

A RIPPING LONG COMPLETE SCHOOL AND SPORTS YARN INSIDE!

The GEM 2^D



SPORTSMEN



A great sports day at St. Jim's! Many fellows put up great performances. But the best performance of all is that of **ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY—THE UNCONSCIOUS CLOWN!**

CHAPTER 1.

A Deputation From the Grammar School.

"**W**HERE'S Tom Merry?"
 "Hallo! What do you Grammar cads want?"
 "Where's Tom Merry?"
 "Blessed if I know!" said Blake. "But if you've got any business here, kid, you can speak to me—as head of the juniors of St. Jim's—"
 "Rats! Where's Tom Merry?"

Blake turned red.

He was standing in the ancient gateway of St. Jim's, with Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy, his chums in Study No. 6 in the School House, and Figgins & Co. of the New House. Three youths had just come up the road, whom Blake immediately recognised as Monk, Lane, and Carboy, of Rylcombe Grammar School.

The chums of Study No. 6 naturally prepared for
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hostilities at the sight of the Grammarians, but Frank Monk showed at once that his mission was a peaceful one by elevating a more or less white handkerchief on the end of a walking-cane. Under cover of this flag of truce, the three Grammarians halted and demanded information as to the whereabouts of Tom Merry.

"Now, look here," said Blake, wagging his forefinger warningly at Frank Monk; "it's all very well to come here with a rag on the end of a walking-stick—"

"Where's Tom Merry?"

"What do you want to see Tom Merry for?" asked Figgins.

"Because he's head of the Lower School here."

"You're mistaken; I'm the head!"

"Rats!"

Figgins' eyes sparkled.

"Did you say 'rats' to me, Frank Monk?"

"Yes, I did!"

of ST. JIM'S!

By
Martin
Clifford.

"Then take your jacket off, and—"

"Flag of truce."

"That's all very well, but—"

"Pway stand aside, Figgins; you must respect a flag of twuce," said D'Arcy, tapping the New House junior on the chest. "Pway do not disgwace St. Jim's more than you can help! Of course, you New House wottahs are a standin' disgwace."

"And you're a sitting disgrace!" said Figgins, giving D'Arcy a rap on the chest that placed him in a sitting position on the spot.

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed the swell of the School House, scrambling to his feet. "Figgins, you wotten boundah, you have stwuck me!"

"Go hon!" said Figgins.

"Yaas, wathah! Pway wemove your jacket, as I am goin' to administah a feahful thwashin'!"

"That's all right; I'll take it with my coat on!" grinned Figgins.

"Pway hold my hat, Hewwies! Hold my jacket, Digbay. Pway do not wumple it more than you can help. Blake, take my tie, please. Now, Figgins!"

And having divested himself of hat, jacket, and tie, the swell of the School House rushed at the redoubtable Figgins.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was in deadly earnest. His dignity—or his "dig," as he would have called it—had been cruelly insulted, and he was determined to inflict a punishment upon Figgins which should ring through the New House.

He did not stop to calculate that the chief of the New House was about twice his match. Figgins was a formidable opponent for Blake or Tom Merry, and he could have dusted the ground with D'Arcy without much trouble. D'Arcy never stopped to consider a little circumstance like that when it was a question of "dig" with him. He rushed straight at Figgins, hitting out with right and left.

The "Co." looked on, grinning, and so did Blake, Herries, and Digby. The Grammar School fellows outside the gateway watched the scene with great interest.

Figgins did not hit out.

He brushed aside the drives of the School House swell, and then his long arms were thrown round D'Arcy, and they wrestled chest to chest.

D'Arcy struggled to get his arms free, but he could not. Figgins' powerful grip was round him, pinning his arms to his sides, and he was quite helpless to use his fists.

"Welease me!" exclaimed D'Arcy, struggling furiously. "Welease me, Figgins! I insist upon bein' immediately weleased, so that I can thwash you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Figgins. "That's cool!"

"Welease me, you feahful boundah!"

"Will you promise to be good, then?"

"Certainly not! I distinctly wefuse to be good! I am goin' to give you a feahful thwashin', Figgins! Welease me, or I shall lose my beastlay tempah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Welease me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blake, Hewwies, Dig—wescue!" shouted D'Arcy.

The School House chums left off laughing to go to the rescue; they could not disregard a call like that. But as soon as they made a movement, so did the Co., Figgins' chums—Kerr, Wynn, and Marmaduke Smythe, known far and wide as the "Co."—rush to stop them, and in a moment there was a general scrimmage in progress.

The Grammar School juniors stood by and applauded.

"Bravo!" shouted Frank Monk, clapping his hands. "Go it, Figgins!"

"Go it, Blake!"

"Buck up, Gussy!"

"Stick to it, Fatty Wynn!"

But the rivals of St. Jim's were too incensed to heed the laughter and cheers of the Grammarians. They were too

busily engaged to heed anything, as a matter of fact. They did not notice three youths, who came down from the direction of the School House and stood staring at them with much amusement. But Monk did.

"There's Tom Merry!" he exclaimed.

Tom Merry it was, with his chums—Manners and Lowther. The Terrible Three stood looking on, with great interest. Frank Monk waved his hand to Tom Merry.

"We can get in now, while those kids are punching one another's heads," he said. "Come on!"

And the three Grammarians entered the gateway.

"Hallo! What do you want?" asked Tom Merry.

"We're a deputation from the Grammar School. You needn't trouble to roll up your cuffs, Lowther; we've come under a flag of truce."

Lowther grinned.

"And what do you want?"

"We're bringing you a challenge from the school."

Tom Merry looked at his watch.

"Well, we've got an engagement," he said; "but we can give you ten minutes, if that's enough?"

"Quite enough!"

"Come up into the study, then."

"Certainly!"

It was a half-holiday at St. Jim's, and the old quadrangle was pretty full. There were many curious stares bestowed upon the Grammarians as they walked with Tom Merry and his chums into the School House. But the convoy of the Terrible Three was sufficient to render them safe.

Tom Merry opened the door of his study. A fire was burning in the grate—very necessary in the cold afternoon. The hero of the Shell waved his hand hospitably.

"Come in, you bouncers!"

Monk, Lane, and Carboy came in.

"Please sit down!"

Three chairs were forthcoming. Monk, Lane, and Carboy grinned, and sat down in great style. Tom Merry sat on the corner of the table. Monty Lowther leaned against the mantelpiece. Manners sat on the window-ledge. When the chums of the Shell had company they usually borrowed chairs or stools from other studies up and down the corridor. But this was a sudden visit.

"Now, go ahead!" said Tom Merry. "We can't stay long, you know, as we have an appointment with a lady."

Frank Monk stared.

"Eh? All three of you?"

"Certainly!"

The Grammarians cackled.

"So you've been falling in love—and all three with the same lady! Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry laughed.

"Not exactly that," he replied. "The lady we are going to see is a widow of sixty-five, and deaf."

"My word! Have you many of that sort on your visiting list?"

"Only one. I expect you know her—most of Rylcombe does—old Dame Humphreys, the widow of a soldier who was killed in action before we were born. She's pretty hard up, you know, and has a hard time of it."

Frank Monk nodded.

"Yes, I know. They were talking of a subscription once—"

"But it was never done," remarked Carboy.

"Exactly," said Tom Merry. "And we've been thinking that something might be done—I don't know exactly what. But something ought to be done, that's certain. The War Office ought to look after her, and if they won't they ought to be made to. However, that's not business. What's the challenge you've come about?"

"It's a challenge from the Grammar School to St. Jim's, and it includes seniors as well as juniors, if they care to come in," said Frank Monk. "You beat us once on the footer field—"

"Twice!" said Lowther.
 "Yes, so it was—twice. I don't know quite how it came about—"

"I could tell you—we were the better team, you know—that accounts for it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But never mind that. You beat us at footer, by some peculiar chance, and now we're going to give you a chance to show what you can do in other lines. We want you to meet us in general athletics. Everything you can do we'll meet you at—running, walking, jumping, anything and everything."

"Boxing and fencing," said Carboy.

"Shooting and swimming," added Lane.

"Everything," said Monk. "We've thought it over, and we've come to the conclusion that it's about the best way to put you kids in your places. You've got a curious idea into your heads that your old school is equal to ours—"

"Nothing of the sort!" said Tom Merry promptly.

"Eh? Do you mean to say—"

"I never said that St. Jim's was equal to the Grammar School."

"Well, if you admit that it isn't—"

"Of course, I admit that it isn't. If St. Jim's were equal to the Grammar School the Grammar School would be equal to St. Jim's—which certainly is not the case. My dear chap, St. Jim's is superior to the Grammar School. That's how the case stands."

"Oh, go and eat coke!" growled Frank Monk. "You refuse to admit that we are top school, and we reckon that by licking you all along the line, at every kind of athletics, we shall put you in your place and make you sing properly small"

"I'm afraid it will work out the other way," said Tom Merry thoughtfully. "It is the Grammar School that will get licked all along the line!"

Frank Monk sniffed.

"We'll risk that, Merry. Do you accept the challenge?"

"Rather!"

"That's settled, then. Now, about the time. A half-holiday won't be long enough for the sports—we shall have to have a whole one."

Tom Merry whistled.

"We haven't another whole holiday this term."

"But on a special occasion like this the Head would grant you one if you put it to him as an old sport."

"Ha, ha, ha! We'll try! But if we can get it, can you fellows get it on the same day?"

"I think so. I shall put it to my pater," said Frank Monk, who was the son of the headmaster of Rylcombe Grammar School. "I think I shall be able to bring him round all right."

"Good! We'll manage to get the whole holiday if we have to go on strike in the school," said Tom Merry. "It will have to be done, and Dr. Holmes will see reason if we put it to him nicely. Now time's up, I'm sorry to say. I find your conversation extraordinarily interesting, and I should like to keep it up all the afternoon. But—"

"But we should be bored to death, I'm afraid," said Monk politely, "so we'll trot!"

"Oh, we'll see you down to the gates! I don't want the fellows to rag you, as you've come here specially to give us a chance of showing up the Grammar School."

And the chums of the Shell escorted the three Grammarians to the gates of St. Jim's.

The disputing Fourth-Formers had evidently reached the end of their tussle, for they were not in sight now. But as Tom Merry said good-bye to the Grammarians, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came across the quad and joined the chums of the Shell at the gate.

CHAPTER 2.

The Sad Case of Arthur Augustus.

TOM MERRY gave a whistle of amazement at the sight of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. The swell of the School House presented a most unusual spectacle. Round one of his eyes was a dark purple patch. D'Arcy had a black eye! Furthermore, his clothes were in a terrible mess.

The Terrible Three stared at him, and broke into a chuckle.

"Oh, Gussy," exclaimed Tom Merry, "this is too good! Where did you get that eye?"

"Black, but comely," said Lowther.

D'Arcy tried to screw his eyeglass into his eye, but in vain. The swelling round it prevented the rim from sticking there. The monocle dropped to the end of its cord.

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"Oh, pway don't wot, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus anxiously. "Do I look vewy howwid?"

"Wotten!" said Tom Merry.

"Shocking!" said Lowther.

"Filthy!" said Manners.

"Bai Jove! Do I weally, you know? It's feahful, deah boys! I don't quite know how I got this black eye. We all got mixed up somehow, and it was either Blake's elbow or Hewwies' knee that banged me in the eye and made me in this awful state."

"Too bad!"

"I've been huntin' through the School House for a waw steak to put on it," said D'Arcy miserably, "but they haven't one, you know. I'm going down to the village for one. Isn't it fearful? I know that I look a howwid sight, and it puts me into quite a fluttah!"

"Too awfully bad. 't must be so painful to be put into a flutter," said Tom Merry gravely.

"Yaas, wathah! Are you goin' down to Wylcombe? I will come with you."

"Not with that eye," said Lowther. "We don't want to be taken for a lot of hooligans just coming home from a row!"

"Oh, weally, Lowthah—"

"What-ho!" exclaimed Manners emphatically. "When we get into Rylcombe they'll think you've been mixed up in a brawl or something."

"Oh, weally, Mannahs—"

"Rather!" said Tom Merry. "Respectable chaps like us have to keep up an appearance, you know, Gussy. It doesn't matter so much for a fellow like you."

"Oh, weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Still, on second thoughts we'll take him along," said Tom Merry. "Of course it's really Blake's business to look after his own tame lunatic."

"I wefuse to be chawctewised as a lunatic!"

"But we'll take you along, D'Arcy, on condition that you agree to get behind a tree if we meet anybody we know."

"I wefuse to do anything of the sort!"

"Well, we'll risk it! Come along!"

"Yaas, wathah! But I must tidy myself first!"

"Oh, no, you don't! Come along, Gussy!"

And the Terrible Three seized the protesting swell of St. Jim's and took him with them.

And the four juniors left the school gates and walked down to the village. The lane was not a well-frequented one, but they were certain to meet a few people. And, as luck would have it, among the few they met were Pilcher, Craggs, and Grimes, the village youths with whom the St. Jim's juniors had had many a rub.

They stopped and stared at D'Arcy. The swell of St. Jim's hastily clapped his handkerchief to his eye as he caught sight of the village trio, and Grimes, Craggs, and Pilcher were naturally surprised to see D'Arcy walking along with a handkerchief to his eye.

"My word!" said Pilcher. "What is the matter with the dear little infant?"

"Perhaps he's lost a halfpenny?" suggested Craggs.

"How sad to see the poor boy crying!" said Grimes.

D'Arcy turned crimson.

"You howwid cads!" he exclaimed. "How dare you suggest that I was cwyin'?"

"Well, what are you doing with that handkerchief to your eye, then?" demanded Pilcher.

"I wefuse to enlighten you on that point."

"Weep, dear baby—weep!" said Craggs.

"I wefuse to weep! Pway pass on, and welieve me of your pwesence!" said D'Arcy haughtily. "I wegard you as feahful blackguards."

"Weep, my pretty one—"

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed D'Arcy. "I'll— Oh deah!"

In his excitement he had taken the handkerchief from his eye, and the blackened optic was fully revealed to the astonished gaze of Pilcher, Craggs, and Grimes.

The village youths gave a simultaneous yell.

"My word, a black eye!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gussy with a black eye!"

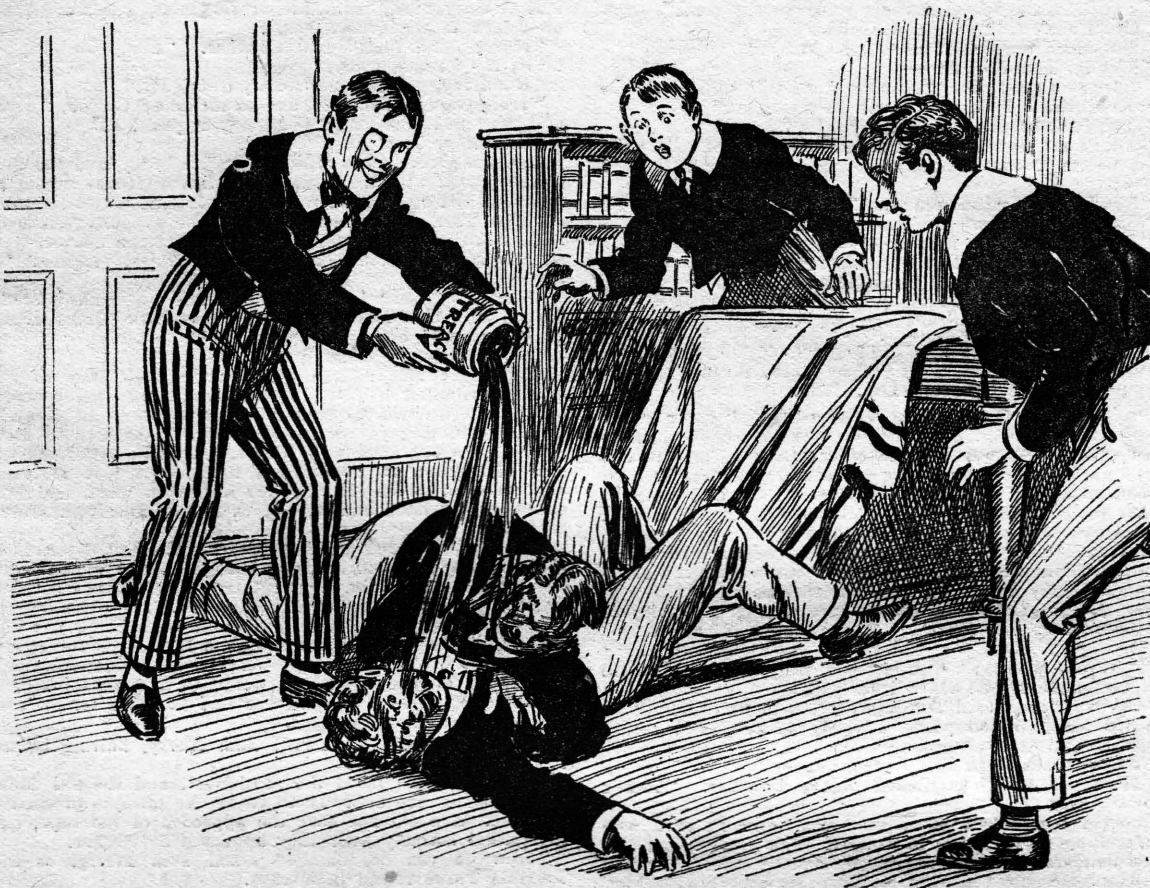
Pilcher, Craggs, and Grimes seemed to be overcome by the sight. They fell against one another, and wept with laughter. D'Arcy, with a face like a peony, strode onwards. His companions were giggling hysterically.

"I weally do not see the cause of this untimely mewwiment," said D'Arcy stiffly. "I must say that I wish you would cease, vou fellahs. I wegard it as bein' far fwom a laughin' mattah."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I fail entirely to see the comic aspect of the mattah at all!"

"Of course you do," said Tom Merry. "But if we had a lookin'-glass here, Gussy, you'd see it all right!"



D'Arcy seized the jar of treacle and sprang to pour it over the newcomer, but in his excitement he poured as much over Blake as the enemy!

"I wegard that as a fwivolous wemark."
 "By Jove," said Lowther, "we could make up something on this for the 'Weekly.' I'll make my contribution a poem on the subject."

"I wefuse to allow anythin' of the kind, Lowthah!"
 "I shan't ask you, kid. Let's see, how does this go:

"There's a kid we all know well enough,
 Who's a regular hooligan rough,
 The trophies he'll prize
 Are thick ears and black eyes,
 And he——"

"I wefuse to allow you to pwoceed, Lowthah!"

"And he——"

"I distinctly wefuse to allow you to compose anythin' so extwemely diswepctful!" said D'Arcy. "You thwee boundahs never twear me with pwopah wesppect, but a fellow must draw a line somewehere."

"Hallo! Here's the butcher's shop!" said Tom Merry, interrupting the dispute.

A fat and ruddy man in a blue apron came forward as the four juniors halted outside his shop.

Gussy gazed longingly at some steak in the window, tenderly feeling his eye.

"What can I do for you, young gentlemen?" asked the butcher.

"This chap wants a pound of beef to put in his eye," said Lowther, indicating D'Arcy.

"Nothin' of the sort!" said the swell of St. Jim's. "I want a waw beef-steak to put on my eye, my good man. I have had an—accident."

The fat butcher grinned.

"I'll get you a nice juicy one, young gent."

"But, I say, are you going to wear it in the street?" asked Tom Merry. "We shall have all Rylcombe following us if you do."

"I am afwaid I cannot considah a minor point like that, Tom Mewwy, when it is a question of a black eye."

"Ha, ha, ha! Well, I don't mind!"

"Pewwaps, though, it would be bettah to go back to the school in a cab," said D'Arcy thoughtfully. "Pway call me a cab, my good man!"

The good man grinned.

The only cab in Rylcombe was the ancient station hack, and that was a good distance away.

"I am afraid it can't be done, sir! Shall I fasten on the steak for you?"

"Weally, this is most annoyin'! Tom Mewwy, will you go to the station and fetch that cுவious old go-cart there?"

Tom Merry winked at his comrades.

"I'm afraid we've no time," he said, looking at his watch. "We're late for our appointment as it is, and you wouldn't like us to keep a lady waiting, Gussy."

"Wathah not! I should wegard such an action as unjustifiable undah any circs."

"So, you see, it can't be done. But we'll take you along with us."

"I shall look a shockin' sight."

"Never mind; it's only five minutes' walk to the station."

"But, weally——"

"I'm afraid there's nothing else to be done, Gussy. Give me the steak, please; I will fix it on. Give me your handkerchiefs, you chaps!"

"Pway, do not use my handkerchief, Tom Mewwy! It is a silk one, and I am afwaid you will spoil it. You can use your own!"

"Certainly!" said Tom Merry, jerking Gussy's handkerchief out of his pocket. "But I'll use yours first! Now, is that your eye?"

"You wottah! You have jammed the beastly steak wight in my eye!"

"Well, where did you want it—on the back of your head?"

"Weally, you need not be so wuff! I am afwaid I shall not like that sticking there, Tom Mewwy. Pewwaps I had bettah take it to St. Jim's and fasten it on there."

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"It will be too late then to do your eyes any good."
 "But I shall look such a widdiculous sight!"
 "Not much worse than usual, you know!"
 "Weally, Tom Mewwy—"
 "Here you are! Keep your fat head still while I tie the handkerchiefs! I think that will be all right!"
 "You have covahed up both my eyes!"
 "That's all right; the bandage wouldn't really be quite safe, unless it went round the wood—round your head, I mean!"
 "But I weally cannot see now!"
 "Nct necessary; we are going to guide you."
 "But, weally, Tom Mewwy—"
 "Oh, come along! Dame Humphreys will think we have forgotten her, and it will be all your fault, Gussy!"
 And Tom Merry paid the grinning butcher, and led the bandaged swell of St. Jim's from the shop.

CHAPTER 3. Monty's Little Joke.

D'ARCY'S appearance, with a big, bulging steak fastened over his right eye with four knotted handkerchiefs, was sufficiently remarkable, and it was not long in attracting attention. The children of Rylcombe took a great interest in the matter, and began to follow the juniors, and the old folk came to their doors and looked out, and grinned at the curious sight.

D'Arcy heard the remarks that his appearance called forth, and his face, where it was not covered by the bandages, gradually assumed a beautiful crimson hue.

The chums of the Shell maintained a perfect gravity of countenance as they marched Arthur Augustus onward.

"Weally, I think you had better move this bandage a little, Tom Mewwy," said Arthur Augustus. "I would wathah be able to see where I am goin'."

"Oh, what rot," said Tom Merry, "when we're taking all the trouble to guide you! I really think you're rather ungrateful, Gussy."

"I don't want to be ungrateful, but—"
 "Here you are!" exclaimed Monty Lowther. "Here's your carriage!"

Lowther signed to a youth in a small grocer's cart, who was looking on the scene in wonder. The grocer's lad had often delivered goods at the school, and Lowther knew him by sight. He halted his cart, and Lowther whispered to him, and a half-crown changed hands.

"Where is the hack, Tom Mewwy?"

"Come on!" said Lowther. "Let me give you a hand in."

"Thank you vewy much! I shall be weally glad to get out of sight of these wude people who are passin' wemarks upon me."

"Of course, you will."
 "Here, I say—" began Tom Merry dubiously, as Lowther assisted the unsuspecting swell of St. Jim's into the grocer's cart.

"Say nothing," retorted Lowther. "I mean, I am going to do my best for Gussy, who has been honourably wounded in the cause of the School House by one of the New House rotters!"

"Weally, I think it was Blake's elbow, or else Hewwies' kneec—"

"Never mind! I've paid your fare!"
 "That is weally vewy good of you, Lowthah! Pewwaps you are not such a rotten boundah as I have always taken you for!"

"Oh, sit down! Don't move that bandage at all, or the beef-steak will come off, and then you'll probably have a black eye for a week."

"I will be vewy careful. But I weally wish that I could see!"

"What rot! What do you want to see for, when you have a reliable driver to take you straight to St. Jim's and deliver you there?"

"Yaas, that's vewy true."

"You'll take the best care of your passenger, driver?"

"Certainly, sir," grinned the grocer's boy.

"Deliver him at the School House at St. Jim's."

"Yes, sir."

Lowther had hurriedly written a few words on a sheet of paper with a pencil. He pinned the paper on D'Arcy's coat, unseen and unsuspected by the blindfolded swell of St. Jim's.

Tom Merry and Manners broke into a chuckle as they read the message.

"Damaged goods! Quite useless! To be delivered to Study No. 6, School House, St. Jim's! With the compliments of Merry, Manners, and Lowther!"

"I say, Lowthah, this hack feels diffewent somehow. The

seat is vewy hard," said Arthur Augustus, who was sitting on a box in the grocer's cart.

"Never mind that," said Lowther. "I suppose they've taken the stumng away."

"But I say, you know, it's vewy dwaughty."

"Well, you can complain, and no mistake! Get on, driver, and get him to the school as quickly as possible!"

"Certainly, sr!"

And the grocer's boy whipped up his horse, and the cart dashed away, with the swell of the School House sitting in it, and a yell of laughter from the gathering crowd followed it. The terrible lurch shrieked. The unconsciousness of Arthur Augustus was the funniest part of the matter.

"But it's really too bad," said Tom Merry, gasping. "I say—"

"Oh, rats!" said Lowther. "It's one up against Study No. 6, anyway. Now, let's get on and see Dame Humphreys—we're a quarter of an hour late."

"By Jove, yes! Buck up!"

And the chums of the Shell made their way to the cottage tenanted by Mrs. Humphreys, while the grocer's cart vanished down the lane in the direction of St. Jim's.

Dame Humphreys was a well-known character in Rylcombe. She was a soldier's widow, and had a small pension—so small that, as Tom Merry had put it, you required a microscope to see it. She was always in want, and subsisted chiefly upon charity—an extremely uncertain source of income.

The case appealed to Tom Merry. He had determined that something should be done, though exactly what he did not know. But when Tom Merry of St. Jim's set his mind upon anything it usually came off. His present purpose in visiting the dame's cottage was to bring her the proceeds of a "whip round" in the School House at St. Jim's, to meet her current week's rent, the dame's landlord being a hard man, who would have turned his own grandmother out of door if she had been his tenant and had not paid him regularly.

"Here you are!" exclaimed Tom Merry, halting before the cottage.

The little place faced the south-west, and the old dame was seated in the doorway to enjoy the glimpse of spring sunshine. She did not hear the approach of the boys, but she smiled amiably when they appeared before her.

"How do you do, dame?" asked Tom Merry, as the Terrible Three raised their caps.

"Yes, it's a nice day," agreed the dame, who was extremely deaf. "Very nice for April, young gentlemen."

"Are you well to-day?"

"Got anything to sell to-day? No, Master Merry; I don't keep a shop. I did. Let me see—it was fourteen years ago come Michaelmas that I closed it."

"I hope you are well, dame?" bawled Tom Merry.

"Yes, I'm trying to tell you."

"My word!" said Lowther. "You need a megaphone here, Tom!"

"We thought we'd come to see you, Mrs. Humphreys," said Tom, in his loudest tones. "You remember I told you I would come this afternoon?"

"Yes, it's a sunny afternoon for April."

"We've brought you a little present."

"Yes, very pleasant indeed."

"I say, we've brought you a little present from the school."

"The cold is indeed something cruel at times, Master Merry."

Tom Merry gasped.

"Better give it up," said Manners. "Try dumb show." And the hero of the Shell thought he had better.

He took out his little leather purse and poured the contents into the dame's lap.

Mrs. Humphreys looked amazed.

"It's for your rent, Mrs. Humphreys!" shouted Tom.

"I can't quite hear."

"It's for your rent on Saturday."

"A little louder. My hearing is not so good as it was."

"It's for your rent!"

"Yes, it shall be spent, certainly. It is very kind of you, Master Merry. I must pay my landlord on Saturday or he will turn me out, in my old age."

"That's what we've brought it for!"

"Yes, he is very hard on the poor."

"My hat!" said Lowther. "This will kill me! Say good-bye, Tommy, and let's travel before you split your eardrums!"

Tom Merry looked rather exhausted. He had the kindest heart in the world, but Dame Humphreys' deafness was certainly a little trying to the nerves.

"Good-bye, dame!" he shouted.

"You are right, Master Merry—it is a shame!"

(Continued on page 8.)



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NESTLÉ'S
WRAPPED 2D BARS
CHOC-FULL OF 2 GOODNESS

SPORTSMEN OF ST. JIM'S!

(Continued from page 6.)

"Good-bye!"

"Oh, no—I'm not going to cry. This will see me over hill next week, at least, and perhaps the clergyman will help me then!"

"Good-bye, I say! Good-bye!"

"Oh, yes; I am always careful to keep my feet dry, on account of the rheumatics."

Tom Merry gave it up.

"Dumb show does it," said Monty Lowther. "We'll all bow together, and then she'll see that we're taking our leave."

"Good wheeze!"

The three juniors stood in a row and took off their caps solemnly and bowed to the old lady. Then they went down the street.

"Good-bye!" shrilled the old dame. "Dear me! They are very kind lads, but they might have said good-bye! But nobody cares for an old woman like me!"

The Terrible Three strolled away towards St. Jim's. Tom Merry's brow was very thoughtful.

"I say, chaps!" he exclaimed. "It's a crying shame about Dame Humphreys. Something ought to be done for her."

"Right-ho!" said Manners. "But I really don't see what we can do except raise a small sum every now and then."

"I've got an idea!"

"Your own?"

"Yes, ass! It's a way of raising a fund for Dame Humphreys—"

"Go ahead!"

"You remember that challenge from the Grammar School—"

"What's that got to do with the washing?"

"This much—it's a way! We'll get up the sports competition, with prizes and so forth for the winners, and charge an entrance fee for every chap who goes in for anything, then—"

"Suppose he goes in for a wash—"

"Ass! Every chap who goes in for one of the contests. Say a bob for a junior, two bob for a senior, and five bob for a master—"

"Yes; I can see the masters entering into this thing."

"I don't see why not. We'll all write home to our relations for things to give as prizes. My old governess, Miss Fawcett, will send things down by the barrowful if I ask her. It's a ripping idea! We'll rig up all kinds of contests, and everybody who likes can enter, whether he belongs to St. Jim's or the Grammar School, or to the village, or—"

"Or Jericho—"

"I tell you, we shall raise quite a sum that way, and it will be ripping fun, too! We'll leave the next number of the 'Weekly' till after the sports, so that we can chronicle our victories in it—"

"Suppose we don't have any?"

"I'm not going to suppose anything of the kind. We're going to lick the Grammarians all along the line. We'll send down the copy for the 'Weekly' to the printer, as usual, so that he can get it set up, and tell him to leave a page for the report of the sports. Then we can write it out after they're over, and a chap can cycle down with it. It's a good wheeze. And, look here; with such a giddy, laudable object for the holding of the sports, the Head can't refuse us a whole holiday."

"Tommy, my son, you have some good ideas sometimes—"

"It's a ripping wheeze," exclaimed Manners heartily, "and, it being our idea, we shall be able to crow over Study No. 6 and Figgins & Co.—"

"Exactly! We come out on top, as usual."

"Come on," said Lowther, "let's get back to St. Jim's and talk it over with the fellows. It's too good an idea to lose. We'll strike while the iron's hot!"

And the Terrible Three hurried back to the school.

CHAPTER 4.

The Return of D'Arcy.

"I WONDER where that young ass has got to?" Jack Blake of Study No. 6 remarked to his chums, Herries and Digby.

"Blessed if I know!" said Digby. "He had a black eye last time I saw him!"

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"So he had when I saw him," said Herries.

"How remarkable!" said Blake sarcastically. "It must have been the same black eye, you know."

"I suppose it was," said Herries, who was rather dense. "He got it in the scrap with Figgins & Co. at the gate, you know. The young ass said that it was either your elbow or my knee that did it, or else your knee or my elbow, I forget which—"

"It doesn't matter which, so long as he got it," Blake remarked. "But the question is, where is he?"

"Perhaps he's gone to do something for his black eye."

"Shouldn't wonder," said Digby. "I advised him to go and bury it. Perhaps he's gone and done it. What do you want him for, Blake?"

Blake turned his trousers pockets inside out.

"Oh, I see!"

"Still, if either of you kids have enough tin to stand a feed at the school shop, I'm willing to give D'Arcy his head," said Blake.

"Stony!" said Herries, with Spartan brevity.

"Busted!" said Digby, with a sigh.

Blake surveyed them with a glance of patient disdain.

"You're a nice pair of duffers for a chap to chum with!" he exclaimed. "Both of you stony when a chap feels just inclined to feed on a dozen or so tarts, and when the millionaire of the family has bunked off somewhere with a black eye! Aren't you ashamed of yourselves?"

"Why, you bounder, you're broke yourself—"

"Oh, don't argue!" said Blake hastily. "Let's go and look for Gussy. If he's gone out, we may spot him from the gate. Hallo, there comes old Sandysugar's cart, and— My only ancient aunt! What's that in it?"

The three juniors stared at the cart in amazement. It was the vehicle belonging to Mr. Sands, the grocer of Rylcombe, playfully nicknamed Sandysugar by the St. Jim's juniors. The grocer's boy, with a smile that apparently wouldn't come off, was driving, and behind him in the cart sat Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of the School House, bandaged and blindfolded.

There was a rush of boys round the cart at once. Figgins & Co., who had finished football practice, and were strolling round, were the first on the scene. A universal howl of laughter greeted the swell of the School House.

Figgins stopped the pony, and the juniors were packed round the cart; and Blake and his chums had all their work cut out to get near it.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Figgins. "It's Gussy, the one and only! Where did you get that funny thing, young Sandysugar?"

"There's a label on it," said Kerr.

"By Jove, so there is!"

"Read it out, Figgy!" cackled Fatty Wynn.

"Right-ho! 'Damaged goods,'" read out Figgins.

"Quite useless. To be delivered to Study No. 6, School House, St. Jim's. With the compliments of Merry, Manners, and Lowther."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors.

"Weally, deah boys—"

Blake fought his way through the crowd, and reached up and seized D'Arcy by the arm, and gave him a shake.

"You utter ass!" he shouted. "How did you—"

"Pway let go my arm! I do not like to be touched so wuffly," said D'Arcy. "I cannot see who it is, but unless I am immediately released I shall stwike him."

"You utter idiot—"

"I wefuse to be called an uttah idiot—"

"Who fixed you up like this—"

"Tom Mewwy vevy kindly fastened a waw steak ovah my eye, and Lowthah genewously placed me in this hack and paid my fare to the coll."

"He placed you in what?"

"In this hack!"

"You—you—you howling ass!"

"I distinctly wefuse to be wewarded as a howlin' ass—"

"You're not in a hack, you're in the grocer's cart from Rylcombe!" roared Blake; while the juniors shrieked with laughter.

D'Arcy gave a jump.

"What's that, deah boy?"

Blake snatched the bandage from his eyes. The beef-steak dropped into the cart. D'Arcy gazed round him in utter bewilderment.

"Bai Jove!" he exclaimed. "Bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Figgins & Co. "Hear us smile! Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy's almost idiotic look of bewilderment was distinctly funny. He seemed so surprised to find himself in the grocer's cart that the boys simply shrieked.

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "That feahful wottah Lowthah must have played a twick on me!"

"You—you—you—you unspeakable ass!"
 "I cannot regard myself as an unspeakable ass. I was blindfolded, you see. Tom Mewwy said the steak would come off if I removed the bandage—"

The juniors roared again.
 "I thought the seat was wathah harder than usual," said D'Arcy, "and I certainly found it vewy dwaughty, but I nevah—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Pway don't make that feahful wow, Figgins! I think that if you want to make a feahful wow like that you ought to go into some lonely place—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Dear me!" said a voice on the edge of the shrieking crowd. "What is that?"

Mr. Railton could not help smiling.
 "Well, get out of that ridiculous position at once!" he said. "And don't let it happen again, or you'll hear from me, D'Arcy!"

"Certainly, sir! I assuah you that I shall nevah let anything of the kind happen again if I can possibly help it."

And Arthur Augustus jumped out of the cart.
 The grocer's boy, having delivered his goods, so to speak, drove away. Mr. Railton went into the School House, still with a smile upon his face. He guessed that it was some juniors' joke, and he was not the kind of master to inquire too closely into the matter unless real harm had been done.

D'Arcy was glad to go into the School House, too, to escape the torrent of chaff from Figgins & Co. and the



"They're off!!" And so was D'Arcy! His bicycle curled up under him and he was left in the middle of the track, completely mixed up with his jigger!

It was Mr. Railton of the School House. The boys parted respectfully for the Housemaster to approach. Blake hastily slipped off the label and put it in his pocket. The Terrible Three had "japed" Study No. 6, but Blake was not the one to get them into hot water over it.

Mr Railton's brow was rather severe as he looked at the swell of St. Jim's still sitting in the grocer's cart.

"What does this mean?" he demanded.
 "I have, unfortunately, met with an accident, sir," said D'Arcy. "Eithah Blake's elbow or Hewwies' knee—I can't quite make out which—stuck me in the eye."

"How could Blake's elbow or Herries' knee strike you in the eye, D'Arcy?" asked the School House master, staring at him. "Don't be absurd!"

"It's quite cowwect, sir. We were havin' a little scwap."
 "Oh, I see! But it is not the discolouration of your eye that I am referring to. What do you mean by coming here in a grocer's cart?"

"I weally did not feel up to walkin', sir," said D'Arcy languidly. "I should have found it most exhaustin'."

rest of the juniors. He sank down, gasping, in Study No. 6, and his comrades gathered round him with grim looks.

"I am weally gwatified to see you look so sewious, deah boys," said D'Arcy unsuspectiously. "This is a sewious mattah. My dig has been outwaged!"

"I'm not thinking of your dig, you ass!" said Blake. "What I'm thinking of is that you've made this study look idiotic in the eyes of the school."

"Wats! How could I help it?"
 "Well, I suppose you can't help being an ass—"
 "I object to that term!"

"You're going to get something else you object to, too. You've shown up this study before all St. Jim's, and you're going to be ragged!"

"Rather!" said Digby. "Are you ready, Gussy?"
 "Right-ho!" exclaimed Herries heartily. "That exactly meets the case!"

D'Arcy looked alarmed as his three chums closed round him.

"I wefuse to be wagged!" he exclaimed. "I distinctly and uttably wefuse to be wagged! I considah—"

"Are you ready?"

"Pway be weasonable, deah boys! It would be vevy much bettah to wag Tom Mewwy and Mannahs and Lowthah!"

"Well, there's something in that," agreed Blake, pausing. "Where are the boundahs? We'll teach 'em to make a bigger fool of you than Nature did—though that wanted some doing."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Let's get them into this study if we can," said Digby thoughtfully. "That treacle we had the other day from Dame Taggles is really no good, you know, since Herries spilt his can of oil into the tin."

"Well, I thought it would do for visitors—"

"No, old chap—it's too bad for that. I tried some on Gore, and he made a face like a gargyle. It will come in handy just now, though, if we can get the Terrible Three into this room. They can have it applied externally. We want to give them a lesson when they start showing up our study."

"Of course! D'Arcy, being such an ass—"

"I weally object—"

"It's a temptation to them to jape him. Still, we must stand up for a member of our own study, even though he may be a howling jackass!"

"Blake, I distinctly wefuse to—"

"So I think the treacle idea is all right. We must get them into the study, though, and then be all ready for them when they come."

"I will manage that for you, deah boys," said D'Arcy. "I must go and change my beastlay clothes first, though, you know. I feel vevy wotten, and I think I want a wash, too. But leave that mattah to me. I'll contviate to twap the Tewwible Thwee."

"How are you going to do it, image?"

"I weally do not know yet; but a fellow of tact and judgment is wequihah for a thing like this, and so you had certainly bettah leave it in my hands."

And D'Arcy left the study.

CHAPTER 5.

A Slight Mistake.

BLAKE, Herries, and Digby were still discussing the matter ten minutes later when Arthur Augustus burst into Study No. 6 excitedly. The swell of the School House had changed his clothes and washed his face in that—for him—remarkably short space of time. His black eye was as much in evidence as ever, and it gave a peculiar aspect to his aristocratic visage. But D'Arcy had forgotten it for the moment.

"I say, deah boys, they're comin'!"

"Who are coming?" asked Blake.

"Tom Mewwy, Mannahs, and Lowthah."

"Coming here?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Blake rose from the corner of the table. He looked suspiciously at the swell of the School House; but D'Arcy's excitement was genuine.

"I say, you're not japing, I suppose?" asked Blake.

"Certainly not, deah boy! They're weally comin'!"

"How did you manage it?" asked Digby.

"As a mattah of fact, I did not manage it at all," said D'Arcy. "I just found them comin' here and huwried on like anythin' to tell you to be weady."

"Do you mean they're coming here of their own accord?"

"Yaas, wathah! They're comin' down the cowwidah, and I heard Tom Mewwy say that they would come and see Blake first before goin' ovah to the New House."

"There's something on, I suppose," said Blake, grinning. "There'll be something more on soon—treacle, for instance. It will be on them. Ready?"

The chums of Study No. 6 were soon ready to receive the enemy.

The jar of treacle, which was unfortunately not good enough even for visitors since Herries had spilt his cycle oil into it, was placed in readiness upon a chair, and the four chums gathered just inside the door. Blake turned the gas down to a mere glimmer.

"Don't make a sound!" whispered Blake. "They'll think there's nobody here, but they'll look in to make sure, and then—"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Not a word! I can hear them in the passage!"

The footsteps of the newcomers could be heard outside. D'Arcy's information was evidently correct.

In the gloom of the dim study the four juniors waited breathlessly.

There was a knock at the door.

"Don't weply, deah boys," said D'Arcy. "They—oooh—gwoooooh—ooow—"

He broke off as Blake's hand was jammed over his mouth.

"Shut up, you ass!" whispered Blake fiercely.

"I wefuse to—eeeeee!"

The knock was repeated on the door.

Silence reigned in the study.

Then the door was opened, and a face looked in.

Whose it was the juniors, of course, could not discern in the gloom, but Blake immediately guessed that Tom Merry smelt a rat, and was not going to enter the study until he had reconnoitred.

There was evidently no time to be wasted. Blake sprang forward, and in a second his arms were round the neck of the dim figure, and it was dragged headlong into the study.

"Quick!" yelled Blake. "I've got him!"

He went to the floor with a bump along with the visitor.

"Quick—the treacle!"

"I've got the tweacle!" shouted D'Arcy excitedly.

He snatched the jar off the chair and sprang to pour it over the newcomer. Blake, being so close to the enemy, naturally received a full share of it; but that the swell of St. Jim's was too excited to take note of.

Blake gave a fearful yell as the horrible, sticky compound smothered over his face, and his yell was echoed by his opponent, who received a generous portion round his neck.

"You young rascals!"

D'Arcy gave a jump.

The voice was not the voice of Tom Merry, but of Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's!

"Bai Jove!" gasped D'Arcy.

"My word!" ejaculated Digby. "Kildare!"

"The captain of the school!" exclaimed Herries.

"What—what does this mean?"

Kildare was really angry for once. He tore himself loose from the amazed and scared Blake, and staggered to his feet. The treacle was clinging lovingly round his neck. D'Arcy, in his amazement and terror, stood like a statue, the treacle-jar in his hands still pouring out its contents over Blake.



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Digby turned up the gas. Blake squirmed away and jumped up. He was treachy from head to foot. The juniors stared at Kildare. He was treachy, too, and his face was crimson with anger.

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed D'Arcy, the first to find his voice. "Bai Jove, Kildare, we're feahfully sowwy, you know!"

"How dare you—"

"It was all a mistake!" said Blake ruefully. "We had turned down the light and prepared this little reception for Tom Merry—"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And then you came in instead. We really couldn't guess that it was you in the dark. I hope you—you don't mind."

"Don't mind!" roared Kildare. "I'm smothered with treacle."

"So am I! That ass, D'Arcy, has given me more than you—"

"Accidents will happen, deah boy!"

"You utter ass!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"I—I'll deal with you young scoundrels presently!" exclaimed Kildare. "I came to speak to you about the football, and—oh, it's too bad for words! Any other Sixth-Former, I verily believe, would skin you for this!"

"You're such a jolly good fellow, Kildare!"

"Yes, I know, when you want me to let you off! I—Oh, confound you! This stuff is runnin, down the back of my neck!"

"Ha, ha, ha! I—I mean, I'm sorry—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's the matter here?"

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther appeared in the doorway. They stared in amazement. Kildare brushed past them, leaving a trail of treacle on Lowther's sleeve, and disappeared. The captain of St. Jim's was blessed with a true Irish good temper, but it had been put to a severe strain this time by the little mistake in Study No. 6.

"You howwid boundahs!" exclaimed D'Arcy. "A nice mess you've got us into! If you had been more punctual you would have got that treacle instead of Kildare."

"Well, that would have been a ripping reward for punctuality; so, of course, we're sorry we're late!" said Tom Merry. "I can see you kids have made another bungle, as usual. If you take my advice, you'll give up japing. You can't manage the easiest sort of a jape, for toffee!"

Blake was too busy trying to get the treacle off his face to reply. D'Arcy walked away indignantly.

"Well, we've got an important matter to talk over, but we want to talk to you all together," said Tom Merry, addressing Digby and Herries. "Will you fellows come to tea in our study? We've got something rather good. My old governess has sent me a hamper from Huckleberry Heath, and there's a fowl and some other things. Will you come?"

"Will we?" said Digby. "Rather!"

"Right-ho!" exclaimed Herries. "We'll come, and bring Blake and D'Arcy. When?"

"Ten minutes."

"Good!"

And the Terrible Three walked away to their own quarters.

Ten minutes later tea was ready in Tom Merry's study, and a fragrant scent greeted the nostrils of four Fourth-Formers as they came up the passage.

CHAPTER 6.

A Feed in Tom Merry's Study.

TOM MERRY'S door stood hospitably open, and Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy looked in, and smiled sweetly at the sight of the tea-table.

The fowl occupied the place of honour, and it was flanked by delicacies which showed how generously the hamper from Huckleberry Heath had been packed.

"Bai Jove!" said D'Arcy. "This looks weally wippin', you know I heah fwom Dig that you have invited us to tea, Tom Mewwy?"

"Exactly."

"We are vewy pleased to come, although as a wulk, we are wathah particoular whom we mix with."

Digby kicked the swell of the School House.

D'Arcy turned his eyes upon him.

"Pway, what was the weason of that wuff action, Digbay?"

"Oh, come in!" said Tom Merry. "Sit down. We've borrowed four seats from Gore's study. There's room for all."

"Bai Jove, that was decent of Gore, as you are not on vewy good terms with him, you know, deah boy!"

"Oh, we didn't ask him!" said Tom Merry coolly.

"When it's a question of getting in seats for a tea-party, you can't afford to stand upon ceremony."

"Better to sit on form," said Monty Lowther, the incurable punster of the Shell.

"Who says fowl?" asked Tom Merry, picking up a carving-knife, borrowed from Kildare's study, and sharpening it upon a steel surreptitiously purloined from the kitchen.

"Fowl!" came in a chorus.

Tom Merry carved well. He had been taught to do so under the careful eye of Miss Priscilla Fawcett, and he often found it a useful accomplishment. The way he made a not particularly large fowl go round among seven juniors was a miracle. Fortunately, there was ham and beef, and sausage-rolls and tongue, to supply any deficiency.

"Ripping!" said Blake. "If you ever want to swap, Tom Merry, I've got a couple of old uncles I'll change for your governess."

"Yaas, wathah! I wegard Miss Pwisicillah as a weally valuable person to have about the house," said D'Arcy. "Tom Mewwy's feeds are always quite the thing, I must say, but this one is extwa wippin'."

There was a tap on the door of the study as D'Arcy spoke. It opened to reveal Skimpole of the Shell. Skimpole looked in and hesitated to enter as he saw that a tea-party was in progress.

Tom Merry made him a hospitable sign.

"Come in, kid!"

Skimpole was a rather curious lad. His enormous forehead, which seemed to occupy nearly half his face, denoted his vast brain power, or else the presence, as Blake put it, of a reservoir. Skimpole was a fellow who lived and had his being with the famous works of Professor Balmcrumpet, the world's biggest crank. His peculiarities formed endless topics in the Shell, and furnished the juniors with food for laughter; but he was so good-natured and obliging that nobody could help liking him. Even Gore, his study-mate and the cad of the Form, half-liked Skimpole.

"Come in, Skimmy!"

"I didn't know you had anything on, Merry."

"Thought he was taking a bath?" asked Lowther.

"I mean, I didn't know there was a party on," explained Skimpole, who took everything with absolute seriousness. "I looked in to ask you if you knew anything about the chairs belonging to our study. They're gone."

"Bai Jove! Are they? What can have become of them?"

"I really don't know. I suppose someone must have borrowed them."

"Ha, ha, ha! I shouldn't wonder if you are right, Skimpole. Are these chairs anything like them?"

"They are indeed, Merry—remarkably like."

"Well, come and sit on one of them, Skimpole, and join us at tea. We've borrowed your chairs, old kid; but, as one friend to another, of course, you don't mind that."

"Oh, no, Merrv!" said Skimpole. "But, as Professor Balmcrumpet would say, you are quite welcome, of course. I don't know what Gore will say, as I think he is going to bring Mellish to tea, and they will probably want something to sit upon."

"Bai Jove! They had better sit upon form."

"But I shall be ready to join you," said Skimpole, entering the study and closing the door. "You see, I'm rather hard up. Gore says that he wants all the grub we have in the study, as he's got Mellish coming to tea. He says that he will punch my head if I object, and as I dislike violence, I should really have to go without my tea."

"Here you are, old kid! You can have half a chair, if you don't mind sitting next to a bloated aristocrat."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"I haven't the slightest objection," said Skimpole, sitting down between Lowther and D'Arcy on half the chair of each. "As Professor Balmcrumpet would say—"

"Hallo! Here's some more of them!" exclaimed Blake.

The door was kicked open, and Gore and Mellish glared into the study.

"I thought so!" roared Gore. "Here are our chairs! You rotters!"

"Couldn't be helped," said Tom Merry. "We had to have them. Don't be a cad, Gore—I mean, not a bigger one than you can help!"

"Give us those blessed chairs!"

"Wouldn't you care to stay to tea?"

Gore calmed down with remarkable suddenness.

"Oh, that alters the case, of course!" he said, surveying the well-spread table with a hungry eye, and glancing at the fresh supplies waiting on the window-ledge and the shelf. "What do you say, Mellish?"

"Oh, of course, I'm always willing to accept an invitation from Tom Merry!" said Mellish, grinning amiably. "We'll be very pleased, Merry."

"What are you going to sit on, though?"

"Bettah sit on form, bai Jove!"

"Or on Skimpole," said Blake. "Whenever he starts jawing, sit on him!"

"Scout in some of the studies and commandeer a couple of chairs!" said Tom Merry. "You can look in any of the Shell studies. Bring 'em along!"

"Right-ho!"

And Gore and Mellish vanished, and soon returned with a couple of chairs—the property of some individual at that moment absent from his quarters. Gore had a couple of plates, too, and Mellish carried cups and saucers.

Tom Merry's study was the roomiest of any in the Shell, and there was room for the company, with a little arranging. The fowl was gone, but there was plenty more, and Gore and Mellish received liberal helpings.

Under the circumstances, both of them were inclined to be agreeable for once in their lives; and, the happy feed being in full swing, Blake remembered that Tom Merry had asked them to the study specially to communicate a brilliant idea, and that nothing had been said about it so far; and it was Blake who generously broached the subject.

"What price that idea?" he asked.

"What idea?" said Tom Merry.

"Why, the idea you were going to tell us about."

"By Jove, I'd forgotten! Yes, I've got a ripping idea—one that will have to be taken up by the whole school," said Tom Merry, laying down his knife. "I'd have asked Figgins & Co. over, too, but we want it clearly understood that the idea started in the School House, of course."

"Yaas, wathah! I dare say it is a vewy wotten ideah, but—"

"Silence for the chair!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Shut up, Gussy!" said Blake. "You're dead in this act! Go on, Tom Merry!"

CHAPTER 7.
Carried Unanimously.

TOM MERRY glanced round at the juniors. There was interest in every face; almost as much interest in what Tom Merry was going to say as in the feed, which is saying a great deal. Even D'Arcy refrained from interrupting.

"It's a rather important matter, kids," said Tom Merry—"a matter in which, the country having neglected its duty, St. Jim's is going to see right done!"

There was a general gasp of amazement. Tom Merry was known as a junior with ideas, and some of his "wheezes" had been sufficiently startling; but as yet he had never proposed any undertaking of national importance. The juniors waited eagerly for him to go on.

"England expects every man to do his duty," went on Tom Merry; "but England does not always do her duty herself, as in the present case."

"Bravo!" exclaimed Skimpole. "I understand, and I am awfully glad, Merry!"

"Shut up, Skimmy!" cried Tom Merry. "What I was going to say is, that there is an old lady in the village of Rylcombe known to you all—"

"Mother Murphy?" asked Blake, naming the old lady who kept the tuckshop, and who was certainly well-known to the juniors of St. Jim's.

Tom Merry laughed.

"No, Dame Humphreys, the widow of a soldier who was killed before we were born. I say Dame Humphreys ought to be provided for, and she isn't. She has some measly rag of an old-age pension about enough to keep her in toffee!"

"Toffee! Scott! She's rather old for toffee!"

"Ass, I am speaking figuratively. About enough to keep her in toffee if she ate toffee," said Tom Merry. "She has a hard landlord, too, which comes rough on an old soul who hasn't any tin. You see, if an old lady of seventy is turned out of doors it is a serious business."

"I should say so!" exclaimed Blake.

"I was saying," said Tom Merry, "that Dame Humphreys ought to be provided for somehow, and if there isn't enough money in the country to pension an old woman, it's time the country shut up shop and retired from business!"

"Hear, hear!"

"But, as the case stands, Dame Humphreys hasn't any tin, and so St. Jim's is coming to the rescue. We're going to raise a fund—"

"Oh!"

"Not in the usual way of a whip round. Frank Monk came over from the Grammar School to-day with a challenge to us to meet them at all kinds of athletic sports, and we accepted."

"Yaas, wathah! It was thwough that I got my black eye."

"But it has since occurred to me that it would be a ripping wheeze to make a big affair of the thing, and charge an entrance fee, and so on, and make the events open to all comers," said Tom Merry. "By that means we shall get a heap of fun out of it, have a high old time, lick the Gram-marians, and raise a tidy sum of money—all proceeds in cash to go to Dame Humphreys."

"By Jove, what a ripping idea!" exclaimed Blake.

"Well, yes, I thought myself it was rather ripping," said Tom Merry modestly. "I am glad to see that you like it."

"It's stunning!" said Blake. "What puzzles me, though, is how you came by the idea? If it had been mine, or Digby's, or even D'Arcy's—"

"Well, you see, it required a brain to think of it, so it couldn't very well start in Study No. 6," exclaimed Tom Merry; "but if you think it's good, and are willing to lend a hand to carry it through—"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"There's no reason why we shouldn't make a big success of it."

"It's a good wheeze," said Gore. "But how are you going to hold a big affair like that without a whole holiday?"

"We're going to get a whole holiday."

"Have you asked the Head?" queried Blake.

"We're going to ask him. I wanted to suggest it to you fellows with the idea of getting up a deputation on the subject to wait on Dr. Holmes—"

"Ripping!"

"And put it to him like an old sport."

"I shouldn't use those words if I were you—" began Herries.

"Fathead! I didn't mean to. I believe he will give us the holiday for such a jolly good purpose. Then we shall have to form a sports committee to get the thing up, and we'll ask Kildare to be chairman."

"Good! Kildare's a jolly good fellow, and having the

Potts, the Office Boy!.....



captain of the school on the committee will give the thing a tone," said Blake thoughtfully.

"That's how I look at it. We don't want to confine this matter to the juniors. Some of the Grammar School seniors will be ready to take part, and some of ours must do the same. The more that enter for the events, the more cash we shall raise for the funds."

"But I say, old son, if we let the seniors into it they will want to take the management of the matter out of our hands."

"Well, come to think of it, I should think a committee of the Sixth Form could look after the affair quite as well as we could," Monty Lowther said seriously.

Tom Merry laughed.

"I shouldn't wonder," he said. "Anyway, we'll have Kildare in, if he'll come. But what about that deputation to the Head?"

"It's a good wheeze, and we'll all go."

"I think the New House ought to be represented," said Tom Merry. "If we settle the matter now, I'll send a note over to Figgins on the subject."

"Good! But when is the deputation to get going?"

"Betah stwike while the iron's hot, deah boys. Why not let the dep go to-night?"

"Good!" said Tom Merry. "I think we may as well lose no time. I'll see what Figgins has to say about the matter, and then we'll make up the deputation."

And so it was agreed. And when tea was finished in Tom Merry's study a note was sent over to Figgins, in the New House, which was promptly answered by Figgins in person, and he brought the Co. with him. Figgins & Co. simply jumped at the idea, and the united juniors were not long in making up the deputation.

CHAPTER 8.
The Deputation.

DR. HOLMES, head of St. Jim's, was seated in his study, busy with examination papers. He had returned to his study after dinner to deal with them, and had just finished one section and stopped for a little rest, when a tap came at his door.

"Come in!" said the Head, thinking that it was probably only Mr. Railton, the Housemaster of the School House, with whom he greatly liked an evening chat.

The door opened, but it was not Mr. Railton who entered. Dr. Holmes glanced in some surprise at the junior who presented himself.

"Merry!" he ejaculated.

"Yes, sir. May I come in?"

"Oh, certainly!"

Tom Merry entered the room, and, to the Head's amazement, he was followed by Blake, Herries, D'Arcy, and Digby. But that was not all. Following them came Manners and Lowther. Then came four New House juniors—Figgins, Kerr, Wynn, and Marmaduke.

Eleven Lower School boys were there in all, and the Head naturally looked amazed at this invasion of his study.

"Close the door, Fatty," said Tom Merry, looking round.

Fatty Wynn obeyed.

"Dear me!" said Dr. Holmes. "This is a most singular proceeding. Merry! May I ask what is the meaning of it?"

"Yes, sir. We are a deputation—"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Shut up, Gussy, old chap!"

"I wefuse to shut up when our respected headmastah asks us for an explanation!" said D'Arcy, with dignity.

The Head adjusted his rince-nez and stared at the deputation of the Lower School.

"You are a—a what?" he asked, hardly knowing whether to believe his ears or not.

"A deputation, sir."

"Yaas, a dep, sir, fwom the Lower School."

"But—but what—"

"If you will allow me to explain, sir—"

"Please do, and at once, Merry. I should be sorry to think that you have done this from impertinence."

"Oh, sir! I hope—"

"Well, go on, Merry, and explain yourself."

"Pewwaps it would be bettah if I explained, sir. I can put the thing much more clearly and concisely than Tom Mewwy can, as I have more tact."

"I think Merry is quite capable—"

"With your permish, sir, I weally think—"

"Pray be silent, D'Arcy! You may go on, Tom Merry."

"Certainly, sir! We have come as a deputation representing—representing—"

Tom Merry paused for a moment.

"Representing both Houses at St. Jim's," said Figgins.

"That's it, sir, representing both Houses at St. Jim's, to ask whether you would have the kindness to grant the school a whole holiday—"

"What?" exclaimed the amazed Head. "What did you say, Merry?"

"A whole holiday, sir, for a special purpose."

"A weally vewy laudable purpose, sir."

"Shut up, D'Arcy!"

"You're not making the thing cleah to our respected headmastah, Tom Mewwy. A little explanation is wequiahed."

"There's an old dame living in the village, sir," said Tom Merry, "who ought to have a proper pension and hasn't one—"

"It's Dame Humphreys, sir," said Figgins.

"And she's howwibly stony, sir."

"We're thinking of getting up some sports in conjunction with the Grammar School," went on Tom Merry, "and devoting the proceeds to the relief of Dame Humphreys."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And that wil' set the old lady on her feet again," said Blake. "It's a good object, sir, and we're going to get Kildare to take a hand."

"So we want you to grant us a whole holiday for the purpose, sir," said Tom Merry.

Dr. Holmes rubbed his chin thoughtfully.

"Ahem! With whom did this idea originate?" he asked.

"It was my idea, sir," said Tom modestly.

"The object is a laudable one," said the Head. "I have heard of the case of Dame Humphreys, and regard it as a hard one."

"We wegard it as a cwysin' scandal, sir!"

"Exactly! I should not object to any reasonable plan being devised to help the old lady," said the Head. "But a whole holiday granted to the school is a very unusual request, and—"

"We hope you won't refuse, sir. Dr. Monk is certain to give the Grammar School fellows a holiday for the purpose if you gran' St. Jim's one."

"Ah, that would make a difference, of course! But I am afraid you have not reflected very long over this matter, my lads."

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"Oh, yes, we have, sir! It's about two hours since the idea first came into my mind!" said Tom Merry.

Dr. Holmes smiled.

"There are many difficulties in the way," he remarked. "There will be a certain amount of expense in holding the affair—"

"We shall have a whip round to cover that, sir."

"Yaas, wathah! A whip round!"

"Then if the whole school is to turn out, and the Grammar School boys are to come over, there will be a tremendous crowd—"

"The more the merrier, sir!"

"Perhaps so, in a sense. But it may lead to disputes."

"Not on such an occasion, sir."

"My dear lad, you may have the best intentions in the world, but I know how disputes between the New House and the School House have a habit of breaking out at all times—in season and out of season."

"Oh, sir, we'd make it pax for the day, and when we make it pax we never break it!" said Tom Merry. And Figgins nodded an emphatic assent.

"Yes, I believe you. But I have heard, too, that there is a rivalry in the School House itself between two studies in the Fourth Form and the Shell."

Tom Merry and Blake coloured.

"Oh, sir, we would make it pax with the bounders!" said Blake. "I mean, we'd have a truce with Tom Merry for the day."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Dr. Holmes stroked his chin.

"Well, well, I know I could trust you to keep your word," he said. "But could you answer for the rest of the juniors?"

"If they made a row when I told them not to—"

began Figgins. "Oh, that's all right, sir!" said Tom Merry. "They have to hop to our tune, sir, or get their heads punched. We'll answer for them."

"Yaas, wathah! If they made any bother on such an important occasion, sir, I should considah it my duty to give them a feahful thwashin'!"

The Head looked directly at Arthur Augustus.

"What have you been doing to your eye, D'Arcy?"

"Nothin', sir."

"It is quite black!" said the Head severely.

"Yaas, but I did not do it myself, sir," said D'Arcy innocently.

Dr. Holmes coughed.

"I did not suppose you did, D'Arcy. I suppose you have been fighting, instead of setting a good example to the younger boys?"

"Yaas, wathah—I mean, it was quite an accident, sir. I wegarded it as impewative to thwash Figgins—"

"Ring off, you ass!" whispered Lowther.

"I wefuse to wing off, Lowthah! I am explainin' the mattah to our respected Head, and I shall be obliged if you do not intewwupt! I wegarded it as impewative to thwash Figgins, sir, and that led to a wow."

"Led to a what?"

"A wow, sir. We had a feahful wow!"

"Can any of you explain to me what a wow is?" asked Dr. Holmes, looking utterly puzzled.

"He means a row, sir," grinned Lowther.

"Oh, a row? I see!"

"Yaas, wathah! We had a feahful wow, and either Blake's elbow, or Hewwies' knee, stwuck me violently in the eye, sir. It was weally an accident, and—"

"That will do, D'Arcy. You will take fifty lines for fighting."

"But I was not fighting with Blake or Hewwies, sir!"

"You were fighting with somebody."

"But weally, Dr. Holmes, if you will allow me to point out—"

"You need not trouble, D'Arcy."

"For my own sake, sir, I must insist upon speakin'!" said D'Arcy.

His companions gasped, and Dr. Holmes fixed upon him a glare that the basilisk might have envied.

"D'Arcy!"

"Yaas, Doctah Holmes, I must weally insist—stop tweadin' on my foot, Tom Mewwy! You are hurtin' my toes, and I am sure you are spoilin' my shoes; I am wathah particulah about my shoes. If you poke me in the wibs again, Blake, I shall stwike you!"

"You may go on, D'Arcy."

"Thank you, sir! It is vevy hard to explain while these wuff boundahs keep on jostlin' a fellow and intewwuptin' him. If I were not a weally patient chap I should wefuse to wegard them as fwiends, considerwin' their wotten treatment of me. They vevy seldom tweek me with weally pwopah respect. But, as I was sayin', I should not like to

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see a gentleman whom I wespsect so highly do anything dishonouwable—"

"D'Arcy!"

"Yaas, wathah, sir! I don't mind doing fifty lines, or a hundwed, for that mattah; but, weally, that is not the point. In comin' heah I wan the wisk of your spottin' my black eye, and it was really twustin' to your honah, you know."

"D'Arcy, I really—"

"That is how the case stands, sir," said D'Arcy firmly. "I twusted to your honah, and as one gentleman to another."

"You need not do the lines, D'Arcy."

"Thank you, sir. I thought that you would see the mattah in a pwopah light as soon as I pointed— Tom



"Ha, ha, ha!" A universal howl of laughter greeted the sweet cart. "Where did you get that funny thing?"

Mewwy, you are hurtin' my arm! Leave off pinching me at once, or I shall get angwy and thwash you!"

"That will do, D'Arcy. Merry, I think, upon the whole, a holiday might be arranged, but the proceedings would be of too extensive a character to be left in the hands of boys of the junior Forms."

Tom Merry's face fell a little.

"You see," went on the Head, kindly enough, "there would be so much to be seen to; and even if the rivals of St. Jim's keep the peace, the Grammar School boys might quarrel."

Tom Merry scratched his curly head thoughtfully.

"Well, yes, sir; but we'd appoint some fellows to act as policemen."

"Yaas, wathah, a lot of fellows who don't enter for the

events," said D'Arcy. "There's Wynn, for instance; he's too fat to entah."

"And there's you," said the Falstaff of the New House indignantly. "You're too fatheaded!"

"I wefuse to—"
 "Silence, D'Arcy! It is a good suggestion, Merry; but, all the same, if the affair takes place, I shall have to place it under the control of a Housemaster, with a committee, perhaps, of boys in the Sixth Form."

The deputation looked at one another in dismay. This was taking the matter out of their hands with a vengeance.

"Well, I dare say you know best, sir," said Tom Merry. "Perhaps it would be a bit above our weight. So long as it comes off, and we raise a fund for Dame Humphreys, it really doesn't matter in whose hands it is."

Head. "Mind, I do not promise, but I will speak to Mr. Railton about it this evening, and we will see what can be done. That is all I can say at present."

"Thank you, sir," said Tom Merry gratefully. "I know you'll do the best you can for us, sir, and if you decided the thing can't be done, we shall know you have a good reason."

"That is a very proper view to take of the matter, Merry," said Dr. Holmes, more pleased than he cared to show by the implicit faith in him the junior's words unconsciously betrayed. "I shall certainly do my best to help you in the matter, especially as the object in view is such an extremely laudable one. You may go, boys."

"Thank you, sir. Good-night!"

"Good-night!"

And the deputation withdrew, and the Head of St. Jim's was left to his work again.

CHAPTER 9.

A Special Prize!

THE juniors of St. Jim's waited anxiously for the result of Dr. Holmes' consultation with Mr. Railton; but the Head did not keep them waiting long. The next day it was announced to the school that a whole holiday would be granted, in order to allow sports to be held in support of a fund for Dame Humphreys, the precise date to be fixed later.

"Good!" said Tom Merry. "The Head is a brick. Of course, he will have to communicate with Dr. Monk before he decides upon the date. It will have to suit the Grammar School as well as ourselves."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"It's a bit rough taking the matter right out of our hands like this," Blake remarked. "It seems that Railton is going to manage it, and Kildare is to be his henchman."

"Never mind; it will induce many Upper Form fellows to enter, who wouldn't have come into the thing while it was under junior management," said Tom Merry sagely.

"Well, there's something in that, certainly."

"You are quite wight, Mewwy," said D'Arcy. "The Uppah Form fellows would have cut the whole beastlay mattah, you know; but with Railton and Kildare at the head of it, they can't very well do anythin' of the sort. We shall woep in a feahful lot of entwance fees."

"Rather! And the rules we've made will be adhered to, you know—the seniors pay more than the juniors, and the masters more than the seniors, if they enter. We'll have a fixed tariff. And now the question of prizes is to be dealt with."

"Yaas, we shall have to have some wippin' pwizes. I think an especially valuable pwesent ought to be provided for the winner of the high jump."

"I don't see why."

"Oh, yaas, you know, I am pwetty certain that I shall win that, and—"

"I can see you doing it," Blake remarked. "Why, Figgins can beat you by a foot or more. Fatty's about your mark."

"Then there is the quartah mile; I am suah of that," persisted D'Arcy. "I shall want a new jiggah this summah, so I think the pwize ought to be a bicycle."

"You young ass! Kerr could run you off your legs."

"Then there's the obstacle wace," said D'Arcy. "That's a dead cert for me, deah boys, and I shall want a decent pwize."

"You're going to enter for all of them—eh?"

"Yaas, wathah, to say nothin' of the water jump, and the swimmin' contest, and the shootin' and fencin'."

"You'll have your work cut out, then," said Tom Merry, laughing. "As everything's got to be crammed into one day, some of the events will have to come off simultaneously."

D'Arcy shook his head.

"Oh, no, Tom Mewwy, that won't do at all!" he said. "I shall insist upon being given time to go in for ewevythin' I entah for."

"Rats! As you wouldn't win anything in any case—"
 "But I intend weally to twy, and when I twy hard enough I always succeed, deah boy."

"Try not to be an ass, then."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"I say, what about the prizes?" said Monty Lowther, coming up. "We ought to get them ready, Tom. Some of us have things that will do, of course. Blake can put up his punching-ball."

"Can I?" said Blake emphatically.

"Certainly, my dear fellow; and D'Arcy can offer a set of fancy waistcoats."

"I shall wefuse to do anythin' of the sort."

"Herries can subscribe his cornet."

"No fear!" said Herries. "If you like, I'll arrange



... of St. Jim's, as he arrived at the school in the grocer's ... young Sandsugar? " yelled Figgins,

"Yaas, wathah! And it will weally save us a lot of twouble, and we shall be free to have a wippin' time."

"Something in that," said Figgins. "I was rather uneasy all along at the idea of having the thing managed by you School House fellows."

"And I felt a bit nervous at letting you New House rotters have a hand in it," Monty Lowther remarked, in a thoughtful way.

"Silence, boys! I will ask Mr. Railton or Mr. Ratcliff."

"Mr. Railton, please, sir," said Tom Merry eagerly; "he is much more fond of sports than the New House master, sir."

"That's so, sir," said Figgins. "We'd all prefer Mr. Railton to take the lead in a matter of this kind, sir, if you will allow us to say so."

"Perhaps it is more in Mr. Railton's line," assented the

musical honours on the occasion, and give a cornet selection."

"Will you?" said Tom Merry. "There'll be a sudden death in the Herries' family if you try it on, that's all I've got to say."

"You haven't heard me practise lately," said Herries. "I'm getting a really wonderful tone in that cornet. If you heard me doing the Grand March from Tannhauser, as a cornet solo, it would make you open your eyes."

"And shut my ears," said Tom Merry. "Grand marches as cornet solos are barred. The best thing you can do with your cornet is to bury it. About the prizes, I suggest that every fellow writes home to his relations, and asks them to send him everything they can that would be of use. I know Miss Fawcett will turn up trumps on an occasion like this. I shall only have to write."

"Good!" agreed Blake. "And we'll all do the same."

It was a good plan, and it was acted upon. Tom Merry's old governess, Miss Priscilla Fawcett, replied to his letter at once, promising to do everything, and also undertaking to come down to St. Jim's on sports day to see her ward distinguish himself. Her brother from India, Mr. Francis Fawcett would bring her down, she said, and the boys of the School House, who had already made the acquaintance of the Anglo-Indian, were glad to hear it.

"Bai Jove, how wippin'!" exclaimed D'Arcy, when he heard the news. "We ought all to have our friends and relations down here to see the fun, and I'll ask my Cousin Ethel to come. She can come down with Miss Pwiscillah, as she did before."

"Splendid!" exclaimed Figgins enthusiastically.

"Yaas, it will be wathah splendid," said D'Arcy, looking somewhat coldly at the New House junior; "but I weally do not see where you will come in, Figgins. Ethel is my cousin, you know."

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"She can't help that," said Figgins, "and I'd be the last to remind her of an unpleasant thing like that."

D'Arcy screwed his eyeglass into his eye, which was by this time nearly well, and gave the humorous Figgins a stony glare.

"I regard that remark as distinctly wotten, Figgins!"

"Never mind, old kid!" said Figgins, giving him a hearty slap on the back, which made the swell of the School House stagger. "You can't help being an ass, you know."

"If you stwike me in that wuff mannah again, Figgins, I shall quawwell with you, and be sewiously angwy."

"Oh, don't!" said Figgins. "You know how terrible you are when you are angry. Tornadoes are not in it. I'm not going to ask my governor down."

"I think you ought to do so, Figgins; I do weally. He would take it as a mark of respect."

"But I can't very well—"

"My deah boy, make it a point to do it."

"But he couldn't come, you see; he's in India."

"Oh, that makes a gweat difference, of course!"

"No reason why we shouldn't all have our people here, all of them that can come," Tom Merry said thoughtfully. "The description will make a fine article for the 'Weekly' when it's all over."

"Yaas, wathah! I'll wite it up for you."

"No, you won't, Gussy; that's my business."

"It has often stwuck me, Tom Mewwy, that you have too good an opinion of your litewawy abilities," said D'Arcy, shaking his head. "I should be the last fellow in the world to wun anybody down, but weally I think you are wathah conceited, you know."

"We can't all be as modest as you are, Gussy. But I'll tell you what. I shall write the article, but it will have to be taken down to the printer's office afterwards, and you can buzz down on your bike with it, like a good fellow."

"Certainly, Tom Mewwy, anythin' to oblige!"

"Right-ho! Equal divisions of labour, you see," smiled Tom Merry. "I'm going to write some letters now. You'd better all do the same, and we'll have a big crowd down here on the great day."

"Yaas, wathah!"

The idea caught on. Half the fellows wrote home and asked their people to come down, and most of those invited accepted. On the day when the Grammar School met St. Jim's there was certain to be a strong feminine contingent adorning the playing fields of the old college. Among others, Cousin Ethel promised to come down with Miss Fawcett, and the School House chums were delighted.

The arrangements for the meeting of the rival schools went on apace in the capable hands of Mr. Railton and Kildare. As a matter of fact, the juniors were scarcely old enough to manage such an affair as this had now grown into, and it took up a great deal of Mr. Railton's time. But the School House master was good-nature itself, and he was heartily in sympathy with the object of the sports.

Wednesday, usually a half-holiday, was fixed for the occasion, after letters had passed between Dr. Holmes and the Head of the Grammar School. The two headmasters were friends, and so the matter was easily arranged. All St. Jim's looked forward to the date, and so did the Grammar School, for that matter.

Frank Monk came over with Lane and Carboy to talk the matter over on Saturday afternoon. "Pax" had been established between the two schools till after the famous Wednesday.

"It's all going on swimmingly," said Tom Merry, as he shook hands heartily with Monk. "We are going to give you the licking of your lives."

"Or receive the licking of yours," said Frank Monk, with equal geniality.

Tom Merry laughed.

"We shall see," he remarked.

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy, with a wise shake of his head. "We shall see what we shall see, deah boy!"

"Go hon!" said Monk. "Did you work that all out in your own brain, Gussy, without the aid of a net?"

"Weally, Fwank Monk—"

"We're getting the prizes down now, Monk," Tom Merry went on. "Miss Fawcett has sent a lot of things already. Skates and footballs and cricket bats. No, she didn't select them herself, so you needn't look alarmed. Mr. Dodds, the curate of Huckleberry Heath, saw to that, and they're all right. She's going to send on something else to-day, and she said in her letter that it would be better than the other things, but I'm blessed if I know what it is!"

There was a thump at the door of the study, and Taggles, the school porter, appeared, with a box on his shoulder.

"This is for you, Master Merry."

"Stick it on the table, Taggles."

"There you are, Master Merry."

"Thank you, Taggles; you needn't wait!"

"Them stairs is very tiring, Master Merry."

"Yes; I found 'em so."

"That box is a 'eavy weight, too."

"So I believe, Taggy!"

Taggles frowned darkly, and turned to the door.

"I say, Gussy, aren't you going to give Taggles a tip?" said Tom Merry.

Arthur Augustus stared.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Give him threepence, and tell him not to squander it on strong liquor," said Tom Merry. "As a matter of fact, I'm stony; but I'll settle when Lowther comes in."

"Yaas, wathah! I'm afraid I could not give anybody so small a tip as thweepence, Tom Mewwy. Here's a shillin' for you, Taggles, and mind you do not spend it on stwong liquah, deah boy."

"You're a gentleman, you are, sir!" said Taggles, slipping the shilling into his waistcoat pocket.

"Thank you, Taggles!" said D'Arcy languidly. "I weally did not wequiah any information on that point, but I am glad to have the opinion of a well-informed person like yourself; I am, weally."

Taggles stared at Arthur Augustus as if he could not quite make him out, and went away.

Frank Monk giggled.

"Well, you are an ass, Gussy," said Tom Merry. "I owe you a shilling now. And Taggles didn't even say that I was a gentleman."

"Too bad," said Frank Monk.

"This box is from Miss Fawcett," went on Tom Merry, cutting the string. "I dare say it contains that valuable article I was speaking about. We'll see."

He soon had the box open. It contained several cricket bats, and some articles of personal attire for Tom Merry himself. He put the latter aside hastily. Then he found what he was in search of—a neat little box with a lock and key, and a note tied to it.

He glanced at the note.

"This is it!" he exclaimed. "The special prize, and Miss Fawcett thinks it ought to be awarded for the biggest feat—"

"Bai Jove, then Figgins ought to have it! He's got the biggest feet!"

"F-e-a-t, ass, not f-e-e-t!" said Tom Merry. "This must really be something special. It doesn't look like a dressing-case. I wonder what it is? I'll soon see."

He lifted the little box out and unlocked it, the juniors watching him curiously. On the inside of the leather-lined lid was an inscription in gilt letters. "The Boy's Own Medicine Chest."

Tom Merry stared at the valuable prize in dismay.

"My word!" said Frank Monk. "Let's have a look at it! Boxes of pills, jars of cold cream, bottles of medicines! Hallo, what's this? Dr. Bones' Purple Pills for Pink Persons! Dr. Bones' Terra-cotta Tabloids for Tiny Tots! My own panama hat! I should like to take this as first prize—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" howled Lane.

"You'd better send that back, Tom Merry," said Carboy, "and say you'd prefer some toffee or a balloon."

Tom Merry shook his head.

"Can't be did. Can't look a gift horse in the mouth. Miss Fawcett has the kindest heart in the world, and I wouldn't refuse anything she sent."

"But you can't offer that awful thing as a prize."

"Yes, I can. If you win it, you're not bound to eat the pills or drink the medicine. You could use the box to keep white mice in."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

And Miss Fawcett's special prize figured in the list of prizes.

CHAPTER 10.

D'Arcy Is Not Left Out!

THE idea had certainly originated with Tom Merry, but as time passed on he could hardly recognise his own idea, so developed and amplified had it become. The management had passed out of his own hands, and the scheme was extended on all sides. The committee of juniors were left with nothing to do, while the arrangements of the fete were in the hands of the School House master and a committee of seniors.

It was, in fact, a great deal like the progress of a snowball down hill, gathering snow as it rolled, till the snowball grew to be a regular avalanche. The affair filled every mind at St. Jim's, and was discussed and discussed again from the top boy in the Sixth to the youngest fag in the Third Form.

Mr. Railton, an athlete and a sportsman to the fingertips, took a great interest in the affair, and under his able management it went ahead swimmingly. Tom Merry and his chums had to acknowledge that the affair was really too big for them to handle alone. But the School House master was tactful. He asked Tom Merry to join the committee as representative of the Lower School, and that set matters right.

Of course, the selection of Tom Merry as Lower School member did not pass without shakings of the head among the juniors. Figgins, Blake, and D'Arcy, at least, were convinced that they would have filled the post better.

"You see, deah boy"—D'Arcy took the trouble to explain—"what is wequiahed is a fellow of tact and judgment, and though I wouldn't dweam of puttin' myself forward in any way, yet for the sake of the coll I think I ought to be on the comm."

To which Tom Merry's cheerful and elegant reply was: "Rats!"

"Of course, what Gussy says is all rot," Blake observed. "I am the chap—"

D'Arcy turned his eyeglass upon Blake.

"Pway, pardon me, Blake, but what were you pleased to wemark?"

"I said that what you said is all rot."

"I wefuse to have my wemarks chawactewised as wot!"

"Blake's right," said Tom Merry. "Anyway, the question's settled now, as Mr. Railton's selected me."

"Yaas, but that can be awwanged all wight. You can wesign."

"No fear!"

"I put it to you for the sake of the coll, Tom Mewwy. A fellow is called upon to make small sacwifices for the good of the coll. You know that I should make a far bettah member of the beastlay committee—"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Blake. "The question is—"

"I wegard your intewwuption as distinctly wude, Blake."

"Well, you never leave off, you know. Besides, you're talking rot. Why can't you cheese it?"

"I uttally wefuse to cheese it?"

Tom Merry walked away laughing, and left them still arguing. The hero of the Shell had no intention of resigning his seat on the committee in order to secure the valuable services of either Blake or D'Arcy. Figgins had something to say on the subject, too, but he found Tom Merry as immovable as a rock.

The juniors had made a list of events for the fete day which would have taken up something like a week, and Mr. Railton cut them down with a merciless pencil.

Kildare had been made treasurer, and Tom Merry & Co. constituted themselves canvassers for entrants and entrance fees.

"You see, you can enter if you like without turning up for the event," they explained to everybody. "The entrance fees swell the fund for Dame Humphreys, and it's all for the good of the cause."

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy, when Tom Merry explained to him. "But I shall weally insist upon all the events being wun one entah anothah, so that I can twy my luck in all that I entah for."

"Can't be done, kid."

"But you have not yet awwanged the ordah of the events."

"We shall settle that at the next committee meeting," said Tom Merry.

"My word!" said Digby. "Tom Merry will want a larger size in hats if his head goes on swelling at this rate!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry moistened his pencil.

"Never mind that. Am I to put you down for the obstacle race, D'Arcy?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And the quarter mile?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"What about the cycle race?"

"I am goin' in for that, deah boy. I weally think that there isn't a juniah in this school or the Gwammah School who wides a jiggh as I do."

"Quite right," said Lowther, grinning. "You've hit it, D'Arcy! Of course, the spectators may mistake it for a comic entertainment."

"Pway, don't be wude, Lowthah! What is the next, Tom Mewwy?"

"The swimming contest. Are you going in for that?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry ran through a very long list of events, and Arthur Augustus entered for all of them. When he had finished the others put their names down.

"Twenty-one shillings, please," said Tom Merry with a businesslike air.

"Bai Jove! Are you talking to me, Tom Mewwy?"

"Certainly! You've entered for twenty-one events, and it will cost you twenty-one shillings; so hand it over, and I'll give you a receipt."

"Well, it's all for the good of the cause," said D'Arcy. "I am goin' to wite to my govannah to come down, you know, to see me wefect glorwy upon the family, and he can't wufese to stand me a fivah on such an occasion. Here's the money."

And D'Arcy paid up promptly. Herries, Digby, and Blake raised twelve shillings among them, so that the contribution from Study No. 6 was a substantial one.

CHAPTER 11.

Mr. Railton Enters for the Mile!

MR. RAILTON took his pipe out of his mouth as a tap came at his study door.

"Come in!" he said in his deep tones.

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther came in. The Terrible Three were looking their mildest and gentlest, by which the experienced Housemaster knew that they had something on their minds and were very dubious about their reception.

"Come in, my boys! Can I do anything for you?"

"Yes, sir," said Tom Merry. "It's about the fete."

"I thought all matters connected with that were settled at the committee meetings, Merry," the Housemaster remarked.

"This is an unofficial matter, sir."

"Well, go on."

"We've just learned something about the Grammar cads, sir—I mean, about the Grammar School fellows," said Tom Merry. "They're going to try to do us. We picked up the information almost by chance."

"I had my eyes open, you see," Lowther remarked.

"Yes, it was really Lowther who scouted it out."

"Well, well! And what is the information?"

"You know, sir, that the events are open to all comers," said Tom Merry. "Seniors and juniors can enter alike, and so can the masters if they want to. Some fellows from the village, too, have entered."

Mr. Railton smiled.

"I don't suppose the Form masters are likely to enter, however, Merry."

"That's where the Grammarians think they are going to score, sir," said the hero of the Shell. "It's in the mile that we expect to score, or did expect. We got Kildare to enter, and, of course, Kildare can run any Grammarian off his legs. Their best man in that line is Dibson, and he can't run with Kildare for toffee—I mean, he can't put up a run anything like Kildare's."

"Then St. Jim's ought to score," the Housemaster remarked.

"Only Frank Monk has done us," said Tom Merry ruefully.

"He's taken advantage of the fact that anybody can enter, and persuaded one of the Grammar School junior masters to enter for the mile."

"Ah!" said Mr. Railton, rubbing his chin thoughtfully.

"The chap is Wimpole, sir—quite a young man, and in good form. He was known as a runner at Cambridge, so I hear, and, of course, he will be able to walk away from even Kildare, good as he is."

"I suppose so."

"It's rather sharp business on Monk's part," went on Tom Merry. "As the case stands at present, the Grammarians are sure of the mile. Of course, it isn't the prize we care for—"

Manners and Lowther grinned, rather to Mr. Railton's surprise. He did not know that the prize for the mile race was the medicine-chest sent down by Miss Priscilla Fawcett.

"It's the honour of the thing," said Tom Merry, with a frown at his chums. "We're not going to have St. Jim's colours lowered like that!"

"It would be rather hard."

"So we thought, sir—"

Tom Merry paused.

"We thought—" said Lowther.

"That's it," said Manners. "We thought—"

The Terrible Three came to a dead stop. A humorous twinkle appeared in Mr. Railton's genial eyes.

"Well, what did you think?" he asked.

"We—we thought that we would—"

Tom Merry paused again.

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"Go on, Merry."

"It seems like a cheek, sir."

"I am sure you would not mean it that way."

"Oh, no, sir! Well, sir, we thought that—that we would try to get a St. Jim's master to enter for the mile, so as to catch the Grammarians—a master who was a jolly good athlete and could make rings round their man."

Mr. Railton looked gravely thoughtful.

"Do you think there is such a one at St. Jim's, Merry?"

"Oh, I know there is, sir!" said Tom Merry promptly.

"Rather!" said Lowther.

And Manners said: "What-ho!"

"Then I should advise you to ask him to enter for the mile," said Mr. Railton. "I suppose it is my advice you want?"

"Would you, sir? Will you enter, then?" asked Tom Merry eagerly.

"I" said the Housemaster, laughing.

"Yes, sir. You are an old Blue, and you could walk over Wimpole if you liked, and it would make the Grammarians simply green."

"I really don't know, Merry, whether it would be quite in accordance with my position to seek to make the Grammarians go simply green," said Mr. Railton, with perfect gravity.

Tom Merry blushed.

"I don't mean exactly that, sir. But it would uphold St. Jim's colours, and we all want to do that. We don't want to see the old school licked."

"That is quite true."

"You have played for St. Jim's First Eleven, sir, so there's really no reason why you shouldn't run for the mile, is there?"

"No, I suppose not."

"Then you will enter, sir?"

"Ahem! I suppose, under the circumstances, I must," said Mr. Railton, smiling. "Of course, I may be beaten. I haven't seen Mr. Wimpole run."

"I have, sir, and I know he's not up to your form," said Tom Merry joyfully. "We shall go one better than the Grammarians this time. If you should get left, it can't be helped. But I am sure you will win. Thank you so much! Then I may put your name down?"

"Certainly!"

And the Housemaster turned towards the fire again, as a hint that the interview was closed. But Tom Merry was not quite finished.

"There's another little matter, sir."

Mr. Railton looked round.

"Well, what is it now, Merry?"

"About entering for the mile, sir."

"But we have already settled that."

"Yes, but there is one point. We are going to put your name down as an entrant for the event."

"Exactly! I have given you permission to do so."

"And so the—the—"

"Surely that is all, Merry?"

"Well, no, sir. There's the—the—"

"The what?"

"The entrance fee, sir," said Tom Merry.

The Housemaster burst into a laugh.

"I had forgotten that, Merry, and it was quite right of you to remind me." He put his hand into his pocket. "I understand that you are collecting fees for the committee. I think the amount is a shilling?"

"A shilling for juniors, sir."

"Ah! And what is it for seniors?"

"Half-a-crown, sir."

Mr. Railton took a half-crown from his pocket. The Terrible Three exchanged expressive glances, and Tom Merry returned to the attack.

"The fact is, sir, the entrance fee is fixed higher for masters than seniors."

"Oh, indeed!"

"Yes, sir. But under the circumstances, as we have asked you as a personal favour to enter, we don't think you ought to be dished for ten shillings."

"Dished, Merry?"

"Excuse me, sir, I mean done—that is to say, I don't think we ought to screw ten shillings out of you, as we asked you to enter. So if you stand half-a-crown, we want to make up the rest of the entrance fee ourselves."

"That's the idea!" said Lowther and Manners at once.

Mr. Railton laughed good-humouredly.

"I quite understand your view of the matter, Merry, but I cannot allow you to pay my entrance fee," he said, putting the half-crown back into his pocket and opening his pocket wallet. "I must certainly pay up myself. It is for the good of the cause, at any rate. Have you change for a pound-note?"

He laid a Treasury note for a pound on the table. The boys looked doubtfully at one another.

"If you please, sir," said Tom Merry diffidently, "we'd rather—"

"Ahem! It is really not a question of what you would rather, Merry, but of what I would rather," Mr. Railton remarked.

"Oh, sir, if you look at it like that—"

"I do, Merry. Can you change this note?"

"We'll see, sir."

Tom Merry went through his pockets and produced nine-pence. Manners followed suit and turned out a shilling and a ball of string. Lowther's product was one-and-threepence, with the addition of a penknife and a bag of caramels.

"I'm afraid we haven't quite enough, sir," said Tom Merry.

"Not even with the caramels thrown in," murmured Lowther.

A voice was heard passing the study door, which was ajar.

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Hallo, that's D'Arcy!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "He'll give us change. Here, D'Arcy! May I call him in, sir?"

"Certainly!"

D'Arcy came into the study. Herries waited for him outside. The swell of the School House was always rolling in wealth, so he was pretty certain to have the required change about him.

"What do you want, Tom Mewwy?" he asked.

"We want a ten-shilling note to give to Mr. Railton."

"Bai Jove, do you weally?" asked D'Arcy, in amazement. It did not occur to him that Tom Merry wanted to give the Housemaster change, and he was really surprised to learn that the Housemaster was borrowing ten shillings from the juniors.

"Yes. Have you got one?"

"Yaas, wathah! And I shall be vewy pleased to lend it to Mr. Wailton."

"Ass! We don't want you to lend it!" said Tom Merry in a fierce whisper, not knowing exactly how the Housemaster might take D'Arcy's absurd misapprehension.

"I dare say you don't, Tom Mewwy. But I don't see why I shouldn't lend it as much as you, as I esteem our respected Housemastah as highly as you do, deah boy."

"You utter idiot!"

"I wefuse to be called an uttah idiot! I am vewy pleased to oblige you in this small mattah, Mr. Wailton, and I should be glad to make it a pound, if you like."

"What?" ejaculated Mr. Railton.

"I should be vewy pleased to make it a pound, sir. I am quite flush just now, and I am always willin' to oblige a gentleman whom I respect so much."

Mr. Railton stared at D'Arcy.

"Is it possible, D'Arcy, that you imagine that I want to borrow money?" he asked.

"Yaas, wathah, sir; and I should be weally delighted to oblige you with a loan. And I should take it as a weal favah if you would wemembah me whenever you are stony."

"D'Arcy! I suppose you do not mean to be impertinent?"

"I wegard impertinence, sir, as a failin' no gentleman could possibly possess," said Arthur Augustus.

"Then—well, well, explain to him, Merry."

"We want to give Mr. Railton change for a pound, ass!" bawled Tom Merry.

"Oh, I see! I weally fail to perceive why you could not tell me that before," said D'Arcy. "New I have put my foot in it, and I am afwaid Mr. Wailton will be in a beastlay tempah, you know."

The Housemaster laughed.

"My dear D'Arcy," he said. "I am obliged for your some intentions, and not in a tempah, as you call it, after all. But I should advise you to think twice before you offer loans to a master. You may go, boys!"

And, having handed over the ten shillings change, the juniors quitted the study. In the passage they glared at Arthur Augustus.

"You howling ass!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Fancy—"

"I wefuse to be wegard as a howin' ass!"

"It's a wonder Mr. Railton didn't knock your silly head off!" said Lowther.

Arthur Augustus looked anxious.

"Do you think I have appeahed wude to Mr. Wailton?" he asked.

"Of course you have!"

"Do you think so, Tom Mewwy?"

"Certainly I do."

"Bai Jove, I shall have to apologise, then."

And D'Arcy turned back towards the study and knocked before they could stop him. Then the Terrible Three grasped him.

"Come in!" said Mr. Railton's voice from within.

"Come away, you ass!"

"I cannot be so wude as to come away aftah knockin' at

the door," said D'Arcy, struggling in the grasp of the Terrible Three. "I must apologise to—"

"Come away!"

"I distinctly wefuse—"

"Come in!" called out Mr. Railton again, impatiently.

"Let me go!"

There was no help for it. D'Arcy opened the door and looked in.

"Pway pardon for me for twoubnin' you, sir," he exclaimed, "but—"

"Well, well, what is it?" asked the Housemaster testily.

"Tom Mewwy is undah the impresson that I was wude to you, and I am afwaid that you may share that ewwoneous impresson."

"You may go, D'Arcy."

"Certainly, sir. But I wish to point out—"

"That will do!"

"And to apologise—"

"You may go!"

"Most sincerely, and from the bottom of my heart, for any seemin' impertinence, and to explain—"

"Will you go?" exclaimed Mr. Railton, rising from his chair.

"Yaas, wathah; but—"

The Housemaster made a stride towards the door. D'Arcy hurriedly closed it, and went along the passage. Then the Terrible Three seized him and ran him along at full speed. D'Arcy struggled, and called on Herries for aid, but his struggles were futile, and Herries only grinned.

The chums of the She! ran him along to the end of the passage, and left him sitting there, with his collar and tie hanging out, quite bewildered.

"You uttah wuffians!" gasped D'Arcy. "I shall wefuse to speak to you again! Hewwies, I no longah wegard you as a friend. Bai Jove, they are gone! I feel quite wumped and wuffed! Still, I did quite wight in apologise' to Mr. Wailton, and I am glad I did not omit it."

And the swell of the School House gathered himself up and hurried away to change his collar.

CHAPTER 12.

The Great Day!

"MY dearest Tommy!" Tom Merry, Manners and Lowther had just come out from breakfast on the eventful Wednesday, when the voice of Miss Priscilla Fawcett fell upon their ears.

Miss Fawcett had just alighted from the station hack and entered the School House, and with her were her brother, Mr. Francis Fawcett of Boggleywallabad, and D'Arcy's cousin, Ethel Cleveland.

Miss Fawcett came straight at Tom Merry, and folded him in a motherly embrace.

"My darling Tommy! And how are you after this long time?"

Manners and Lowther looked on with great admiration. Tom Merry coloured to the ears, almost certain that he detected a slight twinkle in the eyes of Cousin Ethel.

"I'm—I'm ripping!" gasped Tom Merry. "And it isn't a long time. It's only a week or so since I saw you last."

"I seems a long time to me, my dearest boy. I have been so anxious about your darling health. Are you sure you are keeping yourself well wrapped up against these dreadful winds?"

"Oh, yes, that's all right!"

"You are not forgetting your chest-protector?"

"No, no!"

"You are sure you have it on now?"

Tom Merry jumped back as Miss Fawcett made a motion to see for herself.

"It's all right, dear!" gasped Tom Merry. "How—how nice and early you are! How do you do, Cousin Ethel? And you, Uncle Frank?"

Uncle Frank was grinning. He shook hands with the Terrible Three, and then with the chums of Study No. 6, who came pouring out into the Hall.

"It will be a fine day for the sports," Uncle Frank remarked. "Now, my dear sister, we must go and pay our respects to Dr. Holmes."

"I shall see you again soon, dear Tommy."

"I hope so, dear."

"Mind you do not go without your cap, darling. I see you have had your hair cut. Was it not rather dangerous in this windy weather, Tommy?"

"Oh, I never catch cold."

"But you must not be reckless. You know how delicate you are."

"Pray come!" said Mr. Fawcett.

And the visitors were shown to the Head's quarters. Tom Merry drew a deep breath. Manners and Lowther were grinning like monkeys.

"Blessed if I can see anything to snigger at," said Tom Merry.

"Of course you can't," said Blake—"that's not to be expected. It's funny, all the same. But she is a dear old soul, and I don't think, you know, kids, that Tom Merry ought to vex her by going out without a chest-protector."

"Or by recklessly getting his hair cut," said Digby.

"Or by getting his beastly feet wet, or anything of that kind, you know, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus.

"Oh, go and eat coke!" said Tom Merry, walking away.

Most of St. Jim's had already turned out. As so much was to be got through in a single day the sports were to begin at an early hour. The visitors were arriving early, and by half-past ten most of them were present.

The weather, which had been watched anxiously by the St. Jim's juniors for days past, had turned out almost perfect—cold, but fine and sunny.

There was a loud cheer when the Grammarians arrived. All the time since breakfast the Grammarians had been arriving in twos and threes, but soon after ten came Frank Monk and his chums, and a large party. They came in a charabanc, and with them was Mr. Wimpole, the junior master, who had entered for the mile.

Soon after the motor-coach arrived several competitors from the village appeared on the scene, including Craggs, Pilcher, and Grimes.

Seldom had so goodly a crowd gathered upon the grounds of St. Jim's. Amid the boys, of all ages and sizes, and varieties of costume, appeared the gayer garb and hats of the feminine contingent. Nearly every competitor had a sister or a mother or a cousin anxious to see him distinguish himself.

"Is your governor coming down, after all, D'Arcy?" asked Figgins, coming up to Arthur Augustus, who was talking to his cousin near the pavilion, which was gaily decorated with bunting, the work of Tom Merry & Co.

D'Arcy glanced at him with some disfavour. He suspected the long-legged chief of the New House of having found favour in the eyes of Cousin Ethel—a thing D'Arcy could not comprehend while he was himself about, and was inclined to attribute to the well-known contrariness of the gentler sex.

"Yaas, wathah, Figgins! He can't get here in the mornin' but he's goin' to awwife in his cah soon aftah lunch."

"Glad to hear it! Remember me to him if there are any fivers knocking about. I wonder whether you would care to see the—the grounds, Miss Cleveland?"

"I should, very much," said Cousin Ethel.

"Weally, Figgins—"

"Time for you to get ready, if you're in the first event, Gussv," said Figgins.

"Yaas, but weally—"

"We shan't miss seeing you," said Figgins; "I'll take care of that. Isn't it turning out a jolly day, Cousin Ethel?"

"It is, indeed!" said the girl brightly.

D'Arcy fixed his monocle in his eye and stared after them as they strolled away.

"Weally, bai Jove!" he murmured.

He seemed to have turned into an eye-glassed statue, staring after Figgins and his prize. He was roused by a sudden clap on the shoulder that made him stagger.

"Kerr, you wottah, what do you mean by stwikin' me so wuffly?"

"Do you want to be left out?" demanded the Scottish partner in Figgins & Co. "It's time to get into your thmgs."

"Oh, I see! Thank you vevy much, Kerr! I was thinkin'—"

"My dear chap, don't start any unaccustomed exercises on a day like this. You'll be put off your form."

"Weally, Kerr—"

"Oh, come on!"

And Kerr dragged D'Arcy away. The commencement of the day's proceedings was near at hand. Dr. Holmes was on the scene, and with him were most of the masters, and Miss Priscilla and Uncle Frank, all smiles and good humour.

Miss Priscilla's eyes sometimes sought anxiously for Tom Merry, and the Head of St. Jim's observed it.

"Your ward is certain to distinguish himself to-day, I think, Miss Fawcett," remarked Dr. Holmes. "You know, this was really his idea from the start, though it has grown a rather bigger affair than he anticipated."

"Yes, I am aware of that, and it was just like my darling Tommy's kind heart," said Miss Fawcett.

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"Exactly! You are quite right!"

"But I am anxious lest he should over-exert himself," said Miss Priscilla. "As you know, Dr. Holmes, Tom is a most delicate lad."

"Really, Miss Fawcett, I cannot help thinking otherwise. A sturdier or healthier lad—"

"Ah, yes; that may be an outward and deceptive appearance of health!" said the old lady, shaking her head. "Over-exertion may have serious results."

"Stuff!" said Mr. Francis Fawcett, with brotherly candour.

"Really, my dear Francis!"

"Tom is as right as rain!"

"Men do not see these things with women's eyes," said Miss Fawcett, with another grave shake of her head.

"Hem!"

"I do not really know much about athletic matters," went on Miss Priscilla, giving a piece of information that was hardly required; "but I really hope that Tommy will not try to take too many runs or score too many goals to-day."

Dr. Holmes assured her that neither was likely to happen. But the expression on her face showed that she still had her doubts.

CHAPTER 13.

Tom Merry Wins!

WE shall not describe in detail the events of the morning. The first important event was the cycle race, which was specially interesting from the number of competitors and the quality of them—Frank Monk, Tom Merry, Lowther, Carboy, Blake, and D'Arcy being among the entries.

Arthur Augustus, determined to carry off some prize or other, had already appeared in three contests, but had failed to get to the top in any of them. But he was still hopeful, and quite fancied his chance in the bicycle race.

The track was a good one, and there was a general movement of interest as the ten competitors wheeled out their machines. Kildare was starter, but there seemed to be some difficulty about the starting, chiefly due to D'Arcy getting into everybody's way.

His machine was a splendid one, but how he would handle it was another matter. The captain of St. Jim's was about to give the signal when D'Arcy discovered that his saddle was too high, and claimed a respite. His next discovery was that he had left his tool-bag somewhere, and he had to call upon Blake to help him. The saddle was adjusted and all was ready at last.

"Ready?" called out Kildare.

"Yaas, wathah!"

There was a buzz from the crowded ground.

"They're off!"

They were—D'Arcy in a double sense. Why his bicycle should have chosen that particular moment to curl up was a mystery which no one took the trouble to elucidate. Perhaps it was due to the obstinate temper sometimes observed in bicycles when one wants them to behave specially well. At all events, D'Arcy was off, and the starters left him behind, lying on the track and completely mixed up with his jigger.

Arthur Augustus looked at the sky, and then staggered to his feet. His machine was doubled up, and the swell of the School House had several bruises distributed over his person. He stared after the starters.

"Come back!" he bawled.

There was a vell of laughter.

"Come back!" shouted D'Arcy. "That was a false start."

"Rot!" said Kildare. "You were off!"

"Yaas, wathah! I fell off!"

"The start was all right. You were a clumsy young ass!"

Arthur Augustus jammed his monocle into his eye and turned it upon the captain of St. Jim's with a stony glare.

"Pway, what did you call me, Kildare?"

"A clumsy young ass."

"I object to that descript bein' applied to me. I was simply feelin' to see if I had my monocle safe when the beastly jiggah seemed to crumple up."

"No wonder, you young duffer!"

"I have a vevy gweat respect for you, Kildare, but I must refuse to allow anybody to chawactewise me as a young duffah!"

"Get off the track!"

"Pway, why should I hwwv myself to get off the track?"

"You ass! You're in the way!" shouted Kildare.

"They'll be round soon. Get off the track, and take your silly bike away!"

"Weally, Kildare—"

"Get off!" roared a hundred voices.

D'Arcy took a leisurely survey of the shouters, with his monocle in his eye.

"Weally, my fwiends—"

"Get off!"

"Undah the circe, I must absolutely wefuse to hurwvy! Pway welaese my shouldah, Kildare! You are wumplin' my beastlay jacket!"

"I'll rumple your neck if you don't clear out!" growled Kildare.

And Arthur Augustus, yielding to superior force, retreated with his machine. He joined Figgins and Ethel, who were standing near the starting-point, looking on. Figgins was grinning, and there was a twinkle in Cousin Ethel's eye.

"Do you wegard that as a fair start, Figgins?" asked D'Arcy.

"Certainly!" said Figgins.

"I weally think we ought to have started ovah again," said D'Arcy, shaking his head. "As a mattah of fact—"

"Hurrah! Tom Merry leads!"

"Bwavo!" shouted D'Arcy, forgetting that he thought that

were watched by hundreds of keen eyes, and there was a breathless hush when the bell rang for the last lap.

"Tom Merry wins!"

"Monk wins!"

"Buck up, Merry!"

"Go it, Monkey!"

Neck-and-neck now, but Tom Merry's front wheel was creeping ahead. Half a length and a whole length—a length and a half! The hero of the Shell had saved himself for that last spurt, and that last spurt did it.

"Hurrah!"

"Merry! Merry! Bravo, Merry!"

"Bai Jove," said D'Arcy, turning to Cousin Ethel, "Tom Mewwy has won by a length and three-quartahs, at least, and I weally do not think that I should have done much bettah if I had weally started!"

And Cousin Ethel cordially agreed with him.



"HURRAH! St. Jim's wins!" A cheer rose and swelled over the ground as Mr. Railton breasted the tape, with a yard to spare over the Grammar School master!

he ought to have been in the race. "Bwavo, Tom Mewwy! Go it, Monkey. Buck up, Blake!"

During the third lap several of the riders had wheeled their machines away. In the fourth lap another rode off, but five stuck it out for a longer time. Then Carboy found himself too far off for a chance, and gave it up.

The race now remained between four riders—Merry, Monk, Lowther, and Blake. Blake shot ahead, and D'Arcy clapped his hands with glee.

"Go it, deah boy! Wemembah the honah of Study No. 6!" he shouted.

"Buck up, Blake!" yelled Digby and Herries.

But Blake had shot his bolt. Past him went Merry and Monk, and Blake was seen to slacken. For half a lap he rode neck-and-neck with Monty Lowther, and then, both of them being hopelessly behind, they rode from the track.

Tom Merry and Frank Monk had it between them now.

Both of them were splendid riders, and they put all they knew into it. It was riding as fine as is often seen on a professional cycle track. There were loud cheers, loud clappings of hands.

The champions of the Grammar School and St. Jim's

Tom Merry was looking red and somewhat blown after the hard run, but he was a good deal fresher than Monk.

Loud cheers followed the two cyclists as they disappeared. Both had ridden well, and Frank Monk fully deserved his second prize. And as loud as any rang the cheers of the defeated competitors.

CHAPTER 14.

D'Arcy Does Not Win!

LUNCH-TIME came, and that meal had never been a merrier one at St. Jim's. Time had not been found for half the events, and it was clear that some of the less important items would have to be cut out of the programme.

But that possibility had been already foreseen, and the entrance fees were to swell the fund, all the same. Tom Merry sat between Miss Priscilla and Cousin Ethel at lunch, and Ethel divided her attention between the winner of the bicycle race and the great Figgins, who was on the other side. Arthur Augustus had simply no chance; which was

hard lines on D'Arcy, considering that Ethel was his cousin, and he had always regarded her as something in the light of private property.

The afternoon was as fine as the morning, and warmer, which was all the more pleasant. The first event was to be the mile, and it excited great interest. Kildare had withdrawn when Mr. Railton entered his name, knowing that he stood no chance against the School House master; but Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was not so modest. D'Arcy had entered for the mile, and he meant to run in it.

It was in vain that the chums in Study No. 6 represented to him their views on the subject. Their views were strong, and strongly expressed, but the swell of the School House was immovable.

"I have entailed for the wace," he said, "and I should regard it as dewogatory to my dig to wetweat now."

"But all the other entries have gone out," said Blake. "No fellow stands a chance against Wimpole, and especially against Mr. Railton. They have it between them."

"I weally do not see why I should not stand a chance."

"Ass!" said Digby.

"I wufuse to be called an ass!"

"Now, D'Arcy, do the sensible thing and scratch yourself."

"Scratch myself! What do you mean?"

"Scratch your name—I mean scratch it out of the race."

"Oh, I see! I am weally sowwy that I cannot oblige you, Blake."

"If you make the New House cackle at us, you image, we'll make Study No. 6 warm for you afterwards!" said Blake threateningly.

"It will not be consistent with my dig to allow myself to be moved with threats," said D'Arcy. "Pway excuse me now, as I must get into my wunnin' things."

"Did you ever see such an obstinate image?" exclaimed Blake, as D'Arcy walked imperturbably away. "Nothing will keep him from running—and against two opponents like Wimpole and an old Blue! Hallo! Figgins, what are you looking for?"

"Have you seen Skimpole?" asked Figgins.

"Skimpole! What do you want Skimpole for? He's not entered for any of the events, is he?" asked Blake.

Figgins laughed.

"Oh, no! But you know he's our chief policeman, and he has disappeared, and his force is disbanding themselves."

"Ha, ha, ha! Not likely to be a row, is there?"

"I don't know," said Figgins dubiously. "Some of the Grammar School kids were arguing with some of our Third Form fags just now about the result of a football match, and the argument was waxing strong."

Blake looked concerned.

"My hat! I hope there won't be any trouble to disturb the harmony of the day!" he exclaimed. "I suppose we can depend upon the small fry to keep the peace. Where has that ass Skimpole got to? How dare he take on the job of chief constable, and then go off like this!"

"Better look for him," suggested Digby.

"Right-ho! We're all in the next event after the mile, and we shan't be able to assist in keeping the peace then. I say, Manners, have you seen Skimpole?"

"Yes," said Manners, halting. "I saw him go behind the pavilion, with a book under his arm, just after lunch."

"Come on, kids, and we'll rout him out!"

Half a dozen juniors went round the pavilion to look for Skimpole, and there, sure enough they found the freak of

St. Jim's, sitting on a bench, with a big book on his knees, persuing it eagerly.

Blake jerked the big tome out of his hand.

"Here, I say, give me my book!" exclaimed Skimpole. "I was just getting to a most interesting part!"

"Not so important as keeping the Grammar School kids from fighting with the Third Form fags!" said Blake severely.

"My dear Blake——"

"Nice sort of a chief constable you are!"

"Dear me, I forgot! Really, I only took the post on in a moment of good-natured weakness!" said Skimpole. "According to the words of Professor Balmcyrumpet, police should be dispensed with."

"And how will you keep quarrelsome fellows from fighting with one another?"

Skimpole rubbed his nose thoughtfully.

"I haven't thought that out yet."

"Think it out some other time, old fellow, and come and do your duty now," said Blake. "You're chief constable, and you've got to keep the peace. Come on!"

"Certainly, Blake. As a firm believer in the teachings of Professor Balmcyrumpet, I am bound to accede to every reasonable request made by a fellow-creature."

"Come on, then, and don't talk so much!" said Blake.

And Skimpole was bundled away. Twenty juniors who were not entered for any of the events of the day had been formed into an amateur police force to keep order, and Skimpole was the chief. In his keenness to continue perusing the works of Professor Balmcyrumpet he had forgotten his duties, but now that he was reminded he threw himself into the matter. It was time, for some of the more youthful of the Grammarians had already almost come to blows with some of the St. Jim's fags on a football question.

While Skimpole was looking after his police force, the mile race started. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, heedless of frowns, turned up for the race in running garb, with his eyeglass stuck in his eye. Mr. Railton smiled, and Mr. Wimpole, of the Grammar School, stared at him as if he had been some curious zoological specimen.

"What is that little boy doing here, Mr. Railton?" he Grammar School master inquired.

Mr. Railton laughed.

"He is entered for the race. The others have scratched, but D'Arcy thinks he will have a chance."

"Yaas, wathah, sir!" said Arthur Augustus innocently. "I wathah fancy myself at the mile, you know. And pway do not be offended, Mr. Wimpole, if I explain that I am not a little boy. I am nearly as big as Tom Mewwy, and I'm in the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, you know."

But it was time to start. A cheer greeted the start, followed by a loud laugh, as D'Arcy—of course!—was seen to drop behind in the first half-dozen strides. The two athletes simply walked away from him, and D'Arcy was left standing in the track. There was a yell of derision from St. Jim's and Grammar School alike.

"Get off!"

"Go and bury yourself!"

"Yah!"

D'Arcy jammed his monocle in his eye, took a slow survey of the grinning crowd to testify to his supreme indifference to their opinion on that matter, or any other, and then slowly walked off the course.

"Nice sort of an ass you are, ain't you?" said Blake.

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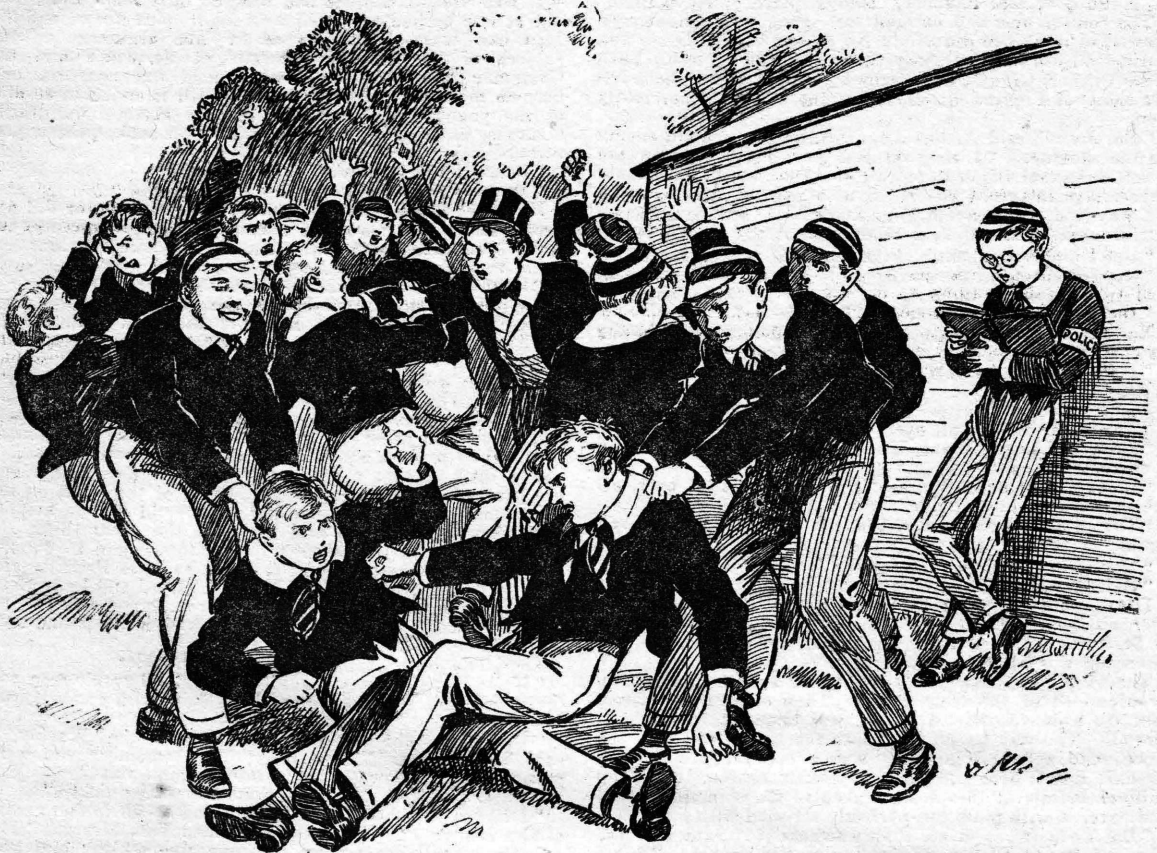
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While a battle royal raged between the fags of St. Jim's and the Grammar School, Skimpole, the policeman, stood quietly by, deeply engrossed in the works of Professor Balmcrumpet!

D'Arcy looked at him frigidly.

"My deah Blake, I was bound to do something for the honah of Study No. 61!" he said. "And, weally, I wathah fancy myself on the cinder-path, you know!"

Blake snorted. It was useless to worry about Arthur Augustus. He had other things to think of, too, for the race was full of interest. Mr. Railton was the finest athlete at St. Jim's; but Wimpole, of the Grammar School, was very good. For some time the event was in doubt, but at last it became apparent that the School House master was the better man of the two.

Mr. Wimpole stuck it out gallantly, but it became more and more evident that he was outclassed by the St. Jim's representative.

Frank Monk thumped Tom Merry on the back as they stood looking on. Tom Merry grinned at him amiably.

"Tit for tat!" he remarked cheerily. "I fancy our move checkmates you, Monkey!"

"You're right," said Monk ruefully. "I never thought you'd be up to the wheeze, you see! Never mind, if you have the mile, we'll have the quarter, and there are plenty of ways yet for us to beat you!"

A cheer rose and swelled over the ground.

"St. Jim's wins!"

"Hurrah!"

Mr. Railton was well ahead. The Grammar School master was fagging on behind, but Mr. Railton had a good yard when his breast touched the tapes.

"Hurrah!"

"Good old St. Jim's!"

The School House master had won—won the famous medicine-chest! And there were chuckles mingled with the cheers that greeted him.

CHAPTER 15.

The End of a Great Day!

THE two most important events so far had been won by St. Jim's, and so the home crowd were exceedingly well pleased with themselves. Some of the smaller events had been pulled off by the Grammar School, but the honours, so far, decidedly rested with St. Jim's. But the visitors were sportsmen. There was no

annoyance shown to mar the good-fellowship of the occasion. The only disputes were among the younger fags, and they were disputing, not for any specific reason, but because, as Blake put it, it was their nature to. Skimpole and his amateur police force found themselves required more than once to stop an incipient "row."

Arthur Augustus, of course, had to distinguish himself in the eyes of his "governah," who had arrived in his motor-car soon after lunch, and joined Dr. Holmes. Lord Eastwood fixed an eyeglass in his eye as he saw his hopeful son among the starters for the quarter-mile. The resemblance between father and son was then very striking.

"By Jove," exclaimed Lord Eastwood, "that's Arthur!"

"Dear me, so it is!" said Lady Eastwood.

"He has entered for everything, auntie!" said Cousin Ethel demurely. "Arthur is really distinguishing himself to-day! Of course, he is not winning anything, but he does not care for a minor point like that—"

Lord Eastwood laughed.

"By Jove, they're off!"

The quarter-mile was well contested, but it was known from the start that Figgins would win. And win he did, with Monty Lowther a good second.

D'Arcy came in last, but he was by no means dismayed. As he explained afterwards, it had struck him soon after the start, that he must not exhaust himself as he would require his strength for throwing the hammer, to say nothing of the other contests he was entered for. When it came to throwing the hammer, D'Arcy was all there. The hammer was big and heavy, and D'Arcy did not feel quite so confident after he had tested the weight of it.

"Bai Jove, you know," he remarked, "I don't know how I shall show up at throwing a beastly sledge-hammer about! I could manage bettah with a—"

"A tack-hammer," suggested Kerr.

"Well, yaas, wathah!"

D'Arcy gave the hammer a trial swing, and there was a yell from Manners. D'Arcy looked round at him.

"Bai Jove, Mannahs, did I hurt you? I'm sowwy!"

"You—you—"

"I'm weally sowwy, Mannahs, but weally, you should not get in the way!"

"Hand over that hammer," said Kildare. "Now, then."

The contest was well entered for. Figgins & Co. showed up well in it, and so did Study No. 6, and Monk, Lane, and Carboy all did well. D'Arcy threw it about six feet. Then came Pilcher, Craggs, and Grimes. Craggs and Grimes fell far short of Figgins' distance, but the burly Pilcher easily won.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus, patting his old enemy on the shoulder. "I congwatulate you, Pilchah. You are a bettah sort of fellah than you look, you know. I should nevah have imagined you to have so much stwength, fwom the way you slouch about, you know."

"Shut up, D'Arcy!" said Kildare sharply.

"But I am complimentin' Pilchah," said Arthur Augustus.

"Oh, I don't mind the young ass!" grinned Pilcher.

D'Arcy stared at him.

"If you are calling me an ass, Pilchah——"

But the chums of Study No. 6 dragged him away before he could finish.

"I am goin' in for the water jump now, deah boys," said D'Arcy.

Blake grinned.

"The water jump's all over, kid."

"Now, you know, Blake, that I insisted upon bein' given a chance."

"Go hon!" grinned Blake. "I'm afraid it's all over, all the same."

"Then I shall wequest Mr. Wailton to have it twied ovah again."

"You're only just in time for the boxing."

"Bai Jove, I must not miss that!"

D'Arcy did not miss the boxing, but the fencing was over, all the same, and several other events escaped the swell of St. Jim's. Father Time would wait for no one, and the afternoon was already growing old.

The high jump was won by Kildare, and the long jump by Monteith of the New House. Then came the obstacle race, in which Arthur Augustus was bound to distinguish himself. The way he plumped into the hedge, fell over the fence, and splashed into the water, made the spectators scream; but D'Arcy, although hopelessly beaten, turned up quite cheerfully at the finish, soaked to the skin, scratched, and covered with mud, but perfectly satisfied with himself.

"Bai Jove, what is all that wow about?" said D'Arcy, when he joined Blake, after changing his clothes. "Some of the youngsters seem to be fighting."

It was true. Skimpole had been on duty for a long time, but at last he had retreated with his famous works, and the fags had taken advantage of it. The argument on the subject of the respective merits of St. Jim's and the Grammar School on the football field was renewed, and became more excited every moment, till it ended in several of the youngsters rolling over on the ground in deadly struggle, while Skimpole stood reading his book, quite imperturbable.

"Police!" roared Blake.

"Where's Skimpole?" shouted Figgins.

But the freak of the Shell either did not hear, or did not heed. Blake, Herries, and Figgins rushed to separate the combatants, and Fatty Wynn and Marmaduke and Manners came to their aid.

"Stop this!" exclaimed Blake. "Stop it, I say!"

"We must stop them before the visitors notice anything!" exclaimed Frank Monk, coming up. "Better hit out!"

"Good idea!" said Figgins.

And they rushed among the combatants, hitting out right and left. The drastic measure was effective. The howling fags separated and fled in various directions. The spot was cleared in next to no time, and the juniors, like the Romans of old, had made a solitude and called it peace.

The dusk of that eventful day was now descending, and the proceedings drew to a close. Some of the items on the programme remained there, but that could not be helped. Everyone was satisfied, and that was the great thing.

In the dusk of the evening the visitors began to depart. The juniors gathered round to cheer as Miss Priscilla and brother Frank drove away with Ethel. Lord and Lady Eastwood also had an ovation, and D'Arcy joined in cheering his "governah," and waved his hand with a five-pound note in it as the motor-car buzzed away.

Then Tom Merry tapped him on the shoulder.

"Hallo, Tom Mewwy!" said Gussy. "I haven't seen you for some time. What have you been doin' with yourself, you know?"

"Writing out the account of the sports for the 'Weekly,'" said Tom Merry. "Here it is. You remember you were going to take it down to the printer's, don't you?"

"Yaas, wathah! You have done it pwetty quickly."

"I had it sketched out, and only had to fill in the names of the winners of the events," explained Tom Merry. "The printer has all the rest of the magazine set up, and he's promised to get this knocked off to-night, and to let me have the copies in the morning. Only you must get it to him before seven."

"Certainly," said D'Arcy. "I'll get my bike."

And he thrust the manuscript into his pocket, and hurried off his machine. And so the famous sports day was described in "Tom Merry's Weekly."

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We cannot better conclude our story than with the following extract from a famous London daily paper:

"Some curious information reaches us from our Sussex correspondent. It appears that a certain Dame Humphreys, the widow of a soldier killed in action, and living in the village of Rylcombe, had fallen into a state of complete destitution. The neglect of the Government to provide for the widow of one of our gallant defenders, who had lost his life for his country, moved the indignation of certain lads belonging to a neighbouring school, who determined to do something for the poor old soul. A fete was organised, of which the proceeds were to be devoted to a fund for the old lady. The idea was, we believe, first mooted by a junior named Merry, but the affair was finally taken in hand by the school authorities, and managed under the joint supervision of the headmasters of St. James' Collegiate School and the Rylcombe Grammar School. The affair was a great success, and a sum of no less than £24 10s. 9d. was gained for this very deserving fund. We heartily congratulate the boys of these two schools upon their success in this attempt to right a wrong; but we are happy to state, that representations having been made at the War Office, we have reason to believe that provision will be properly made for Mrs. Humphreys. This is quite owing to public attention having been drawn to the matter, and Mrs. Humphreys will certainly owe the comforts of her declining years to these kind-hearted schoolboys, and chiefly to the junior who originated the idea, whose name, we believe, is Merry."

Which was very gratifying to the junior whose name was Merry when he received a copy of the paper from Miss Fawcett, with that paragraph heavily underlined.

THE END.

(There's another grand extra-long yarn in next week's GEM. It's called "Gussy Goes 'Goofy'!" You'll howl with laughter when you read it!)

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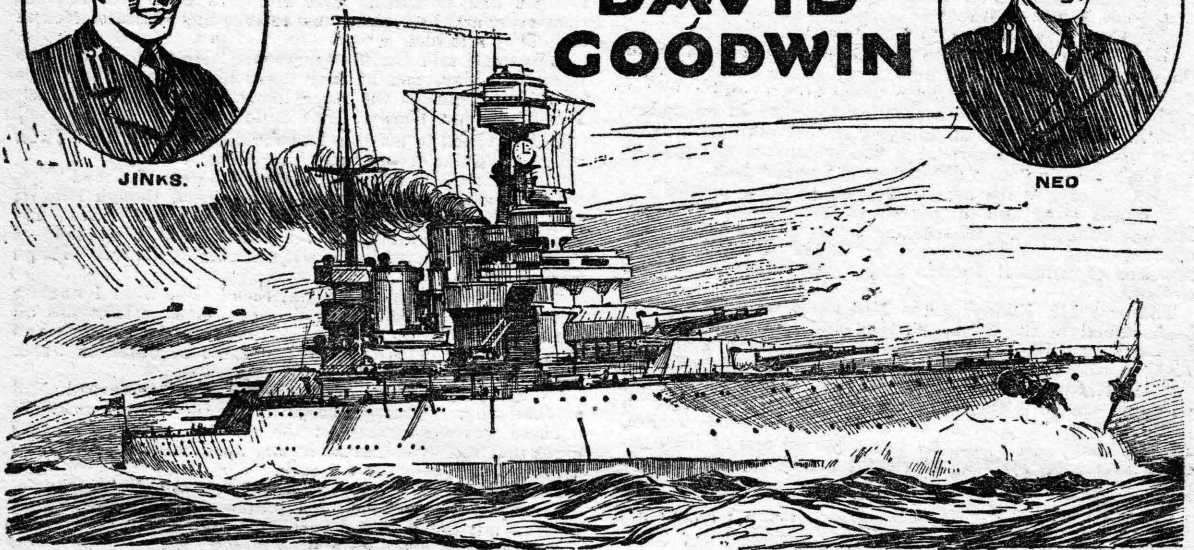


JINKS.



NED

by
**DAVID
GOODWIN**



NED HARDY and his pal **Jinks**, midshipmen on the *Victorious*, have just returned to their ship from leave. Ned's brother **Ralph** was dismissed the Navy on a charge of theft, but Ned believes it was a "frame up" by certain spies. Ned himself has won the D.S.C. for his part in the capture of a Russian spy and is consequently the hero of the hour.

A Letter From Ralph!

NED and Jinks went to the gun-room, and the long, low place certainly seemed like home to them again. They were immediately rushed at by a horde of zealous officers of their own rank, for there was no sub-lieutenant there at the moment to keep order. The middies welcomed their comrades back uproariously.

"Hallo, young spy-hunter!" cried Keppel, the senior midshipman, dealing Ned a mighty slap on the back. "What sort of a time have you had? Come and pour the shore news into us. We've been dull as bilge-water since you left! Got a new skipper—Captain Spencer. He won't trouble our little lot much."

"Jinks, you pea-green fraud!" exclaimed Acland, another middy. "How dare you get two weeks' leave on the strength of being young Hardy's pal! Come and have a Marsata with me. Ned, here's your big brother looking for you. He's been jolly miserable. Hasn't bitten anybody for a week."

There was a snuffing yell of delight from a magnificent bulldog that clove his way through the noisy crowd of middies and hurled himself at Ned, who welcomed him with a joyful whoop, and folded an arm round the huge brute's jaws. Pleased though his comrades were, nobody gave Ned a warmer welcome than Smiler, which had been Ralph Hardy's dog, and, being brought on board by Ned, was now the mascot of the ship.

"You grow more like him every day, Hardy," said Keppel. "I tell you what—Cave! Here's Royalty!"

Lieutenant Hart, the second sub-lieutenant of the gun-room, came in, and the noise hushed.

"Come aboard, sir!" said Ned and Jinks, and reported themselves promptly.

Hart was a favourite with everybody.

"Here's an end to peace, with you two back," said Hart,

noting their arrival in his book. "Now, don't you get the big-head, Mr. Hardy, D.S.C., he said warningly to Ned, "or you'll be brought down with a crash. The Distinguished Service Cross is all right in its way, but unless you wear it on the seat of your trousers it's no protection against a rope's end. Mind that!"

There was a chorus of laughter, in the midst of which a dark-faced, sullen-looking officer strode in. It was Mr. Grimshaw, the senior sub-lieutenant, and, therefore, chief and monarch of the gun-room.

"What's this infernal noise about?" he snapped. "Is there nobody here to keep order?"

"Hardy's come back, sir," said Keppel.

"Is that a reason for making the place into a bear-garden?" roared Grimshaw, a flush on his face, for he had a particular hatred for Ned, especially since the latter's exploits had brought him such popularity. "Why don't you report to me?" he said viciously, turning upon Ned. "Must you be taught your duties all over again?"

Ned had already reported himself to Hart, thinking that Grimshaw had left the ship. But he knew better than to make excuses, and reported himself all over again.

"One more word to you," said Grimshaw. "If I have any more trouble with you, as I had last cruise, you'll get a lesson that will make you think all you have had from me, so far, a fleabite. So be very careful, Mr. Hardy. The rest of you, keep silence."

He marched out of the gun-room, and Ned, taking Jink's arm, went with him to the sleeping flat to stow his kit.

"Of all the unmitigated sweeps, give me Grimshaw!" said Jinks. "He'll upset your apple-cart yet, Ned. He's never forgiven you for making a fool of him last cruise when he reported you to the owner, and got laughed at."

Ned chuckled. He had had some severe hickings from Grimshaw, but even yet he hardly realised how strong a spite the senior had against him. The two piddies changed

quickly into their working kit, and when the watch was called both went on deck. Jinks was now signal midshipman, while Ned, being one of the best steersman in the gun-room, had entire charge of the second cutter.

His boat was piped away directly after he reached the deck, and Ned's blood ran warmer as he dashed away from the ship, his crew of willing bluejackets pulling like Trojans. He had to fetch a bale of signal flags from the quay on the Portsmouth side, and, returning, saw his boat slung in and cleaned down as a midshipman should. For the rest of the watch the business of the great ship seethed about him, and Ned, happy as a flag-captain at being in the midst of it all once more, performed his duties with a smartness that called forth silent approval even from that great autocrat the first-lieutenant, known throughout the ship as "Number One."

When Ned's time came to go off duty he went below to the gun-room, and split a well-earned bottle of dry ginger with Jinks.

The two chums had been chatting together in an undertone for half an hour—for middies are not allowed to raise their voices in the gun-room if sub-lieutenants are present—when a message came down from the upper deck.

"Mr. Hardy, to the admiral's cabin at once, please!"

Ned was away and up the stairs three steps at a time. He was admitted by the marine sentry at the door, and, entering that dread sanctum, he found himself in the presence of Admiral Raglan and a gentleman in civilian clothes.

This was Mr. Elking, whom Ned knew well. He was a high official in the Secret Service, and had already come into contact with the midshipman. He nodded kindly to Ned, to whom the admiral at once addressed himself.

"Mr. Hardy," said Admiral Raglan, "we have to deal with the spy who through your services was brought to justice on our last cruise. We have him in custody ashore. As you know, just before he was captured one of his comrades shot him, for fear he should betray their secrets to us."

Ned remembered it only too well.

"It was at first thought the prisoner Dimitri would die of the wound. The bullet was extracted from his head, however. He has recovered, and is, physically, as strong and well as ever. But a strange thing has happened—a thing which does sometimes occur when a man has been shot in the head. He has entirely lost his memory. The whole of the past is a blank to him. He has forgotten who he is; has forgotten even his English, which was as good as mine, and speaks Russian, which I suppose is his native tongue."

Ned's face showed his surprise at this news.

"There is nothing to be done with the prisoner Dimitri at all," said Mr. Elking. "It is most unfortunate, for us as well as for him. To bring him to his trial is useless. More, he could tell us a great deal about himself and his villainous companions and the conspiracy against the Victorious if he chose. And I believe he would choose, if he had his wits."

"What I want you to do, Mr. Hardy," said the admiral, "is to go ashore with Mr. Elking and see the prisoner. You were chiefly concerned in his capture. The prison doctor thinks it is possible that, if the man saw you, he would connect you with the chase and the capture, and his memory might come back to him. Go at once and see what you can do."

Ned saw what they wanted. He saluted, and immediately left the ship in Mr. Elking's company. In half an hour they were in the prison infirmary, where the doctor and a fleet surgeon received them. The latter told them the captured spy was still in the same condition.

"You don't think he's shamming, sir?" suggested Ned.

"Shamming!" said the fleet surgeon testily. "Do you think I don't know when a man is shamming? Come and see him!"

In a comfortable but guarded cell-room with a barred window was the spy. Ned Hardy's eyes met those of the prisoner.

It was Dimitri sure enough—the same dark-faced, furtive, powerfully built man with whom Ned had had to do on the last cruise. The sight of him brought back the night of the capture with vividness to Ned.

"Well, Dimitri," said the middy frankly, advancing towards him with a friendly air, "we had a tough chase, didn't we? Glad you've pulled round. How are you?"

Dimitri looked at him with a blank, unseeing stare.

"Who are you?" he muttered in English.

"Who am I? You remember Ned Hardy, and the Victorious, and how you nearly gave us the slip, and got shot by one of your own mates?"

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The man blinked at him dully, and then, turning away, yawned, and began to mutter to himself again in Russian. Ned saw the doctors were right. The patient's mind was a blank.

"You remember neither me nor my brother Ralph, then?" said Ned.

The spy looked at him again slowly; then a sudden look of fury flashed into his eyes, and, seizing a water-bottle that stood handy, he aimed a terrific blow at Ned. In an instant, before the blow could fall, the two doctors seized and pinioned the man and disarmed him. The prisoner swore ferociously in Russian, and, being overpowered, relapsed into muttering again.

They tried all they knew to awake the memory that they thought had returned. But Dimitri's mind was blanker than ever, and he refused now to take any notice of Ned at all. They left him.

"No use," said the fleet surgeon. "He may get his wits back some day, and he may carry his secret to his grave with him—which is the more likely. He cannot be tried. Thank you, Mr. Hardy. We can do no more."

Ned returned to his ship and regaled the astonished Jinks with an account of what had happened.

"It's all up with running his mates to ground, then!"

"I suppose so," said Ned. "And, brute though Dimitri was, I'm almost glad he can't betray his own mates. It's a dirty way of winning. I tell you what it is, old chap—I believe we shall have 'em about our ears again soon. Ralph warned me."

"Did he? I'll bet he's right, then! But what I want to know is what's it all about?" cried Jinks. "Who are all these sweeps of spies? Where do they come from, and who's their backer? There's some big game or other on hand. It's a blessed mystery to me!"

"It's a mystery I want cleared up!" returned Ned emphatically. "Hurry into your kit—there's the whistle!"

There was a sing-song in the middies' school-room that night that was as boisterous as any the gun-room mess of the Victorious had seen for a month.

In the morning, turning out at the first sound of the bugle, Ned tubbed himself, fought a couple of bear-fights, had an hour's "instruction," and breakfast, and at two bells in the forenoon watch the letters were brought aboard. To Ned's delight, there was one from his brother. It was brief and to the point.

"Dear Ned,—I wish to see you at once. You are in some danger, and so am I. It is necessary that you should know all that is to be known about the men who are your enemies and mine, and, far more important, enemies of the Victorious and of the Navy. I can give you all that information now. And we have got to help each other."

"The first time you can get leave come across to Ryde, and go to the lounge of the Royal Hotel. Don't ask for me, or mention my name. Wait till somebody comes to you. I shall be on the look-out for you till you are able to turn up. Till then, mum's the word!"

"RALPH."

Ned was in a fever of eagerness to reach his brother to hear what he had to say. To get leave now, after just rejoining his ship, was impossible. But luck played into the midshipman's hands. He was ordered next morning to take a dozen liberty men to Ryde in the second cutter.

He landed at the Long Pier, and, having a clear hour before he had to return, Ned made straight for the Royal Hotel; and, entering the nearly empty lounge, settled himself on a sofa and ordered a cup of coffee. No sooner had the waiter brought it than he informed Ned quietly that a gentleman wanted to see him in the smoking-room. The middy went there at once, and found himself alone with his brother.

Ralph Hardy, tall, bronzed, and handsome, but with lines of care and worry on his face, rose quickly and grasped Ned's hand. He, who had been one of the smartest officers in the fleet, was always stirred by the sight of his young brother in the uniform of the dear old Service.

"Ralph," cried Ned, "I've been just aching to see you!"

"I, too, Ned. But don't shout my name too loud." Ralph shut the door. "I'm coming straight to business, old boy. We've little time. Sit there and listen."

"You know I was turned out of the Service because of the robbery from the Victorious' safes, that were under my charge, and that our father disowned me?"

"Yes; and I told him that you were innocent, and that if I lived I'd prove you so, and make them take you back into the Service!"

"Little chance of that," said Ralph. "They've broken me. But though I'm dismissed from the Navy, I can do good work still. It matters little what becomes of me, but at least I've knowledge, money, and leisure, and I'm using

them to fight that villainous gang of spies that are poisoning the fleet. It was because I stood in their way that those spies hatched the plot that ruined me. And because you, young as you are, balked them once, they have tried to do the same to you. By courage and good luck you have laid one of the worst of them by the heels—the scoundrel Dimitri."

"Yes, Dimitri! He's a prisoner at the gaol infirmary; but he was wounded in the head, and he's lost his memory. It isn't that he won't give information—he absolutely can't," said Ned.

"I know that. It's my business to know everything that's afoot," said Ralph. "Dimitri is one of the head spies. But there are many others, and the toughest and most dangerous of the lot is Voroff, whom you once met in the company of Dimitri. You'll remember him—a man with dark red hair and slim white hands; the sort of hands you see on a doctor. He hasn't come much in your way since your first cruise—but I'll bet you'll see more of him now! He is worth three of Dimitri—to his own gang."

Ned broke in: "What I want to know is this, Ralph—who is Dimitri? Who are all these snakes in the grass, who are giving us such a pile of trouble? Is it this Russian murder gang again?"

"That's it, lad. Agents of the Cheka—the Moscow Secret Police. They call themselves Social Revolutionaries; but what they're out for is plunder and loot. That's the Russian Government. They've killed off a million people, and stripped Russia till there's nothing left to steal; and now there's no money or goods left at home, they're out to burst up any other country they can get a footing in, and start on the grab again. And they go for anybody who stands in their way! Why, they pinched a general last month in Paris, under the noses of the French police, and nobody knows what became of him. Murdered, or else smuggled away to Moscow.

"If they can't murder anybody who's against them, they'll plan to ruin him—which is what happened to me. As I told you, they hate England and her Government, and especially the British Navy, more than anything else. We stand in their road."

"But where do they hang out, Ralph? Where's their headquarters?"

"I'll tell you. They can't do much from Moscow, because it's too far off. So their advanced post, as we call it, is at Rotterdam. And there they call themselves Voroff & Co.; just as if they were a private trading firm. Remember that, Ned—Voroff & Co! They're the biggest and cleverest gang of espionage agents in the world; they've got spies everywhere. They know everybody's business, and every nation's internal affair—they're wreckers!"

"They stick at nothing, Ned. It's my belief Dimitri could tell us what we want to know about my court martial and the way they ruined me—he'd give the show away to save his own bacon, if he could speak. But that bullet in the head has made it impossible—which must be a mighty relief to Voroff & Co."

"What about Mr. Elking?" asked Ned. "Elking is in the British Secret Service, and his special care is the guarding of the Victorious and other chief ships of the Navy, from Voroff & Co. They've broken me, but I mean to beat them yet. They may kill me before they've done—but I'll give my life willingly to spoke their wheel before they get me!"

Ned looked at him anxiously. He realised how grim and stealthy that fight was going to be.

"And you, Ned," said his brother earnestly, "be right on your guard! You've given Voroff & Co.'s men more trouble lately than anyone. They're waiting for their chance to drop on you. So look out!"

"I will! Don't you worry about me, Ralph." "The Victorious sails for Sheerness to-day, Ned. You'll see me before long; either there or at Chatham. Good-bye, old chap! It's near your time for getting aboard."

After a warm farewell and a handgrip, Ned left his brother and hurried down to the pier.

An hour later the flagship pulled her anchors out of the Solent sand, and, with a long, echoing hoot of her siren, led her three great sister ships majestically past the Warner Light heading eastwards for the straits.

(How will the spies make their next attempt on Ned? Don't miss next week's thrilling instalment!)

EASTWOOD SHIELD LEAGUE.

The Editor regrets that owing to pressure on space it is impossible to include accounts of matches this week. Full results are appended.

RESULTS:

ST. JIM'S	3	GREYFRIARS ..	1
Merry (2), Talbot		Wharton	
Teams.—ST. JIM'S: Wynh; Figgins, Kerr; Redfern, Noble, Lowther; Talbot, Levison, Merry, Blake, D'Arcy.			
GREYFRIARS: Field; Bull, Redwing; Cherry, Todd, Linley; Hurree Singh, Nugent, Wharton, Penfold, Vernon-Smith.			
BAGSHOT	2	HIGHCLIFFE ..	2
Putter, Poole		Courtenay (2)	
CLAREMONT	5	BANNINGTON GRM.	
Merrivale, Weston (2),		SCHOOL	2
Kennedy, Baxter		Denver, Bird,	
RYLCOMBE GRAM.			
SCHOOL	4	ABBOTSFORD ..	1
Gay (2), Monk (2)		Fane	
ST. FRANK'S	6	ROOKWOOD ..	2
Nipper (3), Tregallis-		Dodd, Silver	
West, Pitt (2)			
ST. JUDE'S	0	REDCLYFFE ..	4
		Judd, Stoker,	
		Forshaw (2)	

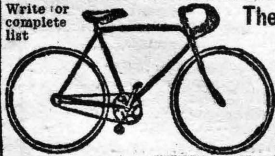


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