In this Number: THE JOKER OF ST. JIM'S.

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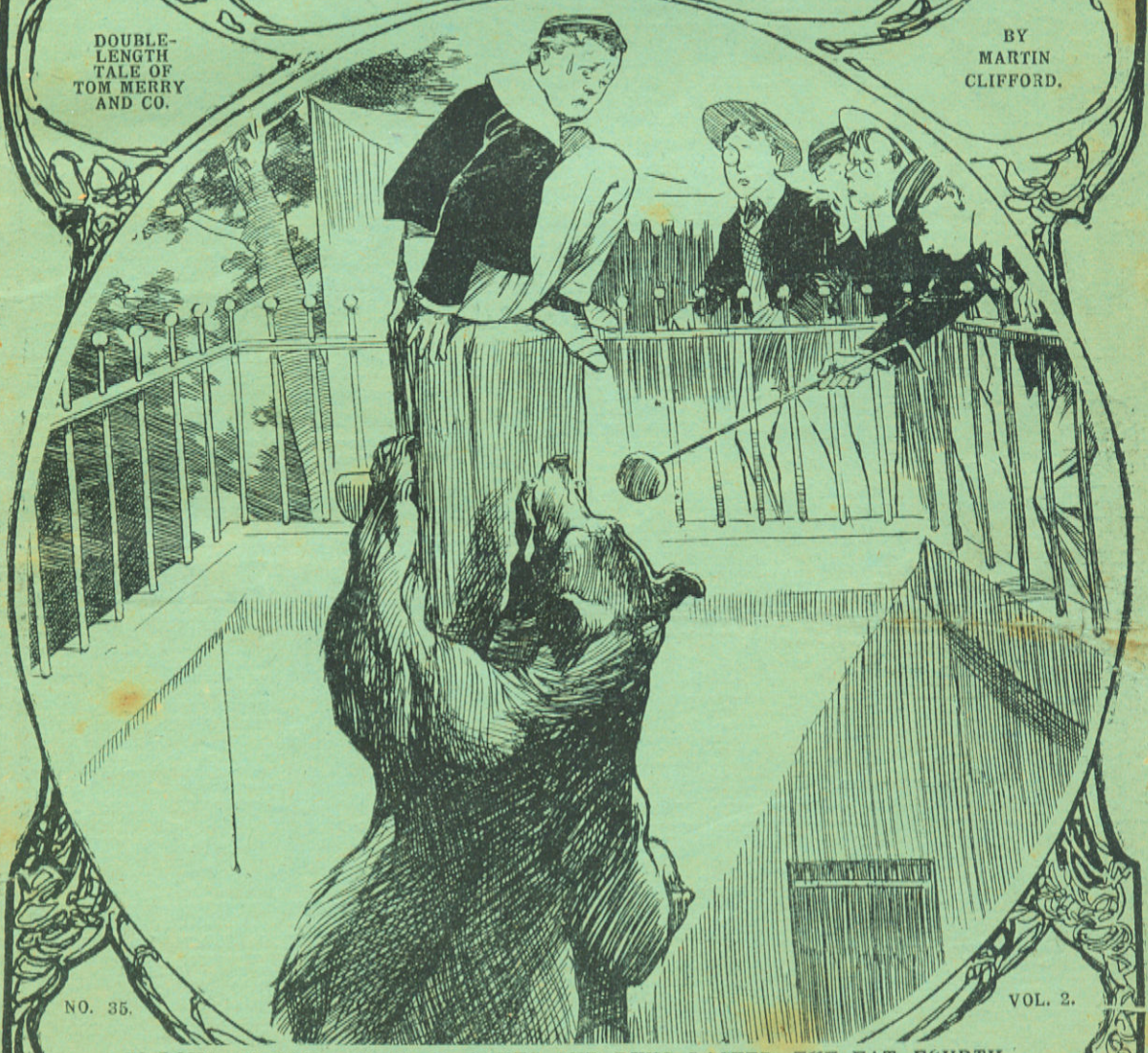
BY MARTIN CLIFFORD.



NO. 35. VOL. 2.

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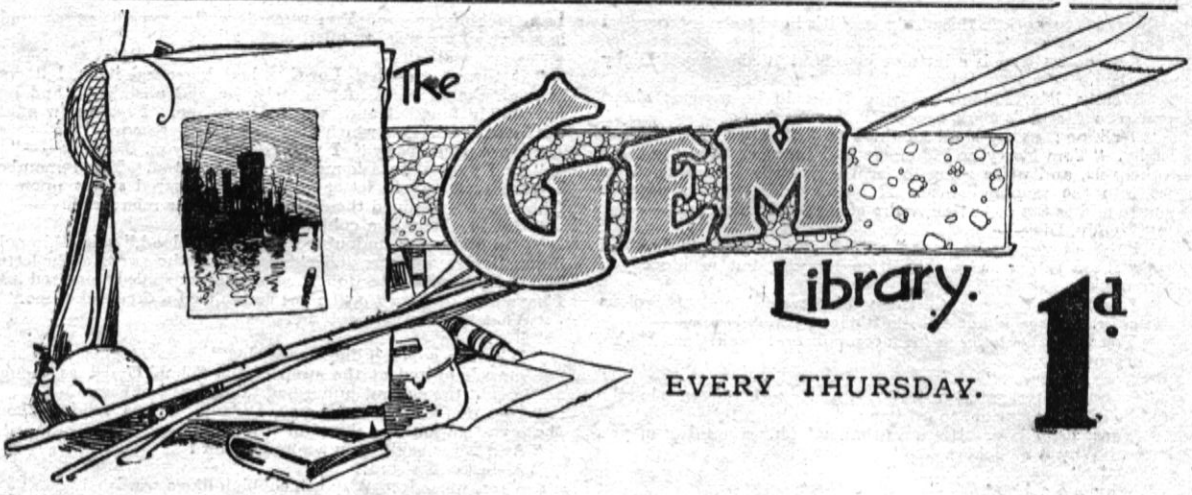

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THE JOKER OF ST JIM'S

A Splendid Long, Complete Tale of Tom Merry & Co. BY MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1.

D'Arcy the Funny Man.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY glanced round Study No. 6, in the School House at St. Jim's, and coughed slightly.

Blake, Herries, and Digby were busily writing at the table. They did not look up. They knew what that little cough meant, and they kept their eyes steadily fixed upon their work, and their pens never ceased to travel for a moment.

D'Arcy coughed again, a little louder than before.

The pens scratched on. Never had the chums of Study No. 6 seemed so deeply immersed in their work. Arthur Augustus frowned slightly, and coughed a third time. Still the three juniors were deaf.

"I say, deah boys," said D'Arcy, at last.

"Eh? Did you speak, Gussy?" said Jack Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Then don't!"

And Blake's pen scratched on. D'Arcy screwed his monocle into his eye, and gave Blake a withering glance; which, unfortunately, only took effect on the back of his head, as Blake was bending over his work again.

"Weally, Blake——"

"Don't interrupt, Gussy, when a chap's doing German," said Blake, imploringly. "Can't you give your silk hat another polish, or something, and be quiet?"

"Weally, deah boy——"

"Der Knecht hat erstochen den edeln Herren," said Blake, in self-defence.

"Pway don't spout that wubbish to me, Blake."

"Der Knecht war selber ein Ritter gern."

"Weally, you know, I think you might put that wubbish aside for a minute, deah boy, when I have somethin' wathah important to say," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"If you call Uhland's Ballads rubbish, Gussy, I'm afraid we shall have to give you the order of the boot from the School House Literary Society."

"I withdwaw the word wubbish, but weally I should like you to listen to me. I wanted to ask you——"

"If it's something about going to the Zoo, that's all arranged for Wednesday afternoon. We've arranged it, and we can't alter the arrangements, so don't talk about it. Let a chap get on with his work."

"Right-ho!" said Herries, looking up. "It isn't often any-

body wants to work in this study, and it's hard to be interrupted when we do start."

"I suppose Gussy is a bit nervous about Wednesday," Digby remarked.

"Weally, Dig, I don't see why I should be nervous about a twip to Wegent's Park to see the Zoo."

"Well, no; as we shall be there to look after you," agreed Digby. "Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther have promised to help us, and we're going to form a ring round you when we get into the monkey-house. If any keeper tries to capture you to add to the collection, we're going to biff him, and——"

"Weally, Dig——"

"So don't you be nervous," said Digby encouragingly. "I know it's a rather risky expedition for you, but we'll see you through."

"I wefuse to weply to these dispawagin' and fwivolous wemarks. I was about to ask Blake a conundwum——"

"You were about to ask me a conundrum!" said Jack Blake, in measured tones.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You've interrupted my work, and bothered me in the middle of a translation, to ask me a conundrum?"

"Yaas, deah boy. It's a wathah wippin' conundwum, you know. Why is a cobblah——"

"Scat!"

"Why is a cobblah——"

"You—you image! As if it isn't bad enough to have Lowther of the Shell setting up as a funny man!" said Blake. "I've always been absolutely determined on one point; that I never would stand a funny man in my own study. How Tom Merry can stand it in his is a mystery to me."

"Why is a cobblah——"

"Cheese it!" roared Blake. "I tell you I won't hear it!"

"Why is a cobblah like a sawfish?"

Jack Blake jumped up and seized the inkpot. D'Arcy jumped up, too, in great alarm.

Blake took aim.

"Where will you have it?" he inquired.

"Weally, Blake——"

"Necktie, chivvy, or waistcoat?" asked Blake. "I'm not particular, so long as you get it."

"Pway don't be a wuffian!"

"Will you promise, honest Injun, never, never to ask a conundrum again while you remain at St. Jim's?" demanded Blake.

"Bai Jove! Certainly not!"

"Then here goes!"

Blake made a threatening movement with the inkpot. Arthur Augustus skipped out of the study in a twinkling. Gussy had heaps of pluck, but he never could face having his waistcoat inked. Blake burst into a laugh and sat down again.

"I can't understand Gussy lately," he said; "the last day or two he's been awfully thoughtful, and he seems to be thinking something out. And he has started in the funny man business. This is the second conundrum I've heard him ask to-day."

"And he made a pun at breakfast," said Digby. "Something about a house-boat and a boat-house."

"And he was telling a funny story in the common-room last night," grunted Herries. "I couldn't see where the joke came in, myself, and nobody else could except D'Arcy, but he was laughing a lot himself."

"I suppose he's caught it from Lowther," said Blake wrathfully. "These things are catching. I'll teach him to ask me conundrums!"

The door of the study opened gently, and an eyeglass, with D'Arcy's face behind it, looked in.

"I say, deah boys!"

"Hallo! You're there, are you?" grunted Blake.

"Yaas, wathah! Why is a cobblah——"

"Get out!" roared Blake.

"Why is a cobblah like a sawfish?"

Blake jumped up. The next second a cushion biffed on the door, and it crashed shut. But the swell of the School House had dodged away in time. He did not open the door again. Jack Blake was evidently in earnest, and not in a humour to receive a conundrum, however ripping, with anything like politeness.

"Bai Jove!" murmured D'Arcy. "It is a cuwious thing that a pwophet is nevah without honah except in his own countwy, and a fellow is appweciated more anywhere than in his own study! I have wemarked that before, and it is vewy cuwious. People put up with Monty Lowther's wotten jokes, and I weally don't see why they shouldn't appweciate a weally good one when they hear it. Skimpole, deah boy."

Skimpole of the Shell stopped as D'Arcy hailed him. Skimpole was looking very serious. The brainy man of the Shell had a huge wrinkle in his forehead, and was blinking through his glasses in a portentous way. He extended a bony forefinger and prodded D'Arcy on the chest.

"I'm glad to see you, D'Arcy," he said. "I have, in fact, been looking for you. You remember the expedition we made in search of my missing microscope?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"It turned out that Lowther had borrowed it, and it was here all the time. Unfortunately, he had mislaid it, and has only lately found it and returned it to me. I have now made the investigation for which I needed the microscope."

"Have you weally! I wanted to ask you, Skimmy——"

"You wanted to ask me about it? Good. You remember I discovered an old letter with suspicious red stains upon it. I have now examined these stains under the microscope——"

"Good! Why is a cobblah——"

"The stains are undoubtedly those of blood," said Skimpole impressively. "I was undecided whether the owner of the letter had committed a dreadful crime, or simply spilled some red ink. I have now decided that he has committed a dreadful crime."

"Yaas? Why is a cobblah——"

"Eh?"

"Why is a cobblah like a sawfish?"

Skimpole stared at the swell of the School House as though he thought the elegant junior had taken leave of his senses.

"I—I don't understand you, D'Arcy. I was talking about the investigation of a dreadful crime."

"And I was askin' you a conundwum?"

"A—a conundrum?"

"Yaas, wathah! Why is a cobblah like a sawfish?"

"Really, D'Arcy, this is no time for jesting. The tell-tale stains cry aloud for vengeance, and I have resolved to take up my amateur detective work again, and pursue the unknown criminal to the bitter end. Is this a time for conundrums?"

"It's a wathah wippin' conundwum," said D'Arcy. "The answer is awfully good. Why is a cobblah like a sawfish?"

But Skimpole did not reply. He wrinkled his brows again in deep thought, and walked off, evidently forgetful of D'Arcy's presence. Skimpole, the amateur detective, was on the track once more. Arthur Augustus jammed his monocle into his eye and looked after the weedy form of the genius of St. Jim's, with indignation in his glance. He was stilll standing there, looking after Skimpole indignantly, when three cheerful-looking youths came down the passage, and D'Arcy received three severe slaps on the shoulders, so suddenly that he jumped clear of the floor and uttered a startled howl.

CHAPTER 2.

A Funny Story!

TOM MERRY, Manners, and Lowther—the chums of the Shell—grinned at Arthur Augustus as he swung round in alarm. D'Arcy rubbed his shoulders, and stared speechlessly at the Terrible Three.

"Feeling pretty fit?" asked Tom Merry genially.

"You—you wuffian——"

"Why, what's the matter now?"

"You have stwuck me wuffly, and made my beastly shouldahs ache."

"Thought you were having a snooze, standing up, like a horse," explained Monty Lowther. "Woke you up in case anybody should come along and biff you."

"Weally, Lowthah; but I am glad to see you fellahs," said D'Arcy, changing his tone suddenly. "I wegard you as wuff wottahs, but I want to ask you——"

"Is it tin?" said Tom Merry, feeling in his pockets. "That's all right. I've got something left over from my last remittance. How much?"

"Thank you vewy much, Tom Merry, but I don't want to bowwow any tin."

"What do you want, then?"

"I want to ask you chaps a conundwum——"

"Oh, don't! That's Lowther's province."

"My conundwums are not wotten like Lowthah's conundwums, 'Why is a cobblah like a sawfish'?"

"Is he?" asked Tom Merry innocently.

"Yaas, wathah, in a certain sense, or the conundwum could not have been composed. Why is a cobblah like a beastly sawfish?"

"Have you ever noticed any resemblance between a cobbler and a sawfish, Manners?"

"Never!" said Manners. "I took a photograph of a cobbler once, but I have never had a chance to snap a sawfish."

"Have you ever noticed a resemblance between a cobbler and a sawfish, Monty?"

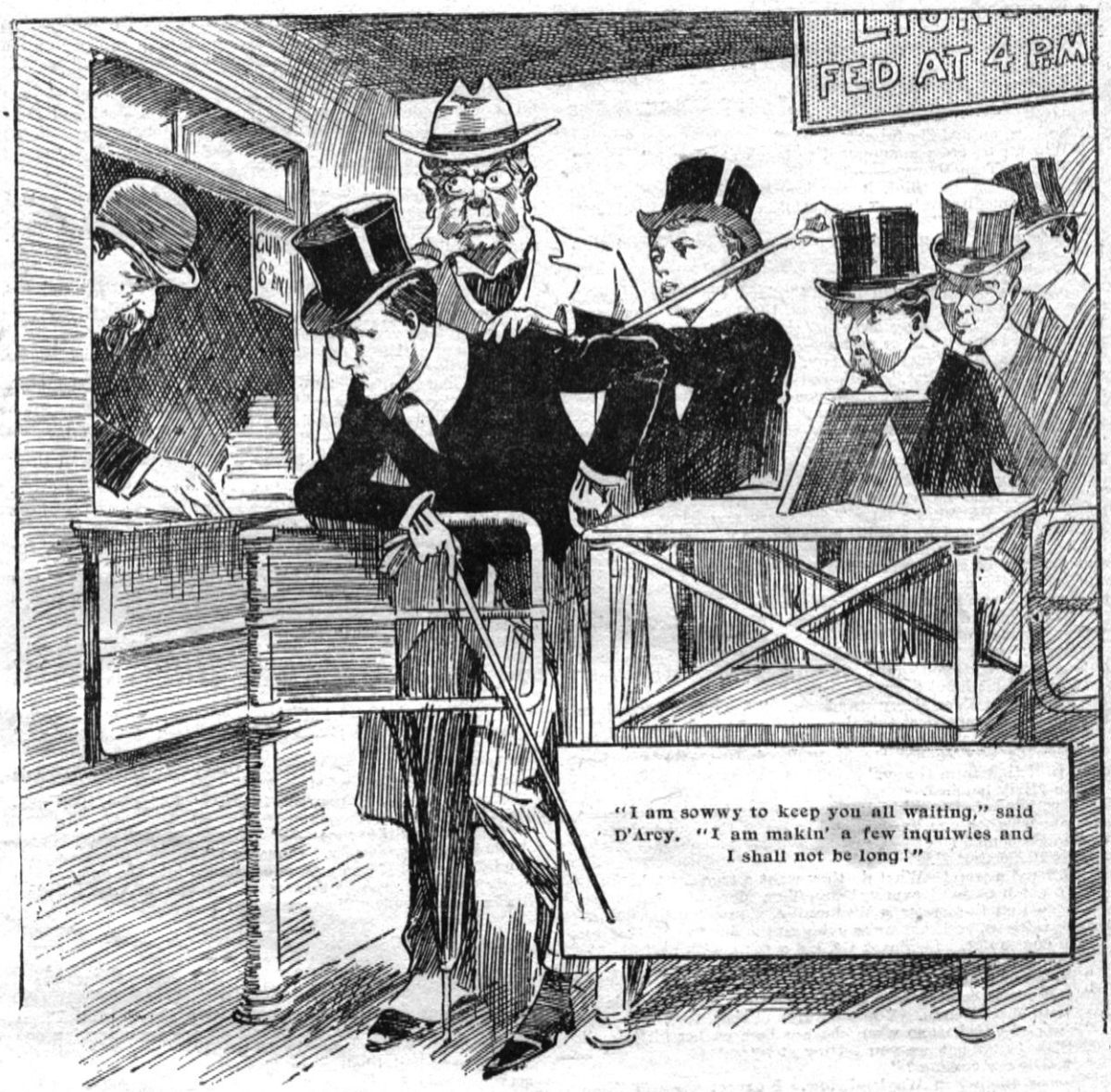
"Never!" said Lowther solemnly; "all the cobblers I have been introduced to belong to a species altogether distinct from the sawfish species."

"Oh, pway don't talk wot, deah boys! Why is a cobblah like a sawfish?"

"But if he isn't like a sawfish——"

"But he is, in a certain sense: hence the conundwum. It's a widdle, you know. Why is a cobblah like a sawfish, deah boys?"

"Give it up," said Tom Merry.



"I am sowwy to keep you all waiting," said D'Arcy. "I am makin' a few inquiwies and I shall not be long!"

"Do you give it up, too, Mannans?"

"Yes, rather! Cut short the agony, please."

"Do you give it up, Lowthah?"

"Yes; quick."

"Because one wode a horse and the othah whododendwon," said D'Arcy.

"Eh?"

"Because one wode a horse, and the othah whododendwon."

"Because one rode a horse and the other rhododendron," repeated Tom Merry slowly and meditatively. "That sounds like the answer to a riddle. But what on earth has it to do with a cobbler and a sawfish?"

Arthur Augustus looked a little perplexed.

"It doesn't sound quite so wippin' as it did before," he admitted. "Pewwaps I have got the w'ong answah."

"Yes, I think it very probable you have," grinned Tom Merry. "You ought to sort out your questions and answers before you spring conundrums on harmless people."

"Yaas, I am afwaid I have forgotten the cowwect answah," confessed D'Arcy. "It was the wuff wudeness of those wottahs in No. 6 that dwove it out of my head. That is certainly not the wight answer. But I say, deah boys——"

"'Nuff," said Lowther. "Be a good chap, and don't ask us any more conundrums."

"It is not a conundwum I have in my mind. I was goin' to tell you an awfully funnay stowy——"

"We're fed up with funny stories," said Manners. "Lowther piles them on too thick already. I'm off." And Manners walked on up the passage.

"It's an awfully funnay thing, Lowthah——"

"You can have all the fun to yourself, old chap," said Lowther, following Manners.

Arthur Augustus sniffed.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, I must say I wegard your fwiends as wotten beasts," he said. "I don't want to wun them down in any way, but I wegard them as feahful pigs. I say, you are not goin', are you? I have an awfully funnay stowy to tell you."

"Oh, get on, then!" said Tom Merry, who was good-natured to a fault. "Let's have the story; but don't be too long-winded, old chap."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"Oh, get on with the washing!"

"There was a chap dinin' once," said D'Arcy. "He was sittin' at the table, you know, and all at once he took up a dish of stwawbewwies and put it on his head——"

"He did, did he?" said Tom Merry. "What did he do that for?"

"That was what the lady next to him asked," said D'Arcy, bubbling with inward suppressed mirth. "She said, 'Good gwacious, what are you placin' that dish on your head for?' And he weplied, 'Bai Jove! I thought it was ice-cweam.'"

And Arthur Augustus went off into a paroxysm of mirth.

He was so convulsed with merriment that it was some seconds before he observed that Tom Merry was looking at him inquiringly, with a face as expressionless as stone as far as merriment was concerned.

And then D'Arcy's mirth died away a little.

"Well," said Tom Merry, "when you're done giggling, Gussy, you might get on with the story."

"That's the stowy," said D'Arcy indignantly.

"What is ?"

"That—I've just told it to you."

"But you said it was a funny story," said Tom Merry, looking perplexed.

"So it is, an awfully funnay stowy."

"Which part are you supposed to laugh at, then ?"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"Suppose he did think it was ice-cream in the dish," said Tom Merry meditatively. "That wouldn't be funny, would it?"

"Oh, weally——"

"Or suppose it had really been strawberries. Would that have been comic ?"

"Weally——"

"Are you sure that you haven't mixed the story up with some conundrums, or something of that sort ?" suggested Tom Merry. "You may have got the answer to that sawfish riddle mixed up with it, or perhaps——"

"As a mattah of fact, deah boy, it doesn't seem so funnay now as it did at first," confessed D'Arcy. "I have often noticed that about a stowy when you wepeat it."

"When you repeat it, you mean," grinned Tom Merry.

"It is vewy pwob that I had a word w'ong," said D'Arcy. "Pewwaps he thought it was molasses, not ice-cweam. When I tell that stowy again I shall make it molasses."

"Take my advice, old chap, and don't tell it again," said Tom Merry, and he walked on, leaving Arthur Augustus to think it out. A minute later Tom Merry arrived at the door of Study No. 6, and opened it by the simple process of jamming his boot against one of the lower panels. The door flew open, and the hero of the Shell walked in, and the Fourth Formers, startled by the crash, looked up from their work, Blake's pen scattering a variety of blots over his foolscap.

"You—you duffer!" ejaculated Blake. "Look what you've made me do."

"Sorry," said Tom Merry cheerfully. "You can write it out again to-night, you know. It will keep you out of mischief."

Blake slid his hand towards a ruler.

"Pax," said Tom Merry promptly. "I haven't come here to whack you youngsters this time. I want to ask you——"

"If you ask me a conundrum you'll get this ruler in the neck, whether it's pax or not," said Blake darkly. "We've had enough of that from Gussy."

Tom Merry laughed.

"I wasn't going to ask you a conundrum, kid. I wanted to ask you whether you knew that Figgins & Co. had ordered a trap in Rylcombe ?"

Jack Blake started.

"Ordered a trap! What do they want a trap for ?"

"To catch us in, I expect," said Tom Merry. "Have you forgotten that to-morrow is Wednesday, a time-honoured half-holiday with us, and that we're going to the Zoo."

"Of course not. Figgins & Co. are coming with us."

"Yes, and so is Cousin Ethel."

"We know that."

"And she is coming here this evening, to stay a couple of days with Mrs. Holmes. You are aware of that, too ?"

"Yes; she told us so when she was here on her birthday," said Blake. "What are you getting at ?"

"How is she coming ?"

"She is staying in Wayland now. I expect she will drive over to-night."

"Then your expectations are a little off the track. Figgins wouldn't blue his tin on a trap for nothing. My belief is that he is going over to Wayland in that trap to fetch Cousin Ethel."

"My hat!"

"He knows what time she would leave there, I dare say. If he arrives at her quarters say half an hour before she would leave, she would naturally accept a seat in his trap instead of ordering out the dogcart she came over in before, and giving the groom the job of driving it back to Wayland for nothing."

"Very likely."

"Figgins is awfully deep. He hasn't said a word about it, but you can depend upon it that's his little game."

"But how do you know he's ordered the trap if he hasn't said a word about it ?" asked Digby.

"Because I've just been down to Rylcombe," said Tom Merry coolly. "You see, I thought of the same wheeze myself. I went into old Brown's to ask him for his trap, and he was sorry he couldn't let me have it, as he was sending it up to the school at six o'clock to the order of Master Figgins. He offered to get another for me, but I didn't accept. You see, I was on the track. It's no good two traps driving over to Wayland to fetch one Cousin Ethel, is it ?"

"Ha, ha! No."

"If Figgins goes, it's no good us going. We can't fight for her in front of her house, or anything of that sort. The age of chivalry, as Burke has very properly remarked, is gone; and men no longer fight in the presence of ladies."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Strategy is the thing. Only one trap can go, and there is no great objection to Figgins ordering the trap and paying the bill, so long as the School House captures the trap and takes it over to Wayland for Cousin Ethel."

"Ripping good idea!" said Blake heartily. "We worked off a wheeze like that on Figgins & Co. once—collared their brake when they were going to a football match, or they collared our brake. It's much the same thing. It will be a ripping joke on the New House. The trap is coming at six."

"That's it."

"There'll be a man in it, of course, and he'll have instructions to take in Figgins. He won't be able to argue with seven of us, though. We can put him down in the bottom of the trap, and you fellows can sit on his head while I drive."

"You can sit on his head while I drive."

"I hope you are not going to begin making trouble at the very start, Tom Merry."

"Certainly not. There would be trouble if you drove. You see, it's all very well to borrow the trap, but old Brown is a poor man, and if it got smashed up we should be in honour bound to pay for it."

"Yes, and that's a jolly good reason why you shouldn't drive, too," grunted Blake. "You can't teach a Yorkshireman much about horses. Yorkshire's my county."

"That's all very well——"

"Then I don't see what you're grumbling at. Hallo, there goes the quarter to six!"

"No time to lose," said Tom Merry. "I should have got in here before only Gussy stopped me to tell me a sad story about a dinner-party. But there's time if we buck up."

"I haven't finished my impot," said Digby.

"Blow your impot!"

"Shove it away," said Blake severely. "What do you mean by talking of impots when it's a question of the School House scoring over the New House."

"If we don't do our prep——" began Herries.

"Rats! Come on, and follow your uncle, and don't jaw."

Jack Blake's word was law in Study No. 6. Herries and Digby left their work, and took their caps, and followed Blake and Tom Merry downstairs. Manners and Lowther were waiting outside the School House, leaning on the balustrade.

"Turned a quarter to six," said Lowther. "No time to lose."

Arthur Augustus came hurriedly out of the School House.

"Hallo, you chaps! What is the diffewence between a wockin'-horse and a beef-steak ?"

"Oh, cheese it!" growled Blake. "We're on the war-path."

"What is the diffewence——"

"Choke him, somebody. Come on!"

And the School House juniors descended into the quadrangle, already dusky in the October evening, and D'Arcy followed with his conundrum still unanswered.

CHAPTER 3.

The Rivals.

IF there was anything that could stop the Terrible Three and Study No. 6 in the School House from ragging one another, it was a "row" with the rival house at St. Jim's. Fourth Form and Shell were always willing to pull loyally together to take a rise out of Figgins & Co., the leaders of the New House juniors. And their rivalry was keener on nothing than on the subject of Cousin Ethel.

Ethel was D'Arcy's cousin, and as D'Arcy was a School House boy, he and his chums naturally regarded Cousin Ethel as School House property. The chums of the New House were far from admitting anything of the sort. Cousin Ethel was their chum as well, as they were ready to maintain with either tongue or fist, on any occasion, in any place, and at any time.

It was just like Figgins to assume to himself the honour and glory of ordering out a trap to fetch Cousin Ethel over from Wayland. If he carried out the little programme successfully, he would allude, on the morrow, to the drive in his airy way, and commiserate the School House fellows on not being up to snuff, and on being left out of things. To say nothing of the fact that, after being driven over to the school by the New House chums, Cousin Ethel would probably feel called upon to be especially nice to Figgins, which would never, never do! Tom Merry & Co. were consequently in a determined mood as they left the School House. Even D'Arcy, on learning what was on, forgot the difference between a rocking-horse and a beef-steak, and gave all his attention to the matter in hand.

"We shall be able to handle Brown's man in the trap easily enough," Tom Merry remarked. "The trouble is, what are we to do with Figgins & Co.?"

"There are seven of us," remarked Digby. "We could bump them into the ditch."

"They'll have a crowd of New House rotters round to see them start, of course."

"H'm! Very likely. Then it will be a fight."

"That won't do. We can't afford to leave anything to chance."

"Pewwaps you had bettah leave it to me, deah boys. I can think out a stwatagem——"

"Rats! Has anybody got an idea?"

"I can think out a stwatagem——"

"We could get Fatty Wynn away, by standing him a feed," Blake suggested. "But it won't be so easy with Figgins and Kerr."

"I have it," muttered Lowther. "Let's go up the road, and meet the trap before it gets to the school. We can stop it, chuck Brown's man out, and there you are!"

"Good!" said Blake, with a chuckle. "And Figgins & Co. can go on waiting at the gate for the trap to come—like Sister Anne looking from the window in the fairy tale."

"But suppose Figgins & Co. are at the gate already?"

"Let's see whether they are."

The dusk was gathering over St. Jim's. The School House juniors made their way down to the high arched gateway. Half a dozen forms loomed out of the dusk, and there was a murmur of voices. The party drew back a little.

"Figgy is there," muttered Blake. "And Kerr and Wynn, and French and Pratt, and some more."

"No good starting a scrap, then."

"You had bettah let me think out a stwatagem——"

"If we go out they'll guess what we've gone for," said Tom Merry, with a worried look. "But if the trap arrives here, Figgy will have it as sure as a gun."

"Not without a tussle!"

"A tussle won't do any good, with the New House within call. But I've got it—follow me!" said Tom Merry excitedly. He turned and ran along the school wall, to a spot where an old oak tree slanted towards the stone.

"Good!" muttered Blake, catching the idea at once.

In that spot it was easy to cross the school wall. The juniors had done it before, on more than one occasion. Tom Merry swarmed up the tree.

"Bai Jove, deah boys, we shall be bweakin' bounds, you know!"

"I expect Figgy's got a pass to Wayland," remarked Manners. "He couldn't go out openly in the trap without a pass. Monteith would give him one. We could ask Kildare——"

"No good asking for passes for seven chaps at once," grinned Blake, "especially for a place so far out of bounds as Wayland."

"We could ask Kildare for one, Darrel for another, Rushden for another, and so on."

"That's wathah a good wheeze, deah boys."

"No time! It's eight minutes to six now."

"Come on," said Tom Merry's voice cautiously from the top of the wall. "There's no time to lose. Up with you as quickly as you can."

And the hero of the Shell dropped into the road. Lowther and Manners followed swiftly, then Blake and Herries and Digby. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy remained till the last, looking very dubiously at the tree trunk, which certainly was weather-stained, and damp with the mist that hung over the quadrangle. Blake looked down from the wall.

"Come on, Gussy."

"I weally think I cannot climb that twee, Blake."

"Ass! You've climbed it before."

"I wefuse to be called an ass!"

"You—you—you—— Are you coming?"

"You see, I have no gloves on. If you chaps will wait a quartah of an hour while I change into an old pair of twousahs and put on some stwong gloves, I shall be vewy pleased to climb the twee aftah you."

"Ass! Stay behind, then!"

"It's all wight! I'll make a sudden wush thwough the gate, and get thwough before the New House wottahs have time to stop me."

Blake, who was about to drop into the road, turned back quickly.

"Gussy! If you give the alarm I'll scalp you! Gussy!"

"It's all wight, deah boy! I shall make a sudden wush, you know!"

"D'Arcy! Hold on! I say——" But Arthur Augustus was gone. Jack Blake dropped quickly into the road. It was too late to stop the swell of St. Jim's now.

"Buck up!" muttered Blake. "That ass D'Arcy is going to get out through the gate, and Figgins will catch on at once. Run for it!"

"The—young ass!"

"Cut!" muttered Tom Merry briefly.

The juniors broke into a run. They had to pass the gateway of St. Jim's to get to the village, but they trusted to their speed and the gathering dusk to hide them from the eyes of the New House Co. there. As they passed there was a sudden commotion in the group of juniors in the gateway.

"Hold the young rotter!"

It was Figgins' voice. There was the sound of a struggle. Then D'Arcy's voice raised in anguish.

"Welease me, you wottahs! You are wumplin' my collah and spoilin' my twousahs! I might as well have climbed the twee as have your filthy boots wubbed on me. Welease me!"

"Climbed the tree!" said Figgins. "What's the little game?"

"There's somebody scudding past in the road," exclaimed Kerr.

"My hat! They're the School House bounders!"

"They've caught on!"

"They're after the trap!"

"Come on!" roared Figgins.

He dashed out into the dusky road, with a dozen New House juniors at his heels. But Tom Merry & Co. were past, and running down the road as if for their lives. It was a race now between the rivals of St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 4.
An Exciting Drive.

"HOLD on!" gasped Tom Merry.

There was a glare of lamps in the road, a clatter of horse's feet. A trap was coming from the direction of the village. Tom Merry & Co. stopped.

"Halt!" shouted Blake.

The man driving the trap pulled in his horse, as he saw half a dozen faces in the glimmer of the lamps.

"What be the matter?" he asked.

"Nothing much," said Tom Merry, jumping on the step, and getting up beside the man in a twinkling. "We've come from St. Jim's to fetch the trap, that's all!"

"I be told to give the trap to Master Figgins."

"That's all right."

Tom Merry calmly took the reins from the man's hand. Lowther and Blake hustled him into the lane before he quite knew what was happening. Lowther pressed a shilling into his hand. He was sat down upon the grassy bank. Digby had the horse by the bit, and he backed him and turned the trap round.

The whole affair had not taken a minute. But a minute was much, when the best runners in the New House were on the track.

"Come on!" shouted Tom Merry, gathering up the reins, "Pile in!"

The juniors piled into the trap. It was a roomy vehicle, and held four as well as one beside the driver. Lowther and Manners crowded in, and Blake and Herries. Tom Merry was in the driver's seat, and Digby jumped up beside him. The whip cracked, and the horse was set in motion, back the way he had come. There was a yell from the dusk, and Figgins came tearing into view.

"They've got the trap!"

"Stop them!"

"Collar the rotters!"

Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn came tearing on. The other fellows were panting behind them.

The trap increased in speed. But Figgins put on a spurt, and hung on behind. Kerr made a desperate bound and also reached the trap. He hung on beside his leader. Their weight told, and their feet dragging on the ground acted somewhat as a brake. The speed of the trap slackened, and the rest of the New House party loomed into view again, running their hardest in pursuit.

"Kick them out!" yelled Blake.

He inserted his hand in Figgins' collar. Figgy's hands were both occupied in clinging on to the tail-board, and he could not defend himself. Blake calmly jerked his collar off, and tore away his necktie. Then he used the latter as a lash, and gave Figgins a few smart strokes with it. Figgins gasped with rage, and strove manfully to drag himself into the trap.

But Herries grasped his fingers and unloosened them, and

Manners pushed him on the chest, and at last he dropped into the road. Digby turned round from his seat in front.

"Here's a long pin," he said. "Stick it into the silly chumps."

"Good! Hand it over."

Kerr hurriedly let go and dropped into the road. He bumped against Figgins, who was up and running again. They reeled over together. The trap increased in speed, and the New House juniors halted breathlessly.

"They're gone!" muttered Figgins.

"And we're done!" said Kerr.

"Clean done!" said Fatty Wynn dolorously. "Of course, they've collared the trap to go over to Wayland to fetch Miss Cleveland?"

"Of course they have!"

"And we can't stop them."

Figgins snapped his teeth.

"Confound them! I wouldn't have minded it at any other time, but now—I did want to drive Cousin Ethel over here!"

"Weally, Figgins, I wegard that as wathah a feahful cheek on your part," said the voice of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy from the dusk. "You weally seem to look upon Ethel as if she were your cousin instead of mine."

"Oh, you can go and eat coke, Gussy."

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

"Oh, rats!"

And Figgins & Co. walked in at the gateway of St. Jim's with extremely downcast looks. They had been done, and there was no getting out of that. Tom Merry & Co. had taken the cake—and the trap! The victorious School House juniors were bowling along merrily through the dusky lanes. Tom Merry was driving, and handling the horse with ease. Tom had done a good deal of driving at his old governess's house at Huckleberry Heath.

"Licked!" said Jack Blake, with great satisfaction. "We're all here excepting Gussy. I rather hope they will slay Gussy for giving us away as he did. It was touch and go."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Never mind, we are victorious. This horse isn't so rocky as old Browr's horses usually are. We are getting along all right. It's rather a weight for him to pull—six fellows, including Herries' feet."

"Let my feet alone," growled Herries.

"You seem to be handling the hoss all right, Merry," said Blake. "You can drive over to Wayland, if you like."

"Thanks! I intend to."

"I mean, I'll drive coming back. We shall have to be as careful as possible with a lady in the trap, you know."

"Blessed if I know how we're going to find room for a lady in here," said Lowther. "If Herries put his feet over the side it would make a difference, of course."

"I'll put you over the side, if you don't shut up!" growled Herries.

"I'd like to see you put one half of me over the side," said Monty Lowther, in the extremely polite tone he always adopted when he wanted to be impertinent. "Ain't you rather cheeky for a Fourth Form kid?"

"If you're looking for a thick ear, fathead——"

"I am, as a matter of fact."

Now that the row with the New House was over, the old rivalry was certain to break out between Shell and Fourth Form, and a word was sufficient to start it. Almost before Monty Lowther had finished speaking, Herries had passed an arm round his neck, and Monty Lowther replied by grasping him round the shoulders. They rolled in the trap, and there was a yell from Blake and Manners.

"Stop it! There's no room for rowing here."

"Chuck it, you asses!"

They did not chuck it. Blake unfastened the tailboard and let it swing down, and then stooped and grasped the struggling pair. He gave them a heave, and Lowther's long legs hung over the back of the trap, and he clung wildly to the tailboard to keep from falling. Herries sat on the board, holding to the chain dizzily.

"Off you go!" said Blake coolly, and he put his foot against Lowther's chest.

"Hold on, ass! Stop it!"

"Travel, my son," said Blake, and he gave Lowther a gentle push. Lowther's feet were dragging along the ground, and he let go, and sat down in the road. Tom Merry drove the trap on without even looking round. There was no time to waste, and if the juniors chose to row and fall out of the trap, that was no business of his.

Lowther jumped up in the road and yelled to the trap to stop. Manners gave Herries a shove, and the Fourth Former clung to the tailboard for a moment and then dropped into the road. Blake turned to the Shell boy wrathfully.

"What did you do that for, fathead?"

"What did you shove Lowther out for?" grinned Manners.

"He was making a rumpus."

"Well, and what was Herries doing?"

Jack Blake grinned.

"Oh, very well! Still, it's like your cheek to shove out a Fourth-Former, and I've a jolly good mind to bump you out after him!"

"Try it on, then!" said Manners.

"If you're looking for trouble."

"I'm looking for all the trouble you can give me."

"Oh, all right; here goes, then!"

They were struggling in the bottom of the trap the next moment. Naturally enough, with the tailboard down, and the vehicle bumping along on a rough road, they were not long in rolling out. Fortunately, the vehicle was a low one, and the slant of the tailboard saved them from a fall. But the bump in the road was a hard one, and it jarred them considerably. They rolled apart in the dust, and sat up looking rather dazed.

"My—my hat!" gasped Blake. "Hallo, there, Tom Merry! Stop! Stop there! Stop that trap!"

"Ha, ha!" laughed Manners breathlessly. "He won't stop!"

"Won't he! I'll jolly soon make him!"

Blake dashed after the trap. But he could not equal the speed of the horse. There was a flash of the lamps as the trap turned a corner, and then the light disappeared, the hoof-beats died away in the distance. Blake halted breathlessly.

Tom Merry drove steadily on. Digby looked back into the trap, and saw that it was empty, and chuckled.

"They're all out," he remarked.

Tom Merry laughed.

"That's their own lookout. I'm not stopping this trap for anybody."

"Right-ho! There wasn't room for a crowd, anyway, and we had to find room for Miss Ethel," agreed Digby. "I'll get back."

He took up Blake's empty seat, and closed up the tailboard. Tom Merry drove on, and Digby sat on the rugs with his hands in his pockets. The horse made little of so light a load, and ere long dashed up in fine style to the garden gate of the house on the outskirts of Wayland, where Cousin Ethel was staying.

CHAPTER 5.

Not Quite a Triumph.

"TOM MERRY!"

Cousin Ethel uttered the name in a tone of surprise, as Tom Merry was shown in by the maidservant. Digby was remaining in the trap to look after the horse. Tom Merry coloured a little. For the life of him he could not tell whether Miss Cleveland was pleased or not.

Cousin Ethel was dressed for going out, and her coat and hat were close at hand. She had evidently been about to start for St. Jim's. Miss Oldbury, her aunt, looked curiously at Tom Merry. Cousin Ethel hastened to present him.

"I thought you would like us to drive you over to St. Jim's Miss Cleveland," said Tom Merry. "We've brought the trap over."

"It is very kind of you," said Cousin Ethel. "But I thought——"

"Very kind indeed," said Miss Oldbury. "If you prefer to go in the trap, Ethel, we will not order out the dogcart."

"I think I will go in the trap, aunt. It is very kind of Tom to bring it over for me. Is anybody with you, Tom?"

"Yes; Dig."

"No one else?"

"No one else, Miss Cleveland."

In a few minutes Cousin Ethel took leave of her aunt, and walked down to the trap with Tom Merry. She seemed unusually silent. Tom Merry glanced at her rather anxiously as they reached the garden gate.

"I—I say, Cousin Ethel," he said, awkwardly, "do you think it was a fearful cheek of us to drive over for you?"

Cousin Ethel laughed.

"Of course not, Tom. I think it was very kind of you, and I would much rather drive over with you than with the groom."

"Then that's all right."

"Certainly. Only——" Cousin Ethel paused, and the gloom of the October evening hid the colour that came into her cheeks for a moment.

"Only what?" asked Tom Merry anxiously.

"I thought—I mean I understood—that Figgins was coming over, and——"

Tom Merry chuckled slightly.

"He was unavoidably detained," he said. "As a matter of fact, he was coming, and so were the rest of the fellows, Miss Cleveland. But the trap wouldn't hold the lot, and there was a series of accidents. Figgins was awfully cut up at not being able to come."

A momentary smile flickered on Cousin Ethel's face. It is probable that she guessed something of the nature of the series of accidents. Tom Merry handed her into the trap, and she chose the seat beside the driver. Digby looked expressively at Tom Merry.

"You drove the trap over here, Merry," he whispered.

"Yes," assented Tom Merry, "and I'm going to drive it back."

"Look here, you beast, fair play's a jewel, and——"

Tom Merry jumped up to the right-hand side of the front seat. Digby murmured something under his breath, and got into the back of the trap. But suddenly a twinkle shot into the Fourth-Former's eyes.

"Would you care to drive, Miss Cleveland?" he asked. "The horse is a very quiet animal, and I know you could manage him first-rate."

"Perhaps Tom could not trust me to drive," murmured Ethel.

"Why, of course," said Tom Merry immediately. "I—I should be delighted."

"Thank you so much."

"You ought to be this side, I think," said Tom Merry, rising.

"Yes, it would be better. Perhaps you would not mind getting into the trap with Digby, so as to allow me plenty of room."

Tom Merry breathed hard through his nose. There was an irrepressible chuckle from Digby. It was followed by a gasp. Tom Merry had contrived to dig his elbow into the Fourth-Former's ribs in getting into the trap.

"Shall we start now?" said Cousin Ethel demurely.

"By all means," said Tom Merry.

The girl shook out the reins. She was a good driver, and the trap bowled along merrily, the lamps glaring out into the October gloom. Tom Merry sat in the trap looking rather downhearted. Digby grinned at him maliciously, and tried to catch his eye as often as possible to grin at him again.

The drive to St. Jim's could not be called a howling success. Cousin Ethel drove, and was too busy with the reins to be able to turn her head once, or to exchange a single remark with either of the juniors. And Tom Merry was not inclined to talk to Digby, and Digby did nothing but grin and wink in the most irritating way at Tom Merry.

No one was sorry when the trap dashed up to the gates of St. Jim's. The gates, of course, were closed. It was now a good hour past locking-up time, and call-over was finished at St. Jim's. The juniors who had been left behind had scraped in in time for calling-over. But there was a calling over the coals in store for Tom Merry and Digby.

Tom Merry jumped down and rang the bell. Taggles the porter came grumbling down to open the gates, and he grinned sourly at the juniors as Tom led the horse in.

"Which Mr. Railton has been asking after you," he said.

"He naturally would," said Tom Merry calmly. "The affairs of the School House generally get into a rocky condition when I am away. I am glad to see that you are so concerned about the welfare of the cock-house at St. Jim's, Taggles."

Taggles grunted. He closed the gates after the trap. A tall, slim junior came into sight from the gloomy quadrangle. It was Figgins.

"Hallo, Figgy," said Tom Merry, affably. "Here's your trap. You can get it back to old Brown's now."

"My trap!" said Figgins, in astonishment. "Not at all. Your trap, dear boy. How do you do, Miss Cleveland? I was coming over in a trap to ask you to drive to St. Jim's, but an unforeseen accident prevented me."

"Thank you very much, Figgins," said Cousin Ethel, sweetly. Figgins walked beside the trap right up to the steps of the Head's house. Curiously enough, Cousin Ethel, who had found nothing to say during the drive over, was very chatty with Figgins. The trap stopped, and it was Figgins who assisted her to alight. Knox, a School House prefect, loomed up in the light of the trap's lamps.

"So you've come back," he said grimly. "Ah, good-evening, Miss Cleveland!" He raised his cap. "Merry and Digby you are to go straight to Mr. Railton's study. He wants to see you on most important business. Follow me."

Tom Merry hesitated. It was rather rough to have to leave Cousin Ethel there with Figgins, and the trap was not disposed of. But there was no arguing with a prefect, nor did he wish Cousin Ethel to guess that he had a caning in store. The girl held out her hand with a smile.

"Good-night, Tom."

"Good-night, Ethel."

"Good-night, Digby."

"Good-night, Cousin Ethel."

The two School House juniors raised their caps and walked away. Then Cousin Ethel shook hands with Figgins. She had not had an opportunity of doing so yet. For some reason Figgins did not let go her hand after shaking it, and Cousin Ethel seemed to quite overlook the fact that he was retaining it. Figgins cleared his throat two or three times before he was able to speak.

"I—I—I say, Miss Cleveland—Cousin Ethel—I wanted awfully to come over and fetch you from Wayland, but something happened."

"It was very kind of you, Figgins."

"I'm so glad to see you at St. Jim's again."

"It's very pleasant to see the old place again so soon, Figgins."

"It's a long time since you were here."

"Exactly six days, Figgins."

"I—I mean it seems a long time!" stammered Figgins. "It's—it's awfully good of you to let me take you to the Zoo to-morrow."

"Is it?" said Cousin Ethel, laughing. "It seems to me that the goodness is on your side, to take me. Have you rung?"

"By Jove, no," said Figgins, colouring deeply. And he rang the bell with his disengaged hand. But Cousin Ethel drew her hand away now.

The door was opened. Cousin Ethel shook hands with Figgins for good-night. The big junior raised his cap and turned away. The door closed and shut off the light and Cousin Ethel. There was a curious look upon Figgins's homely face as he walked off towards the New House. He seemed to be treading on air. Two youths loomed up out of the gloom and almost ran into him.

"Hallo, here you are, Figgy!" said Kerr. "Have you been taking a constitutional in the dark, or lost your way in the quad, or what?"

"Come on, Figgy," said Fatty Wynn anxiously. "We've got a ripping feed in the study. What do you think of fried gammon rashers and sausages, chips and fried onions, broiled cod and baked potatoes, eh?"

Figgins sighed.

"What's the matter?" asked Kerr.

"He's hungry," said Fatty Wynn. "I often sigh like that when I'm hungry. Blessed if I know why he's been wandering around in the quad all this time, and losing the smell of the cooking. Come on, Figgy, old man. What do you think of broiled cod——"

"Ye-e-s. All right."

"And chips and fried onions——"

"Oh, blow your onions!"

Fatty Wynn stared at his leader in blank amazement.

"Eh! What! What did you say, Figgy?"

"Sorry," said Figgins immediately. "It's all right. I'm jolly hungry, as a matter of fact. I'm coming in. Oh—hold on, though—there's the trap!"

"Tom Merry's job to deal with that," said Kerr.

"Tom Merry's just been marched off by a prefect. The horse will get on the flower-beds if he's left loose."

"You'll have to give Taggles a bob to take him home."

"I suppose so."

Figgins returned for the trap, and led the horse away. Taggles bargained for eighteenpence, and Figgins handed it over without a word. Then the New House Co. went into their quarters. And whatever sentimental thoughts and feelings might have dwelt in the breast of Figgins, it cannot be denied that he made an excellent supper in the study, and did full justice to the broiled cod, the gammon rashers and sausages, the chips and the fried onions.

Meanwhile, Tom Merry and Digby were having a rather painful interview with the House master of the School House. Mr. Railton listened patiently to their explanation that there had really been no time to ask for a pass before going out. Then he took up a cane. Two smart cuts for each of the juniors rewarded them for the trouble they had taken; and when they left Mr. Railton's study they did not receive much sympathy from their Form fellows.

"Why didn't you stop for us?" demanded Manners and Lowther, collaring Tom Merry as he came out rubbing his hands.

"Well, I couldn't stop for every silly ass who fell out of the trap, could I?" said Tom Merry, in a tone of expostulation.

"I have alweady explained to Blake," remarked D'Arcy, "that it was a feahful cheek on his part to leave me behind. But you were most to blame, Tom Mewwy, as you were dwivin'. It is wathah fortunate for you that Mr. Wailton has caned you, as othahwise I should give you a feahful thwashin'."

"By Jove, I've had an awfully narrow escape," said Tom Merry, looking alarmed. "Still, I'd rather have the fearful thrashing than any more of your funny stories."

And he walked away, leaving D'Arcy asking Manners and Lowther the difference between a rocking-horse and a beef-steak, and waiting in vain for an answer.

CHAPTER 6.

D'Arcy is Not Appreciated.

COUSIN ETHEL had expressed, in a casual way, a desire to visit the famous Zoological Gardens in Regent's Park; and it had immediately occurred to Figgins that it would be possible to make a trip to that entertaining place one half-holiday. He worked it out, and it was feasible. It was an hour to London by train from Wayland—sometimes less if you could catch the express. An hour there and an hour back was two hours for the travelling. A couple of hours in London made four. It could easily be done within the limits of a half-holiday if the juniors could get excused from

afternoon call-over. And that relaxation it was not difficult to obtain.

Figgins & Co. had at first thought of keeping the idea to themselves. But Figgins, big and rugged as he was in many ways, had a sense of delicacy that never failed him where the gentle sex were concerned. The fact that he liked Cousin Ethel so well made it awkward to keep her all to himself, as it were. He felt that she would feel more at ease if her cousin were in the party. And if D'Arcy were coming, there was no reason why all the chums of the School House should not come. As a matter of fact, D'Arcy would have invited them if Figgins hadn't. And even failing that, it was extremely likely that they would have joined the excursion incontinently, knowing perfectly well that Figgins would have to keep up polite appearances before Miss Cleveland.

It had all been arranged for Wednesday afternoon. Study No 6 and the Terrible Three had obtained the necessary permission from Mr. Railton to miss afternoon calling-over, Figgins & Co. obtained the same from their head prefect, Monteith. The coast was quite clear as far as that was concerned, and the juniors had a pleasant feeling of strangeness in the idea of going beyond bounds without a licking to follow.

On Wednesday all was smiles and good-humour among the juniors concerned. Study No. 6 forgot to chip the chums of the Shell. The latter, when they met Figgins & Co. in the quad, greeted them as cordially as if they had never borrowed their trap overnight, and the New House fellows were quite ready to forget and forgive. The day was fine, clear, and cool, and was evidently going to be dry. It was likely to be a ripping afternoon for footer. But the juniors were not thinking of footer. The afternoon's excursion filled up their thoughts.

"It's a ripping day for an expedition," said Blake, as he came out into the quad after breakfast, and sniffed the keen morning air. "We shall have a jolly good time. It's a lucky thing, too, that we're all in funds."

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy thoughtfully. "I wired to my governah yesterday, and he has turned up twumps in a weally wippin' mannah. Aftah all, though, it was time he sent me anothah fivah."

"Good old belted earl!" said Blake. "Why haven't I a governor with a seat in the House of Lords and an endless bank account? What are you looking so solemn about, Herries? If you're stony, I'll lend you some of Gussy's fiver."

"I should weally be vewy pleased to place my wesources at the disposal of Hewwies."

"It's not that," said Herries, "I've been thinking. I think I'll take my dog Towser with me. He'd like a long run."

"He'd get it, too, if he came near me," said Blake. "I'd get a goal with the brute. You can leave Towser in his kennel."

"He's a splendid dog——"

"So he is," assented Blake. "A fine dog for keeping in a kennel. A ripping dog for chaining up. A lovely animal for drowning purposes."

"Look here, Blake——"

"Speakin' of bulldogs weminds me of a conundwum," said D'Arcy. "What is the diffewence between a bulldog that has lost its fwont teeth and a paper-chase?"

"A bulldog might lose its front teeth," said Blake, "but it couldn't possibly lose a paper-chase. You've got it wrong."

"You don't compwehend, deah boy—the diffewence between a bulldog that has lost its fwont teeth and a paper-chase——"

"It couldn't lose a paper-chase," said Blake obstinately.

"I'll put it the other way wound," said D'Arcy. "What's the diffewence between a paper-chase and a bulldog that has lost its fwont teeth?"

"Blessed if I know," said Blake. "Time for chapel."

"What is the diffewence between——"

Blake seized the swell of the School House by the throat, and backed him up against the wall. D'Arcy gasped, but he dared not struggle, in case his high white collar should be rumpled. There was no time to change it before morning chapel.

"Blake, you wottah, welease me——"

"Now, then, you ass," said Jack Blake grimly, "what do you mean?"

"I fail to compwehend you."

"What do you mean by suddenly setting up as a funny man?" demanded Blake. "For the last two days you have been boiling over with puns, brimming with conundrums, and reeking with funny stories. What's the little game?"

"Weally, Blake——"

"What's the matter? You've never been taken like this before, and I warn you that you will get slain if you don't chuck it!"

"Wats! I don't see why I shouldn't develop a sense of humah if I choose, in spite of the opposish of foolish and unappweciative idiots!" said Arthur Augustus.

"You can't work off your sense of humour on us," grunted Blake. "Have you got an old jest-book or something up your sleeve?"

Arthur Augustus coloured.

"Weally, deah boy——"

"There's the chapel bell!" exclaimed Digby. "Come on!"

Jack Blake released D'Arcy, shaking a warning forefinger at him. The chums of the Fourth set off towards the chapel, and D'Arcy put his disturbed collar straight. Reilly was coming by, and D'Arcy fell in beside him.

"I say, Weilly," he remarked, with a pleasant smile of propitiation, "I know an awfully funnay stowy—would you care to hear it?"

"Oh, I don't mind," said Reilly. "Sure you can go on."

The reply was not very encouraging, but at least the boy from Belfast was a listener; and D'Arcy had found it very hard to obtain listeners for his funny stories.

"It was at a dinnah-party," said D'Arcy, with a preliminary chuckle, "a gentleman suddenly seized a dish of stwawbewwies and put it on his head——"

"Faith, and that was a quare thing to do intirely."

"The lady sittin' next to him said, 'Gweat Scott——'—I mean she said, 'Good gwacious, what are you doin' that for?' And what do you think he said—ha, ha, ha!"

"Faith, and I'm quite in the dark," said Reilly.

"He said—ha, ha, ha!—he said, 'Dear me, I thought it was molasses!' Ha, ha, ha!"

Reilly watched D'Arcy with a face like a graven image.

"Well?" he said.

D'Arcy's mirth died away.

"Wasn't it funnay?" he demanded, rather indignantly.

Reilly scratched his head with a perplexed look.

"Sure, and if you say it was funny, I'll not be after doubting your word," he said. "But it's meself that can't see where the joke comes in. But, sure, we'll be late for chapel."

And Reilly ran off. D'Arcy followed him with a rather hopeless expression.

"Bai Jove," he murmured, "that stowy was awfully funnay when I wead it, and it doesn't seem half so funnay now! Pewwaps I've made a mistake—pewwaps it wasn't eithah ice-cweam or molasses—it may have been pineapple. I'll make it pineapple next time I tell that stowy."

CHAPTER 7.

Cousin Ethel Sees the Joke.

TOM MERRY came out of the Shell class-room when morning lessons were over with a cheerful look upon his sunny face. Manners and Lowther were looking as cheerful. Some of the fellows in the Shell glanced at them enviously. Gore was inclined to grumble, and Skimpole was not satisfied.

"There's a lot of favouritism in this Form," said Gore, addressing vacancy. "Some chaps get permission to take a run up to London, and miss afternoon call-over, and some don't."

"Some chaps can be trusted to behave themselves," Monty Lowther remarked, also addressing space, "and some can't."

There was a chuckle among the Shell fellows, and Gore turned red. He scowled at the Terrible Three, without disturbing their serenity much. Skimpole extended a bony thumb and forefinger and took hold of a jacket button belonging to Tom Merry.

"I'm really very sorry, Merry," he said. "It's rough on me, and rather rough on you, as I could have explained things to you——"

"Are you talking about anything in particular, Skimmy?" asked Tom Merry politely.

"Yes, certainly, Merry. I asked Mr. Railton for permission to accompany you to London this afternoon for a visit to the Zoo."

"Oh, you did, did you?" said Monty Lowther, staring.

"Yes. He refused it——"

"Saved us the trouble," murmured Lowther.

"Did you speak, Lowther?"

"Yes. It will be a fine day to-morrow if it doesn't rain yesterday."

"I fail to see the point of that remark, Lowther. But as I was saying, Merry, Mr. Railton refused me permission. I do not know his motive. It is true that I have no money to pay my fare, but I pointed out to him that he could advance it to me, and that some of you fellows could pay my expenses in London. But for some reason he did not think I ought to accompany you. I am sorry, as I could have explained matters very much, and improved your minds considerably during this visit to the Zoo. I have been there before, and it is most interesting. I should have shown you over the lion house, and I should have been quite at home among the monkeys——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, Skimmy's right for once," said Manners.

"I do not see anything comical in that remark," said Skimpole. "In the monkey house I could have pointed out to you the certain proofs of the descent of man—the traces of the remote ancestry of the human race in the simian features.

I could have compared the monkeys with yourselves, for instance, and pointed out the resemblance——"

Skimpole reeled against the wall as Lowther gave him a dig in the ribs. The Terrible Three walked on, leaving the brainy man of the Shell gasping for breath.

"Dear me," said Skimpole, "that was almost rude of Lowther. I am truly sorry I shall not be able to accompany them this afternoon. It is rough on them. As for myself, I have my detective work to occupy my mind. I think I will go and examine the tell-tale stains once more under the microscope. A detective cannot make too sure. It would be very annoying to cause a man to be hanged for committing a murder, and to discover afterwards that it was simply a case of spilling red ink."

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther walked out into the quadrangle. The Fourth Form were already out, and a well-known lanky form was standing under the big beech in front of the Head's house. A graceful form was beside it. Figgins was talking to Cousin Ethel. The Terrible Three strolled up, and Ethel greeted them with a bright smile.

"It's going to be a jolly afternoon!" said Tom Merry, as he raised his cap. "What time would it suit you to start, Cousin Ethel?"

"Cousin Ethel has just arranged that with me," said Figgins. "Brown's trap is coming to take us to the station."

Cousin Ethel nodded to the juniors, and disappeared into the house.

Tom Merry looked expressively at the New House junior.

"Brown's trap will only hold four," he said—"or six at a pinch."

"It will only hold four on this occasion," said Figgins coolly—"Kerr, Wynn, and myself, besides Miss Cleveland."

"I think we'd better have a brake——"

"You can have a brake if you like," said Figgins, with a chuckle; "but you won't get Cousin Ethel into it. She's promised me."

"Look here, Figgins——"

"Rats!" said Figgins, walking away.

"Done again!" said Manners. "We can't raid the trap under Cousin Ethel's eyes. I'm beginning to think that it's about time we got a new leader."

"Rats!" said Tom Merry cheerfully, and he, too, walked away.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy strolled up, and spotted the two juniors under the beech, and came quickly towards them.

"I thought I saw Cousin Ethel about here," he remarked.

"She's gone in," said Manners.

"I say, don't huwwy away, deah boys. I wanted to tell you somethin'——"

"You can tell Manners," said Lowther, walking off in one direction.

"You can tell Lowther," said Manners, walking off in another.

Arthur Augustus looked after one and then after the other with gathering indignation. He was simply bubbling over with funny stories, and it was hard that no one would listen to them. D'Arcy, the humourist, did not appear popular. He caught sight of Ethel in the Head's garden, and at once hurried to join her. Juniors were not allowed there, as a matter of fact; but D'Arcy naturally considered that as his cousin was there he could safely relax the rule for once in his own favour.

Cousin Ethel smiled as D'Arcy raised his hat.

"Bai Jove, I'm glad to see you, Ethel!" said Arthur Augustus. "I should have been in the twap with you last night, only I was left behind by a set of feahful wottahs. I weally think we shall have a wippin' time this aftahnoon, deah boy—I mean girl."

Cousin Ethel laughed.

"I hope so, Arthur."

"I want you to let me dwive you to the station," went on D'Arcy. "You see, I can get a little dogcart, and we can go alone; and all the othah wottahs can follow on foot. That will be wippin', won't it?"

"Yes; but——"

"That's awwanged, then. Pewwaps we can let Blake come in; but those New House wottahs are barred. There wouldn't be any woom for Figgins's feet."

"Only I have already promised Figgins to go in the trap," said Ethel demurely.

"Bai Jove! Have you weally! Couldn't you tell him you had changed your mind? That is the pwivilege of a lady, you know."

"I'm afraid not, Arthur."

"Well, it's weally wathah hard on me, you know. Won't you feel wathah nervous with Figgins dwivin' you?"

The girl laughed again. She would have felt nervous with D'Arcy driving her.

"I think not, Arthur. But I will ask Figgins to ask you to come in the trap."

Arthur Augustus beamed.

"Vewy good. I shall be there to pwotect you, then, at all events. I say, Ethel, would you care to hear a funnay stowy—a wemarkably funnay stowy?"

"Certainly," said Ethel.

"It happened at a dinnah-party," explained D'Arcy. "It was awfully funnay—ha, ha, ha! A chap suddenly seized a dish of stwawbewwies and put it on his head. The lady who was sittin' next to him said 'My hat'—I mean she said 'Good

gwacious! What are you doin' that for?' And—ha, ha, ha!—what do you think he said?"

"I cannot guess," said Cousin Ethel.

"Ha, ha! He said: Bai Jove, I thought it was pineapples!' Ha, ha, ha!"

Cousin Ethel smiled with polite anticipation.

"Yes, Arthur?"

"Eh?"

"And what did the lady say then?"

"Er—she—I don't know. That's all, you know."

"But where is the story?"

"That's the stowy," said D'Arcy, rather crestfallen.

"But didn't you say it was a funny story?"

"Yaas, wathah! I'll tell it you ovah again, if you like. You see, there was a gentleman at a dinnah-party, and he——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Cousin Ethel laughed—a sweet silvery laugh. She certainly seemed to be amused, but whether it was at the funny story or at Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, we cannot say. But she was certainly laughing; and the swell of St. Jim's was satisfied.

"I thought you would see it in the long wun," he remarked. "You see, there are some jokes that you see at once, and some that dawn on you aftah a time. This is one of the kind that dawn on you. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I shall tell Tom Mewwy that you can see the joke," said D'Arcy, beaming. "Girls have a keenah sense of humah than boys sometimes. I have often thought that Tom Mewwy is vewy dense. I asked him this mornin' the diffewence between a church clock and a lawn-mowah, and he said he would bowwow Skimpole's micwoscope and examine them before he committed himself."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yaas, it was funnay, wasn't it, about the pineapples?" grinned D'Arcy. "I know some more funnay stowies as good as that. There's the stowy about the cuwate and the tin saucepan——"

Cousin Ethel looked at her watch.

"I'm afraid I must go in to lunch now," she said. "And you had better get your dinner, Arthur, or you will be late."

"Yaas, wathah! It was awfully funnay, though, about the tin cuwate and the saucepan—I mean the cuwate and the tin saucepan. I'll tell you that stowy in the twap."

And Cousin Ethel went in, still smiling.

D'Arcy walked away, quite satisfied with himself. A really good humourist likes to be appreciated. And a little feminine tact will often make a humourist feel that he is being appreciated at his proper value.

CHAPTER 8.

Arthur Augustus is Funny Again.

COUSIN ETHEL came down to the trap with Figgins, Figgins colouring a little under the general gaze turned upon him, but looking as proud as Punch nevertheless. Kerr and Wynn formed a sort of guard of honour. Arthur Augustus came up and joined them, bowing over his silk hat in approved Chesterfield-Grandison style. Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn gave him an expressive look as he accompanied them to the trap. But Cousin Ethel murmured a word to Figgins, and all was serene.

The trap was not what would have been called an elegant vehicle. As a matter of fact, Mr. Brown was accustomed to using it for the purpose of retailing vegetables to the inhabitants of Rylcombe and the vicinity. A fragrant odour of onions was still perceptible about it. And the most careful arrangement of the rugs, draped gracefully over the sides, could not wholly conceal the legend—T. Brown, Greengrocer, Rylcombe. But the vehicle was roomy and comfortable, and there was room for five, and what more could be desired? Figgins took the reins, Cousin Ethel seating herself beside him, and Kerr, Wynn, and D'Arcy entered the trap behind. Many a pair of eyes watched them enviously.

"I suppose we're going to walk," said Monty Lowther. "This is getting monotonous."

"It's all right," chuckled Digby. "Cousin Ethel likes driving, and Figgins will have to ask her, you know. He'll look an awful ass going through Rylcombe with a girl driving him."

"Well, that's some comfort," admitted Lowther.

The juniors accompanied the trap to the gates. They heard a little colloquy as they went. Figgins had offered Cousin Ethel the reins.

The girl shook her head.

"But you would like to drive," urged Figgins, with a sinking heart, in case his offer should be accepted.

"Not at all, Figgins."

"I know you drive jolly well," said Figgins.

Cousin Ethel laughed.

"But I would really rather you drove," she said.

"Oh, very well, if you really wish it," said Figgins, thinking that Cousin Ethel was a jolly sensible girl, as well as the sweetest one in England.

The trap started down the lane in fine style. Monty Lowther looked expressively at Digby. Digby snorted.

"Well, she drove last night," he said.

"That was because Tom Merry had the ribbons," chuckled Blake. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, don't cackle!" said Tom Merry. "Let's get off! We shall have to take the short cut, and hurry up, too, to get there the same time as the trap."

The juniors lost no time in getting to Rylcombe. The trap had just arrived at the station, and was standing outside when they arrived. Arthur Augustus jumped down to assist Cousin Ethel to alight; but Figgins had already done so. D'Arcy gave the long-limbed New House junior a look that ought to have withered him up on the spot, but which had no perceptible effect whatever upon Figgins.

"Get the tickets, Merry, will you?" said Figgins, who evidently considered himself the leader of the party. "Eleven first-class returns."

"Oh, certainly!" said Tom Merry.

The juniors had pooled their cash for the occasion, and Tom Merry had the funds. He put down the money at the little booking-office, and received a sheaf of tickets. Five minutes later they were in the train. The carriage was supposed to hold only eight, but, as Tom Merry said, they were all to go together, and the fault was with the railway company for not foreseeing things better.

"Fatty Wynn can sit on Gussy's knees," said Figgins. "That will save a seat——"

"I should uttahly wefuse to have Fatty Wynn sittin' on my knees," said Arthur Augustus, in his most stately manner. "He is a feahfully heavy weight, and he would wumple my——"

"It's all right," said Tom Merry hastily. "Cousin Ethel must have plenty of room, so we will have only four on that side, and seven on this. If I sit next to Cousin Ethel, I shall be able to——"

"I weally considah that that is my place, Tom Mewwy——"

"Now look here, Gussy——"

"I insist——"

Figgins calmly dropped into the seat beside Cousin Ethel. The girl was looking out of the window as the train sped out of the station, and looked unconscious of everything.

"Don't make a row, you kids," said Figgins. "Take care of those tickets, Tom Merry. We should be in a fine fix if you lost them."

"Look here, Figgins——"

"Bai Jove, Lowthah, I weally wish you would not twead on my feet!"

"You shouldn't have such big feet, Gussy."

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"A fellow must tread somewhere; and if your feet are all over the carriage——"

"Did you bring that package I gave you to carry, Figgins?" asked Fatty Wynn anxiously.

"Eh?" said Figgins absently.

"Did you bring that packet I gave you?"

"Did you give me a packet?"

"Did I?" howled Fatty Wynn. "Do you mean to say that you don't remember my giving you a packet of ham sandwiches to carry just before we left the New House?"

"Yes, now you speak of it I remember something of the sort," assented Figgins. "I'm awfully sorry that I've left them somewhere."

"You—you—— Where have you left them?"

"Blessed if I know," said Figgins. "In the trap, very likely. It's all right. Brown's man is taking the trap away from the station, and he'll find the packet. He's bound to eat them, so they won't be wasted."

"Figgins! My ham sandwiches!"

"And nearly an hour before he will be able to get anything to eat!" said Monty Lowther. "Figgins! Figgins! How could you?"

"It's all very well for you to be funny, Lowther. I get awfully hungry in this October weather. I had hardly any dinner—Figgins was hurrying me so—just the school grub, and a rabbit-pie I took in myself, and some broiled cod and a pudding. I hadn't any time for the cold chicken or the steak-pie; Figgins was in such a hurry. He hardly ate any dinner himself, and I know jolly well he'll be hungry before we got to the Zoo."

"Oh, cheese it!" said Figgins, colouring.

"I suppose I shall be able to get a lunch-basket when we change at Wayland——"

"I suppose you won't," laughed Tom Merry. "We have three minutes to get into the London express. Lunch-baskets are barred."

"Then I don't see what's to be done. I've nothing to eat about me except a pork pie and a saveloy. What's to be done?"

"Eat the pork pie, the saveloy, and then go and eat coke,"

said Manners. "You'll make me hungry if you keep on like this."

"That's all very well, but in this October weather——"

"Speaking of October weather," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, "weminds me of a conundrum."

There was a general groan.

"I say, Ethel, deah boy—I mean, Ethel—would you care to hear a weally wippin' conundwum?"

"Oh, yes, certainly," said Cousin Ethel.

"Yaas, I thought you would. What is the diffewence between a church clock and a lawn-mowah?" asked D'Arcy, beaming round the carriage.

"What's that got to do with October weather?" asked Monty Lowther.

"Bai Jove, you're wight! That's the w'ong one. The one I meant to ask you is, why is a moonlight night in October like the fwont page picture of the 'Magnet'?"

"Give it up!" said nine voices with singular rapidity and unanimity.

"Do you give it up, too, Ethel?"

"Er—yes, I think so."

"Because one has a bat on the rocks, and the other has a rat on the box," said D'Arcy.

There was a glare from all quarters.

"I—I don't quite see it," said Ethel. "But I daresay it is all right."

D'Arcy looked reflective for a moment.

"No, upon the whole, I weally think I have given you the w'ong answer," he said. "Pewwaps this is the wight one. Because one has a band on his hat, and the other has a hand on his bat. Is that bettah, do you think?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Cousin Ethel laughed. It was the quickest way of getting rid of the conundrums, and the juniors took their cue from their girl chum, and they all laughed. And D'Arcy, quite satisfied in his mind, laughed too. Unfortunately this appreciation of his humorous efforts encouraged him to do his worst.

"A wathah funnay thing occurred to me the othah day," he remarked. "You know aftah we came home fwom spendin' the vac. at sea, the steamah was w'ecked, and Skimpole went down in a divin'-suit to wescue his miewoscope? The divahs tweated us vewy wudely when they found we had been usin' their things. But the funnay thing is, why do you think Skimpole went down in the divin'-dwess?"

"To look for the microscope," said Herries.

"Yaas, of course; but what other weason?"

"Because he was a silly ass," suggested Manners.

"Oh, pway don't wot! This is a widdle."

"Because one rode a horse and the other rhododendron," said Lowther.

"Oh, weally, Lowthah——"

"We'll give it up," said Tom Merry. "Get it over."

"That is hardly a wespectful way of puttin' it, Tom Mewwy."

"Well, get it over, anyway."

"Why, you see—ha, ha, ha!—he went down for divahs' weasons," chuckled D'Arcy.

"He—he went down for divers reasons, did he?" said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And you say that occurred to you the other day?" asked Monty Lowther.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"It occurred to somebody else a few centuries ago," said Lowther, shaking his head. "I was brought up on that joke."

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"Wayland!" exclaimed Manners.

And the train stopped at the junction.

CHAPTER 9.

Fatty Wynn causes Trouble.

THE party had only to cross a bridge over the line to reach the up platform. Three minutes was enough time and to spare, but Fatty Wynn was thinking of other things.

The party reached the train, and Figgins placed Cousin Ethel in a corner seat with her back to the engine, and sat down beside her.

Tom Merry looked round as the juniors crowded in.

"Where's Wynn?" he asked.

"He went up the platform," said Blake, with a grin. "I fancy he's making for the refreshment-room. You had better go and look for your porpoise, Figgy."

Figgins pretended not to hear. He knew perfectly well that if he left the carriage Blake would drop into his seat beside Cousin Ethel, and would not give it up again. It would be impossible to insist.

Monty Lowther shook Figgins by the shoulder.

"Figgins, do you know Fatty's gone?"

"Is he?" said Figgins. "All right!"

"The train starts in one minute."

"Let it start."

"Well, you're a nice sort of a chum, I must say. Are you going to leave him behind? I suppose that is what you New House chaps call chummy."

"Don't bother, Figgins," said the loyal Kerr, "I'll go and look for Fatty."

Figgins gave the Scottish partner in the Co. a grateful look, Monty gave him a shove, and Blake a kick in passing. Digby put out a leg for him to fall over, and he fell over it. But he picked himself up and ran down the platform looking for Fatty Wynn.

The fat Fourth-Former was standing at the buffet. He had just given his orders, and laid down a half-crown.

Kerr seized him by the back of the collar, and dragged him away.

"Here, hold on!" shouted the astounded junior. "Hold on, Kerr!"

"I'm holding on," grinned Kerr. "Come along!"

"I mean leggo! I haven't had anything to eat yet!"

"The train starts in a few seconds."

"I've left half-a-crown on the counter there!"

"Can't be helped."

"Look here, I'm going back for my half-crown."

"You're going into the carriage."

Kerr exerted his strength, and took the fat Fourth-Former along the platform at a run.

Wynn began to struggle, and Kerr yelled for help.

They were close up to the carriage now, and the juniors were looking out at them with interest. Many other heads were looking out of the windows along the train. The guard was coming along. In ten seconds the train was to start.

"Lend a hand here!" gasped Kerr.

No one in the carriage moved, except Lowther, who nudged Figgins.

"Aren't you going to lend Kerr a hand, Figgy?" he asked.

Figgins affected not to hear the question.

Kerr yelled again.

"Lend a hand here!"

"'Urry up, gentlemen!"

"I'm going back for my half-crown."

"You're not."

The soft voice of Cousin Ethel broke in gently.

"Aren't you coming into the carriage, Wynn?"

Fatty Wynn ceased to struggle immediately. With native Welsh politeness he never could resist an appeal from the fair sex.

He turned to the carriage, and Kerr gave him a shove that sent him sprawling in over the legs of the juniors.

Kerr jumped in after him, and the guard slammed the door and waved his flag.

Fatty Wynn was rolling and puffing under a crowd of feet, some of which trod on him in a really careless way.

Kerr sank into a seat panting.

"Lemme gerrup!" came a stifled voice from the floor of the carriage. "Lemme gerrup, you beasts! If you tread on me again I'll pulverise somebody!"

"Help him up," said Tom Merry sympathetically.

And he seized Fatty's shoulders.

Unfortunately Lowther seized his feet at the same time and lifted, and Fatty was folded up instead of lifted up.

"Which end do you want lifted up first, Fatty?" asked Blake.

"Ow, you rotters! Lemme alone! I'll get up by myself!"

Fatty Wynn scrambled up. He looked very red and flustered. His collar was loose, and his necktie was awry. His cap was under the seat, but in compensation a great deal of dust from under the seat was upon his head. He was gasping for breath.

"Well, of all the rotters!" he said breathlessly. "I beg your pardon, Miss Cleveland, but of all the rotters——"

"You'd have been left behind if I hadn't yanked you in," growled Kerr. "Catch me taking as much trouble again."

"I've left a half-crown behind at the buffet."

"Serve you right."

"I haven't had anything to eat."

"Jolly good thing, too."

"You Scottish beast!"

"You Welsh rabbit!"

"Peace, peace, my children," said Tom Merry, laughing. "You musn't work off New House manners in public. Figgins, is this how you bring up your little boys?"

"Oh, cheese it, both of you!" said Figgins.

"I wanted to get some lunch," said Fatty Wynn. "I've nothing to eat about me but a pork-pie and a saveloy."

"You've got the pork-pie about you and no mistake," grinned Lowther, looking at Fatty Wynn's jacket.

Wynn followed his glance, and gave a howl.

In the tussle the pork-pie had burst, and fragments of it were adhering to Fatty Wynn's jacket and waistcoat. A stream of gravy was running down the latter garment. It streamed merrily down the waistcoat, and continued on its way down the

right leg of the trousers below. The trousers were of a light grey variety, and the gravy showed up in excellent contrast.

"My—my hat!" gasped Fatty Wynn.

He felt in his breast pocket for the pork-pie. It had been crammed in very tightly, but it was loose enough now. The cloth was burst, and the pie was in pieces. Scarce half of it was in his pocket. He dragged out the cloth and the fragments amid a shower of gravy that scattered itself over D'Arcy's legs.

The swell of St. Jim's jumped up with a yell.

"You uttah ass! You've wuined my——"

"Order!" said Jack Blake.

"It's all vewy well to say ordah, Blake, but he's wuined my——"

"Never mind, Gussy, you get the gravy for nothing, you know. Fatty has only the crust, and that looks rather rocky."

"It's rotten!" said Fatty Wynn.

"Then chuck it out of the window, quick!"

"I mean it's rotten to be done in like this. That was a ripping pork-pie. I made it last night from a recipe of my own, and it was full of rich gravy."

"Ha, ha, ha! So is your waistcoat now."

"Yaas, wathah, and my twou——"

"I've only got the saveloy now," said Fatty Wynn discontentedly, "to last me till we get to Regent's Park. I don't know what's to be done."

"I know what's to be done if you start eating saveloys in a respectable party like this," said Lowther. "We shall chuck the saveloy out of the window, and you after it."

"If you think I am going to be starved to death, Lowther ——"

"Rats! You could live for a whole winter, like a Polar bear, without any grub, on your own fat. And you could still weigh about fifty stone at the finish."

Fatty Wynn deigned no reply to this remark. He sat down.

The remains of the pork-pie were consigned to the railway line.

Lowther wagged a warning finger at the fat Fourth-Former as he started feeling in another pocket.

"Mind," he said, "saveloys are barred. Keep an eye on him, you chaps, and collar him the moment he produces it."

"Look here, Monty Lowther——"

"I'm looking. We're all looking. When father says look, we all look," replied Monty Lowther, "and the moment you show that grub we collar you."

"What-ho!" said Blake cordially.

Fatty Wynn looked round.

Figgins was talking to Cousin Ethel, telling her all about a late football match. Kerr was setting his collar straight. There was certainly no help to be had from either, and so the saveloy did not come into evidence.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy wiped the gravy spots from his trousers as well as he could, but he looked very worried when he had finished and surveyed the result. But suddenly the worried look vanished from his face, and his eye twinkled behind the eyeglass.

"Bai Jove, you know, this weminds me of a conundwum! What is the difference between a pork-pie and a Panama hat?"

"Oh, don't!"

"Because one is an heir apparent and the othah a hairy parent."

"Eh?"

"No, that doesn't sound wight, somehow. It's a jolly good conundwum, if I could only think of the answah. Nevah mind. I'll tell you the stowy of the cuwate and the tin saucepan There was a cuwate——"

"Don't!"

"But weally, deah boys——"

"Don't!"

"It's an awfully funnay stowy——"

"Don't!"

"Very well, I shall wefuse to tell you the stowy now, so it is no use your askin' me," said the swell of the School House. And the history of the curate and the tin saucepan remained unrelated.

"Charing Cross!" said Manners, at last.

And the train came to a standstill, and the juniors poured out of the carriage.

CHAPTER 10.
At the Zoo!

"PORTAH!"

"Yes, sir."

"Get me a taxi, deah boy."

"Yessir."

"Ass!" said Tom Merry. "You can't cram eleven people into a taximeter. They're allowed o carry only three——"

"The taxi-cab in the pwesent case will cawwy only two persons, Tom Mewwy."

"Better get a motor-'bus for the party," said Digby. "Cabs would come too expensive for the lot, even with Gussy's fiver to fall back on."

"Are you weady, Ethel?"

"Yes, Arthur—for what?" asked Cousin Ethel.

"I think we had bettah have a taxi-cab," explained D'Arcy. "They are awfully comfy, and save a lot of twouble. I will take you to the entwance of the Zoo in a taxi, and these boundahs can follow on a motor-'bus."

Cousin Ethel shook her head with a laugh.

"Oh, no, Arthur! It is such a short excursion, I think we ought all to remain together."

"But they won't take the whole party in a taxi."

"But we need not take a taxi."

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

"Your cab, sir," said the porter, touching his cap.

"I am sowwy to have given you the twouble for nothin', deah boy," said D'Arcy, "I shall not wequire a cab now."

The porter glared.

"I 'ope you will remember me, sir," he said.

"Certainly," said D'Arcy, beaming. "I wegard you as a most obligin' person, and I shall certainly wemembah you."

And he turned away. The porter stood petrified. Tom Merry, laughing, tapped him on the arm, and the porter looked round.

"It's all right," said Tom. "Take this shilling, and give this one to the taxi man. It's all right."

"Thank you kindly, sir."

Cousin Ethel walked out of the station with Figgins on one side and D'Arcy on the other. The juniors followed, Figgins leading the way up to the Strand. Arthur Augustus looked about him with great interest through his eyeglass, and Tom Merry rescued him from the wheels of a hansom cab and then from a motor-'bus. Then he linked his arm in that of the swell of St. Jim's.

"Where are we goin', deah boy?"

"Bakerloo Tube," said Tom Merry. "There's a station on the Tube at Regent's Park, and we can get out there for the Zoo."

"Bai Jove, that's a ripping ideah, you know!"

The party descended into the Tube station. Tom Merry took the tickets, and they entered the lift. Arthur Augustus looked round him with great interest when the lift attendant closed the iron gates, and the lift began to descend. The dark, cobwebby walls glided upward swiftly, and D'Arcy stretched out his hand to put it through the grating and tap the wall, from a motive of mere curiosity. Tom Merry jerked him back so suddenly that he lost his footing, and stamped on the foot of a stout gentleman standing near him in recovering it. There was a howl of anguish from the stout gentleman, and he hopped on one foot. Arthur Augustus gave Tom Merry a withering glance, and turned round to the stout gentleman hat in hand.

"My dear sir, pway allow me to apologise most sincerely," he exclaimed. "I am feahfully sowwy for this unfortunate occuwwence, and it was the fault of that wuff ass who pulled me back from the gwatin'. I apologise most——"

"You confounded young jackass!"

"My dear sir——"

"You ought to be spanked!" roared the stout gentleman. "That's what you want, you young noodle—you want a spanking!"

D'Arcy replaced his silk hat with an air of offended dignity.

"I have expwessed my wegwet," he said. "A fellow can do no more than expwess his wegwet for an unfortunate occuwwence. I am sowwy that you cannot weceive an apology in a pwopah spiwit. I have apologised as one gentleman to anothah——"

"You young jackanapes!"

D'Arcy gave it up. His graceful manners were wasted on the stout gentleman. Perhaps the latter had some cause for annoyance. D'Arcy had come down heavily upon his favourite corn, and all the apologies in the world had no effect on the pain of it. The stout gentleman glowered at D'Arcy, and at the juniors generally. A little boy with broad white collar, a nice bow, and a pasty complexioned face was with the stout gentleman, and the latter took him by the hand in leaving the lift. He was treading very lightly with one foot, and D'Arcy felt that he might try the effect of another apology on the damaged corn.

He raised his topper once more, with an ingratiating smile.

"I am twuly sowwy, my dear sir, for that unfortunate occuwwence——"

"Young jackanapes!" growled the stout gentleman. "Come on, Alfred."

"Yes, Uncle James," said the little boy, in a shrill, piping voice.

"I weally wegard that old gentleman as a wathah unweason-

able person." murmured D'Arcy. "It was all your fault, Tom Mewwy, and I apologised most handsomely, too."

"Perhaps he was hurt," grinned Monty Lowther.

"Yaas, pewwaps; but an apology ought to make the matter wight."

"There's the train!" exclaimed Herries.

They quickened their pace, and arrived on the platform as the train stopped. It was a train for the Elephant, however, and Herries had to be dragged off it again. Tom Merry led the way to the right platform, and a train came in for Edgware Road, and the juniors boarded it. They sat in a row, filling up nearly one side of a carriage from the door to the double seats. Just as the conductor was closing the gates a stout gentleman and a little boy came bolting on the train, and they sat down opposite the boys from St. Jim's.

The stout gentleman puffed and blew, and mopped his forehead with a handkerchief. He sat in the seat nearest the door, and kept an eagle eye on the conductor. When the sliding-doors were opened at the next station he jabbed the unfortunate man with the end of his umbrella.

"Is this the right train for the Zoo?" he demanded.

"Yes," gasped the man in uniform. "You get out at Regent's Park Station."

And he retreated from the umbrella. He kept a wary distance from it every time he opened the sliding-doors after that. Arthur Augustus, who was troubled in his mind, and really wished to make matters right, smiled at the old gentleman across the carriage.

"Are you goin' to the Zoo, my deah sir?" he said affably.

The stout gentleman glared at him.

"I should be vewy happy to show you wound, if you like, sir," said D'Arcy. "I am takin' these fellows there too."

"Young jackanapes!" murmured the stout gentleman. "Alfred, stop sucking your finger this instant."

"Yes, Uncle James," piped Alfred.

The party alighted at Regent's Park. After leaving the lift the juniors mounted the steps into the Marylebone Road, and Arthur Augustus looked round for the Zoo. He adjusted his eyeglass and looked round again, as if he thought it might be near at hand but passed over in the first glance.

"I don't see the Zoo here, Tom Mewwy," he remarked.

"Did you expect to?" said Tom Merry, laughing. "We've got to cross the road, get into Regent's Park, and go round to the entrance on the Outer Circle."

"Is it a long walk?" asked D'Arcy doubtfully.

"You'll know when you get there, if you count the steps."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"I don't think Cousin Ethel ought to walk it," said Figgins. "There will be enough walking to do in the grounds, you know."

He made a sign to a hansom, and the driver brought the vehicle up to the kerb in a moment. Figgins calmly assisted Cousin Ethel into it. D'Arcy moved forward, and stumbled over Kerr's foot. Before he could recover from the stumble, Figgins was in the hansom with Ethel and bowling away. Arthur Augustus set his silk hat straight, jammed his monocle into his eye, and stared after the cab.

"Bai Jove!" he ejaculated.

"Come on!" exclaimed Tom Merry, dragging him across the road.

"My summah hat! There nevah is any understandin' girls," said D'Arcy. "Ethel couldn't come with me in a taxi, because it was best not to leave the othahs, and now she nevah said a word when Figgins shoved her into a hansom!"

Tom Merry laughed.

"It's a curious thing, Gussy. Better make a note of it and get Skimpole to think it out for you when you get back to St. Jim's. If you don't want to be out first ball to that motor-'bus, you had better buck up."

D'Arcy skipped out of the way of the motor-'bus. Tom Merry led the way into Regent's Park, and they walked along the Outer Circle. A voice they were learning to recognise came to their ears.

"Alfred, throw away that toffee immediately,"

"Yes, Uncle James."

"Bai Jove!" murmured D'Arcy, "that unweasonable old gentleman is goin' to haunt us this aftahnoon, I suppose."

The stout gentleman gave D'Arcy a glare as he passed with Alfred. He had evidently not forgotten the incident in the Bakerloo lift.

"Better go and make him another apology," suggested Monty Lowther.

"Yaas, wathah, if you think—what are you dwaggin' hold of me for, Blake?"

"Don't do anything of the sort, you ass."

"I wefuse to be called an ass."

"Oh, come on!" said Tom Merry. "We shall miss Figgins at the entrance if we don't hurry."

They hurried, but they missed Figgins at the entrance all the same. Tom Merry paid for nine to pass the turnstiles. D'Arcy was last, and he paused in the turnstile and looked round anxiously. Blake poked him in the ribs.

"Come on, Gussy. This isn't a place to go to sleep in, and you're blocking up the way.

"Pway don't poke my wibs in that wuff way, Blake. I am thinking about Figgins and Ethel. Pewwaps they are lost, and I cannot go into the Zoo in any comfort if Cousin Ethel is lost in London."

"Ass!" said Tom Merry. "How could they possibly be lost? I suppose a hansom cabby knows his way to the Zoological Gardens."

"I have heard that countwy people comin' up to London have been dwiven to feahful places by cabmen, and wobbed and murdahed."

"Oh, dear! Are you coming in or not?"

"I'm afwaid it's imposs for me to come in until I am assured about Figgins and Ethel. I cannot leave my own cousin to be wobbed and murdahed, and I am surpwised at your suggestin' such a thing, Tom Mewwy."

"You—you unspeakable duffer! I tell you Figgins must be a good ten minutes ahead of us here, and he's gone in with Ethel."

"I weally considah that we ought to be satisfied on that point before we devote the afternoon to pleasuah. If Ethel has been wobbed——"

"Duffer! Get out of the turnstile, you're blocking the way."

"I am sowwy, but undah the circs——"

"Here come Uncle James and little Alfred," said Blake. "Get out of the turnstile, Gussy, they want to come in."

"Undah the circs.——"

"Ask the ticket man," said Digby. "He'll tell you if Figgy has gone in."

"Bai Jove! I nevah thought of that, you know. I say, deah boy, have you seen a long-legged wottah and a vewy pwetty girl come in duwin' the last quartah of an hour?"

The man in the office grinned.

"I'm afraid you must be a little more exact in your description, sir," he said. "There have been a lot of people in during the last quarter of an hour."

"Alfred, follow me through the gate, and stop biting your nails."

"Yes, Uncle James."

"Boy! You are standing in the way!"

Arthur Augustus looked round and raised his silk hat to the stout gentleman.

"I am sowwy," he said. "I am makin' a few inquiwies, and I shall not be long. My dear sir, the two persons I want to know about are a vewy skinny, long-legged, fatheaded sort of a wascal and a vewy charmin' young lady. If you kick me again, Kerr, I shall be compelled to disturb the harmony of the pwesent expedish by administerin' a feahful thwashin'."

"Just be a little more careful in talking about Figgy, then!" growled Kerr.

"The gentleman wishes to have an exact descwiptior so that he can wecognise him."

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

"Boy, you are blocking up the way and wasting my time. Alfred, put your cap straight immediately!"

"Yes, Uncle James."

"I am sowwy to incommode you, but weally, I should be obliged if you would not intewwupt me, sir," said D'Arcy politely. "You put me off my stwoke. The young lady who came in with the long-legged chap was my cousin, my deah fellow, and vewy like me—wemarkably good-lookin', you know."

"A contradiction in terms," murmured Lowther.

"Pway wing off, Lowthah! The long-legged wottah I was speakin' of had a school-cap on, and his necktie was pwobably on one side, and vewy likely there was some ink on his collar, and his waistcoat was wathah wumpled."

The man in the office laughed.

"I think I saw the two you mention, sir," he said. "They came up in a hansom."

"Yaas, wathah! That's wight!"

"They went in about ten minutes ago."

"Thank you vewy much. I am gweatly welieved in my mind. I was anxious about Ethel, deah boys. And I shouldn't like even Figgins to be wobbed and murdahed, though he has nevah weally tweated me with pwopah wespect."

"Boy, will you allow me to enter!" thundered the stout gentleman, who was growing almost apoplectic in aspect. Arthur Augustus lifted his hat again.

"Certainly, my deah sir! I apologise most sincerely for havin' kept you waitin', and I weally hope it has caused you no inconvenience."

"Young jackanapes!"

"I weally must wemark that that is a wude and oppwobwious expwession, and—welease me, Tom Mewwy! I wefuse to move until I have finished! Oh, you wottah!"

D'Arcy was dragged bodily away, and the stout gentleman was free to enter at last. The chums of St. Jim's walked on up the Terrace Walk, and at the bear pit on the right-hand side they caught sight of Cousin Ethel and Figgins, looking down at the bear.

CHAPTER 11.
In the Bear Pit.

IT was a fine, sunny afternoon, and the grounds of the Zoological Gardens were pretty well filled. There were a number of people round the bear pit, and at the refreshment stall close at hand. Fatty Wynn stopped at the latter. The young lady in charge did a thriving trade, apparently, in buns for the bears and nuts for the monkeys. But Fatty Wynn was not thinking of either nuts for the monkeys or buns for the bears. He was thinking of himself.

He looked over the little buffet with a calculating eye, and felt in his pocket for some money. Then he began to give his orders. Meanwhile, the other juniors joined Figgins and Cousin Ethel. D'Arcy gave his cousin a rather reproachful look.

"I have been feahfully anxious about you, Ethel," he said.

The girl looked surprised.

"Anxious about me, Arthur! Why?"

"I was wathah afwaid you might have been wobbed and murdahed, you know. I inquired at the gate before I came in, howevah, and learned that you were here, by deswibin' Figgins to the ticket chap. I was gweatly welieved in my mind. I weally hope you will not get out of my sight again, deah girl. London is a vewy dangewous place, and you ought not to make me anxious, you know."

Cousin Ethel smiled. If she had been a boy she would probably have said "Rats!" As she was a girl, she only smiled and looked at Figgins, and Figgins grinned. The bear in the pit rose on his hind legs and opened his mouth for buns. He was a large, handsome black bear, and the expression of his face as he opened his mouth was comical in the extreme. He was evidently accustomed to being fed by the visitors, and looked for buns from every corner as a matter of course.

Tom Merry stepped to the buffet and bought a bagful of buns. Cousin Ethel smiled sweetly at the black bear, and he opened his jaws wider.

"He wants a bun, poor boy," said Ethel.

"Here you are," said Tom Merry.

He opened the bag, and Cousin Ethel took out a bun. The bear's jaws opened so wide that his head appeared to be coming into two pieces. Ethel dropped the bun into the square pit and the bear caught it in his mouth. A single movement of the jaws and the bun disappeared. The jaws opened for another.

"My hat!" said Manners. "He will get indigestion at that rate! Fatty Wynn can't bolt buns like that."

"Bai Jove, no! Fatty Wynn is bolting somethin', though. I say, Fatty, deah boy, are you gettin' that cake for the beah?"

"No, I'm not," said the fat Fourth-Former.

"Give us that saveloy," said Lowther. "He's bound to like a saveloy."

"I haven't a saveloy; it's gone."

"Make room here, boys, make room immediately," said a well-known voice. "Alfred, you are not to lean over the parapet!"

"Yes, Uncle James."

"If you were to fall it would cause you considerable injury, and you would probably have to be removed in a cab. I cannot be put to that expense."

"Yes, Uncle James."

"You may purchase a penny bun at the counter here. Take this penny, and mind you do not lose it. You shall feed the bear with the bun. And stop sucking your thumb this instant, Alfred!"

"Yes, Uncle James."

Alfred purchased the penny bun. There was plenty of room for the stout gentleman a few paces further on, but the juniors made room for him on their side. They always treated elders with respect, from a regard for good form.

"Don't waste that bun recklessly, Alfred. You may break it into three pieces and feed the bear with it. And stop eating it yourself!"

"I—I wasn't, Uncle James."

"I distinctly saw you put a portion of that unwholesome pastry into your mouth, Alfred."

"It—it was only a little bit, Uncle James. And—and I'm hungry."

"Pooh, nonsense! How can you possibly be hungry when it is only two hours since you had your dinner. I hope you will not make me sorry that I am conferring a treat upon you this afternoon, Alfred."

"No, Uncle James."

"You may feed the bear. That is right. I will place the last piece on my umbrella, in order to make the animal climb the pole for it, and display his agility for the improvement of your knowledge of natural history."

"Yes, Uncle James."

In the centre of the bear pit, as every visitor to the Zoo knows, is a post, notched to make climbing easy. The stout gentleman impaled a fragment of bun on the end of his umbrella and reached it out towards the post, and strove with coaxing gestures to make the bear climb for it. But Bruin did not seem to be in a climbing mood.

The juniors of St. Jim's had ceased feeding him, from a motive of politeness, until the stout gentleman should be finished improving Alfred's knowledge of natural history. The stout gentleman grew very red in the face as the bear refused to climb. He allowed the umbrella to sink at last, tired of holding it out, and the bear made a sudden snatch at the piece of bun, and seized it in his jaws. The stout gentleman gave him a savage crack over the head with his umbrella and the animal grunted.

"You brute!" muttered Tom Merry.

It was as well for the stout gentleman that no keeper was at hand to see his act of brutality. He frowned angrily at Tom Merry, perhaps feeling the justice of the junior's muttered remark, and then told Alfred to "come on" in a voice of thunder. Alfred started and shrank, and then followed his terrible uncle.

"Bai Jove! What a bwute!" murmured D'Arcy. "And I wathah think that little chap would be just as happy if his uncle wasn't confewwin' a tweat upon him this afternoon."

The bear had retreated to a corner of the pit, and was rubbing his head with his paw and growling slightly. Cousin Ethel tossed a bun to him, and he took no notice. The juniors, with caressing gestures, strove to bring him back to a good temper. All but Fatty Wynn. He was too busy. He was sitting on the parapet, engaged upon a bagful of cakes he had purchased for himself. Lowther reached towards the bag.

"Give us a few of those, Fatty," he said.

"Oh, rats!" said Fatty. "I—oh!"

As he moved quickly the bag slipped from his knees and fell into the pit. Fatty Wynn gazed after it in dismay. Nearly a dozen choice cakes were there, and his feed was cut short, nipped in the bud as it were.

"Serve you right," said Lowther "Why couldn't you give me one for the bear? He'll have the lot now."

"He won't take them," said Kerr. "He's going into his den."

The bear, all his good temper gone, had retreated sullenly into his den under the wall. Fatty Wynn looked after him, and then looked down at the bag on the paved floor of the pit.

"I say, it's a shame to waste good grub like that!" he said. "I'm going down for them."

"You can't," said Tom Merry. "It's not allowed to enter the pit."

"You can tell me if the keeper comes along."

"You won't need telling if the bear comes along," grinned Lowther. "He'd be glad of a nice fat lump out of Fatty."

"He's gone in; and besides, he's tame. I'm going down for those cakes."

"Don't be an ass!" said Figgins. "You can't."

"Who says I can't?" said Fatty Wynn, who could be obstinate when he chose. "It's an easy drop into the pit, and I could jump up and catch the coping again, and you could give me a hand out."

"Don't be an ass!"

Fatty Wynn slid over the rail to the inward side Tom Merry ran forward to stop him, and the fat Fourth-Former dropped quickly into the pit.

He stooped for the bag of cakes and crammed it under his jacket. There was a yell of alarm from the juniors.

"Look out, he's coming!"

Fatty Wynn gave a gasp and looked round. The black head of the bear was protruding from the den, and there was a red, spiteful gleam in his eyes. Fatty made a spring to catch the stone coping, and dropped back a foot short of catching it. The bear growled and came wholly into view. He was evidently annoyed by this invasion of his domain. Fatty stood petrified for the moment.

"The post!" shouted Tom Merry. "Climb the post!"

Fatty Wynn understood. He made a spring for the post in the centre of the pit. The junior was plump, but he was active. The deep notches in the post rendered climbing easy. In a twinkling Fatty Wynn had swarmed up the post, and reached the top of it. He was out of reach of the bear; but he was out of reach of escape also, for it was a physical impossibility to get from the top of the post to any of the sides of the pit.

"Help!" gasped Fatty. "Ow! Help!"

The bear stopped at the foot of the post and growled. He had refused to climb for the sake of the stout gentleman's proffered bun. Perhaps Fatty Wynn seemed to him a more juicy and tempting morsel. At all events, he reared himself upon his hind legs and grasped the post with his claws with the evident intention of climbing.

"Help!" gasped Fatty Wynn.

Cousin Ethel turned pale. Lowther jammed a bun on the end of his cane and reached it out to the bear. Bruin took no notice. He climbed the post, and the shouts and gesticulations of the juniors, and the buns and cakes they pelted him with, made no difference. He took no notice, but slowly and steadily climbed the post after Fatty Wynn.

The drive to St. Jim's could not be called a howling success. Cousin Ethel drove, and was too busy with the reins to be able to turn her head once, or to exchange a single remark with either of the juniors. And Tom Merry was not inclined to talk to Digby, and Digby did nothing but grin and wink in the most irritating way at his ousted chum.

CHAPTER 12.

A Close Thing for Fatty.

"MY hat!" gasped Tom Merry, "Fatty will be clawed down!"

It looked like it. Fatty Wynn was at the top of the post now, and could go no farther. The bear was climbing steadily, and was almost within reach of him now. The red jaws had opened wide. It was not a question of life and death, but Fatty Wynn would certainly have been badly mauled if the bear had dragged him down. The juniors were almost at their wits' end. It was Tom Merry who thought of a way to help.

"Fatty! Fatty! You've got the cakes, drop one into his mouth!"

"Good wheeze!" shouted Figgins. "Buck up, Fatty!"

Fortunately Fatty Wynn had sufficient presence of mind to act upon the suggestion. He clung to the top of the post with one arm, and looked downward. The red muzzle of the bear was not a foot below him. Fatty Wynn shuddered, but he had plenty of pluck. He slid his free hand into the bag under his jacket and extracted a bun. The bun dropped fairly into the bear's mouth. Bruin seemed a little astonished at this reception. He coughed and choked, for the bun had gone very far back in his capacious throat. He dealt with it, however, munching it up, clinging to the post with his paws the while. Then he opened his mouth wide again. But he had ceased to climb.

Fatty Wynn breathed a little more freely, and so did his friends round the bear pit. So long as the bagful of cakes and buns lasted, the fat Fourth-Former was safe.

"Keep it up!" shouted Blake.

Fatty Wynn dropped another cake. A single movement of the powerful jaws crunched it, and it disappeared, and the red mouth opened wide for another.

The sight was comical enough, and but for Fatty Wynn's peril the juniors would have enjoyed it. But it was no laughing matter for Wynn. He dropped another and another morsel into the bear's mouth, and the animal, clinging to the post, munched one after another.

The supply ran short, and the perspiration gathered on Fatty Wynn's brow as he dropped his last cake. The bear munched it, and opened his jaws wide again. Fatty Wynn looked round helplessly.

"Help!" he gasped. "Ow! He's coming up again! Ow! Help!"

The bear waited a few moments. Then he made a movement to climb higher. Tom Merry deftly threw a bun across, and the bear caught it in his jaws. His attention was taken from Fatty Wynn for the moment.

Lowther held out a cake on the end of his cane, and the bear reached for it, snapping with his jaws. Lowther drew it back, and allowed it to fall to the floor of the pit. The bear scrambled down after it.

"Oh!" gasped Fatty Wynn. "Oh! Keep him there somehow! The brute!"

"More buns, quick!" said Figgins.

Lowther made a clean sweep of a huge pile of buns on the buffet. The juniors fairly pelted the bear with them. Bruin's good-temper seemed to return. He bolted the buns at an alarming rate, which certainly could not have been good for his digestive organs. Fatty Wynn was palpitating on top of the post. The bear was letting him alone, but there was no escape from his perch. Figgins called to him.

"Slide down, Fatty!"

"I—I can't! The beast——"

"He's busy now! Slide down, and I'll help you up the other side—quick, before he starts on you again."

"Suppose he—suppose he goes for me?"

"Then we'll all jump in, and he'll have to go for the lot of us."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"All—all right, Figgins. But—but——"

"Slide down, I tell you."

"V-very well."

There was clearly nothing else to be done. Fatty Wynn slid down the post, as quietly as he could, on the further side from the bear. Bruin was gobbling up buns, and had no eyes for Fatty Wynn. His back was turned to the fat Fourth-Former.

Figgins swung himself over the rail at the back of the pit, and with his chest on the stone, reached down with both hands towards Fatty Wynn. He could just clasp hands with the fat Fourth-Former. But Wynn was no light weight. It was impossible for Figgins to lift him in such a position.

"It's all right, Figgy," gasped Wynn, "I can climb."

Kerr was kneeling at the top ready to give a hand. With Figgins grasping his hands, Fatty Wynn scrambled up, and Kerr reached down and got a grip on his collar. Then he was dragged bodily out of the pit. The bear looked round and growled.

"More buns," said Tom Merry.

Arthur Augustus hurled a bun and caught the bear in the eye instead of the mouth. The animal growled again, and rubbed his paw over his eye. But Fatty Wynn was in safety now, and the hail of comestibles ceased. Somewhat rumpled and dusty, and bathed in perspiration, the plump junior stood on the safe side of the rail.

"By Jove!" he gasped, "that was a narrow escape."

"Yes, for the bear," remarked Monty Lowther. "He would have had fearful nightmares to-night if he had bolted our Falstaff."

"Yaas, wathah! It would have been wathah wuff on Bwuin."

"And you might as well have let him have the cakes first as last," said Lowther. "He's had them, you see, and nearly had you, too."

"Let's get on," said Tom Merry, "we've got a lot to see. I think Fatty had better agree not to fall into any more animal's dens, or we shall waste the afternoon without seeing anything of the Zoo. And somebody had better settle up for all those buns."

The girl in the buffet looked as if she thought so too. Lowther paid up cheerfully, and the party moved on. Fatty Wynn paid no heed to the badinage of his chums. He was only too thankful to have escaped the jaws of the bear. Arthur Augustus had been looking thoughtful for some moments. As the juniors walked on, he gave Tom Merry a nudge. The hero of the Shell looked round.

"I say, Tom Mewwy, I wanted to ask you——"

"Go ahead," said Tom Merry, tersely.

"What is the difference between a black bear and a niggah with one eye?"

Tom Merry stopped his ears and ran on.

CHAPTER 13.
In the Lion-House.

JACK BLAKE looked at his watch.

"Hullo, we shall have to buck up!" he exclaimed.

"For what?" asked Tom Merry, looking round.

"To see the lions fed. They're fed at half-past four, you know. It's worth seeing."

"Yaas, wathah! I particularly want to see the lions fed. Pway where are the lions?"

"In the Lion House, of course, fathead."

"I object to bein' called a fathead."

"I object to your being one, you know, but it can't be helped. This way to the Lion House," said Blake, leading the way.

"How do you know that is the way to the Lion House, deah boy?"

"Because I can see the name on the place through the trees, ass."

"Bai Jove! I nevah thought of that."

"The things you don't think of, Gussy, would fill the 'Encyclopædia Britannica,' and leave a lot over," said Blake.

"Oh, weally, Blake——"

"It's a quarter past four now," observed Lowther.

"Then what's the good of goin' in now," said D'Arcy. "We haven't very long to stay here, you know, and we don't want to waste a quartah of an hour."

"People crowd in to see the lions fed," explained Jack Blake who, having been to the Zoo before, naturally adopted the airs of a cicerone. "If you don't buck up, we shan't get into the house at all. I've seen them filling up all the space between the railing and the opposite wall."

"Bai Jove! I nevah——"

"No, of course you didn't! Come on."

The juniors lost no time in getting to the Lion House. Figgins looked anxiously at Cousin Ethel to see if she was afraid. But she wasn't. Cousin Ethel was not the sort of girl to be afraid where there was no danger, and she had never fainted in her life. She only smiled when she heard a lion roar from within the big building.

Blake was right in thinking that there was no time to lose. People were hurrying towards the Lion House from all quarters to see the animals fed. The wide, long hall was already pretty full. In front of the long row of huge cages, or rather dens, runs an iron railing, within which the attendants wheel down the truck containing the food, at feeding time. Some of the spectators were crowding up to the railing, to get as near as possible to the scene, while others occupied the seats at the back of the hall.

Arthur Augustus adjusted his monocle and looked round for a seat. Blake seized him by the arm and dragged him towards the railing.

"Come on, ass, here's a place for us."

"I should gweatly pwefer to sit down, Blake."

"You'll have to sit down on the floor, then."

"There are seats on the othah side of the hall."

"They're all taken, centuries ago—at all events, half-an-hour ago."

"Pewwaps I may find some vacant."

"Oh, you can go and look if you like," grinned Blake. "You won't see the lions fed if you do, that's all. Run along."

"I weally think I had bettah go and look for a seat, as I feel wathah exhausted aftah so much walkin'," said D'Arcy. "Ethel, will you come and sit down?"

The girl shook her head.

"I prefer to watch the lions, Arthur," she replied sweetly.

"Oh, vewy well. Don't let my cousin get cwushed in the cwowd, Figgins."

"I'm looking after Miss Cleveland," said Figgins. "That's all right."

Arthur Augustus went to look for a seat. Figgins, by rare good fortune, found a place at the rail just opposite the den of the largest lion—a really royal beast. Cousin Ethel stood beside him there, squeezed against the rail. Figgins put his strong arm behind her to keep off the pressure of the crowd. Blake, Digby, and Herries were crammed against the rail in front of the big tiger, while the Terrible Three were further along, in front of another lion's den. Kerr and Wynn were just behind them, looking over their shoulders. It was getting close upon feeding-time now, and the animals were very restive. The tiger was walking up and down his cage with endless, tireless movements, and the lion and lioness in the largest den were sniffing and snuffing to and fro, as if they knew that feeding-time was coming, as doubtless they did.

"By jove! I can smell the grub they're bringing," exclaimed Monty Lowther, sniffing. "It niffs just like ham and mustard."

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

"What's the row?" asked Lowther, staring at him.

"The grub you can niff is Fatty Wynn's sandwich."

Lowther looked round. Fatty Wynn was crammed up close behind him by the crowd, and he had hardly room to get his sandwich to his mouth. The fragments of it, as he ate, dropped on Lowther's jacket. Monty made a movement of disgust.

"You horrid cannibal, are you gorging again?" he exclaimed.

"Again!" exclaimed Fatty Wynn indignantly, "I haven't had anything to eat since we were at the buffet near the bear."

"Well, don't use my shoulder for a plate, anyway, and don't poison me with the fumes of that horrid ham and mustard."

"This is a jolly nice sandwich——"

"Gr-r-r-r! Take it away and bury it."

"I'm jolly hungry," said Fatty Wynn, as the last of the sandwich disappeared. "Could you fellows give me a little more room while I get a cake out from under my jacket?"

"No, we couldn't," said Lowther promptly, "and if you start any more grubbing here I'll hack you on the shins, so look out."

"I get awfully sharp set in this October weather——"

"I can hear them bringing the grub along. Ask the keepers to let you have a bit."

There was a crash of the truck on the rails laid for it to run on. The sound was evidently familiar to the animals in the dens. There was a general whisking of tails and roaring and growling. The tiger marched up and down more swiftly than ever, snuffing at the bars. The truck came round the corner and ran along before the cages, and the lions roared in real earnest.

"You must allow me room," said a voice the juniors had heard before. "I must allow my little boy to see the lions fed. Alfred, hold my hand, and leave off sucking your thumb this instant."

"Yes, Uncle James."

"Here, hold on," exclaimed Kerr. "You mustn't shove like that."

"I insist upon having room for my little boy to see the lions fed."

"You should have come earlier, then."

"None of your insolence, boy. You can squeeze up a little closer, I am sure. I will not be treated with insolence. Alfred, if you do not keep close to me I shall box your ears."

"Yes, Uncle James."

"I hope you will not make me sorry that I have taken the trouble to give you an afternoon's enjoyment," said the stout gentleman severely. "You boys must squeeze up closer. I insist upon this little fellow seeing the lions fed."

"Lift him up, then," suggested Tom Merry. "He can see over our heads."

But this apparently did not suit the stout gentleman's ideas. He perhaps wanted to see the lions fed himself. Alfred

certainly hadn't much chance unless he was lifted up. The St. Jim's juniors were closely packed in front of him, with the crowd jamming them on either side. Alfred was not up to Fatty Wynn's shoulder, and Fatty was the shortest of them. But the stout gentleman did not lift Alfred up. He pushed the boys to get a place for himself.

"You are purposely taking up too much room," he said. "I shall call an attendant if you do not squeeze up closer."

"Ow!" gasped Fatty Wynn. "It's hot! I shall faint if that old codger squeezes me any closer to Lowther."

"You'll spoil my jacket," growled Lowther.

"How dare you refer to me as an old codger, boy! Squeeze up! Alfred, why do you not squeeze up? Squeeze up immediately."

"Yes, Uncle James," piped Alfred.

The unfortunate little victim of Uncle James's generosity tried to squeeze up. He shoved against Tom Merry, who looked round sharply. Then the good-natured junior smiled, and seizing the weedy little fellow in his strong arms he hoisted him upon his shoulders with a single movement.

"Now you can see, chappy," he remarked.

"Th-th-thank you," gasped Alfred. "I—I—I am sorry I pushed you, b-b-but——"

"That's all right," said Tom Merry. "I've got you safe. Don't worry."

"Alfred, get down immediately. You are obstructing my view. Get down immediately."

"Oh, you go and eat coke," said Monty Lowther, giving the stout gentleman a dig in the ribs with his elbow, more or less accidentally. "There's too much of you, you know."

"Ow! Oh! You young rascal! Oh! I will chastise you with my umbrella—ow-w-w-w!"

The stout gentleman had grasped his umbrella to use it as a weapon of offence, but at that moment someone ran a pin into his stout self, and he hopped away with a howl of anguish. The umbrella clattered on the floor, and the stout gentleman danced on one leg, clasping the other with both hands. There was a rush of some newly-arrived sightseers to fill the place he had inadvertently left vacant, and by the time he had done dancing and nursing his leg, sightseers five or six deep shut him off from little Alfred and the juniors of St. Jim's.

The lions were being fed now. Huge masses of meat were wheeled along on the trucks, and thrust under the bars of the dens. The lions seized the lumps, and bore them into corners of the cages to lick and gnaw them. It was not a pleasant, but it was an interesting sight. The roaring died away, only some low growls being heard as the meat was devoured. The crowd broke up.

"Bai Jove! I thought you fellows were lost!"

It was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's voice, as he came through the thinning crowd, and rejoined the juniors of St. Jim's. Tom Merry set Alfred upon his feet. Fatty Wynn slipped a big bar of milk chocolate into his hand, and the little fellow whipped it out of sight before the terrible eye of his uncle was upon him again.

"Alfred! Alfred! Where are you."

"Here I am, Uncle James."

"How dare you separate yourself from me. I might have lost you and been put to the trouble of looking for you. I am beginning to regret that I took the trouble of bestowing an afternoon's enjoyment upon you, Alfred. Come with me at once."

"Yes, Uncle James," said Alfred meekly.

"Bai Jove, I don't think I should like that old gentleman for an uncle," said D'Arcy, turning his eyeglass upon the retreating figure of the stout gentleman. "I wathah imagine that Alfwed isn't havin' what you'd call a weally wippin' time."

"Did you see the lions fed, Gussy?"

"No, Tom Mewwy, I did not see the lions fed. All the seats up there were occupied, and no one seemed inclined to make woom for me. I could not see ovah the heads of people tallah than myself, so it was imposs. for me to see the lions fed. I considah——"

"Never mind, you can see Fatty Wynn feed," said Monty Lowther consolingly. "He's starting on some more sandwiches now."

"Oh, weally, Lowthah——"

"Keep an eye on Gussy," said Tom Merry, as they quitted the lion house. "We're going into dangerous quarters now, for Gussy."

"What do you mean, Tom Mewwy?"

"We're going to a place where chaps like you don't always come out again, that's all."

"Bai Jove! What place is it?"

"The monkey house."

"Oh, weally, Tom Mewwy——"

CHAPTER 14.

D'Arcy is Satisfied, and so is Fatty Wynn!

"THERE'S some refreshment rooms near the monkey house, I believe," Fatty Wynn remarked in a casual sort of way as the party proceeded.

"Yes, I shouldn't wonder," assented Tom Merry. "This way to the New House—I mean the monkey house."

They entered the large building. It was pretty well filled. The fine October afternoon had brought many visitors to the Zoo. The sight of the monkeys was very interesting, and especially their almost uncanny resemblance to human beings. D'Arcy stopped at the first cage and put up his eyeglass to survey the inmates. A wizened old monkey came close up to the bars, in expectation of nuts.

"Speak to him, Gussy," said Lowther.

"Eh?" said the swell of St. Jim's, with a start. "What did you say, deah boy?"

"Speak to him! You can see that he recognises you."

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"Come, now, it's awfully snobbish to disown a relation who's down in the world."

Arthur Augustus deigned no reply to that remark. He walked on to the next cage, and Lowther chuckled. Manners brought out his pocket camera.

"I must have a snap of these curious little beggars," he said. "There's a good light just here. Keep the people out of the way."

It was rather a cool request. People were passing and repassing every moment. A stout gentleman and a little boy had just come in, too. But Manners was an enthusiastic amateur photographer, and when was an amateur photographer ever known to think of anything but his amateur photographs?

"Certainly, old chap," said Lowther, who had coolness enough for anything. "People, you are requested to keep back."

Manners took a couple of snaps, and then set his camera for a time exposure. He glanced round, and beckoned to Tom Merry.

"I say, Tom, do you think you could sit down, and keep quite still for a few seconds, while I rest my camera on your head?" he asked.

Tom Merry laughed.

"I'm jolly sure I couldn't," he replied.

"Do you think you could, Figgins?"

"'Fraid not," grinned Figgins.

"You see, it needs to be quite firm for a time exposure," said Manners. "They're never satisfactory if you hold the camera in your hand. It's bound to move. I've always found it so. I suppose I can kneel down and rest it on my knee."

And he did, in the middle of the path, up the side of the building.

"Yes, Alfred these are the monkeys," said the stout gentleman, waving his umbrella towards the cages. "You will observe in them a remarkable intelligence. They are able to receive nuts offered them by visitors, crack them in their teeth, and devour them. This almost human intelligence is very remarkable, and—and—oh!"

The stout gentleman was looking at the cages as he talked and walked, and he had walked right into Manners. The amateur photographer fell over sideways, and the stout gentleman stumbled over him. He came down with his palms on Manners, and his knees on the ground.

Manners twisted round and looked up wrathfully. The stout gentleman was looking down still more wrathfully, and their eyes met.

"You—you young rascal!" gasped the stout gentleman. "You did that on purpose."

"You utter idiot!" roared Manners. "You've spoilt my photograph."

"You have given me a shock——"

"You've wasted a film."

"You——"

The stout gentleman staggered to his feet. Manners jumped up and picked up his camera. The next moment the umbrella came down on Manners' shoulders. The junior gave a whoop, and turned round on his assailant, but Tom Merry promptly dragged him back.

"Leggo!" roared Manners. "Do you think I am going to have a picture spoiled, and be biffed with a gamp into the bargain. Lemme alone."

"You can't biff a man old enough to be your father. Don't be an ass."

"Well, then, let him keep his beastly gamp to himself," growled Manners, rubbing his shoulder. "It's bad enough to have a picture spoiled and a film wasted, without——"

"Cousin Ethel's looking this way."

"Oh, it's all right," grunted Manners.

The stout gentleman, apparently satisfied with his vengeance, strode on. He called to Alfred, who was grinning, whether at Manners or his uncle was not clear; perhaps at both.

"Come along, Alfred! How dare you laugh? Alfred, I

am surprised at you, and I am sorry I took the trouble to give you a happy afternoon. Come along at once."

"Yes, Uncle James."

"Better take snaps for the rest," grinned Lowther. "You ought to get a collection, too, to shove in the family album——"

"Oh, don't be funny; we're getting too much of that from D'Arcy."

"Weally, Mannahs——"

Manners marched on. He took several more snaps, the camera having fortunately escaped damage in the fall. The juniors made a tour of the building, stopping before almost every cage. The monkeys were decidedly amusing. Some of them were swinging, some climbing, some chasing one another. All of them seemed to like nuts, and to expect a good supply of them. Cousin Ethel fed the little fellows with nuts through the bars, Figgins keeping her supplied with nuts from a big bag he had purchased for the purpose.

"Funny little beggahs, aren't they?" said D'Arcy, joining his cousin. "Speakin' of monkeys weminds me of a conundwum. What is the wesemblance between a gowillah and a Manchestah cotton factowy?"

"Between a which?" asked Figgins.

"A Manchestah cotton factowy and a gowillah."

"Oh, a gorilla. Give it up."

"Do you give it up, Ethel?"

"Certainly, Arthur."

"But you haven't twied to guess it yet," said D'Arcy rather indignantly.

"I—I'm afraid I'm not good at guessing conundrums," said Cousin Ethel, laughing.

"It's a jolly good one, and I should particulahly like you to guess it, because I've forgotten the beastly answah, you know, and if you guessed it cowweectly I should know it again," explained Arthur Augustus. "I wemembah it was a wippin' answah."

"Better go and sit quietly in a corner and think it out," suggested Figgins, and he passed on with Cousin Ethel, leaving D'Arcy wondering what Figgy had really meant.

"There's some refreshment rooms yonder," Fatty Wynn remarked, as they came out of the monkey-house.

"Go hon!" said Tom Merry. "This way for the antelopes!"

"I should like to snap some of the antelopes," said Manners. "There might be a chance of getting some of the lions, too, now that the crowd's gone. Would you fellows like to come back to the Lion House for about a quarter of an hour, before going further?"

"I'll think it over," said Tom Merry, "and let you know before bed-time to-night. This way for the giddy antelopes!"

"What about the refreshments?" asked Wynn.

"It's not tea-time yet."

"I've got a feeling as if it was, though."

"Oh, wats!" said D'Arcy. "Come and see the antelopes. I'll tell you that wippin' stowy about the cuwate and the tin saucepan, if you like, to keep your mind occupied; or that othah wippin' one about the chap at the dinnah-party."

"Don't talk to me of dinner-parties!" groaned Fatty Wynn. "My word! couldn't I just do with a large helping of ox-tail soup, a double lot of whitebait, about half a dozen entrées, a chicken, and——"

"Let's get off before he makes us feel hungry," exclaimed Digby; and the juniors walked off towards the antelope house. Fatty Wynn and D'Arcy followed.

"I say, Wynn, it was feahfully funnay, you know. It was at a dinnah-party——"

"Oh, cheese it about your rotten dinner-party!"

"Weally, Wynn, I wegard your wemark as——"

"Well, I'll tell you what," said Fatty Wynn. "Come and sit down at the buffet, and I'll listen to the yarn. I've no doubt it's awfully funny. What do you say?"

"Yaas, wathah! I am feelin' wathah exhausted, and I should like to sit down for a little while. Cousin Ethel seems to be gettin' on all wight without me."

"She does, for a fact. This way to the refreshments."

"You see, Wynn, it was at a dinnah-party——"

"You sit here, and I'll sit under the shade. What are you going to order?"

"Oh, I am not hungry. It was at a dinnah-party——"

"But I am, you know. I always get extra hungry in this October weather. You can get sandwiches here, I believe, and nobby little cakes, and buns, and tea."

"Yaas, but——"

"I've blued all my tin, all I had left over from my whack towards the tickets," explained Fatty Wynn. "If you don't want to treat a chap to a tea, say so, and I'll borrow a few bobs of you till to-morrow."

"I shall be extwemely happy to stand tweat, deah boy."

"That's better. Hallo, miss—miss—miss! Why the dickens doesn't that girl come! She might know I'm hungry by my thin look, I should think."

"Bai Jove! I hardly think——"

"This way, miss! I'll have some sandwiches and pork-pies and anything else you can get me in that line. Never mind the expense."

"Bai Jove!"

The table was soon piled with eatables. Fatty Wynn started. There was not so much variety in the provisions as he could have wished. But he was hungry. He ate with a keen relish, stopping every now and then to gulp down a cup of tea. Arthur Augustus watched him curiously.

"You can go on with the story," said Fatty Wynn graciously.

"It was at a dinnah-party," said Arthur Augustus. "A gentleman who was dinin' suddenly lifted a dish of stwawbewwies up and put it on his head."

"Did he really? Pour out another cup of tea for me, will you? Are you sure you won't have a cup yourself?"

"Quite sure, thank you, deah boy."

"Then pour out another one for me, and it will save me leaving off. No need to waste time, you know. This tuck isn't as good as we get at Dame Taggles' at St. Jim's. But any port in a storm. I'm jolly hungry. Go on with the story. You were saying something about strawberries and cream, weren't you? My hat! couldn't I do with some strawberries and cream now. But go on."

"He suddenly lifted a dish of stwawbewwies on top of his head——"

"Who did?" asked Fatty Wynn, stirring his tea.

"The gentleman I was speakin' of. He was at a dinnah-party, and he suddenly lifted a dish of stwawbewwies and cweam—I mean a dish of stwawbewwies—on top of his head. The lady next to him said 'Cwikey!'—I—I mean she said 'Good gwacious! what are you doin' that for?'"

"Is there any more milk in that jug, D'Arcy?"

"No. She said, 'What are you doin' that for——'"

"Sorry to interrupt you—it's an awfully ripping yarn—but I wish you'd see if you could catch the attendant, and get some more milk. Take the jug and look for her. She's near here somewhere."

"Weally, Wynn——"

"There she is!" exclaimed Fatty Wynn, pointing with his spoon. "Take the jug, and she'll give you some more milk like winking. There's a good chap."

D'Arcy's politeness was limitless. He took the jug, and obtained the new supply of milk, the attendant giving him a sweet smile in addition. He returned to the table with it, and Fatty Wynn milked his fifth cup of tea.

"Thanks awfully, D'Arcy. Where had you got up to? I say, perhaps you had better start the yarn again from the beginning, and then I shall get a clearer idea of it. Don't mind me."

"It was at a dinnah-party," said D'Arcy. "A gentleman suddenly lifted up a dish of molasses—I mean stwawbewwies—and put it on his head. The lady who was sittin' next to him said, 'My word, what are you doin' that for?' And he—ha, ha, ha——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Fatty Wynn.

Arthur Augustus looked at him suspiciously.

"I haven't told you the joke yet, deah boy."

"Oh, haven't you?" said Fatty Wynn, rather taken aback. "I—I thought, as you laughed, it sounded funny, you know, the way you said it. But go on."

"Shall I begin again at the vewy beginnin'?"

"Oh, no," said Fatty Wynn hastily. "Just go on from where you cackled."

"Well, the lady said, 'Bai Jove'—I mean she said 'Goodness gwacious! what are you doin' that for?' He had put a dish of stwawbewwies on his head, you know."

"Yes, I know. Get on with the washing."

"Well, and she asked him whatevah he was doin' that for? And he said—ha, ha, ha!—he said, 'Sowwy, I thought it was pineapples.'"

"Did he?"

"Yaas, wathah! Ha, ha, ha!"

Fatty Wynn had put his foot in it once already by laughing when D'Arcy laughed, before he saw the joke. He did not mean to make the same mistake again. He remained quite grave now, looking inquiringly at D'Arcy.

"Go on, old chap. I'm nearly finished this grub, and we'd better join the others."

"Weally, Wynn——"

"Go on! Tell me the rest of the story."

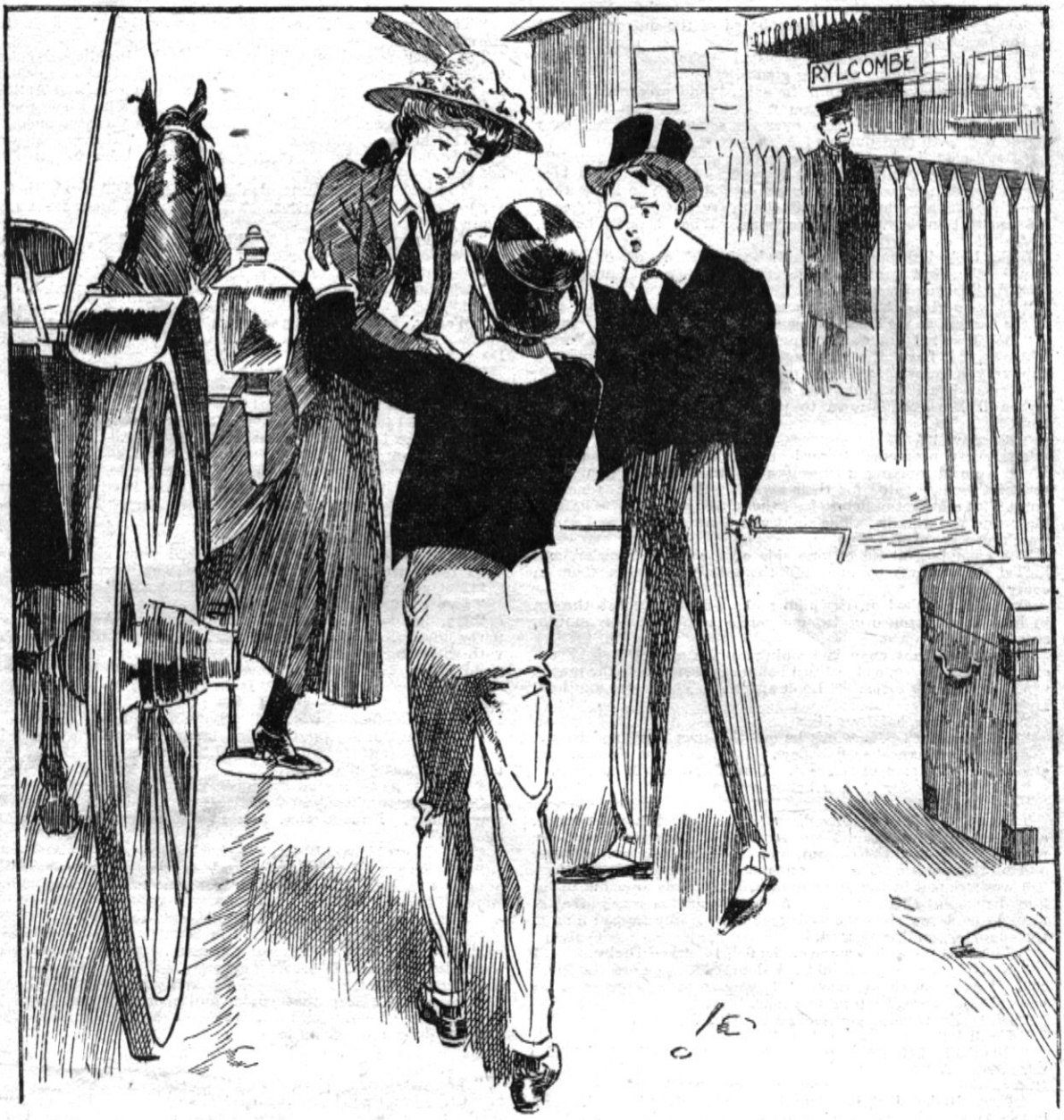
"I've told you all of it," said D'Arcy. "Weally, Wynn——"

"My hat! is that all? I mean, where's the joke?" Then Fatty Wynn remembered the feed he had just enjoyed, and knowing now for certain that it was time to laugh, he laughed. He laughed with great heartiness—"Ha, ha, ha! Ho, ho, ho!" The feed was worth it.

Arthur Augustus beamed upon the fat Fourth-Former, quite satisfied by this appreciation of his exquisite humour, tardy as it was.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Fatty Wynn. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yaas, it was funnay, wasn't it?" said D'Arcy. "Tom



As Figgins helped Cousin Ethel to alight, D'Arcy gave the New House junior a look that ought to have withered him up on the spot.

Mewwy couldn't see the joke. Weilly couldn't see it. Most of the chaps I have told that stowy to can't see the joke. Cousin Ethel saw it, though not at first. There are some funnay things that dawn on you aftah a time, you know. Shall I tell you the stowy about the cuwate and the tin saucepan? It is quite as funny as that."

"I think we ought to get after the others," said Fatty Wynn hastily. He thought that one feed, one story, was a fair deal; and he preferred to leave the exhilarating history of the curate and the tin saucepan until he was hungry again. "If you'll settle up, we can be getting along."

And Arthur Augustus settled up, and they got along.

CHAPTER 15.

A Purloined Pun!

TOM MERRY & CO. had seen the antelopes and many other animals by the time Arthur Augustus and Fatty Wynn rejoined them. Fatty Wynn was looking very contented, and D'Arcy seemed pleased. Fatty Wynn was the second person who had seen the joke in that wonderful story about the dinner-party, and the amateur humorist felt that he was getting on. Blake looked into the guide he had bought at the gate.

"Better go and see the sea-lions fed," he remarked. "It's about time."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"There is another part of this place across the road, where we came in," Monty Lowther remarked. "Do you know which part they keep the unicorns in, Blake?"

"T'other side, I think," said Blake.

"Bai Jove!" said D'Arcy, falling promptly into the trap, "I always believed that the unicorn was a fabulous animal, you know—a cweature that belonged to the Awabian Nights and the faiwy tales."

"Lot you know about natural history," said Lowther, with a sniff.

"I didn't say it was so, deah boy," said D'Arcy mildly. "I only said I had always thought so."

"Well, why don't you keep up to the times?" replied Monty Lowther. "If you had read the last number of the Royal

Society's journal, you would have heard of the unicorn caught on the banks of the Nile by—by——"

"By Baron Munchausen," suggested Blake.

Lowther gave him a warning glance.

"By Captain von Kramm," he said, "and presented to the Zoological Society. Surely you remember the fuss that was made by the Humane Society over the scheme of sending over nigger babies to feed him on?"

"Bai Jove! I wegard that as wotten and feahfully cwuel!"

"Well, it isn't allowed, and they feed him on tinned beef from Chicago now, which is the nearest thing. You know they sometimes tin a workman by mistake in the factories in Chicago. We mustn't miss seeing the unicorn. What time is he fed, Blake?"

Blake looked through the guide-book with an air of solemn examination that would have deceived a more suspicious person than Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"At a quarter-past five," he said. "He's on the other side of the tunnel, so we'll see the sea-lions first."

"Bai Jove! I am weally cuwious to see the unicorn," said D'Arcy. "I have always imagined that there isn't such an animal, you know. Is it vewy dangewous?"

"Only when it is kept short of canned beef," said Lowther; "then it has been known to puncture the keepers with its horn."

"Bai Jove!"

The party proceeded towards the quarters of the sea-lions. They were disporting themselves in the water, among the artificial rocks erected for their benefit. A keeper was coming down with a basket of fish to feed them, and a crowd was gathering round the railings. The sight was a curious one, and worth watching.

The attendant stood on one side of the sheet of water, and hurled the fish one by one, and the seals swam after them in every direction.

One seal, perched on the high rocks, caught the fish thrown to him, at a distance of twenty yards or more, in his mouth, scarcely failing once.

"My hat! that chap is keeping up his wicket well!" exclaimed Tom Merry, as the third fish disappeared into the mouth of the seal on the rocks. "Look at him! There goes another! He's got it!"

"And another, bai Jove!"

"And another! He won't be out this over," grinned Digby.

Another and another fish flew. Then one was missed, and struck on the flipper of the seal. Tom Merry shook his head.

"Out!" he said. "Leg before wicket!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The fish, hurled in various directions, splashed into the water, and the seals swam after them unerringly. The big one on the rocks opened his mouth again, and the attendant sent another and another across. There was no more leg before wicket. Each fish was stopped in the seal's mouth, and it was amazing to see him dispose of them so fast. Arthur Augustus was buried in thought as he watched the seals feeding. Digby tapped him on the shoulder, and he started.

"Thinking you'd like some of the fish?" asked Digby.

"No, Dig, I was not thinkin' I should like some of the fish," said D'Arcy, with dignity. "I wegard the suggestion as widiculous. I was thinkin' of a joke."

"Oh! No wonder you looked worried."

"I will tell it you if you like."

"Thanks! I don't want to look worried, too." And Digby retreated. Arthur Augustus sniffed disdainfully, and turned to Blake.

"I say, Blake, deah boy, you know when they hunt the seals in the Arctic seas, they stick them with speahs, don't they?"

"I believe so," assented Blake.

"They call it sealing when they hunt the poor beggahs, don't they?"

"So I've heard."

"Good! Then why are the blows they give the poor beggahs, like the stuff you fasten up a letter with?" demanded Arthur Augustus.

Jack Blake scratched his head.

"Blessed if I know," he replied.

"Because they are sealing-whacks," said D'Arcy. "See? Sealing-whacks! Sealing-wax!"

"No, I don't quite see," said Blake, with an air of meditation. "In the first place, how do you know they whack the seals?"

"I suppose they biff them in some way, deah boy," said D'Arcy. "If they give the seals whacks when they are sealing they give them sealing-whacks."

"But they hunt them in the open air."

"Eh! Who said they didn't?"

"But there couldn't be any ceiling in the open air."

"Ceiling! Who's talking about a ceiling?"

"You are! You said they give them ceiling whacks. Now, there isn't any ceiling there, and if there were, why should they give it whacks?"

"Weally, Blake! Look here, I'll tell you the thing again fwom the beginnin'——"

"That you won't," said Blake promptly. "Tell it to Herries."

The party moved on. They entered the building devoted to deer and other animals of the same sort. Blake consulted the guide-book and said there was a gnu to be seen, and Arthur Augustus promptly declared that he gnu it. The whole party looked at the swell of St. Jim's when he made this statement.

"You knew it, did you?" said Blake. "How could you possibly have known it when you haven't been to the Zoo before?"

"You misappwehend me, deah boy," said D'Arcy, with the expansive smile of a punster. "I didn't say I knew it—I said I gnu it!"

"You knoo it, did you?" said Lowther. "Where did you pick up your cockney pronunciation?"

"You don't understand me, Lowthah——"

"Oh, yes, I understand; I have heard cockneys speak before now!"

"Weally, Lowthah, you are wathah dense. I was, as a mattah of fact, makin' a pun. G N U—gnu. I gnu it. Do you see?"

"Do I see what? The gnu?"

"No!" howled D'Arcy. "The pun!"

"What pun?"

"The one I just made," shrieked D'Arcy, growing exasperated. "Gnu—knew! Don't you see now? I gnu it."

"You knew what?"

"You—you astoundin' duffah! Don't you see it, Blake?"

"Yes, here it is," said Blake, stopping and looking at the gnu. "Funny-looking beast, ain't he? I wonder if he would like some buns?"

"I don't mean that—I mean——"

"Never mind what you mean. Hold your gloves oetween the railings here, and see if he will gnaw them."

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

"I gnu you wouldn't," said Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!" cackled Monty Lowther. And the whole party burst into a concerted roar. D'Arcy looked at them with withering indignation.

"Bai Jove! What are you cacklin' at now?" he demanded.

"My pun," said Blake. "Didn't you see it—I said I gnu you wouldn't? Gnu—knew! See?"

"You—you feahful wottah! That's my pun!"

"You don't understand. Gnu—knew! I gnu you wouldn't. See? It's a pun on the name of this animal," said Blake, in a tone of patient explanation.

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

"I wefuse to allow you to collah my puns in this unblushin' way, Blake. I made that pun myself only a few moments ago——"

"Oh, Gussy!" said Blake, in a shocked tone.

"Oh, Gussy!" echoed the rest of the party, apparently equally shocked. D'Arcy looked from one to the other. They were all looking at him reprovingly.

"You—you uttah asses! You—you—weally——"

"I don't think D'Arcy can do anything but apologise," said Lowther, with a shake of the head. "Are you going to apologise to Blake, D'Arcy?"

"Certainly not. I wefuse—I distinctly wefuse!"

"Then I must say that you're guilty of very bad form. I don't see how I can regard as a friend a chap who bones another fellow's puns and refuses to apologise."

"It was my pun; I said I gnu——"

"Oh, Gussy!"

"You uttah, feahful wottahs!"

"Oh, it's no good arguing with Gussy!" said Blake. "He ought to apologise, being caught in the act, as it were, but I pass it over. Let's get on."

"Bai Jove! I insist—I insist upon explainin'."

But the party moved on, and D'Arcy's explanations were wasted on the desert air.

CHAPTER 16.

Arthur Augustus Does Not See the Unicorn.

"BETTER get through to the other side now, I think," said Blake, looking at his watch. "We don't want to miss seeing the unicorn fed. The elephants and rhinoceri are on the other side, too. There's a tunnel under the road leads into the other half of the gardens. Follow your uncle."

"Young Curly of the Third told me there was a buffet near the tunnel," said Fatty Wynn. "It's getting jolly near tea-time, isn't it?"

"Why, you've just had one feed, you cormorant!"

"I was really thinking of you others. Of course, I could do with a little more myself. I get pretty sharp set in this October weather."

"Where's the beastly tunnel, though?" said D'Arcy, who had quickly recovered his good-humour. "I can't see the tunnel, deah boys."

As he was looking straight into a flowering bush, that was

not surprising. Blake led the way to the slope which led into the tunnel. They descended it, passed through the excavated passage under the Outer Circle of Regent's Park, and walked up the incline into the other half of the Zoological Gardens.

"Lemme see!" said Blake. "You turn to the left here to get to the elephants."

"Which way to the unicorn's den?" asked Lowther.

"Straight on. Shall we go there first?"

"I think we may as well. I particularly want to see the unicorn, and Gussy ought to see it, after the doubts he's expressed as to its existence."

"I weally did not mean to expwess doubts of its existence, Lowthah. I merely said that I had wegarded it as a fabulous animal, you know."

"Shocking example of the state of ignorance that obtains in some public schools," said Lowther. "Keep that dark, Gussy. It amazes me to find a fellow who still believes that the unicorn is a fabulous animal, after a living specimen has been captured on the banks of the Zambesi and presented to——"

"You said on the banks of the Nile."

"Well, it was between the Nile and the Zambesi," said Lowther. "Come on, Blake, what's the number of its den?"

Blake consulted the guide-book.

"No. 101 Gerrard," he said.

"Ha, ha! Come on. Hark! You can hear it roaring from here."

A cyclist passing in the Outer Circle had sounded a motor-horn, and the sharp, short bark was heard distinctly in the gardens.

"Did you hear it, Gussy?"

"Yaas, wathah! It sounded wemarkably like a motor-cah."

"It probably has a cold," said Lowther. "I remember now that unicorns are in their most delicate state in the early part of the month of October."

"Bai Jove! I shall be awfully glad to see him, you know. I think Mannahs ought to take a photograph of him."

"I'm going to, if I see him," said Manners.

Monty Lowther went on ahead. He disappeared down a path among the trees, and suddenly reappeared with a wildly excited face.

"Run!" he yelled. "Run for your lives! The unicorn's broken loose."

"Bai Jove!" gasped D'Arcy. "Where's Ethel?"

Cousin Ethel and Figgins had taken another path. The juniors all turned to flee, and D'Arcy was as swift as any. Holding his gloves in one hand, and his silk hat on his head with the other, he dashed away.

"Wun!" he yelled, to the astounded passers-by. "Wun like anythin'!"

And he dashed on towards the tunnel. Tom Merry & Co. stopped, breathless, shrieking with laughter. But D'Arcy was ahead, and he did not stop. To his excited ears their yells seemed of fright and alarm. He dashed on at top speed, his eyeglass flying at the end of its cord, and dashed right into a stout gentleman, who was coming out of the tunnel.

"Oh!" gasped the stout gentleman.

He sat down, and D'Arcy sat down. The stout gentleman was pretty well winded, and his face was like a beetroot. He brandished his umbrella at D'Arcy.

"You young villain!" he roared. "It's you again, is it? I'll teach you to play these tricks on me! Oh, you young, dastardly villain."

D'Arcy staggered to his feet.

"It wasn't a twick," he panted. "Wun for your life!"

"Eh! What do you mean?"

D'Arcy excitedly dragged him up.

"Wun!" he yelled. "Wun like anythin'!"

The stout gentleman turned pale. There was no mistaking the genuineness of D'Arcy's excitement. The junior was bathed in perspiration, and casting terrified looks over his shoulder. Alfred began to whimper.

"Good gracious!" gasped the stout gentleman. "Has one of the wild animals broken loose?"

"Yaas, wathah! Wun for your life."

"Come, Alfred! Quick! Run! Run—— But which animal is it?" exclaimed the stout gentleman, with a lingering suspicion of a hoax.

"The unicorn, my deah sir—ow!"

"The unicorn!" yelled the stout gentleman, and all his alarm disappeared in a moment, and he brought down his umbrella with a terrific swipe on D'Arcy's silk hat. The hat closed up like a concertina. D'Arcy gave a wail of anguish.

"You young jackanapes!" roared the stout gentleman. "I'll teach you to play practical jokes on me! Take that—and that."

The umbrella cracked at the second blow. D'Arcy dodged in alarm, trying to keep out of the way of the terrible gentleman, forgetful for the moment of even the escaped unicorn. It occurred to him about that time, too, that his friends must have been left a long way behind. But he could hear their voices.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Young jacknapes! Take——"

It was another swipe. But D'Arcy did not stop to take it. He ran back the way he had come, and caught sight of his friends again. Tom Merry and Lowther were lying on the ground, laughing themselves almost into hysterics. Blake was also on the ground, kicking up his heels. Digby and Herries and Kerr were sprawled on a seat, almost sobbing. Manners was putting away his camera. He had taken a snap of D'Arcy in full flight.

"Oh, carry me home to die!" murmured Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy jammed his eyeglass into his eye, and surveyed the juniors with rising indignation.

"Is it poss?" he said, in measured tones—"is it poss that you have been playin' a wotten twick on me, Monty Lowthah?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Is it poss that the unicorn has not weally escaped?"

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

"Weally, I wegard this as——"

Blake sat up, shaking with mirth. He looked at D'Arcy, and saw his concertinaed hat, and lay down and shrieked again. D'Arcy, with glowering indignation, took his hat off and attempted to punch out the sides to their former shape. But the goodly shape of that hat was gone; the glory had departed for ever from that silk topper. Arthur Augustus jammed it on his head again, and approached Lowther.

"I shall take it as a favah, Lowthah, if you will wise," he said.

"Go hon," gasped Lowther. "Can't you let a chap finish laughing first?"

"Undah the cires, I have no alternative but to administah a feahful thwashin'."

"Ha, ha, ha! Look out for the unicorn."

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Blake. "Mind the unicorn."

"Lowthah, if you do not immediately wise, I shall stwike you."

"Then I suppose I had better immediately wise," said Lowther, getting up. "But don't be too rough on a little fellow, Gussy. Don't stwike me with all your stwength."

"Put up your beastly hands immediately, Lowthah. I am goin' to give you a feahful thwashin'."

"Dear me! Is anything wrong?" said a sweet voice.

Cousin Ethel came in sight with Figgins. Arthur Augustus turned red, and dropped his hands to his sides.

"Oh, nothin'!" he replied. "Nothin' at all, Ethel."

"I thought your voice sounded as if you were—were excited."

"N—n—not a bit. I was just goin' to show Lowthah some twicks in boxin'."

"Oh, don't stop for me," said Cousin Ethel. "I will look on."

Arthur Augustus became perfectly crimson. The girl spoke very demurely; but the swell of St. Jim's had a feeling that she suspected the true state of affairs. To be caught quarrelling by a member of the gentle sex was very painful to D'Arcy, and, of course, it was impossible to explain.

"Dear me, what has happened to your hat?" said Cousin Ethel.

"A wude beast biffed it with a wotten umbwellah," said D'Arcy. "It is wuined."

"It does appear to have lost its shape, doesn't it?" agreed Ethel.

"Yaas, wathah. It was all Lowthah's fault—I mean, it doesn't matter. I won't show you those twicks in boxin' now, Lowthah. I'll leave them till we get home to St. Jim's. Let's get off and see the unicorn!"

Cousin Ethel gave a little cry.

"And see the what, Arthur?"

"The unicorn. Lowthah says—— Bai Jove, what are you gwinnin' at, Blake? What are you gwinnin' at, Tom Mewwy? What are all you boundahs gwinnin' at?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Cousin Ethel joined in the laugh. It was impossible to help it.

Arthur Augustus looked round him, at first in surprise, and then in indignation.

"Is it poss, Lowthah, that you were wottin'?" he demanded. "Isn't it twue that there is an unicorn here, captured by Captain von Kramm on the banks of the Nile——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wegard you as a set of wottahs. I nevah weally believed in a unicorn, but I wouldn't doubt a fellow's word. Lowthah, you are a wottah! If Cousin Ethel were not pwesent I would give you a feahful thwashin'."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, let's get along and see the elephants!" said Blake, wiping his eyes. "I know Gussy will be the death of me sooner or later."

CHAPTER 17.

In the Elephant House.

IT was getting near time for the juniors to leave the Zoo, the train they were to catch home being fixed. But they could not possibly go without seeing the elephants, and then having tea. Blake led the way to the big building which contained the huge animals. In each of the compartments save one was an elephant; the other containing a rhinoceros. The elephants came to the front of the cages, and several of them held out their trunks for biscuits.

"Sweet!" said Cousin Ethel caressingly, as she held out a little biscuit. And a long proboscis whipped forward and took it from her fingers.

"Bai Jove!" said D'Arcy. "They're fine cweatures, and no mistake! I say, Tom Mewwy, why should an elephant be able to twavel vewy wapidly?"

"Because one rode a horse and the other rhododendron."

"Oh, pway don't wot! Why should an elephant be able to twavel vewy quickly, Figgins?"

"Because one has a rat on the box, and the other has a bat on the rocks," said Figgins.

"Weally, Figgins, I wegard you as a silly ass! I say, Hewwies, why should an elephant be able to twavel vewy quickly, deah boy?"

"Blessed if I know," said Herries.

"Because he can twavel without packin' his twunk! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Can he?" said Herries indifferently.

"Yaas, wathah! Of course he can! Elephants don't pack their twunks," said D'Arcy, looking vexed. "You don't pack that sort of twunk, you know."

"Don't you? All right, I'll take your word for it. I say, have you any tin? The attendant will give us some grub for the elephants if you have."

"Yaas, wathah!" Arthur Augustus turned to the man in charge of the elephants, an intelligent-looking fellow, who was evidently attached to his huge charges. "Can you give me some gwub to feed the elephants—if it's allowed, deah boy."

"Certainly, sir!" The attendant turned away, and in a minute or less returned with a double handful of huge biscuits. "Here you are, sir!"

"Thank you vewy much! What is the charge for these biscuits, pway?"

"There is no charge, sir."

"Bai Jove, that's wippin'!" said D'Arcy, and he turned away with the biscuits.

The man looked after him very curiously.

Herries gave a chuckle.

"You ass!" he muttered. "Ain't you going to give him something for his trouble?"

"Bai Jove, you know, I nevah thought of that! Hold the biscuits, will you, Hewwies?"

Herries held them, and proceeded to feed the elephants with them. It was very amusing to see the huge animals stretch out their trunks through the bars and take the biscuits with the delicate tip of the proboscis.

Arthur Augustus felt in his pockets, and turned to the smiling attendant.

"I'm awfully obliged to you, deah boy," he remarked. "Will you do me the honah to accept this half-cwown, with my kind wegards?"

"Thank you very much, sir!"

"Not at all, deah boy. I am extwemely obliged to you."

D'Arcy reclaimed some of the biscuits, and fed the elephants. The good-natured attendant brought him a fresh supply, and the swell of St. Jim's went along the rail, feeding all the huge animals in turn. The biscuits were soon gone.

"Bai Jove, I like these animals!" said D'Arcy. "I wondah whethah the Head would allow me to keep an elephant as a pet at St. Jim's?"

"Bound to," said Lowther. "You could keep it in your study, you know, and make it up a little bed under the table of a night."

"Oh, pway don't be funnay, Lowthah! I have lately been makin' a study of weal humah, and your wotten jokes give me a pain."

The last elephant stretched out his trunk for another biscuit. Like Oliver Twist, he wanted more. D'Arcy had no more biscuits, so he stretched out his hand to give the animal a pat on the trunk. The elephant misunderstood. He took hold of the hand with his trunk, and D'Arcy was dragged forward.

"Oh!" yelled D'Arcy. "Help! Bai Jove!"

The attendant gave a shout, and the elephant released the hand he had captured. Arthur Augustus promptly jumped back. He did not try to pat any more elephants after that.

"I say, there's a rhinoceros in the enclosure round the corner," said Fatty Wynn. "He's a big, funny-looking sort of brute. You ought to come and see him. He will eat cakes, and the buffet's just opposite, and you can get cakes there."

"One for the rhinoceros, and two for yourself," grinned Lowther.

"Well, as a matter of fact, you know, I'm getting rather hungry, and it's no good forgetting that time's getting short, and we haven't had tea yet. Best to be sensible about it."

"Keep away from the railings, Alfred. No, I will not purchase any biscuits for you to feed the elephants. The elephants undoubtedly receive their proper food at the hands of the attendants, and I should regard it as a piece of reckless extravagance. Take your thumb out of your mouth immediately."

"Yes, Uncle James."

"Here, let's go and see the rhinoceros!" gasped Lowther. "Time we were out of this. I'm getting fed up with Uncle James this afternoon."

The party left the building. In the enclosure at the back, where he had gone out for a little walk, was a huge rhinoceros. They looked at him through the railings, and he looked at them. Cousin Ethel threw in her last biscuit, and the rhinoceros munched it up.

"I'll get some more if you like," said Fatty Wynn. "I'll just cut across and order tea for the lot while you're looking at the rhinoceros."

"No hurry," said Figgins.

"Better see to it," said Fatty Wynn. "If there's any more time, we can have another look round after tea. I'll see to it. You can rely on me to get the best spread the place will provide. Trust me for that."

"Yaas, wathah! I say, Hewwies, what is the diffewence between——"

"I'll go along with Wynn," said Herries. "I'm thirsty, and I'll start with lemonade."

Figgins fetched some biscuits for Cousin Ethel to throw to the rhinoceros. The huge animal ate them stolidly enough. Then the juniors walked over to the buffet. There were seats arranged round little tables in the open air, and in the golden October afternoon it was very pleasant.

The juniors were not displeased to sit down and rest. They had had a very enjoyable couple of hours in the Zoo. They had not seen half of what was to be seen, but they had done very well considering. There was time now for a quick tea and a run back to Charing Cross, and then to catch the train home, after a jolly afternoon. They were all pretty sharp set by this time, Cousin Ethel as well as the rest. There was no humbug about Cousin Ethel. When she was hungry she ate, and did not nibble a cake in public, and reserve her more serious performances for the privacy of home. Fatty Wynn had ordered as good a meal as the place afforded. It had not the variety of a study feed at St. Jim's, but it was welcome enough to hungry boys and a hungry girl.

"I say, Figgy, ain't you hungry?" asked Fatty Wynn, rather anxiously.

"Eh—yes," said Figgins absently.

"Why don't you eat something, then? You haven't had a mouthful yet, and we've got to buzz off pretty soon," said Fatty Wynn.

"Oh, cheese it! That's all right."

Cousin Ethel smiled. Figgins was so busy looking after her that he had had no time to think of himself. But she made him sit down at her table and eat. Figgins, as a matter of fact, was hungry, and he ate well enough. Fatty Wynn looked at him, and saw bread-and-butter and eggs disappearing pretty quickly, and looked relieved.

"That's better!" he said. "Blessed if I didn't think there was something wrong with Figgy, Miss Cleveland. He ate hardly any dinner before we came out, and he sat there in a sort of dream, you know, while there were boiled carrots and beef on the table. Who on earth's that kicking my ankle? If that's one of your jokes, Gussy——"

"I am not kickin' your beastly ankle, deah boy."

"Perhaps my foot knocked against it," muttered Figgins.

"Oh, it's all right if it was you," said Fatty Wynn. "It hurt, though. But as I was saying, when a chap forgets that there are boiled beef and carrots and a fig pudding on the table there must be something wrong with him. I began to be afraid that Figgins was ill, Miss Cleveland—I did really. You can always tell that a chap's ill if he goes off his feed. It's an infallible sign. Now I never go off my feed."

"Bai Jove, you're wight there, Fatty!"

Tom Merry looked at his watch.

"Time we were gone," he said. "It won't do to lose the train at Charing Cross. There won't be another till the evening."

"I could eat a little more, Tom Merry, if you could wait a bit——"

"If we wait till you can't eat any more, Fatty, we shall have to catch the midnight train," said Tom Merry, laughing. "I'll settle up here, and then you will have to shift."

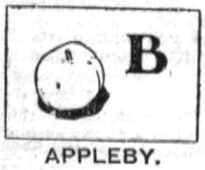
And Tom Merry settled up; and Fatty Wynn, much against his will, shifted. They walked to the exit on the Outer Circle, and strolled out of the park.

(Continued on page 24.)

GRAND FOOTBALL PUZZLE-PICTURE COMPETITION.

FIFTY POUNDS IN CASH PRIZES.

Specimen Picture.



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First Prize—

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And 122 Cash Prizes of 5s. Each.

The First Prize will be awarded to the person who gets all or, failing this, most of the pictures right. The Second Prize will go to the reader nearest to the First Prize Winner, and so on. In the event of ties, the Prizes will be divided—that is to say, if two competitors tie for the first place, the first and second prizes will be divided between them, and so forth.

What Competitors have to do.—The Competition is very simple. We are publishing thirteen sets of Puzzle Pictures, each set consisting of six pictures. This is the Fourth Set. Keep this set until you have all the others. Each of these pictures represents the **name of a well-known Association Football Player.**

All you have to do is to write carefully under each picture the name of the Player you think it represents. Then place the set away until the others have appeared, when the latest day for sending in competitions will be announced. The Editor of the GEM LIBRARY will not be responsible for any loss or delay in transmission or delivery of the lists by post, nor for any accidental loss of a list after delivery. There will be attached to the final list a form to be signed by each competitor, whereby he agrees to these conditions, and no list will be considered unless this form shall have been duly signed by the competitor. No questions will be answered. Read the rules. The Editor's decision is final.

The easiest way to solve the Pictures is to get the issue of "The Boys' Realm" now on sale, price 1d. During the next thirteen weeks "The Boys' Realm" will publish a column of brief biographies of notable footballers, in which will be included all the names of the Players illustrated. Girls may compete. All competitors may get anyone to help them.

THE FIFTH SET. ***READ THE RULES.***

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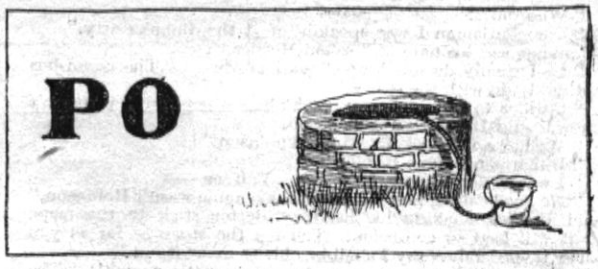

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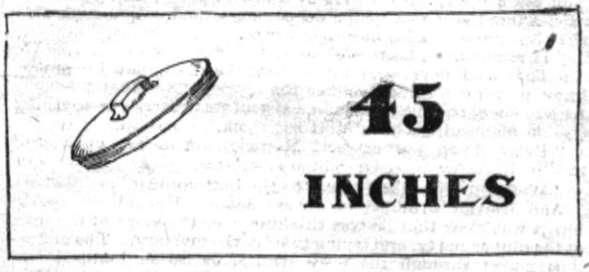

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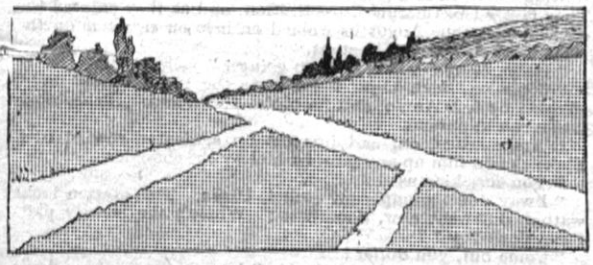

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CHAPTER 18.

Herries Looks Into It.

TOM MERRY stopped a motor-'bus in the Marylebone Road, and the party clambered aboard. They had allowed time for an open-air journey back to Charing Cross. They swarmed up the steps, but there was not room for all on top. Cousin Ethel and Figgins went inside; but D'Arcy and Herries remained on the step, with no place for them above or below.

"No more room, gentlemen," said the conductor.

"That is wathah wotten," said D'Arcy. "I suppose we can stand if we like."

"It is not allowed, sir. There's another 'bus coming on behind."

"I suppose we had bettah all get off again," said Arthur Augustus. "Tom Mewwy!"

"Rats!" replied Tom Merry cheerfully. "There wouldn't be room for eleven on that 'bus either. You two chaps get on it, and mind you rejoin us at St. Martin's Church."

"Oh, vewy well! Jump off, Hewwies!"

Herries had already jumped off. D'Arcy followed suit. There was a second motor-'bus close behind, and the two juniors boarded it. They mounted to the top, where there was plenty of room. There was a twinkle in D'Arcy's eye. He nudged Herries.

"Hallo!" said Herries, looking round.

"I say, Hewwies, old chap, shall I tell you that wippin' stowy about the dinnah-party?"

Herries felt in his pocket. He had left his "Magnet" at St. Jim's. He glanced round the street. The motor-'bus was passing along the Euston Road, and the surroundings were not inviting to the gaze. He had nothing to read, and there was nothing to look at. So he nodded graciously.

"Go ahead!" he said. "Don't be too long-winded, old fellow."

"There was a gentleman at a dinnah-party," said D'Arcy, rather discouraged. Herries was sometimes very dense, and he did not seem what could be called exactly eager to hear the story. "It's an awfully funnay thing, Hewwies. He suddenly took up a dish——"

"Who did?"

"The gentleman I was speakin' of at the dinnah-party."

"What was his name?" asked Herries.

"I—I weally do not know," said D'Arcy. "The name has nothin' to do with the stowy."

"Curious to tell a yarn about a chap whose name you don't know," said Herries. "But go on."

"Well, we will call his name Wobinson."

"But was his name Robinson?"

"I weally don't know, Hewwies. You see——"

"No good calling him Robinson if his name wasn't Robinson," said Herries, shaking his head. "Better stick to the facts, or it will lead to confusion. Tell me the story as far as you know it, and I dare say I shall be able to make it out."

"Vewy well," said Arthur Augustus, with a sigh. "The gentleman was at a dinnah-party, and he suddenly took hold of a dish of stwawbewwies, and lifted it on top of his head."

Herries stared at the swell of St. Jim's.

"Are you joking?" he demanded. "What's the good of pretending that a chap lifted a dish of strawberries on top of his head. What should he do it for?"

"That's part of the stowy."

"Story isn't the word; it's a jolly big crammer," said Herries. "Did you know the man?"

"Of course I didn't."

"Then how do you know whether he did anything of the sort or not?"

"I wead the stowy," said D'Arcy. "You see——"

"Well, get on with it," said Herries distrustfully. "Mind, I don't believe a word of it. You've got hold of some rot, and you've been taken in. Go on."

"Weally, Hewwies, you are vewy twyin'," said D'Arcy patiently. "The gentleman placed the dish of stwawbewwies on his head. The lady next to him said, 'My only hat!'"

"I don't believe a lady would say anything of the kind."

"No, that's wathah w'ong. She said——"

"Don't you remember the story?"

"Yaas, wathah! She said, 'Good gwacious——'"

"That's a bit different from what you said just now. But keep it up. Mind, I don't believe a word of it."

"She said 'Good gwacious! what are you doin' that for?'"

"No wonder," said Herries. "She would naturally be a bit surprised. Not that I believe anything of the sort really happened."

"And then he said—ha, ha, ha——"

"He said 'ha, ha, ha,' did he?" said Herries. "And what in the name of all that's idiotic did he say 'ha, ha, ha' for?"

"I don't mean that he said 'ha, ha, ha,'" explained D'Arcy. "I was just laughin' myself, because it's such a funnay stowy, you know. He didn't say 'ha, ha, ha.'"

"I see. You oughtn't to cackle in the middle of a story," said Herries. "It spoils the effect. But what did he really say when she asked him what he was putting the dish of strawberries on his head for?"

"He said 'Sowwy, I thought it was pineapples.' Ha, ha, ha!"

Herries waited. D'Arcy laughed again, and then glanced at Herries's solemn face.

"Well, and what did she say then?" asked Herries.

"I weally am not aware of any of their furthah conversation," said D'Arcy, in a rather stately manner. "I have welated the whole of the story."

"Is that the whole of it?" asked Herries, looking decidedly puzzled.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"But what did you mean then by sayirg that it was a funny story?"

"It's one of those jokes that dawn on you after a time," said D'Arcy. "You'll burst out laughin' in a minute when it stwikes you."

"I don't think I shall do anything of the kind. It sounds like a story that's got mixed up somehow," said Herries. "In the first place, it's a practical impossibility for anybody to put a dish of strawberries on his head at a dinner-party. Was he a guest at the party, or was he giving it?"

"I weally do not know," murmured D'Arcy, beginning to wish that he had not told Herries that story. Herries had a dreadfully practical mind, and he always liked to fully satisfy himself upon a subject, and it looked as if he was going to analyse and dissect that story till he got fairly to the bottom of it.

"Well, that's an important point," said Herries, wrinkling his brow thoughtfully. "You see, if he was giving the party, he could play any monkey-trick he liked at his own table, but a guest wouldn't care about doing such a thing as shoving a dish on his head. I'll bet you that he wouldn't get asked to dinner in the same place again in a hurry."

"I—I—I pwesume not, Hewwies."

"But supposing that he did put the dish on his head," pursued Herries. "Mind, I say only supposing, for I don't believe a word of it. Supposing that he did put the dish on his head, what has that to do with pineapples? Are you sure it was pineapples? If it was, I must say I don't see where the joke comes in."

"It might have been ice-cweam."

"Ice-cream!" said Herries, started off on a new line of investigation. "Then what he really said was, 'Sorry, I thought it was ice-cream.'"

"Yaas, I suppose so," said D'Arcy feebly.

"That doesn't let in much light on the matter. Are you absolutely certain that it was strawberries in the dish in the first place?"

"Weally, Hewwies——"

"I should like to get to the bottom of it," said Herries keenly. "We ought to be able to thrash it out between us. It's a pity you don't know the man's name. Do you know the name of the lady who was sitting next to him?"

"No, I don't."

"You see, you're jolly careless in getting your facts together. You tell a yarn about a man at a dinner-party, and you don't even know the names of the people concerned. You suggested that his name was Robinson just now."

"It might have been Wobinson."

"That's all very well, might have been. What I want to know is, what the man's name really was. Not that I believe for a moment that he would put a dish of strawberries or anything else on his head. That's a bit too thick."

"Pway dwop the subject, Hewwies. You are exhaustin' me."

'Well, I'd have liked to get to the bottom of it."

And Herries wrinkled his brows again. He did not speak but it was clear that he was thinking over the story of the man at the dinner-party, and trying to solve the mystery. The motor-'bus glided through the busy streets, or rather bumped and snorted through them, and St. Martin's Church came in sight. D'Arcy and Herries alighted, and found Tom Merry & Co. waiting for them in a group at the corner of Duncannon Street. They crossed to Charing Cross Station, and as they entered the enclosure, Arthur Augustus walked on into an entrance on the right-hand side, down the steps.

"Hallo, there! where are you going?" yelled Blake.

"Come on, deah boys, I can hear the twain comin' in!" shouted back D'Arcy; and he broke into a run. Blake broke into a run in pursuit.

D'Arcy dashed on, and brought up against a row of lifts. Blake caught him up and grasped him by the shoulder.

"You shrieking ass!"

"Pway don't wumple my jacket, Blake. This station looks wathah diffewent now, doesn't it? Where's the beastly platform, deah boy?"

"Come out, you duffer!"

"I wefuse to come out. We shall lose the twain if we don't huwwy!"

"Ass! This is the Hampstead Tube Station you've bolted into."

"Bai Jove! is it weally?"

"Yes, ass. Come on!"

"Before I come with you, Blake, I want it to be distinctly undahstood that I uttahly wefuse to be alluded to as an ass!"

Blake jerked him along. He propelled the swell of St. Jim's up the steps with one hand on the back of his collar and the other at his waistbelt. Arthur Augustus struggled in vain. Several people stopped to look on, doubtless finding the sight amusing. D'Arcy was run out of the underground station at full speed, and rushed right into the waiting group at the top of the steps.

"Hold on!" exclaimed Lowther, staggering back from the impact. "What the dickens——"

"Blake, I no longah wegard you as a fwiend."

"I still regard you as a troublesome ass."

"Undah the circs——"

"Come, Arthur," said a gentle voice; "we mustn't lose the train."

"I weally beg your pardon, Ethel. But that wuff wottah is weally enough to make an angel lose his beastly tempah sometimes," said Arthur Augustus.

Ethel slipped a hand through his arm, and D'Arcy calmed down instantly. The homeward bound adventurers entered the great station, and arrived on their platform in good time for the train. Five minutes later they were whizzing homeward in the express.

CHAPTER 19.

Too Much D'Arcy!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY was somewhat silent during the first part of the journey. The train rushed on through a pleasant landscape, growing dim as the sun sank lower in the west. Herries was looking very thoughtful in his corner of the carriage. He was still thinking over the mystery of the man's peculiar action at the dinner-party. Figgins was talking in a low voice to Cousin Ethel, and Manners and Lowther were playing chess on a pocket-board belonging to the former. Tom Merry, Blake, and Digby were busily discussing football prospects in the junior Forms at St. Jim's, and Kerr was reading a "Magnet" he had bought at the railway-station. Fatty Wynn was reflecting—and the subject of his reflections was twofold—the last feed he had had at Regent's Park, and the next one he was going to have in the study in the New House at St. Jim's. Arthur Augustus's face suddenly brightened up.

"Bai Jove, deah boys——"

"What I say is," said Blake, "that a fellow belonging to Study No. 6 can't, under any circumstances, be left out of a junior football eleven. It's not in the nature of things."

"I say, deah boys——"

"It's been a pleasant afternoon, hasn't it?" murmured Figgins, under cover of the louder football discussion. "I wish you were staying over Saturday, Miss Cleveland."

"Do you really?"

"We are playing the School House on Saturday, and I should play ever so much better if you were there looking on, you know. It would make a fellow buck up."

Cousin Ethel laughed softly,

"I might come over and see the match," she said.

Figgins's homely face brightened up, and looked almost handsome.

"Will you really, Ethel?"

"It's no good arguing, Tom Merry. A fellow belonging to Study No. 6 can't——"

"Can't play footer for toffee," said Monty Lowther, looking up from his chess for a moment.

"No!" exclaimed Blake. "Can't be left out of the footer eleven."

"Veal and ham pie!" murmured Fatty Wynn. "It won't take long to warm it up, and I left the wood and paper for the fire all ready in the study. That won't take a minute. I'm getting jolly hungry, Kerr. Lucky I thought of laying in that veal and ham pie."

"Deah boys, I weally wish you would pay me some attention for a moment."

"Go and eat coke, old chap!"

"I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort. I was goin' to welieve the monotony of the journey by welatin' a vewy funny stowy."

"Hold on!" said Herries. "I haven't got over the last yet."

"Weally, Hewwies——"

"I believe it's all rot," said Herries deliberately. "I've thought it out in every possible way, and I can't make sense of it. Either you've got it mixed up, or you've left something out, or else the yarn is a catch from beginning to end. I certainly don't believe that anything of the sort ever happened. I say, you chaps, Gussy says that there was a man at a dinner-party who put a dish of strawberries on his head. He doesn't know the man's name or the name of the man who was giving the party, or the names of any of the parties concerned."

"Weally, Hewwies, you are vewy twyin'. But the stowy I was just goin' to welate was the stowy of the cuwate and the tin saucepan."

Blake took out his pocket-knife and opened the largest blade. Arthur Augustus watched him with nervous interest.

"That's right," said Lowther, looking round. "If he starts on the curate and the tin saucepan, kill him, and we'll hide his body under the seat."

"Quite right," said Tom Merry, with a nod of approval. "I believe in giving every chap a chance, but D'Arcy has passed the limit. As a matter of fact, it's a case of too much D'Arcy!"

"Exactly; too much D'Arcy," assented Blake. "You see, Gussy, you're too much and too often. That's what's the matter with you."

"I wefuse to hold any furthah conversation with you, Blake."

"Good."

"I wegard you as a beast, Tom Mewwy."

"Good."

And the journey was finished without any of the party being enlightened as to the adventures of the curate and the saucepan.

"Wayland!" yelled a voice from the gathering dusk.

The train stopped at the well-known station. The party crossed the platform and entered the local, already waiting. Then they buzzed off for Rylcombe, and ere long arrived, and the journey was over. As the party came out of the little country station a trap loomed up in the dusk, and a man touched his cap to Figgins. It was Brown's man, and Brown's trap.

"'Ere you are, sir."

"Right-ho," said Figgins.

"Bai Jove!" murmured D'Arcy, "I nevah thought of that."

Figgins had arranged with Mr. Brown for his trap to meet the train. There was room in the trap for the New House Co., with Ethel and D'Arcy. The School House juniors looked at one another, and at the astute Figgins.

"There's the station hack you can have," said Figgins, with a wave of his hand towards that ancient vehicle.

"Thank you," said Tom Merry.

The trap drove off with the New House juniors and D'Arcy and Cousin Ethel. The School House Boys gazed after it with mixed feelings.

"Jolly thoughtful of Figgins," remarked Blake.

Tom Merry laughed.

"Yes; and I'm glad Cousin Ethel has a lift to the school. Girls get more tired than we do walking. I'm going to walk it, though."

"Yes, rather," said Lowther. "And there's one comfort—Gussy is in the trap, and we sha'n't have any of his little jokes on the way home. He can tell Figgins & Co. the story of the curate and the tin saucepan."

"Blessed if I quite understand Gussy the last day or two," said Blake, thoughtfully, as they strolled down the old High Street of Rylcombe, and entered the lane homeward. "He seems to have crammed up a fearful lot of rotten jokes, and to be simply bursting with them. It's just as if he'd been reading up a lot of comic papers, and the stuff had got into his head. We ought to look into it, really."

"That's so," agreed Herries. "He was telling me a yarn about a man at a dinner-party, and really I couldn't help thinking that he must be a little bit off his rocker, you know. He doesn't even know the man's name, and——"

"We'll look into it," said Blake.

The juniors arrived at St. Jim's. Brown's trap had done the distance much more quickly, and was long gone. Cousin Ethel was indoors, and Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn had gone to their quarters in the New House. Through the thickening dusk a light gleamed from the window of Figgins's study, and there was a red glow from within that told of a fire burning cheerily, and Blake almost thought he could detect a smell of cooking. Fatty Wynn was evidently making things hum.

"I'm feeling peckish myself," remarked Digby. "I'm ready for something. Where are you off to, Herries? Tuckshop?"

"No. I'm going to feed my bulldog."

And Herries hurried away. The rest of the juniors entered the School House. Arthur Augustus was lounging gracefully in the hall. He had evidently had his tea. He nodded affably to the newcomers.

"I've had tea with Goah," he remarked. "Awfully obligin' fellow, Goah. He wanted me to lend him a bob, but I hadn't anythin' smallah than half-a-cwown, and he said that would do. Feahfully obligin' chap. If you chaps would like to hear the stowy of the cuwate and——"

The 'chaps' passed hurriedly on. Blake, Herries, and Digby stopped at the door of Study No. 6, and Blake turned up the gas. Tom Merry paused and looked in.

"I don't know how you chaps are fixed," he remarked; "but we've got a good supply in our study, and if you care to come along to tea——"

"What-ho!" said Blake heartily.

"Bring your tea-cups, then. And some plates if you have any. Hallo! what are you blinking at, Dig.?"

Digby had picked up a little book from the floor. He was staring at it blankly. He turned over the leaves and whistled.

"What is it?"

"Ha, ha! The origin of Gussy's latest outbreaks as a funny man. Listen!" Digby read out the title on the book. "'Jones's Jest-Book: Two Centuries of Funny Sayings and Doings. Price Sixpence.' Ha, ha, ha!"

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

The book passed from hand to hand. There was no mistake about it. There were all D'Arcy's latest jokes, his riddles, his conundrums, his funny stories. There, staring from almost the first page, was the story of the curate and the tin saucepan. The swell of St. Jim's had evidently been studying that little book in secret, and had dropped it by accident on the floor of the study. The name, "Arthur Augustus D'Arcy," was sprawled across the flyleaf in D'Arcy's well-known hand.

"I've got an idea," said Tom Merry, chuckling. "Hand it over. We'll fix it up in a way that will show Gussy that we are on to the wheeze, and perhaps he'll go easy on the funny-man business after that."

And Tom Merry opened his pocket-knife and proceeded to dismember the jest-book with a merciless hand.

. . . . . .

Five minutes later, the juniors left the study, chuckling gleefully. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was coming upstairs, looking rather troubled. He hurried towards the juniors as they went towards Tom Merry's study.

"Hold on a minute, deah boys! Have you seen a little book lyin' about anywhah?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—weally, Blake——"

"Better look in the study!" grinned Blake.

The juniors walked on. A merry tea was soon in progress in Tom Merry's study. Arthur Augustus jammed his monocle into his eye and stared after them for some moments, and then slowly entered Study No. 6. The gas was turned down. D'Arcy turned it up, and in the flood of light looked round the study. Then he gave a gasp.

"Bai Jove!"

The book of which he was in search was very much in evidence. The leaves of the jest-book, dismembered mercilessly, adorned the walls of the study. The cover was sticking over the mantelpiece, with a knife through it pinning it to the wall. The leaves were all round the study, stuck on the walls with pins or gum, forming a sort of dado. Arthur Augustus stared at them blankly.

"Bai Jove!" he murmured again.

He was discovered. There was no doubt upon that point, for there was the jest-book in fragments, in evidence of the fact. And for the third time Arthur Augustus murmured "Bai Jove!" Then he strolled along to Tom Merry's study. The tea-party there greeted him with a shout of laughter.

"Hallo, Dan Leno!"

"Good old funny-man!"

"What price 'Jones's Jest-Book'!"

"Price Sixpence!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Never mind," said Tom Merry. "The game's up, and Gussy the funny-man is dead and buried. Sit down and have another tea, Gussy—and say farewell, a long farewell, to the story of the curate and the tin saucepan."

And D'Arcy did. The swell of the School House had finished his career as a funny man.

THE END.

(Another splendid long, complete tale of the Boys of St. Jim's next Thursday, entitled "D'Arcy Minor." Please order your copy of "THE GEM" in advance. Price One Penny.)

THE FIRST CHAPTERS OF A GRAND STORY.

A THRILLING TALE OF THE COAL-MINES.

By MAX HAMILTON.

THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

David Steele, fifteen years of age, is forced through circumstances to leave the little North-country village which had been home to him all his days.

Wrexborough is his destination. He tramps on hour after hour, but at last, being too tired to move, falls to sleep on the banks of a canal. He is awakened by voices, and overhears a vile plot. He resolves to frustrate it, and is successful in saving the victim's life. It is necessary for him, though, to resort to the canal, and he and his wounded companion float down with the stream.

Micky Jones, the son of John Jones, had been left in charge of the barge Annie May. Micky did his duty by falling to sleep. The rising wind did not trouble him at all, and as he had neglected to make the barge fast to the bank, it began to swing out into the canal.

But this was how it happened that Mr. Jones's absence and his son's carelessness saved two lives: David Steele's senses had almost left him when his companion's head grazed the barge, and then the boy felt himself drawn up to the surface, and his lungs were filled with a blessed draught of air.

The next morning the rescued man tells David he is Mr. Scott, a wealthy Wrexborough mine-owner. He exacts a promise from the boy not to say a word about the attempt on his life, and later on orders Mr. Grafton, his manager, to find David some work to do. He also gets Mrs. Nichols, the wife of one of his men, to board and lodge him. David goes into his new home, and is dumbfounded on discovering that Markham, one of the men who had made the attack on Mr. Scott, is living under the same roof.

(Now go on with the story.)

What David Saw in the Cracked Mirror.

Before Markham returned, Mrs. Nichols had begun to clear the table.

"Don't ye hurry, lad," she said to David. "I must leave the pot on the table for Bill. I'll just put the other things in the back kitchen. You take your time."

As she hurried off, the outer door opened to re-admit Markham. To David it seemed that the nervousness of his manner had not abated as he sat down to the table and poured himself out a cup of tea.

"You and I are the last left, eh, lad?" he said, with what struck the boy as a forced attempt at joviality. "Well, Tom, what's the news in the 'Chronicle' this evening?"

"They're trying Bevan at full-back," returned Tom. "I doubt if he'll fill Watkins' place, eh? He was a grand back was Watkins! He'll be a loss to the team this season."

David scarcely heard the last words. His attention was concentrated elsewhere.

Sitting on the opposite side of the table to Markham, he had half turned towards Tom, thus presenting his back to the miner. But by chance his eye had fallen upon a cracked little mirror that hung over the mantelpiece, and what he saw in that mirror sent the blood with a sudden rush to his heart!

Leaning over the table with a stealthy movement, Markham had drawn David's cup—still half full—towards him, at the same moment producing from his waistcoat pocket a tiny bottle, which he rapidly uncorked.

David did not stir. Apparently he was intent on listening to Tom Nichols, who, with his eyes still glued to the "Wrexborough Chronicle," was continuing his comments on the footbal

NEXT THURSDAY: **"D'ARCY MINOR."**

A Splendid, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co., by Martin Clifford.

team; in reality he was watching every motion of the man whom he already characterised as his enemy.

A thin stream of fluid dropped noiselessly from the little bottle into the cup. Then, with a swift glance at David, whose back was still towards him, the cup was thrust back into its former position, the bottle concealed, and when David, without any show of haste, turned back to the table, Markham was outwardly engrossed in the remains of his meal. But it did not escape the boy's eye that his hands were trembling.

Mechanically the lad lifted his bread-and-butter to his lips. He scarcely knew why he had not cried out when he had discovered what Markham was doing. Tom would have looked up, and the miner been caught in the act. Curiosity as much as astonishment had kept him silent.

Was Markham trying to poison him, and, if so, why? Because he feared that David's denial that he knew him was not true? But surely he would not risk the penalty of murder on such slight grounds! Yet it was impossible for the boy to disbelieve the evidence of his own eyes.

He was seized with a burning desire to penetrate the mystery that surrounded him; but, to do so, he must not allow Markham to suppose himself suspected.

Meanwhile his tea stood untasted at his side, and he was conscious that Markham was watching him keenly. Raising his cup, he apparently took a gulp of tea. In reality not a drop passed his lips.

As he put it down, he cast a glance at the mirror and saw a look of relief pass over Markham's face.

The problem still remained how to get rid of the tea without arousing the miner's suspicions. Chance gave the opportunity. As Markham arose to draw his chair nearer to the fire something slipped from his pocket and fell, with a jingling sound, to the floor. He bent to pick it up. Instantly David poured the contents of his cup into the slop-basin. Markham, grovelling on his hands and knees, was quite unaware of the trick.

"Hallo, Bill, lost anything?" inquired Tom.

"Yes," grunted Markham, just as David's eye fell upon a tiny bottle shining in the firelight.

"Is this it?" he asked, pouncing upon it.

Markham gave a hasty grab, but David reached it first; and before he had handed it back to its owner he had read the superscription, "Sleeping-draught. Twelve drops to be taken at bedtime."

A sleeping-draught! Then to drug and not to poison him was Markham's aim!

Like a flash of lightning, David's resolution was taken. He would allow Markham to suppose he had succeeded. He rose and stretched his arms above his head with a yawn.

"I don't know how it is," he said, "but I am uncommonly sleepy. I can hardly keep my eyes open."

"Are you, my lad?" said Mrs. Nichols, who had just come bustling into the room. "Well, go to bed whenever you like. You'll have to be early in the morning."

A moment later David was stumbling upstairs like one overcome with weariness. Once in his room, however, that weariness vanished like magic. Nevertheless, he undressed and crept into bed lest Markham should hear him moving and suspect a trick.

Again and again as he tossed on his pillow, he asked himself what object the man could have.

At last ten o'clock struck. He heard the tapping of Tom's crutch, then the shutting of Markham's door, and the creaking of the boards as he moved about the room.

Still nothing happened; and for nearly an hour David lay in the darkness, straining his ears for every sound.

At last, just as he was beginning to feel sleepy, he heard a faint creak.

He held his breath.

Markham's door was opening. Then, through the chink of his own door he saw a streak of light. A moment later the handle turned softly, and from under his apparently closed eyelids David saw a figure, fully dressed and holding a candle in his hand, standing upon the threshold.

It was Markham!

Markham's Midnight Visitor—An Unexpected Recognition.

David held his breath.

With quiet, shoeless feet, Markham advanced into the middle of the room. The boy had closed his eyes tightly, but he knew that the miner was slowly and cautiously nearing his bed. He felt a wild desire to cry out, and it was only with difficulty he repressed it.

The thought that he was alone with the man who had nearly been instrumental in causing his death was not one to inspire courage, especially in the dead of the night.

The floor creaked under Markham's footsteps, and then, by the glow that shone through his closed lids, David knew that the miner must be standing by the bed and holding the candle directly above his face. So intense was the strain upon his nerves that he almost betrayed himself by a start when Markham's voice fell upon his ear.

"Are you awake, lad?" he asked, in a hushed voice.

David had sufficient control over himself to lie perfectly still.

The next moment the light was advanced still nearer to his face, and he could feel the miner's warm breath upon his cheek.

"Sound enough!"

The words came with a grunt of satisfaction, and a moment later the strain was relaxed.

Markham's feet moved back towards the door, and the glow of the candle faded into darkness. Cautiously the handle was turned, and David was once more alone.

The perspiration poured from his forehead, as he started up into a sitting-posture.

In the dead silence he could plainly hear his neighbour moving about in the next room.

What was the meaning of this nocturnal visit?

Evidently he had come to make certain that the drug which he believed he had administered to David had done its work. He had returned to his own room confident that the boy was sound asleep.

It did not take David long to make up his mind that the miner must have some weighty reason for wishing his slumbers to be particularly deep that night.

The partition between the two rooms was of the thinnest. Was he afraid of being overheard or overlooked, and, if so, why?

Perhaps there was some chink—some knothole—in the frail matchboarding that separated his room from Markham's that would supply the answer to that question.

In an instant David was out of bed, his naked feet treading soundlessly as he crept along the floor, his eyes scanning the surface of the wall for some indication of a crack; but there was none. Had there been one, the light from Markham's candle would certainly have betrayed it.

The boy retreated to his bed, and sat down on the side of it to think. For the time he was baffled, but his curiosity, as well as a certain dogged determination that formed an ingrained part of his character, would not allow him to give up his attempt to penetrate the mystery of his fellow-lodger's proceedings. Should he venture along the passage and reconnoitre through Markham's keyhole? He would certainly be justified in doing so, after the miner's stealthy invasion of his own room. Such a course would be decidedly risky, however.

"I believe I shall have to risk it," he said to himself at last. "Find out what he is up to, I will, and there doesn't seem any other way."

A handful of gravel came rattling against his window, and, at the same instant, a low whistle struck upon his ear.

David's own window was open a few inches from the bottom. In an instant he had darted across the room, and, kneeling on the floor so that his eyes were on a level with the sill, peered out into the street.

Now, Wrexborough, like many of the Northern mining towns, is largely built on the slopes of the hills among which it is situated. It follows, therefore, that most of the houses in which the miners dwell, rising up the hillside in straight terraces, resembling huge steps at a distance, have their front and back doors on a different level—in other words, the street level at the back is some feet higher than that at the front. This was the case with the little dwelling occupied by Tom Nichols and his wife. At the front it seemed a two-storeyed, at the back a one-storeyed house. Thus the windows of the rooms occupied by David and Markham were not much more than an average man's height above the pavement, and as David crouched down by the sill he could see, only just below him, the top of a man's head, covered with what looked like a wide felt hat.

"Hush!" Markham was saying to his visitor in quick, agitated tones. "Take care! There's a boy sleeping in the next room."

A hushed but obviously uneasy exclamation broke from the stranger's lips.

"Ye needn't worrit," the miner went on, with a chuckle, "the lad's sound asleep. When I found out he was to be in the next room to me I went off to the chemist and asked him for a bit of a sleeping-draught. I put it in the boy's tea, and he'll have hard work to rouse himself in the morning."

The man in the street nodded. David could not see his face, shadowed as it was by the hat drawn well over his brows; but he noticed that he turned his head in a quick glance up and down the street before, placing his hands on the sill, he drew himself up to the window with a swift movement that denoted the practised athlete. The next instant he was inside the room, and the window, to David's disappointment, was immediately closed. Had it been left open he might have heard the continuation of the conversation so strangely begun. As it was, nothing but the faint murmur of hushed voices came to him through the partition.

At last the noise made by a chair being pushed back warned him that a move was about to be made. He was out of bed again in a twinkling and on his knees by the window before that in

Markham's room was cautiously raised, and Markham's head as cautiously thrust out.

"No one in sight; it's all safe," he said.

His head was withdrawn, and the next moment his visitor lowered himself gently into the street. As he did so, however, his wide-brimmed hat was jerked from his head, and before he could stoop to pick it up, David, his own face pressed against the glass, saw plainly, by the light of a street-lamp, that of the man beneath him.

For a moment he could hardly believe his eyes, and as, like one petrified, he watched the tall figure disappearing hurriedly along the street, a cry of amazement all but escaped his lips.

The man he had just seen—Markham's midnight visitor—was no other than William Scott, the owner of the Wrexborough mine!

David's Perplexity—The Mine.

It was not until long after Scott had disappeared round the corner—not until an increasing sensation of cold set his teeth chattering in his head—that David, recalled to his surroundings, rose from his crouching position by the window, and returned to his bed. For the time sheer astonishment had almost paralysed him.

As he drew the bedclothes over his shivering limbs, he asked himself, for the fiftieth time, what could possibly be the explanation of the mystery which seemed to thicken around him at every step.

The unprovoked attempt to murder Scott had been strange enough—stranger still the mine-owner's desire for secrecy concerning it, and absolute determination to protect the guilty parties at any cost; and now, strangest of all, came the undoubted fact that he, William Scott, the rich colliery proprietor, should pay a secret but, as it seemed, not unfriendly visit to one of the men who had tried to take his life—entering that man's room, too, like a thief in the night.

The tangle seemed utterly incomprehensible. The only point upon which the last turn of events had enlightened David was concerning Markham's motive for drugging him. That, as he had heard from the man's own lips, was to ensure his being unaware of Scott's visit. From his own lips, also, David had gathered that this was not the first time that Scott had come and gone in the same stealthy fashion.

Could it be possible that the miner had some terrible hold over his employer? Was it that some disgraceful secret connected with Scott had come into his possession, and that the latter dared not retaliate, even when his life was in danger, for fear of some dreadful exposure?

David's mind revolted at the thought.

And yet, if Scott had nothing to conceal, why should he slink to Markham by night, instead of meeting him openly, and like a man?

"I wish I could ask somebody's advice," thought David, just as sleep began to descend upon him. "But I can't—that's the worst of this business. I've given Scott my word, and I can't!"

It was well for the boy that he was not left to wake himself in the morning. It was still dark when a series of thundering raps on the back door roused him with a start, under the impression that something strange and alarming must be happening. His feet had barely touched the floor, however, when he heard "All right!" shouted in stentorian tones from Markham's room, and the rapping suddenly ceased.

"What's the matter?" he called out, tapping at the wall of the miner's room. "What's the knocking for? Has anything happened?"

There was a hoarse laugh from Markham in reply.

"That's only th' chap as comes round to wake us all up i' th' morning. Did ye think 'twas the fire brigade? He hammers and hammers till we call out, and then he goes on to t'next. Don't ye hear him lower down now?"

"I should have thought it would have been enough to hammer at one door in each street," said David, as he began to dress. "He makes noise enough to wake up half the town!"

"You won't think so when you're used to him," returned Markham. "In a month or two you'll go on sleeping till he's been a-thundering on the door for the best part of five minutes!"

Early as it was, Mrs. Nichols was already afoot, and a crackling fire and steaming kettle welcomed Markham and David as they descended to the kitchen to snatch a hasty meal before setting off to the day's work.

"Come along, lad," said Markham, at length, rising from the table, "we must hurry up if we don't want to be late!"

His manner to the boy was good-natured, and even cordial. In fact, he seemed altogether in far better spirits than he had been on the night before.

Already David could hear the sound of many feet hastening along the street, and, as they stepped out into the raw morning air, it seemed to him that the whole male population of Wrexborough must be making for the mine. Men and boys were walking and running towards the spot where, just outside the town, on the edge of the moor, rose the tall framework that marked the opening of the shaft.

He kept close to Markham, not from any attraction towards that worthy, but from a sensation of strangeness among the hurrying throng which egrew thicker as the pit was neared.

Mr. Grafton had told him the day before to inquire at the pit's mouth for Mr. Hobbs, one of the overseers; and as they neared the shaft he asked Markham where he was likely to be found.

Markham jerked his thumb towards a short, wiry man who at that moment came hastening up, and David, touching his cap, presented himself nervously to the overseer.

Hobbs nodded kindly.

"Ah, yes, the lad Mr. Grafton told me about! Right you are, my boy! Let me see, what's your name? Steele—David Steele? Good! You can come down with me, and I'll set you to work!"

And a few minutes later David, in company with the overseer and a load of miners, found himself in the cage and sinking down into what seemed the very bowels of the earth.

For the time being his interest in his new surroundings had driven the thought of the events of the night before entirely out of the boy's mind.

This was the first time he had ever been below the surface of the earth, and as he followed Hobbs through one of the long galleries leading to the seam he stared about him eagerly.

What he saw was a passage of rough stone, its roof propped here and there with stout timber; it was rather more than a couple of yards in width, and a line of rails extended along it from the shaft.

"Well, what do you think of a coal-mine, eh?" asked Hobbs good-naturedly.

"I don't see any coal, sir," returned David.

Hobbs laughed.

"You're looking for it in the wrong place, my lad. This part of the mine has been all worked out; we're a long way from the face as yet. Here's some of it coming, though," he added, drawing the boy to the side of the passage or gateway, as it is termed, as a horse dragging behind it a small train of loaded tubs came into sight on its way to the shaft.

"Nearer the face," Mr. Hobbs explained, "where the seam is too low to employ horses, we use small ponies, which draw the tubs singly from the face, where they are loaded, to the station or 'flat,' where they are coupled together, and hauled to the shaft by a horse. Your duty as a trammer will be to take a tub from the 'flat' to the face, and bring it back after it has been loaded by a 'filler.'"

(To be continued next Thursday.)

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The EDITOR.

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