

"D'ARCY'S DILEMMA!" An Exciting School Story of St. Jim's. By Martin Clifford.

# The GEM 2<sup>d</sup>

EVERY WEDNESDAY.

No. 903.  
Vol. XXVII.  
May 30th,  
1925.

LIBRARY OF  
SCHOOL AND SPORTING STORIES



**AN ADVENTURE FOR TWO!**

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and his brother Wally crept stealthily towards the drawing-room window of Eastwood House and peered through at the remarkable scene within! (A dramatic incident from the exciting School Story of St. Jim's, inside.)



# Your Editor Chats With His Readers.

Address all letters: The Editor, The "Gem" Library, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Write me, you can be sure of an answer in return.

**M**Y DEAR CHUMS.—It seems to me only right and proper to say a word or two about the splendid letters which reach me from all over the world. Readers of the GEM are to be found everywhere. In far Australia they get more and more numerous. Thousands of loyal Gemites live in the lands where the sun always shines. Others of my friends have their homes in Canada, in the West Indies, in New Zealand, China, and Malacca. They all like the tales about Tom Merry & Co. Such characters as the ever-popular Gussy, the mischief-making Aubrey Rakee, and the others are all known, and their doings are discussed up and down the big world.

### THE "SCHOOLBOYS' OWN LIBRARY."

With the increasing demand for stories of St. Jim's, this new "Library" was the only thing that would fitly meet the case. It has had a boom rush. With each issue its popularity augments. There has never been anything to equal the success of the new feature. You all like the St. Jim's yarns in the GEM. It follows, then, as the night the day that the chance of getting long complete tales of the lively crowd at St. Jim's is jumped at. Two new topping numbers of the "Schoolboys' Own Library" will be published on Friday, June 5th. Get your orders booked early at the first newsagent's, so as to avoid that highly disagreeable experience of being told that all the copies have been snapped up.

### "A DISGRACE TO THE SHELL!"

By Martin Clifford.

Here's a tip-top triumph for next Wednesday's GEM. This is a story with plenty of grit in it and character. You will be instantaneously interested in the plight of Rakee's poor relation. The

newcomer to St. Jim's has a poor time. It is not his fault. The ticklish position in which he finds himself is the fault of circumstance and of Aubrey Rakee. It is a "full" story in every way, marked by a lot of fascinating detail. What is more, it gets right home. There is in it an appeal to the heart. I have not the slightest doubt myself in which direction the sympathies of Gemites will turn as they follow the clever working out of a really first-line yarn. One is tempted to say more concerning the tale, but it would not do. It is a pity to anticipate a pleasure by nibbling at what is to come. But I would say this much—namely, that Rakee's impecunious kinsman can be pitied for his misfortunes. There is not necessarily any sting at all in being shabby, but there is rank discomfort for a sensitive fellow when he is made the target of the cheap sneers and the unwarrantable enmity of an out-and-out snob like Aubrey Rakee. You will be captivated by this tale of the under-dog and of a caddish intrigue. For next Wednesday! Don't forget to book your order for the paper that is always up to standard!

### "THE BLACK DIAMOND!"

By Louis Alfriston.

A knock-out for our next number! This is another of the exciting and most convincing boxing stories which feature our old friend, that tough sportsman, Big Ben Derby, and cheery little nine-stone Cocky Withers. No gamer exponent of the noble art than Cocky! Next week Big Ben meets the stiffest proposition yet, for his success in the ring has brought him enemies. It is no uncommon thing for well-earned merit to have that result. The fiercest jealousy has been aroused against Ben. The famous boxer has foes who work in the dark, and shrink at nothing underhand, however despicable, so that they can get away with a stolen victory. You are bound to like this yarn of a first-class fighter, who, notwithstanding a powerful backer, seems to be fairly up against it.

### "DAVE, THE PIT BOY!"

By Max Hamilton.

Of a surety the treachery of the crafty Markham knows no bounds! Next week's instalment is a positive thriller. The gripping interest of this drama of the mine rises to fever-heat in the new number of the GEM, and the biggest situation of all is a real startler. Of course, this concerns plucky young Dave. He is not only a fast prisoner, but faced by a terror from which seems no escape.

## Your Editor.



## FACTORY TO RIDER

Packed Free. Carriage Paid. Fifteen days' free trial. From £4 19s. 6d. CASH or 2/6 WEEKLY. Prompt delivery. Save Dealers' Profits. Big Bargains in Factory-Sold Cycles. Juveniles Cycles CHEAP. Accessories and Tyres at popular prices. Satisfaction guaranteed or Money Refunded. Write for Free Lists and Special Offer of Sammie Bicycles. **Mead CYCLE COMPANY, Incorp.** Dept. B601, BIRMINGHAM

## JOIN THE ROYAL NAVY AND SEE THE WORLD.

THE FINEST CAREER FOR BRITISH BOYS.

Boys are wanted for the Seaman Class (from which selections are made for the Wireless Telegraphy and Signalling Branches). Age 15½ to 16½ years

Men also are required for

**STOKERS** . . . . . Age 18 to 25  
**GOOD PAY.** . . . . **ALL FOUND.**  
**EXCELLENT CHANCES FOR PROMOTION.**

Apply by letter to the Recruiting Staff Officer, R.N. & R.M., 5, Suffolk Street, Birmingham; 121, Victoria Street, Bristol; 55, Whitehall, London, S.W.1; 229, Deansgate, Manchester; 115, Rye Hill, Newcastle-on-Tyne, or 6, Washington Terrace, Queen's Park, Southampton.

NO LICENCE REQUIRED.

## 8-CHAMBER SAFETY REVOLVER



Exact replica of real revolver converted to fire blank cartridges only. Accidents impossible. Safe and harmless. Useful for theatricals, race starting, etc. Can easily be carried in pocket.

8-Chamber, NICKEL or BLUE - 12/- carr. free.  
6- " " " " - 9/6 " "  
SAFETY PISTOLS - " - 3/9 " "  
Cartridges, per 100 - " - 2/- " 9d.

Illustrated Catalogue, Cinemas, Cameras, Cycles, etc., post free. **JAMES MANSFIELD & CO., Ltd., 71, High Holborn, London, W.C.1.**

## THE SOLAPHONE As demonstrated at the Empire Exhibition



It is the very latest Pocket Instrument; plays in all keys and produces every shade of notes as perfectly as the human voice. Blends beautifully with Piano or Gramophone. So simple a child can play it.

Post free by return post with full instructions. 2/9 From the maker—

R. FIELD (Dept. 10), Bankfield Road, HUDDERSFIELD.

**300, SIXPENCE.**—Collection of 300 Foreign & Colonial STAMPS, accumulated since 1850. Price only 6d.—**W. A. WHITE, 18, Stourbridge Road, LYE, Worcestershire.**



**THAT'S ME! A PHOTO RECALLS HAPPY TIMES.** This Camera takes a Real Photo on Standard Plates, 3½ ins. by 2½ ins. Complete with Plate, Printing Paper, Chemicals, and full Instructions. Post 2-Only. Send name and address for Electrical Novelty Lists. Free. **SYMAX (opposite Aston Station), 261, Lichfield Road, Aston, BIRMINGHAM.**

**MAGIC TRICKS,** etc.—Parcels, 2/6, 5/6. Ventriloquist's Instrument. Invisible. Imitate Birds. Price 6d. each, 4 for 1/-.—**T. W. HARRISON, 239, Pentonville Rd., London, N.1.**

**STOP STAMMERING!** Cure yourself as I did. Par-ticulars Free.—**FRANK B. HUGHES, 7, SOUTHAMPTON ROW, LONDON, W.C.1.**

## HAVE YOU A RED NOSE?

Send a stamp to pay postage, and you will learn how to rid yourself of such a terrible affliction free of charge. Enclose stamp.

Address in confidence: **T. J. TEMPLE, Specialist, "PALACE HOUSE," 128, SHAFESBURY AVE., LONDON, W.1.**



## DON'T BE BULLIED

Special offer. **TWO ILLUS. SAMPLE LESSONS** from my Complete Course on **JUJITSU** for four penny stamps, or a Large Illus. Portion of Course for P.O. 3/6. Jujitsu is the best and simplest science of self-defence and attack ever invented. Learn to take care of yourself under ALL circumstances. **SEND NOW.** (Est. 20 years.) **"YAWARA" (Dept. A.F.12), 10, Queensway, Hanworth, Feltham, Middlesex**

## MY GREAT OFFER

I supply the finest Coventry built cycles **ON 14 DAYS' APPROVAL, PACKED FREE AND CARRIAGE PAID,** on receipt of a small deposit. Lowest cash prices, or easy payment terms. Write for Free Bargain Lists NOW.

**O'Brien** THE WORLD'S LARGEST CYCLE DEALER  
200 WEEKS

**DUPLICATE STAMP BOOK THE "LIVER" (65) PACKET FREE!!** ALUMINIUM WATERMARK FINDER Just request approvals. **LISHURN & TOWNSEND, London Road, Liverpool.**

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy is confronted by a tough problem, and tackles it in characteristic fashion!



# D'ARCY'S DILEMMA!

A Splendid New, Long Complete School Story of the Two Brothers D'Arcy, and the Chums of St. Jim's.

By  
**Martin Clifford.**

## CHAPTER 1.

### Very Generous of Trimble!

"WIPPIN' aftahnoon for a picnic, deah boys!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sighed as he spoke. The elegant swell of St. Jim's stood gazing out of the window of Study No. 6 in the Fourth Form passage. And Gussy's chums—Jack Blake, Herries, and Digby—also gazed out of the window. And when Arthur Augustus sighed, they sighed in chorus.

Certainly it was a ripping afternoon for a picnic. The sun blazed down from a cloudless sky, bathing the old quadrangle of St. Jim's with its splendour.

Away in the distance stretched the playing fields, on which a number of flannelled figures could be seen. For it was a half-holiday. But the afternoon was really too hot to play cricket in comfort. A picnic in the Priory Woods, or on the banks of the River Rhyll, was far more to the liking of the juniors.

But—and there was a big "but" in the case—a picnic seemed out of the question.

There was a famine in the land—or, rather, in Study No. 6. The chums of the Fourth had fallen on stony places, so to speak. They had assembled in the study after dinner, in order to take stock of their resources. First Blake had turned out his pockets, and found that his total assets realised fourpence-halfpenny. Digby followed Blake's example, and brought to light a shilling postal-order, which was of no immediate value, for it was made payable to Robert Arthur Digby at Wayland Post Office; and that establishment was closed on Wednesday afternoons.

Herries was wealthy, in comparison with his chums, for he excavated a sixpence which had become embedded in a chunk of toffee. But Herries pointed out that the sixpence could not be spared. He wanted it to buy dog-biscuits for his faithful hound Towser.

Having turned out their pockets with almost negligible results, Blake and Herries and Digby had turned hopefully to Arthur Augustus. Gussy generally came to the rescue when his chums were "stony." His wallet usually bulged with Treasury notes—sometimes with banknotes. Very few fellows at St. Jim's received such a liberal supply of pocket money as Arthur Augustus. But on this occasion Gussy failed to rise to the occasion. His wallet was empty.

It was tantalising to be out of funds on such a glorious afternoon.

Digby's postal-order was useless at the moment; and Blake's fourpence-halfpenny would not go very far towards purchasing a tuck-hammer.

The chums of the Fourth exchanged dismal glances. "Sure you haven't left any fivers lying about, Gussy?" inquired Jack Blake.

"Quite suah, deah boy!"

"Go through all your pockets," said Herries.

"I have wansacked them three times, an' I wefuse to go

through them again!" said Arthur Augustus, with some warmth.

"What about your other suits, Gussy?" suggested Digby. "Pr'aps there's a fiver in one of the pockets of your Sunday waistcoat?"

Arthur Augustus shook his head.

"I wegard that as distinctly impwob," he said.

"Well, you might go and see," said Blake. "I know what you are, Gussy. You leave your money in all sorts of queer places."

"Weally, Blake—I wefuse to dwag myself up to the dorm to hunt for fivahs which are not there! The painful fact is, I'm wroke. I expected my allowance this mornin' frowm my patah, but it didn't turn up."

"Delayed in the post, perhaps," said Herries hopefully.

"There's another post in half an hour. We'd better stick here and watch out for the giddy postman. If he turns up with your remittance, Gussy, everything in the garden will be lovely. If he doesn't—well, the picnic's off, that's all."

The juniors kept watch from the window with gloomy faces.

Waiting about for the postman seemed to be a waste of precious time. But there was nothing else for it.

The postman was late. Nearly an hour had elapsed before he came into view, shuffling through the school gateway with his bag. The juniors at the study window made frantic signals to him as he drew nearer.

"Anything for me?" roared Blake.

"Or me?" shouted Herries and Digby, in unison.

"Or me, deah man?" called Arthur Augustus eagerly.

The ancient postman rummaged in his bag for a moment. Then he shook his head sympathetically.

"Nothin' this arfternoon, young gents," he said. "Better luck next time!"

Four frowning faces disappeared from the window. And four hearts sank into four pairs of boots.

"Nothing doing," growled Blake. "That's put the kybosh on the picnic."

"Absolutely, deah boy!"

"Cricket's the only caper," said Digby. "Dashed if I feel like chasing a cricket-ball, on an afternoon like this. But it's better than stewing in a stuffy study. Come on!"

With plum faces, the members of the Co. stepped out, into the passage.

"I say, you fellows—"

Baggy Trimble of the Fourth bore down upon the juniors. Baggy was perspiring freely—he always did on hot days—but he was looking very merry and bright.

"Cut off, Baggy!" growled Herries.

"Oh, really, Herries—"

"Why have you waylaid us in the passage, Twimble?" demanded Arthur Augustus, surveying Baggy through his celebrated monocle.

"I just came to tell you that everything was ready—"  
began Trimble.

"Eh?"

"The tuck-hamper's arrived—"

"What!"

"And all we've got to do is to cart it down to the river, and have the picnic of our lives!"

"Gweat Scott!"

The juniors blinked at Baggy Trimble in astonishment.

"What are you babbling about?" gasped Blake, at last.

"Are you potty?"

"He's got a touch of the sun I expect," said Digby.

Baggy Trimble waxed indignant.

"Look here, are you fellows coming to the picnic, or are you not?" he demanded. "The hamper's here—it's on the doorstep of Taggles' lodge. It's a hefty hamper, crammed full of tuck! I think you four fellows had better carry it. I mustn't exert myself on hot days. Doctor's orders, you know."

Jack Blake's hand fell upon Trimble's shoulder.

"Explain yourself, before I shake you like a fat rat!" he growled. "What hamper are you talking about?"

Baggy Trimble squirmed in Blake's grasp.

"Leggo, you beast, or I sha'n't invite you to the picnic!" he squealed. "I—I happened to hear you fellows saying it was a ripping afternoon for a picnic, only you were stony—"

"The fat villain's been listening at the keyhole!" hooted Herries.

"Oh, really, Herries! How could a fellow help his boot-lace coming undone outside the door of your study? The fact is, I felt awfully sorry you were on the rocks, so I thought I'd do the generous thing."

"The—the generous thing?" stuttered Blake.

Trimble nodded.

"I used the telephone in the prefects' room, and rang up the Wayland Stores, and ordered an extra-special tuck-hamper to be sent over at once. And it's here."

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. And he regarded the squirming Baggy very curiously through his monocle.

"I—I couldn't bear the thought of you fellows being done out of your picnic owing to a shortage of funds," said Trimble. "I felt I ought to come to the rescue. Quite a brain-wave on my part to order a hamper, wasn't it? Rather a pleasant surprise for you fellows, what? Hee, hee, hee!"

And Baggy Trimble gave a feeble titter.

Jack Blake & Co. did not laugh. They did not even smile. Neither did they look as if Trimble had given them a pleasant surprise. They stared at the fat junior very grimly.

"I'm going to thresh this matter out," said Jack Blake. "You ordered a hamper of tuck from the Wayland Stores, Trimble?"

"Yes."

"In your own name?"

"Ahem!"

"Because, if you did, you haven't the money to pay for it. I'm surprised at the Stores letting you have stuff on tick."

"Ahem!" Baggy Trimble seemed to be troubled with a distressing cough. "I—I didn't order the hamper in my own name, exactly."

"Then whose name did you give?" demanded Blake in startled tones.

"Gussy's!" was the reply.

Arthur Augustus gave a yell.

"Trimble, you fat wottah! How dare you make use of my name without my permish?"

"That's all right, Gussy!"

"It is not all wight! It is vevy fah fwom bein' all wight. It is, as a mattah of fact, all wong!"

"It's the biggest piece of nerve I've ever struck!" said Herries. "Fancy, ordering a hamper in Gussy's name!"

Baggy Trimble wriggled uncomfortably in Blake's iron grasp.

"I don't see where the nerve comes in," he faltered. "I happen to be stony myself, so I asked for the hamper to be put on Gussy's account. Gussy can settle for it when he gets his next remittance. Don't glare at me like that, you beasts! Anybody would think I'd committed a crime!"

"Well, you have," said Blake grimly. "It's next door to a crime, anyway, to order goods in another fellow's name without his consent. And then you tried to pretend that you weré being generous and standing treat. Of course, the hamper must go back."

"What!" shrieked Trimble. "You're going to send the hamper back, after I've gone to all this trouble to get it? I'll never do you fellows a good turn again!"

Arthur Augustus gave Trimble a look which ought to have wilted him.

"I considah, Twimble, that you have behaved abominably," he said. "You had no wight whatevah to ask that the

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 903.

hampah should be debited to me. I shall now have to return it to the Stores, with a note to the managah explainin' the mattah. An' I pwopose, deah boys, that we give Twimble a severe bumpin' on the spot."

"Seconded!" said Herries.

"And carried unanimously," said Blake grimly. "Bump him!"

Baggy Trimble gave a startled gasp.

"Well, of all the black ingratitude—" he began. "After going out of my way to do you fellows a good turn—"

Trimble broke off with a wild yell, as his ample form was swung clear of the floor, and then lowered with a bump which shook every bone in his body.

This process was repeated three times, and three separate and distinct yells of anguish acknowledged the receipt of each bump.

Jack Blake & Co. handled Trimble about as gently as a coalman handles a sack, and the fat junior lay in a sprawling heap at the finish, wondering if an earthquake had hit him. Then the chums of the Fourth strolled away to see about the return of the hamper, leaving Baggy Trimble to bemoan the blackness of man's ingratitude.

## CHAPTER 2.

### D'Arcy Sends a Telegram!

"WELCOME, little strangers!"

Monty Lowther of the Shell hailed Jack Blake & Co. with that cheery greeting as they came on to the cricket-ground.

Practice was in progress on Little Side, but there did not seem to be much enthusiasm about it. The blazing sun seemed to have melted all the energy out of the cricketers.

Tom Merry was batting, and he was keen enough. But several of the fieldsmen had gone on strike, and thrown themselves down in the grass in various attitudes of repose.

Bernard Glyn was bowling, but he was not making hard work of it. He merely strolled up to the bowler's stump and lazily swung his arm over to deliver the ball. Glyn had once invented a mechanical bowler—a weird and wonderful device, which could bowl a ball without human aid.

And the schoolboy inventor fervently wished that he still had this labour-saving device, for at that moment he felt too lazy to live, as he expressed it.

Tom Merry brightened up at the sight of Jack Blake & Co.

"Thank goodness you fellows have rolled up," he said. "You'll be fresh for the bowling. These fellows haven't a kick left in them."

"It's too warm for cricket," said Monty Lowther in self-defence. "Oh, let me lie beneath the shade, alone with pints of lemonade!" as the poet has it. I should advise you fellows not to play, unless you want to turn into grease spots."

"We weren't thinkin' of playin', at first," explained Arthur Augustus. "We decided that a picnic was the pwopah caput. Then we found that our joint wesoources amounted to fourpence-halfpenny, so the picnic was off."

"Why didn't you come to me?" said Lowther. "I could have advanced you a bent threepenny-bit that was refused at the tuckshop."

"Matter of fact," said Tom Merry, "we're pretty much in the same boat as you fellows. Like the seed in the giddy parable, we've fallen on stony places."

"That's so," said Manners. "But I'm surprised at you being broke, Gussy. You're generally rolling in quidlets."

"My wemittance has not awvived fwom home," said Arthur Augustus. "I hoped it would come by the aftahnoon post, but there's nothin' doin'. I must write to my patah, and ask him to huwvy it along. It is distinctly embaw-wassin', bai Jove, to be stwanded on the wocks."

"Oh, you won't be stony for long," said Tom Merry.

"Bowl up, somebody!"

Jack Blake took the ball, and he bowled with tremendous energy—for a few moments. Then he mopped the perspiration from his brow, and tossed the ball to Arthur Augustus.

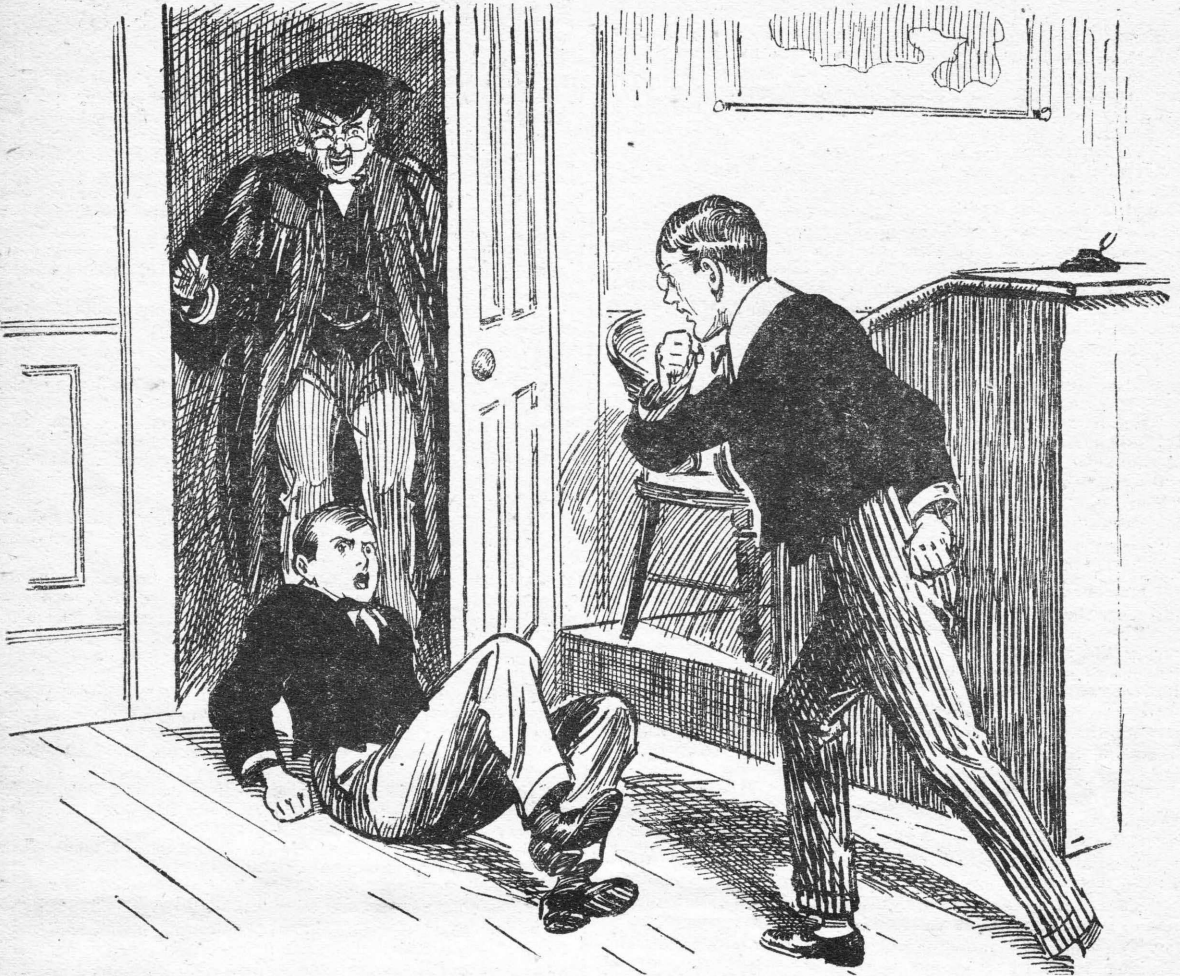
"Take a turn, Gussy," he said. "I'm roasted!"

Arthur Augustus was soon in the same state. He was as fresh as paint when he started to bowl, but his face soon grew as red as a turkeycock, and presently the perspiration streamed down his cheeks. Gussy was very relieved when Herries took his place. He threw himself down on the grass, and fanned himself with a silk handkerchief.

"Bai Jove!" he gasped. "Sunnah has come with a vengeance. The clerk of the weath'ah is handin' out more than our fair share of sunshine. He seems to have mistaken England for the twopics."

Jack Blake took Tom Merry's place at the wicket, but he could find nobody to bowl to him. And by mutual consent the cricket practice was abandoned.

Arthur Augustus was about to suggest ginger-beer and ice at the tuckshop, but he was brought up short by the recollection that he was "stony."



Right and left, left and right, D'Arcy's fist shot out, and Mellish reeled back under the bombardment. Crash! A powerful drive in the chest bowled Mellish over at last, and he rolled at the feet of Mr. Lathom, who had just arrived, and stood frowning in the doorway. (See page 8.)

Dame Taggles would have been quite willing to supply refreshments on credit, in cases where she knew that the credit was good; but Arthur Augustus preferred to pay cash for everything.

Tea-time came, but the cupboard of Study No. 6 was as bare as Mother Hubbard's.

"This means tea in Hall," grunted Blake.

"Don't flatter it by calling it tea," said Digby. "A cup of flavoured water and a hunk of bread-and-margarine. Groo!"

Tea in Hall was certainly no banquet. It was the last resort of those who were short of funds, and without visible means of subsistence. And the chums of the Fourth devoutly hoped that the famine would not last long, and that remittances from home would soon make a welcome appearance.

After tea Arthur Augustus wrote a letter to Lord Eastwood, mildly reproaching that worthy gentleman for being behindhand with his son's allowance.

Whilst the letter was being written, Wally D'Arcy, the cheery-faced minor of Arthur Augustus, looked into the study.

"Heard from home, Gussy?" he inquired.

"No, deah boy!"

"Neither have I. What can the pater be thinking about this week? I'm broke to the wide!"

Arthur Augustus smiled.

"We both happen to be in Queeah Stweeth," he said, "an' that is a most undesivable thowoughfare. But I'm just w'itin' to the patah, an' I have no doubt he will weply by return. We must possess our souls in patience——"

"Bow-wow!"

Arthur Augustus frowned.

"Weally, Wally! That is a vewy wude expression to make to your eldah bwothah!"

"Rats!" said the irrepressible Wally. "Let me know as soon as you hear from the pater, Gussy."

And the fag scuttled away. The fact that he was "broke"

did not seem to weigh very heavily on Wally's mind. He knew that Eastwood House was a horn of plenty, and he was confident that his allowance—and Gussy's—would arrive in the course of a few posts.

But the next day brought no letter, and the day after that the post-rack was scanned in vain.

Jack Blake had a remittance from home, and so did Digby. But there was nothing for the D'Arcys major or minor.

"It is weally too bad of the patah," said Arthur Augustus on the evening of the second day. "I distinctly requested him to send me my allowance by return. I told him it was jollay urgent!"

"These paters are a nuisance, sometimes," said Monty Lowther. "They should be taught to obey orders."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Your remittance ought to have arrived by now, Gussy," said Tom Merry. "What are you going to do about it?"

Arthur Augustus pondered the problem.

"I shall send a telewam to my patah," he said, after a pause. "Oh, but I can't!" he added, remembering his predicament. "They won't let me send telewams on tick."

"Hardly!" said Jack Blake, with a grin. "But that's all right, Gussy. I'll lend you the cash for the telewam."

"Thanks aw'f'ly, deah boy!"

"And we'll all toddle down with you to the post-office," said Lowther.

Quite a big escort accompanied Arthur Augustus to the Rylcombe post-office.

The swell of St. Jim's was looking a trifle worried. He could not understand why his urgent "S.O.S." to Lord Eastwood had not been answered by return, as requested. It was no joke to be kept short of money, even for a few days. Some fellows, like Baggy Trimble, were perpetually "stony," and they were more or less resigned to their fate. But it was a novel experience for Arthur Augustus, who usually had "money to burn."

The juniors trooped into the little post-office, and Arthur Augustus got busy with his telegram. He filled one form, and then another, and he would probably have started on a third had not Jack Blake seized him by the arm.

"My hat, Gussy!" he exclaimed. "Are you writing a telegram or a serial story?"

"Weally, Blake—"

"If that telegram exceeds a hundred words I shall be bankrupt!" growled Blake. "Personally, I don't see why it should exceed half a dozen."

"Gussy repeats himself like a giddy parrot when he sends a wire," said Monty Lowther, with a chuckle. "And he rambles on and on, like he does when he's writing a letter. I expect you'll find that he's started his telegram like this: 'My Dear Pater,—Just a few lines hoping you are quite well, as it leaves me at present.'"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus screwed his monocle into his eye, and glared at the humorous Lowther.

"I suppose you think you are funny?" he said.

"Not half so funny as your telegram, old top! Do read it to us—if it's not too personal, that is. It's bound to be a scream!"

"Weally, Lowthah!" said Arthur Augustus indignantly. "You will not find a single superfluous word in this telegram."

"I know that," said Lowther. "I shall find about a hundred!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus handed over his telegram, and the juniors stared at it in wonder. Certainly Gussy's message to his father did not err on the side of brevity. It was a very long-winded screed—as long as the Head's Sunday sermon, as Lowther expressed it.

"Gussy, you ass!" said Jack Blake, aghast. "I refuse to pay for the dispatch of that wire until you've boiled it down to half a dozen words!"

Arthur Augustus looked distressed.

"How on earth can I compress it into six words?" he asked.

"Quite easily," said Tom Merry, laughing. "All you need say to your worthy sire is, 'Allowance not arrived. Urgent. Please dispatch.'"

"Yaas, but I want to inquirah if everythin' is all wight at home, if my patah is fit an' well, an' all that—"

"You can make those sort of inquiries by letter, fathead! Making them by telegram is a pretty expensive way of doing things. Of course, if Blake doesn't mind—"

"I do mind," grunted Blake. "I'll do anything in reason, but I'm not going to blue the whole of my capital on a silly telegram!"

After further argument, Arthur Augustus reluctantly condensed his telegram into half a dozen words, and passed it over the counter.

"That is a great weight off my mind, deah boys," he remarked, as the juniors quitted the post-office. "I'm certain to get a weply ffrom my patah in the mornin'; an' also a wemittance."

"Don't be too sure, Gussy," said Monty Lowther. "Blessed is he that expecteth nothing, for he shall not be disappointed!"

But Arthur Augustus expected something, and he expected that something right soon. For some unaccountable reason Lord Eastwood had not replied to his letter; but he could not very well ignore an urgent telegram. And Arthur Augustus trotted back quite cheerfully to St. Jim's, confident that the overdue remittance would arrive in the morning.

#### MAIL-ORDER FIRM'S SUCCESS!

Owing to the ever-increasing demand for Mead Cycles, the Mead Cycle Company Incorporated, of Birmingham, has recently moved into a very much larger factory. The new works at Fallows Road, Birmingham, has a floor-space of 42,000 square feet, and the extensive modern manufacturing plant which has been installed will enable the company to greatly increase its output, thus ensuring that every customer will obtain immediate delivery.

Any of our readers who wish to purchase a Mead Cycle, either for cash or on the easy payment plan, can do so with the confident assurance that they will receive the value, quality, and unvarying courtesy which have made the name Mead a symbol for all that is best in British mail-order trading.

The company has just issued a large beautifully-illustrated cycle catalogue, a free copy of which will be sent to anyone on receipt of a postcard. Be sure and mention GEM.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 305.

#### CHAPTER 3. Still Stony!

"BAI Jove! This is weally wemarkable, 'deah boys!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was standing on the School House steps in the bright morning sunshine. He had risen with the lark, and had hurried downstairs to see if the long-delayed letter from Lord Eastwood had arrived.

It had not. Only one communication had arrived for the swell of St. Jim's, and that was a printed official form. Arthur Augustus frowned at it, and his frown deepened as he perused it.

"What's wrong, Gussy?" asked Jack Blake, coming on the scene with Herries and Digby.

"I wepeat, deah boys, this is weally wemarkable! The telegram I sent to my patah ovahnight has not been delivahed."

"My hat!"

"This is an official notice ffrom the post-office people, sayin' that the telegwam could not be delivahed owin' to Eastwood House bein' shut up. That is utterly widic. The house is not shut up at all. My patah is in wescidence."

"But he can't be," said Digby, "or they'd have delivered the wire."

Arthur Augustus looked quite perplexed.

"I am in quite a fog, deah boys," he said. "I can't undahstand what has happened."

"Looks to me as if Lord Eastwood was called away suddenly at short notice," said Blake. "That would account for your remittance not turning up. Anyway, you can soon find out. All you've got to do is to ring up Eastwood House on the telephone. Old Lathom will let you use his phone after brekker, if you ask him nicely."

Arthur Augustus nodded.

"I will certainly telephone, an' get this mystewy unwavelled," he said. "Good-mornin', Wally!" he added, as his minor came trotting up.

"Morning, Gussy!" was the cheerful reply. "Any news from home?"

"No, deah boy! As you are awaih, I sent an urgent telegwam to the patah last night, but it has not been delivahed. Appawvently there is nobody at home."

"Great pip!" ejaculated Wally. "The pater's gone off on his giddy travels, I suppose. But why didn't he write and tell us he was going, and enclose our allowance? It's a bit thick, leaving us stranded on the rocks like this!"

"I am suah the post-office people are mistaken," said Arthur Augustus. "The patah wouldn't dream of goin' away without informin' me beforehand. I shall telephone aftah byekkah, an' I quite expect to find him at home. He may be ill, an' that would account for his not havin' w'ritten."

The breakfast-gong sounded at that moment, and the juniors trooped into the dining-hall with healthy appetites. Even Arthur Augustus did full justice to his eggs-and-bacon, though he was feeling a trifle worried. He could not understand why his telegram to Lord Eastwood had not been delivered.

When the meal was over Arthur Augustus obtained permission from Mr. Lathom to use the telephone in the Form master's study. He put through a trunk call to Eastwood House, and waited, with as much patience as he could muster, for the result. His minor Wally waited outside in the passage.

There was a long delay, so long, in fact, that Arthur Augustus was afraid he would be late for morning lessons. His arm ached with holding the receiver. It seemed an eternity before the operator's voice sounded over the wires.

"You're through, sir!"

"Not weally?" said Arthur Augustus sarcastically. "You can't mean it! I haven't been waitin' more than half an hour. Hallo! Who is that!"

"Eastwood 'Ouse 'ere!" came the reply.

Arthur Augustus jumped. He had expected to hear the familiar voice of his father. But obviously it was not Lord Eastwood speaking. His lordship was not in the habit of shedding his aspirates.

"Bai Jove!" gasped the swell of St. Jim's. "Who is that speakin'?"

"Arry 'Awkins. An' 'oo might you be?"

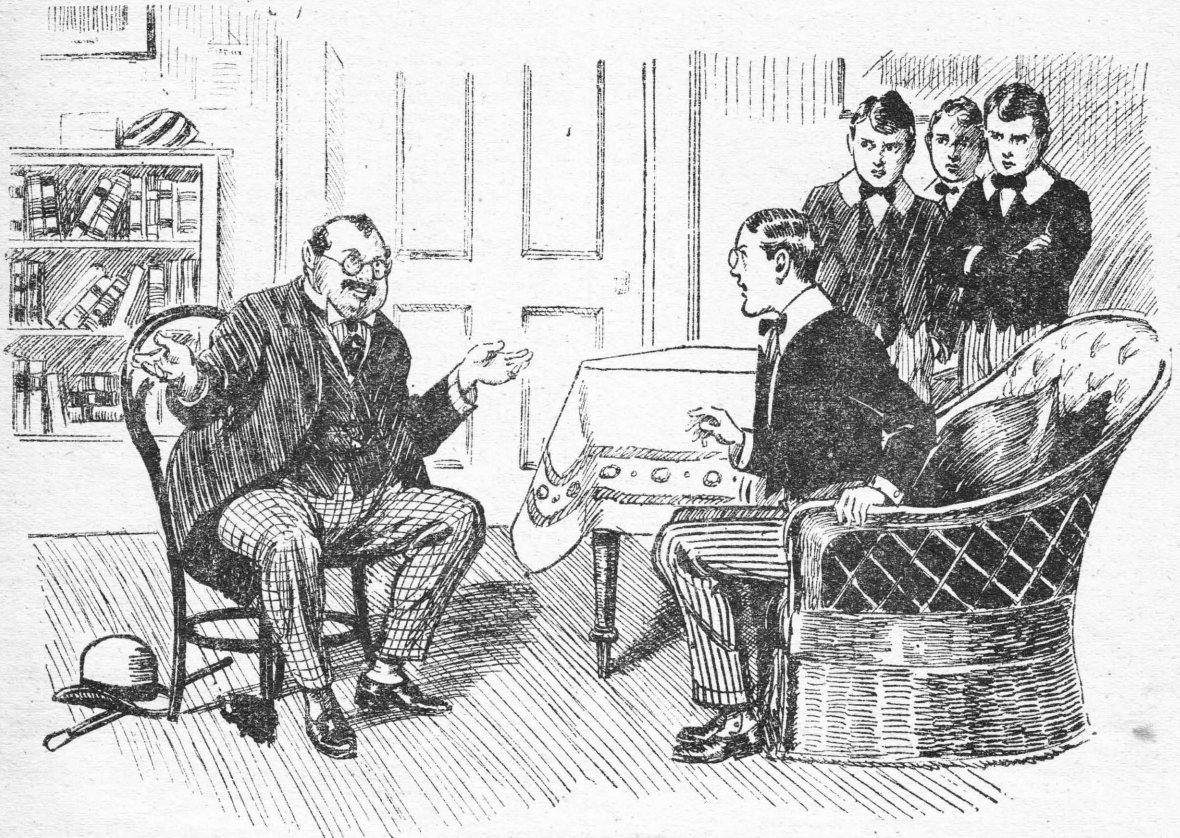
"Deah me!" murmured Arthur Augustus in perplexity. "I must have got the w'ong numbah. That cannot be Eastwood House. There is no membah of the staff named Hawwy Hawkins."

"'Souse me, but I'm the caretaker! I'm a-mindin' the 'ouse in the habscence of 'is lordship!"

"Oh! Then—then Lord Eastwood is not at home? This is his son speakin', ffrom St. Jim's."

The voice of Mr. Harry Hawkins became much more respectful.

"Oh, yessir! Good-mornin', sir! Is there anythin' I can do for you?"



"Now, Mr. Wubenstein," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, "p'waps you will enlighten me as to the reason for your visit?" Mr. Rubenstein looked surprised. "Vot?" he cried, in surprise. "Surely you know why I haf called, Master D'Arcy? I understand that you are—hem—financially embarrassed—" "What!" almost shrieked Arthur Augustus. (See page 9.)

"Where is my patah—I mean Lord Eastwood?" demanded Arthur Augustus.

"Arsk me another, sir. 'Is lordship never said nothink to me about 'is movements. 'Ee jest give me instructions, by the butler, to look after the 'ouse while he was away. An' then 'e 'opped it, or, to put it perlitely, slung 'is 'ook."

"An' you have no ideah where he has gone?"

"No, sir."

"Or how long he is goin' to be away?"

"No, sir."

"Bai Jove! This is most extwaordinawy! How long has Lord Eastwood been away, Hawkins?"

"Three days, sir. 'E went off in the dooce of an 'urry. You never see such a rush. The servants was a-flyin' an' a-tearin' around—"

"Where are they now?"

"The servants, sir? 'Is lordship took some of them with 'im, an' the others 'e sent to their 'omes."

"Then you are the sole occupant of Eastwood House at present?"

"That's so, sir. An' if there is anythink I can do—"

"There's nothin', thank you," said Arthur Augustus.

And he bade good-morning to Mr. Harry Hawkins, and replaced the receiver on its hooks. Then, looking very mystified, he stepped out of the study.

"So the pater's not at home, eh?" said Wally D'Arcy, as his major emerged. "I heard what you were saying. Fancy the old man bunking off like this, and leaving us in the apple-cart! We shall be stony until he comes back. And you've no idea when that will be, I suppose?"

"None whatevah!" said Arthur Augustus. "I do not even know where he has gone. It is most exaspewatin'! I shall speak vevy severely to the patah on the subject when I see him again."

"Good!" said Wally with a grin. "Ask him what he means by buzzing off without getting our permission in writing beforehand."

Arthur Augustus frowned at his minor.

"Weally, Wally, it is not a mattah for mewwiment," he observed. "It is most embawwassin' to be without funds. I was obliged to bowwow fwom Blake last night to send the telegwam; an' this mornin', forgettin' the plight I was in, I went to tip Taggles, the portah, only to find that I had nothin' to tip him with. Taggles was quite huffy about it."

"I don't wonder," said Wally. "Still, we needn't worry about the pater. He's all right. He'll turn up again soon, and give us an extra-special remittance for keeping us waiting so long."

"I sincerely hope so, Wally. An' I wish I had your happy-go-lucky disposish. You don't seem to mind bein' bwoke, but it's a nightmare to me. To my mind, there is no misewy like the misewy of bein' without funds. I am beginnin' to wish I'd been a bit more thwifty in the past, an' then I could have met this emergency. Howevah—"

The bell for morning lessons put a period to the ruminations of Arthur Augustus. And the swell of St. Jim's nodded to his minor, and hurried along to the Fourth Form room.

Most of the fellows were already in their places. But Mr. Lathom had not yet come in, and there was a buzz of conversation. Several glances were turned upon Arthur Augustus as he entered.

"Have you phoned to Eastwood House, Gussy?" asked Blake.

"Yaas, deah boy."

"Was your pater at home?"

Arthur Augustus shook his head.

"He is away, an' the house is in charge of a caretakah. I don't know where he has gone, or why, or for how long. It is vevy remarkahle."

There was a snigger from Percy Mellish, the cad of the Fourth.

"Looks to me as if Lord Eastwood has come a cropper," he remarked.

Arthur Augustus spun round upon the speaker.

"Come a cwoppah?" he repeated. "What, exactly, do you mean by that wemark, Mellish?"

"A financial cropper, I mean," said Mellish calmly. "I expect the family fortunes have petered out, and there's nothing left in the old oak chest. So your pater has had to pack up and clear out."

Arthur Augustus flushed crimson.

"You awful wottah, to suggest such a thing!" he exclaimed. "My patah is a man of substance—"

"So were lots of our griddy lords and dukes, at one time," said Mellish, "but they're feeling the draught a bit now. I see by the papers that a good many of them are selling up."

their estates, and I dare say Lord Eastwood's in the same boat. And if that's the case, I can't say I'm sorry for him. Lords ought to work for their living, same as other people. Why should they spend their lives in selfish luxury, and never do a hand's turn? I consider—"

"Dry up, you cad!" shouted Blake.

"Smash him, Gussy!" roared Herries.

Mellish merely grinned. He considered he was quite safe from assault and battery, for Mr. Lathom would arrive at any moment.

But if Mellish imagined that Arthur Augustus would sit with folded arms and hear Lord Eastwood slandered, he imagined a vain thing.

The swell of St. Jim's pushed back his cuffs, and fairly leapt at Mellish. He received plenty of encouragement from the onlookers, but it was not needed.

"You have spoken in a disrespeful way of my patah," panted Arthur Augustus, "an' I will administrah a feahful thwashin'!"

"Go it, Gussy!"

And Arthur Augustus "went it." Right and left, left and right, his fists shot out, and Mellish reeled back under the bombardment. He was no fighting-man, and he offered but a feeble resistance to the onslaught.

Crash!

A powerful drive in the chest bowled Mellish over like a skittle. He went down, and rolled a couple of yards before he stopped. And when he did stop it was at the feet of little Mr. Lathom, who had just arrived, and stood frowning in the doorway.

"Bless my soul! What does this, disturbance mean?" demanded the master of the Fourth. "How came you to be grovelling at my feet, Mellish? Get up at once!"

Mellish scrambled to his feet. He was looking white and spiteful.

"D'Arcy went for me like a hooligan, sir—" he began.

"Tell Mr. Lathom why!" said Arthur Augustus.

Mellish was silent. And Mr. Lathom turned to the swell of St. Jim's.

"Why did you attack Mellish, D'Arcy?" he demanded.

"I would wathah Mellish told you himself, sir."

"Well, Mellish?"

"D'Arcy had no cause to go for me like a madman, sir. I was simply saying—"

"He was saying rotten things about Lord Eastwood, sir!" squeaked Baggy Trimble, who was never averse to sneaking. "He said that Lord Eastwood ought to work for his living, instead of spending a life of selfish luxury."

Mr. Lathom frowned.

"In that case you richly merited a thrashing, Mellish," he said. "But for the fact that D'Arcy has already punished you, I should give you a severe caning. Go back to your place."

Mellish went sullenly back to his seat, and morning lessons began. But the cad of the Fourth did not concentrate his mind upon lessons. He was thinking of the fellow who had thrashed him, and wondering how he could "get his own back" on Arthur Augustus.

And, before the time of dismissal came, Mellish had hit upon what he considered a very good scheme for causing annoyance to the swell of St. Jim's.

#### CHAPTER 4.

#### A Visitor for Gussy!

"GENTLEMAN to see you, Master D'Arcy!" Toby, the page, was grinning as he made that announcement, and there was an ironic emphasis on the word "gentleman."

It was quite obvious, from the way Toby spoke, that the person who had called to see Master D'Arcy was not really entitled to the grand old name of gentleman. He was merely a worthless imitation.

Jack Blake & Co. were at tea in their study. With the exception of Arthur Augustus, they were in funds again, and Study No. 6 resembled a land flowing with milk and honey. At all events, there was quite a palatable spread on the table.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy glanced up with a frown. Visitors—unless they happened to be postmen with registered letters—were not welcome to the swell of St. Jim's at that moment.

"Bothah!" said Arthur Augustus. "Who is it, Toby?"

"Ere's his card," said Toby. And he handed over a very grubby-looking visiting-card, which bore the inscription:

"MR. REUBEN RUBENSTEIN,  
Financier."

The address on the card was Bank Chambers, Wayland.

Arthur Augustus blinked at the card in astonishment.

"Mr. Weuben Wubenstein," he murmured. "I have not the pleasuah of his acquaintance!"

"What is he?" asked Blake.

"He descwebes himself as a fianciiah."

"That's a glorified name for moneylender," said Blake, with a grin. "What have you been up to, Gussy? Don't tell us you've got into the clutches of a moneylending shark!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Gentleman's gettin' impatient, Master D'Arcy," interposed Toby. "He's trampin' up an' down the passage."

"Let him tramp!" growled Herries. "We don't want any precious fianciers barging in while we're at tea."

Arthur Augustus wrinkled his brows thoughtfully.

"I think I had better see Mr. Wubenstein, deah boys, an' discovah what he wants with me," he said. "Show him in, Toby!"

The pageboy withdrew into the passage. There was a murmur of voices, and the next moment the door was opened wide, to admit Mr. Reuben Rubenstein.

That gentleman's appearance was not calculated to make the juniors fall in love with him at first sight. He was short and stout, and sleek and oily. He was ostentatiously dressed, and his gold watchchain and diamond tiepin were almost aggressively conspicuous. Three of his fat fingers were encircled with rings. His face was bloated, and he was perspiring freely. His eyes were large and bulging—codfish eyes, as Blake described them in an undertone to Digby.

Mr. Reuben Rubenstein advanced into the study. He removed his top-hat, disclosing a semi-bald pate, on which the perspiration lay like melted butter.

Arthur Augustus drew back with a little shudder of revulsion, as Mr. Rubenstein held out a large and flabby hand.

"Goot-afternoon, young shentleman!" said the financier affably. "I believe I haf the honour to address Master Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the son of Lord Eastwood?"

Arthur Augustus nodded curtly. He did not appear to notice the flabby hand extended to him, and Mr. Rubenstein withdrew it.

"I am pleased to meet you, mine front!" he said. "These young shentlemen are your frents, I presume? If you vill ask them to step outside for a few moments, ve vill talk pizz'ness."

"Weally, Mr. Wubenstein!" said Arthur Augustus coldly. "I should not dweam of askin' my fwields to step outside!"

"You vish them to remain?"

"Certainly!"

The financier shrugged his shoulders.

"Very vell," he said. "It is not very discreet to discuss our pizz'ness in the presence of others. But if you vish it, I haf nothing more to say."

"Will you sit down?" said Arthur Augustus, as politely as possible in the circumstances. "Give him a chair, Dig."

Digby jerked a chair towards Mr. Rubenstein, and it creaked loudly as the financier deposited his plump person upon it.

## BOOKS OF SPORT AND ADVENTURE.

Ask your newsagent to show you these books!

### THE BOYS' FRIEND LIBRARY.

- No. 761.—**THE ROTTER OF THE ROTTERS.**  
A Splendid Story of the Footer Field, introducing DICK DARE.  
By RANDOLPH RYLE.
- No. 762.—**THAT TERRIBLE TERM!**  
A Rollicking Summer Story of Schoolboy Fun and Adventure.  
By SIDNEY DREW.
- No. 763.—**DON DARREL ON THE TURF.**  
A Magnificent Yarn of Racing and Adventure on the Turf.  
By WICHTOR NELSON.
- No. 764.—**THE CADDIES OF ST. CUTHBERT'S.**  
A Novel and Exciting Sports Story of a Boy Golfer's Career.  
By A. S. HARDY.

### THE SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY.

- No. 379.—**LIMITED LIABILITY.**  
A Story of Detective Work, introducing Sexton Blake and Tinker.
- No. 380.—**BY ORDER OF THE KING.**  
A Magnificent Tale of Mystery and Detective Adventure in England and ABySSINIA.
- No. 381.—**THE MYSTERY OF THE POT-BANK.**  
A Romance of the Potteries and the Peak District.
- No. 382.—**THE TRAINER'S SECRET.**  
A Fascinating Story of the DERBY, featuring Sexton Blake and Tinker.

### THE SCHOOLBOYS' OWN LIBRARY.

- No. 3.—**THE GREYFRIARS BUSINESS MAN.**  
A Mirth-provoking Story of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars.  
By FRANK RICHARDS.
- No. 4.—**THE FIGHTING FORM OF ST. FRANK'S.**  
A Hipping Yarn of School Life at St. Frank's, featuring Willy Handforth, the Boy Who Wouldn't be Bullied. By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS.

Now on Sale.

Price Fourpence Each!



"Now, Mr. Wubenstein," said Arthur Augustus, "p'waps you will enlighten me as to the reason for your visit?"

Mr. Rubenstein looked surprised.

"Vot? Surely you know why I haf called, Master D'Arcy? I understand that you are—hem!—financially empparressed—"

"What!" almost shrieked Arthur Augustus.

"Or, as you should call it, on the rocks," went on Mr. Rubenstein imperturbably. "You haf no monish—hey? You are vantage to negotiate a little loan?"

Arthur Augustus jumped to his feet. His eyes were gleaming.

"How dare you!" he exclaimed wrathfully. "I wegard you as a vewy insultin' person, Mr. Wubenstein! If you are a moneylendah, you have no wight on these pwemises! Pway wemove yourself at once!"

"Vot? Vot?" gasped Mr. Rubenstein, becoming almost as angry as Arthur Augustus. "You ring me up on the telephone, and tell me you are vantage a little loan, and I gif up my valuable time to come over here, and now you tell me I haf no right on the premises! If your telephone-call vas a silly joke, I will go straight to your headmaster! I will not be hoaxed by a young rascal of a schoolboy!"

Arthur Augustus blinked under that torrent of words.

"Bai Jove!" he gasped. "You—you appear to be undah a delusion, Mr. Wubenstein. You say I wung you up on the telephone—"

Mr. Rubenstein nodded quite fiercely.

"I assuah you I did nothin' of the sort," said Arthur Augustus. "I am not in the habit of communicatin' with moneylendahs, eithah by lettah or telephone!"

"I should think not!" chimed in Jack Blake. "St. Jim's fellows give people of your sort a wide berth, Mr. Rubenstein."

The moneylender ignored Blake, and turned to Arthur Augustus.

"You did not ring me up at two o'clock this afternoon?" he said.

"Certainly not!"

Mr. Rubenstein looked quite perplexed.

"Vell, I will take your vord for it," he said. "But a young shentleman at this school called me up, and gave his name as Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. He said he vas the son of Lord Eastwood, and that he vas in urgent need of a loan of fifty pounds."

"Bai Jove!"

"I am always villing to help lame dogs over stiles," said Mr. Rubenstein, with the air of a philanthropist. "That is why I gave up my valuable time, and came over here vith the monish. See!"

And Mr. Rubenstein pulled out a wallet from his breast-pocket, and exhibited a bundle of banknotes. Perhaps he hoped that Arthur Augustus would be tempted at the sight of them, and would be prepared to do a deal. But Arthur Augustus was not in the least impressed by that display of wealth. And Mr. Rubenstein, after a pause, restored the notes to the wallet, and the wallet to his pocket.

"It seems to me, Master D'Arcy," he said, "that von of your schoolfellows has been playing pranks, by ringing me up and representing himself as you, and asking me to call here. My time—my valuable time—has been vasted. But perhaps it has not been vasted, after all. Perhaps I could accommodate you vith a little loan, to be repaid on the easiest possible terms?"

Arthur Augustus glared.

"If you happen to be short of ready monish," went on Mr. Rubenstein, "this is an offer vich you cannot refuse."

But Arthur Augustus did refuse it, and his refusal was blunt and emphatic.

"Weally, Mr. Wubenstein," he said, "your offah leaves me cold. I should not dream of havin' twansactions with a moneylendah. Moreovah, I am a minah; an' you know perfectly well that you have no wight to appwoach minahs!"

"If the Head knew about this he'd give you fits!" growled Herries.

Mr. Rubenstein looked quite alarmed.

"You will not mention this to your headmaster?" he said anxiously. "I vas not suggesting that Master D'Arcy should borrow the monish as an ordinary pizz-ness deal. It could be quite a private matter. He would accept the loan from me as if I vas a personal frent!"

Arthur Augustus frowned.

"I should not think of wegardin' any wotten moneylendah as a friend of mine!" he said, with some heat. "You will gweately oblige me, Mr. Wubenstein, by takin' your departure."

The moneylender rose to his feet with a scowl.

"Vot about my time—my precious time vch I have vasted?" he said.

"That's your funeral," said Blake.

"Vot about my fare? I came from Vayland to Rycombe by train. I must insist on my fare being paid!"

"Why, it's only eightpence return!" said Digby. "A

giddy financier, rolling in shekels, oughtn't to make a fuss about eightpence."

"I vant my fare," said Rubenstein sullenly.

"Oh, give him his fare, and get rid of him!" grunted Herries.

Jack Blake produced a sixpence and a couple of coppers from his pocket, and handed them to Mr. Rubenstein. And that gentleman, bitterly disappointed at having been brought to St. Jim's on a fool's errand, stamped out of the study and slammed the door.

"Thank goodness!" said Blake, with a sigh of relief. "I'm jolly glad to see the back of that oily merchant!"

"Yaas, watah!"

"Wonder who put him up to coming here?" said Digby. "The rotter deserves a jolly good licking!"

"I'm afraid we shall nevah find out who it was," said Arthur Augustus, pouring himself out a fresh cup of tea. "He's had his wotten jape, an' I hope he's satisfied."

But the identity of the practical joker did not remain hidden.

After tea, Arthur Augustus was summoned to the telephone in the prefects' room. He hurriedly made his way to that apartment, hoping it might be a message from Lord Eastwood. But he was disappointed. It was a gruff voice, obviously disguised, that addressed him over the wires.

"That you, Gussy?"

"My name is D'Arcy," said the Swell of St. Jim's stiffly. "Who are you?"

"Find out!"

"Weally, you wottah—"

"I say, Gussy, did your pal Rubenstein drop in on you this afternoon?"

Arthur Augustus fairly bristled with rage.

"Do not dare to wefer to that oily scoundwel as my pal!" he said.

"How much did you borrow off him?"

"What?"

"Did he advance you the fifty quid?"

Arthur Augustus breathed hard.

"If only I knew who you were, you wotten cad, I'd advance you a thick eah!"

"Poor old Gussy! You'd like to have my blood, wouldn't you? But there's nothing doing! Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus gave a start. He thought he recognised that cackle.

In an unguarded moment the practical joker had given himself away. The cackle was repeated, and Gussy's suspicion ripened into a certainty. It was the cackle of Mellish of the Fourth!

Arthur Augustus said nothing more. He simply jammed the receiver on to its hooks, and strode out of the prefects' room. But he mentally resolved to deal with Percy Mellish at the first opportunity. He informed his chums of the discovery, and they all went down to the school gates to wait for Mellish. It was believed that he had spoken from the public call office in Wayland.

The Fourth-Formers had not waited long before a figure loomed up in the gathering dusk, and Mellish of the Fourth came into view, whistling a merry tune. But the merriment of Mellish soon gave place to weeping and gnashing of teeth.

The cad of the Fourth had already received one thrashing that day; and now he got an encore, so to speak. And the second thrashing was more painful and thorough than the first.

Arthur Augustus punched and pommelled the practical joker without mercy; and he did not desist until Percy Mellish lay moaning and groaning in the school gateway, feeling as if he had passed through a mangle and under a steam roller at the same time! Mellish had been made to realise that the way of the practical joker—like that of the transgressor—is hard.

## CHAPTER 5.

### The Only Way!

A WEEK passed, and there was no news from Lord Eastwood.

The esteemed paterfamilias of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy seemed to have vanished into thin air.

It was only too probable that his lordship was abroad. Had he been in England he could hardly have failed to communicate with his sons. He was on the Continent, perhaps, or even farther afield; and if he was constantly moving from place to place, he would naturally not wish to write letters, or to receive them.

Why had he gone away, where he was, and what he was doing, were mysteries which neither Arthur Augustus nor Wally could solve. They could only guess and surmise.

Arthur Augustus began seriously to wonder if all was well with his worthy sire. But Wally did not worry. The happy-go-lucky leader of the St. Jim's fags was confident that

Lord Eastwood would soon turn up again. He had no haunting thoughts or sleepless nights.

Arthur Augustus, however, was growing hungry for news. Every day he rang up Eastwood House to inquire of Henry Hawkins, the caretaker, if Lord Eastwood was back. And every day the reply was in the negative.

No news is supposed to be good news; but Arthur Augustus began to question the truth of that adage. He wished his father would write, or cable, or communicate with him in some way. The suspense was beginning to get on Gussy's nerves.

And, meanwhile, the Swell of St. Jim's was "stony." He had been in that undesirable condition for some time now; and it was not a pleasant experience, to go about with empty pockets—especially as Arthur Augustus had been accustomed to having plenty of money, and spending it freely.

Gussy's chums in the Fourth would cheerfully have advanced him any sum he cared to name, within reason; and the same applied to Tom Merry & Co. They repeatedly pressed loans upon him, but he repeatedly declined to accept them.

"You see, deah boys," he would say, "if I accepted your vevy kind offahs, I shouldn't know when I should be able to pay you back. I have had no news of my patah. It might be weeks—even monthis—befoah he weturns; an' I couldn't keep you waitin' an unweasonable time for your money. Thanks evah so much; but I'm not takin' any loans! It's a beastly nuisance, bein' bwoke like this, but I must twy an' stick it out."

And Arthur Augustus stuck it out very well indeed, in the circumstances. He was forced to forgo many of the joys of life—the snacks at the tuckshop, the visits to the cinema in Wayland, and the purchase of fancy socks and knitted neckties. He was having what Monty Lowther humorously called an "Adversity" education; but he was not really unhappy about it.

He was surprised to find what a lot of things a fellow could do without, when it came to the push, and he also made the discovery that the simple pleasures of life—those that cost nothing—were the best.

One could bathe in the River Rhyl, for instance, without paying a penny, and thoroughly enjoy it. One could take long tramps over the Sussex Downs, on a half-holiday, and not envy those who could afford swifter means of transport than Shanks' ponies. Being without funds did not necessarily mean that life was not worth living.

But presently something happened which worried Arthur Augustus not a little.

The postman brought a letter for him one afternoon, and Gussy pounced upon it eagerly, expecting to find the Eastwood crest on the back of the envelope. Instead of which appeared the name of a firm of tailors in London.

Inside the envelope was a bill for twenty pounds, in respect of suits and hats and hosiery ordered at various times.

Arthur Augustus glanced at the bill with a glum expression. He had had similar bills before, many a time and oft, but they had not worried him. He had simply posted them on to his pater for settlement, and promptly dismissed them from his mind.

But how could he forward this particular bill to his father, when Lord Eastwood's whereabouts were unknown?

The tailors would not mind waiting for settlement; but Arthur Augustus did not want them to be kept waiting. He was a conscientious youth in matters of this sort. The tailors had delivered the goods, and they must have their money.

Arthur Augustus was standing on the School House steps, frowning at the bill, when his chums joined him.

"What's wrong, Gussy?" asked Jack Blake. "You've got a face as long as a fiddle!"

"I am feelin' wathah wowwied, deah boy."

Blake looked sympathetic.

"Cheer up, Gussy!" he said. "You mustn't let worry get you down. Care killed a cat, you know."

Arthur Augustus brightened up a little. The friendship of his study-mates meant a good deal to him in these days. And Jack Blake and George Herries and Robert Arthur Digby had proved themselves friends indeed. They were not fair-weather friends, who stood by Arthur Augustus in his prosperity, and deserted him in his poverty. Whether the swell of St. Jim's was rolling in riches or on the rocks made no difference to their loyalty.

"I have just weceived a bill for twenty pounds ffrom my tailahs," explained Arthur Augustus.

"Phew!"

"Twenty quid! That's an awful lot," said Herries.

"It is not a great deal in normal cires. But when a fellow happens to be bwoke, an' cannot get in touch with his patah,

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 903.

it seems a mattah of impossibility to pwoduce twenty quids. But I must waise the wind somehow. This bill has got to be paid as soon as poss."

"Why?" said Blake. "Let it rip! Your pater will settle it when he comes home."

Arthur Augustus shook his head.

"I do not like the ideah of lettin' it wip, Blake. My patah might be away for monthis an' months, an' I couldn't possibly keep the tailahs waitin' all that time. I wepeat, I must waise the wind."

"But how?" asked Digby. "Twenty quids will want some raising, I'm thinking. There's nobody at St. Jim's who could lend you that amount—excepting Racke of the Shell, perhaps. And Racke doesn't love you enough to come to your rescue."

"Weally, Dig, I should not dweam of bowwowin' ffrom Wacke. He is a wottah, an' I do not have financial twansactions with wottahs!"

"Well, if you're not going to borrow the money, how on earth do you think you're going to raise it?" asked Herries.

Arthur Augustus pondered the problem for some moments with a clouded brow.

The problem of raising twenty pounds seemed quite hopeless at first. But presently an inspiration came to Arthur Augustus.

"I have thought of a way out, deah boys," he said at length. "The only way out that I can see."

"What are you going to do, Gussy?" asked Blake.

"I shall sell up."

"What!"

"I shall dispose of all my personal pwperty by auction."

"My hat!"

Gussy's chums stared at him in astonishment.

"You'll be an ass if you do that," said Blake. "Why should you get rid of all your belongings, just to satisfy a firm of tailors who will cheerfully wait for their money if you ask them?"

"That bill must be paid," said Arthur Augustus, with decision. "Until it is settled the mattah will pwey on my mind."

"So you've quite made up your mind to sell up?"

"Quite!"

"Going to get rid of your wardrobe?"

"Ewevythin'—except the clothes I stand up in. I shall sell my clobbah, an' my bike, an' my ewicket-bat, an' my wire-less set—ewevythin' on which I shall be able to wealise."

"Great Scott!"

Gussy's chums saw that it would be useless to try and turn him from his purpose. He had quite made up his mind to dispose of his goods and chattels by auction, in order to raise the twenty pounds wherewith to pay the tailors.

"Well, if you're determined to go ahead with this fool scheme, Gussy, we can't prevent you, I suppose," said Blake after a pause. "But you'd better not conduct the auction yourself. I know what you are. You'd start giving the things away for next to nothing."

"Weally, Blake! As a mattah of fact, I wathah fancy myself in the wole of auctioneeah. Bein' a fellow of tact an' judgment—"

"Bow-wow!" said Herries.

"Do not make wude intahjections, Hewwies! Bein' a fellow of tact an' judgment, I feel suah I should conduct the auction-sale with great success."

"Ass! Don't you realise that there are rotters here who would take advantage of your good-nature?" said Blake. "You'd better appoint me your auctioneer. I'll undertake to do the job thoroughly."

"That's vevy kind of you, Blake; but I feah you are somewhat lackin' in those qualities which come out vevy stwong in me—the qualities of tact an' judgment, to which I have already weferred."

"Oh, dry up, Gussy! You can't auction your own belongings. You'll simply have to have a business manager. And I'm your man."

After further discussion, Arthur Augustus agreed to let Blake act as his salesman.

The auction was fixed for Saturday evening, in the junior Common-room. In the meantime, Blake was to make an inventory of Gussy's belongings, and compile a catalogue. He also arranged to draw up a poster announcing the sale, to be exhibited on the notice-board in the Hall.

Herries and Digby offered to help, and the three chunts got busy right away. They left Arthur Augustus to himself, and he tramped to and fro in the quadrangle, with a frown on his face, and with his hands plunged deeply into his pockets.

The prospect of parting with his cherished possessions was anything but pleasant to the swell of St. Jim's. But it was the only way. The money had to be raised, no matter how great a sacrifice was entailed.

Several fellows passed Arthur Augustus as he peregrinated



"I say, Gussy," said Racke, "I've got something for you. Thought it might come in useful!" Arthur Augustus stopped short, and stared. "What is it, Wacke?" Racke groped in his pocket, and produced a small file. Grinning broadly and mischievously, he handed it to the swell of St. Jim's. "It's a file," he said, "to file your petition in bankruptcy!" (See this page.)

to and fro beneath the old elms. Some of them nodded to him in a friendly way as they strolled by; but others were not so kindly disposed towards him. Percy Mellish sneered openly; and so did Crooke of the Shell. They knew that Arthur Augustus was "stony," and was likely to remain so for an indefinite period; and fellows like Crooke and Mellish regarded poverty as a crime.

Arthur Augustus did not see their sneers. He was too preoccupied with his thoughts. But he could not fail to notice Aubrey Racke of the Shell, for Racke planted himself right in Gussy's path.

"I say, Gussy," said Racke. "I've got something for you. Thought it might come in useful."

Arthur Augustus stopped short and stared.

"What is it, Wacke?"

Racke groped in his pocket and produced a small file. Grinning broadly and mischievously, he handed it to the swell of St. Jim's.

Gussy took the file and turned it over in his hand.

"What on earth——" he began.

"It's a file," explained Racke, backing away.

"Yaas, I see it's a file. But what is it for?"

"To file your petition in bankruptcy!" said Racke, with a chuckle.

And there was a yell of laughter from Crooke and Mellish, who had been looking on.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The colour mounted to Gussy's cheeks and he clenched his hands hard.

"Wacke, you wotten cad! If this is your ideah of a joke it isn't mine! I considah it is in vewy bad taste, an' I will pwoceed to administah a feahful thwashin'! Put up your hands, you wottah!"

But Aubrey Racke was not spoiling for a fight just then. He hurried away towards the building, chuckling as he went. Arthur Augustus glared after him, but he did not give chase. Frowning deeply, he resumed his tramping to and fro, until

Tom Merry & Co. found him, and marched him off forcibly to the cricket-field, in order to make the swell of St. Jim's forget his troubles—for the time being, at any rate.

## CHAPTER 6.

### Rallying Round Gussy!

"GREAT pip!" ejaculated Tom Merry. He stopped short in front of the notice-board in the Hall, and stared. And Manners and Lowther stared, too.

The notice-board was practically covered by a huge poster, announcing the forthcoming sale of Gussy's property.

There were other announcements on the board, but they were obliterated by the poster.

Tom Merry's list of players for the next cricket-match had suffered a total eclipse. So had a notice calling a meeting of the Fifth Form Debating Society, and an announcement of the next Grand Rally of the St. Jim's Boy Scouts.

Evidently Jack Blake had considered these affairs of minor importance, compared with the auction sale; and he had coolly blotted them from view with his poster.

### "SPECIAL NOTICE!"

#### A GREAT AUCTION SALE

will be held in the Junior Common-room on Saturday evening, commencing at seven sharp. ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY, ESQUIRE, has decided to dispose of his

HOUSEHOLD FURNITURE AND EFFECTS, which include

A MAGNIFICENT AND EXTENSIVE WARDROBE, comprising Six Super-Smart Suits, fashioned in Savile Row, London; Three Sets of Cricket Flannels; Two Pairs of 'Plus Fours'; One Dozen Striking Fancy Waistcoats, combining all the hues of the rainbow. Also Scores of Neckties, Stacks

of Socks, Six Topping Toppers, several pairs of Patent-leather Shoes, as worn by the nobility and gentry; Shirts, Spats, Gloves, Collars, Walking-sticks, etc., etc. Also  
**A WONDERFUL GOLD WATCH,**  
 complete with chain, and guaranteed not to gain or lose more than one second per annum;

#### A DAZZLING DIAMOND TIE-PIN,

as affected by Members of the House of Lords. Other articles for disposal include A MAGNIFICENT BICYCLE, in first-class running order; a Crystal Wireless Set; a 'Willow King' Cricket Bat; a Stamp Collection, containing many rare specimens; Books of every sort, on every subject, including

**SIX VOLUMES OF 'THE HOLIDAY ANNUAL'** from 1920 to 1925 inclusive, in excellent condition. Also Purses, Pictures, Portraits, and other valuable Perquisites. Catalogues of the Sale may be obtained from the Auctioneer (MR. JACK BLAKE), at his offices, Study No. 6; from MR. EPHRAIM TAGGLES at the Lodge; or from DAME TAGGLES at the Tuckshop.

#### ROLL UP IN YOUR THOUSANDS!

Tom Merry & Co. gasped as they perused that remarkable poster. This was the first they had heard of the proposed auction; and they thought, at first, that it must be a jape.

"Gussy would never sell up, and get rid of all his treasures, unless he was in an awfully tight corner," said Tom Merry. "Looks to me like a silly lark of Blake's."

"It is no lark, deah boy," came a voice from behind the Terrible Three.

Arthur Augustus had strolled up to the notice-board to survey the poster. The juniors regarded him very curiously.

"You—you're really selling up, Gussy?" ejaculated Tom Merry.

"Yaas."

"Are things as bad as all that?" asked Tom, looking quite distressed. "If so I'm sorry."

"Same here," said Manners and Lowther together. Arthur Augustus smiled slightly.

"Pwaw do not be concerned on my account, deah boys," he said. "I am still stonay, and still without news of my patah. But this state of affairs cannot go on for evah. Soonah or latah I shall get some news—an' some cash. In the meantime, I have a bill of twenty pounds to meet, ffrom my tailahs. That explains why I am disposin' of my belongin's by auction."

"But—but it seems rather a rash thing to do, to part with all your property," said Tom Merry slowly. "Dash it all, Gussy, things haven't come to such a desperate pass as all that! Surely the tailors can wait a little while for their money?"

"They would wait willin'ly enough, I've no doubt," said Arthur Augustus. "But I do not feel that it would be playin' the game, to keep them waitin'. My patah might be away for a jolly long time—"

"On the other hand, he might turn up within a week," said Manners. "And then you'd feel pretty sick, if you'd just sold up all your giddy property. Take my tip, Gussy, and let the tailors wait."

But Arthur Augustus shook his head. "The auction must proceed," he said. "My mind is firmly made up on that mattach. Aftah all, it will be no weal hardship to have to part with some of my things. I have come to the conclusion that my wardrobe has been wathah too extensive in the past. Six suits of clothes stwikes me as bein' a twifle excessive—"

"Go hon!" grinned Lowther. "An' a dozen fancy waistcoats are wathah more than I wequiah for immediate wear."

"You don't say so, old top!"

"Moreovah," went on the Swell of St. Jim's, "I am wathah ovahburdened with shirts an' socks, an' collahs an' neckties. I have so many that it would give me a headache to count them. But Blake has got the job of makin' the inventow—thank goodness!"

"What about your bike, Gussy?" said Tom Merry. "You'll miss that."

"Yaas, deah boy. But I can get anothah as soon as my patah turns up. The same wemark applies to my wireless set, an' my ewicket-bat—to ewevythin', in fact. It isn't as if I'm goin' to be permanently poor. My immediate object is to waise the sum of twenty quids—"

"And you think you'll do it?" asked Manners. Arthur Augustus nodded.

"I have figgahed it out that I shall just about do it," he said. "Of course, I sha'n't wealise vevy much on my wardrobe. My togs won't be much use to anyone else unless he happens to be a fellow of my own size an' height. My gold tickah ought to fetch a quid or two, and the biddin' will be fairly high, I expect, for my diamond tiepin. The bike is worth a fivah—it is pwactically new—an' then there's

all the othah things. Yaas, I think I shall manage to waise the twenty quids."

"Good luck to you, Gussy!" said Tom Merry. "Thank you, deah boy! Will you be goin' to the auction?"

"Yes, rather!"

"I shall not be there myself," said Arthur Augustus. "I intended to go, at first—in fact, I wanted to be the auctioneeah—but Blake thinks I had bettah keep out of it. He says it would only make me feel misewable, to see all my pwoperty bein' sold up undah my eyes."

"Blake's quite right, there," said Manners. "It's an ordeal I shouldn't care to face, anyway."

"You can rely on Blake to watch your interests and carry ewerything through all right," said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, I know that. I have ewevy confidence in Blake. His tact an' judgment are not so stwongly in evidence as my own, but I believe he has a good business head."

"A much better business head than you'll ever develop, old chap!" said Lowther with a laugh. "Why, if you conducted the auction, you'd make the bidders a free present of ewerything!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Terrible Three nodded to Arthur Augustus and strolled away.

Manners and Lowther were grinning, but Tom Merry was looking very thoughtful.

"I don't like the idea of Gussy getting rid of all his property," he remarked at length. "He'll have nothing left but the suit he stands up in."

"And his monocle," said Lowther.

"Yes. He wouldn't part with that for untold gold. Gussy without his monocle would be like the Prime Minister without his pipe. But look here, you fellows. I think we ought to make an effort to save Gussy's property."

"But how on earth can we do that?" asked Manners in wonder.

"By bidding for it at the auction, and buying it, and then returning it to Gussy after the sale."

"My hat!"

"We can't save all of it, of course," said Tom Merry. "But we can save all the wearing apparel from going west. That's what Gussy values most, I believe—his togs. They'll go dirt cheap at the auction; they're bound to. As Gussy says, nobody wants another fellow's clothes. A tenner will cover the lot, in my opinion."

"What?" said Manners with a stare. "You don't seriously mean to suggest, Tommy, that six suits, a dozen fancy waistcoats, and all the rest of the paraphernalia, will only fetch a tenner?"

"I can't see them fetching more," said Tom. "Clothes and books are two things that go very cheaply at auctions. An auctioneer told me so. It's an astonishing thing that you can pay seven guineas for a new suit; but if you tried to sell it the next day you'd be lucky to get half the purchase-price."

"My hat!"

"And most of the St. Jim's fellows are well off for clothes, so they would have no use for Gussy's. Ten or twelve pounds will buy up the whole of his wardrobe, although it's really worth three or four times as much as that. Anyway, I think we ought to do the buying-up. We can raise a tenner between us. I had a fiver this morning, from my guardian, and I believe you two can raise a fiver between you."

"Yes. We can just about do it," said Manners. "I'm in funds, and so is Monty."

"And you're willing to come to Gussy's rescue in the way I've suggested?"

"Quite!" said Manners and Lowther spontaneously. "That settles it, then! Of course, we won't breathe a word to Gussy about it. We'll just toddle along to the auction, and buy up his wardrobe, and smuggle the things back to him afterwards."

"Jolly good wheeze!" said Manners heartily.

And the Terrible Three went on their way, feeling quite cheerful at the prospect of being able to do a good turn to Arthur Augustus, who had done them so many good turns in the past.

## CHAPTER 7.

### Racke's Ruse!

"BUSY?" inquired Mellish of the Fourth, glancing into Racke's study.

"Doesn't look like it, does it?" said Racke, with a yawn.

The elegant Aubrey was reclining on the couch. It was a luxurious couch, and Racke's head was pillowed by luxurious cushions. Everything in Racke's study, in fact, betokened luxury and ostentation. Racke was the spoilt son of a wealthy parent. He believed in outward show, and his study was one of the most striking apartments at St. Jim's.

"Mind if I come in?" asked Mellish.

"Of course not, dear man!"

Racke spoke quite genially. He was on very good terms with the cad of the Fourth. They were birds of a feather. Mellish stepped into the study.

"Heard the latest about D'Arcy?" he inquired.

"Yes," said Racke. "He's still stranded on the giddy rocks, I hear, an' he's thinkin' of sellin' 'em up."

"That's so," said Mellish. "The auction's on Saturday night. I say, what a come-down for the son of a noble lord to have to hawk his belongings so that he can raise the wind!"

Racke nodded and grinned. "How are the mighty fallen!" he said. "A week or so ago D'Arcy was one of the most prosperous fellows at St. Jim's. An' now he's on his beam-ends. Serve him jolly well right! I've no sympathy for that affected ass!"

"Why, I thought you loved him like a brother!" said Mellish, who really thought nothing of the sort.

Racke gave a grunt.

"I love D'Arcy about as fondly as I love Tom Merry an' his set," he said. "You know how much that is—not at all! In fact, I hate the whole giddy crew!"

Mellish made himself comfortable in the armchair.

"You'll be interested to know," he said, "that Tom Merry & Co. are doing the sentimental stunt. They're going to help a lame dog—or, rather, a lame pauper—over a stile."

"Rallyin' round D'Arcy, d'you mean?"

Mellish nodded.

"I happened to hear them javing about the auction," he said. "They seem to be sorry for D'Arcy, and they're going to rescue his wardrobe for him. Tom Merry reckons it will only fetch about a tenner. So he's going to bid for all the suits and shirts and socks and things, and let D'Arcy have 'em back after the auction."

"A very touchin' act of human kindness," said Racke, with a sneer. "Looks as if D'Arcy will come out of this very well. He'll raise a nice sum of money, an' get all his clobber back into the bargain."

"That's so," said Mellish.

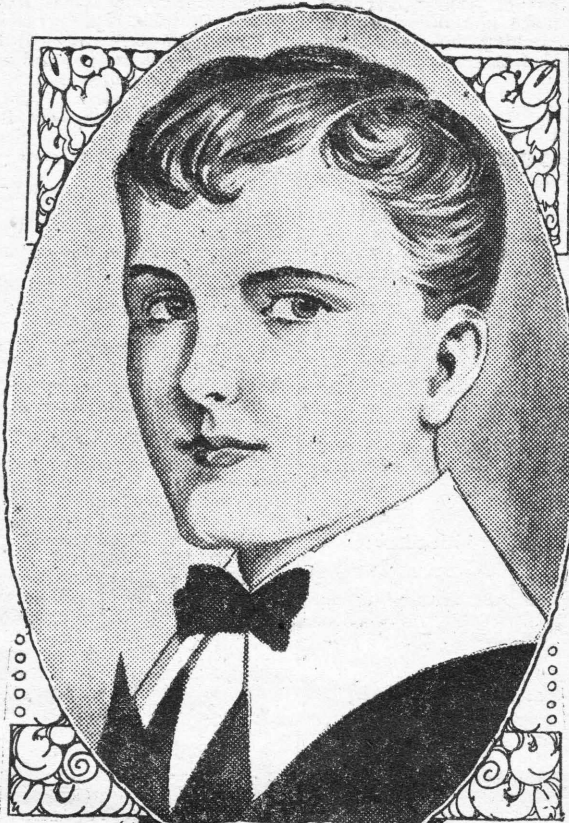
Racke closed his eyes, and his head sank deeper into the cushions. But he was not dozing off to sleep, as Mellish might have supposed. Racke's brain was busy. He felt that he ought to take an active part in the forthcoming auction sale.

Racke, as he had admitted, was no lover of Tom Merry & Co. If he saw an opportunity of thwarting them in any way, he grasped it with both hands. And he thought he saw an opportunity now.

Tom Merry and his chums intended to rescue D'Arcy's wardrobe and restore it to him. And Racke resolved to frustrate this design. This he could easily do, by outbidding Tom Merry & Co. at the auction, and buying up the contents of Gussy's wardrobe himself. Not that Racke had any use for Gussy's clothes. His own wardrobe was ample. But if he bought up Gussy's apparel he would achieve a double purpose. First, he would frustrate the kindly intentions of Tom Merry & Co. Secondly, he would greatly humiliate Arthur Augustus.

The swell of St. Jim's would be compelled to handle Racke's money. He would also have the mortification of seeing his belongings pass into the possession of the caddish Aubrey. And it would be gall and wormwood to Gussy.

True, Racke's money was as good as anybody else's, and Arthur Augustus had to raise the twenty pounds somehow.



FRANK SMITH.

A member of Study No. 7 in the School House Fourth. Shares that apartment with Richard Roylance and the Italian junior, Giacomo Contarini. A quiet and reserved fellow is Smith, who chums up with almost anybody with the exception of the rotters. Being quick at lessons he gains some little favour with his Form-master, Mr. Lathom. He does not take very much interest in sport, although always an interested spectator at the school's footer and cricket matches. He is very fond of country scenery, and when the chance presents itself goes for long walks into the heart of the woods. A decent all-round fellow is Smith.

But he would naturally writhe at being placed under any sort of obligation to Racke.

Racke realised this, and he chuckled. He was particularly flush with money at the present time, and even if it meant paying out fifteen pounds or so for things he didn't want, he felt that it would be worth it, if only for the satisfaction of thwarting Tom Merry & Co., and humiliating Arthur Augustus.

Racke's father had been very generous to him of late, sending him sums of money which would have made some fellows gasp. And the horn of plenty showed no signs of drying up. Racke was therefore quite willing to spend fifteen pounds at the auction. Fifteen pounds' worth of clothes would be of no use to him; but he would be getting fifteen pounds' worth of satisfaction out of the deal.

"Going to sleep?" inquired Mellish, at length. "If so, I'll clear out."

Racke opened his eyes and grinned.

"I'm wide awake, dear man," he said. "Fact is, I've been thinkin'. I've been ponderin' how I can put a spoke in the wheel of Tom Merry & Co., the Good Samaritans, an' at the same time make things mighty uncomfortable for D'Arcy."

"Good!" said Mellish. "What are you going to do, Racke?"

"I shall outbid everybody else at the auction, an' buy up D'Arcy's wardrobe. Then he will have to handle my money, an' that will just about make him squirm! He'll feel that he's under an obligation to me, an' you know how much that will hurt Gussy's sensitive soul. Fancy bein' under an obligation to 'that feaful wotta h Wacke'!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" sniggered Mellish.

The cad of the Fourth fairly revelled in the prospect of D'Arcy's discomfiture.

Mellish had not forgotten the two thrashings he had received at the hands of Arthur Augustus—one for slandering Lord Eastwood, and the other for sending a moneylender to St. Jim's to interview Gussy. The effect of those lickings was to make Mellish feel hostile and vindictive towards Arthur Augustus. He wanted to see the swell of St. Jim's humiliated, and his pride humbled in the dust. Mellish could not bring that about himself, but he knew that Racke could. That was why he had come to interview Aubrey about the auction.

"There's goin' to be some fun at the merry old auction," said Racke, with a chortle. "Merry & Co. will be furious when I start outbiddin' 'em. But they won't be able to stop me. I shall be a bona-fide buyer, an' if I care to pay fancy prices for everythin' that's my own affair."

"Exactly!" said Mellish. "Tom Merry and his pals won't be able to interfere. But what are you going to do with Gussy's clobber when you've bought it?"

"Oh, you leave that to me," said Racke, grinning. "One of the suits, propped on a broomstick, will come in useful as a scarecrow in the Head's garden."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"As for the others, I think I shall exhibit them in some public place, for all the world to see. D'Arcy will writhe every time he sees them. They'll serve as a constant reminder that he's had to sell up, an' that he's under an obligation to me, as the highest bidder."

"Ripping!" said Mellish, rubbing his hands.

A more caddish and cruel scheme than Aubrey Racke's it would have been impossible to imagine. It was Racke's

idea to wound the sensitive feelings of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy as deeply as possible—to make him fairly squirm, as he expressed it. And, unless anything unforeseen happened, it seemed only too probable that Racke would succeed in his base designs.

### CHAPTER 8. The Auction!

**L**OT Number One!" announced Jack Blake. And there was a buzz in the Junior Common-room.

The schoolboy auctioneer stood at the table on which D'Arcy's belongings were piled high. They were piled so high, indeed, that Blake would have been completely hidden from view but for the fact that he was perched on a packing-case.

The Common-room was crowded. Fellows of all Forms had flocked to the auction. Some of them had come as bidders, some out of idle curiosity, and others for a cheap entertainment.

Tom Merry & Co. were seated in the front row. They were looking more serious than usual. Aubrey Racke was sitting just behind them with a sardonic smile on his face.

A notable absentee was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. Gussy was in Study No. 6, but he could hear the hum of voices from the distant Common-room.

"Pile in, Blake!"

"Get on with the washing!"

The auctioneer gripped his "hammer," which consisted of a round ebony ruler.

"Lot Number One!" he repeated. "Six smart suits, fashioned in Savile Row, London. Six beautifully-tailored suits, made exclusively for Society swells. They are to be sold in one lot. Now, gentlemen, what offers?"

"A bob!" squeaked Baggy Trimble.

And there was a laugh. If Trimble hoped to secure the six super-smart suits at twopence per suit he was likely to be unlucky.

Blake sniffed.

"One shilling I am bid!" he remarked contemptuously.

"Five bob!" said Crooke.

"Quids!" said Tom Merry.

"Guineas!" drawled Racke.

"Ah, that's better," said Jack Blake. "Now we're getting to business. Five guineas I am offered for these suits, and that's little enough, goodness knows. Why, they're worth at least five guineas apiece. Come along, gentlemen. Let's hear from you. Don't be afraid to speak up."

"Fat lot of use those suits are," growled Crooke. "They won't fit anybody but Gussy. I reckon he'll be lucky to get five guineas for the lot."

"Dry up, Crooke! Now, then, what advance on five guineas?"

"Six quids!" said Tom Merry.

"Guineas!" chimed in Racke.

"Six pounds ten!" said Tom.

"Six-fifteen!" drawled Racke.

The Terrible Three turned in their seats and frowned at Racke, who met their frowns with a tantalising grin.

Tom Merry & Co. had not expected Racke to take any interest in the auction. He did not need any of the articles that were up for sale. He had plenty of clothes, and a bicycle, and a wireless set, and a gold watch, and a diamond tie-pin. He was well endowed with worldly goods.

It occurred to Tom Merry & Co. that Racke was present for the sole purpose of out-bidding them out of sheer malice. And they were powerless to stop him, so long as he conducted himself properly. If he behaved in a caddish manner they would, of course, be perfectly justified in turning him out. But Racke, apart from his sneering grin, comported himself with the utmost decorum. And a fellow couldn't be turned out of the Common-room merely for grinning.

"Looks as if we're going to be done in the eye by Racke," muttered Manners.

Tom Merry nodded.

"He's doing this to spite us," he said. "Afraid we sha'n't be able to save Gussy's wardrobe, after all. You see, Racke's funds are unlimited. Ours are limited to a tenner."

"Well, if we can only save the six suits, it'll be something," whispered Lowther.

"Six pounds fifteen I am bid," said the auctioneer. "Any advance?"

"Seven pounds!" said Tom Merry.

"Guineas!" said Racke coolly.

"Eight pounds!" said Tom Merry, becoming desperate.

"Guineas!" said the imperturbable Racke.

Tom Merry turned hopelessly to his chums.

"Shall I go on?" he muttered.

"Yes," said Manners. "Might as well go the whole hog."

And the bidding continued. Tom Merry offered nine pounds, and Racke capped it with guineas. The captain of the Shell then rose, to ten pounds, the limit of his resources.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 903.

He fervently hoped that Racke would not go beyond that figure. But his hopes were speedily dashed.

"Ten guineas!" drawled Racke.

And Tom Merry dropped out of the bidding.

Jack Blake poised the ebony ruler in the air with a "Going—going—gone!" And the six suits of clothes were knocked down to Aubrey Racke amid a buzz of excited voices.

"Come and collect your property, Racke," said Blake coldly.

Racke rose to his feet and lounged towards the table. He could not conceal his delight at having out-bid Tom Merry. He gathered up the six suits and dumped them carelessly on to the floor, and sat on them, as if they were of no more value than sacks.

There was a snigger from Mellish of the Fourth, and an angry protest from Tom Merry.

"Get up, you cad! Don't treat those clothes as if they'd belonged to a tramp!"

"I can treat them how I like, I suppose?" said Racke insolently. "They're my property now."

"Not yet," interposed Jack Blake. "You haven't paid for them."

Racke got up, and drew out his wallet with a flourish, and counted out ten Treasury notes for a pound, and one for ten shillings. These he handed to the auctioneer. Then he resumed his seat on the pile of garments.

"These suits will come in jolly handy," he observed.

"You don't need them," growled Manners. "You've got plenty. And you're not Gussy's build, anyway."

"Oh, I don't mean for wearin' purposes," said Racke. "One of these suits will come in useful for scarin' away the crows from the Head's garden—"

"Hee, hee, hee!" chuckled Mellish.

"An' the others can decorate the branches of the elms in the quad. Can't you picture Gussy's face when he sees his property swayin' in the summer breeze?"

Again Mellish gave his shrill cackle, and there were grins on the faces of Crooke and Gore, and a few others. But Racke's words had quite a different effect upon the majority of the fellows. They jumped to their feet, and glared angrily at Racke.

"Shame!"

"You rotten cad!"

"He's only bought those things to spite Gussy and hurt his feelings," said Herries.

"Kick him out!" hooted half a dozen voices.

Racke looked quite alarmed. He had not expected this hostile demonstration. He realised that in his elation at having got the better of Tom Merry in the bidding, he had let his tongue run away with him. He jumped to his feet, and backed away towards the auctioneer's table, and there was a threatening movement towards him.

"Give him his money back, and pitch him into the passage!" roared Herries.

"You—you daren't do that!" panted Racke. "I'm a bona-fide bidder at this auction, an' I can do what I jolly well like with the things, after I've bought them."

"Your mistake!" said Blake grimly. "The deal's off!"

So saying, he gathered up the six suits, and put them back on the table. Then he handed Racke his money. Racke refused to take it, whereupon Blake gripped the caddish Aubrey by the collar, and proceeded to cram the notes down the back of his neck.

Then, almost before Racke could realise what was happening, he was swung off his feet, and whirled to the door, and hurled bodily into the passage beyond.

Racke alighted on the linoleum with a bump and a roar,

"Yaroooooh!"

"Get out, you rotten cad!"

Crash!

The door was slammed in Racke's face as he staggered to his feet. He looked for a moment as if he would re-enter the Common-room. But he knew what would happen if he did. He would be ejected even more forcibly than before.

Racke flourished his fist angrily at the closed door. Then he turned on his heel, and limped away to his study. His plan to humiliate Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had failed utterly.

### CHAPTER 9.

#### A Surprise for Gussy!

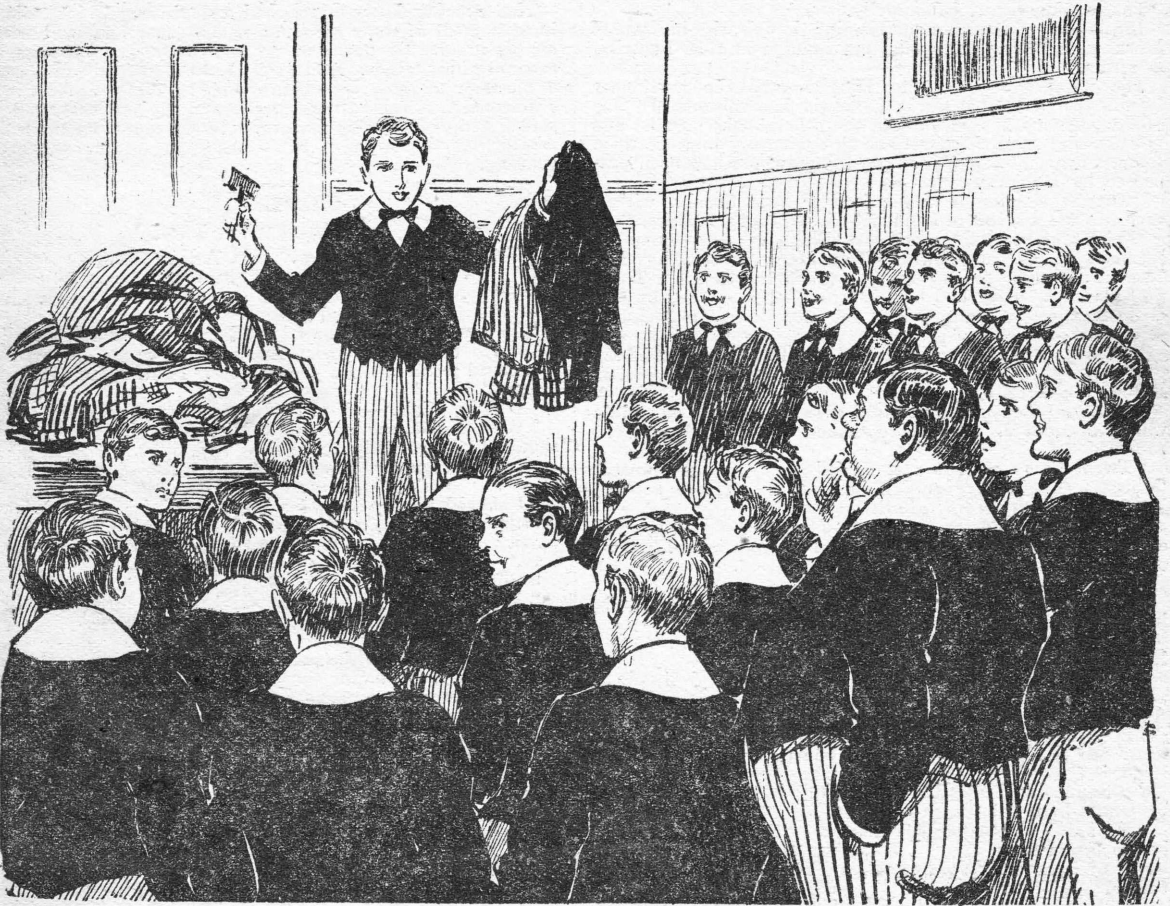
**G**ENTLEMEN," announced Jack Blake, "having rid ourselves of that precious rotter, we will make a fresh start with the auction!"

"Hurrah!"

"Pile in, Blake!"

Lot No. 1 was put up for the second time. It failed to fetch so much as ten guineas on this occasion. The suits realised eight pounds, and they were knocked down to Tom Merry, the highest bidder.

This left Tom with a clear two pounds, with which he



Jack Blake, acting as auctioneer, gripped his "hammer," which consisted of a round ebony ruler. "Now, Lot Number One!" he said. "Six super-smart suits, fashioned in Savile Row, London. Six beautifully tailored suits, made exclusively for Society swells. They are to be sold in one lot. Now, gentlemen, what offers?" "A bob!" squeaked Baggy Trimble. There was a laugh from the crowd, while Blake sniffed contemptuously. (See page 14.)

managed to buy the fancy waistcoats and a certain amount of hosiery. He had hoped to be able to secure the whole of Gussy's wardrobe; but this was not found possible. However, the suits and the waistcoats were the important things, and these had been duly purchased, and would be returned to Arthur Augustus in due course.

"I only wish we had another tenner," said Manners; "then we'd be able to save the rest of the things."

"Never mind!" said Tom Merry. "We've done the best we could in the circus. Shall we buzz off now, or stay and see the rest of the things sold?"

"Let us tarry awhile," said Monty Lowther. "I'm curious to see what the other things fetch."

So the Terrible Three stayed. The wardrobe of Arthur Augustus had been disposed of; and Jack Blake now wheeled the bicycle into view.

"Lot Number Seven!" he announced. "Feast your eyes on this magnificent machine, gentlemen!—She's a beauty, isn't she?"

"How do you know it isn't a 'he'?" asked Lowther.

"Don't interrupt the auctioneer!" said Blake sternly. "Gentlemen, this handsome bicycle is practically brand new. It's only been ridden once or twice. It's the latest model, straight from the Coventry factory, and it's worth every penny of fourteen guineas. Now, who will offer me that sum for it? Don't all speak at once!"

They didn't! Nobody in Blake's audience had fourteen guineas to "blue" on a bicycle.

"No offers?" said Blake, in apparent surprise. "Why, you ought to be tumbling over each other to buy this bike—this peerless, priceless, perfectly posh machine—for the paltry sum of fourteen guineas!"

"Make it fourteen bob, and I might be prepared to do a deal," said Levison.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The auctioneer sighed.

"Fourteen shillings I am bid, by a gentleman with a perverted sense of humour," he said. "What advance on fourteen shillings?"

"A quid!" said Baggy Trimble. "Hand over the bike,

Blake. I sha'n't be able to pay you in a lump, but if you don't mind taking instalments of tuppence a week—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll bid fifty shillings," said Bernard Glyn.

"Fifty-five!" said Digby.

"Sixty!" rapped out Glyn.

"Sixty-five!" snapped Dig.

"That's the style!" said Blake. "Keep the pot a-boiling!"

The bidding was fast and furious, but when it rose to ninety shillings Bernard Glyn shrugged his shoulders, and dropped out. And the peerless, priceless, perfectly posh machine, which was worth every penny of fourteen guineas, was knocked down to Digby for four pounds ten.

"Lot Number Eight!" said Blake. "Here we have a magnificent watch, eighteen carat gold—"

"Straight from the brass foundry!" murmured Crooke.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The auctioneer glared at Crooke.

"When I say gold, I mean gold," he said. "I'm not exaggerating the value of any of these articles. They cost D'Arcy an awful lot. And there's nothing cheap or shoddy about the stuff Gussy has. He goes in for the best of everything. Now, gentlemen! What am I offered for this handsome gold watch?"

"Will it go?" asked Cardew suspiciously.

"Go?" almost shrieked Blake. "Why, it goes like—like a house on fire!"

"In that case, it's bound to be hours fast, an', therefore no use to me," said Cardew calmly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Blake frowned.

"If you fellows keep making idiotic remarks, I shall become like this watch—thoroughly wound up!" he growled. "And by the time this auction's over, you'll feel thoroughly 'run down'!" chuckled Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The watch was eventually knocked down to Herries for twenty-five shillings. It was worth considerably more than that, of course; but Herries' offer was the highest.

The auction proceeded merrily.

Digby bought the diamond tie-pin; though why he wanted it was a mystery. Digby did not indulge in such luxuries, as a rule.

The wireless set went to Herries, and the auctioneer bought the cricket-bat himself, likewise the volumes of "The Holiday Annual," and most of the other books. Blake and Herries and Digby, in fact, bought up everything between them, with the exception of the things which had been purchased by Tom Merry & Co.

"They're keeping it in the family," said Crooke, with a sneer. "They mean to hand it back to Gussy, I expect."

Which was precisely what Jack Blake and his chums did mean to do. All unknown to Tom Merry & Co., they had formed a similar scheme to that which the Terrible Three had planned. They had bought up as much of the stock as their means would allow, with the intention of restoring it to Arthur Augustus afterwards.

When the auction was over and the last "lot" had been put under the hammer—or, rather, the ebony ruler—Jack Blake counted up the takings.

Treasury notes and silver and coppers were arranged in piles and counted. And Blake seemed well satisfied with the result.

"Twenty-two pounds six shillings," he announced. "Gussy's raised his twenty quid, and a bit more besides. He'll be able to pay his tailor's bill now."

"Yes; but he'll have to say good-bye to his belongings," said Tom Merry, who had lingered behind with Manners and Lomther, to see the result of the auction.

Blake smiled.

"He won't have to say good-bye to all of them—only to his wardrobe," he said.

"But what about his bike and his gold ticker and his wireless set?"

"And his cricket-bat and books and diamond tie-pin?" added Manners.

Blake's smile broadened.

"Between ourselves," he said, "we're not going to hang on to the stuff we've bought. Of course, we don't want to shout it from the housetops and make it appear that we're Good Samaritans. But Crooke was quite right when he said we would hand the things back to Gussy."

"My hat!" ejaculated Tom Merry. "Funnily enough, we had planned to do exactly the same. Gussy's wardrobe—as much of it as we were able to buy, anyway—is going back to him."

"Oh, good!" said Blake, his face glowing. "That's awfully decent of you fellows."

"Rats! I don't see why Gussy should be deprived of his property. His suits and things wouldn't be any use to us, anyway."

Thus it came about that the "household furniture and effects," as the poster described them, of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, were restored to their original owner.

They were not handed back publicly, but by stealth.

Whilst Arthur Augustus was absent from the study that evening—he had gone over to the fags' quarters to have a chat with Wally—his property was smuggled into Study No. 6 and left there, with a brief anonymous note, which simply said:

"To Gussy,—Your goods and chattels returned herewith. With compliments."

When Arthur Augustus returned to his study he was considerably astonished to find his property and the note.

"Bai Jove!" he exclaimed. "Why have all these things been returned to me, I wonder? Is it possible that the auction proved a failure?"

But no; that could not be the case. For on the mantel-piece was a heavily sealed envelope, addressed to Arthur Augustus. It contained the sum of twenty-two pounds six shillings—the proceeds of the auction.

It took the swell of St. Jim's quite a long time to realise what had happened. His chums had done this, out of good-fellowship and kindness of heart. They had not liked the thought of Arthur Augustus being stripped of all his possessions, and they had returned them to him after the auction.

Gussy could see the hand of Jack Blake in this, and also the hand of Tom Merry. A queer lump came into his throat, and his eyes grew misty for a moment.

"Bai Jove! How awfully decent of those fellows!" he murmured. "But I can't possibly allow them to do this. They must have these things back—or their money."

But this was easier said than done. For Arthur Augustus was never able to find out exactly who the Good Samaritans were. He questioned Jack Blake and Herries and Digby on the matter, and their replies were non-committal. He also questioned Tom Merry & Co., with the same result.

Arthur Augustus could only suspect who his benefactors were. He could not find out for certain. And that being the case, there was nothing for it but to accept his belongings, and the money into the bargain.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 903.

That evening Gussy despatched a remittance to his tailors, in settlement of their account; and a great load was taken off his mind. He now had no immediate worries, save on account of his father. And surely Lord Eastwood would send a message of some sort before long? Wally D'Arcy was still convinced that all was well, and he had managed to infect Arthur Augustus with some of his optimism, with the result that the swell of St. Jim's spent quite a cheerful evening.

## CHAPTER 10.

### An Adventure For Two!

"COME in, dear boy!" said Arthur Augustus, as his minor's face appeared in the doorway of Study No. 6.

Wally trotted in.

"So you've sold up the happy home, what?" said Wally. "Got rid of all your priceless treasures, they tell me, so's you could settle up with your tailors. I think you're an ass, Gussy!"

"Weally, Wally—"

"Why didn't you ask my advice beforehand? Then I should have warned you against such idiocy."

Arthur Augustus frowned through his monocle at his minor.

"I should not dream of askin' the advice of a youngab bwothah, on any mattah," he said. "I simply had to waise twenty pounds, an' an auction of my property was the only way."

Sniff from Wally.

"As a mattah of fact," continued Arthur Augustus, "things have turned out fah bettah than I expected—"

Snort from Wally.

"I not only waised the twenty pounds necessary to pay the tailahs, but two pounds six in addish, which I pwopose we divide between us as pocket-money."

"Ah, now you're talking!" said Wally.

"Morcovah," went on Arthur Augustus, "you will be surprised to learn that the bulk of my belongin's have been returned to me."

"My hat!"

"The dear boys have been awfully decent. They have wailed wound in a most commendable mannah. I know I ought not to let them do this—their kindness is altogether too quixotic, bai Jove—but what can I do? I can't hand the things back to them because I don't know who the biddahs were."

"Well, it's right-down decent of them, anyway," said Wally heartily. "We're in funds again now, and everything in the garden would be lovely—if only we could get news of the pater. You've heard nothing, I suppose?"

Arthur Augustus shook his head.

"I was thinkin' about cyclin' home on the next half-holiday and havin' a chat with Hawwy Hawkins, the caretakah, at the House. I have wung him up on the phone ewery day askin' for news, but I can only get a few words out of him. He isn't vewy voluble."

"He's not like you, then!" said Wally, with a grin. "When you start jawing, you're like the giddy brook, that goes on for ever!"

"Weally, Wally—"

"It's a good wheeze to pop down home and see Hawkins," said Wally. "I don't know the fellow, do you? Where did the pater dig him up?"

"I believe he is one of the villagahs. I seem to wemembah the name. Anyway, we'll go an' intahview him. Get your bike in wunnin' ordah by Wednesday, Wally, an' we'll start diwectly aftah dinnah."

"We shall want late passes," said Wally. "It's a long run to Eastwood House from here."

"I will awwange about that, dear boy."

Accordingly, when Wednesday afternoon came, the D'Arcy brothers met together in the school gateway with their bikes. It was a glorious afternoon, and the sun was not too hot to make cycling unpleasant.

Jack Blake and Herries and Digby would gladly have accompanied the two brothers, but they were wanted at the cricket.

"This is wathah wippin'!" observed Arthur Augustus, as he and his minor sped along side by side.

"What-ho!" said Wally cheerily. "We ought to be at the House by tea-time—unless you start collecting punctures. I know that's a favourite hobby of yours, Gussy."

Arthur Augustus frowned.

"Unless you address me with more respect, Wally, we shall quawwel!" he said sternly. "Hellup!"

Arthur Augustus broke off with a startled exclamation. He had been frowning at Wally, and therefore failed to notice a jagged piece of glass which lay in his path. There was an ominous pop, and the next moment the back tyre dragged in the dust. The air rushed out of it, leaving it as flat as a pancake.



"Told you so!" said Wally, jumping off his machine. "Why can't you look where you're going, ass?"

"It was your fault, Wally!" said Arthur Augustus, in sulphurous tones. "You distwacted my attention with your wude remarks. Bai Jove! This is a dweadful punctuah! I shall not be able to repwaih it heah. We must push on till we come to a cycle store."

The calamity had occurred at a very lonely spot—miles from civilisation, it seemed. And the brothers were obliged to plod along on foot for several miles before they reached a repair-shop.

Most valuable time had been lost, and it would not now be possible to reach Eastwood House until nightfall. Arthur Augustus decided to telegraph to Mr. Railton at St. Jim's, explaining the facts. The telegram was characteristic of Gussy. It consisted of a score of words, where half a dozen would have sufficed.

When the badly-damaged tyre had been repaired, and the telegram despatched, the brothers had tea at a cosy little bunshop, and then resumed their journey.

"We shan't get home till morning!" chortled Wally as they whizzed along. "But who cares? Sure fact, I don't!"

"We can go back by twain," suggested Arthur Augustus. "It will be quicker."

"Quicker?" gasped Wally. "Oh, my hat! You don't know the Southern Railway. Let's bike back. Night-riding is great fun."

Arthur Augustus assented, and the cyclists pressed on in the gathering dusk.

At length an Elizabethan manor-house loomed up ahead of them. It stood well back from the road, in solitary isolation.

"Hurrah!" ejaculated Wally. "We're there at last!"

They dismounted at the big iron gates which gave access to the drive; and Arthur Augustus stared curiously at the house.

"Gweat Scott!" he exclaimed. "There is a light in the dwawin' woom!"

"Looks as if the pater's back," said Wally. "It can't be the caretaker. His place is in the servants' quarters, not the drawing-room."

Arthur Augustus frowned. "If Hawwy Hawkins has had the bwazen impudence to make himself comfortable in the dwawin' woom, I shall wewpmand him severely!" he said.

"Let's go and peep through the window," said Wally. Very cautiously the gate was swung open, and major and minor tiptoed up the drive. Each of them had an uncomfortable feeling that something was amiss. Arthur Augustus thought of burglars, but he did not voice his thoughts, lest he should be laughed at. Wally also thought of burglars, but he said nothing, for the same reason.

Certainly the conditions were ideal for a burglary. Dusk had descended like a pall over the countryside, and it was a moonless night. A burglar would have found it an easy matter to break into Eastwood House, and only a caretaker would stand between him and the spoils. To overpower Harry Hawkins, especially if the latter happened to be off his guard, would not be difficult.

The curtains of the drawing-room window had been carelessly drawn. They did not meet in the middle, and a shaft of light issued from the aperture and lay across the drive.

Arthur Augustus and Wally moved very stealthily towards the window. Grasping the outer sill, they peered in through the aperture.

A remarkable scene met their gaze. There were two men in the drawing-room. One—apparently the caretaker—was tethered securely to a chair, and gagged. The other, obviously an intruder, was endeavouring to break open Lord Eastwood's writing-desk. He was a man of powerful build—well-dressed, in the manner of the modern burglar—and setting about his work with cool resolution.

It seemed that Harry Hawkins had not been overpowered without a struggle, for a couple of chairs were overturned, and the marauder's collar and tie were streaming loose.

Arthur Augustus took in the situation at a glance. His first impulse was to force an entry into the room, and get to grips with the burglar. But wiser counsels prevailed.

The swell of St. Jim's turned quickly to his minor. "Go an' fetch the police!" he whispered. "Pedal for all you're worth, an' tell them there's a burghlah at Eastwood House!"

"But what about you, Gussy?"

"I will remain heah. If the boundah twies to leave the house befoah the police awwive, I will tackle him!"

Wally hurried away on his mission. He was speedily lost to sight in the darkness, and Arthur Augustus waited at the window, gazing grimly into the drawing-room.

When, after many abortive attempts, the burglar succeeded at length in forcing open the writing-desk, Arthur Augustus could scarcely contain himself. He longed to dash into the room and hurl himself at the intruder. But the folly of such a proceeding was apparent. The powerfully-built man who had overcome the caretaker would have

no difficulty in dealing with a schoolboy. Moreover, he was probably armed.

The man went through the contents of the writing-desk slowly and systematically. He did not deem it likely that he would be disturbed, and he took his time about his task. Meanwhile, the bound and gagged caretaker struggled frantically but ineffectually to free himself.

Arthur Augustus could only watch—and wait. And the suspense, as the minutes passed, grew almost intolerable.

Would the police arrive in time? That was the question. And the answer came quicker than Arthur Augustus anticipated.

A car drew up, almost noiselessly, at the gates of Eastwood House, and the next moment three figures came running up the drive—three vague and shadowy forms that presently resolved themselves into definite shape. They were an inspector and two constables.

The burglar heard the crunch of footsteps on the gravel. He started violently, and promptly bolted out of the room. But he got no farther than the hall. There, he fairly ran into the arms of the officers of the law, and a pair of handcuffs clicked upon his wrists. The fellow's capture was so swift and sudden that he could only gasp.

"Come along, my man!" said the inspector grimly. "You're the gentleman we've been trying to get hot! for weeks. So you're a common burglar, as well as a pillar-box thief, eh?"

The man muttered a savage imprecation. "You were watching the house?" he snarled.

"No; but Lord Eastwood's sons were."

"Yaas, wathah!" chimed in Arthur Augustus, who had come on the scene with Wally. "I wegard you as an uttah wogue an' an unpwincipled wottah, an' I hope you get a jollay stiff sentence! Did you say this boundah was a pillah-box thief, inspectah?"

The inspector nodded. "He's been at the game for some weeks past," he explained; "but he's always managed to give us the slip."

"Bai Jove! Then if Lord Eastwood w'ote to me befoah he went away, the lettah was pwobably stolen?"

"Most probably," replied the inspector. "It would have been destroyed. Pillar-box thieves invariably destroy all letters which do not contain money."

"My hat!" said Wally. "That explains why we haven't heard from the pater, Gussy. He must have written to us before he went away, and this precious rotter got hold of the letter."

"That's so, deah boy. We turned up at the house in the nick of time, Wally—at the psychological moment, in fact. An hour soonah, or an hour latah, an' we should not have been able to frustwate the knavish twicks of this scoundwel. My punctuah pwoved a blessin' in disguise, what?"

"Rather!" said Wally, with a chuckle.

The police officers bade good-night to the two brothers, and marched away with their captive.

Arthur Augustus hurried into the drawing-room to release the caretaker from his unhappy plight.

"Ave they got 'im, sir?" inquired Harry Hawkins, when the gag was removed.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"That's good. 'Ope you don't think I've been neglectin' of my dooties, sir. I was downstairs in the kitchen when the burglar come, an' I rushed up to the drovin' room an' tackled 'im. But 'e was too much for me. The feller was as strong as a box!"

"That's all wight, Hawkins," said Arthur Augustus. "You did your best, in the cires. We came heah to discovah if you had weceived any news fwom Lord Eastwood."

"Not a word—not a whisper," said the caretaker. "But I don't think there's any cause to worry, young gents. 'Is lordship will turn hup at any minute. Are you goin' back to the school to-night?"

"We were," said Arthur Augustus. "But on furthah considewation I think we will spend the night heah, an' weturn in the mornin'. I have wired to my Housemastah sayin' that we have been delayed, so it will be all wight."

"Can you get us some grub, Hawkins?" asked Wally. "I don't know about Gussy, but I'm so peckish that I could eat a donkey's hindleg off!"

"Dinner will be served in 'alf an 'our, gentlemen," said Harry Hawkins, trying to assume the dignity of a butler. "You leave that to me. I done a lot of cookin' when I was in the Army."

Arthur Augustus shuddered a little. The Army style of cooking did not appeal to him. He had visions of leathery beef and underdone potatoes.

However, it was quite a palatable meal that the caretaker prepared, and Arthur Augustus and his minor did full justice to it. Then, feeling deliciously tired after their long cycle ride, they retired to the best bed-room and speedily sank into the arms of Morpheus.

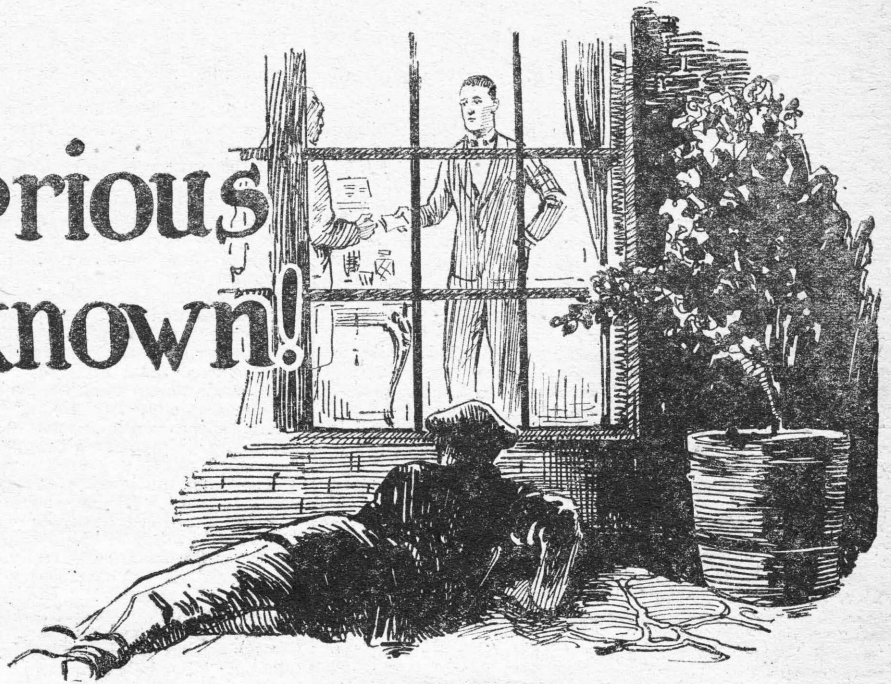
Big Ben Derby and Cocky Withers to the fore again, chums!

# The Mysterious Unknown!

A Complete Boxing  
Story.

By

LOUIS  
ALFRISTON.



## CHAPTER 1.

### Cocky is Curious!

**I**N high spirits, the big Yorkshire lad, Ben Derby, who had so summarily defeated the herculean Butcher Black at Pa Dobbie's East End Home of Boxing, returned with Cocky Withers, the nippy little nine-stone Londoner who had trained him for the fight, to his headquarters at the Flying Huntsman. For Ben was not the type to allow himself to get out of condition between fights.

At last his chance had come. The defeat of the Butcher had helped his patron, Lord Keyingham, to recover some of the losses sustained when backing Butcher Black against a heavy-weight named Battling Bill Baxter, the former had double-crossed him, and his lordship was not the man to forget.

But while the simple-hearted North Countryman settled down to his training with placid good humour, Cocky Withers was by no means so easy in his mind.

He realised that it was only the chance visit of Lord Keyingham to their training quarters that had put them wise to the plot that, engineered by that notorious and sinister hanger-on of the boxing-ring, "Doc" Bludgeon, had been framed to put Ben Derby out of business, and by this means separate their patron from still further substantial slices of his fortune.

That the scheme had been most cleverly foiled, and the biters badly bitten, and all to the good as it was, did not blind the shrewd little light-weight to the probability that this had been only one skirmish in the bitter war that had so long waged between Doc Bludgeon and Lord Keyingham. Cocky had a feeling that the worst was yet to come.

One thought held him, to the exclusion of all others. For the life of him he could not understand why a crook of such low category as the "Doctor" should fly at game so high as young Lord Keyingham. He felt in his bones

that there was some stronger, cleverer, and more sinister figure in the background who, while supplying the money and brains for schemes designed for the young aristocrat's ruin, preferred to do his work unknown and unsuspected. He became every day more convinced that, far from being the chief crook, Doc Bludgeon was only the stalking-horse for a personality far more formidable.

He turned the matter over in his mind so long, and at last he came to a decision. If only for the sake of peace he determined, by hook or by crook, to get to the bottom of the whole conspiracy.

Even in the short time of their friendship he had come to trust Ben Derby as he trusted no one else on earth. In training or out of it the Yorkshireman could be trusted not to play the fool.

Comforted by this reflection, Cocky Withers made no bones about applying for a week's leave on private affairs of his own. Trusting Cocky as fully as the latter trusted Ben, Pa Dobbie, the red-faced proprietor of "Funland," had no hesitation in granting permission.

From the moment he reached London Cocky set himself out to find, follow, and observe Doc Bludgeon without that crook gaining any suspicion that he was being spied upon.

He ran the doctor to earth at last in a club of dubious respectability just off the Marylebone Road.

Cocky waited in a secluded doorway for the doctor to emerge. If it meant waiting all day and all night he was determined not to leave his post until his object was accomplished.

At last, about eight o'clock in the evening, the doctor shouldered his way through the swing doors and stood for a moment on the kerb, as though uncertain what his next movements should be. Suddenly, as though coming to a decision, he hailed a taxi.

Cocky, who had edged unobtrusively nearer, waited his opportunity, and then hailed another one.

"Follow that cab!" he instructed the driver, a cheery-faced fellow, who seemed more than usually intelligent.

"And don't let 'em know you're doing it. Double fare if you don't lose sight of them!"

A long chase followed, until at last, in a lonely road on the far side of Hampstead Heath, the leading cab stopped outside a pair of heavy iron gates let into a high wall which enclosed the grounds of some large house or mansion.

The conduct of Cocky's driver at this point was masterly. Had he stopped, or even slackened speed, it might have given rise to suspicion.

The taxi-man, however, did neither, for his quick eye had detected that, a hundred yards farther on, the high wall turned abruptly to follow a road that ran at right-angles from the main thoroughfare. Without any checking in speed he slid comfortably past the standing taxi, and turned up the side road for a couple of hundred yards before coming to a standstill.

Through the window at the back of the cab, however, Cocky had seen the rival taxi pass through the gates of the mansion.

"Here you are, m'lad!" observed the driver, coming to a halt at last. "What's the programme now?"

Cocky thrust a pound note into the driver's hand.

"Wait!" he said, and to the driver's astonishment swarmed on to the roof of the cab, from which jumping-off place he took a flying leap to the top of the wall, and from there dropped lightly into the grounds beyond.

Once inside he found himself in the extensive, well-kept park of a mansion of some size and dignity, the lights of which he could distinguish through the belt of trees encircling the wall.

With infinite caution Cocky Withers crept forward to investigate. And as he drew nearer to the house he found, as he had suspected, that he was approaching it from the side, and that the front faced the big gate through which Doc Bludgeon's taxi had just passed.

Silently, and keeping as much in the shadow as possible, Cocky made a complete circuit of the house. When he reached the farther side he was halted

by the glare of a light that streamed through a pair of french windows that overlooked a small, gravelled terrace.

The curtains of this room were drawn back, and while this was to his advantage, because it enabled him to see inside, it was impossible to pass the window without being seen by those inside the room.

Hugging closely against the wall, Cocky debated his next move. And while he hesitated a figure passed between the lamp and the window.

A moment later this happened again. Evidently at least two people were in the room. Perhaps one of them was Doc Bludgeon? If so, it was up to Cocky to obtain a glimpse of the doctor's companion.

The windows did not reach entirely to the ground. To pass out of the room on to the terrace it was necessary first to step over a sill some twelve inches in height.

Without hesitation Cocky threw himself flat on the ground and wormed his way forward until he gained the point immediately under the window where the sill screened him from observation. Then, inch by inch, he raised his head.

The risk was well worth while. At any cost he must see who it was that occupied the room.

His courage was rewarded. In an arm-chair that faced the window was Doc Bludgeon, talking excitedly to someone facing him, but whom Cocky was unable to distinguish because the back of the chair he occupied concealed him from view.

He lay there for a full hour before he caught a glimpse of this second man, who at length rose to his feet.

At sight of the tall, distinguished-looking man in immaculate evening-dress, who was handing a box of cigars to the more or less disreputable doc, Cocky's eyes all but dropped out of his head. It was none other than Lord Barnston, the brilliant statesman and diplomat, for whom was prophesied the highest post this country is able to bestow.

In all branches of sport, too, Lord Barnston was a supreme and shining light. On the turf, the hunting and cricket fields, as well as in the world of boxing, he stood for all that was best and highest in sportsmanship. Never had a single word been whispered that did not pay him tribute.

And yet, somehow, Cocky was not impressed with his lordship's appearance. A cat may look at a king, and in this case the cat, in the shape of Cocky Withers, shook his head.

Though his face was handsome, there was something in his expression that made Cocky aware that however genial the great man's outward manner, Lord Barnston had but little real kindness within, and the steel-like set to his thin lips spoke of something, deep down, that was cruel and unforgiving.

Cocky was unable to overhear what passed between the two men, for however excitedly Doc Bludgeon spoke he never once raised his voice. From what Cocky could gather in the few moments he watched, however, Lord Barnston appeared to be laying down the law to the doctor, giving instructions which appeared greatly to the other's liking.

And when at last the latter rose, with the evident intention of leaving, Cocky observed with interest the healthy wad of Treasury notes that passed from the keeping of Lord Barnston into that of his visitor.

Without waiting for more Cocky legged it hot-foot across the park, shinned over the wall by the help of a

convenient tree, and a moment later rejoined his taxi.

The driver regarded him dubiously as he came up.

"Look here," he said, "there's something about this business I don't like! I'm a straight sort of chap myself, and I don't want to be mixed up in any funny business. Chaps that go climbing over the walls of other folk's houses set me thinking."

Cocky realised that to one ignorant of the facts his actions must appear mighty suspicious. He looked at the driver hard for a moment, noticed his active muscular appearance, and then decided to trust him.

"Do you do anything in the boxing line?" he inquired.

The driver nodded. "Sure!" he said. "I'm the welter-weight champion of the cab trade."

"Ever come across a chap called Doc Bludgeon?" Cocky went on to ask.

This time the driver's nod was more emphatic still.

"Sure!" he said again. "And what I know I don't like."

Cocky went on with his cross-examination.

"Do you happen to know Lord Keyingham?" he demanded.

The driver's expression lightened.

"Do I not!" he cried. "I've driven him scores of times. When I was out of work and my mother ill, and he came to hear of it, he got me this job and had her sent for a month to the sea. A gentleman if ever there was one is his lordship."

Here indeed was a stroke of luck for Cocky, an ally who might prove invaluable. Without attracting attention a taxi can go where a man on foot would be regarded with suspicion.

"It's on his lordship's account I've been following Doc Bludgeon, who is in that house now," he said simply. "They're trying to put something over on him, and I'm doing all I can to see they don't. That's the game I was on just now—keeping my eye on the doctor."

The driver thrust out a well-muscled hand.

"Put it there!" he said. "Any friend of Lord Keyingham's is a friend of Joe Peters, which is my name."

He turned away and took his seat at the wheel.

"Just tell me where you want to go," he added, "and I'll drive you. And if it comes to a scrap you can count on me."

CHAPTER 2.

A Challenge Accepted!

**T**HERE was, however, nothing more to be done that night.

Before he dismissed the cab, however, Cocky was particular to obtain Joe Peters' address.

"You can count me in," were the last words the latter said as he drove off. "So long as it's to help Lord Keyingham, anything you say goes with me."

Cocky returned to the Flying Huntsman well pleased with what he had accomplished. If he had obtained no definite confirmation of his suspicions, at least he had gone a good way to justify them. He said nothing to Ben of his adventures, preferring to wait for Lord

Keyingham's next visit before opening out.

Three days later Lord Keyingham called, and in the best of spirits. Ben's victory over Butcher Black had recouped him for some of his previous losses, and he felt very well disposed towards the two boxers. Cocky felt that now was a good time to put a question that had been on his mind ever since his return from London.

"Pardon me, my lord," he said, drawing the other aside, "but do you happen to be acquainted with Lord Barnston?"

Instantly the smile froze on the other's face, replaced by an expression that was not good to see.

"Why do you ask?" he inquired curtly.

Cocky related the events that had caused him to put the inquiry. As the other listened his face grew blacker still, and when Cocky ceased speaking the young lord was pacing agitatedly up and down the room. Suddenly he turned.

"What you tell me explains a lot that has puzzled me," he said at last. "For years it has seemed that in every branch of sport I have found an obstacle to my success, just as in matters of business there has been some hindrance to baulk me at the eleventh hour. Ever since I came of age I have had to count upon this bar to my progress, and always I have known from where it came. Sometimes I have been successful in fighting it, at others it has beaten me." He paused, his usually ruddy, good-natured face stern and pale. "What you tell me now," he concluded, "tells me that the obstacles to my sport come from the same source as those that obstruct me in other matters."

Cocky shot a quick glance at him. "From Lord Barnston?" he suggested quietly.

"From Lord Barnston," the other qualified, "but working through Bludgeon."

For a moment he allowed his hand to rest on Cocky's shoulder, and when he continued there was a break in his voice.

"Many years ago," he said, "Lord Barnston and my father became suddenly bitter rivals. My father won; but from that time the man who once had been his friend became his enemy, plotting ruin, which, but for chance, would have succeeded. Even when my father died the hate of his rival was not subdued, but only transferred to his son—myself. From the moment I came into the property I have felt its influence."

"That's no sort of a way to carry on," said Cocky sympathetically. "Once a scrap is over and done with it's up to both parties to shake hands and forget it. Why," he added, after a pause, "some of my best pals are chaps I've fought in the ring."

Lord Keyingham smiled grimly, but his eyes twinkled.

"Lord Barnston isn't that sort," he said. "Nevertheless, I'm grateful for what you've done. Now I know who is behind the doctor I shall be better able to deal with him."

He hitched his shoulders as though freeing them of a burden.

"But we'll cut all that out now," he said. "What I came for was to take you and Ben to see a light-weight I've taken a fancy to. Give him a try-out, and tell me what you think of him."

Cocky grinned delightedly. The job was one after his own heart.

Ten minutes later the three were speeding down the road in their patron's high-powered car.

**ANSWERS**  
EVERY MONDAY...PRICE 2:

They found the boxer—Kid Pardoe by name—busy in the gymnasium, a slim, well-muscled lad, who gave the idea of knowing his business.

"I want you to have a round or two with Cocky Withers here," said Lord Keyingham, after he had made the three boxers known to each other.

During the three rounds it lasted the encounter was briskness itself, though, from the first it was apparent that Cocky was outclassed. What, however, he lacked in skill he made up for in vigour, and the two swapped punches with a will that was a pleasure to watch; and so good was their condition that at the finish, and though Cocky was bleeding slightly from the mouth, neither lad was in the least distressed.

"He's too good for me, my lord," remarked Cocky frankly, as he pulled off his gloves. "Too nippy altogether!"

"I sha'n't be for long," smiled the Kid pleasantly, "if you get plenty of sparring practice."

Thus, in the friendliest spirits, the two lads parted, Kid to resume his exercises, Cocky to accompany Lord Keyingham and Ben back to the Flying Huntsman.

In the car Lord Keyingham put both lads through a Third Degree cross-examination as to their opinion of the Kid, in which both were equally emphatic that the new light-weight was the goods.

As the one better able to judge, Lord Keyingham turned at last to Cocky.

"What chance would he have against Taffy Foster?" he asked.

Cocky thought for a moment before replying. He had seen the Welshman in action, and had no small opinion of his cleverness.

"A good one, I should think," he said slowly at last. "The Kid's stronger than Taffy, though to beat him he would have to be all that and then some. Not but what Kid Pardoe isn't clever enough for anything," he added, with a grin, pointing to his cut and swollen lip. "Were you thinking of matching them, sir?"

By way of answer, Lord Keyingham stopped the car, and, producing that day's "Sporting Bulletin," pointed to a paragraph headed "Boxing Challenge."

"An unknown will back Taffy Foster for £200 against any light-weight in Britain, barring Freddy O'Hearne of Belfast, George Allen of London, and Tommy Partis of Birmingham. Weigh in at ringside fifteen minutes before contest."

"That 'unknown,' whoever he is, knows something," observed Cocky.

"Take away the belt-holders and the two runners-up, and it's a job to find any lad in the country with a chance against Taffy Foster." He turned directly to Lord Keyingham. "What were you thinking of doing about it?" he inquired.

"I wrote accepting the challenge, providing I need not disclose the name of my man until he enters the ring," answered Lord Keyingham; "and this morning the editor replied that he was authorised to accept my terms."

Once more Cocky nodded in agreement.

"Good!" he said. "Once a clever lad like Taffy gets wise to who he's up against, he won't lose a chance of studying him until he's framed up a plan to beat him."

For the next few days Cocky's thoughts were filled with the curious terms of the forthcoming contest. As there was nothing unusual or illegal in the challenge, why was the name of Taffy Foster's backer withheld?

To Cocky there was something about this that was not quite straight, and Ben, to whom he referred the matter, agreed.

"Myself, I'm only a willing lad from Yorkshire," he observed in his slow, direct style; "but, such as I am, anyone is welcome to my name. Ten to one a chap who prefers to be 'unknown' has summat to be ashamed of."

And the more Cocky considered the question the more inclined he was to agree with Ben. He thought about it so much, indeed, that it began to get on his nerves. Finally, an idea that had been at the back of his mind all along thrust itself forward, so that at last he could not rest until he had made up his mind about it one way or another.

It was fortunate that Taffy Foster's training quarters were only ten or twelve miles from his own, and early one morning Cocky set off on the landlord's bicycle to discover what he could about this mysterious "unknown."

The Welshman's quarters was a cottage that stood at the end of a short lane branching from the main road, a barn in the adjoining field acting as gymnasium. From Cocky's point of view the situation was excellent.

A thick hedge ran down each side of the main road. Twenty yards from the

lane this hedge was broken by a gate, seating himself upon which he could see anyone that passed from the railway station to the lane without himself coming under observation.

He took up his position about nine in the morning, and remained there until six, during which nothing of note happened. Once Taffy and his mentors trotted past on a training run, but Cocky slipped behind the hedge.

The two following days saw him at his post, but it was not until the fourth day that his vigil was rewarded.

About eleven o'clock he observed a figure coming from the station towards the lane—a respectable-looking man, dressed in black broadcloth and square-crowned hat. The last man in the world, Cocky would have thought, to interest himself in boxing. Yet he turned up the side road into the gates of the cottage.

During the time the stranger was inside the house Cocky began to feel disappointed. It struck him as probable that the visitor was only a friend or relative of Taffy's or of one of the trainers. It was not likely that anyone so dowdy would be connected with the "Unknown" whose identity Cocky was out to discover.

But when at last the stranger once more emerged he was accompanied to the end of the lane by the man whom Cocky had marked down as Taffy's principal adviser, a thick-set, black-haired man, with eyes set too close together.

The two were talking excitedly, and, from his emphatic gestures and the tone of his raised voice, it struck Cocky that the stranger might not be quite as steady-going and respectable as at first sight he appeared. In any case, there could be no harm in finding out something about him.

Thus, when the two had separated, and the stranger was once more on his way to the station, Cocky left his post to follow.

Arriving at the station, he waited outside until the London train steamed in, and not until the last moment did he dive for a carriage. Thus, when the train pulled out of the station, the stranger had not once caught a glimpse of him.

When the train reached London, and the stranger got into a taxi, Cocky got into one immediately behind.

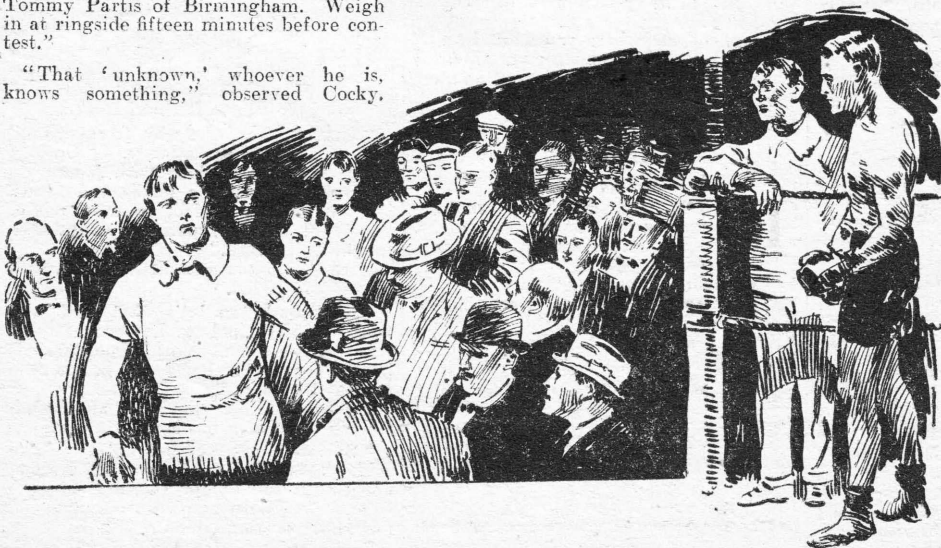
"Follow that cab," he instructed the driver.

### CHAPTER 3.

#### Filling the Breach!

WHEN Cocky got back to the Flying Huntsman that night he was unusually quiet and thoughtful. Ben could get little out of him as to where he had spent the day, Cocky explaining merely that he had been to London on private business.

The next morning, however, Ben observed that his friend took his training more seriously than usual, and as the days passed his application increased. Indeed, if he had been engaged to fight a world's championship, Cocky could not have done more strenuous



Forcing his way through the crowd, Big Ben Derby reached the ringside just as the clock struck nine.

work. At his own expense he sent to London for a sparring partner, and when the new addition arrived he proved to be none other than George Allen, the runner-up for the belt, the fastest and cleverest light-weight England had seen for years. It was said that if George Allen had possessed a knock-out punch, Freddy O'Hearn would not have held the championship.

Poor Ben began to feel that his friend had deserted him, for every moment of the day Cocky spent with his sparring partner—boxing, exercises, and road-work. Whatever spare time he had he was discussing boxing in all its aspects with George Allen, a decent lad, who was glad to put his principal wise to any point upon which he required schooling.

In the meanwhile, Ben was amazed at the improvement in Cocky the new system wrought. His friend seemed to eat up instruction as a cat laps milk. Where at first Allen could hit him where and how he pleased, so rapidly did Cocky improve that it was not long before the other was forced to go all out in order to land a punch.

At last came the day fixed for the fight between Taffy Foster and Kid Pardoe.

It was arranged that, accompanied by his trainer, the Kid should travel to London in Lord Keyingham's car, which was to call for him at four in the afternoon. Ben and Cocky were to meet their patron and Pa Dobbie at Fundle, ringside seats having been reserved. Slightly to Ben's surprise, Cocky had asked that George Allen might also be given a seat, a request that was granted without demur by his lordship.

When, about eight o'clock, they filed into the seats where Lord Keyingham awaited them, Cocky noticed at once how pale and haggard their patron looked. It was evident that he laboured under a strain that only the firm grip he kept upon himself enabled him to suppress.

"I'm afraid we are done in the eye this time, Withers," he said quietly as the other came up.

Cocky stiffened. Had he been right? Were his suspicions to prove correct?

"I'm sorry to hear that, my lord," he replied.

Lord Keyingham nodded gloomily.

"Yes," he said. "Kid Pardoe hasn't turned up. I phoned his training quarters, and found that the car called for him as arranged." For a moment the calm, aristocratic face flushed with anger. "If there has been any dirty work," he added, "I'm going to have it sifted to the bottom."

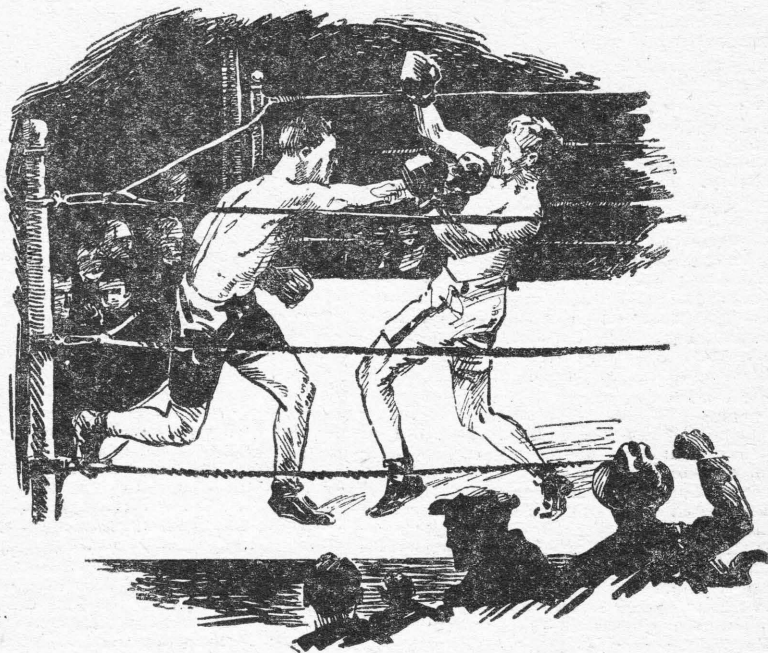
But in the meanwhile matters were becoming serious. The fight was fixed for nine o'clock. At eight-thirty, and though Taffy Foster and his seconds had long since been waiting to weigh-in, there was still no sign of the missing Kid.

On the further side of the ring was Doc Bludgeon, and as minute succeeded minute the satisfaction that shone from his untrustworthy eyes grew in intensity, and the smile about his thin lips broadened to a grin. From time to time he shot a glance of malicious triumph towards Lord Keyingham.

At a quarter to nine Pa Dobbie approached, unmistakable anxiety and distress on his good-humoured face.

"There is a report, my lord," he said, "that your man has not shown up. The boys are getting restless. What am I to tell them?"

Lord Keyingham turned to Cocky, upon whose judgment he had learned, during the past few weeks, to place considerable reliance. But Cocky's place was empty. Quietly and unobtrusively, accompanied by George Allen, he had



Straight from the shoulder came Cocky Withers' right with a punch that landed on Taffy Foster's jaw, sending him to the ground as though he had been poleaxed!

slipped from his seat behind his patron some twenty minutes previously. And even as the latter turned perplexedly away, an attendant approached Ben Derby and whispered something in his ear. Without a word the big Yorkshireman left his seat.

"Listen to them!" cried Pa excitedly, before Lord Keyingham could speak.

He waved his hand in the direction from where came a great shouting, the words of which fell upon the young aristocrat's ears like a blow.

"Ten to one on Taffy Foster! Ten to one on Taffy Foster!"

Desperately Lord Keyingham searched his mind for some way out of the difficulty. The terms of the match were "play or pay." If when the clock struck nine his man was not in the ring, he would lose not only his money but his reputation as a sportsman.

He shot a lightning glance about the hall. His faith in Kid Pardoe was such that he knew he had not wilfully been let down. If it was possible for the Kid to be here, here he would be. And as his glance travelled rapidly about the crowd, suddenly it was arrested.

"Twelve to one on Taffy Foster! Twelve to one on Taffy Foster!" roared the bookmakers.

But high above the heads of the crowd Cocky Withers was signalling.

Ben Derby, his solid bulk against the wall, had hoisted the light-weight on his shoulders, for the crowd was now so thick about the doors it was impossible to reach their patrons. And his back to the two boxers so that he could not see the signal, Doc Bludgeon still grinned his triumph.

On the strength of that single reassuring gesture from Cocky, Lord Keyingham was content to go the limit. He thrust a thick wad of notes into Pa Dobbie's hand.

"That is my answer," he said coolly. "Do the best you can at the odds."

"For the love of Mike!" shouted Pa, and dashed off to obey his instructions.

At three minutes to nine came a stir in the crowd round about the door of

Taffy Foster's dressing-room. A moment later, accompanied by his seconds, the challenger climbed into the ring.

"Where's the other fellow?" yelled the crowd.

Again and again, others taking up the cry, the question echoed and re-echoed throughout the building:

"Where's the other fellow?"

Suddenly and dramatically was the question answered. The deep voice of Ben Derby shouted from the door of a dressing-room on the other side of the hall:

"Here he is!"

A moment later, forcing his way through the throng like a plough through stubble, and followed by George Allen, Ben had reached the ringside.

In his wake, smiling, slim, and fighting fit, was Cocky Withers! And as his feet touched the inner side of the ropes the clock struck nine.

His face purpled with the rage that possessed him, his limbs trembling and his voice quivering, Doc Bludgeon dashed from his seat and through the ropes.

"I protest!" he yelled, in a voice that carried to the remotest corner of the hall. "I protest!"

Leisurely Pa Dobbie, accompanied by Mr. Herbert Waters, the referee, climbed into the ring. After a brief conversation with the spluttering, gesticulating Doc, the referee held up his hand for silence. Within ten seconds of the gesture that vast audience was quiet as though in church.

"Gentlemen," he said, "Mr. Bludgeon here, who authorises me to announce him as Foster's supporter, has lodged an objection to Withers on the grounds that he is not the nominee selected originally by Lord Keyingham, who accepted the terms of the challenge. In response to this objection, I rule that as by those terms it was not necessary for his lordship to disclose the name of his nominee until he entered the ring, he is entitled to be represented by any boxer who fulfils the other terms of the

challenge. Both lads having weighed in within the light-weight limit, I rule that the match proceeds."

A great shout went up from the spectators. The decision was to the liking of all. Lord Keyingham was known as a good sportsman, generous towards any boxer who represented him, and quiet and good-humoured, either in defeat or victory. The house was with him to a man.

In face of the referee's decision Doc Bludgeon could put no active protest, but he slouched back to his seat with lowering brow, muttering furiously under his breath. If looks could kill, the glance he shot at Lord Keyingham would have shrivelled that smiling aristocrat to death. Win or lose, now that there was to be a fight the latter was happy.

That was the great thing—that he had not let the public down. Now that it had been revealed to him who he was up against he knew, deep down in his heart, that his father's enemy had been out this time not so much to rob him of his money as to blacken his good name. He realised that if at the last moment Cockey had not stepped into the breach Doc Bludgeon would have lost no time in spreading the report that, while pretending to take up the challenge, Lord Keyingham was actually backing the other side. Additional comfort, too, lay in the conviction that however the fight went Cockey Withers would prove worthy of his trust.

Cockey, on the other hand, knew that Taffy had not been admitted into the fraudulent scheme of his supporters. The Welshman was the last lad in the world to be mixed up in anything that was not open and above board if he knew it. Consequently, he had trained for this match as if it was for the world's championship.

#### CHAPTER 4.

##### Victory—and a Sensation!

HE looked hard as nails as he advanced across the ring at the first bell, his jaw tucked out of harm's way into the hollow of his shoulder, his body crouched and well protected by forearms and elbows in the American style.

Cockey, on the other hand, adopted the classical English style, which he found the best for milling on the retreat, a process he intended to adopt until he had felt the other out. And in that first round Taffy never let up in his attack, while Cockey gave ground freely. He was prepared to do this indefinitely, if need be, contenting himself with taking what toll he could in doing so. The bell came with Taffy well ahead on points.

The two following rounds were the first one over again. Although his close

cover must necessarily have cramped his style pretty badly, Taffy refused to open out. His idea was to weaken his man by incessant punches to the body before doing so. He went all out to make the bout one of in-fighting only.

But Cockey always refused to come to close quarters. George Allen had taught him how an attacking man may be propped off with a good straight left, and these punches, though not particularly hard, yet managed to do considerable damage. Taffy could not have a square inch of face or body exposed for a second without it becoming the target for a shower of irritating, damaging straight lefts.

At the end of the round Taffy returned to his corner more puzzled than he would admit. This fight was not going to be the easy thing he had expected it to be. This lad was by no means the novice he had been declared. He knew the game.

On the other hand, George Allen was more than satisfied with the way his pupil shaped. Cockey was fighting to instructions, and realised that these were sound.

"Carry on as you're doing," said George at the interval. "You may not look very pretty, but for the time being you can only box as Taffy allows you to, and he isn't too happy about the way things are going." His voice dropped, and he spoke earnestly into Cockey's ear. "Once he opens up," he urged, "use your right, but don't hit him too hard with it at first. Kid him into thinking you don't carry much weight in your right hand. Let him think you left your punch in your training quarters. That'll make him careless. Then, once you see a real chance, bring your right over, with everything you've got behind it." He raised his eyebrows inquiringly. "You get me?" he cried.

Cockey nodded.

"I get you," he said grimly.

Apart from watching the fight, Lord Keyingham was able, from the position of his seat, to study the face of his enemy, Doc Bludgeon, and as the fight progressed he saw how his face paled and how his hands clasped and unclasped in excitement and apprehension.

From the fourth round to the tenth Taffy commenced to fight in more open style. He felt that such a course was necessary. If Cockey could not be tempted to close quarters he must be given a lesson in sheer boxing, for in spite of the unexpected skill of his opponent the Welshman considered himself by far the cleverer man. The fight had not progressed above half a round under the new conditions, however, before he had reason to change his opinion.

For Cockey adapted his methods to the new order of fighting as if to the manner born. More surprising still was it to Taffy that now he wished to transform hostilities to long range, Cockey insisted upon getting to close quarters. Condensed, the Welshman's unenviable position was that when he wanted to box Cockey made him fight, and when he wanted to fight Cockey insisted upon boxing. It was all very discouraging.

Also, and in obedience to instructions, more than once in those five or six rounds he gave Taffy a taste of his right hand. Shrewd punches, too, some of them, though by no means with all his weight behind them.

Taffy smiled. If this was all there was to his opponent's right hand there was not much to fear. He could take all that Cockey liked to send over and come up for more. Of course, those punches stung, but they did no damage.

Thus, even the experienced Taffy

made the mistake of becoming careless, lulled into false security.

Which was what George Allen had intended to happen when he advised Cockey not to use all his weight at first.

The end came in the twelfth round.

Fainting with his left, Taffy loosed a right that caught Cockey fairly and squarely on the point of the jaw. What he failed to notice, however, was that Cockey's head jerked back not so much by the force of the punch as because he withdrew it a fractional proportion of a second before the impact.

Right up against the ropes as he was, Cockey seemed to crumple up. His knees gave; his head lolled; his expression became vague and uncertain.

"You've got him, Taffy!" yelled Doc Bludgeon, his face livid with excitement. "You've got him! Go in and finish him!"

The excitement of all of those about the ring communicated itself to Taffy. In view of Cockey's apparently helpless condition he did not even bother to draw back his right hand, that had done the damage. One more tap on the jaw of this helpless man with his left and the fight would be his.

As though by accident, Cockey's head shifted a bare couple of inches as the blow was delivered, and the well-intentioned "finisher" flashed harmlessly by. And thus, both arms outstretched as wide open as a door, Taffy Foster stood before the now suspiciously alert and active Cockey Withers.

The Londoner's chance had come at last!

Straight from the shoulder, and like the kick of a corn-fed mule, came his right glove, with a punch that landed on the angle of Taffy's jaw and sounded like a mallet striking wood.

The Welshman sank to the ground as though he had been poleaxed.

Though he did so simply as a matter of form, there really was no need for the timekeeper to call the count.

Let alone ten, Taffy could not have toed the mark again in time to hear the count of a hundred.

And at that very moment of victory came a surge about the entrance door. People were scattered in all directions by the progress of a slight, but muscular, form through their ranks. Then, with a shout, there stood beneath the very shadow of the ring in which he had been booked to appear—Kid Pardoe!

Lord Keyingham, however, had worked his way to the ringside, and, on first catching sight of him, had motioned the Kid to follow Cockey Withers, the latter's seconds, and himself into the dressing-room.

When they reached that haven Kid Pardoe broke down and sobbed like a child.

"I couldn't help it, my Lord!" he cried. "I've been nobbled—got at! The car came, not at four, but at a quarter to—a strange car and a strange driver, who said that your car had broken down, and that you had hired him to come in its place. Tom Nokes and I got into it, and it set off at fifty miles an hour. After a quarter of an hour or twenty minutes we turned up a side lane that led to another main road. Tom and I yelled to the driver to stop, but he took no notice, and Tom wouldn't risk me jumping out. We drew up at last outside a village that was miles away from anywhere, where four men waited in the middle of the road with clubs in their hands, and who dragged us out of the car. We put up the best fight we could; but Tom was knocked out, after which they all got in the car and drove off, leaving me to get

(Continued on page 28.)

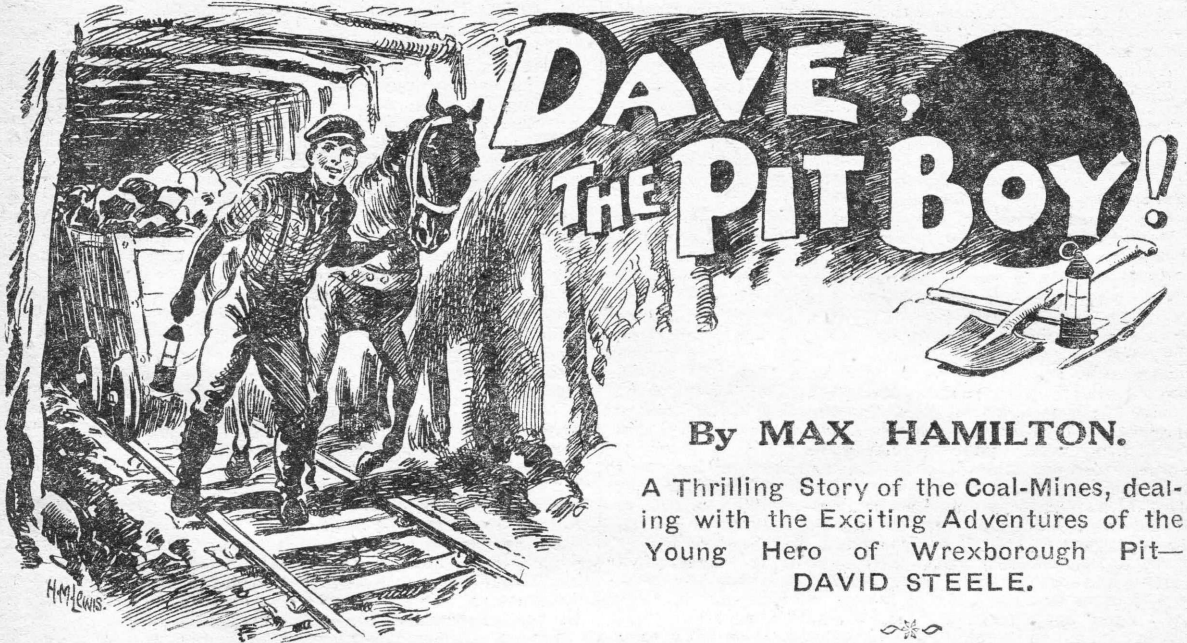
## GREAT NEW MYSTERY STORY!



Get this week's issue of the  
**"MAGNET LIBRARY"**

And Read **THE OPENING CHAPTERS!**  
 THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 903.

David Steele is up against it again this week—hard!



By MAX HAMILTON.

A Thrilling Story of the Coal-Mines, dealing with the Exciting Adventures of the Young Hero of Wrexborough Pit—**DAVID STEELE.**

#### WHAT HAS HAPPENED.

**L**EAVING the little North-country village of Thorpe Western, **DAVID STEELE**, an ambitious young lad of fifteen, decided to try his fortune in Wrexborough.

With a few shillings in his pocket, and with a tramp of thirty to forty miles to his destination, the sturdy country lad sets off.

Utterly tired out at night, the lad sought a sheltered place, into which he crept. But hardly had he dropped off to slumber when he was aroused by hurried movements near at hand. He was alert almost on the instant, and, on making investigations, found, to his horror, the bound figure of a man lying on the permanent-way at the mercy of an express train which was at that moment due. With great presence of mind, the lad dragged the inert form to safety just a fraction of a second before the great train rushed by.

But the perpetrators of the crime were returning; so, carrying the unconscious form, Dave took refuge beneath the arched stone bridge which carried the railway over a canal.

His presence was detected, however, and in an effort to escape the clutches of the unconscious man's assailants, Dave and his burden found themselves in the canal, sweeping helplessly through the arch and out into the open waters beyond.

Fortune was at hand, however, for the two were just able to scramble on board a barge which lay right across the canal. David then learned that he had rescued Mr. Scott, the owner of the Wrexborough coal-mines. David was offered a job in the mine, and gratefully accepted.

Mr. Scott's manner was very strange after that; for not only did he ask Steele to keep the whole affair a secret, but he also found the lad accommodation with a man named Markham, his own assailant!

Markham had recognised Steele, too, and had made many unsuccessful attempts to get the lad out of the way.

Later, by a strange coincidence, Steele gets wise to another plot to capture Scott. But he is unable to warn the mine-owner, for he is caught spying and made prisoner.

Scott, however, walks into the trap, and after a fierce struggle is made a prisoner also. A moment later a match is struck, and in the flutter of light Scott recognises his assailant to be none other than his brother George.

"You're mine, my dear brother—mine to do as I like with!" were the fierce words that drummed in upon the mine-owner's ears. "You've fattened on the property that should have been mine all these years, and now I'm going to make you pay!"  
(Now read on.)

#### Black Treachery!

**G**EORGE SCOTT paused, as if for a reply. None came, however. The prostrate man met his gaze fearlessly, and even with something of contempt in his look. Evidently his silence annoyed his brother, for he went on sneeringly:

"Perhaps you do not realise your position. Do you know where you are? Do you know that there is not within miles a soul who could help you?"

"I know," Scott returned quietly. "And I also know of what you are capable, for I still have in my possession the pocket-book which you dropped on the moor on the night you attempted to murder me. For our mother's sake, and because I did not wish our name to be dragged in the dust, I withheld the evidence against you, and did not set the police on your track. Had I done so you would assuredly not have been here to-night."

For an instant a flush, that might have been one of shame, passed over George Scott's face.

"Generosity is all very well for those who can afford it, my dear Will. Beggars like myself cannot afford to indulge in it. When you took away my inheritance from me you ceased to be my brother, and became my enemy. It is as my enemy that I have treated you—and shall treat you. The other night I thought that the score was paid in full. But, no, a boy turns up in some extraordinary way, and rescues you from what seemed certain death. Since you knew to whom you were indebted for that knock on the head, you might have guessed that what I have set my mind on I do not give up for a single failure."

"And you have set your mind on my death?"

"Not on your death, but on getting you into my power

as I have done to-night. On thinking matters over, I have come to the conclusion that you are worth more to me alive than dead. I will let you go, therefore. I offer you your liberty and safety, but at a price."

"And that price is?"

"One hundred thousand pounds. That was the amount of the capital my father bequeathed to you. You have probably doubled or trebled it by this time; therefore, I consider myself extremely moderate in only asking for the original sum. Of course, you cannot realise it in a day; but if you give me your word that it shall all be paid into my hands within a time which we shall agree upon—say two or three months—why, you will be at liberty to return home as soon as you like."

"And if I refuse?"

"You will not refuse."

"But if I do?" Scott repeated.

"You may refuse now, but before I have done with you you will be only too glad to consent."

William Scott smiled.

"It strikes me, George, that you are trying to terrify me. I am not a child, remember, to be frightened with threats."

"No," was the reply; "and I will do you the justice to say that I believe you are as brave—ay, and braver—than most men, and that you would look death in the face without flinching. But there are things that men look on as more terrible than death—loss of liberty, for instance. What if I told you that it was in my power to shut you up in a prison hundreds of feet below the surface of the earth, and to keep you there, never allowing you to look upon the light of day until you had consented to pay me the sum I ask of you? What would you say if I told you that?"

He leaned forward as he spoke, fixing his eyes upon his brother with a curious smile.

"I should say," the latter returned, "that, as I told you just now, I am not a child, to be frightened by that sort of invention. Further, that we are living in the twentieth century, not the tenth, and that a man in my position cannot suddenly vanish from his surroundings without inquiries being made and a search instituted."

Again George Scott smiled.

"You give me credit for less intelligence than I possess, Will. If you persist in your foolish obstinacy, and thereby force me to carry out the little plan I have in my mind, I can assure you of one thing—that no inquiries will be made, and no search be instituted; for the simple reason that only two people, Markham and myself, will know that you have disappeared from Wrexborough."

The prisoner made no reply. Some inkling of the other's scheme flashed into his brain even before George continued jeeringly:

"I need scarcely recall to your memory how very much alike we are, my dear Will. We used to be continually mistaken for each other in the old days, and occasionally you were annoyed by the fact. The likeness, in spite of the different lives we have led, does not seem to have grown less with years. I am perfectly certain that if I should present myself openly in Wrexborough I should be taken for you, and greeted on all hands as the flourishing colliery proprietor. I think you are beginning to see what I am driving at, aren't you?—beginning to see that there is nothing to prevent my keeping you a prisoner as long as I like; until, in fact, you agree to my terms, and give me your word of honour to pay me one hundred thousand pounds, as well as your solemn promise to keep the transaction secret. Knowing you as I do, I am convinced that your oath once given to that effect, it will be held sacred. To save yourself trouble and inconvenience, therefore, I should strongly advise you to agree to these terms at once. What do you say?"

"I don't agree to them," replied Scott firmly. "I will neither submit to be robbed nor threatened. You have never appealed to me for help in vain in the past. And if anything could add to my determination to refuse you what you ask, it would be your black ingratitude and the treachery by which you lured me here to-night."

"Very well!" snarled his brother fiercely. "You have made your choice, that's enough for me. We'll see how long you'll abide by it. You'll talk in another strain before long. Here, Markham, come and help me to carry him along!"

Markham, who during the whole of the above scene had stood in silence by the door, made a step forward.

"Where are you taking me to?" asked Scott.

"You'll see soon enough," was the reply. "Lift his head, Markham. I'll take his feet."

"What are you going to do with the boy, then?" said Markham, nodding his head in the direction of David, who

still lay prone and outstretched where George Scott had flung him.

His companion turned sharply round.

"Confound the boy! I had forgotten him for the moment," he muttered.

He leaned over David, and looked into his white face.

"He's safe enough for the present," he said carelessly. "No signs of coming round; and when he does come round he'll be too giddy to stand. There's no need to worry about him. I'll come back and settle him presently."

"If you dare to lay a finger on him——" cried Scott, struggling to free himself from the bonds that encircled his wrists and ankles.

"You are scarcely in a position to dictate to me as to what I dare or dare not do!" returned his brother sneeringly. "Don't exhaust yourself, my dear fellow! I have tied you up in much too workmanlike a way for you to be able to unfasten yourself, and you'll have quite enough to do to think of your own concerns without worrying about those of your young friend."

He extinguished the lantern as he spoke, and the next moment Scott felt himself lifted from the ground by his head and heels, and carried out into the open air. Where were they taking him, he asked himself? Not very far, for, after a few yards had been traversed, he was laid down again upon the ground. Then, as he raised his head, and, looking around him, realised where he was, the meaning of his brother's threats suddenly flashed into his mind.

"To shut you up in a prison hundreds of feet below the surface of the earth, to keep you there, and never allow you to look upon the light of day."

He understood now what that meant. For his captor had deposited him upon the earth within a yard or two of the black, gaping mouth that led down to the old mine—to workings which no man ever now entered, to tunnels which the foot of the miner had long ceased to traverse.

### Fighting the Flames!

HALF an hour passed by since David had been left alone; and then, had anyone been there to listen, they would have heard him stir, and a faint moan come from his lips. The stupefaction produced by the violent blow he had received was passing away, and consciousness was coming back to him.

A few minutes more, and he raised himself on his elbow, and peered round him, trying to recall where he was and how he had come there.

His head throbbled sickeningly. He could not bear to hold it up, and soon slipped back into a recumbent position. For a little while he lay dazed and bewildered, and then the memory of his midnight excursion, of his fall through the roof, his capture, and the subsequent arrival of Scott came back to him with a rush.

What had happened since then? He was still in the shed, but, so far as he could make out, alone. Markham and his companion were gone, then. But what had they done with Scott? Killed him? If so, in all probability his body was lying somewhere close at hand, invisible in the darkness.

The boy shuddered at the thought. The horror of it overcame his physical weakness, and he made a desperate effort to rise to his feet.

He had only scrambled to his knees, however, when he stopped suddenly. Footsteps were approaching the shed. Instinct, rather than reason, prompted him to fling himself on the ground again, and lie there motionless and seemingly senseless, awaiting the outcome of events.

He had not long to wait. The door opened and a man entered, and groped his way to the boy's side. Stooping down, he seized David's wrists, and, holding them together, made a couple of turns round them with a rope. Suddenly, however, as if a thought struck him, he stopped.

"No," the boy heard him mutter, "there's no need for that. He can't get away, and if the rope was found on him it would point to foul play. Safer not to."

He unwound the rope and tossed it aside, then rose to his feet and walked across the shed, and the next moment David heard him striking a match.

From where he lay he could not see his enemy. His back was towards him, and he dared not stir. What, he asked himself, with a beating heart, was he about to do? Murder him? If so, he—David—was helpless in his hands!

Another and another match spluttered into flame. Then, to his surprise, the boy heard the door slammed, something that sounded like the thrust of a rusty bolt, and he was alone. His enemy had left him. For a moment he was safe. The footsteps were rapidly receding.

His relief was short-lived, for a whiff of choking smoke enveloped him, and the next instant the shed was lit up by a glare of light.



The door held in spite of David Steele's frenzied efforts, and every moment the roaring and crackling of flames increased, and the volume of smoke grew denser.



The place was on fire. Already in one corner the flames were running rapidly up the dry and rotten timbers, sending out rolling volumes of thick smoke, that rapidly filled the shed and rose through the rents in the roof towards the starlit sky.

Fear lent the lad strength. He leapt up and rushed towards the door. Then, when, as he had instinctively guessed would be the case, he found it fastened on the outside, he flung himself against it, and beat upon it with an energy of which a moment before he would not have believed himself capable.

In vain! The door held, in spite of his frenzied efforts, and every moment the roaring and crackling of flames increased, and the volumes of smoke grew denser. The fire had reached the roof now, and long, red tongues were shooting up above it. The heat was intolerable.

Pausing in his frantic attacks upon the unyielding door, David shouted for aid, hopeless, even as he did so, and knowing that there could be no one in hearing, except those who would turn a deaf ear to his appeals for mercy. But only the increasing roar of the flames returned an answer to his cries.

It was not only fear that filled his heart, but rage against those who had trapped him and consigned him to a horrible death, lest he should live to be a witness against them, for such he felt was the secret of their desire to rid themselves of him. And he gnashed his teeth in helpless fury as he thought how impossible it would be to fix the crime upon them, and how easily and how safely they had swept him from their path. Their hideous cruelty would, in all probability, remain for ever unavenged. To all except the scoundrels who had encompassed it, the manner in which he had met his death would remain a mystery.

The increasing heat of the flames drove him from the door to the farther end of the shed. The roof was well alight by now. One end of it was blazing furiously. As he leaned up against the wall and gazed, fascinated, upon the advancing fire, a strange lethargy fell upon the boy. He wondered dreamily how long it would be before the flames seized him in their fiery fingers and wrapped him in their embrace.

He gazed upwards. Right above him, through a jagged tear in the roof—the very place where he had been dragged through an hour or two before—the sky was plainly visible. A momentary puff of wind had blown the smoke on one side and he could see the stars shining clearly above him, and one broken beam of timber stretching half-way across the opening. And, as he looked up at it, a sudden wild hope flashed into his mind.

A rope slung over that broken beam might save him. A rope! And somewhere on the floor of the shed a rope was lying. In an instant he was down on his knees, creeping towards the spot where he believed it to be—somewhere in the centre of the shed.

The smoke almost choked him—and would have done so if he had not thought of tying his handkerchief over his face. The heat was intense as he worked his way nearer to the blazing end of the shed. He felt as if he could bear the awful heat no longer, when at length his hand touched and closed over what he sought.

Blinded and scorched he struggled back to the other end of the shed. The broken beam was almost hidden from his sight now by volumes of stifling smoke. His head felt bursting, and he could hardly see out of his streaming eyes, as, having knotted a noose with his trembling fingers, he flung the rope upwards. It failed to catch the beam, and fell back again. Again and again he failed.

Reeling and gasping, he raised his arm for the fourth attempt. His weakening sense told him that this would be his last—that he would never have strength for another cast. Once more he flung the noose, almost at random, for, blinded by the smoke, he could not see to aim.

This time it caught. The noose slipped over the timber, and the rope grew taut between his hands. The next instant he was swarming upwards.

He reached the beam, flung his leg across it, and scrambled out on to the roof, whence he took a flying leap to the ground. Then he picked himself up, staggered on a few paces, and for the second time that night, fell senseless on the earth, just as the building from which he had barely escaped with his life collapsed with a crash, the roof falling in, and sending showers of sparks flying up into the midnight air.

An Unexpected Meeting!

IT was broad daylight before David opened his eyes again.

Someone was speaking to him—a hand was laid upon his shoulder, and then upon his head; but it seemed as if some weight was holding him down and he could not



Markham knelt down, and David Steele gave a gasp of surprise as he saw him lower himself through a hole in the ground.

stir. By degrees the voice grew plainer, though it still sounded dim and a long distance off; and at last he could make out the words:

"Wake up, I say! You ain't dead, are yer? Oh, what ever am I to do?"

He opened his eyes.

A face was looking down into his own—an anxious, not over clean face—the face of Micky Jones, the bargeboy.

"I thought you was dead," said Micky, with a sigh of relief. "I've been trying to take you up for the last hour or more. 'Ow did you come 'ere? And what's the matter with you?"

David made no answer. With infinite difficulty he had raised himself upon his elbow, his head throbbing as if it would burst at each movement he made. Then, as he looked around him, a cry burst from his lips. Only a few yards away from him stood the blackened and still smouldering remains of the shed from which he had escaped the night before; and at the sight of it the memory of all that had occurred within its walls came back with a rush.

He staggered to his feet, and stood swaying like a drunken man, clutching at Micky's shoulder to steady himself.

"Help me along, Micky," he said thickly. "Wait a moment, though. You haven't seen anyone about since you came here?"

Micky shook his head.

"It's nigh an hour since I found you lyin' here," he said. "I was on the tramp to Wrexborough. Dad's in 'ospital, with a broken leg; an' me bein' on my own, I thought I might get a job down Wrexborough way. I starts early this morning from Mickleton, and all of a sudden I nearly tumbles over you. What's been up with you? Your eye's as black as a boot, an' your forehead's all swelled."

"Look here, Micky!" David returned. "I haven't time to tell you everything now, but you must help me into Wrexborough as fast as you can. My head swims so, I don't believe I can walk so far unless you help me. There's been foul play here, and I must give the alarm. Here, hold on!"

He slipped his arm through Micky's as he spoke, and together they set out towards the town, Micky with his eyes rounder than ever and half a dozen questions on his tongue. David, however, was in no condition to talk. Even with his companion's assistance it was all he could do to stagger along, stumbling at every other step.

It was not alone the effects of the blow he had received from which he was suffering; the cold to which he had been exposed during the long hours of the night after his escape from the burning shed, had chilled him to the marrow, and he was already well on the way to a high fever. Faint, weak, and giddy, more than once during the walk he was on the point of swooning again; and it was more than an hour after they had started before the outlying houses of Wrexborough came in sight.

David had intended to give the alarm at Scott's house, but he was saved the necessity of going so far. A few

hundred yards from the gates he saw a strongly built figure swinging along the road, with bent head and an air of deep thought.

"Mr. Grafton!" he cried.

The manager of the mine pulled up short and stared at the boy.

"David Steele!" he exclaimed. "How is it you aren't at work this morning? Good heavens, lad!" he went on, as he noticed the boy's pale, bruised face. "What have you been doing with yourself? You look half dead!"

"Never mind me, Mr. Grafton," said David, seizing his sleeve in his excitement; "it's Mr. Scott you must think of. There's been foul play. He was attacked last night by Markham and another man, close by the old shaft, and they have either carried him off, or murdered him. For Heaven's sake, send out in search of him as quickly as you can!" he added, as he met the manager's incredulous gaze. "I tell you it's a matter of life and death! Don't you believe me?"

"Believe you? No!" returned Mr. Grafton bluntly. "Mr. Scott carried off and murdered! If you didn't look as if you'd been half murdered yourself, I should think you were trying one of your hoaxes on me. Have you gone crazy, my lad?"

"Crazy!" cried David passionately. "A hoax! Mr. Grafton, I swear to you I'm speaking the truth! Mr. Scott was attacked on the moor last night. I was there when it happened, and I barely escaped being burnt to death by the same two men in the old shed; and I firmly believe that his body is lying somewhere on the moor now."

"And I firmly believe it isn't," returned the manager coolly. "And as I left Mr. Scott in his own house less than ten minutes ago, I should think I am more likely to be in the right about it than you."

"What!" cried David, unable to believe his ears. "Mr. Scott is safe at home?"

"Safe at home," repeated Grafton; "and I should imagine he has been safe at home all night."

"Then," stammered David, "he did not tell you anything about what happened at the shed?"

"No," replied the manager grudgingly, "he did not. Come—come," he went on sharply, "we've had enough of this! Next time you want to play a practical joke, remember I'm not the person to try it on, or you'll be sorry you made the attempt!"

He was about to pass on, but once more David stopped him. "Mr. Grafton," he exclaimed, "forgive me—but is it really the truth that you have told me?"

"The truth!" said Grafton angrily. "What do you mean, you impertinent young cub? I'll teach you to doubt my word! Bless my heart," he added, with a sudden change of tone, catching David by the arms as the boy staggered and would have fallen, "the lad's ill! What a brute I am to speak to him like that! What's the matter with him?" he went on, turning to Micky. "Been up to mischief—eh?"

Micky shook his head. "Don't know nothin' about it," he declared, "'cept that I round him lyin' on the moor this mornin', an' helped him to walk here."

"Out on the moor?" said the puzzled Grafton, looking down on David, who lay in his arms, moaning faintly, and for the moment incapable of speech. "How did he get there? And who's been knocking him about, I wonder? He's had a blow on the forehead that would have stunned an ox, to judge by the mark it has left. And his clothes are all singed, too. He said something about being nearly burnt, didn't he? Well, there's one thing certain, and that is that the sooner he's lying in his bed the better."

He hoisted the boy in a pair of muscular arms as he spoke. "Hallo! What's this? Somebody ill?"

Grafton turned round, to face his employer. "It's David Steele, sir," he replied. "I'm afraid he has been hurt, though how, I can't make out yet, for the queer part of it is, he came up to me just now with a story that you'd been attacked, and perhaps murdered, by two men near the old shaft. Good heavens, sir, what's the matter?"

For Scott was staring at David as if he had seen a ghost. His pallid lips moved, but no sound came from them, and as David's eyes opened, his own dilated with horror.

The lad gave a faint cry of mingled surprise and relief. "That you, sir?" he exclaimed. "You are safe, then? How did you get away? I was afraid Markham and that other brute had done for you."

But the momentary delay had given the man he addressed time to collect himself, and David's words were answered with a stare of seeming astonishment.

"Markham—done for me? What's the boy talking about?"

David looked up in blank amazement.

"Last night, sir—the moor—the shed!" he gasped painfully, astonished at his employer's strange pretence of not understanding him.

Scott shrugged his shoulders.

"You're dreaming, my lad," he answered sharply, "or talking nonsense! What on earth should I be doing in a shed or on the moor last night?"

There was something so harsh and menacing in his tone that the kindly Grafton broke in with:

"The lad's ill, Mr. Scott—anyone can see that with half an eye. It's my belief he doesn't know what he's talking about."

"Evidently not!" returned Scott roughly.

Then, seeing the look of astonishment on David's face, he altered his tone, and laid his hand on David's pulse.

"You're right; the boy's in a high fever," he said. "Will you take him home, Grafton, and see that he has the doctor? You can tell the people where he lodges that I will be responsible for what he wants while he is laid up."

And, with a curt nod, he turned on his heel, and strode rapidly away. Once out of sight of Grafton and his companion he stopped, and ground his heel savagely into the road.

"Hang the boy!" he muttered. "He has as many lives as a cat! When I saw his face I thought for a minute that the game was up. Evidently, though, he has no suspicion of the real state of things, so he cannot have overheard much of what I said to Markham last night. Still, he knows that there is something wrong, and is just the sort of youngster to peer about till he finds what that something is. It is a fortunate thing that he is ill. Everything he says can be put down to delirium; but he will need watching—ay, and something more than that—will Master David Steele!"

### Lost in the Darkness!

THE doctor's verdict was that David Steele had had a narrow escape of a serious illness. He forbade all work for at least a week; and for seven days David was fussed over as an invalid by kindly Mrs. Nichols. The generally accepted theory of his absence from the house during that eventful night—a theory which the doctor leaned to—was that he had wandered out in an attack of delirium. This theory David, for his own reasons, did not contradict.

It was idle for him to pretend that the treatment he had received from the man he thought to be Scott had not altered his feelings towards his employer. In fact, he was bitterly disappointed in him. He had saved Scott's life at the risk of his own, and Scott—so he thought—having escaped from the second snare laid by his enemies, had left the lad to whom he owed so much to their tender mercy.

Of Markham, since that night on the moor, David had seen nothing. He had suddenly announced his intention of changing his lodgings, and moved to a house some distance up the street. His place in the household was for the present occupied by Micky Jones, who, on Mrs. Nichols' recommendation, had obtained the situation of errand-boy at a neighbouring grocer's shop.

It was not until after he had returned to work that David saw his fellow-lodger again, and then in an unexpected manner.

Turning a corner of one of the galleries, he suddenly came upon two men engaged in conversation, the one Markham, the other, was it, or was it not?—Scott. David could not see, so quickly did he turn away and hurry off, but from his dress he could tell it was no miner.

They had ceased speaking the instant the lad appeared, but not before some words of Markham had reached his ears.

"To-night I can manage it all right, when the others have left the pit."

David started.

"Something new up now," he muttered. "To-night he can manage it all right, when the others have left the pit. What can he mean? Upon my word, the whole thing is absolutely maddening. Twice Markham has tried to murder Scott, and now, if I am not mistaken, here they are as thick as thieves again."

It might have been imagined that after the narrow escapes he had already had, David would have been chary of again interfering in Markham's affairs. Such was not the case, however; but it was more than curiosity that spurred him on—a determination to bring to book the cowardly ruffians who had twice all but murdered him. With this end in view he turned over Markham's words in his mind. The

conclusion to which they pointed was obvious. Markham had some secret project, which was to be carried out in the mine after working hours. What it could be the lad could not even guess, but he very soon made up his mind that he would find out, and fixed upon a plan of action.

Plainly Markham intended to remain in the pit. He, David, must therefore do the same. The boy did not disguise from himself that this meant practical imprisonment underground till next day with a man who, should he suspect his presence, would not hesitate to rid himself of it. It behoved him, therefore, to use the utmost care against discovery.

A little reconnoitring showed him that Markham would have no difficulty in carrying out his part of the scheme. The miner was at work at the end of a narrow gallery, and his mates, when they left off work, would naturally imagine he was following them. He had only to lie low till they were gone for his absence to be entirely unnoticed.

Further investigation showed the boy that a short distance from the spot at which Markham was working was a cross gateway intersecting the gallery. This cross gateway Markham would be bound to pass in whatever direction he was going, since there was no other exit from the gallery. It was at this spot, accordingly, that David resolved to station himself.

more difficult. It needed extreme caution to make no noise in the darkness, since the ground was plentifully bestrewn with rubble, over which the boy more than once nearly fell headlong. David could pretty well guess where he was. He knew that at more than one point the workings which had been reached from the old shaft on the moor practically intersected those of the modern Wrexborough pit; but he had as yet no glimmering of Markham's object in visiting these disused and dangerous tunnels.

On they went through the narrow and crumbling passages, where the masses of rock which had fallen from the decaying roof often made it difficult to squeeze a way. More than once, as the ground sloped, David plunged knee-deep into water. But still Markham held steadily on, and David held as steadily on his track.

The boy was beginning to wonder how much longer this strange progress was to continue, when Markham paused at an intersecting tunnel, and turned sharply off from the one he had been hitherto traversing. David was only a few yards behind him, and as the light vanished he hurried forward, feeling his way with outstretched hands. As he did so, however, his foot caught on a loose stone, and he fell forward on his knees.

He started up, and stood listening anxiously, expecting Markham to return and ascertain the cause of the noise.

## OUT NEXT WEEK—

### Two New Numbers of "THE SCHOOLBOYS' OWN LIBRARY."

No. 5.—"THE SCHOOLBOY CARAVANNERS!" By Frank Richards.

No. 6.—"CAPTAIN OF THE FOURTH!" By Owen Conquest.

A Splendid Yarn of Greyfriars School.  
A Topping Tale of Rookwood School.

PRICE FOURPENCE EACH.

His heart beat fast when the hour for knocking off work approached. It was with some difficulty that he avoided his mates as the stream of miners began to pour towards the shaft.

No one noticed him, however, and crouching down at the angle of the intersecting tunnels, he peered round the corner.

So far David had judged correctly. Markham was still there, sure enough. The gleam from his lamp was visible some few yards away.

David himself had not dared to bring his lamp, since its light must infallibly betray his presence. His only guide through the mazes of the pit, therefore, would be the lamp carried by his enemy.

For some moments the gleam of light that denoted Markham's whereabouts remained stationary. Then, the miner having probably come to the conclusion that his mates had left the coast clear, it moved, and advanced to the spot where David was crouching.

The boy shrank back as it neared him, prepared to take instant flight should Markham turn in his direction. The miner, however, kept straight on, and David, slipping out of his hiding-place, followed him, keeping on his heels as closely as he dared. A few yards farther down the gallery and the light was suddenly eclipsed. Markham had turned off to the right, and David had to stumble forward in darkness until he reached the opening up which the miner had gone.

This manoeuvre was repeated two or three times, by which time a considerable distance had been traversed, and David began to ask himself whether his involuntary guide was leading him. So far as he could make out, Markham was making straight for the worked-out portion of the mine, and would soon find himself face to face with the "goaf," or choked-up passages, which must surely stop his further progress.

Suddenly Markham stopped. As David had surmised, he had reached a wall of broken rock.

He set down his lamp upon the ground, and David, a few paces off, watched him breathlessly.

The miner knelt down, and the boy gave a gasp of surprise as he saw him lower himself through a hole in the ground.

Down he went till only his head was visible, then, stretching out his hand, he gripped the lantern, and the next moment he and it had disappeared.

It did not take David long to grope his way to the edge of the opening through which Markham had vanished. Kneeling above it, he could plainly hear the miner stumbling among loose stones and fragments of rock.

He waited till the sounds grew fainter. Then, with a beating heart, he lowered himself through the opening, and dropped as quietly as he could to the ground below. He drew a breath of relief as he saw that Markham's lamp was still visible some little distance away.

The task of stalking his unconscious guide had now become

If so, how should he escape him in this maze of darkness? And as the question presented itself to him the boy realised for the first time, the full rashness of his undertaking.

If the sound had reached Markham's ears, however, he had probably put it down to a fall of stones from the roof, and after waiting a moment, and hearing no returning footsteps, David hastened on again. He reached the opening down which Markham had disappeared, turned the corner, and then stood still in blank horror.

Markham and his light had vanished! There was nothing before him but darkness—the darkness of the tomb!

(Has David Steele to await death in this living tomb? On no account should you miss reading next week's powerful and thrilling instalment of this great serial.)

"20 Minutes and would do more"

You sent me a "Miss America" nearly a year ago and it is still going good. It goes to the 20 minutes, and would do more if you would let it. Everybody that sees it thinks it is a wonderful little thing, and so it is. I am very pleased with it.

F.G.S.K.

Get this fine Launch for the holidays.

A top-hole Steam Launch, 30 ins. long. Just the thing for hours of sport. Well made, British, and wonderfully cheap. No foreign boat can touch it for beauty, speed, or price.

MISS AMERICA

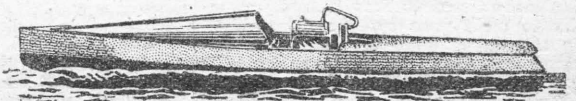
The hull is finished in three colours, and the engine is brass with strong boiler and safety valve. Lamp and filler and full instructions provided. 12/6 Rudder for direct control fitted. Post 9d.

—FREE—

Send a post-card for List 340 of fuller details and illustrations.

HOBBIES, LTD.

(Dept. 340), Dereham, Norfolk  
And Branches, Agencies and Stores everywhere.



## "D'ARCY'S DILEMMA!"

(Continued from page 17.)

### CHAPTER II. All Serene!

**T**OP of the morning, Gussy!"  
Wally D'Arcy hailed his major cheerily. The sun streamed in at the window and the birds were carolling gaily, heralding a perfect day. Arthur Augustus sat up in bed and yawned portentously. It took him a full moment to realise that he was not in the Fourth Form dormitory at St. Jim's. Wally was already dressed. "He had, in fact, been up with the lark. "I've been for a stroll round the grounds," he said, "and now I've come to drag you out for an early morning dip in the river. Tumble out, you lazy slacker!" "Wally, Wally!" protested Arthur Augustus, stifling a further yawn. "You must wemenbah that we are not on holiday. We took watah a liberty in stayin' the night heah, an' now we must huwwy back to St. Jim's."

"Rats! What's the hurry? Railton knows where we are."  
"Yaas, but—"  
"Don't start butting like a blessed billy-goat!" said Wally. "Buck up and get into your togs. I've brought you a towel and costume."

Arthur Augustus rose and stretched himself. He was in the act of dressing when there came a tap on the door.

"That you, Hawkins?" called the swell of St. Jim's.  
"Yessir! I've brought you a cup o' tea an' a 'ard-boiled hogg an' some toast an' some good news."

"We'll have the good news first, if you don't mind," said Wally. "Come in, Hawkins!"

The caretaker came in rather clumsily, balancing a tray. This he dumped on to a chair, and then he produced a morning newspaper.

"Is lordship will be 'ome this mornin'," he announced. "There's a picter of 'im on the back page."

"Bai Jove!"  
Arthur Augustus and Wally almost fought each other for a glimpse at the paper.

On the back-page was a picture of Lord Eastwood stepping on to the quay at Southampton. The letterpress explained that his lordship had been away in Egypt, exploring the tombs of the Pharaohs. He had also made some very important discoveries, which included the tomb of a monarch who had flourished long before the time of Tutankhamen.

"His lordship spent the night at a Southampton hotel," ran the announcement, "and will return to his private residence, Eastwood House, this morning."

"Hurrah!" chortled Wally.  
"Huwwah!" echoed Arthur Augustus.  
"So the pater's been burrowing about among the Egyptian tombs, like a giddy rabbit!" said Wally. "We might have guessed. He's always been interested in that sort of thing. Entomology, they call it, don't they?"

"Wats! Entomology is the science of insects!" said Arthur Augustus, with a laugh.

"Well, King Tut was an insect, wasn't he? Anyway, I've heard it said that he was rather a worm."

"You have indeed brought us good news, Hawkins!" said Arthur Augustus, beaming. "Of course, we will not go back to St. Jim's now. We will wait until the patah turns up."

It was nearly midday when Lord Eastwood arrived, with his retainers, in a smart limousine. He was astonished to find his sons awaiting him.

"Why, my dear boys, what is the meaning of this?" he exclaimed as he shook hands with Arthur Augustus and Wally.

Arthur Augustus explained all that had happened, and his lordship listened in growing amazement.

"Well," he ejaculated at length, "to think that you have been all this time without news and without money! I certainly wrote to you before I left England, explaining that I had been called away at short notice to assist in excavation work in Egypt. I also wrote to my bank, requesting them to forward your allowance each week as usual. Obviously the letters must have fallen into the hands of the pillar-box thief. I am extremely sorry this has happened, my boys. You must have had a very trying time!"

"Oh, we worried through all right, pater," said Wally. "It wasn't the shortage of cash that troubled us; it was not knowing where you were!"

"That's so," said Arthur Augustus. "Wally was confident you would turn up befoah long, but I was beginnin' to get vewy uneasy. You have been away ovah three weeks!"

"And it is good to be home again," said Lord Eastwood, smiling. "We will lunch together, and then I will motor you back to the school."

"Wippin'!"  
There was quite a sensation at St. Jim's when Lord Eastwood turned up with his charges.

The majority of the fellows were highly pleased at his lordship's return. Racke and Mellish were perhaps the only two who did not feel happy about it.

Lord Eastwood was as popular and as prosperous as ever, and it made Mellish's theory that he had become bankrupt and was forced to flee the country seem utterly absurd.

The brief period of poverty which had been experienced by the D'Arcy brothers was at an end now. Lord Eastwood saw that their pockets were well lined before leaving St. Jim's—and Arthur Augustus decided to celebrate the home-coming of his lordship with a magnificent spread in Study No. 6. Tom Merry & Co. were invited, and the red wine flowed freely, as Monty Lowther expressed it. It was only ginger-wine, of course.

At all events, the feasters were a very happy family, and Arthur Augustus, in particular, was in great spirits. The D'Arcy coffers had been amply replenished, and the timely return of Lord Eastwood had brought a welcome ending to D'Arcy's Dilemma!

THE END.

(Look out for another of these splendid yarns by Martin Clifford next week, chums, entitled: "A DISGRACE TO THE SHELL!" Don't miss it whatever you do!)

## "THE MYSTERIOUS UNKNOWN!"

(Continued from page 22.)

Tom to the hospital. As soon as I saw him fixed up I hired a car, and here I am."

Lord Keyingham nodded. He had expected something of the kind, and the news did not particularly surprise him.

"My car was sent, with Jenkins in charge, to reach you at four o'clock," he said. "Probably he stopped for dinner on the road, and had his food dragged for his pains."

This theory, incidentally, was found afterwards to be correct.

"But you, Withers," his lordship resumed, turning to Cocky—"you I have to thank for saving me from a situation in which, not only should I have lost a considerable amount of money, but what I value more—my reputation as a good sportsman."

Cocky coloured modestly.  
"Something seemed to tell me that that advertisement was framed especially to meet your eye, your lordship," he stated. "Whoever put it in the paper was after you, and you only. I was so sure of this that I watched Taffy's quarters to see if either Lord

Barnston or Doc Bludgeon called on him. They didn't; but someone else did, and that someone I followed to London, and from London to Hampstead!"

"Hampstead?" echoed Lord Keyingham incredulously.

"Hampstead," confirmed Cocky. "The man was Lord Barnston's servant, who had been sent to report on Taffy's progress. So, as that told me there was likely to be some dirty work—well, I just went into training, in case I was wanted."

Lord Keyingham stretched out an eager hand.

"Thank you, my lad!" he said gratefully. "You're what I call a true friend, and I sha'n't forget it—" He paused, his face grim and stern. "And now we have to settle with my Lord Barnston!" he added ominously.

Ben Derby stepped forward.  
"Can I do anything to help you, my lord?" he inquired. "I'm a willing lad!"

THE END.

(Another complete boxing story next week: "THE BLACK DIAMOND!" Make sure you read it, chums.)

## CRICKET!

WE MUST HAVE  
THOSE ASHES!

A Stirring Story of the Tests.

By ARTHUR S. HARDY

Special Article entitled:

All Out for Victory!

By ROY KILNER

(Yorkshire and England)

Read both these "star" features in  
this week's

FOOTBALL and SPORTS  
FAVOURITE

On Sale Wednesday, May 27th.

Make sure of a copy.

2D