

'THE SCALLAWAG OF THE THIRD!'

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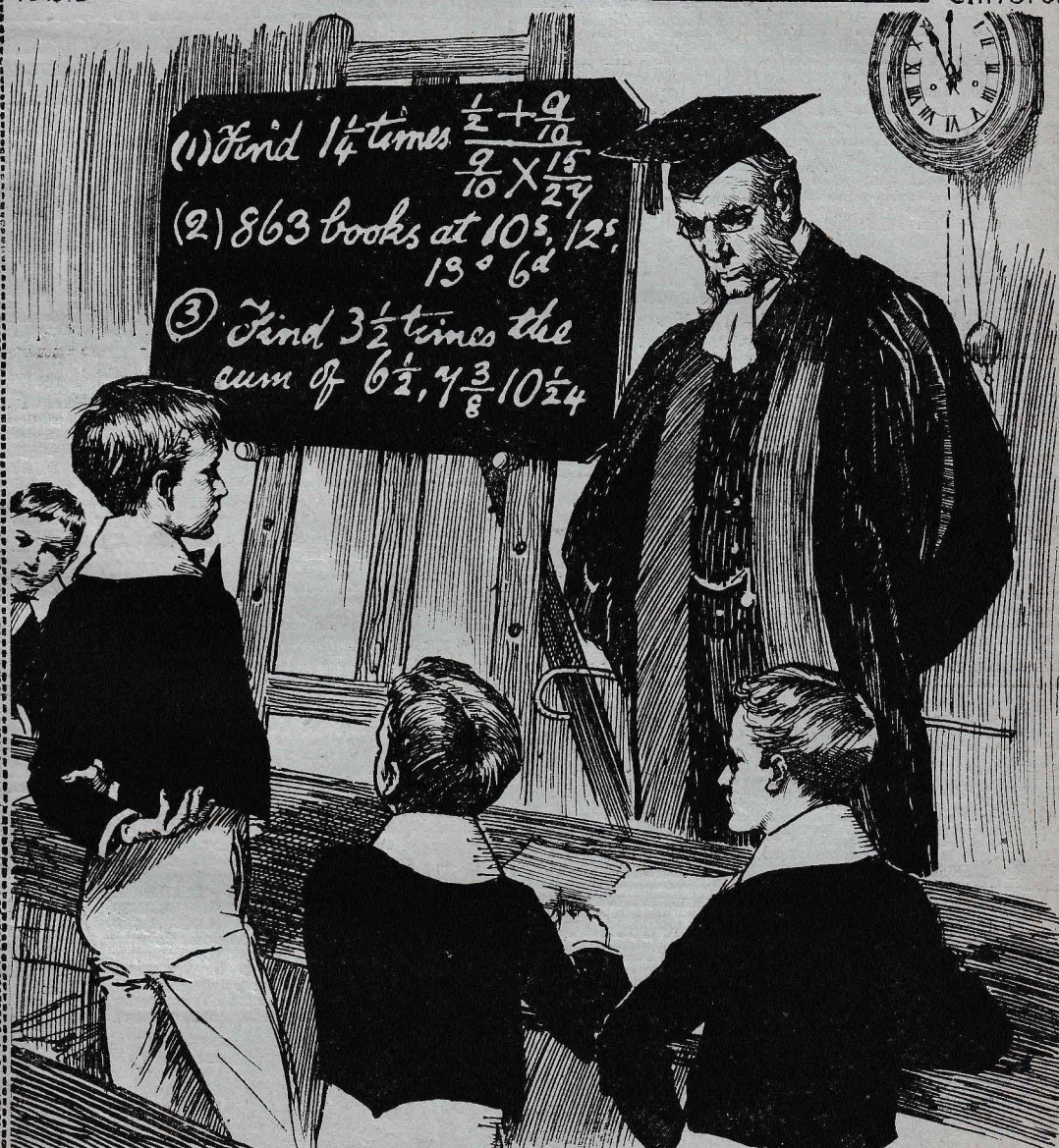
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by
MARTIN
CLIFFORD.



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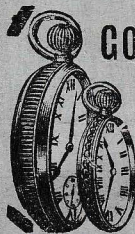
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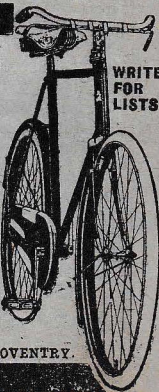
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The Scallawag of the Third.

A Tale of Tom Merry & Co.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1.

Mr. Selby Jumps to Conclusions.

"SILENCE, boys!"

Mr. Selby, the Third-Form master at St. Jim's, rapped out the words irritably. It was the fourth time he had to rap them out in as many minutes, and he was becoming very pink and disturbed.

This was a danger-signal amongst Third-Formers as a rule which usually produced extreme quiet. On the present occasion the quiet was there up to a certain point, then a long drawn-out squeak sounded across the class-room.

Mr. Selby wheeled round from the blackboard.

"D'Arcy minor, is it you?"

"No, sir!"

"Are you sure?"

Wally D'Arcy did not answer. The leader of the fags of St. Jim's could stand a great deal without showing resentment, but there was one thing which he could not stand.

To doubt D'Arcy minor's word was simply asking for unpleasantness.

"Answer me, boy! Are you sure it isn't you?"

"Yes, sir, of course I am sure."

"Humph! Well, it is very strange. The objectionable noise certainly emanates from your side of the room, D'Arcy. It had better not occur again." And Mr. Selby turned to the blackboard once more.

Wally went rather red, and indignation flashed across the inky young face of the junior seated next to him.

Curly Gibson's eyes sparkled.

"Just like Selby."

"He's always the same."

"Jolly well pretends not to believe a fellow when he does really all the time!" whispered Jameson wrathfully.

"Bothered if I'd tell him, Wally!"

D'Arcy minor grinned.

"I'm not going to, kid."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good wheeze! My aunt!"

The irritating squeak rang out again. It was louder than

ever this time, and it set Mr. Selby's teeth on edge. He snatched up his cane and strode across the class-room.

Wally & Co. were writing gravely in their exercise-books. The other Third-Formers, who were not writing, were gazing thoughtfully at nothing in particular.

"D'Arcy minor, stand up!"

Wally obeyed.

There was a very angry flush on Mr. Selby's face as he peered into the desk, then under it. He concluded by glaring at D'Arcy minor.

The Third-Form master had been able to see nothing that could have caused such a prodigious squeak, so he went back to the blackboard.

Jameson chuckled silently.

"Good egg, Wally."

"He'll start rampaging in a minute."

D'Arcy minor nodded grimly.

"Well, he shouldn't doubt a fellow's word like he does," the Fag-Form leader muttered. "Blest if I care—"

Squ-eak!

This time the squeak was louder than ever, as if the cause of it were in considerable pain. Mr. Selby spun round furiously.

"D'Arcy, bring that—that noise here."

Wally looked solemnly at his Form-master.

"Please, sir, I—"

"Bring it here instantly!" thundered Mr. Selby, "I know it is you! D'Arcy, do you hear me?"

"Y-yes, sir, but—"

"Another word and I shall send you to Dr. Holmes!"

Wally at once lapsed into silence. The Third-Formers were waiting expectantly.

Things generally did become exciting when Mr. Selby and his troublesome pupil got at loggerheads—an occurrence which took place at frequent intervals.

Mr. Selby stood grimly by the blackboard, impatiently flicking his trouser-leg with his cane.

Suddenly the cane descended on the desk before him with a swish which made Dudley, the owner of the desk, jump vigorously.

"D'Arcy minor, I should be sorry to have to thrash you before the whole class——"

Wally grinned.

It was rather nice of Mr. Selby to say that he would be sorry to have to thrash him, but the scallawag of the Third had his doubts about the extent of that sorrow.

He remained in silence. On each side of him, his staunch chums Curly Gibson and Jameson were sitting with their handkerchiefs stuffed into their mouths.

They had never seen Wally quite as cool as he was at that moment.

Down came the cane again, and again Dudley jumped.

"D'Arcy, bring me the toy, or whatever it is, that is causing the squeak—bring it to me instantly!"

"Yes, sir, only——"

"Instantly, I said, boy!"

"Yes, of course, but—but I don't think I can, sir."

"What do you mean? You don't think you can! Is it something you have dared to fix to the desk?"

"N-no, sir."

"Then why can't you bring it here?"

"It's rather big, sir——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A distinct, if low, chuckle sounded along the row of desks in which Wally's was placed. It was instantly stifled, but Mr. Selby heard it all right.

It did not improve his temper.

"I will give you three minutes, boy," he cried. "If you do not obey me in that time, I shall take you to the doctor myself."

"But——"

"Silence! You have been impertinent enough this morning. If you have not obeyed me by the time the clock strikes, you will go to Dr. Holmes."

All the juniors in front of Wally turned curiously. There had been some rare tussles between Mr. Selby and D'Arcy minor in the past, but this looked like being the greatest of them all.

It took a great deal to make Wally give in—but, then, it also required a large amount of pluck to withstand Mr. Selby.

The hands of the large clock were creeping round slowly. What would Wally do? Every junior asked himself the question.

As far as the Third-Formers in front could see, he was gazing over the top of his desk at his own boots.

At that moment the door of the class-room was opened gently, and the elegant form of the best-dressed junior in St. Jim's stood in the doorway. It was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, Wally's elder brother.

Arthur Augustus had his monocle in his eye, and a calm, dignified expression on his face.

"Pway excuse me, Mr. Selbay, but may I speak to my minah for a moment? He is to play in the cwicket twial we have awranged for this aftahnoon——"

"No, D'Arcy, you cannot!" snapped Mr. Selby.

"Bai Jove——"

"Your brother is behaving disgracefully. He is more trouble than all the other boys put together. D'Arcy minor, I am waiting for you to bring me the—the cause of the abominable noise which has been disturbing the class all the morning."

Arthur Augustus turned a stern glance towards his brother, and an expression of disapproval flashed across his face as he noticed the inky state of Wally's hands.

"Gweat Scott, Wally, you surprise me——"

"Oh, don't you begin, Gus!" muttered Wally.

"Weally, Wally, your conduct is wepwehensible in the extweme! Your respected Form-mastah has ordahed you to bwing forward the—the——"

"Rats!"

"Bai Jove, I should wegwet havin' to administah a feahful thwashin', Wally," whispered Arthur Augustus, "but undah the circs——"

"D'Arcy, I told you you were not to speak to your brother!"

"Yaas, wathah, sir; but undah the circs——"

"Silence!"

"Yaas, certainly, sir; only——"

"Silence, boy!" almost shouted the Third Form-master.

"Silence!"

Arthur Augustus went pink. Mr. Selby was the only master in St. Jim's who would have raved at the swell of the Fourth Form in that manner.

Wally grinned.

"You see the sort of paddy he's in, Gus, my son!"

"Bai Jove——"

"The three minutes are nearly up, D'Arcy!"

Mr. Selby's voice shook with anger. He had started his class in an irritable mood, but he was well past that stage now.

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NEXT
THURSDAY:

"D'ARCY'S PARTY."

By
MARTIN CLIFFORD.

Suddenly a grin spread across Wally's good-looking young face. To the disappointment of all the juniors in front of him, he stooped down and began an examination of something on the floor.

Mr. Selby waited grimly, swishing his cane in a manner which caused Dudley to divide his attention between the Form-leader and the Form-master.

"The three minutes are up, D'Arcy."

"Yes, sir, I know, sir, but——"

"Go to Dr. Holmes's room instantly, boy!" thundered Mr. Selby.

"Yes, sir, only——"

"Instantly, I said!"

Wally jumped to his feet and walked towards the door. Arthur Augustus gazed at him in horror.

"Weally, Wally, it is imposs. that you can be sent to the doctah! I uttahly wefuse to allow my minah to be sent to the doctah in this mannah! It is a mattah of dig. with me——"

"Silence, D'Arcy!"

"Yaas, wathah, sir! But I considah it my duty to wemon-stwate with my youngah bwothah on his weally weekless behaviour! Wally, I must wequest you to obey your respected Form-mastah instantly!"

"Can't be did, Gus. It's imposs., as you'd say."

"Imposs.! Mr. Selbay, my minah says it is imposs. that he can obey you. Vewy likely——"

Wally had his hand on the door-knob.

"Oh, that's all right, Gus! Don't you get in a wax over nothing! I can't do impossibilities, you know!"

The Third-Former spoke loudly. Mr. Selby hesitated. Once or twice before he had been hasty in sending fellows to the Head, with the result that the subsequent situation had been a trifle embarrassing for himself.

"Stop, D'Arcy!"

Wally stopped.

Curly Gibson and Jameson were rolling about on their respective seats in the most reckless fashion.

"What do you mean by it being impossible to obey me, D'Arcy?"

"I—I can't bring you the—the cause of the squeak, sir!"

"Are you sweenin' some othah juniah, deah boy?"

"Silence! Answer me, boy! Why cannot you bring me the cause of the—the objectionable noise?"

"Because—because it's a floorboard, sir."

Mr. Selby gasped.

"A floorboard! How dare you, D'Arcy? Your impertinence is becoming intolerable!"

"D'Arcy minor is right, sir."

Wally looked up meekly.

"Yes, sir," he said; "it's the floorboard which makes the row. Every time you tread on it, sir, in front of the black-board, it gets up this end and rubs against the wainscot."

"Silence, boys! If this laughter does not cease instantly, the whole class will be kept back!" cried Mr. Selby, redder than ever. "I——"

At that unfortunate moment the Form-master happened to tread on the loose board. He felt it sink under his foot distinctly, and the squeak it produced at the other side of the room was the loudest yet heard.

That was too much for the fags of St. Jim's. They forgot about the threat of extra class, and yelled with laughter.

Mr. Selby tried to make his voice heard, but for a moment failed to do so. Then he strode across the room, and flung open the door.

"Leave the room, D'Arcy major!"

"Bai Jove——"

"Leave the room instantly!"

"Yaas, wathah, sir! But I weally fail to see——"

"Do you hear me, boy?"

Arthur Augustus gasped with astonishment, then retired. The door was slammed to after him, and Mr. Selby wheeled round to face his noisy class again.

The laughter died away at once. There was a light in Mr. Selby's eyes which showed the limit had been reached.

Wally bent over his books.

"Took the wind out of his sails that time," he whispered. "Gave him the kybosh on the top-speed."

"Jolly good rag."

"Rather."

Wally grinned.

"It was, my son. And it's a jolly good wheeze about my playing in the trial this afternoon. I might even get a place in the eleven. Anyway, I shall be able to show the old fogies of the Fourth and Shell what the Third Form fellows can do. I'm ringing off for the rest of the morning, kids."

And Wally lapsed into a dead silence.

He did not want any further trouble with Mr. Selby, and he thought the other affair was all over.

That was D'Arcy minor's first mistake.



CHAPTER 2. Wally's Misfortunes.

MR. SELBY was by no means an unjust man in the sense that he was ever conscious of injustice. He was simply of a very irritable temperament, and when upset, inclined to pick upon some member of his class, and work as much of his ill-humour off on that unhappy fag, whether innocent or guilty.

The moment silence was obtained in the class-room again, the newest fag saw the danger signal, and took warning. Mr. Selby was upset, so someone would have to suffer.

Curly Gibson became anxious.

"And we know who that someone will be, kid."

Jameson nodded.

"Rather. If old Wally doesn't find himself on the rocks—"

"Twenty-five lines for talking, D'Arcy minor."

It was a curious coincidence that Mr. Selby's voice should ring out at that moment, but Wally refused to admit it was a coincidence that he was the junior dropped upon.

He had not spoken, as a matter of fact, but he thought he knew Mr. Selby enough to know that that did not matter.

"Oh, let it rip, Curly!"

"Rats!"

"Ring off, I tell you. No good owning up; the Selby bird will trip me up one way or another."

"Don't be an ass!"

"Please, sir!"

"What is it, Jameson?" exclaimed Mr. Selby irritably.

"Please, sir, it wasn't D'Arcy who was talking—he hasn't spoken."

"No, sir, it was Jameson and I," added Gibson.

"Take fifty lines each, then!" snapped the Form-master.

Gibson & Co. subsided.

It was strange that Mr. Selby should have doubled the imposition simply because the real culprits had owned up.

Jameson and his chum were not given to reasoning things out, as a rule, but the point struck them. There were masters at St. Jim's who would have washed out the imposition altogether in such circumstances instead of doubling.

Wally went on with his work, shrugging his shoulders.

"Oh, that's the Selby fish all over, kids. You were asses to own up. You see, he'll get me for the floor boarding before this class is over."

Wally took refuge in silence again, quite unconscious of the fact that he was not being quite fair to his Form-master.

Mr. Selby would scarcely stoop to revenge himself on a junior in the way Wally's words suggested, but the fact remained that Mr. Selby was keeping a very suspicious glance directed towards D'Arcy minor.

The Third Form-master would remember the floorboard incident until the dismissal bell sounded, but he would forget that if any one had been to blame it was himself.

But Wally was perfection itself for the next half-hour.

There was not a single act of his that called for censure, and then suddenly misfortune befell him.

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By

MARTIN CLIFFORD.

NEXT
THURSDAY:

"D'ARCY'S PARTY."

The clock was creeping round to the half-hour, and Curly Gibson's spirits rose in consequence. In a thoughtless moment, he threw a skilfully made paper pellet across the room.

It caught Dudley just behind the ear and made him jump. Dudley grinned, and a few minutes later the juniors on each side of him also grinned.

"We'll see about this, kids," Dudley whispered, taking the ink-well from its resting-place. "If young Jameson thinks he can biff me on the ear when he likes—"

"It wasn't Jameson, ass!"

"Curly Gibson, then; bound to be one of the three."

The other junior's grin broadened.

If there was one thing Dudley of the Third could do, that thing was making ink-pellets. The skilful manner in which he manipulated the paper in such a way that none of the ink was upset until it struck the victim, called forth silent admiration from his inky-fingered young neighbours.

"My hat, you aren't going to biff that thing across the room, Dud?"

"Aren't I, kid?"

"Ha, ha, ha! Suppose Selby sees?"

"Selby won't; a little more ink, someone."

"My aunt, there's enough there to write an essay already!"

Dudley chuckled silently.

"No good spoiling the giddy ship, my son. Now, wait until Selby turns his back."

Mr. Selby obligingly turned his back at that moment, and Dudley spun round on his seat.

The next instant the ink-pellet shot through the air.

Gibson ducked brilliantly, then Wally gasped. The pellet had caught him on the side of the nose, and ink was running down his face in fine style.

"My only aunt!"

"You ass, Dud."

Then three more pellets shot across the room, all fired at Dudley. All were well loaded with ink, and two of them caught him in the face.

The third, a wild shot, soared over his head, and the next instant, expressions of horror showed on all the juniors' faces.

The third ink-pellet could only have missed Mr. Selby by the fraction of an inch, for it flattened itself on the black-board in front of him.

The Third Form-master started violently.

For a moment he could not think what it was that was trickling down the board, blotting out his neat chalk figures. Then he faced his class, anger sparkling in his eyes.

Without a moment's hesitation, his glance fell on D'Arcy minor first, and the glance was all that was needed in his eyes. He saw the ink marks on Wally's face, and, as usual, jumped to the conclusion which pleased him the most.

"D'Arcy, you are in detention for this afternoon."

Wally gasped. He had done nothing, and yet he was to be detained. He was to miss the trial match, the one thing he had been longing for ever since he had heard there was a chance of his taking part in the game arranged by Tom Merry and Jack Blake in their search for new talent.

It was too exasperating.

"Please, sir, I haven't done anything."

"Silence, boy! Another word, and I shall send you to the doctor. I have stood more impertinence from you this morning than I intend to. Not another word, sir."

"Please, sir, it was I who threw the pellet."

"No, it wasn't Gibson, it was I."

"I, you mean?"

"Fifty lines each. Each of you who spoke has fifty lines."

Not another word, I say."

The fags were in confusion.

As a matter of fact, no one really knew who had thrown the fatal pellet, but all who had thrown anything were anxious to own up.

Any punishment to themselves would be better than that Wally, their acknowledged leader and crack cricketer, should miss his appearing in the trial game.

Dudley was quite desperate.

"It isn't fair, sir."

"Dudley, leave the room!"

"But—"

"Leave the room!" thundered Mr. Selby, and the big Third-Former had to go.

Wally dug him in the ribs as he passed.

"That's all right, Dud, old ass!"

"But—I am awfully sorry, Wally—I—"

"Don't trouble about that. Selby meant to get me over the other rag."

"He is a beast!"

Wally did not answer. There was a very grim expression on his face, though, as the door closed behind the crestfallen Dudley.

Jameson and Gibson were wildly indignant.

"If this isn't the limit."

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NEXT
THURSDAY.

"Hang it all, Wally, the doctor ought to know about it!"

"Selby won't listen to a word, and thinks every fellow in the school tells crams. Bless if I'd stand it, Wally."

D'Arcy minor did not answer. He had rammed his hands in his pockets, and was looking at Mr. Selby.

There was a very grim expression in his honest eyes at that moment, an expression not unlike the one there just before he ran away from school some months ago.

But indignant as he was, he was scarcely more indignant than his chums. They were openly rebellious, and perhaps it was a fortunate thing all round that morning school came to an end at that moment.

Curly Gibson made a dash for the door.

"A protest meeting in the gym., kids!"

"Right-ho!"

"When?"

"At once, of course. We aren't going to stand this. It's jolly well the limit."

"Rather!"

"Selby will have to be shown he can't goat about just as he likes."

"Yes, rather!"

Exactly how Mr. Selby was to be shown, Jameson did not explain. The others were too excited to inquire.

They trooped off towards the gymnasium in reckless indignation, Wally following in the rear, his hands in his pockets.

Mr. Selby passed him in the corridor, and stopped for a moment.

"You see what impertinence has cost you, D'Arcy," he said severely. "You have lost your afternoon's cricket."

Wally did not answer.

He had just as much pride as his brother, Arthur Augustus, only it was of a different kind. Nothing would have induced Wally to ask for a reprieve.

He had already said he was not the culprit, and there was no use in saying it again. Mr. Selby was no more likely to take his word now than he had been in class.

Mr. Selby walked on, exasperated at what he termed D'Arcy's sullenness, for Mr. Selby never for a moment doubted the truth of his words that Wally had been impertinent.

Wally also walked on, and the grim expression was still in his eyes.

CHAPTER 3.

Arthur Augustus Disturbs a Conference.

"B AI Jove!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy uttered the exclamation in surprise.

Morning school was just over, and after a fruitless hunt for Jack Blake, Digby and Herries, his chums, the swell of St. Jim's had repaired to Study No. 6 as a last resource.

He jammed his monocle in his eye, and stood staring into the room.

Jack Blake was there all right, but then so were Figgins and Tom Merry, and it was not often the three great rivals of the old school met together in that peaceful way, unless there were something of great moment in the air.

"Bai Jove, deah boys—"

"Oh, bother, here's that burler Gussy."

"Go for a walk, Gussy, old ass; we're busy."

"Weally, Figgay—"

"Yes, really. We can't have you cackling about in this room, when we have important business on."

"Gweat Scott, Figgay, deah boy! Your wemarks are surpwin' in the extweime. As this woom is my woom—"

"Ring off, ass!"

"I wefuse to wing off, and I uttaly wefuse to be chawactahwised as an ass, Tom Mewwy. I should wegwet havin' to administrah a feafshul twashin'—"

Tom Merry grinned cheerily.

"Yes, kid, you would regret—trying it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Anyway, go for a walk, Gussy, like a decent ass!"

"I wefuse to go for a walk!"

"Well, sit down and read a book, then. Anything you like, so long as you don't cackle."

"I absolutely wefuse to wead a wotten book—"

"Well, you'll have to ring off, anyway!" exclaimed Jack Blake. "We've got a jolly important matter to discuss."

"I flatly wefuse to wing off," returned Arthur Augustus loftily. "I'm not in the habit of wingin' off!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You're right there, kid!"

Arthur Augustus stared coldly at Figgins, the long-limbed leader of the New House.

"If that is meant for humah, deah boy, I considah it wotten in the extweime. Howevah, I did not come heah to

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argue, deah boys, as I have a weally disturbin' mattah to think ovah, and undah the circe. I must ask you to wetiah ffrom the woom, and leave me to wectect in peace."

"My hat!"

"What's that?"

"I must ask you to wetiah instantly ffrom the woom, as I have a vewy disturbin' mattah to think ovah. It is quite poss. that I may explain all about it latah on, but for the pwesent—"

"But for the present you can go and eat coke!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Oh, don't take any notice of the young ass! Leave this room so that he can reflect in peace! Of all the giddy cheek!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry turned in his chair again.

"Get on with it, kids. Who told you Frank Monk and Gordon Gay had been hanging round the coll., Figgy?"

"Lowther."

"My hat! Then we shall have to look out, chaps, and no mistake. The Grammar asses have one or two little things on the slate against us they'd give their young ears to see wiped out— What the—who the—when the—"

Arthur Augustus had laid a firm hand on the back of Tom Merry's chair, and Tom Merry had been in the act of leaning well back on two legs only.

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus gasped.

For an instant or two Tom Merry balanced in the air, waving his arms excitedly on all sides. Then he uttered a yell.

"My—my only Aunt Jane!"

The next moment there was a thud as Tom Merry's feet caught the table underneath, and the inkpot jumped wildly from the stand, splashing its contents in Figgins's face. Figgins also uttered a yell.

"You frabjous ass—"

"Look out—"

"My aunt!"

Tom Merry had completed his balancing feat. He was now taking a backward dive for the floor. The moment following, he struck the floor with a sounding bump.

"O-oh!"

"Bai Jove! Gweat Scott!"

"You utter ass! Let me get at him! Lemme get at Gussy."

Arthur Augustus did not answer.

He stood looking down at Tom Merry's prostrate form in amazement.

"Gweat Scott! What made you do that, deah boy?"

"Shrieking ass!"

"Weally, I must wequest you not to address me in that wough and weady mannah, Tom Mewwy."

"Hopeless, frabjous lunatic!"

"Bai Jove! Howevah, undah the somewhat twyin' circe. I am pwepared to ovahlook your weally widiculous wemarks—"

Tom Merry scrambled to his feet.

"You cackling, gibbering ass, Gussy—"

Arthur Augustus waved his hand loftily.

"Bai Jove, Tom Mewwy, deah boy, pway do not lose your tempah!"

"My aunt, I—I'll—"

"Of course, deah boy, I can undahstand your feelin' watty—"

"Oh, you can, can you, ass!"

"Yaas, wathah! Undah the circe. I almost think I should feel watty myself, deah boy. Howevah, I wegwet the affair, and so the mattah is ovah. Pway don't intewwupt me. Mewwy! As I was about to wemark, I blame you entiahly."

"My—my hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He blames you entirely, kid."

"Yaas, wathah, and when Tom Mewwy has considahed the mattah, he will blame himself—"

"If I don't slay you first, you burbling young lunatic!"

"Pway don't be widic., deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "I wequested you to wetiah ffrom the woom so that I could wectect upon a weally important matter in silence, and you wefused. I trust you will now think bettah of it, deah boy, and wetiah without furthah twouble."

Tom Merry glared at Arthur Augustus wrathfully.

Jack Blake yelled with laughter.

"Oh, don't mind Gussy, Merry. He has forgiven you."

"Yaas, wathah—I mean—"

Tom Merry sat down.

"I've told you before it's time he had a keeper, Blake. You are running a fearful risk in putting it off. Where were we?"

"Ha, ha, ha! Talking about the Grammar School asses, kid!"

"Yes, of course!" growled the hero of the Shell, keeping a warlike glance on Arthur Augustus. "Yes, it's all right what Figgy says about the Grammar asses hanging round St. Jim's. I've seen them myself; but there's something else more important than that even."

"Yaas, wathah; the disturbin' affair I wish to think ovah in peace, deah boy, though how you can have known—"

"Ass!"

"Get on with it, Tom Merry."

"Well, chain up that tailor's dummy, then. Have any of you chaps seen Pilcher, Craggs, and Grimes lately, kids?"

Figgins and Jack Blake looked at the other junior expectantly. Even Arthur Augustus forgot about the disturbing matter which was also disturbing the conference, for a moment.

"Bai Jove, the villagahs, deah boy."

"Yes, ass. Have any of you seen them hanging about the place as well?"

"N-no! My hat! Yes, I have; I caught sight of Grimes sitting on the wall last night."

"So did I."

"And I believe he was up here in the afternoon."

"He was, Figgy, and in the morning, too."

They looked at one another in silence.

"Bai Jove, I wegard that as wathah stwange, deah boys!"

"What can they want, kid?"

Tom Merry shook his head, and grinned.

"There's no telling, with Grimes & Co.," he laughed.

"They may only have come to have a look, and then they may have a rag on against us. There's no saying."

"No, wathah not—"

"We've been dropping on their chests rather heavily lately, haven't we?"

Jack Blake nodded.

"That's a fact. And do you remember old Grimes said something just before the pageant about squaring up matters? And we've had them in the cart once or twice since."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, I thought we ought to have a sort of meeting to be prepared, kid."

"My hat, yes!"

"We don't want the Grammarians and Grimes & Co. wheezing us at the same time—"

"Gweat Scott! Wathah not, deah boy! Howevah, if you will leave the mattah entiahly in my hands, I have no doubt—"

"No, neither have we."

"What do you propose, Tom Merry?"

The Shell junior shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh, I don't see that there is anything to propose," he said. "All we can do is to keep our eyes open, and if either the Grammarians or the villagers start ragging, get them in the neck, as usual."

Jack Blake nodded.

There certainly was nothing to be done until they were certain the enemy were on the war-path. When that was proved to be the case, St. Jim's could be relied upon to give a good account of themselves.

Figgins picked up some sheets of foolscap with a laugh.

"Anyway, we shall be prepared, and that's something. Now to get on with the cricket."

"Bai Jove!"

"Hallo! What's the matter now, Gussy?"

"I shall have to wefuse to allow you to discuss cwicket, or to stay in heah any longah, deah boys!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "I have already wequested you to wetiah, and leave me to wectect ovah a disturbin'—"

"Request away, kid!"

"Weally—"

"Oh, do dry up! You've got D'Arcy minor down for your side, Tom Merry?"

"Rather!"

"Good! I've young Jameson. We'll toss up who'll take Gibson or Dudley."

"Yes, that's it. My hat, it looks as if Gussy will have to stand down, kids."

"Gweat Scott!"

"Still, he won't mind."

"Bai Jove, I should uttiahly wefuse to stand down! Howevah, I see that you are only waggin', although I considah your wemarks in anythin' but good taste, seeing they have put me all in a fluttah. I wequest you for the last time to wetiah—"

"Thank goodness, it is the last time!"

"Bai Jove, I should wegwet havin' to administah— Come in, deah boy!"

"I'm coming," said D'Arcy minor. "Trust me! Cheer-ho, Gus!"

"Bai Jove! Weally, Wally, you must wush upstairs and change your collah. It is covahed with ink!"

"Oh, don't you begin, Gus! I say, Merry, which of you

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MARTIN CLIFFORD.

old fogies has me down to play in the trial match this afternoon?"

"I have, kid!"

"It's a wash-out, then, my son."

The four juniors stared at the fog in amazement.

There was not a keener Third-Former in the college on sport than D'Arcy minor. They all knew that he had been thinking of little else than the trial match for days past.

He still had his hands in his pockets, and his face wore a mask as far as reading it was concerned.

Arthur Augustus uttered a short gasp.

"Gweat Scott! As your eldah bwothah, I ordah you to play for the good of the school, Wally. I shall uttably wefuse to listen to any wotten excuse. As a matter of fact, I considah it wank bad form on your part to twy and make excuses—"

"My aunt, he cackles worse than ever, Blake!"

Jack Blake did not laugh. He jumped to his feet.

"I say, Wally, you aren't slacking, are you?"

"No!"

"What's the wheeze, then?"

D'Arcy minor rammed his hands a trifle deeper in his pockets.

"Oh, nothing," he said coolly. "I've had a row with Selby, and he's gated me for the afternoon. That's all."

"My hat!"

"You utter young ass to goat about in class at the morning of the trial match!"

"You ought to be boiled in oil, Wally!"

"Yaas, wathah—that is to say, I considah you ought to be wemonstated with, Wally," said Arthur Augustus severely. "Was the wow with your respected Form-mastah ovah the mattah of the floahboard, deah boy?"

"No!"

"What was it ovah then, Wally?"

"Oh, something that happened afterwards! The chaps got slinging ink about—"

"Gweat Scott! Slingin' ink about!"

"Yes; and the Selby bird nearly got a dose at the back of the neck. Got up on his hind legs at once. Ratty as they make them for the time being, you bet!"

Arthur Augustus shuddered at his brother's use of slang, but it certainly was not an occasion to discuss style. Besides, Wally did not give him time.

"Hope you have a good game," he said cheerily. "Sorry to mess things up, Tom Merry. Perhaps I shall get a knock with you old fogies later on."

"Yes, of course; but this is the last trial game, Wally."

"Hard cheese, then. I'd cut detention, only Selby will be on the field."

"On the contwawy, Wally, you would do nothin' so weckless."

"Wouldn't I, kid?"

"No, wathah not, because as your eldah bwothah, I should uttably wefuse to allow you to cut detention."

"Fat lot of difference that would make, I don't think. Thought I'd let you know in good time, Merry. So long!"

"Pway stop, Wally! Wally, where are you goin' now?"

"To pick flowers," grinned the Third-Former. "I'd take you four with me, only I don't want to get hauled up for ragging."

And the scallawag of the Third sauntered along the corridor whistling.

CHAPTER 4. On Wally's Trail.

"BAI Jove!"

Arthur Augustus replaced his monocle in his eye, and looked doubtfully at the others. The others looked doubtfully back again.

"My hat!"

"What has happened?"

"Have you heard anything about the row, Gussy?"

"Yaas, wathah, Figgay, deah boy—at least, not about the second wow. There was some twouble about a floah-board, deah boy."

"About a floorboard, ass?"

"Yaas, wathah, only I will explain that latah. Mr. Selby made a mistake—"

"Oh, the floorboard, whatever that meant, wasn't the cause of the row!" exclaimed Jack Blake thoughtfully.

"Wally said so himself."

"Yaas, wathah."

"Well, what was the row?"

Tom Merry shrugged his shoulders.

"Goodness knows. I expect the fags started ragging in class, and Selby dropped on Wally. Silly young asses to goat about just before cricket."

Jack Blake looked slightly more thoughtful.

On account of Arthur Augustus being a member of Study THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 122.

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THURSDAY:

"D'ARCY'S PARTY."

By
MARTIN CLIFFORD.

No. 6, Jack saw more of D'Arcy minor than Tom Merry, perhaps, and so he understood him better. He jumped to his feet and picked up his cap.

"Wally was in a fair old rage, kids."

"Ha, ha, ha! Yes, I expect he was."

"Yaas, wathah, and, undah the circs., I hardly think it is to be wondahed at, deah boys. I considah I should feel wemarkably watty myself."

"Where was he going?"

"Bai Jove, yaas, deah boys, where was my minah going?"

"To pick flowers, kid."

"Weally, Figgay, pway be sewious. Bai Jove, as an eldah bwothah, I considah it is my duty to follow my minah up and see that he is not weckless enough to cut detention, deah boys."

"He said he wouldn't do that, kid."

"Yaas, wathah, only he may change his weckless young mind. Pway excuse me. I must wetiah at once, deah boys."

"Hold on, Gussy."

"We're coming, kid."

"Bai Jove, I wegard that as wathah wippin' of you, Figgay. As you are comin', I pwopose we all go togethah."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Get on with the washing, kids; we haven't got all day."

"No, wathah not; and I am afraid the dinnah gong will wing befoah long. Pway huwwy, deah boys."

The "deah boys" hurried, glancing into the Third Form common-room as they went.

There was not a single fag to be seen there."

"Bai Jove, I shouldn't wondah if they are all in the quadwangle—"

"Great thought from Gussy, chaps."

"Yaas, wathah. This way, deah boys."

Arthur Augustus led the way into the quadrangle, his monocle sparkling in the sun. The four looked about amongst the crowd of juniors, but again there was not a Third-Former to be seen.

"Bai Jove, I wegard this as wemarkable, Figgay."

"Who is that over there, kids?"

"Lowthah, bai Jove! I say, Lowthah, deah boy, have you seen my minah?"

"Many times, kid!"

And the humorist of the Shell grinned pleasantly.

"Pway don't be fwivolous, Lowthah, as this is not the time for humah. We are on my minah's twail."

"Then you'd better clear off to the gym., kid; he's there with about a million other fags. You could hear their giddy voices down in Rylcombe, I should think."

"Bai Jove, I pwopose we wun—"

"Scud for it, chaps!"

And the four dashed off towards the gymnasium.

As they approached the large building, surprised expressions came into their eyes. There certainly was a curious murmuring of subdued voices coming from the gymnasium.

"My hat!"

"What on earth are the young asses up to, kid?"

"Bai Jove! I wondah if they are wehearsin' a play? I— Gweat Scott!"

Arthur Augustus had attempted to open the door. It would not give an inch.

"Bai Jove, the young wottahs have actually barred the doah, deah boys."

"No, really?"

"Of all the cheek!"

"My aunt! Suppose some of the Sixth had wanted to use the place?"

Arthur Augustus gasped with astonishment. The Third Form of St. Jim's had, of course, as much right to the gymnasium as the captain or any other senior; but the cheek of their daring to lock the door against all comers astounded the swell of the Fourth.

He began thumping on the door vigorously.

"Bai Jove, I wegard it as luckay in the extweme that we awwived befoah any of the pwefects, deah boys!" he exclaimed, in concern. "There might have been a wegulah wow! Open the doah, Wally—open the doah instantly!"

There was no answer. Nothing but the low murmuring could be heard. It sounded almost as if the entire Third Form were talking at once in lowered voices.

"Open the doah, Wally! Bai Jove, if I have to make the wequest again, I shall administah feahful thwashin's all wound."

"Rats!"

The answer had come at last. Arthur Augustus put pink.

"Weally, Wally—"

"More rats!"

"Bai Jove! I wegwet to say that wemark settles the mattah. The moment you open this doah, I shall

administah a feahful thwashin'! Open the doah instantly, Wally!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Figgay, I fail to see any cause for wibald laughthah."

"Don't you, kid? I say, Wally, don't be a young ass!"

"Go hon!"

"Some of the seniors may come along!"

"Let 'em!"

"And Mr. Selby is in the quad."

"Well, I don't object. Perhaps he ought to have asked our permission, though."

"Bai Jove, you uttah young wascal, Wally!"

"Oh, don't you begin, Gus!" came Wally's voice pleasantly. "I'd go for a walk if I were you chaps. Get on with it, kids."

And the low murmur of voices started again.

Arthur Augustus thumped at the door until his knuckles ached, but he could not get his brother to answer another word.

Tom Merry looked really concerned for a moment or two.

"I don't like this, Blake."

"No; it is getting near the limit. There'd be an awful row if Kildare came along."

"Yaas, wathah! I considah my minah's conduct as weekless in the extweme."

"Oh, ring off, Gussy!"

"What can they be up to?"

"Goodness knows."

Tom Merry glanced at his watch.

"There's a good twenty minutes before dinner," he exclaimed anxiously. "Ten to one Knox or someone will come along before then. I say, we ought to find out what the young sweeps are up to, chaps."

"Yaas, wathah! I was about to pwopose that myself."

"How can we find out, though?"

"Bweak down the doah, deah boys."

"Ass!"

"What about the windows?"

"Bai Jove, I nevah thought of that. Howevah, it is imposs., as we should wequire a laddah to weach them."

"Rats! They are not very high up."

"No, wathah not; but—"

"What about you giving me a back, Tom Merry, and Gussy climbing up to my shoulders?"

"Bai Jove, I wegard that as a wippin' ideah, deah boys."

"Oh, you do, do you?" growled Tom Merry. "I've had some of this before, and I'm not agreeing to Blake standing on my shoulders in spiked cricket boots."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's all right, kid; I've got shoes on."

Tom Merry hesitated for a moment or two, then went and stood beneath the window with his face to the wall.

"Get on with the washing, then, kids."

"Right-ho!"

"If anyone starts goating, there'll be a fine crop of thick ears, I can tell you," went on the hero of the Shell. "Look out, ass. I don't want my giddy collar trodden on."

Jack Blake grinned; then, aided by Figgins, he managed to get up to Tom Merry's shoulders. Not having had a great deal of practice in the human column business, he had got up the wrong way, and was backing the wall.

He began an attempt to turn round.

"Ass! Keep still! Whose ear do you think you are kicking?"

"Ha, ha, ha! Sorry, kid!"

"Yes, you will be when this is over," growled Tom Merry.

"Of all the rotten japes— Are you going to be all day, Gussy?"

"No, wathah not, deah boy!"

"Get on with the washing, then, ass!"

"Bai Jove, yaas, that's the ideah! Pway give me a leg up, Figgay!"

"Right-ho. Steady, ass!"

"Yaas, wathah! Bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins chuckled loudly. The human pyramid was more than unsteady, and the expression on Tom Merry's face convulsed the New House junior.

Suddenly the Shell junior gave vent to a shout:

"You utter ass, Gussy! O-oh!"

"You're treading on my foot now, idiot! My only Aunt Jane!"

It was Jack Blake who uttered the second yell, but yells were no good.

According to the original plan, Arthur Augustus was to get up to Jack Blake's shoulders somehow, and he was doing his best.

"Pway steady yourselves, deah boy; you are feahfully wockay—"

"Ass!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Oh, do get on with the washing, duffer! Help him up, Figgay, before he breaks some of my ribs with his great hoof."

"Ha, ha, ha! Up you go, Gussy!"

"Yaas, wathah! Bai Jove!"

A final hoist from Figgins and a great effort on the part of Jack Blake proved successful. Arthur Augustus was standing on the shoulders of the chief of Study No. 6.

Tom Merry groaned as the extra weight caused Jack Blake's feet to sink into his shoulders.

"Hurry up! This isn't going to be a long job, I can tell you."

"I should say not."

"No, wathah not; you are much too wockay foah a pywamid, deah boys—"

"Ring off, ass! Can you see anything?"

"Yaas, wathah! Bai Jove!"

"What's up?"

"Gweat Scott!"

"Ass!" shrieked Jack Blake, who was compelled to bump the back of his head against the wall every time Arthur Augustus moved. "Utter ass!"

"What are they doing, Gussy?"

"My only toppah—"

"Idiot!" yelled Tom Merry. "Raving maniac! What are they doing?"

"Weally—"

Tom Merry gave vent to a warning shout.

"Look out, Blake!"

"Ass!"

"Steady!"

"You hopeless idiots!" gasped Tom Merry. "Keep still! My only aunt's hat!"

Figgins yelled with laughter.

The pyramid was swaying about in the most reckless fashion. It would only need a very little to bring it down. That little was approaching.

"Look out, there! Get out of the way, asses!"

Herries's voice rang out excitedly.

Figgins turned to look.

"Steady! Call the brute off, Herries!"

"Towser! Good dog! My aunt!"

Towser, Herries's famous and much pampered bulldog, was racing towards the pyramid, growling loudly. Arthur Augustus heard the growls and glanced down anxiously.

"Bai Jove, he's comin' foah us, deah boys—"

"Keep still, ass!"

Then Tom Merry uttered a yell.

Towser, the bulldog, had concluded his run with a violent spring in the air, alighting on Tom Merry's chest. It was not until that moment Towser recognised old friends in the curious-looking pyramid. It was too late.

The pyramid was doomed.

CHAPTER 5.

Manners Takes a Photograph.

"B AI Jove! Gweat Scott!"

"Steady, ass!"

"You utter duffer, Tom Merry!"

Tom Merry made one more desperate effort to regain his balance, but the unsteadiness of Jack Blake proved too much. He gave vent to a yell, then his legs doubled up beneath him.

"My only Aunt Jane!"

"Gweat Scott!"

The pyramid was coming down.

Figgins shrieked with laughter, then his laughter gave place to a sensation of horror. As a last resource, Jack Blake tried to jump from Tom Merry's shoulders, despite the fact that he was supporting Arthur Augustus.

Arthur Augustus shouted wildly, then Figgins joined him.

Jack Blake had landed full in the New House junior's chest.

Figgins was driven backwards at a great pace, bringing up with a thump against the astounded Herries. Herries sat down.

"You howling duffer, Figgay!"

"Call it off—call the brute off!"

Figgins was shouting excitedly, but he could not get up. Jack Blake was sitting on his legs, while Towser was jumping round him, barking and growling in a manner which would have unnerved anyone.

The bulldog was furiously excited.

The sight of the pyramid, in the first instance, had ruffled his usual calm, while the subsequent fall had proved the last straw. Every instant Figgins expected to feel Towser's formidable teeth meet in his flesh.

"Call the brute off, Herries!"

"My hat!"

"You utter ass, Tom Merry!"

Tom Merry sat up and groaned. The others also sat up and groaned. For a moment or two they stared at one another in silence.

"You utter ass, Tom Merry!"

"You shrieking duffer, Tom Merry!"

"You raving maniac, Tom Merry!"

Tom Merry groaned again and rubbed the back of his head.

"Of all the rotten japes," he growled—"of all the hopeless rags—"

"Bai Jove! Gweat Scott!"

The exclamation came in a despairing gasp.

Tom Merry & Co. looked round in surprise.

"My hat! Where's Gussy?"

"Where's the one and only, kids?"

"Blessed if I know!"

"Gweat Scott! Bai Jove!"

Tom Merry gazed round in amazement, then he glanced up. The next instant he uttered a yell of laughter.

"My aunt, look, kids!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Of all the young asses— Ha, ha, ha!"

And the four sat where they were, yelling with laughter. A moment later their laughter was doubled, for Towser suddenly dashed for the gymnasium wall and made violent efforts to run up it with a series of terrific springs.

His object appeared to be to gain a grip on a pair of vivid green socks with pale yellow clocks.

"Ha, ha, ha! Hear me smile!"

"Just look at the young ass!"

"He's hanging to the window-sill with his hands! My only aunt!"

Arthur Augustus was gasping.

Directly he felt the pyramid giving way beneath him, he had acted in the most natural manner in the world; he had promptly grasped the window-sill above him.

It had saved the fall for the time being, but what was to happen now, Arthur Augustus did not know.

"Gweat Scott! Pway help me down, deah boys!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You shrieking ass, Gussy!"

"Bai Jove! I weally fail to see any weason foah wibald laughtah, Figgay!" gasped Arthur Augustus, drawing his feet up under him every time Towser made a fresh spring.

"Hewwies, call your w'etched bulldog off instantly!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hewwies, if you don't call your w'etched bulldog off instantly, I shall administah a feahful thwashin'! Bai Jove, I believe I'm slippin'!"

"My hat!" shrieked Tom Merry. "Call old Towser off, Herries! He'll have one of Gussy's toes in a minute. My aunt, he wasn't far off that time."

"Hewwies, I wequest you as a fwiend—"

"Towser, come here! Good dog!"

The "good dog" took no notice. He seemed to have only one ambition in life at the moment, and that ambition was to reach Arthur Augustus's vivid green socks.

Arthur Augustus had one ambition, too, to prevent him doing so, and the way he kept pulling his feet up under him as Towser leapt in the air, was too much for Jack Blake.

The chief of Study No. 6 sat down on the step of the gymnasium and rolled about.

"My hat!"

"What do you kids think you are doing? Ha, ha, ha!"

Manners and Lowther dashed up at a fine pace. With the quickness of a born photographer, Manners saw a great chance. As usual, the most enthusiastic cameraist of St. Jim's had a small, folding, film camera in his pocket.

"Keep still, Gussy! I'll have your giddy photograph if it snows Towser—"

"Wetiah instantly, Mannahs. I uttably wefuse to have my photogwaph taken. Tom Mewwy, I wequest you as a fwiend, to w'ench his wotten camewah fwom him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Do keep still, Gussy; the light isn't good enough for a very short exposure! Ha, ha, ha!"

"I uttably wefuse to keep still!"

"Go on; draw your feet up now."

"I uttably wefuse to dwaw my feet up!"

Grr-rr!

Towser growled ominously. In spite of his remark to the contrary, Arthur Augustus did draw his feet up, and he was only just in time.

There was a sharp click from Manners's camera-shutter, and a delighted chuckle from Manners himself.

"Thanks awfully, Gussy!"

"You weckless wottah—"

"I'll print you off a couple of postcards so that you can send one to Cousin Ethel, old man."

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THURSDAY:

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By
MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"You wavin' duffah—"

"And perhaps you would like an enlargement for the study, kid."

"You waggin' outsiders! Hewwies, I ordah you to call Towsah off instantly!"

"Towser, come here, old boy! Good dog!"

"Ordah him off, Hewwies!"

"He won't come, kid. Good dog! Gussy, he won't budge a giddy inch!"

"Then he must be capchahed!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "I wegwet to say it will be imposs. for me to wemain in this extremely wotten posish. much longah. Blake, 'deah boy, I ordah you to capchah Towsah instantly!"

Jack Blake looked at the excited Towser and grinned.

"Sorry, kid; can't be did!"

"As a fwiend—"

"Not as a brother even, Gussy; I don't like the expression in Towser's eyes."

"Bai Jove, if you wefuse—"

"I do, my son."

"Then I can no longah wegard you in the light of a fwiend. Tom Mewwy, I ordah you to capchah Towsah. Mannahs, then— Gweat Scott! I am afwaid the window-sill is already slippin' fwom my gwasp!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Herries was choking with laughter, but he was doing his best to get Towser away from the gymnasium wall. His best, however, was without the slightest effect.

"My hat! I can't manage it, Gussy!" he gasped. "I'd drop if I were you."

"I uttably wefuse to dwop!"

"But if your hands are slipping you'll have to drop, kid."

"Undah the cires., Lowthah, I shall uttably wefuse to allow my hands to slip until Towsah has wetiahed—"

"But it will be all right if you don't look at him," exclaimed Herries. "Towser always is quiet enough if you don't look at him."

"You uttah duffah! And there is anothah weason why I cannot dwop. One of my wotten shoes has fallen."

"My hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Up to that moment none of the six had noticed that one of Arthur Augustus's elegant patent slippers had fallen from his foot, and that the other was merely hanging on to the tips of his toes. To drop down on the uneven stone pathway, shod in this manner, was not to be thought of.

Tom Merry stopped laughing.

"My hat! We musn't let the kid come down like that, chaps."

"Rather not."

"If he drops and we catch him it will be all right."

"Yes, that's it."

"What about Towser, though?"

"Oh, Towser's all right," said Herries, "so long as you don't look at him! Good dog! Good old doggie!"

The "good old doggie" showed his teeth, growled loudly, and took another wild spring at Arthur Augustus's unshod foot.

Jack Blake glanced up at the window-sill. Arthur Augustus's hands certainly did look like slipping.

He stepped to the wall without hesitation.

"Come on, chaps!"

Grr-rrr!

Towser growled louder than ever. Jack Blake stooped down, and coolly patted him on the head.

"What's the matter with you, old chap?" said the junior from the broad acres. "Want to bite someone? Spread round a bit, chaps, in case Towser's excitement overcomes him when he gets Gussy's socks at close quarters."

"Yaas, wathah! Pway close wound vevy carefully, as Towsah has no wespsect foah a fellow's twousahs, deah boys."

"That's all right."

"Leave it to us."

"Yaas, wathah."

"Let her rip."

"Down you come, Gussy."

"Is Towsah neah, deah boys?"

"Towser's all right."

"Yaas, wathah; but I shall have to wefuse to dwop until I am certain the w'etched bwute is not neah. I uttably wefuse to endangah my twousahs, as they are extremely well cut."

"They'll be better cut when Towser gets some teeth into the legs, kid."

"Weally, Lowthah, pway don't be frivolous on a serious mattah. Tom Mewwy, I ask you, as a fwiend, is Towsah neah?"

"Not vevy."

"Bai Jove, yes; but I wefuse to have him neah at all,



"I must wequest you to put your hands up, Digbay!" said Arthur Augustus. Digby obeyed literally. He put his hands above his head and kept them there.

deah boy!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus breathlessly. "Pway dwive the weckless beast away, as my hands are slippin'."

"That's all right."

"Hurry up, Gussy!"

"We aren't going to stay here all day, ass. Hurry up!"

"I wefuse to huwwy up, Figgay. I wefuse to considah the ideah of allowin' myself to dwop until Towsah has been dwiven away—I uttahn wefuse! Dwive the wottah away! I— Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus's hands had slipped from the window-sill, and he was coming down.

Tom Merry gasped. He had not expected the fall quite at that moment, and one of Arthur Augustus's feet caught him on the top of his head.

"Ass!"

"Raving lunatic, take your knee out of my ear!"

"Of all the young burlbers— My aunt!"

Taken by surprise as they were, the juniors managed to break Arthur Augustus's fall somehow, although they could not prevent him reaching the ground. To his horror, Arthur Augustus sank through the middle of them, and sat down on the path with a thump.

Instantly Towser dived between Manners's legs.

"Look out!"

"He's coming, Gussy!"

"Don't look at him, kid. It will be all right if you don't look at him."

But Arthur Augustus refused to take Herries's friendly advice. He did look at Towser, and there was a good deal of horror in the look.

"Take the bwute away. Dwive it off. Pway allow me to wise to my feet, you uttah duffahs! Bai Jove!"

Towser was through the crowd now. He put his front paws on Arthur Augustus's knees heavily; then, to the amazement of the swell of St. Jim's, gently licked his hand.

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus's surprise was complete. Herries's face shone with pleasure.

"Good old Towser!" he exclaimed enthusiastically.

"That's Towser all the world over."

"Bai Jove!"

"Of course, he never meant to take a piece out of Gussy," went on Towser's delighted master. "It was merely the old dog's ripping nature. He thought Gussy was in pain, or danger, or something, and Towser can't stand seeing people in pain."

"Gweat Scott! What about the time when he wushed at Digbay and bit his nose, Hewwies, deah boy?"

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THURSDAY:

"D'ARCY'S PARTY."

By
MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"Oh, that was because Dig was ass enough to look at him. I tell you, chaps, Towser is a ripping natured dog. His idea was to get a grip on Gussy's giddy feet, and pull him down out of danger."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Yes, it was; and it only goes to show what a kind-hearted old chap he is."

"Yaas, wathah!" remarked Arthur Augustus doubtfully; "only it was a wotten ideah to want to pull me down—wotten in the extweme, I might even say! Howevah, he seems friently enough now, and I wathah think I shall treat him to a new collah."

Arthur Augustus scrambled to his feet.

The other juniors laughed heartily; then Tom Merry turned to the swell of St. Jim's.

"Let's get on with the washing, ass!" he exclaimed, still rubbing the back of his head. "What are the fags up to, Gussy?"

"Yes; what's happening inside the gym, kid?"

Arthur Augustus screwed his monocle carefully into his eye and reflected.

CHAPTER 6.

The Third Form Charge:

"MY hat! Get on with it, Gussy!"

"Don't go to sleep, kid!"

"Weally, Mannahs, I wathah think I am not in the habit of goin' to sleep in the daytime."

"Don't break the habit, then."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Get on with the washing, ass!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"What did you see through the window?"

"Yaas, wathah. Pway don't let us waste time. Quite a large cwoed of Third-Formers are in the gym., deah boys, and not one of them has a clean collar on, bai Jove!"

"Ass!"

"Get on with it. What were they doing?"

"Yaas, wathah; but pway don't intewwupt me, Mannahs, deah boy. You put me in a fluttah."

"We'll put you in the rain-butt if you don't buck up, kid."

"Weally, Lowthah, don't be so wedic. I should wefuse to be put in the wain-butt, as bein' lowahin' to a fellow's dig."

"Cackling ass!" cried Tom Merry. "What happened in the gym.?"

"Yaas, wathah; only I must wequest you not to wave at me, and I must uttaly wefuse to be chawactahwised as a cacklin'—chawactahwised in that wough-and-weady mannah."

"Bump him!"

"Bump the young ass if he won't explain!"

"Weally, Figgay, your widiculous wemark surpwise me. I twust you know me well enough to know that I should wefuse to be bumped."

"Oh, the hopeless young ass!"

"Weally, Blake—Howevah, as I considah we have a pwessin' mattah in hand, I am weady to ovahlook your wudeness. As I was sayin', there was quite a cwoed in the gym., deah boys."

"You've said that before, duffer!"

"Weally, Mannahs, if you keep intewwuptin' me, I shall nevah be able to explain. As I wemarked, there was quite a cwoed in the gym—"

The other juniors groaned. Arthur Augustus went on quite coolly:

"And it appeahs to me that they were all talkin' at once, bai Jove!"

"Ass, we knew that!"

"What were they doing, that's what we want to know."

"Yaas, wathah! Well, deah boys, my weckless young minah was standin' on a chair, wavin' his hand in wathah an excited mannah."

"Fat lot of news that is, and no mistake."

"Yaas, wathah. I saw him distinctly, Hewwies, deah boy. Curlay Gibson was standin' on anothah chair."

"Was he waving his hand, too?" asked Tom Merry sarcastically.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Good! Then I didn't get this bump on my napper for nothing," added the Shell junior, with still greater sarcasm.

"No, wathah not. "I should say they were all vewy excited, deah boys."

"But what were they doing, ass?"

"Weally, Blake, I have already told you once. If you failed to heah me, howevah, I am weady to wepeat the story. My weckless young minah was standin' on a chair—"

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NEXT
THURSDAY:

"D'ARCY'S PARTY."

By
MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"Utter ass!"

"Were they rehearsing a play, as you thought—"

"Weally—"

"Or holding a meeting about the cricket—"

"Weally—"

"Or goating about?" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Weally, deah boy, I wegwet to say I cannot explain. My weckless young minah was standing on a chair—"

"Waving his hand. Yes; we're beginning to grasp that now, ass! What was he waving his hand for?"

"Bai Jove, how should I know, deah boy?"

"My aunt! And we went through all that for nothing, kids!" growled Tom Merry. "Gussy, you ought to be boiled in oil!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Not to say tarred and feathered!"

"Gweat Scott!"

"And if there's any of you left, you ought to be handed over to Towser, to amuse him when there are no rats about!" finished Tom Merry, in exasperation. "Kids, we jolly nearly broke our necks for nothing. That utter ass Gussy didn't see anything at all!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, I have already explained that I saw my weckless minah standin' on a chair, wavin'—"

"Oh, slay him, someone!"

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"Look here, Gussy, if you are not out for a thick ear, ring off. Hallo!"

Figgins stopped speaking, and stared at the gymnasium door.

It was opening in a slow, stealthy manner. Now they came to listen, the low murmur of voices had completely died away.

The half-dozen juniors waited expectantly.

Perhaps they would find out something now.

"Pway don't let the young wascals think we are twoublin' about them," whispered Arthur Augustus. "I pwopose we start talkin' about cwicket or somethin', deah boys."

"Yes; that's the wheeze."

"Mustn't let the fags get more swelled heads than they have already. My hat! There are dozens of them!"

"Yaas, wathah; quite a cwoed, as I wemarked. Bai Jove!"

The Third-Formers were pouring out of the gymnasium in a solid stream. They were not looking at the older juniors at all; but if Tom Merry & Co. had been less concerned with the expressions on their faces, they would have noticed that there was nothing approaching disorder in the way they came out.

As a matter of fact, they were forming a very well-packed and solid-looking square.

Jack Blake noticed this after a time.

"My hat! I believe they have only been drilling."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Getting up their scouting, perhaps."

Tom Merry nodded; then a sudden change came over his face.

The solid square of Third-Formers were marching directly towards the six.

"Hallo, Wally!"

"Yaas, wathah! Pway, Wally, what have you young wascals been up to?"

D'Arcy minor turned to Jameson.

"There. What did I tell you?" he asked, in a very loud voice.

"My only Aunt Jane! They have been listening, then?"

"What can you expect from old fogies?" added Gibson.

"They've been listening at that window."

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"Weally, Gibson, if you will all wait a moment, I will explain."

"Listening is a jolly rotten thing to do, Curly!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Rather, Wally. You wouldn't catch a Third-Former listening."

"Gweat Scott, deah boy—"

"And the old fogies will have to be taught that it's not the thing, kid!"

"Rather!" exclaimed Wally, with a sudden grin. "Charge!"

And, to the blank astonishment of the older juniors, the Third-Formers suddenly rushed at them.

There were six in number of Shell and Fourth Form juniors and quite sixty of fags. Tom Merry & Co., of course, hadn't a chance.

Arthur Augustus was amazed.

"Weally! Gweat Scott, they are wushin' us, deah boys!"

"Into them!"

"Give 'em socks, Third!"

"Altogether, my sons!"

And right into the six the Third-Formers dashed.

Arthur Augustus was bowled over at the first rush. Tower turned and fled, and Figgins sat down. For the second time in a few minutes Jack Blake had been flung into his chest.

Tom Merry was the last to go down, but it was only a matter of seconds. He and Herries were rushed together, and clung round each other's necks.

The next moment Jameson, Dudley, and D'Arcy minor brought up against them with a thump. Tom Merry and Herries went down on top of Manners, who was trying to rise.

In less than five seconds there was not one of the six to be seen. All were lying on the ground, with the fags stepping over their prostrate bodies.

D'Arcy minor yelled with laughter.

"Good egg!"

"See what comes of listening, Gus?"

"Gweat Scott! My only toppah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Is that how you old fogies like it done?" shrieked Wally. "My aunt! Just look at them!"

And, chuckling in great glee, the fags dashed off, leaving their rivals sitting up staring after them.

CHAPTER 7.

Tom Merry & Co.'s Day Off.

"GWEAT Scott!"

Arthur Augustus uttered the exclamation in amazement. For a moment he could not realise that Third-Formers had bowled him over, and that Third-Formers, led by his minor, were responsible for the fact that his collar was round Jack Blake's knee.

Tom Merry jumped to his feet.

"Of all the howling cheek!"

"Bai Jove, it's too gweat for words, deah boys!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "We have no othah weseource but to administah the most feafuhl thwashin's all wound!"

"Fat lot of chance we have of doing that, ass!"

"Yaas, wathah; it is a mattah of dig. with us!"

"Dig. be blowed! There the young sweeps go!"

And Figgins stood looking after the fags as they disappeared amongst the huge quantity of bricks and building material which was to be used for the alterations to Mr. Selby's class-room. The leader of the New House juniors could even hear their laughter.

"My hat! What's to be done, chaps?"

"Administah feafuhl thwashin's all wound, deah boy!"

"Yes; it wouldn't take us more than a couple of months if we trained hard, would it?"

"Weally Lowthah—"

"Ring off, Gussy!" exclaimed Tom Merry grimly. "My aunt, if we don't jape the young sweeps for this!"

"Rather!"

"And it's all Gussy's blessed fault!"

"Bai Jove, Tom Mewwy—"

"So it is!" grumbled the Shell junior. "It's all through your silly ass idea that the fags were up to some wheeze. They were drilling, that's all, and jolly well drilled us to show how fit they were. I feel as if I'd been through a mangle."

"Not to mention under a steam-roller!" sighed Lowther.

"Yaas, wathah! I wegwet to say I feel wathah wumpled myself, deah boys!"

"You look it, kid! Whose is this collar round my knee?"

"Bai Jove! I wathah think it's mine, Blake, deah boy!"

"Take it, then! Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus held up his damaged collar, and viewed it through his monocle. It certainly had been in the wars. Lowther chuckled.

"But it'll be all right when it's pressed, Gussy. I'd put it under the mattress, like you do your giddy bags!"

"Weally, Lowthah, I am not in the habit of putting my twousahs undah the wotten mattwess, as I have too much wesepect for them. I have a pwopah twousah-pwess, deah boy!"

"Shove the collar in that, then, kid! Gussy is going to put his collar in the trouser-press, kids!"

"Weally Lowthah—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove, Figgay, I fail to see any cause for wibald laughtah just because Lowthah has made a wotten wemark! Gweat Scott! I am still in a fluttah!"

"And serve you jolly well right for being such an ass!"

"Weally—"

"What did you want to suggest our going on Wally's trail—"

"Weally—"

"Of all the utter young asses!" exclaimed Manners. "However, I don't suppose he can help it! Hallo!"

"What's up now?"

"My hat!"

The juniors stopped talking, and gazed thoughtfully at the rails they could see from the gymnasium. Peering between the iron uprights was the well-known face of a great rival from the village.

"Bai Jove, there's Gwimes, deah boys!"

"And Pilcher!"

"And old Craggs!"

"Yaas, wathah; all the cwowd, bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, even forgetting his dishevelled state in the new excitement. "I wondah what they want heah, deah boys?"

Tom Merry buttoned his coat.

"Come on, chaps!" he said grimly. "This wants looking into!"

"Yaas, wathah! You had bettah leave the talking to me, deah boys. With a few well-chosen words, I wathah fancy—"

"You'd give the giddy game away better than anyone—exactly!" grinned Lowther. "Hallo, Grimes! Nice day, isn't it? Think there'll be any snow?"

Grimes chuckled.

The three still stood by the railings, peering through. The St. Jim's juniors stood staring back.

There was silence for a moment or two.

Presently Lowther, the humorist of the Shell, broke the pause.

"Like monkeys at the Zoo, aren't they, chaps?" he said loudly. "You'll see, they'll start rattling their bars for grub in a minute!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove, I wegard that wathah funnay, deah boy!"

Lowther's remark only had the effect of making Grimes & Co. grin more broadly. They did not show the least sign of resentment nor did they look like retiring.

Lowther stepped up to the rails, and thrust an apple through.

"Don't fight over it!" he said pleasantly. "Funny they haven't got chains round their necks, isn't it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grimes & Co. took no notice. They were staring calmly at the St. Jim's juniors, as though they were not only deaf and dumb, but incapable of motion.

"Bai Jove, deah boys, if you mean this foah humah—"

"Ring off, Gussy!"

"I uttably wefuse to wing off!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus firmly. "Gwimes, deah boy, as a wule, I keep my tempah undah contwol, but when it is woused—"

"Oh, do gag it, someone!" exclaimed Jack Blake.

"Funny ass, Grimes!"

"Yes; he always was!"

Figgins nodded.

"How would it be if we started washing these rails with the hose, kids?"

"Bai Jove! Yaas, wathah! Bothah!"

A loud-voiced gong had commenced to sound. The St. Jim's juniors glanced at one another in exasperation.

Grimes & Co. said nothing, but they chuckled rather loudly.

There was nothing for it. Tom Merry & Co. had to turn on their heels and walk away. Grimes & Co. chuckled louder than ever.

Tom Merry gritted his teeth.

"My hat! This has been an off day, Figgay, and no mistake!"

"My hat—yes! Grimes has a wheeze on up against us, kid!"

Tom Merry nodded thoughtfully, then Jack Blake uttered an exclamation:

"My only Aunt Jane, there's Frank Monk!"

Tom Merry and Figgins wheeled round. Sure enough

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there was their great rival from the Grammar School looking in at the gates.

Once again Tom Merry, Jack Blake, and Figgins exchanged glances. There could be no doubt about it, there was a plot on foot against St. Jim's.

"A double-barrelled plot, by the look of things," muttered Figgins.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Chaps, we shall have to keep our eyes open, and no mistake!"

"That's a fact, only there isn't time to do anything now."

"No; wathah not! We shall hardly have time to wush upstairs and change our collahs! Bai Jove, we shall have to wun like anythin'!"

And he pelted off at his best.

There was not one of that little group of juniors who did not need at least a wash, so they followed him.

The last they heard of the enemy were loud chuckles from Grimes, and still louder from Frank Monk and his chums from the Grammar School.

Tom Merry & Co. gritted their teeth.

CHAPTER 8.

Japed!

"MY hat!"

Jack Blake awoke the following morning with a start. He still felt fearfully sleepy. It needed a great deal of strength of purpose to tumble out of bed, despite the fact that the sun was shining brilliantly from a perfectly cloudless sky.

"My hat! I could sleep on for another week!" he yawned wearily. "Gussy! Gussy, the giddy bell has gone!"

"Wats!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Don't be a duffer, kid!"

"More wats, deah boy; and pway wetiah from my bed-side! I wefuse to be wagged!"

"You'll be ragged, right enough, if you don't get up, ass!"

"Wot!"

And Arthur Augustus dozed on. Jack Blake grinned.

"Got a wet sponge handy, Dig?"

"Right-ho!"

"Plenty of water in it?"

"Rather!"

Arthur Augustus opened his eyes then for the first time. He saw Digby approaching his bed with a large bath-sponge, which was leaving a trail of water along the floor, so he sat up.

"You howwid wuffian, Digbay! I weally believe you were goin' to spwinkle me with wathah!"

"Good guess, Gussy!"

"Bai Jove, what a wotten ideah!"

"Get up, then, ass!"

"I wefuse to get up! I wefuse to admit that the bell has been wung, and if it has been wung, I wefuse to admit that Taggles has wung it at the wight hough! It is imposs. Ow! You wottah, Dig! Bai Jove!"

Digby had splashed a little cold water towards Arthur Augustus, and it was trickling down his chest. He was out of bed in a flash.

A moment was lost while he found his monocle and screwed it well into his eye, then he turned up the cuffs of his pyjamas jacket.

"I must wequest you to put your hands up, Digbay! Pway put them up without furthah delay!"

Digby obeyed literally. He put his hands above his head, and kept them there.

"That do, Gussy? If you want them any higher, I shall have to get on a giddy chair!"

"Bai Jove, you uttah ass, deah boy!" exclaimed the swell of St. Jim's in astonishment. "Pway what are you doin'?"

"Putting my hands up, kid!"

"Yaas, wathah! Howevah, I did not mean in that mannah. In othah words, Digbay, I must wequest you to defend yourself!"

Digby promptly picked up a chair, and held it aggressively above his head.

"Right-ho, Gussy!"

"Gweat Scott!"

The swell of St. Jim's stared at the grinning Fourth-Former for a moment or two, then turned down his cuffs.

"I wegard you as a wottah!" he exclaimed, moving towards his bed again. "Pway wetiah instantly, as I am returnin' to my bed in ordah to west a little longah. I am vovay fatigued aftah the ewicket yesterday, deah boys!"

"Ass!"

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"You can't go and snooze now, duffer; the bell has been rung!"

"I wefuse to admit that the bell has been wung!"

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NEXT
THURSDAY:

"D'ARCY'S PARTY."

By
MARTIN OLIFFORD.

"But I jolly well heard it!"

"I wefuse to admit that you heard it! Of course, I wecognise, deah boy, that you fancay you heard it, but you must have been dweamin'! It is quite imposs. that the bell can have been wung! Weally, Digbay, I must wequest you to move fwom my bed!"

Digby grinned and sat down on the bed.

"Jump into your togs, ass!"

"I wefuse to jump into my togs! I am not in the week-less habit of jumpin' into my togs!"

"Jump into a home, then!" sang out Jack Blake, who was opening the window to let in as much sun as possible. "Don't let the young ass get back to his sleeping compartment, kids! My hat!"

The last words of Jack Blake's remarks came in a gasp of astonishment. The other juniors turned to look at him.

"What's up, Blakey?"

"What's the wheeze?"

"My only aunt!"

Jack Blake was obviously amazed. The other three hurried across the large dormitory, followed by all the Fourth-Formers.

For a moment none could see what was surprising the chief of Study No. 6.

"What's the mattah, deah boy?"

"Look, ass!"

"Yaas, wathah! It's a wippin' day—"

"Shrieking lunatic! Look!"

"Bai Jove! Are you wefewwin' to the sun shinin' on the wivah? Gweat Scott! It is wathah wippin'! I will wite a short poem for the next numbah of the 'Weally,' bai Jove! 'The Sunlit Wivah' wouldn't be a bad title, would it, deah boy?"

"Utter ass! Look!"

"Bai Jove! Are you speakin' of the gween leaves of the old oak twee— My only toppah!"

Arthur Augustus started violently. Herries and Digby started at exactly the same moment.

A great change had taken place in the quadrangle.

The large square was smothered with oblong, solid-looking objects. There wasn't a yard of the whole quad. which was free from one of the objects.

"Gweat Scott! They are bwicks, deah boys!"

"So they are—"

"My hat!"

There was no doubt about it—the quadrangle was covered with bricks. Jack Blake rushed to the chair upon which his clothes were piled and commenced dressing at express speed.

"We must look into this, kids!"

"Yaas, wathah—"

"It's a rag against us, of course, or this quad. wouldn't have been chosen. Ten to one it's Monkey & Co. from the Grammar School."

"Or Grimes and the other village kids."

"Bai Jove, I nevah thought of that—"

Jack Blake rammed his collar on, fastened his necktie in a manner which made Arthur Augustus groan, and rushed from the dormitory. Digby and Herries were not far behind, while Arthur Augustus was torn between a desire to be one of the first upon the scene and his natural respect for careful dressing.

Down the stairs Jack Blake dashed, bringing up unexpectedly against Taggles, the porter, with a bump.

Taggles was staggered, and before he could recover himself Digby thumped into him.

Taggles clung to the balusters and gasped.

"Sorry, Tags—"

"My hat! Hard luck, Taggles—"

And the three dashed on.

Once in the quadrangle, they stopped and stared at the spectacle which met their gaze in blank astonishment.

Seen from above the old quad. had looked curious enough, but from their present position it was astounding. There were hundreds of bricks lying about—the place was smothered with them.

"My only Aunt Jane! They've all been placed down in order—not just thrown down."

"Yes, that's it."

"It's a giddy rag all right."

Jack Blake nodded, glancing round.

"My hat! Where can all the bricks have come from, kids?"

"Blessed if I know—"

ANSWERS

"Phew!"

Jack Blake whistled loudly. Then he pelted off as hard as he could, and the others followed. They did not know where Jack was making for, but they meant to keep up with him.

The chief of Study No. 6 led the way through the bricks, dashed round the corner, and along the second path. Then he stopped, and rammed his hands in his pockets.

"Thought as much, chaps!"

"My aunt!"

And the three stood gazing towards Mr. Selby's class-room.

The huge collection of building materials were still there before the window, ready for the alterations which were to begin that day, but there was one big difference. There was not a single brick to be seen.

Yesterday there had been a great pile of bricks, to-day there was not one. Jack Blake turned hastily.

"My hat! What a jape, Dig!"

"I should say so! Here's Tom Merry——"

"And old Figgys," added Herries. "My aunt, we shall look nice asses over this! The jape is up against us all right, or they'd never have taken the trouble to carry the bricks all the way to the quad."

Jack Blake nodded.

It had just occurred to him that Figgins might be the culprit, but a single glance at the long-limbed junior from the New House showed him his mistake.

Figgys came up quite anxiously.

"Blake, is this one of your rags, kid?"

"Not much, ass!"

"I told you it wasn't, Tom Merry," added Figgins. "Chaps, there's only one explanation to this."

"Rather!"

"Old Monkey is on the warpath."

"Yes, or Grimes."

"My aunt! Yes, it may be either of them," agreed Tom Merry. "It couldn't be both, because they're as big rivals as any of us. The thing is, which of them did it?"

"Goodness knows!"

Jack Blake gritted his teeth.

"We'll soon find that out, kids!" he said grimly. "Trust us. I——"

Jack Blake stopped speaking. Figgins, who had been to make a remark, also changed his mind. They stood looking across the grounds at the portly figure of a man in a gown striding at a quick pace towards them.

"My—my hat, it's Selby!"

Tom Merry was right.

It was the Third Form-master who was coming towards them, the danger-signal of a pink flush on his face.

From the opposite direction Arthur Augustus was also hurrying up.

CHAPTER 9.

Mr. Selby's Anger.

"WHO—who has dared to do this, boys?"

Mr. Selby's voice trembled. Most of the juniors had seen the Third Form master with the pink flush on his face before that morning, but they had never seen him quite so angry since the day D'Arcy minor emptied a paulil of tar over his head.

On that occasion Mr. Selby had been inarticulate, but even now his voice was not quite clear.

"Who has—has dared to do this, boys?"

No one answered. No one had anything to say. The pause was embarrassing in the extreme.

"D'Arcy, is this one of your tricks?" thundered the master. "Is it? Answer me!"

Arthur Augustus gasped. At any less awkward moment Tom Merry & Co. would have chuckled hugely at the idea of the dignified swell of St. Jim's being guilty of carrying bricks from one place to another.

Arthur Augustus recovered from his amazement with an effort.

"Gweat Scott, no, sir——"

"Answer me properly, boy!"

"Yaas, wathah, sir! Bai Jove, I wathah fancay I am not in the habit of playin' twicks——"

"Then why have you turned so red?"

Arthur Augustus did not know, and the question made him turn redder. Mr. Selby looked at him suspiciously.

"Your manner is very strange, D'Arcy. I almost think you had better come with me to the doctor."

"Bai Jove! Gweat Scott!"

"Don't make use of those ridiculous expressions, boy."

"All wight, sir! Bai Jove——"

Tom Merry stepped forward at that moment, just before Jack Blake and Figgins had time to do so. All three knew that Arthur Augustus's dignity never descended to a pose;

it was part of himself, and it was easy enough to see that he was greatly embarrassed.

"Please, sir, D'Arcy doesn't know anything about it."

"Silence, Merry! I was not speaking to you!"

"No, sir," answered Tom Merry, going rather pink. "I thought you were trying to find out the truth of the matter, sir."

It was a distinct snub in a way, but Tom Merry only half meant it. In any case, it passed unnoticed, for Mr. Selby was too angry to listen.

"This matter will be reported to Dr. Holmes at once," he exclaimed. "You boys will probably be sent for."

And he stalked away in great anger.

Tom Merry shrugged his shoulders, and turned to Jack Blake.

"Reasonable sort of bird, isn't he, Blakey?"

"My hat! Did you ever hear anything like it?"

"Bai Jove——"

"Hang it all!" growled Figgins in disgust. "You can't wonder at the Third-Formers getting ratty sometimes, can you? He had absolutely nothing to go upon, and promptly accuses Gussy."

"Rotten, I call it!"

"Not far off, anyway," said Digby. "You got a slap in, Tom Merry, and no mistake!"

Tom Merry grinned.

"Well, he shouldn't accuse fellows without proof. It's all right, Gussy. The doctor will laugh at the idea when Selby suggests it was you."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus, in a gaspy sort of voice. "Thanks awfully foah backin' me up, deah boy! Bai Jove! I feel all in a fluttah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Better luck next time, Gussy. My hat! Monk & Co. must be asses! This jape is going to prove jolly awkward!"

"Rather!"

"I say," exclaimed Figgins. "It hardly looks like Monk's work, somehow."

"Weally, Figgys——"

"I mean, old Monkey is a ripping sport, even if he is a Grammar School ass, and he wouldn't have played this——"

"But——"

"More likely to be Grimes & Co. That's what I'm driving at, kids."

"Yaas, wathah! But I considah Gwimes is a wippin' sport, too, deah boy——"

"Of course! Only he wouldn't know as much about school rules."

Tom Merry banged Figgins on the back lustily.

"Good for you, kid!"

"Ass—duffer——"

"Don't mention it. It's a ripping idea, Figgys! I think it's more likely to be Grimes himself. He'd do a thing like this without it ever entering his head that it might get us into a row. Grimes did it, kids."

"Not much——"

"Monk, more likely. Too good a jape for a villager."

"Not a bit of it——"

"Don't be an ass, young Merry!"

"Don't you be a duffer, young Blake——"

"Look here——"

"Look here——"

The argument was becoming heated, the factions being about equally divided.

Study No. 6 chums maintained it was Frank Monk's work, while the Terrible Three and Figgins were of the opinion that Grimes was the culprit. Voices were beginning to be raised.

"Monk, I tell you——"

"Don't be an uttah ass, deah boy——"

"Grimes——"

"Monk——"

The argument was brought to an end by the vigorous ringing of the school bell. Tom Merry laughed.

"Anyway, kids, it wasn't the one and only."

"No, wathah not. The ideah of my cawwyin' bwicks fwom one wotten place to anothah wotten place is wotten in the extweme."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jack Blake looked up at the school clock.

"Hallo, what's this, chaps?"

"My hat, the bell is being rung ten minutes early!"

"Bai Jove, so it is, deah boys!"

The juniors looked at one another.

There could only be one explanation, that the doctor was summoning the fellows into Hall to discover the culprit of the trick.

Mr. Selby had not wasted much time.

"Trust him!" said Tom Merry shortly. "I suppose we'd better get in."

"Yaas, wathah! I twust the doctah has not been influenced by Mr. Selbay, bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Not much chance of that, Gussy. Besides, we'll back you up like anything."

"Bai Jove, I wergard that as wippen' of you, deah boys. Pway—pway let's get on with the washin'."

They hurried into the college, to find crowds of fellows making their way to Hall in surprise.

Lowther and Manners looked anxious.

"Grimes' work, I suppose, Blakey?"

"Frank Monk's, you mean."

"No he doesn't."

"Ass!"

"Idiot!"

"Silence, please!" exclaimed Dr. Holmes' quiet voice from behind. "Make your way to Hall quietly, Merry."

"Yes, sir," answered the juniors respectfully, and they did not speak again.

Dr. Holmes was one of those men who compelled respect without trying to.

None of the juniors ever knew why they obeyed the Head of St. Jim's to the letter, but they all did. It was one of the things they would not understand until the gates of the old college closed behind them for the last time.

In Hall a buzz of voices was going round, but it stopped as soon as the masters came in. Dr. Holmes put up his hand.

"You all know why you are here," he said quietly. "I require an explanation, please."

There was no answer.

Everyone was looking at everyone else, but nothing was to be read in any of their faces.

Mr. Selby still looked angry.

If he could have had his way this inquiry would have been conducted on very different lines.

"Boys, I require an explanation of the very childish trick that was played some time last night, partially because of the nature of the trick, and partially because it could not have been perpetrated unless bounds were broken."

That was Dr. Holmes all over again.

It never occurred to him to induce the juniors to own up to the trick, then punish them for breaking bounds. Every-

bricks, the New House juniors being just as interested as the School House chums. It seemed very unlikely any of the rival House should be contemplating a raid.

Jack Blake buttoned his coat grimly.

"Anyway, I'm going to find out who is in that room," he said tensely. "The dormy bell will be going in a minute or two, and—"

"Bai Jove!"

The well-known exclamation came to them in muffled tones. It came through the closed door of Study No. 6.

"My only hat, it's Gussy!"

"The one and only in our giddy room, kids."

"Of all the blessed cheek."

And Herries rattled furiously at the door.

"Gussy, if you don't open this door, we'll slay you."

"Is that you, Hewwies, deah boy?"

"Yes, it jolly well is, and—"

"Then pway wetiah, as it is necessawy that I should wemain undisturbed."

"Shriekin' ass!"

"Weally, Digbay, deah boy, your mannah of addressin' me is widic., not to say, wude in the extweme."

"Open—the—door—ass!"

"On the contwawy, deah boy. I am now about to wun the table acwoss the woom so that there will be no chance of the deah bein' wushed."

"Of all the howling cheek."

"Weally, Blake, deah boy, I can undahstand that the mattah fwom your point of view must appeah stwange, not to say, funnay; but if you wecognised the circs.—"

"What are the giddy circs., ass?"

"What do you think you're doing, anyway?"

"Photographs?"

"No, Hewwies. I am not doin' photogwaphs!"

"Shrieking ass, why have you locked the door, then?"

"Because I wish to wemain in peace," said Arthur Augustus's voice coolly. "I have a vewy disturbin' mattah to welflect upon, and even the pwesence of fwends—"

"Of all the young asses!"

"Break the door down!"

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thing had to be right above board when the doctor was moving in a matter.

Again there was no answer.

"I ask you once again, boys."

Still no answer. There was a moment's pause, then the doctor went on.

"If there is a repetition of this ridiculous trick," he said sternly, "the consequences will be serious to the culprits. You can go."

And the fellows filed out, whispering excitedly.

CHAPTER 10.

Arthur Augustus Receives a Shower Bath.

"HALLO, the door won't open, kids!"

Jack Blake uttered the exclamation in surprise. Digby took hold of the door-knob and shook it violently.

"My hat, it's locked!"

"Can't be, Dig., the key's inside."

"But—"

Digby shook the door again. If the door of Study No. 6 were not locked, it certainly was fastened in some way. The most violent onslaught upon it was without the slightest effect.

Jack Blake suddenly put up his hand.

"Ring off, kids," he whispered, placing his ear to the panel. "Perhaps Figgins or Tom Merry have turned it. My aunt!"

"What's the matter, Blakey?"

"There's someone inside, right enough."

The other two listened intently.

There certainly was some one inside, some one who was pacing about the room. Jack Blake & Co. could not make it out.

All the morning and afternoon there had been a good deal of discussion about the trick played on St. Jim's with the

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"Smash the lock!"

The Fourth-Formers spoke excitedly. It would hardly do to break the lock, of course, but the situation was a trying one.

In another ten minutes they would have to retire to the dormitory. At preparation, Jack Blake had sent hasty invitations to the Terrible Three and Figgins & Co. to hold a short meeting in Study No. 6, to decide as to the best means of retaliating on the perpetrators of the trick, whoever they might be.

The guests would be along any minute now. It was too exasperating.

"Gussy, if you don't open this door, I'll—I'll tar and feather you!"

"Weally, deah boy, don't be widic."

"You'll find whether it's ridiculous or not if you don't open this beastly door, ass."

"I am sowwy to have to wefuse, deah boy, but undah the circs.—"

"Open the door!"

"Imposs., Hewwies!"

"Gussy, don't be an ass!" exclaimed Digby. "We've got Tom Merry and Figgins coming."

"Bai Jove! I admit that is awkward. Howevah, you can easily altah the invite foah anothah day. Say, to-morrow aftahnnoon, deah boy."

"Rats!"

"Pway, don't make use of such uttably vulgah expwessions, Hewwies."

"Cheer-ho, kids!"

"Couldn't get here before, Blakey."

And, to the Fourth-Formers' dismay, the Terrible Three and Figgins & Co. came up grinning.

Jack Blake and Herries exchanged glances.

Tom Merry waited patiently.

"Don't mind us, of course, but there isn't a week of time, kid."

"Is the meeting to be held in the corridor, Blake?" asked



Figgins pleasantly. "I would have brought a chair if I had known."

Jack Blake went pink.

"The fact of the matter is——"

"Bai Jove! Is that you, Tom Mewwy, deah boy?"

"Yes, ass," said the Shell junior, looking at the closed door in surprise. "What's the rag?"

"Bai Jove! there isn't a wag at all. It is a vewy sewious mattah, and, undah the circs., I shall have to wequest you and Figgay to wetiah. Any othah day——"

"Rats!"

"What do you think you're doing, ass?"

"Weally, Figgay, I must wequest you not to address me in that wough, not to say, wotten mannah. Howevah, as I am reflectin' over a sewious biznay in quiet——"

"My only Aunt Jane!"

"Gussy's rather keen on reflecting just now, isn't he, Blake?"

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy!"

Tom Merry chuckled loudly. There were also grins on the faces of Figgins & Co., and Jack Blake changed from pink to a deep red.

"We'll see about this!" he said grimly. "Blessed if I'm going to be kept out of my own study."

"You are being kept out, kid."

"Yes, I know, but——"

"It's your own fault, Blake!" said Tom Merry severely. "How many times have I told you to get a collar and a chain for the young burler!"

"Don't goat! My hat!"

The cloud cleared from Jack Blake's face. He began to chuckle.

Tom Merry stared at him in surprise.

"Gone dotty, old chap?" he asked pleasantly.

"My aunt! Come down the passage, chaps."

They all obeyed in surprise. Jack was chuckling quite loudly now.

"What about the passage window above Study No. 6, kids?"

The stares became more pronounced.

"What's he raving about now?"

"What's the matter with the corridor window, ass?"

"Suppose some of us went down into the quad. and jolly well threw stones at our window, what would happen, chaps?"

"The window would get broken."

"Don't be an ass, Lowther. I mean, small stones, gravel, anything to disturb Gussy," went on Jack Blake quickly. "Don't you think it would be likely he'd open the window and look out?"

"Shouldn't wonder, but——"

"And suppose some more of us were at the staircase window above him—with a pail of water."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good wheeze, Blakey!" chuckled Tom Merry, banging his rival on the shoulder. "We shall have to hurry up, though."

"Rather!"

There was no time to discuss the idea in detail, so Fig-gins & Co. and the Terrible Three raced down to the quad. The others hurried to the upper corridor window, pushing it open with as little noise as possible.

"Slip along and get some water, Dig."

"Right-ho! There'll be a pail in the bath-room, I expect."

"Yes, there is!"

Digby flashed off, and Jack Blake and Herries leaned out of the window. It was nearly dark; it would have been quite dark, but for the young moon, but they could just distinguish their own study window all right.

Jack Blake became anxious.

"Hope Tom Merry doesn't get throwing the stones until we're ready."

"Trust Tom Merry. He'll wait for a signal."

Jack Blake nodded, then Digby came along the passage. The pail he had was nearly full of water.

"That ought to be enough!" he chuckled.

"My hat, yes!"

Herries leaned out of the window again, and whistled softly. An equally soft whistle came as answer, then the sound of gravel being thrown at the study window below could be heard.

The stones hit the glass with quite a loud ring.

The Fourth-Formers waited, chuckling quietly.

For quite a long time nothing happened, then the window below them was flung open. Digby got the pail ready.

"Weally, deah boys, it is uttally useless to twy and induce me to allow you to entah this woom," Arthur Augustus's unmistakable tones came. "I have already made up my mind, and I wathah fancy I am not the fellow to be easily swayed one way or the othah, bai Jove——"

"Let her rip, Dig."

Digby chuckled, then tipped the pail on its side.

"Weally, of course, I quite undahstand. O-ow!"

Arthur Augustus gave vent to a wild shriek, then a whole chorus of yells rang out. For a moment Jack Blake, Herries, and Digby stared down in astonishment, then a light dawned on the chief of Study No. 6.

"My only Aunt Jane. Ha, ha, ha!"

Digby and Herries also understood.

"That's Tom Merry's voice."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The young asses were standing under Gussy. Oh, my old hat!"

And the three rolled about on the window-sill, choking with laughter.

"Asses!"

"Idiots!"

"Raving duffers!"

Loudly the cries sounded from below, with a voice half way down chipping in.

"Bai Jove! Gweat Scott! My only toppah!"

Jack Blake & Co. went black in the face, then the sound of rapidly moving feet on the gravel below brought their situation home to them.

Jack Blake was gasping.

"This is where we fade out of the picture, kids."

"Rather!"

And the three pelted about the passage, making their way towards an unfrequented box-room.

CHAPTER 11.

Tom Merry & Co. on the Warpath.

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus gasped with horror.

He was simply drenched to the skin down to the waist, the water running from him in big streams. For a moment or two he stood by the open window, his hands held well out on each side of him, trying to realise what had happened.

"Gweat Scott! I am as wet as if I had come out of the wivah!" he gasped. "My only toppah!"

Then his feelings overcame him, and he darted towards the door.

Anxious as he had been before not to open it, he was THE GEN LIBRARY.—No. 122.

NEXT
THURSDAY:

"D'ARCY'S PARTY."

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equally anxious now to do the reverse, and wrenched the key round vigorously.

A moment later he was pelting along the corridor as hard as he could run.

Round the corner he dashed, then a yell rang out. A thump followed, accompanied by gasps of amazement.

"Of all the young asses——"

"My aunt!"

"Bai Jove!"

And Arthur Augustus brought up against the wall with a thud.

"Weally, deah boys—Kangawoo, isn't it?"

"Yes, it jolly well is!" growled Harry Noble, the Australian junior. "I—— Where's all this water come from?"

"My hat, yes, I'm soaked!" gasped Bernard Glyn.

"It's Gussy. Gussy has been having a bath with his clothes on."

"Bai Jove! Weally, Dane, don't be so widic. Howevah, I haven't time to explain now, as I am in a vewy gweat huwvy. Have any of you seen Tom Mewwy, deah boys?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Noble had turned up the gas in the passage. He chuckled loudly at the spectacle of the drenched Fourth-Former.

Arthur Augustus looked at him coldly.

"Weally, I fail to see any cause for wibald laughtah, Kangawoo!"

"Ho, ho, ho!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Looks like a drowned rat, doesn't he, kids?"

"Gweat Scott, Dane, I must wequest you not to compare me with a dwouned wat!"

"What on earth have you been doing, ass?"

"My aunt, the young duffer's as wet as a conger eel!"

"I uttally wefuse to be spoken of in the same bweath as a conghah eel, Glyn."

"What's the wheeze, then?"

"What have you been doing?"

"Nothin', deah boy!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "I was in Studay Numbah 6, weffecting on a vewy disturbin' mattah, when some uttah wottahs dwenched me with watah——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Talk about a disturbing matter——"

"Disturbing a young ass, I should call it!" chuckled the Cornstalk. "Going to change your togs, or wait for the bell to go, kid?"

"I am going to do neithah, bai Jove! Have you seen Tom Mewwy——"

"Ha, ha, ha! Has anyone here seen Merry?"

"Me—e—double r—y!" laughed Clifton Dane. "Saw him at tea, kid. Hallo!"

"Bai Jove!"

The four turned, to stare along the dimly lighted corridor. Half a dozen juniors were pelting towards them for all they were worth, their heavy breathing being distinctly audible even at that distance.

Harry Noble grinned broadly.

"Here's Merry, kid."

"Bai Jove, yaas, wathah; and all the othah young wottahs as well!"

"Rather!"

"I'd slip off if I were you, Gussy."

"Weally, Dane, what a widiculous wemark to make. I shall stand my gwound and uttally wefuse to allow the outsidahs to pass me. They have left me no othah wresource, but to administah feahful thwashin's all wound."

"My hat!"

Harry Noble uttered the exclamation in surprise.

There was the sound of water dripping on the oilcloth of the passage, and there was a distinctly curious appearance about Tom Merry's collar.

"My only Aunt Jane! They are as wet as Gussy——"

"All the lot of them."

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus stared at the approaching juniors in amazement. Could the whole thing have been an accident, after all?

"Mewwy—Mewwy, deah boy, pway stop!"

"Seen Blake—have you seen young Blake?"

"My hat! What have you been up to, asses?" exclaimed Dane. "My aunt!"

"Never mind what we have been doing; it's what we're just going to do that matters. Sure you haven't seen Blake?"

"Ha, ha, ha! Yes."

"Come on, kids!"

"Right-ho! He must still be upstairs. Get out of the way, Gussy!"

"I wefuse to get out of the way. You have left me no

othah wesource, you waggin' wottahs, but to administah feahful thwashin's all wound. Mewwy—Mewwy, stop instantly."

But Tom Merry dashed on, sweeping Arthur Augustus aside with his sturdy young frame with an ease which astounded the swell of St. Jim's.

"Gweat Scott, Lowthah, stop! I uttably wefuse to allow you to pass until I have administahed a feahful thwashin'—"

"Go hon!" chuckled Lowther; and he dodged Arthur Augustus's outstretched hand.

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus made a grab at the next junior, who was even wetter than Tom Merry had been.

"Mannahs, I must wefuse to allow you to pass. Ow!"

In attempting to follow Lowther's example in dodging the restraining hand, Manners had accidentally dug the School House Fourth-Former in the ribs. Arthur Augustus gasped for breath.

"You weckless wuffian!"

"Sorry, Gussy!"

"You wough wottah! Figgay, stop instantly! Figgay—"

But Figgins was racing on, and with him Kerr and Fatty Wynn.

On account of his stout figure, Fatty Wynn could not get away as smartly as his slimmer chums. Arthur Augustus thought he saw his chance. He gripped the Falstaff of St. Jim's by the coat.

"Too late, deah boy!"

"Let me go, ass!"

"On the contwawy, I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort, Fattay Wynn. I am about to administah a feahful thwashin'—"

"Let me go!" bellowed the New House junior. "I want Blake. I had a pork pie and a cream bun in my pocket which I was going to eat in bed, as I often wake up in the middle of the night feeling peckish this warm weather, and now they are ruined—absolutely ruined. I am going to roll on Blake."

"Gweat Scott!"

"And if you don't let me go," panted Fatty Wynn, "I'll jolly well roll on you!"

And he wrenched himself free, following the others at a much better turn of speed than would have been expected from one of his weight and size.

Cornstalk & Co. leant against the wall, and yelled with laughter. Arthur Augustus viewed the disappearing juniors through his monocle.

Harry Noble was becoming red in the face.

"Ha, ha, ha! Hard luck, Gussy! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove!"

"My hat! Better luck next time, kid!"

Arthur Augustus turned on his heel, and stared at the chuckling junior witheringly.

"Weally, Kangawoo, I fail to see any cause for wibald laughtah. Do you wish me to administah a feahful thwashin'?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus's stare became more withering still.

"I am surprised at your weally widiculous laughtah, Noble. I must admit I considah you in the light of an uttah duffah. Bai Jove, I am all in a fluttah!"

"And a shiver, too, I should think, kid!" laughed the Cornstalk. "I'd go and get a change, if I were you!"

"I wefuse to get a change. I wefuse to do anythin' until I have administahed a feahful thwashin' to Blake and the othahs. Bai Jove!"

There was a loud clang at that moment. Cornstalk & Co. grinned.

"It will have to be a jolly quick set to, then, Gussy! That's the giddy bell."

"Yaas, wathah! Howevah, I shall wait foah the weckless young wuffians in the dormay. Bai Jove!"

"What's up, Gussy?"

"Gweat Scott, it is impos. for me to wait foah the wottahs in the dormay, as I have somethin' else on. That is to say— Howevah, I shall administah feahful thwashin's all wound to-morrow."

And the swell of St. Jim's stalked off.

A few minutes later the Terrible Three and Figgins & Co. returned from the upper landing, their wrath unappeased.

Jack Blake, Digby, and Herries were not to be found.

CHAPTER 12.

Arthur Augustus's Bed.

"HA, HA, HA!"

Jack Blake chuckled loudly as he heard the excited footsteps of Tom Merry & Co. hurrying past the box-room. Herries and Digby scrambled from behind two huge chests, grinning happily.

"My hat! What a rag!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Rather! Won't Gussy be pleased!"

"Just a little!" chuckled Digby; "but not with us, kid! I wonder if Tom Merry will come back this way? Good egg!"

The dormitory-bell sounded at that moment, and, with another delighted chuckle, Jack Blake opened the door.

"It's all right now, kids. The young asses won't have time to come back and have a look in the dormy—they must be running things pretty fine as it is!"

"Yes, rather! Gussy is the only one of the crew we've to meet now!"

Herries led the way along the corridor, grinning.

"We'll talk to him in a fatherly way. Nothing like a fatherly tone of voice when dealing with Gussy."

"Yes, that's the wheeze."

They had to run to get into the dormitory in time to save an imposition, and even as it was they were amongst the last to enter the large room.

Digby jabbed Jack Blake in the ribs.

"Fatherly tones, mind! Gussy! I say, Gussy!"

"Gussy, how could you—"

"Really, Gus, old man, at your time of life— My hat!"

The three stared across the room in surprise. Arthur Augustus was not to be seen.

"Where's Gussy, chaps?"

The juniors stopped chatting about the all-important subject of cricket, and looked round the room.

"My aunt! He isn't here, Blakey!"

Jack Blake whistled with surprise.

"My hat! Hasn't he come in yet?"

"No. Hallo, yes, he has, though, because those are his togs! My aunt, Blake, they're wet through!"

"Shure, an' so they are, me bhoys!" exclaimed Reilly, the junior from Belfast. "They're as wet as whater!"

Jack Blake grinned, but not for long.

"Oh, that's all right about the water!" he said, looking puzzled again. "Gussy got a little spilt on his napper in the dark."

"Yes, about a pailful," said Herries. "My hat! You don't think Gussy can have been kicking over the traces in his old age and playing the goat in Tom Merry's dormy, Blakey?"

The chief of Study No. 6 shook his head.

"Not much. Gussy's dig is Gussy's strong point. I don't believe he's ever been late for bed unless he could help it in his young life."

"No, that's a fact. My only aunt—look!"

"Why, he is in bed, kids!"

"My hat—so he is!"

There certainly was the vague outline of a figure to be seen under the counterpane of Arthur Augustus's bed.

Jack Blake approached it, grinning.

"Playing possum, Dig," he whispered. "Trying to kid us he's asleep. Cheer-ho, Gussy!" And the leader of the School House Fourth-Formers playfully dug the form in what should have been its ribs.

It was a vigorous dig, and ought to have been enough to have awakened any one. No answer came. Jack looked closer, then gave vent to an amazed whistle.

"Phew!"

"What's up, Blakey? My only hat!"

"Don't goat— My aunt!"

And the three stood gazing in silent amazement at the bed. Reilly, Hancock, and a few other juniors hurried up.

"Shure, an' it's a bolster, me bhoys!"

"A giddy bolster, bent to make it look like a figure!"

"And in Gussy's bed!"

There could only be one explanation to that. Arthur Augustus must have placed it there himself. The fact that his drenched clothes were hanging up over the towel-rail proved that he had been in the room since the study-window affair.

"But it can't be! Gussy would never do it! I mean—"

"But Gussy has done it, Blake," exclaimed Digby—"unless you think it's more likely the young ass has been kidnapped, and a blessed dummy left in his place!"

"Faith, an' who'd trouble to kidnap Gussy, Dig?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But Jack Blake was not laughing.

With any other junior, scarcely anything would have been thought of the matter. It would all have been explained by the suggestion that there was a jape afoot. But Arthur Augustus, thorough sportsman as he was, allowed dignity to control most of his actions, and it would have to be a very powerful inducement to make him deceive the prefect into thinking he was in bed when he was not.

All three were convinced upon that point.

Jack Blake glanced from Digby to Herries in doubt.

"And if it is a big business the young ass is engaged in, he'll hash it up, of course."

"Trust Gussy!"

"And get himself in a row."

"Of course!"

All three were agreed upon that point too. Jack glanced at his watch.

"Three minutes more, and the pref. will be round."

"That's so. No time to go and hunt for the kid now."

"Rather not! Who is on duty to-night for this room, Reilly?"

"Shure, and it's Darrel, if I'm not mistaken."

"Yes, that's right."

"Thank goodness it's not old Knox!" said Jack Blake, in relief. "Knox can see through a brick wall just as well as Darrel can shut one eye when he wants to. Think the bolster will pass muster all right, Dig?"

Digby retired to the doorway and looked across the room critically.

"Be better if we had one of the lights out, kid."

The light was promptly extinguished, and the result satisfied the juniors. They waited rather anxiously for the sound of the prefect's footsteps, though, and were intensely relieved when they heard that they were hurried ones.

"It's all right, chaps," whispered Jack Blake. "He hasn't got any time to waste. Some of us had better slip into bed, and the others wander up and down in front of Gussy's kennel. Not a word."

The door was pushed open, and the second prefect of the School House put his head into the room.

"Not so much jaw there, youngsters!" he ordered.

"Hurry up and get in! Good-night!"

"Good-night, Darrel!"

The juniors answered heartily enough. There was something about the easy way in which Darrel refused to see things not meant for his eyes which appealed to the sporting instincts of the Lower School fellows.

Knox always peered about, and in consequence was much more frequently tricked than the other prefect. As a general thing, Jack Blake and his chums rather barred tricking Darrel, because he was such a sportsman.

But this time it could not be helped. Gussy must be saved from himself, as Herries put it.

Lights were put out, and Jack Blake, Herries, and Digby scrambled into bed in case the prefect might return, but they had not undressed.

Jack listened intently.

"We'll give the young ass twenty minutes, Dig."

"Right-ho!"

And they waited in silence.

The time dragged by slowly, then at last the chiming of the school clock brought the Study No. 6 chums from their beds.

"Now for it!"

"Now to get on Gussy's giddy track."

Jack Blake did not answer. There was rather an anxious expression on his face as he cautiously opened the door.

CHAPTER 13.

In the Quadrangle.

"MY hat, we shall have to be jolly careful!" whispered Jack Blake, leading the way along the corridor.

"None of the prefs. will be in bed yet."

"And Knox has got good ears."

"Where shall we go first, Blakey?"

The leader of the School House juniors thought for a moment or two.

"The study, kids. The young ass may be still there, reflecting, or whatever he was doing. Don't make such a row, Dig."

"It's Herries. He keeps bumping into me."

"Oh, I like that, Dig!"

"You won't like it if Knox comes along," growled Jack Blake. "Ring off, ass! I don't believe there's a light in our room after all."

They increased their pace now they were in the Fourth Form corridor—Jack Blake almost running the last few yards. He opened the door hastily.

"No, he isn't here, kids."

"Then where on earth can he be?"

"Goodness knows," answered Jack Blake thoughtfully, beginning to close the door. "I expect the young ass has gone into the New House. Hallo!"

A gust of chilly night air had swept across his face. He opened the door again.

"I say, which of you asses left the window open?"

"It wasn't open—oh, Gussy must have forgotten to shut it after his giddy bath!"

The juniors grinned at the memory of that affair. Jack Blake crossed the floor to close the window.

"Anyway, it's lucky we found it, kids. We're always getting into rows about open windows, and it gets the servants into trouble, too. Don't bang it down, ass!"

"But it won't shut, Blakey."

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NEXT
THURSDAY:

"D'ARCY'S PARTY."

By
MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"Ass! I——"

Jack brought all his weight to bear, but still the window refused to close the last inch or so. Herries pushed him away.

"You ought to do a little more Sandow business, kids," he grinned. "I——"

"Ought we?"

"Get the window shut, Herries. Blessed if you oughtn't to be in Signor Tomsonio's circus as a strong man!"

Herries went rather red, but in spite of his exertion, he could make no impression on the window. Nothing seemed to make it close the last inch or so.

"My hat!"

"There must be something in it, kid!"

"Great Scott!"

Jack Blake uttered the exclamation in quite an incautious tone. If there had been anyone in the passage outside the room, he must have heard.

"Ass!"

"Duffer!"

"My only hat!"

Jack Blake lowered his voice certainly this time, but the surprise was still there. The other two pressed in closer.

"What's the wheeze, Blake?"

"What's up?"

"Run your hand along there, my son! What can you feel?"

"My only Aunt Jane! It's a rope."

Jack Blake nodded.

"Yes, it's a rope all right, and it's that which prevents the window closing!" he exclaimed. "It's fastened inside—yes, to that hook we screwed into the joists under that small length of floorboard, and it's run out of the window."

"My aunt!"

"Gussy has broken bounds, then."

Jack Blake reentered the room and closed the door very quietly. Then he buttoned his coat.

"I'm going to look into this, kids," he said coolly. "Gussy is dangerous in coll., but out of it, at night, an escaped lunatic isn't in it with the one and only. He'll get into an awful row over this if we don't collar him."

"Fire ahead, kid."

"You chaps coming as well?"

"Of course, ass. Get on with the washing."

Jack Blake scrambled through the window, and commenced to slip down the rope. It was a very painful operation, because Arthur Augustus had not taken the trouble to keep the rope from the wall by any means. Long before he was half-way down, his knuckles had suffered considerably.

"My aunt, this is rotten!"

But there was no going back now. He allowed the rope to slip through his hands slowly, doing his best to keep himself away from the wall with his feet. Then he forgot about the wall.

One of his hands had slipped from the rope. He had come to the end of it, and his feet were not touching the ground.

"My hat, this is nice! Wait a minute, kids!"

"Ring off, ass," breathed a voice just above him.

"There's someone wandering about in the quad."

"Ass! Duffer! Frabjous lunatic!"

Herries's feet rubbed against Jack Blake's hands. Herries could not make it out.

"Sorry, kid."

"Raving idiot!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Why don't you go on? Get on with the washing!"

"Shrieking duffer, I've come to the end of the rope!"

"My hat!"

"Tell Dig. My aunt!"

Digby was coming down the rope now at a fine pace. He, too, had seen the figure in the quadrangle, and he did not know that Herries had also seen it.

Digby's one idea was to join his chums as quickly as possible, and warn them. It did not dawn on him for a moment that they might still be clinging to the rope.

"Look out, Dig."

"Stop, ass! O-ow!"

The warning had come too late.

Digby heard the words, but he could not stop in time. He thumped against Herries in rare style, and Herries promptly slid down on Jack Blake.

Jack groaned, then his hand slipped from the rope.

The next instant his feet struck the ground; his drop could not have been more than a foot or so at the most.

"My hat, what a sell!"

Then Herries reached the end of the rope, and a second later, Digby. Both came down on Jack Blake with a thump.

"You utter asses!"

"Duffers!"



"Charge!" yelled Wally; and right into the six older juniors the Third-Formers dashed.

"My hat!"

The three were on the ground in a mixed-up heap. It was a moment or two before they could scramble to their feet. They stood looking at one another in the semi-gloom.

"Of all the young asses, Blake——"

"Of all the shrieking duffers, Dig——"

"Of all the raving lunatics, Herries——"

Jack Blake was the first to recover himself.

"Oh, ring off!" he growled. "What's the good of rowing? I don't suppose you young idiots could help it."

"What's that, Blake?"

"I said I don't suppose you young idiots could help it, kid. Never mind that now. Who said someone was in the quad?"

"My hat! Yes, there's someone wandering about over there!"

"Near Selby's house?"

"Yes, look!"

The three peered across the large quadrangle. There certainly was someone pacing up and down before the Third Form-master's private quarters.

The juniors crouched down in the shadow of the college wall. It might be Arthur Augustus, then, again, it might also be a prefect or even a master. There was no good in running unnecessary risks.

Jack Blake looked puzzled.

"Whoever it is, he isn't in any hurry to get in, kids."

"Not much."

"I say, it's hardly likely to be Gussy. Even the one and only wouldn't be ass enough to wander about in front of Selby's place. My hat!"

"Phew!"

The light clouds had scudded before the moon, and the little extra light had shown them something they had not seen before.

The individual who was pacing up and down before Mr. Selby's house was wearing a gown.

"My aunt, it's Selby himself!"

"Rather!" muttered Digby, with a shudder. "Thank goodness he hasn't spotted us, kids, or we shouldn't get any cricket for a blue moon."

"What's he think he's doing, anyway?"

Jack Blake did not answer. Mr. Selby was not famous for a love of fresh air; perhaps if he had been, his temper might have been more reliable. He was certainly breaking fresh ground in a night stroll of this nature.

Jack Blake was not long in summing the situation up.

"There's only one thing, kids, he's on the prowl."

"We can see that, ass."

"What's he prowling for?—that's the point."

"To see that the brick wheeze isn't carried through again, THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 122.

my son," said the chief of Study No. 6 quietly. "That's what the Selby bird is out for."

"My hat!"

"Suppose Frank Monk and the other Grammar asses turn up, kid?"

"Or Grimes, as the case may be."

Jack grinned.

"Then there'll be ructions, and no mistake, kids," he said. "All the bricks were carted back, weren't they?"

"Rather! They've started using 'em!"

Jack Blake nodded.

"Anyway, there'll be a giddy row if the rag is attempted to-night, and no mistake," he said seriously. "Chaps, this makes it more important to capture Gussy before he gets into a row; we've got to collar the young ass, whatever happens."

"Rather!"

There could be no two opinions on that point. If Arthur Augustus had broken bounds to slip down into the village for anything, it was almost certain Mr. Selby would see him return. That might mean really serious trouble for Arthur Augustus.

But how were they to capture the swell of St. Jim's?

Herries looked inquiringly at the others.

"How are we going to hunt for him without being seen, kids?"

"Blessed if I know, unless——"

Jack Blake stopped speaking abruptly. For a moment he thought he caught a glimpse of a second figure right over by Mr. Selby's class-rooms.

The three peered through the night.

"My hat, there is someone there, Blake!"

"So I thought."

"Among the giddy bricks! My only Aunt Jane, suppose it's someone going to play the brick wheeze again! Frank Monk, perhaps!"

"Phew!"

Jack Blake glanced round hastily. Whoever it was amongst the bricks, he could not see Mr. Selby, on account of a buttress which jutted out from the wall of the Third Form class-room.

For the same reason Mr. Selby could not see him; but any moment the master might prolong one of his strolls to the end of the path. The Fourth-Formers shuddered to think what would happen then.

Jack Blake gritted his teeth.

"We must get over to those bricks, kids."

"Rather!"

"But how?"

Jack glanced round again.

"Slip along the wall and risk it, chaps," he said quietly.

"If we go slowly and keep in the shadow, we ought to get to the end of the quad. without being seen. We shall have to wait until the Selby bird's back is turned then, and make a dash for it."

"My hat, that's risky, old man."

"Can you think of anything else, Dig?"

"N-no! I don't think there is anything else. I'm with you, Blakey."

"So am I," said Herries.

"Good! Let her rip!"

And the three crept away along the path in the shadow cast by the old grey walls of the college.

They had forgotten all about Arthur Augustus for the moment.

CHAPTER 14.

Capturing Arthur Augustus.

"STEADY, Dig."

"His back was turned then, ass."

"Wait until he has started on the return stroll," whispered the leader of the School House juniors. "My hat, is he going to round the buttress?"

Curiously enough, Mr. Selby had taken a longer stroll than usual this time. The three watched anxiously. It almost looked as if they were too late to warn the invader.

Presently Mr. Selby turned on his heel, and Jack Blake heaved a sigh of relief.

"My hat, that was a near thing."

"Another yard, and he must have seen the young ass."

"Rather! What are we going to do when we get up to him, Blake?"

"Ten to one he'll call out or make a dash for it, or something, and give the show away."

"My hat! Yes, we shall have to watch that. The only thing is to pounce on him and gag him if he starts to cackle."

Herries and Digby chuckled. They would enjoy that part of the affair, at any rate.

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NEXT
THURSDAY:

"D'ARCY'S PARTY."

By
MARTIN CLIFFORD.

All three felt a good deal of resentment at the idea that Frank Monk or Grimes were engaged in japing St. Jim's, and if it had not been for Mr. Selby's presence in the quadrangle, they would have prepared a splendid surprise for the invaders.

But in the present circumstances that was out of the question. It would never do to let the Third Form-master discover that the trick had been played by outsiders. He was just the sort of man who would have the thing thrashed out, and an inquiry might prove a serious matter for Frank Monk.

The three Fourth-Formers felt they were in honour bound to save the invaders, whoever they were. There would be plenty of time later on to square accounts.

Presently Jack Blake caught the others by the arm.

"Now for it, chaps."

"Right-ho! Suppose there are a lot of them?"

"I expect there are, but we can't help that. All we've got to do is to go for the ass kneeling amongst the bricks, gag, and make him understand Selby's about before he gives himself away."

Herries and Digby nodded.

The plan sounded simple enough. The next moment they were all racing on tiptoes across the quadrangle, an anxious glance directed towards Mr. Selby's form all the time.

But the master did not turn until they had gained the bricks, and it did not matter then.

"Cover, kids."

Herries and Digby had taken cover almost before the word was whispered. They dropped down amongst the bricks as quickly as possible.

A glance over the top of the pile in front of him told Jack Blake that the fellow they were approaching was unaware of that fact. Everything was working out splendidly.

Hurrying forward on hands and knees, making as little noise as possible, the three came nearer and nearer the kneeling form. What he was doing, none of them could see; it almost looked as if he were doing nothing at all.

"Waiting for the others, perhaps," whispered Jack Blake. "Hope to goodness he is! Now for it!"

And they rushed forward and threw themselves upon the invader.

"Not a word, ass!"

"Gag him! Ram your hand over his mouth!"

"Don't utter a word, kid, or there'll be an awful row!"

"Bai Jove! Gwreat Scott!"

Jack Blake & Co. started. The words had been muffled to an almost inaudible point by Digby's hand being over the speaker's mouth, but they recognised the voice.

"My hat!"

"It's Gussy!"

"Yaas, wathah, you weckless wuffians!" gasped the swell of St. Jim's. "Digbay, if it is Digbay, wemove your hand from my mouth."

"Don't be an ass, Gussy!"

"Hewwies, if it is Hewwies, I am twyin' to keep my tempah, but——"

"Gussy, Selby is on the prowl, you young ass!"

"I wefuse to be chawactahwised as—in that weally wotten mannah!"

They allowed Arthur Augustus to get up, and he did so in some excitement. He screwed his monocle in his eye and glared at the three.

"I wegwet to say I can no longah wegard you as fwiends!" he exclaimed, with dignity. "I considah you have behaved in a most wough and weady mannah, not to say a wotten mannah. I'm all in a fluttah."

"Selby will come along in a minute, ass!"

"I wefuse to considah it the act of a fwiend to wash wildy at a fellow, and woll him on the gwound!"

"Selby will be along in two shakes, and snatch you bald-headed, you frabjous idiot!"

"I should wefuse to be snatched baldheaded by Mr. Selbay. I should wegard it as dewogatory to my dig. to be snatched baldheaded by anyone, bai Jove!"

"Well, you will be if you cackle," said Jack Blake, looking at his chum in surprise. "What on earth do you think you've been doing, Gussy?"

"I must wefuse to answah, deah boy."

"Rats!"

"Weally, Digbay——"

"What's the wheeze, then? What have you been doing?"

"I wegwet to say I must wefuse to answah."

"Ass!" exclaimed Jack Blake, looking at him again. "We thought you were Frank Monk or Grimes goating about with the bricks."

"Indeed, deah boy? Howevah, I twust you know me bettah than to think I am in the wotten habit of goatin' about with bwicks, or goatin' about with anythin' else, deah boy."

"Ha, ha, ha! There's no telling with you, ass."

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Oh, do ring off, kids!" exclaimed Jack Blake. "We aren't anything like out of the wood yet. Gussy, you were an ass not to have that rope longer."

"Bai Jove! Did you notice it wouldn't weach the g'wound, deah boy?"

"My hat! Rather! Those other two asses nearly squashed me."

"G'weat Scott! I hung at the end of that wotten wope for houahs, deah boy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, I see no cause for wibald laughtah in the fact that I hung for houahs at the end of a wotten wope," said Arthur Augustus in surprise. "You see, deah boy, I could not see the g'wound, and I had an ideah that I was only about half-way down. It was like that beastly window-sill mattah ovah again, I didn't like to wisk lettin' myself dwop."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And you were only about a foot or so from the ground all the time."

"Yaas, wathah, so I discovahed aftah I had been hangin' there foah houahs. I must admit I look back at that affair with dwead."

The other three chuckled silently; then Jack Blake jumped to his feet.

"The sooner we get back the better, kids."

"Yaas, wathah! Undah the circs., I do not think I shall stay heah any longah to-night, deah boys."

"What's that, Gussy?"

"Er—nothin', deah boy. I am weady."

Jack Blake looked curiously at the swell of St. Jim's again, but Arthur Augustus did not attempt to explain.

"Pway what are we waitin' foah, deah boys?"

"For a silly young ass," said Jack Blake shortly.

"Weally, if you wewewin' to me—"

"My hat! He knows himself, doesn't he, kids?"

"Bai Jove!"

"Oh, do ring off!" exclaimed Digby. "We shall have to be careful. My hat! Dry up, ass!"

"O—h!"

"Ring off, Gussy, or we shall have Selby on our track! What's the matter, ass?"

"G'weat Scott, my shin—"

"What's the matter with your shin? Ha, ha, ha! Gussy has barked his giddy shins against a wheelbarrow, Blake."

"Good egg!"

"Bai Jove, weally, Blake—"

"Oh, ring off!"

They had gained the last pile of bricks now, and crouching behind it, waited for Mr. Selby to reappear from the shadow. They had not long to wait, the Third Form-master's stroll being a shorter one this time than usual.

The moment he turned, Jack Blake passed the word.

"Now for it, and seud as hard as you can."

"Wight-ho, deah boy!"

"And don't cackle!"

The four flashed across the quadrangle as hard as they could, dreading every moment to hear Mr. Selby's voice ring out.

In great relief they gained the shadow of the college wall without having heard anything. Digby hurriedly led the way towards the rope which hung from the window of Study No. 6.

"The sooner we shin up that the better, kids."

"Yaas, wathah, although I have half a mind not to go in just yet aftah all, deah boy."

"Then use the other half," said Jack Blake. "You are coming in with us."

"Weally deah boy, if I did not wish to come in—Howevah, I considah I had perhaps bettah do so undah the circs."

"Yes, so do I."

"My hat! How are we going to reach the rope, kids?"

"Phew!"

Arthur Augustus viewed the rope through his monocle.

"Bai Jove! I nevah thought of that."

"Of course, we could hoist each other. But how would the last man manage it?"

"Yaas, wathah! Do you considah the last man could spwling the distance and gwasp the wope?"

"Humph! Not first time, anyway, and jumping about on the gravel with Selby in the quad. is risky."

"Yaas, wathah! I considah it would be wisky 'myself, deah boy. Bai Jove!"

"What's up?"

"I have an ideah, Digbay, deah boy—a wattling ideah!"

"Humph!"

"What is it, Gussy?"

"What about gettin' a few bwicks?"

"My hat! Yes, that's the wheeze. We'd only want about half a dozen, and the workmen would think they'd been left under the window by mistake. Anyway, there's less risk than trying to jump up to the beastly rope."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Digby and Herries did not answer. They waited an opportunity, then flashed across to the nearest pile of bricks. Jack Blake and Arthur Augustus followed, and a moment later they were returning, each carrying some bricks.

When these had been placed in a square against the wall Jack Blake decided that it would just be high enough.

He chuckled gleefully.

"And the giddy things are hidden amongst the ivy, kids!" he exclaimed. "They'll never be seen. We can shift 'em back to-morrow."

"Yaas, wathah! I will go first, deah boys."

"Right-ho! Don't make a row, ass."

"Weally, Digbay, I wathah fancay I am not in the wotten habit of makin' a wow. Bai Jove, I vewy neahly slipped that time, deah boys!"

But Arthur Augustus managed to pull himself up the rope without an accident, and a few minutes later the other juniors were following him.

Their backs were turned to the quadrangle, and so, of course, they could not tell whether Mr. Selby was still there.

Jack Blake felt rather anxious because the light was stronger now, and he was afraid their figures might show up in the moonlight. Again he expected to hear Mr. Selby's voice ring out any moment.

But nothing happened, and he scrambled through the window in great haste.

"My hat! If Selby had been looking—"

The chief of Study No. 6 stopped speaking.

He could see from the window that Mr. Selby was standing still. Arthur Augustus followed his gaze.

"Bai Jove! I twust we haven't been seen, deah boys."

"He'd have called out if he had twigged us."

"Yaas, wathah! I considah he would have called out himself. Bai Jove, he is wetiain' now!"

"So he is!"

The four juniors watched Mr. Selby's form disappear through a doorway, and it brought them further relief.

"He was just having a last look round, kids," said Herries. "My hat! Gave me quite a start!"

"Yaas, wathah! I am all in a fluttah myself."

Jack Blake closed the window.

"Now for bed, kids," he said quickly. "Selby might take it into his head to have a prow round inside the coll. as well as out. Gussy, the next time you break bounds —"

"Bai Jove! Bweak bounds! Weally, Blake—"

"Yes, break bounds, ass!"

"G'weat Scott! I should have considahed you knew me bettah than to think I would bweak bounds. As a mattah of fact, I am not in the habit of bweakin' bounds, because I considah the wules of the coll. are fwamed foah our own good—"

"My hat!"

"You wecognise your ewwah, deah boy?"

"I recognise a cackling young ass who's talking through his hat!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Yes, really; if you don't call sneaking out of the ccell. after lock-up, breaking bounds, I jolly well do."

Arthur Augustus screwed his monocle into his eye reflectively as he followed the others from the study.

"Bai Jove! Yaas, I suppose on the face of it, the mattah does wesemble bweakin' bounds," he said. "Howevah, if you knew the facts of the case—that is to wemark — Bai Jove! I considah we had bettah not talk, deah boys."

And the rest of the journey was made in dead silence.

A few moments later Herries softly opened the dormitory door, and as he did so, the figure of a man appeared in the shadow of the passage doorway. He was breathing heavily as if he had been hurrying.

He stood in the shadow until the dormitory door closed behind the last of the juniors, then he turned on his heel and strode away.

The gown he was wearing fluttered in the draughty corridor.

CHAPTER 15.

In Mr. Selby's Room.

"B AI Jove, deah boys, aren't you evah goin' to wise?" Arthur Augustus's voice rang out loudly the following morning as he sat up in bed, rubbing his eyes.

The Fourth-Formers chuckled and went on dressing.

"We did think about it, kid."

"Bai Jove, yaas, wathah! I have been awake foah houahs! Gweat Scott! Some of you are half dweessed."

Digby grinned pleasantly.

"Yes, we thought we'd get up while you snored; we were going to cold pig you in a couple of jiffies."

"Bai Jove! I should have administahed a feahful thwashin' all wound if you had twied to do any such wotten thing!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, preparing to get out of bed. "As I wemarked, I have been awake foah houahs"

"Yes, I don't think."

"Weally, Hewwies— Howevah, as I had my eyes shut you may be excused—"

"And your mouth open."

"And snoring like a gas-engine!"

"Bai Jove, Weilly— Oh! Gweat Scott! O-oh!"

And then, to the blank amazement of the other Fourth-Form juniors, Gussy yelled at the top of his voice.

He had jumped out of bed, and he was now dancing round the bed on one foot. The other foot he was claspings in his hands.

"My only Aunt Jane!"

"What's the wheeze, Gussy—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You uttah wuffians!" yelled Arthur Augustus, his face distorted in the most extraordinary manner. "You weckless wottahs—"

"My hat—"

"Got pins and needles, Gussy?"

"If it's cramp pull the big toe up—"

"Or have the leg off—"

"You uttah boundahs! I shall administah feahful thwashin's all wound! Nothin' will pwevent me administahin' feahful thwashin's— Gweat Scott! I believe I have bwocken my foot!"

The juniors shrieked with laughter at the spectacle of Arthur Augustus, in his elegant pyjamas, dancing on one foot at first; then Jack Blake began to look concerned.

"Have you really hurt yourself, kid?"

"I have broken my w'etched foot—"

"Faith, an' he has hurt himself, then!" grinned Reilly.

Arthur Augustus suddenly stooped down. The next moment he was on his feet again, waving something of an oblong shape in the air.

It was an ordinary building brick.

"Which wottah placed this by my bed?" he demanded.

"Pway own up, as I do not wish to administah feahful thwashin's all wound if only one outsidah is guilty. Blake, I wequest you to answah me instantly. Did you place this wotten bwick in my bed?"

"My—my hat!"

"Am I to undahstand ffrom your wemark that it was you, you uttah wuffian? If so—"

"Phew! No, it wasn't I, kid."

"Digbay, then?"

"Wrong again, kid."

"Hewwies—"

"Another missfire," said Herries, staring blankly at the brick. "I say, have any of you chaps played this giddy trick?"

"Yaas, wathah! I demand an answah instantly—"

"No."

"No; I don't know anything about it."

The answers came promptly in a chorus, and they were all in the negative. Arthur Augustus looked from one to the other.

It never occurred to him to question the truth of their statements. That was like the swell of St. Jim's.

"Gweat Scott! It must be Tom Mewwy, deah boys!" he groaned, rubbing his damaged foot gently. "I shall administah a feahful thwashin' to Tom Mewwy the moment I meet him."

"Or Figgy."

"Yaas, wathah! I considah it vewy pwob. that it's Figgay myself—"

Jack Blake shook his head.

"I don't believe it's either of the kids, Gussy," he said decidedly. "It's rather a silly ass trick to place a brick by a fellow's bed—"

Crash!

A loud thud sounded behind the chief of Study No. 6, making him jump. An exclamation of amazement rang out.

"My only hat—"

"What's up, ass?"

"Shure, an' I'm blessed if I know, me bhoys!" gasped the junior from Belfast. "I was pulling up the blind, an', faith, an' something fell down— By all the banshees of Dublin!"

"Gweat Scott, deah boys, there's anothah bwick—"

"My only hat's aunt— aunt's hat!" gasped Digby. "Three of them, you mean!"

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NEXT
THURSDAY:

"D'ARCY'S PARTY."

By
MARTIN CLIFFORD.

The Fourth-Formers stood gazing at the window-sill. In pulling up the blind Reilly had dislodged three brand-new bricks, and there was another one still on the window-ledge.

The juniors gazed at them in bewilderment.

"Shure, an' there's another on the mantelshelf—"

"And—and one under my bed!"

"Bai Jove—Gweat Scott!"

Jack Blake made a dash for his pile of clothes.

"We must look into this, kids!" he said crisply. "Whoever it may have been who played the wheeze in the quad yesterday, it's jolly certain one of our chaps did this—"

"Bai Jove, yaas, wathah!"

"What shall we do with these giddy bricks, Blake?"

"We can't leave them about for the maids to find."

"My hat, no! Shove them in that cupboard— I say, someone has been asking for a thick ear, chaps!"

"Bai Jove—"

"Look here, Gussy, have you been playing about with my togs?"

"Weally, Blake, if you considah I mean to allow myself to be wagged—"

Then two other voices joined in the excited dispute. Herries and Digby gave vent to angry exclamations at the same time.

"My hat! Who has taken my coat?"

"Look here! What have you young rotters been doing with my waistcoat—"

Arthur Augustus gasped loudly, replacing his monocle in his eye. He was looking blankly at his usually neat pile of clothes.

"Bai Jove! You don't mean to say some w'etched waggahs have touched your clothes as well, Digbay—"

"That's what I jolly well do mean to say!" exclaimed Digby warmly. "My blessed coat has gone—"

"And my waistcoat—"

"And mine as well—"

"Gweat Scott and my twousahs, deah boy! My twousahs have uttably disappeared—"

And the Study No. 6 chums stood looking at one another in amazement.

Jack Blake suddenly turned to the others.

"I say, Reilly, do you know anything about this?"

"No, kid—"

"Any of you others?"

"No—"

"Rather not!"

Jack Blake promptly dived into his box and brought out another waistcoat.

"That settles it, kids!" he said grimly. "This is Figgins's work. Slip into your togs."

"Yaas, wathah! But I twust Figgay has not wumped my twousahs in any way," said Arthur Augustus in alarm.

"They were weally a wippin'ly cut pair of twousahs—"

"Get on with the washing, kids!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Dressing with even greater speed than they had the previous morning, the four were soon ready to leave the room. Jack Blake led the way at a great pace, and this time Arthur Augustus was even more anxious to inquire into the matter than he was.

The idea that his well-cut trousers were in the hands of such a reckless fellow with clothes as Figgins upset him.

"I pwopose we wush into the New House at once, deah boys," he exclaimed, pushing to the front. "If Figgay does not instantly weturn my twousahs I shall administah the most feahful thwashin'— O-oh! Bai Jove! Ow!"

And to the astonishment of the other juniors, Arthur Augustus pitched forward. The next moment he was lying flat on his face on the passage floor.

Digby tried to save himself, but it was too late. He sprawled over Arthur Augustus's legs and fell against Herries. Then they both went down.

"My hat!"

Jack Blake dodged the struggling heap, and just saved himself by bringing up with a thump against the passage wall.

"Bai Jove—Gweat Scott—"

"You frajbious young asses—"

"Lemme get at him—lemme get at Gussy! My only Aunt Jane!"

And Digby sat up. He was holding a brick in his hand, gazing at it open-mouthed.

"Gweat Scott! I twipped ovah somethin', deah boys—"

"Over a— a brick, ass!"

"Bai Jove, so I did—"

Jack Blake looked along the corridor both ways, then rammed his hands in his pockets.

"My hat! There are bricks all over the place!"

"Dozens of them—"

"Bai Jove, so they are, deah boys! I wondah— Gweat Scott, I am all in a fluttah!"

"Ah! Is that you, Blake?"

It was Mr. Selby's voice which rang out at that moment. The Third Form-master was standing in the doorway of his bed-room, fully dressed.

"Y-yes, sir——"

"And Digby, Herries, and D'Arcy?"

"Yaas, wathah, sir!" said Arthur Augustus, scrambling to his feet. "I twust we have not disturbed you in any way, sir——"

"You four boys are to come to my room with me at once," said the master sternly. "I have just sent word to Dr. Holmes asking him to meet me there. He may already be in my room."

"Bai Jove——"

"What did you say, D'Arcy?"

"N-nothing that maddabed vewy much, sir," murmured Arthur Augustus. "May I inquire why we are to come to your woom, sir?"

"You will discover before very long," answered the Third Form-master grimly. "You will discover almost immediately."

And he led the way along the passage.

The Fourth-Formers followed, dreading every moment that Mr. Selby would trip over one or other of the many bricks which strewn his path.

None of them dared warn him on account of the trouble it would bring the perpetrator of the trick. It was with intense relief they gained the master's room without an accident, and an almost greater one that Mr. Selby had failed to see any of the bricks.

The Third Form-master flung open the door.

Dr. Holmes was seated in a chair by the window.

CHAPTER 16.

Mr. Selby's Mistake.

"COME in, boys! Sit down!"

Jack Blake took the chair nearest him, and Arthur Augustus moved across the room to the easy chair.

It was the chair Mr. Selby used, as a rule, but the Third Form-master had taken another one.

"Sit down, D'Arcy."

"Yaas, sir! I—— Bai Jove! Gweat Scott! Ow!"

And Arthur Augustus leapt in the air again. The other juniors watched him in horror. Mr. Selby's face flushed with anger.

"D'Arcy, how dare you make that ridiculous noise?"

"I—I am awfully sowwy, sir, but undah the circs.—— Howevah, sir, it shall not occur again."

"What was the matter, D'Arcy?" asked Dr. Holmes pleasantly.

"I—I—— It's all wight, doctah!" gasped Arthur Augustus, sitting down very carefully. "I twust nothin' sewious has happened, Mr. Selbay——"

Crash!

Arthur Augustus's words were finished by the sound of a heavy fall, and he gasped. He did not look down to see what had happened, because he knew.

Jack Blake also knew the next moment, for a brick was lying on Mr. Selby's carpet.

It must have been in the chair when Arthur Augustus had sat on it, and, in spite of the junior's care, had become dislodged. Jack Blake looked thoughtfully at the firegrate.

"Dear me! Good gracious!"

Dr. Holmes adjusted his spectacles and looked at the brick in astonishment.

"D'Arcy, did you bring that brick into the room?"

"No, sir; wathah not——"

"That is untrue, D'Arcy!"

It was Mr. Selby who spoke this time, the pink flush on his face again. Arthur Augustus got up.

"Weally, Mr. Selbay," he said, with a quiet but none the less obvious dignity, "I twust I am not in the habit of speakin' untwuthfully——"

"You have done so in this case, D'Arcy."

"A moment, Mr. Selby, please," interposed Dr. Holmes, before Arthur Augustus had time to answer. "This matter must be thrashed out."

The doctor, too, had to think of dignity at times.

His words were taken in their literal sense, of course, but in reality they were uttered merely to prevent Mr. Selby making accusations which he might be unable to prove.

If it had not been for the fact that the Head of St. Jim's had to uphold his assistant-masters on all occasions, the doctor would simply have asked Mr. Selby to hear Arthur Augustus out.

Mr. Selby's pink flush became pinker.

"Yes, of course, it must be thrashed out!" he said furiously. "There can be no doubt that the—the brick was placed in that chair as a—a sort of booby-trap for me."

"It certainly looks like it, Mr. Selby. D'Arcy, did I hear you say that you knew nothing about the trap?"

"Yaas, wathah, sir. I was gweatly surpised at finding the bwick undah the cushion."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Herries chuckled loudly, doing his best to make the laugh resemble a cough. Dr. Holmes took no notice.

There was a curious expression on his face, as a matter of fact.

Mr. Selby failed to see any humour in the situation.

"I trust, Dr. Holmes, you will not be misled into believing this boy," he said quickly. "It was D'Arcy and these other juniors who brought the brick into the college."

"Weally, Mr. Selby, I twust you have nevah found——"

"I say it was you, boy."

"I wewget to have to contwadiet you, sir; but I must remark that you are entially w'ong," said Arthur Augustus, in obvious concern. "I give you my word of honah!"

"You give me your word of honour that you did not bring this—the brick into the college?"

"Yaas, wathah, sir."

"Will you give me your word of honour that you did not bring any bricks into the school yesterday?"

"Certainly, sir."

"Do you other boys say the same?"

"Yes, sir."

Something nearly resembling an expression of triumph flashed across the face of the Third Form-master. Dr. Holmes did not see it, and looked relieved.

He watched Mr. Selby cross the room, wondering what was to happen now. The Fourth-Formers also wondered.

Mr. Selby opened a cupboard.

"Last night, sir," he said quickly to the doctor. "I spent some time in the quadrangle in order to discover who it was who had played the trick with the bricks yesterday. At quite a late hour I saw three or four boys climbing into the college by means of a study-window—Study No. 6 window, I should say it was!"

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus murmured the exclamation. The other juniors were staring at the carpet.

The expression on Dr. Holmes's face altered considerably.

"Indeed, Mr. Selby? This is very remarkable. Did you speak to the boys in question?"

"No. I hurried round to this wing of the college, and I saw them again—entering the School House Fourth Form dormitory."

"Dear me, but——"

"One moment, doctor," went on Mr. Selby. "Although I thought I recognised the boys, I could not be quite certain. I think they were all carrying something."

This was purely a flight of fancy on the part of the Third Form-master. He really thought what he said was true, but the wish was very closely related to the thought. Arthur Augustus started.

"Bai Jove!"

"Silence, D'Arcy! What did you do next, Mr. Selby?"

"I retired to my room, and about an hour later paid a visit to the Fourth Form dormitory," went on the master, who was still standing by the cupboard. "All the lads were asleep, so I lighted the gas, and examined the various piles of clothes. One of the results of my examination was that I was induced to bring away with me four garments. This is one of them."

And Mr. Selby held up Arthur Augustus's well-cut trousers.

Arthur Augustus jumped to his feet.

"Bai Jove!"

"These—these garments belong to you, D'Arcy?"

"Yaas, wathah, sir, and I twust they have not been wumped in any way. I wathah pwide myself on the way the cwease keeps in the wight place. Gweat Scott!"

For the first time Arthur Augustus had noticed that something was wrong with his trousers. The knees were covered with a fine, reddish powder.

It looked very much like brickdust.

The stern expression on Dr. Holmes's face became sterner. Mr. Selby was obviously pleased with his role as amateur detective, and at once brought a coat from the cupboard.

"I do not know to whom this coat belongs," he said, "but possibly one of the boys present can tell me?"

"Yes, sir—it's mine," said Digby solemnly.

"Ah, yours, Digby, is it? Perhaps you will be also good enough to explain to Dr. Holmes how it comes that the front of your coat is also covered with brickdust?"

Digby gazed at the carpet again. He did not offer to explain. Dr. Holmes picked up Digby's coat.

"Are you certain this is brickdust, Mr. Selby? It certainly looks like it."

"It is," returned the Third Form-master. "There can be no doubt on the question."

"No, I am afraid not. Dear me! What are those other garments you have, Mr. Selby?"

"Waistcoats, also covered with brickdust."

"Indeed! Blake, whose are these waistcoats?"

"One is mine, sir."

"And the other's mine," said Herries promptly.

Dr. Holmes threw the waistcoats down on the table.

"Blake, what does this mean?"

The chief of Study No. 6 did not answer. He could think of nothing to say.

"Answer me, boy? You have been playing tricks with the bricks, then? Did you break bounds last night?"

"Yes, sir."

"You left the college?"

"Yes, sir. I went into the quadrangle."

"And I went with him, doctor," said Digby.

"So did I," said Herries solemnly.

Dr. Holmes nodded. He could appreciate Digby and Herries' prompt admission of their equal guilt.

"Why did you leave the college?"

"I—"

Jack Blake stopped. The doctor had not long to wait for his answer, though.

"Bai Jove, I wathah think I was to blame in that mattah, dootah!" said the swell of St. Jim's. "Blake and the othahs came to find me. I am entiahly to blame, as a mattah of fact, because they would nevah have bwoke bounds if it had not been foah my disapeahance."

"Ring off, Gussy," whispered Jack Blake.

"I wefuse to wing off, deah boy. It is only wight that the dootah should know the twee facts of the mattah."

"Yes, certainly. Why did you break bounds, D'Arcy?"

"Weally, well, I hardly look upon the mattah as one of bweakin' bounds," said Arthur Augustus, as if he were explaining a most ordinary occurrence. "On the face of it, I admit it stwikkly wesembles bweakin' bounds, but if you wercognised the circe., sir—"

"What were the circumstances, then?"

"Bai Jove! you see, dootah, I wetiiahed fwom the college foah exactly the same purpose Mr. Selbay took a stwoll—to twy and discovah who had played the twick."

"I see."

"What an utterly ridiculous story!" fumed Mr. Selby. "Surely, doctor, you do not believe for a moment—"

"Please allow D'Arcy to continue," said Dr. Holmes quietly. "You have something else to add, I think?"

"Yaas, wathah. I should like to explain that my motive for twyin' to discovah who it was who had played the twick was wathah diffewent fwom Mr. Selbay's."

Dr. Holmes tried not to smile.

"Yes, I suppose it was."

"Yaas, wathah! My ideah was to discovah who it was in ordah that we junioahs could turn the tables. Howevah, I had it in my mind to pwevent a wecuwwence of the wathah sillay twick as well."

Any one but Mr. Selby would never have doubted Arthur Augustus was speaking the truth. There was something about his manner which was entirely convincing.

Mr. Selby refused to see it.

"The story is utterly absurd!" he exclaimed. "Dr. Holmes, if what D'Arcy says is true, how came the brickdust on his clothes?"

"Bai Jove!"

"Ah, you had overlooked that, D'Arcy!" flashed the Third Form-master.

"Yaas, wathah! I had entiahly ovahlooked the mattah."

"You can explain, D'Arcy?"

Arthur Augustus thought for a moment or two in silence, then his face lighted up.

"Yaas, wathah, dootah!" he exclaimed. "The wope we had to use to get into the coll. again was too short, so we all bwtought bwicks to the window, and piled them up in a square to stand on."

"My hat!—ahem! Yes, that was it, sir."

"Rather!"

Jack Blake and the others chimed in excitedly.

Dr. Holmes nodded.

"I see," he said quietly. "Then you give me your word of honour—each of you, that you did not bring a single brick into the college, that you were not responsible for the other trick?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Yes, sir."

The answers came in a chorus. Dr. Holmes got up.

"You each have a hundred lines," he said, "for breaking bounds, you understand," he added. "I, of course, take your words, boys."

"Thank you, sir."

"Yaas, wathah. I considah it wippin' of you—that is to say—"

Mr. Selby had gone pink again.

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NEXT
THURSDAY:

"D'ARCY'S PARTY."

By
MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"Surely you do not intend to let the matter drop here, Dr. Holmes?" he exclaimed. "The boys' story is scarcely to be accepted in face of the evidence I have collected. They were out of the college last night, they have had to admit they touched the bricks, and—a brick is found in my chair. The story is—is too absurd."

Arthur Augustus screwed his monocle in his eye with rather a jerky movement.

"Weally, Mr. Selbay, I twust you do not doubt my word of honah—"

"I do not believe a word of your story."

"Bai Jove! Gweat Scott!"

"Well, you can easily prove it's true, sir," said Jack Blake quietly. "If you'll come down to the quadrangle with us, you'll find the only bricks we touched still under the ivy, I expect."

"Yaas, wathah. Would you mind comin', dootah?"

Dr. Holmes smiled at Arthur Augustus's excitement.

"I do not think there is any need, D'Arcy," he said kindly.

"If Mr. Selby cares to go, show him the way at once."

The Fourth-Formers' eyes sparkled a little at the doctor's words. Anyway, he took their words, and that was all that mattered. Jack Blake felt a curious inclination to call for a cheer for the head of St. Jim's.

Mr. Selby picked up his hat grimly.

"I shall certainly investigate the matter," he said. "I—Come in!"

The door was pushed open, and Taggles, the porter, stood in the doorway. He snuffled, looking suspiciously at the Fourth-Formers.

"Yes, Taggles?"

"Please, sir, the whole college is full of bricks."

"Good gracious! Do you mean something has fallen down—that—"

"No, doctor, which I don't mean nothin' of the kind. I mean, as some young—young gentleman has brought 'undreds of bricks into the college, and they're as thick as flies all over the place. Which is nice goings on, I say, seeing the workmen haven't got a brick to start work with."

"Thank you, Taggles; you can go!"

Dr. Holmes spoke quietly, but there was a set expression about his mouth. His words spoken after the trick of the previous day had been disregarded. Dr. Holmes did not view that lightly.

A change had come over Mr. Selby's face, too.

Dr. Holmes would not be able to allow the matter to drop now, and the Third Form-master thoroughly believed, if further investigations were made, Arthur Augustus's story would be proved untrue.

He followed the headmaster from the room, glancing at the Fourth-Formers as he did so. Dr. Holmes had not looked at them, and they liked that; but there was a good deal of concern on Jack Blake's face as he led the way after the masters.

They would have to clear up the mystery for their own sakes now.

CHAPTER 17.

Kildare's Hint.

"LOOK here, Blake—"

"I say, Blake—"

Jack Blake & Co. stopped and turned, to see the indignant faces of Figgins and Tom Merry behind them. Fatty Wynn, Kerr, with Manners and Lowther were not far behind.

"Look here, Blakey! Is it you?"

"Weally, Tom Mowwy, deah boy, if you are wefewwin' to the affair of the bwicks, I can answah foah my fwienf Blake!"

"Oh, you can, can you, ass? Can't he answer for himself, then?"

"Yaas, wathah; only—"

"Ring off, Gussy! No, Tom Merry; it wasn't any of us! We were going to tackle you about it!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Then you needn't waste time," said the hero of the Shell, looking perplexed. "None of us had anything to do with the wheeze, and somehow I didn't really think you had. It's a silly sort of idea, because you can jolly well hurt yourself if you aren't careful!"

"Rather!" growled Figgins. "Kerr pulled up the blind, and a brick fell on my head!"

"Yaas, wathah; and I neahly bwoke my foot against one of the wotten things! I considah it weally a wotten idea in the extweme!"

"Oh, it is all that!" agreed Jack Blake. "The worst part is, Selby believes we four did it!"

"My hat!"

"Yaas, wathah; only the dootah takes our words, of

course, deah boy! My hat! Taggles was wight, aftah all; there are bwicks all ovah the place!"

"Oh, this is nothing; you should just see Selby's class-room!"

"Bai Jove! Have the young wottahs dared to take bwicks in Mr. Selbay's class-woom, Lowthah, deah boy?"

"Take them in! The place is flooded with them! I shouldn't wondah if the room overflows with bwicks before long! Look-out, ass!"

Arthur Augustus had leant against a large, movable cupboard. He started at Lowther's warning, but the words had come too late.

Something thudded down past him.

It was another brick.

"Gweat Scott!"

"Oh, bother it, chaps; this is getting beyond a rag!" exclaimed Jack Blake. "It's got to be put a stop to!"

"Heah, heah! Bai Jove! I am all in a fluttah!"

"The thing is to find out who is the young ass——"

"There must be a lot of them, Blakey!"

"Yaas, wathah! I say, deah boys, it's a wotten thin' to suspect a fellow when you haven't any proof, but——"

"But——"

"Do any of you chaps think it might be Mellish and some of his cronies?" asked Jack Blake bluntly.

Tom Merry shook his head.

It certainly might be Mellish, but he could think of no reason to support the idea.

"There's no telling, kid," he said thoughtfully. "There's one thing against the idea of Mellish being the fellow."

"Is there, deah boy?"

"It's rather a risky sort of wheeze to play, and Mellish doesn't care for risky wheezes, as a rule. He likes something that can't get him into a row."

"Yaas, wathah; I nevah thought of that! Hallo!"

"Here comes Kildare, chaps!"

And old Skimmy behind him! Wonder what Kildare wants?"

Jack Blake spoke rather anxiously. Had anything else turned up that might throw more suspicion upon them?

The college captain hurried along the passage, a frown on his face.

"Look here, Merry! Do any of you fellows know anything about this trick?"

"No, Kildare."

"Humph! I'm glad of that! You answer for all, I suppose?"

"Yes."

"Good!" went on the captain. "Now, I want you to do something for me—I want you to do your utmost to find out who has played the tricks, and to stop it ever being played again."

The juniors' eyes sparkled.

Kildare was one of those strong-charactered fellows, who usually played everything off his own bat. It was very seldom indeed that he asked for aid.

But, in addition to being a strong-charactered fellow, Kildare was also clear brained. He had thought out this situation, and had come to the only possible conclusion. The tricks were being played by juniors, therefore he knew juniors would be more likely to discover the culprit.

He looked at Tom Merry steadily.

"Will you do it, youngster?"

"We'll do our best, Kildare."

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy! As a mattah of fact, we did twy last night——"

"And got ourselves into a beast of a mess!" said Jack Blake.

"Yes; I heard about that," said the captain slowly.

"It's like this—the absurd trick is throwing the rules and regulations of the college to the winds. It will be a very serious matter for the culprit!"

"Bai Jove!"

"What did you say, D'Arcy?"

"Bai Jove, your wemark waises anothah point, deah boy!"

"Y-yes, rather!"

"You agree, Tom Mewwy, that Kildare's wemark waises anothah point?"

"Oh, we all agree!" said Jack Blake. "Look here, Kildare, when we said we would try and put a stop to the giddy tricks, we didn't think we'd be expected to tell you who it was."

"No; wathah not! It would be uttably imposs. for us to give any names, deah boy!"

"Oh, of course not! Didn't you understand that, Kildare?"

The captain smiled.

"Have I asked you to give any names, D'Arcy?"

"Bai Jove, pewwaps not in actual words, deah boy, but your wemark appeahed to suggest——"

"Never mind what my remarks suggest; it's what they

say that matters!" answered Kildare. "All I say is, stop these tricks! I say nothing else!"

A weedy junior promptly pushed his way to the front.

"Dear me, Kildare, I really think that the matter had much better be left entirely in my hands!" he exclaimed. "As a sincere Socialist and an amateur detective——"

"Not to say a professional ass!" grinned Lowther.

"Dear me, Lowther, what a ridiculous observation to make!" exclaimed Herbert Skimpole, the brainy man of the Shell. "Surely you consider there is no one in the college so capable of taking up this extraordinary affair as myself? surely——"

"You're right there, Skimmy, unless it's Herries's bulldog!"

"Look here, Figgins——"

"Isn't it a bulldog, then, Herries?" asked the New House junior pleasantly. "You've always led us to believe it was!"

Kildare laughed, but the worried frown was still on his face as he prepared to go.

"Anyhow, you know how the matter stands, youngsters," he said. "The strange affair will be thrashed out, and if the culprits are discovered by myself or any other prefect, they will be very severely punished! I think you understand what I mean, Merry?"

The Shell junior nodded.

He understood well enough, and he wondered if the doctor would have consented to Kildare's suggestion. Tom Merry almost thought he would if it had been possible for him to do so without loss of authority, and the Shell junior gritted his teeth.

"This is going to be stopped, Blage!"

"Of course!" answered the Fourth-Former crisply. "It's up against us to worry things out now at any cost."

"Rather!"

"Bai Jove, I considah it is almost a mattah of dig. with us, deah boy!"

Skimpole blinked thoughtfully at the juniors.

"Dear me! Yes; of course, the affair must be cleared up! I consider I have given my word to Kildare to do so. I trust you will all aid me if I need aid, which is unlikely."

"Bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Never mind, Skimmy; you mean well!"

"Dear me! I do not understand you, Lowther!" answered the brainy man of the Shell, looking puzzled. "Still, the past tells me any remark made by you is probably of a frivolous nature, a result of your heredity and environment!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Dear me! I fail to see why you should laugh, because you are a victim of heredity and environment——"

"Rats! Study No. 6, kids!"

"Bai Jove! Do you pwopose to hold a meetin', deah boy?"

"Rather!"

"Dear me! Yes; of course!" exclaimed Skimpole, following on the others' heels. "I will take the chair!"

"Right-ho! As long as you leave the sofa, I don't mind!"

"Dear me, Lowther—— Still, as I remarked before, your remarks lack that seriousness of purpose——"

"Go hon!"

"Heah we are, deah boys!"

"Come in, kids!" exclaimed Jack Blake. "Just the ten of us!"

"Allow me, Skimmy!"

"Yes; certainly, Kerr!" said Skimpole, stepping back to allow the Scots chum to enter the room before him. "As a sincere Socialist, I am bound to be obliging!"

"Thanks, Skimmy!"

"Certainly, Lowther!"

"After me, Skimmy, old ass!"

"Dear me, Herries——"

"That's the style!" grinned Tom Merry. "All in now!" And the door was closed gently but firmly in Skimpole's face.

Skimpole blinked at it in astonishment.

He heard the chuckles inside, and he gradually began to recover from his surprise.

"Dear me! How extraordinary!" he mused, half aloud. "On the face of it, one would almost be tempted to believe they did not want my company. However, that, of course, is absurd! Good gracious! I wonder if there can be any ulterior motive for this remarkable behaviour?"

Skimpole started at his own idea.

He knew that the first rudiments of a detective's education was to be prepared to suspect anyone, but he had enlarged upon that long ago.

The amateur detective of St. Jim's always believed everyone guilty until he found the right culprit—a thing which did not often happen.

"It is very suspicious," he muttered—"very suspicious indeed! I—I think I will go and look for footprints!"

And he hurried away, a thoughtful expression on his bumpy forehead.

CHAPTER 18.

Discovering the Japers.

"**P**WAY take a chair, Figgay, deah boy!"

Figgins looked round the little study, which was packed now.

"Ass, you've taken the last chair yourself!"

"Hah, hah, hah! Bai Jove, so I have! Tom Mewwy, don't you considah that wathah funnay?"

"Oh, ring off! We're not here to goat about! Sit on the giddy window-ledge, Figgay!"

"Right-ho!"

"Look here, chaps," said Blake, "let's consider the whole affair properly," as the juniors began to chuckle. "We jolly well know it wasn't any of us who played the giddy trick, and I know it wasn't anyone from our dormy."

"Same with us," said Figgins.

"And with us," agreed Tom Merry. "I tackled the kids this morning."

"Good egg! Now, the point is, who can it have been?"

"Yaas, wathah, I considah that is the point myself, deah boys—"

"Ass!"

"It's pretty certain there were a good many of them at the game," added Tom Merry. "There must have been a dozen at least."

"Yaas, wathah; but pwobably a lot more. I considah there must have been about fifty, deah boys, or else they would have had to make a good many journeys for the bwicks."

"Good for you, Gussy."

"We're getting on now, and no mistake," grinned Lowther. "We've nearly done nothing."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"And I should say they were some kids who didn't love Selby," remarked Figgins. "Most of the bwicks were carted into his room, and you say there was one on his chair."

"Yes, that's so—"

"But none of us really love Selby," said Lowther; "we like him, of course, but we don't love him—"

"Bai Jove! Gweat Scott!"

Arthur Augustus sprang to his feet excitedly.

"Sit down, ass—"

"Sit down, Gussy!"

"I refuse to sit down! Gweat Scott! Bai Jove!"

The other juniors stared at the swell of St. Jim's in astonishment. He was more excited than they usually saw him.

"What's the wheeze, ass?"

"Bai Jove! I must wetiah fwom the meetin' instantly, deah boys," gasped Arthur Augustus. "I have a wotten idea— Gweat Scott!"

He hurried to the door and unlocked it. Figgins got down from the window-ledge.

"Anything the matter, kid?"

"Yaas, wathah! That is to say— Bai Jove, I am all in a fluttah!"

No one laughed. They could all see that Arthur Augustus was a good deal concerned.

Jack Blake joined him at the door.

"Shall I come with you, kid?"

"Yaas, wathah; and Figgay and Tom Mewwy," said the swell of St. Jim's breathlessly. "I may be w'ong, but if my ideah is wight, there is no time to lose—bai Jove!"

"Right-ho!"

"You chaps be thinking it over until we come back."

Digby and the rest nodded. Figgins hurried across the room.

"I'm ready, kid."

"Yaas, wathah! Thanks awfully foah offahin' to come with me, deah boys! I— Bai Jove, I am in a worse fluttah than evah!"

The other three did not answer, but they followed Arthur Augustus from the room expectantly. The Fourth-Former led the way along the corridor at a great pace.

"This way, deah boys—"

"To the Third Form dormitory, Gussy."

"Yaas, wathah! It is quite poss. the Third-Formahs have not yet come down from their woom, and I must see my minah at once."

Tom Merry started.

Did Arthur Augustus suspect his brother Wally?

"My only hat!" muttered Jack Blake. "He had a row with Selby on the afternoon of the trial match—"

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"And was barred from playing," muttered Figgins.

"My aunt!"

The three became very serious as they followed Arthur Augustus along the second passage, then Jack Blake suddenly darted forward.

"Don't jump to conclusions, Gussy," he whispered. "Take it quietly."

"Yaas, wathah! But undah the circs.— Bai Jove!"

A curious swishing sound had caught their ears. It came from the Third Form dormitory.

Tom Merry hurried up to the door.

"There's something going on in there, kids."

"Yaas, wathah! Howevah, when I ordah my minah to open the doah—"

"He'll tell you to go and eat coke," whispered Figgins. "I shouldn't wondah if the key of that other room fitted this door."

Without a word Jack Blake flashed down the passage on tiptoes. He was back again with the key in a few seconds.

"Don't make a row, chaps!"

"No, wathah not. Bai Jove! I wonder what on earth that swishin' noise can be, deah boys? I twust my minah is not up to anothah wotten twick—"

"The key fits, kids!" exclaimed Jack Blake. "Cheer-ho!"

And he flung the door open.

For an instant they stood in the doorway, trying to grasp what was happening. Arthur Augustus rammed his monocle in his eyes.

"Bai Jove! They are only bwushin' their clothes, deah boys. Howevah, it does not mattah—"

"Brushing their clothes—"

"Brushing brickdust off, by the look of it," said Tom Merry shortly. "Nice day, Wally!"

"Not bad," answered D'Arcy minor coolly. "I suppose you old fogies have come here because you want to go out on your necks."

"No, we came here to see if there was any brickdust about. You utter young ass, Wally!"

D'Arcy minor, Jameson and Curly Gibson exchanged expressive glances. The other fags looked rather frightened.

"Anyway, what's it got to do with you chaps, Merry—"

"Gweat Scott! What has it got to do with us?" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Do you compwehend that you have behaved vewy wudely to your eldahs, that you have refused to obey ordahs—"

"Do you know you've run a pretty good chance of getting sacked?" interrupted Tom Merry shortly. "If that trick had been played again with the bwicks, I don't suppose the doctor would have wanted you back next term."

"Bai Jove—"

Wally grinned and shrugged his shoulders.

"It's all very well for you old fogies to talk, you don't have to put up with a bad-tempered beast like Selby—"

"Weally, Wally I must ordah you not to address your respected Form-mastah in that wough and weady mannah—"

"Oh, don't you begin, Gus! Respected Form-master— Ha, ha, ha! I like that—"

"You've acted like a young ass, Wally; you know that."

D'Arcy minor glanced at Jack Blake and lowered his eyes.

"Anyway," he said defiantly, "I got my own back on Selby. He shouldn't have kept me and stopped my getting a chance in the trial match—"

"Bai Jove! What did he keep you in foah, Wally?"

"Nothing at all. I didn't throw a single pellet across the room—the whole Form will tell you that, and yet he dropped on me before any of them."

Jameson nodded his head vigorously.

"That's so, D'Arcy. Selby did it because he had made an ass of himself earlier on in the morning about the floor-board."

"Bai Jove, I remember that! I was in the class-woom at the time—"

"Well, was I to blame?"

"No, weally, I cannot say that you were, Wally. How-evah—"

"There you are, you see! And I lost my chance of playing in the trial match," growled Wally. "I don't mind now, though. We've ragged Selby some, you bet!"

Tom Merry, Figgins, and Jack Blake exchanged glances, then nodded. Tom Merry put his hands in his pockets.

"It's got to stop, Wally."

The Third-Former shrugged his shoulders.

"I suppose you mean you are going to stop it?" he said. "Trust old fogies to come and meddle! We are going to carry the jape on for about a week."

"Gweat Scott—"

"Yes, Wally, we're going to stop it," went on Tom Merry. "Will you kids promise it isn't going to occur again?"

D'Arcy minor glanced at the others.
 "On your word of honah—"
 "Oh, there's no need to add that!" said Wally. "If we say we won't carry the rag on, we won't. I suppose it's got to stop."

"Bai Jove, I should wathah think so—"

"Come on, kids; that's settled, then!"

And Tom Merry led the way from the room.

At the bottom of the stairs they met Kildare. Arthur Augustus stepped forward.

"Pway stop foah a moment, deah boy, as I have something of great importance to tell you—"

"What is it, D'Arcy?"

"We have discovahed the perpetwators of the bwick wag, and have taken means to prevent it reccuwin'—"

"You have really," exclaimed Kildare, in obvious relief. "Good!"

"Yaas, wathah! So the mattah is ended?"

"Yes, of course," exclaimed Kildare, turning on his heel. "Thanks, youngsters!"

The juniors grinned and moved towards Study No. 6 again. As they neared Mr. Selby's door, Arthur Augustus stopped.

"I am afwaid I cannot come any furthah, deah boys—"

"Hallo, what's it now?" chuckled Figgins. "Going to pay Selby a morning visit and ask yourself to brekker?"

"Weally, Figgay— Howevah, I am goin' to visit Mr. Selbay, as it happens."

"My hat!"

"Yaas, wathah!" continued Arthur Augustus thoughtfully. "I have been turnin' the disturbin' mattah over in my mind foah a long time now, as you know, and have come to the conclusion it is my duty to discuss certain mattahs with Mr. Selbay."

The other three stared at him blankly.

"What matters, Gussy?"

"Mattahs concernin' my minah, deah boys. I wegwet to say Wally considahs Mr. Selbay isn't quite fair to him, and I wathah fancy there is some misundahstandin' some-

where. I considah 't is my duty to lay the mattah befoah Mr. Selbay."

"You utter young ass, Gussy!"

"My only Aunt Jane—"

"He'll be in an awful wax, kid!"

"Weally, Figgay, I twust I shall say nothin' to wuffle Mr. Selbay; I have nothin' to say that could wuffle anyone. I am merely goin' to lay the mattah befoah him in a respectful mannah, and leave it in his hands. I considah that a gweat many of my minah's wows are caused through this wegwettable misundahstandin'."

And to the amazement of the three, Arthur Augustus coolly knocked at the master's door. A moment later he had entered the room.

In a good deal of concern Tom Merry & Co. hung about the corridor waiting for Arthur Augustus's return. They half expected to see him turned out of the room, but nothing like that happened.

At the end of ten minutes the swell of St. Jim's came along the passage looking a trifle disturbed, perhaps, but otherwise unaltered.

"Well, kid?"

"Did he rage—"

"What happened?"

Arthur Augustus screwed his monocle in his eye with exasperating slowness.

"Weally, deah boys," he said quietly, "I wegwet vewy much that I cannot tell you what took place. I must considah the intahview as a confidential one, and twust you will saw nothin' to the othahs."

"No, of course not, Gussy."

"Thanks, awfully, deah boys! Bai Jove, there goes the bell foah bwekkah."

And so no one ever knew what transpired at the interview in Mr. Selby's room.

Whether it would have any result remained to be seen.

THE END.

(Another long, complete school tale of Tom Merry & Co. next Thursday, entitled "D'Arcy's Party," by Martin Clifford. Order your copy in advance. Price 1d.)

The First Chapters of a Splendid Serial Story.



READ THIS FIRST!

Oswald Yorke, a youth of eighteen, whom peculiar circumstances have forced to become a highwayman, one night holds up the carriage of Admiral Sir Sampson Eastlake. He is overpowered, however; but the good old admiral offers him a chance of serving the King in the Navy instead of handing him over to justice. Oswald, therefore, joins the frigate *Catapult* as a midshipman, under the name of John Smith. The frigate is wrecked owing to the incapacity of Captain Burgoyne, her drunken commander, and a mere handful of the crew escape in a small boat, which is entirely unprovisioned.

The survivors are rescued in dire straits by a slave-ship, the captain of which, a man named Kester, orders them to be tended carefully. In the meantime Kester himself, in company with a negro named Bimby, who is joint-owner of the slaver, goes through Captain Burgoyne's papers. Suddenly he turns pale, and the negro who cannot read, leans forward excitedly.

(Now go on with the story.)

Caught in a Gale.

With a hand that shook perceptibly, Kester opened the letter, and drew forth the enclosure:

"Wilminster, March 5th.

"Dear Nephew John," the letter ran, "in accordance with my promise, I send you under cover a draft for one hundred and fifty pounds upon Messrs. Baker Brothers & Co., of Portsmouth. The draft will be duly honoured on presentation. It is a large sum, and I trust that you will expend it with much care, for I assure you that I am not the rich man that report would make me out to be, and I shall be compelled to refuse any further demands from you.—I am, my dear nephew, your affectionate uncle,

"JOHN MAYDEW."

The letter fluttered out of Kester's hand, and fell to the floor, while the man stood for a moment like a block of stone.

"Maydew—Wilminster!" he muttered. "My heavens, after—"

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By
MARTIN CLIFFORD.

NEXT
THURSDAY:

"D'ARCY'S PARTY."

"What de matter? What is it?" demanded Bimby eagerly, laying hold of Kester's arm.

Kester flung him off with an oath.

"Nothing!" he said hoarsely. "At least——"

He paused for a moment, and, with an effort of will, gained control of himself.

"There is no reason why I should not tell you," he said. "The man who wrote that letter was the greatest enemy I ever had in my life. Never a day has passed but what I have cursed his name! He—he drove me from my home—made me—— Bah! what does it matter now? And so this English captain is his nephew—is John Maydew's nephew—and I have saved his life!"

Kester laughed loudly and bitterly, then stopped, and, picking the letter up, put it into the pocket of his shirt.

The men and boys who had been snatched from the very jaws of death lay, still unconscious, down in a stifling cabin. Marvellous was the change that had been wrought in them by these few days of privation! Every ounce of flesh seemed to have disappeared from off their bones, and the glow of health that had mantled their cheeks only a few short days before had given place to a ghastly pallor.

The mulatto, Manuel, poured some tepid water from a tin can into a dipper, and propped up Mr. Pringle's head.

He poured a few drops of the fluid down the unconscious man's throat, then made a round of his invalids, giving a drop to each.

"Tink 'um get betterer if 'um had suffin' to eat," he muttered.

He paused for a moment, considering what would be the best food to administer, then hurried out of the cabin, and returned in a few minutes, with a ship-biscuit and a tin pan.

Putting the biscuit into the pan, he covered it with water, and allowed it to stand for a little while; then, when the biscuit had softened, he plunged both his hands into the pan, and kneaded up the biscuit with his dirty yellow fingers into a very unsavoury-looking paste.

"Tink 'um find dis bery refreshing," he muttered, as he tried a mouthful himself.

Then, taking a handful of the concoction, he went over to Fid, who happened to be the nearest, and lifted the old man's head.

"Now, you take 'um pap!" muttered Manuel, pulling open the old sailor's jaws.

"Eat dat 'um; do powerful lot ob good!" he muttered, as he thrust the handful of paste down Fid's jaw.

The next instant, Fid coughed, and, opening his eyes, made a few uncomplimentary remarks to Manuel in a hoarse voice.

In spite of his age, Fid had a wonderfully robust constitution, and, once restored to consciousness, he, with the help of Manuel and some dainties which the latter obtained from the cook's galley, began to regain his strength.

But it was long before any of the others showed any signs of returning consciousness—so long that Fid's hopes sank, and he shook his head despondently.

"You tink 'ul no come round no more?" asked Manuel.

"I don't know," said the old sailor. "You just go round to the purser, and ask him, with my compliments—What are you grinning at, you yellor image?"

"Yo say de pussah! Ho, ho!" roared Manuel. "Dere ain't no pusson ob dat name on board!"

Fid rubbed his eyes like a man awakening from a long sleep.

"What ship's this?" he demanded.

"De Black Rose," said Manuel.

"Black Rose. Never heard of her. Where do you hail from, and whither bound?"

Manuel grinned, showing his double range of white teeth.

"Come from de coast ob New Guinea, wid cargo ob black ivory for Kingstown."

"Cargo of what?" shouted Fid. "Slaves?" he added, in a lower voice.

"Dat about 'um, mistah? Slaves from New Guinea to Kingstown."

Fid passed his hands through his scanty locks.

"Well, it's better to be saved by a slaver than not saved at all!" he muttered philosophically.

"So long's yo' get saved, what 'um signify?" said Manuel. "Jest you step round an' give my respectful compliments to the skipper, and say I'd be obleeged by a drop of the best Bourbon."

Manuel departed, and in a few minutes returned with a small bottle of brandy, which Fid diluted plentifully with water, and administered a few drops to his unconscious companions.

The effect of the brandy was noticeable at once, particularly on Captain Burgoyne, who had lain like one dead. Their breathing became more regular and less laboured, and presently Oswald opened his eyes and gazed round the cabin. There was no intelligence in his glance, and the next moment his eyes had closed again, and he fell into a deep sleep.

Meanwhile, the day had waned, and the sun was sinking with lurid magnificence. A change had come over the aspect of the heavens. Huge black clouds had drifted up from the north, and were rapidly overshadowing the sky. To the west the sky glowed like the open door of a huge furnace. Eastward all was gloom and greyness.

"We shall have a gale before we are many hours older," said Kester, who, with his black ally, stood on the deck looking anxiously to the northward.

The black, who seemed to have command of the deck, gave some orders that sent a dozen men into the rigging. Then he and Kester sauntered slowly aft, talking together in earnest undertones.

"It will be far better," said the latter. "It is a dead certainty that we shall lose this cargo, part, if not all. We have lost a good deal already, and when honest trade doesn't pay, then——" He paused significantly.

Bimby nodded.

"We see how de cargo fare by de mornin'," he said.

"It will probably be overboard by then!" retorted the other. "It looks to me as if we shall have to lighten the ship. You know, we took the risk of that, if dirty weather came before we touched port. Two days' sail will bring us to San Andrade, where we are sure to fall in with either the schooner or the felucca. I had thought to cut that life," he added. But he shrugged his shoulders, and uttered a hoarse laugh.

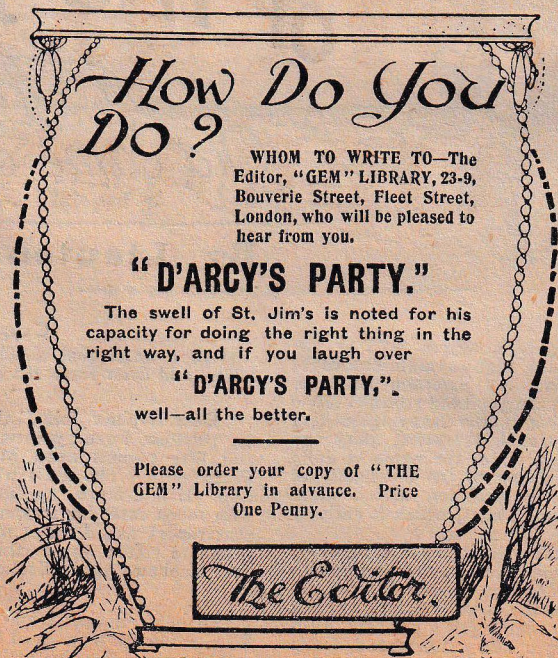
A faint breeze sprang up with the sinking of the sun.

With topsails set, the brig was now flying through the water at a great speed. Darkness, intense and impenetrable, had fallen. Nothing was visible in the murk, and the atmosphere, which all through the day had been heated like the blast from a furnace, had grown chilly. Presently, right to windward, a thin, white line appeared out of the darkness, and came creeping down towards the brig like a cloud of dust along a sandy roadway. They could hear the roar of the approaching squall. Kester gripped the rail, and peered ahead.

"We shall have it down on us in a moment!" he shouted. "By thunder——"

With a terrific impact, the squall struck the brig, laying her over on her beam ends for a moment; the next she rose lightly as a gull, and breasted the huge waves that rolled to the southward. The fore and main topsails had been blown out of the bolt ropes with a sound like the explosion of small cannon, and the ribbons of the sails were streaming out straight in the wind. A huge sea came tumbling over the brig's deck, flinging the white man and the black violently against each other. Bruised and breathless, they clung to the rail, as a glistening sheet of foam swept the deck, carrying with it all things movable, including the hen-coops, the occupants of which clattered and screeched most piteously as they were whirled into the boiling surf.

(Another long instalment of this thrilling serial will appear next Thursday.)



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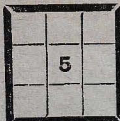
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