

EXTRA-LONG SCHOOL STORY OF TOM MERRY & CO.—INSIDE!

The GEM 2^D



JUST LIKE



Arthur Augustus lost his watch and hired a live detective,
But all the 'tec found out was that poor Gussy was defective!

CHAPTER 1.

D'Arcy Does Not Oblige!

TOM MERRY put his head in at the door of Study No. 6 at St. Jim's.

"I say, Blake!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of the School House, turned his head languidly. He was the only occupant of the study, his chums Blake, Herries, and Digby being conspicuous only by their absence. D'Arcy was seated in the easy-chair, quite upright, so as not to crumple his waistcoat, and reading the latest number of the "Magnet," with his eyeglass screwed into his right eye. He brought the eyeglass to bear upon Tom Merry in an extremely leisurely way.

"I am sowwy—"

"Where's Blake?"

"Pway do not speak in such an extremely abrupt way, Tom Mewwy," said D'Arcy. "You put me into quite a fluttah!"

"I'm in a hurry."

"Yaas, you look as if you were! It's wathah bad form to be in a hurwy, you know," the swell of St. Jim's remarked. "I am sowwy, as I was about to say, when you so wudely intewwupted me, that Blake is not heah. He has gone—"

"Oh, never mind! I only wanted to borrow his watch. THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,264.

Mine has stopped. Yours will do," said Tom Merry. "Lend it to me for a few minutes, will you?"

D'Arcy hesitated. He laid down the "Magnet," and his hand went half-way to his watch-pocket and stopped. A blush came into his cheeks.

Tom Merry looked at him in amazement.

"Did you hear me, D'Arcy?"

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy!"

"Well, lend me your watch!"

"The fact is, Tom Mewwy—"

"I'm in a hurry! Hand it over! I've got to time a foot-race along the upper corridor, between Walsh and Hancock. Hand over that beastly watch!"

"The fact is—"

Tom Merry made a quick step towards the swell of the School House. Arthur Augustus rose to his feet, looking flushed and uncomfortable. He put his hand over his watch-pocket, as if he feared an attempt to take it from his possession by superior force.

"The fact is, Tom Mewwy—"

"I suppose you don't mind lending it to me for a few minutes?" exclaimed Tom Merry in amazement.

"Certainly not, deah boy!"

"I shall take care of it. I know it was a present from your governor, and cost twenty-five guineas. I won't use it to play cockshies with."

The swell of St. Jim's grinned faintly.

"That's all wight, Tom Mewwy. I know you would be

—THIS WEEK'S PRICELESS YARN OF TOM MERRY & CO.!

GUSSY!

By
Martin Clifford.

extremely careful with another fellow's property, as a gentleman should."

"Then hand over the watch."

"You see, dear boy—"

"Has it stopped, like mine?"

"Well, no; it hasn't exactly stopped."

"Then why don't you give it to me?"

"You see—" stammered Arthur Augustus, who for some mysterious reason was evidently determined not to lend the watch, and yet was anxious not to appear disobliging.

"You see, dear boy, I—I—"

"Yes, I see—I can see a silly ass!" said Tom Merry wrathfully. "There's Walsh and Hancock waiting for me, calling me names by this time, and you keep me hanging about because you won't lend me your watch!"

"The fact is, Tom Mewwy, that—that I disapprove of these wuff waces bein' held in the upper cowwidor. It happened once that a fellow wain wight into me and knocked me wight ovah, and I was extremely hurt, to say nothin' of my twousahs bein' extremely wumped!"

"You—you unutterable—"

"Now, wpay don't be wude in your wemarks, Tom Mewwy, or I shall have no alternative but to throw you out of the study!" said Arthur Augustus, in a tone of remonstrance. "And I should weally find the effort most exhaustin'."

"You'd find it rather painful, too, I think," said Tom Merry, glowering at the swell of the School House. "Do you mean to tell me that what you've just said is your only reason for refusing to lend me your watch?"

"Well, no," said D'Arcy, driven into a corner. "To come down to absolute facts, that is not the only reason."

"What's the reason, then?"

"Well, you see, Tom Mewwy—"

"Oh, rats! If you won't lend me the watch, you won't!" said Tom Merry sharply. "I don't see what all this giddy mystery is about, though. Have you pawned your watch, and you don't want anybody to know?"

Arthur Augustus turned crimson.

"I wegard that suggestion as insultin', Tom Mewwy!"

"Well, I can't see any other explanation. But keep the beastly thing! I suppose I can borrow one somewhere else."

And Tom Merry swung out of the door. Arthur Augustus turned a quick step after him. To be considered rude or disobliging was very painful to the Chesterfieldian swell of St. Jim's, always the very pink of politeness.

"I say, Tom Mewwy!"

The hero of the Shell turned back.

"Well, are you going to lend me the watch?"

"Oh, no! But—"

"Well, have you got anything to say? I'm in a hurry."

"I hope you will not wegard my wefusal as at all wude."

"Well, I do! I think you're mean!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Oh, rats! I must be off!"

And Tom Merry hurried along the passage to where the rival foot-racers of the upper corridor were waiting for him. D'Arcy looked worried. He was sorry to send anybody away in a huff, and Tom Merry was certainly huffy now. And to be regarded as rude or mean was anguish to Arthur Augustus.

Tom Merry sprinted down the corridor, and nearly ran into three Fourth-Formers who were coming along towards Study No. 6. They seized him round the neck, and jammed him breathlessly against the wall.

"There, just in time to save you!" exclaimed Blake.

"You'd have been over in another minute."

"Let me go, confound you!"

"Think you can stand steady?"

"Yes, you ass!"

"Let him go, Dig. You can leave off embracing him, Herries."

The chums of Study No. 6 released the hero of the Shell. Tom Merry gasped for breath, and looked daggers at them. He knew perfectly well that the Fourth-Formers

had not really supposed that he was in any danger of falling over, and that this was only a little of Blake's fun.

Blake grinned genially.

"Glad I was in time to save you," he said in his friendliest tone. "Where are you going in such a hurry? Is there a feed on anywhere, or has somebody told you you've got to wash your neck?"

"Oh, don't rot! Lend me your watch."

"My watch?"

"Yes. I've got to time a foot-race in the upper corridor, and Walsh and Hancock are waiting for me. I have just been to your study, but you were not there, and Gussy wouldn't lend me his watch, for some reason or other."

Blake fished out a big silver watch, and detached it from the chain.

"Gussy wouldn't lend you his watch!" he exclaimed.

"Why not?"

"I really don't know."

"But that's not like Gussy! He will usually do anything for anybody," said Blake, looking puzzled.

"Well, he wouldn't, anyway. Thanks! I'll let you have this back presently."

And with the silver watch in his hand, Tom Merry dashed off again.

Blake looked at his chums, with a wrinkled brow.

"We must see into this, kids!" he exclaimed. "We can't have our study's reputation for hospitality sullied by Arthur Aubrey Adolphus! We must see about it!"

"Right-ho!" said Herries.

"My word!" said Digby. "It's not like Arthur Augustus to refuse to oblige anybody. Why, I know for a fact he lent his watch once to a kid in the Third. Perhaps he's got something up against Tom Merry. You know they had a little difference over something or other, but I thought that was all over."

"So did I," said Blake. "That little misunderstanding caused by Mellish telling tales, was wiped out. It can't be that. Let's go and see Gussy."

The three juniors entered Study No. 6. They found Arthur Augustus with a somewhat worried expression upon his face.

"Hallo, you fellows!" he exclaimed. "Have you passed Tom Mewwy in the cowwidor?"

"Yes, we have!" said Blake severely. "And—"

"Did he look wathah offended?"

"Yes, I think he was rather offended."

"I am extremely sowwy. Circs ovah which I have no contvol forced me to appeah wantin' in politeness, and I weally am extremely twoubled in my mind about it. I do not like appeahwin' wude to anybody."

"Why wouldn't you lend Tom Merry your watch?"

"Oh, so he has told you, then?"

"He mentioned it. Are you setting up in business as a hog, or are you off your rooker?" asked Blake. "Have you forgotten that this study has got a reputation to keep up? Or, what do you mean, anyway?"

"Weally, I cannot quite explain."

"Why didn't you lend Tom Merry your watch?"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Have you lent it to somebody else?"

"Not exactly; but—"

"Where is it?"

"You see, Blake—"

"I believe the image has been and pawned it, or something of the sort!" exclaimed Digby. "Let's have a look at it, anyway."

"Pway do not—"

"Hand it out!"

"I am compelled to wefuse to do so."

"What on earth is all this mystery about?" exclaimed Blake, getting impatient. "Look here, I'm going to have a squint at that watch, so dish it out."

"I wefuse!"

"Collar him!"

"Pway do not be wude and wuff!"

D'Arcy's appeal went for nothing. The chums of Study No. 4 laid violent hands upon him, and he was pinned to the wall. Then, while Digby and Blake held him, Herries jerked at his watch-chain, and dragged the watch from his pocket. D'Arcy gave a gasp of dismay, his chums an exclamation of astonishment.

"My hat!" ejaculated Blake. "Where did you get that watch?"

"Brass, by Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Gussy's pawned his watch, and he's wearing a brass one instead! Ha, ha, ha!"

CHAPTER 2.

Gussy's Secret!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY turned red with indignation.

"I have done nothin' of the sort!" he exclaimed.

"Then what are you wearing this thing for?" demanded Blake, holding up the watch to general inspection.

It was a "rolled-gold" watch, and of an exceedingly cheap description. At a distance it might have passed for gold, but at a close view it was seen for what it was. What D'Arcy was doing with such a watch in the place of his twenty-five guinea timekeeper was a mystery, unless Blake had hit upon the correct explanation.

"The fact is, deah boys—"

"Hallo, what's that about a brass watch?" asked Mellish of the Fourth, looking into the study.

Mellish had a knack of turning up in the most inopportune places, at the most inopportune moments, and anything that ever came to his knowledge was certain to spread all over the House; if not all over the school.

"What's that, Blake, Gussy wearing a brass watch?"

"It is not bwass, as I have said before; it is made of wolloed-gold. I bought it to wear in place of my own tickah, because I have lost it."

"You've lost a twenty-five guinea ticker?"

"Yaas, wathah! Wotten, isn't it?"

"Well, I should say so! Where did you lose it?"

"I weally haven't the faintest ideah, you know! I missed it one day last week!"

"And you never said anything about it?"

"You see, I am takin' steps to wecovah it," explained D'Arcy. "It is best not to say anythin' at first. If it has been stolen, I don't want to put the beastly thief on his guard by lettin' him know that I am huntin' for it."

"When did you miss it?"

"On Saturday evening, when I was going to wind it up. I thought pewwaps I had left it somewhere, and I hunted for it, but couldn't find it. Then I wemembahed that I had it on when we went down to the village tuckshop."

"We had a row with the Grammar School kids there," said Digby thoughtfully.

"Yaas, wathah! I should be vewy sowwy to suspect one of them of havin' boned my watch; but somebody must have taken it, you know."

"You're absolutely sure that you haven't pawned it and squandered the money in riotous living?" demanded Blake.

"I wufuse to weply to such a wudiculous question," said the swell of the School House with much dignity.

"Oh, cheese it! But what I want to know is, how are you going to get your watch back if you take no notice of its being stolen?"

"I have already taken measuahs!"

"What are you doing in the matter, then?"

"Undah the circs, I am compelled to keep that a secret," said D'Arcy. "I am afraid that if I confided it to you, you would chattah about the coll, and pewwaps defeat the ends of justice, deah boys."

Blake, Herries, and Digby looked daggers at him.

"You young ass—" began three voices in unison.

"Undah the circs, I am weweluctantly compelled to—"

"Oh, cheese it, kids," said Blake, looking at Dig and Herries; "under the circs, I think I ought to explain the matter to the Head, and let him see to it. We can't have our respected friend D'Arcy losing a valuable watch without taking any steps in the matter at all."

"Right-ho!" said Herries heartily.

"Pway don't do anythin' of the sort, Blake. I should wegard any intahferece in the mattah as an unfriendly act," said D'Arcy. "I am sowwy to have to wufuse to take you into my confidence ovah the mattah—"

"Come along, kids; we can't let D'Arcy lose his watch—"

The three chums moved to the door. Arthur Augustus looked greatly distressed.

"Pway don't be in a huwwy, Blake! Wemain here a

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moment, Dig! Pway sit down, Hewwics! Pewwaps, aftah all, I may be able to explain!"

"Buck up, then!" said Blake tersely.

"The fact of the mattah is—"

"Oh, get on! Can't wait here all night!"

"Well, deah boys, the weal fact of the mattah is— Of course, you won't go chattewin' it all about the beastly coll, you know?"

"Of course we won't! Go on!"

"Well, the fact is that I—I am employin' a detective to look for my watch, you know!" said D'Arcy, with a smile of conscious importance as he made the startling announcement.

The chums of Study No. 6 stared at him in blank amazement.

CHAPTER 3.

D'Arcy's Latest!

JACK BLAKE was the first to find his voice.

"You are employin' a detective?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"What detective? Tom Merry's friend—Ferrers Locke?"

"Oh, no! I thought of givin' him the case, but I weflected that pwobably he would not leave town to come down here and look for a lost watch."

The juniors grinned.

"Well, I think you're about right there," agreed Blake. "But what on earth detective are you employin', then? I didn't know there was a private detective in Rylcombe."

"You surely don't think I would waste my time on a country detective, if there were one, do you?" asked D'Arcy, with withering scorn.

"Then what—where—"

"I am employin' a famous London detective."

"What is his name?"

"Joseph Link."

Blake shook his head gravely.

"I've never heard of him before. Is he any relation to the missing link?"

"Pway don't be fwivolous! He is a famous detective; he says so himself in his advertisement in the 'Daily Telephone.'"

"Ha, ha, ha! Well, he ought to know, I suppose! How did you come across the advertisement, Gussy?"

"Oh, I had seen it before, you know, and I looked it out and wote to him! I have the pawgawpah cut out, if you would like to wead it."

"Rather!" said Blake, Herries, and Digby together, with a simultaneous wink to one another.

D'Arcy opened a Russia leather pocket-book, and produced a newspaper cutting, which he smoothed out for the chums of the Fourth to read.

It ran as most of the similar advertisements in the daily papers run:

"Do You Want a Detective?—Evidence obtained for any purpose. Suspected persons watched unknown to themselves. Male and female shadowers. Uninterrupted successes for many years.—Joseph Link, the famous detective, No. 1g, Flumstury Chambers, E.C."

"And you've written to that rotter?" exclaimed Blake. "I weally do not know why you should chawactewise him as a wottah, Blake," said D'Arcy, in a tone of mild remonstrance.

"He advertises the fact!" grunted Blake. "People watched unknown to themselves! Ugh! I call him a mean beast!"

"Well, it would be weally no good warnin' a cwiminal that you were goin' to watch him," said D'Arcy, with a shake of the head. "Of course, it would be more like playin' the game, I know, but it wouldn't be any good."

"And how much are you going to give him for a start?"

"Oh, he is vewy modewate! He says he will accept two pounds for pweliminawy expenses, and then five guineas in case of success."

"Why, you young ass—"

"My deah chap, that is not vewy much to wecovah a twenty-five guinea tickah," said D'Arcy. "We must be weasonable, you know."

"And you're going to break bounds to meet this—this detective?"

"Yaas. One of you fellows can help me ovah the wall."

"It would be better to help you into a strait-jacket!"

"I wegard that remark as distinctly personal! I weally think the discussion had bettah close," said D'Arcy, with dignity. "I will tell you when I am weady for you to help me ovah the wall."

And the swell of St. Jim's walked out of the study.

The chums looked at one another, and broke into a simultaneous chuckle.

"Well, I think Gussy's latest takes the cake," said Blake, with conviction. "Of course, this detective fellow is a fraud. Most of these advertising detectives are. I've heard, though I don't know much about them. He'll get fees and expenses out of Gussy, but if Gussy sees his watch brought back by Mr. Missing Link, I shall be surprised."

"My word," said Digby, "so shall I be! The chap will swindle Gussy right and left. But, of course, it's no good telling him so."



"WHOOOP!" All of a sudden the Terrible Three came tumbling off the wall, while behind them appeared the grinning faces of the New House Co.!

"Not a bit of it!" said Herries. "He'll go on with his own idea, whatever we say. But if we're going to help him break bounds to meet a bogus detective, it seems to me that we're entitled to squeeze some fun out of the matter."

"Ha, ha, ha! Yes, we'll all be at the meeting!" grinned Blake. "We'll see Mr. Joseph Link, and see what kind of a hoss he is, and— Hello, Tom Merry!"

The hero of the Shell came in at the open doorway, the watch in his hand that he had borrowed from Blake.

"There's your watch," he said, "and many thanks."

"You're quite welcome. Who won the foot-race?"

"Oh, Hancock—an easy first! Have you discovered why Gussy won't lend his watch to anybody? I heard Mellish saying that he's pawned his tucker and bought a rolled-gold one, and is passing it off as the original!" grinned Tom Merry.

"Well, that's partly fact and partly fiction, like most of

Mellish's yarns," said Blake. "You'd better ask Gussy for the rest."

"Oh, I'm not curious!" said Tom Merry. "As I came in I heard you saying something about being present at a meeting. Anything on?"

"Well, what should be on?" asked Blake evasively.

Tom Merry looked at him curiously.

"Well, I thought it might be a meeting of the hobby club, or something of that sort, or a feed, and you might want us to come."

"Oh, no, nothing of the kind!"

Tom Merry nodded and walked out of the study.

As he went along the corridor he came in sight of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, walking with his head very erect, and a flush of indignation on his aristocratic face, probably caused by some remarks which were being addressed to him by a group of juniors lounging on the stairs.

"What price rolled-gold, Gussy?"

"Who's pawned his watch?"

"Ha, ha, ha! Three cheers for D'Arcy's 'uncle!"

Tom Merry grinned and passed on. He joined his chums, Manners and Lowther, in the corridor. Lowther tapped him on the shoulder.

"Going to play chess?" he asked.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"No, my sons, I'm not. I'm going to checkmate somebody, though, I think."

"What's on?" demanded Manners and Lowther together.

"Blessed if I know!" said Tom Merry frankly. "But there's something brewing in Study No. 6. I don't know what it is, but I expect it's something up against us, as Blake's especially friendly with Figgins & Co., of the New House. We had better look into it—which means keeping an eye on those bounders this evening."

And that evening the Terrible Three were on the alert.



CHAPTER 4.

D'Arcy's Detective!

"BAI Jove, there goes eight o'clock, deah boys!"

The hour was booming out from the clock tower of St. Jim's through the dim April night. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy rose to his feet.

Blake glanced at him over the teacups in Study No. 6. The chums of the Fourth were just finishing their tea.

"Follow me, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus.

And the four chums made their way from the study and out of the School House into the dusky quadrangle. Three pairs of eyes followed them from along the passage.

"They're going out!" murmured Tom Merry.

"And so are we!" grinned Monty Lowther.

"Right-ho! Come along!"

Unconscious of the fact that the Terrible Three were on

the track, Blake and his chums crossed the quadrangle to the familiar spot where they had broken bounds before. The wall was shaded by a thick, overhanging tree, which aided the ascent, though it was difficult to get up without assistance.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy halted under the big tree and put his eyeglass in his pocket.

"Now, give me a bunk up, deah boys."

"Right-ho! Here goes!"

And Arthur Augustus pulled himself upon the top of the wall.

"Now, deah boys, are you goin' to wait for me to help me come in again, or shall I let down the wope fwom the twee?"

"You had better let down the wope fwom the twee," said Blake grinning. "We are not going to hang around this romantic spot on a damp evening, I assure you."

"Vewy good! It's just as you like, deah boys."

Arthur Augustus drew a knotted rope from a hollow in the tree, above the lower branches, and looped it over a branch and let it fall on the outside of the wall. The knotted rope had often served the juniors of St. Jim's well.

"Au wevoir, deah boys!" said D'Arcy.

And he swung himself down the rope and disappeared. Blake gave a chuckle.

"We shall see him again sooner than he thinks," he murmured. "We're not going to miss this interview. Give me a bunk up, Digby."

Digby obliged, and then Herries did the same for him, and then Blake and Digby reached down and helped Herries to the top of the wall. Blake looked out into the dim night and discerned the figure of Arthur Augustus on the other side of the road.

"Come on, kids!"

The chums dropped silently into the road. On the other side was a row of thick trees, and under the trees the swell of St. Jim's had disappeared. It was evidently here that he was to meet the detective by appointment.

"Quiet does it!" murmured Blake.

The three juniors were soon in the shadows of the trees. The sound of the School House swell's voice came to their ears.

"Are you there, my good fwend?"

"Here I am, sir!"

It was an oily voice, with a tone in it that made Blake take a dislike to the speaker without even seeing him. A man of spare frame, with a bowler hat and a rather seedy coat, loomed up in the shadows.

Arthur Augustus looked at him curiously.

"Are you Mr. Link?" he inquired.

"Certainly, sir!"

D'Arcy screwed his monocle into his eye and took a keener survey of the stranger. Seediness was Mr. Link's most pronounced trait. His coat was seedy, his trousers were seedy, his boots and hat were seedy. His face looked the seediest of all, bearing traces of strong drink and irregular habits discernible even in the dusk of the evening.

"What do you think of my make-up, Master D'Arcy?"

Arthur Augustus surveyed his features.

"You look as if you were in the habit of dwinkin' spiwits," he said, "and as if you did not wash vewy often."

"Ha, ha, ha! It took me two hours to make up like this."

"Did it, weally? I weally beg your pardon, Mr. Link. I thought it was quite weal, you know, when I saw you," said D'Arcy.

"Good! That is a testimony to the excellence of my disguise, so I freely accept your apology. But now to come down to business. You have lost a watch?"

"Yaas. A twenty-five-guinea tickah!"

"Has it been stolen?"

"I am afwaid so. I don't see how it could get lost, you know. I think it must have been stolen in the village. I had a stwuggle with some of the Gwammah School boys in the tuckshop on Saturday. I should be sowwy to suspect any of them of takin' it, but it was gone on Saturday night."

"Have you made the loss public?"

"No. I thought it bettah to keep it a secwet, and inform no one that I was employin' a detective," said D'Arcy.

Mr. Link seemed relieved.

"Good!" he said. "You had better keep my presence here a profound secret."

"I have already had to take three fwends of mine into my confidence on the mattah, but I can twust them."

"Mind that they keep the secret! My presence here must be known to as few as possible. I shall put up in the village, and begin investigatin' the case at once."

"Vewy good! The Wylcombe Arms is a most wespectable inn!"

"Ahem! To keep up my assumed character, I think I

had better go to a cheap and common place. The Golden Pig would be nearer the mark. In fact, I engaged a room there when I arrived in Rylcombe this evening. I shall take up investigations at once. You remember that I require two pounds for preliminary expenses. I suppose you are prepared to pay that at once?"

"You remembah I sent you a postal ordah for a pound as a guarantee—"

"Certainly; but that was an advance of the fees. I require two pounds simply for preliminary expenses."

"Do you mean that I am to pay you two pounds now, instead of one?"

"That is it. I am sorry that there has been any misunderstanding, but I am afraid I could not depart from my usual rules."

Arthur Augustus hesitated a little. He was not mean, and he had ample pocket-money from his father, a noble earl; still, a pound was a pound.

"Of course, I may as well tell you now that I am quite certain of success," remarked the detective. "A case of this kind is simply child's play to me, after handling cases of international importance."

"Yaas, I suppose so. I will make it two pounds, Mr. Link."

"Thank you! It will come to the same thing in the long run, as you will have a pound less to pay me when I have finished the case."

"Yaas, that is vewy twue."

Two pound-notes changed hands. A grin of satisfaction overspread the seedy, flabby face of Mr. Link.

"Thank you!" he said. "Now I will get to work at once. If you want to see me again, come to the Golden Pig in Rylcombe."

"We are not allowed to go there. It is a wotten place!"

"You can manage it secretly, I suppose? Or you can write to me there, and I can meet you somewhere else. It will be necessary for us to consult from time to time."

"Yaas, I suppose so."

"I will get along to the village now, and commence my investigations."

"Good-night, Mr. Link!"

The seedy detective disappeared down the lane. D'Arcy rubbed his chin thoughtfully.

"Bai Jove, I weally think he is a wippin' detective," he murmured. "He is certainly vewy clevah at disguisin' himself. Anybody seein' him now would take him for a low, dwunken blackguard, bai Jove!"

There was a chuckle in the gloom.

Arthur Augustus started, and looked round him hastily. Three youthful forms loomed up to view under the trees.

"Bai Jove! Who's that? Is that you, Figgins?"

"No, it isn't!"

It was Blake's voice.

D'Arcy frowned.

"Blake, Dig, Hewwies, I wegard this intwusion as impertinent!"

"Ha, ha, ha! You see, we're watching over you, D'Arcy! We're not going to allow you to be done. How did you know that Mr. Joseph Link wouldn't knock you on the head, and go through your pockets?"

"He is a famous detective."

"A famous swindler, rather!"

"Of course, he was in disguise."

"Ha, ha, ha! It took him more than two hours to get that complexion on, I fancy," chuckled Blake. "More like ten years, and it wasn't put on outside, either. It was manufactured by pouring whisky down the inside of his neck!"

"You are widiculously pwedudiced against Mr. Link," said D'Arcy loftily. "You will see how the case will turn out. Pway let us weturn to the school before we are missed."

The chums chuckled as they crossed the lane again to the wall. They had heard nearly all the interview, and they had a pretty clear idea as to the true character of Joseph Link, detective. But D'Arcy was obstinate, and his faith in the detective was great.

"Hallo! Where's the rope?" exclaimed Blake, feeling in the darkness against the wall for the knotted rope. "It's gone!"

"Gone!" ejaculated Digby.

"Yes; look!"

"Bai Jove, there's someone on the wall!" exclaimed D'Arcy.

"There's three!" grunted Blake, straining his eyes upwards. "And, by George, I know who they are! Tom Merry, you rotter, let down that rope!"

Three distinct chuckles from the top of the school wall answered that request. In the dim light, the three chums of the Shell could be seen sitting on top of the wall, in the

place where the Fourth-Formers had crossed it. The rope had been pulled up, and the Terrible Three were masters of the situation.

CHAPTER 5.

Trouble on the Wall!

"TOM Merry!"
"Hallo!"
"Let down that rope!"
"Any hurry?" asked the hero of the Shell in a leisurely way.

"Yaas, wathah! We want to come in!"
"They want to come in, kids," said Tom Merry, addressing his two companions. "This is where we obey their orders in fear and trembling—I don't think!"
"Let down that rope!" howled Blake. "If I have to climb up, I'll make it warm for you!"
"If you climb up, with us here to push you down, you will be a cleverer kid than I take you for, Blake!" said Monty Lowther.

Tom Merry shook his head solemnly.
"I'm afraid it can't be done, Blake," he remarked.

Blake appeared to think so, too, for he did not make the attempt. He gave the Terrible Three a withering glance, which did not appear to affect them much, however.

"Are you going to let down that rope?" exclaimed Digby.
"Not until you have explained the reason for your being out of bounds!"
"You horrid rotters—"

"Yaas, wathah! I wegard you as thwee extwemely howwid wottahs, deah boys! But wathah than we main out here, I am willin' to explain on condition that you let the mattah go no furthah."

"I think we can agree to that," said Tom Merry thoughtfully.

"Certainly!" said Manners and Lowther.

"Vewy well. I have lately lost my watch—"

"The brass one?" asked Tom Merry.

"It is not bwass; it is wolloed-gold. But that is not the one I have lost—I lost my own twenty-five guinea tickah, and I have been weavin' this wotten wolloed-gold thing in place of it, you see."

"I see. That explains the mystery. I thought you were rather a pig for not lending me your watch."

"I am sowwy that you should have laboured undah a mis-apprehension, Tom Mewwy. The fact is that I have lost my watch, and am employin' a detective to find it, or to discover the thief, and I have just met him."

"A—a what?"

"A detective—the famous detective, Mr. Joseph Link!"

"My only hat!"

"Why didn't you give Skimpole the job?" asked Monty Lowther.

"Pway don't be fwivolous, Lowthah. Now, Tom Mewwy, I have acquainted you with the circs, so pway let down the wope!"

"I don't know whether I can approve—"

"It itwally does not mattah to me whethah you appwove or not," explained D'Arcy. "I wegard your pwesence here as wathah impertinent. I— My only aunt! Whatevah is the mattah?"

There was reason for D'Arcy's sudden amazed ejaculation. For all of a sudden, without the slightest warning, the Terrible Three came tumbling off the wall, as if pushed by unseen hands behind. They clung and clutched at it desperately, and held on for a moment, and as they hung there, four heads rose into view in the gloom above the wall.

"Figgins!" ejaculated Tom Merry.

There was a chuckle, and strong hands pushed the chums of the Shell from their hold upon the wall. They dropped into the lane, and Figgins & Co., the chums of the New House, sat grinning on the wall in their place.

Tom Merry alighted upon his feet and rolled over, but he was up again in a moment. Lowther and Manners sat down in the lane, and were slower to rise. From Blake, Digby, Herries, and D'Arcy came a simultaneous chuckle. The sudden fall of the Terrible Three from their place of vantage seemed funny to the chums of the Fourth.

Figgins & Co. grinned down at the School House boys.

"I really think we score here," said Figgins. "What do you think, Kerr?"

"My idea exactly," said Kerr, the Scottish partner in the Co. "Of course, these School House kids can't expect to have any show against us."

"Of course not!" said Marmaduke Smythe. "I hope you haven't bumped yourself too hard, Tom Merry. Sorry we couldn't give you notice."

"Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled Fatty Wynn. "My word! If you're not off, you kids!"

"Well, they are off, and no mistake," Blake remarked. "Now Figgins, let down the rope like a good chap; we've been out here long enough."

"Going to admit that New House is Cock House?" asked Figgins pleasantly.

"No!" shouted Blake.

"Never!" said Tom Merry.

"Then— Hallo! Cave!" said Figgins hastily.

The four New House juniors disappeared into the tree. A voice was heard on the inner side of the wall, a voice quite audible to the juniors standing out in the lane, and which they knew well.

"What is all this noise about?"

It was the voice of Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's.

In a moment Figgins & Co. had dropped from the wall and started at a run for their House. For a few minutes Tom Merry & Co. waited breathlessly till they heard Kildare depart, and then Blake gave Merry a bunk up and he let the rope down. One by one the juniors got over the wall and set off at a trot for the School House.

CHAPTER 6.

Skimpole Takes the Case!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY came into Study No. 6 rather breathlessly. He had left his friends in the quad in rather a hurry. The gas was burning in the study as the swell of the School House entered, and a well-known form was sitting in the easy-chair before the fire. A youth with a large head, a bumpy forehead, and a big pair of spectacles rose to his feet as D'Arcy came in.

"Bai Jove, it's Skimpole," said D'Arcy. "What do you want, Skimpole? I weally twust that you haven't come here to talk Determinism, deah boy!"

Skimpole shook his head.

"I am giving that a rest for the present, since I have discovered my remarkable genius for amateur detective work. I've heard that you've lost a watch, D'Arcy."

"Oh, have you?" said Arthur Augustus.

"Either lost or stolen."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Some of the fellows say you have pawned it, and squandered the money, and are wearing a brass watch in the place of it," remarked Skimpole.

"It is not bwass; it is wolloed-gold."

"But your old watch—is it really pawned, or is it lost?"

"Oh, wats! Do I look like a fellow to pawn a beastlay watch? It's lost, as you are so extwemely cwicious about the mattah."

"Lost, or stolen?"

"My deah chap, I am not goin' to talk about it. I have taken steps to wecovah the thing, and that is all wight."

"Not at all." Skimpole drew out a huge notebook and a big pencil. "Pray place the case in my hands, and I assure you that I shall discover your watch. I shall claim no fee or reward, not even personal expenses. I am working simply for fame."

"I wegard you as an ass, Skimpole."

"Never mind. Give me the case, and I will find the watch. Where did you lose it? Were you attacked and robbed, or—"

"Or robbed and attacked?" said Blake, entering the study with Digby and Herries. "I see you're going in for some more detectives, Gussy. Why not have an army of them, while you're about it?"

Skimpole glanced at him frowningly.

"Don't interrupt, Blake, please. I am taking down the details of the case. Where did you lose the watch, D'Arcy?"

"I weally don't know"

"It disappeared, I suppose?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Were you wearing it at the time?"

"Yaas!"

"Then we must conclude that it was stolen, as it could hardly become accidentally detached from the chain, could it?"

"Vewy pwob."

"Good! I shall immediately take up the case of the stolen watch."

"What about the works?" asked Blake.

"Eh? What works?"

"The works of the watch."

"I don't quite understand you."

"Then you're an ass. You say you're going to take up the case of the watch, and I want to know what you are going to do with the works."

"Ha, ha, ha! That is wathah funny!"

"Don't be frivolous, Blake!" said Skimpole. "This is a

CHAPTER 7.

Mr. Link Keeps His Appointment!

grave matter, as until the watch is found, suspicion rests upon every inhabitant of the school."

"Ass!"
"I mean what I say. The watch has evidently been stolen, and if a theft is committed, there must be a thief somewhere."

"Did you work that out in your own brain, without the aid of a net?"

"Certainly!" said Skimpole, who was never known to see a joke. "Suspicion in the first place rests upon the occupants of this study."

"What?" roared Blake, Digby, and Herries together.
"I mean what I say," said Skimpole firmly. "As you three fellows have every opportunity of stealing one another's things—"

"You unutterable idiot!"
"Please don't call me names. Suspicion rests upon Blake, Herries, and Digby."

"I regard you as an uttah ass, Skimpole."
"You are not a detective," said Skimpole, with a lofty wave of the hand. "As a detective is no respecter of persons, I suspect everybody till I have found out the true culprit. If the watch were insured, I should, of course, suspect you of having made away with it yourself."

"Bai Jove!"
"As it is, suspicion rests, I say, upon your study-mates. I will now proceed to question them."

Blake, Digby, and Herries looked at one another. They were usually very patient with Skimpole, who was a good-natured fellow, though very trying at times. But this time their patience was rapidly getting exhausted.

"Blake, have you lately been expending a larger sum of money than would be reasonably accounted for by the extent of your allowance?"

"My only hat!"
"Has anyone here observed whether Blake has been doing so?"

"Yes," said Digby. "There's that motor-car he bought the other day."

Herries grinned.
"And the fancy-dress ball he gave in the woodshed," said Herries.

"That must have come expensive," said Digby, "to say nothing of a thousand pounds he lost at bridge."

Skimpole looked annoyed.
"You are simply rotting, you fellows!"
"Well, you wanted some information."

"Yes; but seriously—"
"Seriously," said D'Arcy, "I regard it as a great piece of feahful impertinence on your part, Skimpole, to come here and talk your silly wot about suspectin' my friends. Get out of the studay!"

"But I must have the details!"
"Outside!" roared Blake.

"But I must—"
"Oh, collar him, deah boys, and throw him out!"
"Hands off! I really must— Ow! Oh!"

Skimpole was promptly collared and thrown out. He sprawled in the passage with a bump. His notebook went one way and his pencil the other. He sat up and looked indignantly at the four grinning faces in the doorway of Study No. 6.

"I have been treated outrageously!"
"You will be treated more outrageously if you come here again with your silly wot!" said Arthur Augustus, wagging a warning finger at him.

The amateur detective of St. Jim's rose to his feet.
"I shall not give up the case!" he exclaimed. "I shall pursue my investigations in spite of this absurd opposition. Blake's violence proves to me that my suspicions are not without foundation."

"What do you mean?" roared Blake.
"I know what I mean! An innocent man does not immediately proceed to violence. I shall recover your watch, D'Arcy, and you will then have proof that your confidence has been misplaced."

"My only aunt!" exclaimed Blake. "I—"
He rushed from the study. The amateur detective of the School House skipped along the passage with remarkable agility and disappeared.

Blake came back with a wrathful countenance.
"I sha' be the death of that funny merchant if they don't take him off to a lunatic asylum!" he remarked. "He'll spread it all over the school that I've stolen your ticker. Of course, it's all your fault, D'Arcy."

"Oh, weally, Blake—"
"Yes, it is! What do you mean by losing your watch? I shouldn't be surprised, though, if it was lying about somewhere under your very nose all the time!"

"My dear kid, it's all wight! Mr. Link will soon find—"
"Oh, rats!" said Blake.

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"COMING out, kids?"
It was Tom Merry who spoke. He came along with Manners and Lowther after dinner the next day, which was Wednesday and a half-holiday at St. Jim's. The chums of Study No. 6 were standing at the door looking out into the quadrangle. The quad was bright with April sunshine, and the old trees were growing very green.

"Where are you going?" asked Blake.
"We were thinking of a run up to the ruined castle," said Tom Merry. "It's ripping in the woods on a fine afternoon like this!"

"Right-ho! We'll come along."
"Excuse me, deah boys!" said D'Arcy. "I am afraid it will be impos for me to accompany you. I am weally sowwy!"

"Why, what are you going to do?" asked Monty Lowther.
"I have to keep an appointment, deah boy!"
"Oh, of course, with that detective chap!"

"Yaas, wathah!"
"Well, keep it! Come along, kids, let's get out!" said Tom Merry. And the juniors crowded down the School House steps, leaving Arthur Augustus D'Arcy standing alone.

The swell of the School House glanced absently at his watch, forgetting for the moment that the rolled-gold time-keeper would not go. Then he smiled and stepped out into the quad, and glanced at the clock tower.

"Bai Jove, it's about time I started!" he murmured.
To go into the House and fetch a silk hat was the work of a few minutes. Moments would have been enough for anybody else, but D'Arcy had to brush the hat carefully. Then he sallied forth, and, leaving the school behind, went down towards the stile in Rylcombe Lane.

Arthur Augustus was looking very nice this afternoon. His fancy waistcoat contained all the fancy colours of the rainbow, and a few more skillfully worked in, and his boots were aggressively shiny, his trousers creased to perfection, his collar as high and as white as could be desired. His necktie was tied as only Gussy could tie it, and his silk hat reflected the sunshine almost like a mirror.

D'Arcy picked his way along the lane. The ground was muddy from a recent April shower, and the ditch was running full. The swell of St. Jim's came in sight of the stile, shadowed over by great oaks and beeches, a shady and picturesque spot. There was no one there.

"Bai Jove, I suppose I am wathah early!"
D'Arcy would have leaned against the stile to wait, but he was afraid of soiling his coat. He would have sat upon it, but he was afraid of soiling his trousers. He had no resource but to stand upright like a sentry and watch the lane from Rylcombe for the detective to appear in sight.

"Ah, there he is!" he murmured at last.
The seedy figure of Mr. Joseph Link had come into view. In the bright April daylight the detective seemed seedier and more -qualid than ever. And there was a peculiarity in his motions which D'Arcy observed at once, and which puzzled him considerably.

Instead of walking straight along the lane, Mr. Link was lurching from side to side in a strangely unsteady and wholly unaccountable way.

First to one side, and then to the other, and sometimes appearing nearly about to fall. But, considering the wide lucnes he made, he displayed a wonderful skill in keeping on his feet.

"My hat!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "What can possibly be the matter with him? I am weally surprised."

The detective came closer to the waiting junior. His face was flushed, and his eyes had a fishy look. He looked at D'Arcy as if not recognising him.

"Good-aftahnoon, Mr. Link!"
"Yes, certainly!" said Mr. Link. "You are the—er—of course—"

"I am Arthur Augustus D'Arcy."
"Yes, certainly. You have stolen a watch!"

D'Arcy gave a start.
"Weally, Mr. Link, this is no mattah for jokin'!"

The detective nodded solemnly.
"You are quite right, my lad. As you—h'm!—say, it is no—h'm!—I am Joseph Link, the detective, the famous detective, I may say!"

"Yaas, I am perfectly aware of that," said D'Arcy, more and more amazed by the strange manner of the detective.

Any commonplace man appearing with that flushed face, thick voice, and unsteady manner, might have been supposed to be intoxicated. But, of course, such a supposition was quite inadmissible in the case of Mr. Link.

"I am glad you are aware of it," said Mr. Link aggressively. "I am very glad indeed that you are aware of it. I

had a feeling that you had some doubts upon that point—upon the subject, I should say, Master Carson—”

“D’Arcy—Arthur Augustus D’Arcy—”
 “I prefer to call you Carson. I suppose I can please myself in this matter, without asking permission of a boy?”

“Yaas, watahah! But—”
 “Why are you looking at me like that?”
 “Looking at you?” murmured the amazed D’Arcy.

“Yes, sir! You were looking at me!” said Mr. Link.
 “Don’t deny it! I distinctly saw you looking at me!”

“Bai Jove! Why shouldn’t I look at you?”
 “Yes, yes, that is very true! A cat may look at a king—certainly, a king may also look at a cat, in all probability,” said Mr. Link, in an extremely thoughtful way. “Have you ever turned that question over in your mind, my young friend?”

“What question?”
 “The—the question—whether a king—lemme see—I’ve quite forgotten. As I was saying, however, I will not stand any of your impertinence!”

Arthur Augustus could only gasp.
 “You think, because you see me in a

“I received two pounds last night,” said Mr. Link. “Have I those two pounds now in my pocket? Certainly not! They have been expended for the good of trade. The ruby wine has flowed. It flowed last night. It flowed again at my lunch to-day. But if you imagine that I am in the slightest degree intoxicated, I repeat that you lie in your teeth. I am Joseph Link, the famous detective.”

And, possibly by way of proving that he was not intoxicated, Mr. Joseph Link, the famous detective, clung to the stile with both hands.

Arthur Augustus surveyed him in utter disgust. Even the unsuspecting swell of St. Jim’s could entertain no further doubt that the man had been drinking at that early hour of the day, and had become intoxicated. The



SPLASH! With Gussy underneath, the bogus detective and the schoolboy fell plump into an enormous puddle!

shabby coat that you can treat me with insolent disdain,” said Mr. Link. “You do not seem to be aware that this is simply a disguise—adopted for the purposes of my profession.”

“Yaas, don’t you wemebah tellin’ me so last night?”
 “If you say I told you so, you lie!” said Mr. Link, with surprising directness. “Yes, I repeat it. You lie. I am an actor—I have distinguished myself upon the Thespian boards. I have played detective parts with great success. Aha I have a clue! It is you who are the red-handed assassin!”

He lurched towards D’Arcy. The amazed junior retreated in alarm. Mr. Link took a grip upon the top bar of the stile to steady himself.

“Yes, it is you who have stolen a watch,” he went on rather dazedly. “I can see that you are looking at me. If you imagine that I am intoxicated, you are a fool! I repeat it! It is true that the bright sunshine has somewhat dazzled me.”

“Bai Jove! The fellow’s drunk!” murmured D’Arcy.

sight of a man under the influence of drink is always a painful one to a thoughtful lad, and D’Arcy was as much distressed as disgusted.

“I weally think you had bettah go home, Mr. Link,” he said.

“I have not the slightest desire to go home,” said Mr. Link, fixing a glassy stare upon D’Arcy. “Pray, why should I go home?”

“You ought to lie down.”
 “Certainly not! I have no intention whatever of lying down. Perhaps you think that I am a trifle under the influence of liquor? I will show you how straight I can walk, you impertinent young scoundrel!”

Mr. Link left the stile, and started to walk across the lane. D’Arcy dodged out of the way as the famous detective zigzagged through the mud, and finally collapsed in the middle of the road with a splash.

“Bai Jove!”
 Joseph Link sat up in a puddle with a dazed expression.

"Let me help you up," said D'Arcy, approaching him rather gingerly. "I—I will help you to the village, if you like."

"If you mean to insinuate that I am not able to help myself, you lie!" said Mr. Link. "It is true that, with the earth moving about so quickly under one's feet, it is rather difficult to keep one's footing. Before I leave this district I shall speak to the local authorities upon this subject, it is simply infamous that a public road should be in this wobbly and unsafe condition, to the danger of pedestrians."

D'Arcy could not help grinning.

Mr. Link staggered to his feet and lurched about wildly, and the good-natured swell of St. Jim's caught him to steady him.

"Ah! So I have caught you at last have I?" exclaimed Mr. Link, clutching hold of D'Arcy. "Come with me at once to the lock-up!"

"I say—what are you dwivin' at?" gasped D'Arcy.

"You are the rascal who stole the watch!"

"No; it was my watch that was stolen!"

"It makes no difference. I am Joseph Link, the famous detective. A trifle like that is of no consequence. Come to the station!"

And Mr. Link lurched along the road, dragging the perplexed and struggling swell of St. Jim's with him.

"Pway don't be an ass!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "Welease me, you intoxicated wottah! If you wowwy me like this I shall lose my tempah and stwike you."

"Ah! You would strike Joseph Link, the famous detective? Come to the station! If you show fight I shall use force, and anything you say will be taken down in shorthand to be used in evidence against the person who stole the watch. Come along!"

"Welease me!"

D'Arcy struggled violently. They reeled to and fro, Link retaining his hold with all the obstinacy of an intoxicated man. The result was inevitable; the two of them went to the ground together. D'Arcy was underneath, and a mighty splash followed his plump into a muddy puddle.

The swell of St. Jim's gave a gasp of dismay. He was not much hurt, but he was thinking of his clothes. His coat and trousers would be muddy from end to end.

"You howwid wottah!"

The detective rolled off him into the mud. He sat up on

the grass by the side of the lane, and stared with owl-like solemnity at Arthur Augustus. The latter picked himself up, and shook off as much of the mud as he could.

"Oh, you wottah, you uttah wottah!" groaned D'Arcy. "I have a good mind to dwop on you and woll you in the mud, you wascal!"

"I am Joseph Link, the famous detective. I have handled cases of international importance, and anyone who insinuates that I am intoxicated lies in his teeth!"

"You howwid beast!"

"I am Link—Joseph Link, the famous detective."

D'Arcy gave a growl of disgust, and turned away to go up the lane to the school. He left Mr. Link still sitting on the grass, his feet in the mud, and still informing the empty air in a murmuring voice that he was Joseph Link, the famous detective, and had handled cases of international importance.

CHAPTER 8.

Rough on Arthur Augustus!

"HALLO! It's the one and only Gus!"

D'Arcy started. Three youths were speeding down the lane, and they stopped all at once at the sight of the drenched and muddy swell of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's.

A look of vexation came over D'Arcy's face. The three youths were the chums of Rylecombe Grammar School—Monk, Lane, and Carboy. They were about the last persons in the world whom Arthur Augustus would have wished to meet in his present plight.

"My hat!" exclaimed Frank Monk. "It's the real Gussy! What have you been doing, Adolphus? Wrestling with a road-scraping machine?"

"He's started in life as a crossing-sweeper, and he's been using the seat of his trousers as a broom," Carboy remarked.

"He looks nice, doesn't he?" said Lane. "Smells rather nice, too. Have you been having a day out, Gussy, and is this your idea of enjoying yourself?"

Arthur Augustus looked daggers at the facetious youths from the Grammar School.

"Pway do not address your fwivolous wemarks to me," he exclaimed. "I have met with a beastlay accident."

"Looks like it," agreed Monk. "We were going for a little sprint—"

"Pway go for it, then, and don't mind me."

"Not at all. We're going to give it up for your sake."

"Please don't do anythin' of the sort."

"My dear chap, we respect you so highly," explained Monk; "you can't go alone to the school in that state. You need an escort."

"I don't need anythin' of the kind."

"Your mistake! Have you got your mouth-organ, Lane?"

"Certainly; here it is."

"Good! I've got my tin whistle. We'll escort Gussy to St. Jim's with musical honours. Go on, Gussy!"

The swell of St. Jim's glowered at the Grammarians; but the crushing dignity he assumed was rather spoiled in its effect by the muddy and dripping state of his clothes, and the big splashes of mud across his face.

And the unabashed Grammarians only chuckled. It was only a short walk to St. Jim's from the spot where they stood, and they were willing to expend ten minutes on a little fun.

Lane produced his mouth-organ and started blowing on it, and Monk blew fearful blasts on his tin whistle. There was no doubt that when they reached the school they would attract general attention to D'Arcy.

"I wefuse to take a step so long as you wotten boundahs wemain with me," said Arthur Augustus.

"Now, Gussy, don't be obstinate."

"I mean what I say. I weward your actions as distinctly impertinent. If I did not feel so beastlay wotten at the pwesent moment, I would give you a feahful thwashin'!"

"He feels too rotten to walk without assistance," said Frank, pretending to misunderstand the swell of St. Jim's. "Take his left arm, Carboy, and you can take his right, Lane. You can blow the mouth-organ with the other hand—I mean, you can hold it in the other hand and blow it."

"Right you are!"

"I will help him from behind when he lags," said Frank Monk. "I'll just stiek a pin in the toe of my boot, and a little lift every now and then will be enough for him."

"You howwid wottahs!"

"March!"

"I wefuse to."

D'Arcy's refusal did not count for much. With a Grammarian holding either arm in a firm grip, it was not of much use to struggle. He was marched on, and Frank Monk marched in front, playing his tin whistle.

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"Welease me, you beasts!" expostulated D'Arcy. "If I awwive at the school like this I shall look a widiculous ass, you know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Will you welease me?"

"Certainly not. You are too fatigued to walk alone. Hallo, there's the school, and we've got an audience already!"

The great gateway of St. Jim's came in sight. There were several boys lounging there, and they stared in amazement at the approaching four.

D'Arcy struggled violently, but he was held in a firm grip.

"Strike up the 'Bogey Man,' Lane!" exclaimed Frank Monk. And mouth-organ and tin whistle blared out the tune to the well-known words.

There was a yell of laughter from the juniors at the gate.

"Here comes the bogey man!" exclaimed Gore. "Ha, ha, ha! How did you get like that, Gussy?"

"Welease me! Wescue, you wottahs!"

"Ha, ha, ha! No, this is too good a joke to spoil," said Gore.

D'Arcy was marched up to the gates. The terrific noise of the mouth-organ and whistle brought fellows from far and near to see what was going on. D'Arcy was the centre of interest. But all of the Saints were not of Gore's mind, and there was a rush to make reprisals on the Grammarians.

Monk, Lane, and Carboy promptly released their prisoner and fled. Arthur Augustus pushed his way blindly through the crowd and went into the quadrangle. But he was not left in peace. He was rid of the Grammarians, but a curious and mirthful crowd followed him towards the School House.

The shouts of laughter made Mr. Railton, the master of the School House, look out of his window, and he could not help smiling at the sight of Arthur Augustus in his dragged state, with his numerous following.

He stepped to the window and called out:

"D'Arcy, what is the matter with you? What do you mean by walking about in the quadrangle in that state?"

"I weally could not help it, sir. I have had the great misfortune to be wolloed in the mud by a wotten wascal."

The Housemaster smiled.

"Then go and get yourself cleaned. Boys, you must not make so much noise in the quadrangle."

The fellows dispersed, chuckling over the incident, and D'Arcy made his way into the School House. He met Skimpole in the corridor as he made his way towards the bath-room. The amateur detective of St. Jim's stared at him.

"Pway let me pass, Skimpole!" said Arthur Augustus, more irritably than was his wont. The late happenings had rather tried his temper. "Pway—"

"I want to speak to you, Gussy."

"Wats! Do I look in a state to speak to anybody? Get out of the way, you silly ass, or I shall lose my tempah and stwike you!"

Skimpole got out of the way, and D'Arcy strode on towards the bath-room, but the amateur detective followed at his heels.

"I say, D'Arcy, you know I've taken up the case of the stolen watch, and I've got a clue already."

"Pway don't bother me!"

"But I've got a clue," said Skimpole eagerly. "I want to warn you, too. Upon fuller investigation I have decided that it was not Blake who stole the watch."

"You uttah idiot!"

"That is really not a polite way to speak to a chap who is giving you his services free of charge," said Skimpole, still following the swell of St. Jim's. "Of course, if you suspect Blake yourself, I am ready to modify my present theory!"

"You confounded ass!"

"Then I take it you do not suspect Blake. I have more to tell you—Herries and Digby, too, are practically cleared of suspicion."

"You—unspeakable duffah!"

"My theory is quite changed, owing to a clue I have discovered."

"Oh, twavel off, you ass!"

D'Arcy had reached the bath-room and entered it, and was trying to close the door, but the amateur detective put his foot in the way.

"But I must tell you, D'Arcy—"

"Get out!"

"But the clue—you ought to know it. I have discovered that Manners has been spending a great deal of money lately—more than can be explained by the amount of his allowance—that is the system I go to work upon—"

"Get out!"

"And he must have raised the money from somewhere. He has bought a lot of new films for his camera, and some frames and other things, and I hear he is going to have a new bicycle. Where did the money come from?"

"That's no business of yours, you silly ass!"

"Of course, those fellows are always popping in and out of your study. It's clear enough that Manners had the watch and pawned it."

"Will you take your foot away and let me close this door?"

"But I want to tell you—"

"Get out!"

"But I want—"

D'Arcy glared round him, and his eyes fell upon a wet sponge. He grasped it, and plumped it full in the face of Skimpole, squeezing it as he did so. The amateur detective of St. Jim's staggered back with a howl, and D'Arcy slammed the door to, and shot the bolt. Skimpole rubbed the water out of his eyes. He heard a chuckle from within the bath-room.

"I call that ungrateful," he murmured as he went off in search of a towel. "I am devoting all my spare time to the case, without fee or reward, and this is how I am being treated by the fellow I am trying to serve. But I will not be deterred. I shall not slacken down in the least, and I hope soon to have the case fully worked up against Manners."

CHAPTER 9.

Trouble for Skimpole!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS filled in about an hour cleaning himself, after his painful experience in Rylcombe Lane, and changing his attire. When he looked in at Study No. 6 afterwards, to see whether his chums had returned, he found Blake, Herries, and Digby there. A sharp shower had cut short the afternoon's excursion. Herries was lighting the fire, and Digby was cutting some bacon that they had brought in from the school shop on their return, while Blake was cleaning the frying-pan with impot paper.

The three Fourth-Formers looked at D'Arcy as he came in, and grinned. It was easy to see that they had heard of the remarkable circumstances of his return to the school.

"Hallo! So you get yourself scrubbed down!" said Blake cheerily. "I hear you've been mud-collecting up at Rylcombe."

"And coming home with an escort and musical honours!" said Digby.

"Quite an ovation!" Herries remarked.

The swell of the School House turned pink.

"Oh, pway let that subject dwop, deah boys!" he exclaimed. "I am weally tired of it. I novah saw such a set of silly asses in my life as the juniahs of this coll!"

"But what happened to you, Gussy?"

"Oh, nothin' of any consequence!"

"Did you meet the detective?"

"Ya-a-a-as."

"What did he have to report?"

"Oh, nothing!"

"Has he discovered the watch?"

"Er—no," said Arthur Augustus uncomfortably. "He hasn't exactly discovered the watch. N-no, Blake."

"Is he on the track?"

"I weally did not ask him."

Blake stared at the swell of St. Jim's.

"I don't quite catch on to this," he remarked. "You seem to have lost interest in the matter all of a sudden. Don't you believe in your famous detective any longer?"

"He's found him out," said Digby.

D'Arcy's pink complexion became crimson. His chums were quite right, but the School House swell was by no means disposed to admit as much. He would not tell anything like an untruth, but he could not bring himself to confess that he had been so egregiously deceived and taken in by a common charlatan.

"Behold he blusheth!" said Blake. "You've hit it, Dig. He's found Mr. Link out. Is he a missing link yet, Gussy?"

"Oh, pway don't wot!"

"Can't you tell us, what's happened?"

"Yaas, wathah! But I don't believe in encouwagin' cuwiosity among boys of your age!" said D'Arcy loftily.

"My word! Listen to the young ass!"

"I object to bein' called an ass!"

"We all object to your being one."

"I must wefuse to discuss the mattah furthah," said D'Arcy. "And I weally wish you would not cook bacon in this woom. It makes the study smell feahfully!"

"My dear kid, we're all hungry. You needn't have any of the bacon."

"I am hungwy, too."
 "Perhaps you would prefer your bacon raw?" suggested Blake humorously. "Of course, it's a piece of neglect on the Head's part not to have a kitchen and a chef attached to every Fourth Form study. Perhaps he will one of these days. Meanwhile, you will have to put up with the smell of frying bacon."
 "And a jolly nice niff, too, when you're hungry!" said Herries, looking up with a glowing face from the fire, with a smear of soot upon his nose
 "Yes, rather! Lend me a silk handkerchief to wipe out this pan, D'Arcy. wil' you? I can't get all the grease off with paper."
 "I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort!"
 "Then this will have to do. That bacon ready, Dig?"
 "Yes, here you are. Shove in the rind, too, you know. It makes gravy. D'Arcy hasn't washed the plates yet."
 "I wefuse!"
 "Let's get the bacon on. I'm as hungry as a hunter! Fill the kettle, Gussy, will you, and I'll see to the plates."
 "Yaas, wathah!"
 D'Arcy took the kettle and went out of the study to fill it at the tap in the corridor. He was greeted by three familiar voices in unison.
 "Hallo, Gus!"
 He saw the Terrible Three before him, and Tom Merry and his chums had evidently heard of the adventure in Rylcombe Lane.
 "Sorry we were not here to meet you when you came in, Gussy," said Tom Merry. "I hear you've started in business as a road-cleaner, using yourself as a broom."
 "What price the giddy detective?" asked Monty Lowther.
 "Was it Joseph Link who rolled you in the mud?"
 "You would have done better to give the case to Skimpole, after all," remarked Manners. "You have just as much chance of getting back your watch, and—"
 "Oh, let me pass, you silly wottahs!" said Arthur Augustus
 And he marched on indignantly and filled the kettle. The giggles of the chums of the Shell followed him back to Study No. 6. Tom Merry and his comrades walked on to their own quarters and entered their study, and a youth who was rummaging in the table drawer looked up with a jump. It was Skimpole.
 The Terrible Three exchanged glances, and then Manners closed the door quietly and set his back to it.
 Skimpole was looking alarmed, and at the same time he essayed a feeble, propitiating smile.
 "N-n-nice afternoon, isn't it?" he murmured.
 "Yes, jolly nice!" said Tom Merry. "Nice and rainy. Will you kindly explain what you are doing in our study, rummaging in that drawer?"
 Skimpole looked helplessly at the drawer, and then at Tom Merry. He was trying to think out some explanation, and this was so evident in his face that the hero of the Shell could not help smiling.
 "What are you up to?" he rapped out. "Come, out with it!"
 "You see, Merry, I—"
 "Yes, I see you're here, where you have no business to be, turning over our things. We keep money in that drawer when we have any," said Tom Merry. "If you were anybody but asinine Skimpole I might think something serious about this. As it is, I suppose it is some more of your silly rot!"

Skimpole looked from one to another of the chums of the Shell. He read grim determination in every face.
 "Well, as a matter of fact, Merry, I—I—I—"
 "Get it out!"
 "I—I was looking—was—er—looking—"
 "I know you were. What were you looking for? That's the question."
 "I—I can't explain that exactly without giving away the case I am working up," said Skimpole. "Please don't ask me questions."
 "So you are working up a case, are you?"
 "Yes, that's it. And I—I was searching for a clue. I assure you I meant no harm and your property is quite safe. It was not your property I was looking for."
 "I know our property is safe, Skimmy, or you'd have been chucked out of the room on your neck before this. But what do you mean by saying that it isn't our property you are looking for? Do you mean that you are looking for somebody else's property in our room?" exclaimed Tom Merry.
 Skimpole hesitated.
 "Now, look here, you ass," said Tom Merry, taking him by the shoulder with a grip of iron, "what's the little game? Tell me what you were looking for, or I'll rub your head in the emders in the grate! Honest Injun!"
 "I—I—the fact is, Merry, I—I was looking for a clue. I thought—you see, as a matter of fact, I have taken up the case of the stolen watch."
 "You are looking for D'Arcy's watch, you mean?"
 "Yes, that's it."
 "And you expected to find it hidden in our study?" asked Tom Merry, with a dangerous glitter in his eyes.
 "Oh, no, Merry: I didn't expect to find the watch here, but I thought that perhaps I should find the pawnticket."
 The Terrible Three uttered a simultaneous exclamation: "The pawnticket!"
 "Yes, of course. I don't suppose for a moment that Manners took the watch with the idea of wearing it as a timekeeper," explained Skimpole. "Besides, that would not fit in with the theory I have based upon his late expenditure of money—"
 "Manners! Manners took the watch!"
 "I?" said Manners, looking dazed. "I took the watch?"
 "Are you mad, Skimpole?"
 "Certainly not. I did not mean to explain my theory till all was ready for the denunciation of the rascal."
 "Are you calling me a rascal?" roared Manners, with a forward step.
 Tom Merry pulled him back in time, or the amateur detective of St. Jim's would have fared very badly just then. Manners was excited—naturally enough, in the circumstances.
 "But you have forced me to explain before I intended to do so," went on Skimpole, unheeding. "Perhaps it is better, as Manners may now give up the pawnticket, and D'Arcy can redeem his watch, and a scandal may be avoided. Of course, I do not desire a scandal, or anything of that sort. My only object is to recover the stolen article, and prove the correctness of my theory."
 "Is it possible that you believe that Manners boned Gussy's gold watch?" said Tom Merry, in measured accents.
 "Keep your wool on, Manners! You can slaughter him after he's explained."
 "The facts speak for themselves," said Skimpole, with a smile of self-satisfaction. "I have not studied the

Potts, the Office Boy!



methods of Ferrers Locke for nothing, I can assure you. My trained intellect—

"Oh, rats! Come to the point!"

"Very well. My deductions lead irresistibly to the conclusion that Manners is guilty."

"Now, look here, Skimpole!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Are you going to explain yourself, or are you ready to be broken up into little pieces?"

"I will explain. Gussy's watch has been stolen. Who had the opportunity of stealing it? All you fellows are always going in and out of Study No. 6. Has any one of you lately been in possession of an unusual amount of money? Yes, Manners nas. You see, the case is worked out satisfactorily. The only thing now is to find the pawnticket. That is what I was looking for when you came in."

"The pawnticket?"

"Yes. Manners evidently took the watch to raise money on. He could hardly sell it. But pawning it would be easy. Therefore—"

"You unutterable duffer!"

"It is easy to call me names, Tom Merry, but it is not so easy to disprove a theory worked out on the very best Ferrers Locke methods."

"You ass!" said Manners, calming down somewhat, as the ridiculous side of the matter became more apparent to him. "I haven't had a lot of money lately. I've been nearly stony, and have borrowed from both Merry and Lowther."

"You cannot throw dust in my eyes, Manners," said Skimpole, shaking his head. "You have lately had a lot of new, expensive films for your camera, a new printing outfit—"

"You dummy! I have them on tick from the photographer's in Wayland, and I shan't pay for them till near the end of the term."

Skimpole's face fell.

"Oh! I—I wasn't aware of that, of course."

"Don't you think you had better make a little more certain next time before calling a fellow a thief?" asked Manners, in a tone of menace.

"Oh, I didn't call you a thief, Manners! I wouldn't apply such a word to you! I merely—"

"Merely said I had stolen a watch," said Manners, grinning, in spite of himself. "Of course, there's a lot of difference there!"

"I regard the matter from a purely professional standpoint!" exclaimed Skimpole. "A detective cannot afford to be a respecter of persons."

"And a fellow with a fat head like yours cannot afford to set up as an amateur detective," said Manners darkly. "He's likely to get hurt—I may say, certain!"

Skimpole cast an uneasy glance towards the door.

"Of course, Manners, I'm sorry I suspected you, as it turns out. I shall have to form a new theory. I should like to leave this study—"

"So you shall," said Manners, taking a grip upon his collar. "Open the door, Merry, please!"

"Right you are!"

Tom Merry threw open the door, and Manners marched the amateur detective out of the study, with an iron grip on the back of his neck. Along the passage he marched him, down the first flight of stairs, and into the first bathroom. The helpless Skimpole could do nothing but wriggle,

and he did wriggle with apprehension as he was marched into the bath-room.

Manner held him firmly, and turned on a tap with his left hand.

"Manners! I—I say, old fellow—"

"Well?" said Manners pleasantly.

"What are you going to do?"

"I'm going to duck you, as a lesson to chuck up amateur detective work—at least, as far as I'm concerned," said Manners genially.

"Look here, Manners—"

Splash!

Skimpole's head went under the running tap, and then he was flopped, head-and-shoulders, into the rapidly filling bath. He wriggled and squirmed and broke loose, and rose from the water gasping and grunting. Manners, with a roar of laughter, slammed the door behind him, and left him. There was a smile of satisfaction upon the face of Manners as he rejoined his grinning chums in the study.

"I don't think that funny merchant will give us any more of the benefit of his detective investigations," he remarked. "If he keeps on at that Ferrers Locke business, I fancy he will give this study a wide berth."

And Manners was right.

CHAPTER 10.

Figgins Has An Idea!

THERE was a letter lying beside Arthur Augustus' plate the following morning. A frown came over the face of the School House swell as he recognised the handwriting of Joseph Link, private detective.

"The wascal!" murmured D'Arcy. "I suppose this is an apology. But he won't even have any more of my beastly cash, the wottah!"

He opened the letter, and a change came upon his features as he read the contents—a look, first of incredulity, and then of amazement.

"Dear Sir," the letter ran—"I hope you were able to see through the little plot of yesterday afternoon. As I came to meet you at the stile in Rylcombe Lane, I saw that I was observed by a person whom I have had under suspicion. It would never have done for that person to have learned that I was a detective in consultation with you, or probably you would never have seen your watch again.

"What was to be done? A brilliant idea struck me, upon which I immediately acted. I pretended to be intoxicated, and the shadower who was watching me undoubtedly came to the conclusion that I was a common, drunken person, and his suspicions have now been allayed.

"It will be an easy matter for me to complete the case against him, I think, but before proceeding with it, I should like to consult with you again. I flatter myself that the scene yesterday was well acted upon my part, and would have taken in almost anyone, and I was only sorry that I had not the opportunity of enlightening you as to the true facts before you left me.

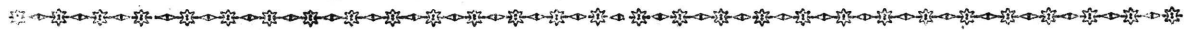
"Can you meet me outside the school—say, at midday?"

"Yours faithfully,

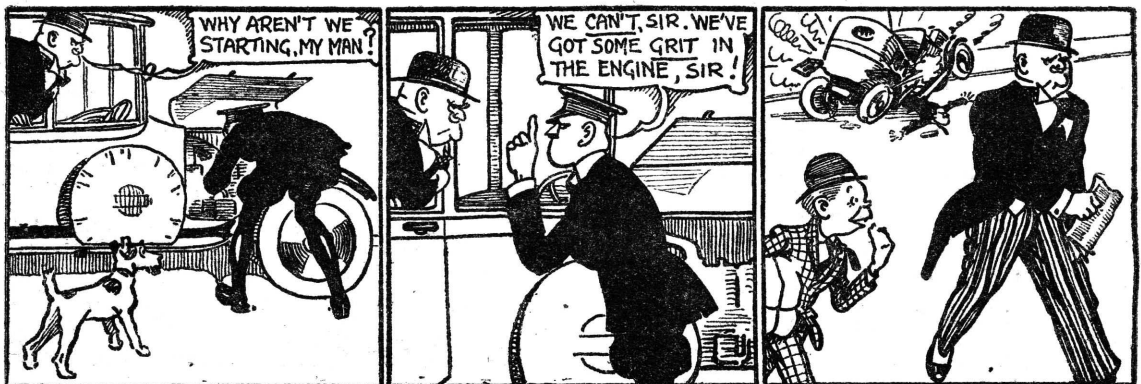
"JOSEPH LINK."

"Bai Jove!" murmured D'Arcy in amazement.

"Hallo, what's the news?" called out Blake.



NOT SO DUSTY!



"Oh, nothin' of consequence!"

"Silence at the table, boys!" said Mr. Lathom, master of the Fourth Form.

Arthur Augustus put his letter into his pocket, and after breakfast went out into the quadrangle to read it over again.

His first feeling of incredulity had vanished. He was filled now with admiration for the wonderful skill of Mr. Joseph Link.

Certainly, the part had been well acted if the detective had been sober at the time. D'Arcy was glad now that he had not related the circumstances to his chums. He made up his mind to meet the detective when the boys were let out of school after morning lessons. It would not be difficult to get out unnoticed for a few minutes.

"Hallo, is that letter for me?"

D'Arcy gave a jump as Figgins of the New House suddenly caught the letter from his hand behind.

"Oh, you wottah, you startled me!" ejaculated D'Arcy, whirling round. "Give me that letter immediately, Figgins!"

Figgins held it in his hand, but did not look at it. He put his hand behind him as D'Arcy approached him excitedly.

"Is it a love letter?" he asked humorously. "Are you in love again, Gussy?"

"It is not a love lettah, you boundah!"

"Then you haven't met any more girls named Ethel?"

"Pway don't wot on a sevious subject, Figgins. Pway weturn my lettah immediately, or I shall lose my tempah and stwike you!"

"Mustn't I look at it?"

"Certainly not! I know you would not be cad enough to wread anothead fellow's lettah. Give it back to me, you beast!"

Figgins handed the letter back to the swell of the School House. As D'Arcy said, he would never have dreamed of looking at it without permission.

"If it isn't a love letter, what is it, to make you wrinkle your manly brow over it so much?" he inquired. "Oh, I think I know! It's a report from the giddy detective!"

"That is my affair, Figgins!"

"Yaas, wathah!" said Figgins, with a grin, as he imitated D'Arcy's beautiful accent. "Of course it is, deah boy. But I should like to know how you are getting on with the noble man-hunter?"

"I am gettin' on all wight!"

And D'Arcy, crumpling the letter in his pocket, walked away. Figgins looked after him, with a grin, and then walked off in search of the Co. He found them exchanging badinage with Tom Merry on the School House steps. Figgins made a sign to them, and they immediately followed their leader, leaving the chums of the Shell to themselves.

"What's the wheeze?" asked Fatty Wynn, the Welsh partner in the Co., as soon as they were out of hearing of the School House juniors. "Are you getting up a feed, or something of that sort?"

"That's you all over, Wynn," said Kerr, "thinking of a feed when we've only just had breakfast."

"I never get enough to eat for breakfast," said Fatty Wynn plaintively. "I'm a growing chap, and I need solid meals. Of course, there's plenty in a way. But I often have nothing but a couple of eggs, bacon, and sausages."

"Don't think about it," said Figgins kindly; "it will make you hungry. And don't talk about it. I'm going to do the talking."

"But is it a feed?"

"No, it isn't!"

"Oh, go on, then!" said Fatty Wynn, without much interest in his manner.

"I've been thinking, kids, whether we can't get up a wheeze out of this detective business," said Figgins. "D'Arcy's latest is funny enough, and there ought to be room for some fun in it. This is where I think Kerr could come out strong."

"I'm willing to do anything I can," said the Scottish partner modestly. "What's the idea? Is it a question of impersonating anybody?"

Kerr, the shining light of the New House Amateur Dramatic Society, was famous in the school for his impersonations. He had been able to disguise himself so well as to deceive even fellows like Blake and Tom Merry, who knew every line on his face.

The chief of the Co. nodded.

"That's it, Kerr. I haven't worked it out in my mind yet; but if you impersonated the detective, say, and met Gussy, and dotted him on the nose—"

"Ha, ha, ha! That would be a surprise for Gussy!" ejaculated Marmaduke.

"I've never seen the chap," said Kerr. "Rather difficult to impersonate a fellow you've never seen."

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"Then work it the other way round, and impersonate Gussy, and dot the detective in the eye," said Fatty Wynn.

"That's not a bad wheeze."

"Wait a bit," said Figgins, rubbing his forehead hard as if to ease the works, so to speak, and assist his train of thought. "I've got something better than that. This detective chap, from what we hear, is evidently an impostor—"

"According to Blake, he's an absolute out-and-outer," Fatty Wynn remarked.

"I don't suppose a real detective would come down here to see a schoolboy about a stolen watch," said Kerr, with a shake of the head. "It's pretty plain that he's just a rascal who advertises in the papers to catch mugs."

"And he's caught one," grinned Figgins.

"Exactly!"

"That being the case, he's pretty certain to be a rogue as well as impostor. He's getting money out of Gussy, and will probably go on getting it out of him till he's stopped, or Gussy has no more to spend."

"Very likely!"



"YOOP!" Mr. Link fairly howled as he was forced to hard, as he ran

"Then if we chip in, it will be a real service to Gussy," said Figgins. "It will be a real lesson to him, too. What I was thinking was that a real detective might arrive at St. Jim's looking for this fellow Link—"

"My only hat!"

"He might want him for something or other he had done in London," said Figgins reflectively, "and might arrest Gussy on suspicion of harbouring a burglar!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What do you think, Kerr? Would you care to take it on?"

Kerr looked very thoughtful.

"You'd have to take in Study, No. 6 as well as Gussy," Figgins remarked; "and, to do those kids justice, they're not exactly what you'd call fools!"

"We've taken them in before, though," Fatty Wynn remarked. "Kerr made up as Lathom, and took in Blake himself, and he took in Tom Merry as well when he impersonated old Schneider."

"Yes, that's true enough. And in this case it wouldn't be impersonating a fellow they know, but just getting up as a stranger," Figgins observed. "I can't see why it shouldn't work. Hallo, there goes the bell! We'll talk it over again!"

And the New House juniors went in to morning lessons with the idea working in their minds—an idea that was to take definite form before the day was out.

CHAPTER 11.

Mr. Link Explains!

"A H, I am glad to see you, sir!" Joseph Link, the famous detective, spoke sincerely enough, as D'Arcy came through the trees beside the lane that April midday. The detective was looking seedier than ever. His face showed



forced to run the gauntlet of the irate juniors, who mobbed him good and hard, as he ran between them!

very plain traces of the previous day's excess, and his hand was shaking visibly.

Arthur Augustus adjusted his eyeglass and looked at him suspiciously. The man's appearance told very much against him, and D'Arcy, who was neat and clean almost to a fault, could not help feeling a sensation of disgust.

"You had my letter, of course, Master D'Arcy?"

"Yaas, wathah! I weceived it this mornin'."

"You understand how it was yesterday, then?"

"Ya-a-a-as, I suppose so," said the swell of St. Jim's slowly. "I undahstand your explanation, Mr. Link, but—"

"But what? You surely have no doubts?"

"Pewwaps not, but—"

The detective drew himself up with a dignified air. Un-

fortunately for the effect of it, his bleary eyes and puffy face discounted the dignity very much.

"I hope you do not doubt my word!" he exclaimed. "If I thought you did, our business relations would, of course, cease at once!"

"Bai Jove! Then you would return the fees, of course?"

"What you have paid so far has, of course, been swallowed up in preliminary expenses. But don't let us have any talk of that kind. If you doubt me I am willing to make any explanation you please."

That was quite true. Words were cheap, and anything like a regard for facts would not have troubled Mr. Link. He was perfectly willing to give any explanation that was likely to satisfy Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Well, as a matter of fact—"

"Ask anything you like," said Mr. Link liberally. "I can see that you have some doubt lingering in your mind, and I shall be extremely pleased to expel it."

"Well, I certainly thought you were drunk yesterday."

"But I have explained that in my letter of this morning."

"You stwuck me!"

"I was watched by the person I suspect of having stolen the watch, my dear sir, and so I had to act so as to keep up the character."

"Ah, yaas; but you wolloed me in the beastlay mud, you know!"

"A painful necessity under the unfortunate circumstances."

"I was quite a widiculous object when I came back to the coll, and I wegard it as a sewious infraction of my dig."

"I can only express my heartiest regret."

"And now you say that that wotten intoxication was assumed."

"Certainly, as I have explained."

"But, as a matter of fact, you look like a person who has been vevy drunk," said D'Arcy, with a shake of the head.

The detective laughed.

"Ha, ha, ha! But that is a part of my disguise, of course."

"A—a part of—"

"My disguise. Exactly. I have been watched to-day as well. If I had been intoxicated yesterday I should naturally show some signs of it to-day, and I have therefore assumed those signs."

"Bai Jove, you know, I nevah thought of that!"

Mr. Link smiled in a superior way.

"You are not a detective," he remarked.

"That is vevy twue."

"I hope I have completely satisfied you now, Master D'Arcy. If there is any other point I can explain I shall be very pleased."

"No, I think that's all wight," said D'Arcy. "What pwogress have you to weport on the case, Mr. Link?"

"The very best, sir," said the detective, rubbing his hands.

"You haven't found the watch?"

"Not exactly, but I am on the track of the thief."

"You are suah that you have the wight fellow?" asked the swell of St. Jim's eagerly. "I shouldn't like you to make a blundah, you know, and cause twouble to an innocent party."

"I am not in the habit of making blunders, Master D'Arcy. The record of Joseph Link, the private detective, stands clear of—"

"Yaas, I am sowwy I expressed myself like that. But are you quite certain that you are on the twack of the weal wascal?"

"I am quite certain of it."

"And who is the wottah? Is it anybody I know?"

"I think so. You told me that just previous to the theft of the watch you had had a struggle with some Grammar School boys."

"Yaas, I wemembah. You don't mean to say—"

"You thought one of them might have taken the watch?"

"No, I didn't say that!" interposed D'Arcy. "I said that I was sure that they wouldn't be such wottahs, or somethin' to that effect."

"Well, I am sorry to have to tell you that it is in that direction that I shall have to look for the thief, Master D'Arcy."

"A Gwammah School fellow?"

"Yes, certainly!" said the detective, with a nod and a peculiar glimmer in his eye. "I am sorry the news is unwelcome to you."

"Oh, that's all wight! I am glad to know that it wasn't a fellow belongin' to St. Jim's," said D'Arcy. "But which of the Gwammarians was it, Mr. Link?"

"That I had perhaps better not tell you yet."

"It surely wasn't Fwank Monk, or Lane, or Carboy?"

The detective pursed his lips thoughtfully.

"Describe Frank to me," he said.

Arthur Augustus did so, rather anxiously. The detective listened, with a keen and thoughtful expression.

"H'm! I am afraid suspicion rests upon that youth—he and two others," he said; "but I shall soon know for certain."

"Pwaw don't take any step in the matter without consulting with me," said D'Arcy anxiously.

"You mean about the arrest?"

"Yaas, wathah! Of course, if either Fwank Monk, Lane, or Carboy took the watch, the wottah ought to be shown up, and yet—"

"You would not shield a criminal?" said Mr. Link.

"Well, no; but—but weally— You see, there is a wivalwy between this coll and the Gwammah School, and the fellows there might think I was actuated by spite," D'Arcy explained. "Undah the cires, I would wathah keep it quiet."

"I see. I will certainly consult with you before any step is taken," the detective remarked. "There is nothing like tempering justice with mercy, as I have often found in the course of my long and varied professional career. I am glad to see that you are disposed to be lenient with these young criminals."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I will make a note of it. Now, as to—"

"If they westore the watch," said D'Arcy, "the whole pwoceedings can be dwopped, and I myself will stand to lose the fees I have paid you for wecovahwin' it."

"That is very generous of you. But suppose they have already pawned the watch and spent the proceeds?"

"Then the young wascals must give up the ticket."

"Ah! They may have sold the watch, and have nothing to show for it. Suppose I find out for certain that such is the case?"

"I hope you won't; but in that case I must let the mattah dwop," said D'Arcy, looking very blue. "I weally hope they haven't sold the beastly watch, you know!"



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"Good! Now, as to the fees—"

"Yaas, you will have your fees in that case, of course, same as if you had westored the watch to me."

"Ah, yes; but that was not what I was going to say. About the fees—the preliminary expenses you gave me are quite exausted."

"Bai Jove, are they?"

"Yes, certainly; and if I am to continue the case I shall require a couple of pounds to go on with."

"Oh, my hat! This is comin' it wathah stwong!"

"Of course, it will be deducted from a final amount of the reward."

"That will leave only a pound to come at the finish."

"All the easier for you to meet the bill, then, sir."

"Yaas, the.e's somethin' in that. But I haven't more than a pound or so with me now till I get some more tin from my governah."

"That is rather unfortunate."

"Yaas, wathah, isn't it?"

"Still, I can take the pound now, and we will see."

"Oh, vewy well!" said D'Arcy resignedly. "I suppose it's no good gwudgin' a pound in wecovahwin' a twenty-five guineah watch, and aftah all, as you say, it will come out of the reward at the finish."

And the pound was handed over.

The detective's eyes glimmered with greed as he slipped the note into his waistcoat pocket.

"I had better get along now," he remarked. "I hope soon to wind up the case, and trust I'm not too late to recover the watch. I am practically certain that it is in the hands of Frank Monk. We shall see. Good-bye!"

"Good-bye, deah boy!"

The detective went hastily down the road. Perhaps he was in a hurry to get to the Golden Pig once more.

Arthur Augustus turned and walked towards the school gates again. Four heads appeared in view as soon as he had disappeared, and Figgins & Co. came out of cover among the trees.

Figgins looked at the Co., and the Co. looked at Figgins. Then all of them burst into a chuckle.

"Well, it's lucky we thought of keeping an eye on Gussy, and spotted him coming here," Figgins remarked. "Did you ever see such a young ass?"

"It's a case of fools and their money," said Kerr. "Catch me parting with tin like that!"

"Well, Gussy has plenty, and I suppose it's a case of easy come and easy go. But what an utter rotter the fellow is! Fancy his hinting that Frank Monk might have had Gussy's watch. We all know that Frank Monk wouldn't do such a thing!"

"Of course we do!" Fatty Wynn exclaimed.

"Don't you see the scoundrel's game?" said the canny Scottish partner in the firm. "He's going to make out that Monk has had the watch, and sold it, so as to account for not bringing it back to Gussy, and to get paid for his investigations, all the same."

"Yes, I suppose that's his idea. As for his investigations, I don't believe he ever investigates anything but the beer of the Golden Pig."

"That's my idea."

"He ought to be collared and ragged," said Figgins. "But I think the wheeze we have been planning will take the cake. You can buzz down to the village on your bike, Kerr, and hire the things you will want; the costumier knows us well enough to let you have them without a deposit now. We'll give Gussy a lesson to-night about employing stray detectives, by Jove!"

And Figgins & Co. chuckled at the prospect.

In the meantime the cunning Mr. Link had been making sure of things in the village. Afraid lest word should reach D'Arcy that he never did anything but drink, he waited outside the tuckshop until a boy—Frank Monk, by chance—came out.

"That's the fellow!" chuckled Mr. Link, as he followed him along the street.

CHAPTER 12.

An Unwelcome Visitor!

"ANYTHING for tea?" said Jack Blake, coming into Study No. 6 about six o'clock that evening. "I'm famished!"

"Yes; it's Gussy's treat—ham and eggs and sausages, jam and pickles, and some of those jolly little jelly tarts of Dame Taggles," said Digby.

Blake turned to the swell of the School House, who was carefully polishing his silk hat. Whenever D'Arcy found himself unoccupied, the brushing of his silk hats was an unailing resource for filling up time.

"By George, Gussy, that's really good of you!" said Blake, giving his aristocratic chum a slap on the back that sent him staggering.

The swell of the School House gave a yell, and dropped the silk hat, and then, losing his balance, fell upon it, and crushed it into a very good imitation of a concertina.

"My word!" exclaimed Digby. "You've done it now!" D'Arcy jumped up like a jack-in-the-box.

"Blake, you howwid wuffian!" Blake looked at the crushed topper in dismay. "I say, I'm sorry! What on earth did you want to fall down on that hat for?" he asked.

"You gave me a feahful thump!" "That was only to express my appreciation of your generosity. Never mind the hat, Gussy. It was getting a little shiny round the brim."

"Was it?" said D'Arcy anxiously. "Yes; and, besides, you've had that hat some time now, and you know they're making them a little flatter in the brim."

"By Jove, yaas! But was it enough to be weally noticed?" "I should say so."

"Oh, in that case, it weally doesn't mattah!" said D'Arcy. "But I might have given it away to some poor beggar, you know."

Blake roared. "Yes, I can see a beggar going around begging in a silk hat! You'll be the death of me, Gussy! But you really couldn't wear that hat."

"Not now, at all events," said Digby. "Shove it on the fire; it will make the kettle boil, at all events. Buck up with the tea, Herries. I'm anxious to sample the treat Gussy has laid in for us. I've got a splendid appetite that I wouldn't sell for its weight in gold."

"Ready in a minute," said Herries. "Good! I like the look of all this," said Blake, running his eye over the table, and unfastening some of the packages. "This is really ripping of you, Adolphus."

"Eh? What is wippin' of me, deah boy?" "Standing us such a ripping feed!"

D'Arcy screwed his monocle into his eye, and looked at the well-supplied table, and looked at Blake, and then at Digby, who was grinning.

"I weally do not quite compwehend," said D'Arcy, looking puzzled. "I have not stood a feed to my knowledge, deah boy!"

It was Blake's turn to look puzzled. "Where did all these things come from then?" he asked. "Dig says you have stood them, and I know jolly well I haven't!"

"Quite a mistake. I only came in a few minutes ago, and I brough nothin' with me," said Arthur Augustus.

"Oh, that's all right!" said Digby. "Gussy has a pound note in his pocket, and I knew he would want to stand a feed, so I just ordered the things at the school shop in his name. They're not paid for yet."

"Bai Jove! Did you weally?" "Yes; it's all right; they only came to eight shillings," said Dig reassuringly. "It was done as a pleasant surprise for all of you, and I told Dame Taggles you would drop in and pay this evening. Don't forget, will you?"

"But, bai Jove, you know, I can't do it!" "Now, Gussy, you've never been a Shylock!"

"It isn't a question of that, deah boy, but I haven't any beastlay money, you know. I know it's wicidulous, but I am actually bwoke."

"Why, you image, you had a pound note in your pocket just before dinner, and I saw it with my own eyes!" exclaimed Digby. "You can't have squandered it on a fancy waistcoat—they don't sell them at the tuckshop."

"I have had to part with it, deah boy." "All of it?"

"Yaas, wathah!" "And you call yourself a chum!" said Digby, more in sorrow than in anger. "You leave me to order a ripping feed in your name—"

"But, weally, deah boy, I nevah asked you to do anythin' of the sort!" protested Arthur Augustus. "I weally nevah requested you—"

"You leave me to order a feed in your name," repeated Digby, unheeding. "I take the trouble of selecting the things, a really ripping turn-out, as Blake and Herries will testify."

"Really ripping!" said Blake and Herries heartily. "And then you stand there as cool as you please, and tell me that you have expended all your wealth in riotous living!"

"I haven't done anything of the kind. I have handed ova the pound to Mr. Link, in advance upon his beastlay fees, you know."

"So you've been meeting that rotter to-day?" "Pway don't chawactewise him as a wortah!"

"And you've gone and busted yourself financially, and deserted your chums in the hour of need," said Digby. "And now what are you going to say to Dame Taggles?"

"Weally, Digbay—"

"You know she will never leave a debt over a night. Pay up is her motto. She'll make a row—very likely ask me for the money," said Digby.

"Well, weally, Dig—"

"What I want to know is, what are you going to do?" said Digby. "I've done my share of the business. I leave it to you now."

"Pewwaps the things nad bettah be taken back." "Perhaps rats!" said Blake emphatically. "I am really surprised at your suggesting a thing like that, Gussy. I suppose you don't mean to be disrespectful to the study, but really, your words are inexcusable."

"Quite so," said Herries. "Besides, I've already broken some of the eggs into the frying-pan, or I'm doing it now, which amounts to the same thing."

"Weally, deah boys—"

"We'll have tea," said Blake. "Over tea we may be able to think of some way of helping Gussy out of his difficulty."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Good!" said Digby. "Gussy can't be called a reliable fellow to have for a chum, but I don't want to see him held up to scorn as a defaulter if it can be avoided."

"Weally, Digbay—"

"Buck up with the eggs, Herries. I'm hungry! After all, it's a ripping tea, and we'll put our heads together to help Gussy. He can always pawn his watch."

"Not now he wears a brass one."

"It's not bwass, it's wolloed-gold," said D'Arcy. "But I'm afraid that it wouldn't fetch much at a pawnbwokahs, and there isn't one in Wylcombe, anyway, and we couldn't go out to-night if there were, deah boys."

"Then we shall have to think of something else," said Blake. "At the worst Gussy can go and borrow it of Tom Merry, and we'll have a whip round later, when we're in funds, to pay the debt. We ought to stand by Gussy, you know, though he really is rather a trouble, always getting into difficulties like this. By Jove, those eggs smell really stunning!"

"Weally, I must say, deah boys—"

"Oh, don't apologise, Gussy! We know you mean well."

"I wasn't going to do anything of the sort."

"Oh, let the subject drop! That's a thing you never will do. Sufficient for the evening is the feed thereof," said Blake. "Hallo! Come in, fathead, whoever you are!"

The invitation was in response to a knock at the door. The door of the study opened, and the chums looked in some surprise at the person who entered. They had expected to see some fellow of their own Form, or, at all events, somebody belonging to St. Jim's, but the individual who now presented himself was an entire stranger to them.

He was a little man, dressed in black, with spats, and a silver watch-chain. He had a silk hat, rather rusty, a greyish beard, and long moustaches that mingled with the beard. His face was dark, and showed many wrinkles, his nose was slightly red, and he wore a pair of rimless glasses upon it.

"Hallo!" said Blake. "I fancy you've come to the wrong shop, sir. Take the next turning on the right, then the second on the left, then the third straight forward, and keep on till you stop, and then you'll be there."

But the strange gentleman did not smile. In fact, the gravity of his face was only equalled by the solemn severity of his garments.

"I think I have made no mistake," said the strange gentleman in a low but clear and incisive voice, with a slight nasal accent. "This is Study No. 6, I think?"

"Yes, that's right. But who—"

"A young gentleman of the name of D'Arcy is here, I think."

"Yaas, wathah!"

The stranger turned his rimless glasses towards the swell of the School House, who was regarding him with astonishment.

"Ah! Are you Master D'Arcy?" he asked. "Yaas, certainly. But I do not wemembah havin' had the honour of makin' your acquaintanee, sir."

"Very probably. Your business has probably never taken you to the Criminal Investigation Department at Scotland Yard," said the stranger, with a slight cough.

The four juniors jumped. "Scotland Yard! Who on earth are you?"

"Detective Fix, of Scotland Yard," said the strange gentleman, with a little formal bow. "I am here on a rather painful errand."

"It can't have anything to do with me, I suppose?" said D'Arcy uneasily. "I weally haven't committed any cwimes that I wemembah."

"That remains to be proved. Perhaps at the time you were not aware that you were committing a crime."

The swell of the School House looked utterly bewildered. (Continued on page 19.)

TAKE A LOOK INSIDE—



Address all letters: The Editor, The GEM, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

HALLO, Chums! I've got great news for you! In next week's all-star programme of the GEM you will find full particulars of a grand new prize scheme which is open to all readers. There's nothing difficult about it, as all you have to do is to collect the special coupons which will be given away in the GEM each week. The prizes offered amount to the colossal figure of

TEN THOUSAND,

so there is a splendid opportunity for every Gemite, who is a regular reader, to try to win one. If you are also a reader of our companion papers, the "Magnet," the "Ranger," the "Nelson Lee," or "Modern Boy," so much the better, for each week special coupons will be given away in these papers in connection with our latest 10,000 Gift Scheme. Are you interested? Right, then see that you get next Wednesday's GEM. In it, of course, you will find another stunning long complete story of Tom Merry & Co., entitled:

"SALESMEN OF ST. JIM'S!"

This is a peach of a yarn, with an admirable mixture of laughs and thrills. Look out, too, for Potts, the Office Boy, in another snappy, laughter-raising joke, and also for the next chapters of David Goodwin's sparkling serial of the Navy, "Chums of the Fighting Fleet." See you next Wednesday, boys? Good! Now for some news pars.

THE VANISHED DRIVER!

Bang! It was not an ordinary explosion, for it seemed as if the earth shook and everything was blotted out in a deafening sound for miles around. No wonder the good folk of Montpellier wondered whether war had broken out afresh, or whether an earthquake had occurred. Investigation, however, brought forth as strange a story as you've ever read in fiction. The scene of the explosion revealed the scattered wreckage of a contractor's lorry; of sign of the driver of the lorry there was none. Further inquiry showed that the lorry had contained a load of dynamite, which was intended for blasting purposes. That all seemed "square" enough, but where was the lorry driver, or his remains? A mystery it remained for a week or more, and then up turned the lorry driver, little the worse for his amazing experience. It appears that he suddenly noticed flames bursting from the carburettor of the lorry, and realising the dangerous nature of his cargo, the driver took to his heels and bolted for all he was worth. He had put a hundred yards between himself and the abandoned lorry when the "big bang" occurred. After that he remembered nothing until he found

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himself on a packet boat, five hundred miles away, bound for the coast of Africa! He realised then that the shock of the explosion must have so dazed him that he boarded the packet boat at Marseilles, which is seventy-six miles from the scene of the explosion, hardly knowing what he was doing. And once on the boat he could only wait until it put back again for Marseilles on its return journey.

THE LUCKY "SPARE"!

The aeroplane was travelling along smoothly about two thousand feet above the ground, and at a nod from the pilot a hardy member of the American Air Force saw that his parachute was in order and took the leap into space. He was certainly not prepared for what happened next, for the chute got entangled with the tail of the plane, and for a full 45 minutes the parachutist dangled at the end of the speeding plane. Can you imagine what his feelings were? It was odds against the parachutist living to tell of his experience until another plane came along, and after ten minutes a knife on a length of string was lowered to the unfortunate man. *Slash! Slash!* He cut through the ropes and once again found himself dropping through space. Did he thank his lucky stars that he was carrying a "spare" parachute on his back? You bet he did!

THE SUPER PLANE!

Berlin to New York in six hours is the dream of a German inventor who is busily constructing an aeroplane that has in theory already surmounted all the obstacles to such a meteoric flash through space. It is claimed that this German machine will gain a height of thirty-five thousand feet above its starting point and then cleave its way through the rarefied upper spaces, by means of super engines and special propellers designed to function at maximum strength in "thin" air. The landing gear of this mystery plane will be drawn up once the "take off" has been made and packed away in the super streamlined plane until a landing is necessary. If this super craft successfully covers its transatlantic test flight, as its designer confidently expects, its speed will be something in the region of eleven miles a minute! To enable the crew to withstand the deadly influences of the rarefied air at a height of thirty-five thousand feet above the earth the cabin of the plane will be fashioned on the lines of a giant thermos flask with cylinders of oxygen close handy. Secrecy shrouds the building of this super plane at present, but it is reported to be a genuine attempt on man's part to annihilate space!

EGGS FOR THE ZOO!

What would you give for an egg that had travelled eight thousand miles? Not much, I'll wager, for you would be thinking that no egg deserved the name of egg after such travellings. Yet there are exceptions to every rule. In this case a number of eggs have travelled that distance—all the way from Guano Islands to the London Zoo. And it is the big ambition of certain folk at the Zoo to see these eggs hatch out into genuine penguins. Whether they will be disappointed or not remains to be seen, but those who should know reckon there is a big chance that the eggs will remain fertile after their lengthy journey, for they travelled most of the eight thousand miles in an Imperial Airways aeroplane. This "hustle" method of the Zoo authorities may, if successful, solve a good many of their problems of rearing birds and animals from far off countries, as the penguin, for instance, is only one of the many creatures that are difficult to bring to England alive.

SO THIS IS SPRING!

Ting-a-ling! Ting-a-ling! The telephone bell was ringing shrilly. Outside a storm was raging—thunder and lightning at unusual strength. The householder's temper did not improve when, having picked up the telephone receiver and barked "Hallo!" into it impatiently he was informed by the operator that he had not been called up. Just at that moment a vivid flash of lightning lit up the house, and when it had faded the householder rubbed his eyes. To his amazement he found the electric lamps all burning merrily, although no human hand had touched the switches. He was a very amazed man until "someone in the know" informed him that the lightning had been responsible for both the ringing of the telephone bell and the switching on of the lights. That's only one of the funny April tricks the Clerk of the Weather has handed out—the rest you have, maybe, sampled yourselves—rain, sleet, hail, thunder, lightning, and brilliant sunshine all in one day!

THE LUCK OF THE TURF!

You seldom see or hear of a jockey, complete in his silken jacket and riding boots, riding along a race-course in a motor car. Yet such a sight gave thousands of racegoers a big thrill recently. It was the occasion of an important cup race and the favourite, with famous Gordon Richards on his back, got a bit frisky and unshipped its rider at the starting tapes. It looked for all the world as if the horse would be "out" of the race, until Richards borrowed the starter's car and tore down the course in it after his runaway mount. He caught up with the animal by the paddock gate, remounted and cantered gently back to the starting tapes. And the end of the story is that the runaway won his race comfortably—despite the fact that he had already travelled the length of the course once in his playful bid for liberty.

THE SMALLEST SCREWS!

The screws you see in an ordinary watch are generally 4-1000th of an inch in diameter. If you cared to load a thimble with these screws you would find that approximately one hundred thousand of them would be required before the thimble became full up.

YOUR EDITOR

JUST LIKE GUSSY!

(Continued from page 17.)

"I weally haven't!"

"The suspicion is that you have sheltered within the walls of the school a well-known criminal fleeing from justice."

"I haven't done anythin' of the sort. Why, I shouldn't be allowed to! I weally haven't seen any cwiminals since that chap Bullivant was here—the burglah who was awwested, and he's in pwison now."

"The man I speak of is known by a variety of aliases, but his latest is that of Joseph Link, and he passes himself off as a private detective," said the man from Scotland Yard. "Ah, I see by your face that you know him!"

It was easy enough to see that by D'Arcy's face. He turned quite pale and sank helplessly into a chair, staring in utter dismay at the visitor to the study.

CHAPTER 13.

The Man From Scotland Yard!

"**J**OSEPH LINK!" murmured D'Arcy. "Joseph Link passes himself off as a private detective? Oh, my only silk hat!"

"I see you are acquainted with the man," said Mr. Fix sternly. "Where is he? Produce him at once!"

And Mr. Fix looked round the study as if he expected to see Joseph Link hiding behind the door or concealed in the coal-locker.

"Goodness gwacious! He's not here!"

"Where is he, then?"

"I weally do not know."

"Prevarication will not serve you," said Mr. Fix. "You yourself may escape with a light sentence by giving up the rascal at once to justice."

"Oh, I say, that's a little too thick!" exclaimed Blake, recovering himself somewhat. "D'Arcy really believed that the fellow was what he represented himself to be."

Mr. Fix looked searchingly at D'Arcy.

"Is that the case, young gentleman?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"H'm! Perhaps the case is a little less black than it was represented to be. For the present I will not call in my men, as I see the rascal is not here."

"No, bai Jove, he isn't, you know!"

"Where are your men?" asked Blake.

"They are waiting outside the House," replied Mr. Fix. "I did not wish to give the alarm too soon. I had better go to your headmaster now."

"Oh, pway do nothin' of the sort!"

"Don't do that!" exclaimed Blake. "D'Arcy would get into a fearful row. Of course, he had no idea that the man was a criminal. We all suspected him to be a rogue, and knew that he was swindling D'Arcy."

"Oh, weally, Blake—"

"But that's the worst we thought about it. I say, Mr. Fix, aren't you hungry after your journey down from London?" said Blake hospitably.

The man from Scotland Yard glanced at the well-spread board and at the eggs in the frying-pan which Herries was holding in the air as if petrified, as he very nearly was by this strange turn of events. The visitor was observed to smack his lips.

"Well, as a matter of fact, young gentlemen, I am hungry."

"Then sit down and have tea with us."

"Oh, I don't know about that!" said Mr. Fix, but with a very evident inclination to yield visible in his face.

Blake saw it, and pressed the point. He signed to Herries to put the pan on the fire again and finish cooking the eggs, and to Digby to pour out the tea. He pulled the most comfortable chair to the table for the guest. Arthur Augustus seemed like a fellow in a dream all the time.

"Oh, come, do sit down!" said Blake. "This is a really ripping spread, and I know you must be hungry. We can explain to you while you have tea."

"Well, you are very kind, young gentlemen."

"Oh, it's an honour to us to entertain a gentleman of your profession!" said Blake with great politeness. "There, sit down here, please."

"Thank you, I will."

Mr. Fix sat down. The largest plate was placed before him, and several nicely done eggs turned upon it. Knife and fork were forthcoming, and the gentleman from Scotland Yard began to eat. He certainly had a good appetite, for

he walked through the ham and eggs at express speed. His plate was replenished. Little did the School House juniors care. It was worth while sacrificing a teed to propitiate their terrible guest and make things easier for Arthur Augustus. The swell of St. Jim's had certainly got himself into a difficulty this time, and the only question now was how to get him out of it, and to that end the loyal chums were prepared to make any sacrifice.

"This is very good," Mr. Fix remarked. "Yes, I will have a couple more eggs, please, Herries. I believe your name is Herries?" he added quickly.

"Yes, sir," said Herries, helping him.

"A little more ham, sir?" said Digby.

"Yes, please—lean, if you please; I don't care for fat."

Digby helped liberally with the ham. Blake poured some more hot water into the teapot and gave it a shake.

"Another cup of tea, Mr. Fix?"

"Yes, certainly, and plenty of sugar and milk."

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "The chap is making himself at home, and no beastly mistake!" Blake gave him a warning glance. The chums were not even thinking of eating anything themselves, though they were all hungry. So long as they could satisfy their guest that was quite enough for them.

"Jam tarts, Mr. Fix?" asked Digby, when the gentleman from Scotland Yard seemed to have become satisfied with the more solid portions of the meal.

Mr. Fix looked them over with a critical eye. He had evidently had plenty to eat, but the jam tarts were tempting.

"Thank you, I'll have a couple," he said. "I suppose you don't keep spirits here, do you, young gentlemen?"

"Bai Jove! Fancy spiwits in a juniah's study!"

"No, I'm sorry, we don't, sir," said Blake smoothly. "You see, we weren't expecting you; another time we'll have some ready—"

"I say, I could run ovah to Knox's study and collah some," suggested D'Arcy. "You know, Knox keeps a bottle of beastly whisky in his study, chaps."

"Good!" said Blake, remembering that little habit of the black sheep of the School House. "Good! We can get you some whisky, Mr. Fix."

"Oh, don't trouble!" said Mr. Fix hastily. "Upon second thoughts, it would be a bad example to drink spirits before boys. I will have some more of the jam tarts. And now to go into this unfortunate affair—"

"Yaas, wathah! Weally, sir—"

"We have received information that this criminal, known now as Joseph Link, usually known to his pals as Slippery Joe, is hiding in the neighbourhood of the village of Rylcombe," said the detective.

"That is quite cowwect."

"I have been making investigations in the village, and I find that the rascal has certainly been there, and has been seen to hold meetings with a youth belonging to this school, named D'Arcy."

"It is quite twue."

"The suspicion naturally arises that D'Arcy is sheltering him from the law—"

"Oh, no, my deah sir; that would be quite incowwect! Pway disabuse your mind of any such idea," said the swell of the School House, greatly distressed.

"I must be satisfied upon that point," said Mr. Fix, with such sternness in his voice that Blake felt that the feed had been simply wasted. "Are you a relation of this man, Joseph Link, alias Slippery Joe and Joe the Nobbler?"

"A wrelation?" wailed D'Arcy. "A wrelation of such a wascal? Goodness gwacious, no! Look at me, and surely you will see that it is imposs."

"Have you any relations or connections among the criminal classes?"

"I weward the question as an insult."

"It must be answered. I should be very sorry to have to take you away from the school with handcuffs on." Mr. Fix put his hand carelessly into his pocket, and there was a metallic clink.

The swell of St. Jim's shuddered.

"Oh, I say, Mr. Fix," said Blake persuasively, "don't be a cad, you know—er, I mean, it's all right! D'Arcy hadn't the faintest idea that this chap was such a rotter, and he wouldn't think of sheltering him from the law. We'll all put our heads together to help you to put him under lock and key."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"H'm! The question is, can you assist me to do so?"

"Oh, yes! The fellow will be meeting D'Arcy again to squeeze some more money out of him, you know, and then you can drop on the rotter," said Blake eagerly.

"Good wheeze!" said Digby.

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CHAPTER 14.

Absolutely Done!

Mr. Fix looked very thoughtful. They could not see his face very clearly, as he kept it turned from the light, but it seemed to show signs of relenting.

"Well, if you can answer for that," said the gentleman from Scotland Yard slowly, "of course, that alters the case."

"Oh, we'll manage it right enough."

"Excuse me," said Arthur Augustus, after some thought on the subject, "if this man is weally such a wascal as you make out—"

"There is no doubt about that."

"Then I shall certainly wofuse to have any more dealings with him, and I shall demand the weturn of my cash."

"Ha, ha, ha!" cackled Blake. "You'll have to go to the host of the Golden Pig for that, I expect, Gussy."

"In any case, money weturned or not, I shall cease my communications with such a disweputable person, even to the extent of giving up lookin' for my watch," said Arthur Augustus. "But about givin' him up to the police, that is quite a diffewent mattah."

"Eh? What are you talking about?"

Mr. Fix turned a severe glance upon the swell of the School House. D'Arcy had one of his obstinate expressions on.

"What do you mean, my lad?" asked the man from Scotland Yard sternly. "Do you mean to say that you will refuse to aid the police?"

"Yaas, wathah! You see, the man is undoubtably a gweat wascal, but in comin' and speakin' to me on a fwriendly footin' he twusts to my honah."

"H'm!"

"If I let him come and talk to me, and betwayed him into the hands of the police, it would be a wathah dishonahwable action."

"But if he is a criminal—"

"Two wongs don't make a wight," said D'Arcy, shaking his head. "I should be a cwiminal, too, if I were guilty of tweachewy."

Blake, Digby, and Herries looked at one another helplessly. There was something in what D'Arcy said; and in any case it was certain that the swell of the School House had made up his mind, and was firmly fixed in his views. The handcuffs clinked again in the pockets of Mr. Fix.

"Have you made up your mind upon that point, Master D'Arcy?" he asked.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"It amounts to a refusal to aid the police in the execution of their duty," said Mr. Fix sternly.

"I am afwaid that undah any circs I could not possibly be guilty of tweachewy," said Arthur Augustus.

"But such things are done every day in the detective line."

"I am vewy sowwy to hear it."

Mr. Fix rose to his feet.

"I can only regard this as a subterfuge," he said. "You are evidently an accomplice of the criminal."

"Nothin' of the sort, only—"

"You have connections in the criminal classes."

"On the contwawy, my fwriends are vewy select, not to say swaggah—"

"I have no alternative but to arrest you on suspicion."

"Pway don't do anythin' of the kind! It will weally be a most widiculous blundah," said D'Arcy. "And extwemely uncomfy for me, too."

There was a metallic jingle again in the pocket of Mr. Fix. But he did not draw out the handcuffs to view.

"Come," he said; "my men are waiting below! I will consult with them before I decide to take you away. But you must come down with me."

"Oh, vewy well!"

"Look here!" exclaimed Blake. "This is all rot! I shall go straight to the Head!"

Mr. Fix looked very uneasy for a moment.

"Wait till I have consulted with my men," he said.

"You can come with me, Master D'Arcy. If I decide to take you away, I will come back and inform these young gentlemen."

"Vewy well. Pway wemain here, deah boys!"

"But—" began Blake.

"Oh, pway wemain here! You must not obstwuct the execution of the beastlay law, you know. I don't want you to get into twouble, too."

"Come along," said Mr. Fix, opening the door.

The man from Scotland Yard walked out of the study, followed by Arthur Augustus. Blake and his chums watched them go, undecided and bewildered. They passed down the staircase, and Tom Merry, coming upstairs, passed them and glanced at them curiously. He stopped at the open door of Study No. 6 and looked in. Three dismayed faces met his glance.

"Hallo! What's up?" exclaimed Tom Merry at once.

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BLAKE gave a groan.

"Oh, Gussy's done it at last!"

"What has he done?"

"You remember that detective chap he was meetin' outside the school?"

"Yes, rather! What about him?"

"Only he turns out to be a criminal hiding from the police, that's all, named Nobbling Joe, or something, and there's a detective come down specially from Scotland Yard to look for him."

Tom Merry started.

"My only hat! Are you sure?"

"Didn't you see a fellow with Gussy on the stairs as you came up?"

"Yes. Was that the detective?"

"Yes! That was the beast!"

"H'm! He was in plain clothes. He didn't look much like a detective, either," said Tom Merry who had Ferrers Locke in his mind's eye. "Are you sure it's all right?"

Blake stared at him.

"All right? Oh, yes! He had his men waiting outside."

"He had what?" yelled Tom Merry.

"His men, the men from Scotland Yard, waiting outside," repeated Blake. "What's the matter with you, Merry?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Eh? What are you cackling at? I should think this was rather a serious matter!" exclaimed Blake indignantly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What's the wheeze? Tell me what you are cackling at, you ass, before I dot you on the nose!" exclaimed Blake excitedly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Fourth-Formers advanced wrathfully towards the hero of the Shell. Tom Merry retreated to the door, still laughing almost hysterically. Blake began to have a suspicion that something was wrong somewhere.

"Merry! Look here—"

"Explain yourself, you rotter!" cried Digby. "Do you mean to say that we've been taken in? What do you mean, anyway?"

"Oh, my only pyjama hat!" gasped Tom Merry. "If this doesn't beat the whole record! I passed some fellows waiting outside the School House as I came in—"

"They were Mr. Fix's men."

"I have no doubt about that. They were fellows you know, too."

"Eh?" ejaculated the three chums together in amazement.

"There were three of them," gurgled Tom Merry, "and their names were Figgins, Wynn, and Marmaduke!"

"Figgins, Wynn, and Marmaduke!" said Blake dazedly. And Digby and Herries repeated like parrots:

"Figgins, Wynn, and Marmaduke!"

"Exactly!"

"But—but what—"

"There weren't any others waiting outside that I saw. I wondered what the Co. were doing there, too. I asked Figgins, and he turned red. Ha, ha, ha! Of course, they were waiting for Mr. Fix, of Scotland Yard! Ha, ha, ha!"

"But—but I don't see—"

"Can't you see that you've been done?"

"Done?" exclaimed the bewildered Blake. "How? No, I can't."

"How have we been done? What are you getting at?"

"Figgins, Wynn, and Marmaduke were waiting outside," chuckled Tom Merry. "Not Kerr—you understand? Kerr, the impersonator!"

The chums of Study No. 6 understood at last!

"Kerr," said Blake, "Kerr! My hat! Kerr! He took us in made up as Mr. Lathom. He made up as Herr Schneider and took us in! And now—"

"And now he's taken you in again. Ha, ha, ha!"

"By Jove, it's plain enough now!" said Digby. "Let's get after the rotter! Oh, what utter asses we shall look if Kerr gets clear after this!"

"He wolfed our feed," muttered Herries. "Fancy us feeding him up to the chin to put him into a good temper! And it was Kerr, after all."

"I'm not quite convinced yet," said Blake. "But—"

"Let's go and see," said Tom Merry, grinning. "It's up against the School House, anyway, so I'm on your side. Follow me."

And Tom Merry turned and ran down the stairs. The chums of Study No. 6 were after him in a twinkling. They ran out into the dusky quad.

"D'Arcy! Where are you?"

"Mr. Fix! Where are you?"

The echoes of their voices replied. The New House juniors whom Tom Merry had seen outside were no longer there. Mr. Fix, of Scotland Yard, had also vanished. But where was Arthur Augustus?

"Gussy! Gussy!"

A still, small voice from the distance replied:

"Pway welease me, deah boys!"

The voice was that of D'Arcy, and it came from the direction of the school fountain. The School House lads ran over to the fountain, where an amazing sight met their eyes. Tied to the fountain, with the water pouring over his head, was the swell of St. Jim's. He turned a pathetic face towards the chums of the School House.

"Pway welease me, deah boys!"

"How did you come like this, Gussy?" demanded Blake, as he felt in his pocket for his penknife.

"It was that wascally Mr. Fix. I came out with him, and then I was seized in the darkness. I could not see the wottahs, but I suppose they were his men. Mr. Fix said they would leave me here till they had captured Slippery

And the voices of Kerr, Wynn, and Marmaduke answered the question in unison from the darkness:

"New House! New House!"

"Who's been diddled and done?"

"Blake has!"

"Who takes the cake?"

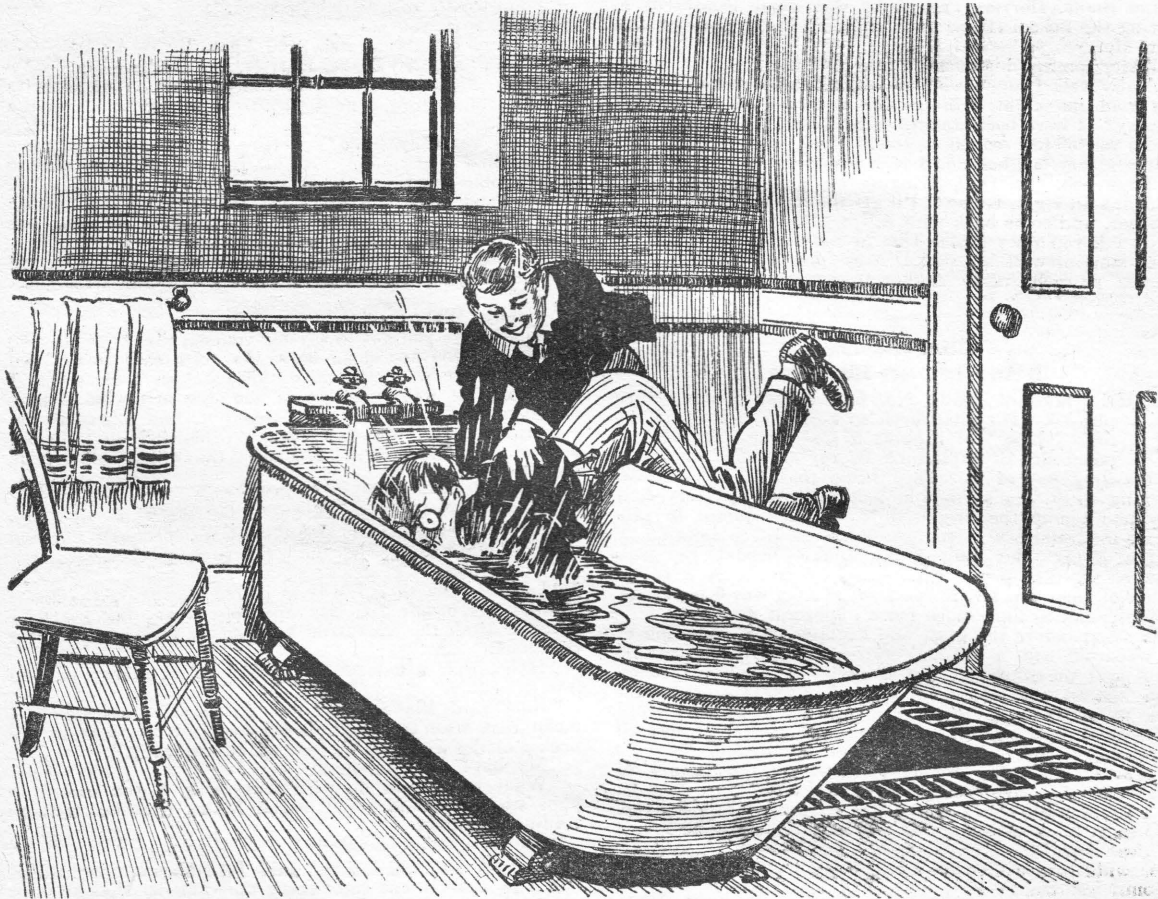
"We do!"

"Let them hear us smile!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The smile could have been heard the length of the quadrangle. Blake made a wrathful step in the direction of the smilers, but there was a sound of retreating footsteps. The laugh rang again from the direction of the New House. Figgins & Co. were gone! The School House juniors looked at one another, with rather sickly expressions.

"Done!" murmured Blake.



"OOCH!" Skimpole's head went underneath the running tap, and then Manners seized him and pitched him bodily into the bath!

Joe, and they tied me to this beastlay fountain, the wotten cads!"

"You ass! Why didn't you call out?"

"I did not wish to be discovahed in such a widiculous position. Pway welease me. I am most uncomfy like this."

Blake cut the cord that fastened the School House swell. "The wottahs! My waistcoat has been simplay soaked by the water and it will be absolutely wuined."

"Never mind," said Blake comfortingly. "You'll get a new waistcoat when you go to Portland, you know—a nice new one done up in broad arrows."

"Pway, don't wor on such a sewious subject, Blake. Do you know I am beginnin' to suspect that we have been done!" said D'Arcy. "I did not wecognise the fellows who collahed me, but one of them chucked, and it sounded to me vewy much like Fatty Wynn."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry.

"It is no laughin' mattah, Tom Mewwy. I have been tweated with gweat diswespect."

"Hallo! What's that?" exclaimed Tom Merry suddenly, as a voice hailed them from the gloom of the quadrangle.

"Figgins!" ejaculated Blake.

It was certainly the voice of the chief of the New House juniors.

"I say, kids, who's Cock House at St. Jim's?"

"Dished!" grunted Herries.

"Absolutely done!" growled Digby.

"Yaas, wathah! I weally considah that you fellows are wathah to blame in this mattah," said D'Arcy. "You weally ought to have seen—"

"You're a good one to talk about it!" grunted Blake. "Why, it was all your fault from start to finish. What did you get that bogus detective down here in the first place for?"

"Oh, weally, Blake—"

"Then you ought to have known that it was Kerr all along—"

"You mean you ought to have known, deah boy!"

"Oh, don't argue; you make me tired!"

"I never knew such a chap as Gussy for arguing," said Digby. "What I like is a fellow who can admit himself in the wrong."

"But, weally, deah boy—"

"Oh, come along, and let's get in! The whole school will be singing this to us to-morrow," said Blake. "It's too rich to keep. We shall never hear the end of it, and Figgins & Co. will have something to cackle about for weeks to come."

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"You're right there," grinned Tom Merry. "I fancy the whole school will help with the cackling. Good-night!"

"Where are you going?"

"I'm going to my study. This is too good to keep. I must tell Lowther and Manners!" chuckled Tom Merry, as they re-entered the School House.

"Don't be in a hurry, though. Gussy wants to speak to you."

"Well, go ahead, Gussy!"

"I weally do not wemembah wantin' to speak to Tom Mewwy, Blake."

"Ass! What about the eight shillings you want to borrow off him?"

"But, weally, you wottahs ought—"

"Oh, don't argue! I verily believe you'd argue the hind leg off a mule!" said Blake. "Settle it with Tom Merry."

And Blake, Herries, and Digby went in to Study No. 6, leaving the School House swell standing in the passage with Tom Merry.

D'Arcy screwed his monocle into his eye.

"Vewy well, I suppose it's all wight," he remarked. "Can you lend me eight shillings for a couple of days, Tom Mewwy? I have been standin' a feed, and that wotten New House waster has scoffed it, too!"

Tom Merry laughed and felt in his pockets.

"Four bob," he said, bringing his possessions to light. "But it's all right, Gussy! I'll get the rest off Manners and Lowther, and come back with it."

"Thank you vewy much, Tom Mewwy. You are weally a decent sort of wottah," said D'Arcy; and Tom Merry went up the passage, while Arthur Augustus D'Arcy entered Study No. 6.

CHAPTER 15.

D'Arcy Recovers His Watch!

THE chums of Study No. 6 were not looking very pleased. They had been so utterly taken in by the little "jape" of Figgins & Co. that there was no possibility of explaining it, or, as Blake expressed it, crawling out of it. They knew that on the morrow morning all St. Jim's would be laughing over the story, how they had ted-up the disguised New House junior to propitiate him, and how Arthur Augustus had been arrested by Figgins & Co. But while Blake, Herries, and Digby were troubled by that prospect, and were also taking a rueful survey of what was left of the feed, D'Arcy was occupied by another, and, to him, much more important matter.

He stood before the glass and examined the reflection of his waistcoat with a sad and sorrowful eye. There was no doubt that the waistcoat was spoiled. It had been ground hard against the stone pillar of the fountain, and that stone pillar was none too clean. The fancy waistcoat, one of the most startling in D'Arcy's possession, was grimed all over, and most of its brilliant colours were dulled.

"It's rotten!" said Blake, referring to the victory of Figgins & Co. "We shall never wipe it out!"

"Yaas, wathah, that's what I was thinking!" said D'Arcy, looking at his waistcoat. "It can nevah possibly be wiped off, deah boys!"

"Oh, our turn will come!" said Digby cheerfully. "We'll think of something—"

"Imposs, deah boy! You can nevah thing of anythin' that will wipe that off!" said D'Arcy, shaking his head.

"What rot!" said Dig warmly. "I suppose we can get up wheezes as well as Figgins & Co., can't we?"

"Eh? Who's talking about Figgins & Co.?"

"You were speaking about wiping off this defeat—"

"Bai Jove, no, I wasn't! I was speakin' about wipin' this wotten gwime off my waistcoat."

Dig looked daggers at the swell of the school. D'Arcy did not notice. He was taking off his jacket, with the view of removing the grimy waistcoat and making a closer survey of it. On closer inspection the waistcoat looked worse than ever, and D'Arcy shook his head sadly.

"I'm afraid it's weally done for, deah boys!" he said.

"Oh, rats!" said Blake.

"I wegard that remark as wude, Blake. Perwaps when the gwime is quite dwy, it may be bwushed off. You might do it for me to-morrow, Dig."

"Catch me! Too much like work. Why can't you do it yourself?"

"It always makes my arm ache bwushin' mud off things."

"What about my arm?" hooted Digby.

"Well, of course, that's weally not so vewy important. But please yourself, deah boy. I weally think you might be obligin', that's all. Upon the whole, I think perwaps the thing is no good, and I may as well be charitable and give it to the poor. Fortunately, I have anothah waistcoat."

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"More like a dozen, I should say!"

"Let me see. There is the one I wore on Saturday—I haven't worn that for some days now, so I think I may as well twy it again," D'Arcy remarked thoughtfully.

"Oh, blow your waistcoat!" growled Blake.

"I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort!"

Arthur Augustus unlocked the box in which he kept his special best waistcoats, and turned over the four or five garments it contained, all carefully folded.

"Ah, this is the one, deah boys!"

He drew out a waistcoat which was really a triumph of colour. Then he uttered an ejaculation of surprise. The waistcoat sagged down with something weighty in the watch-pocket. Arthur Augustus stared at it.

"Bai Jove!"

"What's the matter?"

"I am weally distinctly surprisid."

"What is it, you ass?"

"It's my beastlay watch, you know."

"What!" shouted Blake, Herries, and Digby.

Arthur Augustus, still with that expression of surprise upon his face, drew a gold watch out of the pocket of the waistcoat.

It was certainly "the" watch—the famous twenty-five guinea timekeeper, the present from the School House swell's noble governor. There it was, as large as life.

Blake and his chums looked at D'Arcy with feelings too deep for immediate words. D'Arcy put the watch to his ear, and then commenced to wind it up.

"And so," began Blake, in measured tones, "you have been making all this bother about a watch that wasn't lost at all!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"What have you got to say for yourself?"

"Weally—you see, deah boys, it's quite easy to explain. I changed my waistcoat on Saturday aftah I came in. I wemembah it was wumpled in the wov with the Gwammawians in the village. I changed it, and I was feelin' wathah knocked up—in fact, uttably exhausted—by the wov, and so I ovahlooked the fact that the watch was left in the pocket."

"You—you—"

"Pway don't be wude, Blake. I put the waistcoat away, and haven't looked at it since, so it was perfectly natuwal that I should not discovah the watch in the pocket."

"You—you—"

"I fail to see that I was to blame in any way. I was wathah absent-minded, perwaps, but that was perfectly natuwal aftah the exhaustin' wov in the tuckshop with the Gwammah cads."

"Hallo, that a new watch?" asked Tom Merry, coming into the study.

"No," said Blake; "it's the watch that was stolen—I mean that wasn't stolen. Gussy has just found it in the pocket of the waistcoat he took off on Saturday."

"My hat! Ha, ha, ha!"

"What would you do with that thing if you had it in your study, Tom Merry?" asked Blake, nodding towards Arthur Augustus.

"I wefuse to be called—"

"I think I should kill it," said Tom Merry thoughtfully, "or else take it out somewhere and lose it, Blake!"

"I wegard these jokes as bein' in wathah bad form," said D'Arcy, with dignity. "I fail to see that I am to blame in the mattah at all! It is vewy fortunate that I have found my watch; and yet it's cuwious, too, for Mr. Link told me that he was on the twack of the thief, and the case was vewy stwong against Fwank Monk."

"The rotter!" exclaimed Tom Merry indignantly. "Frank Monk of the Grammar School? By Jove! That rascal ought to be horsewhipped!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Arthur Augustus fastened the watch upon his chain, and restored it to the pocket of the fancy waistcoat, which he proceeded to don. The rolled-gold watch he looked at rather doubtfully, undecided what to do with it. Finally he locked it up in his desk.

CHAPTER 16.

Exit Mr. Link!

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus stood in the Hall, looking at a letter he had just opened. There was an expression of unbounded amazement upon his face. It was the morning after the discovery of the watch, and the boys of St. Jim's were going in to breakfast.

"News?" asked Tom Merry, stopping and tapping the swell of the School House upon the shoulder.

"Yaas, wathah!" gasped D'Arcy. "Wead that! Wead it, for goodness' sake!"



"That's the chap!" murmured Mr. Link, the detective, as Frank Monk came out of the shop. "It will pay me to watch him."

Somewhat surprised, Tom Merry took the letter and glanced through it. It was in the handwriting of Joseph Link, and it was certainly a strange communication, in the light of what had happened the evening before. Tom Merry gave a whistle as he read:

"Dear Sir,—I am pleased to be able to inform you that, having followed up my clues, I have fixed with absolute certainty upon the thief of the watch. I have actually seen the pawn ticket in his possession, so there is no further doubt. Will you meet me at midday in the same place in the lane, and I will explain fully, and you can decide what measures are to be taken.

"Yours faithfully,

"JOSEPH LINK."

"My only hat!" said Tom Merry. "This is what I call ripping! You can see the kind of rotter he is now, I suppose, Gussy?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I suppose it's Frank Monk he's got in his mind?"

"Yaas. I told him that if he turned out to be a Gwamawian, I should pwefer to hush up the mattah, and so—"

"And so his little game is to pretend that Monk is guilty, depending on you to say nothing about it. The utter rascal!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I suppose your being such an ass tempts him to pull the wool over your eyes, Gussy; but, all the same, he's a fearful scoundrel to play a game like this!"

"I wefuse to be chawactewised as an ass!"

"Oh, come into breakfast! I must talk this over with Blake—yes, and Figgins, too. We'll give Mr. Joseph Link something to remember us by. We'll all be on the spot when you meet him."

"Bai Jove! That's a weally wippin' ideah, you know! The wascal ought to have a weally severe lesson!" assented Arthur Augustus.

The letter evoked equal indignation among the chums of Study No. 6 when they saw it. In a matter like this the chums of the Fourth were at one with the Terrible Three. The bogus detective's scheme was so utterly despicable that the juniors agreed, without a dissentient voice, that he ought to be made an example of. And Tom Merry's suggestion that Figgins & Co. should be allowed to take a hand was cordially agreed to.

After morning school there was a general discussion of the matter.

"The rotter!" said Figgins. "Of course, we knew all the time that he was only stuffing up Gussy."

"Oh, weally, Figgins!"

"So did we all," said Tom Merry. "That was bad enough, but this is worse. He would have made Gussy believe that Frank Monk was a thief!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We'll all meet him," said Blake energetically. "We'll put him through it! We really ought to rag Gussy, too."

"Oh, weally, Blake!"

"Never mind Gussy; let's give Mr. Joseph Link a lesson," said Figgins. "Gussy can go out and meet him under the

trees, same as before, and hold him in talk while we surround him. Then we'll drop on him."

"Good! We'll make the rotter run the gauntlet. Every fellow can take a bit of rope or a stuffed stocking," said Monty Lowtner. "We'll give him a lesson that will keep him off the grass in this part of the world, at all events. Of course, it's no good thinking of getting the money back."

"Bai Jove! That's wathah wotten, you know!"
"Serve you right!" said Tom Merry severely. "If Gussy loses the money we'll consider that his proper punishment for being an ass."

"I wefuse to be wogarded as an ass!"
"And next time," said Figgins, "perhaps you'll have sense enough not to go in for anything without asking the advice of a New House fellow first."

"Oh, rats!" said Tom Merry.
"And many of 'em!" added Blake.

"Considering the troubles you fellows are always getting into for want of a little fatherly advice," said Kerr, "I really think—"

"Is this a friendly meeting, or is it to be a House row?" asked Blake. "We're quite ready to wipe up the ground with you New House rotters!"

"Oh, pax!" grinned Figgins. "Keep your wool on! Let's settle about this detective humbug. It's about time you went to meet him, Gussy."

"Yaas, wathah!"
"Then off you go! And mind you keep him talking till you hear me whistle!"

"Till you hear me whistle!" said Blake, with emphasis.

"Now, look here, Blake—"

"Look here, Figgins—"

"Till you hear us all whistle, then!" grinned Tom Merry.

"Off with you, Gussy!"

"Wight you are!"

Arthur Augustus strolled out of the gates. The rest of the juniors followed more slowly. It was necessary to avoid giving the alarm to the bogus detective, who was probably a wary bird. But they were soon under the trees on the other side of the lane, and there they heard the voices of the swell of St. Jim's and Mr. Joseph Link, the famous detective.


"You have the case fully worked out, weally, Mr. Link?"

"Yes, certainly," said the detective, with a smile of satisfaction. "Suspicion was very black against the boy Monk from the start. I have now conclusive proofs that he is guilty."

D'Arcy screwed his eyeglass into his eye and looked at the sham detective curiously. Mr. Link's manner was quite serious, and the School House swell wondered how a man could stand with an unmoved face and utter such utterly unfounded falsehoods. D'Arcy had certainly never met so absolute a rascal before, and his indignation was rising to boiling point.

"SALESMEN OF ST. JIM'S!"

See Gussy at work for Cousin Ethel's Bazaar, in the small reproduction of next week's cover



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"And what are the pwoofs?" he asked.

"The boy Monk pawned the watch in Rylcombe."

"But there is no pawnbrokahn's in Wylcombe."

"Did I say Rylcombe?" said Mr. Link hastily. "Of course, I mean Wayland. A mere slip of the tongue, of course. As you very truly say, there is no pawnbroker's in Rylcombe. The boy Monk pawned the watch in Wayland."

"But how do you know?"

"I have interviewed the pawnbroker, and he gave me an accurate description of the lad. I have seen the pawnticket in Monk's possession."

"Bai Jove!"

"The pawnbroker still has the watch, and if any trouble is made, the first step is, of course, the arrest of the boy Monk. I understood you to say that you did not want a scandal with the Grammar School, and that you would rather lose the watch."

"Yaas, that is vewy twue."

"In that case, my work is done. But I must mention that I have been put to ery heavy and unanticipated expense in the matter, as I was compelled to bribe the pawnbroker's assistant in Ryl—in Wayland, and there were many other items. I will furnish you with a detailed list if you wish, although that is not my usual custom. I think if you now hand me four pounds—"

D'Arcy's eyes gleamed behind his monocle.

"Are you sure that will meet all expenses?" he asked quietly. "I should weally not like you to be put to any loss in the mattah."

"Well, as you are so liberal, perhaps five pounds would be nearer the mark," said Mr. Link thoughtfully. "My time is very valuable, and you must take into consideration the fact that I have left cases in London of almost international importance."

"Yaas wathah!"

"Then if you will kindly hand over—"

"But weally, deah sir, you are too modewate!"

"Too moderate?" said Mr. Link, with a quick glance at the junior. "I don't quite understand you, Master D'Arcy."

"You might as well say twenty pounds, you know," said D'Arcy blandly. "Or you might as well make it fifty while you are on the subject. You would be just as likely to get it ffrom me, too."

"What do you mean? I—"

"I mean that you are a swindlin' wascal!" said D'Arcy. "My watch was nevah stolen at all. I have found it in my study."

Mr. Link's jaw dropped.

"You haven't seen the pawnbrokahn, as the watch was nevah pawned. You haven't seen any pawnticket. You know perfectly well that Fwank Monk is not a thief," said D'Arcy, his indignation boiling over. "You are a beastlay wascal, and you have been imposin' upon me because I was unsuspectious, and expected to be tweated with common honesty."

"This is an excuse not to pay me my fees. I demand the sum of four pounds, and if you do not pay, I shall go immediately to your headmaster."

"Bai Jove, I wish you would! And I'll come with you," said Arthur Augustus. "I expect I should get a blowin' up; but I know jolly well that you would be sent to prison for gettin' money undah false pretences, you wascal!"

An extremely ugly look came over the rascal's face. He knew perfectly well that he dared not go to Dr. Holmes, and his threat had been quite an empty one.

"You young hound!" he snarled, the whole evil nature of the scoundrel showing itself now in the moment of disappointment. "If you don't hand over the tin, I'll take it out of your hide. Do you hear? Pay up, or I'll give you such a thrashing that you won't be able to crawl about for a month!"

D'Arcy's eyes flashed fire.

"Bai Jove, just twy it!" he exclaimed. "Come on, you wascal! Bai Jove, I'll give you a feahful thwashin'!"

There was a whistle under the trees and a shout. A rush of feet, and ten juniors of St. Jim's were surrounding the startled Mr. Link.

The exposed scoundrel cast a hunted look round. D'Arcy was dancing round him, flourishing his fists, but the bogus detective was not inclined to attack him now. He was thinking only of escape; but escape was out off.

"Got h-m!" exclaimed Tom Merry gleefully.

"Got him!" said Figgins. "Collar the rotter!"

They collared the vainly struggling Mr. Link. The detective was now pale with apprehension. He saw that the juniors of St. Jim's meant business.

"Lemme alone!" he yelled. "I'll have the law on you! Don't you dare to touch me, you young whelps!"

But they did dare to touch him. They had him over in

(Continued at foot of page 27.)

SMASHING NAVAL ADVENTURE YARN.

CHUMS OF THE FIGHTING FLEET

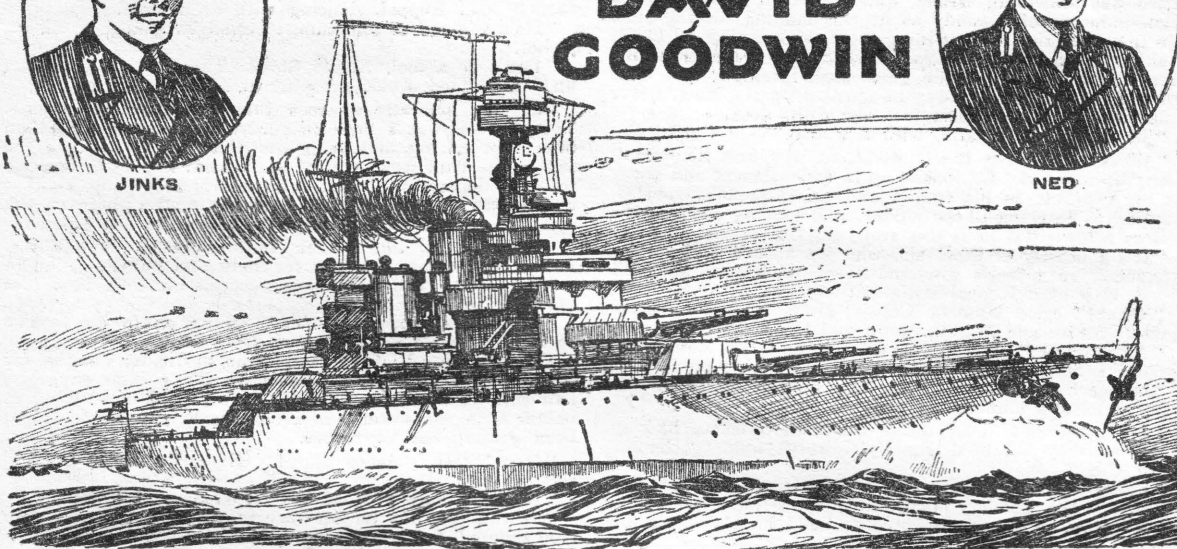


JINKS

by
DAVID
GOODWIN



NED



Ned Hardy, the most popular midy on the Victorious, is in secret communication with his brother Ralph, who was dismissed the Service after a robbery on board the Victorious. Ned believes his brother innocent and thinks he was "framed" by spies. In a boxing match Ned beats Wexton, the cad of the ship, and in revenge Wexton brings a "pug" known as the "Chatham Chicken" on to the Victorious, and introduces him as a midy from another ship. Ned is chosen to box him. Ned wins, but Jinks, his pal, recognises the Chicken and exposes the plot to the gun-room!

Escape!

THE Chicken had not counted on such a flare-up among the middies. His cunning little black eyes looked towards the door, seeking a chance to bolt. But he was hemmed in.

"I think you're mad or drunk!" he growled. "I tell you I'm Beaufort, o' the Triumphant!"

"When did you join her?" asked Keppel keenly.

"Las' year!"

"That's a lie, anyhow! I know one of their gun-room mess, and he told me no new snotties had been appointed to her for two years!"

"Howard, go for the tar-bucket and bring a couple of feather pillows! We'll give him his medicine!"

The Chicken turned pale. He did not want to grow any feathers. He knew what an ugly punishment tarring was, comic though it sounds.

"Hold on!" said Keppel. "He's a guest—we mustn't make any error about it! He says he's Beaufort. There's an engineer lieutenant here now from the Triumphant, visiting Macrae in the ward-room. I've just thought of it—he'll know all their middies!"

"Good egg! Go and fetch him!"

"Keep this chap here till I come back. If there is anything wrong we'll make hay of him! You can get the tar-bucket ready."

The Chatham Chicken's last hope disappeared when he heard there was somebody who could say with certainty that he was a fraud, and let all the middies know it. He determined to bolt. It was a slim chance, and he hardly

knew where he was going to; but anything was better than being tarred and feathered.

Hardly had Keppel made for the door than with one wild plunge the Chicken charged through the middies and dashed after him. The sudden rush was quite unexpected, and it took them just at the moment when their attention was diverted.

With a yell he burst his way through, upsetting two of the middies, and he was away before they could stop him.

Acland made a wild grab at him, but was tripped up, and Keppel, taken in the rear, was sent flying, and fell heavily. A second later the middies would have been upon him and made him prisoner, but the bruiser's rush carried him past, and he fairly flew up the alleyway, with half the gun-room mess in full cry at his heels.

"After him!" shouted Keppel. "Get hold of him! He can't get away! Hurry, you chaps!"

Ned, who had now got his wind back, and felt comparatively fit again, rushed off at the heels of the hunt, eager to see what was happening. There was no doubt that nothing could be too bad for the fellow, who had sneaked aboard under false pretences to smash him up. He caught a glimpse of the fugitive scuttling along the upper alleyway like a rabbit, the middies gaining fast.

The Chicken was flying along blindly. He knew little or nothing of the way about a battleship, and hardly gave himself time to think that, even when he got out of the maze of passages below, there was no escape for him across the water. But he did not trouble about that. What he wanted was to reach the deck and the open air.

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He was powerful enough, but, naturally, knew he had no chance against that wasps' nest of angry middies. For that matter a single one of them had beaten him already, and besides, he had no stomach for any further fighting. The Victorious had given him all he wanted.

He scurried over the middle deck, dodged a squad of astonished bluejackets, dashed up the steps, and found himself on the upper deck by the fore-barbette, knowing no more than the dead how he got there.

"Stop that man!" shouted Keppel, flying up after him. "Stop him!"

Two marines made a dash at the Chicken. They did not know what they were after, but the order was enough. The fugitive dodged them. Everybody on the deck saw there was something wrong, and a seaman gunner and a signalman cut off Grundy as he was making for the side. He turned again, just avoiding them, and, seeing all hands making for him, the Chicken dashed at the ladder of the side tripod holding up the great steel foremast, and went up it like a monkey. Away he scuttled up the mast, never stopping till he was thirty feet above the deck.

"Troed!" cried Acland, with a whoop.

"What on earth is this?" exclaimed the first lieutenant, hurrying forward. He looked up in astonishment and anger at the Chicken, in his singlet and midshipman's trousers, panting as he clung to the ladder, and looking down at the sailors below. "Who is this scallywag?"

"It's a beastly civilian, sir, who got aboard under false pretences, in officer's kit, and tried to smash up Ned Hardy!" panted Keppel indignantly.

"What!" cried Number One. "Here, fetch the fellow down! Smith and Powell, go up and nab him!"

"Ay, ay, sir!" replied the seaman and the signalman, springing briskly on to the ladder and running up it.

Another bluejacket made for the support-ladder on the other side, and climbed up also.

"Lemme alone!" whined the Chatham Chicken, looking down as they mounted rapidly towards him. "Gemme outer this!"

"Fancy the sweep being dressed in a snottie's uniform!" exclaimed the gunnery lieutenant, as indignant as any midshipman. "There's some confounded knavery here, by Jove!"

"They'll have him in a second. Up he goes again! Rotten bad climber!"

The gun-room mess wanted to go up to fetch the Chicken themselves, but to their disgust they were not allowed to, and the bluejackets proceeded to carry out that job. The fugitive at once began to climb higher, and got right up to the fire control-station and the little compartment aloft which takes the place of the old fighting-tops. There was nobody in it at the time, and the gunnery lieutenant, as has been said, was on deck.

The Chicken paused when he reached the control-station, and clung to the rail. To go higher was useless. There was no escape unless he had wings, and certainly there was nothing angelic about the Chatham Chicken.

The bluejackets were running, rather than climbing, up the ladders. It was only a matter of seconds ere they would get hold of him, and to struggle would probably end in his being dashed to the deck. He looked down with a white, frightened face at the crowd below.

"Gosh, it's hard lines on the poor beast!" exclaimed Ned, backing out against the ship's rail on the boat-deck to get a better view.

"Hard lines? Serve the treacherous cad right if he broke his neck!" said Jinks. "What d'you mean by 'hard lines'?"

"Four to one against him on the ladders, and seven hundred below—that's what I mean!"

"He deserves it! You wait till we get hold of him!"

"They'll have him now!" came the cry from the upper deck.

"Look out aloft there! By Jove, he's going to jump for it!"

The Chicken gave one desperate glance at the seamen, who were now nearly up to him, and then another at the sea, far below. In that second he made up his mind. With all his might he launched himself into the air.

"He's got some pluck, though!" cried Jinks.

There was a sudden hush as the fugitive jumped. Many of the men looked aghast, for it promised to be a tragedy. There was strong doubt, as Grundy soared downwards, whether he could clear the ship's side, or strike the boats in the davits far below, or even the steel boom. But the Chicken had put all his force into the spring outwards, and clearing the whaleboat that hung out from the boat-deck by a bare yard, he struck the water with a mighty plunge. It was all done in the twinkling of an eye.

There was a rush to the ship's side—order being forgotten for the moment—and the Chicken came floundering to the surface.

"After him with the cutter there!" shouted the first lieutenant. "Nab him!"

"He's our meat! We'll attend to him in the ward-room!" said Keppel, dancing with excitement.

"He's stunned or something!" cried Ned, flinging off his jacket.

"Don't be a fool, Ned! Stop! The cutter'll pick him up!" exclaimed Jinks, grasping at his chin's arm.

But Ned had already seen that something was wrong. The Chicken was a poor swimmer, and all the wind had been knocked out of him by the dive. As he reached the surface he floundered wildly and turned a ghastly face up towards the ship. It was enough for Ned—and another reason was driving him, too. He vaulted right over the rail without hesitation, and plunged in after the Chicken.

Ned came up like a cork, quite close to his late foe, who was gasping hoarsely for help and on the point of going under. The midshipman caught him and held him up.

"Right you are, young 'un! Hang on to him! The cutter's coming!" called a voice from above.

The Chicken's life had been in no particular danger, for the cutter, though some distance off at the after gangway, had cast loose and would soon have picked him up. But nearer than the cutter was a fast steam pinnace that had been passing the Victorious.

"Here! Hi, pinnace ahoy! Give us a hand, quick!" shouted Ned.

"We're a-comin'! Hold up!" cried the steersman.

The pinnace was on her way to the rescue even before Ned shouted, for her steersman had seen both the lads leap from the Victorious, and instantly ran his vessel towards them. She was not a Navy pinnace, but belonged to a big yacht in the harbour, and there was nobody in her but a yacht hand in uniform, steering, and a man at the engines. She came smartly alongside the swimmers long before the cutter could pull to the spot.

"Crumbs! I was nearly done!" said the Chicken feebly as Ned grasped the pinnace's low gunwale—and the steersman bent over and grasped Bert Grundy, seeing that he was exhausted.

"Haul him in! Take him aboard!" said Ned.

"All right, sir! But hadn't he better go on to your boat that's comin' up there?" said the yachtsman. "She'll take him back!"

"No, no!" cried Ned. "Get him into your pinnace! Look sharp!"

The steersman made no more ado, but with the help of his mate the engineer yanked the dripping and exhausted bruiser into the pinnace.

"You, too, sir?" said the steersman.

"No, the cutter will pick me up. Don't bother about me! Take that fellow away as quick as you can. Put him ashore."

"Eh?" cried the astonished yacht-hand. "You mean aboard the battleship, don't you?"

"All right, sir! Hold on!" cried the petty officer in the stern of the cutter, which was now not thirty yards away and racing up as fast as oars could drive her.

"No, not the battleship!" said Ned hastily to the yachtsman. "The shore, I tell you! Here!" He stuffed a hand in one of his trousers pockets as well as he could and pulled out a wet ten-shilling note. He thrust it into the yachtsman's fist. "Land him on Sheerness jetty. Look sharp before the cutter comes!"

"All right, sir!" said the steersman, grasping the situation. "Start that engine, quick!" he said to his mate. "That's it! Off with you! As for you," he said to the Chicken, "make yourself scarce directly they land you, or some of our chaps'll be coming after you. Get back to Chatham and lose yourself."

"Bless you, gov'nor!" almost blubbered Grundy. "You're a sport, you are! I'm sorry I ever played this game on yer! You're a gentleman!"

Ned dropped back and struck out, his clothes weighing him down rather heavily, just as the cutter reached the spot, while the yacht's pinnace gathered speed and darted off towards Sheerness.

HURRAH!

GRAND 10,000 GIFT SCHEME

Starts in next week's GEM.

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Mr. Wexton Explains!

"HERE! Ahoy! Halt!" roared the cutter's petty officer. "We want that chap! Pinnacle ahoy! Come back!"

"What did you let him go for, you ass, Hardy!" cried a chorus of voices from the Victorious. "Tell them to bring him back!"

"After 'em, lads! Give 'way!" exclaimed the petty officer.

"Pick me up!" called Ned to him. "Don't you see I'm drowning?"

He was in no more danger of drowning than a young seal would have been; but the cutter had to pick him up, and when that delay was over the pinnacle and the Chatham Chicken were far out of reach, and no rowing cutter stood a chance of catching them.

Nor was there any launch or picket-boat of the Victorious available at the moment to go in pursuit, and with such a start the yacht's pinnacle was safe. Very soon she landed her dripping passenger at the jetty, whence the Chatham Chicken made tracks inland as fast as he could, a sadder and a wiser man.

"That's the frozen limit!" gasped the petty officer, forgetful of all discipline. "Fancy letting the beggar go!"

"Ay! Our young gamecock's done the right thing, though!" murmured the bowman under his breath to his next neighbour.

"All right, Harris!" said Ned to the petty-officer. "Thanks for picking me up! Pull for the gangway. I want to change these wet clothes."

Ned went up the gangway, to find that the routine of the Victorious was going as smoothly as ever; the fracas on the upper deck was at an end, and the watch was changing. But whatever the senior officers might think of it, Ned's gun-room messmates received him below with wrath and protests.

"You ass, you let the ruffian slip through your fingers!" chorused half a dozen at once as they crowded round Ned in the alleyway. "We saw you!"

"We were going to tar and feather him! Did you do it on purpose, you chump?"

"Yes, I did!" said Ned very shortly, turning red and facing them. "What of it?"

The midshipmen were flabbergasted.

"Well, but what—why—"

"He was our prisoner!" said Acland.

"Your prisoner be hanged! Did you lick him or did I?"

"He's right there," said Keppel, as Acland scratched his chin, and seemed taken aback.

"The chap has had enough," said Ned. "Dash it all, aren't you satisfied when a fellow's knocked out in a fight, chased all over the ship, and treed up a mast, dives eighty feet, and finishes up by getting half drowned? The poor beast didn't need any ragging after that."

"Hear, hear!" said Keppel. "Dry up, all the rest of you! Hardy's earned the right to jolly well make his own terms, and I'm with him! Our gun-room owes you a big score to-day, Hardy; you've kept our flag flying. Let the bruiser go, if Hardy prefers it. It doesn't matter, for he licked him. What I want to know is, how did he get here?"

"We're all going to hear that, or know the reason why!"

JUST LIKE GUSSY!

(Continued from page 24.)

a twinkling, and Fatty Wynn and Herries, the two heaviest of the party, sat upon his chest to secure him.

"Lemme gerrup!" gasped the unfortunate Mr. Link.

"Wait a minute!" said Tom Merry cheerfully. "We're going to make an example of you, as a sort of warning to you in future. You are a fearful rascal, aren't you?"

"Hang you! Let me get up, or—"

"Do you admit that you are a rascal, and that you have swindled D'Arcy, or shall I stick this pin into you?" asked Tom Merry.

"I—oh!—yes—no—don't you dare—ow! Yes, I am a rascal—oh!—I did swindle D'Arcy—yes, yes, yes! Don't! Yes!"

"Good! You see, he admits it himself, chaps!" said Tom Merry. "Now form up, and let him run the gauntlet."

Tom Merry kept a firm grip upon the rascal, while the other ten of the party formed in a double row, five on each side. Each had a cap or a piece of rope in his hand, ready for the ordeal.

"Right hands up!" said Tom Merry.

said the others fiercely. "Where's the chap who brought him? Fetch Wexton here!"

They summoned Wexton, and a very angry party he had to face. But that wily schemer, though secretly very uneasy, had had time to think what he should say.

"Now, Wexton, let's have it straight, please," said Keppel grimly. "How did you come to bring that blackguard here, and why was he dressed in midshipman's kit?"

"I'm just as sick about it as you all are," said Wexton gravely. "It's my opinion we've had a rotten practical joke played on us. I know nothing of the chap. I got a note that apparently came from Moresby, of the Triumphant, saying their gun-room champion would like to visit us and put the gloves on with our best man."

"Well?"

"I don't believe the note came from Moresby at all. I wish I'd kept it," said Wexton. "It's a plant that some ass who's trying to be funny has got up. The chap came aboard an hour ago, and said he was Beaufort, so I brought him below. I call it a blackguardly business!" added Wexton hotly.

"Hear, hear!" said Ned quietly. "Blackguardly is right, Wexton."

Wexton met his eyes for a moment, and changed colour slightly, but hurried on with his explanation—or rather, the string of lies he had prepared.

"Luckily Hardy gave him a thorough licking," said Wexton. "We ought to have tarred and feathered the cad three times over. I'm for setting the police on him."

"Well, but how do you know that letter came from Moresby?" said Keppel, half convinced.

Wexton answered the question and a dozen others in a way that more or less satisfied the middies. They did not for a moment suspect the real state of the case.

They questioned him freely, and he lied glibly and cleverly in reply. He had a fresh lie for every query, and never once contradicted himself. Few liars are as expert as Mr. Wexton. He convinced them that he had been badly taken in, and was as bitter about it as any of them.

"You must be a thundering ass, Wex, that's all I've got to say!" said Keppel witheringly.

"I'm afraid I was," said Wexton penitently. Jinks was about to open his mouth, but Ned nudged him, and got him out of the room.

"I don't believe a word of it!" snorted Jinks, when they were both alone in the sleeping-flat. "It's my belief that meaty-mouthed bounder Wexton got the whole thing up himself."

"I don't see how we can prove it, and Wexton's done me rather a good turn on the whole."

"Well, that's one way of looking at it," said the astonished Jinks.

"I'm cock of the ring here now, which is rather a score; not that I want to shove myself forward," said Ned. "We've had a real good scrap. Rather a jape. It's my show, isn't it? So don't say anything about it in the gun-room, there's a good chap. Let it drop."

"All right, if you like," said Jinks rather mystified.

(Ned's a good sport, isn't he? Developments are at hand! Don't miss next week's great instalment, what ever you do, chaps!)

Ten right hands went up like clockwork. "Now, you rascal, you're going through it! If you don't run, we'll give you a ducking in the ditch, and then put you through it. Take your choice!"

Mr. Link staggered to his feet. There was no escape. Tom Merry's grip was on his collar, and the rest were ready to pile on him. He cast a hunted look round, and then faced the double row and hesitated.

"Look here—"

"Oh, go on!" said Tom Merry, and he gave the rascal a push, and then a powerful kick behind, which fairly started him on the run.

Mr. Link staggered between the double rows of waiting juniors, and they mobbed him good and hard as he ran. Thwack, thwack, thwack!

He yelled, and made a desperate dash to get through. The blows came down like rain, and he reeled to right and left; but finally he tore through. And then he did not stop. He kept on at full speed, and disappeared among the trees.

"Ha, ha, ha!" shouted Tom Merry. "By Jove, that chap can sprint. And he doesn't look much of an athlete either. I think we've seen the last of Mr. Link, chaps!"

And Tom Merry was right. St. Jim's saw no more of the bogus detective.

THE END.

(There's another riu-snorting yarn in next week's GEM called "SALESMEN OF ST. JIM'S!" Take a look at the cover on page 24.)

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EASTWOOD LEAGUE SHIELD.

WON ON THE POST!
ST. JIM'S DOUBLE TRIUMPH!

By "Old Boy."

St. Jim's, Wed.

WITH the championship of the Eastwood League depending on their match with Redclyffe, there would have been some excuse for nervousness among the Saints, but I found them coolly confident, not a whit dismayed by their unhappy slip at Highcliffe of last week.

Greyfriars were playing at Claremont, and were expected to win. It remained for St. Jim's to pile up a big bag of goals against Redclyffe and top the league on goal average, points being equal. Unless, of course, either Greyfriars or St. Jim's should drop a point, thus giving the championship to their rivals.

Alexander Judd, the Redclyffe captain, was calm, quite sure of himself, and even inclined to try to "put the wind up" the Saints before the start. I did not anticipate that those tactics would meet with much success, and I was amply reassured when St. Jim's made their customary steady and workmanlike beginning.

Luck, however, is a fickle jade, and although the opening exchanges were in favour of St. Jim's, a miskick by Kangaroo let Judd through and the Redclyffe skipper made the most of his chance. He shot, a little wildly, perhaps, but once again luck was with him, and Fatty Wynn, in going to the ball, miscalculated by just a fraction. Amid an almost amazed silence, the ball dropped into the St. Jim's net.

It was then that we saw the real St. Jim's—and I can safely say that I have never seen a team go so "berserk" mad as the St. Jim's men did after that snap goal. From Tom Merry the leather went out to Talbot, and Talbot was away like a runaway express. He beat a half-back, drew a back, and slung the leather across

to Tom Merry as accurately as though he had laid it at his feet. Tom feinted, and let fly with a shot that resembled the discharge of a cannon.

And that was only the beginning. Once again Talbot raced through, and this time he shot on his own account. The Redclyffe goalkeeper got his hands to the ball, but it went clean through them, on into the top of the net. There was one.

Yet again the Saints descended on the Redclyffian goal, and this time it was Jack Blake who, leaping high at the psychological moment, sent in a perfect "header" that added number three to the total.

Again they came—this time Arthur Augustus D'Arcy took the ball down the touchline, and centred for Tom Merry to convert with an unstoppable drive. Four up. Once again Talbot went through, giving to Levison at close range—and Ernest Levison made no mistake! Redclyffe lined up with five against them, and the Saints still thirsting for more!

Just before half time, Tom Merry got his third with a smashing shot that carried the Redclyffe goalkeeper into the net, ball and all—and as they sucked lemons, the faces of the Redclyffians were worth a guinea a box!

Redclyffe put up a stern struggle on the re-start, but they were held. Goals did not come in this half, but the result was beyond doubt. Tom Merry slammed home the last goal of the season two minutes before the final whistle—and the phone tinkled with the final result from Claremont—a draw; three each! Greyfriars had dropped a point, and St. Jim's, by defeating Redclyffe, had won the Eastwood League Championship, together with the handsome shield presented by Lord Eastwood!

Tom Merry was borne aloft from the field, and it was some time before Lord Eastwood could gain silence and make his address, expressing his warmest congratulations and his own personal pleasure that his son, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, should figure in the team which would go down to history as the first holders of the trophy.

RESULTS.

ST. JIM'S .. 7	REDCLYFFE .. 1
Merry (4), Talbot, Blake, Levison.	Judd.
Teams.—ST. JIM'S: Wynn; Figgins, Kerr; Redfern, Noble, Lowther; Talbot, Levison, Merry, Blake, D'Arcy.	REDCLYFFE: Bellairs; Ward, Lock; Smith, Druce, Tanner; Forshaw, Mills, Judd, Stoker, Paget.
BAGSHOT .. 2	ROOKWOOD .. 2
Putter, Poole.	Dodd, Silver.
BANNINGTON GRAM. SCH. .. 0	HIGHCLIFFE .. 6
	Courtenay (4), Derwent, De Courcy.
CLAREMONT .. 3	GREYFRIARS .. 3
Baxter (3).	Wharton (2), Nugent.
ST. FRANK'S .. 4	RYLCOMBE GRAM. SCH. .. 2
Nipper (2), Tregellis-West, Pitt.	Gay (2).
ST. JUDE'S .. 1	ABBOTSFORD .. 1
Fox.	Fane.

FINAL LEAGUE TABLE.

	Goals.					
	P.	W.	D.	L.	F.	Pts.
St. Jim's	22	16	3	3	95	29 35
Greyfriars	22	15	4	3	89	27 34
St. Frank's	22	16	2	4	73	29 34
Rookwood	22	15	3	4	76	42 33
Highcliffe	22	12	5	5	58	35 29
Rylcombe	22	12	3	7	66	43 27
Bagshot	22	6	6	10	38	60 18
Redclyffe	22	7	3	12	41	47 17
St. Jude's	22	2	8	12	28	69 12
Claremont	22	2	6	14	41	70 10
Abbotsford	22	1	8	13	27	92 10
Bannington	22	1	3	18	14	100 5

ST. JIM'S GOAL SCORERS.

Eastwood League: Merry 45, Talbot 12, Blake 12, D'Arcy 10, Levison 6, Noble 3, Figgins 3, Cardew, Redfern, Lowther, and Julian 1 each.
Eastwood Cup: Merry 15, Blake 6, Levison 4, D'Arcy 4, Talbot 2, Lowther, Figgins, and Noble 1 each.

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