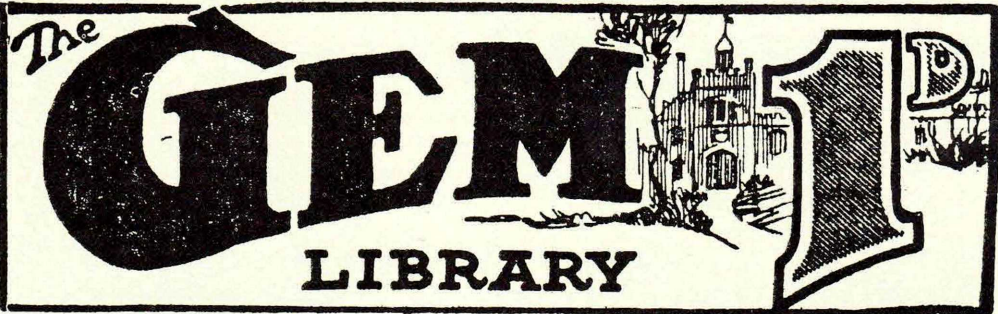


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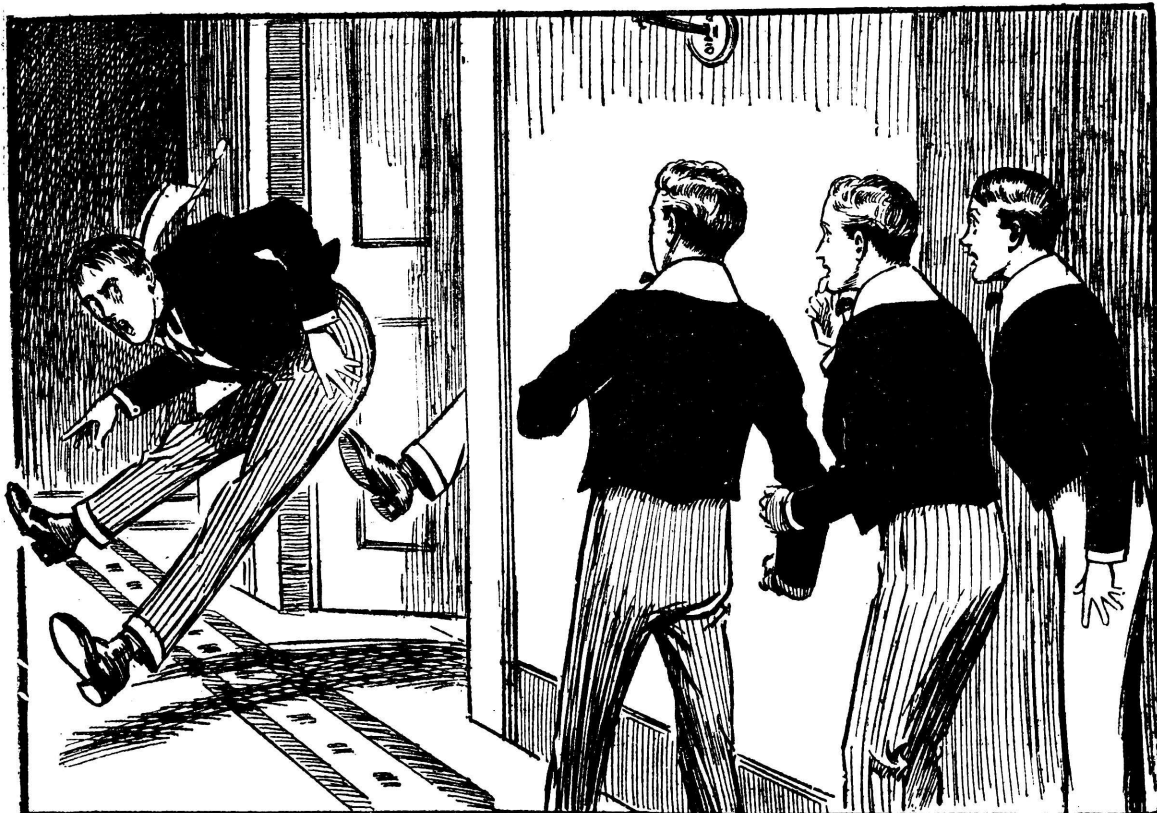
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A Grand, New, Complete Story of Tom Merry & Co. and Lumley-Lumley of St. Jim's
By **MARTIN CLIFFORD.**



A figure shot forth from Cutts's study, and a boot and part of a leg came into view for a moment behind it. The figure bumped on the floor and the boot and leg disappeared into the study again. "By Jove!" gasped Blake. "Is that you, Gussy?" "Gwooh!" said D'Arcy. "I've been thwashin' Cutts!" (See Chapter 1.)

CHAPTER 1. Thrashing Cutts.

"**P**WAY say no more, deal boys!"

"But—"
"I am resolved!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy certainly looked very resolute as he made that statement. His elegant form was drawn up to its full height, his slim hands were clenched, and his eye gleamed behind his eyeglass.

Blake and Herries and Digby, the other occupants of Study No. 6 in the Fourth-Form passage, looked at one another helplessly.

When Arthur Augustus mounted the high horse it was next to impossible to get him to dismount.

And Arthur Augustus had mounted the high horse now with a vengeance. He was, as he had declared, resolved.

"But you can't!" howled Blake.

"I shall try!"

"Look here—" began Herries.

"You are wastin' time, Hewwies. A D'Arcy always means what he says!" said Arthur Augustus, with great dignity. "Pway let me pass, Blake!"

"But I tell you—"

"Wats!"

"I tell you—" said Digby.

"WATS!"

Arthur Augustus pronounced that ancient and classic monosyllable so loudly and distinctly that it reached the ears of three juniors in the passage, and they promptly looked into the study. They were Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther of the Shell, otherwise the Terrible Three.

"You fags rowing again?" asked Monty Lowther, in a severe voice.

Blake glared at him.

"Whom are you calling 'fags,' you Shell bounder? Clear out!"

"Gussy's got 'em again!" growled Herries. "You can lend us a hand to hold him, if you like. He's jolly well not going to Cutts's study."

"What has Cutts been doing now?" asked the Terrible Three altogether. They were sympathetic at once. They had had many and many a rub with Cutts of the Fifth—Cutts, in fact, was their special enemy.

"He has been cuffin' my minah!" said Arthur Augustus loftily. "I wufuse to allow my minah to be cuffed by any

Next Wednesday:

"GUSSY'S HOUSE-PARTY!" AND "A BID FOR A THRONE!"

swankin' wottah in the Fifth Form. I am goin' to thwash Cutts!"

The Terrible Three jumped.

"You're going to what?" gasped Tom Merry.

"Thwash Cutts!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

If Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had stated his intention of thrashing Jack Johnson or the celebrated Carpenter, it could not have struck the chums of the Shell as funnier. Cutts of the Fifth was, of course, a senior, and he was a very powerful fellow, and a good boxer. There were few fellows in the Fifth, or the Sixth, either, who cared to have the gloves on with Gerald Cutts. For Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth Form to undertake to thrash him was a very remarkable enterprise.

But Arthur Augustus was in deadly earnest. Determination gleamed through his eyeglass.

"I fail to see any cause for laughter!" he said stiffly. "Cutts has been waggin' my minah, and I won't have Wally wagged!"

"Well, that's reasonable," agreed Monty Lowther. "Wally isn't a flag or a star-spangled banner, and he oughtn't to be wagged!"

And the juniors chuckled. But D'Arcy was too excited to heed Lowther's little joke upon his beautiful pronunciation.

"I am goin' to give Cutts a feahful thwashin'," he said grimly. "I know he's biggah than I am. Howevah, I flattah myself that I am a pwetty hard hittah. And I am wathah a dab at boxin'. Besides, bullies are always cowards, you know. Anyway, I am goin' to thwash Cutts. I wefuse to allow him to cuff my minah!"

"But—" said Tom Merry.

"But—" gasped Manners and Lowther.

"I wefuse to listen to argument upon the subject," said Arthur Augustus, with a wave of the hand. "I am goin' to Cutts's study now, and there is goin' to be a feahful thwashin'—"

"But who's going to get it?" gurgled Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You will see. When I have finished with Cutts," said Arthur Augustus, with a ferocious look, "his fwends will have to gathah up the sewaps!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jack Blake sank into the armchair, to laugh more at his ease. Digby and Herries held on to the study table and roared. The Terrible Three seemed to be in danger of falling into hysterics. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy jammed his famous monocle a little more tightly into his eye, and stared round at the hilarious juniors with lofty indignation. But as his lofty indignation only made them roar the louder, he strode out of the study with his noble nose high in the air.

"Oh, my only sainted aunt!" Blake gasped, wiping away his tears. "Gussy will be the death of me some day!"

"Cutts will be the death of him to-day, if he goes to his study and goes for him!" stuttered Lowther. "Good old Gussy!"

Blake jumped up.

"He mustn't go, the duffer! After him!"

The juniors ran hastily out of the study. They had no doubt that Gerald Cutts of the Fifth deserved a fearful thrashing—dozens of them, in fact; and if Arthur Augustus had been equal to the task they would have speeded him on his journey with pleasure. But as the case stood, Arthur Augustus was going to look for trouble, and very bad trouble.

The swell of the Fourth was already halfway down the staircase.

"After him!" muttered Tom Merry.

The juniors dashed down the passage at top speed. By main force, if there were no other means, they intended to dissuade Arthur Augustus from his gallant but desperate enterprise.

It was by sheer bad luck that Mr. Railton, the Housemaster of the School House, happened to step out of a study just then, as the six juniors came down the passage in full career.

Mr. Railton did not often visit Fourth-Form studies, and how were Tom Merry & Co. to know that he was there, and that he was just coming out? Clearly, they could not possibly know; but it was very unfortunate, all the same.

For the six racing juniors crashed right into the Housemaster as he stepped suddenly into the passage. Mr. Railton was a stalwart man, and an athlete, but he was not prepared for a shock like that. Neither were the juniors. Mr. Railton went over with a crash, and six gasping juniors sprawled wildly over him.

"Wha-a-at!" ejaculated the Housemaster. "Bless my soul! What—what—"

"Great Scott!"

"Oh, sir!"

"Sorry, sir!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

Tom Merry & Co. scrambled off the Housemaster and scrambled to their feet. Mr. Railton, completely breathless, lay gasping.

The juniors forgot all about Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and Cutts of the Fifth. They thought only of the horror of their unintentional deed. Bumping a Housemaster over headlong in the passage was a decidedly serious matter.

They stood panting, and looking at the floored Housemaster. Tom Merry was the first to recall his presence of mind sufficiently to assist him to rise. He gave a helping hand to the Housemaster, and that gentleman sat up, gasping.

"What—what—" he panted. "Merry—Blake—what—" He gained his feet, with as much dignity as was possible under the circumstances. He was very flushed and very dusty, and breathing hard in jerks. "What does this mean? How dare you rush into me in this manner? Are you out of your senses?"

"So sorry, sir—" murmured Lowther.

"We didn't see you, sir—"

"Quite an accident, sir—"

"We were in rather a hurry—"

Mr. Railton was frowning darkly, which was not surprising under the circumstances.

"You should not rush down the passage in that way," he said. "You should be more careful. You will take a hundred lines each!"

"Yes, sir!"

And Mr. Railton, shaking the dust from his gown, walked majestically away. The juniors looked at one another. A hundred lines each was a hundred lines; but they were glad to escape so cheaply.

"Lucky it wasn't Selby or Linton!" murmured Monty Lowther. "More likely a hundred whacks than a hundred lines, if it had been. Railton is a brick; I'm glad we bumped him over!"

"I've nearly busted my beastly nose on his beastly shoulder!" grunted Herries, dabbing his nose with his handkerchief. "All through that ass Gussy!"

"My hat! Where is Gussy?" exclaimed Tom Merry, remembering the swell of St. Jim's.

"Oh, he's gone, of course!"

"He's in Cutts's study long ago," growled Herries. "Well, he won't stay there long, I fancy."

"Let's go and look for him, anyway!" said Tom.

The juniors made their way down to the next floor at a more moderate pace, Herries dabbing his nose as he went.

They reached the end of the Fifth Form passage; they did not need to go further. There was the sound of a door opening, and a figure shot forth from Cutts's study, and a foot and part of a leg came into view for a moment behind it. The figure bumped on the floor; the boot and leg disappeared into the study again, and there was the slam of a door.

The figure picked itself up.

It was—but was it?—Arthur Augustus D'Arcy! The juniors gazed at it wide-eyed. Arthur Augustus had not been many minutes in Cutts's study—for the purpose of thrashing Cutts.

He had gone in a handsome and elegant youth—the best-dressed junior in all St. Jim's. He came out—

The change was amazing.

If Arthur Augustus had been through a mill, or under a motor-car, the change could hardly have been more surprising in his appearance.

His elegant clothes were rumpled and dusty; his jacket was split up the back; his collar and tie were gone; his hair was a mop. A stream of red ran from his nose, and one of his eyes was closed. His ears were very red, and seemed to have increased in size. He blinked round him in a very uncertain way, and ejaculated breathlessly:

"Bai Jove!"

"Gussy!" gasped Blake. "Is it you, Gussy?"

"Or your ghost?" stuttered Tom Merry. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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Three shadowy forms closed upon Taggles; his arms were seized by two pairs of hands, and a third pair of hands grasped the basket and yanked it away. Taggles was sat down on the turf gently but firmly, and the three figures disappeared in the gloom. (See Chapter 2.)

"What have you been doing?" shrieked Manners.

"Gwooh! I've been thwashin' Cutts!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Have you finished him?" sobbed Blake.

"Nunno!" panted Arthur Augustus. "I have not quite finished him yet. I am goin' to finish him!"

He swung round towards the door of Cutts's study.

With one accord the juniors seized him and dragged him back. Arthur Augustus struggled wildly in their grip.

"Let me go! Welease me, you wottahs! I'm goin' to finish thwashin' Cutts!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let him live!" gasped Lowther. "Spare him! As you are strong, be merciful, you know. Think of his aged parents. Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wefuse to think of his aged pawents! Let me go! I am goin'—"

"My dear fathhead, you're wrecked enough already!" moaned Blake. "We're not going to have our champion lunatic quite slaughtered. Yank him away!"

"I wefuse—I pwotest—"

"All hands—yank!" said Blake.

And Arthur Augustus was "yanked" away, still refusing and protesting. They did not release him till they had plumped him down in the armchair in Study No. 6. Arthur Augustus collapsed there in an exhausted condition.

The juniors stood round him on guard, grinning; but Arthur Augustus made no further attempt to escape. He had no breath left.

"Did you fairly pulverise him?" said Blake, almost weeping.

"As a mattah of fact," gasped Arthur Augustus—"as a mattah of absolute fact, I did not have time to get weally started on him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pewwaps, upon the whole, he is wathah big for me to tackle—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And I feel wathah a w'eck now—"

"You look it. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Howevah, I am goin' to finish thwashin' Cutts!"

Whereupon Tom Merry & Co. pounced upon the warlike swell of the School House, and pinned him down in the chair, and sat upon him in a heap, and refused to move until he had promised, on the honour of a D'Arcy, not to thrash Cutts of the Fifth any more.

CHAPTER 2.

The Last Night of the Term.

"NO prep to-night!" announced Tom Merry joyfully.

"Oh, what a little bit of luck!" sang Monty Lowther sweetly.

St. Jim's was breaking up for the holidays on the following day. The Terrible Three of the Shell—and the other fellows, for the most part—were anticipating the breaking-up with great pleasure. On the morrow the railways would be distributing them to the four corners of the United Kingdom, to meet again at St. Jim's after the vacation, and recount delightful experiences.

The Terrible Three were going together. Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther were to spend the vacation staying with one another alternately, in order not to separate. And they were to begin the vacation with the chums of Study No. 6, as the guests of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, at Eastwood House. On the morrow morning the seven juniors would be starting together, and they had done some of their packing already.

"Nothing doing to-night," Tom Merry continued. "We shan't see the New House fellows for a long time. Figgins & Co. will have time to forget that the School house is Cock House at St. Jim's!"

"We'll remind 'em quick enough next term," said Monty Lowther cheerfully.

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NEXT
WEDNESDAY—

"CUSSY'S HOUSE-PARTY!"

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"But we ought to give them a last reminder before we break up," said Tom Merry thoughtfully. "No prep on the last night, and how can the time be better spent than in japing Figgins & Co.?"

"Echo answers how?" agreed Manners.

"Excuse me—echo should answer Co.!" remarked Lowther.

"Rats! Figgins & Co. are having a final feed in their study this evening to celebrate the breaking-up," Tom Merry observed. "Mrs. Taggles made a special pie to Fatty Wynn's orders. I saw it before it was baked. It was a whacker—nearly two feet across. She'll be sending it to Figgins's study pretty soon I should think!"

Manners and Lowther grinned. Being unoccupied that evening, the last of the term, was, of course, a sufficient reason for japing their old rivals of the New House. For some weeks now they would not have any chances of ragging the New House juniors, as Figgins & Co. were going in quite a different direction for their holidays. Therefore, this last opportunity was not to be lost.

"But the New House bounders will be keeping an eye on that pie!" said Manners, with a shake of the head. "Figgins & Co will turn up in force to escort it to the New House. We shall have a battle-royal to get hold of it!"

"Well, a battle-royal would finish up the term in great style!" grinned Tom Merry. "But I think we can get hold of it by strategy. When we've captured it, we'll ask Figgins & Co. to supper. Only fair to let them have a whack in their own pie!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let's go and scout, anyway."

"Good egg!"

The Terrible Three sauntered across the old quadrangle to the school shop. A fat Fourth-Former was in the shop talking to Mrs. Taggles. It was Fatty Wynn, the Falstaff of the New House.

"Not quite done yet, Mrs. Taggles?"

"Not quite, Master Wynn."

"All right. You'll send it across when it's finished?"

"Yes, Master Wynn, in about half an hour. I'll ask Taggles to bring it over."

"Good enough!" said Wynn.

And he rolled towards the door, and met the Terrible Three face to face. Fatty looked suspicious at once.

"Hallo! Celebrating the breaking-up—what?" asked Monty Lowther affably.

"Oh, a little bit of a feed!" said Fatty Wynn carelessly. "You go and eat coke in your mouldy old House!"

And Fatty Wynn rolled away.

The chums of the Shell exchanged a grin. They had heard what passed between Fatty Wynn and Dame Taggles.

"In half an hour," murmured Lowther, "that whacking pie is to be taken across to the New House by the never-sufficiently-to-be-respected Taggles. He will pass under the elms on his way there. It is already dusk. It will be quite dark then. Suppose three understudies of Dick Turpin were ambushed under the elms? Suppose they rush forth, and slaughter Taggles, and collar the pie?"

"Good egg!" chortled Tom Merry and Manners.

"Of course, we slaughter Taggles figuratively," said Lowther. "We won't leave him for dead; but if we squash his hat over his eyes it will keep him busy long enough for us to clope with the pie!"

"What-ho!"

And the Terrible Three walked away in great spirits. Meanwhile, Fatty Wynn had returned to the New House, where his chums Figgins and Kerr met him in the doorway.

"Not ready yet?" asked Figgins.

"Half an hour; and those Shell bounders from the School House are on the track, and I think they're going to lay for our pie," said Fatty Wynn. "We shall have to take half a dozen fellows to fetch it!"

"Cheeky rotters!" growled Kerr. "We'll collar them and duck them in the fountain if they lay hands on our pie!"

"Hold on!" murmured Figgins, with a gleam coming into his eyes. "Hold on! I've got an idea. They're going to lay for the pie when it's sent over, are they? Half an hour is plenty of time to get ready for those School House duffers. Come with me, my infants!"

For the next ten minutes Figgins & Co. were very busy. Then they might have been seen, as a novelist would say, proceeding cautiously to the tuckshop, after an interview with Dame Taggles, who smiled exceedingly, and strolled down to the porter's lodge.

There they had a little talk with Taggles, the porter. After that they sauntered back to the New House, affecting not to notice three lurking shadows under the old elms.

"There they go!" murmured Monty Lowther, as Figgins & Co. disappeared towards the New House. "Not a suspish, my sons!"

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"They seem very keen to know how that pie's getting on," remarked Manners. "I suppose that's what they've been to the tuckshop for. They'll be more interested still in its getting off!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If they come down in an army to escort the pie home, we'll whistle up our crowd," Tom Merry remarked. "I've spoken to Study No. 6, and Kangaroo and Reilly and Hammond and Dane. They're ready for the signal if they're wanted. That pie is coming into the School House, if we have to wreck the New House and strew Figgins & Co. in little pieces over the quad."

"Yes, rather!"

The chums of the School House were prepared for desperate measures. But desperate measures did not seem to be required. There was no sign of the New House fellows coming in strong force to escort the pie home. The half-hour had passed, and the trio, from their ambush under the elms, had seen Taggles, the porter, arrive from his lodge, and go into the shop. Evidently he was now going to take the pie to Figgins's study. And still there was no sign of Figgins & Co.

"I really wonder Fatty Wynn didn't smell a mouse," Monty Lowther remarked, with a chuckle. "I suppose he was thinking of nothing but the feed. Never mind; we'll ask them to come and have a whack!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shush! Here comes Taggles!"

The portly form of the school porter could be seen advancing in the gloom from the direction of the tuckshop. Taggles carried a large basket in his hand, evidently containing the consignment for the New House. He came on under the dark shadow of the trees, and then there was a sudden rush.

Three shadowy forms closed in swiftly on Taggles—his arms were seized by two pairs of hands, and a third pair of hands grasped the basket and yanked it away. Taggles was sat down on the turf gently but firmly, and left there gasping, as three swift forms disappeared towards the School House with the basket, and soft chuckles floated back to the ears of the school porter as he sat in the grass.

"Huh!" gasped Taggles, who was grinning too. "Huh! I'd report 'em if Master Figgins hadn't 'anded me a bob to take it quietly! I'd report the young raskils, 'andling a 'ard-working man like this 'ere! Huh!"

Quite unconscious of Taggles's reflections on the subject, the Terrible Three rushed towards the School House with their prize. In the doorway quite a crowd of juniors awaited them—the four chums of Study No. 6, and Kangaroo and Clifton Dane and Glyn of the Shell, and Hammond and Reilly and Lumley-Lumley of the Fourth, and several others. They glanced eagerly at the heavy basket.

"Got it?" exclaimed Jack Blake.

"What-ho!"

"And the silly duffers weren't on the look-out?" grinned Kangaroo.

"No fear! Easy as falling off a form!" chuckled Tom Merry. "Figgins & Co. have been done quite brown, as easy as babes in the wood. Gentlemen, there will be a feed in my study to celebrate breaking-up. We are kindly provided with a magnificent pie by the generosity of our old friends of the New House!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But we're going to ask Figgy to the feed—that's only cricket. Go and ask him nicely, Gussy. Tell him we've got a splendid pie—"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Arthur Augustus, chuckling, crossed to the New House, while Tom Merry & Co. bore the great pie prize in triumph to the study in the Shell passage.

CHAPTER 3.

Puzzle—Find the Pie!

FIGGINS & CO. were in their study in the New House. The study, as Arthur Augustus D'Arcy looked into it, presented a festive appearance. There were preparations for a feed on a considerable scale. The table was laid for seven, with all sorts and varieties of crockery and cutlery, and there was an unusually large number of chairs in the study. Figgins and Kerr and Fatty Wynn were chatting together.

"Time that pie was here," Figgins remarked, as Arthur Augustus tapped on the half-open door and stepped in.

"High time," agreed Kerr. "Is that you, Taggles? No; it's Gussy."

"Top of the evening to you, Gussy!" said Figgins affably. "Have you seen anything of Taggles? He was going to bring us a pie, but he seems late."

"Pewwaps you'd bettah not wait for it, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus, with a sweet smile. "Vewy likely Taggles will be late. I've come ovah to ask you to a feed in the School House."

"You're awfully good," said Figgins; "but we're just going to have a feed here on our own. We've got a special pie coming, made by Dame Taggles's own fair hands, and it may come any minute now. Reddy and some of the fellows are coming, too, when the feed's here. You can stay and join us."

"Afraid I couldn't wait, deah boys," said D'Arcy, chuckling at the thought that he would have to wait a very long time, if he waited in Figgys's study for the raided pie. "Pway come ovah to our House. We've got a pie ourselves—a weal wackah!"

"Not really?" said Figgy, in surprise.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Figgins & Co. exchanged grave glances. "Shall we go?" said Figgins seriously. "We could put off our own feed till a little later, for that matter."

Kerr and Fatty Wynn smiled.

"Well, our pie isn't here," said Kerr. "If Gussy's got a pie, we may as well begin on that. It's awfully good of Gussy!"

"Not at all, deah boys. It's the Shell chaps, weally, who are standin' the feed," said D'Arcy. "Tom Mewwy's got the pie—a weal whackah!"

"We'll come!" said Figgins.

"Wight-ho!"

And Figgins & Co. followed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy down the stairs, and out of the New House. They smiled and exchanged winks as they marched across the quadrangle. They had not expected to be invited to share the captured pie. But they were very glad to be on the scene—very glad indeed.

Tom Merry's study was crowded when Figgins & Co. reached it with Arthur Augustus. The chums of the School House were there in force. On the table stood the big basket, and Tom Merry was opening the wicker lid.

"Welcome, dear boys!" said Monty Lowther hospitably, as the New House trio came in.

"Gussy's explained—what?" asked Blake. "We've got a big pie for supper, to celebrate breaking-up, you know. We couldn't leave you chaps out."

"Certainly not!"

"Awfully good of you!" said Figgins. "It's a curious coincidence, but we were expecting a pie ourselves just now, but Mrs. Taggles hasn't sent it yet."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins & Co. looked round in surprise.

"What's the joke?" asked Figgins innocently. "Nothing funny in our expecting a pie, is there?"

"Certainly not!" said Tom Merry hastily. "These silly duffers cackle at anything! Cheese it, you fellows, and get some plates and things."

"That must be pretty nearly as big a pie as ours, from the size of the basket," Fatty Wynn remarked.

"Pwobably just the same size, deah boy!" smiled Arthur Augustus.

"Well, let's see it."

Tom Merry had removed a cloth covering from the interior of the big basket. He looked surprised as a wooden box was revealed.

"My hat! It's in a box!" he exclaimed.

"That's a queer way of packing a pie," said Manners.

"Jolly queer!" said Figgins. "I suppose you've really got a pie there, and you're not pulling our leg—what?"

"Oh, it's here, right enough!" said Tom.

He lifted the wooden box out of the basket, and bumped it down on the table. It was very heavy. The box was nailed up.

"Well, I never saw a pie so carefully fastened up as that one before," said Figgins. "I hope Mrs. Taggles won't fasten up our pie like that. Rather too much of a good thing, in my opinion."

"Did that pie come from Mrs. Taggles's?" asked Kerr.

"Yes. She made it herself."

"Then why is it nailed up in a box?"

"Blessed if I know," said Tom, feeling a little perplexed himself. "Anyway, we'll soon have it out."

He selected a chisel from Lowther's tool-box, and wrenched off the lid of the wooden box. Straw packing was disclosed inside. Figgins & Co. burst into a laugh.

"Pie packed in straw!" chuckled Figgins. "Well, that beats the band! Blessed if ever I saw a pie packed in straw before."

"Bai Jove, it is weally vewy peculiar! This must be a altogether new wheeze of Mrs. Taggles."

Tom Merry, with a mystified face, drew out handfuls of the straw packing. As the pie really belonged to Figgins & Co. they should have known more about that extraordinary

careful packing than did Tom Merry & Co., but they were looking on with amused interest, as if they had never heard of such a thing before.

"Well, where's the blessed pie?" asked Blake, as the pile of unpacked straw rose higher and higher on the study table.

"Hallo! Here's something!"

Tom Merry's hand came in contact with something hard in the straw inside the box, and he drew it out. It was a brick! The juniors stared at it blankly.

"You're not going to eat that?" ejaculated Figgins.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Kerr and Wynn.

Tom Merry groped desperately in the box. He dragged out two or three more bricks and an old boot. Then there was nothing left but straw.

"Well, my hat!" he ejaculated.

"Bai Jove! Is that the lot?"

"That's the lot!" growled Tom.

"Extwaordinawy!"

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Figgins good-humouredly.

"You've brought us over here for a feed, you know. Where's the pie?"

"There—there doesn't seem to be any pie!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Then you were pulling our leg all the time?"

"Nunno! We—we thought there was a pie in the basket!" gasped Tom. "Blessed if I understand it!"

Figgins shook his head solemnly.

"Somebody's been japing you," he said. "Somebody knew you had ordered a pie, and they've stacked that basket full of rubbish for a joke on you."

"But we didn't order the pie!" howled Tom Merry desperately. "We—we raided it. Somebody else must have raided the basket before we got hold of it, and left this rubbish in it."

"Perhaps they've left a message for you in the basket, then," Kerr suggested. "If they've spoofed you, they'd leave a word to tell you so."

"They didn't spoof us!" growled Tom Merry. "They were spoofing you. This was your pie."

"Ours!"

"Yes. And somebody else must have been after it as well as us!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Figgins.

"Hallo, here's a card in the straw!" exclaimed Kangaroo, who was groping in the box.

"Well, I'm off!" said Figgins, rather hastily. "It's pretty plain that there's not going to be a feed. I'm surprised at you. Ta-ta!"

Figgins & Co. left the study rather hurriedly. Kangaroo had felt a card in the straw, and he extracted it and read it, and gave a whoop, just as the New House trio quitted the study. He held it up for the juniors to read.

"Look at that!"

"My hat!"

"Gweat Scott!"

There was a roar of wrath in Tom Merry's study. For the card bore the inscription, in big, daubed letters:

PUZZLE—FIND THE PIE!

WITH BEST WISHES FOR SUCCESS FROM
FIGGINS & CO.

The juniors stared at the card, and then at one another.

"My only hat!" roared Blake. "They knew you silly chumps were after their pie, and they planted this on you."

"Bai Jove!"

"That's why you got it away from Taggles so easily, you Shell duffers!" snorted Herries. "Yah! Figgins has spoofed you once more."

"M-m-my hat!" gasped Tom Merry. "That fat beast Wynn must have suspected us, after all. Where are those New House bounders? After them! We'll collar the real pie before they can get it into their house."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I guess it's too late!" grinned Lumley-Lumley.

"After them!"

Lowther dragged the door open, and the juniors rushed out in an excited crowd. But Figgins & Co. had not allowed the grass to grow under their feet. They were out of the School House already, and scudding across the quadrangle. Tom Merry & Co. rushed out whooping, and burst into base. But the New House trio reached their House yards ahead, and ran in and disappeared. The pursuers halted, baffled and excited.

"Bai Jove, we'll have the pie, all the same!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus.

"Too late!" growled Tom.

He pointed to the window of Figgins's study. It was open, and the light streamed out into the quad. At the lighted window Redfern and Figgins appeared in full view, holding up a gigantic pie for the juniors in the quadrangle to see.

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FERRERS LOCKE, DETECTIVE, is the principal character in one of the best stories contained in

CHUCKLES, 1st.

Redfern had fetched the pie home while Figgins & Co. were in the School House.

The New House juniors grinned down at the baffled crowd under the study window. A dozen fists were shaken in the shadows below.

"This is where we smile!" sang out Figgins. "Who's cock-house at St. Jim's?"

And the fellows in the study roared:

"New House! New House!"

"Who's been done brown, and spoofed like a little kid?"

"Tom Merry! Ha, ha, ha!"

Then the window slammed down, and the blind was drawn, and Figgins & Co. sat down to their feed. And Tom Merry & Co. returned to the School House with feelings that were altogether too deep for words.

CHAPTER 4. The "Outsider."

JERROLD LUMLEY-LUMLEY of the Fourth Form sat in his study alone.

There was a somewhat grim expression upon his face.

Lumley-Lumley of the Fourth was looking forward to the breaking-up on the morrow with feelings very different from those of Tom Merry & Co.

The fellow who had once been known as the Outsider of St. Jim's was now one of the most popular fellows in the Lower School. The wild ways which had earned him his nickname had been dropped long since. But Lumley-Lumley had never been, and would never be, quite like the other fellows.

His curious career before he came to St. Jim's would always leave its mark upon him. The fellow, whose earliest years had been spent in wanderings in strange countries with his father—then anything but a millionaire—had a store of strange experiences, a knowledge of life, that the other juniors could not share.

After those wild early days prosperity had come, and Mr. Lascelles Lumley-Lumley was now a power in the City, and the owner of untold wealth. Jerrold Lumley-Lumley had brought with him to the school curious ways—he had picked up in Californian mining-camps, in gambling-saloons in San Francisco, in the Bowery of New York, and in strange quarters of Paris and London. He had shaken down into his place at last; his wayward career as the Outsider of St. Jim's was over and done with. There was no more breaking bounds at night to visit forbidden haunts—no more joining in the card-parties in Cutts's study. But sometimes Lumley-Lumley, thinking of the old wild days, had yawned a little over what was to him a deadly quiet life. The boy who had knocked about in wild places, sometimes at the risk of his life, felt sometimes the "call of the wild," and his quiet surroundings seemed irksome to him.

He had no relations in England with the exception of his father. And now his father had gone abroad in connection with some railroad undertaking in South America. Lumley-Lumley generally spent his vacations with his father; but now he was "stranded."

There were plenty of fellows in the School House who would gladly have asked him home. Levison or Mellish or Gore would gladly have taken the millionaire's son with them, with an eye to the main chance; but Lumley-Lumley did not like them, and he was not slow in showing it. Better fellows would have asked him for his own sake—Tom Merry & Co. were very friendly with him—but they did not know that he was unprovided for for the vacation. They knew he always went to his father, and generally travelled during the holidays with the millionaire; indeed, Lumley-Lumley's expensive vacations were much envied by some of the fellows.

Lumley-Lumley did not say a word on the subject. He was too proud to risk even the possible appearance of "fishing" for an invitation.

So he was not looking forward to breaking-up with any feelings of pleasure.

A dozen houses would have been open to him if he had cared to say a word; but he did not say the word.

So on the morrow he had either to remain at the school after the other fellows had left, with the two or three deserted individuals who spent their holidays at the school, having no parents or close connections in the country, or else to leave St. Jim's by himself, and rely upon his own resources for the vacation.

To remain at the school was out of the question. He had no mind to join the forlorn two or three who spent their vacations under the motherly eye of Mrs. Mimms, and wandered about the deserted passages or the deserted quadrangle reverently yearning for the beginning of the new term.

That was "not good enough," as he would have expressed it.

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The alternative was to go off "on his own" when the school broke up; an easy enough thing to the lad who had always been able to look after himself, and who had plenty of money, as much as he chose to ask an indulgent father for. But somehow it did not appeal to him.

Somehow just now it was borne in upon his mind that he was lonely—that he had not, like the other fellows, crowds of relations, motherly and sisterly eyes to greet his return to the roof-tree, or young brothers to listen awe-stricken to stories of the doings at St. Jim's.

The junior sighed a little.

He opened the table drawer, and took out a cigarette—one of Levison's cigarettes. Levison of the Fourth was a confirmed smoker, as his pasty complexion testified. Lumley-Lumley had long ago given up such habits. He had no ambition to shine as a "blood" or a "dog" in the fast set at St. Jim's.

But he was feeling so lonely and despondent at this moment that he turned almost unconsciously to the old bad habit. He lighted the cigarette, and blew out a little cloud of smoke.

Tap!

The study door opened.

Lumley-Lumley took the cigarette hastily from his mouth. He coloured with vexation at being caught. He had told Levison many a time, in the plainest of language, his opinion of his habits, and it was exasperating to be caught himself in the same foolish action.

But it was not Levison who came in. It was a big, athletic Fifth-Former—Cutts of the Fifth. The well-dressed, elegant Fifth-Former, with his cool, steady eyes, and clear-cut features, was quite a conspicuous figure in the School House at St. Jim's. He was the dandy of the Fifth and the leader of the "smart set" in the Upper Form—the fellows who smoked and played bridge for money, and in other ways wasted time and money and health under the belief that they were seeing "life."

But Cutts had a good deal more brains than most of the "black sheep" in his set. They generally had reason to repent their "doggishness"; but it was seldom that Cutts failed to make a good thing out of it. The little bridge-parties in Cutts's study helped the dandy of the Fifth to meet his expenses, which were sometimes very large. For Cutts spent a great deal on clothes—he could not be the best-dressed fellow in the Upper School for nothing. He also backed horses—and his horses did not always win. And Cutts always had the best of everything—he had good pictures in his study, he smoked the most expensive cigarettes, he seldom wore a pair of gloves twice—and all his little extravagances had to be paid for. And Cutts had been far from pleased when Lumley-Lumley of the Fourth threw over his old bad ways and became the chum of Tom Merry & Co. and modelled his manners and customs upon theirs.

But Cutts had remained always civil to reformed Outsider of St. Jim's. He had never quite given up the hope of getting Lumley-Lumley back into his select circle once more.

He smiled as he saw Lumley-Lumley take the cigarette hastily from his lips.

"Don't mind me," he said, closing the door of the study.

Lumley-Lumley bit his lip. He threw the cigarette on the floor, and ground it under his foot.

"It was one of Levison's," he explained.

Cutts nodded.

"No harm in a cig every now and then," he remarked.

"I guess I never smoke."

Cutts smiled again. It certainly was a peculiar statement for Lumley-Lumley to make, as the Fifth-Former had found him with a cigarette between his lips.

"I've looked in to speak to you about the vac," said Cutts, taking his seat on the side of the study table, and swinging his long legs.

"About the vac?" said Lumley-Lumley.

"Yes. You generally go abroad with your pater, don't you?"

"I guess so." Lumley-Lumley had never been able to drop that peculiar mode of speech, picked up during his early days in America.

"Will you be abroad all the vac this time?"

Lumley-Lumley grinned. He had no plans whatever for that vacation, as a matter of fact, but he did not feel inclined to tell Cutts of the Fifth so.

"I don't know."

"Look here, Lumley," said Cutts, bending towards him. "I'm getting up a little party for the vac. We're going to a jolly little place down in Hampshire—plenty of shooting, fishing, boating—all kinds of amusements. Of course, my friends are seniors, and it's a bit out of the common to ask a junior along with us. But you're a bit different from the rest of the juniors—you've seen life."

"I guess I have," said Lumley-Lumley coolly. "More

than you have, Cutts, though the Fifth all consider you a very knowing hand."

"I shouldn't wonder," agreed Cutts. "I've certainly never dived into gambling saloons in the Chinese quarter of San Francisco, or seen the sun rise on the streets of Montmartre in Paris. Well, as I was saying, we shall be a jolly party—Gilmour of the Fifth, and Knox of the Sixth, and some other fellows, and we're going to a jolly place. If you want to have a good time, come along with us. We'd be glad to have you—you always were a jolly pal, before you took 'Tom Merry as a model and gave your old friends the go-by. Try it for a week."

Lumley-Lumley wrinkled his brows in thought.

He could guess what Cutts's little party would be like—extremely "wild dogs," in all probability, when they were safe at a distance from masters and prefects at St. Jim's.

But there was no doubt that the party would be jolly enough.

And, as a matter of fact, Cutts's invitation came just in the nick of time. On the morrow he had to leave, and it would be decidedly more agreeable to leave with Cutts & Co., than to "mooch" away by himself.

Yet he felt a twinge of conscience.

Ever since his reform he had had nothing to do with Cutts; and he knew that Tom Merry & Co. would have received him with open arms if he had given them the slightest hint that he was unprovided for the holidays.

Cutts watched him curiously. Cutts's opinion was that the Outsider of St. Jim's must be tired by this time of playing "good little Eric," and that he must welcome the chance of a "burst" during the freedom of vacation.

Perhaps there was something in Cutts's view. Lumley-Lumley had taken very kindly to the life at St. Jim's; but he was not deaf to the "call of the wild." The stir of the reckless adventurer was in his very blood. And Cutts would have been glad to get the millionaire's son in his little party.

It was a chance of paying the expenses of his vacation without dipping into his own pocket. But that was not Cutts's only motive. Lumley-Lumley has been a jolly and entertaining companion in his reckless days, and Cutts missed him. He would have been quite prepared to "pal" with Lumley, if the latter would have fallen into his old ways again.

"Say you'll come," said Cutts. "After all, it isn't all lavender to be pottering about the Continent with your pater, I should think."

"I guess I like it," said Lumley-Lumley; "but as it happens my father's in South America just now, and that's a bit too far to go for the vac."

"Then you want an engagement for the vacation?" exclaimed Cutts. "My dear chap, you can't do better than come with us."

"I guess you're right."

"You haven't booked yourself with Tom Merry or the others?"

"No!"

Cutts smiled, and the Fourth-Former coloured.

"They don't know how I'm fixed," he said. "They'd ask me like a shot, if they knew I was stranded for the vac. But I don't care to tell them."

"That's all right," said Cutts. "I understand. Nobody likes to fish for invitations. You are not a chap like Levison or Mellish. But I asked you before I knew you were stranded, and I asked you because I want you."

Lumley-Lumley nodded.

"I'd like to come," he said. "Of course, every fellow foots his own bill, I suppose?"

"Quite so."

"And every fellow is at liberty to stand out of anything he doesn't care for—such as playing cards for money, and so on?"

"It's going to be Liberty Hall!" said Cutts. "Every fellow will do exactly as he likes. Nobody will be coerced in any way."

"Well, I reckon that's good enough," said Lumley-Lumley.

"Count me in!"

"Good!"

And Cutts left the study with a satisfied smile on his face. Lumley-Lumley looked a little more cheerful. Perhaps he had carried his pride a little too far in carefully concealing from his friends that he was "stranded." But he was built that way. And certainly the prospect of going off with Cutts & Co. on the morrow was more cheerful than his prospect had been before the dandy of the Fifth visited him in his study.

After all, even if he was among "bounders," there was no reason why he should "bound," as he said to himself with a smile. He need do nothing that he would be ashamed to let Tom Merry & Co. know when he met them the next term at St. Jim's.

Cutts met the Terrible Three in the passage as he walked away from Lumley-Lumley's study. He passed on without a nod, and they looked after him curiously. They were on the worst of terms with the black sheep of the Fifth. Both Tom Merry and Monty Lowther had, at different times, narrowly escaped being inveigled into the nets of the cunning Fifth-Former, and the chums of the Shell had not forgotten it.

"Hallo, Cutts, calling on the Fourth?" said Manners.

"What's the little game now?"

"Only been to see Levison, I suppose," said Tom Merry carelessly. "He came out of Levison's study."

"Levison's in the common-room."

"Is he? Then what the dooce was Cutts doing in his study?" Tom Merry knocked at the door and opened it, and Lumley-Lumley looked at him inquiringly.

Tom Merry raised a playfully admonitory forefinger.

"You!" he said.

Lumley-Lumley looked surprised.

"I guess I don't catch on," he said.

"Cutts came to see you?"

"Oh, yes!"

"Haven't you heard the old proverb, 'Evil communications corrupt good manners'?" said Monty Lowther solemnly. "Be warned in time, my young friend—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Lumley-Lumley laughed too. But somehow or other he did not tell the chums of the Shell that he had agreed to accompany Cutts of the Fifth for that vacation, and the Terrible Three went on to their study without suspecting that their comrade was once more in the toils of the black sheep of St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 5.

Study No. 6 Mean Business.

"THEY'RE havin' a bwake!"

Arthur Augustus made that announcement to Blake and Herries and Digby in Study No. 6. The Fourth-Formers were busy. They were selecting various articles that they would require during the vacation at Eastwood House, and endeavouring to pack them into bags that would not contain half the amount of the things that seemed to the juniors strictly necessary and indispensable.

"Eh!" said Blake. "Who's having a brake?"

"The New House wotthahs."

"And what are they breaking?"

"Weally, Blake, you know very well what I mean. I heard the boundahs speakin' to Taggles about it when I went down to tell him about my twunk. The bwake is comin' at ten o'clock in the mornin' to take Figgins & Co. to Wayland. They're not goin' to take the local twain from Wylcombe, the same as we do. They've got the cheek to have a bwake. Pwobably a dozen of the boundahs have clubbed togethah for it."

"Like their cheek!" agreed Digby. "What a nerve to have a brake over to Wayland, when we're going to take the common or garden local train!"

"Yaas, wathah! I've been thinkin', deah boys—"

"You don't say so?" exclaimed Blake, in astonishment.

"Will you be sewious, you ass?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus wrathfully. "I tell you I have been thinkin'—"

"And now tell us what you've been thinking with," said Blake cheerfully. "Blessed if I knew you had the necessary apparatus!"

"You uttah ass! I've been thinkin' that it's up to this studay to dish those boundahs. Tom Mewwy has twied it, and made a hopeless failure of it, and I think it is wotten for the New House to finish up the term with a score ovah the School House!"

"Hear, hear!" said Blake cordially; and Herries and Digby echoed "Hear, hear!" They quite agreed with the swell of St. Jim's upon that point.

"Vewy well," continued Arthur Augustus triumphantly. "Why shouldn't we waid their bwake to-morrow mornin', and leave them to take the local twain?"

Blake and Herries and Digby looked admiringly at their noble chum. Certainly Arthur Augustus was full of brilliant ideas for once.

"By Jove!" said Blake. "You must really have been thinking, Gussy! You should try it again, if it works like that."

"Weally, Blake—"

"It's a jolly good idea. The brake's coming at ten o'clock, you say?" said Blake, very thoughtfully.

"Yaas. Figgins was tellin' Taggles to be weady to put his bags and things on the bwake when it came. Ten o'clock pwecisely in the mornin', Figgay said. And the beast gwinned at me, and said he hoped I should enjoy a wide in the local twain."

"Then his doom is sealed!" said Blake solemnly. "A fellow who had the unparalleled nerve to grin at the one and only Arthur Augustus must die the death. There's nothing else for it. His doom is sealed!"

"You fwightful duffah—"

"Shush!" said Blake soothingly. "We're on to this. If the brake comes at ten, it will come up the road a little before ten. That's as clear as anything in Euclid—clearer than a lot of things are in Euclid, as a matter of fact. Now, suppose a set of nice kids—us—had their bags out in the road, all ready, and stopped the brake as it came along, and collared it, and drove off in it to Wayland? Figgins & Co. would wait for it to arrive, but, like Mariana in the groated mange—I mean, the moated grange—they would have to say, 'He cometh not!'"

"Hear, hear!" chirruped Herries and Digby.

"That was my ideal, of course," said Arthur Augustus.

"Well, it's my idea now, and we're jolly well going to work it!" said Blake briskly. "We've got to have all the bags as far as the stile to-morrow morning by a quarter to ten. The boxes can look after themselves. And we don't want a whole brake to ourselves, so we'll let those Shell bounders into it, and they can come too. It will be a lesson to them that when things have to be really done, it's this study that has to do them."

"Yaas, wathah!"

And Blake & Co. forthwith proceeded to Tom Merry's study to acquaint the Terrible Three with the latest plot against Figgins & Co. The Shell fellows entered into it heartily, the only difference of opinion on the subject being in regard to the leadership. Tom Merry felt that the affair had better be carried out under his personal direction to ensure success, and Blake replied to the suggestion with the remark that when he wanted a howling ass to show him how to do things, he wouldn't fail to let Tom Merry know.

So the question of leadership remained undecided, but it was settled that all the party for the brake should have their personal belongings at the stile in the lane by a quarter to ten in the morning, and that was the really important point.

The chums of No. 6 looked into Reilly's study next, and added Reilly, Kerruish, and Hammond to the party, assuring them that there would be plenty of room in the brake, and no charge, as the bill was to be paid by Figgins & Co. of the New House. Then they called on Lumley-Lumley. Levison and Mellish were in the study when they looked in, so they called Lumley-Lumley out into the passage, not caring to confide the matter to Levison, who could not have been depended on to keep the secret.

Lumley-Lumley came out with a somewhat surprised look on his face.

"What's the little game?" he asked.

"It's about getting off to-morrow," said Blake. "I suppose you're catching the same express from Wayland—and you're going from Wayland, anyway, as everybody has to."

"And we're havin' a bwake to Wayland," said Arthur Augustus; "saves all the bothah of goin' by the local twain, you know."

"And seats are free to all our pals," said Digby, with a grin.

"So we'll give you and your bags a lift to Wayland," said Herries, "only you'll have to be at the stile with your traps at a quarter to ten."

"Isn't the brake coming to the school for you, then?" asked Lumley-Lumley, in surprise.

"No; it's coming for Figgins & Co., and we're going to raid it en route," explained Blake; and the juniors chuckled in chorus.

"I guess I'd like to come," said Lumley-Lumley; "but I'm going to Wayland with somebody else, as it happens."

"That's all right. Bring him, or them, along," said Blake. "There's plenty of room in the brake; and we could squeeze a bit, anyway."

Lumley-Lumley coloured a little.

"I'm afraid the chaps couldn't join your little party," he said. "They're seniors."

Blake whistled.

"Starting off for the vacation with seniors?" he asked. "I guess so, this time."

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus. "Of course, we couldn't have seniahs with us waidin' the New House bwake. They would spoil ewevythin'."

"But what the dooce are you doing with seniors, Lumley?" asked Blake. "I didn't know you were so jolly chummy with the Upper School. We bar seniors in our study."

Lumley-Lumley laughed.

"I guess I'm not exactly chummy in the Upper School," he said. "Only—well, I've been asked, and I'm going, I guess. That's all."

"Lucky bargee, if you're going with Kildare or Darrel," said Blake. "The seniors aren't generally very keen to take juniors along on a vac."

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"Wathah not!"

"They're not Sixth Form chaps," said Lumley-Lumley awkwardly. "As a matter of fact, not to make a blessed secret of it, I'm going with Cutts."

"Cutts of the Fifth!"

"That wottah Cutts!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus. "The uttah wottah I was compelled to thwash for cuffin' my minah!"

"Oh!" said Blake. "I thought you weren't pally with Cutts any more. No business of mine. Sorry you can't come with us. Ta-ta!"

"I—I say, I'm not exactly pally with Cutts," stammered Lumley-Lumley. "This is only a party for the holidays, you know. Nothing of the old game—that's all done with. Cutts asked me, and—"

"What about your pater?"

"He's a few thousand miles away, and won't be home for months."

"Then why cannot you come with us, you boundah?" demanded Arthur Augustus. "You know I should be jolly pleased for you to come to Eastwood House for the vac."

"I guess you're real good, Gussy; but I've fixed it up with Cutts now."

"Blow Cutts! Chuck him over, and come along with us," said Blake. "You can't want to go round with that rank outsider."

Lumley-Lumley shook his head.

"It's fixed up now, I guess," he said. "I couldn't throw Cutts over. And to tell the truth, he asked me when I was feeling pretty down, and I was glad to say yes."

"But you knew we'd be glad to have you, deah boy."

"I guess—"

"Well, I dare say Lumley knows his own bizney best," said Blake drily. "Don't do anything to get sacked for next term, Lumley; that's my advice. Ta-ta!"

Study No. 6 walked away, and Lumley-Lumley went back into his room. He could see that the juniors thought the worse of him for going with Cutts, and he repented a little his hasty acceptance of the Fifth-Formers' invitation. But he was loyal, and he did not think for a moment of throwing Cutts over.

Arthur Augustus looked into Lumley-Lumley's study a few minutes later.

"Lumlay, deah boy," he said very gently, "if you could excuse yourself to Cutts, we should be vewy pleased to have you. Cousin Ethel will be at my place for the holidays, you know; and she will be vewy pleased too. You always get on vewy well with her."

"You're awfully good, Gussy!"

"Won't you come?"

"Thanks all the same, but I guess it's up to me to stick to Cutts. You see, it was decent of him to ask me."

"Vewy well, deah boy; please yourself."

Arthur Augustus retired, disappointed. Since the reform of the Outsider of St. Jim's Arthur Augustus had felt it his duty to keep a fatherly eye upon him, and he was somewhat perturbed at the idea of Lumley-Lumley falling into the clutches of the black sheep of the Fifth once more. But there was evidently nothing to be done.

"So you're going with Cutts, are you?" said Levison, looking very curiously at his study-mate.

"Yes," said Lumley-Lumley shortly.

"High old time, I suppose?" said Levison enviously. "Cutts is thick enough with me here, but he hasn't asked me for the vac. I'm not a millionaire's son, of course. I fancy he'll make you pay for the honour of going with a senior party."

"Oh, rats!"

"I knew you were humbugging Tom Merry and the rest all the time," Levison went on. "You never took me in. I can imagine the gay old time you're going to have this vac. with Cutts and his pals."

Lumley-Lumley looked at him steadily.

"You can imagine what you like, Levison," he said, "but if you'll take the trouble to repeat those remarks, I'll give you a thick ear to take home with you to-morrow. Savvy?"

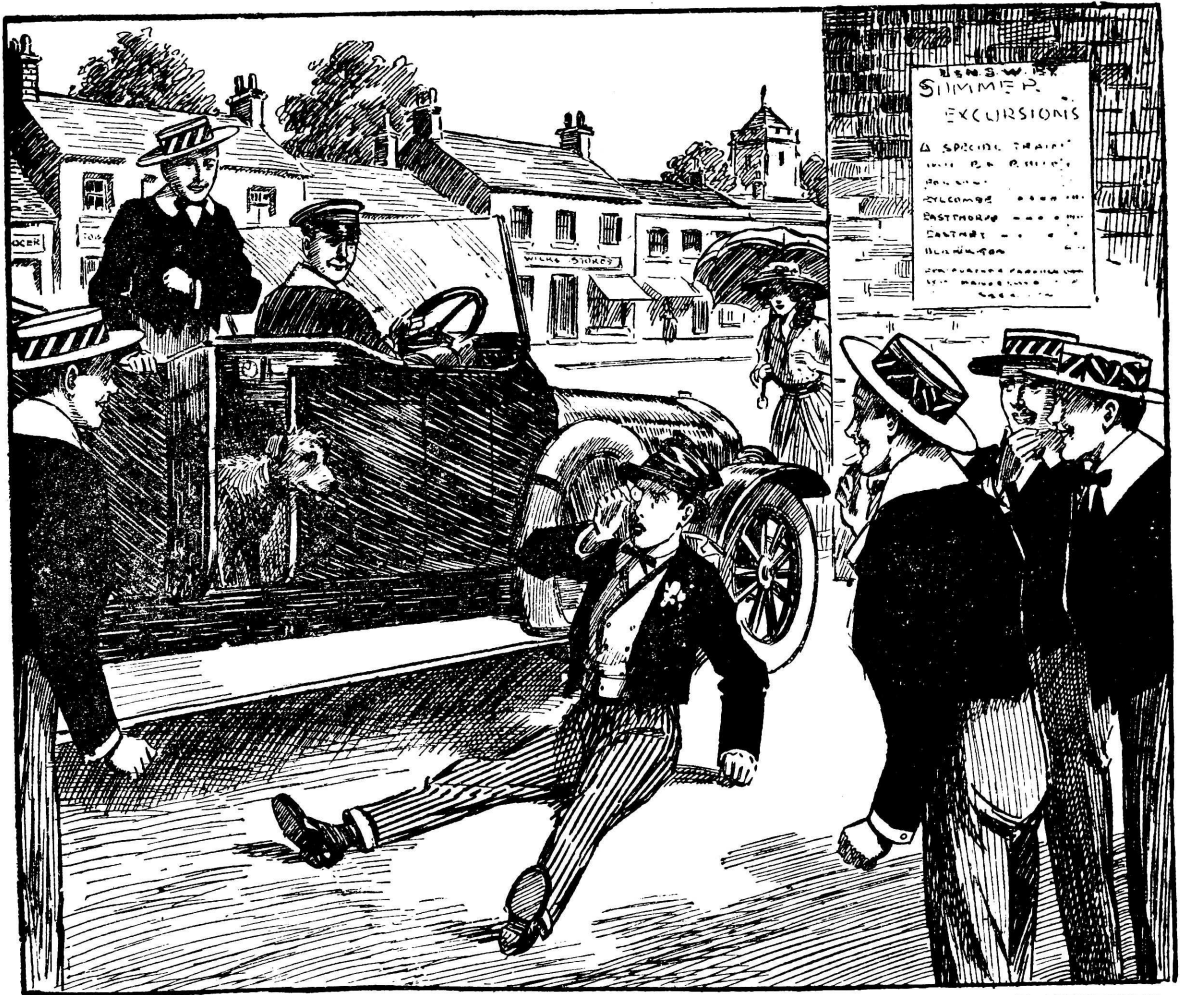
And Levison sniffed, and left his remarks unrepeatd.

CHAPTER 6.

The Early Birds.

ST. JIM'S presented a lively scene upon the following morning.

Fellows, going in all directions, left at different hours. Earliest to start were Bernard Glyn and Kangaroo and Clifton Dane of the Shell. They were going to Glyn House, which was within an easy walk of St. Jim's. After them, Tom Merry & Co. were off pretty early. They wanted to get out with their bags unseen by Figgins & Co., and soon after nine o'clock they shook hands with their numerous friends, and started, in ones and twos and threes. They did



Arthur Augustus sat up and groped for his eyeglass. Wally and Pongo looked out of the car. "Pick him up," said Wally cheerfully. "I'll let him come in if he's quiet." "Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors. (See Chapter 9.)

not leave the school in a body, for fear of attracting the suspicious attention of Figgins & Co.

Strange to say, nothing was to be seen of the chums of the New House. Figgins and Kerr, and Wynn, Redfern, and Owen and Lawrence, and the rest, appeared to be occupied that morning. At all events, they were not to be seen in the quadrangle when Tom Merry & Co. came out.

"Hardly likely to go without saying good-bye to Figgins," Blake remarked, as he started with his study-mates. "But we'll send a note by the brakeman, explaining why we couldn't stop to say good-bye."

"Yaas, wathah!"

And the Fourth-formers chuckled.

That last jape on their rivals of the New House tickled their fancy very much. It was a really effective way of ending the long warfare of the term, in which the ups and downs had been pretty well divided. Honours had been easy, so far, and they were very keen to wind up the term with a victory over the New House.

Blake & Co. carried their bags, and they got out of gates as quickly as they could, fearful of watchful eyes from the direction of the New House. Nine o'clock was striking as they started.

They would have ample time to wait for the brake, it was true; but, as Blake said, it was best to be on the safe side. If Figgins & Co. spotted a crowd of School House fellows rushing off with bags just before the brake was due to arrive, they could not fail to suspect that something was "on." The heavier baggage which was to accompany the juniors was to be sent later. They did not trouble about that now. The four juniors reached the stile, and dumped down their bags in the bright morning sunlight.

The Terrible Three joined them ten minutes later. Then came Kerruish and Roilly and Hammond, all cheerful and

grinning. After them came two or three more School House juniors who had been let into the scheme.

All of them reported that they had got out quite easily, without coming across Figgins or a single pal of his.

"They seem to be asleep this morning," Tom Merry remarked. "I should have thought Figgy would be suspicious, especially as Gussy was there when he was telling Taggles about the brake. It might have occurred to him that we should raid it."

"I dare say he was thinking about the vac," remarked Blake. "Anyway, we can always do those New House bouncers in the eye. Then can spoof Shell fellows, but they're not quite up to the weight of Study No. 6."

"Wathah not!"

"Oh, rats!" said the Terrible Three together.

Several vehicles passed the juniors as they waited by the stile. They were laden with St. Jim's fellows and their belongings, en route for Rylcombe or Wayland. Tom Merry & Co. gave Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, a cheer as he passed with Darrel. Then came a trap with four fellows in it, and the Shell fellows stared as they recognised Lumley-Lumley of the Fourth in company with Cutts and Gilmore and Knox.

Lumley-Lumley coloured a little as he met their surprised glances.

He waved his hand as the trap drove by, and the party disappeared in the direction of Wayland town.

"Cutts has given him a lift, I suppose," Tom Merry remarked.

Blake grunted.

"He's going with Cutts for the vac," he said. "He told me so last night."

The captain of the Shell looked very grave.

"He didn't tell me," he said. "I suppose that was what

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NEXT
WEDNESDAY—

"CUSSY'S HOUSE-PARTY!"

Cutts wanted in his study. Isn't Lumley going off with his pater, as usual?"

"No. He says it can't be done this time."
"If he'd let us know, we'd have bagged him," said Tom. "I wish he wasn't going with Cutts. Well, it's his own business, I suppose."

"Hallo! It's nearly ten!" exclaimed Reilly. "Faith, and it's time that brake came by, if it's to get to the school by ten o'clock."

"Late, I suppose."
The juniors looked down the road towards Rylcombe. There was certainly no sign of the brake so far. Ten o'clock rang out across the fields, and the brake had not appeared. The minutes passed slowly.

"Jolly late!" said Blake, at a quarter-past ten. "My hat! Some of the New House bounders will be coming along to see what's become of it, and they'll spot us here with the bags."

"You're quite sure about the time, Gussy?"
"Yaas, wathah! Ten o'clock was what Figgins said to Taggles," declared Arthur Augustus D'Arcy positively. "I heard him with my own yaas, deah boy."

"Well, you couldn't have heard him with anybody else's, I suppose. But it's jolly queer the brake doesn't come."
"Yaas, wathah; it is certainly vewy queeah. But I am quite suah about it."

"Half-past ten," said Kerruish.
"My hat! We shall lose the train if we wait here much longer!" Tom Merry exclaimed. "And there's no sign of that blessed brake!"

"Blessed if I understand it!" said Blake, wrinkling his brows in perplexity. "The brake simply must pass us here to get to St. Jim's."

"Figgins may have altered the time, after he noticed that Gussy was on to it," suggested Lowther.

"Great Scott!"
"Bai Jove! I nevah thought of that!"
"You wouldn't," growled Manners.

"Weally, Mannahs, you did not think of it, eithah."
"Study No. 6 was managing this," said Manners, with a sniff. "Just like you Fourth Form duffers! Of course, you've made a muck of it!"

"It's too bad!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Look here, one of us had better cut off to St. Jim's, and see about it. If Figgy has altered the time for the afternoon, we can't wait here for hours and hours. We'll have the brake, anyway, whatever time the rotters have fixed it for."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry started off for the school, and the other fellows anxiously awaited his return. It did not take the Shell fellow long to reach St. Jim's. Taggles, the porter, was in the doorway of his lodge, and Tom Merry came up to him breathlessly. He noticed a grin on the crusty face of the porter.

"What time Figgins' brake coming, Taggles?" asked Tom. Taggles chuckled.

"Ten o'clock, Master Merry!"
"But it hasn't come."
"Yes, it 'ave," said Taggles.

"It's come?" shouted Tom Merry.
"Yes."
"When did it come?"

"'Arf-past height," grinned Taggles.
"Half-past eight!" howled Tom Merry. "How could it come at half-past eight if it was ordered for ten o'clock, you—
you image?"

"Master Figgins he changed the time, arter Master D'Arcy 'eard him say ten o'clock," said Taggles, with stolid satisfaction. "I think p'raps Master Figgins was afraid some young rips I know of might think of collaring his brake. He started off at 'arf past eight with the hother's, and he's left a note for you, which 'ere it is."

Tom Merry tore open the note.

"Dear Duffers," it ran, in Figgy's big, sprawling writing,—
"This is to say good-bye, as we're starting rather early. Hope you will have a good time this vac."
"P.S.—Compliments to Gussy on his excessively expressive countenance. Tell him, next time he thinks of japing the New House not to give it away on the spot.

"Kindest regards,
"GEORGE FIGGINS."

"Oh, my hat!"
Ten minutes later Tom Merry rejoined his comrades at the stile.

"Well?" they demanded with one voice.
Tom Merry did not reply. He held up Figgins's note. It was reply enough, and there was a howl of wrath from the School House juniors:

"Oh, rotten!"
"The spoofers!"
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NEXT WEDNESDAY—

"CUSSY'S HOUSE-PARTY!"

"The—swindlers!"
"Dished and done!"
"All Gussy's fault!" howled Lowther. "Compliments on his expressive chivvy! Of course, Figgy mentioned ten o'clock on purpose for Gussy, and made it half-past eight afterwards to do us in the eye."

"Weally, Lowthah—"
"He was pulling Gussy's leg all the time," groaned Blake. "Well, of course, we didn't know that. I admit that Gussy is a howling ass—"
"Weally, Blake—"

"This is how Study No. 6 manage things!" howled Manners. "Here we've been waiting over an hour for the blessed brake, and Figgins & Co. were gone in it before we had finished brekker!"

"And now we've lost the train!"
"Rotten!"

"There's only one thing to be done," said Tom Merry. "And what's that?" growled Blake discontentedly.

"Bump Gussy!"
"Weally, Tom Mewwy— Hands off! Stoppit! Bump! Bump!"
"Yawooh! Oh, you wottahs, you are wuinin' my twousahs! Help! Yow-ow!"

"And now we'll go and look for a train!" growled Tom Merry.
"Gwooh!"

And the School House juniors started off on foot, Arthur Augustus frowning with majestic wrath, and dusting down his elegant garments with a cambric handkerchief as he went. The last jape of the term had gone against the School House, and Study No. 6 had to confess that they had had no better luck than the Terrible Three. And their only consolation was the thought of the really terrific things they would do to Figgins & Co. next term.

CHAPTER 7.

Off for the Holidays.

THE local train from Rylcombe bore Tom Merry & Co. to Wayland Junction. They had lost their express, and they had an hour to wait for the next train at Wayland. There were a good many St. Jim's fellows about the station, and a short time before Tom Merry's train came in four fellows walked on the platform, evidently with the intention of taking the same train, and the four were Cutts & Co. Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass upon Jerrold Lumley-Lumley, who was sauntering by Cutts's side, chatting with him.

"Bai Jove! There's Lumley!" he remarked. "They did not go by the early twain."

Lumley glanced at the juniors, and coloured a little. Tom Merry & Co. were on bad terms with Gerald Cutts and Knox of the Sixth; and were not friendly with Gilmore. Under the circumstances, it was awkward for Lumley-Lumley to meet his old friends. But he nodded to them, and paused to speak. Cutts, with a supercilious glance at the juniors, strolled on along the platform with the other two seniors.

"Not off yet, Lumley?" asked Tom Merry.
"N-no," said Lumley-Lumley; "we've had a stroll round Wayland, and looked into some places. I thought you were going by the earlier train?"

It occurred to Tom Merry that Lumley-Lumley had picked the later train, and induced his companions to wait for it, with the intention of avoiding the awkwardness of travelling with his junior friends. But, owing to the astuteness of Figgins & Co., Tom Merry also had missed the early train, so they were destined to travel together, after all.

"You're going in our divection, Lumley?" asked D'Arcy.
"I guess so."

"You see, we missed our twain, owin' to a wotten twick of that boundah Figgins," said Arthur Augustus. "We were goin' to collah his brake, as we told you last evenin', but somehow or othah he was up to it, and he has done us."

"Then we shall be in the same train," said Lumley-Lumley.
"I guess I'm sorry you fellows are not on better terms with Cutts. He's not really a bad sort."

Tom Merry's lip curled.
"I don't know what you call a bad sort, then," he replied.

"I know he tried to get Lowther and me into his rotten gambling, and made it difficult for us to keep out of it. I know he used Digby's name in a scheme to swindle his own uncle, who's a friend of Dig's pater, and it was by sheer luck we found out what he was doing, and showed him up. I know he gets new fellows into his study, and plays bridge with them—and wins!"

"He wins generally," admitted Lumley-Lumley. "But that's nothing against a fellow, unless he cheats."

"I don't say he cheats, because I haven't played with him, and I don't know," said Tom Merry. "But I know he wins

a good deal of money from new fellows who don't know the ropes. I know he plotted to keep Kildare away from St. Jim's the time he succeeded in getting in as captain himself while old Kildare was absent. I know he's not a safe fellow for a decent chap to know. If you don't call him a bad sort, our ideas about bad sorts are very different."

"I know—I know! But I guess he's got his good points, all the same," said Lumley-Lumley. "He's a jolly companion, anyway!"

"Tastes differ."

"Yaas, wathah! I am weally wathah surprised at you, Lumlay. Is it weally too late to excuse yourself to Cutts, and come along with us? My patah would be vewy glad to see you at Eastwood."

"You're awfully good, Gussy! I—I suppose you fellows think I oughtn't to be with Cutts," said Lumley-Lumley uneasily. "But—but I assure you that it's all right. It doesn't mean that I'm going to do anything rotten. It's just a holiday, at a quiet place down in Hampshire."

"Then you won't be very far from us, when we're at Eastwood," said Jack Blake.

"I don't know. Is Westhorpe very far?"

"Bai Jove! It isn't half a mile ffrom Easthorpe," said Arthur Augustus. "Is that where you are goin' to stay?"

"Yes; a place called The Lodge, close by Westhorpe."

"I know the place," said D'Arcy. "A vewy pwetty place—shootin' and fishin' and boatin' and things. It's the same wivah as wuns past our place, so we shall vewy likely see you on the watah."

"Pity you fellows are not a bit more friendly with Cutts," said Lumley-Lumley regretfully.

"I don't see the pity," said Monty Lowther drily. "We've had quite enough of Cutts's friendliness—quite fed-up on it, in fact! It would be a good thing for you if we collared you and took you along with us, willy-nilly!"

"Bai Jove! That's wathah a good ideah!"

Lumley-Lumley laughed.

"Well, perhaps I shall see you down there," he said. "Ta-ta!"

And the Outsider of St. Jim's walked along the platform and rejoined Cutts & Co. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy shook his head solemnly.

"I don't like old Lumlay bein' with those fellows," he said seriously. "They are goin' to lead him into weckless goin's on—I know that."

"Well, he's old enough to take care of himself," remarked Manners. "Here comes the train."

"How are we travelling?" asked Herries.

"By twain, deah boy!"

"Ass! I mean what class? You've got the tickets."

"First-class, of course, as Gussy's got the tickets!" chuckled Blake. "Doesn't Gussy always do things in tip-top style?"

As the party were the guests of Arthur Augustus, he had insisted upon getting the tickets, and naturally he had taken first-class tickets. A pound or two more or less made no difference to the swell of St. Jim's, who was rolling in money at the break-up of the term. There were only two first-class carriages on the train, and Cutts & Co. entered one, so the juniors invaded the other. Both parties had the carriages to themselves, though the other part of the train was considerably crowded.

"Bai Jove! There won't be woom for all of us in heah!" Arthur Augustus remarked. "Does anybody feel inclined to twavel in the next cawwiage with Cutts?"

Nobody did.

"We'll make room," said Tom Merry. "As host, it's your business to make us comfy. I suggest that you sit on the rack!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Or on the floor," said Blake. "Then you would be useful as a foot-rest!"

"Pway don't be an ass, deah boy! If you fellows don't want to cwowd, I will sacwifice myself and go into the next cawwiage."

"My dear Gussy, you can't travel in questionable company," said Lowther solemnly. "Cutts would have you playing nap before we've gone a mile."

"I twust you do not weally considah that I should be capable of such extwemely wewwehensibie conduct, Lowthah. I wegard—"

"Hallo! Room here?" asked a cheery voice, as Wally—D'Arcy minor of the Third—looked in. "This way, Joe!"

"There ain't any room there, Wally," said Frayne of the Third.

"Oh, we'll make room! You can sit on Gussy!"

Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass severely upon his minor.

"I wufuse to let Fwayne sit on me, Wally! You fags can go furthah along the twain!"

"First-class carriages are at a discount!" explained Wally.

"It is weally vewy extwawagant of you fags to take first-class tickets at all!" said Arthur Augustus, as D'Arcy minor dragged Joe Frayne into the carriage.

"But we haven't," said Wally. "I'm not such a mug as to waste money like that!"

"Then you have no wight in this part of the twain at all. I twust you are not thinkin' of swindlin' the company, you young wascal!"

"What are companies made for?" asked Wally innocently. "Why, you feahful young wewwobate—"

"Don't you begin, Gussy!" implored Wally. "It's all right; I'm not going to welsh the company. I'm jolly particular on those points. That's why I'm going to travel in your carriage."

"Weally, Wally—"

"You see, you can pay extra on my ticket when they come along," explained Wally. "That's the advantage of having a major."

"I wufuse to do anythin' of the sort!" said D'Arcy indignantly. "I wuequest you to move along at once to the second-class cawwiages!"

"Train's startin'," said Wally.

"You know vewy well that you can go along the cowwidah. This is a cowwidah twain."

"So it is," agreed Wally. "But I'm not going to travel second-class. I'm surprised at you suggestin' it, Gussy! It's not honest!"

"You young wascal! If you have second-class tickets—"

"But I haven't; they're third!" said Wally cheerfully.

"Really, the pater would be shocked at your suggestin' that I should travel second with a third-class ticket! I'm afraid your moral tone is going down, Gus!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you young wottah! I was not suggestin' anythin' of the sort!" shouted Arthur Augustus. "If you have third tickets, you must twavel third, of course!"

"You suggested second—all the fellows heard you!" said Wally. "I decline to do anything so fishy as that! I'm staying here!"

"If the twain hadn't started," said Arthur Augustus, in measured tones, "I would thwow you out on the platform, you cheeky young boundah!"

"Lucky for you the train's started, then!" said Wally. "Somebody would be hurt if you started chucking me out, and it wouldn't be me! If you'd collect up some of your enormous feet, Lowther, a fellow would have more room!"

"Look here," said Tom Merry, laughing, "there isn't room for nine fellows in one carriage. If you fags have third tickets, you'd better go along the train."

"Must travel with my major," said Wally cheerfully.

"It's my major's duty to look after me, and see that I don't get into mischief."

"Yaas, that is vewy twue; but—"

"Get off my feet!" roared Lowther.

"Well, I told you to collect them," said Wally. "Besides, you shouldn't have such big feet unless you travel by special train."

"You cheeky young rotter, I'll—"

"Shush! Don't let's start the vac with a rag," said Wally. "Just shove up a bit further and make room for a chap."

"I wegard this invasion of our quartahs as simply feahful impertinence, Wally!"

"Rats! There's room in the next carriage," said Wally.

"It's no good to me, because Cutts wouldn't pay on my ticket of Frayne's. I'm sticking to you. But a couple of these Shell bounders can get out."

"Bai Jove! I—"

"It's all right," said Tom Merry, with a laugh. "I'll get into the next carriage, and you can come along with me, Lowther. We'll risk the moral contamination."

"Right-ho!" growled Lowther. "I'm not going to have these inky fags squeezing me into a pancake, anyway."

Tom Merry and Lowther stepped out into the corridor of the train. The express was outside Wayland now, and rushing along through green woods and meadows. Wally and Joe Frayne cheerfully squeezed into the seats left vacant by the two Shell fellows, quite regardless of the wrathful looks of the rest of the party.

CHAPTER 8.

The Black Sheep.

CUTTS and his companions had settled down comfortably for the journey.

There were only four of them, and they had the carriage to themselves—at first, at all events. They had plenty of room, and made themselves comfortable. Before the train was out of Wayland, Cutts and Knox and Gilmore were smoking cigarettes. Gerald Cutts offered his case to Lumley-Lumley.

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The Fourth-Former shook his head.
 "Oh, rot! Put a smoke on!" said Cutts. "We're not in school now, you know. No masters or prefects here to worry us. We can do as we like."
 "I guess I'd rather not."
 "Oh, be a pal!" said Gilmore. "One cig won't hurt you, kid!"
 "It's a smoking carriage," said Cutts. "You don't mean to say that you're afraid of those good youths in the next carriage seeing you?"
 Lumley-Lumley flushed.
 "No; but—"
 "Well, have just one."
 "Oh, all right."
 Lumley-Lumley reluctantly accepted the cigarette, and Cutts gave him a light. The Outsider of St. Jim's—looking very like the Outsider of former times now—blew out a little cloud of smoke. Like Cutts & Co., he felt the freedom from the restraints of the school, and was in an unusually reckless mood.
 "How long does this last, Cutts?" asked Gilmore.
 "Two hours."
 "Then we've got to pass the time somehow. I suppose you fellows don't feel inclined to pass two hours reading 'The Times'?"
 Cutts and Knox laughed. That harmless way of passing the time on a railway journey was very far from their thoughts. Cutts produced a pack of cards from his pocket.
 "Nap or banker?" he asked.
 "Make it nap."
 "Right-ho! There's four of us—"
 "Three, I guess," said Lumley-Lumley quietly. "You remember what I told you, Cutts, when you asked me to come with you. Nothing of that kind for me."
 Gilmore sneered, but a quick look from Cutts checked him.
 "I haven't forgotten, kid," said Cutts. "I don't want to interfere with any fellow's tastes. If you like to stand out of the game, it's all right if you won't feel that we're neglecting you."
 "I guess that's all serene."
 "Then it's a go."
 The three seniors began to play. As they played for penny points, the play was moderate enough—at least, in comparison with Cutts's usual style. Lumley-Lumley looked on. The three seniors interested in the game seemed to have forgotten him, and Lumley-Lumley had a feeling of being "out of it." As he had chosen to stay out of the game, he could not complain, and he yawned over a paper while his companions amused themselves. But he could not keep his eyes on the paper. The sight of the cards had a fascination for him. The gleaming red and black attracted his eyes in spite of himself. They brought back to his mind his wilder days, when his life had been crammed full of excitement, and the danger of it had given his reckless pleasures an added zest.
 "Take a hand?" said Cutts presently, as he shuffled the cards.
 Lumley-Lumley hesitated.
 "Only penny points?" he asked.
 "Certainly! We won't rook you."
 "I guess its not that. I've plenty of dibs," said Lumley-Lumley carelessly. "But, after all, nap for pennies can't be called gambling, can it?"
 "Only by evil-minded persons," grinned Knox.
 "Give me a hand, then," said Lumley-Lumley. "Dash it all, a fellow must do something! And we're not at St. Jim's now."
 Cutts dealt the cards, and Lumley-Lumley picked up his hand.
 "Two!" said Gilmore.
 "Three!" said Knox.
 "Nap!" said Lumley-Lumley.
 "Go it!"
 The door of the carriage on the train-corridor was closed, and the curtain drawn across it, to keep the occupation of the little party from the view of people who might pass along the train. But at this moment the door was slid back, and the forms of two juniors appeared in the corridor outside.
 Tom Merry and Lowther looked in.
 They started as that unexpected scene burst upon their view.
 Cutts and Knox and Gilmore, they knew, were likely enough to pass the time on a railway journey gambling, but they had not expected it of Lumley-Lumley.
 The latter flushed crimson.
 Cutts looked round angrily.
 "What do you kids want here?" he demanded.
 "There's not room for us in the next carriage," said Tom Merry quietly. "We're coming in here."
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"You're jolly well not coming in here! We're not going to be crowded with junior kids!" Cutts exclaimed. "Get along the train!"
 Tom Merry looked at him steadily.
 "We are coming in," he said, stepping inside the carriage as he spoke. "There are two seats vacant here, and we are going to take them."
 "What-ho!" murmured Monty Lowther.
 Tom Merry and Lowther sat down in the two corner seats nearest the corridor. Cutts laid down his cards, with a threatening scowl.
 "If you whelps don't want to be chucked out, you'd better get out of your own accord!" he exclaimed.
 "Get on with the chucking!" said Lowther cheerily.
 "There are half a dozen chaps in the next carriage who'll chip in if necessary. It will liven up the journey. Don't mind us. Start!"
 "Cheese it, Cutts!" murmured Knox. "We don't want a rag with a crowd of fags!"
 Cutts gritted his teeth. On second thoughts, he did not care, either, for a rough-and-tumble row with six or seven juniors. The seniors were bigger, but the odds were on the side of Tom Merry & Co. if they all piled in, as undoubtedly they would do.
 Cutts sat down again.
 "Let's get on," he said. "Never mind if the little cads are here. There's no sneaking out of term time, anyway."
 "We didn't come in to watch your rotten game!" said Tom Merry, with a curling lip. "You needn't mind us."
 "Well, shut up!" said Cutts.
 "We'll please ourselves about that," said Lowther.
 "Have you ever read the book called 'Naughty Georgey,' Cutts? He was a bad boy who played shove-ha-penny, and went from bad to worse till he became a politician and a member of the Cabinet. Take warning in time."
 "Dry up, you cheeky fag!"
 "You went nap, Lumley," said Gilmore. "We're waiting for you."
 Lumley-Lumley was very red and uncomfortable.
 He had had no anticipation that his old friends would enter the carriage, or he would certainly not have taken up a card. But he did not care to put them down now that the Shell fellows were there. He did not like to act like a boy who suddenly found himself under the eye of a master. He played his hand, and made nap.
 Tom Merry and Lowther stared out of the windows. They were angry and distressed to see Lumley-Lumley only too evidently falling under the old influence of Cutts of the Fifth. They had guessed what his holiday with Cutts would lead to, and it had come about sooner than they had expected. But they had no right to preach to him. He was his own master. The expressions on their faces showed what they thought, and caused Lumley-Lumley to feel ashamed of the occupation, and nettled at the same time. After all, he told himself, he had a right to do as he liked without other fellows pulling long faces about it. The thought that they were condemning him in their minds only made him more reckless.
 "Your deal, Lumley."
 Lumley-Lumley took the pack.
 "Let's have something a bit more lively on the game," yawned Knox. "What do you say to tanners?"
 "Done!" said Cutts.
 "Done!" said Gilmore.
 "Oh, all right!" said Lumley-Lumley. "May as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb!"
 "Don't be an ass, Lumley!" said Tom Merry, his patience giving way. "You know those rotters. They only want to rook you."
 "Will you be kind enough to hold your tongue?" inquired Cutts.
 "No, I won't, when I see a pal of mine being taken in by a gang of sharpers!" said Tom Merry savagely. "You know this is rotten, Lumley. Why don't you chuck it?"
 Lumley-Lumley grinned.
 In his old days, as the Outsider of St. Jim's, he had often been taken in hand by fellows who expected to make money out of him, but he had proved himself sharper than the sharpers. Cutts & Co. certainly had a business eye on Lumley's well-lined pocket-book; but the Outsider was quite sure that he could take plenty of care of it.
 "We don't want a row with you fags," said Cutts, in a voice trembling with rage. "But if you can't keep a civil tongue in your head you'll go out of this carriage on your necks, I warn you."
 "Rats!"
 "As for Lumley, he can take care of himself; he doesn't want you to dry-nurse him, and he isn't the kind of fellow to listen to lies about his friends, either, I hope!"
 "It's all right!" said Lumley-Lumley, rather at a loss

between his present and his old friends. "Don't you bother about me, Tom Merry. I can look after myself."

"You don't seem to be able to!" snapped Tom.

"I guess it's all right."

Lumley-Lumley dealt the cards, with a tinge of defiance in his manner. He did not like the suggestion that he was being dry-nursed.

Sixpence a point was soon increased to a shilling a point, and then to two shillings. Before the journey was half over the four young rascals were gambling on a serious scale.

Tom Merry and Lowther, by no means pleased to be witnesses to such a scene, left the carriage and walked down the corridor. They found seats in a second-class compartment, and Lumley-Lumley was left to his friends.

But Cutts & Co. were very far from "rooking" the astute Outsider. Lumley-Lumley was throwing himself into the game now with all his old zest, and he was winning all along the line. In his unregenerate days his luck had been phenomenal, and it had not deserted him now.

By the time the train stopped at Westhorpe Lumley-Lumley was six pounds in pocket—three from Cutts, and thirty shillings each from Gilmore and Knox. And the three seniors were looking considerably blue.

"Time for another round?" asked Gilmore, as Cutts looked at his watch.

The dandy of the Fifth shook his head.

"No; we're just in. But Lumley will give us our revenge to-night at the Lodge."

"Oh, of course!"

Lumley-Lumley nodded assent. He could do nothing else. He had won their money, and he could not refuse to give them their revenge afterwards. But he realised what that meant to his good resolutions. He had broken the ice; and after that there was no returning. It was a wise maxim of old, to "resist the beginnings." Lumley-Lumley had not resisted the beginnings, and almost unconsciously he had fallen into his old ways, in the company of the black sheep of St. Jim's. With Tom Merry & Co., after what they had seen, his relations would be somewhat strained, and so he would be thrown all the more upon the company of Cutts and the rest. They were going to have a "good time," from the point of view of Gerald Cutts. But Lumley-Lumley's brow was moody as he stepped from the train.

CHAPTER 9.

Arthur Augustus is Sorry He Spoke.

EASTHORPE!"

Tom Merry & Co. descended from the train in the quiet country station.

"Bai Jove, I'm wathah glad to be heah!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy remarked. "If you bwing that mongwel on a journey with me again, Wally, I shall thwash you!"

Wally's shaggy favourite, Pongo, was peeping out from under his jacket. Arthur Augustus had a strong objection to hairy dogs at close quarters. There were a good many hairs belonging to Pongo on Arthur Augustus's immaculate "bags." He dusted himself down very carefully on the platform.

"Oh, rats!" said Wally cheerfully. "Is the car here? I've got to look after Pongo; there's a dog he always fights with at the Easthorpe Arms."

"That wotten beast is not comin' in the cah!" said his major wrathfully. "I would almost as soon have Hewwies' beastly bulldog!"

"My bulldog isn't beastly!" said Herries warmly. "Some silly asses don't know a good dog when they see one!"

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"He jolly well is coming in the car!" said Wally. "You can walk if you like, Gussy. 'Taint far."

"You can let the beast wun atfah the cah."

"Rats! You can run after the car!" retorted Wally. And he marched out of the station, with Pongo under his arm.

The car from Eastwood House was already waiting. It was a big car, and there was room for the nine juniors to crowd in. Pongo was certainly superfluous, from the point of view of several fellows besides Arthur Augustus. But D'Arcy minor was not to be denied. He carried Pongo into the car and set him down on the cushioned seat.

Arthur Augustus breathed wrath.

"Take that bwute out, Wally!"

"Rats!"

"I shall thwow him out!"

"Bosh!"

"I wufuse to have my twousahs made dirtay and haiwy by that howwible mongwel!"

"Keep your blessed trousers to yourself, then!" said Wally cheerfully. "I don't ask you to shove your trousers against Pongo, do I?"

"Besides, there is not woom for a dog; and the patah

does not like to have dogs in the cah, as you know vewy well."

"Oh, the pater will get used to it in time."

"Take it calmly, Gussy!" advised Tom Merry. "We'll find room."

Arthur Augustus shook his head.

"I am bound to make that young boundah wespeth his eldahs," he replied. "I do not approve of this diwespeth towards one's eldah bwothahs. I always tweat old Conway with pwopah wespeth, and I insist upon the same fwom Wally. Wally, you young wascal, if you do not dwpot that beast out of the cah I shall eject you!"

"Eject away!" grinned Wally.

"Stand cleah, you fellahs, while I thwow that cheekay fag out."

"Hear, hear!" said Blake.

Arthur Augustus clambered wrathfully into the car. His dignity as Wally's major was at stake. He laid a grasp upon the fag, and Wally cheerfully returned it. Several idlers gathered round the car to look on with interest. A graceful girl who was coming down the village street quickened her pace as she saw the car, but the juniors were so busy watching D'Arcy's performance as "chucker-out" that they did not observe the approach of Cousin Ethel.

"Don't stand in the way, you chaps!" called out Arthur Augustus from the interior of the big car. "He's just comin'."

"Pile in!" said Blake encouragingly. "We'll stand here to pick up the pieces. Somebody had better telephone for a coffin."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wally, I shall be sowwy to use violence—"

"You will, if you begin!" agreed Wally.

"Are you goin'?"

"Not this year!"

"Then out you go, you cheekay young wottah!"

There was a struggle in the car. Then a form came tumbling out, and rolled in the dust.

"Hurray!" shouted Blake. "Blessed if he hasn't chucked him out—"

"Yawwooh!"

"Why, it's Gussy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus sat up and groped for his eyeglass. Wally and Pongo looked out of the car.

"Pick him up!" said Wally cheerfully. "I'll let him come in if he's quiet."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you uttah young wascal!" yelled Arthur Augustus, scrambling to his feet. "I will give you a feahful thwashin'! I will thwash you severely! I'll—"

Words failed Arthur Augustus. He rushed ferociously towards the car. A hand was laid upon his shoulder from behind, and he shook it off roughly.

"Pway don't collah me, you ass! I'm goin' to—"

"Arthur!"

"Gweat Scott!"

Arthur Augustus spun round as if he had been electrified. Cousin Ethel stood before him, smiling. It was Cousin Ethel to whom he had addressed that rude remark.

The swell of St. Jim's became as crimson as a freshly-boiled beetroot.

"Bai Jove! I—I beg your pardon, deah boy—I—I mean, deah gal—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Wally.

"Shut up, you young wepwobate! I'm weally awf'ly sowwy, Ethel, deah gal! Of course I didn't know it was you!" said Arthur Augustus, in great distress.

"Of course you didn't!" said Ethel cheerily. "And Wally is a young rascal, just as you say!"

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Wally indignantly. "You're not going to side with that dufer, Ethel? He doesn't want Pongo in the car."

"Ahem! I—I wewget that you should have seen me wathah excited, Ethel; but that minah of mine is enough to twy the tempah of a saint, weally. Wally, I twust you will not want to have that wotten mongwel in the cah with Cousin Ethel?"

"Ethel likes dogs," said Wally. "Still, I'll tell you what! You can go in the car, and I'll walk with Ethel. I don't want your old car."

"Wats! If Ethel is goin' to walk, of course, I am goin' to walk too," said Arthur Augustus. "Upon weflection, you can take the beast in the cah!"

"I was out for a walk," said Cousin Ethel, "and there is hardly room in the car. You may come with me, Wally, if you behave yourself!"

"Well, I like that!" grumbled Wally, jumping out of the car with Pongo. "I should always be as quiet as a lamb if I wasn't worried by a rowdy major!"

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"You—you feahful young wascal—"
 "Let's put the bags in the car, and all walk!" suggested Tom Merry.

"What a really ripping idea!" said Blake heartily.
 "Well, if Gussy will be quiet, and not make any of his rowdy scenes, he can come along," said Wally. "But none of your hooliganism, Gussy!"

Arthur Augustus did not reply to that remark. His feelings were too deep for words.

Cousin Ethel and the juniors walked down the leafy lane towards Eastwood House, with Pongo frisking after them, and before they were fairly out of the village Pongo was fighting desperately with the dog from the Easthorpe Arms. Wally and Joe Frayne rushed to the rescue; but Pongo was already chasing his enemy across a meadow, and the two fags sprinted in hot pursuit. The party walked on, as Wally and his comrades disappeared in the distance.

Tom Merry & Co. and D'Arcy's cousin were at lunch when the two fags came in. From the windows they saw them coming up the drive. Wally had Pongo under his arm. He also had his collar torn out, and a big swelling on his nose, and a splash of mud across his face.

Arthur Augustus leaned out of the window, and turned his eyes glass upon his disreputable minor.

"Wally, you young wuffian, how did you get into that awful estate?"

Wally snorted.
 "Dog's owner wanted to whack Pongo," he said indignantly. "Said Pongo began it!"

"Yaas, and so he did!"
 "Well, Pongo's got some spirit," said Wally. "He doesn't like that dog at the Easthorpe Arms, and he always goes for him. I wasn't going to have Pongo whacked. No jolly fear! So we piled on him, didn't we, Joe?"

"We did!" grinned Frayne.

"And left him in a ditch," said Wally cheerfully. "I shouldn't wonder if he complains to the pater. You'll bear me out that I was in the right, won't you, Gussy?"

"You young boundah! I shall certainly wefuse to do anythin' of the sort! I—"

"Oh, ring off!" said his minor.

And Wally and Joe and Pongo passed into the house. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy returned to the luncheon-table breathing hard.

"It's a frightful wowwy to have a minah, Ethel," he remarked. "Only the othah day I had to thwash Cutts of the Fifth for cuffin' him, and I dare say he deserved it. And Cutts is a beastly big fellow, you know, and it was wathah a tough thing for me. It's weally against the wules for a juniah to thwash a Fifth-Former! but I had to do it—didn't I, you chaps?"

"You did!" agreed Tom Merry. "But it's lucky for you you don't have to thrash a fellow like Cutts every day. There wouldn't be anything left of you if you did!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"It was worth seeing Gussy thrashing Cutts!" said Monty Lowther solemnly. "He did it in a manner all his own. We watched him. It was really interesting. He went to Cutts's study and thrashed him. He did it by coming out of Cutts's door on the end of Cutts's boot. Rather a painful way of thrashing a chap, I should think; but that was Gussy's way!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

But Arthur Augustus remembered that the humorist of the Shell was his guest, and paused in time, without stating his opinion of Monty Lowther.

"Well?" said Lowther.

"As you are undah my fathah's woof, Lowthah, I will

say nothing. But if we were at St. Jim's now, I should remark that I weguard you as a silly ass!"

"You may regard me in any character it pleases you to assume for the purpose, my dear chap," said Lowther politely.

"You uttah duffah! I mean—"

"Never mind what you mean, Gussy. Pass the chicken!"

"Yaas; but I meant to say—"

"You want all the chicken?" asked Lowther.

"Certainly not, you uttah ass! I mean—"

"You mean to pass it? Good! I'm waiting!"

Arthur Augustus passed the chicken, and gave it up.

CHAPTER 10.

Undesirable Neighbours.

"G LORIOUS weather!" Jack Blake remarked, the next morning, as he looked out of the window.

"Gorgeous!" agreed Herries, who shared Blake's room. "I wish Towser was here. Towser would enjoy this place!"

"Oh, blow Towser! Let's call Gussy!"

Blake proceeded into the adjoining room, where Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was still deep in balmy slumber.

Blake put his head close to the sleeper, and uttered a sudden formidable roar.

"Wake up!"

"Bai Jove!"

Crack!

Arthur Augustus started out of his slumber in alarm, and raised his head suddenly, and it came into contact with Blake's nose with a sudden concussion.

"Ow!" roared Blake, staggering back, and clasping his nose.

"Ow! Ow! You! You ass!"

"Gweat Scott! Ow! I've knocked my beastly head against somethin'! Ow!"

"Grooh! It was my nose! Grooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at, you ass?" exclaimed Blake, glaring at the swell of St. Jim's.

"Ha, ha, ha! It was funny, you know!"

"I'll funny you, you slacker!"

Do you know it's an hour past rising-bell?" said Blake; and he grasped the swell of St. Jim's and whirled him out of bed.

Arthur Augustus bumped on the floor and roared:

"Oh, you wuff ass!"

"Doesn't it seem so funny now?" grinned Blake.

"Gwooh!"

"Time we were down," said Tom Merry, looking in from another door. "Mustn't slack because we're on holidays, you kids!"


"Whom are you calling kids?" demanded Blake.

"You Fourth-Form kids," said Tom. "Buck up! We're nearly ready to go down, and Wally's out already with his precious mongrel. We're going to keep you fags up to the mark! Ow!"

A pillow whizzed through the air, and Tom Merry shot back suddenly into his room. He landed in the middle of the room with a bump.

Blake chuckled, and returned to his room to dress. The juniors of St. Jim's were starting their holidays in high spirits. As Blake remarked to Herries, it was ripping not to have to grind Latin that morning in the Form-room at St. Jim's.

The river looked much more inviting than the Form-room



NEXT WEDNESDAY:

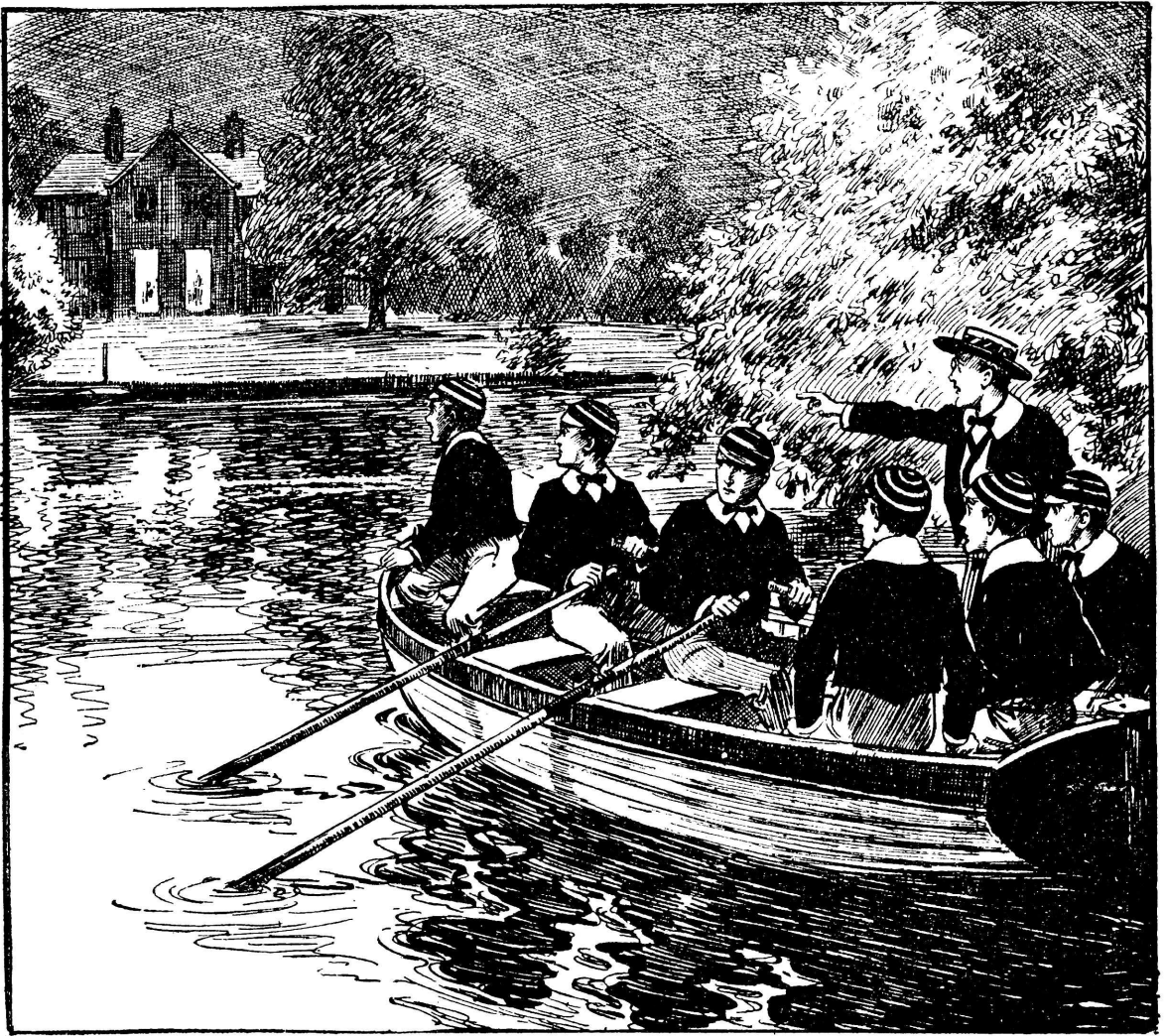
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Gran



As the juniors drew near the lodge, a light twinkled through the trees on the bank. "Bai Jove!" ejaculated D'Arcy, "they're still up!" "Rotters!" snorted Tom Merry. "But it's all the better. We may be able to spot which is Lumley-Lumley's room when he turns his light on." (See Chapter 13.)

had ever looked. Tom Merry & Co. came down in a cheery crowd, and found Lord Eastwood and his eldest son, Lord Conway, already at the breakfast-table. The earl greeted the juniors cordially, and Lord Conway gave them a welcoming nod.

Wally was at the breakfast-table, too, with Frayne, and he was feeding Pongo, who was under the table, and not supposed to be seen. But if Pongo was not seen, his happy voice as he worried kidneys and rashers of bacon could at least be heard.

Lord Eastwood and his eldest son were discussing a matter apparently of great interest to them, and Tom Merry & Co., as they heard the viscount's remarks, started a little. Lord Conway was speaking of the lodge and its occupants.

"Quite a rowdy party there," Lord Conway remarked. "I've been speaking to the head-keeper this morning, and he says that they incessantly come over the boundary-line. We can't have them potting our birds."

"Certainly not," said Lord Eastwood, frowning. "Who is it that has taken the lodge?"

"A Captain Punter, I think," said Lord Conway. "I've seen the man, and he looks to me a rank outsider. They have a roaring time there—bridge till two in the morning, and that kind of thing. They race about in their car past the speed limit all the time. And a fresh lot arrived yesterday, Perkins says, and they slanged him in great style when he pointed out to some of them that they were on the Eastwood property with their guns!"

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "Are you speakin' of the lodge at Eastwood, Conway, deah boy?"

"Yes."

"Then I wathah think we know who the fwesh awwivals are!" smiled Arthur Augustus.

"You know them?" exclaimed his father. "I trust, Arthur, that you have no acquaintances among those rowdy persons?"

"Sowwy, patah—can't be helped. They're St. Jim's fellows—seniabs, of course. We wouldn't own them in the Fourth Form!"

"Bless my soul!" said his lordship. "The Lodge is certainly not a right place for St. Jim's boys to spend their holidays in! I suppose their people know their business best; but, at all events, you boys must have nothing to do with them!"

"That's all right, sir," said Tom Merry. "We're at daggers drawn with Cutts & Co., anyway. We'll give them a wide berth!"

"Yaas, wathah! I do not approve of Cutts!"

After breakfast the juniors strolled down to the river. Arthur Augustus was wearing a very thoughtful look. Monty Lowther slapped him on the shoulder, and made him the generous offer of a penny for his thoughts.

"Ow! Pway don't be a wuff ass, Lowthah! I was thinkin'—"

"I knew there was something the matter with you," said Lowther, with a nod.

"Fathead! I was thinkin' of that name old Conway mentioned—Puntah! I've heard that name befoah!"

"Punter—Punter!" said Tom Merry thoughtfully. "Yes,

"I've heard it, too! I remember—it was that sharper who dogged us when we had a holiday abroad, and tried to get Gussy kidnapped!"

"Yaas, watah! I wondah if it is the same man? He was an awful wascal!"

"I shouldn't wonder," said Tom Merry. "He was a professional sharper, and what Lord Conway says of the tenant of the Lodge would fit Punter. He ought to be in prison, as a matter of fact, only he's too keen to be cornered by the law. Precious sort of acquaintance for St. Jim's chaps!"

"And Lumley's there!" Manners remarked.

Tom Merry sniffed.

"They've got him there to fleece him, of course!" he said.

"I dare say Cutts stands in with Punter, to clear something if he can bring a rich mug there to be skinned."

"Well, Lumley's rich, but he isn't exactly a mug," said Lowther. "I remember when he was a wild beggar at St. Jim's, he could hardly hold his own among the sharpers in Rylcombe."

"But this Punter is a different sort of sharper from the dingy bouncers who hang about the Green Man in Rylcombe," said Tom. "He's a professional swindler, and if he gets Lumley playing cards he will clean him out."

"I twust Lumley will not do anything quite so wotten as that, deah boy!"

Tom shrugged his shoulders. He had not mentioned to the other fellows what he had seen in Cutts's carriage on the way down, and Lowther had also kept his own counsel. They did not want to talk about the fellow who had been their chum, but who seemed to be well on the way of deserving once more his old title of the Outsider.

"Let's have a boat out," said Blake. "It's a lovely morning for a pull up the river."

"I'm going to take photographs," said Manners. "See you later."

Herries and Digby elected to visit Arthur Augustus's pony, while Manners went out with his camera, so the other four fellows ran the boat out and embarked. Arthur Augustus sat at the lines, while Blake and Lowther and Tom Merry pulled. The boat glided along the shining river.

"We shall pass the Lodge," Arthur Augustus remarked, turning his eyeglass upon the wooded shore. "I shouldn't wondah if we see somethin' of those boundahs. I shall wufese to take any notice of Cutts."

"Better still—give him another thrashing," suggested Lowther.

"Pway don't be an ass, Lowtah! Bai Jove, there they are! They've got a punt!"

The juniors looked round. On a gentle rise from the river bank stood the Lodge, a large, country "cottage" in its own grounds. Under the big trees by the riverside a punt lay moored, and several fellows were in it, playing cards in the cool shade. Cutts of the Fifth and Knox were there, and another fellow whom the juniors did not know—a vapid-looking youth with an eyeglass and a vacant face, probably one of the "pigeons" whom the tenant of the Lodge invited there to be plucked. And there was a man with a sallow face and strongly-marked features and a slight scar on his cheek, whom the juniors knew at once. It was a long time since they had seen him, but they recognised Captain Punter, with whom they had had trouble during a holiday abroad.

"Puntah, bai Jove!"

The party in the punt glanced round at the sound of oars. Lumly-Lumley was sitting on the side of the punt, looking on at the game, but not playing. He coloured at the sight of the juniors.

A sneer crossed Cutts's face as he looked at them. Captain Punter gave a start, and stared at them hard, and gritted his teeth. He had vindictive remembrances of his former acquaintance with Tom Merry & Co.

"Puntah, you wascal!" Arthur Augustus hailed him. "I did not expect to see you heah. It is like your cheek to be heah, you wottah!"

Cutts glanced at his host.

"Do you know that whelp, Punter?" he asked.

Captain Punter shook his head.

"Never seen him before," he replied calmly.

"Bai Jove, that is a whoppah, Puntah! I am not at all suah that the police are not lookin' for you at the present moment!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus indignantly. "You know perfectly well that you twied to get us to play cards on the steamah, and twied to swindle us. You are a black-guard, sir! I am not surprised that Cutts is a friend of yours, but I must wemark, Lumley-Lumley, that I am vewy surprised and shocked to see you in such company. I wcommend you to get out of it."

The worthy captain turned purple with wrath.

"Get off from here!" he roared. "You're trespassing here! Clear off at once, or we'll come and shift you!"

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Tom Merry laughed.

"The river's free to everybody," he said; "and D'Arcy's free to tell you his opinion of you, you scoundrel!"

The captain jumped up, and grasped a punt-pole. Cutts rose too, his eyes gleaming. He was not sorry for a chance of coming to blows with the juniors he disliked intently. The odds were on his side now.

"Let's duck them!" he exclaimed.

"Good idea—what?" said the vapid-looking youth, screwing his eyeglass into his eye. "Cheeky young beggars—what? Duck them!"

"You hear?" shouted Captain Punter. "You'll clear off from here at once, or we'll have you out of that boat and duck you!"

"Rats!"

"Yaas, wats, you wascal!"

Captain Punter cast the punt loose. Gilmore jumped into it from the bank. There were five of the party now, without counting Lumley-Lumley. The Outsider of St. Jim's was looking troubled and perplexed.

"Hold on, Punter!" he exclaimed. "Those fellows are friends of mine!"

Captain Punter uttered an oath.

"Friends of yours or not, they're not going to trespass here and insult me!" he exclaimed. "You can jump ashore if you like."

"I guess—"

"Don't mind us, Lumley," said Tom Merry. "We can look after ourselves. If those rotters come this way, we'll make them sorry for it."

"Clear off, and don't have any trouble," said Lumley-Lumley uneasily.

"Wats!"

"Oh, we're looking for trouble!" said Tom Merry cheerfully. "We shall be quite glad of a chance of settling old scores with that sharper."

Lumley-Lumley hesitated a moment, and then jumped to the bank as the captain pushed off. He was in an awkward position. He did not want to take part against his old friends, and at the same time he could not very well side against his host and his fellow-guests at the Lodge. He stood with a moody brow on the grassy bank and watched.

Captain Punter was in deadly earnest. So were Cutts & Co. And the youth with the eyeglass was chuckling gleefully at the idea of ducking the cheeky schoolboys. Captain Punter poled out into the river. Tom Merry & Co. rested on their oars. They had a right to be anywhere on the river they chose, and they certainly did not intend to be bullied away by a sharper like Captain Punter. And if they were not exactly looking for trouble, as Tom Merry put it, they were not keen to avoid it. As for the odds against them, they did not give that matter a thought. They were quite prepared for a scrimmage.

Bump!

The punt bumped into the boat, and both the crafts rocked violently. Then Captain Punter led the attack, leaping into the boat, which oscillated violently as his weight came down in it. He stumbled as the boat rocked, and before he could recover himself, Monty Lowther had hold of his ankles, and had tilted him over the other side. The gallant captain plunged head foremost into the river with a mighty splash.

CHAPTER 11.

The Right Thing.

SPLASH!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Captain Punter disappeared into the river. The juniors were all on their feet now—Arthur Augustus with a boat-hook in his hand, and the other three with their oars ready to repel boarders, so to speak.

"No admittance!" grinned Tom Merry, as he thrust his oar against Cutts's chest, and sent the dandy of the Fifth sprawling back into the punt. Lowther's oar caught Gilmore in the ribs, and he joined Cutts in the bottom of the punt.

Knox of the Sixth leaped into the boat, and slipped, and the next moment was on his back, with Jack Blake sitting on his chest and pinning him down. The Sixth-Former of St. Jim's struggled furiously under the junior; but Blake had him down, and he kept him there.

"Gerroff!" roared Knox. "I—I'll smash you! I—I'll—"

"You'll shut up," grinned Blake, playfully jamming Knox's head down on the timber of the boat.

"Yarooop!"

"By gad!" ejaculated the youth in the eyeglass, who was watching the scene from the punt, without taking any share in the proceedings. "By gad!"

"Help!" roared Knox. "Lend me a hand, Talboys, you idiot!"

"By gad!" repeated Mr. Talboys.

"Will you help me, you chump?"

"By gad!"

The exertions of Mr. Talboys were apparently entirely limited to that ejaculation. Perhaps he did not like the look of Tom Merry & Co. at close quarters.

Captain Punter had come to the surface, puffing and blowing. He grasped at the gunwale of the boat, and tried to drag himself in, but Arthur Augustus made playful passes at him with the boat-hook.

"You keep off, you wottah!" said D'Arcy. "You can hang on if you like; but if you twy to get in I shall give you a feahful cosh!"

Cutts and Gilmore staggered up in the punt. The boat had drifted apart from it now, and the distance was too far for a leap. Lumley-Lumley, on the bank, was grinning. It was evident by this time that the fortune of war was not going against Tom Merry & Co.

Tom Merry grinned and dipped his oars. The boat glided away down the river, with the furious captain hanging to it, D'Arcy still keeping him at bay with the boat-hook. Knox was still struggling under the weight of Jack Blake. Cutts and Gilmore poled away furiously, but they could not get near the boat again.

"Bai Jove! I wathah wegard that as a victory!" grinned Arthur Augustus. "We have beaten the wottahs, deah boys, and taken a pwisonah. What are we goin' to do with him?"

"What were they going to do with us?" chuckled Blake. "Duck him!"

"Yaas, wathah! Let him join his fwient Puntah in the watah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hold on!" roared Knox. "You—you rotten fags, if you dare to duck me, I'll—I'll—I'll—Leggo! Chuck it! Oh—rums!"

Lowther and Blake and D'Arcy seized the Sixth-Former together, while Tom Merry sat at the oars, keeping the boat well away from the punt lumbering in pursuit. Knox was dragged up, struggling furiously, and pitched bodily over the gunwale. He disappeared into the water with a loud splash.

He came up puffing, and struck out for the punt, and Cutts helped him in, drenched and dripping and furious.

Captain Punter still clung to the gunwale of the boat, and was being dragged along through the water after it. The gallant captain was a very poor swimmer, and he dared not let go his hold to attempt to get back to the punt. And the boat-hook flourishing in Arthur Augustus' hand kept him from trying to climb into the boat. His red face had grown pale, and he was panting and gasping.

"Bettah knock that wottah off," Arthur Augustus remarked. "We can't dwag him all along the wivah."

"Give him a cosh on the crumpet," said Monty Lowther.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"D-d-don't!" yelled the captain, as Arthur Augustus brandished the boat-hook in a ferocious manner. "D-d-don't! I—I—I—shall be d-d-drowned if I let go."

"Impossible," said Lowther. "Folks who are born to be hanged can't be drowned."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, we can't take you in," said Blake. "You tried to take us in once; but we're not going to take you in. Let's land the beast, you fellows. We'll shove him across the river, and Cutts can punt over and fetch him."

"Good egg!"

Tom Merry rowed in to the further shore, and the boat bumped on the reeds. Arthur Augustus made a playful lunge at the drenched captain.

"Now get off," he said.

"And buck up," said Tom Merry.

"I—I can't! I can't get through ten feet of mud!" howled Captain Punter. "I—I shall be smothered. I—"

"You never know what you can do till you try," said Tom cheerfully. "But one thing's jolly certain, if you don't get off, I shall shove you off with this oar."

"That's all wight, deah boy. I'll bwain him if he doesn't cleah off," said D'Arcy. "Now, where will you have it, Puntah?"

"You—you young villain!"

Crash!

Arthur Augustus brought the boat-hook down on the gunwale within a couple of feet of the captain's head. Punter gave a yell of fright.

"Bai Jove! Missed his nappah!" said Arthur Augustus. "Nevah mind. I'll bwain him this time!" And up went the boat-hook again.

The captain, grinding an oath between his teeth, let go his hold, and went floundering through reeds and mud to the shore. There was shallow water and thick mud for him

to scramble through, and by the time he reached terra firma he was a most disreputable-looking object. He stood on the bank, soaked with water, dripping with mud, shaking his fist at the boat, and raving out curses.

"Give way, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus. "I weally cannot stay heah and listen to that wascal's extwemely bad language. Buck up!"

The juniors bent to their oars, and glided away, leaving the captain still raving on the bank. Cutts poled across and took him off at last; and it was an extremely wet and furious party that returned to the lodge. Tom Merry & Co. went on down the river quite cheerfully. They had scored off their old foes, and were quite satisfied. There was only one thought that troubled them, and that was the thought of Lumley-Lumley of the Fourth thrown into such rascally company for his vacation. And that was a real worry, for they had a sincere friendship for the one-time Outsider of St. Jim's, and it was painful to see him in his old bad courses again.

Arthur Augustus sat with a wrinkled brow at the rudders. He was evidently thinking the matter out very deeply.

"It's up to us," he said at last.

"Hallo," said Lowther, who had been watching the swell of St. Jim's wrinkled brow with some amusement, "got through the mental process at last!"

"I've been thinkin' it out, deah boys. It is wathah a pity that we didn't know that Lumley-Lumley was stwanded for the holiday, and then we could have asked him to come with us, and he would have come. I feel that I have been a little to blame. It nevah occurred to me that he wasn't goin' with his patah as usual, and he nevah said a word. I pwesume he was afwaid of bein' suspected of fishin' for an invitation, though weally he might have known his old pals bettah. Undah the unfortunate cires, however, I wepeat that it is up to us."

"What's up to us?" demanded Blake.

"To wescue him fwom his various suwoundins," said Arthur Augustus firmly. "You see, so long as he was simply with Cutts & Co., we couldn't intahfere. They are wotten blackguards, but they are St. Jim's fellows. But now we know he is stayin' with a wottah who is pwactically a cwiminal. That fellow Puntah would be in pwison now if the police had pwoofs against him. We can't leave a fwient in such company. If he won't leave it of his own accord, it's up to us to wescue him."

The juniors grinned. The idea of rescuing a fellow from his host and his fellow-guests in a place to which he had gone of his own accord struck them as funny. But Arthur Augustus was in deadly earnest.

"I mean it, deah boys," he said. "There is no tellin' what twouble Lumley may get into among that cwold. That gang at the Lodge are a set of feahful outsidahs. They wace about the country in a glarin' motah-car, and poach on my patah's land, and play bwidge half the night—in fact, they are a wascally set of wottahs. They are goin' to swindle Lumley, of course. That's what he's there for. It's up to us to wescue him. He thinks he can't bwreak with Cutts; but if we give him no choice in the mattah, it will be all wight."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lowther. "Are we going to carry him off by force? Once aboard the lugger and the gal is ours. Ha, ha, ha!"

"I fail to see any weason for cacklin', Lowthah. I suggest that we capchah Lumley-Lumley, and cawvy him off in a boat. Then we'll duck him till he pwomises, honah bwight, to join our partay at Eastwood, and have nothin' more to do with Cutts or Puntah."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gussy, old man, your hospitality is really overwhelming when you set your mind on doing the right thing," said Tom Merry. "It's the first time I ever heard of securing a guest by collaring him and ducking him."

"It's for his own good, deah boy."

"By George," said Blake, "it's not a bad wheeze, when you come to think of it. Lumley-Lumley ought to be glad to get out of that kind of company, if he's got any decency in him. Well, if we take him out of it by force, it will be a big favour to him. And if Gussy's willing to have him at Eastwood—"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Then I buck up Gussy," said Blake. "We'll try it on—what?"

"But Lumley will be ratty if we collar him," said Tom Merry, laughing.

ANSWERS

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 339.

A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

NEXT WEDNESDAY—

"CUSSY'S HOUSE-PARTY!"

"Let him be as watty as he likes."

"But you can't compel a chap to become your guest against his will!" roared Lowther.

"I am prepared to go any lengths when it is a question of doin' the wight thing," said Arthur Augustus firmly. "Besides, it will be a great jape on Cutts & Co. to cawwy off their special guest, the fellow they are goin' to swindle."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was certainly a harebrained scheme. But the more the juniors thought about it, the better they liked it. Lumley-Lumley was their chum, and Cutts of the Fifth had no right to take him away into disreputable company, and endeavour to lead him into all kinds of rascality and blackguardism. To rescue a fellow against his will was an unusual proceeding—and it might lead to a severe tussle with the tenants of the Lodge, if the juniors were caught in the act—but that risk only appealed to their sense of adventure. The Lodge party had started the trouble, anyway. And when the boat returned to Eastwood the rest of the Co. were taken into the scheme, and Manners and Herries and Digby joined heartily in the plan.

During the day Lord Conway and Cousin Ethel both observed that Tom Merry & Co. were frequently in mysterious consultation, and that there seemed to be something afoot; but they little guessed what it was. The chums of St. Jim's kept their own counsel.

CHAPTER 12. A Rook Among Rooks!

"LILY!" said Cutts.

It was night—long past midnight. Outside the lodge the darkness lay thick upon the woods and the river. Save for the occasional cry of a nightbird, all was silent upon the sleeping countryside.

But there was no thought of sleep among the reckless party at the lodge.

In a large room, with French windows open upon a verandah, the electric light gleamed upon an excited if not exactly a merry party.

There were cards upon the table, and silver ash-trays, bottles and glasses, and boxes of cigars and cigarettes.

The floor was littered with cards of discarded packs. Two or three broken champagne glasses lay there too.

The atmosphere was heavy with smoke and the fumes of drink.

Captain Punter, looking more sallow and dingily black-guards than ever in evening clothes, with a big diamond in his shirt-front, stood with his hands in his trousers' pockets, looking on at the card-players.

The gallant captain was not playing, having lately given his place to Mr. Talboys, who was Lumley-Lumley's partner.

Cutts of the Fifth sat opposite Knox. Gilmore was sprawling on a lounge, smoking a cheroot. The deep flush in his face showed that he had been drinking more than was good for him.

Lumley-Lumley had been drinking too.

There had been a time when champagne was as familiar to the Outsider of St. Jim's as ginger-beer was to the other juniors. And the Outsider seemed to be quite his old self again now. The force of association had done it. He had come down to the Lodge with good intentions. But even on the journey down he had fallen into Cutts's cunning net. On the same evening he had given his companions their "revenge," but his luck had still been good, and he had won heavily.

To refuse to play, when the money of his companions was in his pocket, was impossible. And among this reckless set, all the Outsider's old recklessness was coming back. Tom Merry & Co. would hardly have known him now. He seemed to be exactly the fellow he had been when he first came to St. Jim's as he sat at the card-table. There was a cigar between his teeth, and a half-empty champagne-glass at his elbow. The flush in his face showed that the potent liquor had had its effect upon him. But he was still cool enough to play carefully and well.

The game was auction bridge. They had started with half-a-crown a hundred. But as the night grew older and the wine circulated and recklessness mounted the stakes had been increased. They were playing a guinea a hundred now, and still the Outsider's luck was good.

Captain Punter had been his partner at first, and the gallant captain had played very badly, which was curious, because the captain was a past-master of all card games. But perhaps he had his own reasons for wishing Cutts and Knox to score.

But, in spite of his partner's excessively bad play, Lumley-Lumley had done very well, by a combination of skill and luck. Whenever the captain was dummy, he had had, of course, to sit idle while Lumley-Lumley played the cards to

their best advantage, without the power to interfere. And when the captain retired, giving his place to Talboys, the Outsider had gone ahead wonderfully.

Talboys was a bad player, but he did his best, not being in the "know." He was a rich and foolish young fellow, who had been brought to the Lodge, like Lumley-Lumley himself, to be plucked. He was quite unaware of the fact, and he regarded the captain as a dashing fellow with plenty of money, whereas, in reality, the captain would have found it exceedingly difficult to pay his bills but for the unintentional contributions from his guests.

Whether Lumley-Lumley knew that he was regarded as a "pigeon," even Cutts, keen as he was, could not tell.

He gave no sign of knowing it. He appeared to regard the little party as an ordinary, if somewhat reckless, card-party, and he seemed to be enjoying the game.

True, Cutts had seen him look over the cards very sharply before play began, and he guessed that the junior was scanning them to ascertain whether they were marked. Lumley-Lumley's peculiar experiences in early boyhood had taught him all there was to know about marked cards. And Cutts was very glad that the captain had not attempted that kind of trickery, for it was quite certain that Lumley-Lumley would have spotted it at once.

So far as the cards were concerned all was above board. The Outsider was not to be taken in by so palpable a dodge as marked cards.

If he was to be relieved of his superfluous cash, it had to be by some means a little more cunning than that.

And he was to be relieved of it—that was what he was there for. Cutts, it is true, had some personal regard for the Outsider, but to the rest he was simply a victim. And Cutts was feeling by this time anything but amiable towards the junior. If Lumley-Lumley had allowed his money to be won, Cutts's feelings towards him would have been of the friendliest possible kind. But it was Lumley-Lumley who was winning almost all the time. When he had the worst of it, he kept the losses down, and when he won his opponents had to pay out a good figure. And Cutts was feeling more and more bitter with every game.

Did Lumley-Lumley know that the captain and Cutts and Knox were in the "know"—that there was an understanding among them with regard to equal shares in the proceeds if the millionaire's son was rooked? Cutts wondered. But the Outsider's impassive face gave no sign. The captain, with jovial hospitality, pressed champagne upon him, and the Outsider had tossed off glass after glass with perfect equanimity. The captain looked at him, and marvelled. How a junior schoolboy could stand so much champagne and hardly turned a hair was a wonder to him. Of Lumley-Lumley's past he knew nothing. All he knew of the junior was that he was the son of Lascelles Lumley-Lumley, the famous financier and railway magnate, and that he had an ample allowance—as much money, in fact, as he cared to ask an indulgent father to give him. Such a "pigeon" was worth anything to the captain—if only he could be plucked. In that process Captain Punter had not anticipated the slightest difficulty, especially with the aid of Cutts and Knox. But the game was not working out according to programme.

The play had gone on, with short intervals, from the early evening. Now it was past one o'clock in the morning. Would that extraordinary junior never grow tired and slack—would the potent vintage of champagne never have the effect of dulling his faculties, and throwing him off his guard?

It seemed so. Captain Punter was growing restless. He was deeply out of pocket, so far. The money he had won as Lumley-Lumley's partner was nothing to him, because it came out of the common stock. It had to be returned to the losers afterwards. And the money Lumley-Lumley won went into his pocket, and stayed there.

Once or twice a peculiar smile flickered over Lumley-Lumley's calm, impassive countenance. Cutts, as he noted it, suspected that the Outsider was "up" to every move against him; that he knew what he was at the Lodge for, and that he was taking a secret pleasure in turning the tables upon his kind entertainers. And that thought made Cutts savage and furious. But he could not be sure.

"Lily!" said Cutts, between his teeth.

"Pass!" said Talboys.

Knox passed.

"Two lily!" said Lumley-Lumley calmly.

They played. Talboys laid out his cards, and Lumley-Lumley played. Captain Punter strolled carelessly behind Lumley-Lumley's chair. With equal carelessness, apparently, Lumley-Lumley held his cards down, so that they could not possibly be seen. Captain Punter ground his teeth hard. His thin lips parted over his teeth, showing them in a snarl like a wild animal. Lumley-Lumley raised his eyes, and in a mirror opposite him he caught the reflection of the captain's face. Instantly Punter's features cleared, and a genial smile took the place of the snarl.

Lumley-Lumley played on calmly. He did not seem to need to consult his cards again. And the captain had no chance of seeing them. When he was betraying Talboys or any other dupe, the captain had an elaborate system of signals. If he closed his right eye, it meant that the player he was spying upon held the ace of trumps. Both eyes closed for a second meant both king and ace. His hand passed carelessly through his hair indicated over six trumps. And so on. But the gallant captain had no chance whatever of conveying information to Cutts.

Knox did his best. When, as now, Lumley-Lumley was playing two hands, Knox would contrive to let Cutts see his cards as much as possible, and this enabled the dandy of the Fifth to memorise what must be contained in Lumley's hand. But even that was not easy. For if Knox dropped a card face upwards, Lumley-Lumley exacted the penalty; if he held his cards so that Cutts could see them, Lumley-Lumley instantly drew general attention to the fact; if he made signs, Lumley-Lumley would stare him steadily in the face, as if asking him what he meant by it. And, of course, the rascals would not venture to cheat openly. Yet, under the circumstances, it seemed almost miraculous that Lumley-Lumley succeeded in holding his own. Captain Punter's private opinion was that he had the luck of the Gentleman in Black, and he was beginning to suspect that Lumley must be something of a sharper himself to be able to keep his end up in such a situation.

The rascals were getting desperate. So far from cleaning out the pigeon, they had lost considerable cash themselves; and if this kind of thing went on, Lumley-Lumley, instead of paying the whole expenses of the Lodge for a few weeks, would prove a most expensive guest there.

And Captain Punter was not looking for expensive guests. He was accustomed to being an expensive host.

The rubber finished in favour of Lumley-Lumley and Talboys, and as 250 for the rubber brought the score up to a high figure, Knox and Cutts had each to pay out three guineas. Their cash resources were getting to a low figure now.

Lumley-Lumley yawned. "Half-past one," he remarked. "Anybody thinking of bed?"

The card-sharper exchanged quick glances.

An extremely ugly look came over Gerald Cutts's hard, clear-cut face.

"Come, you're not sleepy!" he said unpleasantly. "It isn't exactly sporting to get sleepy after cleaning us out like this!"

The junior laughed.

"Bless you," he said carelessly, "I'm game to go on till daylight if you are! I guess it wouldn't be the first time."

"Another rubber," said the captain. "Go and have a smoke, Knox, old man, and I'll chip in. You two fellows remain partners, as you get on so well."

Talboys and Lumley-Lumley assented to that arrangement. The captain took Knox's place. Knox was glad of it. He was not quite so unscrupulous a rascal as Cutts, and he was clumsy in his attempts to introduce foul play into the game. The captain and Cutts were well-matched. They were both as sharp as needles, and would be able to play into one another's hands easily. It was time that luck should turn, even at the risk of awakening Lumley-Lumley's suspicions.

But the Outsider seemed to be quite equal to the occasion. When he had the play, and dummy's hand was exposed, Punter and Cutts by means of mutual signals could be quite aware of the position of all the cards in the pack. But Lumley-Lumley made low calls, and left the play to the others. Talboys followed his example.

The rubber finished with a victory for the captain and Cutts—it could hardly finish otherwise—but the losers had only to pay out a guinea each. And when the captain proposed a fresh rubber Lumley-Lumley shook his head. Having found that he could not keep his end up against two sharper like Punter and Cutts playing in conjunction, he calmly beat a retreat.

"I guess I've had enough bridge," he said coolly. "If you fellows want your revenge, you can have it at some other game."

The captain gnawed his lip. But he could not refuse.

"Any game you like," he said.

"Make it nap."

"A schoolboy game!" said the captain, with a shrug of the shoulders.

"Well, I guess I'm a schoolboy."

"Oh, I don't mind, if you're set on it!"

They played nap, and Lumley-Lumley's luck continued good. At that game it was only possible to cheat by manipulating the cards. As they were not marked, it was difficult to do so. But the captain was an expert, and he succeeded in getting good cards to Cutts. But when Lumley-

Lumley dealt he always had a good hand, and the captain eyed him with growing suspicion.

It seemed impossible that a mere schoolboy was able to deal himself good cards knowingly from a pack that was not marked when the professional (sharper's) abilities in that direction were limited.

The conviction grew in the captain's mind that he was dealing with a sharper who was much sharper than himself. As they were playing for guinea points, a pile of money was soon accumulating beside Lumley-Lumley's elbow.

"Hang the luck!" exclaimed Cutts at last, as he felt in his pocket and found nothing but space there. "Let's try a new pack!"

The captain understood.

"And a new game," he said.

"Any old game?" yawned Lumley-Lumley. "I'm your antelope, I guess!"

The captain produced a fresh pack of cards from a cabinet. They were desperate now, and Cutts's remark had been a hint to the captain to try marked cards as a last resource. And the captain suggested poker as a game. Lumley-Lumley assented at once.

"You know the game?" asked Punter curiously.

"I guess I've played it in mining camps in the Sierra in California when I was no higher than this table," said Lumley-Lumley coolly. "You can't teach me much about poker."

Gilmore and Knox joined in the game. It was a last effort to turn the tables upon that pigeon who had so unexpectedly turned out to be a hawk.

After two or three rounds, Lumley-Lumley's luck seemed to have deserted him. Twenty pounds had passed away from him, and the conspirators were looking a little more cheerful.

Punter and Cutts had been dealing, and they had given Lumley-Lumley good hands to induce him to plunge; but one of themselves had a hand a little better to take the pot. When Talboys dealt, the captain and Cutts played low. Then came Lumley-Lumley's deal. He seemed not even to look at the cards. If he had spotted that they were marked he gave no sign of his knowledge.

Captain Punter's eyes gleamed as he looked at his hand. He had three aces and two kings. It was a hand that could only be beaten by four of a kind or a royal flush.

He risked a change in the draw, and, to his delight, drew an ace. He had four of a kind now—the highest possible four. Only a straight flush could beat him, and it was not likely that Lumley-Lumley had dealt himself a royal flush—unless he knew that the cards were marked, and knew how to handle them. And it would have been too much to believe that that mere schoolboy was so well up in the tricks of the professional cardsharpener.

Gerald Cutts was looking satisfied, too, in spite of his efforts to appear indifferent.

He had four queens in his hand. Knox had four jacks. Gilmore had a full hand—three tens and two kings. Lumley-Lumley's face showed no sign of what he had. Talboys had a worthless hand, and passed out in the first round. But the other players bet eagerly. The pile in the pool grew larger and larger. No limit had been fixed, and so the stakes grew higher and higher.

Captain Punter conveyed to Cutts the power of his hand by a secret signal, and the Fifth-Former dropped out. After another round or two, Gilmore followed his example. Lumley-Lumley was raising the bets only slightly, apparently a little doubtful now. Knox stayed in long enough to encourage Lumley-Lumley to keep on, and then he, too, passed. It remained now between the captain and the Outsider.

With four aces in his hand, the captain would almost have bet his skin on the game. He wondered what the schoolboy could hold that kept him piling sovereigns in the pool. There was more than a hundred pounds in the pool now, and if Lumley-Lumley won it, the sharper were cleaned out as clean as a whistle. But the captain was sure that the outsider was bluffing. Lumley-Lumley, if he was bluffing, was doing it with an iron nerve.

He opened a pocket-book, flicked out a ten-pound note, and calmly dropped it into the pool.

The captain stared. To go on, he had to put in ten pounds at least, and he had not so much money left about him.

"I shall have to give you an I O U, and call," he said.

Lumley-Lumley nodded.

Captain Punter dropped his valuable I O U into the pool, and called. Lumley-Lumley showed his cards. Captain Punter's eyes almost started from his head. Lumley's hand was a royal flush—the ten, nine, eight, seven, and six of hearts. As a royal flush beat a four, Lumley-Lumley had won.

"I guess I take that little pot," drawled the Outsider of St. Jim's.

And he reached out for it; and as he did so the captain, white with rage, and throwing aside all restraint and disguise, reached out, too, and grasped his wrist.

CHAPTER 13. A Nocturnal Expedition.

"YAW-AW-AW-AW!"

Thus Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. It was past midnight, and the juniors of St. Jim's were asleep under the hospitable roof of Eastwood House. Arthur Augustus was sound in the arms of Morpheus, when an alarm-clock beside his bed buzzed in his ears, and he awakened and yawned portentously.

"Yaw-aw-aw-aw-aw! Bai Jove! I'm sleepay!" Arthur Augustus sat up in bed. The house was very still. Lord Pastwood was sleeping the sleep of the just, little dreaming that his hopeful son had a great scheme on for that eventful night.

Arthur Augustus had carefully placed the alarm-clock to awaken him at the right hour; but, now he was awake, somehow the enterprise did not seem to him quite so inviting as it had seemed when the juniors were planning it during the day.

He gazed round in the dim glimmer of starlight from the window, and yawned again. From Herries' bed came a sound of steady breathing. The swell of St. Jim's reached out and stopped the alarm, as a preliminary to getting up. Then he began to reflect—always a dangerous thing to do when it is a question of getting up at untimely hours.

"Bai Jove! I was wathah an ass to fix it for the night-time!" he murmured. "Pewwaps it's the only time for gettin' at Lumlay without a wov; but, on the othah hand, pewwaps we could catch him quite easily to-morrow walkin' in the park. Vevy likely we shall come across him on the wivah. Besides, he may not be gone to bed, and he may be sittin' up playin' some wotten game. And if he's gone to bed, how are we to be sure of pickin' out his window? And if there's a wov, why, there'll be a wov, and the patah won't like it. I weally think I was wathah an ass! Upon the whole, I think it would be fah bettah to leave the whole biznay till to-morrow, and we'll talk it ovah again. I wondah I did not think of all this befoah! But it's all wight—we'll think it ovah again to-morrow! There's lots of time, anyway!"

And, having come to that resolution, Arthur Augustus laid his drowsy head on the pillow again, and closed his eyes.

He was just slipping back into balmy slumber, when a gasp was laid upon him, and he was jerked bodily out of bed. His eyes opened quite suddenly.

"Gweat Scott! What—who—which—"

Tom Merry grinned cheerfully down at him.

"Time!" he said.

"B-b-bai Jove! I didn't know you were awake, deah boy!"

"I heard the alarm, fathead! Didn't it wake you?"

"Ya-a-s; but I've been thinkin', deah boy. On reflection, I weally considah we had bettah leave the whole biznay till to-morrow!"

Tom Merry chuckled.

"So you want to go back to bed?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, if you do you'll get a jug of water over you. Buck up!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"You're leader in this giddy enterprise, Gussy. It was your idea. Are you going to snore all night, and leave us to go it on our own?" demanded Tom.

"I was pwoposin' to leave it till to-morrow—"

"Rats! Wake up, Herries!"

"Ya-aw-aw!" came from Herries.

"Lowther and Blake are up already," said Tom. "I've called them. Get into your clobber, Gussy. You're not going to plant a burglarious enterprise on us, and go to sleep while we carry it out!"

"Of course, if you are goin', I must come," said Arthur Augustus, with a sigh. "You fellows would make a muck of it without me. But weally—"

"Start in ten minutes," said Tom; and he went back to his room.

And Arthur Augustus groaned and dressed himself. In ten minutes the juniors were dressed and ready to start. The three Shell fellows and the four Fourth-Formers made up the party. Wally and Joe Frayne had judiciously been left out of the scheme. Seven sturdy juniors were enough to deal with the Outsider if he should prove ever so refractory.

Tom Merry opened a window, and looked out. There was thick ivy below the window, and descent to the ground was not difficult.

"Bai Jove! We're not goin' out that way, deah boy!"

"We are, ass. We should wake up somebody if we went

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FERRERS LOCKE, DETECTIVE,

is the principal character in one of the complete stories contained in

CHUCKLES, 1^d.

downstairs. What would your pater or Conway say if they knew?"

"Of course, we musn't wisk that. But I am afraid——"

"Oh, don't be a funk!"

"I am afraid——"

"Close your eyes, then, and hold on to me," said Blake.

"You uttah ass! I am afraid——"

"Nice kind of a leader for a gang of burglars and kid-nappers, I must say!" said Monty Lowther, in disgust. "Afraid, by Jove!"

"You feahful duffah, you will not allow me to finish! I am afraid that I shall spoil my clobber!" shouted the exasperated Arthur Augustus.

"Oh, never mind your clobber! Come on!"

Tom Merry swung himself out of the window, and descended lightly to the ground. One after another the rest of the party followed him. Arthur Augustus came last, in rather a gingerly manner, and dusted himself down very carefully when he stood upon the ground at last.

"Now for the boathouse," said Tom Merry. "You haven't forgotten the key, Gussy?"

"Wathah not!"

"Follow your leader," said Tom.

"Excuse me, deah boy—I'm the leadah," said Arthur Augustus, gently but firmly; and he led the way to the boathouse.

They reached the boathouse, and Arthur Augustus felt in his pocket for the key. Then he uttered an exclamation of dismay.

"Bai Jove! Where's that key?"

"Haven't you got it?" growled Manners.

"I certainly had it. But it does not seem to be heah. I had bettah go back and look for it. It must have dwopped frowm my pocket!"

"Ass!"

"Duffer!"

"Weally, you fellows, as I haven't the key——"

"Jolly lucky I've got one, then," remarked Tom Merry, as he inserted a key into the lock. "There you are!"

"How did you get a key?" asked Arthur Augustus, in astonishment. "That is a patent lock, and I did not know there was anothah key——"

"Oh, I found it!"

"But where did you find it?"

"In your waistcoat pocket," said Tom calmly. "I thought I'd better take charge of it, as you'd have been bound to lose it. Now, buck up with the boat!"

"You feahful ass——"

"Lend a hand with the boat, while Gussy talks," said Tom Merry. "Get finished by the time we've launched the boat, won't you, Gussy?"

"I wegard this as a wotten twick, and——"

"Exactly. Sheer off; you're in the way!"

And the Co. ran the boat down to the water, followed by their indignant leader. The skiff slid out into the river, and the juniors stepped into it. Arthur Augustus took the lines.

"Wow softly, you fellows," he directed. "We don't want to give the alarm to the boundahs when we get near the Lodge!"

"Teach your grandmother!" said Lowther cheerfully.

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"Give way!" said Tom. "Easy does it!"

The boat glided down the starlit river. The countryside was silent and still. The juniors pulled softly down the dark, silently-flowing river. As they drew near the Lodge a light twinkled through the trees on the bank.

"Bai Jove! They're still up!" said Arthur Augustus, peering through the shadows. "It's past two o'clock, deah boys, and they're not gone to bed yet!"

"Rotters!" said Tom. "But it's all the better. We may be able to spot which is Lumley's room when he turns his light on."

"Yaas, wathah!"

The punt belonging to the Lodge was moored under the trees. The juniors pulled softly alongside, and secured the boat to the punt. They stepped softly upon the grassy bank, and made their way through the trees towards the house.

As they came out on the level lawn before the Lodge they had a full view of the open French windows of the room looking on the verandah. Electric light streamed out into the night.

From the darkness of the lawn they could see easily into the lighted room. They saw the table scattered with cards, the champagne bottles with broken necks, glasses, and cigars, and men and youths in evening-clothes. It was a scene of reckless riot; and in the midst of it was the fellow they had come to see—Jerrold Lumley-Lumley!

Tom Merry set his teeth hard.

"Gambling—at two in the morning!" he muttered. "That's the Outsider all over—at his worst! Blessed if I don't feel inclined to wash my hands of him!"

"Wats, deah boy! We're heah to get him away from those wascals, and we're jollay well goin' to do it!" said D'Arcy firmly.

"Stick to the programme," said Lowther. "But I don't see how we're to get him away yet. We can't very well walk in and yank him out under their eyes!"

"Hardly," said Blake, with a chuckle. "We shall have to wait till they've gone to by-by. We can't have to wait long. Even those blackguards can't keep it up much longer!"

"Hallo!" Tom Merry breathed quickly. "That looks like a row!"

The quiet was suddenly broken. From the open windows came ringing a sharp voice—the voice of the Outsider of St. Jim's!

"Hands off!"

CHAPTER 14. To the Rescue!

"HANDS off!"
Jerrold Lumley-Lumley rapped out the words as the grasp of the angry adventurer closed upon his wrist over the pool.

The Outsider had been about to take in the stakes. He had cleaned out the whole company, with the exception of the asinine Talboys. It was clear enough to Captain Punter now that he was dealing with a fellow who was sharper than himself. The sparing of Talboys proved it. Every player in the poker game had had a good hand—with the exception of Talboys.

And it was not difficult for the captain to guess that Lumley-Lumley had intentionally dealt good hands round, giving the captain himself an exceptionally strong one, in order to induce the swindlers to plunge. He had given Talboys a poor hand to make him pass out, because he did not want to win his money. But the others he regarded as fair game.

Yet it was difficult for the captain to complain. Lumley-Lumley, with all his skill in the devices of cardsharppers, could not have dealt those hands unless the cards had been marked with a system of marking known to him. As a matter of fact, there was no system of marking cards which Lumley-Lumley was unacquainted with, owing to his peculiar experiences in his youth.

Even if he had come upon a new system of marking, it would not have taken him long to spot it, and turn it to his advantage, for his brain was quick as lightning in such matters.

Professional cheat and swindler as the worthy captain was, he was no match in astuteness for the Outsider of St. Jim's. The captain realised it at last—and yet what could he say? For to accuse the Outsider was to confess that the cards were marked, and he had produced the cards himself from his own cabinet where he kept such tools of his trade.

But Captain Punter was desperate now.

So far from making a fortune out of the millionaire's son, the latter had "rooked" him to the last sovereign, turning his own weapons against him in the completest manner. And Punter was so enraged that he threw caution to the winds.

The gull Talboys was the only person in the room who was not in the plot, and he was about to learn something of the character of his kind host and entertainer; for the captain was determined that, whatever happened, Jerrold Lumley-Lumley should not rook him.

Lumley-Lumley, as he met the furious eyes of the cardsharpper, realised that all disguise was at an end. More or less secret swindling was done with; it was open war now. But the Outsider was perfectly cool and collected.

The others were upon their feet at once. Gilmore and Knox looked dismayed; they had never dreamed that it would come to this. Unscrupulous rascals as they were, they had some sense of decency left, and the captain's outbreak, amounting to a confession of attempted swindling, gave them no chance of keeping up appearances. But Gerald Cutts was as furious as the captain, and prepared to back him up all along the line. As for Mr. Talboys, he gazed stupidly at the scene, with his monocle jammed in his eye. He was already half-intoxicated, and he looked on like a man in a dream.

"Hands off!"

The captain's grasp closed more tightly upon Jerrold Lumley-Lumley's wrist.

"You don't touch that pool!" he said.

His voice was thick with rage. All the professional geniality of the pretended idler about town was gone. The captain's look now was that of his true character—swindler and bully!

Lumley-Lumley looked at him coolly. Gilmore and Knox, exchanging a quick, troubled glance, slipped quietly from the room. They did not want to be mixed up in what must inevitably follow. Mr. Talboys uttered a feeble protest.

"By gad! What's the trouble, dear boys? Lumley's won the pool, ain't he?"

Cutts pushed him aside. Talboys sank into an armchair, and sat there, staring blankly.

He did not know what to make of what was going on, and his foolish head was already turning round with the wine he had consumed.

"Let go my wrist!"

The captain gritted his teeth.

"You don't touch a single sov in that pool," he said, "you young swindler!"

Lumley-Lumley laughed.

"Where's the swindle, old fellow? Haven't I shown a royal flush—a hand that beats yours from here to Chicago?"

"And how did you get it?"

"Dealt it."

"Yes; and you gave me four aces—three in the deal, and one in the draw!" said the captain, almost choking with rage.

"How could I know what I gave you?" asked Lumley-Lumley, with an air of astonishment. "You don't mean to tell me that the cards were marked—your own cards?"

"Marked cards!" murmured Mr. Talboys, his eyeglass drooping from his eye. "By gad! Marked cards, by gad!"

"I won't jaw with you," said Captain Punter, dropping into the phraseology habitual to him when he was not posing as a man-about-town. "You knew how you got that hand, and I know it, you young rascal! I didn't know I was entertaining a swindler, who was up to every trick of the trade!"

"Or you wouldn't have tried to work off the tricks of the trade on me—what?" said the Outsider, laughing.

"Let go the pool!"

"No jolly fear! I've won it with your own cards! If you play marked cards on your guests, you must take the consequences. Cutts, old man, what do you say?"

Cutts gave him a deadly look.

"I say that you knew all the time," he said, in a choking voice.

"Knew what?"

"And you sha'n't touch that pool!" said Cutts, between his teeth, and without answering Lumley-Lumley's question. "Not a sovereign. Hold the young scoundrel's hands, captain, while I take care of the money!"

"You bet!" said Captain Punter grimly.

The next moment he gave a yell. Lumley-Lumley, with his left hand, caught up a glass of wine, and dashed it full into the captain's face. Punter involuntarily relaxed his grip, staggering back.

Quick as a flash, Lumley-Lumley secured the pool, thrusting notes and gold into his pocket before Cutts could even reach out at him.

He leaped back from the card-table as he did so, kicking over his chair. Three or four sovereigns and half a dozen pieces of silver rolled on the carpet as Lumley-Lumley crammed the money into his pocket.

Captain Punter gouged the wine furiously from his eyes. Cutts leaped upon Lumley-Lumley like a tiger.

But the Outsider of St. Jim's was ready for him. He made one spring to the mantelpiece, and caught up a heavy metal vase by the stem, and swung it into the air.

"Hands off!" he said coolly.

"You—you—"

"Another step nearer, Cutts, and I'll knock you over like a skittle!" said Lumley-Lumley, without a tremor in his voice. "You silly duffer! I've been through rows of this sort where revolvers and knives were to the fore, and come out top dog. Do you think you can frighten me? Why, I'd brain you like a rabbit as soon as look at you, and your precious captain into the bargain! Keep back, if you know when you're safe!"

Cutts stood back; he dared not attack. The dangerous gleam in the Outsider's eyes warned him of what he had to expect if he advanced. Captain Punter had leaped forward to help him, but the Outsider's menacing attitude made him pause. Mr. Talboys blinked at them, and muttered "By gad!" and went to sleep.

Lumley-Lumley burst into a ringing laugh.

"Spoofed, I guess!" he said mockingly. "I guess you were right, Cutts; I took you at your own valuation at St. Jim's when you asked me here. I played you a fair game till you began to cheat. As soon as I knew that I was in a den of swindlers, and only asked here to be rooked, I guess I went in to win. So long as you played fair I played fair. When you planted marked cards on me, I used them to skin

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you. Bless your simple little hearts, those marks have been out of date since Julius Cæsar's time almost! I could put you up to a better dodge than that, captain, if you liked. You brought me here as a pigeon, and it's your own look-out if I've turned out to be a hawk. I went in to skin you as a punishment, and I've done it. I guess I'm not going to keep your money; it's rather too dirty for me to keep. I'm going to hand it over to a public charity, and you'll have a chance of doing good without wanting to. But you're not going to touch a stiver of it again—not a red cent. That's where you get it in the neck for bringing me here under a pretence of friendship to swindle me!"

"Hand back the money!" muttered Cutts hoarsely. The mocking, scornful words of the Outsider stung him like a lash.

"Not a red cent!" said Lumley-Lumley coolly. "I'm not going to keep it, as I said; but it's a fine for your swindling rascality. This has been quite an entertainment for me—rooking the rooks. I guess I'm the antelope to keep my end up, even when I've fallen among thieves! Stand back! I won't impose on your hospitality any longer, Captain Nobody from Nowhere—I guess I'm getting out of this house to-night. I wouldn't sleep under this roof again at any price. But I take this pot with me—some. And you can put that in your pipe and smoke it!"

The captain's features worked with rage. He was ruffian enough for any violence, now that he had thrown off the mask. But the heavy metal vase uplifted in the Outsider's untrusting hand daunted him. The Outsider's mocking words fell upon other ears as well as the captain's and Gerald Cutts's. Tom Merry & Co. were on the verandah now, but the occupants of the room were too excited to look in that direction.

"You—you—you young villain!" muttered the captain hoarsely. "Get out of my house!"

"I guess I'll get my bag and go—willingly! Stand clear, while I get to the door! None of your tricks, my noble captain!"

Captain Punter stood back, clenching his hands with impotent fury. Cutts's hand had closed on a cushion on the lounge. Just as Lumley-Lumley finished speaking, he jerked his arm forward; the cushion flew through the air, and caught the vase in Lumley's hand. It was torn away, and crashed heavily to the floor.

Lumley-Lumley uttered an exclamation, and made a spring to recover it, but Cutts and Captain Punter leaped upon him at the same moment, and then he was struggling in their grasp. His right fist lashed out, and Gerald Cutts reeled back from a terrible drive under the chin, and fell. Captain Punter bore the Outsider to the carpet.

"Quick!" he panted. "A bottle! Quick! Crack him across the head! A bottle! Do you hear?"

Cutts, livid with rage, and utterly beside himself now, grasped a champagne bottle by the neck. But at the same moment an active form leaped in through the open French window, and Tom Merry's fist crashed on the side of Cutts's head, and he staggered across the room and fell with a crash.

"Pile in, deah boys!" yelled Arthur Augustus excitedly, as he rushed upon the captain.

"Hurrah!"

Captain Punter was dragged off Lumley-Lumley, and buried violently into a corner. He sat up gasping. Cutts lay where he had fallen, only lifting himself on his elbow, and gazing at the juniors with an expression of deadly hatred. Tom Merry & Co. were too many for the rascals, and they knew it. The game was up owing to the unexpected appearance of the juniors on the scene. Blake helped the Outsider to his feet. Lumley-Lumley was panting, but he had not lost his coolness.

"I guess you chipped in at the right time," he remarked. "But how in thunder did you get here?"

"We came to yank you out of this place by force, if necessary," said Tom Merry.

"My hat! I guess that's pretty cool!"

"And we're jolly well goin' to do it, deah boy!"

"Yes, rather!" said Blake. "Are you ready to start?"

Lumley-Lumley laughed.

"I guess I was going, anyway," he said. "I'm much obliged to you fellows; you came along in the nick of time. I reckon those scoundrels would have done me some damage. I'll leave my bag here, and send for it to-morrow. Let's get!"

"Yaas, wathah! Shall we bump Puntah first?"

"Oh, never mind Punter! Let's get out!"

"Right-ho!" said Tom Merry. "Come on!"

And the juniors crowded out of the French windows, taking Lumley-Lumley with them. They hurried down to the boat. The raid had turned out quite differently from their expectations, but there was no doubt that Tom Merry & Co. had arrived at the right time.

Lumley-Lumley paused on the bank.

"Good-night!" he said.

"Wats! You're comin' with us!"

"I can't, Gussy! You, know what I've been doing, and I've got my pockets crammed with the cash I've cleared those thieves out of."

"You can't keep it," said Tom quickly.

"I guess I wasn't going to. I'm going to hand over the whole boodle to-morrow to the Cottage Hospital in Easthorpe. But—"

"You're coming with us! You can't go anywhere else, anyway, at this time of night—"

"But—"

"'Nuff said, deah boy! You're my guest for the west of the vacation."

There was a pause.

"I guess I'm sorry for all this," said Lumley-Lumley slowly. "I don't want to blame anybody but myself; but I'm like the chap in the story who fell among thieves, without intending it. If you fellows like to look over what's happened, I give you my word that it's all finished, fair and square."

"Good enough!" said Tom Merry. "Jump into the boat!"

"But what will Lord Eastwood say? My things are in that den; I've got no clobber with me." Lumley-Lumley grinned. He was in evening-clothes and hatless. "Gussy's pater mayn't be quite so easy-going as Gussy."

"We'll lend you some clobber," said Tom.

"Yaas, wathah! Anythin' you like, deah boy! Are you goin' to get into the boat, or shall I have to thwow you in, old chap?"

"I guess I'll get in," said Lumley-Lumley.

And he did.

Tom Merry & Co. pulled away back to Eastwood House. They were feeling very satisfied with their success. Lumley-Lumley had been rescued—with his consent instead of against it, but that was so much to the good.

Tom Merry & Co. arrived at Eastwood House in great spirits, and Lumley-Lumley cheerfully climbed the ivy with them. On the morrow morning there would be an unexpected guest at the breakfast-table. Meanwhile, the juniors slept the sleep of the just.

Lumley-Lumley's appearance with the juniors when they came down on the following morning caused some surprise. But Arthur Augustus had a free hand in inviting guests to spend their holidays with him, and it was, as he assured the Outsider, all right.

That day the Cottage Hospital in Easthorpe benefited extensively by a donation from an anonymous donor, and when Captain Punter and Cutts of the Fifth heard of it they "said things" in the most emphatic manner.

Lumley-Lumley's connection with the Lodge and the party there was over. He sent for his bag that day, and it was brought to Eastwood House, and after that he calmly ignored the existence of Captain Punter and Cutts.

It was extremely probable that he would have trouble with the dandy of the Fifth when the new term began at St. Jim's, but he did not give that a thought. He could take care of himself. And meanwhile, he enjoyed a tremendous good time with Tom Merry & Co. and Cousin Ethel, and was content to forget his unpleasant experiences when he had fallen among thieves.

THE END.

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No. 9.—HERBERT SKIMPOLE.

Approach with slow and solemn tread,

This famous fount of learning,
Who shows, with tie of flaming red,
His Socialistic yearning!
And woe betide you if you deem
To chat with one so clever!
For Skimmy, like the poet's stream,
Goes gurgling on for ever.

He reads the work of that great swot,
Professor Balmcrumpet;
And though his hearers like it not,
They simply have to lump it!
The reader's flushed and fevered face
Inspires them with a passion
To hurl him straight way into space
In "neck or nothing" fashion!

When moved with a delightful dream
To manage England's masses,
His earnest eyes begin to gleam
And glow behind his glasses.
He swiftly summons all St. Jim's
To bow before his presence,
That he may tell them of his whims
And gain their acquiescence.

The rowdy souls who thirst for fun
Attend with solemn faces,
And silence reigns as, one by one,
They pass into their places.
But close inspection would reveal
The object of their mission,
For putrid eggs and orange-peel
Are borne as ammunition!

"My heart is moved," the speaker cries,
"To see you here before me.
I trust that nothing may arise
To make the meeting stormy."
A fusillade of ancient fruit
Then checks his brief oration;
And into space doth Skimmy shoot
'Mid yells of exultation.

The battered politician crawls
In search of lint and lotions;
But, lo! no skirmishes or squalls
Can crush his curious notions.
He next befriends the unemployed,
And many hardened sinners
To Skimmy's study are decoyed
To eat delicious dinners.

Then bow before this brainy boy,
Far wiser than the sages—
A never-failing source of joy
Through this and future ages;
Who renders us convulsed with mirth
Until our eyes are tearful,
And makes us feel that all on earth
Is sunny, bright, and cheerful.

Next Week:

ERNEST LEVISON.

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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.

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J. Ryan and W. Young, c/o Victoria Insurance Co., 53, Market Street, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, wishes to correspond with girl readers.

S. J. Lesar, King Edward Street, Klerksdorp, Transvaal, South Africa, wishes to correspond with girl readers living in England (Dover preferred), age 16-17.

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Albert E. Dolby, 72, Transvaal Road, Kimberley, South Africa, wishes to correspond with girl readers, age 18-21.

Walter Hardwick, c/o Noble & Shortt, Queen Street, Brisbane, Queensland Australia, wishes to correspond with readers, age 16-18.

Miss V. Webb, 138, Underwood Street, Paddington, Sydney, Australia, wishes to correspond with readers living in England or Ireland, age 16-17.

F. Roccke, Fimiston Post Office, Boulder City, Western Australia, wishes to correspond with girl readers living in England.

Miss Aimai Daji, 53, Mint Road, Fort, Bombay, India, wishes to correspond with a girl reader living in England, age 20.

Miss Mary Smith, Cheshunt Lodge, 9, Norman Road, Kingston, Jamaica, wishes to correspond with a reader living in the British Isles, age 14-16.

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(Continued on page iv of cover.)

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OUR GRAND NEW SERIAL.



READ THIS FIRST.

Jem Stanton, a clever criminal, is sentenced to a long term of imprisonment on the strength of the evidence given against him by Paul Satorys, formerly a nobleman in the State of Istan. Stanton is the exact double of Satorys, and, escaping from prison, meets and strikes down his enemy. He exchanges clothes, and leaves Satorys lying in convict's garb, to be found by the warders. Stanton is aware that Satorys is the rightful heir to the throne of Istan, and determines to impersonate him, and make a bid for the throne himself. So exact is his impersonation, that even Satorys' fiancé, Grace Lang, is deceived. She urges him to push his claim to the throne, which he decides to do. His plans prosper, and one evening he sets sail for Istan in the yacht *Bella*, in company with Duvigny, Satorys' most trusted adviser, and Grace. In the meantime Satorys has recovered and proved his real identity, and is in chase of the impostor. Grace Lang also discovers the deception, but is helpless. When Satorys lands in Istan he finds that Stanton has established himself firmly upon the throne, and that Grace is a prisoner within the palace. In company with a loyal old sailor named Peter Mardyke, Satorys creeps into the palace grounds one night with the intention of catching a glimpse of the girl he loves.

They are discovered and captured, however, and Stanton tells Grace that unless she promises to marry him he will kill Satorys and his companion. A friendly priest advises Grace to fall in with Stanton's demands, and gives her a powder to take immediately after the ceremony. For Satorys' sake she agrees, and dons her bridal robes.

(Now go on with the story.)

The Wedding.

A signal was given, the music sounded, and the service began. The girl, standing there amidst the flowers, bowed gracefully to her future husband.

There was a murmur from the multitude, a thrill of admiration for the beautiful girl, and even those who doubted the faith and promises of the new ruler felt as though all must be well if this queen of beauty were ready to accept him as her partner for life.

She bent towards him as Stanton came up.

"You will set him free if I am your wife?" she murmured.

"Be assured of that," was the reply.

There was music once more, and Lara, aided by his subordinates, began the service. The priest looked sad and far away, as though buried in his own reflections. He had known from the first the falseness of the pseudo-ruler. He had credited the story the girl had told him, and as the rites proceeded his thoughts were in the prison-cell, where Satorys, brave and resourceful man as he was, lay helpless, waiting for such fate as his captor might choose to select.

The service reached its end, and Grace stood by the side of her husband. She looked whiter now than the lilies she wore, and as the priest spoke to her a word of encouragement, underlying which the girl knew was a reminder that

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By CLIVE R. FENN.

she could trust him, she actually smiled a smile as of triumph. She did not fear.

The procession was formed, and Stanton led his bride down the aisle between the lines of saluting spectators. Lara turned a moment to the altar, and then passed swiftly through a door on the right, by which he knew he could gain the grand corridor of the palace.

The new queen was seen by those who waited in the palace itself. She was smiling still as she advanced by the side of her husband, and as he spoke to her she nodded, as though pleased; but in the great salon she suddenly paused, and looked at the flowers which were banked in profusion by the dais. Stanton did not perceive her swift movement—did not realise that in that second the girl had followed out the instructions of the priest.

The pseudo-king spoke to her. His manner was changed, and he spoke with the assurance of success.

"I have your promise?" said the girl.

The other nodded.

"It shall be as I said," he replied.

He did not tell her that he had decided to save the life of his rival, but that lifelong captivity awaited the man who was dangerous to him.

Grace gave a sigh. She saw Lara approaching her just as a deadly faintness swept over her whole being. Everything seemed to be fading away. Stanton gazed at her in astonishment. He was speaking to her.

And then she fell back with a faint cry. Those who hurried up saw her lying there, white and beautiful, amidst the flowers. It was a doctor who spoke. He had bent over the unconscious girl, and now he rose slowly, and gazed sadly at the false king.

"She is dead, sir," he said huskily.

A scene of terrible confusion ensued. People were pressing forward eager to see, hoping to learn that the news which was passed from mouth to mouth was false; but, alas! there seemed no possibility of doubt, and Stanton swung round, his face working. For a moment he was moved, then his wholly bad nature asserted itself. He had had his wish, and made the girl his wife, though she would now never be his.

Lara was saying something to him. Stanton did not heed. He was indifferent now. After all, perhaps this marriage had been a mistake, and he was better free.

"Do as you will," he said hoarsely to the priest.

Lara bowed her head. He it was who gave orders, who caused the guards to keep back the crowd of people anxious to see the girl who for a few brief moments had been the queen. Then he bent over her. She might well have been dead. Her features were as of wax; but Lara knew the effect of the narcotic, and he was not afraid.

The man who posed as king had given the priest full authority to act as he thought well. Not that Stanton felt any further interest in the affair. His love for the girl had never been more than a blind. Once he had recovered from the temporary shock of her sudden death, he was almost relieved. He had much to do. Well he knew that his tenure of his place was still insecure.

Lara gave his orders. The great room of the palace rapidly emptied. There were the under-priests and the

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acolytes, and these moved silently like shadows. The seemingly dead girl was carried reverently into the chapel. Here arrangements were swiftly made under the direction of Lara for the removal to the Temple of Missa where the rulers of Istan were laid to rest.

Lara was nervous, but he masked his perturbation as he issued his instructions. Carriages were brought, and a few hours later the mournful procession started for the great Temple far away in the interior where the Faith of Istan was cradled.

Through the crowded city ways the cavalcade wended its way. The people had known next to nothing of the princess who was to have been their queen, but intense sorrow was shown. From a window of the palace Stanton watched the departure, and a sinister smile flitted across his face as he turned to speak to one of the officers with him. The new king had endeavoured to make all sure. He had already surrounded himself with men who had come from nothing and who owed everything to him. He looked upon his solemn vow given to the poor girl as null, and he reflected with satisfaction on the circumstance that now he was free to act as he chose with regard to his imprisoned rival.

A Surprise.

Lara rode by the side of the curtained vehicle where lay the girl who had been prepared to sacrifice all for the sake of the man she loved.

The priest's followers forbore to disturb the thoughts of their venerated chief. The city was long left behind. Ahead of the procession towered the snow-capped mountains which caught the rays of the rising sun.

Down in the thickly-wooded valley through which they were passing, dem-gemmed flowers were unfolding to the sun.

One of the priests who was walking by Lara's side spoke to his master.

"It was an evil day for the country," he said, "when this king returned. He is not loved, and the people seemed ready to rise. Better the old form of government than the tyranny under which the land groans now." The speaker made a gesture towards the carriage. "She died because of that—because she could not bear the thought of being that man's wife."

Lara looked down at the man. He was about to tell him the truth. Then he hesitated. He felt that he could trust no one. He was all anxiety to gain the sanctuary of the temple. The country was disturbed, moreover; and then, again, on either hand there might be spies. Silence was best. Once the poor girl was safe in the temple among the good women who had vowed their lives to the service of religion, it would be time—after she had been revived from her death-like trance—to whisper the truth into the ears of those who could be trusted to keep the secret well.

But Lara had not realised the nature of the country, nor the hopeless state of anarchy which had come to pass. The procession was making its way through the forest amidst scenes of wondrous beauty, when from just ahead came a cry of fear. Those who were in advance, minor priests in their robes, came hastening back. Behind them Lara saw swarms of the savage natives dashing forward, spears raised.

In times of peace the tribes which populated the interior were submissive enough, but rumours had reached them of the change of government. The patrols had been driven in, and now they had gone back to their former life of plunder.

Lara wore a short sword beneath his tunic. This he jerked out, at the same time shouting to his distracted and panic-stricken companions. The latter tried to rally in response to the appeal of their leader, but although they were armed like Lara, they were not fighting men.

The attack was so sudden. From out of the depths of the forest the enemy charged fiercely. The little company with the cortege was being driven back, man after man being cut down.

Lara felt cold despair at his heart as he fought like a lion at bay.

He had refused an escort, dreading lest his secret should be discovered. Now he saw those with him cut down before his eyes. The man who had spoken to him but a short period before lay dying at his feet. The carriage was surrounded by the ferocious blacks who knew no mercy now their blood was up, though at other times they had stood in awe of the priestly caste.

Another minute and Lara was alone, standing bravely to his duty of defending the girl who was lying helpless and unconscious of her peril.

The end could not be long delayed. A savage blow sent him reeling. As he struggled to recover himself he was seized and hurled to the ground, a spear thrust at his heart. He knew no more, but as the darkness came he thought with agony of the fate of the girl whom he had striven to save.

He lay there as one dead, and the natives rushed to the carriage, parting the curtains and gazing at the sleeping girl.

They saw, as they thought, that she was dead. The jewelled appointments of the equipage were, however, the feature which interested them most, and, after deliberating for a time, they whipped up the horses and returned the way they had come, leaving the spot where the brave defenders of the hapless girl lay on the crimsoned grass.

The track was abandoned, and the carriage jolted over the roots of trees. When a halt was called it was late in the day.

Back to Life.

Grace stirred and sat up to look wonderingly about her. She was frightened by the loneliness, and as her ideas came back and she realised why she was there, she looked for Lara. He had given her confidence. He had saved her, and brought her away into the wilds, but where was he now?

She rose stiffly and parted the curtains of the window, and her lips parted in wonderment, though no cry escaped her as she saw the marvels of the land where she had been brought; for the hills she saw lost their summits in the azure, and their lower slopes were like gold.

The girl stepped to the floor of the carriage from the couch where she had been laid.

"Lara," she called very softly, thinking that the priest would hear, for he had told her he would be ever near until the time she woke from her trance.

There was no reply, no sound but a faint hum from the forest. A gorgeous butterfly sailed close to her as she pushed the door of the carriage and stood gazing out at the enchanted scene into the glory of the golden evening.

How strange it was! How strange and sad! She was alone. There was no Lara, no sign of any of his faithful followers, only the silence and solitude of the wonderful world of the woodland glade, and the girl glided from the vehicle and stood there, one hand resting for support on the swinging door.

Where was she? Why had they left her? The bright splendour of the scene ceased for her, and she called again in fear; but alas, there was no sign of her friend, the revered leader of the Istan Church. Surely he had only strolled off, and would be back in a minute at her side.

She advanced a step or two. The horses of the carriage had been removed, and were cropping the herbage some fifty paces distant, and as she stood there amidst the trees in her white robes, looking like some fair visitant from another world, she heard a murmuring from the depths of the forest, and drew back in alarm.

Then a dark face peered at her from amongst the trees. The girl stood transfixed, unable to speak or stir. The murmuring increased. Now it was like the crooning of the great sea, and the glade was alive with men, dark-skinned men, who gazed at her as though they were scotched with fear.

Their white headdresses streamed behind them, and they advanced slowly, their gleaming spears lowered.

Then, as the girl drew back to the carriage, shivering with dread, for the truth was coming to her in fragments, and she knew that something awful must have happened, and that she was alone and helpless in this wild land, surrounded by enemies, one of the curiously-garbed natives stepped ahead of his fellows, and with a cry of wonder prostrated himself at the girl's feet, beating his head on the ground.

His action was imitated by hundreds more, and Grace stood looking at the extraordinary scene, the warriors cringing before her.

Then the first rose slowly, and, laying his spear on the ground, bowed so low that his plumes swept the grass.

"Great One," he said, "you who have come from the dead, have mercy! We are thy servants, thy slaves. Let not thy wrath fall upon us, you, the mighty one who has returned!"

The girl trembled, but those who dared to look at her were far from imagining that she was afraid.

She saw the men advancing towards her, a black wave, and she knew that flight was impossible. The leader spoke again. There were odd words which she understood. She was to enter the carriage and go with them. He was speaking to her as though she were some goddess, and as clear understanding returned to her she knew that something too frightful for words had happened to Lara and his people, but that she was looked upon as sacred, as one who had come back from the grave.

She obeyed. There were teeming multitudes all about her, regarding her with awe, and she fell back on the cushions of the carriage to see, as the journey into the interior was resumed, that a stalwart warrior marched on either side, his spear shining brightly in the slanting rays of the setting sun.

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Immediately after the ceremony, the procession was formed, and the King of Istan led his bride down the aisle. The new queen was still smiling, despite the great sacrifice she had just made. (See page 24.)

Satorys' Escape.

"Are you awake, Peter?"

The voice was that of Satorys, though where it came from the old sailor was at a loss to know. The darkness of the prison-cell was profound. He stretched out his hand, to feel that Duvigny was lying close to him.

"Am I awake, sir? I should rather think I was. Never had a wink all night, or is it day? I don't know. It's all so plaguey dark."

"I would not wake you before," said Satorys grimly. "You have been snoring for hours, but it wouldn't have been any use. Those guards have been coming backwards and forwards outside, and there wasn't a chance."

"A chance for what, sir?"

The sailor was on his feet, standing by Satorys in the gloom.

"Getting away. I have been examining this place, and Hist!"

He dropped down in the straw as the door was opened and a soldier looked in, to swing a lantern so that he saw the three prisoners lying motionless. He seemed satisfied, and withdrew.

Satorys was up again, speaking in a whisper to Peter, and THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 339.

now Duvigny was able to take his part once more. The brave fellow made light of his injuries, and when Satorys explained the nature of the discovery he had made, there was a feeling of joy.

There was something quite different in the manner of Satorys as he told his comrades that he had found the entrance to a long-disused passage. It was partially blocked up, and although it might lead merely into other cells of the fortress, yet the chance was worth taking.

The guards had spoken of the night's happening, and the prisoner who was most concerned had heard the news. He knew that Grace had died; knew, too, that it was the intention of his captor to send him and his two friends to the mines to work as convicts, but the intelligence seemed merely to have strengthened the grim determination of the man who had been so deeply wronged.

Peter, when he heard what had occurred, began to speak of it. He was silenced by Satorys' manner.

"Not a word, please," said the young man quietly. "Now you prepare to follow me, Duvigny. You, Peter, come last."

He was down on his knees in the corner of the cell, dragging away the loose portions of the wall. There was, as he felt certain, a cavity there, and speedily he and his comrades

were working their way along through a narrow tunnel, half suffocated, but fiercely determined.

Satorys gave a sigh of relief as he made out a dim light ahead. He struggled on, to force his way, torn and bleeding, into a corridor. The cool night wind which was blowing in through the open stonework of the ramparts refreshed him. He bent down and assisted Duvigny to rise. Peter wriggled his way through. Satorys stole to the side of the terrace. There was a clear drop there. The fortress was built on the sheer side of a cliff. Far below shone the river which flowed through the town.

There was the tramp of a sentry, and Satorys made his companions a sign. He did not seem to be the same man now, dominated as he was by one idea, that of escape, so that he might have his revenge.

The three men crept back into the shadow. Peter was just about to say something, but a commanding gesture from his chief silenced him, and he muttered what he wished to himself. It was to the effect that he, for his part, was quite prepared to do the dirty work.

Satorys saw the sentry approaching, and drew back. The next moment, as the man came into the zone of light from the crenellated parapet, Satorys sprang on him from behind, jerking him to the ground. The soldier, the breath well-nigh choked out of him, gave a gurgle, and was still.

"Bind him, Peter!" said Satorys.

The sailor dragged off the man's belt. Duvigny helped. Satorys took the soldier's arms—the revolver from his pocket and the rifle which had dropped on the stones.

"It was a mercy it did not go off."

"Throw him over?" said Peter.

"No. Quick—this way! We have to go that way."

"Dursen't do it!" said Peter, recovering his spirits.

Satorys took no notice. The next moment he had edged himself through the stone pillars, and was clinging to the side of the wall. Peter was carrying the rifle. He joined his chief, and Duvigny came last. From the open strip of fortified terrace where the sentry had been left gagged and bound came the sound of more footsteps.

"Now for it!" said Satorys.

He led. With his arm round the carved balustrade, he

started to run. Below lay the city, a myriad of lights, and the river, a broad ribbon of sheeny silk as it looked.

As he hurried on he congratulated himself on the knowledge he had stored up concerning the city where his family had once been great.

Peter was panting behind. Duvigny, who was between, said something, but what it was passed unperceived, for at the moment there came a shot. They had been seen. Satorys glanced down. The wall of the fortress dropped sheer. He did not seem to care, but he wanted to live. He had suffered too much during those last few hours to feel more than a thirst for life, so that he might bring to punishment the vile scoundrel who had robbed him of all.

Another shot rang out. Satorys, who had run on a little way with the agility of a cat, now stopped again. He heard the bullet zip along over his head. It was, he thought, better to chance it, to trust to the broad bosom of the river which was shining far below, than to drop, winged by one of the shots which were now coming fast.

There was a pause. From somewhere quite near an alarm bell boomed out, breaking through the night with deep-tongued resonance.

Peter and Duvigny closed up. Satorys gazed down at the rugged, lichened wall. There was no hold. It was plain what he had to do. Behind he saw the shadowy forms of soldiers. They were afraid to venture the perilous way the fugitives had taken to freedom, but, after all, it would be only a matter of seconds now ere the prisoners were picked off. Satorys gripped the sailor's arm.

"I am going to chance it," he said. "If you surrender—well, they won't be ready to look upon you as a foe, and—"

"Nuff said, sir!" said Peter. "I hate the water, 'cept Saturday nights, but if you want a bathe I'll come with you to see all's safe."

"We'll die together," said Duvigny huskily, as he edged nearer the verge, and prepared to leap.

"Die!" jerked out Peter. "We aren't going to die. It's only because there isn't room for us up here with so many bullets filling up the place."

Satorys nodded. He was imperturbable, strangely, unreally calm, and the next moment he had thrown out his hands, and jumped to what seemed certain death, except to a diver who was inured to the work all his life.

There came a howl of rage from behind. Peter swung himself forward, and Duvigny followed suit.

It was a leap to death, as it seemed. Satorys cut through the air like an arrow, and disappeared into the darkness of the broad river. The rattle of the firing was shut out. When he came to the surface it was to find that he was being swept swiftly downstream.

He struck out, and as he tried to make for the further bank there was a hail. Satorys raised himself, and saw the sailor swimming strongly towards where Duvigny was evidently in distress, and the old man's hail was intended for the other. Satorys redoubled his exertions. From the fortress, now fully a mile away, there came the flash of firing, but the worst of the peril was past, so he thought, but the next moment a bullet hit the water near him.

He was swimming on once more, and the dark line of the wooded shore was close. He lost count of things for a period. Then a familiar voice sounded close to him.

"You keep your pecker up, Mister Duvigny. He may not be lost after all."

Satorys was level then, and he stretched out his hand and helped Peter to support Duvigny, who seemed at his last effort. Peter gave a snort, which might have meant anything. Then as the three scrambled up the bank, he broke what had been a long silence for him.

"Thought it was all up, sir. I went straight after you, but saw nothing of you. Here we are, high, but not dry, and we had better put as big a distance between us and that place as we can, before we are stiff."

"Yes," said Satorys, "we must make for the forest. It is our best chance."

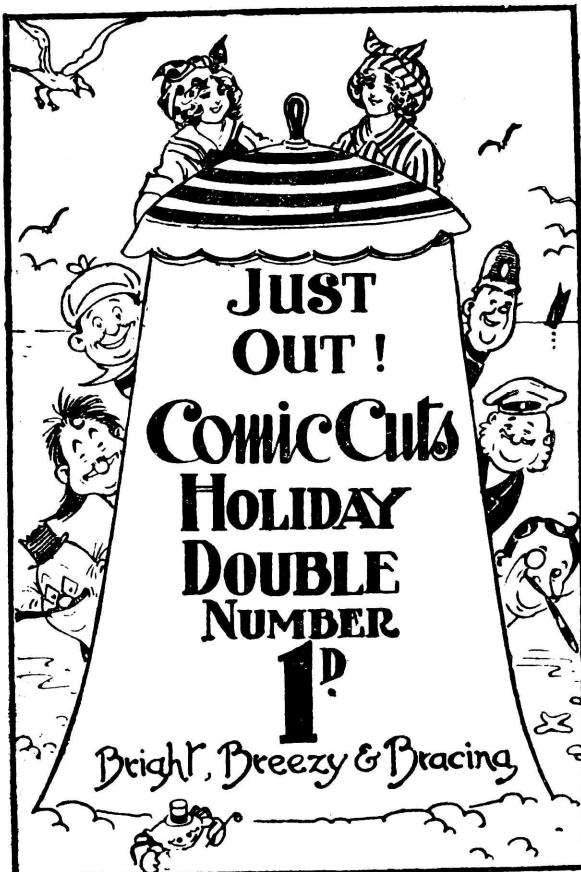
Few more words were uttered. Satorys knew that his enemy would spare nothing to recapture him. The wilderness lay ahead. The three set out for the vast, impenetrable hinterland. The first question was safety. Afterwards they could think of other things.

The matter of arms troubled Satorys. As they tramped on through the night he tried to face the future calmly. He lived for revenge; but as he reflected on his position—stranded as he was in the wilds, a man to be hunted down, he and his two friends—he smiled bitterly. The moon which had lit up the cane brakes dropped out of sight. The three companions stopped at last, exhausted.

(Another splendid long instalment of this grand serial next Wednesday. Order Early.)

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A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.



NEXT WEDNESDAY—

"CUSSY'S HOUSE-PARTY I"

A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

OUR SPECIAL WEEKLY FEATURE

THIS WEEK'S CHAT



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In this grand long, complete tale of the chums of St. Jim's on holiday, a favourite character from another famous school joins Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's little party, and makes himself thoroughly at home. Billy Bunter's little ways do not exactly make for popularity, but D'Arcy is the soul of courtesy, and Tom Merry & Co. have to take their cue from their host. In spite of the uninvited guest's disturbing influence, the fun is fast and furious, and

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is voted a huge success by all.

IN CONFIDENCE.

Referring again to the matter which has been the subject of an unusually large number of readers' letters of late—viz., the possibility of Mr. Martin Clifford's producing another long story of Tom Merry & Co. in 3d. book form, I have something to say which, I fancy, will be of great interest to a very large circle of my chums.

It so happens that, opportunely enough, circumstances have recently combined to lessen somewhat the pressure of work upon this ever-popular author. In other words, Mr. Clifford is looking forward to a short period of leisure within the next few weeks, as he has been able, for the first time for several years, to get a little ahead with his regular work. Now, Mr. Clifford proposes to use this brief leisure in taking a holiday, which I am sure no one will say he does not thoroughly deserve. The question is, am I justified in trying to persuade my hard-working friend to write a "Tom Merry" 3d. book instead?

I have promised many thousands of my chums, at different times, to switch Mr. Clifford on to this work if ever I got an opportunity. Well, here is an opportunity, undoubtedly, if I can only harden my heart sufficiently to take advantage of it.

I have taken my chums fully into my confidence in this matter because I know it is one in which they are keenly interested. I must, therefore, tell them this, that before I can consent to bring the necessary pressure to bear upon this already overworked author, I must be in a position absolutely to assure him of a splendid reception and a record sale for his book when it appears.

This, then, is the question which I must leave my chums to answer for me: Can I give Mr. Clifford this assurance, with the certainty that I have the main body of my chums at my back?

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

Annslay McLaughlin (co. Tyrone).—It is a matter of opinion whether there is anything in palmistry. Some people think there is, others don't. I have not very much faith in it myself.

I. Maxted (Lincoln).—The umpire should have decided the point. A bowler is not compelled to call "play"; but if a batsman is not ready, it is only sportsmanlike to give him another chance.

Doris Purge (Regent's Park).—Much regret space will not permit me to insert your notice.

Richard Ernest Kelly (Scarborough).—You seem to have a talent for writing verses, which may stand you in good stead later.

JACK ASHORE AND AFLOAT.**Sidelights on the Life of our Merchant Seamen.**

"Who wouldn't sell a farm and come to sea?" is an eternally unanswered question, which is asked in every fo'c's'le and many a cargo-boat cabin thousands of times every year.

The proposition is usually put forth at times when, whether on account of hard work or stormy seas, the lot of the sailor-man seems extraordinarily thankless. In the course of a long voyage every able-bodied seaman will vow that he'll seek a "shore job" without fail as soon as the mudhook is down in British ground; with strong words he will back this determination. And yet the chances are that when he has spent his hard-earned wages he will drift to a sailors' home or a sailors' boarding-house, and there remain for a longer or shorter period, till once more he signs articles.

The boarding-house "runner" is the type of man whom Mr. Morley Roberts describes as "eighteenstone and as strong as a hippopotamus," and it is his business to get hold of hard-up mariners and bring them along to his "boss." A small commission is his for each man whom he brings to the establishment.

"Where's your book?" is the first question put to the "bold A.B." By "the book" is meant the Board of Trade continuous discharge book, wherein the captains under whom the sailor has served have given their testimony as to conduct and ability. If there appears a sufficient number of "V.G."—very good—entries, the applicant is received into the house until the boss is able to find a ship for him. For this service the boarding-house master takes the sailor's "advance note," and draws his first month's pay.

"SHANGHAIED."

Many and varied are the stories of men who have been "shanghaied," and more than a few of these hang around the waterside of San Francisco. The "shanghai" operation is generally performed by means of drugged drinks—internal application—or of a stout club or a slungshot—external application. In either case, when the victim recovers consciousness, he finds himself in the fo'c's'le of a deep-water sailing-ship; he has a nasty taste in his mouth or a mountainous bump on his cranium, and the chances undoubtedly are that his pockets are empty, and that he has no more than the rags in which he can stand up. Some boarding-house master has contracted to supply a crew, and this is his last resource for securing a full complement.

Perhaps the most famous story of "shanghai-ing" is that which Mr. Morley Roberts has used as the basis of his yarn, "The Promotion of the Admiral." It is, I believe, founded on the fact that a certain Frisco boarding-house boss did succeed in drugging an American rear-admiral, who had been investigating waterside life, and sending him on board a sailing-ship as an A.B.; moreover, there was no chance of getting ashore till the ship reached the port for which she was bound.

It is told of one boarding-house boss who persuaded a young fellow in search of a pleasure trip to join what was described as a fishing-boat. It was not till the victim was at sea that he discovered the vessel to be a whaler, bound for the Arctic on a two years' cruise!

(Another Splendid Article

Next Wednesday.)

A Cash Prize for Every Contributor to this Page.**THE WRONG 'BUS.**

Two sailors boarded a 'bus and seated themselves next to a clergyman. They began to use somewhat bad language in their conversation. The clergyman, hearing this, tapped one of them on the shoulder.

"My good man," he said, "do you know you are on the road to perdition?"

The sailor thus addressed looked at him for a few minutes, and then turned to his mate.

"Well, I'm blowed," he ejaculated, "if we ain't been and got on the wrong 'bus again!"—Sent in by Sidney J. Caket, Bethnal Green.

HIS CHOICE.

Grocer (to his apprentice): "You have been apprenticed here now for six months, and have seen the several departments of our trade. I wish you to give a choice of your occupation."

Jack: "Thank you, sir."

Grocer: "Well, now, what part of the business do you like best?"

Jack: "Shuttin' up, sir."—Sent in by A. Noakes, St. Leonard's-on-Sea.

TRUE.

"What the dickens is the matter with you?" furiously demanded the warder of Patrick Flynn. "Kicking up a row like that at this time of night!"

"Shure, an' I only want to go home," said Pat.

"Don't be a fool, man!" said the warder, coming nearer to see if his charge was quite well.

"Fool, bedad!" shouted Pat from the other side of the grating. "I'm in my noights."

"Now, look here," broke in the warder meaningly.

"You've got seven days' hard. Seven days you've got to do, so you'd better do them quietly."

"Ye're quite right," retorted Pat. "Shure, the old boy gave me seven days, but, begorra, he didn't say anything about noights; and, faith, you can shurely trust me to come back in the morning!"—Sent in by William G. Rigby, Lancs.

ABSENCE OF MIND.

It is told of Sir Isaac Newton that he was one day walking by the sea-coast and picked up a stone, which he intended to throw into the water; but, wishing to know the time, he took his watch out of his pocket and looked at it, and then, without being conscious of what he was doing, threw his watch into the water and put the stone into his pocket!—Sent in by A. Bestwick, Liverpool.

ALL ACCORDING.

Gentleman (to boy): "Well, my little man, how old are you?"

Tommy: "My age varies, sir. When I'm railway travelling, I'm under twelve; and when I go for beer, I'm over fourteen."—Sent in by James H. Platt, Oldham.

VERY POLITE.

Harris, going home from work, absent-mindedly got into a first-class carriage instead of a third. An inspector promptly appeared at the window.

"Are you first-class?" he demanded.

"Yes, thanks," answered Harris affably. "How are you?"—Sent in by T. A. Owen, Aldersgate Street, E.C.

INQUISITIVE.

A little slum child was enjoying his first glimpse of pastoral life. The setting sun was gilding the grass and roses of the old-fashioned garden, and he sat on a little stool beside the farmer's wife, who was plucking a chicken.

He watched the operation gravely for some time. Then he spoke.

"Do you take off their clothes every night, lady?"—Sent in by I. Catter, Newfoundland.

STRANGE BUT TRUE.

Talkative Barber: "I suppose you wish I wouldn't give you so much of my chin, don't you?"

Bored Customer: "Never mind! I may need some of it to patch up my face before you are done."—Sent in by H. Sharp, Islington.

EASILY EXPLAINED!

One day an Irishman and an American were arguing about their respective farms.

Pat: "I once put a horse into a field and tied it to a rope which was fifteen yards long, and hundreds of yards away was a small haystack. In the morning I found that the haystack had disappeared, the horse having eaten it up."

American: "How did it do it, then?"

Pat: "Well, I tied the horse on to a rope, but I did not fix the rope on to anything else!"—Sent in by D. Joseph, Mile End, E.

SIX FIGURES.

The would-be purchaser had entered the brie-a-brac shop and was casting his eye over the many valuable antiques when he noticed a quaint figure, the head and shoulders of which appeared above the counter.

"What is that old idol over there worth?" he inquired.

The salesman replied in a subdued tone:

"Worth about a quarter of a million, sir; it's the proprietor."—Sent in by F. H. Nias, Middlesex.

STRANGE!

Mrs. Jones (visiting at the vicarage): "What nice buttons you are sewing on your husband's coat! Do you know my husband had some like that?"

Vicar's Wife: "Yes; we found them in the collection-box."—Sent in by R. Ranson, Grays.

CLEVER.

A teacher asked a class of children the other day if they knew a sentence with the alphabet in without any letter occurring twice, and was surprised when a child gave the following reply:

"J. Q. Vandz struck my big fox whelp."—Sent in by E. F. Allen, Chigwell.

MONEY PRIZES OFFERED.

Readers are invited to send ON A POSTCARD Storyettes or Short Interesting Paragraphs for this page. For every contribution used the sender 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.

THE GEM LIBRARY FREE CORRESPONDENCE EXCHANGE.

R. E. Stephenson, 190, York Street, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia, wishes to correspond with a girl reader living in Surrey (England), age 15-16.

E. Rothwell, Box 2233, Calgary, Canada, wishes to correspond with girl reader living in London, interested in postcards, age 19-21.

V. C. Ward, 13, Booth Street, Balmain, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia, wishes to correspond with a girl reader living in Ireland, age 15-16.

R. Gordon, 90a, Fletcher Street, Essendon Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, wishes to correspond with readers living in India, China or Japan, interested in postcards.

W. Dunn, c/o Post Office, Tokomaru, via Wellington, New Zealand, wishes to correspond with a girl reader living in England or Australia, age 16-18.

Patrick J. Gleeson, 12, Service Crescent, Albert Park, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, wishes to correspond with a girl reader living in the British Isles, age 17-18.

A. J. Tramworth, Post Office, Terang, Victoria, Australia, wishes to correspond with readers living in the British Isles, interested in postcards.

P. J. Leibenberg, 58, Height Street, Doornfontein, Johannesburg, Transvaal, South Africa, wishes to correspond with girl readers living in England, Australia or America, age 16-18.

W. J. Fairlie, G.P.O., Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, wishes to correspond with readers living in England, age 19-20.

R. McGowan, c/o G.P.O., Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, State, South Africa, wishes to correspond with a girl reader, age 17-20.

D. Campbell, Record Office, Gen. Manager's Dept., S. A. Rlys., Johannesburg, Transvaal, South Africa, wishes to correspond with girl readers (Scotch preferred), age 15-17.

P. L. Lewin, 152, President Street, Johannesburg, South Africa, wishes to correspond with readers living in the British Isles.

Miss M. Frank, 34, Gordon Road, Bertrams, Johannesburg, South Africa, wishes to correspond with boy readers, age 18-20.

J. A. W. Moss, Room 155, Headquarter Offices, South African Rlys., Johannesburg, Transvaal, South Africa, wishes to correspond with a girl reader living in England, age 14-16.

L. L. Bevan, Room 132, S. A. R. Headqrs., Johannesburg, Transvaal, South Africa, wishes to correspond with a girl reader, age 15-17.

D. Lee, G.P.O., Terana, Victoria, Australia, wishes to correspond with readers living in the British Isles, age 16-17.

Rex. B. Jefferies, c/o H. Newman, 3, Vaughan Street, Fitzroy, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, wishes to correspond with readers.

Alf. Williams, Ellesmere, Merri Street, Northcote, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, wishes to correspond with readers.

Dudley O. Atkinson, "Croydon," French Street, Hamilton, Victoria, Australia, wishes to correspond with readers interested in stamps, age 17-20.

Leo. Egan, 32, Gordon Grove, Northcote, Victoria, Australia, wishes to correspond with readers living in America or the British Isles, age 14-15.

E. Margaret Leonard, c/o J. Evans, 77a, O'Connell Street, North Adelaide, Australia, wishes to correspond with readers interested in postcards, age 18.

G. H. Thorpe, 32, Abbots Street, Abbotsford, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, wishes to correspond with a girl reader living in Scotland or Wales, age 15-18.

R. H. McLennan, c/o Albany Street P.O., Dunedin North, New Zealand, wishes to correspond with a girl reader living in England interested in postcards, age 16-18.

G. A. F. Ravenna, P.O. Box 3791, Johannesburg, Transvaal, South Africa, wishes to correspond with a girl reader living in the British Isles or America.

Miss Eileen Brophy, c/o Mrs. Herring, De Beers Private Box, Grootedam, Dist. Kimberley, South Africa, wishes to correspond with boy readers living in England or South Africa, age 19-23.

Alex. Milne, c/o Box 936, Durban, Natal, South Africa, wishes to correspond with girl readers living in the British Isles, age 14-16.

H. J. Fordred, P.O. Victor Mine, Orange Free State, South Africa, wishes to correspond with a girl reader, age 15-20.

R. J. Hunter, P.O. Box 25, Benoni, South Africa, wishes to correspond with a girl reader living in England or Scotland, age 16-19.

Miss A. Archer, c/o Miss D. Rickards, Newsagent, High Street, Echuca, Victoria, Australia, wishes to correspond with a boy reader living in England or America, age 15-16.

D. Greenwood, c/o G.P.O., Freemantle, Western Australia, wishes to correspond with W. Carnfield, of Tunbridge Wells.

G. E. Gould, P.O. Box 58, Broken Hill, Australia, wishes to correspond with a Protestant girl reader living in the North of Ireland, age 14.

Miss M. Wilkie, 502, Lydiard Street, Ballarat, North Victoria, Australia, wishes to correspond with a girl reader, age 14.

A. G. Fifield, Cremona, 131, Trafalgar Street, Stanmore, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia, wishes to correspond with readers living in Scotland, age 16.

W. H. Laing, 3, Queen Street, West Thebarton, South Australia, wishes to correspond with a reader.

Frank K. Code, 671, Canning Street, North Carlton, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, wishes to correspond with readers.

B. Hirskevitch, 281, Colonial Avenue, Montreal, Canada, wishes to correspond with readers interested in stamps, age 13-16.

Miss L. Michelson, 187, Queen Victoria Markets, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia, wishes to correspond with readers living in St. Louis (Australia), age 16.

W. B. Embury, North Road, Oakleigh, Victoria, Australia, wishes to correspond with a reader living in England or Scotland, age 18.

H. Bloom, 906, Howe Street, Vancouver, British Columbia, wishes to correspond with readers interested in stamps.

R. Cleaver, Te Roti, Taranaki, New Zealand, wishes to correspond with an English boy reader living in Australia, age 12-16.

J. G. Thompson, Kingswood College, Grahamstown, Cape Colony, South Africa, wishes to correspond with girl readers, age 15-16.

H. Barter, Box 2017, Johannesburg, Transvaal, South Africa, wishes to correspond with girl readers, age 14-15.

W. Thompson, 25a, Van Wyck Street, West Krugersdorp, Transvaal, South Africa, wishes to correspond with girl readers living in England, age 15-16.

T. Arthur, P.O. Box 48, Port Elizabeth, wishes to correspond with girl readers, age 15-16.

A. J. Henderson, 3rd Street, Weston, New South Wales, Australia, wishes to correspond with readers living in Great Britain, age 12-14.

Miss Marie Alston, c/o Warragul Furnishing Co., Smith Street, Warragul, Gippsland, Victoria, Australia, wishes to correspond with a girl reader living in Ireland, Scotland or Wales, age 14-15.

A. C. Hancock, Post Office, Weston, New South Wales, Australia, wishes to correspond with readers living in Asia, Africa, or Newfoundland, age 13-17.

Llewelly H. Handfield, P.O. Box 21, Port Adelaide, South Australia, wishes to correspond with girl readers (Welsh preferred), age 18-20.

The Editor specially requests his Colonial Readers kindly to bring the Free Correspondence Exchange to the notice of their friends.