

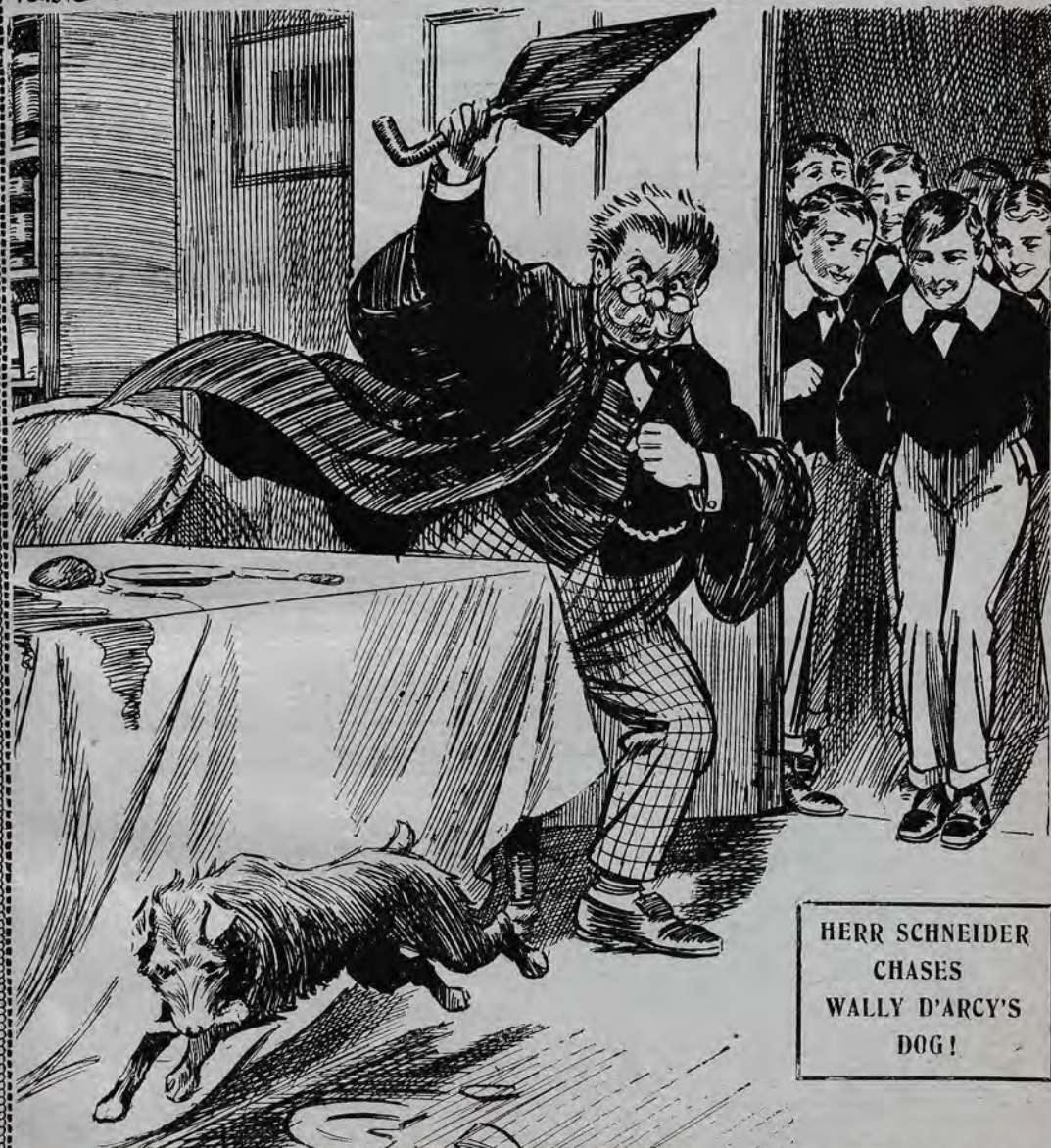
D'ARCY'S PARTY—"Bai Jove!"



Grand Long
Complete
Tale

A Tale of the Terrible Three.

by
MARTIN
CLIFFORD



HERR SCHNEIDER
CHASES
WALLY D'ARCY'S
DOG!

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EVERY

THURSDAY



D'ARCY'S PARTY.

A Splendid, Long Complete School
Tale of
TOM MERRY & Co.

BY

MARTIN CLIFFORD.



CHAPTER 1.

D'Arcy Thinks it a Good Idea.

YAAS, wathah!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy made that remark with considerable emphasis.

Now, Arthur Augustus was seldom emphatic. Emphasis did not accord with that repose which stamps the caste of Vere de Vere. Naturally, therefore, the other fellows in Study No. 6 glanced at D'Arcy as he spoke.

Besides, D'Arcy's observation was not made in reply to anyone; no one had spoken. That emphatic remark broke the silence of the Fourth-Form study.

Hence there was reason for the surprised stares which Blake, Herries, and Digby proceeded to fasten upon the swell of St. Jim's.

"Yaas, wathah!" repeated Arthur Augustus, more emphatically than before, and apparently unconscious of the gazes that were focussed upon him.

Jack Blake tapped his forehead significantly.

"Off—at last!" he murmured.

"Clean off!" said Digby.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy's unexpected confirmation of Digby's remark tickled the chums, and a gust of laughter went through the study.

D'Arcy screwed his monocle into his eye, and regarded the chums of the Fourth inquiringly.

"What's the joke, deah boys?" he inquired.

"Same old joke!" replied Blake.

"What's that?"

"Yourself, old chap!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Will you condescend to enlighten us as to what you happen to be jabbering about?" asked Blake, with elaborate politeness.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh, change the record!" said Digby. "We've heard that one already."

"Weally, Dig—"

"We can't have you cultivating the habit of talking to yourself, Gussy," said Blake, with a serious shake of the head. "That way madness lies."

"Weally, deah boy—"

"Of course, we know it must come sooner or later, but as good chums we want to keep you out of Colney Hatch as long as possible, and—"

"I wegard your wemarks as merely wibald, Blake. I—"

"We'd rather subscribe out of our own pockets for a strait-waistcoat, and keep him in the study," said Digby generously.

"I wegard you as an ass, Dig!"

"By the way," said Blake, "talking about cricket—"

"We weren't talking about cricket."

"No, but we're going to. Things aren't looking very lively in that line at St. Jim's. Since we beat the Gram-marians—"

"Blake, deah boy—"

"And whopped the village—"

"Blake—"

"And licked the New House, why we haven't—"

"Blake, I insist—"

"Hallo, are you still talking, Gussy?"

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy, eyeing his chum with considerable indignation. "You know vewy well that I am still talkin', Blake!"

"Well, you generally are," said Blake resignedly. "Are you bound to go on talking at the present moment?"

"Weally—"

"Because if you wouldn't mind going out into the passage and closing the door, and coming in after you've finished—"

"Weally—"

"You could talk without disturbing anybody," concluded Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you chaps wufuse to listen with pwopah wespsect, I shall have no wresource but to go and ask Tom Mewwy instead of you."

"Ask him what?"

A DOUBLE-LENGTH TALE OF TOM MERRY NEXT THURSDAY.

Copyright in the United States of America.

"To come."
 "Come?"
 "Yaas, wathah!"
 "Come where? Are you wandering again?"
 "To come with me, I mean."
 "Ass!"
 "I wufuse to be called an ass. While you chaps have been chattered, I have been thinkin' it ovah—"

"Thinking what over?"
 "The idea, you know. I think it a wippin' one. That was what caused me to make that remark. It is awfully wippin'."

"What is?"
 "The ideah. I think I shall take one or two of you fellows—"

"He's off again," said Digby.
 "Right off," said Herries, with a nod.
 "Weally, deah boys—"

"Look here, Gussy—" began Blake.
 "Pway, don't intewwupt me, deah boy. I wegard the idea as bein' simply wippin', and I was goin' to ask you fellows. But if you don't want to join in it, I'll go to Tom Mewwy's study and speak to him and Mannahs and Lowthah. I dare say they will be glad enough of a holiday."

"A holiday?"
 "Yaas, wathah, with plenty of good cwicket thwown in."

"Cricket?"
 "Certainly, deah boy! The suggestion comes just in the nick of time, when it's just what we want, and I must say it's awfully thoughtful of my governah."

"Your governor?"
 "Yaas, wathah!"
 "What are you talking about?"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Ass!"

"Weally—"

"Chump—"

"Blake—"

"Fathead!"

D'Arcy rose to his feet.
 "I wufuse to remain here and listen to these oppwobwious expressions," he said. "I will go to Tom Mewwy's study—"

"Frabjous fathead!"

"Vewy well; I will wewire—"

"Collar him!"

"Weally, deah boys—"

"Now, then—"

"Ow!"

Arthur Augustus was promptly collared as he made for the door. Three strong pairs of hands seized him, and he was jammed against the study wall with a force that took his breath away.

"Ow! Yow!" gasped the swell of St. Jim's.

"Now, then, ass—"

"I—I wufuse to be called an ass! If you do not welease me instantly, I shall give you a feahful thwashin'."

"Chump!"

"You howwid wuff wottahs—"

"Now explain—"

"Weally—"

"What were you going to ask us? What are you going to ask Tom Merry? What's the game? What's the wheeze? Explain!"

"Weally—"

"Go ahead!"

"I wufuse! You have tweated me with gwoss diswespsect, and wufused to considah the wippin' idea—"

"But we don't know what the idea is yet!" roared Blake. "You haven't told us that!"

"Bai Jove!"

"We don't know anything about it, chump! We're quite in the dark, fathead! We—"

"Bai Jove, you know! I nevah thought of that!" gasped D'Arcy. "Pway welease me, and don't be a set of wuff asses, and I will explain, deah boys!"

The chums of Study No. 6 released him.
 But they stood round him, with their hands ready to grasp him again in case of necessity, and bending extremely exasperated looks upon him.

"Now go ahead!" growled Blake. "Explain!"
 "Yaas, wathah!"

Arthur Augustus seemed in no hurry to begin. He set his collar straight, and adjusted his necktie, and smoothed out his sleeves, repairing all the damage that had been done to his elegance by the rough attack of the juniors.

The chums watched him with growing exasperation.
 He had roused their curiosity, and his deliberate and leisurely manner would have tried a greater patience than the chums of the Fourth possessed.

"Will you go ahead?" roared Blake, at last.

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NEXT THURSDAY:

"D'ARCY'S CRICKET WEEK."

"Yaas, wathah!"
 "Oh, collar him!" exclaimed Digby. "Let's bump it out of him."
 "Good egg!"
 D'Arcy ceased his rearrangement of his necktie at once.
 "Hold on, deah boys—I'll explain!"

CHAPTER 2.

No Exit.

JACK BLAKE glared at his elegant chum.
 "I'll give you one second to start," he said.
 D'Arcy stayed only to jam his monocle into his eye, and started in a great hurry.

"You see, deah boys, it's a splendid ideah—"

"What is?"

"And it will give us a bit of a holiday—"

"What will?"

"But I shall only be able to take good cwicketahs—of course, my patah makes a point of that. Pway don't get excited, Blake, I'm comin' to the point. In short, I have had a lettah frowm my governah."

"Well?"

"He's holdin' a cwicket week at Eastwood."

"A what?"

"Weally, Blake, I pwesume you know what a cwicket week is. The governah's filled Eastwood House with guests, you see, and he's got a lot of cwicketahs among them, and they're goin' to play a sewies of matches. If you are goin' to make me explain what a cwicket week is—"

"Ass! Get ahead!"

"Well, my eldah bwothah, Conway, is there, of course, and he's skippahin' the house team. They're meetin' all sorts of teams, or they're goin' to, I mean. And the governah has suggested that I might like to go down—and, of course, I'm goin'. You see, he knows we play good cwicket here, and he has an idea that I might be put into the Eastwood eleven."

"My hat!"

"It is extremely pwob. that Conway only intends to put me down as a wewerve," said D'Arcy. "I shall, however, argue that I wathah out with him when I get there. Of course, I should absolutely wufuse to be put down as a wewerve."

"Rats!"

"Although the cwicketahs there are quite gwown up, of course it's all wot to suppose that I'm not fit to play in the house team."

"More rats!"

"Some of them are membahs of the M.C.C., and there is an old Zingari there, too, and the house team will be wathah stwong. I believe the governah has a pwofessional there as well. But, of course, I shall expect to play."

"Of course," said Blake, sarcastically. "I can see them playing a Fourth-Form junior in a team made up of I Zingari!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"But it will be a holiday, anyway," said Blake.

"Yaas, and the governah suggests that I might take a fwend or two."

"Hurrah!"

"Of course, I thought of you chaps immediately—to say nothin' of Wally—"

"Good old Gussy!"

"But if you don't like the ideah, I'll go and ask Tom Mewwy—"

"Rats!"

D'Arcy polished his eyeglass and replaced it in his eye.
 "Well, I shall be glad to have you chaps, as you play decent cwicket. You may be wanted to play, you know, but of course that's not a pwomise."

Blake chuckled.

"You ass, we sha'n't be wanted to play; but we can see some good cricket, and have a good holiday, and that's enough. Hurrah!"

"Yaas, wathah! Hwaway!"

"A friend or two," said Digby thoughtfully. "Jolly good idea; but will a friend or two cover three?"

"Oh, yes," said Blake. "It was probably a misprint in Lord Eastwood's letter, and he meant a friend or three."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's all wight, deah boys. A fwend or two is a wathah bwoad expwession, and will covah—"

"A multitude of sins, like charity," said Blake. "We're all going, of course. I suppose Lord Eastwood has asked the Head?"

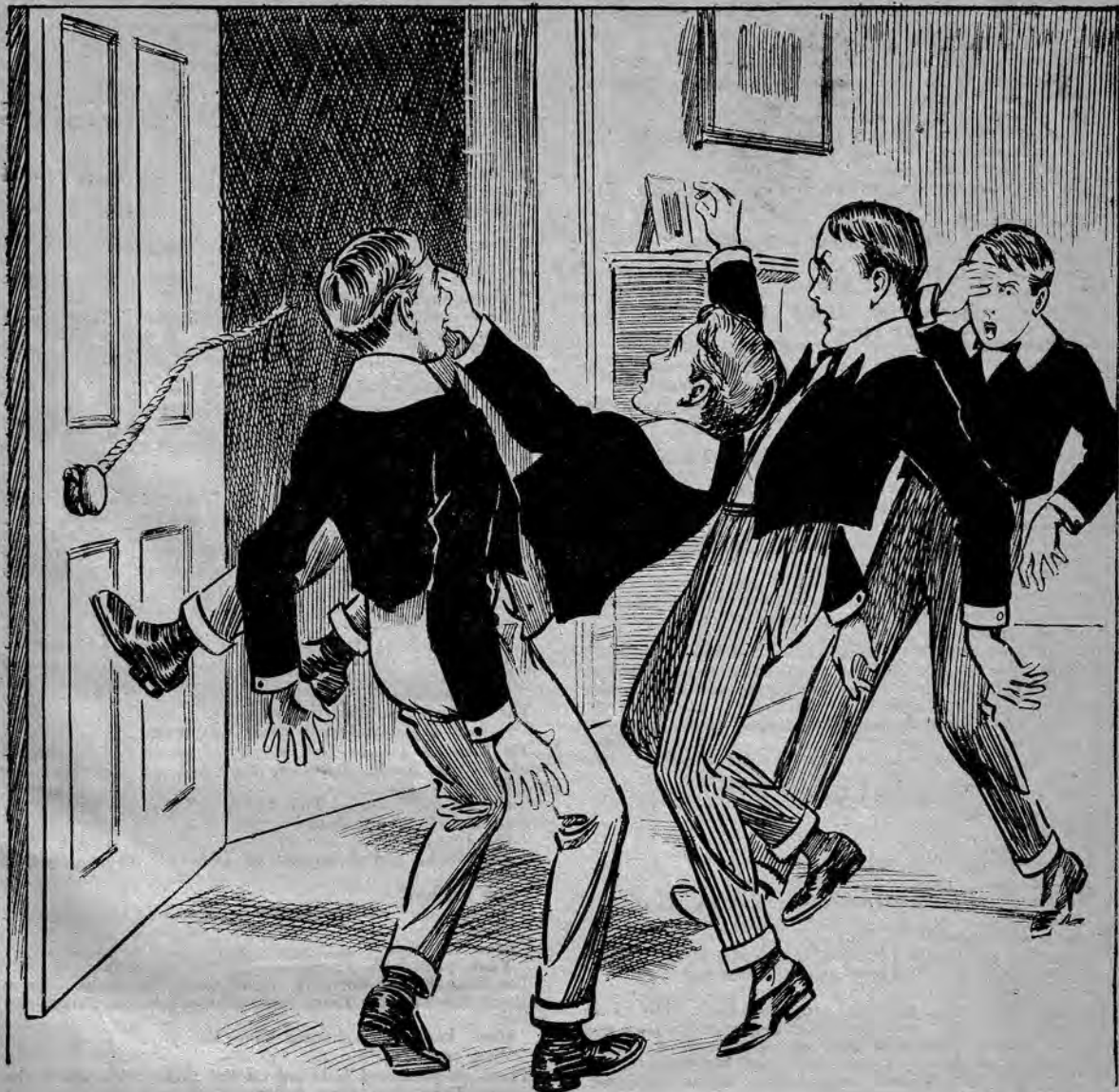
"Yaas; he says so."

"And the Head consents."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Good old Head! He's a brick! That's what comes of

Another Splendid Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co.



Blake grasped the handle of the study door with both hands and gave a tremendous tug. The door flew open and he staggered back. "Oh!"

being a governor of the school," said Blake. "Now, if my pater were on the governing board——"

"I've got to see the Head about it, but that's only formal," said D'Arcy. "Of course, you can all come. I wish we could take Tom Mowwy, too, and the New House chaps. Howvah; it is wathah good for us four to be able to go."

"Yes, rather."

"When shall we start?"

"To-mowwow mornin'."

"Jolly good!" said Herries. "Towser will be pleased."

D'Arcy turned his eyeglass suddenly upon Herries.

"Towsah!" he said.

"Yes. Towser likes a change of air as well as anybody," said Herries affably. "He will thoroughly enjoy a run down to Eastwood."

"Weally, Hewwies——"

"Of course, you want Towser to come?"

"Weally, that wotten bulldog has no wespect for a fellow's twousahs, and——"

"Oh, if you don't want Towser," said Herries huffily.

"I—I will have him with pleasure," said D'Arcy, remembering that he was host now, and that he was bound to concede anything to a guest. "But——"

"But we jolly well won't have him," said Blake, with

emphasis. "You're not going to inflict that bulldog on us, Herries, old man. Like to see Lord Eastwood's face when you walked in with a beastly bulldog."

"He's not a beastly bulldog!" exclaimed Herries indignantly. "He's a jolly fine bulldog, and——"

"Well, he can stop at St. Jim's. If he comes in the train with us, there will be a mysterious death of a bulldog on the railway line," said Blake darkly.

"Look here——"

"Pewwaps I had bettah go and see the Head now," said Arthur Augustus, turning to the door. "Bai Jove!"

"What's the matter?"

"The door won't open."

"Rats! Let me try," said Blake.

Arthur Augustus was tugging in vain at the handle of the door. The door did not budge. He stepped aside to allow Blake to get a grip on the handle.

"It's not locked," said Blake.

"Yaas, but——"

"Here you are!"

Blake gave a tug at the door, and turned a little pink when it did not budge.

He had caught hold of the handle with the air of a fellow

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who was going to solve the difficulty off-hand; but the door baffled him as much as it had D'Arcy.

The swell of St. Jim's smiled sweetly.

"Well, why don't you open it, deah boy?" he asked.

"It—it seems to be stuck, somehow!" stammered Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Herries.

Blake turned a freezing glare upon him.

"What are you making that blessed row for, Herries?"

"Eh? Ha, ha, ha!"

"What's the cackle about?"

"Ha, ha! I'm waiting to see you open the door. Ha, ha!"

"Yaas, wathah! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, cheese it! The door's fastened somehow."

"Go hon!"

"Here, let me try," said Digby.

Blake grunted.

"You can jolly well try, if you like," he said; "but you jolly well won't get it open."

And Blake was right.

Digby tugged at the door with both hands, but it did not budge. It seemed to yield a fraction, and then held fast.

"My word," said Dig. "Somebody's holding it on the other side."

"Bai Jove!"

"Of course!" exclaimed Blake. "I knew it couldn't get stuck."

"Why, you just said—"

"Oh, don't jaw. Lemme get at the beastly thing again. I'll show 'em!"

"Leave it to me—"

"Rats! Gimme the handle!"

"But—"

"Don't argue, Dig, old chap. Blessed if you wouldn't argue the pendulum off a clock. Lemme get at it."

"Oh, all right!"

Blake grasped the door-handle again, and tugged with all his might. But the door did not open. The Fourth-Formers grinned serenely, and Jack Blake's face gradually grew redder and redder.

He let go the handle abruptly, and rapped on the door.

"Open this door!" he roared.

There was the sound of a faint chuckle outside in the passage.

"That's Tom Merry," said Digby.

Blake rapped again.

"Let go!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I know it's you, Tom Merry."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We'll wipe up the passage with you when we get out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Blake breathed hard.

He grasped the handle of the door again with both hands quietly, and turned it, and gave a tremendous tug.

"Oh!"

The door flew open, and Blake staggered back. His hands went sailing out wildly, and one caught Digby on the nose, and the other caught Herries in the eye. The back of Blake's head bumped on D'Arcy's waistcoat, and the swell of St. Jim's sat down with a gasp and a bump. Blake staggered, and sat on his legs.

There was a chorus of gasps.

"Oh!"

CHAPTER 3.

An Attack in Force.

FROM the passage came a sound of chuckling, and then footsteps. The practical jokers were gone, after playing that little jape upon the occupants of Study No. 6.

The four juniors gasped and grunted.

Digby was holding his nose with both hands, and Herries had knuckles to his eyes.

D'Arcy was trying to extricate his legs from under Blake, and Blake was staring dazedly at the open door.

A cord was trailing from the handle on the outside of the door.

That explained how the enemy had succeeded in holding it shut so tightly.

They had tied the cord across the passage to the handle of the door of the room opposite, and naturally enough Blake had been unable to pull the door open, as the cord was too strong to break.

The release of the cord had caused the door to fly open as soon as Blake pulled it, hence the disaster in Study No. 6.

"Ow!" said Digby. "My nose is broken, you ass!"

"M-m-m-m!" said Herries. "I shall have a black eye to take down to Eastwood. Yah!"

"Bai Jove! My twousahs will be ruined!"

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NEXT THURSDAY:

"D'ARCY'S CRICKET WEEK."

"Oh!" grunted Blake.

"You ass! What did you punch my nose for?"

"What did you bung me in the eye for?"

"What did you buff my waistcoat for?"

"Oh!"

"Pway get off my legs, deah boy! You are causin' me considerable inconvenience, and wumplin' my twousahs feahfully."

Blake staggered to his feet.

Arthur Augustus followed his example, and began to dust his trousers.

"M-my hat!" said Blake.

"You ass!"

"You fathead!"

"You've busted my boko."

"You've bunged up my eye."

"Yaas, wathah! And my twousahs—"

"How could I help it?" snorted Blake. "How was I to know that the door wasn't fastened. It was a jape."

"Ass!"

"Cheerful idiot!"

"Yaas, wathah! I considah you an ass, Blake."

"Oh, don't go on cackling like a blessed lot of old hens," said Blake wrathfully. "Get hold of something, and follow me, and we'll make those Shell bounders sit up."

"Good egg!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Blake seized a cricket stump, and D'Arcy took up his bat. Digby took the poker, and Herries a dog-whip. Thus armed, they went down the passage in search of the Terrible Three. As they turned into the Shell passage, they heard the sounds of laughter, and it proceeded from Tom Merry's study.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jack Blake frowned.

"My hat! They're gurgling over it now," he exclaimed.

"The feahful wottahs!"

"Come on!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

The chums of the Fourth rushed on.

The door of Tom Merry's study was open.

The Terrible Three—Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther—could be seen inside, sitting on the table, and shouting with laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry. "Did you see D'Arcy spread himself on the floor?"

"Bai Jove!"

"And Blake spread himself on D'Arcy!" chirped Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go for 'em!" roared Blake.

"Hallo!"

"Give 'em socks!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

The four Fourth-Formers rushed into the study. In a moment the Terrible Three were off the table and ready for battle.

"Here, keep off!" shouted Tom Merry.

"Give 'em socks!"

Three basket-hilted foils lay on the table, with which the Terrible Three had been fighting a three-cornered contest shortly before. The Shell fellows snatched them up, and stood on the defensive.

The wooden foils clashed against the bat, the stump, the poker, and the dog-whip. There was a terrific din in Tom Merry's study.

D'Arcy staggered back as the end of Tom Merry's foil pinked him on the chest.

"Ow!" he gasped, dropping the bat.

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Blake gave a yell, and jumped a foot into the air. D'Arcy had dropped the bat on his toe, and it was a heavy bat.

"Gerrooh!" he shrieked. "You ass!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Yaroo!"

"I'm sowwy—"

"You frabjous ass!"

"Weally—"

Blake danced on one leg. Arthur Augustus picked up his bat, and rushed to the attack. The end of the bat collided with a vase on Tom Merry's mantelpiece, and brought it in fragments to the floor.

Crash!

"Here, look out!" roared Tom Merry.

"Wats!"

Crash!

The end of the bat went into the looking-glass.

"You dangerous ass—"

"You wottahs!"

"Go for 'em!"

The Fourth-Formers attacked hotly.

But the Terrible Three, standing shoulder to shoulder, with the long wooden foils well to the front, stood their ground well.

Blake & Co. could not get past their defence.

There had been no casualties so far, with the exception of the damage to Blake's toe and the smashing of the vase and the mirror.

But the din was terrific.

The clashing and crashing of the weapons, and the tramping of feet, rang through the study and along the Shell passage.

Fellows came out of the other studies to see what the matter was, and the doorway of Tom Merry's study was soon crowded.

"Go it!" shouted Gore. "Ripping! Keep it up!"

"Faith, and ye're winning, Blake!" exclaimed Reilly.

"Go for their topknots!"

"Give 'em socks!"

Clash! Crash!

"Hurrah!"

"Buck up, Shell!"

"Go it, Fourth!"

"Cave!" yelled a voice in the passage.

"Phew! It's Railton!"

"Cut!"

The crowd of juniors in the passage vanished, hurling themselves into various studies, or into the box-room, or on the upper stairs. The passage was cleared in a twinkling. Mr. Railton, the House-master of the School House, strode along to Tom Merry's study, and found not a single junior in his path.

CHAPTER 4.

A Slight Mistake.

MR. RAILTON stood at the open study door, and looked in.

The crash of weapons had ceased.

It was time!

The excited juniors had done a considerable amount of damage—more to the study than to each other.

The room looked a great deal as if a hurricane had struck it.

Chairs were overturned, the looking-glass and the book-case glass was smashed, broken vase and inkpot and papers lay on the floor. Tom Merry's foil had been broken in the middle, and Digby's poker was bent.

The House-master looked in grimly.

The juniors, looking very sheepish, faced him.

"What is this disturbance about?" asked Mr. Railton.

"Ahem!" said Tom Merry.

"You see, sir," began Lowther.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"It—it was only fun, sir," said Jack Blake.

"Somewhat noisy fun, I think, Blake."

"Ye-es, sir!"

"We didn't mean you to hear, sir," ventured Tom Merry.

Mr. Railton smiled. He had no doubt whatever of the exact truthfulness of that statement. But as a matter of fact the whole School House had heard the terrific uproar.

"It—it was a—a celebration, sir," said D'Arcy, struck by an inspiration.

"A what?"

"We—we were feeling elated, sir, because—because—"

"Well?"

"My governah's giving a cwicket week at his house, sir, and we've got the Head's permission to go," said D'Arcy.

"Indeed!"

"Yaas, wathah, sir!"

"And so you were feeling elated?"

"Exactly, sir."

"And that is why you have made this terrific din?"

"Well, no, sir!"

"Then there is no connection between your elation and your noisy visit to a Shell study?"

"Well, no, sir!"

"Then how can you advance it in excuse?"

"You see, sir—"

"Well—"

"As a mattah of fact, sir, it weally amounts to the same thing. Suppose—"

"D'Arcy!"

"Yaas, sir. Suppose—"

"We will suppose nothing," said Mr. Railton, frowning, "except that you ought to know better than to make so much noise. Knox has the room below, and he has complained."

"I am vewy sowwy for Knox, sir."

"You have wrecked the study."

"We—we don't mind, sir," said Tom Merry.

"Possibly not. That does not alter the case. Am I to understand that you meant to hit one another with such weapons as that?"

"Oh, no, sir!"

"Then why were you using them?"

The juniors looked rather nonplussed.

They had certainly not intended to hurt one another very much; but it was equally certain that they might have been hurt, and badly, if the conflict had gone much further.

"You will put those things away at once," said Mr. Railton, "and write a hundred lines each."

"Oh, sir!"

"And if I hear any further disturbance, I shall speak to you severely."

"Yes, sir!"

And the House-master walked away.

The juniors looked at one another dubiously.

"This is wathah wotten," Arthur Augustus D'Arcy remarked. "We shall not be able to give these wottahs the thwashin' they deserve. It's weally a pwomise to Wailton."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Terrible Three.

The Fourth-Formers glared at them.

"You can cackle!" said Blake wrathfully.

"Thanks, we will! Hee ha, ha!"

"I wegard you as a set of wastahs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pway let us wetire fwom the studay, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus, with a great deal of dignity.

"Hold on, Gussy! What's that you were saying to Railton about a cricket week at your governor's?"

"My governor is givin' a cwicket week at Eastwood."

"You're going?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And these chaps?"

"Yaas. And I'm goin' to fix it for my minah, Wally, if poss."

"And you had come here to ask us?" asked Tom Merry.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy turned his eyeglass frigidly upon the hero of the Shell.

"I am hardly likely to ask you chaps, when you have tweated me with gwoss diswespect," he said. "I wegard you as wottahs! Besides, I have only the Head's permission to take a twiend or two, and thwee is the limit."

"Rats!" said Manners. "Make it six."

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"We'll come," said Lowther affably. "We may be able to show some of you how to play cricket. You owe some recompense to this study, too, for wrecking it in this way, and making an unprovoked attack upon three innocent youths!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wegard you as wottahs! You held the door of our study shut—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And caused us to fall ovah the floor of our studay in a most undignified mannah, to say nothin' of the pain."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Undah the circs.—"

"Ha, ha, ha! That's Gussy's gratitude to us for cutting the cord, and lettin' him out, kids!" said Tom Merry.

"Touching, ain't it?" said Lowther.

"Next time we find you tied up in your study, Gussy, we'll leave you to your doom," said Manners severely.

"Bai Jove! Wasn't it you who fastened the door?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My hat!" said Blake, starting. "Wasn't it you, Tom Merry?"

"Ha, ha!" yelled Tom Merry. "No! I wondered why you rushed in on us like a set of maniacs. No, it wasn't us."

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"Bai Jove! Who was it, then?"

"Figgins & Co.!"

"The New House bounders!"

"Yes. We came along the passage and found 'em! We couldn't help sniggering a little. Figgins & Co. bolted, and we—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lowther. "We cut the cord, and, of course, Blake had to yank the door open just then—"

"Ha, ha! And then we saw you tumbling," said Manners. "We came here to get a quiet laugh. You looked funny!"

"Oh, did we?"

"Ha, ha! Yes. Awfully, fearfully funny!"

And the Terrible Three yelled with laughter.

The chums of Study No. 6 looked sheepish.

They had taken it for granted that the Terrible Three had been the cause of the disaster, and they had certainly acted a little hastily.

The damage done to Tom Merry's study, and the hundred lines apiece for all the juniors, had been the result of the mistake.

"Well, I'm blessed!" said Herries.

"Bai Jove!"

"It was all Gussy's fault, of course!" said Blake crossly.

"Weally, Blake, I don't see how you make that out," said the swell of St. Jim's protested mildly.

"You never see anything."

"But—"

"Oh, don't argue, Gussy; you've done enough damage as it is," said Blake. "The worst of it is, that Figgins & Co. have got clear away while we've been wasting time over these duffers!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"They're in the New House by this time, cackling at us!" said Digby wrathfully. "I must say you're an ass, Blake, to bungle things like this."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Look here—"

"But what price us?" demanded Tom Merry. "You've wrecked our study, and got us a hundred lines apiece, all for cutting a cord and letting you out of your study."

"Bai Jove, deah boys, I think we owe Tom Mewwy an apology!"

"You owe us more than that," said Tom Merry. "There's the mirror and the vase and the bookcase—glass costs money!"

"Weally, you know—"

"Still, it's all right, Gussy. Your idea of making it up to us by asking us down to the cricket week at Eastwood is simply splendid!"

"Weally—"

"We accept. Don't we, you fellows?"

"Yes, rather!" said Manners and Lowther together.

"It's very kind of D'Arcy to put it in this pressing way."

The elegant Fourth-Former looked bewildered.

"But—but, I haven't asked—" he stammered.

"You haven't asked the Head?" said Tom Merry genially.

"No. I mean—"

"Oh, that's all right! You'll put it to the Head with your well-known tact," said the hero of the Shell. "Use the tact and judgment you are famous for, Gussy, and it will be as easy as falling off a roof."

"Well, weally, you know—"

"We shall be pleased to come—that's all right."

"Undah the circs—"

"Not a word more," said Tom Merry. "You don't owe us any thanks. It will be a pleasure."

"Quite a pleasure," said Lowther.

"A distinct pleasure!" declared Manners.

Arthur Augustus gazed at the chums of the Shell. For the moment he thought that he must really, in some lapse of mind, have asked the Terrible Three down to Eastwood for the cricket week.

"That's settled, then," said Tom Merry affably. "Now, if you fellows like, we'll come with you and have Figgins & Co. out, and punish 'em for their cheek in japing School House chaps."

"Good egg!" said Blake instantly. "We've got a hundred lines to do, and we ought to make the New House bounders sit up for it."

"Yaas, wathah! But—"

"Come on, then!"

"But—"

"It's all right, Gussy. Come on!"

And Tom Merry led the way, and the rest of the juniors followed, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy still in a state of considerable excitement.

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CHAPTER 5.

Caught in the Trap.

THERE was thick dusk in the quadrangle of St. Jim's, and the big elms were looming darkly. Lights gleamed from most of the lower windows in both the Houses, and from some of the upper ones, belonging to the long ranges of studies. From the window of Figgins's study in the New House a shaft of light fell upon the leaves of the big elms, and made them glimmer and glisten. Figgins & Co. were evidently at home, after their raid on the School House.

The band of juniors cautiously crossing the quadrangle looked up at the lighted window, and grinned.

"They're there!" said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And they won't be expecting us!"

"Hallo, what's that?"

Blake suddenly swung round and glared among the shadowy trees. There was only darkness to meet his view.

"What was it like, Blake?"

"I thought I heard somebody."

"Fancy, my son. Nerves!" said Lowther.

"If you're looking for a thick ear, Lowther—"

"Come on!" said Tom Merry.

The School House juniors hurried on.

Raids between the rival Houses of St. Jim's were common enough, though it was not common for a party to venture into the rival House so boldly as Tom Merry & Co. were now about to do.

But they hoped that the very boldness of the enterprise would lead to its success.

Figgins & Co. would not be looking for that raid, and they would be taken by surprise, and then their doom would fall upon them. To burp Figgins & Co., wreck their study, and retreat unscathed to the School House, would be a big triumph for the invaders.

And Fortune seemed to smile upon them.

Blake's suspicion that they had been seen as they came through the elms was apparently without foundation, for there was not a single New House junior waiting for them in the doorway.

They dodged quickly into the House, and ran up the stairs, and still not one of the enemy showed himself.

In the Fourth-Form passage upstairs they were secure from the seniors and prefects, and apparently they were secure from the juniors, too, for there was none of them to be seen.

Tom Merry looked quickly along the lighted passage.

It was deserted.

"Coast's clear!" he whispered.

"Good egg!"

"Come on! We'll catch 'em on the hop this time, and no mistake!"

"Good!"

The juniors ran quickly and silently along to Figgins's study.

There was a light burning in the room, as they had seen from the quadrangle, and the door was ajar, allowing them to look into the room.

It was unoccupied.

The raiders looked at one another in considerable surprise. Where were Figgins & Co.? Where were all the New House juniors? It was strange that the passage should be deserted at that hour, and that Figgins & Co. should also be out of their study.

"What splendid luck!" whispered Blake. "Get in—quick; before we're seen!"

"Rather!"

They crowded into the study, and left the door ajar.

The room had evidently been vacated very lately.

A half-written imposition lay on the table, and some chestnuts were still on the bars of the grate. Figgins & Co. had certainly not been long gone.

The School House juniors grinned gleefully.

"It seems to be made for us!" murmured Tom Merry.

"This is toffee—just toffee! Figgins & Co. have gone out for something, and when they come back—"

"Ha, ha! We'll collar them!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Stand just inside the door. We'll collar them as they come in, and shove something into their mouths so that they can't yell to the others."

"Bravo!"

"Then we'll give 'em a lesson about fastening chaps up in their studies!" said Digby.

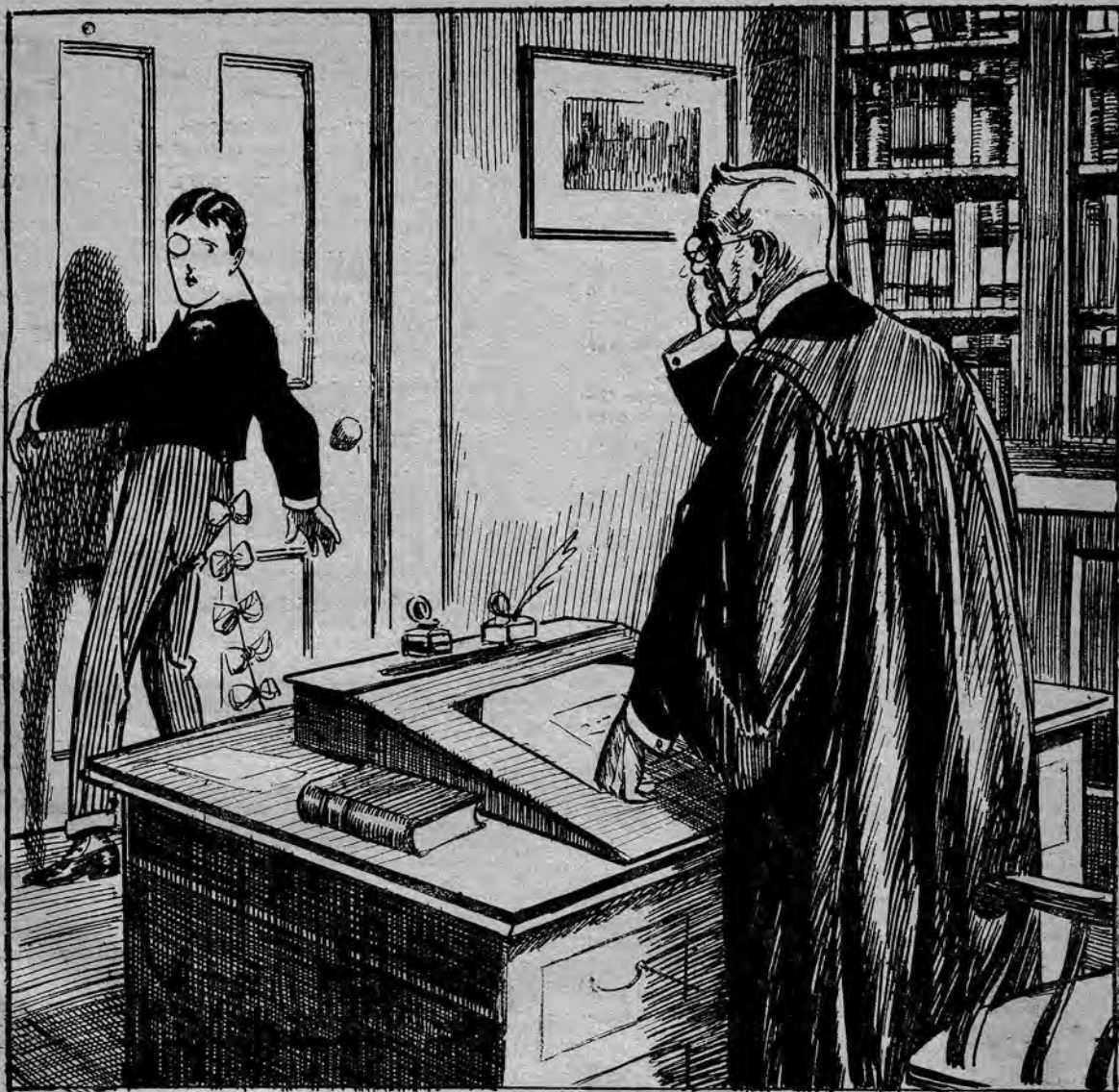
"Hurrah!"

"Quiet!"

And the juniors stood in a group just inside the study, so that they would be hidden from view when the door opened.

They waited.

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"Dear me!" said the Head, looking at D'Arcy very curiously as he caught sight of the tail of the kite trailing along the carpet. "What is that?"

In a minute or less there was a sound of footsteps in the passage. A subdued chuckle came from afar.

"Ready?" whispered Tom Merry.

The School House juniors nodded, and waited, with tense nerves.

The door opened. But it did not open quietly or gently. It was flung open suddenly, and it biffed heavily against the group of juniors, and they uttered surprised exclamations, and reeled one against another.

There was a roar of laughter in the passage.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A crowd of New House juniors poured in, headed by Figgins & Co.—Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn. In a moment the School House raiders were assailed and collared.

They resisted furiously; but they had no chance against the odds.

"Back up!" yelled Tom Merry.

"Go it, School House!"

"Ha, ha! Down with 'em!"

"Sit on 'em!" roared Figgins.

And his orders were obeyed to the letter.

The School House juniors, overwhelmed by numbers, were dragged to the floor, and a couple of New House fellows sat upon each of them.

And Figgins & Co. yelled.

"This is where we smile!" gasped Kerr. "Smile, you fellows!"

And the New House fellows smiled.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Their smile could be heard half-way across the quadrangle.

CHAPTER 6.

Figgins Accepts.

TOM MERRY & CO. wriggled furiously under the weight of their captors. But they wriggled in vain. They were captured, and they were helpless. Every fellow had two foemen sitting on him, and there were a crowd more foes in the passage, ready to swarm upon them if needed.

The New House fellows laughed loudly.

"Nicely caught," said Figgins blandly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You New House rotters!"

"Yaas, wathah! I wegard you as feahful wottahs!"

Figgins shook his finger at them playfully.

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"Mustn't lose its 'ickle temper," he said.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Lerame gerrup!" gasped Monty Lowther, who was being slowly squashed under the weight of Fatty Wynn. "You're c-e-crushing me!"

"Never mind," said Fatty comfortably. "It's all in the day's work."

"You—you heavy porpoise!"

"Quiet, old chap!"

"Gerroff!"

"Rats!"

"Come here to take us by surprise," grinned Figgins. "Catch a weasel asleep! Why, Kerr spotted you in the quad., and brought in word!"

The School House juniors bestowed appreciative looks upon Kerr, which made the Scottish junior burst into a series of explosive cackinnations.

"And we got ready for you," said Figgins. "We knew you'd walk into the trap if we left it open—that's the way of you School House chaps."

The School House chaps gasped with helpless rage.

"Will you walk into my parlour, said the spider to the fly?" chanted Pratt. And the New House fellows roared again.

"Nice of them to walk into the parlour like that," said Figgins. "Never occurred to them that some nice boys about our size were hidden in the other studies, ready to pounce on them as soon as they were safe inside."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, chuck it!" said Tom Merry. "Get off my chest, French!"

"Rats!"

"Get this blessed porpoise off me—I'm suffocating!" came in sepulchral tones from Monty Lowther.

"The question is, what are we going to do with them?" said Figgins. "Bumping is too mild a punishment. What price ducking them in sooty water?"

"Hear, hear!"

"Weally, Figgins, I twust you will not be guilty of such an extremely wotten action. I should wegard it as beastly." "Paint them red, and send them home," said Pratt. "I've got lots of red ink."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You uttah wottah, Fwatt—"

"Or whitewash them," said Fatty Wynn. "There's a pail of whitewash that Taggles left in the box-room, and—"

"Good egg!"

"Fetch it, somebody."

"Bai Jove, Figgins—"

"Buck up with the whitewash!"

"Weally, Figgins, I wegard this as an extremely wotten way to tweat a chap who wants to invite you to a cricket week in the country," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Figgins stared.

So did the School House juniors. This was the first they had heard of inviting Figgins to the cricket week at Eastwood.

But D'Arcy knew what he was about.

The swell of St. Jim's could have submitted to many kinds of punishment with the stoicism of a Spartan or a Red Indian. But to have his clothes spoiled, and to be reduced to a dirty and unpleasant state, was too much for his fortitude.

In such a pass, D'Arcy's aristocratic brain worked with unusual quickness.

And the only possible way out of the difficulty occurred to him, and he acted upon the idea immediately.

"What's that?" demanded Figgins, interested at once.

"My governah is givin' a cricket week at Eastwood."

"What about it?"

"I have permission to go and take a fwiend or two."

"Oh!" said Figgins.

"At pwsent," said D'Arcy, "I wegard you as a fwiend—or, at least, I should do so if Kerr would kindly remove his knee from my chest. He is soilin' my shirt and wumplin' my waistcoat."

"Certainly!" said Kerr politely.

A fellow whose father was giving a cricket week in the country, and who had permission to take a friend or two there, was a fellow to be treated with the utmost politeness.

Arthur Augustus rose to his feet, and dusted his clothes.

"Well?" said Figgins.

"Well, deah boy, unless we should happen to fall out, I wegard you as a fwiend, and I should be vewy pleased to have your company for a week at Eastwood."

Figgins grinned.

"Good! I'll come with pleasure. Only I couldn't come without Fatty Wynn and Kerr."

"I shall be vewy pleased to welcome them, too."

"Good egg!" said Fatty Wynn and Kerr.

And Fatty Wynn smacked his lips anticipatively. He had

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visited Eastwood before, and he knew what an excellent table was kept there. A vision of a long series of gorgeous feasts danced before the eyes of Fatty Wynn.

"Have you fixed it with the Head?" asked Figgins.

"Yaas, my governah has."

"Ripping!"

"Good old Gussy!" murmured Blake. "He's saved us from a whitewashing, and from looking a set of first-class goats to the School House."

"We'll come with pleasure," said Figgins. "But—but did you really come over to ask us, Gussy?"

"Not exactly, deah boy. But—but I have asked you, so it's all right."

"Right as rain!" said Figgins heartily.

"Yes, rather!" chimed in the Co.

"All right, is it?" exclaimed Pratt indignantly. "What about whitewashing them?"

"My dear chap, I'm not going to whitewash one of my best chums," said Figgins.

"Look here—"

"Peace is established in the wigwams of the redskins," said Figgins, with a wave of the hand. "You chaps can bunk."

"Look here, Figgy—"

"Good-bye!"

The juniors who had effected the capture glared.

This was a rather cavalier way to treat them after their services, and the invitation to Figgins & Co. did not compensate them for being deprived of the pleasure of whitewashing the School House juniors. Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn were satisfied, but the rest were very far from being so.

But Figgins was monarch of all he surveyed among the junior portion of the New House.

"My dear chap," he said, "we've licked the School House bounders, and that's enough."

"There's such a thing as tempering justice with mercy," added Kerr.

"Yes; as Shakespeare remarks, 'it's ripping to have a giant's strength, but caddish to use it as a giant.'"

"I don't think Shakespeare puts it exactly like that, Figgy," grinned Kerr.

"Well, that's what he meant, anyway. My dear asses, as we are strong, we should be merciful. We've licked the School House, and what more do you want?"

And the juniors grumbled and went.

"Not so much about licking the School House!" exclaimed Tom Merry, as he dusted himself. "We've had a slight reverse—"

"Do you reverse?" murmured Kerr.

"But as for being licked—"

"Yaas, wathah! I uttably wefuse to wegard myself as bein' licked."

Figgins grinned.

"You can regard yourself as you like, Gussy; you are licked, and that's enough," he said. "Enough for us, anyway. But never mind that; we're jolly good friends now. So you want us to come down for the cricket week?"

"I ask you to come, Figgy."

"We'll come, with pleasure. It's jolly ripping of you, Gussy, and any little ups and downs we may have had will be quite forgotten, of course, on both sides," said Figgins, in the frankest way in the world.

"That is vewy decent of you, Figgay," said D'Arcy, mollified at once. "I shall have to put it wathah tactfully to the Head, that's all. Pewwaps I had better go and see the Head now."

"Good! Let's know the verdict."

"Yaas, wathah!"

And the School House juniors, looking very dusty and sheepish, quitted Figgins's study.

Figgins closed the door after them, and then the New House trio grinned at one another.

"A week in the country!" chuckled Figgins. "How's that for high?"

"Ripping!" said Kerr.

"What-ho!" said Fatty Wynn, rubbing his plump hands. "Lord Eastwood's housekeeping is done on a proper scale, and a fellow need never be afraid of not having enough to eat. I—"

"Trust you to think of that, Fatty."

"Well, it's an important matter, isn't it?" demanded Fatty Wynn.

Meanwhile, the School House raiders were returning to their own House, feeling much less important than when they set out. They were glad that there were no fellows on the steps or in the doorway to watch them come in, and that they had mentioned to no one their intention of falling upon Figgins & Co. in their own study and making an example of them. The raid had worked out so very differently from their anticipations.

CHAPTER 7.

Thereby Hangs a Tale.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY were a thoughtful frown as he entered Study No. 6. He looked at himself in the glass, and slowly peeled off his jacket and waistcoat. The other juniors watched him in considerable surprise.

"Aren't you going to the Head?" asked Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Is that a new dodge—to go in your shirt-sleeves?"

D'Arcy turned his monocle upon Blake with a scornful gaze, as the juniors burst into a general chuckle.

"I wegard your wemark as widiculous, Blake. I am goin' to change my waistcoat, and bwush my jacket, and genewally set myself to wights before I go to the Head."

"Oh, I see! Then you're not going this evening?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"But it's bedtime in an hour, and it will take you longer than that to change your waistcoat and make a final decision about your necktie."

Arthur Augustus deigned no reply to that remark.

He selected a waistcoat and put it on, and then brushed his jacket, removing every atom of dust that had lodged upon it in the combat in Piggins's study.

Then he dusted his trousers, and gave his shoes a rub.

"Now I feel bettah," he remarked. "I shall have to wash my hands, that is all."

And he left the study.

He returned in five minutes, to find the seven juniors eating chestnuts. He looked as clean as a new pin now.

"Do you think I will do, deah boys?" he asked.

They surveyed him critically.

"It depends," said Lowther.

"How do you mean, deah boy?"

"I mean, it depends upon what you want to do for. If you're thinking of getting a job on top of an organ, you'll do admirably."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Upon the whole," said D'Arcy, "I don't think it's a good ideah to be slovenly to save time. Pewwaps I had bettah go up to the dorm. and have a thowough change."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you know—"

"Gussy, old man," said Tom Merry solemnly, "you'll do. You'll do first-rate! The Head will be simply ravished."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"You're as right as rain, Gussy," said Blake. "Do go to the Head, and let's have the verdict; we're dying of anxiety."

"This suspense is killing, as the nigger remarked when they were hanging him," said Monty Lowther.

"Vewy well, deah boys, I will go."

"Just a moment," said Lowther, as D'Arcy was turning to the door. "Is that a speck of dust on your shoulder?"

He reached over to D'Arcy, and brushed the shoulder of his jacket.

"That's all right," he said.

"Thank you vewy much, Lowthah."

"Not at all, deah boy."

And Arthur Augustus left the study. The juniors burst into a chuckle. Monty Lowther, in brushing that imaginary speck of dust off his shoulder, had inserted a bent pin into the jacket, and to the pin was attached a long cord with fragments of twisted paper tied on it at intervals, in the manner of the tail of a kite.

The kite-tail hung down behind Arthur Augustus, and the end of it trailed on the floor, as he walked out of the study.

Nobody but Monty Lowther would have thought of sending D'Arcy into the Head's study with that curious attachment trailing behind him.

"You—you ass!" muttered Blake.

"Leave him alone!"

"Don't stop him now," said Tom Merry. "He'll be too late to see the Head if he doesn't buck up, after wasting so much time, and then we sha'n't know till the morning."

Blake hesitated a moment.

While he hesitated D'Arcy was lost.

The swell of St. Jim's having once started lost no time. He strode along the Fourth-Form passage to the stairs.

Some fellows who were on the staircase stared at him.

"My only hat!" said Kerruish. "Look at it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy paused, jammed his monocle in his eye, and stared haughtily at the grinning juniors.

"Pway acquaint me with the subject of your mewwiment, deah boys!" he exclaimed.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Kewwuish—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at?"

"Ha, ha! Thereby hangs a tail!" chuckled Kerruish.

And the juniors yelled again.

Arthur Augustus had some thoughts of rushing upon them and giving them all a fearful thrashing, but he restrained his wrath, and went on downstairs.

Lefevre of the Fifth was in the hall, chatting with some other Fifth-Formers, and they all stopped, and stared at the elegant junior as he passed.

"Great Scott!" said Lefevre.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My hat! That's what I say! Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lefevre.

Arthur Augustus swung round.

"Weally, you wottahs—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus swung on.

He hadn't the faintest idea that there was a remarkable appendage trailing behind his jacket, and the cause of the general mirth that greeted his appearance was a mystery to him.

"Hallo, look there!" exclaimed Gore of the Shell, in the lower passage.

And there was a fresh yell of laughter.

"Goah, deah boy—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What's the mattah?"

"Ha, ha! Look behind you."

Arthur Augustus swung round. Of course the tail swung round with him, and he saw nothing of it.

"Weally, Goah—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The swell of St. Jim's strode on loftily.

He made up his mind that it was a rag, and he determined to take no more notice of the laughter which greeted him wherever he passed.

He reached the door of the Head's study, and tapped at it. Dr. Holmes's deep voice bade him enter.

D'Arcy entered the study. Dr. Holmes glanced up at him kindly. He could not see D'Arcy's absurd appendage while the elegant junior was facing him.

"Ah, I wanted to see you, D'Arcy!" he remarked. "You have doubtless come about the matter mentioned to me by Lord Eastwood."

"Yaas, sir!"

"I shall make no difficulty in granting Lord Eastwood's request," said the Head. "You are at liberty to visit your home for the cricket week, and to take a friend or two as Lord Eastwood wishes."

"Thank you very much, sir."

"The selection of the friend or two may be left to you, I suppose," said the Head. "You will let me know the names, so that I can communicate them to their Form-master."

"Thank you, sir."

D'Arcy hesitated.

Should he tell the Head then how many fellows he had decided to take, or leave Dr. Holmes to make the discovery when he sent the list in?

The latter would probably be the safer course.

"Of course, you will not be limited to one friend or two," said the Head, with a smile. "You may take more than that."

"Oh, thank you, sir!" said D'Arcy, relieved. "You are awfully good, sir."

"The only condition I make is that their Form-master shall be sufficiently satisfied with their progress to raise no objection," said the Head.

"Vewy well, sir."

"Very good! Dear me!" said the Head, putting on his glasses and looking at D'Arcy very curiously, as he caught sight of the tail of the kite trailing on the carpet beside his feet. "What—what is that?"

"What is what, sir?"

"That! Turn round!"

"T-t-t-turn round, sir."

"Yes, at once."

Arthur Augustus, astonished by the curious order, turned round at once. The kite tail followed him round with a graceful sweep.

The Head's face relaxed.

He tried to frown, but he could not—his lips would smile instead, and the smile became a laugh in spite of himself.

"Dear me! Ha, ha, ha! This is very absurd!"

"Sir!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy swung round again, and again the tail swept in a circle. This time it caught on a chair, and D'Arcy heard the sound, and swung round to see what it was. The tail swung away, of course, but the junior caught a glimpse of it, and turned round and round trying to see what it was.

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NEXT THURSDAY

"D'ARCY'S CRICKET WEEK"

The sight of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy chasing his tail like a kitten was too much for the doctor.

He burst into a hearty laugh.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Dear me! You—you have something attached to your jacket, D'Arcy. This is most absurd! Come here, and I will take it off for you."

The junior approached, and Dr. Holmes unhooked the pin. D'Arcy's face was a study as he beheld the kite-tail.

"Bai Jove!" he gasped. "Was—that fastened to me, sir?"

"Yes. It is some absurd trick!"

"Then that is why the fellows were laughin'!"

"It is most absurd," said the Head. "Take it away with you, D'Arcy."

And the swell of St. Jim's left the study with the kite-tail in his hand, and grim vengeance in his face.

CHAPTER 8.

Lowther Makes His Will.

"HERE he is!"

"What's the verdict?"

"Get it off your chest, Gussy?"

"Are we all going?"

"Going in bulk or in tale?"

"Get it out!"

"Go it!"

Arthur Augustus adjusted his monocle with the greatest care, and stared at the excited juniors in Study No. 6 without replying.

"Why don't you speak, image?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Go it!"

"Get it out!"

"Nevah mind that mattah now," said Arthur Augustus. "There is a more important mattah to be settled. Look at this!"

He held up the kite-tail.

The juniors looked at it with grave faces and great interest.

"Well?" said seven voices, in unison, at last.

"Well!" said D'Arcy.

"Well!" repeated the seven.

"Weally, you wottahs—"

"What does the Head say?"

"What's the verdict?"

"I went into the Head's study with that widiculous thing langin' on to my jacket behind," said Arthur Augustus.

"What did you do that for?" asked Monty Lowther innocently.

This question was almost too much for the swell of St. Jim's. He remained silent for at least two seconds, giving the humorist of the Shell a withering look.

"Somebody tied it to my jacket," he said at last.

"Oh!"

"And when the Head dwew my attention to it, I chased it wound and wound in the most widiculous mannah, and even the Head laughed!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake. "I wish I had been there! I should have laughed, too."

And the juniors roared.

"I have been tweated with gwoss diswespect, and placed in a widiculous posish," said D'Arcy. "I want to know which of you wottahs tied this thing to my jacket."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I am goin' to give the culpwit a feahful thwashin'."

And Arthur Augustus pushed back his cuffs in an exceedingly businesslike manner.

Monty Lowther slipped off the table.

"Do you mean that, D'Arcy?" he asked solemnly.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Monty Lowther cast a tearful look round the study.

"Then I suppose there's nothing to be done," said he. "I must take it quietly."

"Did you do it, Lowthah?"

"Yes."

"Then I am goin' to thwash you."

"Hold on a minute," said Lowther, backing round the table with an appearance of great alarm. "Just a tick—"

"I wufuse to hold on," said D'Arcy, following him. "I am goin' to thwash you. I wequest you to stand still while I do so."

Lowther still backed away, going right round the study table, and D'Arcy followed him. The swell of St. Jim's increased his speed, and so did Lowther, and the peculiar race went on, while the juniors yelled with laughter.

"Lowthah, you ass—"

"Hold on," said Lowther, "I want to make a few preparations before I am slain. Tom, will you take down my last will and testament if I dictate it?"

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"Certainly!" said Tom Merry, weeping.

"You uttah asses—"

"That's only fair," said Blake solemnly. "You know what a terror you are when you are roused, Gussy. Suppose you should slay Lowther by an unlucky blow, as frequently happens in novels—"

"Don't be an ass, Blake!"

"Then what would you feel like if you had not given him time to make his last will and testament?"

"You duffahs—"

"I claim the right to make my will before I am slain," said Monty Lowther. "If Gussy refuses, I decline the meeting!"

"You ass!"

"It's quite in order, and is done in the best six-shilling novels," said Manners. "Hold that bloodthirsty avenger back while Lowther makes his will!"

"Weally, you fellows—"

But D'Arcy was held back, and Tom Merry produced a crumpled sheet of paper and a fountain-pen, and Lowther began to dictate his will.

"The last will and testament of Montague Lowther—"

"You ass!" shouted D'Arcy, trying to get past Digby and Manners and Herries, who were holding him back.

"Quiet, Gussy!"

"You duffahs—"

"Gussy," said Blake severely, "I am surprised at a fellow of your birth and breeding interrupting a solemn proceeding like this."

"I wegard you as a wottah."

"Go on, Lowther."

"I leave my cricket bat to Tom Merry, and my camera to Arthur Augustus Adolphus Aubrey D'Arcy—"

"Let me get at the wottah!"

"With the condition that he does not try to take his own photo with the camera, as I do not wish it to be broken," went on Lowther.

"You wottah—"

"I leave my football boots to D'Arcy, if they are not too small for him—"

"You feahful wottah, they're three sizes too large!" howled D'Arcy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Order!"

"I leave my—"

"I wufuse to take part in these widiculous pwocceedin's. Lowthah, you are an uttah wottah. I wegard you with pwofound contempt."

"Go hon!"

"Don't interrupt a chap making his last will, Gussy—"

"I am willin' to allow the mattah to dwop," said D'Arcy, with an indignant glare round the study.

"Hear, hear!"

"Do you apologise?" demanded Lowther.

"Eh?"

"Do you apolgise?"

"You uttah ass!"

"I am in the hands of my friends in this matter," said Lowther, in the best manner of a novel hero. "If it is their opinion that I can let the matter drop without receiving an apology, I shall not insist."

"I wegard you—"

"Of course, Gussy ought to apologise," said Tom Merry. "Still, I think you might be magnanimous, and waive the apology. Consider it made."

"Very well; I consider you to have apologised, D'Arcy."

"You wank outsidah—"

"The matter is now settled," said Tom Merry. "It is settled to the credit of all parties concerned, without anybody being hurt, and with everybody's honour unstained—just like a French d—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus frowned darkly. The juniors chuckled, but the swell of St. Jim's did not join in the chuckle. D'Arcy was on his dignity.

Blake gazed at him with an expression of surprise.

"Is anything the matter, Gussy?" he asked, with solicitude.

"Oh, nothin'!" said D'Arcy loftily.

"You are perfectly satisfied with the proceedings, I suppose, or would you like them to be gone through again?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Blake—"

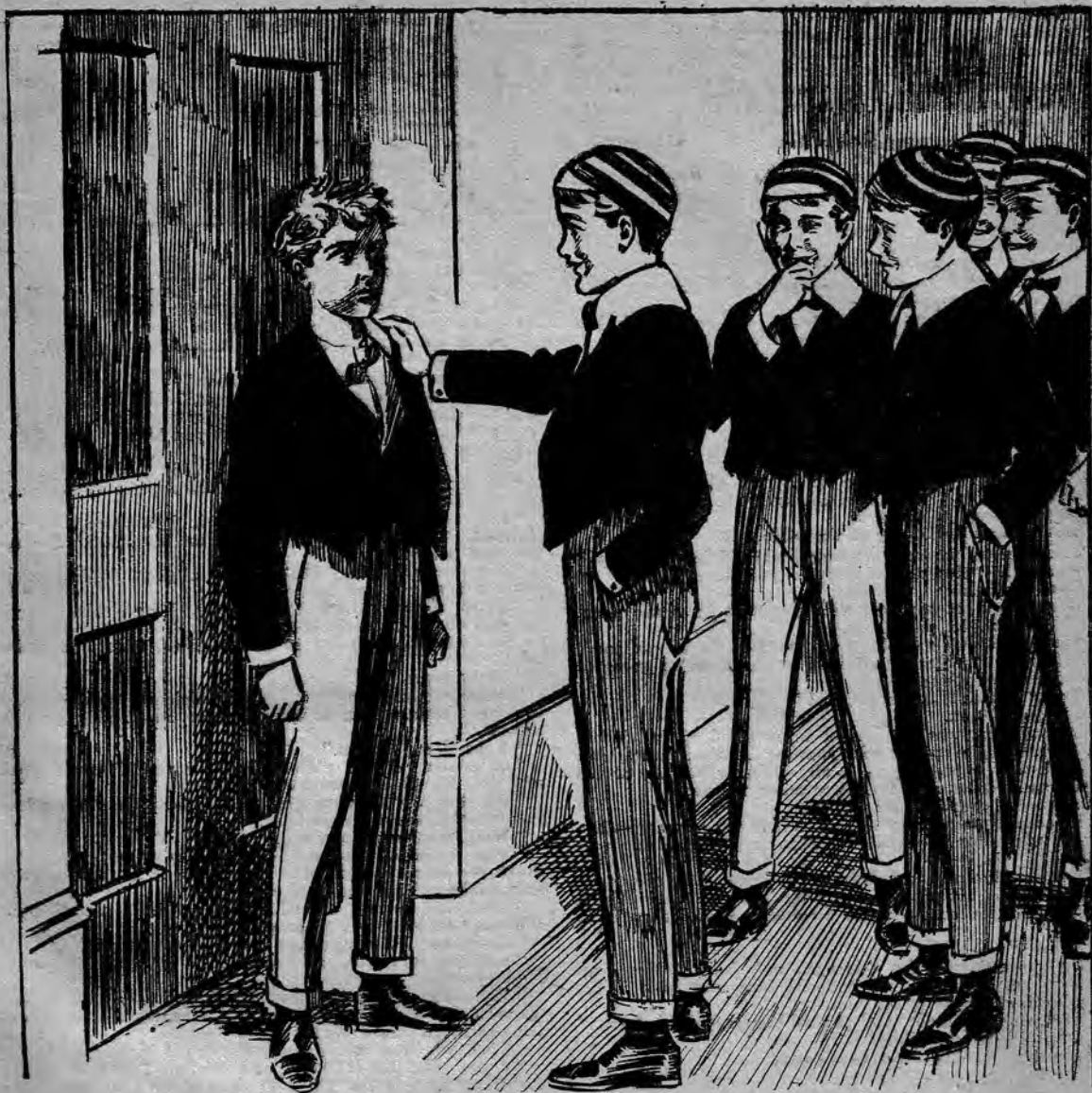
"Well, then, what's the verdict? What did the Head say?"

"It's all wight."

"We're going?"

"Yaas."

"Hurrah!"



"Well, you look a sight, young un!" said Tom Merry, laughing as he caught the hero of the Third by the shoulder.

CHAPTER 9.

Wally Wants to Go.

KANGAROO—otherwise Harry Noble—put his head into Study No. 6 as the cheer rang along the Fourth Form passage. The Cornstalk looked inquiringly at the juniors.

"What's the row?" he asked. "Wherefore hurrah?"

"Good news, my son! Hurrah!"

"Hip pip—"

"What is it, then, you asses?"

"Gussy's governor is giving a cricket week at Eastwood, and he's got the Head's permission to take a friend or two."

"Jolly good," said the Australian junior. "How fortunate that I chummed up with Gussy the moment I came to St. Jim's."

"Weally, Kangawoo—"

"How lucky that we took to each other like ducks taking to water, and have been inseparable ever since."

"Bai Jove!"

"You know, I have always liked and admired Gussy, and tried to—tie my necktie as he does," said Noble. "I'm so glad you've got permission to take a friend or two,

Gussy. "Of course, I'm the friend—the two can be anybody you please."

"Weally—"

"Nuff said, old chap. I'll come."

"Gweat Scott!"

"When are you starting?"

"To-morrow. But—"

"What train?"

"The thwee-thirty fwom Wylcombe. But—"

"All right; I'll be ready."

"Weally—"

"Any of you fellows coming?" asked Kangaroo, with an affable look at the grinning juniors.

"Yes, a few," said Tom Merry, laughing.

"The friend or two amounts to nine chaps so far," said Blake. "Blessed if I see why there shouldn't be a tenth."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Make it ten, Gussy."

Arthur Augustus smiled.

"Well, as a mattah of fact, Kangawoo is a weally wippin' cricketah. He bowls vewy neahly as well as I do—"

"Awfully nearly, if not quite," murmured Tom Merry.

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"And his batten' isn't bad—"

"Thanks awfully," said Kangaroo gratefully.

"Not at all, deah boy. I am only statin' the facts," said D'Arcy. "I don't know whethah there will be twouble in the mornin' when the Head discovahs how many chaps are goin', but I suppose it will be as easy to take ten as nine."

"Yes, rather!"

"Then I shall be vewy glad to take you, Kangawoo!"

"Shake!" said the Cornstalk.

He grasped D'Arcy's hand, and gave it a squeeze that made the swell of St. Jim's jump clear of the floor with a wild howl.

"Ow! Ow! Yow! Yaroo!"

"Anything the matter?"

"Yaroo! My—my—my hand!"

"Well, I'm glad it's settled nicely," said Kangaroo. "I'll go and toll Glyn and Dane."

And he went down the passage, whistling. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy caressed his injured hand tenderly.

"I am wathah inclined to think that Kangawoo was japin' me," he said. "I weally think I ought to give him a feahful thwashin'."

"Is it a custom of yours to thrash your guests?" asked Monty Lowther innocently.

"Weally, Lowthab—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus turned an indignant glance upon the Terrible Three as they quitted the study, to return to their interrupted prep, to finish it.

Blake glanced doubtfully at the table.

"I don't know whether it's worth while doing the prep.,"

he remarked. "It's useless if we're going to-morrow."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"If anything goes wrong, it's better to have the prep.

done," said Digby cautiously.

"Besides, it will look as if we want to do all we can,"

said Herries. "After all, it isn't much, if we're going to have a week's holiday."

"Yaas, wathah! Let's get on!"

And they got on.

But that prep. was fated to be interrupted again. There was a sound of snapping and yapping in the passage, and the door was opened, and Wally—D'Arcy minor of the Third Form—came in with Pongo under his arm.

He closed the study door quickly.

"You don't mind my lying low in here for a few minutes, do you, you chaps?" queried the hero of the Third affably.

"Weally, Wally—"

"You see, Pongo's forbidden in the house, but, of course, I have him in the Form-room after lessons," said Wally.

"Like to see the school where I couldn't have Pongo in to talk to."

"But—"

"He got out into the passage, and he's tripped up Kildare," said Wally. "I collared him and ran. I believe Kildare's looking for him."

"You young bouncer, and you've brought him in here!" exclaimed Blake wrathfully.

Wally held up his finger cautiously.

"Hist!"

"What the—"

"I can hear Kildare coming!"

"Better bunk."

"Can't; he'd spot me. Where can I hide Pongo?"

"Shove him in the cupboard," said Blake, "or in Gussy's hat-box."

"I uttally wefuse to have that howwid animal shoved into my hat-box."

Wally grinned, and darted towards the cupboard.

He pushed Pongo inside—Pongo going very unwillingly, apparently seeing no reason why he should hide—and closed the door. He leaned against the door in an attitude of assumed carelessness.

"Yes, Gussy," he said, in a loud voice, as the study door opened, "I shall certainly come home for the cricket week."

"Weally, Wally—"

Kildare of the Sixth looked into the study. Kildare, captain of St. Jim's, was generally good-tempered. He did not look good-tempered now. Perhaps stumbling over Wally's dog in the passage had not improved his temper.

"Is D'Arcy minor here? Ah, here you are! Where is that dog?"

"Dog!" said Wally.

"I fell over Pongo in the passage."

"Did you?"

"Yes, I did!" roared Kildare.

"Was he hurt?" asked Wally.

Kildare glared at the cool junior.

"I was hurt," he exclaimed. "You know you are not

allowed to have that brute in the house, D'Arcy minor. Where is he?"

"I can't see him."

"The brute ran upstairs."

"Did he?"

"And I saw you in the upper passage."

"Did you?"

"Where is that dog?"

Scratch! Scratch! Scratch!

It was Pongo inside the cupboard, trying to get out. Blake & Co. grinned. Kildare uttered an exclamation.

"Why, you young-rascal, you have him in the cupboard there!"

Wally turned red.

"Open that door!" commanded Kildare.

Wally opened the cupboard door. Pongo frisked out in great glee, and barked. He ran between Arthur Augustus's legs, and nearly upset the swell of St. Jim's.

"So he was here all the time!" said Kildare grimly.

"You see—"

"Come to my study, D'Arcy minor."

"You're not going to whack Pongo," said Wally, gathering his shaggy favourite up in his arms protectingly. "I brought him in. You can lick me if you like."

Kildare smiled grimly.

"That's what I'm going to do. Follow me."

D'Arcy minor made a grimace as the captain of St. Jim's quitted the study.

"Curious thing that I'm always in hot water," he exclaimed. "People seem to pick on me because I'm harmless and inoffensive."

"Yes, rather!" said Blake, with a grin. "Mind, that beast is trying to get away!"

"Quiet, Pongo! Look here, Gussy, I have heard from the dad about that cricket week at home, and it seems that he hasn't made it a point to ask the Head for me to be let off."

"Vewy pwob."

"Some rot about my not being sufficiently well reported by my Form-master, to justify him in making such a request."

"Yaas, I suppose so."

"Of course, it's all piffle. Selby never gives me good reports. He dislikes me for some reason."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake. "Perhaps it was because you covered him with tar once."

"Well, that was really only a joke."

"You couldn't expect Selby to have a sufficiently developed sense of humour to appreciate it as it deserved," said Blake, with a shake of the head.

"Well, it's rotten that I'm not to have leave," said Wally. "Of course, I'm going."

"I'm sowwy, Wally, but it seems to me imposs."

"Kildare told you to follow him, Wally," suggested Digby gently.

"Well, I'm going to. The governor has left it to the discretion of the Head and my Form-master whether I am allowed to go," said Wally.

"Then you had bettah behave yourself, deah boy."

"I was thinking of that," said Wally. "If I set up as a shining light in the Third Form, and drew all eyes upon me by my goodness and meekness, like Georgie in the story-book, it might work—only there isn't much time. Besides, it isn't in my line."

"I think I heard Kildare call," said Herries.

"Blow Kildare! You see, I must go, and I shall have to work it somehow. I should hate to have to do a bolt."

"I uttally wefuse my pernish. for you to do a bolt, Wally."

"Rats! Look here, Gussy. I want you to write a persuasive letter to the governor, and at the same time put it sweetly to the Head."

"But—"

"I'll be on my best behaviour, and win golden opinions from all sorts of people, like that chap in Virgil—or was it Homer?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake. "It was Shakespeare."

"Well, I knew it was one of the old bouncers," said Wally irreverently. "Well, that's my little game. See?"

"D'Arcy minor!"

It was Kildare's voice from the distance.

"Hallo, there's Kildare doing vocal exercises. I shall have to cut. But I sha'n't see you again before bedtime, so I must finish now," said Wally.

"Weally, Wally—"

"Now, don't you begin, Gus! It's too bad of you to waste time talking, when there isn't a minute to spare. Remember what I want you to do, that's all. I'm going to play gentle Georgie, and win golden opinions. Then if I can't come with you to-morrow, I shall be able to follow a day or two later. See?"

"Yaas, but—"

"I can hear Kildare coming," said Blake.

"My only Aunt Jane! I—"

Wally made for the door just as Kildare reached it again. The captain of St. Jim's frowned into the study.

"I think I told you to follow me, D'Arcy minor," he said.

"Just coming, Kildare. Ow!"

The St. Jim's captain took a firm grasp upon Wally's ear with his finger and thumb, and led him from the study. Wally wriggled painfully, and Pongo took advantage of the diversion to skip out of his arms and dash for liberty.

"Ow!" murmured Wally. "You needn't hold me so tight, Kildare; I'm not going to bolt."

But Kildare's grip did not relax till he had led the scamp of the Third Form into his study. There he took down a cane, and the next five minutes were decidedly painful for D'Arcy minor.

CHAPTER 10.

Kind Friends!

"A CRICKET week!"

"How jolly!"

"Wish I were going!"

"Faith, and so do I!"

Tom Merry & Co. were in the common-room in the School House, and most of the other juniors were there, chatting before going to bed. The news had spread over the whole House that D'Arcy's "governor" was giving a cricket week at Eastwood, and that the swell of St. Jim's was going, with a party of friends.

The fellows were very much interested, of course.

There were few who wouldn't have been glad of a cricket week at Eastwood House, and to enjoy the hospitality of D'Arcy's noble parent.

If the swell of St. Jim's had been so minded, he could easily have included the whole House in the "friend or two."

Naturally, it was only D'Arcy's own particular friends who could expect to be asked, where there were so many willing to go, and only a limited number could be taken.

But it was astonishing how many particular friends D'Arcy found himself in possession of all of a sudden.

Not only in the junior Forms, but in the Middle School, and even among the seniors, Arthur Augustus became amazingly popular.

There were a few fellows who sneered, and said that D'Arcy wouldn't have such good luck if his father didn't happen to be an influential member of the governing body of St. Jim's.

Possibly there was something in it.

Lord Eastwood, as a governor of the old school, naturally had a great deal of influence with the head-master, who was moreover an old friend of his.

But it was understood that no fellow would be granted that extra holiday who was not in the good books of his Form-master, so far as his progress with his studies went.

And D'Arcy, with all his elegant ways, was a hard worker, and Tom Merry & Co. never allowed either sport or fun to interfere with their school work.

Fellows who sneered the most, like Mellish of the Fourth, were fellows who neglected their work, and on that ground alone would not have been entitled to an extra exert.

When the chums of Study No. 6 had finished their prep., and came down to the junior common-room, Arthur Augustus received quite an ovation.

Mellish was very friendly, but so were all the rest, and D'Arcy was a little surprised at first.

"Here he is!" said Mellish. "Would you like to have the armchair, D'Arcy?"

"No, thanks, Mellish," said the swell of the Fourth, who never was on good terms with Mellish, and quite distrusted him.

"Better take it," urged Mellish. "You ought to rest, you know. You've got a long journey to make to-morrow."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I hear you had some lines to do, Gussy. You don't mind my calling you Gussy, do you?"

D'Arcy turned his monocle upon the cad of the Fourth.

"Well, as a matter of fact, Mellish, I generally pwefer to be called that only by my friends, you know."

Mellish smiled a sickly smile.

"Well, I've always wanted to be on good terms," he said. "I hope you look on me as a friend. I'm sure I regard you in that light."

"That's vewy kind of you, deah boy."

"I was going to say that if you hadn't time to do your lines, I would do them for you."

D'Arcy almost gasped.

"Bai Jove! What?"

"I should have very great pleasure in doing your lines,

D'Arcy, if it would save you time, and you have much packing to do."

"I— Weally, Mellish, you are awf'ly good! I am afraid I have done you an injustice."

"Oh, never mind that," said Mellish affably. "If all misunderstandings are over now, that's all right."

"But weally—"

"Do take the armchair, Gussy!"

"Well, as you are so pweassin', I will."

"May I do the lines?" asked Mellish, as D'Arcy sank into the armchair.

"Yaas, wathah! Pway accept my best thanks."

"Not at all. Only too happy."

"That's all very well," interrupted Slade. "I think you might let me do your lines, Gussy. I should like to."

"Bai Jove!"

"Besides, Mellish can't play cricket, as you know."

Arthur Augustus looked astonished.

"Whatever has doin' my lines got to do with cwicket?" he asked.

Tom Merry burst into a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"It hasn't much to do with cricket," roared Jack Blake, "but it's got a lot to do with a cricket week."

"Bai Jove!"

"Really, Blake, I think you are very unfair," said Mellish, in his meekest and blandest tone. "I have not given D'Arcy a single hint on that topic. Of course, I should like to go with him for the ericket week, and if he cared to ask me I should accept with pleasure," said Mellish. "But I hope I am above hinting to anyone for an invitation."

"I hope you are, Mellish, but I have my doubts."

"Really, Blake—"

"Yaas, wathah! Weally, Blake, I think you are showin' too much distwust," said Arthur Augustus, a little severely. "Mellish is turnin' ovah a new leaf. He wants to be chummy. I think we ought to give him a chance."

"Thank you, D'Arcy. I was sure you would be fair to me," said Mellish.

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy! Of course, it is imposs. for me to have you down to Eastwood, but I am vewy pleased to see you playin' up like this."

Mellish's jaw dropped.

"Impossible, D'Arcy?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"But—"

"But it's jolly good of you to do my lines. You and Slade can do them between you. I shall be vewy much obliged."

"You can jolly well do them yourself," said Mellish; and he walked out of the room.

D'Arcy turned his monocle in the direction of the departing cad of the Fourth.

"Bai Jove! Is anythin' w'ong with Mellish?" he asked. "I twust I have not said anythin' to annoy him, affah he was so decent."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, never mind Mellish," said Slade; "I'll do the lines. You know how I play cricket, too, D'Arcy."

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy, but I wouldn't remind you of it."

"What?" yelled Slade.

"You'll impwove in time," said D'Arcy. "It's all wight. When a chap misses the ball ewevy time, and keeps on gettin' leg before, it's no good blamin' him. What he wants is pwactice. Besides, it's the result of hewedity and enviwnment, as Skimpole says."

"Look here—"

"You can get ahead with the lines, deah boy."

"Am I coming down for the cricket week?"

"Imposs., deah boy."

"Then you can jolly well do your lines yourself," said Slade; and he growled and went out, slamming the door.

"Bai Jove!"

CHAPTER 11.

More Kindness.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS looked very thoughtful as he sat in the armchair, and stretched out his legs so that his trousers would not bag at the knees.

Unwilling as he was to suspect anybody of interested motives on any occasion, he could not very well fail to see that Mellish and Slade had had interested motives in making their kind offers.

But nothing could possibly have made the good-natured, kind-hearted swell of St. Jim's in the least cynical.

He quickly dismissed Mellish from his mind, and the thoughtful frown upon his noble brow was caused by his reflections upon the subject of his younger brother.

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NEXT THURS. AT

"D'ARCY'S CRICKET WEEK."

It was hard on Wally that he couldn't go to Eastwood for the cricket week.

Wally was the scamp of the Form he belonged to, and there was little mischief among the fags that he did not have a hand in. His Form-master had a "down" upon him, and perhaps not without reason. Mr. Selby was an acid-tempered man, and the last man in the world to get on amicably with D'Arcy minor.

There were frequently rubs, too, between major and minor, for Wally never would follow in the course Arthur Augustus prescribed for him.

He was as inky and untidy as D'Arcy was elegant and neat, and that was a constant trial to the swell of St. Jim's. He even preferred "Wally" to "Walter Adolphus" as a name to be called by—a thing D'Arcy never could understand.

Yet there was a very real affection between the brothers, though they were hardly aware of it themselves, and would have laughed to scorn any idea of a demonstrative display of it.

Wally certainly didn't deserve any relaxation of the college rules in his favour, on the score of conduct.

All the same, he wanted to go to the cricket week, and Arthur Augustus wanted him to go. And this was particularly benevolent of D'Arcy, because he knew that Wally would take Pongo—and Pongo was D'Arcy's pet abomination, even more so than Herries's famous bulldog.

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther were playing chess with Blake, Herries, and Digby—a three-sided match—to the accompaniment of endless remarks and comparing of notes and recriminations, when D'Arcy rose from his chair.

The swell of St. Jim's glanced at them.

"I say, deah boys!" he remarked.

No one answered. They were too intent on their game.

"Check!" exclaimed the Terrible Three, in one voice.

"Oh, all right!" said Blake. "That's what comes of letting Herries select the move!"

"Just so!" said Digby.

"Oh, rats!" exclaimed Herries indignantly. "You chaps had taken moves, and you jolly well got us into this position."

"Don't jaw, old chap."

"No—you've done enough damage!"

"Look here—"

"We can get out of it all right," said Blake. "We can cover by interposing the knight—"

"Better move the king behind the rock," said Digby.

"My idea would be to get the king to queen's second," remarked Herries.

"Now, be reasonable, old chap; we've had enough of your ideas; that's how we got into this mess."

"Look here, Blake—"

"Look here, Herries—"

"Take your time," said Tom Merry blandly. "You're mate in three, whichever way you fix it."

"Don't you jaw, Tom Merry!"

"You Shell bounders can keep quiet, anyway!"

"Yes, but—"

"Cheese it!"

"Dry up!"

D'Arcy smiled, and quitted the common-room. He saw that he would not have much chance of speaking to his comrades until that fateful game of chess was decided.

The swell of St. Jim's went down the passage looking very thoughtful. He was going to see Wally in the Third Form-room; but a minute after he had left the common-room, he received a friendly tap on the shoulder.

Knox, the prefect, and Sefton of the Sixth—a New House fellow—had stopped him. The two were great chums, though they belonged to rival Houses. And neither was a fellow of whom his House had reason to be proud. Knox was a bully, and Sefton was another, and they were intensely disliked by the juniors.

Arthur Augustus stopped, looking a little uneasy.

He was not on good terms with either of the Sixth-Formers, and he remembered the terrific disturbance that had been made over Knox's head that evening.

But the manner of the seniors was far from hostile.

"Hallo, D'Arcy!" said Knox affably. "Step into my study, will you?"

Arthur Augustus hesitated.

In the study he would be quite at the mercy of the two bullies, if they chose to show the cloven foot. Certainly, Knox's manner was friendly enough; but D'Arcy, like the gentleman of olden times feared the Greeks when they came with gifts in their hands.

"I am in wathah a hurry, Knox," he remarked.

"I want to speak to you."

"So do I," said Sefton agreeably.

"I've got a bit of a supper going in my study, too," Knox remarked.

"Weally, Knox—"

"Hot buttered toast, and jam," said Knox.

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"You're awfully good!"

"Not at all," said the prefect cordially, passing his arm through D'Arcy's. "Come along, my boy!"

It was certainly very flattering to be called "my boy" by a prefect, and to walk along the passage arm-in-arm with a Sixth-Former was naturally very gratifying to a junior. Besides, D'Arcy was polite before everything. His interview with Wally could wait a few minutes. He accompanied the seniors with a good grace.

There was a fire in Knox's study, and the room looked very cheerful. Knox's fag had prepared supper there. There was a pile of buttered toast on a dish on the fender.

Knox had been going to entertain his New House crony, as a matter of fact, when the news of the cricket week had been wafted to his ears.

"Sit down, chappy!" said Knox heartily. "Take the arm-chair."

"Weally, you're too good—"

"Not a bit of it! Sit down!"

D'Arcy sank into the armchair.

Sefton sat down, too, and Knox handed out the toast, and made cups of cocoa. Knox was hospitality and affability itself.

D'Arcy had never imagined that the unpopular prefect could be so genial and pleasant. He felt that he had done Knox an injustice. True, with the memory of Mellish's dodges fresh in his mind, he could not help a slight suspicion creeping in. But he banished it as unworthy of himself and of the genial prefect.

"Like the toast, D'Arcy?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Cocoa all right?"

"Wippin'!"

"Make yourself at home, you know."

"Certainly, deah boy!"

And Arthur Augustus made himself at home. Supper with a prefect in his study, as a distinguished guest, was a new experience to the junior, and naturally enough he enjoyed it. And the cocoa was good, and the toast was really nice. Knox's fag knew better than to allow any fault to creep into his toast-making.

Knox exchanged a glance with Sefton.

"Quite comfy, D'Arcy?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Good! There's a subject I've been going to speak to some of you juniors about for a long time," Knox remarked thoughtfully. "It appears to me that relations aren't really as friendly as they ought to be between the upper and the lower school."

"That's vewy twue, deah boy," said D'Arcy, helping himself to another slice of toast.

"It's a thing that ought to be altered," said the prefect, with a shake of the head.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"For instance, I can't help thinking that it would promote good-feeling between the Forms if the Sixth had juniors to tea in their studies, sometimes."

"Vewy likely!"

"And the seniors, too, could take an interest in junior pursuits, especially in sports, such as cricket."

"Kildare does a lot for us in that line, Knox, and so does Dawwel."

"H'm, yes; but I mean something more—more in a friendly way," said Knox. "Do you think it a good idea, D'Arcy?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Of course, I value your opinion very highly."

"Well, I am genevally considahed a fellow of some tact and judgment," said Arthur Augustus. "I think it's a wippin' ideah."

"By the way, I hear you're going on some holiday or other to-morrow," Knox remarked.

"Yaas."

"What is it?"

"A cwicket week at my governah's. I'm going down and takin' a fiwend or two."

"Have you selected the friends you are going to take?"

"Yaas."

"Juniors, I suppose?"

"Certainly, deah boy!"

"It might be a good idea to ask some seniors," suggested Knox, in honeyed tones. "It would promote that—that good and friendly feeling between the Forms that I was speaking of just now."

"Yaas, wathah, but—"

"I think it's a good idea," remarked Sefton.

"A couple of seniors could easily get permission to go, too," remarked Knox, in a reflective way, "and they would be able to do all sorts of little things for you, too—especially a prefect."

"Yaas, but—"



Fatty Wynn was standing at the counter waiting for his penny change. "Come on!" roared Figgins, rushing in. "The train's starting!"

"In fact, I wouldn't mind coming myself," said Knox, as if the idea had suddenly shot into his mind.

"Same here!" said Sefton, with great heartiness.

D'Arcy coloured.

"The fact is, deah boys, the numbah is made up," he said. "Of course, I should be vewy much flattahed, but it is imposs."

"Oh, nonsense!" said Knox briskly. "We aren't standing on our dignity as Sixth-Formers. We'll just come."

"Certainly," said Sefton.

"Imposs. I'm sowwy—"

"Now, look here, D'Arcy—"

"I'm awf'ly sowwy—"

"I'll make you sorrier, if I have any of your cheek, you young hound!" said Knox, his angry temper breaking out. "You'd better be careful how you talk to me!"

Arthur Augustus rose to his feet.

He began to wish very sincerely that he had not entered the study after all. He was in a trap. Wild horses would not have dragged him into giving Knox an invitation to the cricket week at Eastwood now; but how he was to get out of the study was a question.

"Weally, Knox—" he began.

"Look to the door, Sefton!" said Knox.

The New House bully put his back to the door.

D'Arcy cast a quick glance round.

He saw that he was in for a licking, and his eyes flashed. He seized the kettle that was still singing on the hob, with a sudden inspiration.

"Pway get out of the way, Sefton," he said, advancing to the door.

Knox sprang after him, and D'Arcy swung the kettle round. The bully of the Sixth sprang back just in time to escape a jet of hot water from the spout.

"You young hound!" he roared. "Put that kettle down!" Arthur Augustus did not deign to reply to the prefect. He advanced upon Sefton, who flinched. He would willingly have treated the junior with any amount of brutality; but the kettle of hot water was another matter.

"Let me pass!" said D'Arcy.

"Stop him!" howled Knox.

"Let me pass!"

Sefton forced a laugh, and stepped aside from the door.

"Get out, you whelp!" he said.

Arthur Augustus opened the door, keeping a wary eye on the two bullies. He stepped into the passage, and then turned his monocle back once more.

"I regard you with profound contempt," he said. Then he slammed the door, threw down the kettle, and fled.

CHAPTER 12.

Wally Means to be Good.

D'ARCY ran for the Third-Form room, and reached it. If the Sixth-Form bullies looked for him, he was pretty certain that they would not look there.

The fags were in the Form-room in great force. They preferred that room to the junior common-room, which they would have to share with the Fourth and Shell. It was getting near to bedtime, but the Third were still lively.

Wally was arguing hotly with Jameson and Curly Gibson, and there was a babel of tongues from the rest of the room at the same time.

"Well, I haven't seen him," said Jameson. "You should keep an eye on your mongrel."

"Keep him in the kennel," said Gibson.

"Rats!" retorted Wally. "You ought to have looked for him while I was in Kildare's study."

"Oh, he'll turn up all right!"

"Hallo, here's the giddy Anarey!" said Jameson, jamming a penny into his right eye, in rude imitation of D'Arcy's monocle, and staring at the swell of St. Jim's.

D'Arcy gave him a glance of lofty disdain.

"I came to speak to you, Wally," he said. "I trust Kildare did not hurt you much."

Wally growled, and rubbed his hands once more upon his rumpled trousers.

"He jolly well did!" he said. "He laid it on as if he were making big drives in a cricket-match."

"Sowwy! Still, you deserved it, and that must be a comfort to you, deah boy."

Wally glared.

"If you've come here to be funny, Gussy, you may as well cot!" he exclaimed. "I don't feel quite up to giddy humour now."

"I was not jokin', Wally," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "I should imagine that the reflection that you fully deserved your punishment would make it less disagreeable to you."

"Then you're off-side!" growled Wally. "It doesn't! What else have you come for? I could have got that out of a Good-George book."

"Weally, Wally—"

"Oh, cut the cackle, and come to the hosses!" said Wally.

"What's the bizney?"

"It's about the cricket week."

Wally brightened up.

"Got the Head's permission?"

"No, deah boy. I have not mentioned you to the Head. But I am goin' to do my best. I shall twy my hardest to get you leave to come."

"Well, that's jolly decent of you, Gussy," said Wally.

"Look here, if you get me off for the week, I won't rag you all the time we're at home."

"Hear, hear!" said Jameson. "And if you can take us, too, Gussy, we'll stand by and cheer whenever you make a good hit."

"I'm afraid that would be impos, Jameson—"

"Impossible for you to make a good hit? Well, perhaps you're right."

"You young-ass! I mean impos. to take you!"

"We shouldn't have much cheering to do, anyway," remarked Curly Gibson.

"Weally, you young wascal—"

"What's this blessed Fourth-Former doing in our room?" exclaimed Jameson, observing that there was no chance for him, at all events, to get to Eastwood for the cricket week.

"Kick him out!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Throw him out!"

"Hold on!" said Wally. "Gussy's my visitor, and you've got to treat him civilly, unless you want thick ears all round."

"Yah!"

"If the chap who said 'yah' will come out, I'll talk to him," said Wally.

The invitation was not accepted. The chap who said 'yah,' apparently did not wish to be talked to by D'Arcy minor. The fags moved off, and Wally was left alone with his major. D'Arcy glanced after them loftily through his monocle, and then his glance returned to his hopeful younger brother.

"I'm weally vewy much concerned about this, Wally," he remarked. "We must work it if we can. The governah

"The governor's played it rather low down on me," said

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Wally. "He might have made it a point with the Head that I was to go."

Arthur Augustus shook his head.

"Impos, deah boy. He was bound to leave it to the Head. It depends on the report of the Form-mastah."

"Selby always slates me."

"You must be vewy careful with Selby."

"Not much good."

"You must be vewy careful with the othah mastahs."

"H'm!"

"Also with the pwefects, and the seniahs genewally."

"A-h-e-m!"

"It's only by keepin' on your best behaviour that you'll have a chance at all, Wally. It's wathah unfortunate that you've just had twouble with Kildare."

Wally rubbed his hand reminiscently.

"Yes, rather; he hurts when he lays it on."

"I mean, it wathah spoils your start as a good chawactah."

"Oh, that's all right! Kildare always forgets a chap after he's fieked him. He's not a worm like Knox, for instance, always keeping it up against a chap."

"Now, will you twy to be good, Wally, and get some golden opinions? And I will do what I can with the Head. As for the governah, he's willin' for you to come home if the Head cares to let you go."

"I'm on my best behaviour already," said Wally. "I've been keeping these chaps quiet. There hasn't been half the usual row in the room this evening."

"Vewy good!"

"If there's much noise, I'm going to fight the chap who starts it. That's understood. Now, if I—"

"Bai Jove, what's that?"

The door was flung suddenly open, and an excited fag put his head in.

"Wally! Where's young D'Arcy?"

"Here I am!" said Wally. "Who are you calling young D'Arcy?"

"I say, it's Pongo!"

"Pongo!"

"Yes, Pongo!"

"Have you found him?"

"Found him? No! He's found Herr Schneider!"

"What?"

"He's in Schneider's room, and—"

"My hat!"

"Schneider's yelling like one o'clock," grinned the fag. "He's in an awful rage! He found Pongo eating his supper, which had been laid in his room because he's got a cold, you know."

"Phew!"

"I fancy he'll smash Pongo!"

"Will he?" roared Wally.

And he dashed from the room.

"Wally!" shouted Arthur Augustus—"Wally!"

But the scamp of the Third did not hear, or heed, at all events.

He rushed away, with a troop of fags at his heels, in the direction of the German master's room.

"Bai Jove," murmured Arthur Augustus, "what wotten luck! That beastly mongrel will spoil evewythin'—just when Wally was going to be good. Bai Jove!"

Wally had already forgotten that he was going to be good. He was thinking only of Pongo at that moment.

There was the sound of an uproar in Herr Schneider's room.

The door was wide open, and a group of fellows stood in the passage, staring in, and chuckling.

The scene within was curious.

On the table lay the remains of Herr Schneider's supper, mostly dragged off the plate and distributed over the cloth.

Herr Schneider, with a face red with rage, was grasping an umbrella, and trying to get at Pongo. Pongo was determined not to be got at. He was dodging round the table, and the stout Herr pursued him breathlessly.

"Mein Gott!" gasped Herr Schneider. "It is tat mein supper have been eaten mit te dog after mit itself, ain't it? I smashes tat tog!"

"Here, lemme through!" muttered Wally.

"Who are you shoving, young D'Arcy?"

"Lemme get in! That's my dog!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Wally elbowed his way to the open doorway.

Pongo was chasing wildly round the room, escaping the swipes of the Herr's umbrella by a series of miracles.

Every now and then he made a rush for the door, but the crowd there would not let him pass. They were enjoying the scene too much. The sight of the fat German gentleman taking so much unaccustomed exercise was very entertaining.

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"Go it, sir!" said Gore. "You nearly had him that time, sir!"

"Ach! Don't let tat tog get away, ain't it?"

"We won't let him pass!"

"Not much, sir."

"He has eaten mein supper mit himseif. It is tat I smashes him, ain't it? I kills tat peastly tog before!"

"Go it, sir!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Herr was wildly excited, too much excited to realise what an absurd figure he was making. He made another breathless rush after the lively mongrel, and Pongo whipped out of the way just in time.

Swipe, went the umbrella, and there was a crash.

Herr Schneider had missed Pongo, but he had caught a vase on the mantelpiece, and it came down in a hundred pieces.

"Bravo!" roared Kerruish.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Herr gasped for breath.

"Ach! Mein Himmel!"

"Make way, you bounders!" grunted Wally.

"Keep back!"

"Sha'n't!"

Wally's elbows forced the crowd in the doorway to open. Pongo saw his opportunity, and whisked out through the struggling legs, and dashed along the passage. Herr Schneider gave a yell.

"Ach! It is tat he gets away!"

"He's gone, sir!"

"Ach! Tat is D'Arcy minor! D'Arcy minor, tat you gomes in here!"

Wally unwillingly entered the room. He would gladly have followed Pongo at top speed down the passage; but the Herr's eye was upon him.

He assumed the meekest possible expression as he stepped into the room.

Herr Schneider adjusted his spectacles, mopped his perspiring brow, and fixed a stern glance upon the scamp of the Third.

"D'Arcy minor, tat is your tog?"

"Ye-e-es, sir!"

"He has eaten my supper, ain't it?"

"He—he's fond of good food, sir. He—he knew you would be bound to have a nice supper, sir," murmured Wally.

"Tat tog is not allowed in te house, ain't it?"

"Well, sir—"

"But you have him in te house."

"He got loose, sir."

"But you have him in te house before tat he got loose."

"Well, yes, sir!"

"You have proke te rules, D'Arcy minor."

"If you please, sir—"

"Also and too you have caused to be proke mein vase, and to be eaten mit itself mein supper before," said the Herr. "I tink tat I sends you to te Head to be caned, ain't it."

Wally gave a gasp of dismay.

To be sent in to the Head then to be caned would be ruin to his plans for getting extra leave by good behaviour, and impressing upon Dr. Holmes what a nice, well-behaved boy he was.

"Oh, sir!" murmured Wally.

The German-master smiled grimly.

"It is too late for tat you go to bodder te Head to-night," he said. "But you goes in at first ting after te prayers in te morning, ain't it, and you haves te cane mit yourself."

"Oh, sir! I—I'd rather you caned me, sir!" faltered Wally.

"You goes to te Head in te morning," said Herr Schneider. "I gifs you a note. You leave mein room now, you pad poy."

"But, sir—"

"Tat you goes at once!"

"But—"

The German-master made a step towards Wally, and the hero of the Third quitted the room in rather a hurried manner. It was not often that Wally was dismayed; but his face was very grim now as he went to look for Pongo. With the best intentions in the world, he was having the cruellest kind of luck.

CHAPTER 13. What's the Row?

D'ARCY minor returned to the Third Form-room with a clouded brow.

His good intentions were panning out so badly that he had an excuse for feeling annoyed. He passed a group of Fourth-Formers in the passage, and they were chatting cheerily over the prospects of the morrow.

"We get the three-thirty train from Rylcombe," said Jack Blake. "We shall be free after morning lessons. How ripping!"

"Gorgeous!" said Herries.

"Faith, and I wish I were comin' wid ye," said Reilly.

"Never mind; you shall help us pack," Digby observed.

Whereat Reilly snorted, and walked on. Apparently the privilege of helping the cricketers to pack was not much of a consolation to him.

"I wish I could take all the chaps, bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy remarked. "As a mattah of fact, I don't suppose I shall be able to take my minah."

"Well, that's rough on Wally," said Blake. "But it's soft on us."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Still, I'd be glad for him to come," said Blake magnanimously. "He never does understand his place as a Third Form fag; but we'd keep him in order."

"Yaas, I should insist upon his keepin' in ordah. But I'm afwaid it will be no go for poor old Wally," said D'Arcy, with a shake of the head. "He was goin' to be good, and he's already been licked by Kildare, and is in a wov with Schneidah ovah Pongo."

"Just Wally's luck."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm jolly well going, all the same!" broke in Wally truculently.

"Bai Jove! Here he is! How did you get on with Schneidah, deah boy?"

Wally snorted.

"I'm to go in to the Head after prayers in the morning."

"Gweat Scott!"

"That settles it!" said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Rats!" retorted Wally. "Gussy can see the Head before I get my licking. If Dr. Holmes consents to my going, he can't take it back because he's got to lick me before I start."

"Yaas, but—"

"You ought to see him about it to-night, Gus."

"Too late, deah boy. I can't disturb the Head in the bosom of his family."

"First thing in the morning, then, before I'm licked."

"Vewy well, but I'm afwaid it won't be much use."

"Use or not, I'm coming," said Wally, with a sniff.

"You can't come without permish—, deah boy."

"I shall be sorry to do a bunk—"

"What a howwibly slangay expression!"

"Well, a bolt, then; but I shall if you don't work it with the Head. It's up to you to manage it for me."

"Weally, Wally—"

But Wally was gone on his way, whistling. Arthur Augustus looked worried.

"Bai Jove, we must manage it somehow!" he exclaimed. "Blessed if I know how, though. Let's go and consult Tom Mewwy!"

"Oh, all right!"

The Terrible Three had gone to their study after the end of the three aside game of chess in the common-room. The clash of wooden foils as the chums of the Fourth approached told that they were busy, putting in some extra exercise before bedtime.

Arthur Augustus tapped on the door, and opened it.

"A hit!" exclaimed Manners. "I had you there!"

"A very palpable hit!" grinned Lowther.

Tom Merry rubbed his chest.

"Yes, you ass, you've nearly punctured me! Hallo! What do you kids want?"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Like a round with the foils?" asked Tom Merry cheerfully. "I believe I could get your eyeglass every time, Gussy!"

"I want to consult you chaps," said D'Arcy, with dignity.

"Go ahead; consultations free!" said Tom Merry.

"Pway don't be an ass! This is how the mattah stands—"

"Does it really?" asked Tom Merry, gazing at the swell of the Fourth, who was standing in his usual elegant attitude. "Gentlemen, look at Gussy! That is how the matter stands."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wish you could be sewious. My minah wants to come down to Eastwood for the cwicket week, and it's wathah wuff that he shouldn't. He's in twouble as usual with neahly everybody, and we must manage it somehow for him."

Tom Merry wrinkled his brows thoughtfully.

"Well, we ought to be able to work it between us," he remarked. "As you're taking ten chaps, I don't see why you shouldn't take eleven."

"The friend or two can be stretched indefinitely," remarked Lowther.

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"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If it's a question of smuggling him out of the school," went on Lowther, "I should suggest hiding him in Gussy's hat-box."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Or if the hat-box isn't large enough, in an extra trunk. Gussy will, of course, take twenty trunks. Why not take twenty one instead, and shove Wally into the twenty-first."

"You uttah ass—"

"Or disguise him as a clean, respectable junior!" exclaimed Manners, as if with a burst of inspiration. "No one would recognise him, and we could whisk him out of the school—"

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"Or suppose we— Hallo! What's that row?"

Tom Morry looked out of the open door.

A terrific uproar made itself heard from the distance.

The juniors looked astonished.

Uproars frequently occurred at St. Jim's, but this was a tremendous one, and it was very near bedtime, too, and the House was generally quiet at that hour.

"What on earth is it?" exclaimed Blake.

"Can't be a New House raid."

"Oh, no; the Houses are closed, and Figgins & Co. couldn't get in. Besides, they wouldn't make a row like that, I suppose."

"Then what—"

"Let's go and see."

"Good egg!"

The juniors hurried down the passage towards the stairs. The disturbance grew more audible as they proceeded.

D'Arcy uttered a sudden exclamation of dismay.

"Wally again!"

"What!"

"Bai Jove! Can't you hear, deah boys?" groaned Arthur Augustus. "It's a wow in the Third Form quattahs!"

And it was!

CHAPTER 14.

The Revolt of the Third.

WALLY had entered the Third Form-room with a frowning brow; but he had found little sympathy among his Form-fellows.

Usually monarch of all he surveyed in the Form-room, and a great chief among the inky-fingered fags, Wally was a little "off his perch" at present.

Jameson and Gibson openly declared that it was like his cheek to think of going down to Eastwood for the cricket week when the other fellows couldn't go.

Wally had promised to work it for them, too, if he could; but if he couldn't, what was the use of his missing the cricket week himself?

But Jameson had refused to listen to reason.

The other fellows, too, were a little sore. Wally, in his determination to be good, had instituted a new orderliness in the Form-room.

A guileless stranger entering the Third-Form room at any period during that evening, would not have suspected that it was less noisy than usual. He would have thought it very noisy indeed. But if he had been in the habit of looking in every evening, he would have observed that there was less noise on this particular evening.

Wally was determined that there should be no complaints on that score, at all events. Prefects should have no excuse for roaring down the passage, and masters should not be caused to tap on the door and admonish the juniors.

Wally was on his best behaviour!

Now, Wally might be on his best behaviour with good reason, because there was a cricket week at stake; but the rest of the Form had nothing at stake, and they naturally very strongly resented having to be on their best behaviour on Wally's account—especially as Wally was generally the greatest scamp among them all.

So mutiny was simmering in the Third Form-room.

When Wally came in with his frowning brow, his frown did not intimidate the fags, who had been talking together in whispers, and had decided upon a plan of action.

Jameson and Gibson, instead of backing up Wally as usual, had assumed a position of lofty neutrality.

As soon as Wally came in, Stokes and Garnett seized hold of a form, and heaved it over on the floor with a mighty crash.

Wally jumped.

"You noisy asses!" he exclaimed. "Stop that!"

"Yah!"

"What!"

"Yah!"

Wally stood almost petrified.

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Never since he had arrived at St. Jim's, and won the respect of the Third Form by fighting in rapid succession every fag who could put up his hands, had he been treated with such derision.

"What!" he roared.

"Yah!"

"Go and eat coke!"

"Booh!"

Crash!

Another form went crashing on the floor. At the same time Jones and Dedson seized the poker and tongs, and commenced a hammering on the fender, which might have awakened the Seven Sleepers themselves.

Bang, bang!

Crash!

Boom! Bang! Crash!

Wally stopped his ears.

"You duffers!" he roared. "Stop that racket! I told you to be extra quiet this evening!"

"Yah!"

"And it's nearly bedtime!"

"Yah!"

"Rats!"

"I'll lick you all round if you don't shut up!" roared Wally.

"Yah!"

D'Arcy minor turned upon Jameson and Gibson, who were grinning.

"You rotters!" he yelled. "You're in this!"

Jameson gave a shrug.

"We're not in it," he said. "We're doing nothing. But it's funny. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" echoed Gibson. "It's funny!"

"Back me up, and I'll jolly soon stop them!"

"Bosh!"

"Rubbish!"

Wally stared at them.

"You worms!" he exclaimed. "You blessed worms! Do you mean to say you're not going to back me up?"

"Why shouldn't the chaps amuse themselves, if they like?" yawned Jameson. "I don't see any objection to it."

"Not a bit," said Curly Gibson.

"You chumps! We shall have the masters here soon."

"Well, let 'em come."

"Let 'em all come."

"We shall all get gated, and I sha'n't have a look in for an extra exeat!" yelled Wally.

"Blessed if I care!"

"Don't see why you should have an exeat."

Wally wasted no more time in words.

Jameson and Gibson had evidently got their backs up, and there was no help to be expected from them. But Wally was not timid. He jumped on a form.

"Chaps, stop that row!" he shouted.

"Yah!" yelled the Third Form.

Crash!

Clatter! Bang!

"If you don't shut up I'll start on you!" roared Wally.

There was a yell of laughter.

Wally could certainly account with ease for any single fellow in the Form, and perhaps for almost any two of them; but the idea of even Wally "starting upon" thirty fellows at once was comic.

But Wally was in deadly earnest.

"Will you chuck it?" he roared.

"Yah!"

That was the only reply he could get from the Third Form. It wasn't a particularly intelligible one, but it was emphatic, and it fully conveyed the meaning of the excited fags. They didn't mean to "chuck it."

Wally jumped down, and rushed up to Stokes, who was wielding the tongs upon the fender with tremendous effect.

He got one arm round Stokes's neck, and began to pommel him. Stokes, finding his head in chancery, dropped the tongs and yelled for help.

In a moment the fags were piling on Wally.

He had to release Stokes to defend himself. Stokes staggered away with his nose streaming red. Wally fought like a Trojan. But he was overwhelmed by numbers, and hurled to the floor, and a dozen triumphant fags sat on him, and kept him there.

Wally struggled and gasped in vain under the weight of the victors.

"Lemme gerrup!" he gasped. "I—I'll lick you all!"

"Yah!"

"Keep it up, you chaps!" gasped Dodson. "Go it!"

Crash! Bang! Bump! Thud! Clatter!

The uproar was terrific.

The fags had meant to assert their independence, and to prove to Wally that they could do as they liked; but in their excitement they were probably overdoing it a little.

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They had fully expected a prefect to give them a look-in, but they had not intended to alarm the whole House. But in their excitement they were quite carried away.

The Form-room door was suddenly thrown open, and Mr. Railton strode in.

The House-master was frowning darkly.

"Cease this disturbance instantly!" he cried.

"My hat!" murmured Jameson. "It's Railton!"

"There'll be a row now!"

"Yes, rather!"

The uproar ceased as if by magic.

Mr. Railton's voice was one to carry obedience with it. The fags piled off Wally, and the scamp of the Third sat on the floor, very dusty and bewildered and dishevelled.

Mr. Railton glanced at him sternly.

"Ah, it is you, D'Arcy minor!"

"Ye-e-e-s, sir!" gasped Wally.

"You are the centre of disturbance, as usual."

"Oh!"

"It is disgraceful!" said Mr. Railton. "The noise you have been making is simply disgraceful. The Head has heard it. I am ashamed of you."

The fags looked sheepish.

"Every one of you will stay in for the next half-holiday," resumed the House-master. "I will speak to Mr. Selby. And you, D'Arcy minor, will report yourself to the Head immediately after prayers to-morrow morning."

"Oh, sir!"

"I trust this lesson will not be lost upon you."

"Oh, sir!"

Mr. Railton strode from the room. In the disordered quarters of the Third Form a pin might have been heard to drop.

"My hat!" murmured Stokes at last. "Railton's got his back up!"

"Gated for the next half!" grumbled Dodson.

"Well, the rag was worth it!"

"And Wally's going to be licked."

"Poor old Wally!"

Wally snorted.

"You blessed duffers!" he said. "You see what you've done! Serves you all jolly well right. Bah!"

And Wally stamped out of the room. He stamped into the midst of Tom Merry & Co., who were among the crowd who had come to see what the disturbance was about.

CHAPTER 15.

Digby's Idea.

TOM MERRY caught the hero of the Third by the shoulder. Wally looked at him grimly. His clothes were untidy, half the buttons gone off his waistcoat, his collar torn out, his hair like a mop. A stranger would never have taken him at that moment for a brother of the elegant Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Well, you look a sight, young 'un!" said Tom Merry, laughing.

Wally growled.

"It's all the fault of those duffers."

"But what was the row about?"

"A blessed mutiny. I was keeping extra order—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There's nothing to cackle at. I was keeping the Form quiet—"

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

"Oh, cheese it! I was keeping them on their best behaviour, and they cut up rusty. That's all. Now they're all gated for the next half, and serve 'em right."

"And you?"

"Oh, I'm gated, too; but as I'm going to Eastwood for the cricket week it won't hurt me," said Wally.

Tom Merry laughed.

"Looks to me as if you're not going," he remarked.

"Oh, I'm going! I've got to turn up in the Head's study, too, after prayers in the morning," said Wally, with a grimace.

"Bai Jove! You've got to do that alweady for Herr Schneidah, Wally!"

The hero of the Third chuckled softly.

"Yes; I shall kill two birds with one stone, see? I sha'n't mention who sent me, and the same licking will do for both."

"Bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I think it's any good trying to be on one's best behaviour!" growled Wally. "It doesn't seem to have

improved matters much. You'd better think of something else, Gus."

"Weally, Wally—"

"I've got an idea," said Digby, who had been looking thoughtful. "You're out with Railton and Schneider and Kildare and the Head, but if Selby spoke up for you, it might be worked yet—"

"Selby's least likely of all."

"Not if you work it properly. I tell you I've got a wheeze."

"Go it," said Wally, not very hopefully.

"Shove on the best behaviour thick with Selby—concentrate on him, you see. Take him a bunch of flowers in the morning, to put in his study, and that sort of thing. Say good-night to him nicely when you meet him, and—ask after his cough. He thinks he's got a cough."

Wally wrinkled his brows thoughtfully.

"Well, there might be something in that," he admitted. "I've never tried the soft sawder dodge with Selby. I don't know how it would work."

"Well, try it!"

"Yaas, wathah! It couldn't do any harm, Wally."

Wally nodded.

"Well, I'll try it," he said. "I can buzz off some flowers out of the Head's garden in the morning, and try."

"Mind you don't get caught in the Head's garden, then."

"Oh, that's all right!"

And Wally went up to the Third-Form dormitory. It was close on bedtime for the Third Form, and before Wally had finished putting himself to rights, the Form came up to bed. Although they had been gated for a half-holiday, most of the Third looked cheerful enough. Most of them considered that such a gorgeous rag was worth the gating.

Jameson and Gibson were a little repentant now, but Wally would not look at them. He undressed and went to bed without a word.

"I say, Wally!" sang out Jameson, after lights out.

No reply.

"Wally old chap!"

Silence.

"Hang it, Wally, you're not ratty, are you?"

"No," growled Wally, "I'm not ratty; but I want to go to sleep. Shut up!"

"I'm sorry—"

"All right; dry up!"

"I'm sorry you're going to be licked."

"Never mind; let's go to sleep."

"Yes, but—"

"My only Aunt Jane! Are you going to talk all night, Jameson?" exclaimed Wally exasperated. "Can't you understand it's past bedtime?"

"Look here!"

"Rats!"

"I want to say—"

"Well, don't."

"But—"

"Ring off!"

"Look here, Wally—"

Wally snored.

Jameson gave it up. There was evidently nothing to be got out of D'Arcy minor in his present temper.

"Cheese it, old chap," said Curly Gibson. "He'll be all right in the morning."

And the Third Form went to sleep.

Tom Merry & Co. went to bed shortly afterwards. They were in very cheerful spirits about the morrow, and the cricket-week to follow.

The prospect of a week away from school, with cricket and a house-party thrown in, was extremely exhilarating.

At the same time, they felt concerned for Wally.

As D'Arcy's brother, they felt that he had a sort of right to go. At the same time, they felt that Lord Eastwood had acted with proper delicacy in not making a point of it. If Wally's general behaviour did not justify the Head in giving him that holiday, it would hardly be form for the earl to use his influence in Wally's favour. But the juniors felt that it was hard. The scamp of the Third had tried to be good, but he was new to it, and it had not been a success. His efforts had really deserved better results.

As a matter of fact, whatever chance Wally had had of getting leave had probably been spoiled for good by the late happenings.

Tom Merry went to sleep, and dreamed of a cricket-match at Eastwood House, in which Lord Eastwood had asked him personally to play, and in which he was knocking up a century against the bowling of a M.C.C. champion.

From the delightful dream he was awakened by the rising-bell.

Clang! Clang!

Tom Merry sat up in bed.

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ANSWERS

NEXT
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The bright rays of the summer sun were streaming in at the windows. It was going to be a fine day.

Tom Merry jumped out of bed, and went to the window. The quadrangle looked very fresh and green in the morning sun. Tom Merry thought of Eastwood House, with its scented woods and rolling park-land. The weather was inspiring, and gave promise of a splendid day.

Suddenly, as he was about to turn from the window, he caught sight of three forms moving in the quadrangle.

He stared at them hard.

It was an early hour for juniors to be abroad, and he saw that they were juniors, though they were too far off for him to recognise them. They must have been up before rising-bell—a most remarkable thing for the fags.

"My hat!" murmured Tom Merry, as the identity of one at least of the trio dawned upon him. "It's D'Arcy minor! He's going to carry out Dig's idea."

And Tom Merry smiled. Digby's idea was a good one, perhaps; but Tom had a suspicion that in D'Arcy minor's hands the carrying out would probably leave something to be desired.

CHAPTER 16.

Early Risers.

TOM MERRY was quite right; it was D'Arcy minor who was abroad in the quad. at that early hour. D'Arcy minor was awake, and out of bed, a quarter of an hour before the rising-bell commenced to clang forth its summons. Wally believed in striking the iron while it was hot.

He had thought a good deal over Digby's idea before going to sleep the previous evening, and he had decided that it was a good one. He had never tried the effect of what he called "soft sawder" upon his Form-master, and there was no reason why it shouldn't answer. If it did, he was all right; if it didn't, he was no worse off than before, so it was worth putting to the test. He realised that in moving Mr. Selby lay his last hope.

Jameson woke up while Wally was dressing. He could hardly help doing so, for Wally sat on his bed to put his boots on—sitting down rather heavily upon Jameson's legs. Jameson sat up with a startled grunt.

"Oh! Is that you, Wally?"

"Don't you know me by sight yet?" asked Wally pleasantly.

"Gerroff my legs, then!"

"I'm putting my boots on."

"Look here—"

"Oh, go to sleep!"

Jameson jerked his legs violently away.

"Where are you going?" he asked.

"Out!"

"What for?"

"Not to ask questions."

"Oh, look here!" said Jameson pacifically. "Don't bear malice, old chap! You made us all rather wild last night, you know, you were so blessed cocky. If it's a wheeze, I'm willing to get up and help you."

Wally considered. Certainly he could carry out his plan more easily with assistance, and besides, as a matter of fact, he never did bear grudges. So he decided to forgive Jameson.

"Well, get up, then," he said.

"Me, too?" asked Curly Gibson sleepily, from his bed.

"You, too, if you like."

The three juniors were soon dressed. Wally led the way out of the dormitory, and in a minute more they were in the fresh air of the quadrangle.

"What's the dodge?" asked Gibson, who had controlled his curiosity up to that point.

"We're going to the Head's garden."

"Phew!"

"It will be all right," said Wally. "There's nobody there at this time in the morning. There goes the rising-bell; Taggles is busy with that, and there's no one else up. We shall raid the garden as easy as rolling off a form."

"What the dickens do we want to raid the garden for?" demanded Jameson mystified.

"What do you generally raid a garden for?" demanded Wally, in his turn.

Jameson scratched his nose thoughtfully.

"To get out and break bounds," he said. "That's what we generally get into the Head's garden for. But—"

"But surely we don't want to break bounds now," said Gibson.

"Ass!"

"Well, what are you going into the garden for?"

"Flowers."

"What?"

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"Flowers! FLOWERS," said Wally pleasantly. "That spells flowers. Flowers are things that grow in a garden—"

"Oh, don't rot! What the dickens do you want flowers for?" asked Jameson, who would have been no more astonished if Wally had said that he had got up early to do an extra lesson before classes.

"To present to Mr. Selby."

"Eh?"

"He's fond of flowers. I'm going to give him a bouquet."

"Oh, he's mad!" said Jameson resignedly. "Mad as a hatter!"

"I know what I'm doing," said Wally.

"You're sucking up to a master, that's what you're doing," said Jameson fiercely. "I never thought it of you, D'Arcy minor. I never thought I should see you—"

"Behaving decently?" said Wally. "Well, naturally you wouldn't expect anything of that sort from a friend of yours."

"Look here—"

"I'm going to get Selby to speak a word to the Head for me if I can," explained Wally. "You know, music bath charms to soothe the savage breast, and flowers may have the same effect. You can tame almost any wild beast by feeding him, so why shouldn't you make a little present to a Form-master?"

Jameson chuckled. It struck him that Mr. Selby would not have been flattered by the comparison if he could have heard it.

"I'm going to rig up a beautiful bouquet, and slam them into a vase or something, and stick 'em on Selby's desk," said Wally, with a grin. "When he looks pleased, and asks who's been so thoughtful this morning, I shall rise up in my place and say—"

"My hat!"

"Ass! I shall say, 'Please, sir, I thought you might like some flowers.' If that doesn't touch Selby's heart, I'm quite off-side, and I shall have to try something else. Of course, a lot depends on what he's had for breakfast. If the bacon's tough, he will be ratty, and it mayn't work. Still, it will soften him a bit, anyway, and make a beginning. In a Good-Georgie book he would shed tears on his waistcoat and grasp my hand, or pat me on the head, but, of course, you can't expect anything of that sort from Selby. He never plays the game."

The fags had reached the gate of the Head's private garden by this time.

That garden was sacred to the masters and the prefects of St. Jim's, though members of the Sixth were generally allowed to walk there, in an awfully select manner; much envied by fellows in the lower Forms.

The garden was the pride of the head gardener's heart, too, and there was ample room for Wally to make his selection.

Amid such profusion, a single bouquet, however large, was not likely to be missed. And at that time in the morning there was no one to spot the raiders.

"You stay here and keep watch, Curly," said Wally.

"Jameson can come and help me."

"Right you are," said Gibson.

He leaned on the gate, and Wally and Jameson clambered over it, and dropped into the garden. It looked very quiet and deserted under the rising sun.

"Whistle if you hear anybody," said Wally.

"Right-ho!"

And the raiders plunged into the shrubberies.

"What sort of things are you going to take?" asked Jameson.

"Roses," said Wally. "They smell nice, and make a good show, and there are heaps of them here, too, and they won't be missed."

"Here's a tree."

"Good! We'll have some of that lot."

A rose-tree trailing up the side of a greenhouse was the first halting-place of the raiders. Wally detached several big white roses.

"They'll come out beautifully in water," he remarked.

"We must have some red ones, too. Here's another lot."

Wally reached down more roses. One, just out of his reach, was a really beautiful specimen, and Wally tried twice to grab at it. But it nodded beyond his fingers.

"Give us a bunk up, Jim. I must have that one."

"Take one of the others—"

"Oh, don't jaw!"

Jameson grunted, and made a back, and Wally clambered on it. He reached up at the rose, and grasped it, and detached it. Jameson gave a sudden start as the sound of a whistle rang from the direction of the gate.

"Look out!" yelled Wally. "You ass!"

He rolled off Jameson's back, clutching wildly at the rose-tree to save himself. He tore his skin on thorns, and the



"I'll add a little to the confusion," said Jack Rhodes, taking Dudley's boot and smashing every inch of glass in the window. "The firemen ought to hear that, anyhow."

(This picture illustrates an exciting incident in "Jack Rhodes' Progress," the splendid complete tale by Alfred Barnard, contained in this week's issue of "The Empire Library." Now on sale.)

last state of that rose-tree was worse than its first. Wally rolled on the ground.

"M-my hat!" gasped Jameson. "Sorry!"

"You chump!"

"Curly's whistling!"

"No reason to bump me over if he is!" roared Wally.

"Hush! They'll hear you!"

Wally scrambled up. He was strongly inclined to commit assault and battery upon his chum on the spot, but there was evidently no time. From the direction of the gate came the sound of Curly Gibson's whistle. He was whistling the tune of "What's the Matter With England," the Territorial song. "He's whistling a tune so that they won't suspect him," whispered Jameson.

Wally was gathering up his fallen roses.

"It's awfully cute of him," said Jameson. "Come on!"

"I'm not going to leave the roses."

"You don't want to be caught, I suppose?" breathed Jameson.

"Oh, buzz off!"

Jameson started, and Wally quickly followed, with the bunch of roses in his hand. They arrived breathless at the gate, and found Curly Gibson leaning upon it, just as they had left him, and whistling away cheerily.

They tumbled over the gate in such a hurry that Wally dropped several roses, and Jameson fell with a bump and a grunt.

"Buck up!" muttered Wally.

Gibson left off whistling.

"Anything wrong?" he asked hurriedly. "Gardener after you?"

"What!"

"Have they seen you?"

"Not that I know of. Didn't you whistle to give the alarm?"

Curly Gibson looked astonished.

"Oh, no," he said; "I was just whistling a tune to pass away the time. I shouldn't have whistled a tune to warn you."

Wally and Jameson glared at him. They had had their fright for nothing. They stared at Curly; and then, obeying a common impulse, and without stopping to consult, they fell upon him.

Two minutes later they walked away, leaving Curly a hopeless wreck on the ground, gasping for breath, and wondering whether an earthquake had happened.

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CHAPTER 17.

Wally is a Little Too Clever.

TOM MERRY & CO. met Wally and Jameson as they re-entered the School House. Wally had something wrapped in a newspaper in his hand, and Tom Merry looked at it curiously.

"What have you got there?" he asked.

Wally grinned, and cautiously opened a corner of the newspaper, and showed a glimpse of beautiful roses.

"Phew! How lovely! Where did you get them?"

"Well, I didn't gather them on the elms," said Wally.

And he passed on with his prize.

"The young bounder's been raiding the Head's garden, of course," said Blake. "I suppose it was the only place to get any decent flowers, when you come to think of it."

"Bai Jove!"

"There wasn't time for him to go to the village; and besides, I don't suppose he's flush of tin," Tom Merry remarked. "I only hope he hasn't left too many traces behind him in the rose-garden."

"Yaas, wathah! I stwongly disappwove of waidin' the Head's garden," said Arthur Augustus. "I weally don't know whethah I ought to ordah the young wascal to take them back."

"He could take a gum-brush, and stick them on the bushes again," Monty Lowther suggested.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"I hope the dodge will work," said Digby. "It was my idea. But Selby's a queer fish to get round."

"Yaas, wathah! I weally think Wally has more chance of scorin' by my puttin' it tactfully to the Head," said Arthur Augustus. "I shall call upon Doctah Holmes immediately after bwekkah."

"Put it to him as an old sport," said Blake. "Point out to him that you know what's the proper thing to do, and he really must trust to your judgment."

"Pway, don't wot, deah boy! I was thinkin' of fillin' up the time to bwekkah by packin' my twunks. Any of you fellows like to help?"

"What offers?" asked Monty Lowther.

There was no offer. D'Arcy turned his eyeglass round the group, but no one displayed any alacrity to help him pack his twunks.

"Weally, deah boys—"

"Suppose you don't take any twunks?" suggested Blake. "Just put a change of linen and a comb and brush and a set of pyjamas in your silk hat, and—"

"Pway don't be an ass!"

"We shall have to take bags," said Tom Merry, "as we're going to stay for a week. But mine will take five minutes to pack."

"I shall have to take a considewable numbah of things," said Arthur Augustus thoughtfully. "Of course, it is not as if I were goin' anywhah but home. I shall find most of the things I need there. One twunk will be sufficient."

"Go hon!"

D'Arcy went away to begin the important work. The others went out into the quadrangle, where they found Figgins & Co., also in high spirits, though a little anxious as to whether the Head would see the matter in a proper light when he heard how many D'Arcy's "friend or two" numbered.

After breakfast Arthur Augustus contrived to interview the Head before chapel. Dr. Holmes did not look particularly pleased at being interrupted, but he gave the junior a kindly nod.

"Ah! You have come to tell me the names of the friends you wish to take with you to Eastwood, D'Arcy," he remarked. "I am afraid I cannot stop now."

"No, sir; I will—will send in the list, sir," said D'Arcy. "It was another mattah."

"Ahem!"

"About my minah, sir."

"Your—er—minor."

"My younghah bwothah Wally, sir. I should vewy much like him to come if poss., sir."

The Head frowned.

"I have not received very favourable reports of D'Arcy minor lately," he said. "However, I will speak to his Form-master. If Mr. Selby sees no objection, I will see what can be done for D'Arcy minor."

"Thank you, sir!"

And D'Arcy quitted the study.

He had said all that he had to say, and he had received the answer he expected. As for trying any persuasion with the Head, that was out of the question. All depended upon the report Mr. Selby made when the doctor spoke to him.

Knowing how the Form-master regarded the scamp of the Third, D'Arcy was not very hopeful. If Wally succeeded in making his peace that morning, all would be well, but—it was a very considerable "but."

Wally was waiting in the passage for the swell of St. Jim's.

"Well?" he demanded laconically.

"The Head is goin' to speak to Selby, deah boy."

"I thought so."

"It all depends on how Selby puts it."

Wally nodded.

"I think I shall be able to work it with Selby," he said.

"I know he likes flowers, and I've got a beautiful bouquet for him."

"Out of the Head's garden, you young wascal?"

"You didn't think I was going to wire to London for them, did you?" asked Wally aggressively. "I think it's jolly lucky the Head's got a garden, if you ask me."

"Weally, Wally—"

"I've got a vase from Rushden's study to put 'em in," said Wally. "You know Rushden's away to-day. I can put it back later, barring accidents. It will look jolly, a vase of roses on old Selby's desk in the Form-room."

"Yaas, wathah, but—"

"It's bound to make a good impression on him."

"Yaas, but—"

"Oh, don't croak, Gus! Don't be a blessed Jonah!" protested Wally.

"I was thinkin' of your goin' in to the Head aftah pwayahs, Wally. If he has to cane you this mornin', that may spoil the effect of Mr. Selby's wepport, even if he gives you a good one."

"I'm not going in."

"What!"

"Deaf?" asked Wally cheerfully.

"Don't be a diswepctful young ass, Wally. You must go in. You've been sent in by Mr. Wailton and Herr Schneidah both."

Wally held up his hands, and showed the palms scratched by the thorns of the roses. They were stained red, and D'Arcy uttered an exclamation of horror.

"Gweat Scott, Wally!"

"I scratched them getting these blessed roses," explained Wally, with a chuckle. "I've shown 'em to Schneider and Railton, and asked them if I may go to the Head later. See? They can't cane a chap on a wounded fin."

"Weally, Wally—"

"Mr. Railton's given me lines to do instead, and Herr Schneider says I'm to go to the Head after school instead. He's a beast. He might as well have given me a German impot. I shouldn't have had to do it, as I'm going away. But you can't expect these blessed aliens to play the game. I'm not going into the Head's study, you see."

"Wally! Your hands are in an awful state, deah boy. You must see a doctah about them."

"Rats!"

"I insist upon it, Wally. Why, they are bleeding—"

"Bosh! They're only scratched," said Wally. "Can't you see they're touched up?"

"Touched up?" said D'Arcy faintly.

"Yes. I got Kerr to do it for me. You know what a splendid chap he is at making up. A couple of real scratches and some spoof ones, and—"

"Wally, you are a howwid young wascal!"

"Go hon!"

"I wegard you as bein' an outwageous young wapscaillon. I should not be surprised, Wally, if you finish your caweer in the dock."

"I'm more worried about the beginning of it just now, though," said Wally cheerfully. "It all depends on Selby. I'm going to be awfully careful with Selby."

And Wally walked away whistling.

Arthur Augustus gazed after his hopeful minor with a very curious expression upon his face. D'Arcy never fully understood Wally, and the curious developments of the minor's character were continually astonishing the major. If Wally's good fortune were equal to his resource and his nerve, he was certain to succeed.

"Bai Jove!" murmured D'Arcy.

He was looking very thoughtful as he joined the Lower School going to chapel.

"Well, said Blake, "is it all right?"

"I weally don't know yet, deah boy. I hope so."

Blake grunted.

CHAPTER 18.

Mr. Selby Thinks it Incredible.

M R. SELBY was a few minutes late for class that morning. The Third Form were in their places, looking as good as gold. They had been "gated" by Mr. Railton, and they knew that their Form-master would be annoyed at the House-master having interfered. He would take it as a reflection on his management of his form. Woe was likely to betide the Third-former who roused Mr. Selby's ire that morning.

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But if Wally's plan were successful, the Third Form-master would be propitiated at the start. Wally was arranging the roses in the vases upon the desk. Rushden's vase was a handsome one, and the roses looked very well in it. Wally stepped back to view his handiwork with a satisfied eye.

"My only Aunt Jane!" he ejaculated. "Doesn't it look ripping?"

"Jolly ripping!" said Jameson. "Get into your place, you ass! It's past time."

"All right. It does look well!"

"Selby's late already."

Wally went to his place.

From the forms the roses on the master's desk certainly looked very nice, and the effect was very pleasant in the plain and unadorned class-room.

If Mr. Selby weren't pleased with the trouble the juniors had taken, he must be the grumpiest and most discontented person possible, and it was no good trying to please him.

So Wally said to himself as he looked at the roses.

The big hand of the clock was crawling on, and still Mr. Selby did not come. He was five minutes late now.

The Form began to be vaguely alarmed.

Usually, being left to themselves would have meant skylarking. But Wally had set his face against that now; and besides, the fags felt in no mood for skylarking. They thought there was something amiss.

"Railton's pitching it to Selby about keeping us in better order, perhaps," whispered Curly Gibson.

"Shouldn't wonder."

"He'll come in as ratty as anything!"

"Just my luck!" growled Wally. "Why couldn't you blessed hooligans behave yourselves last night?"

"Oh, rats!"

"There's going to be trouble with Selby this morning," said Jameson dolefully. "Wish he'd come, and get it over!"

"Oh, rather!"

"He's six minutes late."

"I—I say, it can't be anything about the raid in the Head's garden, can it?" muttered Gibson. "You didn't do any damage?"

"Oh, no! They wouldn't miss a few roses!"

"But did you damage anything?"

Wally reflected. He remembered the rose-tree he had grabbed at when he rolled off Jameson's back. He hadn't stopped to look whether it was damaged or not.

But he shook his head.

"No, I'm sure not. Nothing noticeable. Did we, Jim?"

"I don't think so."

"It can't be that."

"Besides, that's no business of Selby's," said Wally. "He wouldn't care if all the Head's rose-trees were pulled up by the roots. He's no gardener. And it's not his garden. Besides, they wouldn't tell him. The Head's gardener would just tell the Head that somebody had been there, that's all."

"H'm, I suppose so."

"Cave! Here he comes!"

There was a sound in the passage. The juniors sat up with expressionless faces, motionless as statues. Everyone was particularly anxious to avoid catching Mr. Selby's eye when he entered.

Mr. Selby came in.

He gave the Form one glance, and nodded brusquely in reply to their respectful greeting, and strode to his desk, his gown rustling.

"It's all up!" muttered Jameson. "Look at his nose!"

The class looked at Mr. Selby's nose in dismay. That organ was a danger-signal. When it was very red it showed that Mr. Selby was suffering from indigestion. And then the Third-Formers had to walk very warily indeed.

It was very red now!

Mr. Selby marched up to his desk, and suddenly stopped and stared as he caught sight of the vase of flowers.

He remained quite motionless for some moments, staring at the flowers. The juniors could not see his face now, and Wally's hopes rose.

"It'll be all right," he whispered to Jameson. "He's seen the flowers, and he's pleased. It's a mark of affectionate attention, you know—respect from a pupil to his kind teacher, and all that. He's going to say something nice."

Mr. Selby turned towards the class.

Wally's jaw dropped as he saw his face.

Mr. Selby was going to say something; but his expression showed that, whatever he was going to say, it was not something nice.

"My only Aunt Jane!" murmured Wally, in dismay.

He did not know what was wrong. But he could see that

something was. His last resource had failed him, and he was apparently "in" for something, too.

"Incredible!"

That was what Mr. Selby said.

He said it in a tone that made the class thrill. Mr. Selby was celebrated for what the juniors called his "tantrums." But he was evidently in a tantrum now which cast all previous tantrums into the shade.

"Incredible! Absolutely incredible!"

"You've done it now!" murmured Jameson.

"Oh, shut up!"

"Yes, incredible!" said Mr. Selby. "I see; but I cannot believe. I doubt the evidence of my eyes. I repeat, incredible!"

The class trembled.

They did not know in the least what Mr. Selby was driving at, but they saw that there was a cyclone coming.

"If I did not see this," said Mr. Selby, apparently making up his mind to accept the evidence of his eyes after all—"if I did not see it, I could not believe it. As an instance of astounding effrontery, I think it can never have been equalled in the history of this or any other school."

Dead silence.

"I have been listening," said Mr. Selby, "to a complaint made respecting a boy in this Form. A rose-tree in the Head's garden has been wilfully and outrageously damaged, and partially dragged down. A number of roses have been removed from it; but it is the damage to the tree that the gardener has especially complained of."

"Oh!" murmured Wally. "You chump, Jameson!"

"It was Gibson's fault—he whistled."

"The ass!"

Mr. Selby took breath.

"This matter would not have come to my notice, probably not to my knowledge," he said, "but for the act of the boy concerned in the wilful damage. As soon as the injury to the rose-tree was known to Mr. Railton, he remembered that a junior of this Form had shown him his hands, scratched by thorns, as an excuse for not taking a caning he had been ordered to take from the Head."

Wally jumped.

It was a little point he had overlooked, and another proof of the well-known statement of the poet, that the best-laid schemes of mice and men do not always prove to be absolutely reliable.

"Mr. Railton at once gave me the name of the junior in question," said Mr. Selby. "I was not surprised, when he told me that a rose-tree had been wilfully damaged, to learn that D'Arcy minor's hands had been scratched by thorns."

Wally sat silent.

"I came here, however, without expecting to witness this crowning and well-nigh incredible piece of effrontery," said Mr. Selby, with a wave of the hand towards the roses on the desk. "That D'Arcy minor should damage the Head's rose-tree is no surprise to me. That he should use the result of his own recklessness as an excuse for escaping a well-deserved caning, is also not surprising. But that he should venture upon such a piece of defiant effrontery as putting the stolen—yes, stolen roses on his Form-master's desk—that, I confess, surprises me."

And Mr. Selby wound up dramatically.

Wally's face was a study.

There was a moment's silence. Then Mr. Selby's voice rapped out so suddenly that it made the terrified fags jump.

"D'Arcy minor!"

"Ye-es, sir."

"Stand out before the class!"

Wally slowly left his place. He advanced towards Mr. Selby, the latter keeping an eye on him all the time—an eye that seemed to pierce like a gimlet.

"D'Arcy minor, you placed these roses upon my desk!"

"Ye-es, sir."

"I must conclude, therefore, that you raided the Head's garden?"

"Ye-es."

"You damaged the rose-tree?"

"I didn't mean—"

"Yes or no?"

"I suppose so, sir. But—"

"And you were guilty of the crowning, the incredible effrontery, of placing these roses here?" thundered Mr. Selby.

"I—I thought—I—"

"Enough, D'Arcy minor. Follow me!"

"If you please, sir—"

"Not a word. Whatever you have to say, you can say to the Head. I leave the matter entirely in his hands," said Mr. Selby. "I confess myself incapable of dealing adequately with such an example of juvenile depravity. To enter the Head's garden was wrong—but that might be excused as a boyish freak. To take the roses was wrong—"

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but I should be willing to believe that you acted thoughtlessly. To damage the rose-tree was bad—but I could believe that it was accidental.

"But to place the roses here, on my desk—to flaunt them, as it were, in the face of your master—that, D'Arcy minor, shows a depravity of nature which shocks and astonishes me. I can only conclude that your nature has been warped and poisoned by reading depraved literature for the young—that literature which I am glad to say I have never read, or ever seen, but which I have always thoroughly and unhesitatingly condemned. Follow me, D'Arcy minor."

And Mr. Selby rustled from the room.

Wally followed.

"The next time I try to please a Form-master," he murmured, "I hope somebody will use my head for a football! This is a go!"

Two minutes later they were in Dr. Holmes's study, and Mr. Selby was making the long-looked-for report to the Head.

CHAPTER 19.

Jolly Good!

"WHERE'S Wally?"

Tom Merry asked the question.

The Shell and the Fourth Form had come out after morning lessons, and Tom Merry & Co. had gathered together, in the highest spirits.

It was a glorious day, and they were to have a glorious week, and what more could they desire to make them happy?

"Where's Wally?"

"I weally don't know," said D'Arcy. "The Third Form are out, but Wally doesn't appear to be in the quad. with them."

"I don't think he's gone out," said Kangaroo.

"Where is the young duffer, then?"

"I twust he is all wight," said Arthur Augustus. "I suppose the Head has spoken to Mr. Selby about him by this time. If Dig's ideah worked out all wight, Mr. Selby has probably made a favouable weport."

"We'd better find Wally. It was a good idea, but—"

"The idea was all right," said Digby. "But Wally may have had his usual luck in carrying it out. Here's young Jameson. Jameson, where's Wally?"

"In the Form-room."

"Bai Jove! What is he doin' there?"

"Rubbing his hands."

"Wubbin' his hands! What for?"

"Better ask him."

And Jameson went out. D'Arcy turned his monocle on his chums in great surprise.

"I hardly compwehend this," he remarked. "Why on earth should Wally stay in the class-woom to wub his hands? I suppose it's the scwatches."

"More likely a licking."

"Bai Jove!"

"Let's go and see, anyway."

They hurried to the Third-Form room. Sure enough, Wally was there. He was sitting on a form engaged as Jameson had said, rubbing his hands together slowly and ruefully. He grunted as he looked up at Tom Merry & Co.

"Licked?" asked Tom Merry.

"Yes," replied Wally, with equal brevity.

"Badly?"

"Yes."

"How did the wheeze work?" asked Digby.

"As well as I could have expected a rotten, Fourth-Form wheeze to work!" said Wally, rather ungratefully. "Everything's gone wrong. Selby's slated me awfully to the Head, and I've been licked, and I'm gated for a fortnight, and there's not the ghost of a chance of getting leave to go home for the cricket week."

"Phew!"

"What a giddy chapter of misfortunes!" said Monty Lowther.

"Bai Jove, it's wathah wotten!" said Arthur Augustus.

"I should say it is!" said Wally. "This is what comes of trying to be good. It's the first time I've ever tried it—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And it doesn't pay. I'm jolly well never going to be beastly good again! The next time I gather flowers for a Form-master, you're welcome to kick me as hard as you like!"

"But—"

"Next time I use a Fourth Form wheeze, you can use my napper for a footer!"

"It was a jolly good idea," said Digby warmly. "It wanted carrying out, that's all."

"Rats!"

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"It's wathah unfortunate," said Arthur Augustus, distressfully. "You won't be able to come home for the cwicket week now, Wally."

Wally snorted.

"Won't I!" he said. "That's all you know, Gussy. I'm going to work it somehow."

"I hope you are not thinkin' of boltin'?" said Arthur Augustus. "The patah would only send you stwaight back, Wally."

"I shall work it somehow, I tell you!"

"I hope you will, deah boy. I twust your hands do not hurt."

Wally sniffed.

"No. I'm rubbing them for fun," he remarked.

"Weally, Wally—"

"Oh, scat!"

Wally was evidently not in a mood to be condoled with. The juniors left him rubbing his hands.

They were sorry for Wally; but there was no doubt that it was his own past delinquencies that caused his bad luck.

If he had been more accustomed to trying to be good, probably it would have come easier to him, and would not have led to such an unfortunate series of catastrophes.

"It's wotten!" Arthur Augustus remarked. "I'm sowwy now I didn't bwing my mind to bear on the mattah, instead of twustin' Dig to think of a wheeze."

"Well, you champion ass!" said Digby.

"Weally, Dig—"

"Look here," said Kangaroo, "you'd better cut in and see the Head, and let's have the verdict about that list you've got for him."

D'Arcy shook his head.

"I'll send in the list by Binks," he said. "It will save a personal interview, which might be awkward undah the cirs."

"Leave it till after dinner," said Tom Merry. "Better to catch the Head in the best possible temper."

"Yaas, wathah! That is weally vewy thoughtful of you."

And the juniors did what packing they had to do, and persuaded Arthur Augustus that a couple of large bags would answer his purpose, instead of burdening the party with a trunk.

As he was going home, he did not need a hat-box, which was a great relief, for it appeared that he had a reserve of toppers under the parental roof.

After the juniors' dinner, D'Arcy made out the list of the "friend or two" who were to go with him to Eastwood.

There were ten names on the list, and when it was written out D'Arcy looked at it with a thoughtful eye.

"Bai Jove!" he remarked. "The Head may think it is wathah cool of me, you know."

"So it is!" said Tom Merry cheerfully.

"Weally—"

"But that's all right. If there's any objection, you must pile it on that your pater will be awfully pleased, and that you expected to take your dearest friends—"

"Bai Jove!"

"Binks, come here, old man! Give him a tanner, Gussy, and let him take the paper."

The School-House page took the paper and the sixpence with a grin.

"Take that to the Head, Binks," said D'Arcy anxiously, "and bwing me back his answer, if there is one. But don't tell him I expect an answer."

Binks grinned.

"Werry well, Master D'Arcy."

And he vanished.

The juniors waited patiently in the School-House hall for his return. Figgins & Co., who were just as anxious as the School-House fellows, came in and joined them. It was three minutes before Binks returned.

"Any answer?" demanded eleven voices in unison.

"The 'Ead wants to see Master D'Arcy in his study," said Binks.

Arthur Augustus sighed.

"Now for the tug-of-war!" he murmured.

"Pitch it to him tactfully, Gussy, old man!"

"Yaas, wathah! You can wely upon my usin' the pwopah amount of tact and judgment, deah boys."

And Arthur Augustus took his way to the Head's study.

He tapped rather timidly, and entered. Dr. Holmes was sitting with the paper in his hand. He glanced at D'Arcy over his spectacles.

"Ahem, D'Arcy! Is this the—er—the list you promised me?"

"Yaas, sir!"

"Is it not rather a long one?"

"Weally, sir—"

"Have you put down the names of all the juniors you would like to take with you?" asked the Head, with a slight tinge of sarcasm, which was quite lost upon Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Oh, no, sir!"

"Oh!"

"I should like to take Weilly, sir, and Kewwaish, and Evans, and Hancock, and Pratt, and young Jones, sir—but but I thought I ought to be moderate, sir."

The Head coughed.

"I should like to take Clifton Dane, sir, and Glyn, and Goah, and Skimpole, and—"

"Ahem! You need not continue, D'Arcy. I have no doubt you would like to take the whole junior portion of the School House."

"Yaas, wathah, sir!"

Dr. Holmes smiled.

"I suppose, therefore, I may look upon this list as really moderate?" he said.

"I am glad you look upon it in that light, sir," said D'Arcy, looking greatly relieved. "Thank you vewy much, sir."

"But—but—I did not say—"

should not like you to think I was imposin' upon your gweat kindness, sir," said D'Arcy. "I am glad you wegard the list as modewate."

"D'Arcy!"

"I can only thank you vewy much, sir, in the name of my friends and myself."

The Head looked hard at the elegant junior. He was quite serious. Dr. Holmes hesitated a few moments, turning the paper over in his hands.

"Very well, D'Arcy," he said. "The number you were to take was not specified either by your father or myself. Perhaps I should have been a little more precise. I consent—and I hope you will have a most enjoyable week."

"Thank you vewy much, sir. I—"

"Well?"

"If you would allow me to say a word for Wally, sir—my minah—" faltered the swell of St. Jim's.

Dr. Holmes shook his head decidedly.

"Impossible, D'Arcy! His record for the last twenty-four hours is worse than it has ever been, and he has greatly incensed his Form-master. He has been in trouble with his House-master, his German-master, his head prefect, and his Form-master, and really he is much more deserving of punishment than of a holiday. Good-bye, D'Arcy!"

"Good-bye, sir, and thank you vewy much!"

And D'Arcy left the Head's study.

He returned to his chums.

"It's all wight, deah boys!"

"List passed unanimously?" asked Kangaroo.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Good!"

"Hip-pip!"

"Hurrah!"

"I'm only sowwy about Wally," said D'Arcy, and he went in search of his minor.

Wally heard of his major's last appeal for him with a grin.

"It's all right, Gussy," he said. "You've done your best, and you're a good little ass!"

"Wally!"

"But I shall manage it somehow."

"Well, I hope you will," said Arthur Augustus, after quite a long pause; "and if you do come home, Wally, I shall give you a feahful thwashin' for that diswespectful wemark you have just made."

Whereat Wally chuckled.

CHAPTER 20.

A Railway Tragedy.

THE rest of St. Jim's was busy with afternoon lessons when Arthur Augustus and his friend or two—numbering eleven in all—made their way to the gates of St. Jim's, each of them carrying one or more bags.

Tom Merry & Co. tramped down to the station in a merry party.

Arthur Augustus was still thinking of his minor, but he could not help admitting that it was a comfort not to have Pongo attached to the party.

"Of course, I'm awf'ly fond of dogs," he remarked; "but Pongo is like Towsah, and he has no respect whatevah for a fellow's twousahs."

"Towser would have liked to come," said Herries. "I don't feel half safe about him, leaving him to Taggles to feed."

"Towser wouldn't have liked the result if he had come," said Blake. "He would have been found drowned in the lake at Eastwood."

"Look here—"

"Yaas, wathah! I must say that the partay is wathah improved by the absence of Pongo and Towsah."

Herries grunted.

"Bless Towser and Pongo!" said Fatty Wynn. "I hope you fellows have brought some sandwiches."

"I thought I saw you laying in a supply of grub at the tuck-shop," said Tom Merry.

Fatty Wynn looked alarmed.

"Oh, no! That was only a little snack for myself," he said, and he glanced down at a somewhat bulky parcel that swung on his arm. "Of course, I'd share out with you fellows like a shot if you want any, but I got only enough for myself, as a matter of fact. In fact, I didn't get quite enough, because the funds wouldn't run to it."

Figgins looked at the bulky parcel.

"You must have a good bit there!" he remarked.

"No," said Fatty Wynn innocently. "Only three pork pies, some baked potatoes, a beefsteak pudding, half-a-dozen hard-boiled eggs, a currant cake, a pound of dough nuts, and a pound of mixed biscuits, and some nuts."

"Bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You'll be famished before we get to Eastwood, if that's all you've got," said Monty Lowther, sympathetically.

"Yes, I hope you chaps have some sandwiches," said Fatty.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

They reached the station and boarded the local train for Wayland. At Wayland Junction they had to change, and as there was ten minutes to wait, Fatty Wynn paid a visit to the buffet.

"Mind you don't lose the train," said Tom Merry. "What the dickens do you want to go to the buffet for when you've got provisions enough for a siege of Ladysmith in that blessed parcel under your arm."

"Well, that's barely enough for the journey," said Fatty. "No good breaking into it now. I'd better get a snack at the buffet."

And he rolled off.

Fatty Wynn said that he would have a snack, but when he started eating, he did not usually leave off till his money was gone. He had just borrowed half-a-crown of Figgins, and so his snack was likely to come to exactly two shillings and sixpence. He had not reappeared when the train came into the station.

The juniors entered the train, securing a carriage to themselves—which was pretty well crowded by them—and Figgins and Kerr looked anxiously for Fatty.

"The ass!" exclaimed Figgins. "He'll lose the train!"

"Yell for him!"

"Fatty!"

"Fatty Wynn!"

"Coo-ey!" roared Kangaroo.

"This way, Fatty!"

"Buck up!"

"Next man in!"

"On the ball!"

And still Fatty Wynn did not appear. He was evidently too deeply and seriously occupied at the buffet to hear or heed the calling.

Figgins jumped out of the train and beckoned to Kerr.

"We shall have to fetch him!" he exclaimed. "Come on! Mind you don't let them start without us, Tom Merry!"

"I'll do my best. Buck up!"

Figgins and Kerr rushed off to the buffet. It was a considerable distance down the platform, and the porters were slamming the doors of the train as they reached it.

They rushed in.

Fatty Wynn was standing at the counter. He had just paid his half-crown, and there was a penny change; and Fatty Wynn was debating in his mind whether he would have a jam-tart or a scone for that penny. It never occurred to him to put the penny in his pocket.

"Come on!" roared Figgins.

Fatty Wynn started.

"Eh?"

"Come on—"

"But—"

"Train's starting!" roared Figgins.

Still Fatty seemed only imperfectly to comprehend. His mind was still wavering between the scone and the tart.

"All right," he said, "I'm coming! I—"

"Collar him, Kerr!"

"I— Oh! Ow! Leggo!"

Kerr and Figgins seized him one by each arm. They rushed him violently out of the refreshment-room, at a speed that took his breath away. Fatty Wynn, at the last moment, had snatched up the jam-tart, deciding upon that, but in doing so he had let fall his parcel of provisions, which rolled upon the floor. Figgins and Kerr whisked him out of the buffet too quickly for him to recover it.

Fatty struggled as they whirled him along.

"Hold on—"

"Ass! Buck up!"

"But my grub—"

"Shove him along!"

"The parcel—"

"Train's just starting."

"But—"

"Urry up!"

"Buck up!" roared Tom Merry, from the open carriage door. "Buck up! Put it on!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Fatty Wynn, still breathlessly resisting, was whirled on by his chums towards the train. A porter ran along shouting: "Stand back there! Stand back!"

"Quick!" muttered Tom Merry.

"Wun like anythin', deah boys!"

Figgins gasped as he whirled Fatty Wynn to the carriage door. Fatty was grasped from within, and shoved from without, and went headlong into the carriage, and collapsed breathless among a forest of legs.

Figgins and Kerr bundled in after him, just as the train began to move.

The guard slammed the door.

"My hat!" gasped Figgins. "That was a narrow squeak!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You asses!" roared Fatty Wynn. "You chumps! You frabjous cuckoos!"

"Eh?"

"You ass! You've left the parcel behind!"

"The what?"

"The parcel!"

"Oh!"

"The parcel of grub! My grub! Now I haven't any!"

The juniors looked at the wildly-excited Fatty, and burst into a roar of laughter. The fat Fourth-Former sat on the floor of the carriage, staring at them in withering indignation.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

CHAPTER 21.

D'Arcy Arrives with a Friend or Two.

TOM MERRY & CO. laughed, and laughed again. They could not help it.

Fatty Wynn picked himself up with a grunt.

"You utter asses!" he said. "What the dickens am I to do for grub on the journey now? I hope you've brought a decent lot of sandwiches, that's all. I shall want them."

The train was whirling out of the old town of Wayland, gathering speed as it went. The laughter of the juniors mingled with the rolling and whirring of the express.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You frabjous asses! I shall be awfully hungry!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry. "This is a case of the dog and the shadow over again! Fatty has lost the substance in grasping after the shadow. If he hadn't gone to the buffet—"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And that was all the sympathy Fatty Wynn received.

The fat Fourth-Former sat down, in indignation and dismay. It was not long before he was hungry; Fatty Wynn had a wonderful appetite.

The juniors were talking cheerfully, discussing the prospects of the cricket week, and the possibility of some of them being asked to play in the house eleven.

Fatty Wynn interrupted them.

"Blow all that rot," was his remark. "I suppose you chaps have some sandwiches."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, hand 'em over."

"Here you are, deah boy!" said D'Arcy, opening one of his bags. "Pway leave me a couple—two will be enough for me. We shall have a jolly good early suppah at Eastwood."

"Right-ho!"

Fatty Wynn started on the sandwiches. Ten minutes later his voice was heard again.

"Gussy, old man!"

"Yaas, deah boy!"

"I suppose a couple of Figgy's sandwiches will do for you instead of your own."

"Certainly."

"That's lucky, as I've finished the lot. I forgot!"

"Gweat Scott! Nevah mind, Wynn, you won't be hungwy again before we get to Eastwood, that's one comfort."

But Arthur Augustus was wrong. Fatty Wynn was ready for a meal by the time the juniors were ready to sample the provisions they had brought. They shared out with him, of course, and Fatty took the lion's share.

"What time do we get into Eastwood?" he asked.

"Well, there will be a conveyance at the station to meet us," said D'Arcy. "We shall get in pretty early in the evening."

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"Supper ready, I suppose?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Good! I shall be ready for it!"

Through the dusk of the summer evening the train rushed on. It had long been dark when they stopped at last, and changed for the local line which took them to Easthorpe, the station for Eastwood. Fatty Wynn made a rush for the buffet the moment he was out of the train, but Figgins and Kerr fastened upon him at once.

"Leggo!" growled Fatty. "There's three minutes to wait, and—"

"And you're going to wait with us!" grinned Figgins.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Look here—"

"You can talk till you're black in the face, my son!" chuckled Figgins. "But you're not going to leave us for the tenth part of a tick."

"But—"

"This way!"

And Fatty Wynn was bundled into the local train, and it started. He cast a pathetic glance round the carriage.

"Any of you got a stick of toffee, or anything?" he asked.

Monty Lowther felt in his pocket.

"Milk chocolate do?" he asked.

"Yes—yes! Hand it over!"

Monty Lowther handed over a cake of milk chocolate. Fatty Wynn seized it, and jammed it straight into his mouth.

Fatty Wynn grinned; he could afford to grin so long as the milk chocolate lasted. But it was gone in a minute or two.

Then Fatty Wynn counted the minutes. The train stopped at last. The crowd of juniors bundled out, and found a conveyance waiting for them. The coachman stared at the crowd that bundled out of the station laden with bags. The trap was large enough to hold four with comfort, or six at a pinch. There were eleven.

He touched his hat to D'Arcy.

"His lordship said—that—"

"Bai Jove, I weally ought to have wiahed to the governah," said D'Arcy. "He was expectin' me with a friend or two, of course. That twap won't hold us. Get another twap at the inn, Joyce, and buck up, deah boy!"

"Yes, Master Augustus!"

"Let us start first in this one," murmured Fatty Wynn; but Figgins stamped on his foot, and they waited for the others.

The second trap was soon forthcoming, and the two vehicles rolled off in the darkness of the scented country lanes towards the great house of Eastwood.

"Here we are, Fatty!" exclaimed Figgins encouragingly, as they rolled in at the lodge gates. "Cheer up!"

And Fatty Wynn brightened as the lights of Eastwood burst upon his sight. He thought of the supper waiting within those hospitable walls, and smiled.

The roll of wheels was evidently heard in the house, for the great door was opened, and a handsome old gentleman with a white moustache appeared in the wide, lighted hall to welcome the swell of St. Jim's.

"Bai Jove! It's the governah!"

The juniors alighted.

Lord Eastwood was wearing a welcoming smile. It slowly changed to a look of amazement as the crowd of juniors came into view.

"Dear me!" murmured his lordship.

"How are you, patah?" said D'Arcy affectionately. "I've awwived all wight, you see, and I've bwrought a friend or two!"

His lordship recovered in a moment.

"I see you have, Arthur," he replied. "I am glad to see you—and your friend or two. Please come in, my boys—all friends of my son are welcome here, and I am heartily glad to see you all!"

And Lord Eastwood shook hands cordially with Tom Merry & Co.

"Your pater's a brick," said Tom Merry, as they went in to supper; to which remark the swell of St. Jim's replied cheerfully:

"Yaas, wathah!"

A few minutes more, and Fatty Wynn was happy. He smiled sweetly over the well-spread board, and did not leave off eating till it was time to go to bed; and then Figgins and Kerr had to use almost force to detach him from the supper table.

"Well," said Tom Merry, as he kicked off his boots that night. "This is ripping. You're a brick, Gussy, and your governor's a brick, and I rather think we're going to have a jolly cricket week!"

And Tom Merry was right.

THE END.

(Another long, complete tale of Tom Merry & Co., next Thursday, entitled "D'Arcy's Cricket Week," by Martin Clifford.)

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. They are hardly recovered when a violent squall strikes the slaver, sweeping everything movable on deck overboard, and hurling the captain and Bimby, the negro part-owner of the slaver, violently against the deck-rail.

(Now go on with the story.)

The Horrible Cargo of the Slaver—An Interview with the Captain.

In the hull that followed, a babel of sound rose up through the deck from the stifling hold, where a hundred human beings were fighting for air and life in the darkness. Even Kester shuddered at the sound, then uttered a furious oath.

"There'll not be a dozen living by morning," he said.

All through the night the gale continued with more or less fury, and during the lulls in the tempest those hideous sounds rose from the fever-stricken, terrified wretches in the hold.

Morning broke at last, cold and grey, with heavy black clouds scudding across the sky. The wind still continued fresh, but the gale had abated, and under bare poles the Black Rose was careering through a sea that had been churned up into snowy froth.

It was not till late in the afternoon that the weather moderated sufficiently for some of the crew to go aloft and make all secure. All through the night and the day that followed, Kester and the negro had remained on deck; but now that danger was passed they went below.

As they reached the companion-hatch, Kester held up his hand.

"Listen!" he said.

"Listen?" repeated the black. "What fo' listen?"

"Do you hear anything from the hold?"

They both listened intently, but not a sound came from the hold; then, with a grim smile on his face, Kester led the way below.

"You see, it is forced on us," said Kester. "'There is a Providence that shapes our ends, rough hew them as we may,'"

he muttered, in an undertone.

"What dat about Providence?" demanded Bimby.

"I said that it was forced on us. We have lost our cargo.

There is only the other thing left."

Bimby nodded.

"Betterer if we hadn't changed our trade," he said.

"Then, it is San Andrade?" asked Kester.

Bimby nodded.

Down in the cabin that had been allotted to them, the survivors of the Catapult, sorely bruised and buffeted by the pitching and tossing of the brig, had regained consciousness. They had learned from Fid what manner of vessel it was that had providentially picked them up in the moment of their need; but, in the selfishness of their own sufferings, they were all too thankful at their own escape to spare much thought for the black cargo the brig carried.

"Are there any slaves on board now?" Oswald asked the mulatto.

"Down in de hole, one hundred more'n twenty," said Manuel. "Men, women, and piccaninnies; but I tink dere am precious few left ob dese latter now!" he added.

"A hundred and twenty in the hold?" repeated Oswald.

Maxwell was busy devouring a piece of salt pork.

"By the way, where is Babbington?" he asked suddenly, looking round him. "He was with us. Don't you remember, Smith, he was beside you?"

No one knew.

"You ask for young jontleman dat wid you in de boat?" said Manuel, when he came back with a fresh supply of provisions for his ravenous charges. "Young jontleman, not more'n so big as dat?" said Manuel, holding his hand about four feet from the ground.

"Yes," said Maxwell impatiently.

"Him dead," said Manuel briefly.

"Poor chap!" said Maxwell. And he returned to the attack on the salt pork.

Though all had suffered, the one who seemed to have suffered most was Captain Burgoyne. It was long after the others had returned to consciousness that he opened his eyes. Shaking, trembling in every limb, like a man smitten with palsy, he sat gazing vacantly round him until his eyes lighted on the bottle of brandy which Manuel had procured.

With a muttered exclamation, he rose unsteadily to his feet, staggered across the cabin, and seized the bottle; but as he did so, Fid caught it and wrenched it from his grasp.

Despite his weakness, the captain uttered a scream of passion, and tried to strike the old sailor; but, missing Fid's head with his clenched fist, he lurched forward, and fell heavily on the deck.

Fid and Manuel raised him between them, and carried him to his bunk, on which they laid him.

Then, mixing a little of the brandy with water, Fid poured it down the captain's throat, which had the effect of reviving him sufficiently to enable him to fire off a string of oaths at the old sailor.

"You did quite right, man; take no notice," said Dr. Telford, in an undertone. "If he had drunk that strong spirit, it would have killed him on the spot," he added.

The captain lay glaring from one to another.

"Mutiny!" he said faintly. "Curse you, Telford! You are inciting the men to mutiny! By heavens, you—"

He stopped speaking suddenly, and fell into a deep sleep, which lasted for several hours, at the end of which time he awakened with renewed strength and ravenous appetite.

There was still an hour before sunset, and the day which had opened so stormily was setting fair.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 123.

Another Splendid Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co.

NEXT THURSDAY:

"D'ARCY'S CRICKET WEEK."

The wind and waves had subsided, the heavens had cleared of the ominous clouds, and, under new top-sails, the Black Rose was speeding on her course.

All hands were on deck, and gathered around the hatchway, where Kester and Bimby were talking together earnestly.

"Off hatches!" said the former suddenly. "And stand ready to shoot down any man who may show fight!"

Two men obeyed, while the others, with loaded pistols in their hands, stood waiting.

The two men knocked the hatches off, and from the depths of the hold a horrible, sickening stench rose; but there was no sign of living being, no sound from that pestilential place.

"Cargo a dead loss, and not insured!" muttered Kester, with a grim smile. "Harris, Peto—you two go down into the hold."

The two men he had singled out—a big, brawny, fierce-faced Englishman and a powerful negro—hung back, for clearly neither of them had any liking for the duty.

"You hear me?" said Kester, in a low, dangerous voice.

Unwillingly, the two men advanced towards the hold, and peered down; and, heavens! what a sight met their gaze.

Below them, piled high one on another, were the bodies of the unfortunate slaves. Of all the hundred and twenty men, women, and little children in that ghastly place, not one seemed to be living.

The Englishman, with a shudder, drew back, as his nostrils caught the sickening odour wafted up from that pit of death.

"Into the hold!" repeated Kester quietly. And as he spoke he drew his pistol from his belt, and fingered the trigger meaningly.

They knew that to disobey meant death, for they had sailed under Kester long enough to know orders were not to be lightly disregarded.

With a shudder of repulsion, the two men—black and white—descended into the noisome place.

"Throw them a rope-end!" ordered Kester.

The rope was thrown into the hold, and the men secured it round the body of one of the slaves, who was dragged up to the deck.

The first to be drawn up was a man, whose huge, gaunt frame was shockingly attenuated. He still breathed, and Kester ordered some of the crew to give him water in the hopes of resuscitating him.

The next body was that of a woman, dead, and horribly crushed and mutilated, with a child clasped in her rigid arms. From the lips of the child came a feeble cry. Kester made a motion with his hand, and a moment later the dead mother and living babe sank under the curling waves.

And so the ghastly work went on till the sun went down. Of the hundred and twenty living creatures that had been forced into the hold, but four remained alive. They were all men—strong, muscular negroes once, now little more than skeletons covered with skin.

Their work was now done, and the two men Kester had ordered into the hold came up on to deck. As his foot touched the deck, the Englishman, Harris, swayed, and fell his length with a crash.

Kester shrugged his shoulders and turned away.

"Pump water into the hold," he said.

All through the night the breeze, for it was little more now, kept steady, and the Black Rose bowled along smoothly over the crisp sea. Morning revealed land lying over their bows, and before noon the Black Rose had cast anchor off a small island.

Two other vessels were also riding at anchor off the island, both schooners, at the sight of which, Kester and Bimby seemed to be somewhat puzzled.

"The farther one is the Albatross, beyond a doubt," said Kester. "But what schooner is that? A smart-looking craft, too, Bimby."

The negro grunted.

"Smarter dan dis fool's' old brig."

"It would be a good exchange, eh? With such a vessel as that, and a few stout

lads; but come"—Kester broke off—"we will go on shore, and see how the wind blows. But first for our British captain." His face darkened as he spoke, though his tone was still light. "Pico, go to the cabin where the men we picked up are, and present my compliments to the English Captain Burgoyne, and say I shall be glad if he will come to my cabin."

Pico, the negro, went off and delivered the message, and a few minutes later returned, accompanied by Captain Burgoyne. Up to the present, the survivors of the Catapult had not come face to face with the man who had rescued them, and Captain Burgoyne was evidently in some trepidation as he entered Kester's cabin. Kester rose as the captain entered, and glanced searchingly into his face.

"You are Captain Burgoyne, of the frigate Catapult?" he said briefly.

"Yes, sir; and you—"

"That does not signify!" said Kester abruptly.

Captain Burgoyne's nervousness increased at the sounds of Kester's harsh tones.

"We owe you a debt of gratitude—" he began.

But Kester silenced him with a wave of his hand.

"There need be no talk of gratitude between you and me, sir!" he said coldly. "What I did for you, I presume, any man would have done for another. Possibly you are not aware of the nature of the vessel you stand on?"

Burgoyne hesitated.

"I have heard that you are engaged in the slave trade," he said.

"Was engaged in that trade, but am no longer," said Kester coolly. "You can go, sir," he added abruptly. "I shall probably wish to see you again later."

Captain Burgoyne took his abrupt dismissal without resentment, and turned towards the door. At the entrance he hesitated a moment.

"Do you propose to put me and my men on shore here, sir?" he asked.

"That is, as I may determine," said Kester briefly.

And the captain went out without another word.

Ten minutes later, Kester, accompanied by Bimby and six of the crew, put off in a boat, and rowed to the island.

But before leaving the Black Rose, the men, by Kester's directions, had made some alteration in their attire. The coloured shirts had been replaced by dark-blue knitted jerseys, the wide pantaloons by serge trousers, and none carried any visible weapons. Kester himself was dressed in white jeans, and Bimby in a pea-jacket and trousers.

They landed on the beach, where several boats were drawn up, and where a number of negroes were busily employed rolling water-barrels down to the shore, and stowing them in the boats.

At the back of the beach, the ground rose to a slight eminence, the summit of which was crowned by a few trees, through which a large wooden house was visible.

Following a rocky pathway, they ascended the hill, and made towards the house, which was surrounded by cotton plantations, where a score or more negroes were at work.

Other negroes were lounging under the walls of the house, and paid little attention to the strangers approaching.

The boat's crew had remained down on the beach, and Kester, followed at a slight distance by Bimby, who appeared to have assumed the role of servant, advanced to the house, and, without any further ceremony, entered the open doorway.

In a long, low room, the windows of which were screened by green blinds, were seated a number of men, who looked up as Kester entered. Although a quick glance of recognition passed between him and several of them, none made any move to greet him, except a stout man, dressed in linen, who had been taking his ease in a rattan chair.

(Another long instalment of this thrilling serial will appear next Thursday.)

How Do You Do?

WHOM TO WRITE TO—The Editor, "GEM" LIBRARY, 23-9, Bouverie Street, Fleet Street, London, who will be pleased to hear from you.

"D'ARCY'S CRICKET WEEK."

Next Thursday's long complete story will deal with the swell of St. Jim's party at Eastwood House, and if they have a right good time so will you when you read the story.

By the way, although Wally is left behind he turns up unexpectedly and is the means of clearing up a mystery that has puzzled his seniors.

The Editor.

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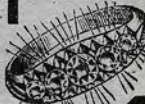
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