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The GEM 2^d





By **MARTIN CLIFFORD.**

Cousin Ethel is here again and, with her coming, the rivalry between Figgins and Gussy springs into being once more!

CHAPTER 1.

D'Arcy Stands On His Rights!

"**C**OUSIN ETHEL!"

"Certainly, deah boy!"

"What, coming here?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Good!" said Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther with one voice.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of St. Jim's, was standing in the Hall of the School House, with an open letter in his hand, when the chums of the Shell came down the stairs. D'Arcy's face was beaming, and Tom Merry had stopped to ask him if it was good news, and the swell of the School House cheerfully imparted the information that Cousin Ethel was coming down to St. Jim's.

"Yaas, good, isn't it?" said D'Arcy, screwing his eye-glass into his eye and surveying the Terrible Three with

a friendly grin. "It is weally vevy good of Cousin Ethel to give us a look-in like this, deah boys."

"Rather!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "When is she coming?"

"This afternoon."

"Just to see us, I suppose?" said Manners.

"Well, no," said D'Arcy. "There's somethin' on, I think. She's got some plan or othah in her mind—some-thing' to do with somethin' or othah, or somethin' of that sort, you know, Tom Mewwy."

"Oh, yes, that's quite lucid!" assented Tom.

"I can't quite make out what it is," said D'Arcy. "But I fancy she wants us to help her in somethin' or othah."

"Good! We're all ready."

"Yaas, wathah! Of course, it's a case of beauty in dis-twess," said Arthur Augustus. "But I weally wish Ethel would explain a little more definitely, you know. I have

—AND THEIR OLD FRIEND, D'ARCY'S COUSIN ETHEL!

of ST. JIM'S!

suspected more than once that she does not feel a weally pwopah wesepect for my judgment."

"Oh, impossible!"
"Yaas, it is impos, perhaps, but the thought has cossed my mind," said D'Arcy, shaking his head. "Ethel says I'm to meet her at the station, and to tell all the boys that she wants their help."

"Right-ho!" said the Terrible Three heartily.
"Of course, that's all wight. Ethel is a wippin' gal, and she's weally vewy sensible for a gal," said D'Arcy. "When I talk to her, you know, I feel that she can understand all I say, and most gals haven't bwains enough for that, you know."

"I'm afraid I haven't brains enough always, Gussy," said Tom Merry modestly. "You're such an awfully deep chap, you know."

D'Arcy smiled a satisfied smile.
"Yaas, I know I am wathah deep, Tom Mewwy. I'm to tell all the fellows they're wanted to help, but I can't tell them what they're wanted to help in, as I don't know myself. That's a wathah cwivious state of affairs, isn't it?"

"Oh, no; that's all right!" said Monty Lowther. "Everybody will be willing to help. That's a dead cert."
"Oh, yes!" said Tom Merry. "Even the New House bounders will rally round us at a time like this."

"Yaas, wathah! I suppose Figgins & Co. will wally wound like decent chaps," said Arthur Augustus. "I think Figgins wathah likes my Cousin Ethel, as a mattah of fact."

"And she rather likes Figgins," said Manners.
"Oh, no! Nothin' of the sort, Mannahs. You are quite mistaken on that point. Ethel is vewy nice even to a wank outsidah, you know. You noticed that you yourself got on vewy well with her last Chwistmas at Hucklebewwy Heath."

"Why, you silly ass—"
"Pway don't use any oppwobwious expwessions, Mannahs. Undah the circs, as I have to meet a lady this aftahnoon, I cannot give you a thwashin', as I do not wish to appeah before Cousin Ethel with a black eye, or anythin' of that sort. She has such a way of laughing at a chap."

"I suppose we're to come to the station with you?" said Tom Merry.

Arthur Augustus shook his head.
"No. Ethel says I'm to meet her, but she doesn't say anything about you boundahs."

"No; but, of course, it's understood."
"Wats!" said D'Arcy, who could be obstinate when he liked. "It's not understood at all, deah boys. I'm going to meet Cousin Ethel at the beastlay station, and I'm going alone."

"That's rather greedy of you, Gussy."
"Nothin' of the sort."

"Miss Ethel would naturally be pleased to see us."
"I weally don't see why she should be," replied D'Arcy, looking at them with his eyeglass screwed into his eye. "I can't see anything about you to please anybody to look at. As I have said, Ethel is polite, even to boundahs, but weally—"

"Are you looking for a thick ear, Gussy, to take to the station with you?"

"Certainly not, Lowthah! I wefuse to quawwel with any of you boundahs, as I must not wisk bein' disfigured this aftahnoon."

"But, weally, Gussy, you ought to let us come to the station," said Tom Merry. "You could explain to Cousin Ethel that we were all anxious to be attentive."

"That's it," said Manners persuasively. "Don't be an ass, you know."

"We only want to do the polite thing," said Lowther, in a wheedling tone.

But Arthur Augustus was adamant.
"I wefuse to take any of you boundahs with me," he said firmly. "I'm not even goin' to take any of the chaps in my own study; and I know Blake, Hewwies, and Digby

will want to come. Which we minds me, I must go and tell them about it."

"But, I say, Gussy—"
"Look here, Adolphus—"

"I'm afwaid I haven't time to talk now, deah boys. It's past two already, and the twain comes in at half-past thwee. I have to change my clothes, too, before I start, and bwush my toppah."

"You young ass—"
But Arthur Augustus was walking away, leaving the chums of the Shell in a decidedly wrathful state of mind.

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther liked Cousin Ethel, and she liked them, and they were glad to hear that she was coming down to St. Jim's. They could hardly go to the station to meet her without being asked, when she had asked D'Arcy. But, of course, Arthur Augustus, as her cousin, could have taken along his friends. But Arthur Augustus apparently knew a thing worth two of that. He was to meet Cousin Ethel, and he meant to have the honour and glory all to himself, and to escort the young lady in triumph to St. Jim's, amid the envious stares of his friends.

"The young rotter!" exclaimed Manners wrathfully. "He knows he's got the whip-hand this time, and he means to use it."

"We can't go, except as Gussy's friends," said Lowther. "It would look forward. I shouldn't like to make a bad impression upon Miss Cleveland."

"Rather not!"
Tom Merry was looking very thoughtful, and he did not join in the remarks of his chums. Lowther looked at him rather sarcastically.

"This chap calls himself leader of our lot," he remarked. "Sets himself up as cock of the Shell. Nice leader, Manners."

"Oh, ripping!" said Manners. "He sees us done like this—absolutely done by a tailor's dummy like Gussy—and hasn't a word to say!"

"I think it's about time we deposed Tom Merry, and got a kid out of the Remove or the Third Form to lead us," remarked Lowther. "It would be just as good, at any rate."

"A jolly sight better, perhaps."
"The image can't even speak."

"Oh, he's putting on that look like an owl to make us think he's thinking! But if he thinks we think he's thinking, I think he thinks—"

"Hallo! What's all the row?" asked Tom Merry. "I say, I've been thinking—"

"What with?" asked Lowther sarcastically.
Tom Merry laughed.

"Gussy won't take us along to meet Miss Ethel at the station."

"We know he won't."
"And we can't go with him without his permission. It would look rather forward in Cousin Ethel's eyes."

"Of course it would!"
"But if anything prevented Gussy going—"

"Eh?" ejaculated Manners and Lowther together.
"If anything prevented Gussy going," repeated Tom Merry calmly, "it would be only the polite thing for us to go in his place, for, of course, Miss Cleveland couldn't be allowed to arrive at Rylcombe Station and find nobody there to meet her and bring her to St. Jim's."

The next moment Tom Merry was reeling under a terrific slap on the shoulder from Manners. He staggered, but a thump on the other shoulder from Lowther set him right again. He gave a gasp.

"What the—how—why—"
"Hurrah!" shouted Lowther. "You've hit it!"

"You've hit me, you asses!" growled Tom Merry, rubbing his aching shoulders. "I've a jolly good mind to knock your silly heads together!"

"My dear chap, that's how we show our appreciation of your genius," said Lowther blandly. "Your ideas, as a rule, are rotten; but this time you have simply hit the nail on the head, and the wheeze is a regular ripper."

"Spiffing!" said Manners. "Of course, something might easily happen to keep Gussy from going to the station."

The Terrible Three burst into a simultaneous laugh.
"Such things have happened," grinned Lowther.

"And may happen again," said Tom Merry.
"He might get a thick ear and be unable to show up—"

"Or he might get tied up to a tree—"
 "Or locked up in the gym, or the boot-room," said Tom Merry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Of course, it's impossible for us to be left out in the cold in a matter like this," said Tom Merry. "Gussy will have only himself to blame. Let's jaw it over, and get on to a good plan for keeping him here, and then all's plain sailing."

And the Terrible Three put their heads together and plotted a plot.

CHAPTER 2.

Blake Is Left Out!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY walked away towards Study No. 6, the letter in his hand, looking and feeling exceedingly pleased with himself.

Cousin Ethel was coming down to St. Jim's! The girl had a standing invitation from the Head's wife, kindly Mrs. Holmes, to come whenever she chose; but her visits were not frequent, and they were always prized by the boys. Tom Merry and his friends were anxious to stand well in Cousin Ethel's eyes, and D'Arcy became a person of unusual importance on the strength of his cousinship.

The coming visit meant a great time for Arthur Augustus. D'Arcy had a great weakness for falling in love with those of the weaker sex on the slightest provocation, and he was more or less in love with Cousin Ethel; but for the life of him he had never been able to make out whether Ethel took him seriously or not.

At all events, the swell of the School House was determined that he, and he alone, was the fellow who would meet Cousin Ethel at the station and escort her to St. Jim's.

He entered Study No. 6, where Blake, Herries, and Digby were putting on their running-shoes for a little sprint, it being a half-holiday at St. Jim's, and a fine April afternoon. The beaming satisfaction in D'Arcy's face attracted the attention of the chums of the Fourth at once.

"Hallo! What's on?" asked Blake, looking at him. "Found a threepenny bit in somebody's pocket, Gussy?"

"He's just heard of a new thing in fancy waistcoats," said Digby. "That's the only thing that would bring such a seraphic grin to his chivvy."

"Or his governor has sent him a new silk topper as a birthday present," remarked Herries.

"Oh, pway don't wot, deah boys—"

"Well, what is it then?"

"I've had a lettah fwom my Cousin Ethel—"

The chums of the Fourth were all attention at once.

"Good! What's the news?"

"She's comin' here!"

"Coming here?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Good again! But what for?"

"Well, pwnceipally to see me, of course; but she has some plan in her bwain, too, which she wants us to help her with. She says I'm to tell you all, and ask you all if you will help her."

"Will we, rather!" said Blake emphatically. "What do you chaps say?"

"What-ho!" said Herries and Digby.

"But what are we to help in, Gussy?"

"Cousin Ethel doesn't say."

"Never mind; we'll help all the same. When is she coming to St. Jim's?"

"This aftahnoon, by the thwee-thirty at Wylcombe."

"Good! We'll all meet her!"

Arthur Augustus gave a slight sniff.

"You won't do anythin' of the sort, Blako. Cousin Ethel has asked me to meet the twain at the station, and she hasn't said a word about you. I've just told Tom Mewy that he can't come."

"Why, you young rotter, of course we're coming."

D'Arcy deigned no answer to that last remark. He walked out of the study, and they heard him go down the stairs. The chums of Study No. 6 were looking extremely disgusted.

"I suppose that's what he calls chummy?" said Blake.

"Rotten!" said Herries.

"Distinctly rotten!" said Digby. "I never thought Gussy had such nerve. This is the chap we've taken up and loved like a brother—the chap we've put up with, whose silk hats, whose neckties we've never inked—"

"Notwithstanding all provocations," said Blake.

"And this is our reward."

"Hallo, you chaps!" Tom Merry looked into the study.

"You're looking rather down in the dumps, kids."

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"Who are you calling kids?" said Blake aggressively. He was in an aggressive mood.

Tom Merry laughed.

"Well, you're not looking very cheerful for a party of fellows going to meet one of the most charming girls in the world!"

"Eh? Who told you we were going to meet anybody?"

"So you're not going, then?"

"No, we're not," grunted Blake. "Can't see why you Shellfish need bother your heads about it, though. Funny how some chaps can't mind their own business."

"Oh, keep your wool on!" said Tom Merry good-naturedly. "I was thinking of taking you into a wheeze."

"We're fed up with your wheezes, thanks, Tom Merry. I don't want to become an old man before my time, so we won't hear the wheeze, thank you!"

"Oh, very well, if you don't want to go and meet Miss Cleveland—"

Blake gave a jump.

"What! Is it a wheeze for getting round Gussy?"

"That's the cheese."

"Go ahead!" said Blake tersely.

"I take it that Gussy won't have you along with him any more than he will have us," said Tom Merry. "He wants to do the little trick all on his lonesome, and bring Cousin Ethel here all by himself, and flaunt his success in our eyes, so to speak."

"Yes, something like that."

"Well, my idea is to take the job off his hands."

Blake shook his head.

"We can't go along without being asked," he said.

"Gussy would show us up before Cousin Ethel. It would look too bad. As for persuading him, wild horses wouldn't do that, when the obstinate young rotter's made up his mind."

"Well, I've never seen a wild horse persuading anybody, so I can't say about that," confessed Tom Merry. "But I wasn't thinking of persuading him. I was thinking of locking him up in this study."

"What?"

"What's the matter with locking him up here? If he can't get out to meet the lady, naturally his friends go in his place. We all go. I've taken you into this little wheeze out of sheer good-nature, as we could have kidnapped Gussy in our own study—"

"H'm! Perhaps you could, and perhaps you couldn't," said Blake, with a sniff. "Very likely we should have dropped on you and made you sit up."

"Well, anyway, what do you think of the wheeze?"

"Jolly good! We're on it—eh, kids?"

"My word!" said Digby. "Rather!"

"Right-ho!" said Herries.

Tom Merry grinned gleefully.

"Good! That's settled, then. Gussy's gone over to the New House to interview Figgins & Co. When he comes back—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

CHAPTER 3.

Figgins Has an Idea!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY crossed the quadrangle to the New House, but he was not put to the trouble of going up to the study shared by Figgins, Kerr, Wynn, and Marmaduke Smythe, the famous quartet known all over St. Jim's as Figgins & Co. The four juniors were standing in a group outside the New House at St. Jim's. Figgins had a cricket bat under his arm, and was laying down the law on the subject of the great summer game, which at this time was beginning to excite general attention at St. Jim's. Football was a thing of the past season.

"You see, you have to hold it so," said Figgins, taking a cricket ball from Kerr's hand, "then throw back your hand so—"

"Ow!" ejaculated Fatty Wynn, as the back of Figgins' large hand biffed upon his nose. "What on earth are you up to, fathead?"

"I really wish you wouldn't get in the way, Fatty Wynn. I never saw such an awkward ass as you are in all my natural!" said Figgins, in a tone of remonstrance.

Fatty Wynn rubbed his nose ruefully.

"Seems to me you're a clumsy ass, Figgins. But I say, I'm getting hungry!"

"I'm explaining how Kildare bowls—"

"Yes, that's all very well, but I get hungry in this weather. Are you coming to the tuckshop, you chaps?"

"If you don't want to listen to me, Fatty Wynn, while I explain how Kildare took Monteith's wicket—"

"But I do want to listen to you, Figgy," said the

Welsh partner in the Co. pacifically. "But I don't see why you couldn't explain in the tuckshop just as well as here."

"You greedy young rotter!"

"I don't see why you should call me greedy. This weather makes me hungry. I didn't have much dinner, either—only some beef and potatoes, and a pie, and some plum pudding, and a few tarts and cream-puffs in the study afterwards, and that toffee and the nuts. I really—"

"You throw back your hand like that—"

"Are you coming to the—"

"Will you shut up? You throw back your hand—"

"I say, I rather feel with Fatty on this occasion," observed Marmaduke. "I'm a bit peckish myself—"

"Got it!" yelled Pratt.

"You howwid wascal!" roared D'Arcy. "You have wuined my hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

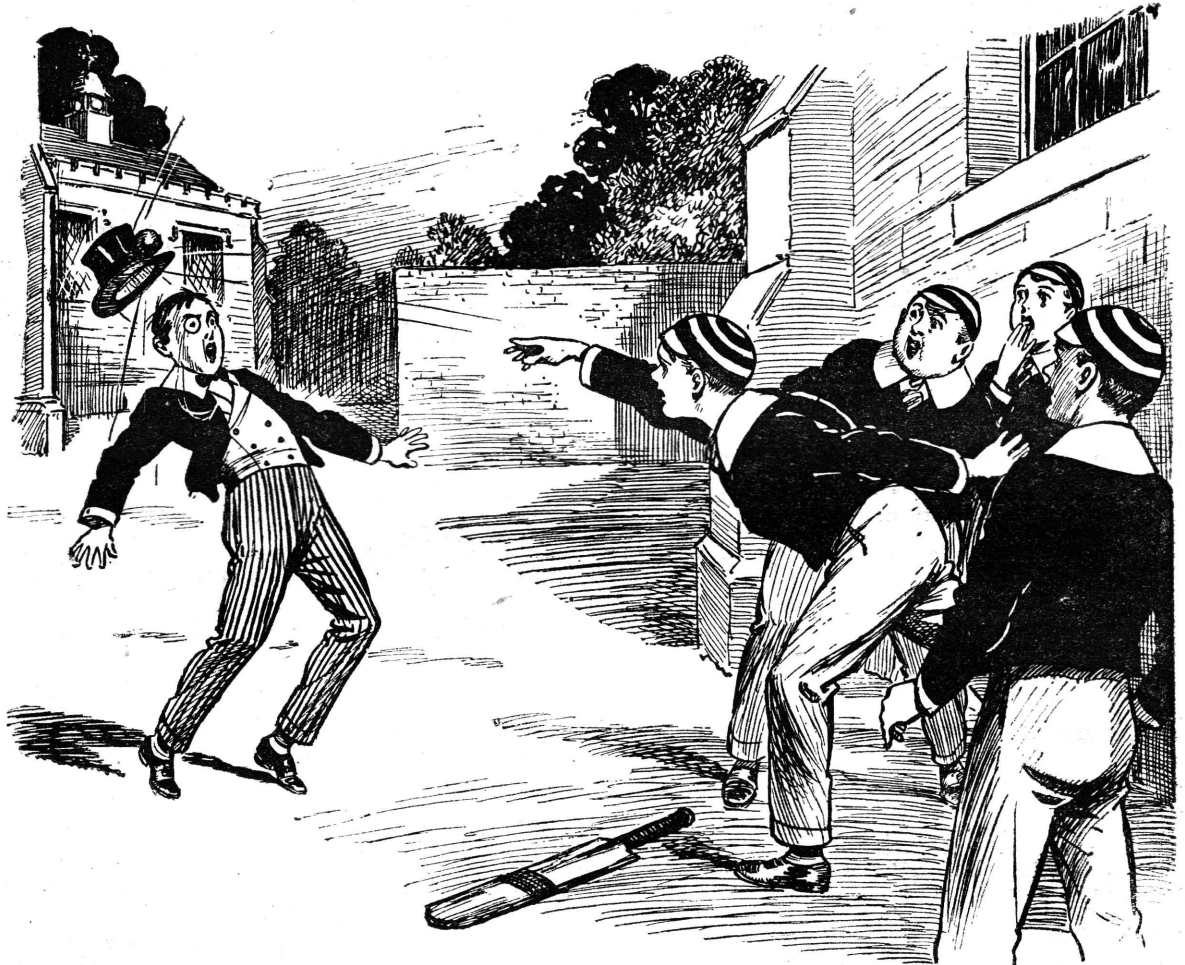
"Give me my toppah immediately."

Two or three New House juniors were scrambling for the hat. French and Jimson tore it out from under the feet of the successful Pratt. They seemed to disagree as to the ownership of the recovered hat, for they pulled at it in opposite directions, and French gained the brim, while Jimson remained in possession of the crown.

D'Arcy gave a wail of anguish.

"My toppah! Give me my beastlay toppah, you wottahs!"

Figgins grinned.



“YOOP!” D'Arcy gave a yell as Figgins let go of the ball and it crashed into the swell of the Fourth's silk hat and sent it flying!

"You throw back your hand like that—"

"Look out for my napper, fathead!"

"Get your silly napper out of the way, then. Then you grip the ball like that, and let it go overhand like that. My only hat!"

Figgins let the ball go to illustrate the movement, and it crashed against the silk hat of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who came up at that moment.

D'Arcy gave a yell.

"Ow! My hat! You bwute! My toppah!"

The topper was rolling over in the mud of the quadrangle, and there was a shout from a number of New House youths as they dashed towards it.

Perhaps their intention was to restore it to D'Arcy; perhaps it wasn't. At all events, that hat was soon not worth restoring to anybody. Pratt was the lucky one who caught it, and he caught it by making a desperate bound and coming down upon it with both feet.

There was a crash as he landed on it, and he pinned it to the ground under his heavy boot.

"Give him his toppah!" he exclaimed.

"Certainly!" said Jimson, tossing his portion of the ruined silk topper to the swell of the School House. "There you are, Gussy!"

"There you are!" said French, adding his fragment, which caught D'Arcy under the chin. "You'll need a little secotine, and that hat will be as good as new."

And the New House juniors marched off laughing, leaving Arthur Augustus D'Arcy surveying the ruins of his hat with feelings too deep for words.

"Bai Jove, what a set of wottahs!" murmured the swell of the School House. "Figgins, I wegard you as sewal sorts of a beast!"

"Ha, ha, ha! It was quite an accident, Gussy. I was showing Kerr how Kildare bowled Monteith at practice this afternoon. And how was I to know that you were going to bring a silk hat into the discussion?"

"You are a wank wottah!"

"I'm really sorry, Gussy. It's lucky that you are rolling

in money and the price of a silk topper is nothing to you. As a matter of fact, you'll be glad of an excuse to buy a new one. And really that was getting a little out of date, Gussy."

"Do you weally think so, Figgins?" asked the elegant swell of the School House, with real anxiety.

"Yes, rather! Why, you must have had it a fortnight! Bury the remains, Gussy, and get a new one in the latest style. That's my advice."

"Are you coming to the tuckshop, Figgins?"

"Oh, all right, Fatty! You—"

"Wait a minute, deah boys! I want to speak to you. That's weally why I came ovah here. As a rule, I am wathah select, not to say swaggah, in my selection of persons whom I honah with my conversation, but I have instructions to speak to you New House boundahs."

"My dear chap, the best thing you can do is to take a return ticket to Colney Hatch."

"Before we wipe up the ground with you," said Kerr.

"I wufuse."

"Oh, do come, Figgins! I'm simply starving!"

"Pway do not huwwy away, deah boys! I have a message for you fvwom a lady."

"Oho!" said Figgins. "Which of your latest mashes is that? The young lady in the draper's at Rylcombe, or the maid at the Golden Pig?"

"Pway don't be fwivolous, Figgins!"

"It's you who are frivolous, Gustavus."

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"Pway don't wot! I have had a lettah fvwom my Cousin Ethel."

Figgins & Co. became attention at once, especially Figgins.

"Oh, that alters the case!" said Figgins. "Any news? Does Cousin Ethel ask after me?"

D'Arcy sniffed.

"Why on earth should she ask after you, Figgins?" he said.

The New House leader turned a trifle red.

"Oh, I don't know! She might."

"I assuah you, deah boy, that Cousin Ethel does not wemembah ewevy boundah she has met at this coll," said Arthur Augustus.

"Oh, get on with the washing!" said Figgins. "Why do you come telling us about the letter for, if there's nothing about us in it?"

"But there is somethin' about you in it."

"Oh, is there?" said Figgins, with reviving interest. "Well, what is it? Spout it out! Get it off your padded chest, and don't be so beastly long-winded about it!"

"I wufuse to be chawactewised as long-winded!"

"Oh, come to the point!"

"It is extremely difficult for me to come to the point when you keep on intewwuptin' me," said D'Arcy. "Howevah, I will endeavor to do so. Cousin Ethel is comin' down to the coll—"

"Hurrah!" shouted Figgins.

"Hurrah!" echoed the Co., waving their caps.

D'Arcy screwed his monocle into his eye and surveyed them with extreme disdain.

"I weally do not see any reason for this absurd demonstration," he said. "You will pwobably see vevy little of my cousin, as she will, of course, be with me most of the time. I splay want to give Cousin Ethel's message, and I beg you to westwain yourselves, and act like Chwistianst for a short time. Cousin Ethel wants us all to help her—"

"Help her in what?"

"I weally do not know, as I have explained already to Blake and Tom Mewwy. There is somethin' on, and we are to help her; but, of course, you New House boundahs can stand out of it if you like; in fact, it would pwobably be wathah better if you did—"

D'Arcy was interrupted. Figgins seized him by the shoulder, and ran him forcibly against the wall of the New House. The School House swell wriggled in the grip of the muscular Figgins.

"Pway welease me, Figgins!"

"What's all that rot!" demanded Figgins sternly. "What's that about us standing out of it? Do you want us to frog's-march you up and down the quad?"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,265.

"I wufuse to be fwog's-marched up and down the beastlay quad—"

"Mind, anything that Cousin Ethel wants done will be done, and it's as much our business as it is yours. Understand that?"

"Yaas, wathah! But weally you are wumplin' my collah!"

"Any question of anybody standing out of it—"

"You are soilin' my jacket against this beastlay and extwemely dirtay wall!"

"Well, don't be a young ass!"

"I wufuse to be called an ass! I would not speak to you wotten boundahs at all, only I have to tell you Cousin Ethel's message!" said D'Arcy, wriggling out of Figgins' grip. "You are a wuff wottah, Figgins, and appeal to have not the slightest respect for a fellow's clothes. I have told you what is wanted."

"No, you haven't. You've only told us that there is something wanted."

"That is all I can tell you at pwsent. Cousin Ethel will tell you the west when she awwives. I must buzz off now."

"When is she coming?"

"By the half-past thwee twain at Wylcombe."

"Good! I suppose you're making up a party to go down to the station to meet her?" said Figgins, with a sparkle in his eyes.

Arthur Augustus shook his head.

"I am down' nothin' of the sort, Figgins."

"But someone must—"

"I am goin' down to the beastlay station to meet my cousin. I am goin' alone. Cousin Ethel asked me to come."

"Didn't she mention me?"

"No, she didn't mention you, or any othah wottah!"

And D'Arcy turned and walked away towards the School House.

"I've got a really ripping idea—a first-rate, double-action, non-skidding idea!" said Figgins, as he watched D'Arcy depart. "You know passengers from Huckleberry Heath change at Wayland, like everybody who comes by railway to this place. Now, if four fellows about our size were waiting for her on the platform at Wayland—"

"My hat!"

"With a trap outside to bring her on to the school without her coming by the local train to Rylcombe at all—"

"Hurrah!"

"Then," said Figgins, with a grin of satisfaction, "who ever happens to be waiting to meet her at Rylcombe can go on waiting. He won't see anything of Cousin Ethel."

"Ha, ha, ca!"

"Whether it's Gussy, or Blake, or Tom Merry, or anybody else, or the lot together, they can wait for the empty train—empty as far as Cousin Ethel's concerned, I mean."

"Ha, ha, ca!"

"I should think it would be easy to persuade Miss Ethel to come from Wayland by trap instead of by train," said Figgins, with a grin. "It's a ripping afternoon, and the lanes are getting quite green and jolly. I can drive first-rate."

"You'd better let me drive, Figgins."

"Oh, don't be an ass, Kerr, old chap. I should consider myself responsible if there were any accidents. We don't want to damage a lady—"

"No; that's why I don't think you ought to drive."

"We'd better go to the tuckshop and have a bit of a feed first," said Fatty Wynn. "We shall get awfully hungry going all the way over to Wayland. Better have something in the trap, too, in case Cousin Ethel is hungry."

"Trust Fatty Wynn not to overlook a point like that!" grinned Marnaduke.

"It's a most important point," said Fatty Wynn. "What I say is—"

"It's a go," said Kerr. "Let's get ready, and unless I'm much mistaken we shall succeed in pulling the legs of those School House bounders this time. We can get the trap in Rylcombe, and drive over to Wayland in plenty of time. Come on!"

And the four New House juniors, chuckling gleefully, went into their House to prepare for the trip. It really looked as if the astute Figgins would succeed this time in scoring a victory against the juniors of the School House.

Arthur Augustus was used to attracting a certain amount of attention in the School House, but now he was both surprised and gratified by the unusual interest his chums took in his proceedings. Blake and his comrades seemed really unable to let him out of their sight, and the interest displayed by the Terrible Three was quite as keen. Arthur Augustus had changed his clothes, but that was merely a preliminary in his preparations for the expedition. His hair had to be carefully brushed and parted, and this was

no light task. The waistcoat he was to wear had to be selected with great care from a dozen others, and advice taken upon the point from his chums. Blake and the rest were grave as judges when he appealed to them for their judgment.

They had followed him upstairs to watch him change, then they had followed him back to the study. He was bound to finish up there, because there was a large glass in the study in which Gussy could view his elegant figure full length. Needless to say, such glasses were not provided by the school for the use of the juniors, and D'Arcy had himself stood the expense of having it affixed there. Owing to the exigencies of space, it was fastened upright to the wall. On more than one occasion had D'Arcy been put to the expense of new glass for his mirror; but that was a mere trifle to the best-dressed fellow in the college. A fellow must expect to have to make sacrifices for his ideals.

D'Arcy took a look at himself in the glass.

The reflection there seemed to be very gratifying to look at, for the swell of the School House smiled with complete satisfaction.

D'Arcy did indeed look a picture. He had a really elegant figure, and his clothes were well cut, and worn with much grace. The crease in his trousers was only equalled by the set of his coat, and the brightness of his hat outshone everything but the aggressive polish of his boots. From crown to toe D'Arcy looked perfect, his own particular line.

"Bai Jove," murmured Arthur Augustus, "without bein' conceted, I weally do think I look wathah wippin', you know! Cousin Ethel can't fail to notice the diffewence between a chap like me and a big, ill-dressed, careless wottah like Figgins. Yaas, wathah!"

And Arthur Augustus crossed to the door and turned the handle. The door refused to open, and D'Arcy pulled at it very hard.

"Bai Jove, the beastlay door's jammed! I haven't any time to waste, eithah! I say, out there! Blake! Tom Mowwy! Are you there?"

Only the echoes of his own voice answered him. He tugged at the door again, quite rumpling his lavender kid gloves, but it did not budge. A horrid suspicion darted into the mind of the School House swell.

"Bai Jove! The howwid wottahs have gone and left me locked in!"

It was a fact; they were really gone. Tom Merry and Blake and their followers were marching out of the gates while Arthur Augustus was still calling, and, in high good-humour, they took the road to Rylcombe, to meet Cousin Ethel. But, meanwhile, what were Figgins & Co. doing?

CHAPTER 4.
Cousin Ethel!

"WAYLAND!" said Figgins pointing with his whip. The sleepy little country town was in sight; sleepy enough now, though lively as a rule on market days. The trap containing the New House quartet was bowling along the green lane, the ribbons in the hands of the great Figgins.

Figgins & Co. had carried out their plan so far without a hitch of any kind. The New House chums were fortunately in funds, so there was no difficulty in that quarter. They had hired Mr. Grimes' roomy trap in Rylcombe, and Figgins had taken care that a decent pony was put between the shafts. Then he had driven over to the market town with the gleeful Co. in ample time to get to Wayland Junction to meet the train from Huckleberry Heath.

The drive was very pleasant through the country lanes in the bright, sunny April weather. Figgins, in spite of the doubts Kerr had expressed, handled the pony easily and well, and there were no mishaps. Wayland came in sight and Figgins drove into the country town in great style, and brought the trap to a halt outside the station.

Figgins & Co. alighted. The station clock indicated ten minutes to three, and, as Figgins knew, the Huckleberry Heath train did not come in till close on three o'clock, when the local from Rylcombe was waiting ready for it. Figgins grinned as he patted the sleek pony.

"Good time, kids!" he exclaimed. "Everything in the garden is simply lovely. We'll get on to the platform, of course, or Cousin Ethel may change trains without our knowing it. We've got to keep an eye open. Of course, if we were to lose her now, those School House rotters would have the grin of us!"

"We shan't lose her!" said Kerr determinedly.

"Not much! You can stay and mind the pony, Kerr, in case of accidents!"

"I think I really ought to come on to the platform, Figgins!" said Kerr, in a very expressive tone.

"Now, don't be an ass, old fellow!" said Figgins, in a tone of mild remonstrance. "We don't want to find that the critter has bolted when we come out, do we?"

"Well, Fatty Wynn can look after the pony!"

"I can't!" said the Welsh partner in the Co. promptly.

"The refreshment-rooms are on the platform of this station, and there's just comy time for me to get something to eat before the train comes in. I'm tearfully hungry! It's driving in the open air, I suppose!"

"Perhaps Marmaduke—"

"Rats!" said Marmaduke promptly.

"Now, look here, Marmy—"

"I'm coming on the platform, Figgys!"

"Oh, rats!" said Figgins, looking annoyed. "Somebody must look after the beastly trap! I suppose I had better give this cabby-man a tanner to do it! It's a waste!"

"Why not look after the pony yourself, Figgys?"

"Eh?"

"We three can go on the platform and wait for Cousin Ethel," said Kerr. "We know her as well as you do! I don't suppose she particularly wants to see you, either, Figgys!"

"Are you looking for a thick ear, Kerr?"

"No, but—"

"Well, you'll get one jolly sharp if you talk that rot!" said Figgins. "Of course, I must go on the platform! I'll get the cabby to keep an eye on this restive charger. You'll see this beast doesn't bolt, won't you, cabby?"

"Yes, sir!" said the ancient Wayland cabman, touching his hat.

"Good! I'll make it a tanner! Now, do come into the station, kids, and stop arguing!"

"It was you who was arguing, Figgins!"

"Oh, give us a rest! I say, chappie, we want to go on the platform to meet the train from Huckleberry Heath!"

"Can't!" said the porter at the gate grumpily. "I know you young imps! You're not a-going on the platform if I knows it!"

"My dear chap—"

"Be hoff with you!"

The Co. looked at their leader. At Rylcombe there was no difficulty in getting on the platform to meet a train, but here it was evidently different. Figgins showed a silver sixpence between finger and thumb.

"Now, be a good chap—"

"Be hoff with you!"

"This tanner—"

"Get hout!" said the man, evidently not to be influenced by the voice of the charmer.

"Look here," said Figgins, "we're going on that platform! It's important!"

"You're not! I know you himps! Get hout!"

"Wait a minute, kids," said Figgins. "I'll fix it!"

He ran to the booking office and clamped down four pennies. In a few moments he was in possession of four platform tickets. With these in his possession he marched back and distributed them one each to the Co. The ticket official glared at the astute Figgins. They had tickets now, and he could not refuse them admission to the platform. He took the tickets surlily, and Figgins & Co. marched on, grinning triumphantly.

"More ways of killing a cat than by choking it with cream!" said Figgins sententiously. "We've saved twopence, and avoided being guilty of bribing an official in the course of his duty, so we ought to be satisfied. Still five minutes! You can go and get that feed, Fatty Wynn!"

"Right-ho, Figgins!"

"Buck up, and don't come back with jam all over your mouth!" said Figgins in a tone of admonition.

"Oh, I say, Figgys—"

"Shut up, and buzz off!"

Fatty Wynn buzzed off. The other three juniors walked up and down the platform and waited for the train to come in.

(Continued on next page.)

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Figgins uttered an exclamation when a puff of smoke was seen far up the line.

"Here she comes!"

"Good!" said Kerr and Marmaduke together.

"I—I say," said Figgins, showing traces of nervousness—very unusual in him. "Is my necktie straight, Kerr?"

Kerr glanced at it.

"No! It never is, Figgy!"

"You might just put it straight, will you, Kerr? There's a good chap!"

Kerr gave the necktie a jerk.

"Hang it all, Kerr, you might be a little more careful with a chap's necktie!" said Figgins. "I'll bet it's just as much out of straight now on the other side!"

"H'm! So it is."

Kerr gave the necktie another jerk. It pulled right out, and the end came loose in Kerr's hand. Figgins gave a grunt.

"You clumsy ass!"

"Sorry, Figgy; I couldn't help it! I say, I forgot to change my collar before I came out. Is this one very soiled?" asked Kerr anxiously.

"Look at my necktie—"

"Look at my collar—"

"If you—"

"Can't you—"

"Hallo! Here's the train!" said Marmaduke, as the train rushed into the station with a buzz and a clatter. "And here comes Fatty Wynn—jammy, as usual."

Fatty Wynn had seen the train come in from the window of the refreshment saloon, and he had bolted his last jam tart and darted out on the platform. There was jam on his hands, and jam on his mouth, and jam on his right cheek. Fatty Wynn, in his excitement, was quite unconscious of it.

Figgins was making desperate attempts to get his necktie tied again. But the loose ends were still in his hands when the train stopped. A charming face looked out of a window, and two bright blue eyes lighted upon the juniors at once.

It was Cousin Ethel!

CHAPTER 5.

Figgins & Co. Carry off the Prize!

"**C**OUSIN ETHEL!"

Cousin Ethel smiled.

Whether it was pleasure at the unexpected sight of the juniors on the Wayland platform, or the sight of Figgins' public performance with the troublesome necktie, or the jam on the plump countenance of Fatty Wynn—whatever it was, Cousin Ethel smiled sweetly. There was a rush of the juniors to open the carriage door.

Of course, Kerr got in Fatty Wynn's way, and Fatty Wynn got in Marmaduke's way, and the Co. looked daggers at one another. Figgins opened the carriage door and assisted Cousin Ethel to alight, cap in hand. The ends of his necktie hung over his waistcoat, for the moment forgotten by the blushing Figgins.

For the great Figgins was blushing.

"Cousin Ethel!"

"Figgins! What a surprise to see you here!"

"Yes, rather!" said Figgins. "Quite an accident, you know—that is—of course—not exactly an accident, but—"

"You didn't know I was coming to the school?"

"Oh, yes; Gussy told us, you know!"

"I see. And you happened to be in Wayland, so—"

"Well, no; we—happened to drive over in a trap," explained Figgins.

Cousin Ethel smiled.

"You see," said Figgins, growing more courageous—"you see, Miss Cleveland, it's such a really ripping day, that—that we thought you'd have had quite enough of train travelling by the time you got to this station, so—"

"So—," said Kerr.

"You see—," said Marmaduke.

"This is how it is," said Fatty Wynn. "We—"

"Exactly!" said Figgins.

The girl looked from one to the other with a lurking smile in her eyes.

"I don't think I quite understand yet," she said. "I suppose I am very stupid."

"Exactly," stammered Figgins. "I mean—not at all. You see—"

"You see," said Kerr, "we—"

"Shut up a minute, Kerr, old chap—"

"I'm explaining to Cousin Ethel—"

"Yes, but—"

"You see—," said Fatty Wynn.

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Wynn broke off suddenly. Marmaduke was passing his hand over his mouth with mysterious gestures to indicate that Fatty Wynn's face was jammy, as a hint to get it cleaned before Cousin Ethel noticed it. Fatty Wynn hadn't the faintest idea what Marmaduke's gestures and significant looks implied.

"I say, are you ill, Marmy?" he asked anxiously.

Cousin Ethel's eyes turned upon Marmaduke, and he dropped his hand suddenly from his mouth and turned red.

"No, you ass!" he muttered savagely.

The girl looked at her wristlet-watch.

"I shall have to hurry to get the Rylcombe train," she said.

"That's just it!" said Figgins eagerly. "We thought you would have had quite enough railway travelling by the time you got to Wayland—"

Cousin Ethel laughed.

"Well, so I have, Figgins, as a matter of fact; but I suppose it is not possible to walk to St. Jim's, is it?"

"Not a bit of it; but it's possible to drive."

"To drive?" said Cousin Ethel inquiringly.

"Yes, that's the wheeze—I mean, the idea," said Figgins. "We've brought a trap over to Wayland on purpose to drive you to the school, Cousin Ethel."

The girl's eyes danced.

"Have you really? How very kind of you, Figgins!"

Figgins turned positively crimson with pleasure.

"It will be kind of you, Miss Cleveland, if you come in the trap," he said. "It's jolly driving along the country lanes. It's so—so fresh and sweet in the spring, you know; all Nature putting on her—her—her—" Figgins paused. He had read a spring poem lately, and the imagery was still in his mind, but it had grown a little confused.

"I shall be glad to come, but—"

"Oh, you can't say no, Miss Ethel! It's so much better than a stuffy train; and, besides, you know what a lot of accidents happen to the local trains!"

"Do they?"

"Fearful!" said Figgins. "They—they rush along so recklessly, you know!"

There was a shriek of a train whistle. The girl started, and the juniors grinned with delight. A train at the opposite platform snorted and began to move.

"Is that—?"

"I'm sorry," said the hypocritical Figgins, assuming an extremely solemn expression—"I'm really sorry! That's the Rylcombe train."

"My train?"

"Yes; I'm afraid you've lost it."

Cousin Ethel looked very grave.

"All my fault," said Figgins penitently; "keeping you here talking, instead of taking you to your train. Luckily, there's the trap."

"When is the next train, do you know?"

"They go every hour."

"Dear me!" said Cousin Ethel.

"It would be as quick to go in the trap," said Figgins. "I'm so sorry we let the train go, like a lot of idiots—us, the idiots, of course!" he added hastily. "It was really Kerr's fault—"

"Well, I like that!" said Kerr. "You—"

"Oh, don't argue, Kerr! That's the worst of you Scotch chaps; you're always arguing! I suppose there's nothing for it but the trap, Miss Cleveland?"

"You feel sure my cousin—"

"I feel pretty certain he's still at St. Jim's," said Figgins. "They wouldn't let him get away after— I—I mean, I'm sure that something has happened to detain him. You know accidents do happen!"

"Yes; at St. Jim's," said Cousin Ethel demurely. "I suppose there is nothing for it but the trap, as you say. It is really very kind of you all!"

"Oh, not at all!" said Figgins. "The kindness is on your side."

"Very well put!" said Fatty Wynn. "The kindness is—"

"So if one of you would be kind enough to get my bag—"

There was a rush of juniors to seize the little travelling-bag.

Figgins and Kerr, of course, knocked their heads together in their haste, and Marmaduke picked up the bag. Figgins felt inclined for a moment to commit assault and battery on the spot and possess himself of the bag by main force. But Marmaduke was evidently prepared to resist any attempts to despoil him—and two gentle blue eyes were upon them. Figgins gave Marmaduke a look which ex-



The cheery New House juniors darted towards the carriage from which Cousin Ethel was about to alight. Fatty beamed his usual smile, but Figgins was still making desperate attempts to get his necktie tied again!

pressed volumes of what he would do when he met him again quietly in the study of the New House, and then turned towards Cousin Ethel with a sweet smile.

"This way, Cousin Ethel," he said.

"The refreshment-room's this way!" said Fatty Wynn. "I am sure Cousin Ethel must be hungry after a long journey—"

"I had a lunch-basket in the train," said Cousin Ethel. "I should like to get to St. Jim's as soon as possible."

They left the station. Figgins handed Cousin Ethel into the trap, and, in the fullness of his heart, gave the old cabby a shilling instead of sixpence for looking after the pony. Then the juniors swarmed in, and Figgins took the ribbons.

Figgins' heart beat with pride as he toiled the trap out of Wayland, with the girl seated by his side.

"I—I sav, would you like to drive?" said Figgins hesitatingly, when they were safe out upon a quiet country road with few observers in sight.

The girl smiled.

"Oh no, thank you; I'd rather you drove, Figgins!"

Figgins thought to himself that Cousin Ethel was a jolly sensible girl. That drive through the pleasant lanes to St. Jim's was the happiest time Figgins remembered in his life. Cousin Ethel seemed to enjoy it, too!

CHAPTER 6.

Done!

"TRAIN'S not in yet!" said Tom Merry.

Six juniors of St. Jim's had arrived at Rylcombe Station. The station clock indicated twenty-seven minutes past three, so that the juniors had cut it pretty fine. But so long as they were in time, what did that matter?

"Three minutes to wait!" said Blake, with a look of satisfaction. "I think I'll borrow a brush in the waiting-room, and get some of this dust off. I've never noticed Rylcombe Lane to be so dusty before."

"Look here, Blake—"

"Hallo, there's the train!" exclaimed Lowther.

In an instant all eyes were upon the train from Wayland. It came puffing and blowing into the station, and several doors opened as it stopped. There seemed to be an unusual number of passengers—eight or nine, at the least. The juniors ran along the train looking for Cousin Ethel.

But Cousin Ethel was not to be seen. The passengers all alighted, and the chums scrutinised them as they passed out, but Cousin Ethel was not among them. They ran along the train, peering into every carriage, but the carriages were empty. The guard waved his flag, and the train

moved on. With feelings too deep to be expressed in words, the juniors stood as a group upon the platform and watched the train steam away down the line.

"Well, my hat!" exclaimed Blake.

"My only Panama aunt!"

"Is it possible that Gussy was diddling us?" said Monty Lowther thoughtfully. "Can this be a jape of the great Gustavus? Was he pulling our noble leg all the time?"

Tom Merry shook his head.

"No, Monty, he meant to come to the station himself. It's all right, as far as Gussy is concerned."

"By Jove, here he is!" grinned Blake.

It was indeed Arthur Augustus, as large as life. He marched upon the platform, and screwed his monocle into his eye, and took a survey of the waiting juniors, and then turned haughtily away. It was evident that the swell of the School House was very much offended, and did not intend to speak to them. That did not really seem to trouble them much, however.

"I say, Gussy, exclaimed Blake, "sorry we hadn't time to let you out, you know. We came away in such a hurry."

"Pway do not address me, Blake."

"But how did you get out?"

"A fellow came into the School House for a cricket-bat, and he heard my cries and came to the rescue," said D'Arcy. "I had been a pwiseonah in the study for a feahful long time then, you howwid wascals!"

"Too bad! Accidents will happen—"

"I wegard you as a wottan. It was a long time before Walsh could find a key to fit the study door, as you had taken the key from the lock."

"You know, a chap is absent-minded at times."

"I wufese to wegard it as absent-mindedness. It was a wotten joke," said D'Arcy, with dignity. "I cannot any longah wegard you as a friend. But it appeahs that my Cousin Ethel had not awvived by that twain, aftah all."

"No," said Tom Merry. "We were in time, Gussy, but she wasn't in the train. Must have missed the junction at Wayland."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"I suppose there's a wire at the school," said Blake. "It's no good expecting Gussy to think of anything. We'd better get back to St. Jim's. That's about the only thing to be done now. I really don't see what Tom Merry wanted to bring us all here for nothing for."

"Oh, I like that!" exclaimed Tom Merry indignantly.

"I let you into the wheeze out of sheer good nature."

"Yes, you're always making a muck of something out of sheer good nature. Don't argue. It's bad enough to have wasted nearly all the afternoon for nothing without arguing about it afterwards," said Blake severely.

"But—"

"Oh, rats! Let's get back to St. Jim's. You won't find me following your silly lead again in a hurry, I can tell you."

The juniors left the station. There was evidently nothing for it but to get back to the school and see whether any news had been received of Cousin Ethel. They could hear nothing of any accident on the line, so they could only conclude that Cousin Ethel had been detained for some unknown reason at Huckleberry Heath, and in that case, of course, there would be a wire at St. Jim's. They went along Rylcombe Lane with sombre faces. They had looked forward to Cousin Ethel coming, and it was a keen disappointment.

They were near the school when a trap turned out of the Wayland Road into Rylcombe Lane, and dashed on towards St. Jim's.

Blake uttered a sharp exclamation, and broke into a run.

"Did you see who was in that trap?"

"Looked like Figgins driving," said Tom Merry. "I caught only a glimpse of him. What are you running for, Blake?"

Blake was looking excited. The trap had disappeared in a few seconds round a bend in the lane, and Blake was sprinting after it as if for a wager. The other juniors kept pace with him, though far from understanding the cause of the excitement.

"What's the trouble, Blake?"

Blake gasped.

"Didn't you see who was sitting beside Figgins?"

"Hadn't time. It looked like a girl."

"It was a girl!"

"Figgins & Co. are having an afternoon out in style," remarked Monty Lowther. "I wonder whom it was?"

"It was Cousin Ethel!"

"What!" shouted six voices.

"It was Cousin Ethel!"

"Impossible!"

"I tell you I saw her!"

The juniors were running in dead earnest now. There

was blank amazement in every face, but Blake's conviction carried weight.

"Are you sure, Blake?" gasped Tom Merry.

"Of course I am! This is all a trick of Figgins & Co."

"They've done us!" gasped Blake wildly. "Oh, the rotters! The beasts!"

"But—but— My hat, I have it!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Figgins & Co. have been over to Wayland in that trap—"

"Yes; and while we've been waiting—"

"They have—"

"They've been driving in the trap, bringing Cousin Ethel to the school!"

"My hat!"

"Bai Jove, deah boys, I weally—"

"They've done us! Come on! We'll wipe up the ground with Figgins & Co. for this! The rotters! To think of waiting there all that time, while they were driving— Oh, it won't bear thinking of! Come on!"

The juniors ran hard. They came in sight of the trap again as it turned into the ancient gateway of St. Jim's. They dashed after it in a body, and arrived panting in the quadrangle. The trap had stopped before Dr. Holmes' house, and Figgins was assisting Cousin Ethel to alight. The girl passed into the house, and Figgins turned with a broad grin to greet the dusty, breathless juniors as they came panting up.

CHAPTER 7.

A Function That Didn't Come Off.

FIGGINS & CO. instinctively drew closer together, and pushed back their cuffs, as the School House boys ran up.

Figgins expected trouble.

"Hallo, kids!" he said genially. "You look as if you had been running. Rather nice weather for a sprint, ain't it?"

"They don't seem to have enjoyed it, though," remarked Kerr. "Blake is looking quite annoyed, and Tom Merry seems excited."

"Oh, they've been running away from the Grammar School cads, I expect!" said Fatty Wynn.

"You rotters!" howled Blake.

"Eh? What's the matter now?"

"You—you—you—"

"Bai Jove, you know, I wegard you as a set of uttah wottahs! You have been and collahed my cousin at Wayland, while we were waitin' at the beastly station in Wylcombe! Is that what you call ewicket, Figgins?"

"I call it a jolly good jape," said Figgins, grinning. "Cousin Ethel happened to miss the Rylcombe train at Wayland—"

"Bai Jove!"

"You see, we kept her talking, and she didn't know it was going."

"You wottah!"

"But I had explained that you probably wouldn't be at the station to meet it—"

"As a mattah of fact, I was not; but these boundahs were there!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hear us smile!" said Kerr. "Ha, ha, ha!"

And Figgins & Co. smiled in a way that startled the rooks in the old trees. But the School House juniors did not feel like smiling.

Only one consideration deterred them from hurling themselves upon the New House quartet upon the spot. It was hardly possible to have a rough-and-tumble scramble on the steps of Dr. Holmes' house. The Head would come out—and, worse still, Cousin Ethel would see it all. It was impossible to allow Cousin Ethel to see them engaged in deadly warfare. Figgins & Co. realised their advantage, and they showed no disposition to leave the safe spot.

"You—you rotters!" said Tom Merry. "You've done us this time! I say, are you going to stand on those steps the rest of the afternoon, Figgins?"

"Yes; I rather like the spot," said Figgins blandly.

"It's nice and shady here," said Kerr.

"Come into the gym, you wasters!" exclaimed Blake. "Just you come into the gym with me, and I'll wipe up the floor with you!"

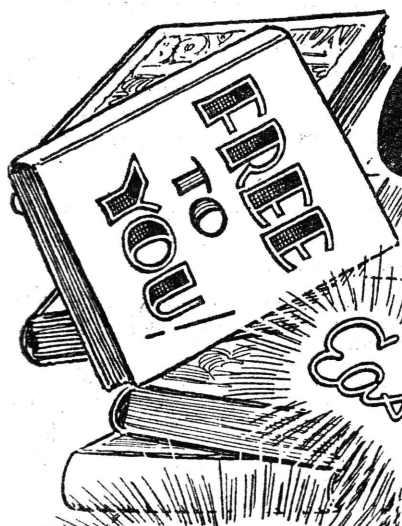
"Not good enough," grinned Marmaduke. "Better take it calmly, kids. You've been absolutely and completely done, and you may as well own up."

Tom Merry burst into a laugh.

"Well, as a matter of fact, Figgy is quite right!" he exclaimed. "We've been done, and it's no good denying it. We can't have a row here, either. I'm off!"

"Here, Tom Merry—"

(Continued on page 12.)



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"Oh, rats! I'm off! Come on, chappies!"

And Tom Merry walked away to the School House with Manners and Lowther. The chums of Study No. 6 bestowed a final glare upon Figgins & Co., but the new House chums showed no signs of coming off the steps.

"Oh, come on!" said Blake crossly. "We'll make the bounders sit up another time!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" howled Figgins & Co., as the juniors retreated. "Here us smile! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Absolutely done!" said Blake, as they went into the School House. "We had all the trouble of shutting Gussy up in the study for nothing—"

"Yaas, and it weally serves you wight, Blake! I wegard it as a kind of judgment upon you for not playin' the game!"

"Oh, rats! It's all Gussy's fault! I don't see what he wanted to tell those New House bounders Cousin Ethel was coming at all for."

"But I had to give them Cousin Ethel's message."

"Oh, don't begin to argue again! Let's go and get some tea, for goodness' sake, or I shall get into a bad temper, I think."

"You weally look wathah as if you were in a bad tempah already."

"Bosh!" said Blake, laughing a little. "It was exasperating, of course! But, never mind. I've thought of an idea that will take the shine out of Figgins & Co. a little."

"Get it off your chest, then," said Herries.

"Why shouldn't Cousin Ethel come to tea in the study?"

"Good wheeze!" exclaimed Herries and Digby instantly. And Arthur Augustus chimed in with a cordial "Yaas, wathah!"

"We're in funds just now," said Blake, with a look of satisfaction. "So is Tom Merry, as I happen to know. We'll go Co. with these bounders over it, as very likely the same idea has occurred to Merry, and we don't want any dispute about it. Cousin Ethel can't have two teas in one evening."

"Bai Jove, no! I'll go and wpropose it to Tom Merry, while you boundahs get in the things," said D'Arcy, turning towards the door of the study in which the chums were now. "I'll— Hallo, here are the boundahs!"

The Terrible Three had just arrived at the door of Study No. 6 and were looking in. Tom Merry came in, followed by Manners and Lowther.

"I was just coming to speak to you, Tom Merry."

"Never mind. I'll speak to you instead," said Tom Merry cheerfully. "I've got rather a stunning idea, you chaps—"

"I was going to say, Tom Mewwy—"

"Ring off, Gussy, and give a fellow a chance to speak. I think we can take the shine out of Figgins & Co. a little, you kids, by—"

"I was goin'—"

"By getting Cousin Ethel to come to tea in the School House."

"Bai Jove, that's what I was goin' to—"

"Oh, I see! Had you fellows thought of it?"

"We were just talking it over," said Blake. "It's a really ripping idea, and we'll go Co. over it. That way we shall be able to stand a ripping feed, and save bother. We can't row while there's a girl about."

"Exactly. That's how we looked at it," said Tom Merry. "I suppose we'd better have the feed in our study?"

"Oh, yes," said Blake, "it's the biggest in the House."

And in a very short time preparations were in hand for a record feast.

"Look here!"

"My hat! Where did you get that?" exclaimed Tom Merry, looking in great admiration at the brightly-burnished copper kettle Herries placed on the table.

"House dame's room!" grinned Herries. "Mrs. Mimms is out so I thought I'd borrow it. We can take it back when we've finished, and she'll never know the difference."

"Ha, ha, ha! We'll risk it, anyway. Hallo, here comes the crockery!"

Crockery and cutlery galore came pouring into the study. The raiders had been remorselessly thorough. It was true that hardly a single article matched any other article, but Blake said that added to the artistic effect of the whole. There were cups and saucers to go round, at all events, and that was the main point. Blake came in at last with a cricket-bag simply stuffed with provisions.

"Good!" exclaimed Tom Merry, looking at the contents with glistening eyes as they turned them out. "You do know how to do shopping, Blake. We shall show Cousin Ethel that we can do things in style at this show, and no mistake."

"It is time for me to go and take Cousin Ethel the invitation, deah boys!" Arthur Augustus looked into Study No. 10 some minutes later.

"Yes, you'd better buzz off, now, or she'll be having tea with the Head's wife, and girls aren't like boys, you know— one tea is enough for them."

"I'll wun like anythin'."

And Arthur Augustus, full of the importance of his mission, hurried off. He stopped only to get his silk hat out of Study No. 6 and to put on his gloves, and then he hurried into the quadrangle and presented himself at the Head's house.

He was shown into the drawing-room, where Mrs. Holmes, the doctor's wife, met him. D'Arcy looked round for Cousin Ethel, but she was not there. Mrs. Holmes smiled.

"What can I do for you, Master D'Arcy?" she asked.

"I am sowwy to twouble you, madam," said D'Arcy respectfully. "I wished to ascertain whethah—whethah—"

"Yes?"

"Whethah my Cousin Ethel could come to tea with us in the School House, madam," said D'Arcy. "We should be so pleased and honahed if she would come and you would give your kind permish—"

Mrs. Holmes smiled again.

"Indeed! I am afraid you are a little too late, D'Arcy."

Arthur Augustus looked dismayed.

"Too late?"

"Yes, I am afraid so."

"Has Ethel had her tea? Oh deah! That is weally too bad! But we've got a weally wippin' feed, and she might come all the same—"

"I am afraid it will be impossible, as Ethel has already gone to—"

"Gone to—"

"Figgins asked Ethel to tea in the New House, and I gave my permission—"

Potts, the Office Boy!



D'Arcy's jaw dropped.
 "Figgins?"
 "Yes, and Ethel—"
 "Oh, the wottah! The beast!"
 "D'Arcy!"
 "I beg your pardon, ma'am! But weally—Figgins! Yaas, I see I am too late. I will wettire," said D'Arcy.
 "I am sowsy to have twoubled you."
 "Oh, not at all!"
 D'Arcy retired. His heart was too full for speech. He returned to the School House and went up to Tom Merry's study. A general chorus of inquiry greeted him:
 "Is she coming?"
 "The fact is, deah boys—"
 "Ass! Is she coming?"
 "No. The fact is she has already gone to tea with Figgins & Co."
 There was a yell.
 "Figgins & Co.?"
 "Yaas, watahah!"
 Tom Merry sank helplessly into a chair. Blake staggered against the wall.
 "Done!"
 "Done again!"

CHAPTER 8.

Uninvited Guests!

FIGGINS was enjoying himself. The study in the New House shared by the famous quartet was always a cosy and cheery apartment, but on the present occasion it looked—in the eyes of Figgins & Co., at least—really ripping.

There was a clean cloth on the table, gleaming crockery, and a whole globe on the gas-jet; the fire was burning brightly and cheerily in a beautifully cleaned and swept grate; there were flowers in the study—flowers everywhere—and if Cousin Ethel had known of the risks Figgins had run in getting them from the Head's garden, she would have keenly appreciated the devotion of the New House chief.

Cousin Ethel was delighted with everything. She had, with Mrs. Holmes' permission, accepted the invitation to tea in Figgins & Co.'s study, quite ignorant of the fact that Tom Merry and Blake were making preparations for her reception in the School House.

Figgins was not quite so ignorant of it.

Fatty Wynn had been shopping in the school shop, and he had seen Blake there, and the extent of Blake's purchases, and the extreme care he displayed in the selection of the good things, had put Fatty on the scent.

He had reported to Figgins, and Figgins had grinned hugely. He had expected something of the sort, and he had taken care to invite Cousin Ethel while they were in the trap, and to secure her as soon as possible, so that the rival juniors should have no chance.

Everything was not ready, therefore, when Cousin Ethel arrived at Figgins' study. But what did that matter? It was better than risking losing the prize. The kettle was singing away cheerily, and Cousin Ethel announced her intention of making the tea.

"Will you really?" said Figgins.

"Yes, certainly! Boys cannot make tea!"

"Oh, can't they?" said Kerr rather warmly. "I've made

tea often enough. Why, we have tea in the study every evening, except when we're broke—"

Figgins gave him a warning glance.

"Cousin Ethel's quite right," he said. "It's a real treat to have a girl make tea for you. They make it so much better than boys."

Kerr stared at Figgins open-mouthed.

The last he had heard from Figgins on the subject was that girls were "cack-handed critters, anyway, and couldn't do anything like a boy could." Figgins appeared to have changed his views.

"The kettle's rather dirty," said Fatty Wynn dubiously. "I don't see how Cousin Ethel can take hold of the handle—"

"Oh, that's nothing!"

"You mustn't soil your fingers, though," said Figgins anxiously. "Kerr ought to keep the kettle cleaner. He's growing very careless—"

"I" exclaimed Kerr. "Why, I—"

"Don't argue, old chap! This is a tea-fight, not a debating society," said Figgins. "We have mislaid the kettle-holder, I'm sorry to say—"

"Mislaid it?" murmured Kerr dazedly.

Such a thing as a kettle-holder was utterly unknown in the study, outside Figgins' vivid imagination.

"But here's a silk handkerchief that will make a ripping one," said Figgins.

Kerr nearly said something; it was his silk handkerchief that Figgins was twisting up into a kettle-holder. But he contained himself with an effort, privately resolving upon a little talk with Figgins later.

"Where's the tea?" said Figgins, looking round.

"Here you are," said Fatty Wynn.

"Got a spoon?"

"Yes, lots. This one's clean!"

Cousin Ethel smiled demurely, and took the tea and the spoon. Figgins warmed up the pot ready and handed her the kettle-holder.

"Think you'd like me to pour in the water for you?" he asked anxiously.

"Thank you, you may."

"Good!" said Figgins, delighted.

He gripped the kettle with great relief, using the improvised kettle-holder in order to show Cousin Ethel that they were accustomed to one in the study. He was very nervous about Cousin Ethel getting too near that horribly black kettle. There had been no time to see to everything, or Figgins would have cleaned it, and he thought that really one of the Co. might have thought of it. However, it was too late now. Cousin Ethel carefully measured in the tea and held the teapot ready. Figgins poured in the boiling water.

The tea was made. Figgins, rather uneasy directly under the eyes of Cousin Ethel, ran the water over the pot and made rather a mess on the carpet, but that was only a trifling accident.

The tea was set to draw, and then they sat down to tea. The table groaned, as a novelist would say, under the weight of the viands—and, indeed, Figgins & Co. were "doing themselves down" very well on this occasion, and the table presented a plentiful and hospitable appearance.

"I will pour out the tea," said Cousin Ethel.

"Good!" said Figgins. "I—"

He broke off as a tap came at the door.



"SEA"-ING STARS!



"Come in!" said Figgins anxiously.

He inwardly resolved that if it was a New House fellow who had scented the feed and come to join in it he would privately slay him after Cousin Ethel was gone.

The door opened, and Jack Blake, of Study No. 6 in the School House, presented himself. He smiled and nodded to the amazed Figgins.

"Just in time!" he said cheerily. "I was afraid I would be a little late. It was really decent of you to ask us to tea with Cousin Ethel, Figgins."

Figgins glared at him.

"I—I asked—" he stammered.

"So glad to see you at St. Jim's, Cousin Ethel!" said Blake, taking no notice of Figgins, or of the glaring Co. "It is really jolly of Figgins to have us all in!"

"How nice!" said the unsuspecting Cousin Ethel, shaking hands with Blake. "I am very glad to see you again, Blake. Are your friends with you?"

"Oh, yes!" said Blake. "Figgins invited them as much as myself."

"You—you—" murmured Figgins.

"Did you speak, Figgins?"

Figgins would have liked to speak. He would have liked to seize Jack Blake and anoint him with the marmalade, and then rub his head in the cinders in the grate, and then pitch him downstairs, or out of the window.

He had not asked Blake to tea, or dreamed of asking him. It was simply a piece of unparalleled nerve on the part of the School House junior; but the explanation before Cousin Ethel was impossible. There could be no rowing while the girl was there. Figgins knew it, and knew that Blake knew it. The Co. were powerless, and could only grin and bear it.

The unaffected pleasure Ethel showed at Figgins' thoughtfulness in inviting all her friends only made matters worse.

"What did you say, Figgins?"

"Oh, n-nothing!"

"Come on, you chaps!" said Blake, glancing towards the door. "Figgys is jolly glad to see us. Of course, we knew he would be."

"Yaas, wathah! How do you do, Cousin Ethel? I want to explain and apologise about meetin' that twain."

Digby and Hennes came in with demure grins. They were looking very neat in clean collars and well-brushed jackets. Figgins mumbled something unintelligibly as Digby ostentatiously shook hands with him.

"Well, this is cosy!" said Blake. "By the way, I hear you have invited the Terrible Three, too, Figgins."

"I—I—I—"

"Here we are!" said Tom Merry's cheery voice at the door. "This is really kind of you, Figgins! So glad to see you again, Cousin Ethel!"

"And I'm glad to see you all!"

"It's ripping of Figgins to ask us all here to meet you, isn't it?"

"It is very kind, indeed."

"Glad you are pleased!" said Figgins, trying to recover himself. "It's—it's jolly to see so many friends' faces about. I don't know whether you'll all find room; but a couple of you can sit on the coal-locker, and another couple on the window-sill. Better scout along the passage for some chairs, Kerr."

"That's really kind of you, Figgins!" said Tom Merry, calmly dropping into Figgins' chair beside Cousin Ethel. "I shall be quite comfy here!"

"And this will about suit me," said Blake, sitting himself in the chair on the other side of Ethel, from which Kerr had risen to lift the teapot from the grate. "What's that, Kerr? You're pleased? Don't mention it, old chap! I'm all right!"

"I—I—I—"

"Exactly! You can have the coal-locker. Can I help you to anything, Cousin Ethel? I say, isn't it ripping for us all to be together again, and Figgins looking so jolly pleased to see us enjoying ourselves?"

"It is very nice indeed."

"Yes, I'll say that for Figgins," Blake went on. "I never believe in judging a fellow by his looks, and really Figgins is a jolly good sort."

"Oh, you wait a bit!" murmured Figgins.

Blake looked at him sweetly.

"What's that, Figgins? Did you say I was to wait?"

"I—I mean, wait a minute, and I'll help you to something!" stammered Figgins, fearful of giving himself away to Cousin Ethel.

"Oh, that's all right, old chap! I'm not really very hungry. I say, kids, it's jolly decent of Figgins to constitute himself waiter like this and look after us, isn't it? Of course, there's no room for him to sit down. Hand up that teapot, Figgys."

"Yes, and tuck up, old fellow!" said Tom Merry.

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Figgins would gladly have broken the teapot on Blake's head, but that was impossible. He handed it up, and Cousin Ethel poured out the tea. Kerr and Marmaduke had made a hurried hunt along the passage for cups and saucers, and returned with a supply; but there were not enough to go round.

There was no room at the table for Figgins, or Kerr, or Marmaduke, so they waited for their tea. Kerr, gritting his teeth, went out in search of more crockery. Figgins was nearly boiling over.

"These are jolly little cakes!" said Tom Merry, handing a plate towards Cousin Ethel. "I can recommend these."

"I think I will have some bread-and-butter."

"Of course," said Blake, handing up a plate from the other side. "This bread-and-butter is cut very nicely,



Figgins. You might cut some more, old chap, will you? This won't be near enough."

Figgins doubled up his fists and brandished them behind Blake's back. Cousin Ethel turned her head, and Figgins grew crimson; but he was quick-witted. He went on brandishing his fists solemnly in the air, pretending that he had been stretching himself.

"It's warm in here," he said apologetically. "I—I—" A curious look came into Cousin Ethel's eyes. Perhaps a glimpse of the real state of affairs dawned upon her at that moment; but, if so, she gave no sign of it.

She demurely ate her bread-and-butter, and allowed Tom Merry to help her to cakes, and Blake to fill her plate with cream-puffs. Figgins made more tea and cut more bread-and-butter. The School House seven had brought healthy, youthful appetites with them, and, plentiful as the supplies

The girl looked at her little gold watch.
 "I think I must be going now."
 "What—already?"
 "I think Mrs. Holmes will be expecting me. You will turn this over in your minds, won't you, and think of a plan?"
 "Of course."
 "Yes, certainly."
 "Yaas, wathah!"
 "It would be so nice for the dear little Sunday-school children to have a nice treat," said Cousin Ethel. "And I have as good as promised it to them."
 "We'll see you through, Cousin Ethel," said Blake heartily. "We'll think of a plan. If there's no better way, we'll have a whip round in the school."
 Cousin Ethel shook her head.

"Oh, no, I should not like that! Cannot you think of some idea similar to that you thought of for the soldier's widow in Rylcombe? I have an idea myself, but I will not tell it you now. I think you boys could think of something very much better if you try."

"Well, yes," said Blake, innocently enough. "It's not much good a girl trying to think out a plan, you know."

Figgins looked daggers at Blake.
 "I'd back Cousin Ethel up against any School House idiot in thinking out plans," he grunted.

"Oh, not at all!" said Cousin Ethel sweetly. "Blake is quite right. If you cannot think of anything satisfactory, I will make a suggestion, but I am sure that you will be able to hit on a good plan. Now I must be going."

"May I see you safely as far as the Head's house, Cousin Ethel?" asked Figgins anxiously.

"Weally, Figgins, I considah that I can take charge of my own cousin," said Arthur Augustus. "Weally—"

"Oh, no, Arthur, you look so tired!" said Cousin Ethel, with a sweet smile.

"Well, I have had wathah an exhaustin' aftahnoon, but weally—"

"You must rest," said Cousin Ethel. "I shall be very pleased, Figgins."

Figgins nearly jumped with delight. He reached down his cap, and then put it up again, and brought out a silk hat. A topper was required to do justice to an occasion like that. He looked as pleased as Punch as he marched out of the study with Cousin Ethel.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy glanced after them with a very curious expression upon his face.

"I weally wegard Figgins as a wathah cheekay boundah," he said, looking round. "He seems to forget that Ethel is my cousin, and not his—don't you think so?"

"Looks like it," agreed Tom Merry.

"Well, we shall get on with the planning a little more quietly without Figgins," said Blake. "Now, my idea is—"

"Better wait till Figgins comes back," said Kerr.

"Oh, that's rot, Kerr, old fellow!"

"Is it? I don't see it. Besides, we ought to make a regular meeting of it, and elect a chairman."

"I am quite willin' to be chairman, deah boys, if wequiahed."

"Rats!"

"If the gentleman who says wats will kindly step forward, I shall have gweat pleasuah in givin' him a feahful thwashin'!"

"Hallo, here's Figgy!"

Figgins came into the study looking very pleased with himself. He put away his topper, and beamed genially upon the company.

"Better get to business," he said. "We've got to think of a scheme."

"We were just thinking of electing a chairman and getting to business."

"I had just offahed my services as chairman, and—"

"Oh, rats to you, Gussy!" said Figgins cheerfully. "You School House kids ought to think yourself lucky that you're not fired out of this study, neck and crop, after your confounded cheek in poking yourselves in here and scoffing up our feed without being invited."

Tom Merry & Co. roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove, Figgins, you know, I wegard the whole mattah as extwemely funnny."

"If it hadn't been for—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let's fire 'em out now!" exclaimed Marmaduke. "No need to sit here and put up with their silly cackling, that I can see."

"I'd like to see the New House kid that could fire me out!" said Blake casually.

"Here's one!"

"And here's another!"

"Oh, shut up!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Is this what you call talking it over quietly without getting excited?"

"Well, you scoffed our tea."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins waved his hand for peace.

"Dry up, everybody!" he exclaimed. "These School House wasters did us, but we mustn't forget that we did them in the first place. Besides, rows are off now; we've got to talk business. When Cousin Ethel asks us to-morrow morning what decision we've come to, I suppose it won't do to explain that we haven't come to any, but started punching one another's heads instead."

"That is weally vevy thoughtful of you, Figgins."

"Make it pax, then," said Tom Merry. "We're willing. And then for goodness' sake let us get to business."

"Good! As it is my study the meeting's held in I shall be chairman," said Figgins. "Anybody got any objection to raise?"

"Yaas, wathah! I considah myself the pwooper person to be chairman of this honahable meetin'. I have had a gweat deal of expewience—"

"Blake, I expect you to keep Gussy quiet, or else lead him home with a string."

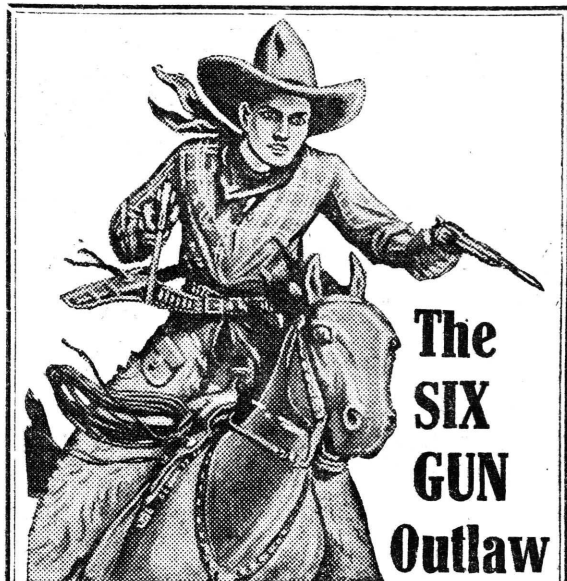
"I should uttably wefuse to be led home with a stwing."

"Oh, dry up!" said Tom Merry. "Figgy's claim is reasonable. We're in his study, so we'll make him chairman. Who says Figgins for chairman?"

"Figgins!" exclaimed six or seven voices.

"Oh, vevy well!" said D'Arcy. "I am quite willin' to bow to the wish of the respected majority, deah boys, and I am only sowwy for the sake of the beastlay meetin', you know. Pway pwoceed to business."

And Figgins took the chair, and the meeting of the St. Jim's Co. proceeded to business.



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But when it eventually broke up nothing had been decided except that on the morrow Ethel should be asked for her suggestion.

CHAPTER 10.

Early Risers!

TOM MERRY was the first up in the Shell dormitory in the School House the following morning. But he had not been out of bed a couple of minutes when Manners turned out. Then Lowther, sitting up with a yawn, slipped out of bed. The rising-bell had not yet gone. Gore looked out of the bedclothes and surveyed the Terrible Three in astonishment.

"Hallo! Are you chaps ill?" he exclaimed. "What on earth are you turning out so early for?"

"I'm just going out in the quad for a bit," said Tom Merry carelessly.

"So am I," said Lowther.

"Curious," said Manners. "So am I."

"Well, you may," said Gore, with a yawn. "I'm going to stay in bed till rising-bell. Don't make a row"

"Shut the door quietly," yawned Skimpole, from his bed. The Terrible Three looked at one another rather curiously as they washed and dressed themselves. Then Tom Merry, who was ready first, made for the door. Manners put down his comb and followed. Monty Lowther hastily jerked on his necktie and hurried after them.

Tom Merry stopped in the passage, laughing

"We may as well have it out, kids!" he exclaimed. "I'm going to the Head's garden."

Manners and Lowther laughed.

"So are we, I suppose."

"Same old game?"

"Exactly."

"Well, it's no good my asking you chaps to go back to bed, I suppose?"

"Not much," said Lowther emphatically.

"Then we had better all go together."

"All serene!"

And the chums of the Shell went down the passage. It had occurred to Tom Merry that on the previous occasions when Miss Cleveland had stayed at St. Jim's, it had been her custom to take a very early morning walk in the Head's garden. It was a golden opportunity of speaking to Cousin Ethel on the important matter that had been left undecided the previous evening. But the same idea, as it happened, had occurred to Lowther and Manners. Hence the sudden and unusual early rising in the Shell dormitory in the School House.

"Hallo!" murmured Manners, as they came past the Fourth Form sleeping quarters. "Some kids are awake there, and rising-bell hasn't gone."

The door of the dormitory was opening. Just as the Terrible Three came abreast of it four juniors came out of the Fourth Form dormitory.

Tom Merry grinned at the sight of Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy, all of them fully dressed, and evidently going out.

The Fourth-Formers stared at the Terrible Three.

"Anything wrong?" asked Blake pleasantly.

"Wrong? No! What are you getting at?"

"Well, I'm rather surprised to see you bounders out of bed before you're routed out by a prefect, that's all!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh, we're just taking an early stroll!"

"Curious, so are we!" said Blake suspiciously. "Come on, kids! We haven't time to stand here chatting to those Shellfish!"

The Fourth-Formers marched on down the stairs. The chums of the Shell followed. Blake and his comrades went out into the quadrangle, and Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther were close upon their track. In the fresh morning air, under the green elms, the Fourth-Formers came to a stop.

"Which way are you chaps going?" asked Blake.

"Oh, just strolling down towards the Head's garden!" said Tom Merry carelessly.

"Better have a little run down to the gates."

"Oh, no; we're not out for a run!"

"Why don't you have a look at the cricket pitch?"

"I'm going to presently."

"Look here, Tom Merry—"

"No time, old fellow. Come on, chaps!"

The Terrible Three walked away towards the Head's garden. The chums of Study No. 6 looked at one another wrathfully, and then followed.

"You may as well out with it, Tom Merry," growled Blake. "You're going down to the Head's garden because you think D'Arcy's cousin will be there."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Well, what are you going for, Blake?"

"Same reason! I want to speak to Cousin Ethel particularly about that idea she has, you know!"

"That's it. We're on the same track"

"No good a crowd going."

"No; just cut back to the School House, will you?"

"No fear!"

"I don't see what these kids want to come along for," Monty Lowther remarked. "Curious thing that the Fourth Form youngsters are always—"

"Who are you calling kids?"

"Yaas, wathah! If you apply that opprobrious expression to me, Lowthah, I shall feel called upon to give you a feahful thwashin'!"

"My idea is," said Digby, "that these Shell rotters ought to go back to bed. You know the old saying—that fools need more sleep than other fellows—"

"Then you are risking your health by getting up early," said Lowther.

"What I say is—"

"I say," exclaimed Herries suddenly, "look there!"

Herries was pointing towards the Head's garden. At the little gate leading out of the quadrangle into the private precincts of the garden four youthful figures could be seen coming from the direction of the New House. The School House fellows uttered a simultaneous exclamation.

"Figgins & Co.!"

Tom Merry burst into a merry laugh.

"Ha, ha, ha! Figgins has the same idea, kids! They're on the spot earlier than we are! Figgy is going to open the gate!"

"My hat!" exclaimed Blake. "The cheek of those New House kids! They know very well that the Head's garden is private, and juniors are not allowed in there!"

"Yaas, wathah! What a feahful nerve, you know."

"But we were just going in," said Tom Merry.

"That's different, of course! We—"

"I say, let's go and collar them!" exclaimed Digby. "I think we may as well make it pax amongst ourselves—it's a School House affair, anyway—and just shift the New House bounders out of it. What do you Shellfish say?"

"Good wheeze!" exclaimed Tom Merry immediately. "It's like Figgins' cheek to think of forestalling us in this manner! Is it pax, Blake?"

"Yes, rather! Come on!"

The School House seven broke into a run. Figgins had tried the gate and found it fastened, and he was preparing to climb over the wooden bars—an easy task—when the School House fellows arrived, panting, upon the scene.

Figgins & Co. stared at them in amazement.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Figgins. "What are you kids doing out so early in the morning? Rising-bell's only just started!"

"We're up to your little game, Figgy!" said Tom Merry severely. "Is this what you call cricket—stealing a march on fellows like this?"

"I really don't know what you are talking about, Tom Merry?"

"What are you doing out of the New House so early in the morning?"

"Why, it's a lovely fresh April morning—"

"April rats, it's May! I know what you're here for!"

"And what's that, Mr. Blessed Clever Merry?" asked Kerr sarcastically.

"You want to speak to Cousin Ethel!"

"I suppose you kids have had the cheek to come out for the same purpose?" Figgins remarked, looking disdainfully at the School House seven.

"Yaas, wathah! You apeah to forget, Figgins, that Ethel is my cousin, and therefore I have a right to regard her weally as a sort of private pproperty!"

"My dear chap, she can't help being your cousin; and I'd be the last to remind her of it. The best thing you fellows can do is to hook it."

"Of all the fearful chuk—"

"Oh, get off Travel; and take your face away with you."

"Figgins, I feel called upon—"

"You'll feel sat upon soon," said Figgins darkly. "We're getting rather fed-up with the cheek of you School House wasters."

"Nuff said!" exclaimed Blake decidedly. "You're the party that's going to travel, Figgy; and the sooner you do it, the better it will be for your health!"

"Ha, ha ha! If you are looking for trouble—"

"Are you going, Figgins?"

"Oh, at once—I don't think!"

Tom Merry pushed back his cuffs.

(Continued on page 19.)

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SEE WHAT'S IN—



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HALLO, chums! Are you collecting our gift coupons? Of course! The more you get the better you stand of winning a topping prize. While we are on the subject don't forget to cut out the coupons in this week's issue, and put them by until the time comes to send in your full collection. I know you liked the long St. Jim's yarn this week, for Martin Clifford was in great form. Well, take it from me, next Wednesday's school story is even better. In

"THE KIDNAPPED CRICKETERS!"

you will find a rare yarn of schoolboy adventure and rivalry, with a spice of humour thrown in, too. Tell your pals about these St. Jim's stories, and if you want to read another tip-top school story yourself, I strongly recommend you to sample this week's "Magnet." In our popular companion paper there is a grand complete story of Harry Wharton & Co. and Billy Bunter of Greyfriars; also there is a special gift coupon which you can add to your GEM collection. Trot round to the newsagent to-day and have a look at the "Magnet"; you'll want to buy it directly you see it!

Next week's GEM will contain another powerful instalment of

"CHUMS OF THE FIGHTING FLEET,"

so stand by for more thrills and excitement. If you want a laugh Potts the Office Boy will oblige, whilst in this chat page will be found more news pars of interest.

S O S!

He was a wireless enthusiast, and he got a big thrill when he was least expecting it. Suddenly through the ether came a voice. "I am lost—I am lost—switch on searchlights." The listener in did not lose any time; he phoned the nearest aerodrome, told what his set had "picked up" and undoubtedly saved an airman's life. The aerodrome was soon floodlighted with powerful motor-car headlamps, and before long a plane came down out of the darkness, and made a perfect landing. The pilot explained afterwards that he had run out of petrol, and had lost his way, and it was lucky for him that his S O S had been picked up.

A MODERN MIRACLE!

If you ask certain natives of South Africa if they believe in the ancient biblical story of manna falling from heaven they will say yes with great fervour, for with their own eyes they have seen its modern equivalent on a waste piece of land near Natal. Over a stretch of ground measuring THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,265.

roughly seven hundred yards by twenty yards there appeared one morning a substance which at first glance appeared to be snow. But the natives, who had never seen its like before, were filling their baskets and eating it greedily, when a white man came upon the scene. He secured a sample of the stuff which looks like a popcorn, and answers exactly to the description of the manna described in Exodus—pleasantly honey-sweet. The fall of this modern manna, strangely enough, was confined to the one spot; the adjoining farms escaped this strange gift from the heavens. Yet perhaps the most extraordinary thing was the fact that the natives ate the manna without any fear, or without any prompting. They genuinely believed that the manna was sent to them as consolation for the heavy losses their cattle had suffered owing to the recent long drought.

THE TINIEST PAGE-BOY IN ENGLAND!

He stands no higher than three feet ten inches, and he turns the scales at three stone seven pounds. But he's mighty slippery. Ask him how many buttons there are on his posh uniform, and he'll quickly reply "Thirty-one on my chest and four on each sleeve." Ask him how much material it took to make his smart suit, and he'll snap the answer at you: "A yard and a half." John hasn't been a page-boy very long, but he is "doing fine." Yet methinks he'll always remember one of his first jobs. That was to look after an Irish wolf-hound which weighed over fourteen stone, and stood three feet high! The hound won when it came to a matter of brute strength, for John, the page-boy, though he was hanging on to its collar with both hands with all his strength, was dragged off his feet. But that didn't upset John; he likes the life of a page-boy, and wouldn't swap it even to become a jockey!

HEARD THIS ONE?

Lady: "Tommy, I am surprised. You know you shouldn't smoke until you get a little older?"

Tommy (indignantly, producing a cigarette holder): "Well, what do you call this, ma'am?"

OR THIS?

The Hikers' latest song is "Annie Laurie." Got it? Good!

THE HUMAN ELEPHANT!

Crash! The policeman on duty jumped. From somewhere near at hand came the sound of breaking glass. A window-smashing raid or what—? He hurried to investi-

gate, and what he saw made him jump. There was an elephant with its head clean through a plate glass window! An elephant—and while the constable was wondering what to do the elephant began to shed its skin. From that skin emerged two young men. The constable has every reason to faint at that strange, unexpected sight. But he didn't; he made inquiries. And they produced the story that the two young men were en route for a fancy dress ball. On rounding a corner the "front" legs and the "back" legs of the elephant did not agree as to the direction to take, hence the clatter of breaking glass as a shop window "got in the way."

WONDERFUL FREE GIFTS.

Here you are, boys, here's a wonderful free offer. A "Hawkeye" camera made by Kodak, a waterproof case to carry it in or a silk-bound album for the snaps you take, these are only three out of the scores of useful presents that Nestlé's are offering. All you have to do is to buy any of the varied assortments of Nestlé's Chocolate from the 2d. wrapped bar upwards and save the coupons to obtain these valuable gifts. Write to Nestlé's (Gift Dept.), Silverthorne Road, Battersea, London, S.W.8, and ask them to send you a copy of their Presentation List, and with it will come a voucher for five free coupons. Start collecting your coupons to-day.

THE MAGIC EYE!

Click! The burglar scarcely heeded that slight sound. He'd got the safe open—the loot was his to pocket and dispose of at the first opportunity. But he was a very surprised fellow when the police called upon him the next day and charged him with safe-breaking. His denials only brought smiles to the faces of the police, for in their possession was a perfect photograph showing the cracksmen actually in front of the safe. "It's a miracle!" gasped the burglar, as he saw the likeness of himself. "A bloomin' miracle!" But it was nothing of the kind—that faint click he had heard when he swung the safe door open was a special camera doing its work, although the room was in pitch darkness at the time. It's the new type camera, developed by the police, known as the infra-red-ray camera. Amongst other things it can take photographs in the dark, or in the thickest of fogs; can take a picture of a distant object invisible to your eyes and mine, and can also detect the cleverest piece of forgery in the world, or show up secret writing. This latest weapon against the cracksmen fraternity is causing them much loss of "employment," but that's all to the good so far as we're concerned!

YELLOW SNOW!

Quite a sensation was caused in Berlin recently when people witnessed a fall of yellow snow. After that yellow rain began to beat down. This strange phenomena set the experts busy, and their theory is that the yellow snow and rain are direct results of large quantities of sand being whirled up from the desert thousands of miles away, and carried across to Germany on the wings of the wind, whilst others who are supposed to know all about these things declare the phenomena to be due to the recent volcanic eruptions in South America.

YOUR EDITOR

SALESMEN OF ST. JIM'S!

(Continued from page 17)

"Lend a hand, kids, and we'll soon have these rotters gone!" he said. "We'll frog's-march Figgins and Kerr and Marmy, and you can roll Fatty Wynn along like a barrel; he's too heavy to carry. Now, then!"

"Right-ho! Give 'em socks!"
 And the School House boys rushed to the attack. The odds were heavy against Figgins & Co., but they were game to the backbone. They put their backs to the gate, and stood shoulder to shoulder, and hit out right and left. Blake and Herries rolled on the ground, and Tom Merry rolled over them. Lowther was added to the heap.

But then Digby and Manners gripped Marmaduke, and dragged him struggling from the gate. Arthur Augustus closed with Fatty Wynn, and the two went staggering and struggling to and fro. Tom Merry jumped up and fastened on Figgins. Blake grappled with Kerr and dragged him away from the gate, and they fought furiously under the elms, oblivious of their surroundings. Herries went to the aid of Tom Merry and seized Figgins. Taken two to one, Figgins fought gamely, but he had no chance. But he was not easily to be removed from the gate. He clung to the top bar with both hands and refused to be dragged off. A tug-of-war ensued between the juniors and the gate with Figgys as the rope.

"Better come, Figgins," gasped Tom Merry; "it's only a question of time!"

"Rats!"
 "Oh, come off!" panted Herries.
 "Rats!"
 "Yank him off!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Yank away!"
 "Right-ho!"

Tom Merry and Herries each had a leg of Figgins in an iron grip, and they yanked away for all they were worth. Figgins clung desperately to the gate. Something had to go, and Figgins would have had to part with either the gate or his legs, had not a timely interruption come.

"Good-morning!"
 It was a soft, sweet voice from the other side of the gate. Cousin Ethel stood there, looking across at the juniors, with a charming smile.

CHAPTER 11.
 Cousin Ethel's Idea!

TOM MERRY and Herries dropped Figgins' legs as if they had suddenly become red-hot. Figgins plumped on the ground and gathered himself up. The juniors separated, looking very red and flustered and decidedly sheepish. They stared at Cousin Ethel, and Cousin Ethel looked at them sweetly. They raised their caps awkwardly enough.

"Good-morning! You are out for a walk early, aren't you?"

"Ye-e-es," murmured Tom Merry.
 "R-r-rather!" murmured Blake.
 "You see—" stuttered Figgins.
 "What a nice fresh morning it is!"
 "Yes; so nice after the rain," stammered Figgins.
 Cousin Ethel looked surprised.
 "But it hasn't been raining!"
 "No more it has!" said Figgins. "My—er—my mistake."
 "Did you—did you notice that we were doing gymnastics as you came up?" asked Tom Merry boldly.
 Cousin Ethel looked at him innocently.
 "Was that gymnastics?"
 "A—a sort of ju-jitsu," said Blake, taking the cue from Tom Merry. "Sort of Japanese gymnastics you know. You hang on to a gate, you know; or a parallel bar would do—"

"And the other chaps try to drag you off!" exclaimed Figgins.
 "It's a rather rough game," said Tom Merry. "Makes a fellow rather rumbled and dusty, you know."
 "Yes," assented Cousin Ethel. "it does, indeed!"
 "People sometimes think chaps are fighting when they are playing that game," said Figgins diffidently.
 "Do they really?" said Cousin Ethel.
 "Weally, Figgins—"

Blake trod on D'Arcy's toe, as a hint to shut up. The swell of the School House gave a wail of anguish. Cousin Ethel looked at him.
 "Whatever is the matter, Arthur?"
 "Some wuff beast has just twod on my toes! I believe it was you, Blake! What did you twead on my toe for?"

"You utter idiot—I mean, quite a mistake, old chap—"
 "That's all vewy well, but—"
 "The fact is, Cousin Ethel," said Figgins hastily, "we came out to speak to you about that idea, you know. We remembered that you sometimes took an early morning walk, and we thought—"

"Thought it would be nicer for us all to come together," said Blake.
 "To show how united we are on the subject!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "You know, we sometimes have little rows—just for fun, you know—"

"Do you really?" said Cousin Ethel.
 "You see," said Blake. "those New House kids are so obstreperous at times that we regard it as a duty to set them down—"

"He means that we have to take our natural place as Cock House at St. Jim's," Figgins explained. "That sometimes leads to disputes."

"You wish to speak to me?" said Cousin Ethel, cutting short what promised to grow into a decidedly warm argument.

"Yaas, wathah!"
 "This is how it is," said Figgins. "We debated the matter last evening in my study, and we came to the conclusion that we'd ask you to make that suggestion you were speaking about, to save time."

"We could knock the idea into shape a bit," explained Blake. "We don't mind a bit how much trouble we take." Figgins glared at Blake, much to his astonishment.

"I say, is anything wrong, Figgins?"
 "No, of course not."
 "You didn't get hurt in that—that game just now?"
 "Rats! I mean, no! You're interrupting Cousin Ethel."
 "Not at all," said Ethel. "If you really wish me to make a suggestion—"
 "That's it," said Figgins. "My idea is that we ought to make it Cousin Ethel & Co., and take our orders from Cousin Ethel."

Blake murmured "Rats!" under his breath. Tom Merry nodded.

"Oh, not at all!" said Cousin Ethel. "I am only going to just make a suggestion. Why not give a bazaar in the school?"

"A bazaar?"
 The juniors looked at one another wondering that they had not thought of it themselves. Considering the

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acknowledged superiority of the masculine intellect, it was really rather surprising.

"Yes, a bazaar," said Cousin Ethel. "You have stalls, you know, and sell things; and the things are contributed for the good of the cause. Miss Fawcett would send a lot of things—I have asked her, in case you should adopt my suggestion, you know; and you could all contribute or make something. I know you have a hobby club, and do fretwork and things like that. You could make a lot of things to sell. I could knit things, too—comforters and things. My Cousin Arthur knows how to knit, too."

"Bai Jove, Ethel, weally—"
 There was a general giggle. D'Arcy had many ways that made him a conspicuous figure in the life at St. Jim's, but the juniors had never seen him knitting yet.

"You remember, Arthur, I taught you on holiday once," said Ethel. "You learned to knit really well, and I hope you haven't forgotten."

"Oh, weally—"
 "It's a jolly good wheeze!" exclaimed Figgins.
 "Good!" said Tom Merry. "I vote for the bazaar!"

"So do we all!" exclaimed Blake heartily. "The idea is simply ripping, and it will be immense fun. We can get permission from the Head to hold it in the great hall, and there will be room for lots of stalls. We can each take one—"

"Yaas, wathah! I wathah fancy myself at a stall, you know."

"And I shall take one," said Cousin Ethel. "I think that for such a good cause all the school will come to the bazaar and buy things."

"All the juniors will!" said Figgins significantly. "If any of them stay away—"

"They won't!" said Tom Merry. "I'll answer for the School House lot, anyway."

"You'd better answer for your own study, Tom Merry, and leave the House to me, as head of it!" said Blake.

"Oh, don't be an ass, Blake! You know——"
 "I'm sure all the boys will come," said Cousin Ethel, "and I hope the seniors as well as the juniors. We shall have to consult about getting the things ready for the bazaar. Are you all agreed upon the plan?"

"Yaas, wathah!"
 "I think I must go in to breakfast now. I am so glad we have been able to hit on a plan," said Cousin Ethel.

And the girl, with a bright smile and a nod, disappeared into the garden, and the juniors were left to discuss the plans for the bazaar.

CHAPTER 12.

The Collecting Committee!

"BAZAAR?"
 "Yes."

"Rats!"

It was Gore who said "Rats!" But Gore was the only one. Every other fellow in the Shell jumped at the idea, and so did the Fourth Form. Even youngsters in the Remove and the Third Form jumped at it. And the Fifth Form condescended to say that it was rather a good idea. Even the grave and reverend seniors of the Sixth Form were heard to remark that they would come and have a look at the affair.

In short, the idea caught on. All kinds of ideas, big and little, had emanated from Tom Merry & Co. during their adventurous career as dwellers in the ancient foundation of St. Jim's. It was admitted that the latest was as good as any. A bazaar for a charitable purpose was a good thing for a good object, and even the Head, apprised of the plan, approved of it. Ethel had, as a matter of fact, taken Mrs. Holmes into her confidence at the start, and the Head's wife was backing her up. After that, all, of course, was plain sailing.

"Such a noble object, dear," said Mrs. Holmes to the Head.

"Er—exactly," said the Head.

"So thoughtful of Ethel."

"Yes, indeed."

"So kind and generous of the boys."

"Very!"

"It really ought to be encouraged."

"Certainly—yes—er—yes!"

"Then they can have the lecture hall for the bazaar?"

"Eh? The lecture hall?"

"Yes."

"For the bazaar?"

"Certainly."

"Well, really, my dear——"

"Such a deserving object!"

"Yes, but really——"

"For so good a cause——"

"Yes, certainly, but——"

"And so, of course, they can have the lecture hall?"

"Oh, yes, I suppose so! Yes, certainly, they can have the lecture hall!"

The Head's permission to use the lecture hall for the lordly purpose of the bazaar was communicated to Tom Merry & Co. by Cousin Ethel. All was clear ahead now. The permission had been given for Saturday afternoon—a half-holiday—and by that time all was to be ready for the bazaar.

Tom Merry & Co. held frequent consultations in their study and in the club-room in the School House. To the consultations Cousin Ethel frequently came, and frequently her presence was like oil on the troubled waters when the arguments were growing heated. But upon the whole the juniors kept the peace pretty well.

The idea had taken firm hold of their minds, and they were anxious to please Cousin Ethel and make the bazaar a success, so House and study rows were put off for a more suitable time.

The task of collecting articles to be exposed for sale on the various stalls was really a herculean one. But the enthusiastic juniors did not shrink from it.

Tom Merry's old governess, Miss Priscilla Fawcett, came to their aid like a Briton. She was not able to come down to St. Jim's herself just then, but she sent all sorts and condition of articles for the bazaar.

"We shall want a fealtul lot of things, you know," said D'Arcy. "It is wathah selfish of Mannahs to wefuse to put up his camewah, which would waise quite a decent sum of money all by itself; but we can go wound the school collect-in' up things, you know. Things the fellows don't want might be useful to othah fellows who haven't them, and, aftah all, anythin' is good enough to sell at a bazaar."

"Something in that," agreed Tom Merry. "We'd better get up a collecting committee. By the way, what are you going to knit for sale, Gussy?"

D'Arcy gave Tom Merry an extremely haughty glance through his eyeglass.

"I weward that as a most widiculous question, Tom Mewwy. I am not goin' to knit anythin' at all."

"But Cousin Ethel says you can knit——"

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

"I think it's mean of D'Arcy to refuse his aid in such a noble cause," said Figgins. "Think of the poor Sunday-school children, you selfish fellow. They are languishing in the foul slums of Huckleberry Heath——"

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Tom Merry. "There aren't any slums in Huckleberry Heath."

"Oh, that's only a figure of speech; I suppose the kids are poor. or they wouldn't want to be sent on a giddy treat. If D'Arcy refuses to help——"

"But I don't wefuse to help, Figgins. I am quite willin' to take the lead in this affair, and diwect the whole mattah for you."

"Go hon!" said Figgins sarcastically. "We couldn't possibly think of putting you to all that trouble, Gussy. You'd find it too exhausting."

"I shouldn't mind that for the good of the cause, Figgins. I am quite pwepared to sacwifice myself."

"But we're not prepared to sacrifice ourselves," said Tom Merry. "So we won't make you head cook and bottle-washer, Gussy."

"If you intend that wemark in a dispawagin' sense, Tom Mewwy——"

"Oh, I intend it in a Pickwickian sense!" said Tom Merry blandly. "Gentlemen, I propose that a vote of censure is passed upon Adolphus Algernon D'Arcy for his selfish conduct in refusing to knit socks for the starving children of Huckleberry Heath!"

"Hear, hear!"

"I second that motion!" said Blake.

"And I thurd it!" said Figgins. "I say——"

"Pwavy don't be a set of silly asses, you know," said



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While the others fought furiously Figgins became a rope for a tug-of-war between Tom Merry and Herries on one side and the gate of the Head's garden on the other!

D'Arcy in a tone of remonstrance. "What's the good of knittin' socks for the starvin' youngstahs? They can't eat socks, you know! If you give 'em socks—"

"We'll give you socks if you interrupt us again!" said Figgins. "The vote of censure is passed and duly recorded!"

"I wefuse—"

"Now, to get on with the business—"

"Wait a moment, deah boys! If it is the opinion of the meetin' that socks should be knitted, I will get some needles and wool—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I am quite willin' to spend a certain amount of cash for the good of the cause, and I weally think I could manage to knit in good style!"

"Good! Gussy knits socks!" said Figgins. "He can make me some while he's about it; I want some new ones!"

"I don't know whethah I could get needles big enough, Figgins!" said D'Arcy doubtfully. "You see—"

"Oh, you go and eat coke!" said Figgins. "Who's coming on the collecting committee with me? No good losing time over it!"

"Three will be enough," said Lowther. "Tom Merry, Manners, and myself will about fill the bill, I think!"

"Secunded!" said Manners.

"Oh, rats!" said Figgins. "Better have a member from each party to save rows—myself, Tom Merry, and Blake!"

"As a mattah of fact, Figgins, I am wathah inclined to wegard myself as bein' the pwopah person—"

"More rats! You two fellows come along, and some of you find a muzzle for Gussy while we're gone!"

"Figgins, I weally—"

"Oh, come on, Merry and Blake!"

And the collecting committee set out. They thoughtfully took three large cricket-bags with them to hold the articles they expected to collect for the bazaar. Tom Merry also took a big money-box, for the subscriptions towards purchasing further articles.

"We'll visit the seniors' studies first," said Tom Merry thoughtfully. "Fellows in the Sixth and Fifth will have more things to give away than juniors, you know, and the things will be more worth having!"

"Something in that!" assented Figgins. "Let's start at the top—with Kildare!"

"Good!"

Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, and top of the Sixth, was a School House boy. He was in his study when the collecting committee presented themselves.

Tom Merry tapped at the door, and the pleasant voice of the St. Jim's captain bade him enter. The committee entered.

Kildare looked at them in some surprise. It was not often that the three rival leaders of the St. Jim's juniors were seen in peace together.

"Hallo! What do you kids want?" he asked cheerily.

The committee exchanged glances. The term "kids" could not be considered as precisely respectful. But they tacitly agreed to pass over it.

"We've come—" said Tom Merry.

"We've come—" said Blake.

"We've come—" said Figgins.

Kildare smiled pleasantly.

"Is that a part song you are practising, or what?" he asked. "Don't you think you might rehearse a little and get into tune before you come and work it off on a chap?"

"It's these School House bounders—they won't shut up!" explained Figgins.

"You see, these Fourth Form kids will talk," said Tom Merry. "The fact of the matter is, Kildare—"

"That we're a committee—" said Blake.

"Appointed to collect—" began Figgins.

Kildare pointed to the door. The committee looked at it and then at Kildare and then at each other and then at Kildare again.

"Well, what does that mean?" asked Figgins.

"Outside!" said Kildare.



Mellish emptied the sack of cinders right on to the carpet of Study No. 6, but he failed to notice the irate juniors who were watching him from behind the door!

"My only hat!" said Tom Merry.

Blake grunted.

"The rotters!"

There were footsteps in the passage. Digby, Herries, and D'Arcy came along. They were looking curious.

"Hallo!" said Herries. "Gore just told us there was a lot of things in our study waiting to be sorted out—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Digby. "So there are! Look at 'em!"

Arthur Augustus adjusted his monocle and stared in amazement at the wonderful collection which almost barred ingress into Study No. 6.

"Bai Jove, Blake! What have you collected all this feahful wot here for?" he asked. "What are you going to do with it?"

"You—you—you—" Blake remembered Cousin Ethel, and controlled himself. "Do you think I collected it, you duffer?"

"Yaas, wathah! You can't suppose it's going to be of any use! Hallo, here's Figgins! I say, Figgins, just look at this collection of Blake's, deah boy!"

"It's not my collection!" howled Blake. "Can't you understand—"

"Just look, Figgins, deah boy!"

Figgins looked into the study, and grinned.

"Same old joke," he said. "I've just found a similar collection in my study. It's an answer to the note we sent round."

"Bai Jove, you know, I wogard that as weally funny!"

"I wish I had some of the funny merchants here, that's all!" said Blake wrathfully. "I'd show some of them some more fun!"

"Bai Jove! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, don't cackle like that, Gussy! You remind me of a cheap alarm clock. What are we going to do with all this rubbish? You say you've got the same, Figgy?"

"Yes, our study over in the New House is crammed," grinned Figgins. "Old broken chairs and saucepans and things. There's a lot of humour in St. Jim's that we've never suspected the existence of, you see."

"It's really rather comical," said Cousin Ethel. "I hope none of you will be angry about it."

"Angry!" exclaimed Blake. "Certainly not! What do you think, Figgins?"

"Nothing like it," said Figgins. "It's a good joke. Would you care to come over and have a look at the collection in my study, Cousin Ethel? It's quite humorous."

"Oh, yes, I should!" said Ethel. "I think I have time before tea."

"It's really funny, you know," said Figgins, as he walked Cousin Ethel off under the glowering eyes of the School House boys.

The latter did not seem to see the fun. They looked at one another, and D'Arcy was the first to break the silence.

"I have always wathah liked Figgins, in a way," he said. "But if this goes on I shall weally cease to regard him with anythin' like wespsect. The way that fellow cawwies off a chap's cousin undah his very nose, is most exaspewatin'."

"Of all the nerve—" said Blake.

"That's how I look at it," said Tom Merry. "I—Hallo! What on earth has Mellish got there? In the name of wonder—"

Mellish of the Fourth was coming along the passage. He had a sack over his shoulders, and was so busy carrying it that he did not notice the juniors standing there. Quick as thought Blake drew them into the study.

"It's some more contributions," he whispered. "We'll catch him on the hop."

And the juniors grinned and were silent.

Mellish came along, and turned in at the study door. He flopped the well-filled sack down upon the floor, and the contents shot out. A cloud arose from the heap. It was a mass of cinders, soot, and other rubbish, mingled with feathers and sawdust and shavings. Mellish had evidently taken some trouble to get together his contribution.

He did not see the wrathful juniors till the sack had been pitched down. Then he dropped the end of it hastily, and essayed to fly. But two or three strong pairs of hands had hold of him.

"No, you don't!" said Tom Merry grimly. Mellish wriggled.
 "What is this little lot for?" asked Blake sweetly.
 "Oh, I—only—you see—"
 "Oh, it's all right!" said Tom Merry. "Mellish is a humorist, that's all. It's very funny—very funny indeed; but not quite so funny as Mellish will look when we've rolled him in that stuff."
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 Mellish struggled frantically.
 "Let me go! I— It was only a joke! I—"
 "Well, this is only another joke."
 "Ow! I—I— Ow—ow!"
 Mellish gasped and wriggled as he was rolled over in the soot and cinders. He was not released till he was as black as a nigger minstrel. He reeled out into the passage, followed by a roar of laughter from Tom Merry & Co.
 "You—you rotters!"
 "Give him another roll, kids!"
 "Yaas, wathah! Give the wottah anothead woll!"
 But Mellish was gone. He had had enough. The rapid beat of his footsteps died away down the passage, and the humorist vanished. And the loud laughter of Tom Merry & Co. followed him.

"The great bazaar, gentlemen of St. Jim's, is now open!"
 "Yaas, wathah!"
 The scene in the great lecture hall of St. Jim's was one of animation. The seats had been cleared away, and the great body of the Hall left open for the famous bazaar. The stalls were arranged round the hall, and the articles—which did not include those piled up the evening before in Study No. 6—were exposed for sale in enticing array. The hall was thronged. Seniors as well as juniors were there, and some of the masters had consented to give the bazaar a "look-in."

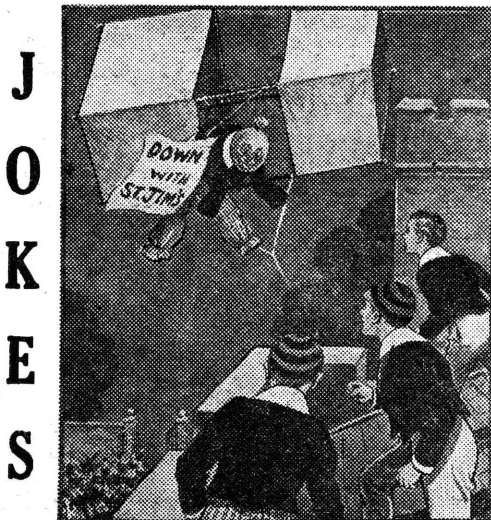
It was hinted that, later on, the Head himself would walk through the Hall. A great honour, which the bazaarists very keenly appreciated.

Cousin Ethel was in charge of a stall upon which reposed boxes and piles of various kinds of sweets. There were all varieties of chocolate in boxes, tied with pretty ribbons. The chocolate had been bought in bulk, and tied up in fancy boxes, to be sold again at six times cost price, in the

Somebody's putting one over on Tom Merry & Co. in the small reproduction of next week's cover, shown below.

Don't Miss

"The Kidnapped Cricketers!"



usual way of bazaars. D'Arcy presided at a stall which was piled up with knitted socks.

Arthur Augustus had simply slaved at his knitting in his leisure time. The result was a variety of socks in endless number, sufficient to supply the wants of all St. Jim's for generations to come, and their sisters and their cousins and their aunts, as Blake humorously remarked.

Fatty Wynn had a stall spread with enticing eatables, which he had manufactured himself from raw material bought up cheaply in large quantities. Tom Merry's stall contained bats and athletic goods. There were two dozen stalls in all, all of them well provided.

Each member of Tom Merry & Co. had suggested that Cousin Ethel would require assistance at her stall, and that he himself was the proper person to render that assistance; but each had been vetoed by the rest, and so Cousin Ethel had only the assistance of Mrs. Holmes.

But Figgins & Co. had plotted a plot with a number of juniors of the New House. Directly the bazaar was opened it was noticed that there was a rush upon Figgins' stall, which was provided with exercisers and dumb-bells and other things of the kind dear to the heart of schoolboys, mainly suggested by the judicious Mr. Dodds, the curate of Huckleberry Heath.

Figgins' stock was bought up by the loyal New House juniors in a remarkably short space of time, and Figgins, like Othello, found his occupation gone.

That was what the sage Figgins had planned. His stall being empty, there could be no harm in his strolling along to Cousin Ethel's stall to see whether he could be of any use.

The girl greeted him with a smile and nod. "Can I help you in any way, Cousin Ethel?" asked Figgins, in a casual sort of way.

Cousin Ethel looked doubtful, smiling. "Is anyone looking after your own stall, Figgins?" asked Mrs. Holmes.

"I've finished there," explained Figgins. "I don't say I'm a better salesman than any other fellow present, but I have had a rush of business, you know."

"You don't mean to say that you're sold out already, Figgins?" exclaimed Cousin Ethel.

"Yes, indeed I am!"
 "How delightful! This will be splendid for the Sunday-school! How quick the things are selling, dear Mrs. Holmes!"

"Very quickly indeed!" said Mrs. Holmes, looking rather suspiciously at Figgins.

"I hope I can be of some help here," said Figgins blandly. "A fellow doesn't want to hang about at an empty stall while everybody else is busy."

Cousin Ethel laughed. "Well, yes; I suppose I ought to be glad to secure the services of such a wonderful salesman!" she exclaimed. "You may certainly stay, Figgins."

And Figgins stayed. And he was happy for the rest of the afternoon. His assistance did not clear Cousin Ethel's stall so rapidly as it had cleared his own, but the sale was very good. Everybody came to buy of Cousin Ethel. Blake and Tom Merry gave Figgins all sorts of looks from their stalls, as he stood beside Cousin Ethel, handing her things and making himself generally useful. Figgins did not even notice it.

Needless to say, the bazaar was a huge success. The Head came in at last, and as sales showed signs of flagging, the generous Dr. Holmes bought up heaps of unsaleable things himself, and the other masters were also tactful and liberal. There was hardly a thing left on the stalls at the end of the great bazaar. Fatty Wynn's stall was quite clear—though several fellows hinted that he ate more than he sold—an allegation to which colour was lent by the extraordinary and unexampled circumstance that Fatty Wynn could eat no tea after the bazaar was over.

"Bai Jove, it's weally a gweat and wippin' success, deah boys!" said D'Arcy, rising to his feet at the tea-table in the Fourth Form room, after the bazaar, where all concerned in the great function were gathered to a little celebration. "I hear that about twenty-five pounds has been raised altogether!"

"Twenty-four pounds nineteen shillings and ninepence three-farthings!" said Cousin Ethel.

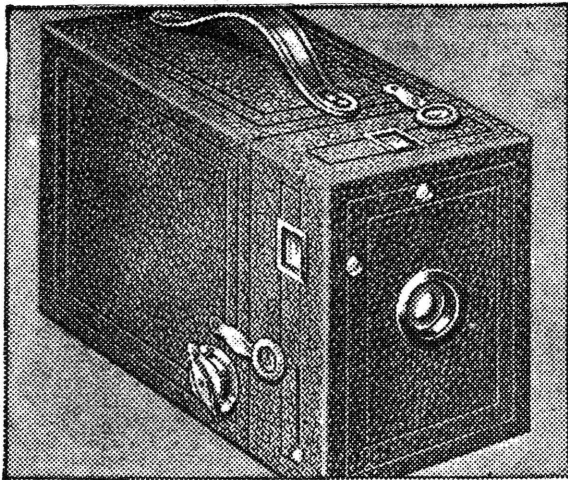
"I stand corrected," said D'Arcy. "Twenty-four pounds nineteen shillings and ninepence three-farthings have been raised for this laudable object, and I fill my glass to drink to the health of Cousin Ethel & Co., and the success of the Sunday-school treat to the youngstahs of Hucklebawny Heath!"

And the toast was drunk with enthusiasm.

THE END.

(Tom Merry and Co. are up against Frank Monk and Co. of the Grammar School in "THE KIDNAPPED CRICKETERS!"—next week's ripping school yarn!)

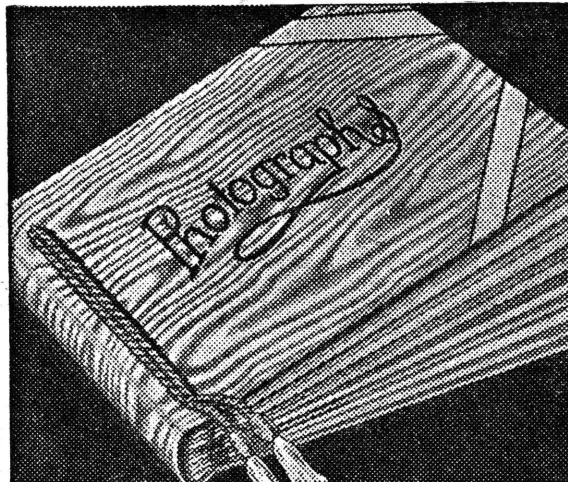
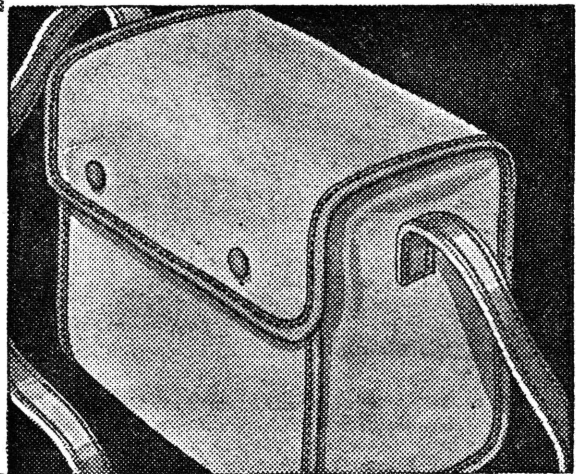
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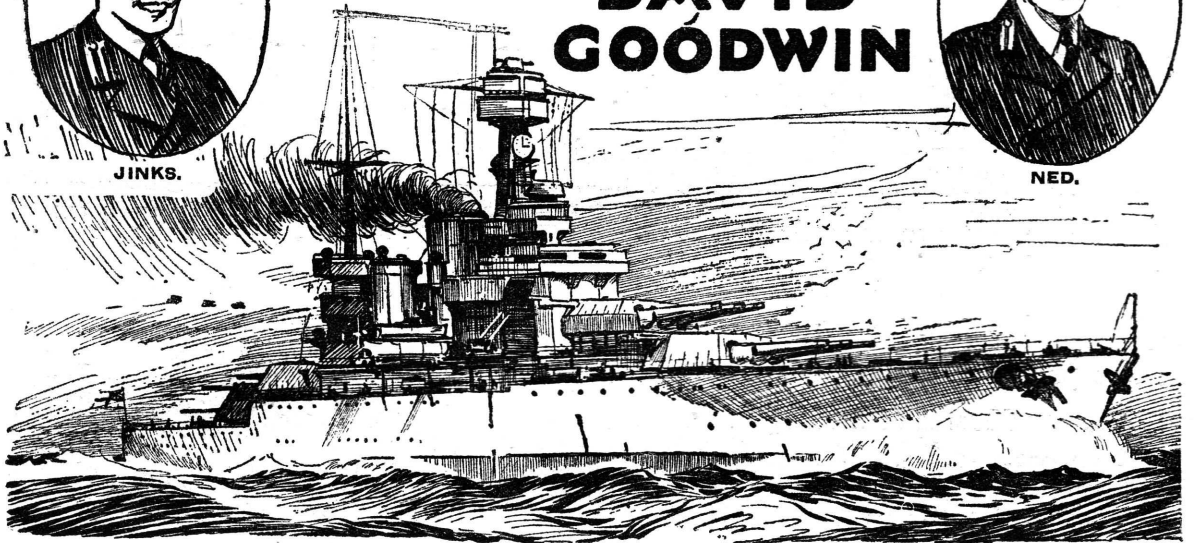


JINKS.

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 the fraud is exposed, and then in a chase that follows, the "pug" dives overboard. He cannot swim, and Ned rescues him and sends him ashore before the enraged middies can get at him.

The Mysterious Letter!

NED, having changed into dry uniform, Jinks and he returned to the gun-room, where the battle was being fought all over again in words by those who had seen it to those who had not. Ned, who was getting rather sick of the subject, and refused to be "drawn" upon it, made an uncommonly good tea, and went on deck, where he was joined by his chum.

"Afternoon letters just come," said Jinks, who had eight or nine in his fist. "Two for you, and not one of them in a shemalé hand. Can't think what you do with yourself when you're ashore. Here are yours—catch hold."

"One's from Ralph!" said Ned, tearing open the envelope quickly.

"Is it, though!" returned Jinks eagerly, putting away his own letter. "What's the latest?"

Ned gave an exclamation as he read the letter. When he had done, he thrust it into Jinks' hands.

"Dear Ned,—Can you meet me at half-past seven to-night in the ruins of the old Jezreel Temple on Gad's Hill? You must manage it somehow. I have a tough job that I want you to take a hand in, following our talk at Ryde. You can be of great help to me. Come alone, and be sure to burn this.—Yours, R."

Ned was hurrying off to find the first lieutenant, burning with anxiety to obtain shore leave and get away at once, when Jinks called him back.

"Wait a bit, Ned! Here's another letter for you. Didn't see it at first; it got stuck among mine."

"Can't bother about it now!" exclaimed Ned. "If Ralph's in a tight place—"

"Hold on, though, the writing looks very like his. It may be later news."

Ned tore the envelope open, and, halting by the turret, THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,265.

read the letter rapidly. It surprised him even more than the first.

It was headed "Yacht Shearwater, Newhaven," and was dated the day before.

"Dear Ned," it ran,—"Just a line to let you know that I shall be in your district most probably by the time you get this, and shall no doubt see you again before long. It is necessary that we should keep in touch with each other, and that you should know where to find me.

"I am just leaving Newhaven for sea, on board the Shearwater, Tom Cavendish's cutter, and am sending this ashore to be posted by Tom's brother, who isn't coming with us.

"Cavendish is bound to the East Coast, and he is going to drop me at Shellness, on the east end of Sheppey Island. I shall walk from there to Minster, where I am going to stay at the inn, and so shall be quite near to Sheerness, which, of course, is at the west end of the island, and off which your ship now lies.

"Communicate with me there if any news of importance turns up, and write to me in the name of Mr. Lexden, the Shoreland Arms, Minster. If there is anything very urgent, come yourself.

"Keep a look-out for any of our friends about whom I spoke to you—especially those you may remember having seen aboard the steam yacht that ran you down off Spithead. We're on their track.

"Good luck to you, old boy! Yours—RALPH."

Ned was completely bewildered by this letter, coming as it did after the other one. He hurriedly scanned the dates of both.

"What on earth does this mean?" said Ned. "How could Ralph have gone to sea from Newhaven at four yesterday and written this other letter at seven o'clock in Chatham?"

"Something wrong here!" said Jinks, no less perplexed,

when he had read the second missive. "Are you sure both those letters are Ralph's?"

"They're in his fist, anyway," said Ned, very worried. "Who else could possibly write 'em?"

"Well, he's made a mistake somewhere. Maybe there was some delay in posting that one from Newhaven. That's the one that looks genuine to me," declared Jinks. "It's just the thing your brother would do, to come round by sea."

"Where is this place, Minster, that he says he's coming to?"

"On the Sheppey cliffs yonder, a mile or two away. He could walk there from Shellness, where he says he was going to land, in an hour or so. There's been a strong southerly wind blowing, and it wouldn't take a fast yacht long to come round from Newhaven. Minster's a quiet little place—just a village."

"And what's the Jezreel Temple, that's given us as a meeting-place in the first letter? Is it near Minster?"

"No; miles away in the other direction—not far from Chatham," said Jinks, who knew the whole district. "It's a ruined iron building some mad tribe of johnnies started to build on the top of a hill, years ago, and never finished. They used to wear pigtails, and believed the end of the world was coming—"

"Oh, don't talk bilge!" broke in Ned excitedly. "I don't want to hear about that now. There's something wrong with Ralph, and I want to know what to do."

"It doesn't look to me as if there's anything wrong with him. This Newhaven letter gives the other one away, I think. Better go over to Minster, and I'll bet long odds you'll find your brother there."

"Not much!" exclaimed Ned. "Go to Minster, when he may be in the dickens' own fix at this Jezreel place. That's the port I'm going to make for!"

"Anyhow, send word to Minster and tell Ralph what you're doing, in case he's there. Write a note saying you've gone to Gad's Hill, according to his instructions, and that you suppose it's all right. Send the letter ashore, to be taken by postal express messenger to Minster."

Ned dashed off the note on a slip of paper, sealed it, and addressed it as Jinks advised.

"I'm in it, anyhow. I'm not going to be left out this time," said Jinks.

"Good man! I'll be jolly glad to have you!"

Ned dashed off to the upper deck. He sought the first lieutenant with all speed, and found him coming out of the chart-house.

"Can I go ashore for the evening, sir?"

"Number One" happened to be in a good temper, and looked at Ned benignly.

"Oh, you're the conqueror of the boxing champion who challenged us, aren't you?" he said. "Can't refuse leave to anybody who upholds the honour of the ship. Yes, cut along! Be back by eight bells."

"Can I go, too, sir?" besought Jinks. "I've got some fearful important business to do with Hardy—"

"All right, be off!" said Number One. "Don't be late, or you'll get no more leave for a month."

The two middies dashed away for the boat deck.

"Bit of luck!" said Jinks. "Only hope there's a train to Chatham. This is an awful line to travel on. If only we'd a car! There'll be a launch going ashore. We must get a place in that."

To their dismay, however, they found there was not even a whaleboat available. The launches were slung in, and would certainly not be lowered to take ashore a couple of junior middies on leave.

"There's a waterman's boat passing yonder. Give him a hail!" said Jinks.

The waterman's dinghy was called to the gangway. The boys jumped in, leaving Ned's note for Minster to be taken ashore when the cutter returned.

"Five bob if you reach the jetty in twenty minutes," said Ned.

And the longshoreman woke up and began to pull his best. Ned himself took the second pair of oars, and put his back into the work. The boat was a slow old tub, however, and the tide was against them.

"D'you know how the trains run to Chatham? What's the next?" asked Jinks, of the waterman.

"There's one about ha' past seven—nothin' afore that," said the man.

"We shall never get to the place in anything like time!" exclaimed Ned, in a fever of impatience. "What infernal luck!"

"There's the yacht's pinnace that picked up the Chicken!" said Jinks suddenly. He pointed to the fast little steam-launch which had already rendered them a

service. She was cutting along at a rare pace, heading up the river. "I wonder if—"

"Hi! Pinnace ahoy!" hailed Ned, as soon as he saw her.

"Ay, ay, sir!" replied the yacht-hand at her tiller, recognising the midshipman who had given him a handsome tip.

"Where are you bound?"

"Right up to Chatham! Goin' to fetch some stores."

"Can you take me and my friend? We're very anxious to get there."

"Certainly, sir!" said the yacht-hand, in the hope of getting another fat tip. "Stop the engine, Bill! Bring your craft alongside, sir!"

"By Jove, here's a bit of luck!" exclaimed Jinks. "We shall get a lift right through."

Ned paid off the waterman, and in another minute the launch was carrying the two middies up the river at a slashing pace, the spray leaping before her cutwater.

"How soon can you get there?" asked Ned.

"Inside of an hour, as the tide is."

"Good business! We shall do it easy," said Jinks, with deep relief.

The Meeting in the Temple!

"THAT chap was in a rare state when we put him ashore, sir," said the steersman of the launch, when they were well on the way.

"What chap?" said Jinks.

"Well, gen'l'men, I suppose, secin' he'd got an officer's trousers on," said the yacht-hand, smothering a grin, "though he didn't look to me like one. He was fair broke up, sir, and nearly blubberin'."

Ned realised it was the defeated pugilist that the steersman was talking about, though what the Chatham Chicken should weep about was beyond him.

"He was sayin' he'd rather 'a' cut his left hand off than take part in any game to do you down, if he'd only known what a sport you was. Said he'd treated you like a dog, an' you'd done him a good turn on top of it. An' that if he could get hold o' the chap that put him on to the game he'd smash him up!"

"Wexton had better keep his eyes open, then," grinned Jinks.

"It was a rum show," said the steersman. "What was all the row about? Why did he jump out o' that man-o-war's fighting-top, an' risk breakin' his neck?"

The curiosity of the yachtsman and engineer was aroused, but Jinks did not mean to satisfy it, nor to discuss the private affairs of the flagship with civilians.

"Oh, it's a little custom we have in the battle-cruisers!" said Jinks. "When a midshipman gets his sub-lieutenancy, or is appointed to another ship, he has to run six times round the upper deck with only his trousers on, and then dive overboard out of the fire-control station aloft. We had one of the Royal princes with us as a scottie till last month, and he had to go through it like the rest when he got his step."

"Lor!" said the yachtsman.

"You should have seen him spinning round in the air! He turned head over heels three times, and came down siting. Made a hole in the water as big as a liner's funnel."

"You don't say so, sir!"

"Yes. This chap you saw go overboard ought really to have come on board again and done it a second time from the mainmast. But he'd had enough of it, and my friend here, who is very tender-hearted, and his related to the chap by marriage, wanted to let him off."

The steersman of the pinnace looked doubtfully at Jinks. The engineer grinned sardonically as he shovelled more coal into the boiler fire.

"I'm obliged to you for explaining it, sir. I ain't used to Navy ways," said the steersman.

"Oh, don't apologise! I'm always glad to spread information about," said Jinks. "You're a taxpayer, you know, and pay for me. What became of the—er—midshipman you put ashore?"

"I understand he was off to take the first train for Chatham. There was one he was able to catch if he ran. An' he did run, too, wet through though 'e was!"

"Ned, you ought to have given the Chicken a pair of dry pants before you sent him off. Hope he won't catch consumption, or the Chatham chicken-pox, or something."

"Oh, hang the Chicken!" said Ned abruptly.

Ned was sitting back and intently comparing the two letters he had received, keeping them out of sight of the others; but they brought him no comfort.

The launch reached Chatham, and ran alongside the Sun Pier. Ned gave the yacht hands another ten shillings—his last—and the boys hurried off through the town. Jinks knew the way to Gad's Hill, but it was some distance off, and Ned decided they must hire a couple of bicycles, which they did at once. Ned having to borrow the money from Jinks to pay for them. The pair were soon pedalling away at full speed.

"We've lots of time," said Jinks.
"Time! We don't know what may be happening. It's the beastly uncertainty that worries me," said Ned. "If I had an idea what it is that Ralph's up against it'd be a comfort."

"From what I know of your brother he's jolly well able to take care of himself, and if I were a spy I'd sooner tackle Old Nick. However, he'll soon be able to tell us all about it."

All the same, Jinks himself began to grow anxious as they approached their destination. He could not deny that there was an ugly appearance about those two letters, and that it looked as if something had gone very wrong. The twilight was falling, and the district seemed to him dismal and uncanny.

The Temple of Jezreel, now in full view, looked like a huge tin biscuit-box on top of the lonely hill in front. It had been built by a mad baker of Chatham, who had gathered round him a following of enthusiasts who wished to found a new religion or creed of their own. The money gave out, and the Tribe of Jezreel broke up before the building was finished; and it remains to this day a melancholy monument of folly, visible for miles around.

The two middies left their bicycles in a ditch near the foot of the hill, and, choosing the side where there was most cover, made their way to the top. And though not a soul was in sight in any direction they took care to make their advance as quietly and inconspicuously as possible.

"Rotten, dismal-looking show, isn't it?" murmured Jinks, peering at the great ruined iron structure, which had the appearance of a rusty and long-abandoned gasworks. "Hope the dead Jezreelers don't come out at night an' Jezreel about the place! They seem to have left it to the bats."

Hundreds of them were hawking to and fro in the dusk all round the temple, adding to the gloom of the scene.

Ned said nothing, but made straight for one of the many openings. One side of the place was not closed at all.

"If this is your brother's idea of a merry trysting-place, he's got rummy notions!" muttered Jinks. "Enough to give a hyena the pip! Go easy—there may be somebody about."

They looked in cautiously before entering. The place was deserted. Most of the roof was open to the sky, and

steel frames and girders supported the sides here and there. Rank grass and weeds covered the floor.

"We'll take a look round, and then sit down and wait till Ralph comes," said Ned, peering through the gloom.

"We've been spoofed!" said Jinks, skinning a cake of chocolate and eating it. "Your brother's not on deck. Some ass has pulled our legs! Nice fools we shall look!"

"Ralph said he was coming," answered Ned doggedly, as they walked round the deserted building. "If I— Ah!"

A cry broke from him as he felt himself seized from behind and borne down, before he could turn or defend himself, by some strange form that seemed to come flying out of the darkness. At the same moment there was a shout from Jinks, and a desperate struggle ensued.

Two dim shapes had suddenly dashed out from behind a pile of girders close behind them. The attack was rapid and unexpected as a thunderbolt. The two middies were completely taken by surprise. They had hardly seen the pile of girders in the gloom, and that anybody could be lying in wait for them in that lonely spot never occurred to either.

Agile though they were the attack from behind was too swift for them, and Ned was tripped and thrown, turning as he fell, and landing heavily on his back, with his assailant on top of him.

"Look out for yourself!" he shouted desperately to Jinks, struggling with the man who had thrown him.

Jinks was already in the toils, however. He had two foes to contend with, and they had seized him before he had any chance to resist. He struggled violently, but uselessly, with his captors. The last rays of the daylight shone through the open roof upon the encounter, and the men who had tackled Jinks seemed to be a farmer and a big merchant seaman.

"Who is dat one you got?" the man who had thrown Ned cried, with a strong foreign accent.

"A snottie of the same ship!" growled one of Jinks' captors, wrenching him violently round to bring his face to the dying light.

"If I could get a hand free I'd show you who I am!" gasped Jinks.

"I know him!" said Jinks' other assailant, looking into the captive's face. "We'll have to put him through it, as he's here! Don't waste any time, Jan! You've got the right one there, haven't you?"

"Dis is Hardy!" growled the man who was pinning Ned down; and the middy, glancing up, recognised the man in a flash as the Russian who had escaped from the black steam-yacht on the night of her capture. "We haf had enough trouble mit him, and now—"

(And now what? What are these men going to do? Whatever YOU do, don't miss next week's gripping instalment!)

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