



ALL GUSSY'S FAULT!

A Long, Complete School
Story of the Chums of St. Jim's

By MARTIN CLIFFORD

Illustrated by R. J. Macdonald.

THE FIRST CHAPTER

Gussy's Party!

"WEALLY, Blake——"
"Dry up!"

"I wefuse to dwy up. I considah——"

"Hallo, you fellows, ready?" asked the cheery voice of Tom Merry as he came out of the School-House with Manners and Lowther.

The Terrible Three of the Shell were in their oldest clothes, as were Blake and Herries and Digby of the Fourth, who were standing by a group of bicycles in the quad. But Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the ornament of the Fourth Form, was in his usual elegant Etons. Arthur Augustus seemed to be engaged in a rather warm altercation with his comrades as the Terrible Three arrived on the scene.

"I am very nearly weady, Tom Mewwy," he answered. "I have simply to wun in for my toppah——"

"You've simply got to get on your jigger," said Jack Blake. "You don't want a topper for a bike ride."

"I pwesume, Blake, that I know the best whethah I want a toppah or not," said Arthur Augustus with dignity.

"My dear chap, you don't know anything. Now, are you getting on your jigger or do

you want to be chucked on it?" inquired Blake.

"I should wefuse to be chucked on it, Blake. I appeal to you, Tom Mewwy——"

"What's the row?" asked Tom Merry, with a smile. "Tell your Uncle Thomas all about it."

"We are goin' ovaah to St. Winifred's for the aftahnoon," said Arthur Augustus, "and I think——"

"Bosh!"

"Weally, Blake——"

"Rats!"

"If you keep on intewwuptin' me with wibald remarks, Blake——"

"Get on your bike!" roared Blake.

"I wefuse to do anything of the sort at pwesent. As we have nevah been to St. Winifred's befoah, I considah it necessary to keep up appeawances, as it is a wathah special occasion. You fellows can dwess as you like, but at least one membah of the party ought to look wespectable."

"What?" ejaculated Tom Merry.

"I insist upon goin' in a toppah," said Arthur Augustus firmly, "I am accustomed to keepin' up appeawances for you fellows."

"Ass!" remarked Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies——"

"Fathead!" said Digby.

"Weally, Dig——"

"The silly ass wants to start on a fifteen-mile ride in a silly topper!" exclaimed Blake, in great exasperation. "I think we'd better lift him on his bike and tie his feet to the pedals."

"I should wefuse——"

"Well, it's Gussy's party," said Tom Merry, laughing. "It's Gussy who had the invitation from Drake at St. Winifred's. We must give Gussy his head."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And if we give him his head, we can give him his hat," said Monty Lowther. "Shall I cut in and get it for you, Gussy?"

"Bai Jove! You are vewy obligin', deah boy. It is in the hatbox in Study No. 6."

"Look here——" began Blake warmly.

Monty Lowther disappeared into the house.

"Oh, give him his head," said Manners. "We shall never get off at this rate, and it's a long, long way to St. Winifred's."

"Yaas, we are wastin' time while you are waggin' your chin, Blake," said Arthur Augustus severely. "I weally nevah knew such a fellow for talkin'."

"I never knew such a conceited ass," growled Blake.

"I'm not conceited in the least, deah boy, but I know my way about," answered Arthur Augustus calmly. "We are callin' on the St. Winifred's chaps for the first time, and we don't want them to suppose that St. Jim's fellows are all ill-dressed wuffians. It is up to at least one membah of the partay to keep up wespectable appeawances. As you fellows are comin' as my fwiends I weally considah that you might sport your toppahs also."

"Catch me biking in a topper!" grunted Herries.

"Buck up, Lowther!" called out Tom Merry.

There was no reply from Monty Lowther. He had disappeared up the staircase to fetch the beautiful topper which reposed in the hatbox in Study No. 6. But something seemed to be delaying him in that celebrated apartment.

Baggy Trimble, of the Fourth, came out of the School-House while Tom Merry and Co. were waiting for Lowther. Trimble, of the

Fourth, joined the group of juniors, with an agreeable and ingratiating grin on his fat countenance.

"Starting for St. Winifred's?" he inquired.

"Yaas, Twimble."

Only Arthur Augustus took the trouble to reply to Trimble's inquiry. The fat Baggy was not "persona grata" with Tom Merry and Co. But Arthur Augustus's politeness never failed under any strain.

"Good! I'll come!" said Baggy.

"Ahem!"

"You won't!" remarked George Herries, who was a much plainer speaker than Arthur Augustus; painfully plain, at times, in fact.

"No fear!" observed Blake. "Roll away, Trimble."

But Trimble, of the Fourth, was not thin-skinned. He only gave Blake and Herries a lofty blink, and turned his attention to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Your party, isn't it, Gussy?" he asked.

"Yaas."

"Drake, at St. Winifred's, asked you over, didn't he?"

"Yaas."

"And told you to bring your friends, what?"

"I weally do not see how you know so much about it, Twimble," said Arthur Augustus, in surprise. "I do not wemembah confidin' the circumstances to you."

"I happened to hear——"

"Weally, Twimble——"

"As you're taking your friends," continued Twimble, "I don't mind coming. I can borrow a bike——"

"But you are not a fwiend of mine, Twimble."

"Now, look here, Gussy——"

"I should be vewy much obliged to you, Twimble, if you would not address me as Gussy. I am Gussy to my fwiends."

"Well, ain't I your old pal?" asked Trimble, more in sorrow than in anger. "I shouldn't have expected you to forget an old friendship like that, Gussy. Wait a minute, while I get a bike——"

"Bai Jove! I weally——"

"Where's that ass, Lowther?" exclaimed

Blake. "He's been gone long enough to collect all the toppers in the House. There's Figgins yelling at us from the gates."

"Here I am, old top."

Monty Lowther came out of the School-House, with a gleaming topper in his hand, and a grin on his face. Arthur Augustus received the topper with a cheery smile, and placed it on his noble head with great satisfaction.

"Pway take my cap in, Twimble——"

"Certainly, old chap. Wait for me, won't you?"

"I feah——"

"Come on!" growled Blake.

The juniors wheeled their machines away towards the gates, where Figgins and Co., of the New House, were waiting for them. Baggy Trimble stood with D'Arcy's cap in his hand, staring after them. Then he started in pursuit.

"I say, Gussy——"

"Pway do not wowwy, Twimble."

"But I'm coming!" howled Trimble.

Tom Merry and Co. wheeled their bikes out into the road unheeding. Even Arthur Augustus, polished as he was, did not feel equal to burdening himself with the obnoxious Baggy for the afternoon. Baggy Trimble rolled out of the gateway after them, with wrath in his fat face.

The juniors mounted in the road.

"Will you wait for me?" howled Trimble.

"Weally, you know——"

"Buzz off, you fat wasp!" snapped Herries.

"Look here, Gussy——"

Arthur Augustus paused, with one leg over his bike.

"I am vewy sowwy, Twimble," he said politely—as politely as the circumstances allowed. "But this is a wathah special occasion. As this is our first visit to St. Winifred's I wegard it as bein' necessary to be careful to keep up appeawances. So you see, it is quite imposs for you to be a membah of the partay."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I see nothin' to cackle at in that wemark, deah boys. I am speakin' sewiously to Twimble."

"You cheeky ass!" roared Trimble.

"Bai Jove!"

"You silly, glass-eyed tailor's dummy——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! If I had time, Twimble, I should certainly give you a feahful thwashin'," exclaimed Arthur Augustus indignantly. "I wegard your wudeness as uttably uncalled for, considerin' that I have been vewy careful not to wound your feelin's."

"You—you chump!"

"I wegard you with uttah contempt, Twimble."

And Arthur Augustus got on his bike, and pedalled after his comrades, who had already started. Baggy Trimble glared after him, and then his fat hand came up, with Gussy's cap in it, and the cap was hurled with deadly aim. It smote Gussy's topper from behind and sent it spinning over his eyes.

"Gweat Scott!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The topper rolled in the road, and D'Arcy just escaped riding on it. He jumped off his bike in breathless wrath.

"Bai Jove! I—I will stop to thwash that fat wottah aftah all!" he gasped, as he gathered up the dusty topper.

"Come on!" yelled Blake.

"I am goin' to thwash Twimble!"

But Baggy Trimble, very judiciously, had executed a strategic retreat after hurling the cap. He vanished across the quadrangle of St. Jim's as fast as his fat legs could carry him.

"Come back, Twimble!" shouted Arthur Augustus, wrathfully. "I am goin' to give you a feahful thwashin'. Come back, you wottah."

Baggy Trimble was not a bright youth; but he was too bright to heed that command. He melted into the distance.

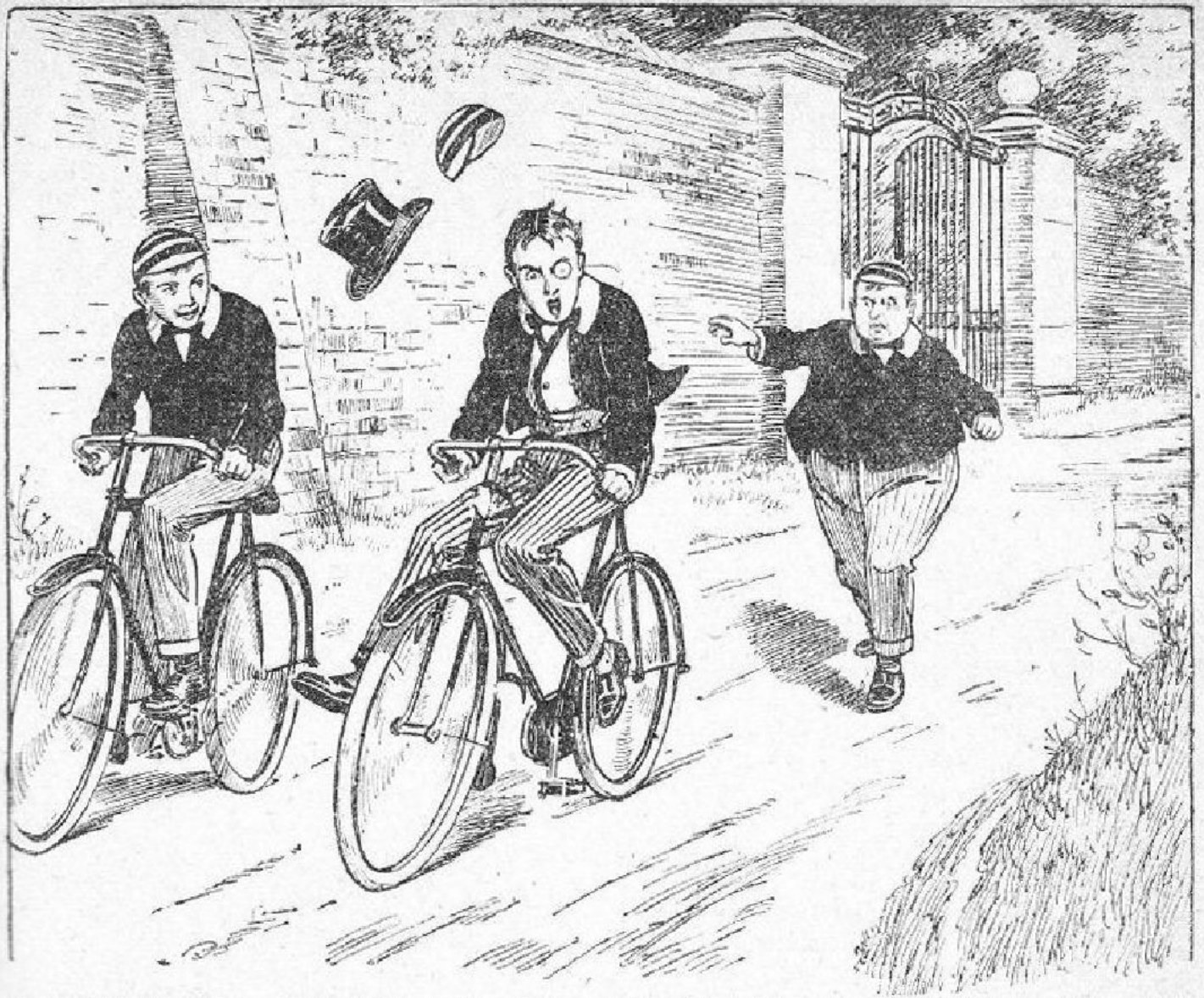
"Are you coming, Gussy?" yelled Blake.

"I am comin' when I have bwushed my hat, Blake."

"You'll be left behind, then, ass!"

"Wats!"

Tom Merry and Co. rode on; and Arthur Augustus, having brushed his beautiful hat with an equally beautiful cambrie handkerchief, set it on his noble head, remounted his jigger, and pedalled after his comrades.



Baggy Trimble glared at the Swell of St. Jim's, and then his fat hand came up, with Gussy's cap in it, and the cap was hurled with deadly aim. It smote Gussy's topper from behind and sent it spinning. (See page 130)

THE SECOND CHAPTER

Mysterious

TOM MERRY and Co. rode on cheerily by green lanes and dusty roads. They had a long ride before them, and they kept up a good speed. It was nearly fifteen miles from St. Jim's to the Chadway River.

It was quite a numerous party that Arthur Augustus was taking over to visit his friend Drake, of the Fourth Form of St. Winifred's. There were ten in all, and some of them wondered exactly what Drake would look like when Gussy dropped in to tea with his friends. Drake of St. Winifred's had asked Gussy to bike over and bring his friends to tea, but it

was probable that he had not expected the swell of St. Jim's to turn up with nine friends. The noble Gussy could have made the party nineteen, or ninety, if he had liked, for the St. Jim's fellows were very curious to see the old ship upon which St. Winifred's made its home during the rebuilding of the school. A school on a ship was a novelty to them.

St. Jim's had recently received, and accepted, a challenge from the junior cricket club of St. Winifred's, and Tom Merry and Co. were rather curious to see the fellows they were to play with on the home ground in a week or two. Tom Merry had met Daubeny, the junior captain of St. Winifred's and had not been much impressed by him; though he

had politely found a vacant date for the match.

The miles glided away under the whirling wheels at a great rate. As the party wheeled through the old High Street of Abbotsford, it struck Arthur Augustus D'Arcy that several passers-by glanced at them, and chiefly at his noble self, with unusual interest. A youth with a basket on his arm stopped on the edge of the pavement, stared directly at D'Arcy, and ejaculated:

"Oh, lor! What a chivvy!"

Arthur Augustus flushed pink.

He gave the impertinent youth a glance that ought to have withered him to ashes on the spot, but which failed in its effect. The youth with the basket was left grinning broadly.

Arthur Augustus looked round at his comrades as they wheeled out of the town upon the broad country road.

Nine faces wore nine cheerful grins.

Arthur Augustus frowned.

"Bai Jove!" he said. "What a vevy wude boy!"

"Horrid!" said Monty Lowther.

"I wegard it as bein' in the worst of taste for him to allude to your features in that wude way, Lowthah."

"Wha-a-at?"

"For a moment, I was undah the impwession that the young rascal was alludin' to me," said Arthur Augustus.

"So he was, you ass!"

"Wubbish! I twust there is nothin' about my chivvay to excite wemarks of a dewogatory nature."

"Lots!"

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"Heaps!" said Monty Lowther. "There's your eyeglass, and your nose, and your cheek—especially your cheek!"

"Wats! Bai Jove, it is gettin' wathah warm," said Arthur Augustus, changing the subject. "The perspiwation is actually wunnin' down my face."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, deah boys, I see nothin' to cackle at."

But the juniors chuckled as they rode on, rather to the perplexity of Arthur Augustus.

It was a pleasant afternoon in early summer, and not too warm. But Arthur Augustus undoubtedly felt the moisture trickling down his noble brow.

He would have been startled if he could have seen it as well as felt it; for the moisture was not, as he supposed, perspiration. It was in colour a brilliant red: and the most casual glance might have recognised it was produced by ink.

Streaks of crimson barred the noble countenance of the swell of St. Jim's, giving him a peculiar, zebra-like appearance.

If he could have seen it, he would have guessed why Monty Lowther had so obligingly offered to fetch his hat from the study; and why Monty had been delayed in fetching it.

The other fellows guessed easily enough, as they saw the streaks of red creeping down Gussy's countenance.

Under the lining inside the hat was a liberal supply of red ink: which, as it soaked through the lining, gradually flowed down in little oozy streams.

Blissfully unconscious of his remarkable aspect, Arthur Augustus rode on cheerily. His comrades could not help smiling when they glanced at him; in fact, the ride went on to an almost perpetual accompaniment of chortles.

"You fellows seem to be in a vevy mewwy mood this afternoon," Arthur Augustus remarked at last.

"You cheer us up!" explained Lowther. "Chap can't look at you without wanting to smile."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you intend that wemark in a dewogatory sense, Lowthah——" began the swell of the Fourth warmly.

"Not at all, old top! Why, you have the same effect on the people we pass. Look at that chap in the waggon."

A market-cart was lumbering by, and the waggoner seemed half asleep on his seat—till Arthur Augustus dawned upon him.

Then he sat up and took notice, so to speak.

Indeed, he gave so sudden a start that he seemed likely to pitch off his seat upon the backs of his horses.

"Lor'lummy!" ejaculated the waggoner,

staring at Arthur Augustus as if the aristocratic features of Lord Eastwood's son fascinated him.

D'Arcy glanced up at him.

"A blooming red Injin!" exclaimed the waggoner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! What could that person possibly have meant, Blake?" asked Arthur Augustus, as the juniors rode on.

"Ask me another!" said Blake.

"Was he alludin' to you, do you think?"

"Me!" ejaculated Blake.

"Yaas!"

"You ass! Why should he take me for a Red Indian?" demanded Blake.

"Well, your mannaahs, you know——"

"My what?"

"Mannaahs, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus innocently. "I have wemarked more than once that you have the mannaahs of a Wed Indian."

"You silly ass!" roared Blake.

"Weally, deah boy——"

"Hallo, there's a kid in a fit!" remarked Monty Lowther, jerking his head towards a farmer's lad who was leaning on a gate and staring into the road.

The farmer's lad had been busily and sedately chewing a straw till the bunch of cyclists swept by. But as his eyes fell upon the swell of St. Jim's his mouth opened so wide that the straw fell out.

"Haw, haw, haw!" roared the farmer's boy.

"Gweat Scott!"

Arthur Augustus slowed down, but Herries caught his elbow, and rushed him on.

"Come on, old top," said Herries, "no time to stop and scrap with farmers boys."

"I was not goin' to scwap with him, Herries, I was simply goin' to ask him the reason of his uttah wudeness, and punch his nose."

"Leave his nose alone," said Digby, "we've got to get to the Benbow some time to-day."

"Yaas, but——"

"Besides, he couldn't help it," said Manners.

"You ought to be used to producing that effect on people by now."

"Weally, Mannaahs, if you mean to imply

that there is anythin' in my features to excite wisibility——"

"There seems to be," grinned Figgins, of the New House. "Look at that giddy cyclist."

Arthur Augustus looked at the passing cyclist. The man looked at him, and gave a jump. Then he gave a yell:

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The cyclist nearly doubled over his handlebars with mirth as he rode on. Arthur Augustus looked over his shoulder at him, in utter perplexity. His noble countenance was a deep pink now with vexation; and on the pink the bars of crimson showed up quite nicely.

"I weally fail to undahstand this," exclaimed D'Arcy, "what is there in my face to make people gwin in this widiculous way?"

"Well, there's your nose!" suggested Monty Lowther.

"Weally, you ass——"

"And your other features—all of them worth a guinea a box."

"You uttah ass——"

Arthur Augustus broke off, as a pedestrian, passing in the road, stopped to stare at him, and give a howl of laughter. It was really growing quite disconcerting. The swell of St. Jim's took his handkerchief out to wipe the perspiration from his face. He gave a jump as his eyes fell on the handkerchief after he had wiped his face. There were blotches of red on the cambric.

"Gweat Scott!" Arthur Augustus jammed on his brake and jumped down. "Oh, cwumbs! I am bleedin'."

"Come on!" roared Blake.

"Pway stop, deah boys——"

"Rats! Follow on!"

"I am bleedin' feahfully!" shrieked Arthur Augustus. "I have weceived some feahful injawy. I am goin' for a doctah."

He whirled his bike round and remounted. A mile back the cyclists had passed through a village, and Arthur Augustus started to return to it—at top speed. Tom Merry and Co. wheeled round in the road in dismay.

"Come on!" shouted Tom.

"I am goin' for a doctah!"

"There's nothing the matter with you, you ass!" yelled Blake.



Arthur Augustus jumped off his machine, and leaned it against a tree. He examined his only hat with a steadfast gaze, his comrades watching him with grinning faces. "I suppose my face is wed inkay!" he said at length. (See Page 135.)

But Arthur Augustus was already out of hearing.

"Oh, crumbs!" exclaimed Blake. "What thumping time shall we get to St. Winifred's! Lowther, you silly ass, what do you want to play your idiotic jokes on poor old Gussy for?"

"My dear chap, Gussy was born to have his leg pulled. I'm simply helping him to fulfil his mission in life."

"Fathead!"

"After him!" exclaimed Tom Merry excitedly.

And the nine juniors, strung out breathlessly along the road, pedalled furiously in pursuit of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

THE THIRD CHAPTER

TOO Funny!

"STOP!"
"Hold on!"
"Chuck it!"

Tom Merry and Co. shouted as they rode; but Arthur Augustus did not heed. He did not suspect red ink; and he was convinced that he was bleeding profusely somewhere. In those circumstances evidently it was wise to see a doctor with the smallest possible delay; and Arthur Augustus was riding like the wind to seek a medical man. Tea at St. Winifred's could wait for so important a reason.

But his chums, naturally, were not so

alarmed as Gussy himself. They were feeling exasperation instead of alarm, as they chased back along the dusty road after the fleeing swell of St. Jim's.

"Come back!" howled Kerr.

"Stop!" raved Blake.

"You silly ass!"

"You frabjous chump——"

"You burbling jabberwock——"

But Gussy was deaf to the voices of the charmers. He pedalled on regardless.

Tom Merry drew ahead of his comrades, and gradually overhauled Arthur Augustus, fast as he rode. They were almost at the entrance of the village when the captain of the Shell came level.

"Stop!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Imposs! I am bleedin' to death——"

"You're not bleeding, you silly ass!" stut-tered Tom. "It's only red ink, you burbling chump!"

"Wats!"

"What! I tell you——"

"Wubbish! How could wed ink get on my face? Pway keep cleah, Tom Mewwy—I want to see a doctah at once——"

"You don't need a doctor for red ink, chump! It was in your hat."

"Mum-mum-my hat!"

"Yes, ass."

"Oh!"

Arthur Augustus slackened at last. He began to understand. He whipped off the gleaming silk topper and looked into it.

Red ink was exuding all through the lining in the front of the hat; and even Gussy could doubt no longer.

"Wed ink——"

"Yes, you duffer!" gasped Blake, coming up breathlessly. "If you'd had the sense of a bunny rabbit, you'd have spotted it before."

"It's spotted you, anyhow, Gussy," re-marked Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus jumped off his machine, and leaned it against a tree. He examined his inky hat with a steadfast gaze, his comrades watching him with grinning faces.

"I suppose my face is wed inkay!" he said at length.

"Just a little!" grinned Fatty Wynn.

"Just a few!" murmured Lowther.

"I pwesume, Lowthah, that you placèd that wed ink in my hat when you fetchèd it fwom the studay for me," said Arthur Augustus, with deadly calmness.

"Guilty, my lord!" murmured the humourist of the Shell.

"Vewy well! Pway hold my hat, Blake, while I give Lowthah a feahful thwashin'."

"My dear ass, there's no time for thrashing silly chumps now; we've got to get to St. Winny's to tea——"

"I am afraid we shall be late for tea in any case, Blake, as I have to get washed, and to get a new hat, befoah we can pwoceed."

"Well, a wash wouldn't do you any harm," agreed Blake. "You look as if you could do with one. But you'll have to manage with that hat. No time for shopping."

"I uttably wefuse to pwoceed in this hat, Blake! It is all inkay."

"Can't be helped."

"Come on, old chap," urged Fatty Wynn. "I'm hungry already."

"You genewally are, Wynn; but I feah that that can make no diffewence now. The ink will have to be scwapèd out of the hat, at least, befoah I can wear it again, and I wequiah a wash. Then I am goin' to thwash Lowthah."

"Why didn't I think of making my will before we started?" murmured Monty Lowther.

"Look hère, Gussy——"

"Wats!"

"We can't hang about here——"

"Wot!"

Inky hat in hand Arthur Augustus marched off to a little wayside inn by the roadside. Evidently the swell of St. Jim's was not to be induced to proceed till he was newly swept and garnished, so to speak.

"Well, my word!" said Digby, as Gussy disappeared into the inn. "The silly ass will keep us an hour or two——"

"I'm hungry already!" said Fatty Wynn, with deep feeling.

However, Arthur Augustus did not take as long as Digby dismally prophesied, or anything like it; and he came out of the inn newly washed and clean as a new pin.

He gave the humorist of St. Jim's a lofty stare as he rejoined the party; but a little thing like a lofty stare did not disturb Monty Lowther to any great extent.

"I have had a feahful lot of twouble," said D'Arcy, "but I think all the ink has gone at last. I shall be able to pwoceed, when I have thwashed Lowthah——"

"Oh, for goodness' sake let's get on," said Fatty Wynne crossly. "I'm getting famished."

"But I wefuse——"

"Come along, Gussy!" interrupted Tom Merry. "You can settle with him later on."

"Hear, hear!" chorused the party.

And so the St. Jim's juniors rode onward again.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER

Cricket at St. Winifred's!

"THAT'S the Benbow!" Tom Merry and Co. had wheeled through the village of Chade, and were following the road through the brown woods towards the river, when the topmasts of the old wooden warship rose into view over the trees. It was their first sight of the School on the River. Fore, main, and mizzen topmasts rose clear against the sunny sky in the distance.

"That's the old tub, as Daubeny called it," said Tom Merry. "I shall be glad to have a look at it."

"Yaas, wathah."

"There's a kid in the maintop remarked Kerr.

Diminished by the distance a figure could be discerned seated in the maintop of the Benbow—the figure of a fat youth in Etons, eating toffee. Then the trees shut out the masts from view.

There was a sound of voices ahead, but the playing-fields were as yet hidden by the trees.

"Cricket going on, I suppose," said Figgins.

"Good—we'll see what they're like, if it's a junior game," said Tom Merry. "I've never seen St. Winifred's play, but I've heard that their first eleven is good. I don't know about the juniors; that chap Daubeny seemed to think a good deal of it. But he's the skipper. Is your pal, Drake in the junior eleven, Gussy?"

"I think not, deah boy."

"Isn't he a cricketer?"

"Yaas, wathah."

"Well, he wouldn't be playing this afternoon as he's expecting visitors," observed Monty Lowther. "I wonder what he will think when he sees us. Did he expect you to bring an army, Gussy?"

"He asked me to bwing my fwiends. I am suah Dwake will not be lackin' in hospitality."

"I hope not!" murmured Fatty Wynn. "I'm jolly hungry."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hallo! What's that they're shouting?" exclaimed Blake.

From the direction of the St. Winifred's cricket-ground by the river, still screened by the trees from the cyclists, there came an unmistakable yell.

"Butter-fingers!"

"Boooh!"

"Go home, Daubeny!"

"Boooh!"

The St. Jim's cyclists exchanged amused glances. Judging by those yells, the St. Winifred's crowd did not think much of their junior cricketers.

"Here they are!" exclaimed Tom.

The bunch of cyclists swept out of the wood at last on the open road to the river bank. The road skirted the playing-fields, and the St. Jim's fellows had a full view of the game.

It was a junior match that was going on.

St. Winifred's were playing the local team from Chade, which should not have been a matter of difficulty for them. But St. Winifred's evidently were in difficulties.

Chade were in, and Daubeny and Co. were in the field. Two batsmen were running as Tom Merry and Co. jumped off their machines to look on. The fieldsmen were panting after the ball, and seemed to be in a breathless state. Daubeny, the St. Winny's skipper, had evidently missed a catch; some of the crowd of onlookers were still "booing" him.

The St. Jim's fellows left their bikes along a fence and joined the crowd round the field of play. They were interested in St. Winifred's cricket, as Daubeny was soon to bring his team over to St. Jim's for a match. Only

Fatty Wynn cast his eyes towards the Benbow, and wondered whether tea was ready on board the school ship.

The ball went in to the wicket-keeper, but the batsmen were home. The field crossed over again, and a slim and elegant youth went on to bowl. There was a shout from some of the juniors round.

"Don't play the goat, Egan!"

Egan, the bowler, cast an angry glance round.

"My hat!" murmured Tom Merry. "They have a jolly queer way of encouraging their players here!"

"Yaas, wathah!" grinned Arthur Augustus.

"Well, that chap is a goat, and no mistake!" remarked Herries. "What do they give him the bowling for?"

Egan had sent down the ball clumsily enough, and the Chade batsman knocked it away easily. The batsmen were running again, while two or three of the field fagged after the ball.

Tom Merry chuckled.

If this was a fair specimen of St. Winifred's cricket Daubeny and Co. were not likely to give much trouble at St. Jim's.

"Hallo, you chaps!"

"Dwake, deah boy!"

A handsome junior in Etons joined the St. Jim's crowd and shook hands cordially with Arthur Augustus D'Ardy.

It was Jack Drake, of the St. Winifred's Fourth.

Arthur Augustus presented him to his chums, who rather took to the St. Winny's junior at once. He had an open, frank face and a cheery manner that were very engaging.

If Drake was surprised to see the numerous party Arthur Augustus had brought with him, he did not show it. He seemed very pleased to see the crowd from St. Jim's.

"Jolly glad to see you all!" he said.

"Like to look at the cricket a bit before we go on board?"

"Yes, rather!"

"You'll find it amusin', at any rate," said Drake, with a grin. "Daubeny is the only man in the team who can play at all, and he's off colour. That's Egan who's bowlin', an awful ass at cricket! That

idiot just muffing a catch is Torrence! The silly cuckoo who is panting yonder is Seeley! He's got no wind; I fancy he was smoking right up to the start of the match. The born dummy who's sittin' down is Chilcot!"

Tom Merry and Co. chuckled. Drake's description of the St. Winifred's cricketers rather tickled them.

"What do you think of the show?" asked Drake.

"Ahem!" murmured Tom.

He did not quite like to tell a St. Winifred's fellow what he really thought of the show.

The cricket was almost the last word in inefficiency; there were fag elevens at St. Jim's that could have walked all over Daubeny and Co. without exerting themselves very much.

"Rotten!" said Herries, who was rather a plain speaker. "Our Second Form could beat that lot."

"Weally, Hewwies!" murmured Arthur Augustus.

"Well, they could," grunted Herries. "I don't call that cricket; I call that fumbling!"

"Weally, you know——"

Drake laughed.

"Quite correct!" he said. "It's rotten fumbling! You can see what a lot of the fellows think of it."

Some of the St. Winny's fellows were voicing their opinions just then.

"Butter-fingers!"

"Go home!"

"Rotten!"

"Call that cricket!"

"Yah!"

Vernon Daubeny gave a furious look at the yelling juniors. These stern critics did not seem in a majority in the crowd, but they were a very emphatic minority.

"But what's the idea?" asked Tom Merry. "You could put better men than that in the field."

"Of course we could!" growled Drake. "But Daub's junior captain, and no end of a big gun, in his own estimation. He runs the show, and this is the way he runs it. A fellow has to suck up to Daub no end to squeeze into the eleven, and that isn't the

way to get good men. I used to be in the team, but since I'm out with Daub I'm left out of games; and it's the same with other chaps. But Daub has a majority behind him in the club. You see, he's got no end of tin and a terrific home that fellows like to be asked to, and so on. So far he's been able to keep the cricket in his own hands, and this is the merry result!"

Drake spoke in a good-humoured tone, but it was evident that he was inwardly rather sore on the subject.

"Chade are sixty for four wickets," he said. "They can keep in the rest of the day, if they like. Daub's lot can't touch them. It makes me tired. Let's go on the Benbow, shall we?"

"Righto!"

And Tom Merry and Co., turning their backs on the remarkable display of cricket, followed Drake to the old warship.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER

On Board the Benbow

"WIPPIN', bai Jove!"

That was Arthur Augustus's comment on the old Benbow as Jack Drake showed the party round. Drake did the honours cheerfully, though once or twice he glanced towards the bank where the cricket was still in progress, and frowned.

Tom Merry and Co. were keenly interested in the Benbow, and in all they saw on the old ship. The fine old warship, which had once sailed the seas under Nelson's flag, was anchored in the Chadway, and a permanent gangway connected it with the shore. Where great guns had once looked out were now study windows; the old captain's cabin was the Head's study, and Form-rooms were partitioned off between decks. The Fourth-form quarters were aft on the main deck, and thither Drake led the way after a round had been made to see the sights.

"Here's my room," he said, stopping at No. 8 Study in the Fourth. "You here, Rodney?"

"Here I am," answered a cheery voice; and Dick Rodney of the Fourth turned to greet the visitors.

Drake introduced his cham, who had apparently been engaged in getting tea ready while Drake was on the cricket-ground. Tom Merry and Co. crowded round the doorway, but it was pretty evident that there was no accommodation for so numerous a party in No. 8 Study. The studies on board the Benbow were not palatial in their dimensions.

"Bai Jove!" remarked Arthur Augustus cheerfully. "We shall weally be crowdin' you out, old chap."

"Tea in the form-room," said Drake, with a smile. "We can have that to ourselves on a half-holiday. Toodles—where's Toodles?"

"Right here, dear old boy," answered a fat and wheezy voice as Tuckey Toodles came along the passage.

Tom Merry and Co. recognised the fat youth they had seen in the maintop. There was a smear of toffee about Toodles's ample mouth, it was all that remained of the toffee he had been busy upon when they had first sighted him.

Tuckey Toodles was effusively genial to the visitors. Probably he saw in their presence the prospect of a feed of unusual magnitude.

"Oh, here you are!" said Drake. "Make yourself useful, Tuckey. We're going to have tea in the form-room, you go round and bag the crocks. Easy enough while all the fellows are out."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Leave it to me," said Toodles.

He rolled away on his mission.

Drake led his numerous guests to the deck again, while Tuckey Toodles was busily engaged in raiding "crocks" from various studies, and Dick Rodney paid a visit to the ship's canteen for supplies. There was a slightly thoughtful expression on Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's noble face as he stepped out on deck.

"Bai Jove, Tom Mewwy!" he murmured. "Do you think there is wathah a cwovd of us, undah the cires?"

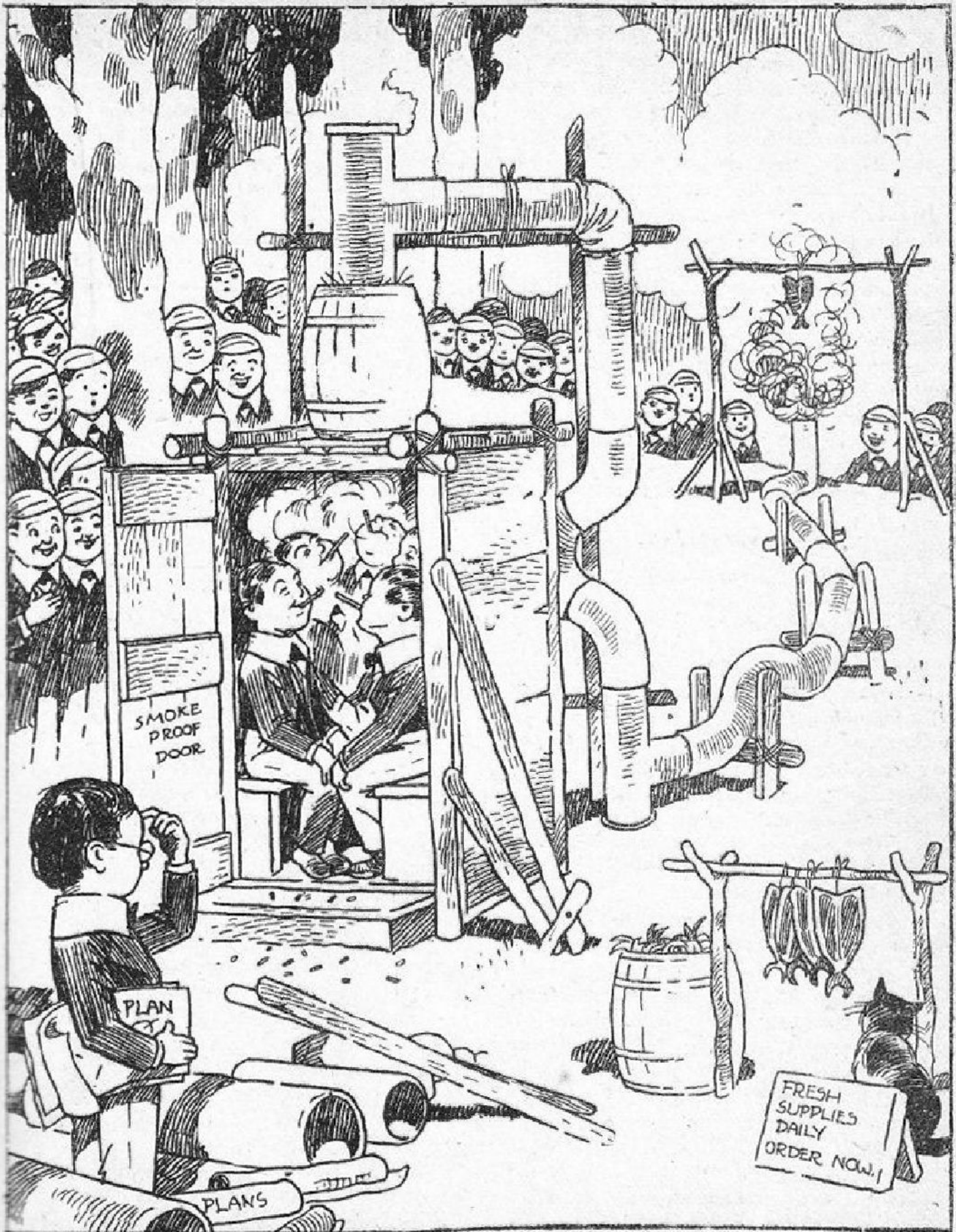
Tom Merry grinned.

"Has that only just occurred to you, old top?" he asked.

"I twust we are not puttin' these fellows out in any way."

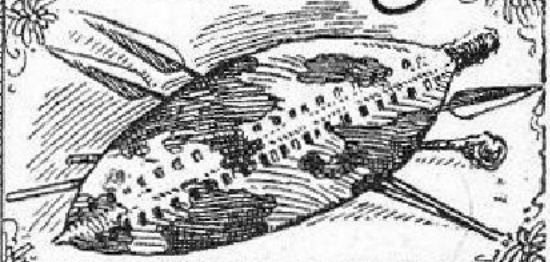
"What a trustful disposition," murmured Monty Lowther.

THE INVENTIONS OF SMITH, MINOR

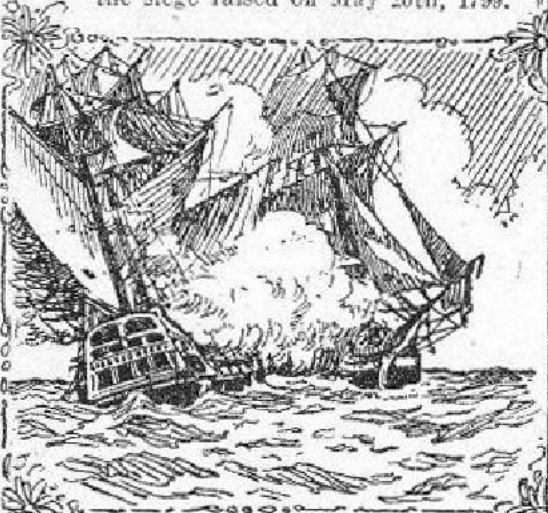


SMITH MINOR'S NOVEL SCHEME FOR SMOKING A KIPPER!

Famous Fights for the Flag



The final of eleven assaults on Acre, when Mr. Midshipman Oastler held the breach with a handful of men against fearful odds. Napoleon's troops were beaten off and the siege raised on May 20th, 1799.



The Battle of Ferkeh in the Dongola Expedition on June 7th, 1896. The infantry, under the command of the late Lord Kitchener, stormed the village of Ferkeh, inflicting tremendous losses on the enemy.



"Weally, Lowthah——"

"Dear old Gus!" grinned Blake. "Always putting his silly foot in it."

"Weally, Blake——"

"Hallo, St. Winny's are batting now," remarked Manners, with a glance towards the cricket-ground in the distance.

"Then the other party must have declared," grinned Digby.

The juniors watched the cricket from the rail. Daubeny of the Shell was at the wicket, with Egan at the other end. Tom Merry and Co. were rather curious to see some batting; they had already formed their opinion of Daub and Co's bowling and fielding. Somewhat to their surprise Daubeny lived through an over, and scored a couple of runs. But when the field crossed over, and Egan had the bowling, there was a yell from the hostile section of the crowd as the stumps went down.

"Out!"

"What price ducks' eggs?"

"Go home, Egan!"

Torrence came on in Egan's place, and stopped a couple of balls. The third knocked his middle stump out.

Tom Merry burst into a laugh. He could not help it.

"Your skipper must be rather an ass to play men like that, Drake," he said. "Is that the team he's bringing over to St. Jim's next week?"

Drake stared.

"Is Daub playing your school?" he asked.

"Yes, he asked us for a match, and we fixed it up."

Drake whistled.

"I didn't know." He knitted his brows. "Yes, that is the team he will bring over; if he makes any changes they won't improve it much. They're awfully satisfied with themselves. It's sickenin', you know; it's simply guying St. Winny's, taking around a crew like that. I hope the fellows will get fed-up with it soon."

Tom Merry frowned a little, too.

He had fixed up the match willingly enough, but he did not quite relish the prospect of wasting a holiday on such cricket as this. However, the arrangement was

made, and it was rather too late for such considerations.

The juniors were still watching a lamentable exhibition of falling wickets, when Tuckey Toodles arrived to summon them to tea in the Fourth-form room.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER

Daubeny Interrupts

JACK DRAKE and Rodney had probably been a little taken by surprise by the arrival of so numerous a party, but they had played up well. There was a handsome spread in the form-room, and several St. Winny's fellows were there to help—Estcourt, and Sawyer major, and Conway, and one or two more. Three or four study tables had been carried in, and put together, and they were covered by several tablecloths of different degrees of whiteness. Crocks were there in abundance in a remarkable variety of patterns, some of them cheap and some of them costly.

Tuckey Toodles had not been particular where he found them, and among the crocks there were cups and saucers of a very expensive kind that he had been borrowed from the study of the great Daub himself. However, the great Daub was busy on the cricket-ground; so he was not able to raise any objections.

Fatty Wynn's face beamed at the sight of the spread. He murmured to Kerr that the St. Winny's chaps knew how to "do" a fellow all right. And Fatty proceeded to do full justice to the feed, in which object he was ably seconded by Tucky Toodles.

It was quite a merry meal, and all the St. Jim's party were enjoying their visit to the old Benbow. Sawyer major was looking out of a window, and he turned round with a grin.

"Game's up!" he announced.

"They've finished early," remarked Tom Merry.

"All down for about a dozen, I expect," said Drake. "I wish you could scratch that match with Daubeny, Merry."

"Well, we couldn't very well," said Tom.

"But why? They won't hurt us."

"It's rotten for a crowd like that to go

around guying St. Winny's. That was what I was thinking of."

Tom Merry smiled.

"I must say that crowd doesn't do your school credit, so far as cricket is concerned," he remarked. "Sack the lot would be a good idea."

"Daub's too firmly fixed for that," growled Drake. "I've tried that, but he's got a good backing, ass as he is. Well, it can't be helped."

And the subject was dropped.

But Tom Merry could see that it was still in Drake's mind, and that he was still feeling exasperated.

There was a trampling on the deck overhead, which announced that the cricketers were coming on board.

A little later there were footsteps in the passage, and the form-room door was thrown open.

Vernon Daubeny appeared in the doorway with an angry frown upon his face.

Tucky Toodles blinked at him in some alarm. He guessed that the great chief of the "Bucks" of St. Winifred's had missed his crocks.

Drake glanced at Daubeny coolly.

"How did it go?" he asked sarcastically.

But Daubeny had not come there to announce the result of the match.

"Some cad's been in my study!" he exclaimed angrily. "Every dashed thing has been taken away!"

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus.

The St. Jim's fellows regarded their plates with elaborate unconsciousness. It looked as if trouble was coming.

Probably his easy defeat at the hands of the Chade villagers, and the remarks of the hostile section among the St. Winny's juniors, had not improved Vernon Daubeny's temper.

Certainly he was looking very angry and savage now, and did not choose to take heed of the fact that strangers were present.

"Is that all?" asked Drake.

"You've got the things here!" exclaimed Daubeny.

"You ass, Toodles!" exclaimed Drake.

"Why couldn't you let Daub's stuff alone? Still, it doesn't matter."

"Doesn't it?" shouted Daubeny. "How

am I to have my tea, I'd like to know, with all my things gone?"

"You can trot in to school tea!" suggested Drake.

"Don't be a fool! Hand over my things at once!"

"Can't be done, old top! Can't you see we're busy?"

"Then I'll jolly well——" Daubeny broke off as he recognised Tom Merry at the table. "Hallo, is that you, Merry?"

"Yes, here I am," said Tom cheerfully, hoping that the recognition would tide over the trouble, and pour oil upon the troubled waters, as it were. "How do you do, Daubeny?"

"Better come along to my study," said Daubeny. "You don't want to feed with a gang of scrubby fags here."

Tom stared.

"I'm Drake's guest at the present moment," he answered curtly.

"Oh, if you prefer fags' company, please yourself," sneered Daubeny. "Toodles, take my things back to my study at once!"

"Oh, I say——" began Toodles.

"Sharp's the word, if you don't want your ear pulled!" snapped Daubeny.

Tucky Toodles gave Drake a dismayed look. This was a very disagreeable interruption to a pleasant gathering.

But Jack Drake was equal to the occasion.

He gave Rodney a glance and rose to his feet.

The two juniors strode towards Vernon Daubeny, and, heedless of his lofty stare, laid violent hands upon him.

"Outside, old top!" said Drake.

"You cheeky cad!" roared Daubeny.

"Why, I—I—I'll—yarrooh!"

In the grasp of the two Fourth-formers, Vernon Daubeny went whirling through the doorway.

There was a bump as he landed outside.

Some of the juniors chuckled. Arthur Augustus's noble countenance was very serious however. He was shocked at Vernon Daubeny's distinct want of repose of manner.

The bump in the passage was followed by a loud yell. Daubeny seemed to be hurt.

"Goings?" asked Drake.

"Ow! Ow! Wow! I'll—I'll——"

Bump!

"Yow-ow-ow-woop!"

Drake and Rodney came back smiling into the Four-room and closed the door. It was not opened again. The "crocks" remained unclaimed; it was evident that Daubeny of the Shell had had enough. The agreeable tea-party finished without seeing him again.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Deserters.

THE sunset was red on the river when Tom Merry and Co. left the old Benbow, Drake and Rodney coming ashore with them. The St. Jim's party wheeled out their bikes for the ride home. They had enjoyed their visit to the school on the ship, and they liked most of the fellows they had met there—with the exception of Daubeny.

Towards Vernon Daubeny their feelings assuredly were neither of liking nor of admiration. Tom Merry already regretted that he had cheerfully, and rather thoughtlessly, taken up Vernon Dau-

beny's suggestion of a cricket match between the two schools, and he was puzzled that Daubeny should desire to come over to St. Jim's and collect a certain licking. But it was possible that the great Daub did not expect to be beaten. "Swank" appeared to be the lofty youth's chief characteristic, and he seemed to be satisfied with cricket as played by the Bucks of St. Winifred's.

"You're meeting Daub's lot next week," Drake said, as the juniors were bidding good-bye.

"Can't be helped, can it now?" said Tom Merry. "Why don't you fellows pile in somehow, and send over a good team?"

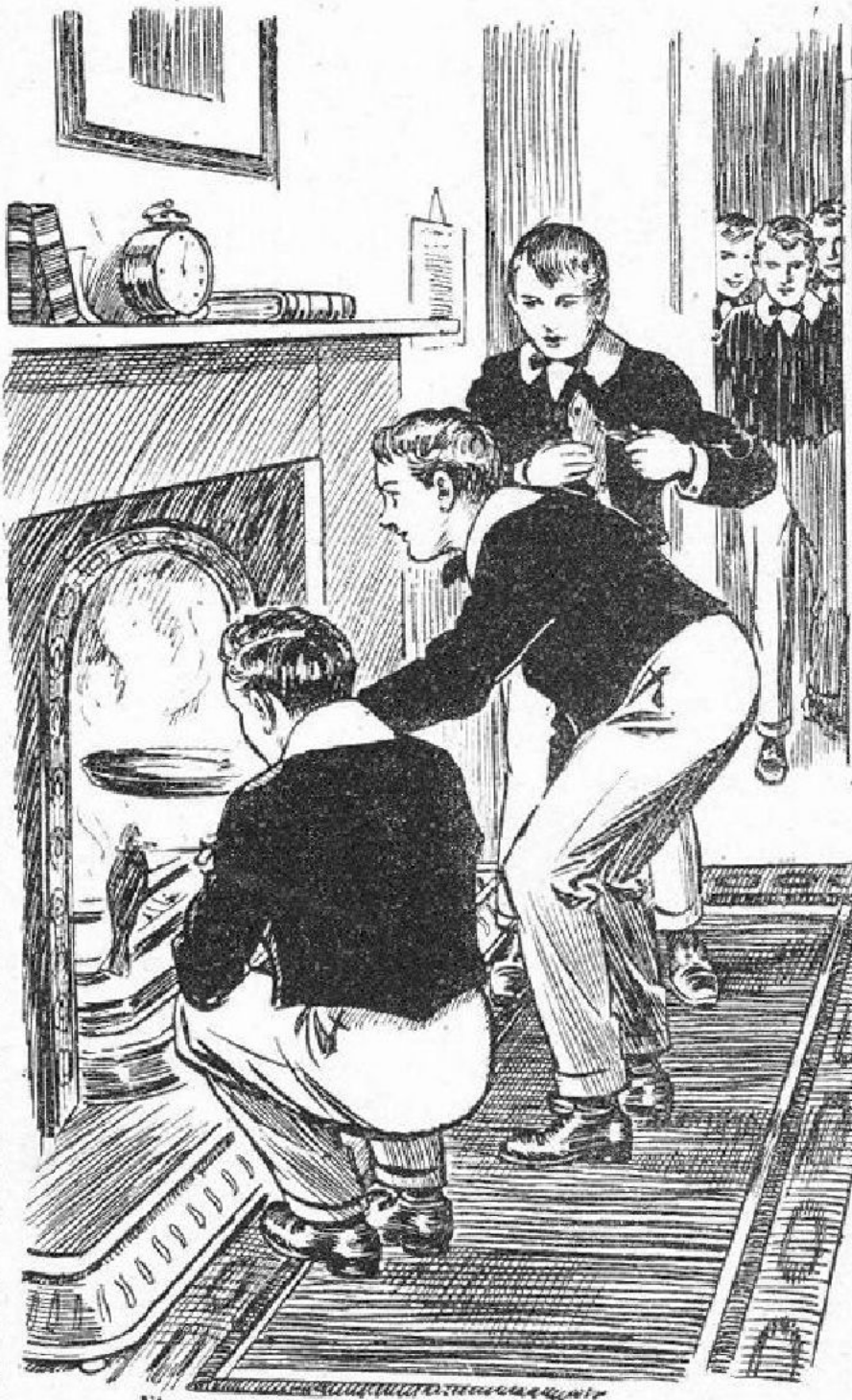
"Yaas, wathah," said Arthur Augustus. "That's the weally wight and propah thing to do, deah boy."

"We'll try, anyhow," said Drake.

But he did not seem very hopeful.

Tom Merry and Co. rode away in the sunset on the long ride home to St. Jim's.

"Wathah a jollay place, isn't it?" remarked Arthur Augustus. "If I weren't a St.



Wally & Co. were too busily engaged to heed the three Shell fellows standing grinning in the doorway. "We're in time for supper, anyway!" murmured Monty Lowther. (See page 148)

Jim's chap, I should weally like to be on the Benbow. But what vewy extwaordinaway cwicket!"

"It was really like Daubeny's cheek to challenge us, with a scratch crew like that, to play," said Manners.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And Tommy was an ass to fix it up," said Blake. "You ought to have stopped him, Manners."

"Well, I didn't know——" said Manners.

"And I didn't know——" said Tom.

"Surprising the number of things Shell chaps don't know," remarked Blake, in a reflective sort of way. "This is what comes of having a Shell chap for junior skipper. I've always said——"

"Bow—wow!"

"I've always said that the Fourth——"

"Rats!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, I quite agree with Blake. It is beneath our dig to meet a cwew like Daubeny's eleven."

"No doubt about that," grunted Herries. "Better leave the match to the Third Form eleven. Young Wally could beat them with his lot."

"Yaas. If I were skippah, Tom Mewwy——"

Tom Merry laughed.

"You can be skipper in the St. Winny's match, if you like, Gussy," he said. "I dare say you could beat them."

"Bai Jove! I should wefuse to be skippah, to meet a team like that," said Arthur Augustus disdainfully. "You can leave it to my young bwothah, if you like. Wally could handle them."

"Fact is, I'm standing out next week," said George Figgins. "I'm not going to waste a holiday on those slacking asses."

"Same here," said Fatty Wynn. "What's the good of my bowling to them, when Trimble and Skimpole could knock over their wickets?"

"Hear, hear!" said Kerr.

The three New House juniors were evidently of one opinion. And their opinion seemed to be largely shared by the School House fellows.

"Well, you won't want me, either, Tom," Monty Lowther remarked. "I think I'll go on a cinema crawl instead."

"Manners can take your place, Monty."

"No fear!" said Manners. "I'm going out with my camera. I'd give it up for a real match; not to play a set of duds."

"Just what I think," agreed Blake. "I'd rather go on the river myself."

"Yaas, wathah! We'll have a boat out," said Arthur Augustus. "A match like that is unworthy of our powahs, deah boys. I suggest goin' on the wivah instead. In fact, I shall insist upon it. In a case of doubt, deah boys, you can wely on me to point out the propah thing to do."

Tom Merry looked rather worried.

"Look here, you duffers!" he exclaimed. "St. Winny's are coming over next Wednesday to play us, and somebody's got to meet them. I was thinking of resigning the captaincy for the day——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Figgins makes out that the New House can skipper an eleven," said Tom. "Well, Figgie can have his chance next Wednesday."

"Declined with thanks!" chortled Figgins.

"Well, you duffers think that Study No. 6 knows all about cricket," said Tom, addressing Blake and Co., "I'm willing to leave that match entirely to Study No. 6."

"No takers!" answered Blake. "Study No. 6 doesn't play that kind of cricket."

"Wathah not!"

"I wouldn't be found dead on the same cricket-field as Daubeny," grunted Herries. "Why, my dog Towser wouldn't muff a catch as he does."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here!" roared Tom Merry. "Somebody's got to play St. Winny's!"

"Pick out eleven of the biggest idiots at St. Jim's, and leave it to them," suggested Blake.

"Well, I've offered you the job," answered Tom.

"Why, you silly ass——"

"Bai Jove! If you are implyin' that I am an idiot, Tom Mewwy——"

"I'm not implying it; I'm stating the fact," retorted the captain of the Shell gruffly.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"Tommy can play the match all on his own," chuckled Monty Lowther. "After all,

St. Jim's could easily play them ten men short."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Daubeny and Co.'s ears certainly ought to have tingled just then.

Tom Merry was very thoughtful as he finished his ride home. It was pretty clear that if the match with St. Winifred's was to come off he would have to find a new team to play the visitors—his usual faithful followers simply refused to waste their time on it.

It was not to be wondered at, in the circumstances; but it was rather disconcerting to the junior cricket captain.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER

Gussy to the Rescue

"WALLY, you know——"

"What?"

"My young bwothah Wally," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

It was the day following Tom Merry and Co.'s visit to St. Winifred's on the river.

There was a discussion going on in No. 10 in the Shell—the apartment owned by the Terrible Three.

The subject of the discussion was the St. Winny's match.

And it was waxing warm.

Blake and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy were with the Terrible Three, as well as Kangaroo and Talbot of the Shell. Tom Merry was looking very restive.

The match with Daubeny's team was worrying him.

His faithful followers took the view that Tom, as skipper, and Manners, as secretary, were responsible for the fixture, and that what had happened was their look-out. They, themselves, weren't going to "play the goat" and call it cricket; that was how Blake put it, and his comrades agreed with him.

"You see, we don't like your Daub, anyway," said Blake. "He's a swanking cad, and he can't play cricket. We don't get whole holidays every day. Why should we waste one on that ass?"

"Don't call him my Daub," growled Tom Merry. "I don't like the fellow any more than you do."

"Then what did you fix up a match with him for?"

"Well, he wanted it——"

"That isn't a reason. You're too soft, Tommy!" said Blake, with a shake of his head. "I've always said that you're too soft. All the fellows have heard me."

"Yaas, wathah. I can beah witness that Blake is statin' the exact facts," said Arthur Augustus gravely. "I have often heard him wesefer to Tom Mewwy as vewy soft indeed."

Tom Merry glared.

"You pair of asses——" he began.

"Bai Jove! If you allude to me as a paib of asses, Tom Mewwy——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, dear boys, I fail to see any weason for mewwiment in Tom Mewwy's wude wemarks. I considah——"

"You fellows were quite glad to hear that a match was fixed up for the holiday," said Tom Merry, argumentatively.

"We thought it was a cricket match, not a goat's game," said Blake. "But dash it all, you can get recruits enough, leaving us out. You can't expect players like us to waste time on a set of born cuckoos like Daubeny and Co."

"Hardly!" said Kangaroo.

"Well, it would be a waste of time, from what I hear," remarked Talbot of the Shell, with a smile.

"Thou too, Brutus!" said Tom Merry, more in sorrow than in anger.

"Oh, I'll stiek to you, if you want me," said Talbot, "After all, it will be rather a joke, I dare say."

"Wathah too much of a joke for me, deah boy," said D'Arcy. "I pwefer to go on the wivah."

"Make up a fresh team," said Blake. "Easy enough. Leave it to the fags, for instance."

It was then that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy surprised his chums by his sudden reference to his hopeful young brother, Wally of the Third.

"Well, what about Wally?" demanded Tom Merry, crossly. "What the thump has young Wally to do with the matter?"

"I have an ideah, deah boys."

"Bosh!"

"If you do not wish to hear my ideas, Tom Mewwy——"

"My dear chap, ideas don't grow in Study No. 6," said Tom Merry. "But you can wag your chin if you like. Your remarks can't be much more fat-headed than Blake's, anyhow."

"Why, you ass——" began Blake.

"Pway allow me to make a remark, Blake. I was suggestin' Wally, you fellows——"

"Bother Wally!" grunted Manners.

"I refuse to bothah Wally. Wally is my minah——"

"But what about him?" shrieked Tom Merry. "Come to the point!"

"I am comin' to the point as fast as I can, Tom Mewwy. It is wathah difficult to come to the point when a chap is constantly intewupted by burblin' asses. I considah——"

"Sit on his head, somebody!"

"I refuse to have my head sat upon. I was goin' to pwopound a wippin' stunt——"

"Bedtime at half-past nine," said Monty Lowther, gravely. "That only gives you another four hours to jaw, Gussy. Can you get it done in the time?"

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"Call me when Gussy's done," said Manners, leaning back and closing his eyes. "I can do with a couple of hours' nap."

"I wegard that remark as asinine, Mannahs. I am suggestin' a stunt to wescue us all from the widiculous posish we have been placed in by your egwegious fatheadedness, and Tom Mewwy's. My ideah is to leave the mattah to Wally. He can play St. Winny's with a team of fags of the Third Form."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Wally will wepwesent the juniah cwicket club on the occasion, so everythin' will be in ordah," said Arthur Augustus. "The young boundah will be very pleased to play for St. Jim's, and his dashed fags will be quite up to the weight of Daubeny and Co."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"No doubt about that," said Tom. "I believe our Second Form could beat them; I know the Third could. They had hardly a man, that I saw, equal to Wally, or Reggie Manners, or young Levison."

"Yaas, wathah! We shall save our dignity in this way—we weally couldn't be seen on the

cwicket gwound, you know, with such a feahful crew of fumblahs as Daubeny and Co."

"We don't want to risk losing the match, though," said Manners. "Daubeny would swank no end if he beat St. Jim's; and he would forget to mention that he'd played a scratch gang of fags here."

"No wisk at all, Mannahs."

"None!" said Tom. "The Third could beat St. Winny's. It's not such a rotten idea as one would expect from Gussy——"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings——" said Lowther.

"I refuse to be wegardad as a babe and sucklin'!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus indignantly. "I wegard this as a vewy wippin' ideah, if young Wally will play up."

Tom Merry nodded with a cheery grin.

The noble Gussy often had great ideas, but they did not often meet with enthusiastic admiration from his comrades. But on the present occasion the whole company agreed that Gussy had hit the right nail on the head.

It was agreed that it was like Daubeny's cheek to challenge St. Jim's juniors to a cricket match, when his team was composed of hopeless "duds" who were not fit to play a fag eleven at the great game. To give him a fag team to meet was quite a proper retort to his "cheek."

Tom Merry was within his rights in putting any team he chose into the field; and certainly the Third Form of St. Jim's could put in a better eleven than the one the Co. had seen on the bank of the Chadway.

If Daubeny did not like it, he could "lump" it. That was how the St. Jim's juniors looked at the matter.

If Daubeny of St. Winifred's had been a more agreeable fellow perhaps Tom Merry would have hesitated. But what the juniors had seen of the great Daub on the Benbow had not pleased them at all.

There was no harm in taking down a swanking ass a peg or two; the two chums agreed on that.

Besides, Daubeny would have no reasonable grounds for complaint; for the St. Jim's fag eleven certainly would beat him. Judging by what they had seen the previous day, the

chums of St. Jim's were quite assured that Wally and Co. could walk all over the St. Winny's cricketers.

There was a little discussion in Tom Merry's study, punctuated with many chortles; and it was agreed on all hands to adopt the ripping idea of the great Gussy.

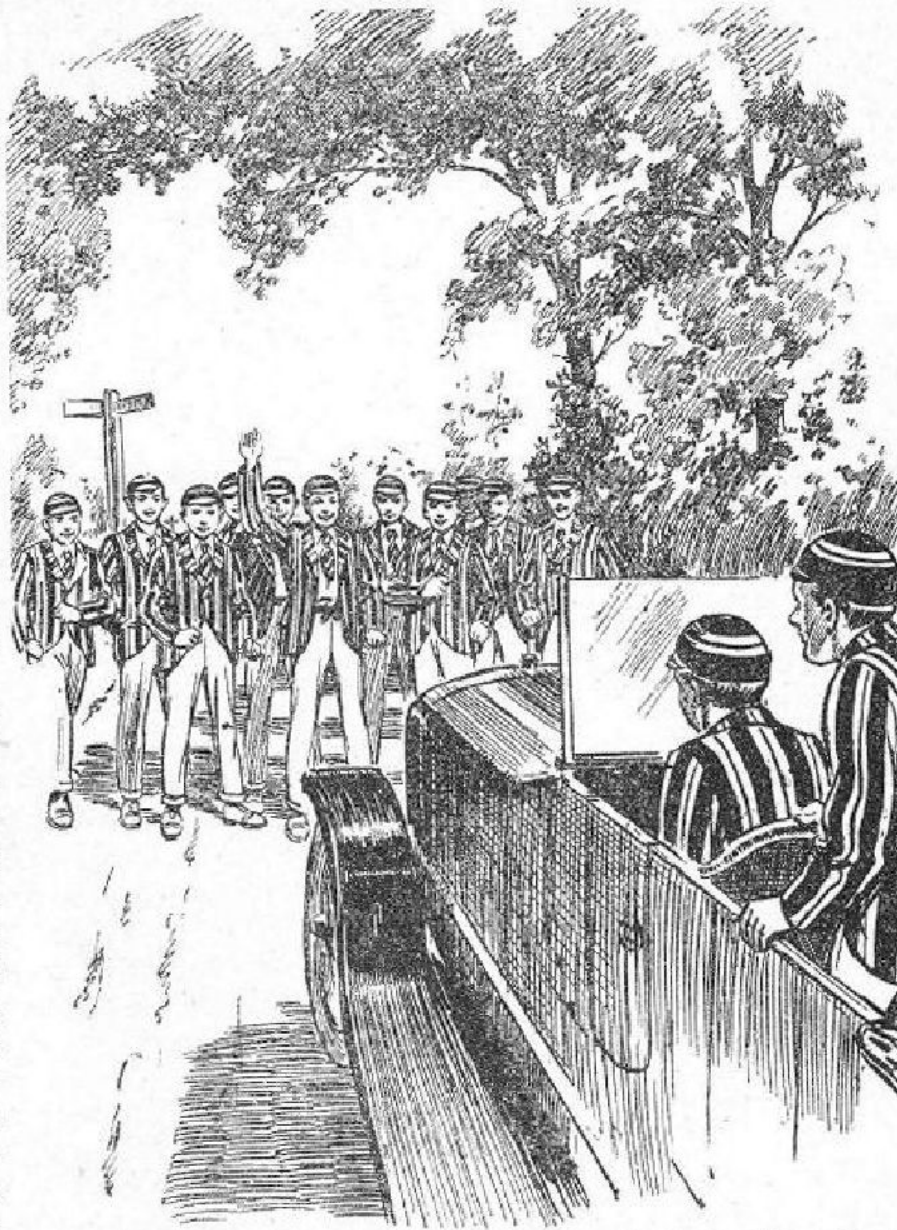
A whole holiday, otherwise to be wasted on fumbling cricket, would be saved; and the lofty Daubeny would be put in his proper place; and whatever happened, the St. Winny's team would be sent defeated home. And so it was settled.

And, after tea, Tom Merry decided to approach D'Arcy minor on the subject. There was little doubt that Wally of the Third would jump at the chance of playing his fag team as representative of the school, and no doubt at all that the Third Form youths would back him up enthusiastically. It really was a simple and entertaining way out of a difficulty; and when Arthur Augustus remarked that, whatever the "posish" he could always be relied upon to point out the "wight and pwopah" thing to do, his comrades did not

THERE was a distinct odour of burning as Tom Merry opened the door of the Third-form room. There was also an odour

of herrings. But the smell of burning was the stronger of the two. Evidently, as Monty Lowther remarked, a feast was toward in the halls of the Third.

Evening preparation was over, and Mr. Selby had left his Form to their own devices. And their present device was apparently supper in the Form-room. A fire, principally of sticks and cardboard, was blazing in the grate, and two or three amateur cooks were gathered round it. D'Arcy minor—Wally of the Third—with a very red face and a perspiring brow, and a dab of soot upon his nose, was toast-



In the middle of the lane stood a group of schoolboys in white cricketing flannels, and Vernon Daubeny uttered a surprised ejaculation as he recognised Jack Drake, and a crowd of the St. Winny's Fourth. (See Page 160.)

ing a herring, impaled upon a toasting-fork. Manners minor had another herring, skilfully fixed upon a couple of pens. But Frank Levi-son was the happy possessor of a frying-pan, and in the pan reposed three fish, in more or less advanced stages of scorching. While Joe Frayne was making toast—an operation

which consisted of charring black patches upon thick slices of bread.

Wally and Co. were too busily engaged, to heed the three Shell fellows standing grinning in the doorway.

"We're in time for supper!" murmured Monty Lowther. "Those herrings look rather tempting, what?"

Tom Merry shuddered.

"Greasy little beggars!" said Manners. "They prefer this to supper in Hall."

"Better a burnt herring and contentment therewith," said Lowther.

D'Arcy minor looked round.

"Hallo, what do you bounders want?" he inquired disrespectfully. "If you've come to supper——"

"We haven't!" said Tom Merry, hastily. "I've come to have a word with you."

"Oh, we don't mind," said Wally, generously. "We've got a stack of herrings, and we can easily broil a few more. We got the lot cheap from Dame Taggles; she was glad to be rid of them, I think—they wouldn't have lasted over to-morrow. You can stay to supper."

"Yes, there's plenty," said Reggie Manners. "Some of them are a bit gamy, but they're really all right."

"Ahem!"

A supper on "gamy" herrings, considerably burnt in the process of cooking, was not enticing to the Shell fellows. They did not want to appear ungrateful. But they did not want that supper.

"Did you say you had something to jaw, Tom Merry?" asked Wally.

"Yes, kid."

"Not so much of your kid," said D'Arcy minor. "But you can go ahead. Are you looking for cricket recruits? If so, you've come to the right shop. There are some fellows here who could play the heads off the Shell."

"What-ho!" said Manners minor.

"You've hit it!" said Tom.

"Eh?"

"You've got it, kid."

"Oh! My only aunt Jane!" ejaculated Wally, in astonishment. "You really want some men from the Third for cricket?"

"Yes."

"Good man!" said Wally, heartily.

There was a perceptible growth of geniality among the Third-formers. In spite of their persuasion that they could play cricket quite as well as anybody in the Lower School they had certainly not expected the junior captain to call upon their services. In that matter Tom Merry had never previously seen eye to eye with them.

"Now you're talking sense," said Levison minor.

"Hear, hear!"

"Well, Tom Merry does talk sense at times," remarked Wally. "He's not half such an ass as you might expect. How many men do you want, Tommy?"

"Eleven."

"Wha-a-at?"

"A whole team," said Tom.

Wally looked at him suspiciously.

"If you're pulling my leg——" he began.

"Not at all, kid. We want you kids——"

"Us what?"

"You chaps—we want you chaps to take over a match for us."

"You don't feel equal to it yourselves?" asked Levison minor.

"You young ass!" began Manners.

"Shush!" said Tom. "Yes, that's it—we don't feel equal to the match, for various reasons. It takes place next Wednesday, and we want you to put a Third-form team in the field, Wally. You'll captain the team, and you'll pick your men from the Third Form. How do you like the idea?"

"If you're spoofing——"

"Honest Injun!"

"Well, we wouldn't mind," said Wally, cautiously. "Who's the enemy?"

"St. Winifred's juniors."

"I didn't know you had a fixture with St. Winifred's."

"This is the first," explained Tom.

"And the last!" added Manners.

"St. Winifred's!" said Wally, thoughtfully. "I've heard about that show. They shifted the school to a barge, or something, while the old show was being rebuilt or something."

"An old warship," said Tom. "Daubeny and his team are coming over to play us

on Wednesday, and we want your team to meet them."

"Why don't you play them yourselves, if you've fixed up a match with them?" inquired Reggie Manners.

"Well, they're not up to our weight——"

"Then they're not up to ours."

"Ahem!"

"That's so," agreed Wally. "Still, we wouldn't mind taking the match over. Let's see—there isn't a match on for Wednesday, is there, Levison?"

"I think not," said Frank.

Tom Merry smiled. Third-form matches—even if one was "on"—were not matters of very great consequence, though nothing would have induced Wally and Co. to admit the fact.

"Well, as we've got a vacant date, we might see you through," said D'Arcy minor. "It's rather a queer idea, but you Shell fish are pretty queer anyhow. We'll beat St. Winifred's for you, with pleasure. What are you fellows going to do?"

"Oh, we shall be on the river, most likely. We'll stay in to meet Daubeny when he comes, and then clear off and leave him to you."

"I wouldn't mind putting you in my team, Tom Merry."

"Eh?"

"You're not half bad at cricket," said Wally patronisingly.

"You young ass—ahem! I mean, thanks; but I'd rather leave the match wholly in your hands. I can rely on you to whack St. Winifred's."

"Oh, that's all right! It's a jolly queer thing, passing a school match on to us like this. Whose idea was it?"

"Your major suggested it."

"Oh, Gussy! Bound to be a queer idea, then, if it was Gussy's. Never mind, we'll take it on, if you mean business."

"Honest Injun, I tell you!"

"Done!" said Wally.

Although Walter Adolphus D'Arcy was assuming an extremely nonchalant manner, it was easy to see that he was highly delighted.

Taking over a "school" match was a feather in the cap of the Third; there was

no doubt about that. Wally could guess that Tom Merry had landed himself carelessly with a match with some fumbling team he did not care to waste a holiday upon; but that did not alter the fact that it was a junior "School" match, and a great opportunity for the fag eleven to distinguish itself.

After the match the Third-formers would be able to allude nonchalantly to "our match with St. Winny's juniors," and certainly they would never remember to mention the reasons why the match had been passed on to them.

In fact the faces of the fags were now shining even more with satisfaction than with herrings.

"It's a go!" said Levison minor.

"Rely on us," said Reggie Manners.

"We'll see you through. We don't mind helping you out of a fix."

"Any time you're booked to meet a team above your weight, you can come to us," added Jameson.

"Thanks awfully!" said Tom Merry.

"I'll remember. Then it's a go—you play St. Winifred's on Wednesday."

"It's a go! But look here," said Wally cautiously. "No creeping out at the last minute, or anything of that kind. If we take over the match we shall put in some extra practice between now and Wednesday. It's got to be understood that we play St. Winifred's, and that the match is ours, and that we don't give it up if you change your mind."

"Honour bright!" said Tom.

"Good! But it's just as well to have things settled. If you don't mind, we'll go and see Kildare about it, and you can tell him how it's fixed, as Head of the Games."

Tom Merry nodded, with a smile.

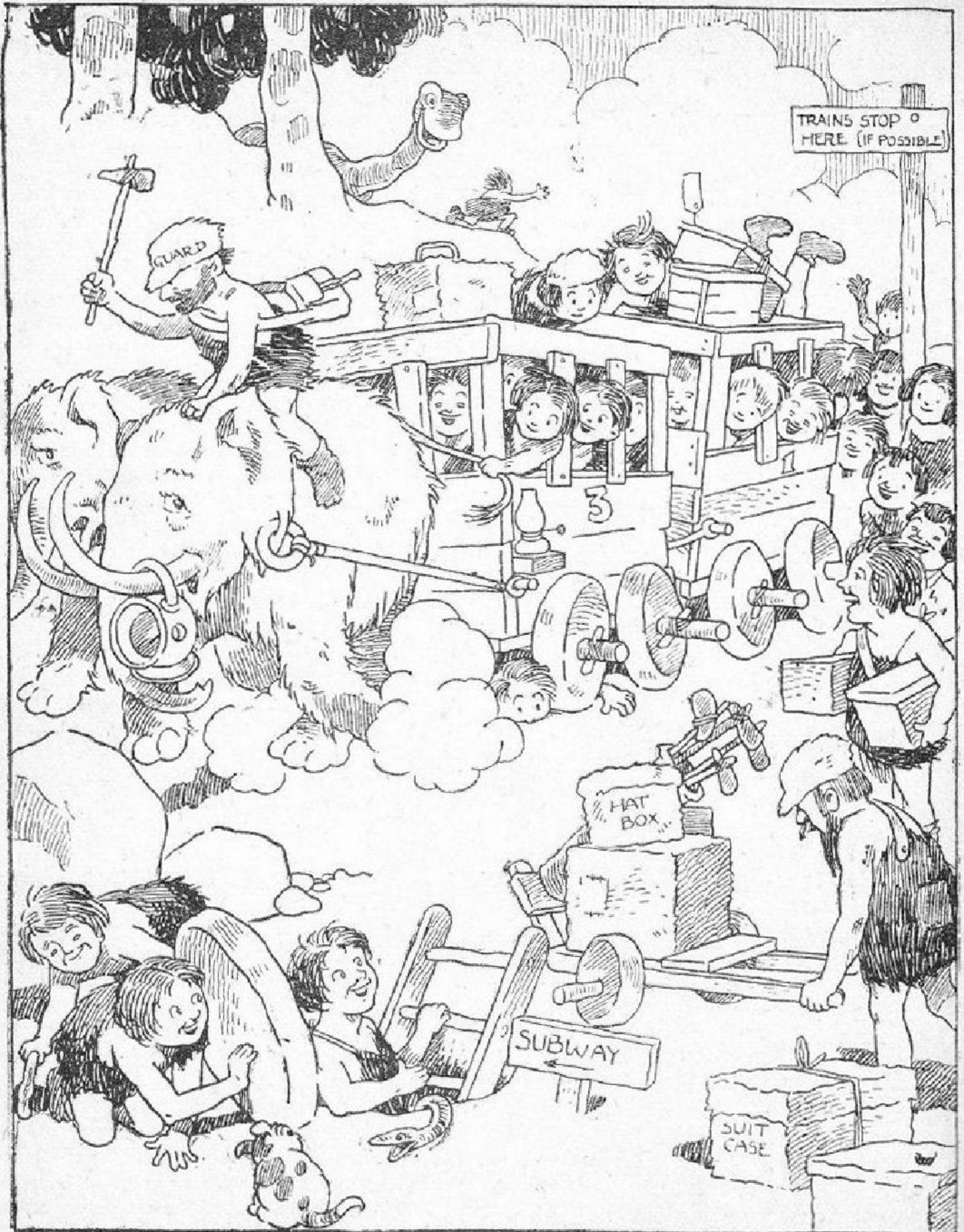
"I don't mind," he said.

"Then we'll go now," said Wally, jumping up.

"Come on, then."

Tom Merry and Manners left the form-room in company with the leader of the Third. The fags were left in a buzz of excited discussion. There was no doubt that the Third-formers were pleased at the prospect of representing St. Jim's in a School match.

GREYFRIARS IN PREHISTORIC TIMES



OFF FOR THE HOLIDAYS AT THE END OF THE TERM!

Tom Merry and Wally proceeded immediately to the Sixth-form passage, where Tom tapped at Kildare's door.

"Come in!" called out the pleasant voice of Eric Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's.

The two juniors entered, Wally taking in with him a slight and agreeable scent of herrings.

Kildare was chatting in his study with Darrel of the Sixth, but he paused and cast an inquiring glance at his visitors.

"Well, what is it?" he asked. "Cut it short!"

Tom Merry explained how matters stood, and Kildare raised his eyebrows a little.

"It's a rather odd thing," he said. "Why don't you want to play the team you've arranged to meet?"

"We've seen them since, and they're a set of fumbling asses, Kildare. It would be a waste of time."

"Oh, but——"

"They're entitled to meet a St. Jim's team, and the Third will be a St. Jim's team," said Tom. "They can't grumble."

"I should think they'd be offended if they find that they're being palmed off with a fag eleven."

"Well, that's their look-out. They shouldn't have had the thumping cheek to send us a challenge, when they can't play cricket for toffee."

Kildare laughed.

"Well, it's your own bizney," he said. "What do you want me to do in the matter?"

"Wally wants you to take official cognizance, as Head of the Games, that the match is handed over to the Third," said Tom, with a grin. "He doesn't want to get ready for the match and risk its being taken out of his hands again."

"Oh, I see! I'll make a note of it. I suppose you've quite made up your mind about it?"

"Oh, quite!"

"It's understood, then, that the match belongs to the Third, whether you change your mind or not?" said Kildare.

"That's it."

"Right, then"

The two juniors left the study.

"All serene, old top!" said Wally, in the passage. "We'll beat St. Winny's for you. We'll take over the Greyfriars and Rookwood matches as well, if you like."

"I don't," said Tom, laughing.

And he returned to his quarters satisfied, while Wally cut off to the Third form room in a state of great elation.

And the next day Wally and Co. might have been seen—and, in fact, were seen—slogging at cricket practice on the fag ground with great assiduity. St. Winifred's might or might not be a team of fumbling slackers, but Wally, like a wise leader, was leaving nothing to chance. During the following days he kept his men at work with the rigour of a drill-sergeant, till some of his faithful followers began to wish that they had never heard of the St. Winifred's match.

THE TENTH CHAPTER

Jack Drake thinks it out

JACK DRAKE of St. Winifred's came along the gangway from the shore to the Benbow, with a cricket bat under his arm and a frown on his handsome face. It was Tuesday, the day before the fixture St. Winifred's v. St. Jim's. Drake had been at cricket practice, and it was the morrow's cricket match that he was thinking of as he came back to the Benbow with a frowning brow.

That fixture worried Drake.

"Rotten" as Vernon Daubeny was in the position of junior cricket captain, he had a great deal of influence in many ways among the St. Winny's juniors, and shifting him from his position was not an easy task. A few more defeats perhaps would cause the fellows to grow "fed" with Daub, but in the meantime another defeat was to be gathered up at St. Jim's; and Jack Drake disliked that idea very much. He had thought over the matter a great deal, and discussed it with his chum, Rodney, and with Sawyer major, and Estcourt, and others of his friends, but it did not seem that anything was to be done.

But a determination was growing in Drake's mind that Daubeny should not be allowed to make St. Winny's look absurd on the St.

Jim's cricket ground. If he wouldn't play the game, and wouldn't make room for others to play it, he had to be dealt with. Drake had made up his mind on that point; the only question that remained was how to deal with the chief of the "Bucks."

That was the problem that corrugated Drake's brow as he came over the gangway, his bat under his arm.

Daubeny and Co. were lounging on the deck, and they grinned as the junior passed them.

The match was to take place on the morrow, and Daub, who was rolling in money, had ordered a big and expensive car to convey the eleven to St. Jim's. It was the great Daub's way to do things in style, so far as the expenditure of money went. But the great Daub did not think it necessary to put in any extra practice that day. No doubt he considered that his form was quite good enough.

Drake glanced at the grinning nuts of the Shell, and his frown deepened. He stopped to speak.

"Look here, Daub——" he began.

"Hallo, old top!" said Daubeny affably. "Been at the nets?"

"Yes. You fellows ought to have been there, too."

Daubeny shook his head with a smile.

"We don't need so much practice as you fags," he remarked.

"Oh, quite!" grinned Egan.

"Don't talk out of your hat!" growled Drake crossly. "You know I could play your heads off. How the club stands you is a mystery to me. Look here, Daubeny, are you taking over to St. Jim's the same crew that you played against Chade last week?"

"Practically."

"Chade wiped up the ground with you. Are you specially keen on getting a licking at St. Jim's?"

"We shall beat them all right, I think!"

"You know you can't!"

Daubeny shrugged his shoulders.

"You don't seem to care twopence for the name of the school," said Jack Drake bitterly. "You bag a fixture with a school like St. Jim's, and you take over there a crew of duds that the fags will snigger at."

"Which means that you want me to play you against St. Jim's!" remarked Daubeny, with a smile to his comrades. "Can't be done, Drake. You ain't quite up to School form."

"Hardly," assented Torrence.

"Not at all," observed Seeley, with a sage shake of the head. "It's only your conceit makes you think so, Drake."

The Fourth-former breathed hard.

"I don't ask you to put me in, Daub," he said, controlling his temper. "Put in a few fellows who can keep their end up. There's a good many to choose from in the Fourth, and a few in the Shell."

"My dear man, I've got all the best men in my team now."

"Oh, quite!"

"You know you haven't!" exclaimed Drake savagely. "You're a silly chump, but you're not such a born idiot as to think that."

"What I like about the Fourth," said Daubeny to his chums, "is their polished Chesterfieldian manner. It does them credit."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Drake gave an impatient sniff and walked on, leaving the "Bucks" of St. Winifred's chuckling.

He went down to the Fourth-form quarters and entered No. 8 Study, where Dick Rodney was brewing coffee on a spirit-stove. Rodney looked up with a smile.

"Nearly ready," he remarked. "Anything up? You look waxy."

"I feel waxy," growled Drake, pitching his hat into a corner. "I've just been speaking to Daub."

"Oh, Daub!" said Rodney.

"The silly chump is bent on getting a licking at St. Jim's, and making St. Winny's look ridiculous."

"I don't think he cares much whether they are licked or not, old chap. Those silly asses brag that they don't work at cricket. They're after a day out chiefly; the cricket match is only an incident."

"It's rotten!"

"Can't be helped," said Rodney.

"Lovelace ought to interfere, as captain of St. Winny's. I suppose he will sooner or later."

"Well, the juniors have always been allowed to select their own skipper, and it can't be denied that Daub has a majority."

"Rotten slackers like himself!" growled Drake.

"Quite true; but I don't see what can be done."

"Well, something's going to be done," said Drake decidedly. "I met some of the Chade fellows this afternoon, and they were chipping me about the cricket. I'm quite fed up."

"Same here, but——"

"If Daub persists in playing the goat Daub's got to be stopped."

Rodney opened his eyes. "How?" he asked.

"I've got an idea."

"Good man!" said Rodney. "Let's have it over tea."

"Where's Tootles? I don't want him to hear; it would be all over the ship in ten minutes."

"He's gone to tea with Newson. Newson's had a remittance, and Tuckey has become his devoted chum—for this afternoon."

Jack Drake laughed.

"All the better! I'll tell you over tea, then. It's a rather drastic stunt."

The coffee was brewed, and the two chums sat down to tea. Jack Drake had closed the door carefully. Evidently secrecy was required, concerning his drastic stunt.

"Well," said Rodney, as he chipped his egg, "I'm listening—all ears, in fact. How is Daub going to be stopped?"

"There's a good eleven to be picked out of the Fourth Form, among our set," said Drake. "Us two, and Estcourt, Sawyer major, Rawlings, Norman, Conway—and some more—all good men."

"Daub won't pick one of them. They're not friends of his."

"A cricket captain oughtn't to pick his men out of his personal friends, whether they can play cricket or not."

"Better tell Daub that!" said Rodney, laughing. "I know it already, old fellow."

"I've told Daubeny often enough. Now, we could make up a good eleven, that would give St. Jim's a tussle for their money. Why shouldn't we do it?"

"Eh? Because Daub's eleven is the St. Winny's junior eleven, and plays for the school, of course."

"They're going over to St. Jim's to-morrow in a big car."

"Good old Daub! Always splashing his money about."

"Suppose they don't arrive there?" said Drake.

"Wha-a-at?"

"Suppose the car was held up——"

"Held up!" gasped Rodney.

"Yes; and that gang of slackers turned out of it——"

"My only hat!"

"Landed somewhere, ten miles from anywhere, so that they couldn't get a train to St. Jim's in time——"

"Phew!"

"And suppose we went on in the car——"

"Drake!"

"As the St. Winifred's eleven!" wound up Drake. "How does that strike you?"

Dick Rodney did not state how that struck him. He simply stared at his chum open-mouthed.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER

Back up!

DICK RODNEY found his voice at last.

"You're joking, I suppose?" he ejaculated, when he found it.

"I'm not joking," said Jack Drake determinedly. "I've thought it out, and I mean it, every word. Why shouldn't we do it?"

"I suppose there's about a thousand reasons why we shouldn't," said Dick Rodney.

"There would be a terrific row about it."

"Who cares?"

"Daub and Co. would kick up no end of a shindy."

"Let them."

"How are we to stop the car?" asked Rodney, after a pause. The question showed that he was already entertaining Drake's amazing scheme.

"Easy enough. We know the road it must follow, as far as Kingsford at any rate. We can be ahead of it on the road and stop it. Once we get to close quarters, those

slackers won't put up much of a tussle. They'd be afraid of getting their beautiful clobber soiled!" said Drake, with a scornful sniff.

"Oh, we could handle them—a dozen of us," assented Rodney. "But——"

"But what?"

"If we bagged their car they'd get to a railway station, and come on, and get to St. Jim's later——"

"We'd take care they didn't! We'd give them a ten-mile walk to a railway station. After that they wouldn't feel very keen about a long journey and a cricket match. They'd get in on their hands and knees after tramping ten miles—that slacking lot."

"Well, ten miles is a bit of a tramp, even for chaps who aren't slackers," said Rodney, laughing. "It would knock out Daub and Co. right enough. Serve them jolly well right, for that matter. But——"

"Old scout, you're as full of butts as a billy-goat," said Drake. "I think it's a jolly good idea."

"The chauffeur might refuse to drive us, if Daub told him not to. He's Daub's man, you know."

"He would think over it, and withdraw his refusal, if we held his nose in a ditch for a bit."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Besides, we'll stand him a good tip. If you come to that I can drive a car easily enough: I've driven a car in the holidays at home. A detail like that won't stop us."

Dick Rodney rubbed his nose thoughtfully.

His chum's suggestion had taken away his breath at first; but the more he thought of it the better he liked it.

Daubeny and Co. were in need of a severe lesson, and this lesson, certainly, would be severe enough. And certainly the scheme was quite justifiable: the right men would get to St. Jim's for the cricket match, instead of the wrong men. A cricket captain who put every other consideration before cricket was not a captain to be treated with respect. And if the new team won the match at St. Jim's, that would be a justification in itself. Nothing succeeds like success.

In any case Drake had evidently made up

his mind: and Rodney, as a loyal chum, had to back him up.

"Well, I'm on," he said, at last. "But Tom Merry will be expecting to see Daub at his school. He will be a bit surprised to find you cricket captain."

"We needn't explain it all at St. Jim's. Merry will simply think that changes have been made in the team. He knows how much they were needed, after seeing the play here last week."

"No doubt about that. In fact, I thought Merry was rather sorry he'd agreed to play Daub at all, after seeing his style."

"I noticed that; in fact, there's no mistake about it. Dash it all, if St. Jim's give up a whole holiday for the match, it's up to St. Winny's to send over a team worth meeting. Something's due to them."

"Quite so. We'll do it—if we can get the fellows to back us up."

"I think that will be all right. Every chap who can put up a good game is pretty sick at being left out of the eleven. Look here, we'll have a study meeting, and put it to them," said Drake. "You can go round asking the fellows quietly to step into this study after tea. We'll make up a list of the men we want—say a round dozen—and nobody else need be told a word till afterwards. It's got to be kept dark, of course. If Daub got a hint of it, we shouldn't catch him on the road."

"Ha, ha! I should think not."

There was an earnest discussion in No. 8 Study till tea was over. Then Dick Rodney quietly departed on his mission.

Later on every few minutes a fellow dropped into the study to the secret meeting.

The Fourth-formers were rather surprised to find a meeting in progress, as they dropped in; Rodney had given no explanation so far, save that Jack Drake had something of importance to communicate, which was to be kept strictly dark.

No. 8 Study was pretty well crowded when the last recruit arrived, in company with Rodney himself. It was a case of "standing room only," as Rodney remarked.

Drake closed the door, and locked it, to prevent possible interruptions. Then he faced the surprised and curious crowd of juniors.

"Well, what's the game?" inquired Sawyer major. "Is it a feed, or a Sinn Fein meeting, or a Gunpowder Plot?"

"It's a wheeze!" said Drake.

"Go it!"

"It's up against Daubeny!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Any fellow who doesn't care to back us up, can stand out," continued Drake. "But he will be expected to keep his head shut about what I'm going to say."

"That's understood," said Rawlings. "Pile in, old top."

Jack Drake proceeded to explain.

The meeting simply blinked at him.

When he had finished they were still blinking. Nobody seemed to have anything to say, for the moment.

"Well, will you fellows back up?" demanded Drake. "I've picked you out because you're cricketers. You can give St. Jim's a good game; they're entitled to it."

"But—but what about Daub?" stuttered Norman.

"Nothing about Daub. Daub is dead in this act."

"It will be a lark!" grinned Sawyer major. "Fancy Daub's face afterwards! He will be chortled to death, if this comes off."

"It will come off, all right, if we take it in hand," said Drake. "The question is, will you fellows back up, and play the game for St. Winifred's?"

"Hear, hear!"

"Done, then!" said Drake, his eyes sparkling. "Better cut, now it's settled; we don't want Daub to smell a mouse. Mind,

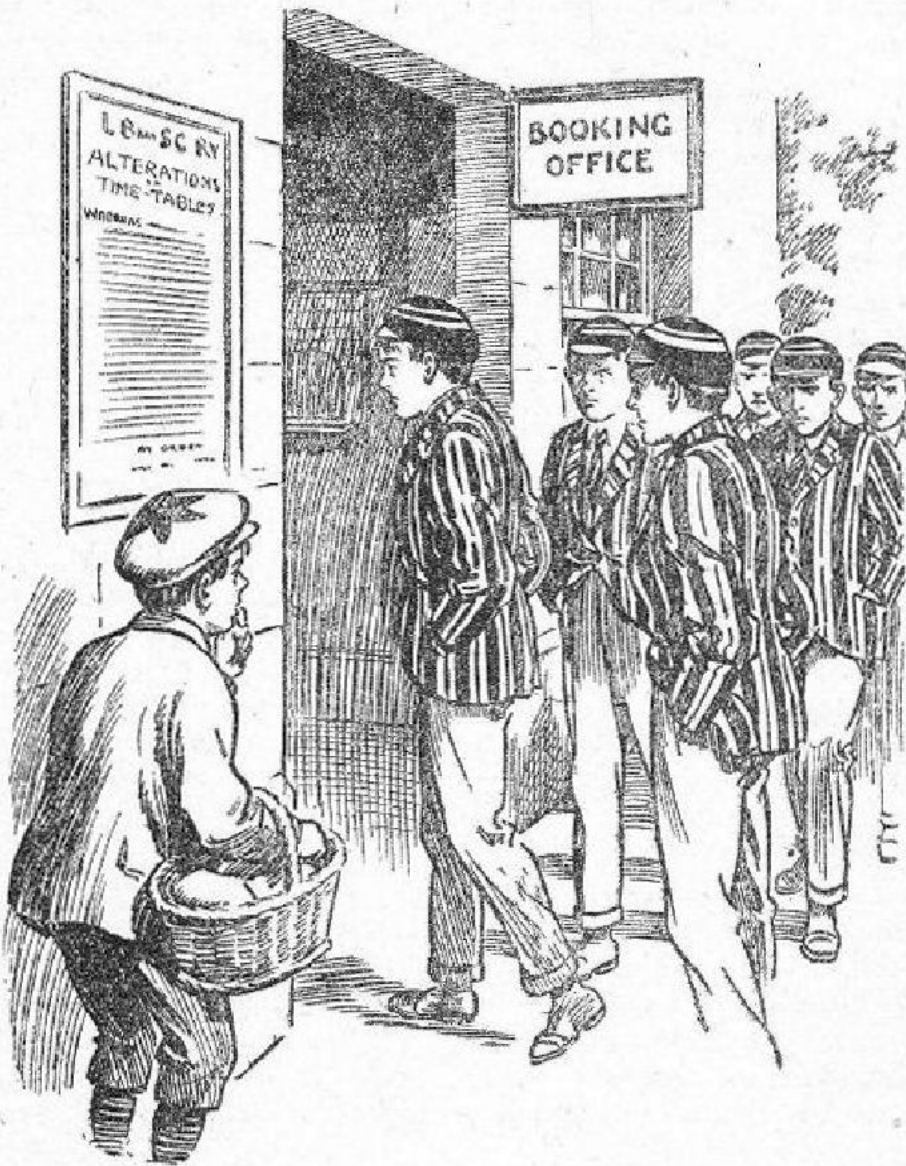
not a word outside this study."

"Not a giddy syllable!" grinned Sawyer major.

And so it was settled.

What Daubeny of the Shell would have thought, if he had known, was an interesting question. But Daub did not know, and was not likely to.

What Tom Merry would have thought, too, was a still more interesting question, considering the arrangement he had made with Wally and Co. of the Third—on the astute suggestion of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. But Tom Merry did not know—yet!



It was a dusty, disconsolate, weary crowd that limped at last into the railway station at Kingsford! (See page 163)

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER

Tom Merry is Satisfied!

"**B**AI Jove! The young boundahs are weally gettin' on!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy made that remark in tones of lofty approval.

Cricket practice was going on, on the fag's ground at St. Jim's, at the very same moment that the meeting was being held in Jack Drake's study on board the Benbow fifteen miles away.

Wally and Co. were excelling themselves at the nets.

Tom Merry had kindly come along to see how the fags were shaping, with Lowther and Manners, Blake and Dig and Gussy. The heroes of the Third prided themselves upon knowing as much about the great game as their elders of the Fourth and the Shell; but they were not insensible to the honour of being watched at practice by the great men of the junior eleven. Which was proved by the fact that D'Arcy minor "slanged" Jameson for muffing a catch, at a great rate, as the distinguished onlookers arrived.

"Jolly good, for fags," commented Tom Merry. "Those slacking duffers from St. Winifred's won't have a look-in, that's pretty certain."

"Not an earthly," agreed Blake.

"Wathah not!" grinned Arthur Augustus. "It's weally not my wish to bwag at all, deah boys, but I think that in this case you will admit that I have pointed out the pwopah thing to do."

"Who said the age of miracles was past!" murmured Monty Lowther.

"Weally, Lowther——"

"It was really a good idea," confessed Tom Merry, "what beats me is, how you came to think of it, Gussy."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"I fancy Daubeny will be a bit edge-wise, when he finds that the team playing him is selected from the Third Form!" remarked Manners.

"Let him be as edge-wise as he likes," answered Tom Merry. "He had no right to challenge us. If he gets taken down for his cheek that's his own look-out. The Third will beat him; and what more can he want?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I don't believe in running risks with a cricket match," said Grundy of the Shell, joining the group of spectators. "You'll

look a silly ass if the St. Winny's crowd beat this gang of fags, Tom Merry."

"They couldn't!"

"Quite imposs, Gwunday," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, "I have seen the sillay asses at cwicket, and I hardly think they could beat you."

"What?"

"I am not surprised that you are astonished, Gwunday; but it is weally a fact that some of the St. Winny's chaps play as wottenly as you do."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy bestowed a wrathful glare upon the swell of St. Jim's. George Alfred Grundy's cricket was a standing joke; as Monty Lowther had humorously remarked, it was the funniest thing going, with the solitary exception of Grundy's footer. But George Alfred himself could not be expected to see that.

"Even Twimble of the Fourth could play them," went on Arthur Augustus innocently. "I do not believe that Daubeny's bowlahs could take even Twimble's wicket. I weally nevah saw such a fumblin' cwe. Bai Jove, suppose you ask Wally for a place in the team, Gwunday."

"Me in the fag team!" hooted Grundy.

"Yaas, wathah! You would have a chance of playin' for St. Jim's without doin' any harm!" explained Arthur Augustus.

"You silly ass!" roared Grundy, while the other fellow chuckled.

"Weally, Gwunday——"

Biff! Grundy of the Shell smote Arthur Augustus upon the hat, and strode away in wrath.

There was a howl from the swell of St. Jim's.

"Yow! Bai Jove! Oh, my hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus struggled with his hat, and succeeded in extracting his head from it, and glared round furiously in search of Grundy of the Shell. But Grundy, fortunately for him, had vanished by that time. Possibly it was fortunate for Arthur Augustus also.

"Bai Jove! I shall give that wuffian a feahful thwashin' when I see him again!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Fancy any fellow bein' Hun enough to damage a fellows'

toppah, you know! I should think even the Kaisah would stop at that, bai Jove!"

Whereupon Monty Lowther proceeded to quote Shakespeare, with variations:

"Who steals my purse, steals trash,
But he who lays rough hands upon my
topper——"

"Pway don't be a sillay ass, Lowthah," said Arthur Augustus crossly. "You have got that quotation quite w'ong. There is nothin' at all in Shakespeare about silk toppahs. I am quite suah of that. Toppahs were not worn in Shakespeare's time. I see nothin' to cackle at in that wemark, you fellows. It is very odd that I cannot make a wemark without some sillay ass beginnin' to cackle."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wats!"

"Stop that ball!" came a howl from the field.

Wally, at the wicket, had smitten a mighty smite. The round red ball whizzed over the boundary, and there was a sudden crash. It was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy who stopped the ball, quite unintentionally, with his silk hat.

The hat flew in one direction, and the ball in another. Arthur Augustus, greatly astonished, gave a stagger and sat down in the grass.

"Bai Jove! Wha-a-at was that?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well fielded!" shrieked Monty Lowther.

Levinson minor came panting up to the ropes.

"Chuck in that ball!" he gasped.

"Oh, cwumbs! You young wuffian, you have wuined my hat!" shouted Arthur Augustus.

"Can't you chuck in that ball!" demanded Levinson minor, with a heartless disregard for the hat.

"I—I—I——"

Tom Merry laughed and picked up the ball, and returned it to the fag, who grinned and ran off with it. Arthur Augustus picked up his hat and regarded it with anguish. Grundy's thump had not improved it, and the crashing ball had finished what Grundy had begun.

"Look at it!" said Arthur Augustus. "Bai Jove! I have a gweat mind to go on the field and give Wally a feahful thwashin' on the spot! I wefuse to wemain heah any any longah. Bothah the fags and their sillay cwicket!"

And Arthur Augustus marched off, with his wrecked topper in his hand, and an expression on his noble face that was worthy of Niobe in her most pessimistic moments.

Tom Merry and Co. remained watching the fags for some time, and when they strolled back to the School-house, Tom was quite satisfied in his mind as to the prospects of the morrow. There was no doubt whatever that Wally and his men, fags as they were, could beat Daubeny and Co. hands down. That was a right and proper punishment for Daubeny's cheek in challenging the mighty men of the St. Jim's junior club—a licking at the hands of Third Form fags. It was making the punishment fit the crime, as it were. But there was a surprise—a great surprise—in store for Tom Merry in the morning, and his opinion of Gussy's great wheeze was likely to change very considerably when Jack Drake's team arrived in the place of Daubeny and Co.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER

On the King's Highway

DAUBENY of the Shell came on the deck of the Benbow in the fresh summer morning with a very cheery expression on his face.

Daubeny was feeling very cheery that morning.

It was a whole holiday, and a glorious day. There was to be an agreeable run across country in a handsome and commodious car, and lunch and tea at St. Jim's. There was to be a cricket match thrown in, as it were.

But the cricket match was not the most important event of the day, in the estimation of the "Bucks" of St. Winnifred's. They made no secret of the fact that they did not "work" at cricket; that was just a pleasant and gentle pastime. If they won a match, they took the gifts that the gods sent them with complacency; if they lost—as they often did—they bore it with cheerful philosophy.

Certainly they didn't allow it to worry them or disturb their equanimity.

Daub was promising himself a pleasant day; and the added pleasure of seeing Jack Drake's face frowning disapproval when he started in the big car.

But in the latter expectation he was disappointed. Drake was not visible when Daub came on deck; neither was Rodney, and a good many more members of the St. Winny's Fourth were absent.

Tuckey Toodles was hanging rather disconsolately about the deck. Drake and Co. had gone off without bidding farewell to Tuckey Toodles, and without even mentioning to him that they were going. Tuckey was feeling neglected. He came up to Daubeny on the deck with his most ingratiating smile.

"Starting soon, old top?" he inquired.

"Yes, Fatty."

"I'll come in the car if you like."

"Thanks! I don't like."

"You've lots of room," urged Toodles.

"I'll keep score for you at St. Jim's, if you like. I'll umpire for you. In fact, I'd like to be of use."

"You'd like to do me a favour?" asked Daubeny.

"Yes, old scout," exclaimed Tuckey eagerly. "Anything you like. Give it a name."

"Then jump into the river——"

"Eh?"

"And stay there."

And with that cordial remark Daubeny walked on with his friends to the gangway, leaving Toodles staring.

The big car had arrived, and was waiting on the road by the river bank. The "Bucks" walked ashore elegantly. A dapper chauffeur touched his cap to the great Daub.

"Pile in you chaps," yawned Daubeny.

The cricketers and their cricket bags piled in the car. Vernon Daubeny took a cigarette-case from his pocket; and then glanced towards the Benbow. On second thoughts he decided to put off his smoke till he was at a safer distance, and put back the case. Tuckey Toodles came rolling up in the car, still in the hope of attaching himself to Daub and Co. for the day, since the Fourth-Formers had eluded him.

"I say, Daub——"

"Where's Drake?" asked Daubeny, who was looking round in search of his rival in the Lower School.

Vernon Daubeny had fully expected to see Drake there, with his friends, and he was prepared to enjoy Drake's anger and chagrin. He was disappointed and annoyed.

"Drake!" grunted Toodles. "Oh, he's gone out—the whole lot of them have gone out. I think they went off just after brekker."

"Gone out for the day?"

"Playing cricket, I think," answered Toodles.

"Playing cricket!" said Torrence, from the car. "Whom the thump are they playing cricket with?"

"Well, they took their cricket things," said Toodles. "I saw Drake and Rodney getting them ready, and asked Drake what was on, and he told me to go and eat coke. Now they're gone, and the things are gone, so I suppose they're playing cricket somewhere."

"That's rather queer!" remarked Seeley.

"Oh, quite!" said Egan. "They've no right to fix up a match anywhere, if you come to that. They're nobody."

Daubeny frowned.

"Oh, they're playing some kids' team in the village, I expect," he remarked. "It don't matter to us. Let's get off."

Daubeny stepped into the big car.

"I say, Daub, if you'd like me——"

"Start!" said Daubeny.

"Daub, old chap—— I say, dear old boy——"

"Stand clear!"

The engine was humming. Daubeny closed the door of the car, and Tuckey Toodles jumped back as it began to move.

"I say, old chap——" he howled.

"Rats!"

The car glided on.

Tuckey Toodles ran alongside to keep pace for a few minutes, while he addressed some more remarks to Vernon Daubeny. But Daub was no longer an "old chap" or a "dear old boy." Far from it. Now that it was certain that he was not going to be one of the party, Master Toodles revealed his genuine opinion of the lordly "Bucks."

"Yah!" roared Toodles. "You going to play cricket! You couldn't play marbles! Yah!"

"Clear off, you cheeky little beast!" shouted Daubeny angrily.

"Yah! Who muffs catches?" yelled Toodles, still running alongside. "Who scores two duck's eggs in every match?"

"Get on, Jones!" snapped Daubeny to the chauffeur. The derisive yells of Tuckey Toodles did not seem to please Daubeny.

"Yessir."

The car was beginning to put on speed, but Tuckey Toodles put on a spurt, and remained in the offing, panting and derisive.

"Yah! Slackers!" he spluttered. "Cricket! Bosh! Peg-top is your game! You can't play cricket! I'll give you a quid for every run you score today, Daub. It won't cost me a sovereign. Yah!"

There was a sudden sound from Jones, the chauffeur, which sounded suspiciously like a chuckle.

"What are you crawling for, you fool?" snapped Daubeny.

The car was going fast now, and Tuckey Toodles was left behind—standing in the road in an exceedingly elegant attitude, with his fat thumb to his fat little nose, and his fingers extended. Daubeny's lofty countenance was very red; and Daub's temper—never very

good—was exceedingly savage. Some of his comrades were grinning; which did not make Daub feel any more amiable.

"You silly fool! Why can't you get going?" he howled to the chauffeur, apparently with the idea of "taking it out" of that gentleman for the chuckle he had involuntarily emitted.

The man slowed down, and looked over his shoulder.

"What did you call me, sir?" he inquired.

"I called you a fool!" snapped Daubeny.

The chauffeur looked at him.

"I don't allow whipper-snappers to call me names, sir," he said, with great politeness. "I used to get that from my sergeant, but I'm not taking it from you. Understand?"

The custodian of the scent-box seemed to expect a reply; but Daubeny did not consider it judicious to make one. He sat down and grunted; and the chauffeur drove on in

silence. Daubeny sat fuming. He had not started the day well. First there was Tuckey Toodles' derisive impertinence, and now he had had to accept "back-chat" from an individual whom he would have alluded to scornfully as a "bally chauffeur." It was really not gratifying to so great a man as Daubeny of the Shell. It was still less gratifying to observe that his comrades did not seem displeased at seeing him taken down a peg.



"Look out, Tom Mewwy, you are wumplin' my jacket!" remarked Arthur Augustus, in a tone of mild reproof. "Oh! You fearful ass!" groaned Tom Merry. (See page 167)

However, the great Daub recovered his equanimity as the car bowled on by long white roads and dusty lanes; and, safe out of sight of the Chadway and the Benbow, the "Bucks" opened their cigarette-cases and put on "smokes."

With an expensive gold-tipped cigarette between his lips, Daubeny of the Shell felt more at peace with the world. It was not a good preparative for a tough cricket match; but that was a detail that Daub did not care much about.

"Rippin' day!" yawned Torrence.

"Oh, quite!" said Egan. "You're not lookin' very cheery, Daub, old buck."

"What rot!" said Daubeny crossly. "Cheery as a lark!"

"Cheeky blighter, that chauffeur!" said Seeley, closing one eye at his companions.

"Hang the chauffeur!" growled Daub.

"Hallo, we're through Kingsford. After this lane, it's a straight run to St. Jim's by the high road. I shall complain at the garage about their sendin' such a ruffian with the car. When you pay through the nose for a big car, you want a civil chauffeur. I'm dashed if I know what the dashed lower classes are comin' to, in these days. Hallo, if the silly ass isn't stoppin'."

The car slowed down.

Daubeny of the Shell stood up, and glared over the wind-screen at the driver.

"What are you stoppin' for?" he snapped.

"Look, and you'll see, sir!" was the chauffeur's reply.

Daubeny looked.

The car was following a rather narrow lane, deeply shaded by big trees on both sides. Kingsford was now a mile behind. In the middle of the lane stood a group of schoolboys in white cricketing flannels, and Vernon Daubeny uttered a surprised ejaculation as he recognised Jack Drake, and a crowd of the St. Winny's Fourth. Drake was holding up his hand as a signal for the car to stop; and as the crowd of juniors blocked the road, the chauffeur naturally slowed down, under the impression that there was something "up" on the road ahead.

"Drive on!" exclaimed Daubeny. "No need to stop for those kids!"

"I suppose there's something the matter ahead——"

"I don't suppose so."

"Then why are they stopping us?" grunted the chauffeur.

"Only a lark, I expect."

"I'd better ask them."

And the chauffeur prudently stopped.

The next moment the car was surrounded by the Fourth-formers of St. Winifred's.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER

Rough on Daub!

JACK DRAKE dragged the door open.

The Bucks were all on their feet now, in amazement. They had not expected to see Drake that day.

Daubeny glared at him.

"What's up?" he demanded.

"I am, old top," answered Drake, coolly, as he stepped into the car.

"Get out!" roared Daubeny.

"No fear!"

Rodney and Sawyer major wedged into the car after Drake. The Bucks viewed that proceeding with staring astonishment. They had not the faintest idea, so far, of what was intended.

"What's the matter, young gentlemen?" asked the chauffeur. "Is the road up?"

"Oh, no!"

"What have you stopped us for, then?"

"Just to talk to these chaps," answered Drake, cheerily. "It's all right, chauffeur. You just hold on."

"Look here, what's this game?" shouted Daubeny, angrily. "Do you think we're going to give you a lift to St. Jim's, Drake? You're jolly well mistaken, I can tell you!"

"No room here for your crowd," said Torrence, pacifically. "You can see that for yourself, Drake. Don't be a cad!"

"Get out!"

Drake shook his head.

"We're not getting out," he answered, coolly. "We're getting in. Squeeze up, you fellows."

"I order you to get out of my car!" yelled Daubeny, utterly enraged by that lawless invasion.

"You can order till you're black in the face," said Rodney. "Pile in, you fellows. If they don't make room sit on their knees."

"Do you mind if I sit on your head, Egan?" inquired Sawyer major.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here——"

"Get out!"

"What are you up to?"

There was a chorus of indignant expostulation from the Bucks of St. Winifred's. But they did not seek to expel the intruders by force. Jack Drake and Co. were rather too hefty, in the fistical line, for Daubeny and his nutty friends to think of that resource.

"Chauffeur!" howled Daubeny.

"Yessir?"

"Turn those young rascals out of the car!"

The chauffeur blinked at him.

"P'r'aps you wouldn't mind telling me, sir, how I'm to turn out a dozen fellers?" he suggested.

"Turn them out at once!"

"I'm paid to drive this 'ere car!" answered the chauffeur stolidly. "I ain't paid to scrap with schoolboys, not that I knows on. I s'pose you can turn them out yourselves, if you don't like their company."

But that was exactly what the nuts of St. Winifred's couldn't do. Even if they had not been nervous for their noses, they would have been nervous for their clothes. As a matter of fact they were nervous for both.

The Fourth-formers swarmed into the big car, unresisted by the surprised and enraged Bucks; meeting with only angry expostulations, which did not deter them in the least.

Daubeny, as much surprised as enraged, glared at the grinning Fourth-formers, as they squeezed into seats. There was room for three or four; and the rest sat on the knees of the Bucks. Four or five cricket bags were thrown in, and the last junior in jammed the door shut. Daubeny clenched his fists.

"Will you tell me what this means, Drake?" he hissed.

"Certainly. We want a lift."

"You're not going to St. Jim's with us?"

"Not with you, that's a cert."

"Where do you want a lift to?" hissed Daubeny.

"Mark's Cross."

"You fool! That's a good ten miles out of our way, across the heath!"

"Exactly."

"We're not taking you there!" howled Daubeny, furiously. "We shall be late at St. Jim's!"

"You won't be late at St. Jim's," grinned Drake. "Now then, Daub, take it smiling, and tell your man to start."

Daubeny's reply was not in words. The elegant Daub was not a fighting-man, as a rule; but he was wound up to fighting-pitch now. He scrambled at Drake through a crowd of legs, and grappled with him fiercely.

"Back up, you fellows!" he shouted. "Pitch them out."

"It won't be us that's pitched out, if you fellows give any trouble," said Dick Rodney.

The Bucks were aware of that; and they sat tight. Daubeny was struggling with Drake, and he suddenly collapsed and disappeared among a sea of legs. Drake sat on his chest.

"I—I say, better give them a lift where they want to go," stammered Seeley. "After all, we can make up for lost time."

"Oh, quite!" gasped Egan.

"Groogh! Lemme gerrup!" spluttered Daubeny, wriggling furiously amid boots and dust at the bottom of the crowded car.

"You're all right there, for the present," said Drake cheerily. "Are you going to give your man directions?"

"Ow! Yow! No. Gerroff."

"Tread on his nose, Sawyer."

"Certainly."

"Yarooop! I—I'll do as you like!" wailed Daubeny. "Chauffeur! Where's that silly idiot? Jones, drive to Mark's Cross as quick as you can."

"Suttingly, sir!" grinned the chauffeur.

The chauffeur had watched the remarkable scene in astonishment; but he concluded that it was no business of his. He was paid to drive the car. He drove it.

The crammed car sped on its way, turning from the highroad, and following a rather bumpy road across the heath.

The car was too full to be comfortable ; but the Fourth-formers did not seem to mind. All the grousing was on the part of the Bucks. They were very uncomfortably wedged and squeezed—especially Vernon Daubeny, who was still on the floor.

Never had Daub and Co. been so eager to reach their destination as they were during this remarkable drive.

The car glided on swiftly by the lonely road over the heath. It stopped at last, in the very heart of the wide expanse, where a stone cross marked the cross-roads. That was Mark's Cross, one of the most solitary spots in the county. The car drew up, and the chauffeur looked round.

"Here you are, sir!"

"Lemme gerrup, Drake, you beast!" said Daubeny sulphurously.

"Right you are! Open the door, Rodney."

Dick Rodney threw the door open.

Drake rose from his seat on Vernon Daubeny's chest, and grasped the junior captain of St. Winifred's by the collar. The next minute Vernon Daubeny found himself sitting in the grass by the roadside.

"Turn them out. Pitch out their bags!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There were wild yells of wrath and expostulation from the Bucks. But out they went.

In a few minutes Daubeny and Co. were in the road, and Jack Drake and his comrades in triumphant possession of the big car.

"Now, then, chauffeur!" said Drake.

"Oh, my eye!" said the chauffeur.

"We're taking over the car now. Those chaps are going to walk home."

"Oh, erikey!"

"We're not!" yelled Daubeny, beside himself with rage. "I—I—I'll go to the police—I'll—I'll——"

He made a furious rush at the car.

Drake and Rodney promptly collared him, as he mounted the step.

"Back up, you fellows!" yelled Daubeny.

But the fellows did not back up. The Bucks had had enough. Already they were in a dusty and dishevelled condition, and noses and eyes had received severe damages. They did not want any more.

"Yow-ow-ow! Rescue!"

But there was no rescue for the helpless chief of the Bucks. His red and breathless followers only rubbed their injuries and gasped.

"We're paying for the car from now on, old top," explained Jack Drake. "All you've got to do is to pass it on to us. We'll settle with you this evening on the Benbow. See?"

"I won't! I——"

"Tell the chauffeur to drive us on."

"I won't! Ow! wow!"

"Got the scissors, Sawyer?"

"Here you are."

"Cut his hair till he does as he's told."

"What-ho!"

Daubeny struggled frantically in the grasp of Drake and Rodney, as Sawyer major flourished the scissors. A beautiful lock of hair fell over his nose.

It was too much for Daubeny.

"Stop!" he howled.

"Are you handing over the car?" demanded Drake.

"Wow! Yes! Ow!"

"Tell the chauffeur, then."

"Oh, my eye!" said the chauffeur.

"I—I'm handing over the car to these chaps, Jones," gasped Daubeny. "It's all right, you idiot; they belong to my school. Drive them where they like. Leave my hair alone. Sawyer, you rotter. You're disfigurin' me! Oh, dear! Take the car, you rotters, I don't care! Leggo! Leave my hair alone."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You understand, chauffeur?" asked Drake.

"Oh! Yessir!" stuttered the chauffeur.

"Drive back to the high road."

"Yessir."

Daubeny was dropped gently into the dust, and the car glided away. The Fourth-formers waved their hands in exuberant farewell to the dusty and disconsolate nuts as they were left behind. In a few minutes the car vanished in a cloud of dust.

Vernon Daubeny staggered to his feet

He wiped his dusty and perspiring brow, and gave utterance to a stream of remarks which it was fortunate for him that the Head of St. Winifred's could not hear.

"Oh, shut up, Daub," muttered Torrence.

"What's the good of swearin' ? Don't be a blackguard."

Daubeny gritted his teeth.

"Look what they've done!" he hissed. "We're landed here—ten miles from anywhere! The bags to carry, too! What are we goin' to do?"

"Goodness knows!"

"I'll complain to the Head when we get back!" mumbled Egan.

"That won't help us now."

"Oh, dear, what are we goin' to do?"

"Hoof it," said Seeley.

"Oh, my hat! What a rotten trick! We shan't be able to play St. Jim's to-day!"

Daubeny snorted.

"Play St. Jim's! We shan't be able to get there even, if we try, till late in the afternoon. No good goin'.

Hang those matters! I'll make Drake squirm for this somehow."

"At present we've got to do the squirming!" groaned Egan, dabbing his nose with his handkerchief.

"Does my hair look very bad, you fellows?"

"Bother your hair!"

"Look at my nose!"

"And my eye!"

"Ow! ow!"

"We've got to walk ten miles," groaned Torrence. "We can get a train home to Chade from Kingsford. I suppose we'd better send a wire to St. Jim's, and let Master Tom Merry know——"

"Hang Tom Merry!" snarled Daubeny.

"Well, he'll be expectin' us——"

"I wish I'd never fixed up the match now. Drake's done this because he's wild at bein' left out of the eleven. I—I wonder how my hair will look."

"I suppose they're goin' off for a jaunt in the car," muttered Seeley. "They will pay for it, though. Oh, my hat! What a day out!"

In very disconsolate spirits the crowd of nutty youths—not looking very nutty now—started on their long tramp across the heath. After



Daubney struggled frantically in the grasp of Drake and Rodney as Sawyer major flourished the scissors. A beautiful lock of hair fell over his nose. It was too much for Daubney. "Stop!" he howled. (See page 162)

the first two or three miles they trudged and limped. It was a dusty, disconsolate, and weary crowd that limped at last into the railway station at Kingsford. Daubeny did not even trouble to ask whether there was a train in the direction of St. Jim's. It was too late now for a day's match, anyhow; and the weary Bucks were feeling inclined for anything

but a long journey and a cricket match to follow. What they wanted was to lie down and rest their weary limbs. And when a local train landed them at Chade they tramped the last mile to the Chadway, and crawled on board the Benbow—where their unexpected reappearance caused great surprise. From Kingsford Daubeny had sent a telegram to St. Jim's; a message that was short and not very sweet. That done, he dismissed the St. Jim's match from his weary mind. Tuckey Toodles was on the deck when the Bucks limped on board, and he blinked at Daubeny and Co. with wide-open eyes.

And when the story became known, instead of sympathy for the hapless Bucks, there was great merriment on the Benbow. Lovelace of the Sixth, to whom Daubeny gasped out his tale of woe, roared with laughter.

"They collared our car!" howled Daubeny indignantly.

"What did you let them for?" inquired the St. Winifred's captain.

And that was all he said. It was a question that was really rather difficult for the Bucks to answer. And even when Daubeny stretched his weary limbs on the elegant sofa in his study, he was not left at peace. The door opened, and Tuckey Toodles' grubby face grinned in.

"Sold again!" grinned Toodles.

"Get out!" moaned Daubeny.

"He, he, he! Sold again! Why did you let them bag the car? He, he, he!"

Daubeny reached feebly for a cushion.

"Yah! Funk!"

And with that Parthian shot Tuckey Toodles retired, and the cushion smote the door as it closed.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER

A Startling Discovery

"RIPPIN' morning, deah boys!" Thus Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, on the morning of the great day. The sun that shone on the ripples of the Chadway and the old masts of the Benbow, was shimmering down on the green quad at St. Jim's, and the wide playing-fields. Tom Merry and Co. turned out that morning in great spirits.

Whole holidays were few and far between;

and the St. Jim's fellows meant to enjoy this one to the full. A good cricket match would have been welcome; but there were other resources. The St. Winny's match being left to the fags, the Terrible Three intended to have a boat out on the Ryll; and Blake and Co., of Study No. 6, were planning to have another boat. Figgins and Co., of the New House, were scheming a picnic on the island. Levison of the Fourth was going on a long cycle spin with Clive and Cardew. Baggy Trimble was thinking of joining them, and was seeking up and down St. Jim's for a bike to borrow—and seeking in vain. Every fellow had his plans for that glorious day—and Wally and Co. were probably the cheeriest of all. They were going to play, in the school colours, for the School; representing St. Jim's in the place of the junior eleven. That was more than enough to put the heroes of the Third into merry spirits.

Tom Merry and his chums had agreed that they ought to be present when Daubeny arrived. It was up to them to greet the visitors civilly, and present them to the team that was to play them. Whether Vernon Daubeny would have any fault to find with the arrangement Tom Merry did not know, and he cared little. What he knew was that he did not intend to waste a rare holiday playing a fumbling crew of slackers, in a farcical match which would probably end soon after lunch. He was quite sure about that.

If Daubeny did not like the arrangement he could lump it; that was how the junior captain of St. Jim's looked at it. Besides, as Tom had said, Vernon Daubeny was going to get a licking; and what more could he want or ask for?

"It's simply ripping on the river," Blake of the Fourth remarked. "On the whole, I'm not sorry we're giving cricket a miss for the day. If it had been a match worth while, of course——"

"Yaas, wathah! But it isn't, deah boy."

"Exactly! Adolphus has hit the nail on the head, with his usual tact and judgment," observed Monty Lowther, solemnly.

"Weally, Lowthah, you are vewy well aware that my name is not Adolphus."

"My mistake. I mean Aubrey."

"It is not Aubwey eithah, you ass. Weally

"I hear that the New House bounders are going picnicking," remarked George Herries thoughtfully.

"You are intewwuptin' me, Hewwies."

"Just so. My idea is, that we may as well raid the New House bounders, and make them sit up," said Herries.

"Hear, hear!"

"Good egg!" said Tom Merry. "We'll just hang on till the St. Winny's fellows come, and then we can clear, and leave them to the Third."

"Yaas, wathah."

"I believe they're coming in a car," said Tom. "Stumps are pitched at eleven, so they'll be here fairly early. Might take a spin along the road and meet the car; they are bound to come Abbotsford way."

"I will leave that to you, Tom Mewwy. I am goin' to give Wally some instructions weady for the game."

"When the blind lead the blind!" murmured Monty Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah."

"Go it!" said Tom Merry, laughing. "It may do Wally good. He may dot you on the nose, and that may do you good."

"Wats!"

Arthur Augustus marched off in search of his minor, to impart valuable instructions to that fortunate youth—instructions which were destined to be received by the fag with black ingratitude. The Terrible Three wheeled out their bicycles, to ride up the Abbotsford road, and meet the St. Winifred's car *en route*.

The three Shell fellows spun along cheerily in the bright summer morning. They were nearly at Abbotsford when a big car loomed up on the road, pretty well filled with juniors of St. Winifred's. Tom Merry recognised Jack Drake among the passengers as the car came buzzing on.

"Hallo, Drake's there!" he exclaimed. "That's the St. Winifred's car, I suppose."

"I don't see Daubeny!" remarked Manners.

"There's that chap Rodney!" said Lowther. "And some more of the fellows we saw last week at St. Winny's. This isn't Daubeny's lot."

"Followers, perhaps!"

"Then they're ahead of the leaders."

"Well, they're not Daub's lot," said Tom Merry. "May as well speak to them, and ask them whether Daubeny is on the road."

"Yes, rather!"

The Terrible Three dismounted as the car came humming up. They waved their hands to Drake, who called to the chauffeur. The car halted.

A dozen smiling faces looked down from the big car at the three cyclists standing by their machines in the road.

Even yet no suspicion of the truth dawned upon Tom Merry. This car-load was evidently not Daubeny's team; and he concluded that it was a party of St. Winifred's fellows who had come over to witness the match.

"Hallo, you chaps!" greeted Drake cheerily. "Close on St. Jim's, what?"

"Only a few miles now," said Tom Merry. "Have you fellows come over to see the game?"

"Ha, ha! Yes."

"Just a few!" grinned Sawyer major.

"All serene," said Tom, rather puzzled by the outburst of merriment among the Benbow fellows. "The more the merrier. But we came out to meet Daubeny on the road."

"Oh! Daub?"

"Yes. Is he behind you?"

"A jolly long way behind!" answered Jack Drake, with a smile.

"Well, it was arranged for stumps to be pitched at eleven," said Tom Merry. "Something happened to delay them?"

"Yes."

Drake glanced at his companions.

"The fact is, there's been a bit of a change in the programme," he explained. "You saw what Daub's cricket was like when you came over to the Benbow with Gussy——"

"Ahem! Yes."

"Not quite the kind of game to put up for St. Winifred's, you know," said Drake. "Daub didn't see it at first; but he sees it now. It's been explained to him."

"Fully!" said Rodney.

"And the long and the short of it is, that the team's been changed," said Drake. "Daub's staying out. We're the St. Winifred's eleven."

Tom Merry started.

"You!" he ejaculated.

"Little us!" smiled Drake.

"Oh, my only hat!"

"Makes no difference to you fellows, I suppose," said Drake. "We'll undertake to give you a better game than Daub's lot. You may rely on us for that."

"I—I—I didn't know——"

"We didn't know ourselves until last night. It was decided on quite suddenly; in fact, Daub didn't make up his mind to stand out until this morning."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And now here we are, ready for a good game," said Drake. "I say, is anything the matter?"

He stared at the St. Jim's trio.

The expressions on the faces of Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther, were extremely peculiar.

Manners and Lowther exchanged a look. Tom Merry's eyes were fixed on Jack Drake. His glance roved from Drake to the other fellows in the car. What their cricket was like Tom did not know, as he had never seen them play. But a glance at them was sufficient to tell him that they were players of a kind very different from Daubeny's nutty team. Every fellow in the car was hefty enough; not one of them had the dainty and lackadaisical look of Daubeny or his followers. Tom recognised some of them as the fellows who had been gibing and hooting Daubeny's cricketers on Little Side at St. Winifred's the week before. Evidently there had been some sort of a revolution at St. Winifred's, and the cricket representation was now in the hands of the opposition.

How it had come about did not matter much; the important thing was that it had come about!

The team of fumlbers, who were to be so gloriously licked by the fags of St. Jim's, were not coming!

This hefty crowd had come instead; and Wally and Co. were booked to meet them!

Tom Merry stood rooted to the ground, as the awfulness of the situation dawned upon him. He could not speak for a minute or two.

Drake looked puzzled.

"Anything the matter?" he repeated.

"Oh!" stuttered Tom. "Ah! I—I—I see! Then Daubeny isn't—isn't coming over?"

"No."

"And—and none of his men—the chaps we saw playing at your show?"

"None."

"And—and—oh, my only hat!"

"I don't quite see——" began Drake in perplexity.

"Excuse me, I—I think I'll get off!" gasped Tom Merry. "Come on, you fellows. Put it on."

The Terrible Three jumped on their machines and pedalled off, grinding at the pedals as if they were on the racing-track. Jack Drake stared after them blankly.

"What the merry thump is the matter!" he exclaimed.

"Give it up," said Rodney.

"Well, drive on."

The car started again, and buzzed on for St. Jim's.

Meanwhile the Terrible Three were riding hard for the school, by short cuts and by-ways, heedless of mud and ruts. There was only one thought in Tom Merry's mind; to get back to St. Jim's before the St. Winifred's team arrived there, and alter the arrangements that had been made.

He could not throw away a cricket match, the first match played between the two schools. Wally must be persuaded somehow to give up his claim, and leave the match after all to the junior eleven; and the eleven must be called together before it scattered for the day by road and wood and river.

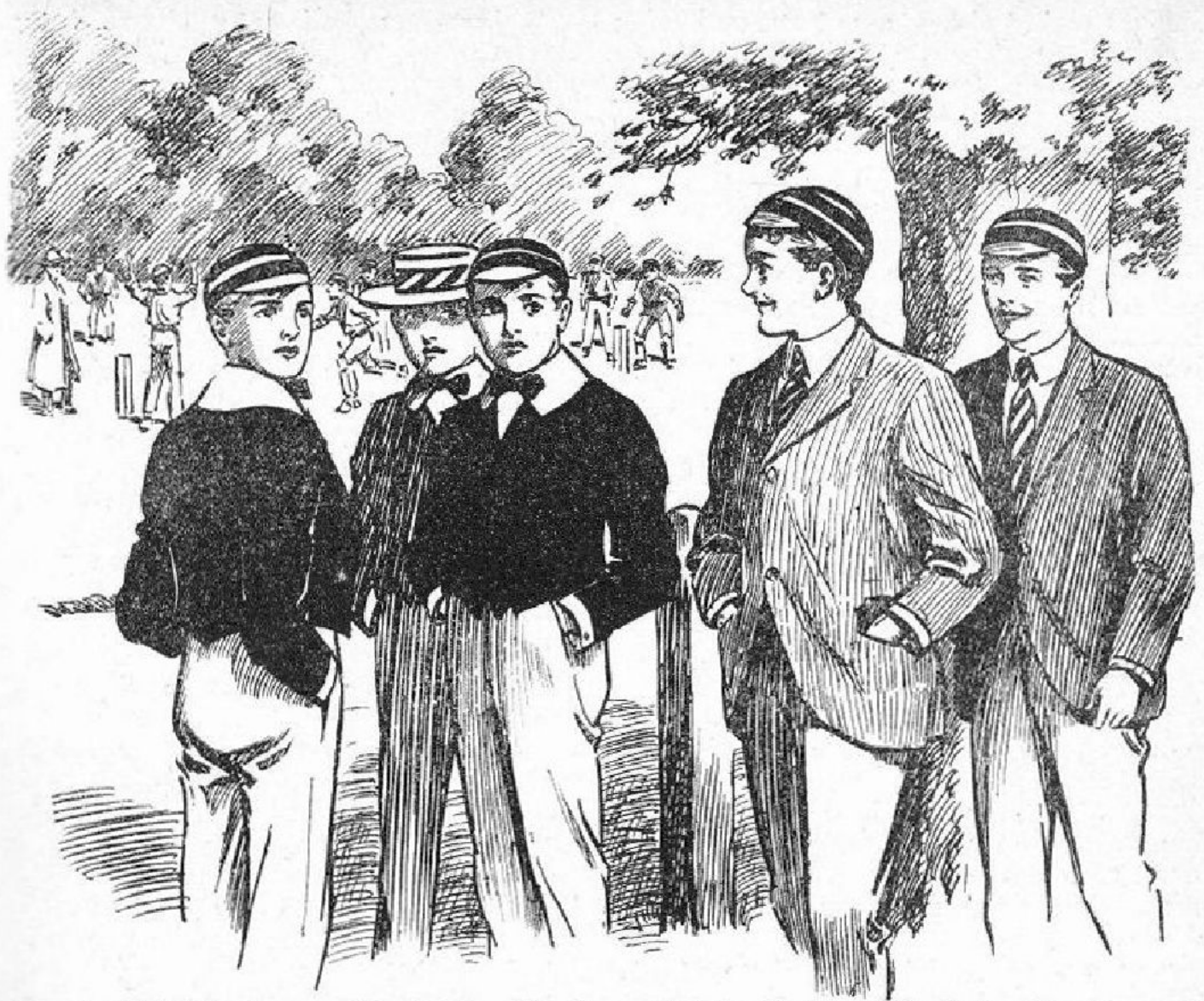
The car was rapid, but it had to follow the road, and the route by road was longer. By short cuts and bumpy bridle-paths the Terrible Three rode—and they rode as if for their lives.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER

Wally Declines to See Reason

"TOM MEWWY! Anythin' up?"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was lounging elegantly by the old gateway of St. Jim's, when three dusty and perspiring cyclists came tearing up.



"You shouldn't take chances with cricket matches," remarked the Captain of St. Jim's. (See Page 170)

The swell of St. Jim's jammed his celebrated monocle into his eye, and surveyed them in astonishment.

Three bikes went spinning unregarded against the gate, as the juniors jumped down. Tom Merry caught the swell of the Fourth by the shoulder.

"Gussy—you ass——"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

Tom Merry panted for breath. He had done the miles from Abbotsford in record time.

"Gussy! Oh, you thundering chump——"

"Bai Jove!"

"You know that chap Drake at St. Winny's?" gasped Tom.

"Yaas, wathah; quite an old fwiend."

"Is he any good at cricket?"

"Wippin'."

"Up to St. Jim's form?"

"Quite."

"Suppose he captained a team from St. Winny's, what would you think of Wally's chances of a win?"

"Wally wouldn't have any chances, deah boy."

"Oh!"

"You are wumplin' my jacket, Tom Mewwy!" remarked Arthur Augustus in a tone of mild reproof.

"You fearful ass!" groaned Tom Merry. "I've a jolly good mind to rumple your silly features! A pretty scrape you've landed us in, with your potty stunts!"

"Bai Jove! I fail to compwehend——"

"Ass!"

Tom Merry bumped the elegant Fourth:

Former against the gate, and ran on leaving Arthur Augustus gasping for breath in a state of complete bewilderment.

"Gweat Scott! What's the mattah? Mannahs—Lowthah—what's the mattah?" stammered D'Arcy.

"Ass!"

"Fathead!"

With those emphatic but unenlightening replies, Manners and Lowthar followed Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "Those thwee fellows are fairly off their wockahs! I wondah if it is sunstwoke?"

Leaving Arthur Augustus to wonder, the Terrible Three ran towards the junior cricket ground. Wally and Co., of the Third, were already there, in high feather, and the stumps were pitched. Some of the fags were giving the pitch a final roll. D'Arcy minor greeted the Terrible Three with a cheery nod as they came breathlessly up.

"Hallo, old tops!" said Wally. "You seem in rather a hurry. St. Winny's in sight yet?"

"They'd better not be late," remarked Reggie Manners. "I don't fancy hanging about waiting for anybody."

"Oh, give them a chance!" said Levison minor generously.

"They're coming!" gasped Tom Merry. "They'll be here in ten minutes, I think, D'Arcy minor."

"Well, we're ready for 'em," said Wally. "Chuck that rolling, you kids; the pitch will do."

"Wally, I—I—I want——"

"You want me to give you a place in my eleven?" grinned Wally. "Can't be did! Number's full!"

"Couldn't play the Shell, anyway!" remarked Jameson.

"Not in a School match!" said Levison minor gravely.

And there was a chorus from the fags.

"I—I—I don't want you to play St. Winny's after all, Wally, old kid," gasped Tom Merry.

D'Arcy minor laughed.

"Is this your funny morning?" he inquired.

"There—there's been a change in the arrangements," explained Tom Merry, with a sinking heart, as he realised that Wally, smiling as he was, was as hard as nails under his smiles. Wally had his rights in the matter; Kildare of the Sixth was a witness to that. If Wally did not choose to yield up his rights, there was no telling what was to be done.

"A change—what?" said Wally calmly.

"Yes. You see——"

"Not so far as we're concerned," said D'Arcy minor cheerfully. "We arranged to play St. Winny's, and we're going to play them. No change in that."

"I want you to give up the match, Wally."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Wally.

"What are you cackling at, you young ass?"

"Your little joke, old son."

"I'm not joking——"

"Yes, you are; you must be. You can't be asking me seriously to give up the match when we've been slogging for a week to get ready for it. If you were I should only tell you to go and eat coke."

"Look here, Wally——"

"The worst of you kids in the Shell," said Wally, "is that you don't know your own minds. I foresaw it—didn't I, you chaps?"

"You did!" said Manners minor.

"That's why I made you come to Kildare and make it official," said Wally. "Nothing doing now, Tom. Sorry; but there you are."

"Look here——" began Lowthar hotly.

"Nothing doing!" repeated Wally obstinately.

"You young ass——" Manners began.

"You old ass!" retorted Wally independently.

"Listen to me, Wally," said Tom Merry patiently. "The thing isn't as we supposed. We thought—we were given to understand—that Daubeny of St. Winifred's was coming over, with a crew of silly fumlbers that we saw playing at St. Winny's last week. You fags could have beaten the lot with an innings to spare. But it turns out that quite another team is coming—a really hefty team, up to our own weight. You see? You fags can't possibly play them."

"Oh, can't we?" exclaimed Reggie Manners warmly.

"No; it's impossible."

"We'll jolly well try, anyhow."

"You see, Wally, the case is altered," said Tom Merry almost pleadingly. "We gave you the match against Daubeny. But this is quite different. Drake and his men are a really good team. We must play them, or they will beat St. Jim's hollow."

"Oh, they won't beat us!" answered D'Arcy minor cheerily.

"You won't have the ghost of a chance against them, kid."

"Rats!"

"Now, Wally, be a sensible chap. I know we handed you the match; but it was under a misapprehension."

"Quite a mistake, you see!" said Lowther.

"I know I warned you that if I took the match on, I shouldn't allow you to change your mind," retorted Wally. "The Third are playing St. Winny's to-day. That's settled."

"I tell you——"

"So you handed us the match because you thought it wasn't any good," said Wally sarcastically. "Now you want to bag it again because you think it's going to be a good one. Do you call that cricket?"

"It—it isn't like that! You see, we can't let St. Jim's score a defeat—we can't put a licking in the school record——"

"Bow-wow! We'll beat St. Winny's all right."

"You can't!" roared Tom Merry.

"Bosh!"

"Look here, you cheeky young ass, you can get off the field!" exclaimed Monty Lowther impatiently. "Call the team together, Tom, and we'll clear these young ruffians off on their necks."

Wally's eyes sparkled.

"Will you?" he ejaculated. "Reggie, cut off and call Kildare. Head of the Games will see fair play."

Tom Merry made a hopeless gesture.

"You needn't call Kildare," he said. "A bargain's a bargain; and if you keep me to it, Wally——"

"What-ho!" said Wally emphatically.

"It means a sweeping licking for St. Jim's."

"That's only your conceit," said Wally calmly. "I've told you often enough that my team could lick yours, Tom Merry, if you'd fix up a match."

"You little ass!"

"Nuff said! Trot St. Winny's along when they arrive," said Wally. "We'll give 'em gyp. Don't you worry, old scout; we can beat any team that you could beat. Now, would you Shell fellows mind getting off our field? Only players in the field of play. Travel, will you?"

Tom Merry and Co. travelled.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER

The Great Match

"WHAT a game!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The junior cricket-ground was thronged.

Crowds of fellows who had intended to spend the whole holiday out of gates changed their mind, and came down to see the cricket match instead. The Third, of course, turned up as one man. But nearly everybody else was interested. The story of Gussy's great idea, and Tom Merry's disastrous adoption of it, made all St. Jim's chortle. Even fellows of the Fifth and the Sixth honoured the occasion by strolling along to look on. And they looked on with smiling faces.

All St. Jim's knew what had happened now; that Tom had expected a team of fumbling "duds," and had given the match over to the fags in consequence; and that, now that a hefty team had turned up instead of the expected fumlbers, the fags held him to his bargain. There seemed to be really no sympathy at all for Tom Merry's hapless situation. The fellows only chuckled over it.

Naturally the junior eleven were all there to look on. Tom Merry nourished a faint hope that Wally's crowd might possibly beat the visitors, somehow or anyhow. It was a very faint hope, but he clung to it. It was all he had to cling to.

His handsome face was very pink as he stood by the ropes and watched the start. Every fellow who glanced at him smiled. Grundy of the Shell was there, loud and

eloquent. Grundy wanted to know if he hadn't warned Tom Merry of this very possibility; and Grundy was only silenced by being forcibly collared by the Terrible Three, and having his features severely rubbed in the grass.

"It's hard cheese, kid," said Kildare of the Sixth, as he passed Tom.

"Horrid!" said Tom dolefully. "You see, I never knew——"

"You shouldn't take chances with cricket matches," remarked the captain of St. Jim's.

"I know that—now."

"It was rather a potty idea, wasn't it?" said Darrel of the Sixth, with a smile.

"Awfully potty."

"What put it into your head, then?"

"That howling idiot Gussy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

Kildare and Darrel walked on, laughing. Tom Merry watched the cricketers. Wally of the Third tossed with Drake for choice of innings, in an extremely dignified manner. Wally, at least, was taking the affair with portentous seriousness. So were his followers. There was nothing absurd in the situation, as far as the heroes of the Third could see. They had taken over the match; they were going to play it; and they were going to beat St. Winifred's. That was how the Third looked at it.

The Third batted first, and Drake and his merry men went into the field. Some of them were grinning.

Drake's expression was rather peculiar.

To bag this match, and keep St. Winifred's from scoring a defeat, he had taken most drastic measures with Daubeny and his men—for which there might be consequences when he returned to the Benbow. And the match he had bagged was—this! However, he was landed in it now; and certainly there was going to be a Benbow victory on the St. Jim's ground—for what that was worth under the circumstances.

It occurred to Drake that Daubeny probably would not have grudged him the match if he had known how matters stood. Certainly Daub's lofty dignity would have been greatly offended if he had found himself booked to play a gang of scrubby little fags. Daub's dig-

nity had been saved—and Drake had saved it for him. This, undoubtedly, had not been Drake's object!

Wally and Levison minor went to the wickets, the rest of the Third Form batsmen standing in a group by the pavilion, and looking on with perfectly serious faces. To judge by their looks, and the looks of the two batsmen, they might have been playing for the county.

Drake glanced at the fag batsmen with a grin, and tossed the ball to Dick Rodney.

"Kill 'em quick, old scout!" he said.

"I'll try!" said Rodney, laughing. And he went on to bowl.

Dick Rodney was the champion junior bowler of the Benbow; though the great Daub had always firmly declined to recognise the fact. His comrades expected to see him send the fag batsmen home with a duck's egg a piece. But Wally and Co. were made of sterner material than that.

D'Arcy minor had the bowling, and he stood up to it manfully. To the surprise of St. Winifred's, and to the relief of St. Jim's, he lived through the over. There were no runs, but there was no wicket down, and that was something.

"Aftah all, Wally may pull ththrough!" remarked Arthur Augustus hopefully.

The wish was father to the thought.

"Rats!" grunted Figgins.

"Bosh!" said Blake.

"Weally, deah boys, it is quite poss——"

"Bow-wow!"

"Look!" snorted Grundy of the Shell.

Drake had gone on to bowl the second over to Levison minor. Frank Levison was remarkably good for a fag bat; but he was nowhere near the form of the St. Winifred's bowler. His wicket went down at the second ball, and Levison minor tramped back to the pavilion with a rather rueful countenance.

"Call that batting?" inquired Jameson, as he came in.

"Try it yourself!" grunted Levison minor.

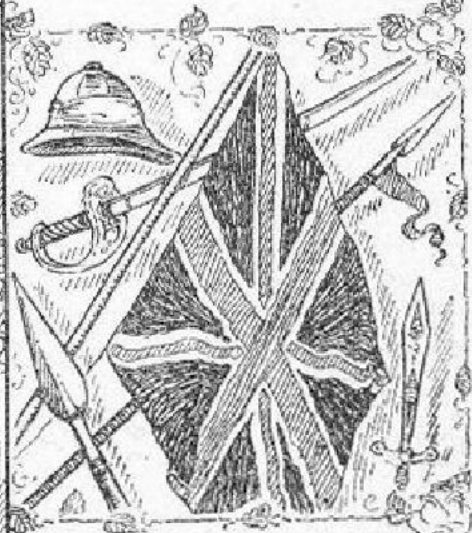
But it was not Jameson's turn yet. Reggie Manners was next man in. The last ball of the over proved fatal to the unfortunate Reggie; he was caught at point by Sawyer major.

Then Rodney was bowling again.

Famous Fights for the Flag



The Battle of Inkermann, on November 5th, 1854. The Coldstream Guards storming a Russian redoubt.



The Battle of Omdurman, on September 2nd, 1898. Colonel Martin, carrying only a stick, charged the 21st Lancers (320 strong) against two thousand Dervishes, who were concealed in a depression in the ground.

This time Wally's luck was out—and Wally followed it, as it were. He came back to the pavilion with a very red face.

"Man in!" he snapped.

Joe Frayne went in.

He came out after the next ball. Then came Jameson's turn. And Jameson came out blushing, and the St. Winny's fieldsmen cheered the hat trick.

Tom Merry suppressed a groan.

By that time it was easy to see that, whatever Daub and his men might have been like, Jack Drake's team were hot stuff, quite on a par with Tom Merry's own doughty eleven. Tom Merry's men, of course, could have walked all over the Third, and it was clear that that was precisely what Drake's men were going to do.

Even Wally was looking very thoughtful as he watched the batting from the pavilion.

Wally had food for thought now.

It came into his mind that he had over-estimated the powers of the Third Form cricketers. But if Wally repented, repentance came too late, as it so often does.

The die was cast now; as Manners put it classically and sardonically: "*Jacta est alea!*"

The best men of the Third Form eleven were out, and not a run had been scored so far. There was general surprise when Hobbs of the Third broke his duck.

But he did it; and here and there a stray run was "sneaked" as the disastrous innings went on.

The innings ended early—remarkably early. The Third Form total was ten runs.

"A wicket a run!" said Tom Merry dispiritedly. "I suppose that was what we might have expected."

"Yaas, wathah!" murmured Arthur Augustus.

St. Winifred's decided to bat before lunch. There was plenty of time. Wally and Co. went into the field with faces that were more serious than ever—though it was now the outlook of overwhelming defeat that made them serious.

Some of the spectators strolled away, laughing; but a good many remained to watch the interesting match. Among them

were Tom Merry and Co. As Figgins sarcastically remarked, he wanted to know exactly how many innings St. Jim's would be beaten by.

St. Winifred's were grinning hugely now, evidently looking upon the match as a first-class joke.

But Wally and Co. were not slain yet.

Levison minor was a wonderful bowler for his age, and it was he who took the first over, Wally imploring him, almost with tears in his eyes, to do his level best. Frank Levison went on determined to do or die. No doubt Drake, who started the batting, was careless, owing to the view he was taking of the whole affair.

He paid for his carelessness. Levison minor sent down a ball that curled round the careless bat, and there was a crash.

"How's that?" shrieked the Third Form of St. Jim's, with one view.

"Hurray!"

"Well bowled, young Levison!"

"Bravo, Franky!" roared Levison of the Fourth, brandishing his straw hat in great enthusiasm. "Well bowled! Oh, well bowled!"

Drake blushed as he walked off. He had certainly been careless, but that did not alter the fact that he had been bowled by a Third Form fag! He could have kicked himself as he walked back.

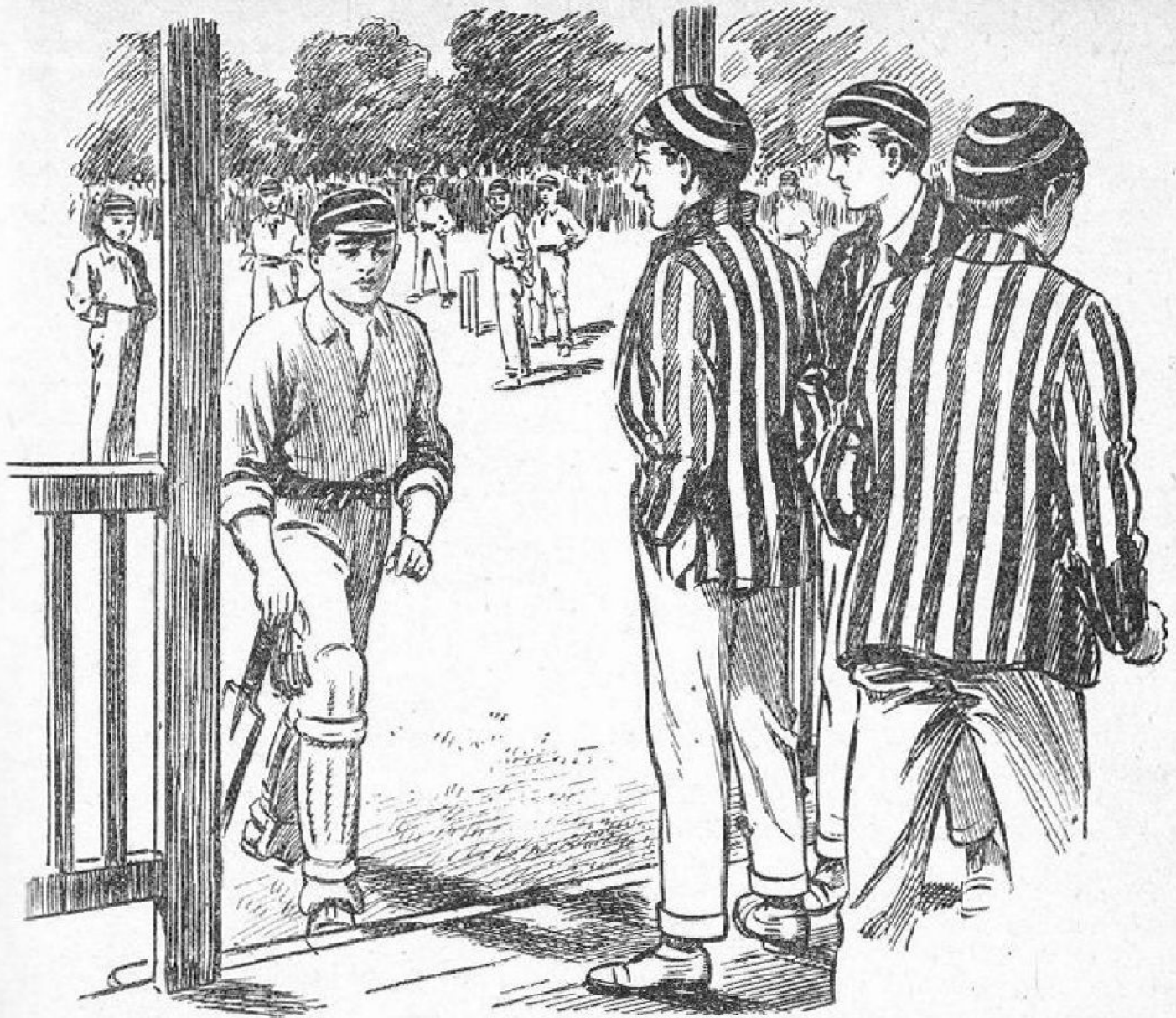
"Oh, Drake!" murmured Rodney, as he came in.

"Look out for that little blighter!" was Drake's answer; and Rodney nodded, and went out to join Sawyer major at the wickets.

The runs began now. But in bowling and fielding, the fags proved themselves more hefty than in batting against bowlers who were over their weight.

St. Winifred's did not sweep them off the face of the earth, as they had fully anticipated. Runs piled up, but wickets fell. Two good catches came to Wally in the field; another wicket fell to Frank Levison's bowling, and one to Manners minor.

Tom Merry's face brightened a little as he watched. It was not to be such a crushing defeat as had seemed probable at first. Wally



“Call that batting?” inquired Jameson, as Frank Levison came in. (See page 170)

and Co. were putting up a really good game, considering the weight against them.

It had been Jack Drake's intention to knock up a level hundred runs, and then declare, not expecting to be called upon to bat in a second innings. But the hundred, as it happened, did not materialise. St. Winifred's, to their surprise, were all down for sixty.

However, sixty to ten for the first innings was a very comfortable margin, and the St. Winny's men went smiling to lunch.

Tom Merry and Co. entertained the visitors to lunch, keeping up cheery countenances with an effort—rather a big effort.

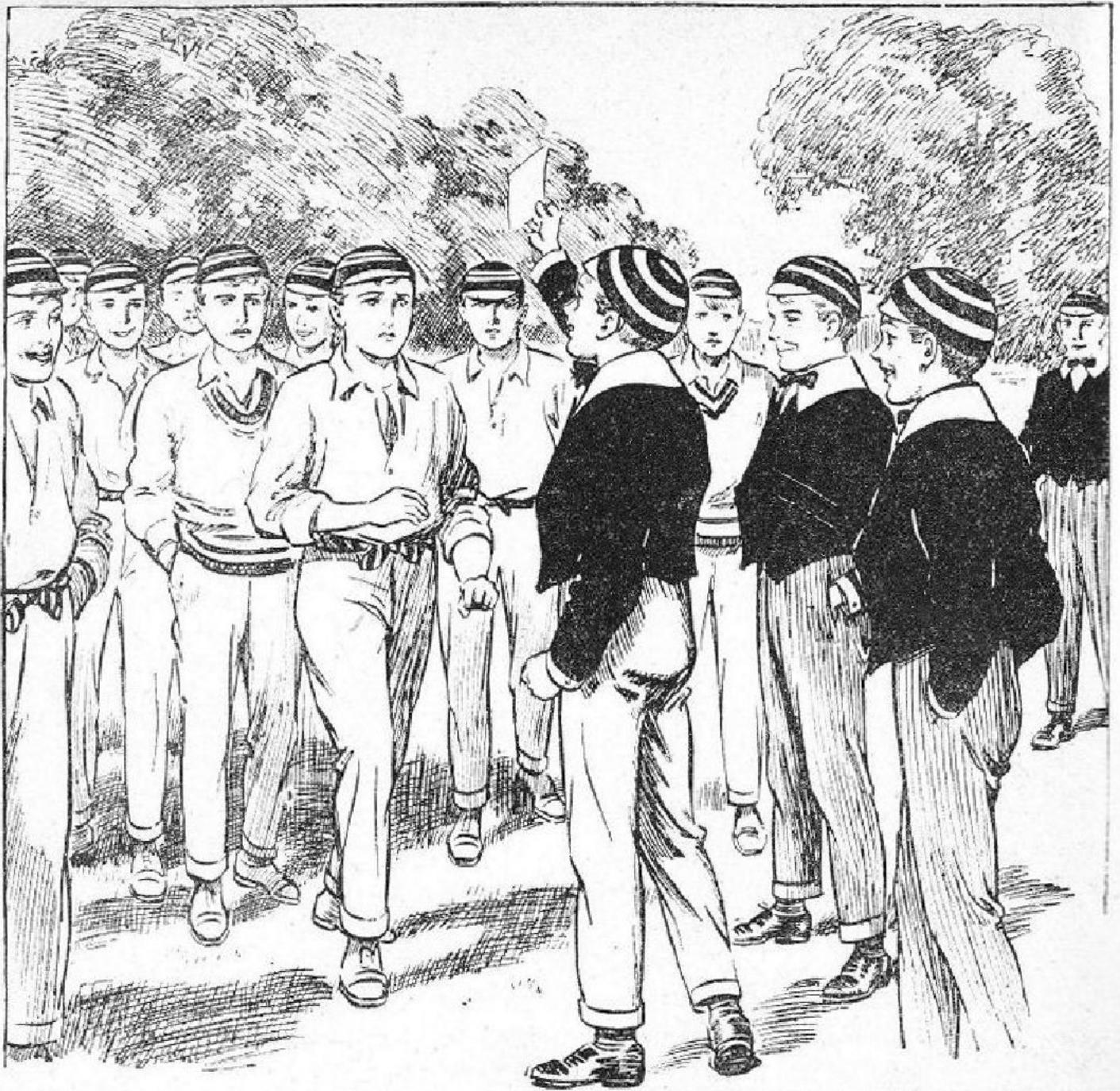
Wally and Co. seemed fairly satisfied with

themselves. They realised that they weren't going to win, but they considered that they were doing pretty well. So they were for that matter. It was quite certain that they could have walked over Daubeny's team. But a big defeat was to be scored for St. Jim's, all the same.

After lunch cricketers and spectators foregathered on the field again. Jack Drake smiled to Rodney as they went into the field.

“Anyway, we shall have a win to report at home,” he remarked. “And we'll have a run round the country in Daub's car this afternoon, so the holiday won't be wasted.”

And Rodney laughingly assented.



Drake's expression was extraordinary for a moment. "How did you know?" he gasped at last. Tom Merry answered with a laugh, and held up the telegram. (See page 176)

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER

An Exchange of Telegrams

"WELL hit, Wally!"
"Bravo!"

There were no duck's eggs for D'Arcy minor in the St. Jim's second innings, at all events. Wally was on his mettle, and striding up to the odds in great style. He sent the ball travelling, and crossed and recrossed the pitch with Levison minor.

"They're tough little beggars, anyhow,"

Monty Lowther remarked. "They do St. Jim's credit—in a way."

"In a way," murmured Manners.

"What a way!" grunted Blake.

Wally was still batting when Levison minor was extinguished in the fourth over. Reggie, who took his place, played up well. Drake and Co. found that they had to exert themselves a little.

"Master Merry!"

Toby, the House page, came down with a telegram. Tom Merry glanced round.

"For me, kid?" he asked.

"Yes, sir."

Tom Merry took the telegram and opened it. He stared as he read the message within.

"Sorry prevented coming to-day. Play you another time.—DAUBENY."

That was the message.

"Anything up?" asked Monty Lowther as Tom Merry stared at the telegram in bewilderment.

"It's from Daubeny of St. Winny's."

"Hallo! What's Daub got to say?"

"Look!"

A dozen fellows looked at the telegram and stared. Why Daubeny should telegraph that he couldn't come, and suggest a match on another date, when a St. Winifred's team had arrived, was a deep mystery.

"What the merry thump does it mean?" asked Tom Merry. "I—I suppose it's all straight, isn't it, this really is a team from St. Winny's?"

"Yaas, wathah! We know the chaps, don't we?" said Arthur Augustus. "But that telegwam is weally wathah puzzlin'."

"Any answer, sir?" inquired Toby. "Boy waiting, sir."

"Yes; wait a minute."

Tom Merry pencilled a reply on the back of the telegraph form.

"Daubeny Benbow Chade,—Drake's eleven playing here.—TOM MERRY."

And Toby trotted away with the reply.

In a perplexed mood Tom resumed watching the cricket. A suspicion was dawning in his mind now. It seemed a fantastic one, but he could not help thinking that there was something very suspicious in the circumstances. Was Drake's eleven, after all, the official junior eleven of St. Winifred's? Did Daubeny know they were there? If not—

Daubeny's reply, at all events, would clear up the mystery, and Tom Merry waited rather anxiously for it.

Meanwhile the fag batting was going on. Wally of the Third was out at last, and, after his fall, the wickets went down faster. Thirty runs had piled up, but it was perfectly clear that the St. Winny's total would not be reached, and that St. Winny's would not have to bat again.

"All over bar groaning," was Lowther's remark.

"Yes, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy dismally. "It has all turned out weally vewy unfortunately. Howevah, I twust it will be a lesson to Tom Mewwy not to wun wisks with a cwicket match again."

"The question is," said Blake ferociously, "what are we going to do to Gussy?"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Boil him in oil!" said Manners.

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"It's all Gussy's fault," said Blake. "As soon as the St. Winny's chaps are gone I suggest giving Gussy the ragging of his life."

"Bai Jove! I considah—"

"Hear, hear!"

"Look out for squalls, Gussy!" said Blake darkly.

"Wats!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus indignantly. "I weally considah—"

"Hallo! There goes last man!"

Last man in was Hobbs. Hobbs stayed in just long enough for Dick Rodney to knock his middle stump out of the ground.

"All down for thirty!"

"Oh, dear!"

"Nice for St. Jim's! Nice for our cricket record!" groaned Blake. "Never mind, we'll take it out of Gussy."

"Weally, Blake—"

Toby came on the ground with a buff envelope in his hand.

"Master Merry—"

"Hallo! It's raining telegrams to-day!" said Manners. "What is it this time, Tommy?"

Tom Merry opened the telegram, and a crowd of fellows read it together. It was from Daubeny of St. Winifred's, and from its length it was evident that Daubeny had not counted the words, or recked in the least that there was an extra charge for every word over twelve.

"Tom Merry, St. Jim's, Rylcombe.—Drake has no right to play for St. Winifred's. He bagged our car and turned us out on the road. We didn't know he was coming to St. Jim's. The match does not count. Kick the rotters out.—
DAUBENY."

"Oh, my only aunt Sempronia Ann!" yelled Blake. "They're not the St. Winny's team at all!"

"Bai Jove! What a stunt!"

"Not the St. Winny's eleven—just any old eleven!" gasped Tom Merry. "It's not a School match at all!"

"Phew!"

"Unofficial, at least!" grinned Monty Lowther. "Just a private little eleven that has come over to play our fags."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry laughed.

"This isn't the St. Winny's match," he said. "The St. Winny's match hasn't come off to-day—that's all! My hat! Who ever heard of such a trick? I—I can't blame Drake for being fed with Daubeny, and taking the match off his hands. But that doesn't alter the fact that he doesn't represent St. Winny's, and that this isn't the St. Winny's match at all!"

"Bagged their car, and turned them out!" chuckled Lowther. "Serve them jolly well right, if you come to that. But Drake seems to have overlooked that remarkably useful invention, the telegraph."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Here they come!" grinned Blake. "We ought to congratulate them on beating our fags, and hope that they will come over to see the St. Winny's match—when it comes off."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Tom Merry and Co. hurried to meet Jack Drake and his merry men as they came off the field.

THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER

All's well that ends well

"CONGRATULATIONS, Drake!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Drake looked at Tom Merry and Co. with a rather perplexed smile.

"You're awfully good," he said. "We expected to win, of course, but I'm blessed if I expected you fellows to be so pleased about it."

"My dear chap, it was kind of you to spend a whole holiday coming over here to play our

Third Form," answered Tom Merry genially. "Our Third is good stuff, for fags, you know; but they don't often get a chance of playing a visiting team on their own. I don't think we should have been good-natured enough to come over to your show and play your Third. This was really kind of you."

"Awf'ly kind, Dwake!"

"And I hope you'll come over when the St. Winifred's match comes off, Drake——"

"Eh?"

"It's postponed, you know——"

"Wha-a-at?"

"But it's coming off later," said Tom Merry calmly. "I should recommend Daubeny to put you in his team, Drake. Some of your men are pretty good, too, though of course you haven't had a fair chance of showing what you can do in a fag match like this. Still, I must say again that it was kind of you to give our Third a match."

"Yes, rather," chuckled Lowther.

"Vewy kind indeed," grinned Arthur Augustus. "Awf'ly, in fact!"

The St. Winifred's cricketers looked at them, and looked at one another.

"I—I don't quite understand," said Jack Drake slowly. "This is the St. Winifred's match."

"Not at all."

"What?"

"You see, the St. Winifred's match was booked with the St. Winny's juniors eleven," explained Tom Merry genially.

"But——"

"And the St. Winny's eleven, having been pitched out of their car and left on the road, the match is naturally postponed——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Drake's expression was extraordinary for a moment.

"How did you know?" he gasped at last.

Tom Merry held up the telegram, laughing.

"Oh!" gasped Drake.

"Sold again!" murmured Sawyer major.

"Blessed if I thought of that!"

"But—but we're from St. Winifred's, you know," murmured Rodney.

"Are you the St. Winny's junior eleven?" grinned Lowther.

"No-o-no!"

"Then the official match is postponed, old top! You're some sort of a scratch eleven that's come over to play our Third, what?"

"Oh, dear!" murmured Drake.

"And it was awf'ly kind of you!" chortled Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in great glee. "I am suah that my young bwothah feels highly honahed."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Tom Merry and Co. generously and pressingly repeated their invitation to Jack Drake to come over and see the St. Wini-fred's match—when it came off.

Jack Drake and Co. departed, after an early tea, in Daubeny's big car, hardly knowing whether to feel satisfied or not with the way things had turned out on that eventful day. Certainly they had a sweeping victory to report on board the Benbow; but equally certainly that victory was only over the Third Form of St. Jim's, in a quite unofficial match. The official match was yet to come.

But whatever Drake and Co. thought, the

St. Jim's fellows were feeling quite satisfied, especially Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. The terrific ragging that had loomed over noble Gussy's head did not happen. Indeed, as the matter had turned out, Arthur Augustus claimed the credit for having propounded, after all, a really ripping wheeze; and he repeated his assurance to his chums that, in a case of doubt, they could always rely upon him to point out the "wight and pwopah" thing to do.

A couple of weeks later Daubeny and Co. came over to play the official match, and this time they came by train. And this time, also, Tom Merry did not call upon the services of the Third Form of St. Jim's.

Daubeny and Co. were comfortably beaten by an innings and fifty runs, but they seemed quite satisfied with themselves when they departed. Tom Merry and Co. were also satisfied, so, as rarely happens, everybody was satisfied. Which was quite a happy state of affairs.

THE END



"IT'S A LONG, LONG WAY TO——"

"How far does it say, Pat?"

"Ten miles."

"Arrah, then! Doing ut together, it'll be foive moiles each between us."