aftah all."

"No," said Tom Merry. "We were in time, Gussy, but she wasn't in the train. Must have missed the junction at Wayland."

"Yaas, wathah! I am in time, aftah all. You boundahs will oblige me by wetirin' fwom the scene," said Arthur Augustus.

"Rats!"

"I wefuse to allow you to wemain with me."

"Oh, we'll explain to Cousin Ethel that we came because you were prevented, and, of course, in that case we should remain."

"I wefuse to allow——"

Blake looked up and down the platform.

"Is there a place handy where we can lock him up?" he asked thoughtfully. "There's plenty of time yet."

D'Arcy looked alarmed as the juniors closed round him.

"You howwid wuffians! Don't you dare——"

"Yes, I know a place," said Tom Merry. "Collar him!"

"Pway don't be such wuff bwutes! I don't mind your stayin' with me—in fact, I wathah pwefer it," said D'Arcy hastily. "Pway——"

"You want us to stay?"

"Ya-a-a-as, wathah!"

Tom Merry looked round at his chums.

"In that case, chaps, I think we ought to stay, just to oblige Gussy," he remarked.

And the juniors grinned assent.

"Here comes the train!" said Monty Lowther at last.

The train from Wayland came puffing in. Eagerly the juniors scanned it. The doors opened, and various passengers alighted, but still Cousin Ethel was not among them. The faces of the juniors were long and glum.

"What on earth can it mean?" muttered Tom Merry, in perplexity. "Cousin Ethel isn't the kind of girl to change her mind for nothing. Some accident must have happened, after all."

"Perhaps she's changed her mind about coming," suggested Blake. "In that case, she would wire to the school. I suppose she would wire to D'Arcy."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Did you inquire whether there was a telegram for you before you left the school, Gussy?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Certainly not! I had no reason to imagine that there might be a telegwam, and I was in a hurwy, too."

"That was very thoughtless of you," said Tom Merry, with a shake of the head. "You really ought to have thought of a little thing like that, Gussy."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"I suppose there's a wire at the school," said Blake. "It's no good expecting Gussy to think of anything. We'd better get back to St. Jim's. That's about the only thing to be done now. I really don't see what Tom Merry wanted to bring us all here for nothing for."

"Oh, I like that!" exclaimed Tom Merry indignantly. "I let you into the wheeze out of sheer good-nature."

"Yes, you're always making a muck of something out of sheer good-nature. Don't argue. It's bad enough to have wasted nearly all the afternoon for nothing without arguing about it afterwards," said Blake severely.

"But——"

"Oh, rats! Let's get back to St. Jim's. You won't find me following your silly lead again in a hurry, I can tell you."

The juniors left the station. There was evidently nothing for it but to get back to the school and see whether

any news had been received of Cousin Ethel. They could hear nothing of any accident on the line, so they could only conclude that Cousin Ethel had been detained for some unknown reason at Huckleberry Heath, and in that case, of course, there would be a wire at St. Jim's. They went along Rylcombe Lane with sombre faces. They had looked forward to Cousin Ethel's coming, and it was a keen disappointment.

They were near the school when a trap turned out of the Wayland Road into Rylcombe Lane, and dashed on towards St. Jim's.

Blake uttered a sharp exclamation, and broke into a run.

"Did you see who was in that trap?"

"Looked like Figgins driving," said Tom Merry. "I caught only a glimpse of him. What are you running like that for, Blake?"

Blake was looking excited. The trap had disappeared in a few seconds round a bend in the lane, and Blake was sprinting after it as if for a wager. The other juniors kept pace with him, though far from understanding the cause of the excitement.

"What's the trouble, Blake?"

Blake gasped.

"Didn't you see who was sitting beside Figgins?"

"Hadn't time. It looked like a girl."

"It was a girl!"

"Figgins & Co. are having an afternoon out in style," remarked Monty Lowther. "I wonder whom it was?"

"It was Cousin Ethel!"

"What!" shouted six voices.

"It was Cousin Ethel!"

"Impossible!"

"I tell you I saw her!"

The juniors were running in dead earnest now. There was blank amazement in every face, but Blake's conviction carried weight.

"Are you sure, Blake?" gasped Tom Merry.

"Of course I am! This is all a trick of Figgins & Co.

"They've done us!" gasped Blake wildly. "Oh, the rotters! The beasts!"

"But—but— My hat, I have it!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Figgins & Co. have been over to Wayland in that trap—"

"Yes; and while we've been waiting—"

"They have—"

"They've been driving in the trap, bringing Cousin Ethel to the school!"

"My hat!"

"Bai Jove, deah boys, I weally—"

"They've done us! Come on! We'll wipe up the ground with Figgins & Co. for this! The rotters! To think of us waiting there all that time, while they were driving— oh, it won't bear thinking of! Come on!"

The juniors ran hard. They came in sight of the trap again as it turned into the ancient gateway of St. Jim's. They dashed after it in a body, and arrived panting in the quadrangle. The trap had stopped before the Principal's House, and Figgins was assisting Cousin Ethel to alight. The girl passed into the house, and Figgins turned with a broad grin to greet the dusty, breathless juniors as they came panting up.

CHAPTER 8.

A Function that Didn't Come Off.

FIGGINS & CO. instinctively drew closer together, and pushed back their cuffs, as the School House boys ran up. Figgins expected trouble.

"Hallo, kids!" he said genially. "You look as if you had been running! Rather nice weather for a sprint, ain't it?"

"They don't seem to have enjoyed it, though," remarked Kerr. "Blake is looking quite annoyed, and Tom Merry seems excited."

"Oh, they've been running away from the Grammar cads, I expect," said Fatty Wynn.

"You rotters!" howled Blake.

"Eh? What's the matter now?"

"You—you—"

"Bai Jove, you know, I wegard you as a set of uttah wottahs! You have been and collahed my cousin at Wayland, while we were waitin' at the beastly station in Wylcombe! Is that what you call cwicket, Figgins?"

"I call it a jolly good jape," said Figgins, grinning. "Cousin Ethel happened to miss the Rylcombe train at Wayland—"

"Bai Jove!"

"You see, we kept her talking, and she didn't know it was going."

"You wottah!"

"But I had explained that you probably wouldn't be at the station to meet it—"

"As a mattah of fact, I was not; but these boundahs were there!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hear us smile!" said Kerr. "Ha, ha, ha!"

And Figgins & Co. smiled in a way that startled the rooks in the old trees. But the School House juniors did not feel like smiling.

Only one consideration deterred them from hurling themselves upon the New House quartette upon the spot. It was hardly possible to have a rough-and-tumble scramble on the steps of the Principal's House. The Head would come out—and, worse still, Cousin Ethel would see it all. It was impossible to allow Cousin Ethel to see them engaged in deadly warfare. Figgins & Co. realised their advantage, and they showed no disposition to leave the safe spot.

"You—you rotters!" said Tom Merry. "You've done us this time! I say, are you going to stand on those steps the rest of the afternoon, Figgins?"

"Yes; I rather like the spot," said Figgins blandly.

"It's nice and shady here," said Kerr.

"Come into the gym, you wasters!" exclaimed Blake. "Just you come into the gym. with me, and I'll wipe up the floor with you!"

"Not good enough," grinned Marmaduke. "Better take it calmly, kids. You've been absolutely and completely done, and you may as well own up."

Tom Merry burst into a laugh.

"Well, as a matter of fact, Figgy is quite right!" he exclaimed. "We've been done, and it's no good denying it. We can't have a row here, either. I'm off!"

"Here, Tom Merry—"

"Oh, rats! I'm off! Come on chappies!"

And Tom Merry walked away to the School House with Manners and Lowther. The chums of Study No. 6 bestowed a final glare upon Figgins & Co., but the New House chums showed no sign of coming off the steps.

"Oh, come on!" said Blake crossly. "We'll make those bounders sit up another time!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" howled Figgins & Co., as the juniors retreated. "Hear us smile! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Absolutely done!" said Blake, as they went into the School House. "We had all the trouble of shutting Gussy up in the study for nothing!"

"Yaas, and it weally serves you wight, Blake! I wegard it as a kind of judgment upon you for not playin' the game!"

"Oh, rats! It's all Gussy's fault! I don't see what he wanted to tell those New House bounders Cousin Ethel was coming at all for."

"But I had to give them Cousin Ethel's message."

"Oh, don't begin to argue again! Let's go and get some tea, for goodness' sake, or I shall get into a bad temper, I think."

"You weally look wathah as if you were in a bad temper already."

"Bosh!" said Blake, laughing a little. "It was exasperating, of course! But, never mind. I've thought of an idea that will take the shine out of Figgins & Co. a little."

"Get it off your chest, then," said Herries.

"Why shouldn't Cousin Ethel come to tea in the study?"

"Good wheeze!" exclaimed Herries and Digby instantly. And Arthur Augustus chimed in with a cordial "Yaas, wathah!"

"We're in funds just now," said Blake, with a look of satisfaction. "So is Tom Merry, as I happen to know. We'll go Co. with these bounders over it, as very likely the same idea has occurred to Merry, and we don't want any dispute over it. Cousin Ethel can't have two teas in one evening."

"Bai Jove, no! I'll go and ppropose it to Tom Mewwy, while you boundahs get in the things," said D'Arcy, turning towards the door of the study, in which the chums were now.

"I'll— Hallo, here are the boundahs!"

The Terrible Three had just arrived at the door of Study No. 6, and were looking in. Tom Merry came in, followed by Manners and Lowther.

"I was just comin' to speak to you, Tom Mewwy."

"Never mind. I'll speak to you instead," said Tom Merry cheerfully. "I've got rather a stunning idea, you chaps—"

"I was going to say, Tom Mewwy—"

"Ring off, Gussy, and give a fellow a chance to speak. I think we can take the shine out of Figgins & Co. a little, you kids, by—"

"I was goin'—"

"By getting Cousin Ethel to come to tea in the School House."

"Bai Jove, that's what I was goin' to—"

"Oh, I see! Had you fellows thought of it?"

"We were just talking it over," said Blake. "It's a really ripping idea, and we'll go Co. over it. That way we shall be able to stand a ripping feed, and save bother. We can't row while there's a girl about."

"Exactly. That's how we looked at it," said Tom Merry. "I suppose we'd better have the feed in our study?"

"Oh, yes!" said Manners and Lowther. "I don't see why you should suppose anything of the sort," said Blake unpleasantly. "Of course, Study No. 6 is the proper place!"

"Yaas, wathah!" "As heads of the juniors of the School House," said Digby, "our study naturally takes precedence. Even you Shell-fish have to admit that."

"Oh, rot!" began Lowther hotly. "You Fourth Form kids take altogether too much upon yourselves. I'd like to know—"

"If you can't talk common or garden sense, Lowther, you'd better dry up!"

"Yaas, wathah! It would be considewate of Lowthah to dwy up."

"Oh, don't begin rowing!" exclaimed Tom Merry pacifically.

"Who's beginning rowing?"

"I think the tea ought to be given in our study because—"

"Because you're a set of cheeky kids!"

"No," said Tom Merry; "because our study's bigger than this, and if there's to be seven of us and a lady visitor, it will be a bit of a squeeze."

Blake looked thoughtful. It hadn't struck him in that light.

"Well, there's something in that," he admitted. "The Shell studies are a bit bigger than the Fourth, I know. Blessed if I know why!"

"And ours is the biggest of the Shell studies," said Tom Merry. "We were lucky to get it. There will be room there."

"Tom Mewwy is quite wight."

"Of course I am! But we'll divide honours equally. We'll have the feed in our study, but you fellows shall stand all the tuck, if you like."

"Ha, ha, ha!" cackled Lowther.

"Oh, don't be funny, Tom Merry! We'll have the feed in your study, if you chaps can tidy it up a bit and make it look respectable."

"It's more respectable than this rotten show, anyway, at the worst of times!" Manners remarked, with a disparaging glance round Study No. 6.

"And one of us will have to take the invitation to Cousin Ethel," said Blake. "We're not going to leave everything in your hands, Tom Merry."

"Yaas, wathah! As Cousin Ethel is my cousin, I shall take the beastly invite to her, you know, deah boys."

"That's agreed," said Tom Merry. "But I really hope that Gussy won't make a bungle of it."

D'Arcy screwed his monocle into his eye and surveyed the hero of the Shell with a glance of supreme disdain.

"I weally do not see any weason to dwead that I shall make a bungle of such an extwemely simple mattah, Tom Mewwy."

"Well, you're such an ass, you know!"

"I wefuse to be chawacterwised as an ass—"

"You'll have to go to the Principal's house and ask to see Cousin Ethel—"

"Nothin' very difficult in that—"

"And then persuade her to come. She'll have to ask Mrs. Holmes, too. I hope you will manage it all right."

"My dear Mewwy, I shall manage it all wight. You fellows just see to gettin' up a weally wippin' tea, and leave the west to me."

"You can trust me with the shopping," said Blake. "All of you stump up the funds, and I'll go down and interview Dame Taggles. While I'm gone you can set to work making Tom Merry's study look as decent as possible."

"Good!"

Blake was soon in possession of ample funds, and, with the cash jingling in his pocket, he made his way to the school shop. The juniors lost no time in setting to work in Tom Merry's study. It was the largest of the Shell studies, which were built in the new wing of the School House, and were larger than the studies in the older portion of the building. The room was very quickly swept and garnished.

The carpet had seen service. But it was wonderful what a difference a careful brushing made. The grate was dirty, it could not be denied, but blacklead and brushes and willing hands made a marvellous transformation. The window was none too clean, but a fresh pair of muslin curtains concealed that fact.

Tom Merry looked, rather doubtfully at the table-cloth. It had been clean a few days before, but no one would have thought so to look at it. There was a variety of stains, tea and coffee and cocoa, to say nothing of bicycle oil and jam.

"It does look a bit fishy, and no mistake," said Lowther.

"We can't let Cousin Ethel see a cloth like that on the table."

"No. Luckily Kildare always has a clean cloth in his drawer," said Tom Merry. "Cut along to his study and fetch it, Monty, there's a good chap!"

"Suppose he's there?"

"Then ask him to lend it you, and say we've a lady coming. He's almost sure to."

"Well, I'll try."

And Lowther ran off. Kildare was the best-natured fellow in the Sixth Form at St. Jim's, a fact the juniors never forgot. Tom Merry looked over cutlery and crockery. The supply was hopelessly inadequate, but Tom Merry knew by old experience how to deal with a situation like that.

"Get all the things from your study, Dig," he said, "and the rest of you go along the passage and collar everything you can from the empty studies. Don't have any rows if you can help it; there's no time."

"Right-ho!" said the juniors cheerfully.

The raiders were quickly at work. Lowther returned with a beautifully clean white table-cloth.

"Was Kildare there?"

"No," said Lowther. "It's all right. I've brought along his teapot, too; may as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb."

"That was thoughtful of you."

"Ours is a bit rocky. It's never poured out the same since Manners chipped off half the spout, you know. This is a beauty of Kildare's."

"The kettle is a bit rotten," said Manners. "I never did like those cheap tin kettles—they look so black—"

"That's all right," said Herries, coming into the study. "Look here!"

"My hat! Where did you get that?" exclaimed Tom Merry, looking in great admiration at the brightly-burnished copper kettle Herries placed on the table.

"House-dame's room!" grinned Herries. "Mrs. Mimms is out, so I thought I'd borrow it. We can take it back when we've finished, and she'll never know the difference."

"Ha, ha! We'll risk it, anyway. Hallo, here comes the crockery!"

Crockery and cutlery galore came pouring into the study. The raiders had been remorselessly thorough. It was true that hardly a single article matched any other article, but Blake said that added to the artistic effect of the whole.

There were cups and saucers to go round, at all events, and that was the main point. Blake came in at last with a cricket-bag simply stuffed with provisions.

"Good!" exclaimed Tom Merry, looking at the contents with glistening eyes as they were turned out. "You do know how to do shopping, Blake. We shall show Cousin Ethel that we can do things in style at this show, and no mistake."

"Yaas, wathah! Is it time for me to go and take Cousin Ethel the invite, deah boys?"

"Yes, you'd better buzz off now, or she'll be having tea with the Head's wife, and girls aren't like boys, you know—one tea is enough for them."

"I'll wun like anythin'."

And Arthur Augustus, full of the importance of his mission, hurried off. He stopped only to get his silk hat out of Study No. 6, and to put on his gloves, and then he hurried into the quadrangle and presented himself at the Head's house.

He was shown into the drawing-room, where Mrs. Holmes, the doctor's wife, met him. D'Arcy looked round for Cousin Ethel, but she was not there. Mrs. Holmes smiled.

"What can I do for you, Master D'Arcy?" she asked.

"I am sowwy to twouble you, madam," said D'Arcy respectfully. "I wished to ascertain whethah—whethah—"

"Yes?"

"Whethah my Cousin Ethel could come to tea with us in the School House, ma'am," said D'Arcy. "We should be so pleased and honahed if she would come, and you would give your kind permish—"

Mrs. Holmes smiled again.

"Indeed! I am afraid you are a little too late, D'Arcy." Arthur Augustus looked dismayed.

"Too late?"

"Yes, I am afraid so."

"Has Ethel had her tea? Oh, deah, that is weally too bad! But we've got a weally wippin' feed, and she might come all the same—"

"I am afraid it will be impossible, as Ethel is already gone to—"

"Gone to—"

"Figgins asked Ethel to tea in the New House, and I gave my permission—"

D'Arcy's jaw dropped.

"Figgins?"

"Yes, and Ethel—"

"Oh, the wottah! The beast!"

"D'Arcy!"

"I beg your pardon, ma'am! But weally—Figgins! Yaas, I see I am too late. I will wetire," said D'Arcy. "I am sowwy to have twoubled you."

"Oh, not at all!"

D'Arcy retired. His heart was too full for speech. He returned to the School House and went up to Tom Merry's study. A general chorus of inquiry greeted him.

"Is she coming?"

"The fact is, deah boys—"

"Ass! Is she coming?"

"No. The fact is she has already gone to tea with Figgins & Co.—"

There was a yell.

"Figgins & Co.?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry sank helplessly into a chair. Blake staggered against the wall.

"Done!"

"Done again!"

CHAPTER 9.

Tea in Figgins's Study—Uninvited Guests.

FIGGINS was enjoying himself. The study in the New House shared by the famous quartette was always a cosy and cheerful apartment, but on the present occasion it looked—in the eyes of Figgins & Co., at least—really ripping.

There was a clean cloth on the table, gleaming crockery, and a whole globe on the gas-jet. The fire was burning brightly and cheerily in a beautifully-cleaned and swept grate. There were flowers in the study—flowers everywhere—and if Cousin Ethel had known of the risks Figgins had run in getting them from the Head's garden she would have keenly appreciated the devotion of the New House chief.

Cousin Ethel was delighted with everything. She had, with Mrs. Holmes's permission, accepted the invitation to tea in Figgins & Co.'s study, quite ignorant of the fact that Tom Merry and Blake were making preparations for her reception in the School House.

Figgins was not quite so ignorant of it.

Fatty Wynn had been shopping in the school shop, and he had seen Blake there, and the extent of Blake's purchases, and the extreme care he displayed in the selection of the good things, had put Fatty on the scent.

He had reported to Figgins, and Figgins had grinned hugely. He had expected something of the sort, and he had taken care to invite Cousin Ethel while they were in the trap, and to secure her as soon as possible, so that the rival juniors should have no chance.

Everything was not ready, therefore, when Cousin Ethel arrived at Figgins's study, but that did not matter. It was better than risking losing the prize. The kettle was singing away cheerily, and Cousin Ethel announced her intention at once of making the tea.

"Will you really?" said Figgins.

"Yes, certainly!" said Cousin Ethel. "Boys cannot make tea!"

"Oh, can't they?" said Kerr rather warmly. "I've made tea often enough. Why, we have tea in the study every evening, except when we're broke—"

Figgins gave him a warning glance.

"Cousin Ethel's quite right," he said. "It's a real treat to have a girl make tea for you. They make it so much better than boys."

Kerr stared at Figgins open-mouthed.

The last he had heard from Figgins on the subject was that girls were cack-handed critters, anyway, and couldn't

do anything like a boy could. Figgins appeared to have changed his views.

"The kettle's rather dirty," said Fatty Wynn dubiously. "I don't see how Cousin Ethel can take hold of the handle—"

"Oh, that's nothing!"

"You mustn't soil your fingers, though," said Figgins anxiously. "Kerr ought to keep the kettle cleaner. He's growing very careless—"

"I?" exclaimed Kerr. "Why, I—"

"Don't argue, old chap. This is a tea-fight, not a debating society," said Figgins. "We have mislaid the kettle-holder, I'm sorry to say—"

"Mislaid it?" murmured Kerr dazedly.

Such a thing as a kettle-holder was utterly unknown in the study, outside Figgins's vivid imagination.

"But here's a silk handkerchief that will make a ripping one," said Figgins.

Kerr nearly said something; it was his silk handkerchief that Figgins was twisting up into a kettle-holder. But he contained himself with an effort, privately resolving upon a little talk with Figgins later.

"Where's the tea?" said Figgins, looking round.

"Here you are!" said Fatty Wynn.

"Got a spoon?"

"Yes, lots. This one's clean!"

Cousin Ethel smiled demurely, and took the tea and the spoon. Figgins warmed up the pot ready, and handed her the kettle-holder.

"Think you'd like me to pour in the water for you?" he asked anxiously.

"Thank you, you may!"

"Good!" said Figgins delighted.

He gripped the kettle with great relief, using the improvised kettle-holder in order to show Cousin Ethel that they were accustomed to one in the study. He was very nervous about Cousin Ethel getting too near that horribly black kettle. There had been no time to see to everything, or Figgins would have cleaned it, and he thought that really one of the Co. might have thought of it. However, it was too late now. Cousin Ethel carefully measured in the tea and held the teapot ready. Figgins poured in the boiling water.

The tea was made. Figgins, rather uneasy directly under the eyes of Cousin Ethel, ran the water over the pot, and made rather a mess on the carpet, but that was only a trifling accident.

The tea was set to draw, and then they sat down to tea. The table groaned, as a novelist would say, under the weight of the viands; and, indeed, Figgins & Co. were "doing themselves down" very well on this occasion, and the tea-table presented a plentiful and hospitable appearance.

"I will pour out the tea," said Cousin Ethel.

"Good!" said Figgins. "I—"

He broke off, as a tap came at the door.

"Come in!" said Figgins anxiously.

He inwardly resolved that if it was a New House fellow who had scented the feed and come to join in it, he would privately slay him after Cousin Ethel was gone.

The door opened, and Jack Blake, of Study No. 6 in the School House, presented himself. He smiled and nodded to the amazed Figgins.

"Just in time!" he said cheerily. "I was afraid I should be a little late. It was really decent of you to ask us to tea with Cousin Ethel, Figgins."

Figgins glared at him.

"I—I asked," he stammered.

"So glad to see you at St. Jim's, Cousin Ethel!" said Blake, taking no notice of Figgins or of the glaring Co. "It is really jolly of Figgins to have us all in."

Next Thursday.

TOM MERRY

and the First Adventure of

ALAN WAYWARD.



"This is all a trick of Figgins & Co. They've done us!" gasped Blake wildly. "Oh, the rotters! Come on!"

"How nice!" said the unsuspecting Cousin Ethel, shaking hands with Blake. "I am very glad to see you again, Blake. Are your friends with you?"

"Oh, yes," said Blake. "Figgins invited them as much as myself."

"You—you—" murmured Figgins.

"Did you speak, Figgins?"

Figgins would have liked to speak. He would have liked to seize Jack Blake and anoint him with the marmalade, and then rub his head in the cinders in the grate, and then pitch him downstairs, or out of the window.

He had not asked Blake to tea, or dreamed of asking him. It was simply a piece of unparalleled nerve on the part of the School House junior; but explanations before Cousin Ethel were impossible. There could be no rowing while the girl was there. Figgins knew it, and knew that Blake knew it. The Co. were powerless, and could only grin and bear it.

The unaffected pleasure Ethel showed at Figgins's thoughtfulness in inviting all her friends only made matters worse.

"What did you say, Figgins?"

"Oh, n-nothing."

"Come in, you chaps!" said Blake, glancing towards the door. "Figgys is jolly glad to see us. Of course, we knew he would be."

"Yaas, wathah! How do you do, Cousin Ethel? I want to explain and apologise about meetin' that twain."

Digby and Herries came in with demure grins. They were looking very neat in clean collars and well-brushed jackets. Figgins mumbled something, unintelligibly as Digby ostentatiously shook hands with him.

"Well, this is cosy!" said Blake. "By the way, I hear that you invited the Terrible Three, too, Figgins."

"I—I—I—"

"Here we are!" said Tom Merry's cheerful voice at the door. "This is really kind of you, Figgins. So glad to see you again, Cousin Ethel!"

"And I am glad to see you all!"

"It's ripping of Figgins to ask us all here to meet you, isn't it?"

"It is very kind indeed of Figgins."

"Glad you are pleased," said Figgins, trying to recover himself. "It's—it's jolly to see so many friendly faces about. I don't know whether you'll all find room, but a couple of you can sit upon the window-sill; and there's the coal-locker, too. Better scout along the passage for some chairs, Kerr."

"That's really kind of you, Figgins!" said Tom Merry, calmly dropping into Figgins's chair beside Cousin Ethel. "I shall be quite comfy here."

"And this will about suit me," said Blake, seating himself in the chair on the other side of Ethel, from which Kerr had risen to lift the teapot from the grate. "What's that, Kerr? You're pleased? Don't mention it, old chap! I'm all right."

"I—I—I—"
"Exactly! You can have the coal-locker. Can I help you to anything, Cousin Ethel? I say, isn't it ripping for us all to be together again, and Figgins looking so jolly pleased to see us enjoying ourselves?"

"It is very nice indeed."

"Yes, I'll say that for Figgins," Blake went on. "I never believe in judging a fellow by his looks, and really Figgins is a jolly good sort."

"Oh, you wait a bit!" murmured Figgins.

Blake looked at him sweetly.

"What's that, Figgins? Did you say I was to wait?"

"I—I mean, wait a minute, and I'll help you to something," stammered Figgins, fearful of giving himself away to Cousin Ethel.

"Oh, that's all right, old chap! I'm not really very hungry. I say, kids, it's jolly decent of Figgins to constitute himself waiter like this and look after us. Isn't it? Of course, there's no room for him to sit down. Hand up that teapot, Figgys."

"Yes, and buck up, old fellow!" said Tom Merry.

Figgins would gladly have broken the teapot on Blake's head, but that was impossible. He handed it up, and Cousin Ethel poured out the tea. Kerr and Marmaduke had made a hurried hunt along the passage for cups and saucers, and returned with a supply, but there were not enough to go round.

There was no room at the table for Figgins, or Kerr, or Marmaduke, so they waited for their tea. Kerr, gritting his teeth, went out in search of more crockery. Figgins was nearly boiling over.

"These are jolly little cakes!" said Tom Merry, handing a plate towards Cousin Ethel. "I can recommend these."

"I think I will have some bread-and-butter." "Of course," said Blake, handing up a plate from the other side. "This bread-and-butter is cut very nicely, Figgins. You might cut some more, old chap, will you? This won't be nearly enough."

Figgins doubled up his fists, and brandished them behind Blake's back. Cousin Ethel turned her head, and Figgins grew crimson, but he was quick-witted. He went on brandishing his fists solemnly in the air, pretending that he had been stretching himself.

"It's warm in here," he said apologetically. "I—I—" A curious look came into Cousin Ethel's eyes. Perhaps a glimpse of the real state of affairs dawned upon her at that moment; but if so, she gave no sign of it.

She demurely ate her bread-and-butter, and allowed Tom Merry to help her to cakes, and Blake to fill her plate with cream-puffs. Figgins made more tea, and cut more bread-and-butter. The School House seven had brought healthy, youthful appetites with them, and plentiful as the supplies were, they faded away like a beautiful dream before the onslaughts of Tom Merry & Co.

Figgins & Co. hardly ate anything. They were too furious; and besides, the visitors kept the Co. pretty busy supplying their wants. There was no room for the Co. to sit down, either, and no seats for them, anyway.

The tea was a great success—from a School House point of view. Fatty Wynn was the only member of the Co. who really had a look-in. But when a feed was going, there was no earthly consideration that would keep the Falstaff of the New House out of it.

Fatty Wynn filled himself up regardless of everything, and had a pretty good time. Figgins, Kerr, and Marmaduke were a good deal out in the cold. When the tea was over, they were at boiling-point inwardly, but their faces were contorted into polite grins. They were glad when it was over.

"Well, this has been ripping!" said Tom Merry. "I propose a vote of thanks to Figgins, the founder of the feast."

"Seconded!" exclaimed Blake heartily. "Passed unanimously!" said Monty Lowther.

"Yaas, wathah!" "And now," said Tom Merry, "perhaps Cousin Ethel would like to have a look at the School House."

Figgins simply gasped. The cool nerve of the School House boys in inviting themselves to tea in the study was appalling enough; but this brazen proposal to carry off his guest under his very eyes was going a bit further.

"Good!" said Blake. "Of course—" "I think," said Cousin Ethel quietly, "that this is a good opportunity of saying what I wished to say to all of you. Then I think Mrs. Holmes will be expecting me. Did my cousin tell you that I wanted your assistance?"

"Yaas, wathah!" "I want you all to help me, if you will."

"You've only got to give your orders, Cousin Ethel," said Figgins. "We'd do anything for you, wouldn't we, chaps?"

"Yes, rather!" said the Co. "Anything!" said Tom Merry.

The girl smiled. "Thank you very much. Then I will tell you why I have come down to St. Jim's."

And School House and New House juniors alike listened eagerly for the explanation.

CHAPTER 10.

Cousin Ethel's Project.

Cousin Ethel looked round at the circle of eager faces, and smiled again. It was plain to her that all the juniors—School House and New House fellows alike—were only too eager to hear her commands, and to obey them.

"You remember Mr. Dodds?" began Ethel. "Yaas, wathah! He's a cuwate or somethin' at Huckleberry Heath, isn't he?" said Arthur Augustus.

"Old Dodds!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Rather, Cousin Ethel! We remember how he played cricket here—rather—and how jolly he made things at Christmas at Laurel Villa! What about Dodds?"

"I have been taking a class in Mr. Dodds's Sunday-school," said Cousin Ethel.

"Oh!" "The class is composed of all the poorest children in Huckleberry Heath," said the girl, a little eagerly—"poor

little things who never have a holiday—and the idea came into my mind—"

She paused. "Pway go on, deah boy—I mean, deah girl!" said D'Arcy encouragingly.

"Well, the idea came into my head of giving the children a treat," said Cousin Ethel, colouring a little.

"Good!"

"Bwavo!" "I spoke to Mr. Dodds about it, and he thought it a good idea. But there was one difficulty in the way—lack of funds."

"Yes," said Tom Merry, "that's a lack that stands in the way of a lot of things."

"I should say so!" remarked Fatty Wynn, with great feeling. "What a ripping lot of feeds we could get in the study if it wasn't for lack of funds!"

Cousin Ethel smiled.

"Well, I was thinking that perhaps you would be able to help me raise the funds for the children's treat," she went on. "You remember how you once raised a fund for a poor old soldier's widow in Rylocombe?"

"Yaas, wathah!" "Couldn't something of the kind be done again?" said Cousin Ethel. "Of course, there are many charitable people in Huckleberry Heath, but their charity is required for the urgent necessities of the poor people under Mr. Dodds's care. I have undertaken to see the cost of the Sunday-school treat raised, or else to give up the idea. I don't want to do that if it can be helped."

"I should say not!" exclaimed Tom Merry warmly. "Of course, we are going to help you raise the wind—ahem! I mean the money."

"Yaas, wathah!" "If we put our heads together we shall jolly soon discover a way," said Figgins. "You can always depend upon a New House chap—"

"Upon a School House fellow—"

"Look here—"

"Oh, don't rot, Figgins! You know—"

"You will talk it over quietly, won't you, without getting excited?" said Cousin Ethel sweetly.

"Oh, yes!" exclaimed Blake heartily. "I'm really surprised at Figgins."

"Look here, Blake—"

"Don't argue about it, Figgins, old man. You're worse than Kerr. Blessed if I see what you New House chaps always want to be arguing for."

"I'm not going—"

"Then stay, only don't—"

"Oh, hold on!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Cousin Ethel says we're to talk it over quietly without getting excited."

"Who's getting excited?"

"Order, order!" exclaimed Monty Lowther. "Yaas, wathah! Ordah, deah boys!"

"If you could think of a plan," Cousin Ethel's silvery voice broke in.

"Oh, we'll jolly soon think of a plan, if these School House chaps will only be quiet a bit," said Figgins. The girl looked at her little gold watch.

"I think I must be going now."

"What, already?"

"I think Mrs. Holmes will be expecting me. You will turn this over in your minds, won't you, and think of a plan?"

"Of course!"

"Yes, certainly!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"It would be so nice for the dear little Sunday-school children to have a nice treat," said Cousin Ethel; "and I have as good as promised it to them."

"We'll see you through, Cousin Ethel," said Blake heartily. "We'll think of a plan. If there's no better way we'll have a whip round in the school."

Cousin Ethel shook her head.

"Oh, no, I should not like that. Cannot you think of some idea similar to that you thought of for the soldier's widow in Rylocombe? I have an idea myself, but I will not tell it you now. I think you boys could think of something very much better if you try."

"Well, yes," said Blake, innocently enough; "it's not much good a girl trying to think out a plan, you know."

Figgins looked daggers at Blake.

"I'd back Cousin Ethel up against any School House idiot in thinking out plans," he grunted.

"Oh, not at all," said Cousin Ethel sweetly; "Blake is quite right. If you cannot think of anything satisfactory, I will make a suggestion; but I am sure that you will be able to hit on a good plan. Now I must be going."

"May I see you safely as far as the Principal's house, Cousin Ethel?" asked Figgins anxiously.

"Weally, Figgins, I considah that I can take charge of my own cousin," said Arthur Augustus. "Weally—"
 "Oh, no, Arthur, you look so tired," said Cousin Ethel, with a sweet smile.

"Well, I have had wathah an exhaustin' aftahnoon, but weally—"

"You must rest," said Cousin Ethel. "I shall be very pleased, Figgins."

Figgins nearly jumped with delight. He reached down his cap, and then put it up again, and brought out a silk hat. A topper was required to do justice to an occasion like that. He looked as pleased as Punch as he marched out of the study with Cousin Ethel.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy glanced after them with a very curious expression upon his face.

"I weally wegard Figgins as a wathah cheeky boundah," he said, looking round. "He seems to forget that Ethel is my cousin, and not his—don't you think so?"

"Looks like it," agreed Tom Merry.

"Well, we shall get on with the planning a little more quietly without Figgins," said Blake. "Now, my idea is—"

"Better wait till Figgy comes back," said Kerr.

"Oh, that's rot, Kerr, old fellow!"

"Is it? I don't see it. Besides, we ought to make a regular meeting of it, and elect a chairman."

"I am quite willin' to be chairman, deah boys, if wequired."

"Rats!"

"Who said wats?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus indignantly, looking round. "I wegard the intewuption as impertinent. I wegard myself as decidedly the pwopah person to take the chair undah the circs., as it is my cousin who—"

"Rats!"

"If the gentleman who said wats will kindly step forward, I shall have great pleasure in givin' him a feahful thwashin'."

"Hallo, here's Figgy!"

Figgins came into the study, looking very pleased with himself. He put away his topper, and beamed genially upon the company.

"Better get to business," he said. "We've got to think of a scheme."

"We were just thinking of electing a chairman and getting to business."

"I had just offahed my services as chairman, and—"

"Oh, rats to you, Gussy!" said Figgins cheerfully. "You School House kids ought to think yourselves lucky that you're not fired out of this study neck and crop, after your confounded cheek in poking yourselves in here and scoffing up our feed without being invited."

Tom Merry & Co. roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's all very well to cackle, but if it hadn't been for Cousin Ethel—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove, Figgins, you know, I wegard the whole mattah as extremely funny!"

"If it hadn't been for—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let's fire 'em out now," exclaimed Marmaduke. "No need to sit here and put up with their silly cackling, that I can see."

"I'd like to see the New House kid that could fire me out," said Blake casually.

"Here's one!"

"And here's another!"

"Oh, shut up!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Is this what you call talking it over quietly without getting excited?"

"Well, you scoffed our fea."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins waved his hand for peace.

"Dry up, everybody!" he exclaimed. "These School House wasters did us, but we musn't forget that we did them in the first place. Besides, rows are off now; we've got to talk business. When Cousin Ethel asks us to-morrow morning what decision we've come to, I suppose it won't do to explain that we haven't come to any, but started punching one another's heads instead."

"That is weally vevy thoughtful of you, Figgins."

"Make it pax, then," said Tom Merry. "We're willing. And then, for goodness' sake, let us get to business."

"Good! As it is my study the meeting's held in, I shall be chairman," said Figgins. "Anybody got any objection to raise?"

"Yaas, wathah! I considah myself the pwopah person to be chairman of this honouvable meetin'. I have had a great deal of expwience—"

"Blake, I expect you to keep Gussy quiet, or else lead him home with a string."

"I should uttably wufese to be led home with a stwing."
 "Oh, dry up!" said Tom Merry. "Figgy's claim is reasonable. We're in his study, so we'll make him chairman. Who says Figgins for chairman?"

"Figgins!" exclaimed six or seven voices.

"Oh, vevy well!" said D'Arcy. "I am quite willin' to bow to the wish of the respected majowity, deah boys, and I am only sowwy for the sake of the beastly meetin', you know. Pway pwocceed to business."

And Figgins took the chair, and the meeting of the St. Jim's Co. proceeded to business.

CHAPTER 11.

No Ideas.

"IN the first place," said Figgins, standing up and looking round the crowded study, with the air of a fellow defying contradiction—"in the first place—"

"Pway excuse me a moment, Figgins—"

"Shut up, Gussy!"

"I wufese to shut up. If you will allow me to wemark, Figgins—"

"Oh, what is it?"

"Your necktie is a little cwoked. I will put it stwaight for you if you like. It wovvies me to see a fellow's necktie cwoked."

"I'll put your nose cwoked if you don't shut up," said Figgins darkly.

"Weally, I wegard that as ungwateful—"

"Shut up! In the first place," resumed Figgins, regardless of the state of his necktie and of the fact that it worried D'Arcy—"in the first place, chaps, we've got to talk this matter over, as Cousin Ethel said, without any jawing and snacking."

"I weally don't wemembah my cousin usin' those words."

"Something to that effect," said Figgins. "So I want to appeal to you School House cads—I mean kids—to be a little bit reasonable. Don't jaw for the sake of jawing, in your usual style, and don't talk more rot than you can help. Don't be a set of silly magpies, you know. That will assist the meeting materially."

"Hear, hear!" said the Co. heartily.

Figgins's appeal was not lost upon the School House boys. They looked at one another, and Tom Merry and Blake began to speak at the same moment.

"Look here, Figgins—"

"Oh, don't all start speaking at once!"

"Figgy's quite right, Blake: Shut up a minute while I—"

"Suppose you do the shutting' up."

"Oh, don't be an ass!"

"Order!" exclaimed the chairman. "You're starting already. It's a queer thing to me that you School House kids can't learn to behave yourselves."

"What I say is," exclaimed Tom Merry, "that we'll undertake to do all you want if only you New House kids will stop being a set of silly, chattering, cackling idiots."

"That's it!" said Blake. "If you'll only stop your idiotic jabbering and jawing—"

"And let us think it out," said Manners.

The chairman rapped on the table.

"I am sorry to see that my appeal has been wasted upon the obtuse intellects of the School House rotters," he exclaimed severely. "But I must remind the meeting that we can't stay here all night. Has anybody got a suggestion to make for raising the funds necessary for the Sunday-school treat?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, go ahead, and don't all talk at once."

"What's the mattah with havin' the sports again, as we had them on the occasion my cousin wuferr'd to?" said Arthur Augustus. "We charged an entwance fee, and waised quite a wespactable sum of money for that deservin' person in Wylcombe. The Gwammah School cads backed us up jolly well ovah it, too."

"This is a matter that concerns St. Jim's alone," said Figgins; "Grammar School cads are barred."

"Yaas; but the sports were a great success, and—"

"Can't work the same wheeze twice," said Tom Merry decidedly. "You can't enthuse twice on the same subject, you know. The sports were a great success, but they wouldn't be a success a second time."

"I weally don't see—"

"Nobody expects you to see, old chap," said Kerr kindly.

"Tom Merry's quite right, and the sports won't serve over again, anyhow."

"Weally, Kerr—"

"Oh, chuck it, Gussy!" said Digby. "Let's put it to the vote, anyway."

"Dry up, Digby. I'm chairman, and it's my business to put things to the vote," said Figgins, with severity.

"Oh, rats!"

"If you say rats to your chairman—?"

"Oh, get to business, Figgy!" said Blake. "You just said yourself that we can't stay here all night. There won't be anything else for it, though, if you once get fairly started. Put it to the vote."

"Who says sports over again to raise the wind?" said Figgins, putting it to the meeting.

"No," was the general shout.

"That settles it."

"Vewy well, I bow to the majority; but I weally considah—"

"And now," said Figgins, "has anybody got a suggestion to make?"

"What price a lottery?" asked Herries, who had been silent for some time, apparently thinking things out very deeply.

"A lottery! What do you mean by a lottery?"

"Why, you buy tickets, you know, and prizes, and so on, and the money paid for the tickets goes to the fund, and the prizes—"

"You are a silly ass, Herries, and no mistake. That's gambling."

"Is it?" said Herries. "Well, come to think of it, I suppose it is something of the sort. But in a good cause—"

"None of that," said Figgins. "A good cause doesn't justify a bad action!"

"Oh, I say, Figgy," said Lowther, in a tone of remonstrance, "we're not in the lecture-hall now, you know."

Figgins turned red.

"I don't mean to be lecturing!" he exclaimed. "What I say is—"

"Figgy's right!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Herries hadn't quite thought it out, or he wouldn't have suggested a lottery. As a matter of fact, if we adopted that idea, the masters would stop us, and lick us into the bargain."

"Well, that wouldn't do much good," said Herries. "I withdraw the suggestion. I've given the matter a lot of thought, too."

"What about a sweepstake?" said Manners.

"Rats! That's gambling, too."

"They have 'em in lots of public schools."

"I know they do; but we don't want anything of that sort at St. Jim's; besides, the prefects would get wind of it, and be down on us."

"Besides that," said Tom Merry, "it will all have to be open and above-board, as Cousin Ethel is connected with it."

"That's right," said Blake. "Nothing is any good that won't bear the daylight on it. Lotteries and sweepstakes are barred."

"Bai Jove, you know, I've got a weally good ideah!"

"Well, what is it, Gussy?" asked Figgins patiently.

"Let us have a waffle."

"A what?"

"A waffle."

Figgins scratched his head hopelessly.

"What on earth does he mean by a waffle?"

Blake shook D'Arcy by the shoulder. Tom Merry dug him in the ribs. Monty Lowther smote him on the back.

"Now, then, you ass!"

"Pway don't be so wuff! You are quite takin' my bweath away, and I am already feelin' wathah exhausted. Pway—"

"Explain what you mean, ass!"

"I wefuse to be called an ass!"

"Will you explain?"

"Yaas, wathah! I think that we could waise the wind in a weally wreditable and effective way by havin' a waffle."

"Are you joking, you howler?"

"I am not jokin', and I uttahnly wefuse to be chawactewised as a howlah! I wegard the expwession as absurd and oppwobwious."

"Then what do you mean by a waffle?"

"You are an extremely ignowant set of persons if you do not know what a waffle is," said D'Arcy, with some disdain. "Still, I don't mind explainin'. You all take tickets, say at a shillin' each, for some pwize or othah—Mannah's camewa would do."

"Would it?" said Manners.

"Yaas, certainly. It would do vewy well."

"But what is the waffle?" howled Blake. "What do you mean by a waffle? Is it some new toy, or a game, or what?"

Figgins gave a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha! He means a raffle!"

"Oh!" said Blake, understanding at last. "A raffle! I see!"

"Yaas, wathah! A waffle!"

"Oh, a raffle!" said Tom Merry thoughtfully. "Manners could put up his camera to be raffled for."

"Catch me!" said Manners, in a very uncompromising tone.

"Weally, Mannahs, I don't think you ought to allow mere selfishness to stand in the way of helpin' on a good cause."

"Oh, that's all right!" said Tom Merry. "Manners's camera would do, but Gussy's new bicyole would be better, as it's more valuabile."

"I suppose that's a joke, Tom Mewwy. I must say that I wegard jokes of that sort as bein' in wathah bad taste."

"Certainly not. Your bicyole—"

"I should certainly have a stwong objection to havin' my new twenty-guinea jiggah waffled for," said Arthur Augustus. "If you cannot think of a bettah idea than that, Tom Mewwy, you had bettah let the mattah dwop."

"A raffle's no good," said Figgins. "Besides, very likely it wouldn't be allowed. Has anybody got any other suggestion to make?"

The juniors all wrinkled their brows thoughtfully.

They had plenty of ideas, but they were mostly impracticable, and every suggestion that was made was soon crushed under the weight of the difficulties started against it.

"Well," said Figgins, looking round, "if you can't think of anything—"

"Oh, we can think of something! Give us time," said Blake. "I'm just turning the thing over in my mind."

"Only it's getting jolly late," said Figgins. "What I was going to say is, Cousin Ethel said she had a suggestion to make, if we wanted one."

"Bai Jove, you know, I had quite forgotten that!"

"Oh, girls can't think out a plan, you know!"

"Seems to me that boys can't either," said Figgins.

"Anyway, it's high time this meeting broke up, and I vote that we ask Cousin Ethel in the morning what her idea was, and then we can think it over and see if it will do."

"Oh, all right!" said Blake, with a nod. "I wouldn't say so to Cousin Ethel, of course; but girls' ideas aren't much good. Still, there's no harm in listening to a suggestion, even from a girl."

"That's settled, then?" said Figgins, appealing to the meeting.

"Passed unanimously."

"Good!" said Tom Merry. "I'll speak to Cousin Ethel in the morning."

Figgins gave him a fixed look.

"What's that you'll do, Tom Merry?"

"I'll speak to Cousin Ethel about it in the morning."

"Excuse me, but, as chairman of this meeting, I shall speak to Cousin Ethel about it in the morning."

"You won't be chairman any longer after the meeting's broken up."

"If I have much more jaw from a certain School House waster, somebody else will get broken up beside the meeting!"

"Ordah!" exclaimed D'Arcy. "Ordah, deah boys! Of course, upon a little weflection, you must admit that I am the pwopah person to speak to Cousin Ethel on the subject."

"Rats!"

"If you say wats to me, Kerr—"

"Order! The meeting is now dissolved!" exclaimed Figgins. "You School House rotters can travel! And the sooner the quicker!"

"Oh, come along!" said Blake. "Figgy's face worries me! It has been worrying me for a long time, but I've been putting up with it. There's a limit to endurance."

"Oh, travel along!"

"Come on, chaps! Let's get out of this measly old house."

The School House seven marched off. The question as to who was to speak to Cousin Ethel in the morning upon that important subject was left unsettled.

CHAPTER 12.

Early Risers.

TOM MERRY was the first up in the Shell dormitory in the School House the following morning. But he had not been out of bed a couple of minutes, when Manners turned out. Then Lowther, sitting up with a yawn, slipped out of bed. The rising-bell had not yet gone. Gore looked out of the bedclothes and surveyed the Terrible Three in astonishment.

"Hallo, are you chaps ill?" he exclaimed. "What on earth are you turning out so early for?"

"I'm just going out in the quad for a bit," said Tom Merry carelessly.

"So am I," said Lowther.

"Curious," said Manners. "So am I."

"Well, you may," said Gore, with a yawn. "I'm going to stay in bed till rising-bell. Don't make a row."



"Ow!" ejaculated Fatty Wynn, as the back of Figgins's large hand caught him upon the nose "What on earth are you up to, fathead?"

"Shut the door quietly," yawned Skimpole, from his bed.

The Terrible Three looked at one another rather curiously as they washed and dressed themselves. But they did not made for the door. Manners put down his comb and followed. Monty Lowther hastily jerked on his necktie and hurried after them.

Tom Merry stopped in the passage, laughing.

"We may as well have it out, kids!" he exclaimed. "I'm going to the Head's garden."

Manners and Lowther laughed.

"So are we, I suppose."

"Same old game?"

"Exactly."

"Well, it's no good my asking you chaps to go back to bed, I suppose?"

"Not much," said Lowther emphatically.

"Then we had better all go together."

"All serene!"

And the chums of the Shell went down the passage. It had occurred to Tom Merry that on the previous occasions when Miss Cleveland had stayed at St. Jim's, it had been her custom to take a very early morning walk in the Head's garden. It was a golden opportunity of speaking to Cousin

Ethel on the important matter that had been left undecided the previous evening. But the same idea, as it happened, had occurred to Lowther and Manners. Hence the sudden and unusual early rising in the Shell dormitory in the School House.

"Hallo," murmured Manners, as they came past the Fourth Form sleeping quarters, "some kids are awake there, and rising-bell hasn't gone."

The door of the dormitory was opening. Just as the Terrible Three came abreast of it, four juniors came out of the Fourth Form-room.

Tom Merry grinned at the sight of Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy, all of them fully dressed, and evidently going out.

The Fourth-Formers stared at the Terrible Three.

"Anything wrong?" asked Blake pleasantly.

"Wrong? No. What are you getting at?"

"Well, I'm rather surprised to see you bounders out of bed before you're routed out by a prefect, that's all!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh, we're just taking an early stroll!"

"Curious; so are we!" said Blake suspiciously. "Come on, kids; we haven't time to stand here chatting to these Shell-fish!"

The Fourth-Formers marched on down the stairs. The chums of the Shell followed. Blake and his comrades went out into the quadrangle, and Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther were close upon their track. In the fresh morning air, under the green elms, the Fourth-Formers came to a stop.

"Which way are you chaps going?" asked Blake.
"Oh, just strolling down towards the Head's garden!" said Tom Merry carelessly.

"Better have a little run down to the gates."
"Oh, no; we're not out for a run!"
"Why don't you have a look at the cricket pitch?"
"I'm going to presently."

"Look here, Tom Merry—"
"No time, old fellow. Come on, chaps!"
The Terrible Three walked away towards the Head's garden. The chums of Study No. 6 looked at one another wrathfully, and then followed.

"You may as well out with it, Tom Merry," growled Blake. "You're going down to the Head's garden because you think D'Arcy's cousin will be there."

Tom Merry laughed.
"Well, what are you going for, Blake?"
"Same reason! I want to speak to Cousin Ethel particularly about that idea she has, you know!"
"That's it. We're on the same track."

"No good a crowd going."
"No; just cut back to the School House, will you?"
"No fear!"

"I don't see what these kids want to come along for," Monty Lowther remarked. "Curious thing that the Fourth Form youngsters are always—"

"Who are you calling kids?"
"Yaas, wathah! If you apply that opprobrious expession to me, Lowthah, I shall feel called upon to give you a feafuhl thwashin,!"

"My idea is," said Digby, "that these Shell rotters ought to go back to bed. You know the old saying, that fools need more sleep than other fellows—"

"Then you are risking your health by getting up early," said Lowther.

"What I say is—"
"I say," exclaimed Herries suddenly; "look there!"

Herries was pointing towards the Head's garden. "At the little gate leading out of the quadrangle into the private precincts of the garden four youthful figures could be seen, which had just come from the direction of the New House. The School House fellows uttered a simultaneous exclamation.

"Figgins & Co!"
Tom Merry burst into a merry laugh.
"Ha, ha! Figgins has the same idea, kids! They're on the spot earlier than we are! Figgy is going to open the gate!"

"My hat!" exclaimed Blake. "The cheek of these New House kids! They know very well that the Head's garden is private, and juniors are not allowed in there!"

"Yaas, wathah! What a feafuhl nerve, you know!"
"But we were just going in," said Tom Merry.
"That's different, of course! We—"

"I say, let's go and collar them!" exclaimed Digby. "I think we may as well make it pax among ourselves—it's a School House affair, anyway—and just shift the New House bounders out of it. What do you Shell-fish say?"

"Good wheeze!" exclaimed Tom Merry immediately.
"It's like Figgins's cheek to think of forestalling us in this manner! Is it pax, Blake?"

"Yes, rather; come on!"
The School House seven broke into a run. Figgins had tried the gate and found it fastened, and he was preparing to climb over the wooden bars—an easy task—when the School House fellows arrived, panting, upon the scene.

Figgins & Co. stared at them in amazement.
"Hallo!" exclaimed Figgins. "What are you kids doing out so early in the morning? Rising-bell's only just started!"

"We're up to your little games, Figgy," said Tom Merry severely. "Is this what you call cricket; stealing a march on fellows like this?"

"I really don't know what you are talking about, Tom Merry!"

"What are you doing out of the New House so early in the morning?"

"Why, it's a lovely, fresh April morning—"

"April rats! I know what you're here for!"
"And what's that, Mr. Blessed Clever Merry?" asked Kerr sarcastically.

"You want to speak to Cousin Ethel!"

"I suppose you kids have had the cheek to come out for the same purpose?" Figgins remarked, looking disdainfully at the School House seven.

"Yaas, wathah! You appeah to forget, Figgins, that Ethel is my cousin, and therefore I have a wight to wegard her weally as a sort of pwivate pwperty!"

"My dear chap, she can't help being your cousin; and I'd be the last to remind her of it. The best thing you fellows can do is to hook it."

"Of all the feafuhl cheek—"
"Oh, get off! Travel; and take your face away with you!"

"Figgins, I feel called upon—"
"You'll feel sat upon soon," said Figgins darkly. "We're getting rather fed-up with the cheek of you School House wasters."

"Nuff said!" exclaimed Blake decidedly. "You're the party that's going to travel, Figgy; and the sooner you do it, the better it will be for your health!"

"Ha, ha! If you are looking for trouble—"

"Are you going, Figgins?"

"Oh, at once—I don't think!"

Tom Merry pushed back his cuffs.

"Lend a hand, kids, and we'll soon have these rotters gone!" he said. "We'll frog-march Figgins and Kerr and Marry, and you can roll Fatty Wynn along like a barrel; he's too heavy to carry. Now, then!"

"Right-ho! Give 'em socks!"

And the School House boys rushed to the attack. The odds were heavy against Figgins & Co., but they were game to the backbone. They put their backs to the gate, and stood shoulder to shoulder, and hit out right and left. Blake and Herries rolled on the ground and Tom Merry rolled over them. Lowther was added to the heap.

But then Digby and Manners gripped Marmaduke, and dragged him struggling from the gate. Arthur Augustus closed with Fatty Wynn, and the two went staggering and struggling to and fro. Tom Merry jumped up and fastened on Figgins. Blake grappled with Kerr and dragged him away from the gate, and they fought furiously under the elms, oblivious of their surroundings. Herries went to the aid of Tom Merry and seized Figgins. Taken two to one, Figgins fought gamely, but he had no chance. But he was not easily to be removed from the gate. He clung to the top bar with his hands and refused to be dragged off.

"Better come, Figgins," gasped Tom Merry; "it's only a question of time!"

"Rats!"

"Oh, come off!" panted Herries.

"Rats!"

"Yank him off!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Yank away!"

"Right-ho!"

Tom Merry and Herries each had a leg of Figgins in an iron grip, and they yanked away for all they were worth. Figgins clung desperately to the gate. Something had to go, and Figgins would have had to part with either the gate or his legs, had not a timely interruption come.

"Good-morning!"
It was a soft, sweet voice from the other side of the gate. Cousin Ethel stood there, looking across at the juniors with a charming smile.

CHAPTER 13.

Cousin Ethel's Idea.

TOM MERRY and Herries dropped Figgins's legs as if they had suddenly become red-hot. Figgins plumped on the ground and gathered himself up. The juniors separated, looking very red and flustered and decidedly sheepish. They stared at Cousin Ethel, and Cousin Ethel looked at them sweetly. They raised their caps, awkwardly enough.

"Good-morning! You are out for a walk early, aren't you?"

"Ye-e-e-es," stammered Tom Merry.

"Ra-a-a-ather," murmured Blake.

"You see—" stuttered Figgins.

"What a nice, fresh morning it is!"

"Yes; so nice after the rain," stammered Figgins.

Cousin Ethel looked surprised.

"But it hasn't been raining!"

"No more it has," said Figgins. "My—or—my mistake."

"Did you—did you notice that we were doing gymnastics as you came up?" asked Tom Merry boldly.

Cousin Ethel looked at him innocently.

"Was that gymnastics?"

"A—a sort of jiu-jitsu," said Blake, taking the cue from Tom Merry.

"Sort of Japanese gymnastics, you know.

You hang on to a gate, you know; or a parallel bar would do—"

"And the other chaps try to drag you off," explained Figgins.

"It's a rather rough game," said Tom Merry. "Makes a fellow rather ruffled and dusty, you know."

"Yes," assented Cousin Ethel; "it does, indeed!"

"People sometimes think chaps are fighting when they are playing that game," said Figgins diffidently.

"Do they really?" said Cousin Ethel.

"Weally, Figgins—"

Blake trod on D'Arcy's toe, as a hint to shut up. The swell of the School House gave a wail of anguish. Cousin Ethel looked at him.

"Whatever is the matter, Arthur?"

"Some wuff beast has just twod on my toe! I believe it was you, Blake! What did you twead on my toe for?"

"You utter idiot—I mean, quite a mistake, old chap—"

"That's all vewy well, but—"

"The fact is, Cousin Ethel," said Figgins hastily, "we came out to speak to you about that idea, you know. We remembered that you sometimes took an early morning walk, and we thought—"

"Thought it would be nicer for us all to come together," said Blake.

"To show how united we are on the subject," explained Tom Merry. "You know, we sometimes have little rows—just for fun, you know—"

"Do you really?" said Cousin Ethel.

"You see," said Blake, "those New House kids are so obstreperous at times that we regard it as a duty to set them down—"

"He means that we have to take our natural place as cock-house of St. Jim's," Figgins explained. "That sometimes leads to disputes—"

"You wished to speak to me?" said Cousin Ethel, cutting short what promised to grow into a decidedly warm argument.

"Yaas, wathah! You see—"

"This is how it is," said Figgins. "We debated the matter last evening in my study, and we came to the conclusion that we'd ask you to make that suggestion you were speaking about, to save time."

"We could knock the idea into shape a bit," explained Blake. "We don't mind a bit how much trouble we take."

Figgins glared at Blake, much to his astonishment.

"I say, is anything wrong, Figgins?"

"No, of course not."

"You didn't get hurt in that—that game just now?"

"Rats! I mean, no. You're interrupting Cousin Ethel."

"Not at all," said Ethel. "If you really wish me to make a suggestion—"

"That's it," said Figgins. "My idea is that we ought to make it Cousin Ethel & Co., and take our orders from Cousin Ethel."

Blake murmured "Rats!" under his breath. Tom Merry nodded.

"Oh, not at all!" said Cousin Ethel. "I am only going to just make a suggestion. Why not give a bazaar in the school?"

"A bazaar?"

The juniors looked at one another, wondering that they had not thought of it themselves. Considering the acknowledged superiority of the masculine intellect, it was really rather surprising.

"Yes, a bazaar," said Cousin Ethel. "You have stalls, you know, and sell things; and the things are contributed for the good of the cause. Miss Fawcett would send a lot of things—I have asked her—in—in case you should adopt my suggestion, you know; and you could all contribute or make something. I know you have a hobby club, and do fretwork, and things like that. You could make a lot of things to sell. I could knit things, too—comforters and things. My cousin Arthur knows how to knit, too."

"Bai Jove, Ethel, weally—"

There was a general giggle. D'Arcy had many ways that made him a conspicuous figure in the life at St. Jim's, but the juniors had never seen him knitting yet.

"You remember, Arthur, I taught you on a holiday once," said Ethel. "You learned to knit really well, and I hope you haven't forgotten."

"Oh, weally—"

"It's a jolly good wheeze!" exclaimed Figgins. "I knew Cousin Ethel would have a good idea. After this, who says there ought not to be votes for women?"

"I don't quite see the connection," said Herries, looking puzzled. "What has a bazaar to do with votes for women?"

"Nobody expects you to see anything, Herries, old chap. I say it's a good idea, and it's unanimously adopted," said Figgins rather hastily.

"Good!" said Tom Merry. "I vote for the bazaar."

"So do we all!" exclaimed Blake heartily. "The idea is simply ripping, and it will be immense fun. We can get permission from the Head to hold it in the great hall,

and there will be room for lots of stalls. We can each take one—"

"Yaas, wathah! I wathah fancy myself at a stall, you know."

"And I shall take one," said Cousin Ethel. "I think that for such a good cause all the school will come to the bazaar and buy things."

"All the juniors will," said Figgins significantly. "If any of them stay away—"

"They won't!" said Tom Merry. "I'll answer for the School House lot, anyway."

"You'd better answer for your own study, Tom Merry, and leave the House to me, as head of it," said Blake.

"Oh, don't be an ass, Blake! You know—"

"I am sure all the boys will come," said Cousin Ethel; "and I hope the seniors as well as the juniors. We shall have to consult about getting the things ready for the bazaar. Are you all agreed upon the plan?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I think I must go in to breakfast now. I am so glad we have been able to hit on a plan," said Cousin Ethel.

And the girl, with a bright smile and a nod, disappeared into the garden, and the juniors were left to discuss the plans for the bazaar.

CHAPTER 14.

The Collecting Committee

"B AZAAR?"

"Yes."

"Rats!"

It was Gore who said "Rats." But Gore was the only one. Every other fellow in the Shell jumped at the idea, and so did the Fourth Form. Even youngsters in the Remove and the Third Form jumped at it. And the Fifth Form condescended to say that it was rather a good idea. Even the grave and reverend seigniors of the Sixth were heard to remark that they would come and have a look at the affair.

In short, the idea caught on. All kinds of ideas, big and little, had emanated from Tom Merry & Co. during their adventurous career as dwellers in the ancient foundation of St. Jim's. It was admitted that the latest was as good as any. A bazaar for a charitable purpose was a good thing for a good object, and even the Head, apprised of the plan, approved of it. Ethel had, as a matter of fact, taken Mrs. Holmes into her confidence at the start, and the Head's wife was backing her up. After that, all of course was plain sailing.

"Such a noble object, dear," said Mrs. Holmes to the Head.

"Er—exactly," said the Head.

"So thoughtful of Ethel."

"Yes, indeed."

"So kind and generous of the boys."

"Very!"

"It really ought to be encouraged."

"Certainly—yes—er—yes!"

"Then they can have the lecture-hall for the bazaar?"

"Eh? The lecture-hall?"

"Yes."

"For the bazaar?"

"Certainly."

"Well, really, my dear—"

"Such a deserving object—"

"Yes, but really—"

"For so good a cause—"

"Yes, certainly, but—"

"And so, of course, they can have the lecture-hall?"

"Oh, yes, I suppose so! Yes, certainly, they can have the lecture-hall."

The Head's permission to use the lecture-hall for the laudable purpose of the bazaar was communicated to Tom Merry & Co. by Cousin Ethel. All was clear ahead now. The permission had been given for Saturday afternoon—a half-holiday—and by that time all was to be ready for the bazaar.

Tom Merry & Co. held frequent consultations in their studies and in the club-room in the School House. To the consultations Cousin Ethel frequently came, and frequently her presence was like oil on the troubled waters when the arguments were growing heated. But upon the whole the juniors kept the peace pretty well.

The idea had taken firm hold of their minds, and they were all anxious to please Cousin Ethel and make the bazaar a success, so House and study rows were put off for a more suitable time.

The task of collecting articles to be exposed for sale on the various stalls was really a herculean one. But the enthusiastic juniors did not shrink from it.

Tom Merry's old governess, Miss Priscilla Fawcett, came to their aid like a Briton. She was not able to come down to St. Jim's herself just then, but she sent all sorts and conditions of articles for the bazaar.

"We shall want a fearful lot of things, you know," said D'Arcy. "It is wathah selfish of Mannahs to wefuse to put up his camewa, which would waise quite a decent sum of money all by itself, but we can go wound the school collectin' up things, you know. Things the fellows don't want might be useful to othah fellows who haven't them, and, aftah all, anythin' is good enough to sell at a bazaar." "Something in that," agreed Tom Merry. "We'd better get up a collecting committee. By the way, what are you going to knit for sale, Gussy?"

Gussy gave Tom Merry an extremely haughty glance through his eyeglass.

"I wegard that as a most wiculous question, Tom Mewwy. I am not goin' to knit anythin' at all."

"But Cousin Ethel says you can knit—"

"I should uttably wefuse to do anythin' of the sort."

"I think it's mean of D'Arcy to wefuse his aid in such a noble cause," said Figgins. "Think of the poor Sunday School children, you selfish fellow. They are languishing in the foul slums of Huckleberry Heath—"

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Tom Merry. "There aren't any slums in Huckleberry Heath."

"Oh, that's only a figure of speech! I suppose the kids are poor, or they wouldn't want to be sent on a giddy treat. If D'Arcy wefuses to help—"

"But I don't wefuse to help, Figgins. I am quite willin' to take the lead in this affair, and diwect the whole mattah for you."

"Go hon!" said Figgins sarcastically. "We couldn't possibly think of putting you to all that trouble, Gussy. You'd find it too exhausting."

"I shouldn't mind that, for the good of the cause, Figgins. I am quite pwepared to sacrifice myself."

"But we're not prepared to sacrifice ourselves," said Tom Merry. "So we won't make you head cook and bottlewasher, Gussy."

"If you intend that wemark in a dispawagin' sense, Tom Mewwy—"

"Oh, I intend it in a Pickwickian sense!" said Tom Merry blandly. "Gentlemen, I propose that a vote of censure is passed upon Adolphus Algernon D'Arcy for his selfish conduct in refusing to knit socks for the starving children of Huckleberry Heath."

"Hear, hear!"

"I second that motion," said Blake.

"And I third it," said Figgins. "I say—"

"Pway don't be a set of silly asses, you know," said D'Arcy, in a tone of remonstrance. "What's the good of knitting socks for the starving youngsters? They can't eat socks, you know. If you give 'em socks—"

"We'll give you socks if you interrupt us again," said Figgins. "The vote of censure is passed and duly recorded."

"I wefuse—"

"Now, to get on with business—"

"Wait a moment, deah boys! If it is the opinion of the meetin' that socks should be knitted, I will get a knittin' machine fwom town—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I am quite willin' to blue a certain amount of cash for the good of the cause, and I weally think I could handle a knittin' machine in good style."

"Good! Gussy gets a knitting machine, and knits socks," said Figgins. "He can make me some while he's about it; I want some new ones."

"I don't know whethah I could get a machine big enough, Figgins," said D'Arcy doubtfully. "You see—"

"Oh, you go and eat coke!" said Figgins. "Who's coming on the collecting committee with me? No good losing time over it."

"Three will be enough," said Lowther. "Tom Merry, Manners, and myself will about fill the bill, I think."

"Seconded!" said Manners.

"Oh, rats!" said Figgins. "Better have a member from each party to save rows—myself, Tom Merry, and Blake."

"As a mattah of fact, Figgins, I am wathah inclined to wegard myself as bein' the pwopah person—"

"More rats! You two fellows come along, and some of you find a muzzle for Gussy while we're gone."

"Figgins, I weally—"

"Oh, come on, Merry and Blake!"

And the collecting committee set out. They thoughtfully took three large cricket-bags with them, to hold the articles they expected to collect for the bazaar. Tom

Merry also took a big money-box, for subscriptions towards purchasing further articles.

"We'll visit the seniors' studies first," said Tom Merry thoughtfully. "Fellows in the Sixth and Fifth will have more things to give away than juniors, you know, and the things will be more worth having."

"Something in that," assented Figgins. "Let's start at the top, with Kildare."

"Good!"

Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, and top of the Sixth, was a School House boy. He was in his study when the collecting committee presented themselves.

Tom Merry tapped at the door, and the pleasant voice of the St. Jim's captain bade him enter. The committee entered.

Kildare looked at them in some surprise. It was not often that the three rival leaders of the St. Jim's juniors were seen in peace together.

"Hallo! What do you kids want?" he asked cheerily.

The committee exchanged glances. The term "kids" could not be considered as precisely respectful. But they tactfully agreed to pass over it.

"We've come—" said Tom Merry.

"We've come—" said Blake.

"We've come—" said Figgins.

Kildare smiled pleasantly.

"Is that a part song you are practising, or what?" he asked. "Don't you think you might rehearse a little and get into tune before you come and work it off on a chap?"

"It's these School House bounders won't shut up," explained Figgins.

"You see, it's these Fourth Form kids will talk," said Tom Merry. "The fact of the matter is, Kildare—"

"That we're a committee—" said Blake.

"Appointed to collect—" began Figgins.

Kildare pointed to the door. The committee looked at it, and then at Kildare, and then at each other, and then at Kildare again.

"Well, what does that mean?" asked Figgins.

"Outside!" said Kildare.

"But—"

"I've got no time to waste," said the captain of St. Jim's. "If you have got anything to say, you should appoint a spokesman. Get out!"

"But we're a committee—"

"Appointed to collect—"

"Articles for the bazaar—"

"I'm busy. Outside!"

"But really, Kildare—"

"Outside!"

The captain of St. Jim's stretched out his hand towards a ruler. The collecting committee hastily withdrew from the study and closed the door. In the passage they glowered at one another.

"Not much good keeping on with this committee, unless you like to appoint me spokesman," said Blake.

"I wouldn't mind doing that," said Tom Merry, "only it's no good leaving a delicate matter like that in the hands of a Fourth Form fellow. You must see that for yourselves."

"I don't see anything of the sort," said Figgins. "A fellow's Form doesn't matter much, in my opinion, but I couldn't consent to leaving anything of any importance in the hands of a School House chap. That's the real difficulty."

Tom Merry laughed. He had a sense of humour, which came to the rescue sometimes when trouble loomed on the horizon.

"Suppose we send round notes to all the fellows," he suggested, "and ask them to send into my study all the things they can contribute to the bazaar?"

"That's a good idea," said Blake. "We'll just write a note, saying that all contributions will be thankfully received in Study No. 6—"

"In my study," said Figgins, "as far as the New House is concerned. Then we'll pool the lot afterwards."

"Very well, that's agreed."

And the committee adjourned to Tom Merry's study to write the notes, and reproduce them on Lowther's copying-press, and then to despatch them to the fellows in both houses.

ANSWERS



"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, "without bein' conceited, I weally do think I look wathah wippin'!"

CHAPTER 15.

A Curious Collection.

COUSIN ETHEL smiled as she met Tom Merry in the quad. after school on Friday. Tom raised his cap, and stopped to speak.

"Everything is going jolly well," he remarked. "There's a big hamper of things come down from Miss Fawcett, and a lot of them must have been selected by Mr. Dodds, I think, for they're good things and very useful—cricket bats and balls, and exercisers, and dumb-bells, and so on. Miss Fawcett has put in a lot of bottles of cod-liver oil, too, but I'm afraid they'll be left on our hands."

The girl laughed.

"Miss Fawcett is a kind old soul," she said. "And Mrs. Holmes is helping me very much. How about the collection you were making of things the boys don't want?"

"I think that's getting on nicely," said Tom Merry. "We sent round a lot of notes, you know, asking the School House chaps to dump into Study No. 6 all the things they can look out for the bazaar, after school to-day. That's the longest we can give them, as we must have all the things in hand to-morrow."

"Very true."

"I expect there'll be a good many things shoved into

Study No. 6," said Tom Merry. "Here's Blake; I'll ask him."

Blake stopped as he saw Cousin Ethel.

"Anything turned up in your study yet, Blake?" asked Tom Merry.

"I don't know," said Blake. "I haven't been there since school. The others haven't, either. If anybody's going to shove anything there, it must be there by this time, I expect. I was just going in to look at the things and begin sorting 'em over."

"Shall we go and see them?" asked Tom Merry, looking at Cousin Ethel.

The girl nodded brightly.

"Yes, I am anxious to see the collection."

She walked into the School House between Tom Merry and Blake. Many envious glances followed the two juniors from the other fellows.

They arrived at Study No. 6, and sounds were heard within. The door opened, and Gore, of the Shell, came out with a grin on his face.

"Hallo!" said Blake, looking at him suspiciously. "What have you been doing in my study, Gore?"

"Oh, I had your note!" said Gore airily.

"My note?"

"Yes, about the collection you wanted to make for the bazaar."

"Oh, I see! You've been taking something in to add to the collection?"

"That's it. A lot of fellows have been collecting and bringing the things here for the last hour. You'll find the study pretty full."

And Gore went rather quickly down the passage. His look and last words had roused an uneasy feeling in Blake's breast. He opened the door and looked into the study.

Tom Merry uttered an exclamation.

"My hat!"

Blake snapped his teeth. A dimple came into Cousin Ethel's cheek as she tried to suppress a laugh.

The study was indeed, as Gore had said, pretty full.

The note sent round by the collectors had evidently been taken in a somewhat humorous sense by the School House fellows.

They had been asked to contribute any things they might have which they had done with, but which might still be of use to others.

It could not be said that there had not been a liberal response to the appeal, though it did not come in exactly the way the contributors had anticipated.

The study was simply crammed with contributions.

But the contributions!

There were broken crockeries, split stumps, disabled chairs, cheap clocks that wouldn't go, old books with the covers torn off, worn-out boots and caps, battered silk hats and ripped neckties. They lay all over the table and the floor and the chairs. One particularly humorous contributor had taken the trouble of dragging a broken old sofa to the study, and it stood in the grate, with the stuffing trailing out of it over the floor. Another had contributed a cage containing a canary, which was well-known to belong to Mrs. Mimms, the house-dame, and must have been purloined from her room while she was busy below stairs.

"My only hat!" said Tom Merry

Blake grunted.

"The rotters!"

There were footsteps in the passage. Digby, Herries, and D'Arcy came along. They were looking curious.

"Hallo!" said Herries. "Gore just told us there were a lot of things in our study waiting to be sorted out—"

"Ha, ha!" roared Digby. "So there are! Look at 'em!"

Arthur Augustus adjusted his monocle and stared in amazement at the wonderful collection which almost barred ingress into Study No. 6.

"Bai Jove, Blake! What have you collected all this feahful wot here for?" he asked. "What are you going to do with it?"

"You—you—you— Blake remembered Cousin Ethel, and controlled himself. "Do you think I collected it, you duffer?"

"Yaas, wathah! You can't suppose it's goin' to be of any use— Hallo, here's Figgins! I say, Figgins, just look at this collection of Blake's, deah boy!"

"It's not my collection!" howled Blake. "Can't you understand—"

"Just look, Figgins, deah boy!"

Figgins looked into the study, and grinned.

"Same old joke," he said. "I've just found a similar collection in my study. It's in answer to the note we sent round."

"Bai Jove, you know, I wegard that as weally funny!"

"I wish I had some of the funny merchants here, that's all!" said Blake wrathfully. "I'd show some of them some more fun!"

"Bai Jove! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, don't cackle like that, Gussy! You remind me of a cheap alarm clock. What are we going to do with all this rubbish? You say you've got the same, Figgys?"

"Yes, our study over in the New House is crammed," grinned Figgins. "Old broken chairs and saucepans and things. There's a lot of humour in St. Jim's that we've never suspected the existence of, you see."

"It is really rather comical," said Cousin Ethel. "I hope none of you will be angry about it."

"Angry!" exclaimed Blake. "Certainly not. What do you think, Figgins?"

"Nothing like it," said Figgins. "It's a good joke. Would you care to come over and have a look at the collection in my study, Cousin Ethel? It's quite humorous."

"Oh, yes, I should," said Ethel. "I think I have time before tea."

"It's really funny, you know," said Figgins, as he walked Cousin Ethel off under the glowering eyes of the School House boys.

The latter did not seem to see the fun. They looked at one another, and D'Arcy was the first to break the silence.

"I have always wathah liked Figgins, in a way," he said. "But if this goes on I shall weally cease to wegard him with anythin' like wespect. The way that fellow cawwies off a chap's cousin undah his vevy nose is most exaspewatin'!"

"Of all the nerve—" said Blake.

"That's how I look at it," said Tom Merry. "I— Hallo! What on earth's Mellish got there? In the name of wonder—"

Mellish, of the Fourth, was coming along the passage. He had a sack over his shoulders, and was so busy carrying it that he did not notice the juniors standing there. Quick as thought Blake drew them into the study.

"It's some more contributions," he whispered. "We'll catch him on the hop."

And the juniors grinned and were silent.

Mellish came along, and turned in at the study door. He flopped the well-filled sack down upon the floor, and the contents shot out. A cloud arose from the heap. It was a mass of cinders, soot, and other rubbish, mingled with feathers and sawdust and shavings. Mellish had evidently taken some trouble to get together his contribution.

He did not see the wrathful juniors in the sack had been pitched down. Then he dropped the end of it hastily, and essayed to fly. But two or three strong pairs of hands had hold of him.

"No, you don't!" said Tom Merry grimly.

Mellish wriggled.

"What is this little lot for?" asked Blake sweetly.

"Oh—I—only—you see—"

"Oh, it's all right!" said Tom Merry. "Mellish is a humorist, that's all. It's very funny—very funny indeed; but not quite so funny as Mellish will look when we've rolled him in that stuff."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mellish struggled frantically.

"Let me go! I— It was only a joke! I—"

"Well, this is only another joke."

"Ow! I—I— Ow—ow!"

Mellish gasped and wriggled as he was rolled over in the soot and cinders. He was not released till he was as black as a nigger minstrel. He reeled out into the passage, followed by a roar of laughter from Tom Merry & Co.

"You—you rotters!"

"Give him another roll, kids!"

"Yaas, wathah! Give the wotthah anothah woll!"

But Mellish was gone. He had had enough. The rapid beat of his footsteps died away down the passage, and the humorist vanished. And the loud laughter of Tom Merry & Co. followed him.

CHAPTER 16.

The Bazaar.

THE great bazaar, gentlemen of St. Jim's is now open!

"Yaas, wathah!"

The scene in the great lecture-hall of St. Jim's was one of animation. The seats had been cleared away, and the great body of the hall left open for the famous bazaar.

The stalls were arranged through the length of the hall, and the articles—which did not include those piled up the evening before in Study No. 6—were exposed for sale in enticing array.

The hall was thronged. Seniors as well as juniors were there, and some of the masters had consented to give the bazaar a "look-in."

It was hinted that later on the Head himself would walk through the hall. A great honour, which the bazaarists very keenly appreciated.

Cousin Ethel was in charge of a stall upon which reposed boxes and piles of various kinds of sweets. There were all varieties of chocolate in boxes, tied with pretty ribbons. The chocolate had been bought in bulk, and tied up in fancy boxes, to be sold again at six times cost price, in the usual way of bazaars. D'Arcy presided at a stall which was piled up with knitted socks.

The knitting-machine had come down, and Arthur Augustus had simply slaved at it in his leisure time. The result was a variety of socks in endless number, sufficient to supply the wants of all St. Jim's for generations to come, and their sisters and their cousins and their aunts, as Blake humorously remarked.

Fatty Wynn had a stall spread with enticing eatables, which he had manufactured himself from raw material bought up cheaply in large quantities. Tom Merry's stall was conspicuous for cricket-bats and other athletic goods. There were two dozen stalls in all, all of them well provided.

Each member of Tom Merry & Co. had suggested that

Cousin Ethel would require assistance at her stall, and that he himself was the proper person to render that assistance; but each had been vetoed by the rest, and so Cousin Ethel had only the assistance of Mrs. Holmes.

But Figgins & Co. had plotted a plot with a number of juniors of the New House. Directly the bazaar was opened it was noticed that there was a rush upon Figgins's stall, which was provided with exercisers and dumb-bells and other things of the same kind dear, to the heart of schoolboys, mainly suggested by the judicious Mr. Dodds, the curate of Huckleberry Heath.

Figgins's stock was bought up by the loyal New House juniors in a remarkably short space of time, and Figgins, like Othello, found his occupation gone.

That was what the sage Figgins had planned. His stall being empty, there could be no harm in his strolling along to Cousin Ethel's stall, to see whether he could be of any use.

The girl greeted him with a smile and nod.
"Can I help you in any way, Cousin Ethel?" asked Figgins, in a casual sort of way.

Cousin Ethel looked doubtfully smiling.
"Is anyone looking after your own stall, Figgins?" asked Mrs. Holmes.

"I've finished there," explained Figgins. "I don't say I'm a better salesman than any other fellow present, but I have had a rush of business, you know."

"You don't mean to say that you're sold out already, Figgins?" exclaimed Cousin Ethel.

"Yes, indeed I am!"
"How delightful! This will be splendid for the Sunday-school! How quickly the things are selling, dear Mrs. Holmes!"

"Very quickly indeed!" said Mrs. Holmes, looking rather suspiciously at Figgins.

"I hope I can be of some help here," said Figgins blandly. "A fellow doesn't want to hang about at an empty stall when everybody else is busy."

"Oh, yes; I am sure you can find something to do, Figgins," said Cousin Ethel, wrinkling her smooth brow with deep thought.

"Anything?" said the delighted Figgins.
"You don't mind?"

"Mind?" said Figgins. "I should say not!"
"Then— you are sure you don't mind?"

"Not a bit!"
"Then you can go and help my Cousin Arthur sell the things on his stall," said Ethel demurely; "he doesn't seem to be having much success."

Figgins's face fell.
"Arthur! Gussy! Oh dear—I mean, oh, yes! I—I shall be delighted!"

Figgins did not look delighted as he made his way to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's stall. The swell of the School House had actually not sold a single pair of socks yet, and he was looking distressed. He urged the sale with all the persuasion he was capable of, but the obdurate fellows refused to listen to the voice of the charmer.

"Hallo, Figgins," said Arthur Augustus, as the New House junior came up, "how are you gettin' on?"

"Sold out!" growled Figgins.
"Bai Jove, that's wippin'! I don't think I shall get sold out in a hurwy! There doesn't seem to be any great demand for socks at St. Jim's. I'm inclined to believe that socks of the best quality and the greatest variety are weally a dwug in the market, you know."

"What on earth have you got that heap of rubbish for?" grunted Figgins. "I've come to help you sell 'em. But how on earth we're to get rid of all that rot—"

"That is weally kind of you, Figgins."
"Oh, rats! How can you possibly sell that bosh, now?"

"Weally, Figgins, you must wemembah that it was you who advised me to get that knitting-machine, and make all these wotten things."

"Did I? Then I was an ass, and you were another. But, I say, what do you say to lowering the price?"

"I'm chargin' a shillin' a pair."
"Make it twopence!"

"Bai Jove, that wouldn't pay cost pvice, you know!"
"Never mind. The cost price didn't come out of the funds, did it?"

"Oh, no! I stood it out of my own beastly pocket, you know!"

"Then it's all right! No good having a lot of socks left on hand. If you stood the cost price, Gussy, all the pairs that are sold mean a clear profit for the bazaar and the Sunday-school fund, however cheap we sell them. That's as clear as anything in Euclid."

D'Arcy looked rather puzzled. He did not quite follow Figgins's reasoning, but he was anxious to get rid of his stock, and willing to do all he could for the good of the cause. Figgins did not give him much time to think, either.

"Who says socks? Fine quality socks, twopence per pair, and twelve pairs a shilling!" said the generous Figgins.

"My hat," said Gore, "here's a bargain in socks! Why, they could be sold for more than that to any dealer in Rylcombe to sell again."

"Then there's a chance of a bargain for you!" said Figgins.

"You're joking!"
"No; honest Injun! Socks at twelve pairs a shilling, or three dozen pairs for eighteenpence!" said Figgins, growing more generous than ever at the prospect of a brisk trade. Juniors were crowding round the stall.

At that price D'Arcy's socks, which had bade fair to be a drug in the market, were quickly cleared off. The swell of the School House watched the clearing of his stall with great satisfaction.

"Bai Jove," he exclaimed, "I'm at liberty now, and I think I'll go and help Cousin Ethel!"
Figgins's jaw dropped a little.

"Hadh't you better go and help Tom Merry?" he said anxiously. "He looks like being done up with his exertions."

"Ladies first, Figgy!" said Arthur Augustus. "You can go and help Tom Mewwy, and give him my kind wegards. I will help Cousin Ethel."

"I say, Gussy, don't be mean, you know!"
"Mean!" said Arthur Augustus, stopping. "I fail to see the weason of that wemark, Figgins."

"You see, a chap like you who's rolling in money ought to go round buying things now he's finished selling," suggested Figgins. "Of course, if you don't want to part with any money—"

"Weally, Figgins, I nevah thought of that, and I shall certainly go wound and buy things," said Arthur Augustus.
"Will you come with me?"
"Not just at present. I'm going to help somebody else, now."

"You are weally an induswtiewous chap, Figgy. Don't you find it exhaustin'?"
"Oh, not at all!" said Figgins, darting away.
Cousin Ethel looked at him curiously as he rejoined her. "Weren't you going to help Arthur?" she asked.
"I've done it," said Figgins calmly. "I have a way of making sales, you know. I suppose it's a sort of knack, really. Gussy is sold out."
"Sold out already!"
"Yes. I helped him, you know. Now, you'll let me stay and help you, won't you?" said Figgins persuasively.
Cousin Ethel laughed.
"Well, yes; I suppose I ought to be glad to secure the services of such a wonderful salesman!" she exclaimed.
"You may certainly stay, Figgins."
And Figgins stayed. And he was happy for the rest of the afternoon. His assistance did not clear Cousin Ethel's stall so rapidly as it had cleared his own and D'Arcy's; but the sale was very good. Everybody came to buy of Cousin Ethel. Blake and Tom Merry gave Figgins all sorts of looks from their stalls, as he stood beside Cousin Ethel handing her things, and making himself generally useful. Figgins did not even notice it.
Needless to say, the bazaar was a huge success. The Head came in at last, and as sales showed signs of flagging, the generous doctor bought up heaps of unsaleable things himself, and the other masters were also tactful and liberal. There was hardly a thing left on the stalls at the close of the great bazaar. Fatty Wynn's stall was quite clear—though several fellows hinted that he ate more than he sold—an allegation to which colour was lent by the extraordinary and unexampled circumstance that Fatty Wynn could eat no tea after the bazaar was over.
"Bai Jove, it's weally a gweat and wippin' success, deah boys!" said D'Arcy, rising to his feet at the tea-table in the Fourth Form-room, after the bazaar—where all concerned in the great function were gathered to a little celebration. "I hear that about twenty-five pounds has been raised altogether!"
"Twenty-four pounds nineteen shillings and ninepence three-farthings," said Cousin Ethel.
"I stand cowwected," said D'Arcy. "Twenty-four pounds nineteen shillings and ninepence three-farthings have been raised for this extremely laudable object, and I fill my glass to dwink to the health of Cousin Ethel & Co., and the success of the Sunday-school tweat to the youngstahs of Hucklebewwy Heath!"
And the toast was drunk with enthusiasm.

THE END.

(Another long, complete tale of Tom Merry next Thursday, entitled "Tom Merry's Struggle," also a tale of Alan Wayward. Please do not fail to order your copy of "THE GEM" LIBRARY in advance. Price One Penny.)



In the Nick of Time.

"Wot cheer, mates!" shouted Chippy, in his hoarse tones. "Old 'ard a bit! Lemme come up!"

But the victorious band were deaf to the calls of their leader, and at this instant they disappeared at a point where a sloping wharf ran from the quay edge into the river.

"Bring 'im along to the other end o' the wharf!" commanded the red-haired boy. "Then we'll chuck him bang into the mud, an' see 'im scabble 'is way out!"

"Leave go, you fellows!" yelled Dick, fighting with tooth and nail to wrench himself free; but there were too many for him, and Chippy, who loved fair play and practised it, was too far behind. But, luckily for Dick, other help was at hand, or he would assuredly have been pitched straight into eighteen inches of foul, black mud.

A boat had been pulled from a ship in midstream to the wharf, and a tall gentleman landed from it as Dick was dragged past the spot.

"What, you, Dick?" shouted the new-comer. "What does this mean?" And, followed by the boatman, he made a dash at the group.

The wharf-rats threw down their captive and fled, and the gentleman picked Dick up.

"Thanks, Uncle Jim!" said Dick, puffing like a grampus. "If you hadn't lent a hand, those wharf-rats would have tipped me over into the mud."

Chippy Rigs Himself Out.

Three weeks later the Wolf Patrol, again on a Saturday afternoon, were busy in their beloved headquarters. They had flattened out a tracking-patch fifteen yards square. Dick had brought his bicycle, and the Wolves were studying walking, running, and cycling tracks across their patch, when they were joined by a stranger.

It was Chippy, and Chippy had been doing his best to provide himself with some sort of scout's rig, in the shape of shorts, hat, and boots. His shorts were rather on the queer side. He had only one pair of ragged trousers, and he did not dare to cut them down, or he would have had nothing for general wear, so he had obtained an old pair of corduroys from a bricklayer who lived next door.

Chippy was no tailor, so he had simply sawn off the legs to such a length as would clear his knees, and left it at that. The waist would have gone round him at least twice, so Chippy laid it over in folds, and lashed all tight with a piece of tarry string.

His hat was an old felt one of his mother's. It was the nearest thing he could rake up to a scout's broad brim, and he had hammered the edge with a big stone to make it lie

A REMINDER—

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"THE BOYS' HERALD"

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flat. His boots were borrowed from his mother also. His ordinary boots, heavy and clumsy, with hobnails as big as pea-nuts, seemed to him very ill-suited for the soft, swift, noiseless tread of a scout, so he had replaced them with an old pair of elastic-sided boots intended for female wear.

The toes were the worst bother. His mother was a long-footed woman, and the toes of the boots sailed ahead of Chippy's feet, and turned up, after the style of the Middle Ages, as depicted in history books, and went flip-flop-flap before him as he walked. And so Chippy had come to visit the Wolf Patrol as a friend and a brother.

"Hallo, who's this?" cried Arthur Graydon, looking up from the tracking-patch.

The others looked up, too, and some of the boys raised a great shout of laughter.

"What do you want here?" went on Arthur, stepping forward, patrol-flag in hand.

The flag told Chippy that he stood in presence of the patrol leader, and he gave the full salute. But Arthur did not return it.

"Who are you?" demanded Arthur.

"My name's Slynn," replied the other.

"They gen'ly call me Chippy."

He announced himself in his usual husky notes. It seemed as if Chippy was bothered with a perpetual cold, which had settled in his throat. Perhaps it came from living in the continual damp of Skinner's Hole.

"And what do you want here?" went on another.

"I come over wi' a little challenge," growled Chippy. "Our patrol 'ud like to have a fren'ly try wi' yourn at any sort o' scoutin' ye like"

"Patrol!" cried Arthur, in astonishment. "What's a rum-looking beggar like you got to do with a patrol? What patrol?"

"Raven Patrol o' Skinner's 'Ole," announced Chippy.

The Wolves received this with a shout of laughter, but Chippy remained as solemn as a judge.

"I like that," said Arthur. "Do you suppose anyone will take notice of a patrol you wharf-rats would set up? Why, I know you now! You're the fellow that blacked my eye the other week, confound you! It's like your cheek to come here! You'd better clear out of this!"

"Well," replied Chippy, "wot if I did black yer eye? I did it fair and square. I stood straight up to yer. Ye'd a blacked mine if yer could! Wot yer gousin' about?"

How Chippy Bamboozled the Wolf Patrol.

Chippy had observed how clear a trail he left, and when he came to the high-road, he thought it was about time to throw his pursuers out a little, for they could travel much faster than he could go in the tracking-irons. So at the hedge of the high-road down went his head, and up went his feet, and he walked across the smooth, hard road on his hands, leaving no trace, or such a trace as the Wolf Patrol were not yet clever enough to pick up.

With the tracking-irons safely hoisted in the air, he went quite thirty yards before he turned himself right side up again, and scuttled off. He went another mile, and practised the same manoeuvre once more, and then he crept very warily forward, for the land was rising to a ridge. Unless he crossed this ridge with the utmost caution; the boys behind him on the heath would see his figure against the skyline. He marked a place where the ridge was covered with gorse-bushes, and through these he wriggled his way, receiving a hundred scratches, but troubling nothing about them.

(These are extracts from THE BOYS' HERALD new story, and refer to the incidents depicted in the stirring picture reproduced on this page.)

If you would like to read more about Chippy you should get "THE BOYS' HERALD" that is now on sale everywhere.

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The ONLY NEW AND ORIGINAL SCHOOL TALE by this famous author.



THE TEMPEST HEADLAND

A SPLENDID NEW SCHOOL TALE.

By S. CLARKE HOOK.

READ THIS FIRST.

Billy Barnes, Cyril Conway, and Snowy White Adonis Venus are three great chums at Tempest Headland School. Dr. Buchanan, the headmaster, finds them very troublesome pupils; as does also Herr Ludvig, the German master. Venus is a black boy, and is taken as a fag by Graft.

The chums wage continual warfare on Mopps, the school porter, who is very unpopular. Snigg—a sneak—having heard Cyril and Venus planning an owl-hunt on the roof, dresses up as a ghost; but, instead of frightening the chums, they frighten him, and he slips and falls through a skylight on to a dinner-table, round which Mopps and some guests of his are sitting. One of the latter—Maggie, a buxom widow—makes the most of opportunity, and throws herself into the arms of one, Henry—Mopps's cousin—crying: "Save me!"

(Now go on with the story.)

Mopps is Undeceived.

"Save you, lassie!" growled Henry, seating her on his knee and placing his arm round her waist. "Why, that's just what I want to do. I want to save you from all harm all the days of my life; but you see, I can only do that if you will be my wife."

"Oh, Henry, this is so sudden!" declared Maggie, holding up her face in such a tempting position, that Henry, being human, took advantage of the situation.

"I don't know about being sudden, my dear," observed Henry. "It hasn't been sudden to me, I can tell you."

"Bust me!" gasped Mopps.

- At that critical moment Dr. Buchanan hurried into the study to see what was the cause of the awful smash, and he was not a little surprised to see Snigg, wrapped in a sheet, sitting in a dish of stew, for that worthy was so dazed by the fall that he only gazed blankly at the doctor, and sat where he had fallen.

"Sir!" roared Mopps. "I've been treated in a most shameful manner, and—"

"What has happened, Henry?" demanded the doctor, turning to the farmer, whom he had known since boyhood. He knew that Mopps would be fearfully long-winded over such a story as would have to be told.

"If you please, sir," answered Henry slowly, "there's a young gent fallen through the skylight, and— Well I'm blown! Here comes two more of 'em!"

Henry was perfectly correct. Venus and Cyril, in their anxiety to see whether Snigg had broken his neck or not, ventured on the sloping roof, then they also slipped, and went tobogganning through the broken skylight to drop on the top of Snigg, rendering bad ten times worse. Maggie did not scream this time, but perhaps that was because Henry's arm was round her waist.

"It's fair raining boys, isn't it, sir?" exclaimed Henry, so happy in having gained Maggie's consent that he wanted no one to be in trouble.

"It is perfectly scandalous!" cried the doctor. "What were you doing, Snigg?"

"Of course, I get all the blame!" blubbered Snigg, who had an idea that he was going to get something more than blame.

"I report these two boys for dropping on my head, sir."

"Did they push you through the skylight?"

"Yes, sir! It was all through them. They are the worst boys in the college."

"What were you doing on the roof?"

"I was—in the execution of my duty—I—er—I had to go on the roof."

"You had better be careful what you are saying, boy!"

"I thought I smelt fire, sir, and I went on the roof to see if the chimney was on fire."

"Why is that sheet wrapped round you?"

"I—er—have a cold, sir, and—"

"That will do. It is a lamentable thing that you never speak the truth. Did you push him through the skylight, Cyril?"

"No, sir; we never touched him."

"Why were you on the roof?"

"We were trying to catch an owl that we had heard hooting, and we saw a sort of ghostly form which, on further investigation, we discovered was Snigg. At that moment he went sliding down the sloping roof and dropped through the skylight into Mopps's stew."

This last word was pronounced something like Mopps pronounced it, but it did not make the doctor smile.

"After that, sir," continued Cyril, who could easily see the doctor was not satisfied, "we got on the sloping roof to see if Snigg had broken his little neck, and a similar calamity befell us. We went waltzing through the skylight and dropped on Snigg."

"Do you still maintain that they pushed you through the skylight, Snigg?"

"As I say, sir, they caused me to fall through it. They startled me, and I slipped."

"That is a very different story to the one you just told."

"Perhaps you misunderstood me, sir."

"Nothing of the sort. You told me a deliberate falsehood. How can I believe a boy who always speaks falsely? I believe Cyril, because, he always tells me the truth, no matter what trouble it will get him into. I suppose you went on the roof to frighten them, and that is why you were wrapped in that sheet."

"Well, it was something like that, sir."

"Then why did you not tell me like an honourable boy? I can assure you it would have been far better for you if you had done so. For telling me a deliberate falsehood, your next half-holiday will be stopped. Get off the table!"

"Thank you, sir! Good-night!"

Snigg was about to bolt from the room, thinking he had got off remarkably lightly; but the doctor ordered him back.

"That punishment is for your falsehood, and has nothing to do with the punishment I shall administer for your having gone on the roof."

"Beg pardon, sir," exclaimed Henry, with his arm still round Maggie's waist, though she tried to remove it, because of the doctor's presence. "I hope you will pardon the young gents this time. You have known me since a boy, sir, and you have done me many a good turn, though I can't recollect ever having asked a favour of you before this. I hope you will grant it, and not punish them. I will willingly pay for the skylight."

"I don't understand you, Henry. Here these boys have completely spoilt your supper. I wished you to have a pleasant evening together, and they have not only spoilt your supper, but they must have frightened your lady friends."

"That's just what I'm thankful for, sir," said Henry. "You see, Maggie was so startled that she sort of fell into my arms, and it made me say what I've been wanting to say for years and years. If you only knew how thankful and happy they have made me, you would forgive them. You see, sir, Maggie has promised to be my wife."

NEXT
THURSDAY

TOM MERRY AND ALAN WAYWARD.

(Continued).



TEMPEST HEADLAND

The Only New and Original School Tale.
By S. CLARKE HOOK.

"You oughtn't to speak like that, Henry," said Maggie. "A gentleman in the doctor's position can have no interest in the affairs of people like us."

"You are quite mistaken, Maggie," said the doctor kindly. "I have great interest in both of you. How could it be otherwise when I have known you for so long? I wish you every happiness, and I think you have both chosen wisely. What is more, I am certain that Mrs. Buchanan and my daughter will be very pleased to hear the news. But you see, Henry, lads must be punished for their misdeeds."

"Nasty fall, sir. Must have hurt 'em. I'm so downright happy myself that I can't bear to see anyone in trouble, especially when their trouble is just what brought my happiness. I will gladly make the damage—"

"No; I will not allow that," interposed the doctor. "But your sentiments are very creditable to you, Henry, and in consideration of what you have said, I will pardon them, and I will bear the loss. There is just one thing that I would point out to you, Snigg, because under all the circumstances I shall not punish you for your falsehood. I know the man who has pleaded for you to be a thoroughly honourable and straightforward man. Had it been otherwise, I should certainly not have granted his request. Bear that in mind, my lad. Remember that a falsehood is a contemptible crime. Going on the roof was a very foolish and wrong action, because you know perfectly well that it has been forbidden; but to speak falsely about the matter is a crime. I congratulate you, Henry, and feel sure that you have both chosen very wisely. I will speak to you further on the subject. Good-night! Get to bed, boys!"

"But where do I come in?" gasped Mopps. "I have nursed a hadder in my breast!"

"Poor, unlucky hadder!" murmured Cyril, who was not obeying the doctor's order about getting to bed as promptly as he ought to have done.

"Henry, you are a robber! You've robbed me of all I hold dear, and this world's goods. I've been deceived, and you would never have entered my 'ome had I known that you was false. You knew where my 'eart was—"

"Port side of your bussom," observed Cyril. "You varmint! I'll make you pay for this night's work!" cried Mopps.

"Blest if I know what the man is talking about!" exclaimed Henry. "If you are referring to Maggie, I'm mighty certain that she would never have married you!"

"That's your pride and conceit!" "I don't say she's wise in choosing me, still, I have a comfortable home on my farm to offer her, and you have only got the clothes you stand up in; besides, you are old enough to be her father!"

"Begoni! Get hout! Never let me see your false face no more!"

"Well, I tell you what it is, Maggie!" exclaimed Henry. "It's getting a bit late now, but to-morrow you and your lady friend and me will all have dianer at the hotel. I'll order that dinner to-morrow morning, and then we will go up the river in a boat. Good-night, Mopps! I don't bear you malice for what you've said, but to think— Haw, haw, haw! Good-night!"

"But where do I come in?" growled Mopps, as his guests left the room. "It's a crool world, and I'd cut my throat if—if my razor wasn't so blunt!"

"Can easy sharpen dat razor for you, Mopps," said Venus.

"Clear hout!" yelled Mopps, giving Venus a kick that sent him flying through the doorway, and it was that unfortunate kick that got Cyril into trouble, for, seizing the jug of beer that was on the table, he emptied it over Mopps' head, and when that little incident was reported to the doctor, Cyril got his Saturday afternoon stopped.

It so happened that Dr. Buchanan and his wife were going to spend Saturday afternoon and evening with the vicar, and the doctor knew that Cyril might be tempted out, especially as the afternoon promised to be fine. The other masters would all be out, and the doctor would never have thought of asking one of them to keep an eye on the captive, so he ordered him into his study.

"Conway!" he exclaimed. "I am going out this afternoon. I find you will be alone in the college. Do you pledge me your word that you will not leave the classroom?"

"Yes, sir!" "Thank you. You can go."

Cyril did; all the same he did not like the arrangement, because he particularly wanted to go out. He always felt like that on half-holidays, and there is not the slightest doubt that he would have gone out had he not given the promise. As it was, Billy and Venus went without him, and spent the afternoon rowing on the river.

The unlucky Cyril spent it in the classroom, and was watching the passing vessels through his telescope, which he had taken the precaution of bringing in, because he knew that the task the doctor had set him could be rattled off in an hour. He was doing the watching first, and was particularly interested in a sailing vessel's manoeuvres as she rounded the point against a wind that was blowing off shore.

She had just disappeared from view, and Cyril was about to put his telescope down—it was a birthday present from his mother, and a very good one—when beyond the summit of the cliff, he saw a rowing boat upon the water, and in that boat he saw a girl waving something.

Another good look convinced Cyril that it was Lily, the doctor's daughter, and that if there were oars in the boat, which he doubted, because Lily could row, she was unable to use them.

Now, Cyril knew that the tide was at its height, or just turned, and he also knew that the wind would inevitably carry that boat out to sea.

Placing his glass in his locker, he darted from the room and through the gates, hoping that Mopps had not seen him; though he did not really care much under the circumstances. Cyril was a clear-headed lad. He had pledged his word to remain in the classroom, but would not have been such an idiot as to have remained there if, for instance, the room had caught fire. To his way of thinking, this was a far more serious matter, and he raced to Tempest Headland.

"It's my only chance," he muttered, between his clenched teeth. "I cannot possibly reach her any other way. It would mean swimming a mile, and the boat would have drifted four. Dare I do it? Dare I take that awful leap?"

"I don't believe I dare."

The doctor did it to save the life of Venus, and I called him a maniac. It was madness! I shall fail at the last. That awful rush through space, with death, perhaps, at the end of it. And my mother—what would she feel? Yet—well, dare I take that awful dive? A man has done it; but then, he is brave and good. I am neither."

As these thoughts flashed through the lad's brain, he reached the summit of the cliff, and gazed down the terrible height. The waves were bursting against the face of the cliff, but the height from the surface of the water was terrible to one who contemplated diving down it.

He glanced at the boat, which was being slowly but surely drifted out to sea. (Another long instalment next Thursday.)

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