

OFFICER AND TROOPER!

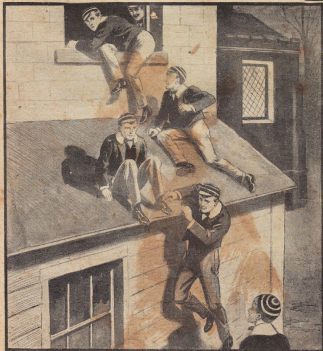
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KEEPING IT DARK!

A Grand Long, Complete School Story of the Class of St. Jim's,
By **MARTIN CLIFFORD.**



After a moment's hesitation with respect, his jaw dropping, his mouth open, "Ho, ho, ho!" came from beneath his smiling, but somewhat sinister, features. "I'm glad you're a graduate, but I'm glad you're not a graduate!" he remarked. (Chapter 1)

CHAPTER I. A Catastrophe!

"DICKENS!" said Tom Merry.

"Yes, what?"

"By Jove, it is that," said Blake of the Fourth, looking out of the window of Study No. 4 into the old courtyard of St. Jim's. From the old clock could not be seen in the great courtyard the flag flying over the old main building, and the light from the lower windows of the School House was a yellow line.

"All the better," said Tom Merry, turning from the window. "Cats won't know what bit flag! If he recognizes as it this flag, he must have the eyes of a cat."

Next Wednesday.

"THE ST. JIM'S REFUGEE!" AND "OFFICER AND TROOPER!"

No. 222, (New Series), Vol. 2.

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"Yes, what?"

And the first in Study No. 4 checked. There were seven desks there, and that was very late. Their companion was completely unknown, and it would have surprised anyone who had looked into Study No. 4 at that moment.

On the study table was a large tin pen. Digby was staring at it with a long wooden ruler. Having no feeling in his side from a laceration, and knowing no other means of his own, he took the ruler and placed it on the table, and then, with a gasp, he saw liquid that he gave his companion. Jack Blake's acquaintance was a large of invisible mark of a purple line. Tom Merry collected a sheet of blot from the distance, and Digby seized it in. It was a furious mistake.

Outside, in the old yard, the November fog had been driving thicker and thicker. It was not quite so thick as yesterday, Tom Merry had suggested a little. The celebrated Mr. Guppy would not have compared it with a London periodical. But undoubtedly it was very thick. Garden coming across the road had to grope their way across the shadows, the lights of the distant houses could not be seen from the gate.

"Don't splash the table, Dig, dear boy," said Arthur Angustin D'Arcy warningly. "We must not have any traces left. There is bound to be warty about this, and there may be an inquiry, you know."

"There is coming to be answered," agreed Monty Lewtchen. "There's the spirit!"

"Heads come out!"

Monty Lewtchen took the big garden syringe Arthur Angustin handed to him.

"I think that will do you, Dig," he remarked. "It's thoroughly done! I suppose you'd better leave the job to me."

"Well, Lewtchen, you had better leave it to me," said D'Arcy. "You might make a mistake in the fog, you know, and never get it right the next morning."

"I'd take it on," said Blake doubtfully. "I had thought of the window."

"Oh, yes?" said Tom severely. "You'd better leave it to me. We're the injured party, after all."

"You shall follow, would make a bundle of it," said Blake, with a shake of the head.

"I am, indeed! Leave it to me!"

"I am, indeed!"

"I am, indeed!"

"I am, indeed!"

"I am, indeed!"

"I am, indeed!"

"I am, indeed!"

"I am, indeed!"

"I am, indeed!"

"I am, indeed!"

"I am, indeed!"

"I am, indeed!"

"I am, indeed!"

"I am, indeed!"

"I am, indeed!"

"I am, indeed!"

"I am, indeed!"

"I am, indeed!"

"I am, indeed!"

"I am, indeed!"

"I am, indeed!"

"I am, indeed!"

"I am, indeed!"

"I am, indeed!"

Merry. "We've not really glad to see you, Kildare. Will you come along to my study and have tea?"

"No, thank," said Kildare. "I'm just going out. I looked in to remind you that your three hats and boots brought in to me, Blake."

"My own hats?"

"Yes, your hats. What are you stammering about?"

"Am I stammering?"

"And what are you hiding under your jacket, Lewtchen?"

"Main-man's jacket!" stammered Lewtchen.

"Yes, what is it?"

Monty Lewtchen, with a grimace, produced the garden spade. Kildare stared at it in astonishment.

"What have you got that for?" he demanded.

"We've a garden—we've got it here, you know," explained Lewtchen vaguely. "We've borrowed it from Tompkins."

"Is it?" said Blake, holding his hat—

"Blake's hat was out of such work."

Kildare smiled grimly. He could see that he had surprised the young rascals in the midst of their preparations for some "game," and he intended to stir the matter to the bottom.

"And what's under that tablecloth?" he asked.

"The three—all up now!" growled Arthur Angustin.

"Yes, indeed!"

"What is it?"

"It's all up! I suppose you young rascals are looking for a hiding-place that is!"

And Kildare strode towards the table, caught hold of the cloth between cover and the gas, and jerked it away.

"Look out!" yelled Tom Merry.

But it was too late! The cloth was caught in the gas, and Kildare, who took it off the table, and the gas was along with it. There was a loud "boom" and Kildare gave a kick as the contents of the gas shot away him. The terrible mixture that had been prepared for the sole benefit of Gully of the Fifth Street Kildare, swamping his waistcoat, and streaming down his trousers.

"Gretchenoo!" gasped Kildare. "What the—how the—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"You've done it now?" gasped Lewtchen.

"Oh, my hat!"

Kildare stood for a moment staring at the floor, white and hot and black hot, gas and heated gas, streamed down his shirt, and formed a pool at his feet. His hair was a study. His clothes were ruined, and, to judge by his next action, he was not the least of them. He had a slight cough in his throat, and he proceeded to see that it came with courtesy and respect.

"You young rascals!" he said. "Smash! Smash! Smash! You young rascals!" he said. "Smash! Smash! Smash!"

"Have, hold on!"

"Oh! Oh!"

"Smash! Oh! Oh!"

"Smash! Oh! Oh!"

"Smash! Oh! Oh!"

"Smash! Oh! Oh!"

"Smash! Oh! Oh!"

"Smash! Oh! Oh!"

"Smash! Oh! Oh!"

"Smash! Oh! Oh!"

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CHAPTER 2
Tom Merry's Study.

"Oh! Oh! Oh!"

"Oh! Oh! Oh!"

"Oh! Oh! Oh!"

"Oh! Oh! Oh!"

"Oh! Oh! Oh!"

"What makes you think that he should sleep in just that?" groaned Blake. "He's got the mattress instead of Cotta's."

"Leave his night, the awful beast!"

"Oh, my God!"

"Oh, my God!"

"Hallo! What's the row?" Talbot of the Fifth looked over the study, with a look of surprise upon his handsome face.

"Oh!" groaned Tom Merry.

"Goodness!"

"But what's happened?" asked Talbot, in an earnest moment of genuine and genuine sympathy.

"Hard luck!" said Talbot emphatically. "But what the deuce were you making that mattress for, you fellows?"

"Cotta's bed!"

"It was on your account, dear boy," mumbled Arthur Augustus. "We were going to arrange your uphairs, you know."

Talbot's handsome face flushed.

"I wish you hadn't," he said. "I don't mind Cotta being here, but this—"

"Yes!"

"Yes!"

"Yes!"

"We're jolly well going for him all the same!" said Tom Merry. "We may easily make another mistake. Kibbler's going to be drunk again, and we shall catch Cotta all right in the end."

"Yes, within!"

"Don't know what's done it now!" groaned Hervey.

"It's some brother's doing."

"Who says?" asked Blake.

"Well, I do, for one," said Hervey. "Well, I'm gone if you are."

"You're not to go in, as we shall be too late for Cotta," said Tom Merry. "He's going out of town—Larson heard that he'd be late."

"Yes, look up!"

"Hold on!" said Talbot quietly. "If you're doing this on my account, I'd rather you shouldn't do it—really!"

"How now?" said Blake.

"You know it is no longer, dear boy!" said Arthur Augustus, with a wave of the hand. "We're going to look up!"

"Yes, really!"

"Ring off!" said Tom Merry loudly. "Clear out, Talbot! You have it to do!"

"Now you're talking!" cried Mummy Lewther.

And the partners, only made more determined by that tremendous looking, set in work at once. A big ink-bottle was taken from the cupboard, and his of various kind pressed into it.

The partners then proceeded their office as they went into the corridor hall. Only Talbot was looking a little green.

It was entirely upon Talbot's account that that innocent corpse was being prepared for Cotta of the Fifth. Talbot was one of the best fellows in the room, and as straight as any fellow in the School House, but it was no secret that Talbot had had a private and "study" pen.

A short time ago Cotta's pen, Treasurer of the Fifth, had been stolen, and the school was in a state of commotion. Talbot, naturally, had done nothing but prevent the investigation with any number of Cotta's C's—used to be had looked through to the back of the Fifth Form school desk. Taking advantage of Talbot's peculiar pen, he had sought to finish the Third year Talbot—and he had failed.

Treasure was gone, looked out of the Fifth. It was a heavy blow for the blunder of the Fifth. It resulted deeply with Cotta, and his anxiety was only increased against Talbot. Talbot, naturally, had done nothing but prevent the investigation with any number of Cotta's C's—used to be had looked through to the back of the Fifth Form school desk. Taking advantage of Talbot's peculiar pen, he had sought to finish the Third year Talbot—and he had failed.

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Talbot here is quickly, he took it as proof of his participation for early wrongdoing, though in this the understanding had had been more aimed against that slaying. But Talbot's claims were not so unfair. It was agreed on all hands that Cotta had to be "sent up."

And Tom Merry & Co. had agreed that, with Cotta's "sent up," they would make Cotta's life not worth living. Hence the Fifth school that had looked so innocently in Mummy No. 2. That was only to be the last step, but the first step had unfortunately come a "mother." But Tom Merry & Co. were determined.

The partners was now ready. Tom Merry looked out of the study window. The fog in the quadrangle was thicker

than ever. Mummy Lewther walked back to Study No. 2 and returned with the spirit.

"You to arrive!" said Mummy. "No time to lose. Now, what's going to be the case of the deuce dead?" No good!

"I'll take it," said Talbot. "As you're doing it on my account, it's only fair that I should take the risk."

You Merry shook his head.

"You go for it," he suggested.

"Break it down to you, dear boys," said Arthur Augustus gravely. "I'm afraid you fellows will make a mark!"

"Hark! You up!" said Blake, producing a penny. "Old man!"

Too late for Arthur Augustus & Co., and he smiled with satisfaction. The other fellows did not seem so satisfied.

"It's all right, dear boys. Pshaw give me the spirit, Lewther, the Jew! How am I going to carry the stuff, though!"

"Pshaw give it into your pocket," suggested Lewther approvingly.

"Wheek! Lewther!"

"Take the big spirit over your nose, forehead, and put the spirit! make your jacket, and Blake. — Show the lid on the lid. What you don't spill it, no!"

Arthur Augustus took the spirit into his arms rather gingerly. He was not afraid of Cotta of the Fifth, but he was nervous about his station. However, with the water he took with the spirit under his jacket, he was not really to worry. The ink-bottle was now in his hand, and he smiled. Arthur Augustus smiled the smile of superior wisdom.

"Pshaw leave it to me, dear boys! You can rely on me. It's all right."

And Arthur Augustus marched out of the study. He proceeded slowly along the passage, fearful of spilling the contents of the tin and getting his immaculate "shades."

"Hark! You up!" said Tom Merry, in a suppressed voice.

"Wheek! You Merry!"

"Back up!"

"Pshaw don't call out, you and! You will attract attention."

"You—your forehead! Get a more on!" bawled Blake.

"It's all right. You know it to me."

Arthur Augustus proceeded down the passage again. Tom Merry & Co. were after him, but refraining from saying him any more. At the top of the street & Co. they saw Kangaroo of the Sixth coming up, with Cotta, Dora and Glyn. They stared at the blunder.

"What on earth have you got there?" asked Kangaroo, in astonishment.

"Nothing!" said Arthur Augustus mysteriously.

"Oh!"

"It's a dead mouse, though!"

Arthur Augustus proceeded down the stairs, leaving the Sixth fellows staring after him in amazement. Lewther of the Fourth came running upstairs, and nearly tripped into him.

"Look out!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"Hark! What's that?" asked Lewther.

A short fellow in the lower hall heard Arthur Augustus's "Hark!" and they started at him as he came down. The sight of the smell of St. Jim's carrying a blunder into the huge quadrangle was curious, to say the least.

"What are you up to, Gusty?"

"What's the little game?"

"Well, a stone under the bed of the Fourth. Arthur Augustus put his finger to his lips, and in doing so allowed the spirit to slip from under his jacket, and it crashed on the floor.

"Oh, Jew!"

Arthur Augustus hastily gathered up the spirit, and took of a moment from all sides, and there was a splash from the blunder as it was stepped. The lid was not very tight.

"Hark! Jew!"

Arthur Augustus fairly fell into the mud, leaving a pool of ink on the floor. He, Blake, the blunderer, came along the passage, and he stared at the pool of ink, and they stared after the figure of Arthur Augustus rearing through the mud down into the main.

"Oh, Jew!" he called out sharply.

"Oh, Jew!" he called out sharply.

He, Glyn, had stepped. He had stepped Arthur Augustus's looking began from the head of the stairs.

"The world was! I suppose that's why in the School House you had's spirit ink, wrapping old book."

"And I wonder," said Mummy Lewther solemnly. "I wonder what'll get the ink!"

The Gem Librarian—No. 22.

**CHAPTER 6.
D'Arvy Hunt It.**

"BAt Java! It's frightfully thick!"

It was Arthur Angustus felt as if he had put his hand into a blender in his path his way through the fog in the vicinity of his desk. He could not see the structure, and he could hardly discern the ground at his feet. He stumbled on through the thick mist, blinking round him. The light of the School House disappeared in the fog behind. Arthur Angustus had to creep down several times to make sure that he was still upon the floor in the gates. He was still pushing his way towards the gates, when seven o'clock sounded out in muffled tones from the clock-tower.

"Seven, had Java? The hour will be shortly!" announced Arthur Angustus.

And he stumbled on hurriedly. It was known that Cuts of the Fifth was going out at seven—Loraine of the Fourth had heard him tell Mr. Lippin so. The bustles passed that Cuts probably had a particular appointment in Kilmara's evening session of his open-air fiddle class, and he was not likely to miss that appointment. Cuts had doubtless given some excellent reason for going when he obtained a pass out of gates; but Tom Merry & Co. guessed already that he was going to stop the bellows out at the Green Meadows of Cuts' little habits that they were well acquainted with—about, of course, made it all the more probable to detest Cuts with their intense aversion.

Arthur Angustus reached the gates at last. He was not yet ten paces from the entrance, and was half of his his gate ahead yet. Arthur Angustus grappled for it with his hand, and then slipped down up to the second half of the gate, waiting. He was quite certain that Cuts had not passed him on the way to the gates, so he was certainly ahead of his intended victim; but Cuts could not be many minutes away, unless he was to be very late for his appointment.

D'Arvy walked rapidly, pushing through the fog. He had not seen the structure on the ground and rather the hill all at, and held the big nozzle in his hands. At the sound of footsteps he intended to off it, and then let fly at close quarters.

"Had Java? Mark he comes!"

Footsteps came with a muffled sound through the fog. There was a loud sound of glass rattling under heavy boots. Arthur Angustus waited until the ground of the nozzle laid the ground in his hands. Then he saw into the instrument the run again, with the loaded nozzle ready in his hands. There was fully a pint of water in it, and a few drops splashed down Arthur Angustus's damp trousers, scattered to the fog. A figure in an evening coat and thick cap hurried up, making for the gate.

"Whisk! Whisk!"

With a steady aim, Arthur Angustus discharged the squirt.

"Craggh!"

A wild, grating grumble came from the thin figure as it staggered back under the unexpected attack.

"Qwoooooooohhhhh!"

Before the victim had finished gurgling, Arthur was facing through the fog. He had certainly not been away. With his coat disarranged by the first shower, the wretched creature could have had no eyes for him.

"Has Java? What a glibby success!" chuckled Arthur Angustus as he ran.

"Was!"

"Great Scott! Oh!"

The hating figure had humped into the fountain. He covered off behind it, and, making the gutter stammer of lightening, he hurried off. In his fall he rolled into the fog, he humped into a tree, and gave a yell, and dropped the nozzle, which rolled somewhere in the fog. He groped for it for a few minutes, but lost in his confusion, and then, giving it up, he headed for the fiddle again. This time he reached the School House without accident, and peered up the steps.

The door had been closed, but Arthur Angustus pushed it open, and slipped in, and seemed to begin fiddling him. He fiddled for a while, then drew forth one of his instruments, two dark strands of the strings, and his hands were cleared, and there was a dash of it on his face. But Arthur Angustus was too excited and triumphant to notice these little details.

Tom Merry & Co. were waiting for him in the hall. Arthur Angustus gave them a triumphant grin.

"It's all right, look here?"

"I thought it a treat—right on the strings!"

"My hat!" said Tom Merry. "Then there'd be a row now! He's bound to come in! He can't go out for that!"

"He, he, he! I should say not!"

Tom Merry looked.—No. 26.

"Arthur clear," grinned method. "Come has a few with him sharp about him. It wouldn't be possible to know what he's doing. Look to find out what's done it if Cuts' eyes with that dash on his nose."

"Had Java? In there a dash on my nose, dash here," said Arthur Angustus anxiously. He walked it with the back of his hand, and changed it into a streak across his under lip.

"He, he, he!"

"Widly, you follow—"

"What, you are a pretty sight, you going on?" ventured a voice behind Arthur Angustus. "Are you making up to a Red Indian, or are you off your rocker?"

Arthur Angustus looking round him, almost a yell, for the voice was the voice of Cuts of the Fifth.

D'Arvy started at the Fifth House heavily. Cuts had his coat on, and his cap in his hand, and had just come down the stairs. He was just going out. Evidently he had not gone out yet. D'Arvy stared at him in horror. Cuts had just started. Upon whose face, then, had he expressed the devoted worshiper?

"In-sub-lim-i-na Java?" stammered D'Arvy. "How—your hat, Cuts?"

Cuts stared at him.

"You," he said. "Why not? What's the matter with you? Who wouldn't I be here? Are you dizzy?"

"How—your hat, your game out?"

"Come out! No, I'm just going," said Cuts, still once puzzled.

"Oh, you didn't wait?"

"What's your wish, head? I was gone out of seven, and I'm just going now."

"How did you know I was going out at seven? And where is to do with you, anyway?" demanded the study of the Fifth.

"Oh, records!"

The door was being violently open. A figure in an evening coat came in. At half light the face was not recognizable. It was only a person in the general, which, raised a light on his face, and said to Arthur Angustus, "What's there for the sake of the seven with one more of people here?"

"My hat!" gasped Tom Merry. "Lord's Kilties!"

"Kilties! Oh, records!"

"Enough!" came from the people back-wards. "Oh! Where's that young fellow? Where are those records?"

"And records, Kilties?" exclaimed Mr. Bailton, coming out of his study. "What is the matter? What has happened?"

Cuts of the Fifth bowed into a shrug. He explained, now, and he related. Kilties of the Sixth had suddenly stopped in between Cuts and the justice and stopped his bullying. And now he had resumed the rapping intended for Cuts.

The crew of the justice were a study. They knew that Arthur Angustus could have made a mistake in the fog who they saw Cuts, but they had not dreamed that it was a dreadful mistake on his. Kilties—the head prefect of the School House, the captain of the school!

Arthur Angustus reported Kilties with horror, his jaw dropping at the mouthful.

"He, he, he, come on, Cuts."

"Come on, he, he, he, he, he, he," exclaimed Mr. Bailton. "Kilties, who has happened to you?"

"I—I—I've been attacked with something—oh, or something," spluttered Kilties. "Some young fellow was being in with one of the gates! Oh, don't! You remember!"

"I don't think you need look for the young fellow!" gasped Cuts. "Perhaps D'Arvy will explain that matter to you."

Mr. Bailton had a frowning frown upon W.A.S.Y.

"D'Arvy?"

"Yes, sir," greeted the peep of Mr. Java.

"You are the author of this?"

"Widly, sir."

"You spill some ink on the floor when I say you have. It's been a quarter of an hour ago. You have ink on your face and clothes and clothes now."

"Oh, records, records!"

"You have done this?"

"It—I was an accident, sir," stammered Arthur Angustus.

"I wouldn't have blamed old Kilties for that—for the worth, sir!"

"An accident?" cried Kilties. "You let fly at us with a squirt."

"It could not have been an accident, then," said the Housemaster.

"Yes, sir, it was an accident—a harmful accident! I

"How? Kildare was gone out. I didn't recognize him in the fog, sir. Oh, dear! I'm awfully sorry, Kildare. What has I probably done there in the world. It was a terrible accident."

"You young rascal!"

"How could it have been an accident, if you required this stuff near Kildare?" exclaimed the Housekeeper.

"It might be meant for somebody else, you see, sir."

"Indeed! Then you deliberately intended to assist that foolish expedition over someone?"

"Come, look up your study, D'Arce! Kildare, you may rest assured that D'Arcy's punishment for this outrage will be exemplary."

"Oh, dear!"

"Kildare gave D'Arcy a peep from, and stood away. The unfortunate read of St. Jim's started for Mr. Haddon's study. The Housekeeper watched his retreat again.

"Mind not your hand, D'Arce. I shall punish you most severely for this."

"If you please, sir," said Tom Merry quietly, looking on with a crowd of anxious faces looking over his shoulder.

"What do you want, Harry?" stopped Mr. Haddon.

"We're all in it, sir," said Tom Merry.

"What do you mean?" said Arthur Agnew angrily.

"You can't go in without my word, you all?" said Mr. Haddon gravely. "You may all come into the study. I shall endeavor to improve upon you that you may all play tricks of this kind. Your hand, D'Arce?"

"Speak, speak, speak!"

"Oh, I'm sorry, sir," said Mr. Haddon. They had four cards and Mr. Haddon had them up to it, he had been doing special athletic exercises to get in form for it. When he had finished, he pointed to the door with the cane, and the juniors departed. They crowded out of the study, looking as if the work was worth doing.

"How had you got into Kildare's study?"

"I went with my master, stopping it over Kildare's study, you remember?"

"What?"

"You're kidding me?"

"You're out of your mind?"

"Oh, I'm sorry, sir," said Mr. Haddon. "I don't know what you're talking about."

CHAPTER 4. No Luck!

KILDARE'S appearance the next morning was greeted with smiles. The captain of St. Jim's had expended a great effort, and the captain of St. Jim's had expended a great effort, and he had not been able to get rid of all the mistakes.

Some ingredients, especially the morning tea and the eggs, had great striking power, and Kildare had to leave the house in a hurry with his cane. When his commotion produced a popular morning newspaper, which caused much excitement for some. Even Tom Merry & Co., many a time were for the occasion, asked what they saw the captain of St. Jim's in the day.

But Kildare in the day. He made every money had behind a good deal of the excitement, and that day was extremely down on Tom Merry & Co. He decided the Housekeeper's study to give the Terrible Threes a hundred lines each for smiling when he met them; to send Harry for giving down the members. Tom Merry & Co. were generally in Kildare's good books, and they left the Housekeeper's study in a hurry. They were all looking on, they could stand all this, but they still had to be being on hand again with old Kildare, who was the old of the juniors. They guessed that perhaps Kildare suspected that the mistake had been pointed upon him in return for the smoking in Study No. 1—what, as a matter of fact, the

junior had forgiven with all their hearts. Arthur Agnew understood to explain to old Kildare, so that he should get better study that evening and upon suspension. But when he arrived in Kildare's study to explain, the captain of St. Jim's treated him with a cordial bow, and pointed to the door.

"Get out!" he said loudly.

"I wanted to tell you something, Kildare, dear boy—"

"Don't!" snapped Kildare.

"It was really an accident last night—"

"Well, well, well, sir—"

"I was writing at the gate for that team Ours, you know; it was Ours of the Fifth I was going to finish—"

"Take a hundred lines, D'Arce!"

"Yes, dear boy; but I wanted you to understand that it was really an accident. I wouldn't have dreamed you'd be so quick."

"You've no hand on this?"

"I want you, but I really want you to understand—"

"Oh! Fear don't be a fool, Kildare! Oh, my hat!"

Arthur Agnew departed quite suddenly from Kildare's study, helped from behind by Kildare's heavy foot. He was a patient expression when he returned to Study No. 3. He had explained, but he had not improved relations with Kildare, apparently.

Tom Merry made the next effort to pour oil on the troubled waters. He started tapping for Kildare, smiling. When Kildare looked at his clock, he noticed, he turned Tom Merry there, very busy talking back, and the table shook with. Perhaps that might have softened Kildare's heart, which was really very hard, had he not caught sight of his collection in the glass at the same moment, and noticed its position.

"No, no!" he said, instead of putting his hand to his head, he took a step out, and stepped over the junior

knocking before his eye, and stepped into the study, looking at the study, and then stepped into Study No. 3.

Tom Merry collapsed there in a luxurious state, and the door slammed on him.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Tom.

He did not venture into the study again. Evidently Kildare was up to a mood to be tipped for.

The Terrible Threes were soon checked back as they gathered in their study to be.

"It's serious!" said Messure. "We've no had words with old Kildare, and he hasn't made Ours all up. Our luck is out!"

And the captains arrived that it was. He far from making the study of the Fifth, all up, they had been made to sit up themselves very severely. And Ours was making himself an impression on even. After tea the Terrible Threes joined

Walter, and they went down to the common room together. There it was the house of the Fifth were drinking in the study passage, and they looked at the juniors as they came by, and Ours occasionally got his hand over his eyes, as if he had been a great great a pickpocket. Walter turned crimson, but he passed on without a word. The Terrible Threes

helped.

"Ours, you respectable old!" joked Tom Merry.

"You speaking for a word?" said Henry Lockton.

"What's the matter? Have I had the pleasure to offend you, or my wife?"

"No, longer pleased."

"You mean and?" broke out Tom Merry. "Why can't you be Tally-ho?" It wasn't his fault that two other were invited for entertaining the latter lady.

Ours hit his eye, and his eye glared. The explosion of Walter's had been a severe blow to the pride of the Terrible Threes. It was not, it was not. But Ours' commiseration his wife's feelings. It was not easy to make him lose his temper.

"My dear young," he drawled, in his usual drawing tone. "It may be your pleasure to show up with a colored pick-pocket in a weakness before he returned. I suppose you don't know the look looking after my property. You see, I'm afraid your fingers get might break me again any day."

The Terrible Threes did not reply to words. Words were useless with a fellow like Ours. They made a sudden rush at him and colored him, and before Ours knew what was happening he was bowled over, and rolled in the door.

"You've your young folks!" roared Ours. "You—you—Help, Sir, Help, you see!"

would have found more still had not Kildare come on the scene with a card in his hand.

The two Fifth Avenue lopers were, however, the captain of St. Joe's to deal with the junkies which he did not expect. Tom Merry & Co. scowled into the commotion, with the professor's face exhibiting hidden fears. Then Kildare sprang forward. Tom Merry & Co. regarded one another dubiously.

"Are both in it?" queried Mousers.

"Seems to be," said Tom Merry. "Never mind, never say so. Kildare is rather down on us, I must say."

"Yes, perhaps," I am beginning to think that Kildare is rather a beast."

"It's my fault," said Talbot, with a distressed look. "I wish you fellows would let it drop. So far, what should you do to me, I can stand—so long as I receive my rights, in a way. He ought to let it drop; but if he won't, let him say! It doesn't matter."

"You're to let him wig, duck boy?"

"None here," said Tom Merry. "He's got to be dealt."

"But—" said Talbot.

"But—" said the junkies together; and Talbot gave it up.

CHAPTER 5.

A Suspicion for Jack Blake.

THEY of the Fifth were in his study that evening, sitting with Williams of the Fifth over a cigarette, when there came a rap on the door.

The deputy of the Fifth crossed, and thrust his cigarette hastily into the fire. He did not seem to be capable of smoking. Williams retained his "leg" under his foot.

"Come in," snapped Cuts.

The girl's slight self as he entered. The cigarette was out of sight, but there was a very perceptible scent of tobacco smoke in the room.

"Notice the smell?" queried Cuts. "I've just been bringing some old letters."

"I've never by accident," Williams remarked, "noticed any such thing in your study, Cuts," he said.

"No, never, dear boy."

"Thanks, I'll stop. I don't let keep you a few minutes."

"Please yourself," returned Cuts.

Kildare's eyes glanced a little at the mannerly suppressed laughter of the Fifth-Five's captain. There was an odd look between the St. Joe's captain and the deputy of the Fifth.

"In the first place," said Kildare—"it isn't what I mean about, but I'll mention it because you have been smoking here. The junkies are vexed when they are caught smoking, and a master ought to have decency enough to let them a good example."

"Are you going to come out?" queried Cuts.

Kildare checked.

"It may be my duty to report you to the Housemaster," said Kildare.

"I should wish till I had proof if I were you," suggested Cuts. "I've already told you that I've been hearing some odd letters."

"Yes, you have told me so," said Kildare, in a tone which showed his positive opinion of Cuts's remarks. However, I was merely giving you a warning, so we can let that drop. I've a strong suspicion, Cuts, that you are selling for the sixth and, unless you are very careful, you may follow the way Tom Merry goes."

"Thank you."

"We'll talk this in, for instance," said Kildare, taking up a pink paper that lay on the table inside out, and there were found some of the printed material in the list of letters. Cuts looked a little alarmed, but Kildare did not turn a hair.

"That?" said Cuts. "That isn't mine?"

"You keep papers that do not belong to you on your study table."

"It came wrapped round a parcel from Hammy's," Cuts explained. "It's very unusual of them to wrap parcels in wrapping paper, but I'm not responsible for that."

Cuts checked again, in great admiration for the cool of the Master. Cuts did not expect Kildare to believe his explanation. He meant him to understand that that was the explanation he would make if the matter were reported to the Housemaster. As a matter of fact, Kildare's remark was very cool. Kildare—"I don't believe what you say, of course, and I know it is the truth. So you have no use for this wrapping paper, I will take it away with me?"

Cuts bit his lip. The two Kildare had been studying that Tom Merry letter—No. 10.

pink paper, and observing the chances of various "papers," and they did not want to lose their valuable source of information. But it was impossible to make an objection. Cuts smiled.

"Give it, by all means," he said. "That is, if you are sure that it will not connect the pure atmosphere of your study with Hammy's. I should be very much a victim of that kind. It would be impossible."

Kildare's movement was unobscured; but Kildare did not appear to notice it. He gave his attention solely to Cuts.

"Now I'll come to the matter I came to see you about," he said.

"Yes, if you please you did," returned Cuts.

"I'll give Talbot you of the book."

"I'll give Talbot you of the book," he said. "What?" the deputy of the Fifth asked. "You believe there is a lad in the third century Talbot—at least, for male talents Talbot. He was called something else, wasn't he, when he was a philosopher—or a lawyer, was it?"

"Never mind that," said Kildare. "That's what I've come about. It's come to my knowledge that I have been copying Talbot on the subject of his post—"

"My dear chap, you had hardly thought that I have time to waste in copying papers?"

"And it has got to stop," said Kildare, understanding Cuts's intention.

"Let it go," said Cuts, smiling.

"Yes, whatever Talbot may have happened, everybody knows that he had a very unfortunate upbringing—that is all over. He has been punished, and he has been subjected to that kind of a punishment, and there is nothing whatsoever against him now. It is the Master's wish that nothing should be said about his past, and you have no business to say anything. You have refused to do so. Well, I will not say anything that you won't be allowed to go on. Mind—"

Kildare raised his hand warningly—"If you set in that direction and anything may again—"

"You're using some pretty strong expressions," said Cuts, changing color a little.

"I'm saying what I mean. It's childish and deplorable to mention a man who's had everything against him, and who's trying hard to make up for it now, and if you don't stop it, you'll have to deal with me."

"And what will you do?" asked Cuts contemptuously.

Kildare came a step nearer, with a grin a broad that Cuts had seen from his eye.

"In the first place," said the captain of St. Joe's, "I'll give you a little thing having Cuts."

"I should not accept a bribe," he remarked. "And a fight between the head of the Fifth and the head of the Fifth would make rather an unpleasant incident, wouldn't it—something like a scandal?"

"I shall not do that. In the second place, if that doesn't make you act decently towards me, I shall suggest you to the Head, and you can deal with him on the subject. There was no other. We had never mentioned the captain of the school to take up the subject for Talbot in this way, and he was not mentioned. He knew the kind of respect the Head would give him when he was met for after Kildare had made his report. The cool and headless deputy of the Fifth was returned for the more."

"That's all," said Kildare. "I want you to remember that. The kid's done you no harm—let's bring to the door his name. You've got to leave him alone. That's all. Better think over it."

And, without another word, the captain of St. Joe's turned and walked the study.

"My word!" murmured Williams softly.

Cuts smiled his tooth.

"Have him, the smoking brand!" sang his lip.

"Kildare takes his lip, all the same. You don't want to have it out with the three on your side. He thinks a bit of that fellow Talbot, in spite of what he's been. If he's all right, you can let the lid show! After all, it was Talbot's own fault that he got the order of the head!"

"Oh, yes!" said Cuts, merrily.

And the subject was dropped, and the previous subject resumed the discussion of the chances of these "papers" and which had been interrupted by Kildare's visit.

Kildare returned to his study with a burning letter. He found the pink paper on the table with a burning letter. He had a deep shiver for Cuts of the Fifth, and all the papers and cigarettes, and the visit to Cuts's study seemed to have an unpleasant taste in his mouth.

He opened the fire together to make a Mass, intending to throw the pink paper upon it.



"Look out!" said Tom Merry. "She is not the lady I off the road!" "The one you speak of," there was a loud "swish," and Miss's party a whizz as the carriage of the post that drove back. "Swish-swish" as it passed. (See Chapter 1.)

A tap came at the door of his study, and he opened and came in.

"Miss of the Fourth comes in, with a stack of papers for the book," Mr. Kildare looked at him curiously.

"My lovely Kildare, said Miss, with great modesty.

"Put them on the table."

Miss placed the books on the table, and gave a jump at the sight of the pink paper.

"There it was, what, in full view by the daylight, with pen-and-ink marks against the names of horses in the lists. Miss stared at it, speechless. He would not have been more surprised if he had seen the "papers" themselves in Kildare's study.

"You don't?" repeated Mr. Kildare.

"I never," answered Miss.

Kildare looked at her, and returned with reaction as to her the gentleman's astonished expression fixed upon the pink paper. He searched it up, and there it lay the list with a heavy

"Miss did not look at him as he turned to the door, but he knew that his face was red. He hurried out of the study.

Kildare bit his lip with annoyance. It was impossible for the head parson of the Society of Friends to explain himself to a gentleman he felt sure he had never met, that paper from Miss's study.

It was an instance of Kildare's course, and the conduct of his Miss's conduct was very much to be commended, and with an explanation in a "list" in the Fourth Form; but he knew that Miss had been very much interested.

Just Miss was more than interested—she was what he would have described as "absorbed." He returned to

Study No. 5 in a state of wonder. Morris and Higgs and P'Long were at work with their preparation there. Miss's peculiar expression struck them at once.

"Anxious?" said Miss, "said boy?" asked Arthur Angleton, having the young man's attention on his cheek.

"No," said Miss, "Miss goes for a change."

"The papers?" asked Higgs.

"No," said Miss, "said boy?" asked Arthur Angleton, having the young man's attention on his cheek.

And Miss sat down to his preparation without a word of explanation to his surprised class. If Kildare chose to leave his study for the morning, he would not have been surprised if he had seen the "papers" themselves in Kildare's study.

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CHAPTER 6.

The Plan of Campaign.

THE MOTHER of the Fourth looked into Tom Merry's study the next day, when the Fourth's Three were being done to her. Tom Merry gave him a sharp nod.

"Just in time," he remarked, "ready done."

Miss's mother looked down a shawl in the study. The Mark's mother looked down a shawl in the study. The Mark's mother looked down a shawl in the study. The Mark's mother looked down a shawl in the study.

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and Tom Merry & Co. kindly gave him their congratulations. Monty Lewther had remarked that it was never too late to stand even for Levison, and certainly he required a good deal of mending. But the way Levison had stood by Talbot when Talbot was in a tight corner, made the charms of the Shell feel unusually cordial towards him.

"You haven't had any luck," said Levison abruptly, as he accepted the ten-ounce packet filled by Marston.

"Our luck seems to be out," confessed Tom Merry. "We haven't downed Cutts, and old Kiddero is down on us. But our game will come."

"That's all we come to talk to you about," said Levison. "I can put you up to a dodge."

"Ahem!"

"The Terrible Three did not look enthusiastic. Levison's "dodge" was not quite to their taste. There seemed, in fact, to be an inextinguishable "kink" in Levison's character; even when he wanted to do good he would choose a crooked way. And crooked ways, with even so good an object, did not recommend themselves to Tom Merry & Co.

"You can't take it for what it's worth," said Levison, with a slight sneer. He was quite brave enough to read the thoughts of the Shell fellows. "Cutts has been treating Talbot in a rotten way, and all's fair in war."

"Not all," said Tom Merry. "Still, we'll be glad to hear of a dodge for downing Cutts. We haven't had any luck, so far."

"My idea is to show him up to the Head," said Levison. "I can't appear in it myself, because he could tell some things about me if he liked. People who live in glass-houses can't throw stones, you know. But you fellows—Eric all round—your iron-clad reputations—"

"Oh, choose it!"

"Treasure of the Fifth was sacked the other day," went on Levison. "We all know that Cutts was in the same boat, though he was too slow to be caught. We know he is a gambler, and deals with bookmakers—brooks bunch of a night, and that kind of thing. If he were ever caught out, with good reason here, it would be all up with him here. I know Kiddero suspects him, but he won't say on him, and without catching him he can't be broken on. Well, I happen to know that he has another of his little expeditions on for to-night. Anyway, I'm pretty certain of it. He could be caught out, and shown up, and he would be sacked from the school. It would be good ridance for St. Jim's."

"No doubt about that," said Tom Merry. "But—"

"And it would be quite easy," said Levison eagerly. "The letter has been down on his ever since I checked pulling with him, and he set. He failed me today! Levison pulled his teeth. "I told him I'd make him sorry for it."

"How?"

Tom Merry and his chums devoted their attention to their toilet and sundries. As a matter of fact, they had no desire to be used as Levison's cat's-paws, which was evidently what the Fourth-Former was planning.

"All you've got to do," suggested Levison, "is to catch him out at night. Talk away if he doesn't get in again. You can get out of the dorm easily enough."

"Suppose we were caught out ourselves?"

"Well, you'd be kicked, but that wouldn't hurt you. Nobody would suspect that you were out for any rotten reason, and they might suspect it in my case," said Levison coolly. "You could make out that you were going to stop the New House change, or something."

"Thanks."

Levison's lip curled.

"Sorry. I forgot that you were brought up at the feet of George Washington," he said. "Anyway, you could be caught. Dash it all, you've broken heads before, and not been spotted. Well, then you could lay for Cutts in the quad, and catch him get out; and drop on him outside the school walls, and take him out that he didn't get in again. He has to go, or fasten him up in the old barn, or something, and kick him."

"My bet!"

"Yes, he would be missed in the morning," said Levison sagaciously. "He would have to explain how he came to be out of doors at night. He couldn't, of course. Once the Head was put on the track, he would soon nose out the whole story. The whole game would come out. He only needs a dose to open his eyes, you see. Cutts would be thoroughly shaken up, and he'd get the sack, an' so as bosses."

"To-night," agreed Tom Merry.

"Well, it would be a jolly good thing for the school, wouldn't it?"

"First rate."

"Then you'd do it?"

Tom Merry shook his head.

"Why not?" demanded Levison angrily.

"Can't be done," said Tom. "It would screw him right. THE GAZETTE LIBRARY.—No. 355.

especially after the notice you let's treated Talbot. But it would be awkward. Whatever Cutts does, it's not up to us to give him away to the Head. We're not perfect."

"Oh, that's all not," said Levison.

"Thanks," said Levison cheerfully. "Much obliged for your opinion, Levison; but that's what we think."

"Essentially," said Marston.

Levison made an impatient gesture.

"You're letting a jolly good chance slip!" he exclaimed. "You could clear the rotten out of the school for good."

"Why not tackle the job yourself?" asked Levison.

"I couldn't handle him alone, and I've got nobody to back me up," said Levison sulkily. "Besides, he could get his thing about me. I've been in with him in a good many things. I don't want the best myself."

"Well, we shouldn't be sorry if Cutts got the order of the book," remarked Tom Merry. "But we can't give him away ourselves. It would be rather too rotten, even so. But you can't see it off to-night!"

"I believe so, anyway."

"What use?"

"He usually clears off about eleven, when he goes out. I know his habits, you see," said Levison, with a smug grin. "I've been along with him more than once. Since I've been here up, though, he hasn't been anxious for my company. His precious friends only want fellows with well-lined pockets, and fellows who can't play cards quite so well as I can. But, of course, I shouldn't talk about that here!" added Levison, with another sneer.

"Better not," agreed Levison. "You are corrupting our innocence, my dear boy."

"We might catch the head," said Tom Merry thoughtfully.

"No chance of making a mistake in the fog again, or nobody else will be going out at eleven o'clock at night. We could rag the rotten half-headed, and he wouldn't be able to say a word about it afterwards, as he couldn't very well confirm that he was outside the house at that time of night—what?"

Levison and Marston chuckled.

"Good egg!" said Levison.

"I'm on!" said Marston.

"What's the good of ragging him!" said Levison irritably.

"Better show him up, and get him the order of the book."

"Can't be done, my son. That's barred. But if we could catch him in the quad to-night, and give him the ragging of his life—"

"Yes, ha, ha!"

"We'll think it over," said Tom Merry thoughtfully. "It's a good scheme. We might get Taggles' tarpot out of the woodshed, and give him a coating. He could spend the rest of the night getting it off, instead of playing cards at the Green Man. It would really be a good thing for him. And the cream of the joke would be, that he couldn't say a word about it afterwards."

"The scheme of the Shell checked at the idea.

"You'd have to be careful," said Levison. "Since Treacher came a rascal, Cutts has been very careful. It won't be so jolly easy to catch him, especially inside the school walls."

"Oh, leave that to us!" said Tom.

After tea, when Levison had departed, the Terrible Three discussed the scheme, and the charms of Study No. 5 were called into the account. Blake & Co. were "on" at once: The idea of tagging Cutts, and if it was that wide it was possible for him to make any complaint afterwards, appeared to them at once. And it was agreed that at half-past ten that night the seven jokers should meet in the box-room with due secrecy, and only forth to "lay" for Cutts in the quad-room.

They made their preparations before locking-up. A jester was filled with tar from Taggles' tarpot in the woodshed, and concealed in the hollow elm in the quad, ready for use. At half-past nine the jokers went to bed as usual, but not to sleep. Not a word had been said about the scheme outside their own select circle; but Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was so very mysterious that several fellows in the Fourth asked him what was on, questions to which Arthur Augustus replied only with still more mysterious shakes of the head.

When the Fourth turned in, Arthur Augustus only partly undressed himself on being to bed. It was not worth while to take all his things off, as he was to get up in an hour. Of course, a dozen fellows in the dormitory observed his peculiar conduct.

First's the little game, Gussy?" Reddy wanted to know.

"Little game, Weilly!" repeated Arthur Augustus, innocently.

"Yes. What's on to-night?"

"Fwag don't ask indiscreet questions, Weilly, dear boy," said Arthur Augustus reprovingly.

"Oh, yes indeed!" murmured Blake.

"Weilly, Blake—"

"What's the little game—a call on the New House?" asked Kildare.

"What?" said Arthur Augustus. "Have you got your wobbish shoes back, Blake?"

"Shamp!" said Blake, in a fierce whisper.

"I was afraid you might have forgotten them, dear boy! I've not taken 'em off the bed waddy."

"You—your frazzled an—"

"I refuse to be called an an! Undak the circs, we shall scrounge wobbish shoes—"

"Cave!" murmured Hessemer, as Kildare came in to see the cat.

Kildare glanced sharply at the janitors. The sudden cessation of Blake as he entered the dormitory was a suspicious circumstance. The pair of rubber shoes that stood quite prominently just under the edge of D'Arcy's bed were another suspicious circumstance—or, rather, a couple of suspicious circumstances. And the fact that D'Arcy's beautiful pyjamas lay on his bed did not fail to attract Kildare's attention. If D'Arcy was in his underclothes, and had just finished to put on his pyjamas—

"The question of St. Jim's stands towards his bed.

"D'Arcy?" he tapped out.

"Yes, Kildare?" said Arthur Augustus innocently.

"What are these shoes doing here?"

"Shoes, dear boy!"

"You!"

"But Jove!" said Arthur Augustus, sitting up in bed and pointing at the shoes, as if he had never seen them before.

"But Jove! They—they are just 'neath the bed, Kildare. No harm in that, dear boy."

"Why are you not ashamed, D'Arcy?"

"Unshameful!" said Jove!" Arthur Augustus hastily gathered the bedclothes round him, but it was a little too late.

Blake and Herries and Digby looked daggers at their noble class. The cat was out of the bag now, so far as Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was concerned.

"You wretched young shakes," said Kildare, "do you mean to say you are going to bed in your clothes? Get up at once!"

"I refuse to be called a 'shakes,'" said Arthur Augustus indignantly. "It is 'nuthin' of the sort! I—"

"Well!"

"Ahem!"

Kildare smiled grimly.

"You young an! You are thinking of getting us after lights out, I suppose. Put on your pyjamas at once! Do you hear?"

"Yes—yes!" said D'Arcy feebly.

"I suppose you have some ladies planned for to-night?" said the prefect sternly. "I shall take away those shoes with me. And if there is any nonsense in this dormitory to-night you will hear from me. And I require you to promise, D'Arcy, that you will not get out of bed after lights out. And you will take a hundred lines, anyway."

"Oh, coventry!"

"Now, then, give me your word, or I'll take you by the scruff of the neck and march you down to the Hessemer!" said Kildare intently.

Arthur Augustus gave his chin a despairing look. Blake and Herries and Digby had closed their eyes, however, and seemed to be asleep.

"Up, you scoundrel, Kildare," said D'Arcy, after a long pause. "There's something else to be done."

"Yes, what?"

Kildare put out the lights and quitted the dormitory.

CHAPTER 7.

In the Dead of Night.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY sat up in bed after Kildare was gone and his footsteps had died away along the passage.

"What wotten lark, dear boys!" growled D'Arcy. "It's all off now. You fellows can't go without me."

"What up, you silly idiot!" said Blake emphatically.

"I refuse to be called a silly idiot, Blake! That fearful beast has taken my shoes away! I never regarded Kildare as such a wretched beast before. He seems to be wretchedly sharp to-night. I did not 'nuthin' whatever to make him suspicious. I'm afraid you fellows must have given it away somehow."

"Will you shut up!" shrieked Blake.

"Well, Blake—"

"What?"

A plover came hurtling through the air, and it caught

Arthur Augustus on the side of the head and stretched him in the bedclothes.

"Gosh! What fearful beast threw that pillow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But Jove, if that was you, Blake, I'll come and give you a fearful thrashing! But Jove, though, I've promised that suspicious beast not to get out of bed! However, as I cannot come, you fellows must give up the ghost!"

"What idea!" asked Lemley-Lesley.

"I say don't ask questions, Lemley! It's a secret!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There is 'nuthin' whatever to chuckle at, Herries. Blake will give me an unshakable not to carry out the plot to-night!"

"I'll give you a thick ear, you howling chump!" said the exasperated leader of Study No. 6. "For goodness' sake, shut up!"

"You will make a fearful mark of it if I do not come with you, dear boy. I cannot vouch upon you to deal with Coth-walton's assistance."

"So you're going for Coth!" exclaimed Melish.

"Mind your own linen, Melish, and don't be inquisitive! Blake, you had better slip along to the wash-room and tell Tom Mewey you can't come. Tell him it's all off, owing to unforeseen circs."

"So Tom Mewey's in it too?" shrieked Melish.

"What! You are an inquisitive beast, Melish, and I utterly refuse to tell you whether Tom Mewey is in it or not. Do you hear, ha, ha, ha!"

"Blaise, dear boy—"

"Hewlow! Dig—"

"Secret! Secret! Secret!"

"You utter anes, I know perfectly well that you are not asleep! I require you to promise that you will put it off till the next time Coth goes out on the wash-day."

"Gotta going on the wash-day, is he?" shrieked Lemley-Lesley.

"I want to say a word about it, Lemley! It's a secret!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There is 'nuthin' whatever to chuckle at. Blake! Hewlow! Dig!"

"Secret! Secret! Secret!"

Nothing but ances could be elicited from Blake and Herries and Digby. Their only hope was that Arthur Augustus would settle down to sleep. They did not want to meet their accidental expedition under the eyes of a whole wretched dormitory. The janitor did not seem at all sleepy now. There was a ripple of whisper from bed to bed. Arthur Augustus's way of keeping a secret tickled the Fourth immensely.

The wadd of St. Jim's gave it up at last. But he determined to keep awake till half-past two, and reconstitute again with Blake & Co. if they attempted to carry out the scheme without his assistance. That the whole plan would go wrong if deprived of his valuable aid Arthur Augustus had not the slightest doubt.

Fortunately, by the time ten o'clock rang out Arthur Augustus was fast asleep, without intending it. By that time, too, the rest of the Fourth had dropped off, with the exception of Blake and Herries and Digby—and one other. The other was Percy Melish. Curiosity was keeping the Peeping Tom of the Fourth awake. He intended to know what was going on.

Until half-past two there was silence in the Fourth Form dormitory. Then Blake slipped out of bed and called softly to Herries and Dig. They had dived off; but they awoke at once and hurried out, and the three juncos dressed themselves quickly, and put on their rubber shoes almost without a sound.

"Not a word!" Blake whispered. "If we wake up that chump he will begin talking again and never-give-it-off! Mewey's the worst!"

And in cautious silence the three juncos quitted the dormitory. Arthur Augustus remained safe in the arms of Morphous. But as the door closed softly behind them Percy Melish sat up in bed. He waited a few minutes, and then slipped out and crept towards Levin's bed. Levin's awake as Melish shook him lightly.

"Hello! What—"

"Hush!" whispered Melish.

Levin looked at him in the darkness.

"What is it? What are you out of bed for?"

"Those three ratters have gone out!" whispered Melish.

"Blake and Herries and Digby? I couldn't see them, but I know it was them."

"Well, what about it?" growled Levin.

"Don't you see?" Melish whispered eagerly. "They've gone out to break through; they'll be outside the house by the time the Librarian—No. 356."

"The Gem Librarian—No. 356."

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"The Gem Librarian—No. 356."

"What's the next?"

"What is it? What are you out of bed for?"

"Those three ratters have gone out!" whispered Melish.

"Blake and Herries and Digby? I couldn't see them, but I know it was them."

this time. We know the way they've gone. What a chance to catch them on the hop!"

Levison set his teeth. In the dark Mellich could not see the expression on his face.

"What do you mean, Mellich?"

"You could go after them, and fasten the box-room window on the inside," said Mellich, with a subdued chuckle.

"Then, when they come back, they couldn't get in! See?"

"You notice?"

"You won't!" said Levison, in a fierce whisper. "Let me catch you doing anything of the sort, you beastly sneak!"

"Why, you—you—you beast!" stammered Mellich, quite taken aback. As a rule, Levison was quite willing and eager to share with great kindness into any ill-natured trick, and Mellich had expected him to jump at the suggestion.

"What's the matter with you? I told you they'd be asleep by the morning, and they wouldn't know who'd done it, there's no risk. Look here, Levison, I—oh—ow—ow!"

Mellich broke off as a finger and thumb fastened upon his nose in the darkness, with a grip like that of a vice.

He grunted with anguish.

"Good-night! Legs! You beast! Out!"

"You sneaking cad!" said Levison. "I'll stay awake now, and see that you don't play any such dirty trick! Get off, you rascal!"

Mellich jerked his nose away.

"Yes—you—you—I'll—I'll—"

"You'll go back to bed, or I'll call D'Arcy and tell him what you suggested," said Levison savagely.

"Yes—you—"

"Oh, shut up!"

Mellich crept back to bed, covering his nose. And in spite of that excellent opportunity for playing a sneaky trick upon the thieves of the Fourth, Mellich remained in bed.

CHAPTER 8.

A Startling Discovery.

"HERE we are!"

Tom Merry whispered the words in the darkness of the box-room.

The Terrible Three were first on the spot. Blake and Herries and Digby came quietly into the box-room, groping their way in the darkness. Blake shut the door softly.

"Right!" he whispered.

All of you there.

"Encouraging theory. We've left him behind."

"Good!" said the Terrible Three, all together. They did not agree with Arthur Augustus D'Arcy as to the great value of his assistance in their enterprise.

Tom Merry had opened the window, which gave upon the roof of an out-house. The janitors climbed through the window one after another, and Tom Merry, who went last, carefully closed it behind him. The janitors dropped lightly to the ground.

It was dark outside. A dense mist hung over school, through which the stars twinkled faintly.

They made their way quietly into the quadrangle. Most of the lights were out in the School House. Some of the masters' studies and some of the Sixth were still lighted, and the windows of the Head's house glimmered into the mist. But the doors were all locked at that hour, and the quadrangle was dark and deserted. There was little danger of discovery, unless a surprise visit should be paid to the dormitories—and that was not likely to happen.

"Now the question is, where are we going to lay out for Curtis?" whispered Tom Merry. "He will have to get over the wall somehow—and more likely he will use the slanting oak. I expect he knows that as well as we do."

"But he mayn't," said Blake doubtfully; "and we can't see far in this blessed mist. No good waiting for him in one place while he's getting out at another."

"Not much, certainly."

"Might collar him as he gets out of the house?" suggested Messers. "He's almost sure to get out by his study window. It's easy to reach the ground from there. As a matter of fact, he was seen doing it once."

"I—E suppose he's certain to come," said Digby, with a shiver. "It was very cold in the quadrangle. Levison may have been mistaken."

"How now?" said Blake. "Not much good thinking of that now, see. We're here on spec. Let's see if his light's out, anyway; he mayn't be gone to bed. The Fifth don't have to burn off some as we do."

The janitors approached the School House under Curtis's study window. The window was quite dark.

They fired Limes—No. 86.

"Oh, he's in the house long ago?" said Tom Merry. "Curtis isn't the kind of chap to burn the midnight oil."

"Suppose he don't come alone!" suggested Digby. "Might have Gilmore or St. Leger with him, you know."

"Then you'll collar the lot?"

"Hush!"

"Oh, don't make difficulties, Dig!" growled Blake, driving in a chilly gust of wind caught him. "I say, it's pretty cold here. This blessed mist gets into my eyes and nose. How long is it off eleven now?"

"There goes a quarter to."

"Thank! Quarter of ten over to wait! It's beastly cold!"

In the chilly quadrangle, in the mist and the keen wind, it was not exactly pleasant. It occurred to the janitors that jiggering Curtis at that hour of the night was not quite as agreeable an occupation. It had seemed more pleasant when they discussed it in the warm and well-lighted study. However, it was too late to think of that now. They were in for it.

"He might get out of the house a dozen ways," growled Leather. "We'd better wait by the wall. We can separate and watch in half a dozen places. Chap who spots last can give the earlier call."

"Good egg!"

They were decided upon, and the chilly janitors made their way to the school wall, where it bordered the high-road. There was a light bearing in Taggie's lodge, and they gave that a wide berth. Near the big gates was the little alcove, which was used only by masters and prefects, who had keys to it. A little further on was the slanting oak, which had helped fellows to climb the school wall less than unsuccessful. In the shadow of the oak Tom Merry took up equal station, as he kept ward. They were out of sight of one another in the mist, but the earlier call—the signal of Tom Merry's Boy Scout Patrol—would be sufficient to call them together when the dash of the Fifth appeared. The jam-jar full of tar was placed in readiness close to the wall.

Then the janitors waited.

It seemed an age to the waiting janitors before eleven o'clock rang out from the old tower. There was a light gleam falling through the mist, and as they had not seen tonight their watches, they were far from comfortable.

But they cheered up as eleven struck. If Gerald Curtis was coming, he could not be very long now.

Tom Merry was lively on his guard. He was watching the spot that was believed to be used by Curtis in getting out of bounds.

He gave a start as he heard the sound of cautious footsteps in the mist. It was only a few minutes after eleven.

Tom Merry bent his head to listen, his heart beating. There was no doubt about it; he could distinguish the light and cautious tread, which was following the path down to the side-gate, within a dozen yards of where he stood.

He waited, restraining from giving the earlier signal till he was quite sure that it was Curtis. Certainly no one else—unless some other "Blade," determined upon "seeing life" at forbidden hours—was likely to be leaving the school at that hour on a dark and misty night. But he did not want to risk making a mistake.

The stealthy footsteps ceased.

They had stopped at the little gate, and Tom Merry almost held his breath. Had Curtis heard some sound that placed him on his guard? He was not coming in the direction of the slanting oak; he had stopped at the gate. Was it Curtis?

A faint sound came through the stillness—the sound of a key being inserted into a keyhole.

Tom Merry started again. Whoever it was that was going out, was unlocking the side gate, to which only masters and prefects had keys. Fuzzled and perplexed, Tom Merry crept forward, keeping close to the wall, till he could see the figure at the gate.

He caught a glimpse of a form in an overcoat opening the gate.

He caught his breath.

The broken-down bounds did not hear him—did not glance in his direction. Evidently he believed himself alone in the deserted quadrangle.

But Tom Merry saw distinctly the light tread creep out, upon which, even in the mist—he was so close now—he could distinguish the tony traces of the mixture which Arthur Augustus had so unfortunately squandered over Kildare by mistake.

Tom Merry stood rooted to the ground.

Had the wearer of the overcoat looked towards him, he must have seen him, for he was in clear view of the starlit Shell

see.

But he passed out of the gate without a glance round him. His face Tom Merry could not see; it was in the shadow,

and besides, the collar of the coat was turned up to the ears,

and a soft cap was pulled low down over the brows.

But Tom did not need to see the face. He knew the coat; and he knew that only prefects had keys to that gate.

He stood spellbound.

Kildare!

The gate closed softly, the spring lock closing of itself. Fairly, from the other side of the high wall, Tom Merry heard footsteps die away.

"Kildare!"

Tom Merry moved at last. He had come there to "spot" Cuts at the Fifth, and it was the captain of St. Jim's whom he had seen leaving the precincts of the school at that hour.

Tom Merry shivered, not only with the cold. The discovery almost threw him. Kildare! Was it possible!

It was amazing—staggering, yet there could be no doubt about it. Tom Merry felt almost a sickness at his heart. He would have given worlds not to have made that discovery.

With his hand in a whirl, the captain of the Shell gripped his way along the wall to strain his comrades.

CHAPTER 9. A Secret to Keep!

"SEEN him?"

Mozzy Lovelock whistled the question at Tom Merry leaping into him in the mist.

"No!"

"I thought I heard somebody," muttered Lovelock.

"It wasn't Cuts."

"Then it was somebody!"

"Yes," muttered Tom humbly. "It—it was somebody! Let's get on."

"Somebody else has gone out?" asked Lovelock, pointed.

"Yes! It's got in."

"But aren't we going to wait for Cuts?"

"No, I—I think not. I wish we hadn't come out. Let's get back."

Mozzy Lovelock grasped his chain by the arm, and poked closely into his face in the mist. He could see that something had happened.

"What's the matter, Tom?"

Blake came leaping through the mist. He had heard the whispering voices.

"What are you fellows harrying about?" he asked. "Do you want to wait the rotter that we're born?"

"I want to check it, and get in," said Tom Merry.

"What the diavols for?" exclaimed Blake. "We haven't come out here for nothing, I suppose? He can't be long now."

But Tom Merry did not feel inclined to wait for the darby of the Fifth. He was sick of the satiric after the discovery he had made; and he wished from the bottom of his heart that he had remained in his dormitory. He was not in a mood now for a jape upon Cuts.

"Has anything happened?" asked Blake, peering at the captain of the Shell. "You look as if you'd seen a ghost. Is anything wrong?"

"Yes, said Tom.

"Well, what's wrong, then?"

"I'll tell you later. Let's get in. I've got us with this," said Tom desperately. "Call the other chaps, and tell them to check it."

"I don't see checking it," said Blake obstinately. "We've been out of bed an hour, and I don't see sticking here all that time for nothing. If you're fixing, you can go in, and we'll look after Cuts."

"We can't go over with it," said Tom in a low voice. "We can't run the slightest risk of a row to-night, now. Something might come out. Look here, I've just seen somebody go out, and it wasn't Cuts. He went out by the side gate, and let himself out with a key."

"One of the masters?" said Blake. "Blowed if I see what he can be going out at this time for; but, if he's gone, the coast is clear. It's all right."

"It wasn't a master."

Blake whistled softly.

"Then it must have been a prefect, if he let himself out with a key. Master of the New House at his old game again, perhaps."

"He didn't come from the direction of the New House."

"Oh, come," said Blake, "none of the prefects of our House would be getting out of bounds at this time of night! They couldn't have a good reason for going out on a howl before midnight on a foggy night. Whoever it was has gone gab-bawling. We know from Lovelock that there is a little game on at the Green Man—that dear youth knows all these social arrangements. Don't tell me it was a School House prefect."

"It was Kildare!"

Blake jumped.

"Kildare! You're dreaming?"

"I swear it was," said Tom Merry bitterly. "The show we're always fixed and looked up to—to think he should come this! I—I hope he may have had some other reason for going out. It's barely possible, though it's hard to guess what it could be. Anyway, we're not going to say anything about it, and—let's get in."

"But it couldn't have been—couldn't it?"

"Of course, it couldn't," said Hercules, who had joined them now. "The whispering voices had brought the whole party to the spot. You've been seeing double, Tom. It's the blessed mist."

"That's it," said Mamma. "It's the fog, Tom. Gungy took Kildare for Cuts the other night in the fog, you know. Now you've taken Cuts for Kildare."

"Must be that," said Lovelock.

"Tom Merry, shake his head.

"Cuts isn't a prefect," he said. "You know as well as I do that only the prefects have keys to that gate."

"Yes, but—"

"But you couldn't have seen him very clearly in this mist," said Blake.

"He had his collar up, and his cap pulled down; but I know his coat quite well."

"Poof! Coats are very much alike."

"It was the same coat I'd always spotted the missing over. I could see the marks on it."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Sure, Tom?"

"Quite sure."

There was a short silence. The proofs were convincing enough, and there could be little doubt, or, rather, no doubt that it was the captain of St. Jim's whom Tom Merry had seen let himself out. As for his having any innocent and blameless reason for going out after eleven o'clock on such a night, it was hard to imagine that. Although the prefects were trusted to use their own judgment, to a great extent, as to their hours, the Head would certainly have required an explanation if he had known that any fellow left the school precincts for than an hour before midnight! What reason could Kildare possibly have had?

It was not possible to imagine one. But even if he had a reason, and had obtained his Housemaster's permission to make that extraordinary excursion, how then to account for his being clearly visible down the path to the gate? Tom Merry clearly recalled that not a great distance from the gate it was only too certain that the senior who had gone out was going out secretly.

"He came knocking down the path like a thief," said Tom in a low voice. "I scarcely heard him. He had a key to the gate. I spotted the coat at once. I was so close to him that he would have seen me if he'd looked towards me. And he came from the School House, not the New House. I—I don't know what to think about it. To think that old Kildare should be dropping into the kind of thing that Cuts goes in for, is beyond reasonable."

"It is impossible," said Blake. "There's never been a sign of a new house—my hat! He kept off suddenly."

"What have you got in your middle now?" asked Mamma. Blake colored unconsciously.

"I wasn't going to say a word about it," he said, hesitating.

"But now it looks as if it throws some light on the matter. Last evening, when I took my lives in to Kildare, I—I—"

"You came back into the study looking as if you'd seen a spook," said Dicky.

"It was what I'd seen in Kildare's study," said Blake.

There was a pink paper—a rotten, facing paper—on his table, upon which he had marked with pencil—the names of the drop-pers, you know. Kildare turned red, and reached it up and jammed it into the fire, when he saw that I'd seen it. I—I didn't think—couldn't think—you understand, but it made me feel jolly wofully."

Tom Merry drew a deep breath.

"I suppose it's no business of ours," he said. "Anyway, we're not going to set up in judgment on old Kildare. If he's slaying the giddy goose—and it looks like it—it's his business to say anything against him. We've got to keep this dark."

There was a general murmur of approval. For precisely the same conduct, from the Co. looked on Gerald Cuts as an outsider and a rotter. But it was different with old Kildare. It was not easy to break old habits. They had always liked and admired Kildare, and their loyalty was strong even now. If he had been guilty of foolish weakness, it only roused compassion to struggle with their affection for him.

"Keep it dark, by all means," said Mamma. "How jolly lucky that you saw it with us!"

"Let's get in," said Blake. "I don't feel much inclined to go on."

THE GEM LIBRARY—No. 256.
Next Wednesday—"THE ST. JIM'S REFUGEE!" A Magazine Co., Ltd., Cavendish Square, York, of Tom Merry & Co. by MARTIN CLIFFORD.

for going for Cutts now. He may have slipped out while we've been standing here, too. Let's check it."

There was no dissenting voice now. The half-dozen juniors made their way to the back of the School House, with gleaming eyes in their tracks, and climbed quietly in. The experience had not been a success. There was not one member of the party who did not wish sincerely that it had never been undertaken. But it was too late to wish that now. They had made an inadvertent discovery, and it weighed upon their minds. They went to their dormitories in pensive silence, and turned in. In the Shell dormitory all the fellows were asleep; but Blake & Co. found one wretched in the Fourth Form quarters. It was Levison.

"What luck?" came Levison's whispering voice through the darkness, as the three juniors crept towards their beds.

"Rotten!" said Blake briefly.

"Didn't you spot him?"

"No!"

"You didn't wait long enough, then," said Levison. "I'm jolly certain that he was going out to-night. As a matter of fact, I heard him asking St. Leger to go with him, and St. Leger said he wouldn't. You were duffers to miss him."

"Oh, man!" said Blake gruffly.

And the juniors turned in, but it was some time before they slept. The discovery they had made worried them. It was easy enough to agree to keep it dark, but it was not pleasant to have such a secret to keep, and the shock to their belief and faith in Kildare had been a rude one. Truly that nocturnal expedition was very far from having been a success.

CHAPTER 10.

Arthur Augustus Wants to Know.

LANG! Clasp! Clasp!

Arthur Augustus D'Avry sat up in bed and rubbed his eyes as the morning-bell clanged out in the grey November morning. He groped under his pillow for his famous monocle, where it always reposed at night, and inserted it into his eye, and surveyed Blake and Horvath and Dugby, who were being decidedly disconcerted to get up that morning. They were feeling the effects of their loss of sleep overnight.

Arthur Augustus's first thoughts were for the expedition that had been planned, and he remembered—rather late—that he had intended to stay awake and keep the juniors from recklessly undertaking the task without his invaluable assistance.

"I trust you fellows did not go out afish all," said Arthur Augustus.

"They jolly well did!" said Percy Mellish. "I heard them."

"Woolly! Blake, it was verry wooksh of you! I suppose the whole thing ended in a muck-up!" said D'Avry.

"Yes," said Blake.

"Did your colahk Cutts afish all?"

"Shurrup!"

"What! There is no harm in the fellows knowing about it now it's all over," said Arthur Augustus.

"Cutts won't be able to say anything about it if you caught him out of hisside, you know. Did you colahk Cutts, or didn't you?"

"Fesh, and was that the little game?" asked Reilly. "Why couldn't you sell a clasp in time? I'd have taken a head with pleasure."

"Burrn here, I guess," said Levison-Lindsay. "What luck did you have, Blake?"

"None!" said Blake briefly.

"You failed to spot Cutts, of course?" said Arthur Augustus, in the tone of one who had fully expected as much.

"Didn't see his nose hair of him," admitted Blake.

"Probably you gave yourselves away," sneered Arthur Augustus. "I swear you can't not be surprised. I suppose he spotted you, and gave you a wide berth. It is extremely foolish that you was not on the spot. Did rotter happen at all?"

"I was not gone out of bed," said Blake, not caring to reply to that question. "Are you going to bewike there all the morning?"

"I refuse to have my wewerks chawwastated as burkin!" said Arthur Augustus indignantly. "You are extremely wote this mornin', Blake. I asked you a question—"

"The Gax Loharr.—No. 222.

"Time you were up," said Horvath, dragging off D'Avry's bedclothes, and rolling him out on the floor; and the swell of St. Jim's gave up asking questions for a time, and devoted himself to his morning toilet—which was not a brief affair.

Blake and his chums were down before Arthur Augustus, who was generally just out of the dormitory, having many little touches to give in his toilet that the other fellows did not trouble about. But the elegant junior joined them in the quadrangle soon afterwards. He wanted to know exactly what had happened the previous night, principally for the purpose of explaining how much better things would have gone if he had been there to give able directions.

But his chums were not anxious to give an account of the previous night's happenings. Arthur Augustus was not exactly the fellow they would have chosen to keep a secret. They congratulated themselves on the fact that he had not been with the party. The honor of the noble youth was unquestionable, but his manner of keeping a secret was not quite reliable. And the great secret was an important one. If Kildare's folly ever became public the chums were determined that it should not be by their means. It was an irksome secret, but it was one that, it was very necessary to keep.

At the same time, it was extremely awkward to keep their bosom chums out of their confidence. Blake saw difficulties ahead.

"Now, I want to know all about it, dear boys," said Arthur Augustus. "You acted in a verry wooksh way, and of course, you made a muck of it. You admit that?"

"Oh, yes!" said Blake. "Grilly, my lord!"

"Pray don't be ridiculous, Blake. I suppose you don't even know whether that wotch Cutts went out at all?"

"Quite so."

"I suppose he dodged you—he would," agreed D'Avry.

"Didn't you hear anything at all suspicious?"

"I didn't," said Blake, speaking for himself.

"You didn't see anybody or anything?"

"Oh, yes! I saw Dig—"

"Only Blake—"

"And Horvath—"

"I regarded you as an ass, Blake. However, heah is Tom Mowrey, and porvage he may be able to give me a sensible account of your ridiculous muck."

"Oh, let it drop!" urged Blake. "It's all over now, you know."

"Wait!" Arthur Augustus joined the Terrible Three, who had just come out of the School House. "Good mornin', dear boys! So you made a muck of it, afish all!"

"What could we expect when you weren't with us!" said Mowrey Leather bitterly.

"Yess, wotah! However, tell me precisely what happened, and I will point out what you ought to have done, you know, and you can wainde how wooksh you have been, and you will have some sense another time. Where did you wait for Cutts?"

"In the quad."

"Yes, I know that. But what part of the quad?"

The Terrible Three exchanged glances. They saw that Blake had told the swell of St. Jim's nothing, and they took their own cue from that.

"Near the wall!" said Tom Merry, after reflection.

"And you didn't see the wotch?"

"No!" said Blake.

"Levison is quite certain that he went out, you know."

"Then we must have missed him," said Levison cheerily. "Deprived of your valuable assistance, Gungy, you know—"

"Yess, but it is verry odd, all the same. What time did you come in?"

"Levving so. About half-past eleven."

"Cutts must have gone beyond that, if he went at all," said Arthur Augustus decidedly.

"I verry think you have played the giddy on, dear boys. Probably he passed quite close to you in the morn."

"That's how we mist' him," said Levison humorously.

"Didn't you listen for his footsteps, though? You should have done that. You can hear footsteps at a great distance by placing your ear on the ground."

"My what! Oh, my ear! But I couldn't place that on the ground," said Levison.

"It isn't detachable like your earplugs."

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Blake placed the linen on the table, and gave a jump at the sight of the pink paper. There it was, open, in full view of the gaslight. Blake stared at it open-mouthed. "You can go!" rapped out Kildare. "Ye-es, sir," stammered Blake. (See Chapter 3.)

"You tithin' me! I mean you could stoop down and place your yab on the ground, and then you could have heard him. I suppose you never thought of that!"

"Can't say I did."

"And you heard nothin' at all!"

That was a power. Arthur Augustus's thirst for information was decidedly awkward. The chains of the shawl were silent. D'Arcy turned his eyes from one face to another.

"I asked you a question, dear boys," he said mildly.

"Yes, you generally are asking questions," said Tom Merry reproachfully. "Let's have a run after a footer, and get an appetite for brekker."

"But I want to know—"

"How to play footer? We'll teach you."

"I want to know—"

"Come on!" said Tom, as Bernard Glyn came out of the House with a footer under his arm. "Here we are again! On the ball!"

"Woolly, Tom Mowry—"

But the Terrible Three were after the football, and Arthur Augustus was unable to ask any more questions just then. He was left with a thoughtful frown upon his noble face. Arthur Augustus was very far from being of a suspicious

nature, but he could not help feeling that the fellows were keeping something back from him. There was something behind that general dissimulation to talk about the affair of the previous night.

"But Jove!" D'Arcy murmured to himself. "The bookshelves are keeping' something' dark. Except' me out of it, but Jove! They've got themselves into some trouble, and they haven't the cheek to tell me, I suppose. However, I shall insist upon it."

Arthur Augustus followed the footballers. But the Terrible Three scored the footer across the quadrangle, and Figgins & Co. of the New House entered into a struggle for the possession of it. Arthur Augustus had no chance of intercepting any of the six soccer-kickers before breakfast. After breakfast they contrived to dodge him until the bell rang for first lesson, and D'Arcy had to go into the Park-rooms with his thirst for information still unquenched.

After lessons he joined Blake and Harris and Dicky as they came out with the Fourth. There was a very determined expression upon his aristocratic countenance—the expression of a fellow who was not to be trifled with.

"Blake, dear boy, I have been thinkin'—"

"That it's a good idea to get in a little footer practice

"before dinner?" asked Blake. "Right, Gasey, as you always say, Gasey on!"

"I was not thinkin' about football," said Blake. "Then you ought to have been. This way," said Blake. "You are keepin' somethin' back from me," said Arthur Augustus severely. "I insist upon havin' a full account of what happened last night."

"Oh, that's ancient history now," urged Blake. "Let's go down to the footer, old chap. Use your feet instead of your tongue for a bit. You ought to exercise both ends, you know."

Arthur Augustus fixed a very reproachful look upon his chum. Blake and Herries and Digby looked and felt uncomfortable. It was exceedingly unpleasant to be in the position of keeping a secret from their pal and study-mate.

"This is not what I should have expected from my friends," said Arthur Augustus, with a great deal of dignity. "I am not askin' questions from idle curiosity. I have a right to know how the match went off, as I was one of the party, and was only kept behind because Kildare was a suspicious beast. It isn't cricket, dash boys."

"Oh, draw it mild," said Dig severely. "It isn't cricket!" said Arthur Augustus firmly. "If I had gone, and you had stayed in, I should have told you all about it from beginnin' to end. You are awash of that."

Blake had to admit it. "And yet you are keepin' somethin' back from me," said Arthur Augustus.

"What put that idea into your head?" said Blake feebly. "If you assume me that you are not keepin' anything back, Blake, of course, I shall be satisfied," said Arthur Augustus jolly. "I should not doubt your word—you know that."

But Blake could not very well give him that assurance. For keepin' by was hardly a very honest thing. "Well, Blake?" said D'Arcy, after a pause. "I—I say, let's go down to the footer," said Blake.

"Are you keepin' somethin' back, or are you not, Blake?" "Ahem!" "You have some wizen secret about what happened last night," said Arthur Augustus, with deep indignation, "and you won't take me into your confidence. I do not regard that as cricket."

"Well—ahem!—cricket's over now, you know," suggested Blake, with an attempt at humor. "Let us go for the footer." "Pshaw to seawind! You know perfectly well that I have a right to know, as it was only by accident that I was not with you."

"Yes, but—"

"Out with it, dash boy! If you are in some difficulty, you know, I will advise you like a fethah. You can rely on a fellow of tact and judgment like me," said Arthur Augustus encouragingly.

Blake grinned. He was not yearning after fatherly advice from his noble chum. Neither did he place a full reliance upon Arthur Augustus's gifts of tact and judgment.

"I'm waitin', Blake," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "Look here, Gasey," said Blake desperately. "I can't very well tell you a whopper and shut you up. Won't you ring off of your own accord?"

"I'm waitin'!" repeated D'Arcy irritably. "The fact is, I—er—I don't want to tell you," said Blake, with a burst of heroism. "It's nothing really—nothing to do with us. Now, be a good chap, and don't say anything more about it."

"Why don't you want to tell me? If you have a good reason, of course—"

"Well, you would babble it out, you know," said Blake rather unobsequiously.

Arthur Augustus stiffened up like a poker. "I regard that as insolent," Blake! You fellows know very well how I keep a secret!"

"We do!" murmured Herries. "We do!"

"I am as man as an eagle, you know. Nobody gets a word out of me about our expedient last night. You fellows must have been very careless somehow to make old Kildare so very suspicious. But I would invest you with a secret all the same."

Blake gazed helplessly at his comrades. "However," continued Arthur Augustus, with lofty dignity, "I will not press you. If you cannot take me into your confidence and rely on me, you need tell me nothing."

"That's right, old chap!"

"But, unless the circus, of course, it is impos for our friendship to continue."

"Er—"

"I decline to remain the pal of fellows who refuse to regard me as a person person to place confidence in."

"Now, look here, Gasey—"

THE COMPANION PAPERS: "THE MAGNET" LIBRARY, "THE PENNY POPULAR," "GRICKLES," 10.

"I have the look," said Arthur Augustus, with emphasis, "to wish you a very good morning!"

And Arthur Augustus turned on his heel and walked away, with his aristocratic air very high in the air.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Blake. "Gasey! I say, Gasey!"

Arthur Augustus's side was elevated a little more, but he did not look round. He departed, the picture of frozen dignity, and Blake and Herries and Digby exchanged glances of dismay.

CHAPTER 11.

Dropped!

TOM MERRY was chatting with Manzoni and Lowther, looking on at the footer practice, when Arthur Augustus D'Arcy hove down upon them. There was no escape for the Terrible Three, unless they took to their heels, so they faced the swell of St. Jim's resignedly, prepared to go through it. The expression of lofty dignity upon the countenance of Arthur Augustus showed them that the matter was very serious.

"Hello!" said Tom Merry, with great affability. "What a jolly picture you look to-day, Gasey! That waistcoat does not you!"

"Talk about Joseph's coat!" said Monty Lowther enthusiastically. "Why, Joseph's coat wasn't in it with that waistcoat, Gasey!"

"Never mind my waistcoat now," said Arthur Augustus. As a rule it was quite easy to draw him upon such topics, but just now the attempt was a rank failure. "I want to speak to you fellows about—"

"Is Blake coming down to the footer?" asked Manzoni. "I have no knowledge whatever of what Blake intends to do," said D'Arcy jolly. "I have dropped Blake."

"Dropped him?" gasped Lowther. "Was he hurt?" "Wreckly, Lowther!"

"I hope you dropped him on something soft—say a mattress!" said Lowther, with an expression of concern.

"I'm sure that I have dropped his acquaintance, Lowther!"

"But he's got a lot of acquaintances here," said Lowther, misunderstanding again. "Which of these have you dropped? And where did you drop him?"

"Fray don't be an ass, Lowther! You understand me perfectly well. I decline to recognize Blake as a friend any longer, and the same with Herries and Digby. I want you fellows will not compel me to treat you in the same manner."

"I trust not," said Lowther solemnly.

"Blake and Herries and Dig—I mean, Digby—have refused to tell me what happened last night. They are keepin' somethin' back. Of course, you admit that I have a right to know, as I was really one of the party."

"Yes—er!" said Tom Merry.

"Then I trust that you will explain me with the whole of the circus, dash boy."

"Blame!"

"I am waitin' to be acquainted with the circus, Tom Merry."

"You—you see—"

"Ahem!" said Manzoni. "Ahem!"

"Little boys shouldn't ask questions!" suggested Monty Lowther brightly. "Then they won't get any—any German news told them!"

"You mean that you refuse to take me into your confidence on the matter?" asked Arthur Augustus, in his usual stately way.

"Not exactly that," said Tom Merry, scratching his curly head, in perplexity. "But—but you see, under the circumstances—ahem!"

"Exactly!" said Lowther. "Tom Merry expresses it with all the clearness of a great statesman. 'Under the—ahem!—circumstances—ahem!—ahem!'"

But Arthur Augustus declined to smile. Evidently the swell of St. Jim's was taking very much to heart that want of confidence on the part of his friends.

"You have nothing to say?" he asked.

"To—to say?" asked Tom Merry, looking round helplessly. "Ye—er, it—it's a fine afternoon, considering—considering how foggy it was last night."

"And I think the sun is going to keep off, after all," said Lowther. "We look like having good weather for the match on Saturday."

"Very well," said Arthur Augustus, stiffly. "Enough said. You will kindly refrain from speakin' to me again. From this moment, I decline to know you."

"Gasey, old chap—"

"Gasey, you are—"

Arthur Augustus walked away.

"Oh, crumble!" murmured Monty Lowther. "What an ass Blake was to let him know that there was something;

being kept dark! Gussy's quite right; he has a right to know, and it's rather rotten not to tell him, only—

"Only he would let it out," said Tom Merry seriously. "He can't keep a secret for toffee. And we can't run the slightest risk of giving old Kildare away! Whatever sort of a fool he makes of himself, it's up to us to stand by him. He's always been decent to us—excepting when his temper's up and the wrong way, of course."

"I feel rather mean towards Gussy," confessed Lowther. "Still, if we're going to keep it dark, we must keep it dark, and that's all about it."

And Tom Merry and Manners agreed that it was. They, too, did not quite feel satisfied with regard to Arthur Augustus, and they knew how wounded he must be feeling. But what was to be done?

They turned to the footer, to drive the unpleasant matter from their minds. Talbot had just come down with his football. He gave them a cheery smile. He had been chatting with Kildare before he came down to Little Side, and his talk with the captain of St. Jim's seemed to have had a very brightening effect upon his spirits.

"Kildare's a splendid chap!" was his first remark, so he joined the Terrible Three. He did not know that the third fellow had just been discussing that very person. Even Talbot had not been taken into the secret of the happenings of the previous night. He was perfectly reliable, of course, but Tom Merry & Co. did not feel that they had a right to bring Kildare even to a fellow who was certain to keep the secret. The line said about the matter the better, was their own decision.

"Kildare!" said Tom. "I saw you talking to him. What has he done—offered you a place in the First Eleven?"

Talbot laughed. "No, not that. It's about Cutts."

"Cutts?" said Tom Merry. "You know the way he goes about chipping me ever since Freshman was opened?"

"And we haven't made him sit up for it yet," said Monty Lowther.

"All in good time," remarked Manners.

"That's what I want to tell you," said Talbot hastily. "Kildare came to know of it, somehow, and he's sent Cutts. And there won't be any more of it. Kildare's put it straight to him, and Cutts knows that if there's any more of it he's got to have it out with the Head. So—"

"Good old Kildare!" said Tom Merry. "All the same—"

"The sitting-up process is good for fellows like Cutts," said Monty Lowther. "He shan't be deprived of our kind attentions, all the same. Rely on us."

"I want you to check it," said Talbot.

"My dear chap—"

Tom Merry nodded thoughtfully.

"Least, said someone recently," he agreed. "If Cutts believes himself, we'll let him live."

"I was getting in some new pyro for him," said Manners.

"Keep it for developing," said Talbot, laughing. "But it's jolly decent of Kildare to chip in like that, isn't it? He's a splendid chap."

"Topping!" said Tom Merry, a little awkwardly. At any other time he could have joined without reserve in any praise of Kildare, but now— "Let's go on to the footer," he said.

"Talk of angels!" murmured Monty Lowther. "Here's his Highness of the Fifth!"

Cutts of the Fifth passed them on his way to Big Side. He did not glance towards Talbot. The sarcastic smile, the sneering remark, which the juniors had learnt to expect, were wanting now. Evidently Cutts of the Fifth had learned his lesson.

Tom Merry & Co. went into the field cheerily. That little instance of Kildare'sadrover of heart had touched them, and it made them all the more resolute to keep his secret—that wretched secret that they had surprised by accident. Whatever happened, Kildare's campside must be kept dark, even at the price of freezing looks from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

CHAPTER 12.

The Cold Shoulder.

AND Arthur Augustus was very freezing. Feeling that his personal dignity was at stake—a very important point indeed with the oval of St. Jim's—Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was adamant.

Tom Merry & Co. felt a little conscience-stricken at leaving him out of the secret, though with the best possible motives, and they were willing to go any length to placate the offended oval of the Fourth. But Arthur Augustus was not to be placated.

Like the prophet of old, he felt that he did well to be angry. And his icy reserve was respectable.

At dinner he appeared to be quite unaware of the existence of Blake and Horrie and Digby. The Terrible Three were at another table; but Blake & Co. had the full force of D'Arcy's dignity brought to bear upon them, so to speak. Blake politely passed him things, and was thanked with great courtesy but with a far-away expression. Dig ventured to give Arthur Augustus a jocular jab in the ribs. Arthur Augustus drew a little further away. Horrie asked him whether he was playing in the match on Bankday, and he was afflicted with sudden deafness.

The other Fourth-Forths were not long in noticing the state of affairs, and it caused many smiles. Some good-natured fellows chipped in after dinner, with the kind intention of peering oil upon the troubled waters. But they could not get at what was the matter. Blake & Co. had nothing to say, and from Arthur Augustus there was no information to be gleaned.

"But you've had a row, surely?" said Betty of the Fourth.

"I am not in the habit of havin' rows, Wexley."

"Well, you're not speaking to the chaps in your study, are you?" Gussy, asking.

"Sure, and you best have a rap on!"

"Yess."

"What's the reason, this?"

"I am not satisfied with them, and I no longer regard them as friends, that is all," said Arthur Augustus; and he walked away, only to run into another person, and this time Jervell Lansley-Lansley.

"I guess you've got trouble in your study—what?" said Lansley-Lansley, good-naturedly. "Can a chap do anything to help?"

"Thank you very much, dear boy! No."

"But what have you gone off on your ear for?" asked Lansley-Lansley. From his early days in the great western republic, Lansley-Lansley was in the habit of using a variety of extraordinary American expressions.

"I refuse to have my amiable described as goin' off on my yah!" replied Arthur Augustus; and he departed, and a minute later was collected by Harry Hammond.

"Something up, son?" asked Hammond. The Cockney scribbler was very chummy with Arthur Augustus, for whom he had a tremendous admiration, which was really not undeserved.

"Yess, dear boy."

"Nuthin' serious, I 'spe'!" said Hammond amiably. "If there's anything a friend can do, you 'ave only got to ask 'Arry 'Ammond."

Arthur Augustus smiled.

"That's all right, dear boy. There's nuthin' to be done."

In the Fourth-room that afternoon D'Arcy's attitude was unchanged. Digby playfully caught him in the ear with a paper ball, but was unable to make him smile. After leaving the three chaps laid in wait for D'Arcy in the passage, with beseeching looks. Arthur Augustus walked past them as if he did not see them. In the doorway the Terrible Three met him, and they put on their sweetest and friendliest smiles. Arthur Augustus was blind to them. He walked on without a sign.

"We're cut!" said Monty Lowther, with humorous despair.

"Gussy is going to freeze us to death. We shall be frozen to death shortly. That will be 'as 'as' state of affairs."

But Monty Lowther's wretched guess passed unnoticed. The third fellow was really feeling worried. Blake and Horrie said, "Dig, what are we going to do?"

"Now, what are we going to do?" asked Blake. "This is rotten, you know. If it was anybody else I'd leave him to stew in his own juice, but I don't like being in three terms with Gussy. You see, he's in the right, in a way. We've got to make it up with him somehow."

"Without telling him the gobby secret," said Manners.

"Oh, of course!"

"What about getting a special cold remedy in the study?" suggested Tom Merry. "When Gussy comes in to tea, and finds a whacking crowd all ready in his honour, that's bound to touch his heart."

"Not a bad idea! How's the money-market?"

The money-market proved to be sound, on examination. The six juniors proceeded to the tobacconist and laid in supplies. They supplied themselves especially with the things they knew that Arthur Augustus liked. They conveyed them to the study in a hopeful frame of mind.

Study No. 3 presented a festive appearance. A cheerful fire blazed in the grate; the gas glowed on a well-lit table; and there was a fragrance of hot toast and frying wafers in the study. Arthur Augustus was gone down to footer practice, and he was sure to come in hungry, and then

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He suspected ahead all ready in Study No. 5 could not fail, as Tom Merry suggested, to touch his heart.

All was ready, and dusk was deepening in the quad; but the swell of St. Jim's did not arrive in the study.

Blake looked anxiously out of the window.

"Where is the duffer?" he exclaimed. "It's too dark to be kicking a footer about now. Why the dickens don't he come?"

"I'll look in the dorm," said Dig. "May be changing there."

Digby cut along to the Fourth Form dormitory, but Arthur Augustus was not there. He looked into the common-room downstairs, but the common-room was empty. He returned unaccompanied to Study No. 5.

"Not come in!" he asked, looking round the study.

"No!" growled Blake. "Haven't you seen him?"

"No. May be gone over to tea in the New House."

"Oh, pshaw!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"I'll jolly well go and see!" said Blake cruelly.

Blake departed. He came back in ten minutes, with the report that Arthur Augustus was not in the New House.

"That the silly ass must be gone out," said Monty Lawtler. "No good letting a good foot spoil. Better pile in."

"That was evidently the only thing to be done. The juniors

got down to tea, leaving a generous supply for Arthur Augustus D'Arcy when he should turn up. But they had

finished tea, and he had not turned up, and they debated what had become of him. It was clear by the time that he was staying away from the study intentionally.

The Terrible Three departed, disappointed at that result of their excellent scheme. They had had a good tea, certainly, and that was one comfort. Blake and Herries and Digby remained in an exaggerated frame of mind. The study hands had been almost exhausted for that foot of reconciliation, and it had been a ghastly failure. In the great D'Arcy's trash and rubbish were drying up, to keep warm, and they would certainly not be very nice if the swell of St. Jim's did not come soon.

"Hallo! Here he is!" exclaimed Blake, suddenly, as the elegant figure of the swell of the Fourth appeared in the doorway.

"Tea's ready, Gussy—more than ready," said Digby.

"We've kept yours warm for you," said Herries.

Arthur Augustus did not reply. He was collecting his books, and the three juniors watched him in wonder.

"Are you dead?" bawled Blake. "Don't you want any tea?"

Arthur Augustus looked at him coldly.

"I have had tea in Hall," he replied icily.

"Well, say—say hi!"

"Unduh the curn, I do not care to feed in this study. I

am goin' to have my tea in Hall regularly in the future."

"What are you doing with those books?" asked Blake.

"I am goin' to take them down into the Form-rooms."

"Into the Form-rooms? What for?"

"To do my preparation."

"You're not going to do your prep here in the study?"

"Certainly not."

"It's jolly cold in the Form-rooms," remarked Digby.

"The fire's out, you know. They don't keep the fire in it, the cvering for silly duffers who are on their dignity."

"I do not mind the cold," said Arthur Augustus stiffly.

"You'd be freezing when you've finished!" growled Herries.

"I'm awfully cold."

"Look here, Gussy—"

"Good-night!" said D'Arcy.

And, with a pile of books under either arm, he walked out of the study.

"Gussy!" roared Blake. "Fathead! Silly ass! Come in!"

Arthur Augustus walked away. Blake caught up a cushion to send after him; but Dig restrained hisasperated cheer.

"Oh, the ass!" growled Blake. "How long is this going on, I wonder? He'll catch cold in the Form-rooms, staying there for an hour without a fire in weather like this! Why—the froh-jaws are! Suppose we go after him and bang him!"

"We can't bang him into making friends again," said Dig.

"Give him his head; he'll come round!"

That was apparently the only thing to be done. The juniors settled down to their own preparation, giving Arthur Augustus his head. But as they worked in the cosy study, before a crackling fire, they could not help thinking of their share in the cold and gloomy Form-rooms by himself. As for covering round, Arthur Augustus showed no sign whatever of Blake's plan.

The juniors did not see him again till the Fourth went up.

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to bed, and then they heard him sneeze, as Herries had foretold.

"Caught a cold, Gussy?" asked Dig, with solicitude.

No reply.

"Have you got a cold in the nose, fathead?" bellowed Blake.

Then Arthur Augustus looked at his old chums.

"I shall be obliged to you if you will not address me," he said. "I do not desire to converse with you."

"Fathead!"

"Wah!"

And in that chummy mood the chums of the Fourth went to bed. Arthur Augustus had let the sea go down upon his wrath.

CHAPTER 13.

Let In.

THE next day Tom Merry & Co. were considerably concerned in their minds concerning Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

The state of affairs had attracted the attention of no end of fellows in the School House, and even Figgins & Co. of the New House had noticed it, and wanted to know what it was all about.

Arthur Augustus was quite a prominent personage in the Lower School, at least; he was the Patronus Archie of the juniors, the guru of fashion, and the model of form. Naturally, his singular conduct in giving the cold shoulder to his old chums caused much comment.

The four fellows in Study No. 5 had always been inseparable. There were plenty of warm arguments in the study, and even now sometimes, and their manner of speaking to one another did not always indicate close friendship and esteem; but their attachment was founded upon a rock, so to speak, and was supposed to be quite unassailable. And now it was broken—badly. Arthur Augustus was not on speaking terms with Study No. 5, and he was equally distant to the Terrible Three of the Staff.

Probably Arthur Augustus felt the estrangement quite as much as the other fellows did, but he gave no sign of it. He had other resources, too. Hammond, after ascertaining that it was out of the question to repair the breach between D'Arcy and his best chums, insisted upon the swell of St. Jim's staying in his study. Reilly and Kernish, his study-mates, being quite agreeable.

So that day Arthur Augustus had tea in No. 5, and that evening did his preparation there. Hammond, indeed, would have been very glad to keep him there for good; but he was a good-natured fellow, and he wanted to pour oil on the troubled waters if he could.

But his attempts in that direction were hopeless failures, and he gave them up, so far as D'Arcy was concerned. Arthur Augustus's dignity was a stone wall that was not to be penetrated.

Thus, that evening Hammond dropped into Study No. 6 after Blake and his chums had finished their prep. He found the three juniors looking bothered. The breach with their old pal worried them.

"I see no offence," said Hammond, in his peculiar idiom, which his trying at St. Jim's had not eradicated. "I don't like to see Master Gussy on those 'ere terms. Why can't you jolly make it up—real?"

"Oh, how-never," said Blake irritably.

"Of course," said my business," said Hammond hastily.

"I don't want to interfere."

"That's all right," said Blake. "If you could make Gussy see reason, we'd be obliged to you. But there's no arguing with Gussy."

"Not 'ave you done to 'im?" asked Hammond.

"Nothing," said Blake shortly.

Hammond shook his head.

"It's up to you," he said decisively. "Master Gussy ain't to blame, I know that. My advice to you is to give up as you're in the wrong, and he'll look over it. That's 'ow I look at it."

And Hammond departed, with that excellent advice. Blake & Co. looked at one another.

"Cheeky ass!" growled Herries.

Blake rubbed his nose thoughtfully.

"Well, he's right in a way," he remarked. "Gussy has some grounds for complaint. Of course, we know he can't keep a secret, and it's no good telling him one. I wish we'd never gone out that night. How Cotts! How Kidders! How everybody!"

"I—I suppose it wouldn't do to tell him?" said Dig hesitatingly.

"We could impress upon him to be awfully careful, you know?"

Blake granted.

"You know how he keeps a secret, Dig?"

Blake granted.

"You know how he keeps a secret, Dig?"

Blake granted.

"You know how he keeps a secret, Dig?"

Blake granted.

"You know how he keeps a secret, Dig?"

Blake granted.

"Well, yes, but this is a special sort of one. Even Gussy might understand that it was necessary to be careful. Besides, it's all very well to keep Kildare's beastly secrets, but I don't see falling out with our own pal because Kildare chose to play the tricky one!"

"I've been thinking of that," said Herrie. "Kildare's a good chap—or he was a good chap—and we don't want to give him away. But, after all, a fellow's own pal comes first. It is a bit thick, leaving Gussy out of it. Any of us would be offended for the same kind of thing!"

"I suppose we should," admitted Blake.

"Of course we should," said Digby. "After all, Kildare shouldn't have done it. He'd no right to do it. If he's taking up Gussy's blackguardly ways, he must expect to run the same risks. I don't see quarrelling with Gussy because a chap in the Sixth Form has done something to be ashamed of, and it's to be kept dark?"

Blake ruminated. After all, Arthur Augustus had a right to be admitted to the secret; and, after all, too, he might receive his awful impressions, and keep it more carefully than he kept secrets as a rule.

The chaps already felt that they had treated him rather shabbily.

"Make him promise to keep it dark before we tell him anything," said Herrie. "Impress on him that it might mean the sack for old Kildare, and—well, trust to that!"

"Here he is!" said Dig, as the elegant form of Arthur Augustus passed the study doorway, coming away from Hammond's study.

"Gussy!" called out Blake, making up his mind.

Arthur Augustus walked on.

"After him?" said Blake desperately. "We'll tell him, and chance it. If he lets it out we'll scold him, that's all!"

The juniors rushed down the passage after D'Arcy. He heard them coming, but did not look back or stop. He had to stop, however, for three pairs of hands were laid upon him, effectually arresting his progress.

"Come into the study!"

"I refuse to come into the study!"

"We're going to tell you," said Blake.

"Oh, is that case, I am willing to hear what you have to say, and to accept your excuses for your conduct, if you have any to offer!" said D'Arcy loftily.

And he condemned to walk back to No. 6 with his respectful chords.

Blake closed the door when they were in the study. Arthur Augustus stood stiffly by the table in a graceful attitude, waiting for the explanation. He was not disposed to forgive Study No. 6 all at once.

"Now, first of all," said Blake impressively, "you must promise solemnly to keep it dark, Gussy?"

"I refuse!"

"If you cannot trust to my discretion, you need not tell me anything!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"I decline to be treated with want of confidence," said Arthur Augustus. "As a matter of fact, I am a much more reliable chap at keeping a secret than any of you chaps. You fellows give it away to Kildare the chabk night, when he stopped an honest girl's car—"

"Was a girl?" ejaculated Herrie.

"Yes, walloh; you must have done it somehow, or Kildare wouldn't have been so beastly suspicious. He's not a suspicious chap as a rule. And I have not uttered a word of wopwosh!"

"Oh, crusht!" said Blake freely.

"I am prepared to hear what you have to say, Blake."

"Look here, Gussy, it's awfully important," said Blake.

"If it gets out, it may mean that old Kildare will get sacked from the school!"

"Great Scott!"

"You see how important it is," said Dig.

Arthur Augustus shook his head.

"I walloh think you fellows have made some wallohous mistake," he said. "I walloh think you are backin' up the wrong race. However, go on."

"We spotted somebody going out that night," said Blake, "or rather, Tom Merry did. And it wasn't Cutts. It was Kildare."

"Was?"

"What?" exclaimed the three juniors together, in great exasperation. They had not expected the awfully important secret to be greeted in that disinterested way.

"Was?" repeated Arthur Augustus, and then more emphatically, "Was?"

"Look here, you chattering an—"

"I refuse to be called a chattering an. You have made a mistake, or Tom Merry has made a mistake. Old Kildare isn't that sort of a chap."

"But Tom Merry saw him," said Blake helplessly.

"It made a mistake in the fog, I suppose. Why, I made a mistake myself in the fog, you know, when I spairted Kildare instead of Cutts."

"Listen, an! The fellow who went out had a key to the side gate, and only profers have a key. And Tom Merry recognised the stains of the mixture on the coat."

"But Joss?"

"Now you see how important it is to keep it dark," urged Blake.

"It's barely possible that Kildare had some good reasons—sherr—for going out; but it would look—"

"Walloh! The chap who was going' out at that time of night was guss' pub-baccarat," said Arthur Augustus decidedly.

"Well, that's all the more reason for keeping it dark. We don't want to get old Kildare into trouble, whatever he's done."

Arthur Augustus nodded assent.

"That's all right," he agreed. "I admit that it looks very suspicious. If Kildare is guss' in for that sort of thing, it's a very serious matter. He's walloh a good-natured an, and some foolish wotah may have led him astray. I quite agree with keepin' it dark, and, of course, I shall say nothin'."

"Good," said Blake, with a heave of relief. "Only do be careful—jolly careful. I expect Tom Merry will rag us for telling you at all."

"You Merry can go and eat cobo! You ought to have told me at once," said Arthur Augustus. "However, I accept your apology. I walloh you as havin' acted like very thoughtful youngsters."

"Oh!"

"And I am prepared to wotahate you in my friendship, but you don't know how much harm you may have done by keepin' me in the dark all this time!" said D'Arcy severely.

"I don't quite see that. I shouldn't have told you at all if you hadn't been sticking in the sulks!" growled Blake.

"I was not in the sulks," said Arthur Augustus indignantly.

"I was actin' Joss's prophag walloh for my personal dig. However, neverwag it in writing later." He crossed to the door and opened it, with a thoughtful shade upon his brow.

"Too late for what?" said Blake, greatly puzzled.

"There's nothing to be done except to keep it dark."

Arthur Augustus smiled in a superior manner.

"There is something else to be done, of course. If a fellow we respect highly is guss' to the dogs, as Kildare appears to be doin', it is no wotah to stand by and let him go. It is our duty to speak a word in season."

"A—w—what?"

"A word in season," said Arthur Augustus firmly. "I walloh to stand by with my hands in my pockets while a chap I walloh is guss' to the giddy low-wows, I am guss' to speak to Kildare."

"Speak to Kildare?" murmured Blake dazedly.

"Yes, walloh. Of course, I shall be very diplomatic. I shall not tell him we know anything. I shall keep wery dark if you have told me, of course. That is unshabbec. But I feel it my duty to warn him."

"Oh, crusht!"

"Gussy, you an, stop!"

"Wait! You leave it to me, dash boys."

Arthur Augustus quitted the study. The charms of No. 6 looked at one another in blank consternation. Whatever results they might have anticipated from letting Arthur Augustus into the secret, they had not expected anything like this.

"Merry hat," growled Blake, "we've done it now! I—I say, he must be stopped. After him, and pack him back!"

Blake ran to the door, and took it open. But he was too late! Arthur Augustus was gone; and it was too late to tell his benevolent intention of visiting the captain of St. Jim's and speaking a word in season.

CHAPTER 18.

A Word in Season.

KILDARE was in his study, chatting to Darrel on the subject of the next match of the First Eleven, when a tap came at his door, and he sang out directly: "Come in!"

It was D'Arcy of the Fourth who entered. Kildare gave him a pleasant nod. The strained relations between Kildare and the juniors were quite over now; the captain of St. Jim's had forgiven and forgotten the incident of the mixture.

"Hallo, kid?" said Kildare. "What's wanted?"

"May I speak to you for a few minutes, Kildare?" asked Arthur Augustus, with great earnestness.

"Certainly. Go ahead."

Arthur Augustus bowed his elegant young Darrel.

"Ahem! I—well, I want to speak to you in private, Kildare, if The Gem Library, No. 326.

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you have no objection," he said. "I am with Durwood will excuse us."

"With pleasure," he said. "I'll look in later, Kildare." Durwood quitted the study. Arthur Augustus glanced at the door to make sure that it was closed. Kildare surveyed him with approving attention. From the expressions in D'Arcy's manner, he concluded that the latter was in some difficulty, and had come to ask his advice, or that he had committed some delinquency of unusual magnitude, and had come to confess. He waited.

"Ahem!" commenced Arthur Augustus. Now that he was about to begin, the subject presented some little difficulty. "Go ahead," said Kildare encouragingly. "What have you been doing, you young rascal?"

"Oh! Then you want advice about something? Well, pile in; I'll be your private, you know."

"It isn't that, dash boy."

"No! Then what the dickens is it?" asked Kildare, beginning to get impatient.

"The—fact is—"

"Well?"

"Suppose," said D'Arcy, seeking to put it diplomatically, "suppose, you know—"

"Suppose what?"

"Suppose—about—suppose a chap," said D'Arcy—"suppose a chap, you know a chap—"

"What are you driving at?"

"Suppose a chap—I won't mention any names, unless the case, as we are keeping the whole matter dark; but suppose a chap—"

D'Arcy passed again.

Kildare began to wonder whether there was anything amiss with Arthur Augustus's brain. Certainly he was speaking very strangely.

"Well," said the St. Jim's captain, as patiently as he could, "suppose a chap—what—"

"Suppose a chap was given to the dogs," said Arthur Augustus.

"K!"

"Suppose, you know, that a—suppose a chap you expected very highly, you know, was—was given to the dogs—"

"Would you mind explaining what you're talking about?" asked Kildare, patiently.

"Yes, that's just what I am doing, you know. Suppose a chap was given to the road to ruin, for instance, you would consider it a good idea to speak a word in season to him, wouldn't you?"

"I dare say I should," agreed Kildare. "I don't know any chap at present on the road to ruin, but I know a silly lad on the road to getting a licking."

"Ahem! I may be patient, dash boy, I'm speakin' comfort for your own good."

"For my good?"

"Yes, my good, suppose a chap had taken to going out at night and pobbering and that kind of thing, you know."

"Have you come here to tell me about somebody you suspect of that?" asked Kildare. "If you have, I'm bound to listen to you, as a prefect, but—"

"I trust you do not regard me as capable of telling tales, Kildare?"

"Then what in the name of thunder are you doing?"

"I am putting a case," said Arthur Augustus. "I don't want to mention any names. Suppose a chap was taking to those wicked ways, you know, I—I beg him to reflect in time."

"To—what?"

"Reflect in time," said Arthur Augustus firmly; "that is the word to use, and such a chap—suppose there was such a chap in this steady, bristling—I should be very sorry to see such a chap given to the dogs. I should beg him to consider himself in time, and turn such a new leaf, you know."

Kildare gazed steadily at the swell of the Fourth. His hand strayed towards a case on his table.

"Before I lick you for your cheek, D'Arcy, please explain yourself. Have you got a whip, striped ties, into your head that I have been doing the kind of thing you are alluding to?"

"I have not mentioned any names, dash boy."

"Who has put this fool idea into your head?" demanded Kildare, wrathfully. "You silly young ass! You—you were speaking your young duffer! You could not have thought of this

for yourself. Somebody has been pulling your leg, of course. Who was it?"

"I suspect that I am not mentioning names," said Arthur Augustus in distress. "I am only speakin' in a general way."

"You have come here to give me a lecture on bad conduct in a general way?" demanded the astounded Sixth-Former.

"Yes, exactly," said Arthur Augustus, delighted at being so well understood. "You have hit it, Kildare. Suppose a chap—"

"D'Arcy—"

"Suppose a chap knew that a chap whom he suspected highly was going on in a wicked, wicked way, a chap would be bound to speak to a chap, without sayin' exactly that he was the chap the chap was—ahem!" Arthur Augustus flushed that he was getting a little confused. "Suppose, as I was sayin', a chap—"

He so oversteered this time, Kildare stood towards him, grasped him by the shoulder, and shook him soundly. Arthur Augustus gasped, and his senses dropped out of his eyes.

"Well, Kildare, pray don't be a wall beat—"

"Now explain yourself, you thumping young idiot!" said Kildare, still shaking him. "Some practical joker, I suppose, has been putting this into your silly head, knowing that you were fool enough to come here and lecture me. It that is it?"

"But Jove! I—you—you—they—"

"Who told you that?" roared Kildare. "Come, I insist upon knowing at once! If any younger rascal has been spreading such stories about me, by Jove, I'll make him smart! Who put this into your head, you young imbecile!"

"Oh! Well, say! How can I speak when you are sh-sh-shakin' me like that?" stammered Arthur Augustus.

Kildare ceased to shake him; but he retained his grip, which was no less.

"You ought to be licked for your cheek! But the chap I'll lick is the fellow rascal who has been putting this rot into your head. I'll teach him to start lying stories about me!" roared Kildare.

"Let's stories!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus indignantly.

"You, you imbecile! Do you think there's any truth in it?" roared Kildare, beginning to shake him again. "Are you thick enough for that?"

"You have no right to chawerewise Blake's statement at a lady's society," said Arthur Augustus. "It is false! Blake is incapable of doing anything of the sort, and he was greatly displeas'd about it. That is why we agreed to keep it all dark."

"Blake!" exclaimed Kildare, in astonishment. "It is impossible! I know Blake isn't the fellow to invent such a yarn. You must have been dreaming."

Arthur Augustus jolted himself away from the Sixth-Former's grasp and groped for his cravat and fastened it in his eyes with great dignity.

"I came back to do you a good turn, Kildare," he said severely. "I hoped to be able to turn you back from the road to ruin with a word in season. I did not think that you would go so far as to persecute me."

"I persecute?" gasped Kildare.

"Yes, wretched!"

"You—yes—Are you mad? You dare to tell me I am persecuting!" shouted the captain of St. Jim's.

"I am not afraid to tell the truth to anybody. I came here to do you a good turn, without mentioning names. As you have worried me in such a speech, there is nothing for me to do but to write from the steeple, and have you to go to the dogs in your own way!"

"I—I—I—By Jove, I'll lick you if you can't wriggle!" gasped Kildare. "I—oh, rather, I'll lick Blake for putting you up to this! The young rascal to invent such a yarn—"

"It was not invented, and you have no right to suggest such a thing. Tom Mewry saw you with his own eyes!" roared Arthur Augustus, indignant at the charge against his own, and forgetting his resolve not to mention names.

"Tom Mewry! So Tom Mewry is it, too?" ejaculated Kildare.

"I refuse to give you any information. I will write—"

"No, you won't!" said Kildare grimly. "We're going to have this thrashed out, you other young ass! Stay there!"

He whirled the swell of the Fourth further into the study, opened the door, and put out his head, and called:

"Curly Gibson of the Third came in sooner to the cell."

"Go and fetch Blake and Tom Mewry here at once!" said Kildare.

The fog cut off.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus, in dismay. "I've afraid it will all come out now; and those boys will think that I have let out the secret! Bai Jove!"

ANSWERS

THE GEN LIBRARY.—No. 336.

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CHAPTER 28.

Light at Last!

BLAKE was not surprised when the fog put his head into Study No. 2 with the information that the chief of the study was wanted by Kildare.

"Is D'Arcy there?" he asked.
"Yes," said Curly. "And Kildare seems to be in a wax about something. He wants you and Tom Merry in a hurry! You're in for it!"

And with that startling statement the fog hurried on to call Tom Merry.

Blake looked curiously at his dorm.
"Tom Merry, too?" he said. "It's all out now! Garry's done it!"

"Well, Kildare can't blame us," said Horrie thoughtfully.
"He'll know we've been keeping it dark."

"He'll know we were out of bounds that night!" grunted Blake.

"So was he! He can't go for us for that."

"Better give Tom Merry the tip," said Dig; and Blake nodded. As they proceeded together to Tom Merry's study.

The Terrible Times were all there, and they had just received the fog's message.

"Come on!" said Blake gleefully. "We're in for it!"

"What's the matter?" asked Tom.

"We had to let Garry into the secret—we did, anyway—"

"Followed!"

"Oh, call me anything you like!" said Blake resignedly.

"You can kick me if you like! I feel like kicking myself! The whopping ass went straight to Kildare—"

"Not to tell him!" howled Money Lawther.

"No; to speak a word of warning diplomatically!" grunted Blake.

"Of course, he's let the cat out of the bag. Come on!"

"We'd better all come," said Marmory; "we're all in it. We'll stand by one another. After all, I don't see why Kildare should be ratty, when we've been keeping his secret."

"He jolly well will be ratty, all the same!"

"Well, we'll put it behind us," said Horrie. "He shouldn't have done what he did. It's horrible, but we've done him wrong. Of course, we oughtn't to have been telling the dorm."

"He ought to keep that dark, as we're keeping his beastly secret dark," said Dig.

"That's not in a hopeful mood that the six juniors made their way to Kildare's study.

The captain of St. Jim's stared at them when they presented themselves.

"I want Mr. Blake and Merry?" he said.

"We're all in it," said Lovethor; "we were all on the scene. I suppose that bowling duffer has told you all about it!"

"Well, Lovethor, I have not said a word. I was speaking to Kildare in a general way, without mentioning names at all."

"Oh, well!"

"But when he said it was a 'lip' story, I had to declare that Blake was incapable of such a thing," said D'Arcy warmly.

"I suppose you wouldn't expect me to stand quietly and head down when down, would you?"

"That's enough!" said Kildare sternly. "Now, you young lions, I want to know all about this. Someone has dared to say that I have broken boards at night and gone out of the school for a meanly motive. Who was it? Which of you young rascals invented it?"

"Invented it?" ejaculated Tom Merry.

"Yes! Sharp, now!"

"I—I suppose we say as well have it all out!" said Tom reluctantly.

"The—the fact is you know it for a fact, Kildare. We had agreed to keep it dark; and, let for Garry, there wouldn't have been a word said."

"Well, you Marmory—"

"We're still going to keep it dark," said Blake. "We'll feel some day of shunting up that crew man. You needn't be so gony, Kildare. Whatever you do, you're always been decent to us, and we're not going to give you away."

"Give me away! You—you— Do you dare to say that you believe the story?"

"Eh, now!" said Tom Merry, beginning to lose patience himself.

"How me! Where—what?"

"Three nights ago."

"At what time?"

"After eleven!"

"Where?"

"In the quad."

"And where were you?" demanded Kildare sternly. "You could not have seen anybody in the quad from the Shell dormitory."

"We were out of the House," said Tom. "We couldn't say. We weren't thinking about you, though. We were going to jump somebody—arrogant mind when—a chap we expected to catch out of the House at that time. And—and, instead of him, you came along."

Kildare had a startled look.

"I—I came along! In the quad—three nights ago—after eleven—arrogant!"

"You!"

"I have been to bed before eleven every night this week, you young idiot!"

Tom Merry was silent. There was no reply to be made to a statement like that.

"Who also saw me!" demanded Kildare, looking round at the downcast juniors.

"No one else," said Tom. "I saw you."

"I heard somebody say, 'But Tom Merry saw you right enough. You needn't think we've got this up against you, Kildare. We had a jolly bad shock when Tom told us, and we all agreed to keep it dark; and we're going to keep it dark now, too, even if you lick us!"

"Yess, wathah! Only you ought to reflect in time, Kildare, when this kind of conduct is likely to land you—"

"Hold your idiotic tongue!" shouted Kildare.

"Be quiet!"

"So it ends with you, Tom Merry," said Kildare savagely. "If I didn't know that you were a straight kid I'd lock you here and now for saying such a thing! But I can't believe you are an intentional liar. You must have made a mistake. Do you say that you actually saw me close enough in that night to recognise me? Mind what you say!"

"I didn't see your face, of course. You had your cap pulled down, and your coat-collar turned up. But you opened the gate with a key, and only persons here have keys to that gate; and I know your coat."

"My coat! You dare to think such a thing of me on the evidence of a coat!" exclaimed Kildare. "Why, there are a dozen coats in the house library!"

"Your coat was marked. I saw the initials on it—that's another that D'Arcy spirited over you, somebody would know that coat."

"You—you young idiot!" said Kildare. "Did you think I should wear that coat again after it was smothered with ink? It's been hanging up in the lobby in the hall ever since D'Arcy spirited it. It's a safe worn my other coat over mine. Mind, I don't doubt your word—I'm sure somebody goes out. I suppose it did not occur to you in your wisdom that somebody might have taken my coat?"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Well!" snapped Kildare.

"I—I certainly never thought of that," admitted Tom Merry, in dismay. "You really have your coat here—in your room—and—and I didn't know it was in the lobby."

"I'm hung in there because I'm not wearing it, you see. It's there now."

"But—let the key to the gate!" murmured Tom Merry.

"How could I— How could any other chap get that?"

"Go and fetch the coat out of the lobby," said Kildare.

Tom Merry obeyed. He brought the stained and soiled overcoat into the study, and laid it on the table. There were several splashes of mud on it.

"That mud wasn't there when I used it last," said Kildare. "Now feel in the inside pocket—in the left!"

Tom Merry did so, and drew out a small box.

"That's the key to the side gate," said Kildare. "I kept it in that pocket. As I've never had occasion to go out after looking-up this week, I didn't think of getting it. It's been in that pocket, hanging up in the lobby, ever since that young hearse spirited ink over me."

"Oh!"

"Is there anything else you have founded this ridiculous story upon?" demanded Kildare.

Tom Merry was silent. Blake opened his lips, and closed them again. But Kildare noted it at once.

"Well, Blake? Out with it!"

"There was that—that speering paper, you know—is—your study—!" stammered Blake.

Kildare laughed involuntarily.

"You thought that was mine, you—you— I don't know what you call you."

"Well, it was here, and—and you have it—"

"What else should I do with a speering paper I had taken from a fellow who ought not to have had it in his study?"

"Oh, certainly!"

"Now," said Kildare quietly, "I've been patient with you. I ought to have given you a hiding all round, but instead of that I've explained the matter. Are you satisfied?"

"Of course," said Tom Merry. "We might have guessed. It's just what he would do, take another fellow's coat in case he was seen, the wretch! If we'd known that you'd left it in the lobby—with the key in the pocket—"

"That was without carelessness of you, Kildare?"

"Shut up, ag!" murmured Blake.

"Quite so; it was careless of me," said Kildare. "But I did not know that a fellow in the School House was in the habit of breaking bounds at night. You juniors seem to have become better interested. And now I want to know who it was? It must have been a senior, or you could not have taken him for me, even in my coat. His name?"

"There was silence in the study.

"You say you had gone out of your dormitories specially to intercept a certain person in the quad. You knew, then, that he was going out. Undoubtedly, it was the same person who took my coat and used my key. Who was it you expected to see in the quad—whose did you see?"

"We—we can't tell about him," said Tom Merry. "I—he is a rotten cad, and we know now it wasn't you, Kildare, and—and you're sorry! But—"

"We're going to keep it awfully dark, Kildare. And we can't really insist about the other chap!"

Kildare lit his lip, and there was a pause.

"Very well," he said, at length. "I won't ask you to give me his name. Perhaps I can guess it myself; and I shall keep my eyes open after this. I think I shall be able to spot him, whether he wears his own coat or somebody else's." Kildare picked up a cane. "You know the consequences of getting out of the dormitory at night. You see, Jerry?"

"I—I say, Kildare, we—we were going to keep it dark, you know—"

"We—we were really backing you up, you know," murmured Monty Lowther.

"Thank you. I've no doubt you had excellent intentions towards me," said Kildare sarcastically. "I am obliged to you. You have done me the honor of thinking me a black-guard, and going to keep it dark. You needn't bother."

"We—we're sorry, you know—"

"Yes, wretch! I apologise most sincerely. Kildare, dear boy, as one gentleman to another," said Arthur Argusson.

"I accept your apologies," said Kildare grimly; "and now hold out your hands."

The scene that followed was painful—very painful! Tom Merry & Co. bore it heroically, but they felt as if life were barely worth living when they crawled out of Kildare's study when it was over.

They went down the passage awaiting their heads hard. At the end of the passage they passed, to look at each other indignantly.

"Well, I'm glad," said Blake, with a determined effort to take a cheerful view. "I'm jolly glad it's all right about Kildare. I'm glad we were wrong about him—I mean that Tom Merry was wrong about him."

"He's rather a beast, though," growled Monty Lowther.

"He might have let us down lightly, considering that we were sticking to him and keeping his secrets. It turns out that he hadn't any secret. Still, we were going to keep it if he'd had one!"

"Every that deep either Cutts using Kildare's coat," questioned Tom Merry. "Just one of his tricks—he's been so jolly careful lately with his little game. But a fellow couldn't guess a thing like that, could he?"

"Well, you couldn't," agreed Blake.

"Or, or?" said Monty. "Anyway, we've got a thumping good laugh. And it's all the fault of that man for blinding us!"

"But Jerry, it's 'settles' of the sort!" exclaimed Arthur Argusson indignantly. "I was 'sent' to keep it very, dark indeed, and you fellows ought to be grateful to me."

"What?"

"Yes, wretch!" said Arthur Argusson fiercely. "But for me, you would still be under the impression that old Kildare had acted in a wretched way, when it was that beast Cutts all the time. I told you it would all go wrong if you went without me—and it did! And I trust," concluded Arthur Argusson, with a solemn shake of the head—"I trust, dear boys, that this will be a lesson to you!"

"Oh, bump him!" said Blake.

"Waddy, Blake—pawcock—you wretch—oh!"

"Bump!"

"And Tom Merry & Co. went their way, leaving Arthur Argusson sitting on the floor, in a state of breathless indignation.

THE END.

(Another grand complete story of Tom Merry & Co., entitled "The St. Jim's Refugee" will appear in next Wednesday's GEM. Make certain of getting a copy.)

THE GEM LIBRARY—No. 356.

THIS WEEK'S CHAT.

The Editor's Personal Column.

"THE ST. JIM'S REFUGEE!"

By Martin Clifford.

The splendid story of St. Jim's, entitled as above, which appears on Wednesday next, deals with the experiences of an unhappy Belgian lad who, driven from his home by the ruthless Prussians, has taken refuge in England. Arthur Argusson of Arroy, whose generous heart is moved by the little fellow's plight, plays the Good Samaritan, and succeeds in arranging his change into St. Jim's. The officers of the Fourth have great difficulty in concealing the fugitive, but they manage things in their own inimitable way, and there are lively times indeed at the old school until—

"THE ST. JIM'S REFUGEE!"

is ultimately claimed by his grateful mother.

I have much pleasure in announcing that on Monday next the HUNTER CHRISTMAS NUMBER OF "THE MAGNET" LIBRARY

makes its appearance, and every Gemite should make sure of obtaining a copy. To begin with, there will be a SPLENDID COLOURED COVER,

depicting an old warrior "fighting his battles over again," by one of our most talented artists. The ever-popular Frank Richards has secured a stunning success with his rising \$0,000-word tale of the cloister of Greyfriars School, entitled

"THE RETURN OF THE PRODIGAL."

which should not so account be absent from the Christmas number.

It was my fixed resolve that Gemites should in no wise be forgotten, and Tom Merry, the month-year skipper of the Staff at St. Jim's, has given me permission to reproduce the Christmas Number of

"TOM MERRY'S WEEKLY."

and this exciting journal will evoke many hearty laughs. Articles by the leading lights of St. Jim's will appear, and as the copy is desirable, you will be able to take it out of next Monday's "Magnet" and pass it round to all your friends.

There are many other features, too, in this Grand Christmas Number, but I will leave my friends to find out what they are for themselves. The price is twopenny, and the value better than ever!

LEAGUE LEADERS, PLEASE NOTE!

I am well aware that during the last few years many "Gem Leagues" have been formed, and are flourishing in various parts of Great Britain and in the Colonies.

Will the presidents and leaders of these leagues kindly notify me of their names and addresses, together with the number of members, and any other information of interest connected with their league. I shall then be enabled to draw up a tabulated list of "Gem Leagues," which shall be published on this page at the earliest opportunity. By this means readers may ascertain if there is a league in their district which they may join.

With a view, therefore, of furthering the interests of my readers both at home and abroad, I shall be glad to hear from all leaders of leagues as early as possible.

THE EDITOR.

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

B. J. M. (Glasgow).—The tale you mention have not yet appeared in "Boy's Friend" St. Library form, but there is every likelihood of their doing so soon.

W. E. Devonport.—Many thanks for your letter. There is certainly a great deal in what you say, but I am afraid I cannot alter the style of the paper in question—at present, at any rate.

L. C. E.—I will try and do as you suggest later on.

Miss V. Mansfield.—Your wish shall be complied with. Many thanks for your letter.

OUR COMPANION PAPERS: "THE MAGNET" LIBRARY, "THE PENNY POPULAR," "GRUCKLES," IS
Every Monday. Every Friday. Every Saturday, 2

THE FIRST CHAPTERS OF OUR GRAND NEW SERIAL STORY.

OFFICER AND TROOPER.

An Entrancing New
Story of Life in the
British Army.



Specialy Published for
Patriotic British Boys.

By
BEVERLEY KENT.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Bob Hall, a fine, strapping young fellow, in the company of a comrade, gazed sick of the life he is leading, and decided to resign. By a stroke of great good fortune he succeeds in joining the 7th Hussars, known to the military world as "The Dio Haris." Here he comes up with Private Bill Dent, a fellow after Bob's own heart. Life at the barracks in no way resembles a feather bed, and the new recruit comes in for very severe though good-measured training. A man named Goss, however, crosses Bob's path by introducing his dinner, and there is every indication of a first-class row. Bob aims the despatcher by the back of the neck, and endeavours to drag him away from the table.

CHAPTER 2.

His First Fight, and What Came of It.

A barracks-room table is merely laid on trestles, and therefore when the older soldier grasped it in an effort to steady himself, it came away, carrying all the plates, cups, and cutlery with a clatter to the door. Every soldier springing to his feet with a shout of wrath, and all turned on the lad.

"He won't a trifle pale, but he faced them squarely. "I'm a stranger here, but I'm one of the regiment, and I ought to get fair play," he cried. "If this man had left me alone I should have been none of this trouble. As all events, he's got going to eat my dinner, and so—"

Bob took a step on the shoulder, and, turning, he saw the strong, open face of Bill Dent behind him.

"Steady, Hal!" he cried. "Keep cool, old chap, and we'll see that you do get fair play. Now, chum, I suppose the best thing to do is to see this quarrel through straight away. Goss has been to Mess, and what the youngster says is true. We've all lost our dinner. I reckon, but we'll put the blame on the right shoulders. Let them have it out, and then, perhaps, Goss will give over his usual game of trying to bully the raw 'uns."

The other soldiers, who were either busy picking up the broken stuff or brushing their uniforms, passed as Dent spoke. They were a fine, swart lot, and the justice of Dent's statement appealed to them. Goss, who had risen to his feet, was whispering fiercely.

"If the young cub wants a hiding, I'm the man to give it to him," he muttered. "A recruit ought to be licked into shape and taught to know his place, and that's why I took some of his cheek at the start. Dent is always meddling up to the new chaps, hoping to make pale, but—"

"I've been in the regiment as long as you, and I'm more respected than you'll ever be, anyway," Dent interjected quietly. "You've played this game too often, but I guess you've not more'n a year since this journey. What do you say, chum? Shall we let 'em have a cut in?"

The other soldiers looked not long.

"Well, since we've lost our grub, we'd better have some sport," a smart-looking private muttered. "They've had an hour in which to fight out their difference, and that's enough for both of 'em. We'll all go to the dry canteen afterwards and have a meal on our own, and—"

"Put away the table!" Dent commanded. "Hooty, you go to the door and keep an eye down the passage. Graham, see steady to Goss, and I'll be second for Hall. Fraser, you set an example."

Bob walked to his bunk and unbuttoned his tunic. The moment had come when it became necessary for him to prove his mettle before his comrades. It came at some time in the lives of all soldiers, and the way the man composed himself on this occasion is remembered either against him or in his favour during the rest of his life with the colours.

Instinctively the lad knew this, and he resolved, at all costs, to keep his cool up and not show the white feather. Goss was laughing boisterously as he, too, got ready for the fray, and Bob was quick to notice that his opponent was a wonderfully muscular man.

"Make as good a show as you can," Dent urged in a whisper to the lad as he led him towards the ring which had been improvised. "Don't your health if you get hit, remember, but if you can't down him, at any rate take your punishment like a man. We'll see that you have fair play."

Bob dropped into a fighting posture, and faced Goss, who grinned extensively. The lad was a stouter lighter than his antagonist, but, if anything, he looked in the better condition.

"Time!" Goss advanced, and Bob feigned, ducked, clinched, and broken away in a manner that showed he was no novice with his hands. He had to learn all about scoring, it is true, but the art of self-defence can be acquired as well in civilian life as in a barracks, and Bob had always gone in for all sports and pastimes that came his way.

The other privates observed, and a nasty glint came into the eyes of Goss.

"So ye think ye know a bit!" he growled. "All right! Here's that for a start!"

As he spoke he lunged viciously at Bob, who ducked, quickly jumped to one side, and gave the leopards a smart clip on the ear. As Goss wheeled round, he caught him with a smart right-hander on the ribs, and followed up with his left full on the face.

For a second the older soldier was completely dazed by the unexpected violence of the attack, but Bob, anticipating a rush, had jumped back, and so was unable to take advantage of his opponent's discomfiture. Then Goss dashed in, regardless of his own defence, and hit out right and left.

In the face of such a torrent of blows, Bob's knowledge and skill were of little avail. The lad stood up to his doubtful opponent placidly, guarded wherever he could, bridle away when hand pressed, and never lightly across the floor, but back when he got an opening, and took the hard knocks he could not parry without flinching. But the moment arose when he slipped and staggered, and Goss, hitting out from the shoulder with all his strength, sent him crashing to the floor.

"Time!" Had Bob been able to defend himself for a second longer, he would have had a couple, at least. As it was, he was badly shaken, and crept into the ring a second time, half-led by the fall. Goss, too, was breathing hard, for the lad's stubborn defence had severely taxed his strength. Except for that lucky blow, Bob was now in the better condition of the two.

The lad saw this, and comforted himself by acting altogether on the defence for the first couple of minutes of the second round. Both opponents were playing for a rest, and when Goss left a trifle stronger on his legs he determined to bring the fight to a British by one terrific hit. Bob dodged the

THE GEM LIBRARY—No. 356.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

crashing blow; and then, turning, aside the cheeks of the privates, who were now applauding him vociferously, he clung to defenses into attack, and stopped back as hard as he could.

The punishment on both sides became terrific, and yet neither would yield. To Bob, fighting in the presence of his future comrades, the contest had a much greater significance than occurred to them in the heat of the moment. He knew he was making his reputation as a man, and he resolved, come what would, that he would fight on bitterly to the very last. Goss was now pouring like a Niagara; he moved slowly; his blows had lost something of their sting; yet he was no coward at heart, nor would he suffer defeat at the hands of a recruit. He gathered himself for one final effort, and Bob, seeing the blow about to come, resolved to forestall it. He let out with all his strength, caught Goss on the point of the chin, as much by good luck as science, and the body, with a gasp, crashed down and lay without attempting to rise again.

Instantaneously the barrack-rooms was a wild scene of delight and disorder. Cheer breaker on cheer; Bob, half dazed and wholly bewildered, felt that he was surrounded by a host of hearty admirers. His hands were warmly grasped, he was lifted up, and carried shoulder high out to the wash-house, there to wash his toilet after his heroic contest. And when at length he was grooved down and felt fairly fit again, he was conducted with all honour to the dry canteen, and entertained by his messmates to an all fresco repast.

News of the fight had spread like wildfire, and dozens of soldiers joined the merry-makers. Bob quickly found that, by reason as unexpected as they were gratifying, the gallant Die-Hard had already accepted him as one of themselves, and he settled down to an afternoon's enjoyment.

But if he had made many friends, he had also made one enemy, and, therefore, it happened that he had to go through the hardest experience of all before his first day closed as a soldier.

CHAPTER 3.

His First Lesson as a Horseman, and a Dastard Deed.

The meal was over, and the merry buzz of voices was at its height when a thick-set looking man climbed into the canteen and paced around. The new-comer's uniform was almost as much beaded as an officer's; his right elbow bore several badges of distinction; his square face was marked down one side by an ugly scar; straight, pluck, and dogged resolution

were evidenced in every feature of a somewhat forbidding countenance; and he eyed the privates grouped together with inflexible determination as he spoke.

"There's a new recruit, I'm told," he rapped out slowly, as he tapped his leg with a silver-mounted riding-whip. "I guess it's about time that he and I became acquainted. Jim—go after him, one of you chaps, and tell him to come along to the riding-school, for I want to put him through his paces."

Without fail on all in the canteen as the riding-master spoke, and Bob, hastily turning his head, saw that Goss was standing behind the riding-master, and grinning vindictively.

"I'm the new-recruit, and—" the lad began, as

"Stand to attention, whose your address is?" the other thundered.

Bob instantly jumped to his feet.

"That's better! Now follow me." The riding-master wheeled round and walked away. The other privates hastily followed the lad as he went to receive his first lesson in horsemanship.

"That cur Goss has set Blyth against you," Dent whispered, as he overtook the lad. "It's a mean way of trying to put you out, but Goss is not above that. Don't run foul of the riding-master, though, or he'll half kill you afore he's done. Keep your temper and do your best."

"Is Goss a friend of his, then?" Bob inquired wonderingly.

"The riding-master likes Goss because he's a first-rate horseman, and helps him a lot with the cattle," Dent explained. "Evidently he's sold a pack of lies about you, and Blyth thinks that you need a setting down. Ah, I thought so! They're going to put you on Jupiter!"

Bob had entered the riding-school by this time, and he gazed around curiously. It was a long hall, with small windows which threw a dappled light on the tanned floor. For four feet up the walls the sides were padded; stretched was a wooden roof, and at the far end were half a dozen stalls.

As Dent spoke, Goss had entered one of the stalls, and he led out a roan-black horse, about sixteen hands in height. The animal had a bridle on, but no saddle, and it pawed the ground and rolled the whites of its eyes as Goss cinged to the reins. The other privates had followed Bob across the barrack square, and they stood by the door, watching the proceedings with faces that evidently expressed disapproval.

"Mean!" cried Blyth, taking down a long whip with a heavy thong.

Bob stepped forward, and grasped the reins. Goss jumped to one side, and the horse at once began to plunge wildly.

"Mount!" the riding-master shouted again.

Dent ran forward as if to catch the terrified animal, but he stopped for a couple of seconds as he reached Bob's side.

"Get Jupiter into a corner; that's your only chance," he whispered.

"Good luck, there!" Blyth thundered. "I'm riding-master, and not you, and I'll train the recruit and I'll back him." Bob caught the horse again, and led him into a corner, holding him with his hands facing the angle of the wall, he sprang on to his back as quickly as possible, whilst Jupiter, finding he could not rear without hurting his fore-legs, swung round dully, but not before the lad was fairly secure.

Bob held on to him with all the strength in his knees as the animal again began to plunge. All those who have ever learned to ride remember the first experience on a backing horse; it is one of hopeless endeavour to remain steady. Every time Jupiter plunged, Bob came down on his back like a sack, whereas the horse was facing forward, the lad shot backwards. He speedily found that his efforts to keep astride were becoming less difficult, and the horse, as Bob showed more confidence, ceased from the struggle in which he was trained to take a part, and began to amble round the hall.

Norries of approval came from the host of soldiers at the door, and then suddenly the riding-master gave a further order.

"Halt!" he cried.

Bob was about to draw on the rein, when, to his horror, the well-trained old war-horse stiffened underneath him, its fore-legs out, its head bent, and its hind hoofs extended. Jupiter had obeyed the command without a second's hesitation, and Bob, who was far from expecting such speedy action, was shot over the head of his steed.

In falling, he struck against Goss, who had not time to clear, out of the way, and both tumbled to the tan. Bob arose, pale and dizzy, whilst Goss turned on him savagely.

"You awkward, blundering idiot! You've knocked out half my nose!" he yelled. "For two pence I'd—"

Crack! Crack!

Blyth's whip fell impartially both on Goss and Bob, and the soldiers at the door could not restrain their delight.

"Serve you right, Goss!" Dent shouted exultantly. "Well done, Blyth! You're a plucked one, anyhow!"

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"Silence!" Hylth thundered. "Get out the handles, some of you. We'll see if the recruit is game to tackle the jumps!" Some men ran forward, and placed the handles around the school. Again Hylth called on Bob to mount, and the lad, having learned the trick, at once complied. He led the horse up the school, turned his head, and, with one terrific bound, Jupiter was up and over the first handle. To Bob's astonishment, as if he had been raised by an earthquake. Up and up he sprang, and, leaping forward instead of back as the horse alighted, the lad was shaken so terribly that he with difficulty restrained a groan.

Jupiter, well trained to perform all the tricks by which a horse can be amused, passed at the second handle, and then leaped over the third, as Bob had expected. The lad was thrown backward, and remaining thus as the animal's hoofs hit the sea, he found, to his delight, that he came down safely. He had now learned the dodge in jumping, and made haste to make use of it.

Up and over, up and over! Roused and round the school Jupiter galloped, and at every fence Bob showed more steadiness and nerve.

"I've had worse than him through my hands," Hylth remarked contentedly. "I'll just give him another twister, and then I guess he'll be through the worst. Raise the handles."

Away in the corner, Goss was standing, and at the order he took charge of the one nearest to him. There the light fell but dimly as he clutched the lever by which the top bar could be raised.

Twice Bob galloped the horse round the circuit of the school. Then he got him at the fence where Goss stood.

Jupiter started, and off easily, and his forefeet hit the bar. He pitched forward, and Bob was unable to keep him on his feet. With a crash the charger fell and rolled over and over. At last he rose, panting and terrified. But Bob lay still, and his face was ashen pale.

Goss, in his mean way, had writhed his spine! He had raised the handle whilst the horse was in the air!

A short screech, and all ran to see if the gallant lad still breathed.

CHAPTER 4.

The Way of the Service.

Bob Hall lay still, his face ashen pale, his eyes closed, almost dead down, and lifted Bob's hand to his knee.

"I never knew Jupiter make such a big blunder as this before," the riding-master gasped reasonably. "Why, he'd been raised the handles twice already, and the sticks had not been raised. If—"

"Goss was at the lever!" Deat growled, looking up, whilst a slight shiver went over the form he held in his arms. The treacherous soldier passed forward.

"And do you mean to say that I raised it?" he said, with self-deigned wrath. "Just you take a pull on your reins, ease off the reins, or I'll have you court-martialed. The word of the De-Harsh, the same as yourself, and—"

"I was keeping an eye on you!" Deat roared hoarsely. "I've reason to know the sort you are, and so—"

"Silence!" As a stern voice issued the command, the soldiers started. Standing three paces away was the adjutant of the regiment, Captain Cecil Hamshaw, one of the finest officers in the British Army. So intent had the men been in observing Bob's first lesson in the school, that they were unaware that Hamshaw had been standing behind them. So tall was he that without difficulty he could see over their heads, though every one of them was above the qualifying height for a Hussar.

"Riding-master Hylth, I blame you for this," he thundered. "Private Hall only joined the Service to-day, and when at first I saw you putting him over the handles I concluded that already he had had experience on horseback. I have my doubts now, though. And if you have overstepped the regulations and raised the lad's life, I'll take care that, even if you're a good soldier though you are, you'll regret—ah! He's coming round. I'm glad to see it. Forward, Hylth, run for some water. I'll find out what I want from the lad himself."

Bob had opened his eyes, and even as Hamshaw spoke, he tried to struggle to his feet. Deat hoisted his train, and Hylth, returning with a bucket of water, splashed some over the lad's face. He stood up, helped by Deat, and rested painfully against the wall.

"Feeling better?" Hamshaw inquired kindly.

"No, sir, no. No better, I'm glad to see, but you've had a big shaking. If lucky, you're not worse. Take Trooper Hall to the hospital, some of you men, and I'll follow on directly."

"I'm all right," Bob cried, shaking himself free and trying

to stand alone. "I don't want to go to the hospital, sir. I'd sooner stay out with the regiment."

Hamshaw tugged at his moustache, and grinned. "You've yet to learn that you must always obey orders, whether you like 'em or not," he chuckled. "However, that'll come in time enough. I'm sure, and—"

"Happy if I'm wrong, sir," Bob interposed eagerly. "But the fact is—"

"Yes, but!" Hamshaw laughed outright. "This is worse and worse. Hall, you mustn't interrupt your superior officer! No harm done, my lad, so you needn't look ashamed. But I think you'd do well, anyhow, to take a rest for a couple of days, and in the Service you must 'go ash' or 'stick to work.' We can't let you spend a day in your bunk in the barracks-room. Now, what do you say?"

"I'll stick to work, sir," the lad replied doggedly. "I'm sure better already, and—"

"Well, I like your pluck, and I suppose your chums will help you along. You ought to make plenty of friends if you keep on this way. Now, I want to ask you a question. Have you ever been astride a horse before to-day?"

Deat had taken hold of Bob's arm again, and the lad felt a gentle pressure on his elbow as the adjutant put the question. The lad was quickly taken.

"Can't say I've done much riding, sir," Bob replied hesitatingly. "That sort of thing hasn't come much my way; but still I fancy myself a bit, and—"

Hamshaw eyed him reflectively.

"The riding-master set you a fairly difficult task, didn't he—ah?" he queried.

Bob now saw the drift of the questions, and his manly heart rose to the top at once. He straightened himself and answered like a shot, to the delight of the other soldiers:

"Not more difficult than I was game to take on, sir," he affirmed stoutly.

"All right; you can go," Hamshaw replied, with a benign smile. "Of course, it's the riding-master's business to train you up as quickly as he can, and so— I'll get you the quarter of eight, Hylth, and I reckon you'll get some use out of that, and so on. Now, it's getting late, and I thought I'd better close the school for the day."

The adjutant returned the salute of all the soldiers and strode away, his splendid figure loomed up to an enormous height in the twilight, as he went down the school. The soldiers ran to set back the handles, and Hylth walked out slowly into the open air. Then he passed.

Bob presently recovered, walking with Deat and Hylth, and as he passed Hylth the latter tapped him on the shoulder.

"See here, Hall, I want to talk to you," the riding-master began awkwardly. "I was led to believe that you were a steady, closely-put-together, who badly wanted knocking into your place, and I've seen there's no man in the regiment whose duty gives him more chance of making a chap go the right road than mine does."

"Yes, sir."

"Well, I've been misinformed, that's all. I'm sorry I gave you such a grilling, for it wasn't necessary, and I'll tell you as man to man that I was near getting into the deuce of a lot of trouble, if you hadn't seen that Hylth was about being on a horse before. I'd have been court-martialed before the U.O. for certain. The adjutant is the best and the straightest officer we've got, and he'll see fair play done to all ranks. We all like it in him; but, of course, when a chap has himself to blame he'd answer keep out of trouble if he could. Now, Hall, I'm in your debt, and I'm not the man to forget it. Just shake hands, my lad, and cut along, and keep this conversation to yourself. Discipline must be kept up, and I'm ever your obedient servant, and don't let me forget it."

The rough but true-hearted riding-master struck Bob's hand cordially, tapped him on the shoulder, then abruptly resigned into the hands of the superior officer, though with a kindly twinkle in his eye, as, leaving Bob to follow his chums, he strode away with imperious stride.

Bob found Deat and Hylth awaiting him fifty yards away, and they chuckled as the trio stepped across the square.

"Old Hylth's been coming out strong to you, I guess—and so well he ought," Deat remarked. "He's a real live man, is Hylth, and when he's in the wrong he makes no bones about owning up. That's how he keeps the chaps from turning snuff; yes, there's a fellow worse than Hylth, as Hylth and I know."

"That's so," Hylth affirmed. "He's a real hot 'em on his work, and he wouldn't be riding-master here if he couldn't make a horseman out of mostly anything on two legs. For all his rough ways, though, he's as true as steel, and you've actually realize what he's done for the De-Harsh."

Another grand instance of this story will appear next Wednesday. ORDER IN ADVANCE. THE GEM LIBRARY.

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Our Weekly Prize Page.

LOOK OUT FOR YOUR WINNING STORYETTE

ENGLAND'S UNKNOWN HEROES.

Inspector: "Now, boys, can any of you tell me the names of any Englishmen who have died whilst bravely doing their duty?"

First Boy: "General Gordon, sir."
Inspector (looking round the room): "Surely he was not the only one?"

Second Boy: "My father, sir!"
Inspector: "Oh, indeed! What was he?"
Second Boy (proudly): "A referee at football matches, sir."—Sent in by Stanley Donaldson, A.S.D.R.

IT NEVER CAME BACK.

A village schoolmaster has concluded that it is not safe to teach proverbs to young children.

"Now, boys, always remember," said he one day, "that the early bird catches the worm."
Next morning a small boy teed the line, with a ten-stained face.

"What's the matter, Tommy?" asked the master.
"Please, sir, you said it was the early bird that catches the worm."

"Yes."
"Well, father christed me."
"What fur, my boy?"
"Cos, sir, I let our enemy out, and it's sapper come back with the worm!"—Sent in by Horrie Stewart, Aberdeen.

WORTH KNOWING.

A young couple went to a tailor's house to get married. After the ceremony the bridegroom drew the clergyman aside, and said as a whisper:

"I'm sorry I have no money to pay your fee, but if you'll take me down into the cellar I'll show you how to fix your gas-meter so that it will not register."—Sent in by A. Sainsforth, Leicester.

TOMMY'S EXPLANATION.

The class was having lessons in national history, and the teacher asked:

"Now, is there any boy here who can tell me what a rebel is?"
There was a shuffling of feet at the back of the class-room, and the hand of Tommy Skyes shot up.
"Please, sir," he almost shouted, "a rebel is a donkey with a football-shirt on!"—Sent in by W. Kelly, Carraroe.

HARD LINK.

Business was very slow at the rag-and-bone merchant tramped sleep. Suddenly his knees rose as a voice hailed him from the top story of a dwelling. There were seven stories, and he was very tired. When he reached the top there was a big surprise awaiting him, for instead of the business he expected, the woman who had hailed him said:

"Mister, won't you put this little boy in your bag if he doesn't stop crying?"—Sent in by W. Sumner, Manchester.

BETWEEN.

Friendman: "I call to see Messieur Boyles."
Mastermist: "I'm sorry, but he's not down."
Friendman: "Vai you bid? I come yesterday, an' you say he not up, now you say he not down. Vai you mean by it all? Ven will he be in so middle?"—Sent in by Miss V. Watson, Peckham.

MISPLACED CHARITY.

A tradesman one day put a box outside his window labelled "For the Blind." Most of his customers stopped and put a copper in.

A few weeks afterwards the box disappeared.
"What's happened to your box with contributions for the blind?" he was asked.

"Oh," he said, pointing to a new canvas blind over the shop-front, "I got enough money after a bit, so I bought the blind. Nice one, ain't it?"—Sent in by G. F. Sivad, Peckham, S.E.

FAMILIARITY.

A new constable was on duty at a London police-court, and was conducting a prisoner to the cells.

"Mind the step!" he said, as they came to a dark corner.
"All right," answered the prisoner. "Don't you be so bloomin' anxious! I know that step goes before you were born!"—Sent in by S. T. Hall, Deyfield, S.E.

SHOCKING HOURS.

The City merchant was engaging an applicant for a post in his office.

"How long were you in your last place?" he asked.

"Seven years."

"And why did you leave?"

"The hours were so unreasonable. I didn't get a day off during the whole time."

"But! That's bad. Where ever were you employed?"

"Dartmoor."—Sent in by J. A. MacRae, Liverpool.

HIS PROPER PLACE.

Customer (to grocer): "What price is your sugar?"

Grocer: "Eightpence a pound, madam."

Customer: "Don't you think you ought to be at the bank?"

Grocer (surprised): "No! Why?"

Customer: "Because your charges are so heavy."—Sent in by G. Middleton, Liverpool.

ARTFUL.

Mama: "What's in dem bottom, Harry?"

Harry: "Pine-apples andora. I gets ten per cent off the insurance for 'em! dem about. I don't know what was in dem, but there's kyrosene in 'em now."—Sent in by L. W. van Oppen, Bedford.

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.

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A Series of Letters of Enthralling Interest received direct from Corporal Charles, of his Majesty's—th Dragoons, who is an old reader of "The Gem" Library, and is now on active service on the Continent with the British Expeditionary Force.

(Exclusive to "The Gem" Library.)

No. 9.—

FAVOURD BY FORTUNE!



If nothing less than the working of a miracle can I able to send you my weekly despatch. You will understand this when I tell you that I had no access for hours in the very heart of a German camp.

The wonderful part of the affair is that I was not a prisoner, nor was my presence suspected. How I escaped, however, is the most remarkable part of the story. Truly, it is better to be born lucky than rich—having war this.

By this time you've probably heard about our little private parties round about Lille and the Yser. The story, however, is correct—I don't think so. Kaiser wanted his overworked troops to have a few days' grubbing and holiday-making by the sea, especially in the neighbourhood of Calais. Tommy Atkins didn't like kindly to the idea. He said, you go back to Berlin—or to Jhericho. And that's the job we've had to hand this past week or so.

It's kept us busy in all departments. Our plucky boys, the so-called brave Belgians, and the gallant, fire-eating Frenchmen have been at it hammer-and-sledge. The German approach comes on like pins out of a sack, but they don't roll over for it. Morning, noon, and night it's been halt, fight, split all the time. Life will be very tame for us when this job's finished.

On the occasion I'm referring to we had a bivouac at 2.30 in the morning. The moon was glimmering faintly out of an over-cast sky. The camp was fairly quiet, though far away the everlasting artillery clack was going on, and we got a glimpse now and then of death-bearing us in a French dragoon.

About three o'clock we moved off. The intention, I believe, was to make a good advance. Something, however, went wrong. We had not gone more than a couple of miles when we came up against the enemy's reserves.

We were all the more surprised because there were two companies on foot of us—the 9th Lancers and the 2nd Life Guards. Whether they had gone through the German lines, or had taken this strong position, is still a mystery. Anyway, before you could say Jack Robinson we found ourselves surrounded by the enemy's forces.

They were charged, and my leader assured back, and immediately a hurricane of bullets poured down us to front of us. Our horses, started by the suddenness of it all, reared, and began to get out of control. Many of them reared, and fell like the wind.

I reared afterwards that an order was given for our retirement. Most of the hundred-and-twenty King's Dragoons that started out got away in safety, but I and about half a dozen more got jammed in a corner of half-burnt farm-house, and what with our terrified horses and a mass of infantry also come rushing at us, we literally had our heads full.

"Oh, hell!" I cried, taking charge. "Go for 'em, my brave boys!"

It was our only chance—risk or nothing. We galloped into the grey-gabled mass, into the very middle where they were firing at us as fast as they could pull the trigger. Two soldiers were captured. The lot of us left, yelling with the bangs of a squall, charged into them again, swinging our sabres about our heads. My sword too cracked some skulls that time!

None of us expected to get through, but we did. Two only a moment's idea of a surrender; shouting, hallooing, collection of arms, and our orderly firing ourselves galloping along a road, with the bullets flying after us.

There was no sign of the rest of our force. We certainly had not galloped after them, as was my intention; instead, we were still deeper in the German lines. To make matters worse, the instant we pulled up we found a company of the Kaiser's heavies marching towards us from our front. Thus had the enemy got us at it both sides.

"Blamest, my sons, and make the best of a bad job!" I cried.

Near by was a ridge—you could scarcely call it a ridge—which was all the cover obtainable. We had not got down and loaded all our men had just a dozen shots apiece, when they turned two Massie guns on us. Warrant! I should say so! We hid that whilst they had a good go at the pack-trailers. Two of our horses paid the penalty of not being able to creep like us.

After to our left was a couple of haystacks. Some of the squad-leads, taking slight notice, made good shots at us, but to look had it. I brought most of them down, and one of my drags lugged the third.

Half a dozen minutes more took it hard in the proceedings, while the Massie started ahead. When the operations were over I and a trooper named Crooks were the only two left. Of the however, only one escaped. He hid there, we have almost shot of ammunition, though we had helped ourselves to the remains of our unfortunate comrades.

"You ought to make a dash for it!" cried Crooks. "So long, my boys!"

He gripped my hand, and pointed to the middle of one of the haystacks, saying that had trotted up in terror. Crooks was a brave lad, I ever there was one. He went off as coolly as if he were trying to parade. I kept his gun through. At present he's numbered amongst the missing.

A shower of bullets were sent after him, but he kept in the middle, and presently disappeared from view. Things became quieter after a bit. No doubt the squad-leads thought they had accounted for the lot of us. I determined to follow Crooks.

I was the only one left of our little band, all the others, save Crooks, had won a horse's skin. I tell you I wasn't feeling very cheery when I glimpsed the head-ends of a horse—my own name had been one of the first to go—and clambered into the middle.

It was that horse—a big, white one—but I thought about my wadding. Heaven only knows where the Germans found him. He was a bundle of animated excitement.

For some moments, though I patted my steed in his flanks, he remained suggestively still; then, just as I was about to dismount, after treating the brute to all the stable language I could think of at five o'clock in the morning, he started galloping round in a circle, like a circus horse with a tally on his back.

Unfortunately, I saw the fairy. I tugged and strained at the brute's head till my muscles trembled. Next found of a horse going mad? I believe that big beast was absolutely dizzy. Some of the German infantry, seeing the mysterious movements of the Irish horse and thinking he made there was a suspicion of Tommy Atkins' cavalry, gave them a shot, gave me a valley from a safe distance.

I gave up the idea of a bad job. He was still galloping round in a circle, first to his hind-legs, then endeavouring to give me a shove over his nose, when I slipped from the saddle. Something seemed to jump up and hit me on the back of the head. I saw a French dragoon—then nothing.

I tried to give him something for hours. It was the best sleep I'd had for a long time. Fortunately, though I had a lump on the back of my head as big as an egg, I could still move fit as a fiddle.

The sun was streaming down on us. My uniform was wet. Owing to there had been a severe frost, I had no doubt been covered with a snowy mantle, which the sun now had melted.

I was in a sort of pit, and I wondered what all the tramping and noise of human noses could mean. I was frozen. I

(Continued on page 86 of cover.)

