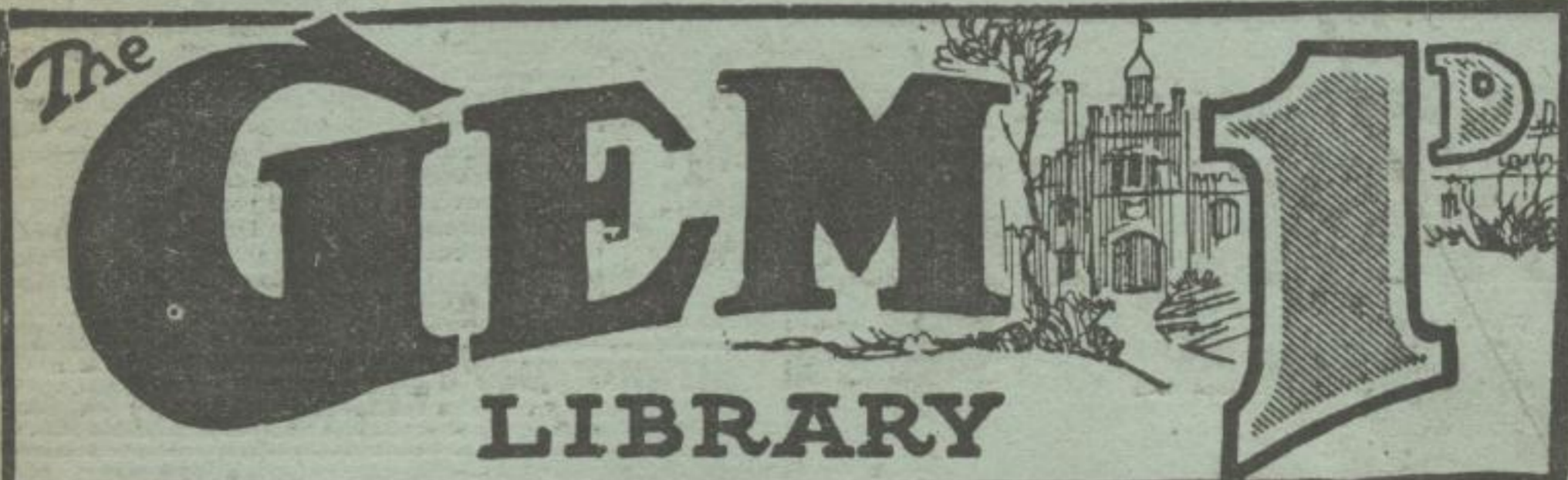


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ARTHUR AUGUSTUS SAT HAND IN HAND WITH THE BOGUS MISS CHUNN. "CALL ME ANN JANE, ARTHUR!" SAID KERR, IN DULCET TONES, FROM BEHIND HIS VEIL. "SMILE, CUSSY!" CALLED OUT MANNERS, TAKING AIM WITH HIS CAMERA. "DON'T LOOK AS IF YOU WERE GOING TO EXECUTION! SMILE!" (An amusing scene in this week's long, complete school tale.)

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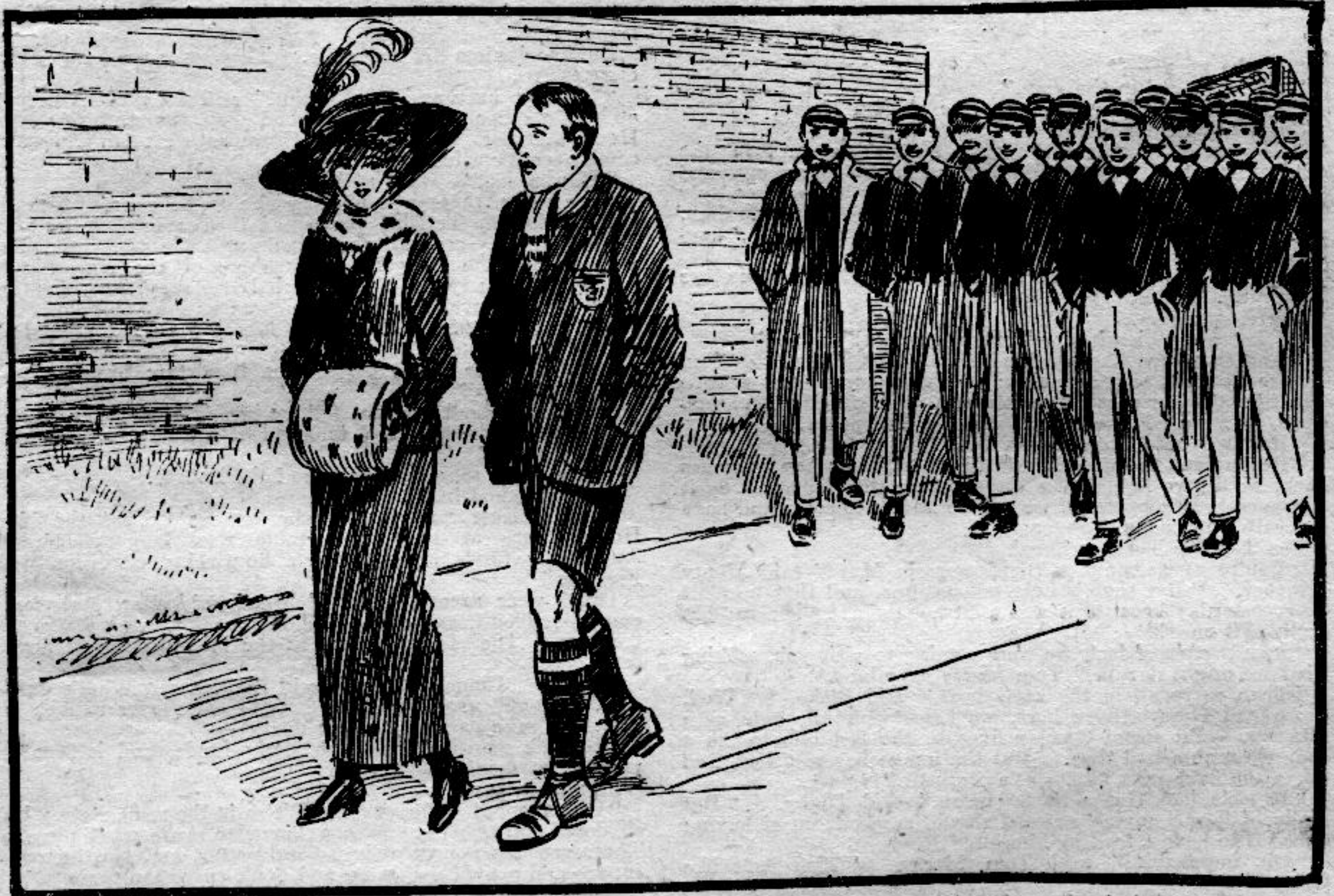


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D'ARCY'S DELUSION!

A Magnificent, New, Long, Complete School Tale Dealing with the Adventures of
Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's.

By **MARTIN CLIFFORD.**



Arthur Augustus's face was like a well-bolled beetroot, as he walked across the quadrangle with the red feather, the juniors following in a crowd. (See Chapter 17.)

CHAPTER 1. Left in the Lurch!

"Gussy!"

"D'Arcy, you ass!"
"Where's that chump Gussy!"

Blake, Herries, and Digby of the Fourth were asking those questions right and left, up and down the School House at St. Jim's.

As their inquiries remained unanswered, they grew more and more emphatic.

"Where's that ass Gussy?"

"Where has that giddy fathead got to?"

"Anybody seen a tame lunatic?"

Nobody had, apparently. Blake and Herries and Digby were pink with indignation. For a quarter of an hour or more they had sought their noble chum, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth Form, but they found him not. In all sorts of likely and unlikely places they had sought him; but Arthur Augustus seemed to have melted into thin air,

to have "suddenly, silently vanished away" like the celebrated Boojum.

The Terrible Three of the Shell—Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther—were standing in the doorway of the School House, looking out into the wintry dusk in the quad. They looked round as they heard the emphatic inquiries of Blake & Co.

"Gussy missing?" asked Tom Merry.

Blake snorted.

"Yes. The frabjous ass has disappeared—vanished—bunked! We're going to scalp and slaughter him when he turns up!"

"What does it matter?"

"We want him!" said Blake and Herries in chorus. "We haven't had tea! We're stony in Study No. 6! Gussy's had a fiver!"

The mystery was explained.

In the famous apartment known as Study No. 6, in the Fourth Form passage, funds were to a great extent in common. At all events, when one fellow there had any

Next Wednesday:

"HARD PRESSED!" AND "SECRET SERVICE!"

money, the others were always sure of tea. Just at present Study No. 6 was in the state of Egypt of old when passing through the lean years. The arrival of a fiver for Arthur Augustus had relieved the strain, and promised an end to the famine. And, lo! the swell of St. Jim's had disappeared from human ken, taking the fiver with him.

No wonder Blake & Co. were boiling with indignation. The Terrible Three fully sympathised with them. As a matter of fact, funds were low in their study, too, and they would cheerfully have lent their aid in "blewing" that fiver. They felt that Arthur Augustus had done them an injury as well as his study-mates.

"But where can he have gone to?" said Monty Lowther.

Another snort from Blake.

"Blessed if I know! We've been from end to end of the School House, and he isn't inside it!"

"Might have run over to the New House to see Figgins?" suggested Manners.

"Herries has been over there asking. He hasn't been seen in the New House."

"In the tuckshop, perhaps—"

"I've been there," said Digby. "Mrs. Taggles hasn't seen him."

"In the gym—"

"We've looked in the gym."

"Then he must have gone out!" said Tom Merry.

Snort again from Blake.

"Of course he must have gone out, as he isn't in the giddy school! But what does he mean by going out, and specially by taking our fiver with him? He knows the study is in a state of stoniness—and it's too late for tea in hall, too. Nothing to eat at all, excepting some of Herries' dog-biscuits—"

"My hat! Does Herries eat dog-biscuits?" asked Lowther innocently.

Herries glared.

"They're my biscuits for Towser, you ass!" he said.

"And at a time like this," said Blake, as if the fate of an empire at least was trembling in the balance—"at a time like this, the ass goes out, without a word about where he's gone, or when he'll be back! Simply disappears!"

"Rotten!" said Tom Merry.

"Rotten isn't the word!" said Blake. "But when he comes back, we'll give him such a slaughtering that he won't do it any more! I suppose all we can do now is to come and have tea with you chaps!"

The Terrible Three grinned.

"You're as welcome as the flowers in May!" said Monty Lowther. "But there's only one sardine, and that was left over yesterday because it was a little—ahem! The cat has declined it once!"

"As a matter of fact, we were coming to visit you, seeking what we might devour," Tom Merry explained.

"Then we're all in the same boat," said Blake. "Well, if we had Gussy's fiver here, we'd see you through with pleasure. I'd spend Gussy's fiver to the last bob to see a chap through a bad time. But the image has vanished, and taken the fiver with him. It's disgusting!"

"It isn't like Gussy to be mean," said Digby. "But really, if it was anybody else, I should suspect him of having gone off to have a feed by himself!"

"Oh, impossible!" said Tom Merry. "That isn't like Gussy!"

"No, I know it isn't. But what the dickens has he vanished for, and taken the cash with him? Besides, he owes me a quid. I lent him a whole remittance yesterday. He might have let me have my quid out of the fiver!" said Digby, aggrieved.

"I should say so!" exclaimed Blake. "The quid would have seen us through tea! I simply can't imagine what the little game is!"

"He's been rather queer lately," said Herries thoughtfully. "I've noticed it for some days. On Saturday he stood out of the footer match, and went for a walk by himself. A chap who would do that must be a bit queer!"

"And he always seems to be buzzing off to Rylcombe now," said Digby. "I suppose he's gone to Rylcombe this time, though goodness knows what for!"

"And he had a letter this morning, and turned very red when I asked him what it was," said Blake reflectively. "Of course, I was thinking that it might be a remittance from one of his giddy aunts. He's got dozens of 'em, and they all send him quids. But it wasn't."

"It's a queer biznai," said Tom Merry. "Can our noble and esteemed Gussy be getting himself into trouble?"

"Well, he isn't ass enough to get into any blackguardly games, like Levison, or Cutts of the Fifth!" said Blake.

"I'll say that for Gussy—he's nine kinds of an ass, but he's as straight as a giddy die! But why he has buzzed off now—"

"It's a mystery. The question is—" began Herries.

"Where has he gone to, and why?"

"Ye-e-es; but I was going to say, the question is, where are we going to get any tea? I'm hungry."

"Same here!" said Digby pathetically.

"Better begin on Towser's biscuits!" chuckled Monty Lowther.

But the juniors did not smile. They were too hungry and exasperated.

"Let's go over and see Figgins," said Jack Blake desperately. "After all, Figgy is a good chap, though he's a New House bouncer. We'll tell him House rows are off, and we've come over for a feed!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Apparently, there was nothing else to be done. The six juniors—for the Terrible Three had thrown in their lot with Blake & Co.—crossed the quadrangle in the dusk, and walked into the New House. Some of the New House juniors who spotted them hurled rude epithets, for the fellows of the rival Houses seldom met without chipping, and sometimes fisticuffs. But Tom Merry waved his hand in sign of peace.

"We've come to see Figgins on important business," he said. "It's pax!"

And the School House fellows made their way to the Fourth-Form passage, and knocked at the door of Figgins's study.

"Come in!" sang out Figgins of the Fourth.

They marched in.

Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn, the famous Co. of the New House, were at tea. The table was frugally spread. Apparently funds were not in a flourishing condition with Figgins.

There were several slices of bread-and-butter, and some empty eggshells, and some decidedly weak-looking tea in the tea-cups. The visitors looked at the table, and their hearts sank.

"Hallo! Come right in!" said Figgins. "What's on?"

"Nothing!" groaned Blake. "We came over to look for a feed to save us from sudden death—"

"Gussy's vanished with the study funds, and left us to perish," explained Digby.

Figgins grinned.

"Oh, crumbs! I'm sorry! We're in the same state. But sit down and pile in; you're welcome to share what there is. There are three slices of bread-and-butter, and two lumps of sugar—and a nut! Pile in, and don't spare the tommy!"

The School House fellows looked at Figgins & Co., and at those slim supplies, and perhaps they felt that three slices of bread-and-butter, two lumps of sugar, and a nut would not go far among six hungry fellows; so they shook their heads.

"Thanks, Figgy!" said Tom Merry, with emotion. "You're generous to a fault; but we won't rob you like that! Good-bye!"

And the visitors departed, leaving Figgins & Co. grinning. They returned to the School House with only one consolation—the prospect of waiting for Arthur Augustus D'Arcy to come in, and then ragging him in the most expert and thorough-going manner.

CHAPTER 2.

A Startling Discovery!

CALLING-OVER was proceeding when Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth Form put in an appearance at last.

When the fellows went into hall for the roll-call, he was not to be seen; and the chums of the School House began to think that he was going to miss calling-over.

But just as they took their places in the hall, and Mr. Railton started on the list of names, the swell of St. Jim's came hurriedly in.

He was flushed and breathless, and had evidently been running, and he panted a little as he took his place among the

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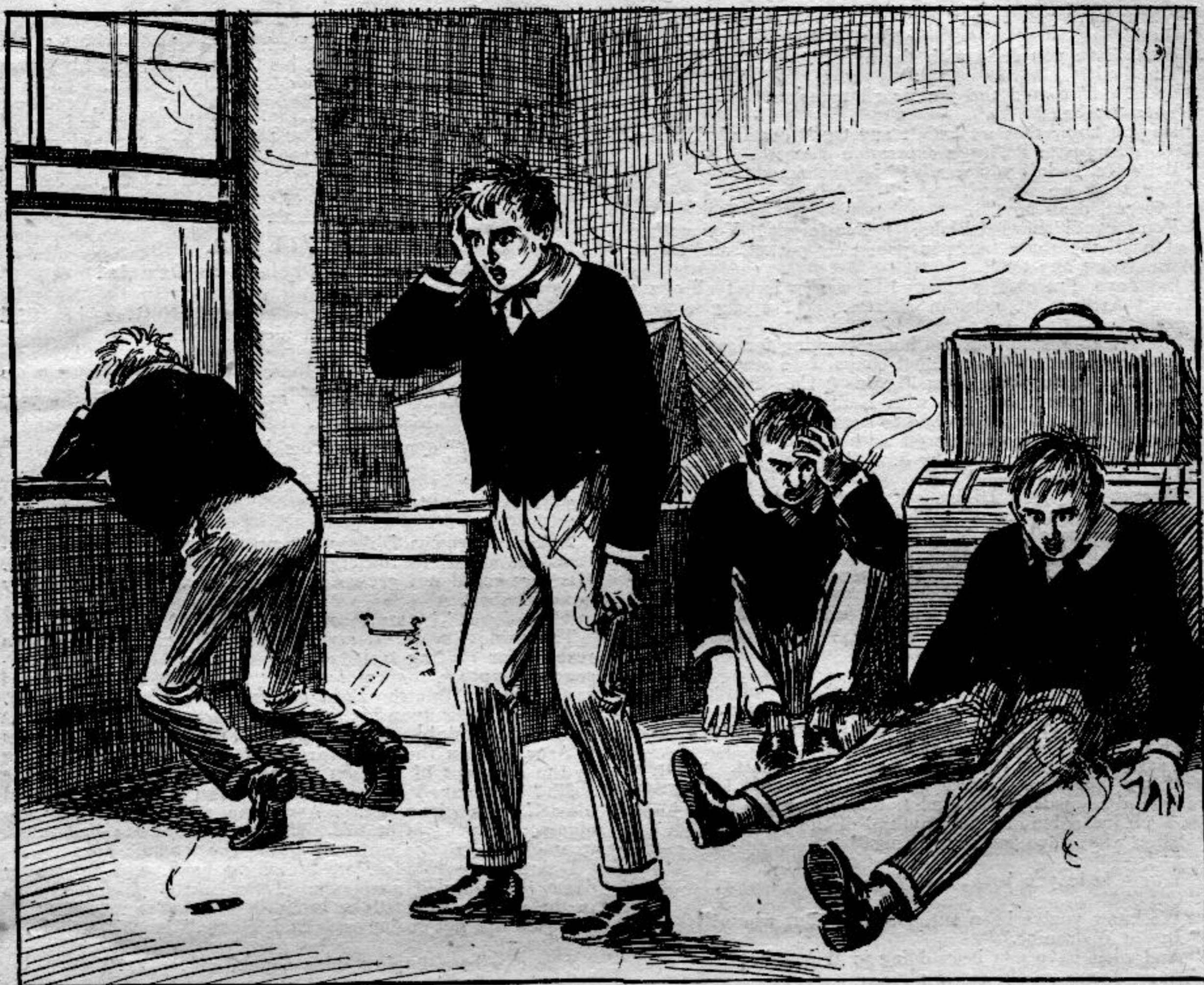
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Crooke rose slowly and cautiously to his feet, heaving and moaning. "I—I'm going," he murmured. "I'll butcher you presently, Levison. I—I think that cigarmust have been poisoned!" (See Chapter 10.)

Fourth; and he gasped out "Adsum!" when the Housemaster called his name.

His friends regarded him with grim looks.

Arthur Augustus did not appear to notice them. His thoughts were evidently elsewhere. He did not even nod in reply to Hammond, the Cockney schoolboy, who greeted him with a cheery grin. He did not notice Jack Blake's glare, or Harry Hammond's nod. He did not seem to notice anything. When the names were all called, and the assembly dispersed, D'Arcy walked out of hall by himself.

"My 'at!" said Hammond in great surprise.

Blake & Co. were more than surprised. They were exasperated. It was bad enough for Arthur Augustus to walk off with the study funds, and leave them to forage up and down the School House for tea. But to forget all about the matter, as if it were of no importance—not even to ask them how they had managed, that was adding insult to injury. The chums of the School House exchanged deadly looks as they started on the track of the swell of St. Jim's. To judge by their facial expressions, there was a high old time in store for Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"The image!" said Blake in measured tones. "Not so much as a question whether we've found any tea!"

"Must be dotty," said Herries. "Where is he gone?"

"Gone up to the study, I think. We're going to slaughter Gussy, you chaps. Will you come and lend a hand?"

"Certainly!" said the Terrible Three together.

They were as much exasperated as Blake & Co.

The six juniors proceeded to Study No. 6, where they found Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

He was sitting in the armchair, looking into the fire.

Apparently, he was deeply interested in studying the glowing embers, for he did not move or look up as the juniors crowded in. They gazed at him in wonder. He continued to gaze into the fire, a slight wrinkle of thoughtfulness in

his noble brow, and his thoughts evidently far away. Jack Blake came behind his chair, and bent down over him, still without being observed. But Arthur Augustus had to observe him when he gave a sudden yell in his ear:

"Hallo!"

"Bai Jove!"

The startled junior jumped—so suddenly that the top of his head came into violent contact with Blake's chin. He gave a yell, and Blake staggered back with a wild roar, clasping both hands to his chin in anguish.

"Ow, ow, ow, ow! Yow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, my chin! Oh, crumbs! Yaroooh!"

Arthur Augustus spun round, and gazed at Blake in surprise and anger. He rubbed the top of his head with one hand, and with the other jammed his famous monocle into his eye.

"You uttah ass, Blake! You have hurt my nappah!"

"Ow! You chump! You've dislocated my chin!" groaned Blake.

"What did you shove your silly chin on my nappah for, you fwightful ass?" demanded Arthur Augustus. "Why did you yell in my eah like a Wed Indian? You have thwown me into quite a fluttah."

"I'd throw you into the quad, for two pins!" groaned Blake.

"I should uttably wefuse to be thwown into the quad. I twust you fellows will wun away and let me be quiet. I want to be alone."

"My hat!"

"You—you—you unspeakable fathead!" said Blake, still rubbing his chin. "You apology for a burbling jabberwock! You tailor's dummy! You howling jossah!"

"I wefuse to be chawactewised as a howlin' jossah. I considah—"

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NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

"HARD PRESSED!"

Another Splendid, Long, Complete School Tale of
Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's. Order Early.

"Where have you been?"
 "Out!"
 "What have you done with the fiver?"
 "The fivah? I have spent it."
 "Spent it!" roared the juniors all together.
 "Yaas, wathah!"
 "Do you know that we hadn't any tin?" demanded Blake. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's expression changed.
 "Bai Jove, hadn't you weally?" he exclaimed.
 "You knew we were all stony," said Digby.
 "I forgot, deah boy."
 "You forgot!" howled Blake. "You forgot! You walked off with all the study funds in your silly pocket, and forgot that we hadn't any tea."
 "Bai Jove, I'm awf'ly sowwy! I weally forgot all about it," said Arthur Augustus in distress. "I apologise most sincerely."
 "We had to scout about the house begging for grub," said Herries, incensed. "These Shell chaps were stony too, and we couldn't get anything from Figgins & Co. Two of us got tea with Kangaroo, and one with Reilly, and the rest with Hammond. That's what we had to do, and we all got it jolly late. And you werë walking off with a fiver all the time—and spending it on yourself—by Jove!"
 "Weally, Hewwies—"
 "Disgusting!" said Digby. "I shouldn't really have thought it of you, Gussy. Why, even Fatty Wynn doesn't forget his chums when he's in funds!"
 "Weally, Digby—"
 "Rotten!" said Blake. "You never know a fellow till you've found him out, I suppose?"
 "We're surprised at you, Gussy!" said Tom Merry, with a solemn shake of the head.
 "Shocked!" said Monty Lowther.
 "Disgusted!" said Manners.
 Arthur Augustus looked from one to another of the juniors as they made those remarks in turn, his noble face growing more and more crimson, till at last it looked like a well-boiled beetroot. He seemed at a loss for words.
 "I say, weally, you chaps," he stammered at last. "Surely you don't think that I have been havin' a feed by myself, and leavin' my pals in the lurch? Surely you are quite awah that I am incapable of doin' anythin' of the sort?"
 "Then what have you been doing?"
 "I—I—"
 "Where have you been?"
 "Out!"
 "We know you've been out, fathead. But where?"
 "In—in Wylcombe."
 "And what have you been doing in Rylcombe?"
 Arthur Augustus did not reply.
 "What have you spent the fiver on?"
 No answer.
 "Have you had a feed?"
 "Feed! No."
 "Haven't you had tea?" demanded Tom Merry.
 "Tea! No."
 "Then you're hungry, too—what?"
 "Hungwy! No."
 "Oh, he's potty!" said Herries. "Must be quite potty. Now I come to think of it, I think I've seen it coming on for some time."
 "Weally, Hewwies, you ass—"
 "Look here," said Blake. "We're not going to have you keeping silly secrets from your kind uncles. Where have you been, and what silly game have you been up to?"
 No reply.
 "Are you going to explain?" roared Blake.
 "Imposs."
 "Do you mean that it's a secret?"
 "Yaas."
 "You're keeping secrets from the study?" demanded Blake and Herries and Digby in concert.
 "And from your kind uncles in the Shell!" said Monty Lowther, with a reproachful shake of the head.
 "I am sowwy," said Arthur Augustus firmly. "But I cannot satisfy your cwiosity upon that point. As a mattah of fact, I do not approve of cwiosity. I wegard it as bad form. I can only wecommend you not to be inquisitive."
 The juniors looked at the swell of the Fourth as if they would eat him.
 "It's no good arguing with the silly ass," said Blake. "This is a case where bumping is the only possible argument. Bump him!"
 "Hands off, you duffahs! Weally—yawwooooh!"
 Six pairs of hands closed upon Arthur Augustus D'Arcy in various parts of his person, and he descended upon the study carpet with a loud concussion.
 Bump!
 "Ow! You wottahs! My twousahs! Ow!"
 Bump, bump!
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"Yawwooooh!"
 Arthur Augustus struggled wildly in the grasp of his persecutors. His collar burst, his tie came off, and his jacket curled round his ears. But suddenly the juniors let go as if the swell of St. Jim's had become, all at once, red-hot. Arthur Augustus sprawled gasping on the floor, and round him were scattered several articles that had dropped out of his pockets in the struggle. The juniors gazed at them blankly. One word broke from all of them at once, in various tones of surprise and consternation.

CHAPTER 3.

Arthur Augustus Declines to Explain!

"CIGARS!"
 Cigars they were—dozens of them—beautiful Havana cigars, with nice gold labels.
 Cigars!
 The chums of the School House could not have been more astounded if a snake had curled out of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's pocket.
 "Cigars!" stuttered Blake.
 "Havanas!" ejaculated Tom Merry.
 "Smokes!"
 "My hat!"
 "Great Scott!"
 "Oh, Gussy!"
 Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sat up, dishevelled and breathless. He stared at the cigars, and he stared at his chums. His face could not grow any redder, or he would probably have blushed.
 "Bai Jove!" he murmured.
 The juniors were all serious now. D'Arcy's keeping his reasons for visiting Rylcombe a secret they had hitherto regarded simply as some more of his "rot," as Blake would have expressed it. But the sight of the cigars changed all that. It let in a light upon his mysterious excursion, and upon his refusal to explain. Was it possible that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was on the downward path—that he was following in the footsteps of Levison of the Fourth, and Cutts of the Fifth? It looked like it. Why, even Levison contented himself with cigarettes. And here were cigars—Havana cigars of expensive brands. If Arthur Augustus had taken to smoking, he was certainly going the "whole hog."
 D'Arcy rose to his feet, breathing hard, and smoothing down his rumpled garments. There was a painful silence in the study. Jack Blake broke it.
 "This has got to be explained, Gussy," he said grimly.
 "Sowwy—"
 "You've been buying these cigars, of course?"
 "Natuwally!"
 "Got any more about you?"
 "I am sowwy that I must decline to answah that question, Blake."
 "Oh, don't trouble!" said Blake grimly. "We'll soon see. Collar the silly mug, and turn out his pockets, you chaps!"
 "Blake! You wottahs! Hands off, immediately! I wefuse to have my pockets turned out! I wegard this as wank impertinence! I considah— Oh, you feahful wottahs!"
 The juniors did not heed his expostulations. The Terrible Three seized him, and held him powerless, while Blake and Herries and Digby coolly turned out all his pockets, turning out the lining, to make sure that they were emptied.
 And they stared in astonishment at the articles that were brought to light. There were more cigars—quite a dozen of them, and most of them shilling ones. There were several packets of cigarettes. There were boxes of matches. There was a large and handsome meerschaum pipe. There were several packets of tobacco of various brands. Arthur Augustus could not have laid in a more extensive supply of smoking materials if it had been his fixed intention of committing suicide by smoking himself to death.
 The articles were piled on the table, and they made quite a heap. Then Arthur Augustus was released. He stood frowning with wrath.
 "Now," said Blake, and he was very serious now—"now, Gussy, we want to know what this means."
 "I wefuse to say a word!"
 "You've been buying all this stuff in Rylcombe?"
 "Yaas."
 "What for?"
 "That's my biznay!"
 "You've taken to smoking?"
 "Certainly not! I should wegard it as wotten bad form for a fellow of my age to smoke. A gentleman does not smoke till he has turned twenty-one!"
 "Do you mean to say that you have bought all this stuff without intending to smoke any of it?" demanded Tom Merry.

"I don't mean to say anythin'."

The juniors looked at Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and they looked at one another. Arthur Augustus was fastidiously truthful. It seemed impossible that he could be telling an untruth. But it seemed more impossible that he could have spent several pounds upon smoking materials without intending to smoke. It was scarcely possible to believe that, unless they believed at the same time that Arthur Augustus was insane. And he was not insane. He was very angry and excited, but he was in his senses.

"Now, look here, Gussy," said Blake, after a painful pause, "we're all your chums, and we feel bound to look after you, especially as you were born a silly ass, and can't help it! We're not going to let you go to the dogs. This kind of thing is all very well for Levison and Mellish, but it's not good enough for Study No. 6. If you didn't buy these things to smoke, what did you buy them for?"

"I am sowwy I cannot explain."

"You mean you won't?" said Blake sharply.

"Yaas. You can put it like that if you like."

"Then something's got to be done. Do you know you'd get into a fearful row if a prefect discovered you with all that rubbish?"

"Yaas; I wegard that as vevy pwob."

There was a tap at the door, and Levison of the Fourth looked in. Levison had no business in Study No. 6; he was not on visiting terms there. He had heard excited voices, and he was curious to know what was going on, that was all.

"Hallo, you chaps!" he said. "Can you lend me a German dic? Why—what—oh, my hat!"

The cad of the Fourth broke off in blank astonishment, as he caught sight of the pile of cigars, cigarettes, and tobacco on the table.

"Clear out!" said Blake angrily.

Levison gasped.

"Oh, crumbs! Is it a smoking-bee? You've got a jolly lot of stuff, I must say. I don't mind having a smoke with you. But, I say, you have kept it dark all this time, I must say. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Clear off!" roared Blake.

He made an angry movement towards Levison, and that youth promptly backed out of the study and slammed the door. The juniors heard him laughing as he went down the passage.

It was a toothsome item of news for Levison. It had always been Levison's private opinion that Tom Merry & Co. were humbugs; and that, under the careful appearances they kept up, they were no better than he. Now he had proof of it, and he enjoyed it.

"It'll be all over the House in two minutes now," said Blake helplessly.

"Better get that stuff out of sight before any other prying rotter sees it," said Tom Merry uneasily.

"Shove it in the fire!" said Herries.

"Hold on! They'll smell it all over the House!" exclaimed Tom. "Lock it up somewhere, till you get a chance of taking it out and chucking it into the river."

"Bai Jove! You fellows can see now the harm you've done by your beastly cuwiosity. We shall nevah heah the end of this now."

"All your fault, you silly chump!" said Blake angrily.

"What did you bring it into the school for?"

"I decline to weply."

"It means a flogging for the whole study if it's found here!" growled Blake. "I suppose I'd better lock it up."

He piled the offensive articles into his desk, and locked it. It was a relief to all the juniors to get it out of sight.

"And now, Gussy, we want to know what this means," said Blake.

"I am sowwy I cannot satisfy your cuwiosity."

"And you say you haven't taken up smoking?"

"Yaas, wathah! If you doubt my word, Blake—"

"But you must have been to the tobacconist's to get that stuff?"

"I should hardly go to the gwocer's for it."

"The tobacconist's is out of bounds."

"I am awah of that."

"Then you've broken bounds, you ass!"

"I wefuse to be called an ass."

Blake clenched his hands. He was greatly inclined to "wade in," and give his aristocratic chum the licking of his life, there and then. But he restrained himself. He was very angry indeed, but he realised that that was not really an effective method of dealing with Arthur Augustus.

"If you don't explain," said Blake at last, "we can only think one thing—that is, you've taken to rotten, blackguardly ways, like Levison and Cutts!"

"If you hold such an opinion of me, Blake, I shall wefuse to wegard you as a fwiehd."

"I don't specially want to be regarded as a friend by a

fellow of Cutts's stamp, and that's what you seem to be now," said Blake unpleasantly.

"I have assuahed you—"

"Tell us what you bought the stuff for."

"I cannot."

"Then you know what we think."

Arthur Augustus stood very erect.

"Am I to undahstand that you doubt my word, Blake?"

"Yes!" rapped out Blake savagely.

"Then I shall dwop your acquaintance."

"Drop it, and be hanged!"

"That is suffish!" said Arthur Augustus, with a great deal of dignity. And he turned upon his heel, and walked out of the study.

"Come back, you silly idiot!" growled Blake.

Arthur Augustus slammed the door.

CHAPTER 4.

Face to Face.

It was a mystery!

Tom Merry & Co. puzzled over it a good deal that evening, but without reaching any satisfactory solution.

What was the matter with Arthur Augustus D'Arcy?

Cutts of the Fifth prided himself upon being what he called a "wild beggar," and a "dog," and a "blade." But Arthur Augustus was not that kind of fellow. Surely it was impossible that Arthur Augustus was taking to bad paths?

Yet how could the juniors possibly suppose that he had spent pounds upon tobacco, cigars, and cigarettes, unless he intended to smoke them? And if he did intend that, he had spoken untruthfully in denying it. It was not like Arthur Augustus—but when a fellow, hitherto straight, "lets go" at one point, he is only too likely to "let go" at others. Smoking was strictly forbidden at St. Jim's—and moreover it was regarded as bad form by the boys themselves. If Arthur Augustus had really taken to it, and had denied it—he was clearly in a bad way. And it required great faith in him to believe his denial.

But Arthur Augustus vouchsafed no word of explanation. He declined to speak to Blake again at all that evening. Blake had ruthlessly doubted his word—and Arthur Augustus could not possibly forgive that. From Blake's point of view, the only possible alternative to doubting his word was regarding him as an irresponsible lunatic; and Arthur Augustus would not have liked that either. What did his silence mean? The juniors simply could not make it out.

Meanwhile, the matter was not confined to the chums of the School House. That unlucky glimpse Levison of the Fourth had obtained of the smoking supplies was the beginning. Levison talked far and wide of what he had seen. He was only too glad of an opportunity of showing up the giddy models, as he called them. All the juniors in the School House soon knew all about the smokes, and Study No. 6 were chipped about it till their tempers grew very sore and irritable.

Most of the fellows declined to credit that Arthur Augustus had purchased that enormous supply entirely for himself. They declared that Study No. 6 and the Terrible Three were going to have a "smoking-bee" all together, only Levison had happened to spot them.

Arthur Augustus, when questioned on the subject, declined to say a word, excepting that all questions regarding his personal affairs amounted to dashed impertinence.

There was a great deal of "dashed impertinence" rife in the School House that evening.

Blake & Co. soon lost their tempers on the subject. They could not deny that the smokes were there. And they felt uneasily that the talk on the subject would soon reach the ears of the seniors. As soon as a prefect came to hear of it, there would be an inquiry; perhaps a search in the study. They knew how their old enemy, Knox the prefect, would jump at such an opportunity, for instance; and even old Kildare would regard it as his duty to look into the matter if he heard of it. But there was no chance of getting rid of the obnoxious stuff that night.

A junior would be caned if he were found with a single cigarette in his possession. The chums simply shuddered to think what would happen if they were found to have in their study enough smoking supplies to stock a small shop.

Naturally they felt very sore towards Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. Relations were strained in Study No. 6 that evening.

But D'Arcy did not seem to mind. His thoughts were elsewhere.

When the Fourth-Formers went up to bed, he did not say good-night to Blake. And Digby and Herries did not say good-night to D'Arcy. They were too annoyed. There was a ripple of laughter and joking in the dormitory on the subject of the smokes. Pointed allusions were made to fellows

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on the downward path, and the road to ruin. Lumley-Lumley of the Fourth told a solemn story of a fellow who had started by smoking a cigarette, and finished up as a politician—a terrible example of a hopeless fall—amid yells of laughter.

Kildare looked rather curiously at the juniors when he came to see lights out in the Fourth-Form dormitory.

"You seem very jolly here to-night," he remarked, rather suspiciously.

"It's Gussy!" explained Kerruish. "He's making us die of laughing. He's such a funny merchant!"

"Weally, Kewwuish—"

"Sure, and it's on a cinematograph he ought to be!" chuckled Reilly.

"Weilly, you ass—"

"Well, turn in," said Kildare good-humouredly. "No larks here to-night, or I shall be down on you."

The captain of St. Jim's naturally suspected that some jape was on, to account for the merriment of the Fourth-Formers. The juniors stayed awake later than usual that night, chatting joyfully on the subject of smokes, and drinks, and bets, and sweepstakes, and other things Study No. 6 might naturally be supposed to be interested in, in the light of Levison's discovery.

When the rising-bell clanged out in the morning, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was sitting up in bed when Jack Blake awoke. Blake looked at him curiously. D'Arcy had his blankets tucked round him for warmth, for it was a cold winter's morning. His knees were hunched up under the coverlet, and he had a pocket-book on his knees, and was scribbling with a stump of pencil.

"That a betting-book, D'Arcy?" called out Levison.

D'Arcy started, and turned red.

"Certainly not, you uttah wottah!" he exclaimed indignantly.

"What is it, then?"

"Mind your own biznai!"

And Arthur Augustus turned out of bed, and promptly concealed the pocket-book from sight in an inside pocket of his jacket.

But when his chums spotted him a little later, walking in the quadrangle before breakfast, the book and the pencil were in his hands again. He was evidently deeply engaged in some meditation. Blake snorted and passed on, but Digby and Herries stopped to speak to him. D'Arcy came out of his reverie with a start.

"Bai Jove! You startled me, you fellows. I say, Hewwies, can you tell me a whyme for dyin'?"

"For what?" howled Herries.

"Dyin', deah boy.

"Who's dying?"

"Nobody that I know—I want a whyme!"

"Lying!" suggested Digby.

"Wats! That's no good!"

"Frying!" said Herries.

Arthur Augustus sniffed and walked away. Those prosaic rhymes evidently did not meet with his approval. Herries and Digby exchanged glances.

"He's making up poetry!" said Dig helplessly.

"A contribution for the 'Weekly,' perhaps," said Herries.

"Yes; or else he's going off his rocker."

There was a German lesson in class that morning, and Arthur Augustus was very absent-minded; so much so, that Herr Schneider was down upon him several times. Herr Schneider was not an amiable gentleman. Arthur Augustus was soon richer by a hundred lines from Goethe, but he did not seem to mind. And at the end of the lesson, Herr Schneider quite lost his temper. The juniors had to write down the conjugation of "gehen," to go. When Herr Schneider looked at D'Arcy's paper, he simply gasped.

"Lieben!" he read out. "Ich liebe, du liebst, er liebt—ich liebe dich—ich liebe dich—ich liebe dich— D'Arcy, you stupid poy, vat is tat?"

All eyes were turned upon D'Arcy. He had written down the verb "to love" instead of the verb "to go"—and instead of conjugating it in order, he had covered his paper with such sentences as "ich liebe dich"—"I love thee." No wonder Herr Schneider was astonished.

Arthur Augustus's face grew crimson. He did not appear to realise what he had done until the German-master pointed it out to him.

"Vat does tat mean, D'Arcy?"

"I—I—I—" stammered Arthur Augustus.

"It is a choke, hein?" demanded Herr Schneider.

"Nunno, sir!"

"Den vy have you written tat nonsense after?"

Arthur Augustus was silent, but his face was burning.

"Simply off his rocker!" murmured the astonished Blake.

"You do not answer, D'Arcy! I tink tat it is a sheeky choke. You vill hold out te hand mit you."

Whack, whack!

"Yow-ow!"

And Arthur Augustus's face was more serious than ever for the remainder of morning lessons.

CHAPTER 5.

The Way Out!

TOM MERRY came hurriedly out of the School House soon after dinner that day, looking for Blake. Blake and Herries and Digby were punting a footer about to keep themselves warm, when Tom ran up.

"Blake! Chuck that! There's going to be trouble!" Blake grunted.

"What's the matter now? Gussy again?"

"It's those blessed smokes. Knox has got hold of the yarn. I don't know whether Levison's told him—I shouldn't wonder—anyway, he knows. Reilly heard him say to Kildare that he wanted him to go with him to Study No. 6 to make an investigation there. You know what that means?"

Jack Blake drew a long face.

"Have they gone?"

"No; Kildare's on the footer ground—he wouldn't come in. He told Knox he'd see to it when he came in, Reilly says."

"Good egg!" said Blake, with a deep breath of relief.

"There's time! We must get rid of the blessed things somehow. Where's Gussy?"

"Give it up! He's gone off somewhere!"

The chums of the School House held a hurried consultation. That Knox had heard of the smokes was certain. He wished to take Kildare, the head prefect of the School House, with him, to make the investigation, so that there should be no possible doubt on the subject. Knox undoubtedly thought that he had caught Study No. 6 this time. And Blake & Co. could not help thinking so, too.

"What on earth's going to be done?" exclaimed Digby.

"If we take the rubbish away now, we may be stopped, with the blessed things in our pockets!"

"Knox will be keeping his eyes open, too," said Herries.

"If he sees us going out of gates, he'll be down on us like lightning."

"We're all in it," said Monty Lowther. "It will come out—if Knox doesn't know it already—that we were in your study when Levison spotted the smokes there. We shall all be called up before the Head. Not much good Gussy telling him that he bought all that rubbish without intending to smoke."

"No fear."

"No good getting rid of it, either," said Manners quietly.

"Kildare will ask us whether it was there, and I suppose we can't lie about it."

Blake groaned.

"Oh, that ass Gussy! The silly chump! Why can't he go off his silly rocker without getting us all into trouble with it? It will look rotten, too, if we say it was all Gussy's doing—as if we were trying to sneak out of it ourselves."

Tom Merry ran his fingers through his curly hair, as an aid to thought. He looked up at the leafless elms, and round at the gym, and the two Houses, as if seeking inspiration. But there was no inspiration to be had.

Figgins & Co. came sauntering towards them, arm-in-arm, and Tom turned to them desperately.

"Give us some advice, Kerr, old man. You're a blessed Scotchman—you ought to be able to think a way out!"

Kerr grinned.

"Quite at your service," he said. "What's the trouble?"

The juniors hurriedly explained, all of them speaking at once. Figgins and Kerr and Wynn listened in amazement.

"Well, that beats the band!" said Figgins, with a deep breath. "Fancy old Gussy taking to the giddy road to ruin in his old age!"

"The utter idiot!" said Fatty Wynn, in unspeakable disgust. "Pounds' worth of smokes! Think of the grub he could have got for the money! Oh, the awful ass!"

"But we want to know what to do," said Blake. "Give us a tip, Kerr—you're splendid at thinking things out."

"Yes; go it, Kerr!" said Figgins encouragingly.

Figgins admitted freely that Kerr had most of the brains of the Co.

"All serene!" said Kerr. "I think there's a way out."

ANSWERS

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"THE MAGNET" LIBRARY,
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Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR,"
Every Friday.

"Good egg!" chorused the School House juniors, in great relief.

"What's the way? Quick!" said Blake. "The Assyrians may come down like a wolf on the fold any minute now!"

"It's Herr Schneider's birthday to-day," said Kerr.

The juniors stared at him.

"You crass ass——"

"You howling duffer——"

"Blow Herr Schneider——"

"Hang his birthday——"

"You frabjous ass——"

Kerr held up his hand for silence.

"Let Kerr go on," said Figgins admonishingly. "Kerr's the chap to think things out. I'll bet you Kerr knows what to do."

"Give us a chance!" said Kerr. "Look here, it's old Schneider's birthday. What price a lot of respectful and admiring juniors going to him in a body and making him a handsome birthday present?"

"You—you—you fearful idiot!" shrieked Blake. "What's the good of talking about Schneider and birthday presents, when the prefects may be down on us any minute?"

"Talk about Nero fiddling while Rome was burning!" howled Herries. "Why, you silly ass——"

"Schneider is a terrific smoker," resumed Kerr, with unmoved calmness. "He's always got a meerschaum going in his study, and he's been seen smoking cigars in the library, and even in the Form-room. He makes the whole place reek with tobacco."

"What on earth——"

"Oh, he's dotty!"

"So what could be more natural," said Kerr, "than for a party of juniors who wanted to make him a birthday present to buy him a lot of smokes—cigars and things——"

"Oh!"

"You say there's a meerschaum pipe, tobacco, cigars, and cigarettes. Well, that would make a handsome birthday present for any smoky old German," said Kerr. "The only thing is—to make haste and present it to him before the prefects get hold of it. It would be a bit too late then to say it was for Schneider."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Good old Scotty!"

Jack Blake fairly hugged Kerr.

"I'll never call the New House a lunatic asylum again!" he exclaimed. "Come on, you chaps; there's old Schneider in his study now, smoking like a giddy furnace! You New House chaps come, too—we'll make the present from the lot of us—it will look better."

"That is, if Gussy won't object to his property being given away," added Kerr.

Blake snorted.

"Let him object! Come on!"

The juniors hurried into the School House. Blake unlocked his desk, and the cargo of smokes was hurriedly hauled out. The extent of the supply made Figgins & Co. open their eyes wide.

"Gussy must have intended to have a big burst with this lot!" said Figgins.

"He says he never intended to smoke any of it."

"Then he won't mind the stuff being given away!" grinned Figgins.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was no time to be lost. Manners, glancing from the study window, announced that Kildare was coming towards the House with Knox, of the Sixth.

The smokes and the pipe were hastily gathered up, and shoved into a bag, and Tom Merry & Co. tore downstairs, and ran for Herr Schneider's study. Tom knocked at the door, and opened it without waiting to be bidden, and the party of juniors poured in.

Tom Merry closed the door behind them quickly. For the moment they were safe—Kildare and Knox would not think of looking for them in the German-master's study.

CHAPTER 6.

Herr Schneider is Pleased—And Knox Isn't.

HERR SCHNEIDER jumped up in astonishment at that sudden invasion of his study. He had been smoking his pipe peacefully, and reading a German paper with calm enjoyment. But the sudden crowding into his study of nine flushed and excited juniors startled him out of his tranquillity. He jumped up, and blinked at the party over his big spectacles in surprise and annoyance.

"Vat is all dis?" he exclaimed. "Vat do you mean, tat you rush into my study like vild Indians mit yourselves? I tink——"

"Excuse us, sir——"

"I tink tat I do not like such chokes!" said Herr Schneider. "I tink tat I canes you all round, pefore! Merry, hold out te——"

"If you please, sir——"

"We've come to——"

"It's your birthday, sir——"

"We've brought you a little present, sir——"

"Many happy returns of the day, sir——"

The juniors all spoke at once. It was necessary to get the explanation out before the German-master commenced operations with the cane. Herr Schneider looked astonished, but he laid down the cane, and his frown vanished. He had never supposed that he was sufficiently popular among the juniors for a party of them to distinguish him in this way. He could not help feeling gratified.

"Indeed! Tat alters the case!" he said benignantly. "I have misunderstood you. So you tink of te old Cherman-master's birthday—hein?"

"Why, of course, sir!" said Monty Lowther.

"We know how much we owe you, sir," said Blake. "I'm afraid we sometimes give you trouble in class, sir; but we don't mean to."

"Oh, no, sir!"

"You—you see, sir," said Tom Merry, "as soon as Kerr mentioned that it was your birthday, we—we—we decided——"

"We've all come together, sir," said Manners. "We wanted you to understand that we're all together in this."

"Certainly, sir!"

"We've got a little present, which we hope you will accept, sir," said Jack Blake. "Knowing how fond you are of smoking, sir, we thought that—that we couldn't do better than bring you these things——"

He turned out the contents of the bag upon the table. Herr Schneider's round, blue eyes opened wider and rounder as he saw the birthday present. He had wondered what form the present would take, but he had certainly not expected it to take that form. Yet he could not help being pleased. He was a hardened old smoker, but his salary as a German-master did not allow him to indulge freely in the luxury of expensive Havana cigars. The sight of nearly twenty Larranagas, Coronas, and Bocks brought a grin of pleasure to his plump face. And he smiled beatifically at the sight of the meerschaum pipe. It was a very handsome pipe.

"My tear poys——" said Herr Schneider, much moved.

"We hope you will accept the things, sir——"

"With our kindest regards, Herr Schneider——"

"And best wishes for a happy birthday, sir——"

"And many of 'em, sir!"

Herr Schneider looked at the precious gifts, and turned them over. Some of the packets of cigarettes were expensive, some cheap. Some of the tobacco was good, some was decidedly bad. The collection had evidently been purchased without much judgment. But, after all, junior schoolboys could not be expected to have much judgment in such matters. The intention was good, and some of the smokes were decidedly good. And the meerschaum was a beauty. Herr Schneider's face grew quite angelic.

"My tear—tear poys," he said, "I gannot say how gratify I am! Dere is nozzings tat I shall like petter as tat!"

"So glad, sir."

"We thought you'd be pleased, sir."

"Of course, we don't know much about these things, sir; but we hope you'll like some of them, sir."

"But I fear tat day must have cost a great deal of money, mein poys."

"Oh, that's nothing, sir."

"D'Arcy had a fiver, sir, and he was quite willing to spend the lot."

Herr Schneider looked a little grave.

"But you must have proken pounds to get these tings," he said. "I am afraid tat tat was not right, mein poys."

"Ahem!"

"H'm!"

"You—you see, sir——"

"But tat can be forgiven, since it is tat you vish to do honour to your Cherman-master," said Herr Schneider. "If tere is any question apout it, I vill explain to your House-master." He put a Corona into his mouth, bit off the end, and lighted it, and blew out smoke with great enjoyment. "Oh, peautiful—peautiful! Mein tear poys, I tank you from te pottom of my heart!"

"It's a great pleasure to us, sir," said Tom Merry. "You can't imagine, sir, how much you've pleased us by accepting this little present."

Which was very true indeed.

And the juniors retired from the study, leaving Herr Schneider in a state of beatific pleasure, and inclined to modify the opinion he had held for a very long time, that all boys ought to be drowned at birth.

They grinned with glee and relief as they went down the passage in triumph.

"Safe out of that awful scrape!" chuckled Blake. "Now Knox can do his giddy worst! Let him rip!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It isn't often you can get out of a beastly scrape, and give pleasure at the same time to a harmless and necessary German-master—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Here the young rascals are!" exclaimed the voice of Knox of the Sixth from the staircase. "Here they are, Kildare!"

"Hallo! Looking for us?" exclaimed Blake, in great surprise. "Do you want us, Kildare?"

Kildare looked over the banisters with a frowning brow.

"Yes; I've been to your study," he said. "Come up here at once, all of you! Not the New House fellows—the others."

"Right-ho! So-long, Figgy!"

Figgins & Co. strolled away, and the six School House juniors went cheerfully upstairs, and followed Kildare and Knox into Study No. 6. They did not dread the results of a search there now. Six cherubs could not have looked more cheerfully innocent than Tom Merry & Co. just then.

Kildare surveyed them frowningly. Knox's information had been so positive that the head prefect had felt compelled to believe him.

"Now, turn out those smokes!" said Kildare sternly.

"Smokes!"

"Yes. At once!"

"What smokes?" asked Blake. "Have you got any smokes about you, Dig?"

"No fear! Have you, Herries?"

"Certainly not!" said Herries. "Have you, Lowther?"

Monty Lowther shook his head solemnly.

"Sorry, Kildare, I haven't," he said politely. "If you want a smoke, you'd better ask Knox here. He's more likely to have a cigarette in his pocket."

The juniors smiled, and Knox scowled.

"They're lying, of course!" said Knox savagely. "I know that they've got a pile of cigars, cigarettes, and tobacco in the study. From what I hear, it's the talk of the House."

"Is there anything of the kind in this study, Blake?"

"No, Kildare."

"Look in his desk," said Knox.

It was not difficult for the juniors to guess then that the prefect had obtained his information from Levison of the Fourth.

"Open your desk, Blake!"

"Certainly!"

Blake unlocked his desk, and threw up the lid. There were certainly no smokes of any kind there. There were a few boxes of matches; nothing more suspicious.

"I'm glad!" said Kildare, with relief. "I thought it was impossible, Knox. I told you so. These kids are not that sort."

"They've hidden them somewhere," said Knox, biting his lips. "I'm certain of what I say. They had the things here last night. Why, smell at this desk! It niffs of tobacco!"

Kildare's brow grew stern again.

"That is so! Blake, have you had any cigars or tobacco here at all?"

"Yes," said Blake at once.

"What did I say!" exclaimed Knox triumphantly.

"Then you have been smoking?"

"No fear! Spoil our form for footer if we did!" said Blake promptly. "We're not quite such mugs as that!"

"They had the stuff here, but didn't smoke any!" said Knox, with a sneer. "They can tell that to the marines!"

"Has there been any smoking in this study at all, Blake?"

"No; there hasn't!"

"Or in your study, Tom Merry?"

"Certainly not, Kildare!"

"Then what have you done with the tobacco and things, and what did you bring them here for?" demanded Kildare sharply.

Blake's face set obstinately.

"If Knox says we've been smoking, let him prove it!" he said. "I'm not going to say a word! If you want to know what's become of the smokes, you can go and ask Herr Schneider!"

"The German-master!" exclaimed Kildare, in surprise. "What can he possibly know about it?"

"Ask him."

"Don't bandy words with the young rascals!" said Knox. "This is only a trick of some sort. Old Schneider can't know anything about the matter."

"Now, look here, kids—" began Kildare.

"I think we've said enough," said Tom Merry quietly. "We give you our word, all round, that we haven't been smoking, and never had any intention of smoking. If you

want to know what's become of the smokes, go and ask Herr Schneider. That's only fair. If he doesn't satisfy you, you can lick us afterwards."

Kildare hesitated.

"Well, that's only fair!" he said. "Wait here till I come back."

"Right-ho!"

Kildare left Study No. 6. He was only gone five minutes. He was grinning when he looked into the study again.

"It's all right, Knox," he said. "All the stuff's in Schneider's study."

"What!" howled Knox.

"But when you kids want to make a master a birthday present again, I recommend you to get something a little less questionable," said Kildare. "That's all."

"It was that ass Gussy—"

"You see—"

"Oh, it's all right!" said Kildare. "Come on, Knox! The matter's closed. Do you hear?"

"But—I say—"

"I tell you the matter's closed!" said Kildare impatiently.

The head prefect's word was law. Knox gave the juniors a savage look, and followed Kildare from the study. And Tom Merry & Co. laughed.

CHAPTER 7.

An Important Engagement.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY came into Study No. 6, and regarded the juniors with surprise in his glance. Tom Merry & Co. were still laughing, and they could have been heard at the end of the passage.

"Bai Jove! What's the joke, deah boys?" asked D'Arcy.

"Knox is," said Tom Merry cheerfully. "By the way, we've handed Herr Schneider your handsome birthday present."

"What!"

"He was very pleased with the meerschaum pipe, and he likes the cigars no end," said Jack Blake.

"Gweat Scott!"

"And we handed them to him just in time, before they were found here, and we were accused of smoking," added Digby.

Arthur Augustus stared, and then his face broke into a smile.

"Bai Jove! Did Knox get on to them, then?"

"Somebody told him."

"Levison, the wottah, I suppose! Bai Jove! That was a wippin' ideah for gettin' wid of the wubbish! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Did you want to get rid of it?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!—It was dangerous to keep such stuff in the studay, and I hadn't the faintest idea what to do with it." The juniors glared at him in astonishment.

"Oh, this beats the giddy band!" said Blake. "He's wasted a fiver on buying stuff at a tobacconist's, and then his only trouble was to find some means of chucking it away! You'd better spend your next fiver on a strait-jacket, Gussy."

"I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort! And now I wemembah, I am not on speakin' terms with you, Blake. Pway do not address me!"

"Fathead!"

"I wefuse to weply!"

"Chump!"

"I will not uttah a word!"

"Look here, you burbler—"

"I decline even to open my lips!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors, and Arthur Augustus looked surprised. He did not see where the laugh came in.

"I wegard you as cacklin' asses," he said crossly, "and I shall not uttah a word of any sort to you, Blake, until you have made a pwofound apology!"

"Frabjous chump!" said Blake. "That's all the apology you'll get out of me!"

"Then I decline to wegard you any longah as a fwieend!"

"Time to get ready for the match," said Tom Merry, as two o'clock sounded from the clock-tower of St. Jim's. "Come along and change!"

"Bai Jove! I forgot to mention—I sha'n't be able to play this aftahnoon, Tom Mewwy!"

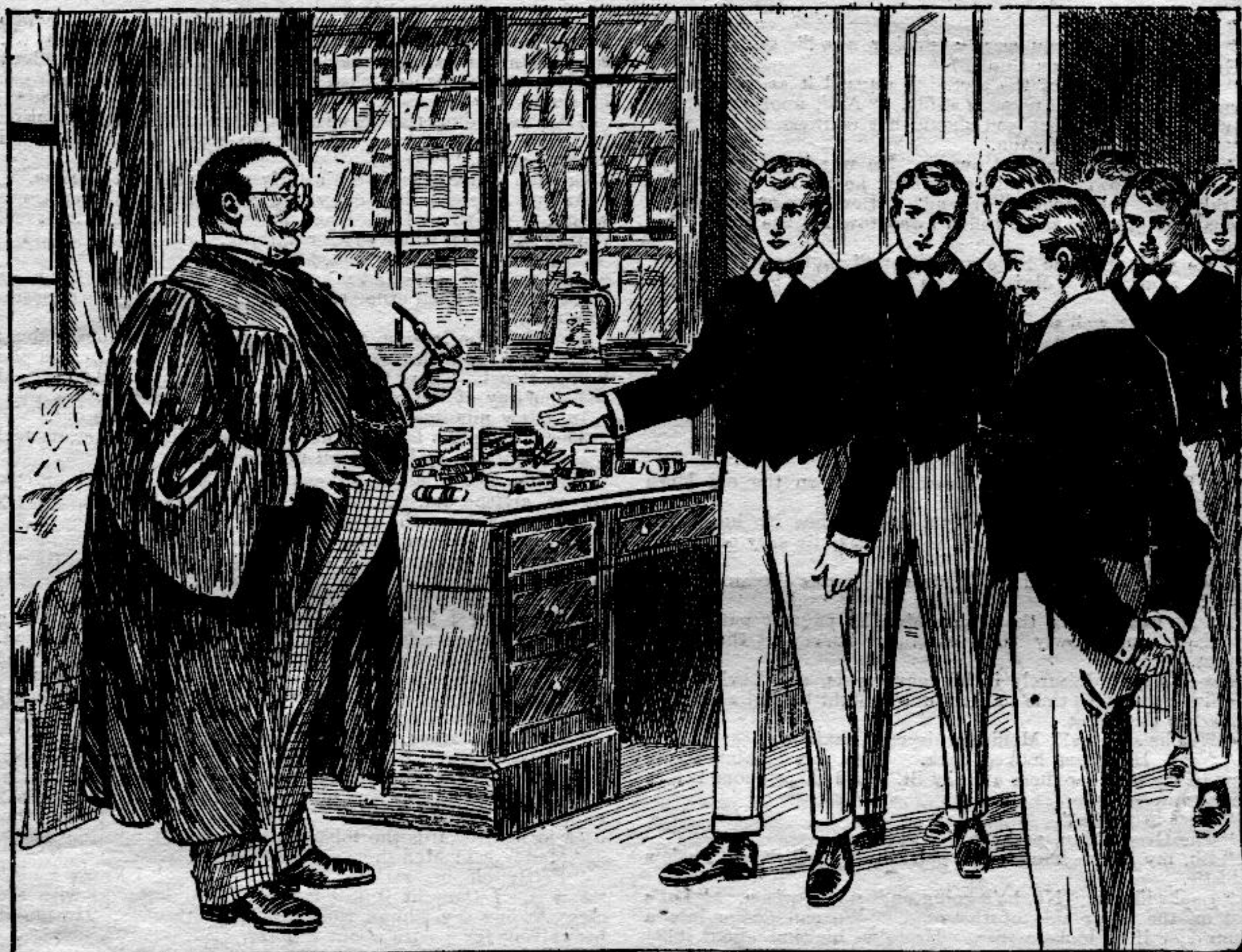
"You want to miss the match?"

"Yaas. Put in my fwieend Hammond; he's a splendid playah!"

"I'm going to put him in, anyway," said Tom Merry. "But if you want to stay out, you can go and eat coke, or buy cigars, or whatever you dashed well like! I'll put in Kerruish, and I've a jolly good mind to keep him there, and leave you out for the whole term!"

"I should wefuse to be left out for the whole term. I have a wathah important engagement to-day—"

"Another mysterious visit to Rylcombe—eh?" asked Blake suspiciously.



"We've got a little birthday present, which we hope you will accept sir," said Jack Blake, turning out the contents of the bag on the table in front of the astonished German-master. (See Chapter 5.)

Arthur Augustus looked at him fixedly, but did not reply.

"Do you hear me, ass?" roared Blake.

"Yaas."

"Well, answer then, you burbling jabberwock!"

"I wefuse to answah. I am not on speakin' terms with you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You'll be on fighting terms with me soon if I have much more of your silly rot!" said Blake, thoroughly exasperated. "I've never been quite so near to wiping up the floor of the study with you!"

"I should wefuse——"

"Oh, go and chop chips!" snorted Blake.

And he strode out of the study, followed by the other fellows. It was time to change for the House match, and a House match was of far more importance than Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and his little mysteries.

Tom Merry lingered behind for a moment to speak to D'Arcy. He was really concerned about the swell of St. Jim's.

"Look here, Gussy," he said, "you can speak to me like an old pal, you know. What is this little game? What are you up to?"

"I'm sowwy I cannot explain, deah boy."

"Are you getting into some trouble?"

"Certainly not. I was nevah so happay in my life!"

"You're not going to buy any more smokes to-day?"

"I am not sure. Pwobably yaas. Fortunately, my patah has played up. I sent him a wiah last night, and I have received a wemittance this mornin'. I was quite out of funds. It would have been doocid awkward!"

"Come on, Tommy!" shouted Lowther.

And Tom Merry nodded to D'Arcy and ran off, feeling very much puzzled and mystified.

The mystery of Arthur Augustus seemed to be growing deeper and deeper. Why he should wire to his father for an extra remittance, spend it in smokes, and then want to have the smokes thrown away, was a puzzle past Tom Merry's powers of solving.

But the juniors soon forgot about Arthur Augustus as soon as they were on the footer-ground. Figgins & Co., of the New House, were in great form, and Tom Merry's team had plenty to do to hold their own against them. Arthur Augustus came down to see the beginning of the match—either from a sympathetic interest, or from a desire to see all his chums safely occupied before he started on his mysterious excursion.

"Not playing to-day?" Levison of the Fourth remarked, joining him at the ropes.

Arthur Augustus gave him a glance of great disfavour. He suspected Levison of having given Knox the information about the smokes in the study.

"No!" he said shortly.

"Hard cheese on the School House," said Levison solemnly. "Not much chance for our side to pull the match off without you!"

Arthur Augustus thawed a little. He was thinking just the same himself, and it was somewhat gratifying to see that Levison agreed with his secret thoughts.

"Yaas, that's so," he assented. "I'm weally sowwy. I'd have played for Tom Mewwy if I could possibly have contrived it; but I have a vevy important engagement for this aftahnoon, so it was quite imposs."

"Cousin Ethel coming?" suggested Levison.

"Oh, no!"

"Going for a little excursion, I suppose?"

"Yaas."

"I'll come with you if you like, D'Arcy. I've got nothing special to do this afternoon," offered Levison.

"Thank you vevy much, but I must go alone."

"Oh, I see! You're going to meet somebody?"

"Bai Jove! What a splendid pass!" said Arthur Augustus. "Bwavo, Kerr! Bai Jove! Figgins will get that goal! Huwway!"

Levison grinned. Arthur Augustus evidently did not intend to reply to his question.

"Got a smoke about you, D'Arcy?" Levison asked, when the cheers for Figgy's goal had died away.

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"Certainly not!"

"Oh, I thought you were a smoker now!" said Levison. "Great fun, don't you think?"

"I think nothin' of the sort. I wegard it as wotten bad form!" said Arthur Augustus stiffly. "And, upon the whole, Levison, I pwefer that you should not address me!"

"Go hon!" said Levison.

Arthur Augustus moved away. He was keeping one eye on the clock-tower. At three o'clock he turned and walked briskly off the football-ground. Levison and Mellish exchanged glances, and strolled away towards the gates after him.

"We shall spot the little game now!" murmured Levison, with a chuckle. "Bet you two to one he's going to the tobacconist's!"

"We'll jolly well see, anyway!" said Mellish.

And as Arthur Augustus sauntered gracefully down the lane, Levison and Mellish strolled on his track, and it never occurred to Arthur Augustus to look round.

CHAPTER 8.

Most Mysterious.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS sauntered down the old High Street of Rylcombe.

In the lane he had not once turned his head, and Levison and Mellish had found their task quite easy of following him unobserved.

But, once in the village, Arthur Augustus became more cautious.

As he was passing the Green Man he paused, put up his eyeglass, and slowly and carefully surveyed the High Street.

He was quite leisurely in his movements, and Levison and Mellish had ample time to draw out of sight behind a waggon halted in the street.

"Has he seen us?" Mellish whispered anxiously.

"No. He never looked back. He's just looking round now to see whether there are any St. Jim's chaps about before he goes in—"

"Goes in where?"

"The Green Man, perhaps!"

"Oh, my hat! That awful pub!" said Mellish, with a low whistle.

"Looks like it. No, he's going on," said Levison. "Let's get on the other side of the road. We can dodge into a shop door if he looks across. He takes his time about it!"

The two young rascals chuckled and crossed the street. Arthur Augustus, having taken his leisurely survey, and apparently being satisfied, was sauntering on again. Once more he paused, and the two spies dodged into the doorway of Mr. Wiggs, the tailor; but this time Arthur Augustus did not look round. He had only paused to flick a speck of dust from the sleeve of his beautiful coat.

The next time he stopped, it was outside the plate-glass window of Chunn's, the tobacconist's.

"That's his game!" whispered Levison.

Arthur Augustus put up his eyeglass again, and took another survey. Levison and Mellish were in the doorway of Bunn's teashop now, and out of sight. Arthur Augustus was satisfied. He disappeared in at the door of Chunn's shop.

"There he goes!" said Mellish. "Out of bounds! All tobacconist's shops are out of bounds! If a prefect spotted him now—"

"Well, we've spotted him," said Levison. "After this, even he can't have the awful nerve to pretend that he doesn't smoke. Blake got rid of that stuff somehow out of their study, and D'Arcy has come down here for a fresh lot!"

"Plain as daylight!" said Mellish.

"And we'll jolly well make him hand out some to us!" said Levison, with a chuckle. "I can't afford to buy Chunn's stuff myself. My allowance only runs to Wild Honeysuckle cigarettes at eight a penny. I'll make him hand some of them over!"

"Good egg! We'll make it halves!"

"Here he comes!"

Arthur Augustus came out of the tobacconist's. His face was a little flushed. He walked quickly down the street.

Levison and his companion were about to leave the doorway of the teashop, and follow him, when he halted. He stood gazing into a shop window, as if deeply interested. As the shop was an ironmonger's, and the window displayed chiefly an assortment of agricultural implements, it was not likely that the swell of St. Jim's was really interested. He was evidently marking time—for what?

The shadowers soon saw. D'Arcy stared into the ironmonger's window for five minutes, and then walked back towards the tobacconist's, and disappeared inside.

The two watchers were decidedly astonished.

"Forgotten to get matches, perhaps?" hazarded Mellish.

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In about five minutes D'Arcy came out again. This time he walked as far as the local chemist's, and stood staring for some minutes at the coloured glass jars in the window. Levison and Mellish watched him, intently curious to see what he would do next.

After regarding the chemist's window with great attention for some time, D'Arcy retraced his steps to Chunn's, and entered again.

Levison and Mellish were utterly mystified by this time.

Arthur Augustus had entered the tobacconist's three times within a quarter of an hour, and had spent the intervals staring into shop windows—for nothing.

"Must be off his dot!" said Mellish.

"Looks like it. Let's get out of here; old Bunn is watching us from the cash desk. Let's get opposite Chunn's!"

They left the teashop doorway, and moved cautiously along the street. A little further along was a big oak-tree in the village street. There they halted, in good cover, and watched the doorway of the tobacconist's on the other side.

In a few minutes Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came out.

The flush in his face had deepened, and his manner seemed a little agitated as he walked up the street.

Levison and Mellish did not stir. They expected him to return, and he did. Before ten minutes had elapsed, D'Arcy was back again at the tobacconist's.

The two watchers exchanged amazed glances.

"That's four times he's been in," said Mellish.

Levison rubbed his nose thoughtfully.

"This beats it," he said. "What's the little game?"

"Blessed if I know. They must think he's mad, coming into the shop ever few minutes," said Mellish in amazement.

"He must buy something every time," said Levison. "He can't go in there for nothing."

"But what's his game? Why can't he buy what he wants at once, and have done with it?"

"Goodness knows. Here he comes again."

Arthur Augustus came out of Chunn's, and sauntered down the street. This time he went as far as the railway-station, and sauntered to and fro in front of the station for twenty minutes or so. But as if attracted by a magnet, he came back at last towards the tobacconist's, and disappeared inside.

"Mad!" said Mellish.

"Fairly off his rocker," said Levison. "I can't understand it. I thought it might be something to do with the races. They say Chunn runs a betting business. He might be waiting for a wire about a horse. But—"

Mellish shook his head.

"He'd have got it by this time, I should think."

"Yes. I suppose it isn't that. But what is it?"

"Ask me another. I think he's potty."

Out came D'Arcy again, and up the street he went. Levison and Mellish hardly troubled to follow him with their eyes this time; they knew he would come back. And he did. Ten minutes later he disappeared once more into the tobacconist's.

For two whole hours it continued, and by that time Arthur Augustus had certainly been in and out of the tobacconist's a dozen times.

If he had made a purchase every time, he must have accumulated a considerable supply of smokes.

At last, when Levison and Mellish were getting thoroughly tired of their vigil, Arthur Augustus also appeared to be tired.

His walk was brisker as he left the tobacconist's, and he strode away in the direction of St. Jim's with a decided air.

"He's going back this time—back to the school!" said Levison shrewdly.

And they followed.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy walked directly on, and did not look back once before he arrived at St. Jim's. Levison and Mellish followed him in at the gates, and across the quadrangle to the School House.

The football-match was over, and Blake & Co. could be seen chatting with the Terrible Three in the school tuckshop.

But Arthur Augustus did not glance towards them.

He entered the School House, and went up to Study No. 6, and Levison and Mellish arrived in the Fourth Form passage after him, in time to see him close the door.

"Come on," said Levison, with a grin. "We know what he's got about him, and we're going halves. We'll have a smoke in the box-room afterwards."

"Good egg!" chuckled Mellish.

And they hurried on to Study No. 6, opened the door without knocking, and walked into the study.

CHAPTER 9.

Not Half!

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus uttered that ejaculation as the two juniors came unceremoniously in.

Upon the study-table was a pile of cigars and packets of cigarettes.

The elegant junior had evidently just turned them out of his pockets, probably with the intention of packing them out of sight somewhere.

He started, and turned an angry glance upon the two Fourth-Formers.

"How dare you entah my studay without knockin'?" he demanded wrathfully.

"Didn't want you to put the smokes out of sight!" grinned Mellish.

"We've caught you!" Levison remarked.

Arthur Augustus's eye gleamed behind his eyeglass.

"You uttah wottahs!"

"Oh, come off!" said Levison coolly. "We don't spend the afternoon going in and out of a tobacconist's, anyway."

D'Arcy's brows contracted.

"You feahful cad! Have you been watchin' me?"

"Oh, we happened to see you!" said Levison carelessly. "Didn't we, Mellish?"

"Yes, about a dozen times," grinned Mellish.

"You uttah cads!"

"Miss Chunn must have thought you dotty," said Levison. "Why on earth couldn't you have bought all the smokes you wanted at once, instead of going in a dozen times for them?"

"Mind your own biznai!"

"I wonder what Kildare would say if he happened to look into this study now?" remarked Mellish.

"Bai Jove!"

"Blake couldn't make Herr Schneider a second birthday present—what?"

"Pway get out of my study. I wegard you as a disgustin' spy. If you do not wetire fwom my quartahs immediately, I shall thwow you out."

And Arthur Augustus pushed back his cuffs in a business-like manner.

"Hold on," said Levison coolly. "We didn't come here simply to jaw. You've been breaking bounds, and buying cigars. We're willing to keep the secret for you."

"I decline to wequest any favah at your wotten hands!"

"You'd like me to mention the matter to Knox?" chuckled Levison. "He was awfully ratty to-day over Blake diddling him. He knows very well the stuff wasn't bought with the intention of handing it to Herr Schneider. He would like to run into this second cargo."

"You can sneak if you like. You have already done so once, I believe."

"Knox happened to hear me talking to Mellish," explained Levison; "the same thing might happen again, of course. A fellow isn't bound to keep disgraceful secrets like this. This study ought to be shown up."

"The othah fellows know nothin' about this."

"They'd have to prove that."

Arthur Augustus wrinkled his brows. He would have risked any punishment himself rather than ask a favour at Levison's hands. But he realised that the discovery of the cigars in the study would mean trouble for Blake and Herries and Digby, as well as for himself.

"You feahful cad!" he said. "Why can't you mind your own business?"

Levison shrugged his shoulders.

"I only want fair play," he remarked. "Halves! That's fair!"

"What!"

"Halves!" said Levison and Mellish together.

"I don't quite compwehend you. What do you want half of?"

Levison pointed to the cigars on the table.

"I can't afford to smoke cigars," he said. "I'd like to, but the cash won't run to it. You've got a dozen there. Halves!"

Arthur Augustus's face cleared.

"Oh, is that all you want?"

"That's all."

"I do not appwove of boys smokin'," said Arthur Augustus severely. "It's very bad form, and it howwid for the health while a chap is still gwowin'."

"Well, I like that, considering that you must smoke like a chimney yourself," said Levison in amazement.

"You uttah wottah! I do not smoke!"

Levison stared at him.

"What have you bought all this stuff for, then? Are you going to stick the cigars round the study walls for ornaments?"

"He, he, he!" cackled Mellish.

"I certainly wefuse to explain to an uttah wottah like you. I should have no objection whatevah to givin' you the cigahs, but I wegard it as w'ong for you to smoke. Besides, they will make you ill."

"Rats! That's my business, I suppose?"

"Well, yaas, I suppose it is," said D'Arcy, after a moment's thought. "I am certainly not your fathah confessah. If you choose to smoke, I can only wegard you as a wank outsiders, and have no wight to intahfeah with you."

"Are you going to give me half?"

"You can take the lot if you like."

"Wha-a-at!"

"As a mattah of fact, I shall be vewy much obliged if you will wemove the wubbish fwom this studay."

Levison and Mellish stared blankly at the swell of St. Jim's. Arthur Augustus was evidently in earnest. He was pushing the smokes across the table to the two young rascals as he spoke.

"You must be mad!" gasped Levison at last. "Why, those Coronas cost eighteenpence each, and the Larranagas clevence. I know. I've fetched them for Cutts when he's been putting on style. You've paid good money for them, and now you don't want them."

"Certainly I don't want them."

"Then why did you buy them?"

"Pway attend wholly to your own affairs, Levison, and leave me to attend to mine," said Arthur Augustus, with a great deal of dignity.

Levison and Mellish crammed the cigars and cigarettes into their pockets. They had never dreamed of reaping such a harvest. They looked forward with great enjoyment to smoking eighteenpenny cigars. Arthur Augustus watched the disappearance of his supply of smokes with unmistakable satisfaction. He breathed an audible sigh of relief when the last of them disappeared into the pockets of the two cads of the Fourth.

"Now, pway get out!" he said.

"What-ho!" said Levison, with a chuckle. "We're finished here. You can buy as many more smokes as you like, Gussy—we'll get rid of them for you!"

"He, he, he!" cackled Mellish.

And they departed in great satisfaction.

Ten minutes later Jack Blake came into the study. He sniffed, and cast a suspicious glance at his elegant study mate.

"You've been having tobacco here," he said. "It niffs. Have you been buying smokes again?"

Arthur Augustus did not reply.

"Do you hear me?" roared Blake.

"I have already wemarked to you, Blake, that until you apologise for doubtin' my word, I cannot wegard you as a fwiend."

Jack Blake gave him a concentrated glare.

"Have you been buying smokes again?" he demanded. And Herries and Digby, who had followed Blake in, glared interrogatively at the swell of St. Jim's.

"I wefuse to weply."

"Go through his pockets," said Blake.

"I wefuse to allow—"

But D'Arcy's refusal made no difference. The three juniors collared him and turned his pockets out, in spite of his wild resistance. They felt that it was their duty to look after Gussy, and they meant to do their duty—without standing on ceremony. But nothing of an incriminating nature was discovered in the elegant junior's pockets. He was not quite so elegant, however, when the three juniors had finished with him.

"Nothing there!" said Blake, in relief. "He hasn't been playing the giddy ox again, after all!"

"You uttah wottahs!" shrieked D'Arcy. "I wegard you—"

"Bump him for giving us so much trouble!" said Herries.

"Good wheeze!"

"Leggo! I wefuse to be bumped—I considah—I—hands off—yawwooh!"

Bump, bump, bump!

"Ow! Bai Jove! Gweat Scott! You awful bwutes! Yawwoooooh!"

Blake and Herries and Digby strode out of the study, slamming the door after them. Arthur Augustus sat up on the carpet and gasped. It was several minutes before he rose to his feet; he had to get his second wind.

"Ow!" he groaned. "The wottahs! I've a good mind—ow—to go aftah them and give them a feahful thwashin' all wound—ow—I shall certainly dwop their—ow—acquaintance! Ow—ow!"

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CHAPTER 10.
Great Enjoyment.

"MY treat!" said Levison, with a princely air. Quite a little party had assembled in the upper box-room. There were Levison and Mellish, and Crooke and Gore of the Shell, and Pigott of the Third. The five young rascals were going to enjoy themselves—or so they believed.

It was not often that Levison stood a treat. He was exceptionally careful in looking after his money. But this time he had obtained his supply very cheaply. It was not a feed. It was a "smoking bee." Cigars and cigarettes obtained for nothing could be dispensed with a generous hand.

"Well, what have you got?" asked Gore, not very graciously. "If you've asked me here to smoke Honeysuckle fags at eight a penny—"

"I've got some smokes better than you've ever had in your life," said Levison. "If they are too strong for you—"

"Rats!" said Gore, with a curl of the lip. "I can smoke anything—even a pipe."

"What do you think of those?"

Levison laid a handful of cigars on an empty trunk.

There were exclamations of surprise and admiration from the guests. Gore picked up one of the cigars—a long Corona, with a scent that would have delighted the heart of a smoker old enough to appreciate it.

"My hat, this is gorgeous!" he exclaimed. "This is the same brand of cigar that D'Arcy's pater smokes—Lord Eastwood, you know. He can afford 'em."

"You must have given eighteenpence for that smoke," said Crooke, with a stare. Crooke was the son of a millionaire, but he had never thought of giving eighteenpence for a smoke.

Levison smiled in an airy manner.

"It's my treat," he said—"mine and Mellish's. We haven't spared any expense to make it a decent thing, have we, Mellish?"

"Not us!" grinned Mellish.

"And those Larranagas!" ejaculated Pigott of the Third. "Why, they were elevenpence in Rylcombe—tenpence in London, I believe. I've fetched them for Cutts!"

"My dear kid, don't count on what they cost," said Levison. "It's our treat, and we want to do the thing decently!"

"Well, I must say you're doing that!" said Crooke, with a deep breath. "You must have spent a lot of money on these things!"

"Oh, never mind the money!"

"I've sometimes thought you were a mean chap, Levison," confessed Gore. "I take it back now. This is really handsome of you!"

"Thanks! Pile in!"

"What-ho!"

"You'd better leave the cigars alone, Piggy. They'll be too stiff for you. Try the cigarettes," said Levison.

Pigott of the Third sniffed. Pigott sometimes fagged for Cutts of the Fifth, and performed little commissions for him, and he had learned many of the bad habits of the Fifth-Former. He was a hardened young rascal, as a matter of fact, and had a tougher inside than any of the older fellows there. His under-grown frame and yellowish complexion hinted that he was not at all new to smoking. Cigarettes from Cutts's box, and cigar-ends from Cutts's grate had been his nourishment. He selected one of the big Coronas and lighted it with a flourish, after snipping off the end in quite a masterly manner, as he had seen Gerald Cutts do.

If any of the other fellows had doubted their inward powers of dealing with big cigars, Pigott's example would have dismissed those doubts. The little rascal was soon blowing out great clouds of smoke.

Crooke and Gore, Mellish and Levison, lighted up.

Levison had opened the window of the box-room; but in spite of a current of air, the room was soon blue with smoke. Five big Coronas all going at once produced a great deal of smoke, and the inexperienced young rascals smoked very quickly.

Levison, indeed, finished his cigar in five or six minutes. He was conscious of a slightly giddy sensation in the head, but he was delighted, and a little surprised, to find that his inside was apparently normal. He was evidently a better smoker than he had supposed. He picked up a Larranaga, bit off the end, and lighted it.

"I say, isn't this ripping?" said Crooke.

"Gorgeous!" said Gore.

"We owe a vote of thanks to Levison and Mellish!" grinned Pigott. "Cutts would have come to this if you'd asked him. He can only get cigars like these when he's in funds!"

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Levison was proceeding more slowly with his second cigar. The giddy sensation in his head was increasing, and there was a feeling of lightness inside his body, as if he were about to rise and float away along with the smoke. It was a very queer feeling. He moved a little—and the first movement sent a strange and terrible shudder through him. As a matter of fact, he was now feeling the effects of the first cigar. His head began to spin, and a fearful feeling rose in his chest—higher and higher. His face went a sickly white, and then slowly changed to a rare and peculiar art shade in green.

Crooke lowered his beautiful Corona—half-smoked. His complexion matched Levison's. Gore was still puffing away, but more slowly. Mellish rose to his feet, and walked towards the window. Under pretence of looking out, he slyly dropped his cigar into the ivy. Only Pigott was still smoking with apparent satisfaction.

"How are you getting on, Levison?" asked Crooke, in a curious uncertain voice.

Levison did not reply. He dared not speak. He dared not move. He knew what would happen if he did.

"G-g-g-good smokes, ain't they?" groaned Gore.

"J-j-j-jolly good!" murmured Crooke. "I—I don't believe in quite finishing a cigar, you know. They lose their flavour as you get to the end. I've heard Cutts say so!"

"Just what I think!" said Gore, suddenly dropping his cigar as if it had become red-hot. "Never overdo even a good thing, you know!"

"Groooogh!" said Levison.

Pigott burst into a demoniac chuckle. He was smoking slowly and with enjoyment, his meagre and stunted body being habituated to nicotine. The little rascal had known what to expect to happen to the less experienced smokers. He grinned at them like some dwarfish imp through the cigar haze.

"You're looking a bit queer, Levison!" he remarked, with ghoulish glee. "Feel a bit rocky inside—what?"

"Nunno!" stuttered Levison.

"Right as rain—eh?"

"Ye-e-es—groooooogh!"

"Bit fishy, I think. Never mind; think of fat pork and oysters!" said Pigott heartlessly.

"Grooh!"

Levison made a sudden jump from the box he was sitting on, and spun towards the fireplace. Disaster overtook him before he reached it. Levison, instead of crossing the box-room, might have been crossing the Channel on a particularly rough and stormy day to judge by what happened.

The sight of Levison's awful fate finished the others. There was a weird and unearthly gurgle from Crooke, and he sank back against the wall, his face white as a sheet, and his chest rising and falling convulsively. Gore stared at him with unseeing eyes, with horrid and unimagined torments going on in his interior.

"Oh, crumbs!" groaned Mellish, who was hanging on to the window-ledge with convulsive hands. "Oh, goodness gracious! Oh, my hat! I—I—I say—some silly idiots call this enjoyment—ow!—a fellow must be mad to smoke cigars—ow!—grooh!—gerrooogh!"

"Groooogh!"

"Oh, my aunt! Oh, crumbs! Yow-ow-ow!"

Gurgle—gurgle—gurgle!

"Yaw-aw-aw-awwwww!"

Levison fell across the box he had been sitting on, face downwards, and groaned in agony of spirit. He lay, helplessly heaving and groaning. The box-room seemed to be swimming round him, and he did not care twopence if the Head himself had walked in at that moment and caught him. A flogging would have been exquisite enjoyment compared with what he was now suffering. Death itself would have been a great boon in comparison. Strange and unknown forces seemed to be at combat within him. He groaned and groaned without ceasing, not even knowing that he did so.

Pigott smoked on, regarding the sufferings of his companions with callous enjoyment. He was amused. Four ghastly and horrible wretches groaned and moaned round him. Pigott finished his cigar and rose to his feet. Pigott had habituated himself to nicotine at the expense of ruining his constitution—he could not run, or box, or stick to work, or play footer—but he could smoke. He looked upon himself as an extremely doggish man of the world, and he regarded his companions with airy scorn.

"Have another cigar!" he jeered. "Hair of the dog, you know."

Gurgle—gurgle!

Groogh-hooh-hooh!

Gug-gug-gug!

Pigott threw away the stump of his cigar, and rose to his feet.

"Well, you don't seem a jolly party," he remarked. "I

think I'll be getting off. You chaps had better pull yourselves together before you show yourselves downstairs. If anybody sees your faces now, you'll be spotted at once. So-long—and thanks awfully, Levison! Quite a treat, I assure you."

And Pigott walked out, whistling. Gore made an effort, and lurched towards the door after him, with a vague idea of killing him on the spot. But he lurched helplessly against the door, collapsed on the floor, and there he was helplessly, horribly sick.

For half an hour nothing was heard in the box-room save low, anguished gurgles and groans. The jolly party regarded one another with savage animosity. Each fellow felt inclined to slaughter all the rest, if only he had had the strength to move. Crooke was the first to recover sufficiently to pick himself up. He rose slowly and cautiously to his feet, heaving and moaning.

"I'm g-g-going!" he murmured. "I'll butcher you presently, Levison. You did this on purpose, you beast!"

"Oh, I feel awful!" moaned Mellish. "I—I never thought it would be like this! I—I think that cigar must have been poisoned!"

"I've been on the Channel," said Gore wildly. "It was a rough day. But it wasn't anything like this. I—I shall never be well again, I know that! I feel as if I were going to d-d-die! I wish I could see you hung first, Levison. I—I'd give everything I possess to see you hung!"

Levison only groaned.

Four miserable, white-faced, shaking wrecks crawled out of the box-room at last. And the traces they left behind them indicated that anything but a jolly party had been there.

CHAPTER 11.

The Order of the Boot!

"GREAT Scott! Are you ill, Gore?"

Tom Merry, quite alarmed, uttered that exclamation as he met Gore in the Shell passage.

George Gore did not reply. He scowled ferociously, and went into his study and slammed the door.

Tom Merry was amazed.

"There's something wrong with Gore," he said, as he entered his study, where Lowther and Manners were getting tea. "Looks as if he's had a bad dose of sea-sickness."

Monty Lowther chuckled.

"I've just seen Crooke," he remarked. "He looks the same. I asked him what was the matter, and he said he was going to kill Levison."

"Has Levison done something to them?" said Tom, in amazement.

"Levison's looking just as sick!" grinned Lowther. "I've seen him. He's in his study now. Lumley-Lumley asked me to come in and look at them. He said it was worth seeing."

"And was it?"

"It was! Never seen such a pair of awful scarecrows. Mellish said it was all Gussy's fault. Levison said he hoped Gussy would be expelled as soon as he was found out."

"What on earth has Gussy been doing, then?"

"Ha, ha, ha! I fancy he's been passing smokes on to Levison."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Awful thing to see the one-and-only Gussy on the downward path, and leading other fellows on the road to ruin, ain't it?" said Manners.

"Well, it's rather rotten," said Tom Merry, with a frown. "If D'Arcy has taken to doing rotten things himself, he might leave other fellows out of it. I should have thought that that lot would be more likely to lead Gussy astray—but it seems that he's been the giddy tempter this time."

"Gussy in the role of Mephistopheles," chuckled Lowther. "Quite a new part for Gussy. I always knew he was several sorts of an idiot—but I never supposed that he was a blade, and a dog, and a giddy kipper, before. You never know a fellow till you find him out."

The Terrible Three were considerably puzzled. After tea they dropped into Study No. 6, where Blake & Co. were at the tea-table. There was a supply of good things on the table, showing that the financial famine was over at last in No. 6.

Arthur Augustus was sitting very stiffly at the table. He had not forgiven his study-mates for the rough handling he had received that afternoon—and he was still not upon speaking terms with Jack Blake.

"What have you been doing, Gussy?" demanded Tom Merry severely.

Arthur Augustus adjusted his eyeglass, and regarded Tom Merry with an inquiring stare.

"I do not quite comprehend you, dear boy," he replied.

Monty Lowther wagged an accusing forefinger at him.

"You've been leading dear little innocent boys into your bad ways," he said.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Crooke and Gore and Levison and Mellish," said

Manners. "All of them on the rocks—half dead, and wishing they were quite—all through you! What do you mean by spreading your riotous habits through the House in this way?"

"You uttah ass—"

"Hallo! Gussy been smoking again?" exclaimed Blake.

"I have nevah been smokin'—"

"You gave smokes to Levison & Co."

Arthur Augustus grinned.

"Yaas. Levison said halves, and I told him he could have the lot. I twust he has twied one of the stwongest cigahs, and cured himself of playin' the giddy ox."

"He looks as if he's had a bad Channel crossing," said Tom Merry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"So you've been bringing smokes into the school again, Gussy?" said Blake, with a glare at the swell of the School House.

"I decline to weply to you, Blake."

"Have you been bringing smokes into this study?" demanded Herries.

"Yaas!"

"What for?"

"I was goin' to thwow them away, but Levison spotted me. He was goin' to sneak about it, as he did before, so I let him have the wubbish."

"And if he had sneaked, we should all have got into a row," said Digby.

"Yaas, pewwaps. I should have been weally sowwy. However, I should have apologised."

"Which would have set matters quite right again, of course," grinned Tom Merry.

"An apology fwom one gentleman to anothah is quite suffish," said Arthur Augustus loftily.

"Well, Levison & Co. deserved all they got," said Jack Blake. "But we're not going to have this kind of thing going on. Whether you've taken to smoking, or whether you've gone potty, I don't care—you're not going to bring any more of your muck into this study. We try to be respectable, and we can't have you disgracing us like this. I want you to promise never to buy any more smokes."

"Wats!"

"You've got to give your word," said Blake.

"I have nothin' to say to you, Blake."

Blake snorted.

"I've got something to say to you, though. You've got to give us your word not to go to the tobacconist's again, or we shall pitch you neck and crop out of the study, and keep you out."

"You can hardly turn me out of my own studay, Blake."

"I think we can—and if you complain to the House-master, you can tell him the reason!" hooted Blake.

"I am not likely to do that. I should thwash you if you attempted anythin' of the kind," said D'Arcy warmly.

"Get out of the doorway, you Shell chaps," said Blake grimly.

The Terrible Three stood aside with cheerful smiles. Blake and Herries and Digby rose to their feet. D'Arcy rose, too, rather hurriedly.

"Now, I twust you chaps are not goin' to play the giddy goat," he said remonstratingly.

"You are going to promise to keep clear of the tobacconist's—"

"I wefuse!"

"Outside, then!"

"Wats! I tell you— Oh!"

Three strong pairs of arms grasped Arthur Augustus D'Arcy at once, and, in spite of his violent struggles, he was ejected from the study—right on his neck.

He rolled in the passage; and jumped up, gasping for breath, and red with rage. He rushed back furiously into the study, his fists clenched, and his arms going like the sails of a windmill.

"You uttah wottahs! You wank outsidahs! I will thwash you all wound—yaroooh—"

Arthur Augustus fully intended to thrash his study-mates all round; but he had overlooked one rather important circumstance—and that was, that he was by no means a match for three sturdy juniors.

Blake and Herries and Digby were ready for him, and they seized him as he rushed in. The Shell fellows looked on smilingly; they were not needed to interfere. They were simply spectators of the scene. Blake and Herries and Digby whirled Arthur Augustus off his feet, and rushed him out into the passage again, and sent him spinning along the linoleum. Arthur Augustus looked all arms and legs as he went.

Blake panted as he came back into the study.

"Now, if he comes back again—"

He did come back again—but only as far as the doorway. He stood there—wild and dishevelled and breathless.

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NEXT
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"You uttah wascals! I am not goin' to be turned out of my own studay! I wegard you as wank bwutes! I'm comin' in—"

"You'll go out on your neck if you do!" said Blake.

"You feahful wottah—"

"Collar him!"

Arthur Augustus had come inside the study. Instantly he was seized by three juniors and hurled forth again. This time he did not return. It was beginning to dawn upon his noble mind that he was not quite up to such unequal warfare.

"Bai Jove! The beasts! I have been thwown into quite a fluttah!" he gasped. "Tom Mewwy, deah boy, I think I will do my pwep. in your studay this evenin'. I wefuse to occupy the same quartahs as those feahful wuffians!"

"No, you won't," said Tom Merry promptly; "not unless you promise to keep clear of the tobacconist's. I think Blake is quite right."

"I wegard you as impertinent, Mewwy."

"Go hon!"

The Terrible Three walked away, grinning. Arthur Augustus panted, and dusted himself down, amid grins and chuckles from the fellows who had witnessed his ejection from No. 6 Study. Then he went to No. 5 Study—the room belonging to Hammond, Bates, and Smith minor—and Harry Hammond, his Cockney chum, took him in with pleasure. And for the rest of that evening Arthur Augustus did not look into Study No. 6; neither did he exchange a word with his old chums, nor with the Terrible Three. The swell of St. Jim's was very much upon his dignity.

CHAPTER 12,

More Trouble.

TROUBLE in Study No. 6 was rare.

True, the four chums of the Fourth were not always very polite to one another; and strangers hearing their mode of speech would never have supposed that they were affectionate chums. But they were, all the same; and there was seldom, or never, any real trouble in the study.

But apparently it had come at last.

The next day all the School House knew that D'Arcy had been turned out of his own study, and that he was not on speaking terms with his old chums.

When he came upon Blake & Co., he passed them with chin uplifted, and his aristocratic nose very high in the air.

With the Terrible Three, too, he was on the worst of terms. He cut them as mercilessly as he did his old friends in the Fourth.

His dignity had been terribly ruffled; and to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, his personal "dig," was the first and foremost of all possible considerations.

But though D'Arcy no longer regarded them as friends, the chums of the School House were as concerned as ever about him. They had lost patience with him, and perhaps that was not the most judicious way to treat a fellow whom they suspected of having taken the wrong turning—the fatal turning leading to the downward path. But they did not mean to let him go his own ways unmolested. As Blake remarked, when he recovered his good-temper, Gussy was too good a little ass to be allowed to go to the bow-wows at his own sweet will.

There was undoubtedly something amiss with D'Arcy. He neglected his work and his prep., and was in frequent trouble with Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth. He neglected footer practice, and was quite unconcerned when

Tom Merry scratched his name out of the House Eleven. He fell into pensive moods, plunging into brown studies, and he would come to himself with a start, and answer absent-mindedly if anyone spoke to him.

It was all very puzzling, and it confirmed the juniors' suspicions that the swell of St. Jim's was getting himself into trouble of some kind. On Thursday and Friday, too, he made visits to Rylcombe, getting passes from the prefects. And he did not explain in the slightest degree what he went there for—even to Hammond, the fellow he was mostly with now. Harry Hammond's friendship was a blessing to Arthur Augustus, since his break with his old chums.

Hammond, the Cockney schoolboy, regarded the swell of St. Jim's with deep and undying admiration, and everything that Arthur Augustus did was right in his eyes. If Arthur Augustus had come home from one of his mysterious excursions with vine-leaves in his hair, so to speak, Hammond wouldn't have found any fault with him.

He was back just in time for calling-over on Friday evening, and after calling-over he went up to Hammond's study. Bates and Smith minor had raised no objection to that new addition to the study. As a matter of fact, they were rather proud of having Lord Eastwood's son in their study. Hammond was in No. 5 Study just now when D'Arcy came in, the other two fellows being downstairs.

Arthur Augustus sank into a chair, looking a little tired.

"Had a long walk?" asked Harry Hammond.

"Only to Wylcombe, Hammond."

"You've been a long time gone."

"Yaas; I spent wathah a lot of time in the village," said D'Arcy, the colour coming into his cheeks for some reason.

Hammond looked at him curiously.

"I 'ope you ain't brought any more smokes back with you, Master D'Arcy," he said. "Course, 'tain't no business of mine; but that really ain't good enough for you."

"Yaas, I have, though."

Arthur Augustus rummaged in his pockets, and laid a handful of cigars on the study table. Hammond stared at them.

"How much did that little lot cost you?" he asked.

"I weally don't know. Ten or fifteen shillin's, I think."

"You're not going to smoke them?"

"Certainly not! I do not smoke."

"Look 'ere, Master D'Arcy, some of the blokes say as 'ow you're goin' off your rocker!" said Hammond. "Wot's the good of buyin' cigars and not smokin' them?"

"Surely it would be worse to smoke them, Hammond?"

"Well, yes, judging by the way Levison looked the other day," said Hammond, with a chuckle. "But that ain't the p'int. Why buy them?"

"I have a weason."

"Can't you explain to an old pal?"

Arthur Augustus hesitated.

"I should weally like to explain, Hammond. I have felt for some time a pwessin' need to confide in somebody. But—"

"Go ahead!" said Hammond encouragingly.

"But I feah that you would not compwehend."

"Well, I ain't got your brains, Master D'Arcy, but I'd try," said Hammond loyally.

"I don't mean that, Hammond. I mean, I feah that you are wathah too young to undahstand," explained Arthur Augustus, with a shake of the head.

"I'm older than you, Master D'Arcy," he ventured to hint

Hammond stared at him, as well he might. Considering that he was several months older than the swell of St. Jim's, he was naturally surprised by that statement.


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Gran



Arthur Augustus sprawled gasping on the floor—and round him were scattered the contents of his pockets. The juniors gazed at them blankly, and then there broke from them the one word. "Cigars!" (See Chapter 2.)

"Yaas; but some fellows are older than their years!" Arthur Augustus explained. "I've weally had lots of expewience. I wegard myself vevy much as a man of the world, you know; and, of course, you are weally a kid, Hammond."

Hammond grinned. He had spent all his youth in a shop in Bethnal Green, where he had learned more of real life and human nature than Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was likely to learn if he lived to the respectable age of Methuselah. But he was too faithful a pal to explain that to Arthur Augustus.

"Still, I'll do my best to understand," he said. "Jest you tell me about it, wotever it is, and I'll do my best."

There was a long pause. Arthur Augustus was debating the matter in his mind. Evidently he had a strong desire to speak, but for some unknown reason he hesitated. To Harry Hammond's surprise, the colour deepened and deepened in D'Arcy's face till he was perfectly scarlet. The Cockney schoolboy felt a momentary uneasiness.

"Crikey, Master D'Arcy! You ain't been doing nothing wrong, surely? 'Course, if you 'ave, I'll stand by you—that's settled, anywe. But—"

"Thank you, deah boy. But I have certainly been doin' nothin' wrong, exceptin' bweakin' bounds to go to the tobacconist's. I am sowwy to do that, but you see that, as the shop is out of bounds, I cannot go there without bweakin' bounds."

"But why go there?"

"That's what I'm goin' to explain. Have you ever been there, Hammond?"

"I've glanced into the shop," said Hammond.

"Yaas. And what did you see there?"

"See there?" repeated Hammond, in surprise. "Lemme see. Same as you usually see in tobacconist's shops, I s'pose.

There was stacks of cigar-boxes, and packets of cigarettes on the counter, and a light burnin' for customers, and Miss Chunn sittin' on the counter, torkin' to young Chipps, the auctioneer's clerk, and rollin' 'er heyes—"

Arthur Augustus jumped up, as if he had received an electric shock.

"Hammond!"

"Yes?" said Hammond.

"You are alludin' to an estimable young lady in a vevy diswespectful mannah—"

"I didn't mean to," said Hammond honestly. "I 'ope I sha'n't never speak of any woman with disrespect, Master D'Arcy. There ain't no harm in Miss Chunn rollin' 'er eyes, as I can see. 'Sides, she's rather spooney on that young man Chipps; they walk out together."

"Hammond!"

Arthur Augustus's noble face was like a thundercloud. His nose was quivering, his eyes were gleaming, his lips tightly set. Hammond gazed at him in surprise and alarm.

"Wot's the matter, D'Arcy?"

"The mattah!" Arthur Augustus's voice trembled. "We have been fwiends, Hawwy Hammond, evah since you came to St. Jim's. We've nevah had a wow exceptin' at the time that wottah Levison twied to make twouble between us. Well, we are goin' to be fwiends no longah! I wefuse to call a chap a fwiend when he speaks in that mannah of a young lady whom I—I—I wespect and admire! That is all! I shall not visit this study again!"

Arthur Augustus stalked blindly to the door. Hammond jumped up in alarm.

"Master D'Arcy— Gussy— I say—"

Slam!

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was gone, leaving Hammond overwhelmed with dismay.

CHAPTER 13.

Light at Last.

"GET your skates, Gussy!" Jack Blake spoke as the juniors came out of the dining-room, after dinner on Saturday.

The Ryll was covered again with a sheet of solid ice, and even footer was neglected that afternoon for skating.

Arthur Augustus gave a start, and looked quickly at Blake.

"Skates!" he repeated. "I don't want my skates yet. I—I—I mean, I weally don't know why you should suppose that I am goin' skatin', Blake."

"Ass!" said Blake politely. "We're all going skating, and I suppose you're coming, too. The ice is first-rate."

"I am sowwy I cannot come."

"Fathead—"

"And I should be vewy much obliged, Blake, if you would wemembah that I am not on speakin' terms with you!"

D'Arcy walked away with his nose in the air. Jack Blake breathed hard through his nose. He was, as he had remarked several times, getting fed-up—up to the chin. Already he had seriously debated with Digby and Herries whether it wouldn't, upon the whole, be a good idea to give Arthur Augustus a terrific hiding.

"Potty as ever!" growled Herries. "Why can't he come skating like everybody else? Do you know where Gussy is going, Hammond?"

Hammond shook his head. Hammond had been looking quite glum all the morning.

"I don't know nothin' about it," he said. "He won't speak to me now."

"What!" shouted Blake. "Has he quarrelled with you, too?"

Hammond nodded dolorously.

"Yes. He came to my study yesterday evening, and left a lot of cigars on the table. He lost his temper about nothin' fur as I could see, and stamped out and slammed the door. He hasn't spoken to me to-day."

"What did you do with the cigars?" asked Herries.

"I took 'em out this mornin' and chucked 'em into the river," said Hammond. "I didn't know wot else to do with them. They couldn't stop in my study, of course. I wish I knew wot was the matter with D'Arcy."

"Going off his silly rocker, that's all!" said Digby.

Hammond sighed. There was a doglike fidelity in his nature, and he felt the estrangement from Arthur Augustus far more than the chums of Study No. 6 did.

A large crowd of juniors went down to the frozen river. The Ryll was frozen for miles, and Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther started off upon a long skating run together. They dashed along at a good speed on the gleaming ice, the keen wind bringing the colour to their cheeks.

St. Jim's and the crowd of skaters disappeared behind them. They passed under the old stone bridge, and over the frozen Pool, and down to the wider reaches of the river.

Here and there, as they sped on, they passed skaters and sliders—fellows from the Grammar School, and villagers, and country fellows galore. But past Rylcombe the river was more solitary.

"My hat! This is ripping!" Tom Merry exclaimed. "We can put on speed here. We've got the ice all to ourselves."

"Yes, rather!"

They rushed on.

As they came round a bend of the river, between the great leafless trees that overhung the banks at this point, they caught sight of two more skaters—a girl with a flowing scarf and an elegant youth, who could not possibly be anybody but—

"Gussy!" exclaimed the Terrible Three together.

It was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

The chums of the Shell knew that Arthur Augustus had declined to go down to the skating with the rest of the fellows. They understood the reason now.

They slid in towards the bank, and slacked down. Arthur Augustus and his companion were in the middle of the ice, and neither of them observed the three Shell fellows.

The Terrible Three exchanged looks of helpless astonishment.

"So that's Gussy's engagement!" murmured Monty Lowther.

"But—but who is she?" said Manners.

Tom Merry wrinkled his brows in an effort to remember.

"I've seen her before somewhere," he said. "I can't remember—but I'm sure she belongs to this neighbourhood."

The chums of the Shell looked on blankly. Arthur Augustus remained quite unconscious of them. His companion was a girl of about twenty-three, with a very large

hat and very small boots. She had a fat, pleasant face, a prominent nose, and a healthy colour.

The Shell fellows were sure that they had seen her before somewhere, but where they could not recall.

It was Monty Lowther who suddenly remembered, and he signified the same by bursting into a suffocated chuckle.

"Oh, my hat! Ha, ha, ha!"

"What's the matter with you?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Oh, hold me up!" spluttered Lowther. "Oh, crumbs! Those cigars!"

"Cigars!"

"Those giddy smokes!"

"Smokes!" yelled Tom Merry and Manners. "What do you mean, fathead?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Lowther went off into a sort of convulsion. Tom Merry and Manners started towards him with wrathful looks, but Lowther waved them off.

"Peace, my infants—peace! I've soluted the giddy mystery!"

"What do you mean, you duffer?"

"You don't know that young lady?"

"I've seen her before, but where I don't know—in Rylcombe, I think," said Tom.

"Exactly! In Rylcombe High Street—"

"Yes?"

"In a shop—"

"A shop?" repeated Tom.

"Yes—a tobacconist's."

"What!"

"Miss Chunn!" hooted Lowther. "Miss Chunn, the tobacconist's girl! Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry and Manners gasped.

"By Jove! I know her now!" ejaculated Manners. "Of course, it's Miss Chunn—Ann Jane Chunn, I believe her name is. I've seen her walking with young Chipps, the auctioneer."

"Miss Chunn!" gasped Tom Merry.

Monty Lowther gurgled.

"Now, do you know why Gussy bought the cigars?"

"Oh, crumbs! He bought them at Chunn's!"

"Exactly! Levison and Mellish have been telling a yarn about watching him there. He goes in and buys a cigar, and comes out again, and goes in to buy another cigar! Ha, ha!"

"But—but, why?"

"Don't you see?" yelled Lowther. "Gussy's in love again!"

"Wha-a-at!"

"He's been in love two or three times, to my knowledge!" gurgled Lowther. "There was Cousin Ethel, and then the Head's niece, and then Glyn's sister. He's always doing it. This time it's Ann Jane Chunn! And Gussy has been buying all those unholy smokes as an excuse for going into the shop to make her acquaintance and talk to her!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"And he's made the best of his time!" chuckled Lowther. "Behold him now, taking the fair damsel out to skate! Behold him! He'll be flopping down on the ice soon to propose!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I believe he proposed to Glyn's sister. She's twenty-five. Glyn tells the yarn, anyway—says Gussy went on his knees, and spoiled the knees of his bags. Bet you he proposes to Ann Jane!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let's skate up and be introduced," said Manners.

"No; let's get back and tell the other fellows," said Lowther. "We've all got to take this in hand. I'm glad it's nothing worse. I was really beginning to believe that Gussy was following in Cutts's footsteps. But he's only in love!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We'll hold a meeting—all Gussy's friends—and consider what's to be done," said Monty Lowther. "He's got to be stopped before he gets flogged for going to the tobacconist's. And we can't have a School House chap making such a giddy ass of himself. When the New House fellows get hold of it, it will be the joke of the school."

The Terrible Three, rippling with laughter, gazed after D'Arcy and Ann Jane. Whether that young lady was aware that Arthur Augustus was in love, they did not know. Probably she regarded Arthur Augustus as a nice boy who was a little silly, and had no objection to being amused by him. And Mr. Chipps, being occupied at the auctioneer's office that day, she had allowed Arthur Augustus to take her out to skate. They skated on down the river, and a bend hid them from the sight of the Shell fellows.

The Terrible Three skated back at top speed to St. Jim's.

They had no doubt that they had penetrated the mystery. The fact that Arthur Augustus had paid endless visits to the

tobacconist's, and that he had purchased all sorts of smoking supplies without any intention of smoking them, had seemed quite inexplicable; but it was explained now. Arthur Augustus was in love! And now that they thought of it, there were many little circumstances that confirmed their belief. Arthur Augustus's pensive moods, his absent-mindedness and abstraction, his blank refusal to explain anything, and his secret slipping away to skate with Miss Chunn—all pointed to the same conclusion.

Once more the susceptible heart of the swell of St. Jim's had been touched. Once more he was a victim of the arrows of the little blind god.

The chums of the Shell quaked with laughter as they skated. It was too funny, and they chuckled and chuckled as they glided on, till they were quite out of breath. And when they reached home, and Blake and Herries and Digby were taken aside and enlightened, then there were three more hysterical chucklers.

CHAPTER 14.

Hearts Bowed Down.

TOM MERRY met Arthur Augustus when that elegant youth came back to St. Jim's.

Tom Merry was standing on the steps of the School House, in the gloom, watching for him.

When Arthur Augustus came up, Tom touched his arm lightly.

"I want to speak to you, Gussy," he said, in a mysterious whisper.

D'Arcy regarded him coldly.

"I am afraid that I cannot reciprocate the desiah, Tom Mewwy," he replied. "Undah the pwesent circs., it is imposs. to wegard you as a fwieend."

"I must confide in somebody," said Tom, with a break in his voice. "Gussy, don't refuse! You're the only fellow I could possibly tell. You would understand. The others wouldn't. But you are such a fatherly chap, I feel that I could tell you."

"Bai Jove! What's the mattah, deah boy?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, forgetting at once that he was on bad terms with the captain of the Shell.

"Come out into the quad., where the other fellows can't hear us," said Tom.

"Certainly, deah boy! If there's any twouble, you can't do bettah than ask my advice. I may say that I wegard myself as a fellow of tact and judgment."

"That's why I'm going to confide in you, Gussy," said Tom, in a broken voice.

"Wight-ho, my deah chap!"

Tom Merry led the swell of St. Jim's into the deep dusk under the elm-trees. They were quite alone there, and safe from eavesdroppers. But Tom Merry did not seem to be in a hurry to begin. He sighed deeply, and sighed again.

"It's wathah cold heah, Tom Mewwy," Arthur Augustus ventured to suggest, when Tom had sighed several times without coming to the point.

"Is it?" said Tom vaguely.

"Yaas. And there's wathah a wind blowin'."

"A chap doesn't notice little things like that when he's in love," said Tom Merry, in a deep and thrilling voice.

Arthur Augustus started violently.

"In—in—in what?" he stammered.

"Love," said Tom Merry. "Gussy, what would you think if I told you that I were in love—deeply, wildly, tragically, passionately, awfully, and frightfully?"

"Bai Jove!"

"You're the only chap at St. Jim's who can sympathise with me," murmured Tom Merry. "You have been in love yourself several times, haven't you?"

"Ahem! I—I—I—"

"I must confide in somebody," said Tom, taking D'Arcy by the arm. "Swear never to reveal the secret, Gussy!"

"Yaas, certainly! But—"

"She is older than I am," sobbed Tom Merry. "But that doesn't make any difference, does it, Gussy?"

"Certainly not, deah boy! In fact, I think that when a chap's about our age, the wight age for the lady is about twenty-thwee," said D'Arcy at once.

A peculiar sound came from Tom Merry, and D'Arcy suspected for a moment that he was choking back a chuckle. But as he peered at Tom's face in the dusk, he saw that it was long and solemn.

"How curious!" said Tom. "That is exactly her age, Gussy! And what do you think her name is—her sweet and poetical name?"

"I'm sure I can't guess, deah boy."

"Ann Jane," murmured Tom Merry.

D'Arcy jumped.

"Ann—Ann—Ann what?" he ejaculated.

"No, not Ann What. Ann Jane," said Tom, in a whisper. "She serves in the tobacconist's shop in Rylcombe. You know Chunn's shop?"

"Yaas, wathah—I—I mean, I've seen it."

"Perhaps you have seen Ann Jane?"

"Bai Jove, I should jollay well say so! Look heah, Tom Mewwy—"

"But she loves another!" said Tom, with a sob.

"Yaas, I twust so!"

"What! You trust so! You want her to throw herself away on young Chipps, the auctioneer, instead of waiting fifteen years for me?" exclaimed Tom Merry indignantly.

"Chipps! Who's talkin' about Chipps?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus sharply.

"I am. She loves Chipps," said Tom Merry. "They walk out together on Sundays. He buys her chocolates in the automatic-machines. Boo-hoo!"

"Bai Jove! Pway don't cw, deah boy—"

"How c-c-can I help it? I want your advice, Gussy. Chipps is my rival. Would you advise me to kill him?"

"Gweat Scott!"

"Or would it be better for me to hire a motor-car and carry her off in the dead of night?" whispered Tom Merry.

"You uttah ass—"

"What!"

"I—I mean, you are talkin' wot, you know. As a mattah of fact—it's wathah awkward to say so, aftah your confession—but—but that young lady is already pwivate pwoperty, in a mannah of speakin'."

"Yes. That young boulder Chipps—"

"Blow young Chipps! I'm not thinkin' of Chipps. To tell you the twuth, Tom Mewwy, I am in love with Miss Chunn myself."

"You!"

"Yaas. I did not intend to tell anybody; but since you have made this weally awkward confession, I am bound to put you out of your misewy at once by tellin' you the twuth. I adore her."

"Traitor!"

"I wefuse to be chawacterised as a twaitah!"

"Beware!" hissed Tom Merry. "Beware! Ere you shall be my successful rival, I will strew the hungry churchyard with your bones! Beware!"

And the captain of the Shell rushed away.

"Well, bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus. "This is vewy we remarkable! I nevah suspected Tom Mewwy of bein' such a silly ass! Bai Jove!"

And the swell of St. Jim's went thoughtfully towards the School House. Before he reached the House, however; the figure of Monty Lowther loomed up in the gloom.

"Is that you, Gussy?"

"Yaas. But—"

"Come with me!" Lowther caught D'Arcy by the arm. "Not a word! I've got something to tell you—something I must tell you! Never mind our little differences now. This is a matter of fearful importance. Come into the silence and gloom of the whispering trees, and I will a tale unfold."

Arthur Augustus, very much surprised, allowed Lowther to march him under the trees again. Lowther tried to speak, but his voice broke into sobs.

"Gweat Scott!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, very much surprised and distressed. "What is the mattah, Lowthah? Has Knox been lickin' you?"

"Knox! Licking! Think you that such trifles, light as air, could cause this heartrending emotion?" said Monty Lowther mournfully. "Look at me, D'Arcy! Regard me! In me you behold a victim of an all-devouring passion! I love, but I am not loved! Advise me! What shall I do? Shall I seek rest and forgetfulness 'neath the icy waters of the river, or shall I imbrue these hands deep in the heart's best blood of my rival?"

"Look here, Lowthah—"

"Her name is Ann Jane," groaned Lowther. "Perhaps you have seen her. She sells cigars at the tobacco shop in Rylcombe. Have you seen the dainty way she lights a cigarette for a chap? Have you marked her graceful manner of handing you the change? Have you—"

"If you mean that you are in love with Miss Chunn—"

"Exactly!"

"Then I wegard you as an ass! As a mattah of fact, I am goin' to pwopose to that young lady myself, and ask her to wait ten years for me—"

"Traitor!" hissed Monty Lowther. And he vanished into the darkness.

Arthur Augustus walked into the School House in a very disturbed frame of mind. He was not surprised that the other fellows had also been smitten with the manifold charms of Miss Chunn. Indeed, the surprising thing, in D'Arcy's opinion, would have been if they had not been so smitten. But it was extremely awkward for the despairing lovers to choose him as a confidant. Under the circumstances, he felt that he

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could hardly be expected to sympathise with them and wish them luck.

Manners was lounging on the staircase, and the moment he saw D'Arcy his face became long and serious. He hurried towards the swell of St. Jim's.

"I've been waiting for you, Gussy!" he exclaimed. "I could not have waited much longer."

"Why not, Mannahs?"

"My heart is bursting!" Manners said tragically. "Can you hear it beat?"

"Certainly not!"

"It is like a hammer. It has beaten like that," said Manners, sinking his voice to a tragic whisper, "ever since I first saw her."

"Gweat Scott! Who?"

"Ann Jane. She—"

"Mannahs, do you mean to say that you are in love with Miss Chunn?"

"Hear me!" said Manners, dramatically raising his hand.

"Hear me! By yon eternal stars, by the misty regions of space where unknown worlds roll and whirl, I swear—"

"Pway lowah your voice, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus hastily. "You are makin' the fellows stare this way!"

"Let them stare," said Manners brokenly. "Let them stare! Soon, perhaps, they will be staring at my emaciated corpse. I love—"

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"I love—madly, insanely, pottily and dottily, I love—"

"I wish you would confide in somebody else, Mannahs," said Arthur Augustus, a little testily. "I am weally the last fellow in the world you should confide in. Undah the circs., I have no wesource but to decline your confidences."

"But you can advise me. You are an old hand at this sort of thing."

"Nothin' of the sort. I scorn the suggestion. I wegard you as an ass. Pway let go my arm!"

And Arthur Augustus jerked his arm away, and fairly ran upstairs to escape any further confidences from the love-lorn Manners.

CHAPTER 15.

Half-a-Dozen of Them!

JACK BLAKE was in the Fourth Form passage, leaning against the wall, and evidently waiting for Arthur Augustus. He started eagerly towards the elegant junior as he came up.

"Thank goodness you've come, Gussy!" he exclaimed.

"Bai Jove, what's the mattah?"

"I've something to tell you. Come into the study."

"Has something happened to Hewwies or Dig?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus in alarm.

"Worse than that!"

"Bai Jove! But, weally, Blake, as we are not on speakin' terms—"

"Come!"

"I considah—"

"Come!"

"Yaas, that's all vewy well, but—"

"Come!"

Blake dragged Arthur Augustus into Study No. 6. He closed the door, and Arthur Augustus waited uneasily. Blake's face was tragic.

"Have you ever been in love, Gussy?" he said, with a sob.

"Oh, cwumbs!"

"If you have, you can sympathise with me. Yet how can you guess the all-consuming, volcanic love that I feel for the adorable Ann Jane!"

"Ann Jane!"

"Yes, the incomparable Ann Jane—the divine Miss Chunn—"

"I wefuse to listen to anothah word!" shouted Arthur Augustus. "I wegard it as your awful nerve to fall in love with Miss Chunn. You are welcome to admire her fwom a distance, but I distinctly wefuse to allow you to fall in love with her."

And Arthur Augustus tore open the study door and marched out, and slammed the door behind him. Blake collapsed into the armchair, choking.

Digby was in the passage. He took D'Arcy's arm, as the swell of St. Jim's was marching past him without seeing him.

"Gussy, old man, I've been waiting for you. I want you to advise me."

D'Arcy stopped dead.

"I twust you are not in love, too, Dig?" he exclaimed, jamming his eyeglass into his eye, and regarding Digby wrathfully.

"How did you guess?" said Dig solemnly. "Did my face betray it? Has the canker of a secret passion emaciated my features, and written lines upon my brow?"

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"THE MAGNET" LIBRARY,
Every Monday.

Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR,"
Every Friday.

"You are lookin' just the same as usual; and, in fact, in a state of disgustin' health!" snapped Arthur Augustus.

"Ah, the pain is here!" said Digby, laying his hand upon his heart. "Here is the agony, also the anguish—"

"Then I should advise you to consult a doctor," said Arthur Augustus. "Pewwaps you are suffewin' fwom heart disease, though it is more likely to be indigestion."

"It is love, the all-pervading, all-devouring—"

"Wats! You are too young to think of anythin' of the sort. I wegard you as a widiculous ass! Pewwaps you will tell me that it is Miss Chunn you are in love with?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, utterly exasperated.

"How did you know?" cried Digby. "Ah! You have seen her? You have beheld the rosy light of her divine countenance? You have noted the magic roll of her optics?"

"Oh, wats!"

"Hear me—"

"I wefuse to heah you!" shouted D'Arcy.

And he stalked away.

But Herries was waiting for him further along the passage. Herries was leaning against the wall, his face in the shadow, and he did not seem to see D'Arcy. But he groaned deeply as the swell of St. Jim's came by. D'Arcy involuntarily halted.

"What's the mattah, Hewwies?" he asked, with concern.

Herries started, and looked up. His face was dreadfully white, and as it was in the shadow, D'Arcy could not see that the whiteness was produced by a liberal application of chalk. As it was, the pallor startled him. Herries was, as a rule, a particularly robust and healthy young person.

"Gweat Scott! Are you ill, Hewwies?" exclaimed D'Arcy in alarm.

Herries shook his head mournfully.

"Have you been smokin'?"

Herries groaned.

"No!"

"You've been eatin' something that doesn't agree with you, I suppose?" said Arthur Augustus. "You'd better see the house-dame, Hewwies. Mrs. Mimms will give you some wemedy."

"There is no remedy for what I suffer from," said Herries faintly.

"What is it, for goodness' sake?"

"Love!" groaned Herries.

Arthur Augustus gave a kind of war-whoop.

"What!"

"Love! I am in love. My heart is torn, my breast is rent, my life is broken and busted and bent," said Herries, breaking into poetry.

"Hewwies! This is widiculous! A fellow of your age has no wight to think of such things!" said D'Arcy, with great severity.

"Ah, you know not love!" said Herries sadly.

"Yaas, I do, though. But that—that's diffewent, you know. I think you must be ill, Hewwies. You ought to see the doctor."

"Can't thou minister to a mind diseased?" said Herries wildly. "Yah! Throw physie to the dogs. I'll none of it! I love! J'aime! Ich liebe! Amo! Gussy, I must tell someone. I will tell you! You shall hear the wild outpourings of a broken heart!"

"Nothin' of the sort, Hewwies. I wefuse to hear anythin' of the kind. I advise you to have a little more sense."

"Listen!" said Herries darkly. "I have a rival!"

"Weally—"

"There is a fellow in this school who is after Ann Jane—"

"Ann Jane!" shrieked D'Arcy.

"That is her name—oh, name sweeter than Desdemona or Juliet!" said Herries. "And her other name is sweeter still—the melodious name of Chunn!"

"Oh, gweat Scott, this is weally too thick!"

"I want you to help me, D'Arcy. You know what it's like. You have been in love with Cousin Ethel and the Head's niece and Glyn's sister and the girl at the draper's—"

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"You must help me! Listen! I have a rival! I know him not; but he has lurked into the cigar-shop and bought cigars—cigarettes—tobacco—just as an excuse for speaking to my Ann Jane!"

"You have no wight to call her your Ann Jane!"

"I must find him! You must help me find him! When I have found him," said Herries in a thrilling whisper, "I shall take him quietly into a dark corner and slay him!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Keep the dark secret," said Herries, "and help me to find the chap. Can you guess who it is—he is a St. Jim's chap, I know that, and has bought a lot of cigars and a meerschaum-pipe and things? Look! Here I have the deadly blade that shall drink his heart's best blood!" Herries

opened his jacket a little, and D'Arcy's horrified eyes discerned a huge carving-knife. "I am desperate! He is my rival! He dies!"

"Hewwies, you must be off your wockah!"

"Love is madness!" said Herries. "Did not Romeo rave and ramp? Did not Othello jump and stamp? Did not Antony—"

"Nevah mind those chaps, Hewwies. Take that howwible knife away. You are a feahful ass. Undah the cires.—"

"Ah, I have a suspicion!" exclaimed Herries, glaring at him. "You are my rival! Those cigars—those cigarettes—that meerschaum-pipe—traitor!"

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Die! With these hands—with this trenchant blade—flee not—I will slay you!"

Herries made a ferocious jump towards Arthur Augustus. The swell of St. Jim's gave him a terrified look, and bolted into the nearest study, and slammed the door. Herries hammered at the door furiously. The key turned in the lock.

"Go away, you awful wottah!" came D'Arcy's voice from within. "Go away!"

"Come forth!"

"I wefuse to come forth!" shrieked D'Arcy. "Go away, you murdewous lunatic! Oh! Help! Somebody take that knife away fwom him! Wescue!"

There was a sound of retreating footsteps. Herries was gone. But it was fully ten minutes before Arthur Augustus ventured to open the door of the study and look out. It happened to be Tom Merry's study, but the Terrible Three were elsewhere. There was no one in the passage; and D'Arcy stepped out of the room and breathed hard.

"I must tell the fellows! We must get hold of him and get that knife away—oh, bai Jove! What a feahful state of affairs!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "If he goes on like that, he will have to be shut up in a lunatic asylum, bai Jove!"

D'Arcy hurried down the passage to search for Blake & Co. There was a light under the door of Study No. 6, and a clink of tea-cups and saucers, and a sound of cheery voices within. Arthur Augustus opened the study door and gazed in.

Quite a merry tea-party had assembled there. Blake and Herries and Digby, Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther. Herries face was still very pale—he had not rubbed off quite all the chalk. He still had the carving-knife, but he was cutting bread with it. The tea-party all looked round at D'Arcy's astounded face. They did not look at all love-lorn now, not at all despairing or tormented.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Come in!" said Blake cheerily. "We've got poached eggs on toast, and jam—strawberry jam. What's the matter, Gussy?"

"That ass Hewwies—"

"Come in!" yelled Monty Lowther. "We've all recovered now. It's time you recovered, too, Gussy! Come and have tea, and we'll drink the health of the divine Ann Jane in strong tea!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus gazed at them, and the truth slowly dawned upon his mind. Somehow or other, they had discovered his secret while he was away from the school that afternoon, and they had waited for his return with a jape ready-planned, and they had been pulling his noble leg in concert all the time. Arthur Augustus gazed from one face to another, and met only cheery smiles and chuckles.

"Oh, you awful wottahs!" he gasped at last.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You fwightful outsiders!"

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Tom Merry, laughing. "Why shouldn't we be in love as well as you? You haven't taken out a patent, I suppose?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I love, thou lovest, he loves!" grinned Digby. "J'aime, tu aimes, il aime!"

"Ich liebe, du liebst, er liebt!" howled Manners.

"Amo, amas, amat!" chortled Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Slam!

"Come and have tea!" yelled Blake.

But Arthur Augustus did not come and have tea. He strode away down the passage in a white-heat of indignation, with yells of laughter ringing in his ears. But all the suddenly-recovered admirers of Ann Jane finished the toast and poached eggs and jam with complete satisfaction.

CHAPTER 16.

The Observed of All Observers!

THE secret was out now!

Tom Merry & Co. had not meant to tell, but such a secret could not be kept. Fellows had heard whispers and chuckling remarks from one to another, and the first mention of Ann Jane was enough for Levison and

Mellish, who had watched Arthur Augustus's peregrinations on that famous afternoon.

Levison overheard a word passed between Tom Merry and Manners, and that was enough. A quarter of an hour later half the School House knew that Arthur Augustus was in love with Miss Chunn.

It was so utterly absurd that the juniors simply yelled over it. It was the richest item Levison had ever been able to impart to eager hearers.

The story ran through the House like wildfire. The next day it was all over the New House, too.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was the cynosure of all eyes.

That was as it should be, in a way; but he did not like his present conspicuousness. He was furious. And he had a secret idea that, since all the fellows seemed to regard his infatuation as ridiculous, there was perhaps something really ridiculous in it.

When he appeared in the quadrangle, grinning young rascals asked him after Ann Jane. They asked him if Ann Jane had consented to wait twenty-five years for him, and whether she had agreed to stop growing older while he grew up. They wanted to know when the banns were to be published, and who was to give the bride away, and whether all the Fourth Form would be asked to the wedding.

Reilly demanded to be best-man—an honour that was disputed by a crowd of other fellows. Arthur Augustus fled wildly from his questioners; but he could not get away from them, and that day he had five several and separate fights on his hands.

As Arthur Augustus sometimes related, in confidential moments, his ancestors had often fought in shining armour for fair ladies, in the great days of chivalry. But his fights on account of Miss Chunn were less romantic. The D'Arcys of old could trounce a scurvy knave, and come up smiling afterwards. But Arthur Augustus, after trouncing a scurvy knave, came up with a swollen nose, or a thick ear, or a darkened eye.

During the next day or two he accumulated signs of battle, till Mr. Lathom, his Form-master, dropped on him at last, and gave him a severe lecture on the subject of quarrelsomeness, and a hundred lines to drive it home.

That day the current number of "Tom Merry's Weekly" came out, and there was a new column in it, that had never been there before. It was headed, "Births, Marriages, and Deaths," and at the top of it appeared the notice:

"D'ARCY—CHUNN—"

Then followed a glowing account of the wedding, written in Monty Lowther's best style.

The fellows roared over the announcement, and when it was brought to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's notice, he went to look for Monty Lowther, and there was another fight.

And when Arthur Augustus started on his next walk to Rylcombe, quite a little army marched after him.

Arthur Augustus saw them swarming out of the school gates, and he stopped in the lane, his face going crimson.

The juniors stopped, too, waiting for D'Arcy to lead the way. He came striding back towards them, his face furious.

"What do you wottahs want?" he demanded.

"Want!" said Gore of the Shell. "We're going for a little walk!"

"To Rylcombe!" added Levison.

"Just going to drop in to see Ann Jane!" explained Kerruish.

"Faith, and it's buying some cigars I'm after!" said Reilly.

"I wefuse to allow you to go there, you feahful wottahs! I wegard you as beasts! I think this is in wotten bad taste!"

"You haven't bought Chunn's shop, by any chance?" asked Smith minor, in surprise.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Or taken out a monopoly of Rylcombe High Street?" chuckled Bates.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus glared at them, and clenched his fists. But evidently he could not "whop" fifteen or sixteen fellows. If he started it, the whopping was likely to be on the other side. So he walked off again furiously. And the army marched on his track. It was only too evident that they meant to follow him to the tobacconist's, and enjoy the fun there, and Arthur Augustus gave it up.

He turned and walked back to St. Jim's, much to the disappointment of the juniors. They encouraged him loudly to go on; they asked him whether Ann Jane wouldn't be ratty; but Arthur Augustus heeded not. He marched back to the school, and retired to Study No. 6, where he locked himself in.

His visits to the tobacconist's ceased. He could never get out without at least a dozen watchful fellows getting after him, and he shrank from a ridiculous scene occurring at Chunn's. He consoled himself by pouring out his heart in

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NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

"HARD PRESSED!"

Another Splendid, Long, Complete School Tale of
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rhymes; but, unfortunately, his pathetic poem fell into Levison's hands. Whether he had carelessly dropped it, or whether Levison had obtained it from his pocket, was never known; but certainly one afternoon there was Levison in the quadrangle, reading out the poem to a group of delighted juniors:

"Oh, why are you far away?
Oh, why is it ever thus?
Beloved and beautiful, stay, oh, stay!
I dream of you nightly, and think by day;
Love surely was made for us!"

The juniors roared as they listened. There was a great deal more of the poem, but Arthur Augustus came up before any more could be read. As soon as he discovered what Levison was reading, he rushed straight at Levison, hitting out, and there was a struggle for the possession of the poem. It was torn into fragments, and the fragments were carried off by many hands, and both D'Arcy and Levison emerged from the combat with black eyes.

And that poem was never delivered into the fairy hands of Ann Jane.

"The silly ass is just obstinate!" Jack Blake remarked to Tom Merry, after a few days. "I believe he's getting fed-up with the rot himself, but he won't say so. I suppose what he really wants is a good licking!"

Tom Merry laughed.

"I've got an idea," he replied. "If Gussy wants to see the divine Ann Jane, why shouldn't he? He can't go to Chunn's any more, because the fellows crowd after him, but suppose Ann Jane came here!"

Blake stared.

"She wouldn't," he said. "She's a nice girl enough, and Gussy ought to be ashamed of himself for getting her name joked about in this way!"

"I know she wouldn't; but suppose she did?"

"Well, it would make Gussy wish he'd never been born, I should think!" chuckled Blake. "If a young lady came here and claimed him before all the chaps—Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, then, that's what's going to happen. You see, Gussy is a dreamy duffer, and never thinks of things as they are in real life. If Ann Jane came here and claimed him, it would bring it home to him, and he would understand that he's been playing the giddy goat! Don't you think so?"

"Yes; but she won't! It would be an awful fix for Gussy!"

"She will! Or if she won't, her double will!"

"Her double!" ejaculated Blake.

Tom Merry chuckled gleefully.

"You know how well Kerr plays girl parts in the theatricals. His Lady Teazle was a regular corker. With a blonde wig, and a high colour, and a picture hat, he could play Miss Chunn down to the ground."

Blake roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What do you think of the idea?"

Blake hugged the captain of the Shell.

"Ripping! Gorgeous! First chop! Spiffing!"

"Then we'll go over and see Figgins & Co. about it."

Five minutes later they crossed the quadrangle, and there was a consultation in Figgins's study, punctuated with yelps of laughter.

CHAPTER 17.

Nice for Arthur Augustus!

TAGGLES, the porter, was surprised.

It was a half-holiday at St. Jim's, and there was a football-match in progress between the Fourth and the Shell. There were a good many fellows in the quadrangle when the visitor arrived for D'Arcy.

Taggles stared at her blankly when she asked for Master D'Arcy.

It was the first time in his experience that a young lady in a picture-hat, a thick veil, and golden hair in ringlets, had ever presented herself at the school, and asked for a boy in the Fourth Form.

"I—I dunno about this," said Taggles, in surprise. "Are you a relation of Master D'Arcy, miss?"

"No."

"May I arsk wot your business is?"

"I wish to see him."

"But—but I dunno—"

Taggles did not know, but apparently the visitor knew, for she walked past the porter, and went on into the quadrangle, leaving Taggles staring after her blankly, and rubbing his chin. The picture hat was spotted at once in the quad. Miss Chunn was somewhat striking in her attire, and that hat was well known in Rylcombe—or, at all events, a hat exactly

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like it. The feather that stuck up from it was two feet high, at least, and was bright crimson in colour. That feather was celebrated in Rylcombe. The sight of it in the distance was sufficient to announce that Miss Chunn was coming, without a sight of her face. That feather had, indeed, caused some misgivings to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who had a secret horror of conspicuousness.

"My hat!" roared Gore. "It's Ann Jane!"

"The Chunn-bird!" yelled Levison.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Can any of you dear boys tell me where Master D'Arcy is?" asked the lady with the red feather sweetly.

"Yes, rather!" gasped Gore. "He's on the footer-ground. He's playing. But he'll come off like a shot when he knows you're here, miss."

"Will you show me the way, little boy?"

Gore snorted. He did not like being called a little boy. But he was only too glad to show the way. Indeed, twenty fellows had already grouped themselves round the red feather, eager to show the way. It was like a little army marching upon the football-ground, with the red feather floating high above, like the white plume of Navarre in olden time.

Arthur Augustus was playing that afternoon, for the Fourth against the Shell. It was close upon half-time, and the game was going strong. Figgins was taking the ball down the field, and Clifton Dane, in goal, was watching him, when the red feather came in sight. A yell from the spectators announced the arrival of Miss Chunn, and there was a loud call for Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. D'Arcy was following Figgy's run, ready to take a pass, but he stopped abruptly, and glared round. The sight of the red feather seemed to paralyse him.

"Play up!" roared Blake.

"Bai Jove! It's—it's—it's Miss Chunn!"

"Never mind who it is. You're playing footer now."

"Come off, Gussy!" bellowed Gore. "Here's a visitor for you!"

"Gussy, you're wanted!"

"Don't be rude, Gussy, and keep a lady waiting."

"Gussy—Gussy! This way, Gussy!"

"Oh, cwumbs, this is weally most awkward!"

The ball shot past D'Arcy, and was captured by Tom Merry, and rushed off. Jack Blake caught Arthur Augustus by the shoulder, and shook him.

"Can't you play?" he roared.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Keep your silly eyes open—"

"It's Miss Chunn—"

"I don't care if it's Miss Chunn, or Miss Bunn, or Miss Gunn!" howled Blake. "You'd better get off the ground. Buzz off!"

"Yaas, wathah. I agwee with you."

And Arthur Augustus ran off. Manners dropped out of the Shell team, and walked off the field. It had been agreed between the two skippers.

Arthur Augustus hastily donned his coat and muffler, and ran up to the crowd surrounding Miss Chunn.

"Oh, Arthur!" exclaimed the young lady.

D'Arcy crimsoned. Miss Chunn had never called him Arthur before; indeed, during his visits to the tobacconist's, that young lady had seemed to regard him with a good-humoured and amused toleration. He did not even know that she was aware that he was in love. He had dreamed of the day when she should call him Arthur. The day had come, but rather unfortunately. It was not exactly what he desired, to be hailed as Arthur before a crowd of grinning juniors.

"G-g-g-good-aftahnoon!" stammered Arthur Augustus, in great confusion.

"Call me Ann Jane!" murmured the young lady, in a low voice.

"Oh, weally—"

"You are glad to see me here, Arthur?"

"Oh, yaas—yaas. wathah; b-but—"

"We're all glad to see you, miss," said Levison. "It's a great honour to see you here. The Head would be pleased if he knew."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And you are going to show me your dear little study, Arthur dear?" asked the young lady.

"Oh, cwumbs! Yaas, wathah! Pway come this way!"

Arthur Augustus's face was like unto a freshly-boiled beet-root as he walked across the quadrangle with the red feather. Fellows of all Forms stared at him. He saw Kildare of the Sixth fasten a very peculiar glance upon him; Cutts & Co. of the Fifth stood and yelled with laughter; fags of the Third and Second came round in dozens.

Arthur Augustus led his guest into the School House, and up to Study No. 6. That famous apartment had often been visited by D'Arcy's feminine relations, especially Cousin

Ethel; but it was the first time that he had received there a guest unrelated to him of the feminine persuasion.

"Oh, dear, what a pretty little room!" murmured the young lady, as Arthur Augustus showed her into the study. "Dear me! Do you always keep your boots on the table, and the frying-pan on the mantel piece?"

Arthur Augustus groaned inwardly. The study certainly wasn't in a state for receiving lady visitors. But then Miss Chunn's visit was so entirely unexpected—on D'Arcy's part, at least.

"I must weally apologise for the state of my quartahs!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "The othah fellows are untiday beasts, you know!"

He tried to shut the door, but Gore had his foot in the way. Arthur Augustus gave Gore an expressive glare; but Gore did not mind. The swell of St. Jim's shrank from a personal encounter in the presence of Miss Chunn. He was only too painfully conscious of the black eye he already possessed.

"Will you go away, Goah?" he murmured.

"No fear!" said Gore calmly. And twenty or thirty voices in the passage echoed that reply. The juniors had no intention whatever of going away.

"Please don't shut the door, Arthur!" said the lady coyly. "Let all your friends come in. Please don't close the door. I am very shy!"

"Oh, cwumbs!"

It occurred to Arthur Augustus that certainly it was not a good idea to shut the door. So the door remained wide open, and some of the juniors came in, smiling. They were enjoying themselves, though Arthur Augustus was not.

"Don't mind us, Gussy!" said Levison. "We want to help you to look after Miss Chunn. By the way, I saw Knox go into Mr. Railton's study just now."

D'Arcy shuddered.

"P-p-pewwaps you would like me to show you wound the school, Miss Chunn—"

"Call me Ann Jane!" came a soft voice from behind the veil.

"Ya-a-a-a-s! Will you let me show you wound the school, A-a-ann Jane?" stammered Arthur Augustus. "This studay is weally wathah uncomfy!"

"I think I should like to rest a little first," said the lady, sinking into the armchair, with her back to the light. "You do not want to get rid of me, Arthur?"

"Certainly not, deah gal! But I—I—"

"Come and sit beside me, Arthur."

"B-b-b-but—"

"Won't you sit beside me, dear Arthur?"

"Ya-as-as—w-w-with pleasure, you know!"

Arthur Augustus—not looking at all as if it were a pleasure—sat beside the young lady. A gloved hand stole into his. An hour ago Arthur Augustus would have considered himself in the seventh heaven to sit and hold Ann Jane's hand. Now he would almost as soon have sat and held a red-hot poker. The lady appeared to be quite unconscious of the hysterical joy of the juniors who were crowding the study and the passage. She seemed to have eyes only for Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"How nice to sit with you and hold your dear hand, Arthur!" she murmured.

"Oh, bai Jove!"

"Are you happy now, Arthur dear?"

"Ya-a-a-s—fwightfully! B-b-but—"

"Doesn't he look happy?" grinned Gore. "You must not mind his blushes, Miss Chunn. Gussy is rather shy, ain't you, Gussy?"

Arthur Augustus gave Gore a homicidal look. He had never felt so utterly and supremely ridiculous in his life. The crowd in the study was growing thicker and thicker—fellows were swarming from all quarters, and struggling to get a sight of the swell of St. Jim's sitting hand-in-hand with Miss Chunn. Manners was seen in the crowd with his camera.

"Keep still!" called out Manners, as he took aim. "Smile, Gussy! Don't look as if you were going to execution! Smile!"

D'Arcy jumped up frantically.

"Mannahs, you villain, if you dare—"

Click!

"Got you!" said Manners. "I'm afraid you've spoiled the picture by moving, though! Why couldn't you sit still and smile—"

"You—you uttah wottah—"

There was a heavy tread in the passage, and a surging of the crowd.

"Cave!"

The stalwart form of Mr. Railton, the Housemaster of the School House, appeared in the study doorway. The juniors

crowded back. Arthur Augustus stood as if turned to stone. The young lady in the armchair seemed quite self-possessed.

Mr. Railton gazed at her, and gazed at D'Arcy. His brow was terrific.

"D'Arcy!"

"Ya-a-a-a-s, sir!"

"Who is this young lady?"

"M-m-m-miss Chunn, sir!" stuttered D'Arcy.

"You know perfectly well that junior boys are not allowed to have lady visitors, above all without asking permission!" said Mr. Railton sternly. "Miss Chunn, I am sorry, but—"

"It's all right, sir," said Miss Chunn, with a startling change of voice. "This is only a little joke on Gussy, sir!"

"Wha-at!"

That voice seemed to electrify Arthur Augustus. He could not believe his ears at first. He turned an infuriated look upon the veiled young lady.

"You—you wottah—you—you—" Words failed him.

The red feather rose from the armchair. Miss Chunn removed her veil and her hat, and with the hat came the golden hair. A face highly-coloured was revealed—but in spite of the high colour, the features of Kerr of the Fourth were easily recognisable now that the veil was gone.

Mr. Railton looked at him blankly.

"Kerr!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, sir!" said Kerr demurely. "It's only amateur theatricals, sir—I'm practising."

"Oh, I see!" said Mr. Railton, his face breaking into a smile. "I understood—Knox certainly said—however, no matter. There is no harm in amateur theatricals, but you should not appear out of doors in feminine attire, Kerr."

"Very well, sir."

And Mr. Railton left the study. Arthur Augustus gazed at Kerr. Kerr proceeded calmly to take off his skirt—he had his Etons underneath. Arthur Augustus seemed almost petrified. His first feeling had been of relief, that it was not really Miss Chunn—but there was fury in his noble face now. He came to himself as Kerr moved towards the door, and simply jumped at him.

"Kerr, you wottah! You spoofah! You beast! I—I—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came in a thunderous roar from the passage.

"Go it, Arthur! Go it, Arthur dear! Ha, ha, ha!"

Kerr fled. He dashed down the passage with his disguise under his arm, chuckling; and Arthur Augustus dashed ferociously on his track. The swell of St. Jim's overtook him as he reached the stairs, and collared him, and they closed. There was a howl of laughter from the crowd as they rolled down the stairs together.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go it, Arthur dear!"

"Go it, Ann Jane!"

The two juniors stopped on the first landing, rolling over. Arthur Augustus was pommelling away frantically, and Kerr was pommelling, too. Half the school seemed to be collected on the stairs, and in the passage, cheering on the combatants. Kerr tore himself away at last, with his skirt in shreds, and his wig in fragments, and his hat in tatters. He dashed out of the School House. Arthur Augustus sat up on the stairs, gasping. He, too, was almost in rags—and his other eye was black now. The combat had been terrific while it lasted.

Arthur Augustus staggered up, amid yells of laughter. He stared ferociously at the crowd of yelling juniors.

"You uttah wottahs—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You wotten beasts—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy stalked away furiously to Study No. 6 and locked himself in. But for a long time outside the study there sounded the yells of the School House fellows, laughing like hyenas.

Whether that ridiculous scene in the study had made Arthur Augustus realise that he was playing the "giddy ox," as Blake expressed it—or not—certainly that was the end of D'Arcy's love-affair. From that day forth there were no more pensive moods, no more poetry, and no more visits to the tobacconist's in Rylcombe. Arthur Augustus had been cured, after a day or two—during which time his dignity slowly recovered from the wounds it had received—matters were restored to their old footing in Study No. 6. Which was a very satisfactory result of the efforts of Tom Merry & Co. in Looking After Gussy!

THE END.

(Another splendid, long, complete tale of TOM MERRY & CO. next week, entitled "HARD PRESSED!" by Martin Clifford. Order your Copy in Advance, and don't forget to order "CHUCKLES!" at the same time.)

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"HARD PRESSED!"

WALK UP! WALK UP! WALK UP! MONEY PRIZES FOR READERS!



Our Weekly Prize Page.

LOOK OUT FOR YOUR WINNING STORYETTE!

SPOILT THE COMPLIMENT.

Mrs. Bigg: "Jane, wasn't that gentleman asking for me?"

Jane: "No, mum. He said the lady he wanted to see was about forty, so I said it couldn't be you."

Mrs. Bigg: "Quite right, Jane. You may have the afternoon off."

Jane: "Thank you, mum. I said it couldn't be you, as you are about fifty."

Mrs. Bigg: "And while you are out you must look for a new job."—Sent in by N. Clement, Manchester.

SOMETHING ABOUT CATS.

A schoolboy, asked to write something about cats, wrote the following:

"Cats that are made for little boys to maul and tease are called Maltese cats. Some cats are known by their purrs, and are called Persian cats. A very fine cat is called the Magnificat. Cats that have bad tempers are called Angora cats, while cats with deep feelings are called feline cats."—Sent in by Miss A. Adams, Magor, Mon.

THE REASON.

"No," declared the young man, with a touch of sadness in his voice; "it may be that some day I shall be happy, but at present it is beyond me."

His companions were interested.

"There is a girl I dearly love," went on the unhappy one. "She would have me if I asked her; but I dare not. I really cannot marry on two thousand pounds a year."

Amazement was depicted on every face.

"You can't marry on two thousand pounds a year?" gasped one. "Why not?"

"Ah!" sighed the young man. "Simply because I haven't the two thousand pounds a year."—Sent in by Miss O. Russell, Cardiff.

NOT WHAT SHE MEANT.

The small boy was being reproved by his mother.

"Willie, why can't you be good?" she asked.

"I'll be good for a ha'penny," was the surly reply.

"But you must not be bribed," murmured his mother.

"You should copy your father, and be good for nothing."—Sent in by F. Allen, Colchester.

ANOTHER ONE.

A man was driving a party of old women to a mothers' meeting; when he passed a friend of his, who, seeing his passengers, called out:

"Where are you taking that lot?" he asked.

"I be going to Burnham (burn 'em)," answered the driver.

"Oh, are you? Wait a few minutes while I get my missus!"—Sent in by F. J. Birt, Bristol.

REFUSED TO BE BOSSED.

"But, madam," said the surgeon at the hospital, after the woman who had been knocked down by a motor-car had recovered consciousness, "why didn't you stop when the policeman on duty at the cross-roads held up his hand? If you had stopped, you would not be here now!"

"What! Me stop when Jim Maginnis holds up his hand!" snorted the indignant patient. "I'd have you know I'm his wife, and he never saw the day when he could boss me!"—Sent in by E. Blakemore, Blakenhall.

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"THE MAGNET" LIBRARY, Every Monday.

PITIED THE OTHER.

Pat was visiting a museum, and came across a strange-looking object which possessed no head or arms. Mystified, he called to an attendant, and inquired what it was.

"That," said the man, "means the Victory."

"Then, begorra," ejaculated Pat, "if that be Victory, I'd no' like to see the other fellow!"—Sent in by Miss W. Colledge, Australia.

THE DIFFERENCE.

Tommy White: "What is the difference between a cat and a comma?"

Billy Green: "I'll give it up."

Tommy White: "A cat has its claws at the end of its paws, a comma its pause at the end of its clause."—Sent in by J. Johnston, Coatbridge.

NOT FOR HIRE.

A small boy, who was sitting next to a very haughty lady in a crowded omnibus, kept on sniffing in a most annoying manner. At last the lady could no longer stand it, and turned to the lad.

"Boy, have you got a handkerchief?" she demanded.

The small boy looked at her for a few seconds, and then, in a very dignified tone, came his answer:

"Yus, I 'ave; but I don't lend it to strangers!"—Sent in by P. Bastick, East Twickenham.

A LONG TIME.

He was the sole passenger on the notoriously slow railway. He was used to the long stoppages and the late arrival of the trains, but on the present occasion all records were to be broken. He called to the guard, and tried to while away the time by chatting.

"I am an old servant of the company," remarked the guard, "having been on this train for fifty years."

"Have you really?" murmured the weary passenger. "What station did you get in at?"—Sent in by D. Littlewood, Halifax.

A BAD COMPLAINT.

A young doctor, very much in love with a young lady, decided to put his fate to the test.

"Do you know," he said to the girl, "I have a heart affection for you?"

"Have you had it lung?" she coyly inquired.

"Oh, yes! I feel I shall live-r troubled life without you," he murmured fervently.

"Then you had better asth-ma," she softly said.—Sent in by W. Emanuel, Abertillery.

THE ART OF BOOK-KEEPING.

Considerable attention was attracted by an advertisement which appeared in the local paper. It read, "Book-keeping taught in one lesson. Fee, one shilling."

Needless to say, when he first opened his class, there were plenty of students. But before he commenced he collected all the shillings. Then, turning to the class with a bland smile, he said:

"The whole art of book-keeping hinges on three words—never lend them!"

With that he left the room, and was never seen again in the neighbourhood.—Sent in by S. Abbott, Leyton.

MONEY PRIZES OFFERED!

Readers are invited to send ON A POSTCARD Storyettes or Short, Interesting Paragraphs for this page. For every contribution used the senders will receive a Money Prize.

ALL POSTCARDS MUST BE ADDRESSED The Editor, "The Gem" Library, Gough House, Gough Square, Fleet Street, London, E.C.

THIS OFFER IS OPEN TO READERS IN ALL PARTS OF THE WORLD. No correspondence can be entered into with regard to this Competition, and all contributions enclosed in letters, or sent in otherwise than on postcards, will be disregarded.

Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR," Every Friday.

SECRET SERVICE!



The Opening Chapters of a Grand New Serial Story. By AGENT "No. 55."

NOTE!

The author has, for obvious reasons, to conceal his real identity under the pen-name of Agent "No. 55." Concerning his position, I am allowed to say no more than this: that if his real name were revealed it would cause something like consternation in Diplomatic and Secret Service circles.

THE EDITOR.

THE FIRST INSTALMENTS.

Jerry Osborne, a young Britisher taking a holiday in Berlin, goes to the assistance of a man who has been knocked down by a motor-car in the street in

• THE GERMAN CAPITAL.

To his surprise he recognises in the injured man his employer, Mr. Muller, the head of the London office in which Jerry works. After the accident Mr. Muller's brain seems to be affected; he has lost his memory, and mutters continually. As

THE INJURED MAN'S ONLY FRIEND

in Berlin, Jerry is asked by the German police to accompany him home to England. The lad therefore takes charge of his employer. He is surprised to note how much attention his charge attracts during the train journey to the frontier.

At Flushing Jerry is attacked by several Germans, and in the scuffle Mr. Muller is knocked down. The blow restores him to his full senses, and Jerry is amazed to see him rush off with his aggressors to catch the steamer, which Jerry himself just misses. He is pondering over the strange turn events have taken, when a stranger introduces himself. He is an English airman and inventor, named Max Elton, and Jerry finally accompanies him to his lonely house on the marshes about seventy miles from Flushing. Subsequently Jerry makes a compact of friendship with Elton, who believes himself to be in danger from secret emissaries of the German Government. Jerry discovers the reality of the danger when, on returning suddenly to the house one day, he finds it in the hands of Muller and his friends. The lad tells the Germans that Elton is away, and with that they bundle him on board a motor-boat, which is bound for the Hook. He eludes his captors, however, and contrives to warn Elton, with the result that Muller and his friends get a warm reception when they return to the attack. The raiders are beaten off, leaving one of their number—a sullen fellow named Hendricks—in the hands of Elton and Jerry.

(Now go on with the story.)

Muller Gets Busy.

High in the blue sky a large speck was moving, and the crews of Dutch and English fishing-boats noticing it, stared with a stolid curiosity.

That speck was Max Elton's aero-hydroplane, and in it Jerry Osborne was enjoying his longest flight in the air. He was in the gayest of spirits, and his companion, not occupied for the moment with anything serious, was as light-hearted as he.

They had been busy for the last few days. From wounded Hendricks they had been able to extract nothing. The sullen spy had shut his lips obstinately, and flatly refused to answer a single question; neither threat nor bribe could make him open his mouth. They had taken him to the nearest town, and handed him over to the police, charged with attempted burglary.

Then Elton had taken Jerry with him for a flight across the wide extent of the Zuyder Zee, and, aided by powerful glasses, Jerry had seen something of the elaborate work going forward.

Some draining work was being done, but not enough to employ the enormous number of men gathered together. Elton had estimated as many as six hundred thousand. But not a uniform was to be seen.

"I got down there once," Elton told Jerry, "close by where a big gang was at work, and I talked to some of them. I spoke in Dutch, and I was answered in German. Then an official came along, and politely asked me to shift. He knew who I was all right, and he didn't say he doubted I'd got there by accident; but it was evident I wasn't to stay. Those thousands of men are German soldiers dressed as labourers, and they're waiting orders to mobilise, which will be just as soon as the Kaiser thinks the time is ripe to strike a blow. Follow the papers, Jerry, and you'll gather how things are being worked up to make that plausible. India is getting restive—we've had to increase our troops; France and Austria and Italy are at loggerheads, and there's a rebellion brewing in Algeria."

"Canada and Australia would help us if war came."

"Yes, if industrial troubles don't choke them, as seems likely. And don't forget this, Jerry, when Germany does

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"HARD PRESSED!"

make war, she'll do it suddenly—blow first and word afterwards sort of thing. When Canada and Australia arrive on the scene, Germany reckons there'll be no England left. It's fellows such as you and I are out to prevent that reckoning coming true."

In other parts of the great inland sea they had seen a vast fleet of large barges, some in use; these were to be for transporting the Kaiser's invading army. On the islands of Urk and Schokland, huge buildings had been erected quite recently. Some of these were aircraft sheds, said Elton. On more than one evening he had seen 'planes leave the islands, and almost invariably they travelled to the eastward.

"Spying work in England, and our Government does nothing to prevent it!" Elton said bitterly. "But I'm going to open their eyes a bit soon. And don't forget, Jerry, if anything happens to me, that duty becomes yours. What you're seeing now no other Englishman except myself has seen. So take a good look. After what has just happened, it would be a bold insurance company that'd take me as a risk. I've some papers that I mean to duplicate and give you the copy. If ever you hear of me coming to grief, go at once to the Foreign or War Secretary and give them to him. Both of 'em know my name, so you'll have no trouble."

And Jerry Osborne felt proud that he should be thought worthy of such confidence, his mind made up to act as Max Elton would act, his country and her flag more important than his own safety or even life.

But at present he was going back to take up his work in Muller's office. This was secret service work he had entered upon, and in such where diamond is employed to cut diamond, the weapons of fighting are something more than pistols and swords or knives. Muller had made him an offer while on the motor-boat; he was going to appear to accept it. He and Elton had talked it over, and it was plain Muller's offer meant something more than was apparent.

Besides, there was a sheet of paper Jerry had found near the spot where his fight in the dark with Muller had taken place. It was innocent enough—merely a list of names, but the first was that of the Roslea works, which were the headquarters of Government aircraft construction. Others were names of British ports.

It might be—it might not, but a sinister meaning seemed to lurk there.

So it happened that five days after Mr. Muller, agent for

motor machinery, walking into his office in Queen Victoria Street, was surprised to see sitting there Jerry Osborne.

Muller blinked, expressed his surprise, inquired what it was Osborne wanted.

"Can I speak to you, sir, for a few minutes?"

"Why, yes; but, surely, Osborne, your holiday is not yet finished? However, come into my room."

And when they were there, and the door closed, Muller looked at his clerk and asked "Well?"

"The offer you made me, Mr. Muller—forty pounds, didn't you say?"

Muller eyed him without moving a muscle, and Jerry stood the examination well.

"How came you to leave the hotel at the Hook where I advised you to stay, Osborne?" he inquired.

"Well, Mr. Muller, you didn't tell me how long I was to stay. I understood it was only for a short time, and as you didn't turn up, I thought you'd either have forgotten or meant me to see you at the office."

It sounded all right. Muller had not gone to the Hook. That one chance shot Jerry had fired had inflicted a wound, and, although it was not serious, Muller fearing trouble as a result of his failure to wipe out Elton, had taken the motor-boat to a secure hiding-place, there to lie up for a few days before going to England.

That Jerry had been his opponent in the desperate fight the falling ladder had terminated had been concealed from him by the darkness. And his earlier summing-up of Jerry Osborne as only a stupid cricket and football loving young Englishman still remained.

"You did quite right, and I am most pleased to see you here," he told Jerry. "Didn't you find the hotel comfortable?"

"The bed-room was very nice indeed, and the food I had good."

"That's right. Well, you recall what I said, Osborne, and I'm glad you have accepted my offer. Every young man wouldn't give up his annual holiday. I want you to help me in taking the models to show to likely customers—you'll find them a bit heavy. I'm not sure when I shall start, but I want you to come here every day, and then if I'm not ready you can go off where you like." He paused to consider a moment; then: "Would you like some of the money now, just to help you along?"

"No!" Jerry said promptly.

The idea of taking this spy's money even as a blind wasn't pleasant.

"Save it to the end, and have it in a lump," Muller said, and smiled. "Ah, well, just as you like!"

So for forty-eight hours Jerry found himself with nothing to do; but on the third morning came a letter that bucked him considerably. It was from Elton, and had been posted in Edinburgh.

"Dear Jerry," wrote Elton, "I am enclosing a duplicate of the papers of which I spoke. I won't insult you by asking you to take care they don't go out of your possession, but please remember what I told you to do with them in the event of anything happening to me. You'll wonder at me sending such valuable stuff this way. My dear chap, there's nothing safer—in England—than the common or garden post-office, bless it! I'm coming South, and may see you in a day or so after you get this. Cheer-ho!"

That morning when Jerry went to the office he found Muller was ready for him, alert and businesslike.

"Here's the stuff, Osborne." And he indicated ten beautifully-made little models of the essential parts of an engine, such as is used for the propulsion of aircraft. Though each was but small, the weight was considerable, and Jerry was told to pack each carefully into a wooden box, and all into a flat leather case similar to a suit, or week-end, case, but somewhat deeper.

"Be careful you pack them so that they won't shake," directed Muller. "And we'll be starting at eleven o'clock."

The models were simple-looking and obvious enough, yet, handling them, Jerry was conscious of a feeling of apprehension. If his work were simply to carry the case for his employer with them to Roslea—their destination—the payment promised him was absurdly exaggerated. He would have liked to examine the models, but with Muller at his desk within six feet of him, to do so was impossible.

At eleven o'clock they left the office, to find a powerful-looking motor-car waiting outside.

"We're going down in this," observed Muller, opening the door and indicating Jerry's seat. "Not much longer than by train, and I don't want to risk injuring the models by any jolting. Get in, Osborne; the case can go on the floor."

It seemed a pretty thin explanation, but Jerry wasn't offering any objection. He enjoyed the ride, the day being fine and sunny. At Bury St. Edmunds they had a capital lunch.

Great Strike Drama!

IT'S HARD TO GET ON

List of the Principal Characters:

GOFFREY NORMAN. *The young signalman, wrongfully dismissed by the Central British Railway Co.*

BLIND JOE HANSARD. *The blind driver. "I shall never see the lamps again!"*

GEORGE HANSARD. *Blind Joe's wastrel son. "I do a man's work. Why shouldn't I have a man's pleasures!"*

HETTY HANSARD. *A really fine heroine, as sweet as she is brave.*

SIR JAMES MELROSE. *The harsh director of the Central British Railway.*

ARTHUR MELROSE. *The villain. "He is his father's spy!"*

MAD MAX. *The agitator.*

THE REVEREND PETER WHITE. *A man who knows and loves the poor. A peacemaker.*

See **TUESDAY'S**

Boy's Journal

ONE PENNY

"By the way, Osborne," Muller said carelessly, shortly after leaving the hotel, "I was sorry that accident to my boat prevented you from seeing your friend Elton again. I did not see him, after all; very disappointed. When I called a second time he was still away. Good thing that you didn't wait there by yourself for him. Heard anything of him?"

Jerry was on the alert. In spite of Muller's failures he feared the man, and was by no means certain that he was wholly ignorant of the part Jerry had played.

"As a matter of fact I heard from Mr. Elton quite recently," he replied, with much candour. "He asked if I were well."

"Where was he then?"

"Flying somewhere in Scotland, I believe."

"Ah! I hope to have the pleasure of seeing him before long!" said Muller carelessly. "Bad luck missing him before."

Shortly after three o'clock the car passed through Norwich, little more than half an hour's quick running from where, on that deserted strip of the Norfolk coast between Caister and Mundesley, the English Government, at last stirred into action by public opinion, had built large works for the construction of fighting air craft. These covered an immense tract of ground, for, in addition to the machine sheds, the fitting works, hangars for the reception of completed planes, was an extensive flying-ground, bounded on one side by a treble row of small houses, where the men employed at the works lived with their families. There were rows of warehouses and store-rooms, shops, a gymnasium, workmen's club-house; in fact, a veritable town had come into existence.

On the outskirts of the village of Hempstall, at a dismal-looking public-house, the car drew up, and, taking him into the room he had ordered, Muller gave Jerry his instructions.

"I want you, Osborne, to go at once to the Roslea works, taking the models with you," he said. "With the director I have an appointment, and already we are late; but it is impossible that I can appear to so important official as the director dressed thus. I have brought a change of clothes with me, and while you are going on ahead I will change into them."

He was unfastening, as he spoke, a small kit-bag he had brought, and, ignorant of Muller's real character, Jerry would have smiled at the notion of this changing of clothes. But he was far from smiling. That this visit to Roslea had some sinister motive he was convinced, but although he had been cudgelling his brains during the journey no explanation had come to him.

"The works are but a mile from here," went on Muller. "But the case is heavy, so I will send the chauffeur with you. And remember what I said about carefulness. These models are most delicate. Take this letter with you. Without it the gatekeeper will not let you enter; for, as a Government building holding many secrets, the authorities are very strict as to who is admitted. I will follow you as quickly as I can, but you will wait for me in the waiting-room of the director's office until I come. And, above all things, allow no one to take from you the case or its contents. And now, go down and tell Ellis he is to accompany you to Roslea."

Five minutes later Muller came out, half-dressed, the case in his hands. With an admonition to Jerry to lose no time, he handed it over, pointed out the road they were to take, and went indoors.

"What is the game? What is the meaning of all this?"

The questions hammered at Jerry's brain, but no reply was forthcoming. He went on, walking in step with the chauffeur, each holding one handle of the case. The chauffeur, a short, stolid-faced man, did not speak, and Jerry did not want to talk. Somehow he had the feeling that his companion was watching him. The walls surrounding the Roslea works were within five hundred yards, when the stolid chauffeur broke the silence.

"We must get on; we be late!" he cried.

"All right; plenty of time!" Jerry rejoined.

"No; we were told to hurry," the man said, quickening his pace, and there seemed almost a command in his voice that Jerry resented.

Several planes flying in the aerodrome attracted Jerry's attention until the gates of the works were reached, and here they were challenged. Jerry produced his letter.

"All right!" said the gatekeeper, having perused it. "You come in, but not this man."

Without any demur the chauffeur turned back, and Jerry found himself lugging the bag along a gravelled walk leading to the main building. Here again he was challenged, but the letter got him through. Evidently Muller was known and expected. Ultimately Jerry was shown into a small waiting-room adjoining another, on the door of which was painted "Director."

"Mr. Muller will be here soon," he explained to his guide, who nodded, and sat down on a chair by the door.

Five minutes passed, and then a step sounded outside the door, and a cry broke from Jerry, for the man swiftly crossing to the private door was Max Elton. In an instant Jerry was out of his chair and gripping Elton's hand.

"My dear chap, where've you sprung from? Glad to see you, anyway. What news?" exclaimed the inventor.

A sense of relief came upon Jerry. Now Elton was here all was right. His keen brain would solve the mystery. In hurried words he told of the errand that had brought him, and at the first mention of Muller's name Elton's face became animated.

"Here, hold on!" he cried.

"Sir David Went wanted to see you, sir, immediately you came in," interrupted the man who had been mounting guard over Jerry.

"Go to Jericho! Here, quick, Jerry; let us get the case open!" Elton cried excitedly. "Great heavens! If I'm right! But it seems impossible. A man could never be such a fiend!"

Dropping on his knees, he pulled at the straps of the case, yelling to the man at the door to fetch a bath of water, the bigger the better.

"Hurry, you fool, unless you want to be in bits!" he shouted. And the man fled.

Jerry, scared by the fear of impending tragedy, stood motionless. The inner door opened, and a tall, grey-moustached man, aroused by the sudden clamour, watched Elton with amazement.

"What's all this, Elton?" he demanded sharply.

It was Sir David Went himself who spoke, but Elton paid no heed. Muttering to himself, he was working feverishly with a clasp knife at the leather around the lock of the case. Then he put his ear to the hole, listening intently.

"Clockwork, by thunder!" he shouted. "This case is filled with infernal machines. Will that fool never come with the water? Who knows when these devilish instruments are timed to explode?"

"Infernal machines!" Sir David's face went grey. "Who brought them here?" And he looked at Jerry.

"I did," the young man answered.

And at that the director whipped a revolver from his pocket, covering Jerry. He shouted, and half a dozen men came running. Then stumbled into the room a man bearing a bath, from which the water slopped at every step, and into it, the case at last ripped open, Elton took one by one the packages within, and laid them carefully in the water.

All was confusion and wonder. Not until afterwards was it realised with what courage Max Elton had acted.

Leaping to his feet, Elton approached Jerry.

"Where did you leave Muller?" he cried.

Jerry told him.

"Then, by the Lord Harry, this time we'll get the skunk!" Elton shouted. "Come along, Jerry!"

"Mr. Elton, this person—" intervened the director.

"Oh, he's all right! Come along, old man! We'll cook that fellow's goose this time." And, grabbing at Jerry, Elton rushed out of the room, out of the building, and down the gravelled path.

Side by side the pair sprinted back for the dismal public-house. There was no time for further explanation, but Jerry was not surprised they did not meet Muller on the road. Realisation of the ghastly plot of which he had been made an ignorant accessory had come to him, and he was burning to lay hands on the German.

Gaining the road, they came upon a small Ford car idling along, a bearded old gentleman at the wheel. Elton stopped, threw up an arm, and the motorist came to a standstill.

"In the King's name!" shouted Elton.

He hustled the amazed motorist out of the driver's seat. Jerry sprang in behind, and off tore the car for Hempstall village, the protests of the owner, inarticulate with rage and astonishment at the drastic treatment to which he and his property were being subjected, falling upon deaf ears.

Drawn Blank.

Elton shoved the Ford along at top gallop, and within thirty seconds of the change of drivers the public-house came into sight.

"That's the place!" shouted Jerry, behind Elton's head, and the Ford pulled up outside the inn with a tearing jar, the suddenness of which almost shot its owner into the wind-screen.

Like lightning Elton had climbed across him, and was entering the doorway. Jerry also got out, hurrying to the ruinous coach-house in which Muller's big car had been put. Swinging back the half-dropping door, Jerry found the car gone.

Nor was he surprised. Plain as a pikestaff to him now was the dastardly crime in which he had been innocently involved. By some means or other Muller had contrived an

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 309.

Another Splendid, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's. Order Early.

appointment with the director of the Roslea Works, and had conceived the awful scheme of blowing up the buildings by the introduction of infernal machines in the form of engine models. These would explode at any set time, to be accurately ensured by the use of delicate clockwork. But Muller had not intended risking his own life. Someone else was to convey the agents of destruction into Roslea, and the someone had been himself, bribed with the promise of forty pounds, money that Muller knew well he would never have to pay.

Jerry understood Muller's ruse of the necessity of changing his clothes. When he had been sent to tell the chauffeur Muller had been setting the clockwork. The chauffeur had gone with him to the works to ensure the conveyance of the infernal machine into Roslea. And now Muller had gone, as fast as he could, on learning his innocent confederate had done his work.

A hot rage possessed Jerry. He had been made a fool of. Why had he not suspected the truth of Muller's infernal ingenuity? But for the providential appearance of Max Elton, the spy's plan must have succeeded, Roslea would be a mass of flaming destruction, and himself, with only Heaven knew how many other unfortunates, lying dead, or in agonising torment.

"Jerry, our man left here half an hour ago, maybe more, so the landlord says," said Elton, meeting Jerry as he ran back. "Went along the road to Norwich. We'll follow him."

The bearded, goggled, and ancient owner of the Ford had not left his seat, and Elton gave him little opportunity to raise objections.

"Sorry to put you to any inconvenience, sir; but this is a matter of life and death. Borrow your car we must," he said. "Will you go with us, or stay here? Going towards Norwich, or further?"

Mumbling in his beard, the old gentleman said something that seemed to be an inquiry whether this high-handed young man was a policeman.

"No, but I'm after a criminal, and it's in the King's service your car has been borrowed," Elton replied.

And then with Jerry aboard the car was sent on the move, the old gentleman still with them. And Elton must have astonished him with the pace he got out of the car. Elton was a past master in the art of driving. There was need for haste, and some of the risks he took were startling. Outside Norwich, an indignant policeman ran into the road, holding up his arms, and Elton stopped.

"You're going at an illegal pace, and—" he began; but Elton cut him short.

"Pace be jiggered, man! Have you seen a big red car, chauffeur in green uniform, one passenger, pass along here? Answer, man, answer!"

And the constable, scared by Elton's vehemence, forgot his duty, and did answer. No; no car of such description had passed that way, and then he took out his notebook, asking for name and address, but Elton turned from him impatiently, for the old gentleman, in a thick, wheezy voice was telling him that he had seen such a car, had passed it, in fact, but on the road from North Walsham.

Ignoring the officer, Elton swung the Ford about, taking the direct road for North Walsham. But inquiry there proved fruitless; no car like that of Muller's had been seen. Muller had got away. To spend further time hunting him was waste.

"Wouldn't it be as well to leave a description and the number of the car—I took note of that—with the police?" asked Jerry, as they were about to leave the police-station.

"Better dodge than that, old man," replied Elton, who had recovered his usual serenity. "I'll notify the local branch of the A. A. The police are all right, but I'd back Stenson Cooke's fellows to be of more use in this matter. Good lad to have noted the number, Jerry."

But such praise did not console Jerry a lot. He was disgusted with himself. Why hadn't he seen through Muller's design? However, no use crying over spilled milk.

When they got outside, they found the Ford gone. The owner had taken the opportunity to get rid of the companions who had spoiled his afternoon outing.

"And I don't wonder!" laughed Elton. "It was a bit rough on the old chap, but we were justified. You'd better come back with me to Roslea, Jerry. I'm anxious to hear from Sir David Went just what he knows of our friend, Muller."

(Another splendid long instalment of this grand new serial next Wednesday. Please order your copy in advance.)

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 309.

"THE MAGNET" LIBRARY,
Every Monday.

Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR,"
Every Friday.

A NEW FREE CORRESPONDENCE EXCHANGE.

The only names and addresses which can be printed in these columns are those of readers living in any of our Colonies who desire Correspondents in Great Britain and Ireland.

Colonists sending in their names and addresses for insertion in the columns of this popular story-book must state what kind of correspondent is required—boy or girl; English, Scotch, Welsh, or Irish.

Would-be correspondents must send with each notice two coupons, one taken from "The Gem," and one from the same week's issue of its companion paper, "The Magnet" Library. Coupons will always be found on page 2 of both papers, and requests for correspondents not containing these two coupons will be absolutely disregarded.

Readers wishing to reply to advertisements appearing in this column must write to the advertisers direct. No correspondence with advertisers can be undertaken through the medium of this office.

All advertisements for insertion in this Free Exchange should be addressed: "The Editor, 'The Gem' Library, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C."

A. H. Green, Deakin Street, Beulad, Victoria, Australia, wishes to correspond with readers of the "Gem."

E. Cuthbertson, P.O. Box 192, Germiston, Transvaal, South Africa, wishes to correspond with girl readers living in England.

W. E. Herbert, 149, Prairie Street, Rosettenville, Johannesburg, South Africa, wishes to correspond with a girl reader living in Great Britain or the Colonies, age 17-19.

Pieter Klem, 7, Avenue, 7 Street, Melville, Johannesburg, South Africa, wishes to correspond with readers interested in stamps, age 13-15.

W. Maytham, 3, Scanlan Street, Queenstown, South Africa, wishes to correspond with a girl reader living in Great Britain, age 17.

R. Gordon, 6, Raitt Street, Newtown, Johannesburg, South Africa, wishes to correspond with a girl reader living in Canada, age 14-16.

T. Brownlee, Box 57, Queenstown, South Africa, wishes to correspond with readers in Australia.

Sapper C. Johnson, 85 Company, R.G.A., Colaba, Bombay, India, wishes to correspond with a girl reader, age 18.

G. Chaplin, 300, Furny Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, wishes to correspond with readers.

A. Tytler, Station B, Post-office, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, wishes to correspond with a girl reader living in Canada.

A. Blakeley, 34, Scarboro' Road, Toronto, Canada, wishes to correspond with boy readers in England and India, age 16-17.

L. Dawson, 3930, Commercial Street, Vancouver, B.C., Canada, wishes to correspond with girl readers in England or Australia, age 17-19.

T. Farries, 379, St. John's Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, wishes to correspond with girl readers, age 15-16.

E. A. Fathers, Box 14, Geraldton, Western Australia, wishes to correspond with readers in Canada, India, New Zealand, age 17-18.

C. F. Carter, 8, Smythe Road, W. Subiaco, Perth, West Australia, wishes to correspond with a reader in India or Ireland.

C. Govers, 1, Arkle Street, E. Prahran, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, wishes to correspond with a boy reader in India, age 12-13.

Miss Alma Taylor, 13, St. Phillip Street, Abbotsford, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, wishes to correspond with readers in the British Isles and America, age 18-19.

R. Griffin, 21, Sebastopol Street, Caulfield, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, wishes to correspond with readers in England or Scotland, age 15-16.

The Editor specially requests Colonial Readers to kindly bring the Free Correspondence Exchange to the notice of their friends.

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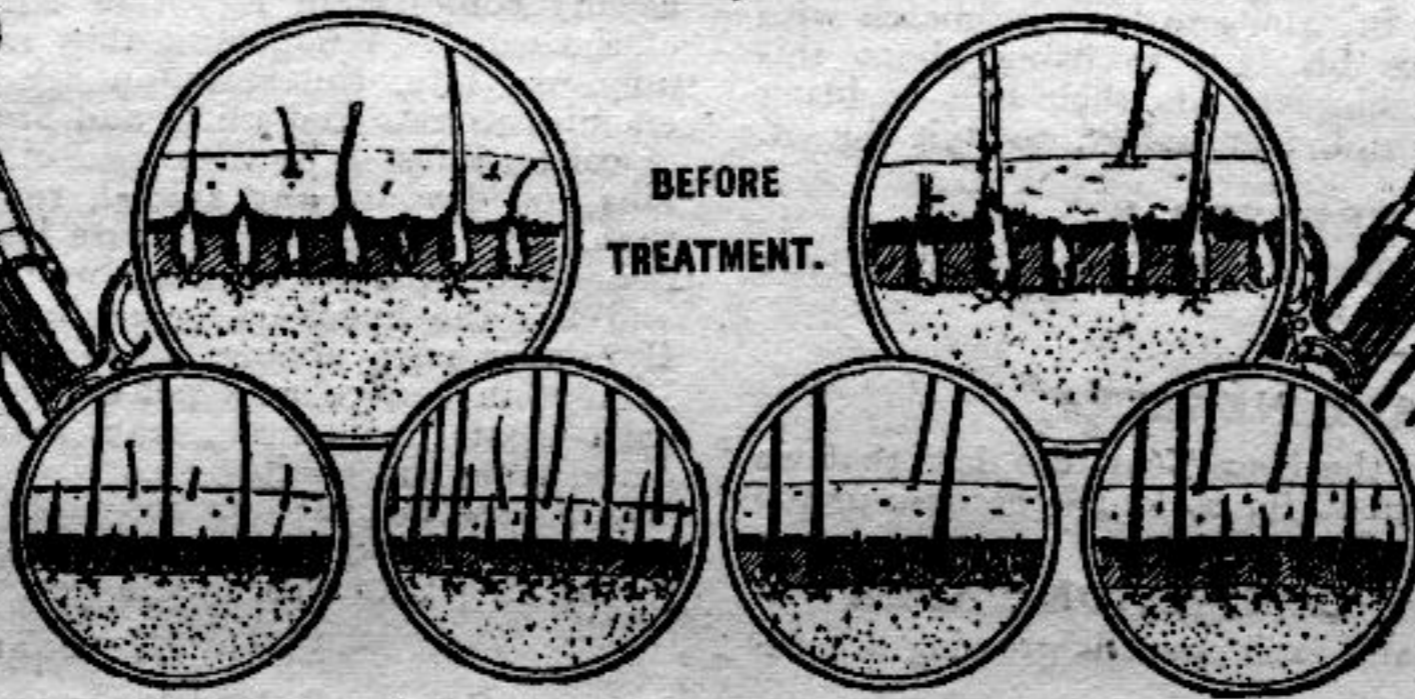
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1st day.

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1st day.

7th day.

In the enlarged drawings above are seen on the right, horse's hair, and on the left, human hair as revealed by the microscope. Note the similar conditions before the treatment with "Hair-Drill," the bare patches with choked-up hair follicles, the excessive accumulation of scurf. Note also the immediate effect of this wonderful method and the result of consistent use.

has had the particulars reprinted for the benefit of prematurely old-looking men and women.

In the first place, these experiments have proved that in animal life the hair-growing principle is the same in all but degree.

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Another important fact elicited is that the hair papilla (feeding centre) whence the hair-root starts, practically never dies, and that the hair may have disappeared years ago and yet be regrown if the papilla receives the proper stimulation and nourishment.

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In cases where there was a total lack of hair, where it was falling or becoming thin, and where it was fading and growing out of condition, the result of "Harlene Hair-Drill" treatment was the same—with no will effort on the part of the subject treated, healthy, luxuriant and abundant hair was regrown.

A LOGICAL CONCLUSION.

Therefore, if it is possible to obtain such results in cases so difficult, it is—and has been proved to be—much easier to obtain them for men and women who, by their desire to benefit, give the "Hair-Drill" treatment the assistance of their will. "Harlene Hair-Drill" will be found to cleanse the scalp thoroughly, dissolving all scurf, and actually nourishing the hair roots and producing a rich, flowing growth of hair that is an object of admiration.

FACTS ABOUT "HARLENE HAIR-DRILL."

The effect is noticeable after almost the first application,

return you will receive:—

(1) A trial bottle of "Harlene," a delightful food for the hair and stimulant for the hair-roots, which renders the hair soft, glossy and beautifully luxuriant.

(2) A packet of "Cremex," a real shampoo which dissolves scurf and allays all scalp irritation, and prepares the head for "Hair-Drill."

(3) The Manual of secret "Hair-Drill" rules, showing how, for two minutes a day of this delightful toilet practice, you may grow healthy hair free from all signs of baldness, greyness, or hair poverty.

Supplies of "Harlene," are obtainable at all leading Chemists and Stores in bottles at 1s., 2s. 6d., and 4s. 6d.; and of "Cremex," 1s. per box of 7 packets (single packets, 2d.), or direct on remittance, post free. Foreign orders freight extra. All cheques and postal orders should be crossed.

HAIR CULTURE AT HOME—FREE—

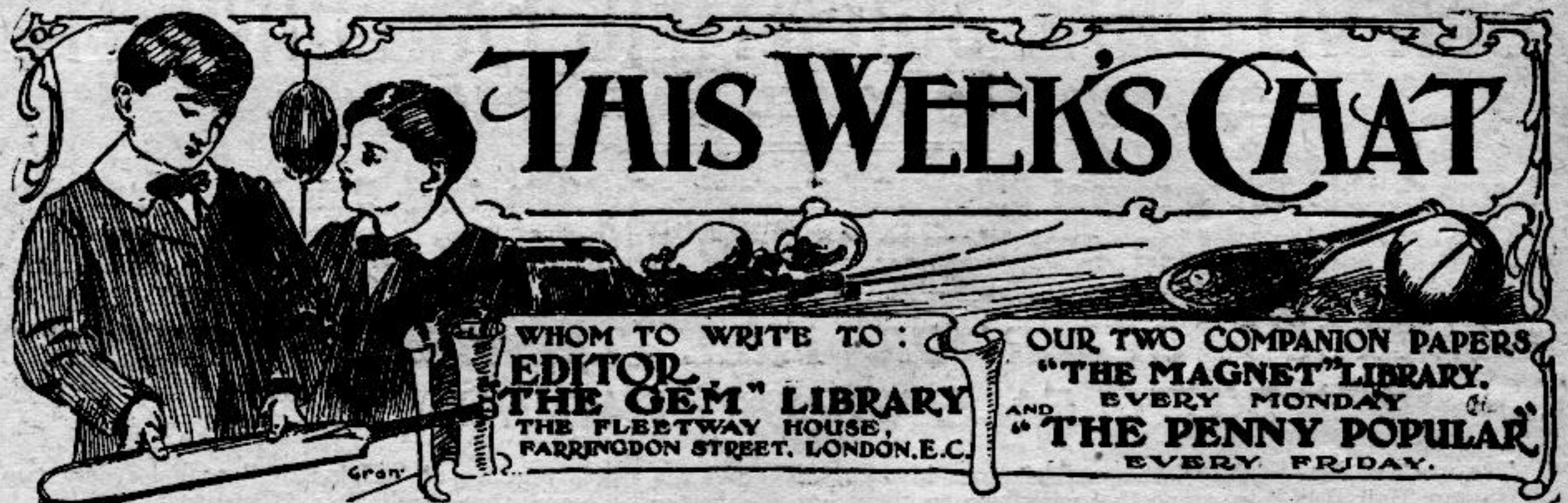
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Please forward me the complete "Hair-Drill" Outfit as offered. 3d. stamps enclosed to cover postage to any part of the world. (Foreign stamps accepted.)

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OUR SPECIAL WEEKLY FEATURE



WHOM TO WRITE TO:
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OUR TWO COMPANION PAPERS
"THE MAGNET" LIBRARY.
 EVERY MONDAY
 AND
"THE PENNY POPULAR"
 EVERY FRIDAY.

For Next Wednesday.

"HARD PRESSED!"
 By Martin Clifford.

This grand, long, complete tale of the famous chums of St. Jim's centres round a football match, which the old school is very anxious to win, its opponents being a very famous team of amateurs. The prospects of the St. Jim's side are rosy enough, and Kildare, the burly captain of the First Eleven, is feeling very confident. But he does not reckon with Cutts of the Fifth. Cutts, one of the black sheep of St. Jim's, has his own reasons for wishing St. Jim's to lose the match with the Isthmians, and he does his best to bring about this result. Tom Merry & Co., however, do their best to bring about a win for St. Jim's, and, fortunately, though the St. Jim's First are

"HARD PRESSED!"

Tom Merry & Co.'s best is better than Cutts's best. Don't miss this grand school-football tale!

NEARER AND NEARER!

Now that we are well into the New Year, the date that we have all been looking forward to for so long—the date of the publication of our

NEW HALFPENNY COMPANION PAPER

—is getting rapidly nearer, and excitement is growing accordingly. week will see

No. 1 of **"CHUCKLES!"**

actually in your hands, and you will know the best! For good value, as well as intrinsic merit, the first issue of "Chuckles!" will easily beat any other paper ever published. Every copy will contain a special "surprise-packet"—a free gift in the most popular form. Our New Companion Paper is the fruit of my reader-chums' own suggestions and ideas, and I have done my best to make it a record-breaker. It only remains for my chums themselves to take this, their own paper, in hand directly it appears, and do their best to make it a record-breaker, too! Then its success is instantly assured. It is because I know that I can rely upon my chums to do this that I have consented to bring this New Companion Paper out. As a matter of fact, I look upon Frank Richards' complete tale of Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars, and Trumper & Co. of Courtfield, entitled

"THE FOUNDER OF THE FEAST!"

as a passport to success with all my chums who love a good school story. This is one of the grand tales contained in the first number of "Chuckles!" which will be out next week.

And when I state that the other stories in our New Companion Paper are of an equally high standard of merit, I think I have said all that is necessary for the present. So look out for

No. 1 of **"CHUCKLES!"**

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

E. B. Bell (Buenos Ayres).—Ventriloquism can be acquired by constant practice. A book on the subject can be obtained from Upcott Gill, Drury Lane, London, W.C., at the price of one shilling.

R. G. (Derby).—Many thanks for your letter and suggestions.

A. Mack (Quebec).—Thanks for your letter. I am afraid "Poplets" Competition is only open to readers in Great Britain, as the result of each competition would have to wait three months before the Australian, South African, and other far-country readers could send in their coupons.

HOUSEHOLD PETS (Special Article) No. 2

By Dr. Gordon Stables, R.N.

The Mongoose

usually comes from Egypt or Africa and many other parts of the world. When tame they make very good pets. That they can bite, the scars on my fingers testify. They are enemies to rats and mice, and are specially useful in houses or cellars infested by these and other vermin. The mongoose kills and devours any animal, reptile, bird, or beast smaller than itself. If kept in a house loose, for catching mice, etc., doors and windows must be well secured, for it climbs well, and has the knack of squeezing through very small holes. If rats or mice abound it will need very little else to eat. If kept in a cage as a pet it may be fed on dead mice, or cat's meat (horse flesh), raw meat, fowls' heads, etc., procured from the poulterer's. Give plenty of hay for bedding. If the cage be not kept scrupulously clean it is apt to smell high. Dry sawdust should be used to absorb the moisture, for nothing kills a mongoose sooner than wet.

Jerboas

are sometimes called spring mice, owing to their jumping powers. They look, indeed, like miniature kangaroos, with their long, strong hind legs and little short fore ones. They must be kept warm with nice straw, in which they usually hide by day. They eat maize, oats, lettuce, etc. Give plenty of water, which they drink in a highly amusing manner by dipping their fingers in and then sucking them.

Guinea Pigs or Cavies.

Well, I think there is a great deal too much written about these interesting and beautiful little creatures. This, owing to the fact that they are now bred to such perfection, both the long-haired and the short-haired. And in a very few lines I can tell you all that you need to know about them, unless, indeed, you desire to breed for show and profit. Cavies breed when very young. The buck and doe, well matched, should live together in one nice hutch, which ought to be raised two or three feet above the ground, with a little ladder up to the doorway, through which the cavies may pop in and out from the wired yard, which should surround the whole. The hutch ought to be closed at night, however, against cats, rats, or owls. Their food is bread and milk always fresh, roots of all eatable kinds. They won't do well unless kept most carefully clean and fed abundantly. There should be a dark-room to the hutch, and very clean hay should be given as a bed. The young are born fully dressed and with their eyes open, and the consequential little mites are ready to come down to breakfast the second day. Give clean water although they drink but little. For breeding properly one needs to have a book.

(Another splendid
 "Household Pets" article
 next week.)

The Editor

NOTE!

Our New Halfpenny Companion

— Paper —

CHUCKLES, $\frac{1d.}{2}$

The Champion Coloured Comic Paper,

Out on Saturday, Jan. 10th,

will contain a splendid
complete school tale
by FRANK RICHARDS,
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of FERRERS LOCKE,
DETECTIVE.

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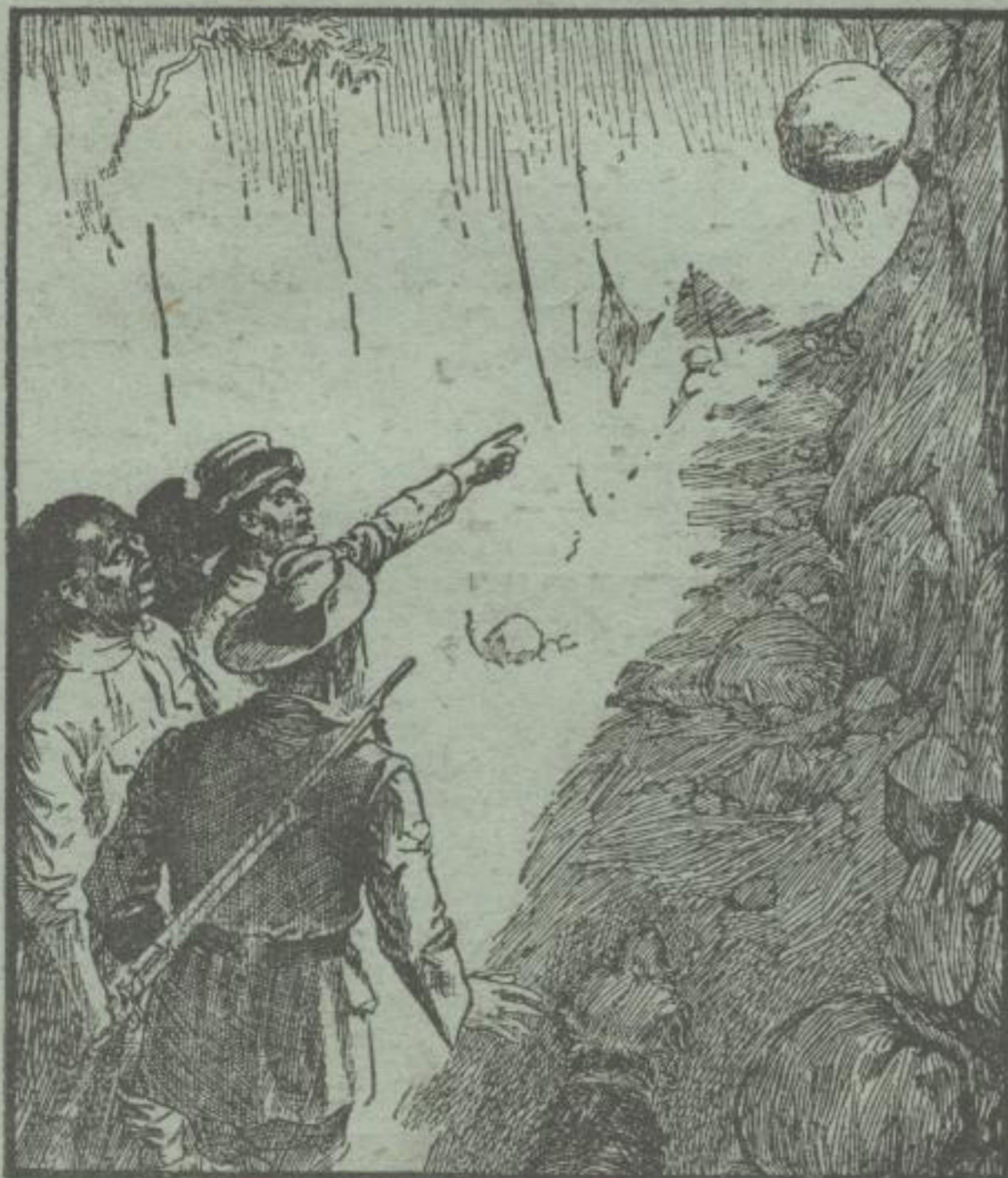
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An Amusing Incident in the Splendid, Complete Tale of School Life, entitled "THE MISSING PLANS."



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