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The **GEM** 1^d

LIBRARY NO. 124. VOL. 4.

The top section of the cover features a decorative border. On the left, a small illustration shows a boy in a cap and uniform holding a large book. On the right, a small illustration shows a boat on water with a figure inside. The central text reads 'The GEM 1d' in a large, stylized font, with 'LIBRARY NO. 124.' and 'VOL. 4.' printed below it.

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by
MARTIN
CLIFFORD.



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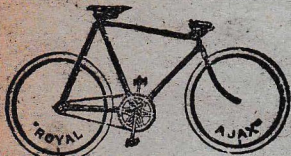


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THURSDAY

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CHAPTER 1.

Feet First.

"D'ARCY!"
"Gussy!"

"Pway don't bothah, deah boys!" drawled Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the ornament of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's. "I am feelin' wemarkably comfy at the pwsent moment, and do not wish to be disturbed."

"Rats!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"Wake up!"

"I am not asleep, deah boy. But I am vewy comfy, and I wepeat that I do not desiah to be disturbed by any of you noisy boundahs."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy certainly looked comfortable. He was stretched in a hammock under a shady tree, on the lawn before Eastwood House.

Eastwood House was the seat of Lord Eastwood, D'Arcy's "governor," as the swell of St. Jim's always called him.

Lord Eastwood was giving a "cricket week," and Arthur Augustus had been allowed to come home for the occasion, and bring a friend or two, his friend or two numbering ten. Tom Merry & Co., all the genial chums of St. Jim's, were there, prepared to enjoy themselves in their holiday in the brilliant summer weather.

They were succeeding pretty well, too.

It was after lunch, and as the Eastwood House lunch took the place of the midday dinner the St. Jim's juniors were accustomed to, they did it full justice.

It was pleasant to lie in the grass under the trees afterwards, taking for once the relaxation of "slacking,"—though, as a rule, Tom Merry & Co. were far from being slackers.

But D'Arcy, at least, was certainly slacking now.

He looked the picture of lazy comfort as he lay in the hammock, swinging gently, with his eyes half-closed.

A Panama-hat partly shaded his face, and his eyeglass

"D'ARCY'S CRICKET WEEK."

A Splendid, Long, Complete
Tale of Tom Merry & Co.,

— BY —

MARTIN CLIFFORD.

had dropped to the end of its cord, and the swell of St. Jim's had not even troubled to replace it.

Tom Merry had just come down from the direction of the house. He had a telegram in his hand.

The telegram was for D'Arcy. But D'Arcy manifested no curiosity on the subject. He only half opened his eyes to look at the hero of the Shell.

"Wake up, ass!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

D'Arcy did not finish the sentence. He allowed his voice to trail away. Tom Merry snorted.

"You blessed slacker!"

"Weally——"

"Get up!"

"I wefuse to get up. I like a west aftah lunch. Besides, we are goin' to play cwicket this aftahnoon, and I wequire some wesepe."

"Here's a wire for you."

"Pway put it somewhere."

"Don't you want it?"

"No."

"You champion ass," exclaimed Tom Merry. "It may contain something important."

"That is not at all likely, deah boy; and anyway, I can attend to it latah. Pway don't talk any more; you throw me into a flutteh."

Tom Merry gazed speechless at the swell of St. Jim's. D'Arcy closed his eyes and breathed gently.

"Well, my hat!" said Monty Lowther. "Of all the lazy bounders!"

"Of all the blessed slackers!" said Jack Blake, D'Arcy's chum in the Fourth Form at St. Jim's.

"Of all the lazy larrikins," remarked Harry Noble, otherwise called Kangaroo.

"Weally, deah boys——"

"Wake up, you slacker!"

"I decline to wake up, and I wefuse to be called a

A DOUBLE-LENGTH TALE OF TOM MERRY NEXT THURSDAY.

No. 124 (New Series.)

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slackah. I shall thrash you when I wake up, Tom Mewwy."

"Ass!"

"Pway dwy up, deah boys!"

"You've got to open this telegram."

"I decline to open it."

"But it must be opened, you chump!" exclaimed Digby.

"How do you know it doesn't contain important news of some sort?"

"Well, you chaps can open it."

"Do you want me to?" asked Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Sure?"

"Yaas. Anythin' for a quiet life."

Tom Merry slit the buff envelope with his thumb. He took out the slip inside and unfolded it.

Then he uttered an exclamation.

"Phew!"

"What's the news?" asked Blake.

"I haven't read it, but I saw the name signed," said Tom Merry. "It's Wally."

"D'Arcy minor?"

"Yes, rather!"

"What on earth is young Wally wiring from St. Jim's for?" exclaimed Herries.

"I don't know."

"Wake up, Gussy! Your minor's in trouble," said Monty Lowther.

"That's all wight, deah boy; he's always in twouble."

"You ass! He may have died suddenly, and wired to you on the spot," said Kangaroo severely.

"Pway don't be an ass, deah boy. Wead it out, please, Tom Mewwy."

"Right-ho!"

Tom Merry read out the telegram.

"Dear Gussy—"

"Extravagant young bounder!" said Kerr, of the New House at St. Jim's. "Fancy wasting a halfpenny on the word 'dear' to begin a telegram!"

"Yaas, wathah! He's a weekless young wascal."

"Go on, Blake."

"Dear Gussy, I've been refused permission to come home for cricket week—"

"We knew that," said Blake.

The juniors all chuckled.

Wally, D'Arcy's minor in the Third Form at St. Jim's, had made desperate efforts to be good, in order to obtain permission to go home for the cricket week at Eastwood, and the disastrous result of his efforts still furnished food for mirth to the juniors of St. Jim's.

"Order!" said Figgins. "Read it out!"

"Dear Gussy, I've been refused permission to come home for cricket week, but I'm coming all the same. Can you fix it for me, or shall I bolt?—WALLY."

"Bai Jove!"

"Cheeky young rascal!" said Tom Merry, laughing. "I thought he wouldn't give up the idea of coming."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"There'll be a row if he bolts," said Figgins. "But I don't see how Gussy can fix it for him to come."

"Especially if he goes to sleep instead of thinking the matter out," said Manners.

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"Wake up!"

"It's all wight. I'll attend to the mattah pwesently."

And D'Arcy closed his eyes again.

The juniors looked at one another. Jack Blake stepped softly to the rope at the foot of the hammock, and began to untie it.

Tom Merry & Co. grinned joyfully.

When that rope was untied, the hammock would sweep down to the grass, and Arthur Augustus was likely to be shot out with surprising suddenness.

Not a word was said.

The juniors watched Blake in joyous anticipation.

Arthur Augustus breathed gently.

"That's wight, deah boys," he said drowsily. "Pway don't make a wow. I'm goin' to play cwicket like anythin' this aftahnoon, you know, and I wequire some wepose now. Is anybody shakin' the hammock?"

No reply.

"Pway don't make a wow or jolt me. Yow!"

The hammock was suddenly released at the foot.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy found himself suddenly going.

He gave a wild yell, and clutched out frantically; but there was no time to save himself.

In the twinkling of an eye he was shot out upon the grass with a bump.

Bump!

"Ow!"

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NEXT THURSDAY: "THE JAPE AGAINST ST. JIM'S."

D'Arcy sat in the grass, blinking in great confusion, not knowing for the moment what had happened. Tom Merry & Co. roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

CHAPTER 2.

Reply Prepaid.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY groped for his eyeglass, found it, and jammed it into his right eye. He rose to his feet, his aristocratic countenance fairly pink with wrath.

"You uttah asses!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I insist upon your stoppin' this wibald laughtah at once."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Who was it weleased the wope of my hammock?"

The juniors looked at one another.

"Who was it released the rope of the hammock?" asked Tom Merry.

"Who was it released the rope of the hammock?" said Kangaroo.

"Who was it—"

"You uttah asses! I insist upon knowing who weleased the wope of the hammock."

"He insists upon knowing who released the rope of the hammock."

"He insists upon knowing—"

"You cwass duffahs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wegard the person who gave me that fall as a pwactical jokah of the deepest dye," said Arthur Augustus.

"He regards the person who—"

"Oh, pway don't wot!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I suppose it was you, Blake, as you were standin' there." Arthur Augustus pushed back his cuffs. "Pway put up your hands, deah boy."

"Eh?"

"Pway put up your hands."

Blake held his hands in the air above his head.

"There you are!" he said. "Are you going through my pockets, Gussy? Did you ask me down here to do the Deadwood Dick business?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I did not mean hold up your hands in that widiculous way," said D'Arcy. "I am goin' to give you a feahful thwashin'."

"Oh, I see!"

"Pway get weady."

Blake smiled blandly.

"Do you generally entertain a guest by giving him a thrashing, Gussy?" he asked, with an air of polite interest. Arthur Augustus started.

In his wrath he had forgotten for the moment that Jack Blake was his guest in his father's house. He coloured, and dropped his fists, which he had been flourishing in an extremely warlike way.

"Bai Jove, I forgot that!"

"I think you forgot yourself," said Blake severely. "I'm ashamed of you."

"Weally, Blake—"

"We're all ashamed of you," said Digby. "I put it to the fellows. Aren't you all ashamed of Gussy?"

"Yes, rather!"

"I'm blushing for him," said Monty Lowther. "I haven't blushed for myself for a long time, but I'm blushing for Gussy."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"If he chooses to apologise, I may look over the matter," said Blake loftily.

"I am sowwy, deah boy," said D'Arcy, with dignity. "I forgot that you were my guest for the moment. Undah the circs, I apologise, but it must be undahstood that if you were not my guest I should considah you a wottah, and give you a feahful thwashin'."

"Your apology is accepted," said Blake, "only don't do it again."

"Weally, Blake—"

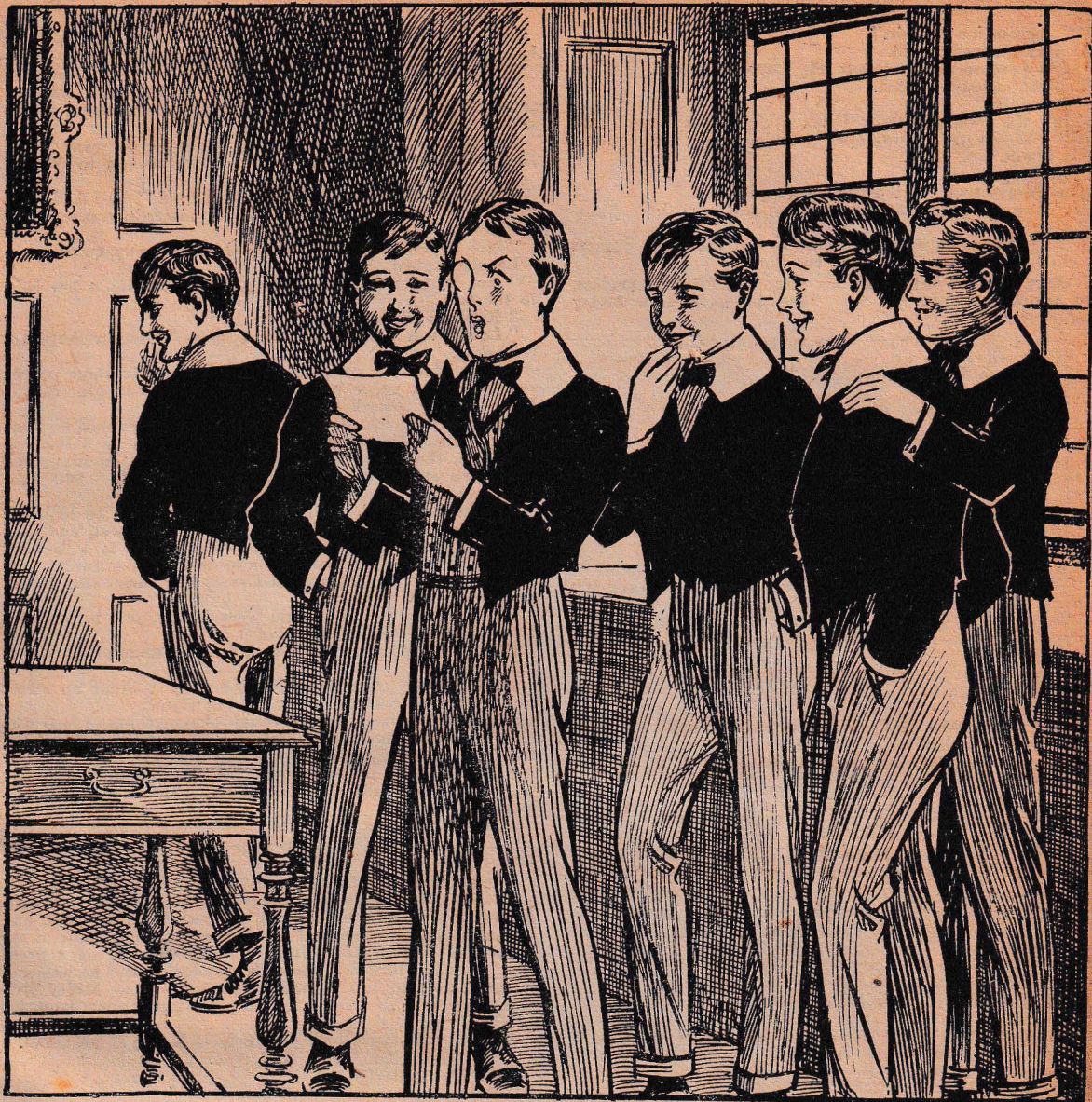
"Say no more," said Blake, with a wave of the hand.

"I forgive you, only don't do it any more. You are a great trial to me as it is. What are you going to do about this telegram?"

"Bai Jove, I'd forgotten that! I think I had bettah send a wiah to Wally orderin' him, as his majah, to stay at the school."

"Which will have a fat lot of effect on Wally," said Tom Merry.

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



Arthur Augustus looked at the telegram, and gasped. Wally's reply—the prepaid reply—was short, if not sweet. It consisted of a single word. "Rats."

"I twust he will not disobey the ordahs of his majah," said D'Arcy. "I should wegard it as impwative to give him a feahful thwashin' if he did. Bai Jove, there's the clock stwikin'! It's time to get weady for the cwicket. That pwofessional chap—what's his name?—Lovell, has pwomised to give us some bowlin'."

"That's all very well!" exclaimed Tom Merry, "but there's this wire from Wally. You ought to answer it."

"Pewwaps you are wight, deah boy. Where's the telegraph lad? I suppose he's waitin' for an answer."

"He's waiting at the house."

"Vewy good. I'll go and wiah my stwict ordahs to Wally to sit tight, and on no account to leave the school without permish."

And Arthur Augustus walked off to the house. The St. Jim's juniors followed him, grinning. They guessed exactly how much influence D'Arcy's strict orders would have over the scamp of the Third Form at St. Jim's.

Arthur Augustus took a form from the telegraph boy, wetted a pencil, and thought the matter out for a moment.

Then, with the juniors looking over his shoulder, he wrote as follows:

"Dear Wally,—I uttably refuse my permish for you to bolt. I order you, as your majah, to remain at the school. Reply.—ARTHUR."

"Pway take that, my lad," said D'Arcy to the telegraph-boy, who by the way, was at least a year older than the swell of St. Jim's. "I wish to pwepay a weply, too."

The lad grinned as he looked over the message.

"Two shillings, sir."

"Take that half-crown, please; nevah mind the change."

And the lad went away with the telegram.

The juniors of St. Jim's went out to cricket practice while they awaited the reply to the telegram. Lovell, the professional cricketer who was engaged by Lord Eastwood to give strength to the house team for the cricket week, had promised to give them some bowling, and they were glad of a chance of standing up to a bowler who had done execution among county bats on the historic ground at Lord's.

Lovell, a young man of not more than twenty-five or six, with a pleasant manner that had already won favour with the juniors of St. Jim's, had been very kind in the matter of putting them up to cricket wrinkles, and D'Arcy had informed the chums that he approved of Lovell—a statement which made Monty Lowther inquire gravely whether Lovell wasn't likely to get a swelled head if he heard of it.

It was about an hour later, and D'Arcy was at the wicket, trying to stand up to the young professional's bowling, when the uniform of the telegraph-boy was seen again. The lad made his way to the pitch.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 124.

NEXT
THURSDAY:

"THE JAPE AGAINST ST. JIM'S."

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

"Telegram for you, sir!"
 D'Arcy glanced round.
 "Pway excuse me a moment, Mr. Lovell," he said.
 The professional nodded.
 "Certainly!"
 "It's the pwepaid weply fwom Wally, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus. "Pway open it for me, Tom Mewwy, and wead it out."
 "Right you are!"
 Tom Merry took the telegram, and opened it.
 He gave one glance at the message, and roared.
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 Arthur Augustus stared at him; so did the other juniors of St. Jim's, who were fielding for him.
 D'Arcy put his bat under his arm, felt for his eyeglass, and jammed it into his eye. Then he gave Tom Merry another stare.
 "Weally, Tom Mewwy—" he began.
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "It is fwom Wally, I pwesume?"
 "Yes. Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Is he going to obey my ordahs?"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Surely he does not wefuse?"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Wead it out, deah boy, and stop cacklin'."
 "Rats!"
 "If you say wats to me, Tom Mewwy—" "
 "Rats!"
 "Eh?"
 "Well, you asked for it."
 "Weally, I fail to compwehend, Tom Mewwy. I asked you to wead out the telegwam fwom my minah—" "
 "That's what I've done! There's the telegram!" Tom Merry held it under the noble nose of the swell of St. Jim's.
 "Look!"
 D'Arcy looked.
 Then he gasped.
 Wally's reply to his telegram—the prepaid reply—was short, if not sweet. Wally generally came to the point, and he had certainly done so in this case.
 The reply consisted of a single word.
 "Rats!"

CHAPTER 3. More Rats.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY looked at the telegram, and looked at his chums. They roared. The expression of D'Arcy's face was even richer than the message from Wally. The swell of St. Jim's seemed unable to comprehend.
 "Bai Jove!" he said.
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Pway stop that cacklin', deah boys!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "There must be some mistake. I shall have to wiah to Wally again," said Arthur Augustus, his aristocratic brow wrinkling into a frown.
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Pway, have you anothah form, deah boy?"
 "Yes, sir."
 "Lend me a pencil, somebody."
 "Here you are, kid."
 "Thank you, Kangawoo! Pway wait a minute, my lad."
 "Certainly, sir!"
 Arthur Augustus wrote out another telegram.
 "Wally,—I fail to understand your wire. Please note that I stwictly forbid you to leave St. Jim's without permish.—ARTHUR."
 He handed the form to the post-office lad.
 "Reply paid, sir?"
 "Yaas, wathah!"
 And D'Arcy paid, and the telegraph boy grinned and went his way. D'Arcy looked round at the chums with a dignified expression.
 "I wegard this laughtah as out of place," he remarked.
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "I shall not allow my minah to grow up diswespectful to his eldahs. I wegard diswespect to an eldah bwothah as bein' the worst of bad form."
 "Quite right, Gus!" drawled a pleasant voice.
 And Lord Conway, the eldest son and heir of the Earl of Eastwood, strolled upon the pitch in spotless flannels. He had a bat under his arm, and he gave the juniors of St. Jim's a genial nod.
 They all liked Lord Conway.
 He had won his Blue at his University, and he was the strength of the batting side at Eastwood House, the professional Lovell being the strongest bowler.

D'Arcy adjusted his eyeglass, and looked at his elder brother.

"Weally, Conway—" "
 "Mind you never fail in respect to an elder brother, Gussy," said Lord Conway, wagging a warning finger at the swell of St. Jim's.

"Weally, you must not take my words too litewally," said Arthur Augustus. "I was wfewwin' exclusively to Wally." Conway laughed.

"Will you send me a ball or two, Lovell?" he asked. "I want to see what form I'm in for the match to-morrow."

"Certainly, sir!"

"Not if you're fagged," added Lord Conway quickly.

Lovell laughed.

"Not in the least, sir. I've only been bowling a few balls to the lads."

"Right-ho, then!"

"Lovell was bowling to me, Conway," Arthur Augustus remarked.

"Then this is a splendid chance for you to show proper respect for an elder brother, by standing out gracefully," Lord Conway remarked.

The juniors chuckled, and Arthur Augustus rubbed his nose thoughtfully. He confided to Tom Merry, as he walked off the pitch, that there were two sides to every question, and that some chaps could apparently only see one. And Tom Merry chuckled and agreed that it was so.

The juniors stood round, or sat in the grass, to look on. They knew what a fine batsman Lord Conway was, and they had had some experience of Lovell's powers as a bowler. Harry Noble was particularly interested in the sturdy, sun-burnt professional. He watched every movement that Lovell made.

"There goes the ball," said Tom Merry, and he added a moment later, "and the wicket."

Lord Conway looked down with a rueful smile as his wicket fell in pieces.

He had been clean bowled, apparently without an effort on the part of the crack bowler; but Conway was a sportsman to the backbone, and he could take anything of that sort with no feeling but that of admiration for the prowess of the man who had beaten him.

"Well done!" he exclaimed. "If you give them many balls like that to-morrow, Lovell, the Gipsies won't have a look in."

Lovell smiled.

"I think we shall give the Gipsies a good tussle, sir," he said.

Kangaroo fielded the ball, and tossed it back to the bowler, and then stood with his hands in his pockets watching. Kangaroo had been brought up on cricket in Australia, and he was as keenly interested in the great summer game as the keenest of the St. Jim's juniors, which was saying a great deal. Lovell's form was certainly wonderful, and he was well worth watching, but it had occurred to Tom Merry that Kangaroo took an interest in the professional apart from his bowling.

"Have you seen Lovell play before, Kangy?" he asked.

"Not in England," said Kangaroo.

Tom Merry started.

"Does he come from Australia, then?"

"I don't know," said Kangaroo slowly. "If he doesn't, he's the double of a man who does, that's all. Did you see that ball he knocked down Lord Conway's wicket with—a leg break that was the dickens to play? I've seen that bowled on a Melbourne pitch, by a man who was as like this chap, Lovell, as two peas are alike."

"Perhaps it's the same."

"I should think so, only—" "

"Only what?"

"Only this chap's not supposed to come from Australia."

"Oh, I see!"

"He's a Suwwey man," Arthur Augustus remarked. "He has played for Suwwey as a pweessional, and he was born in the county. He made the declaration of birth, you know; so he can't be the same chap, Kangawoo."

Noble shook his head.

"No, he can't; it's a coincidence, that's all. Yet—look at his delivery; you don't see two bowlers like that every day."

They watched the professional.

His delivery was grace itself. He had a fine figure, full of lissom activity. Lord Conway stopped the ball, but it was a close thing.

"By George," said Figgins. "He bowls better than Fatty Wynn, and I've always said that Fatty could take some county wickets if he tried."

"What-ho!" said Kerr.

And the Welsh junior blushed.

"But I couldn't touch that chap," he remarked.

"There goes the wicket again."

Lord Conway's wicket fell.

He laughed.

"Jolly good, Lovell," he called out.

"Glad you are satisfied, sir."

"Bai Jove! he's a wonderful bowlah, and an awf'ly decent chap," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "As a mattah of fact, deah boys, I could not stand up to his bowlin' vewy long myself."

"You couldn't," agreed Monty Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Here, take the bat, Berkeley," exclaimed Lord Conway, as a tall, handsome cricketer came down from the house. "Let's see how you can stand up to Lovell's bowling."

Berkeley took the bat, with a slight shrug of the shoulders. He was a handsome man, but there was a look about his face that would not have prepossessed a close observer in his favour.

The said close observer would have concluded that Cecil Berkeley was an arrogant man, given to thinking a great deal of himself, and to thinking too little of others, especially if they happened to be below him in social station.

He glanced at the professional bowler with a glance that Lovell appeared not to notice, though Tom Merry saw it, and knitted his brows.

To Berkeley, a professional bowler evidently was of about as much account as a cricket bat or a set of stumps.

He laughed lazily.

"I don't think Lovell will take my wicket easily," he remarked.

"I don't know; he's a wonder."

"Hang it all, Conway, don't tell me you let a professional bowler knock out the best amateur bat in the team."

"Well, Lovell has knocked me out twice."

"Then it's time somebody stood up for the amateurs," said Berkeley. "Let him bowl."

Lord Conway frowned a little.

Berkeley's manner, without having anything in it that could actually be complained of, was disdainful towards the professional cricketer, which was all the more unpleasant because Lovell, being paid for his services at Eastwood House, was not in a position to resent it.

"That chap Berkeley is wathah a boundah," Arthur Augustus confided to his chums. "He doesn't treat Lovell decently. As a mattah of fact, Lovell can play his head off at cwicket."

"It's caddish to take the upper hand of a man who can't hit back," said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Just what I was thinking," Figgins remarked.

"Who's Berkeley, anyway?" asked Kerr.

"He belongs to an awf'ly old family," said Arthur Augustus. "All wight on that score."

"Traces his descent a long way back, eh?" said Kangaroo. "I wonder if his goes further back than mine."

"That depends, deah boy. How far does yours go?"

"As far as Adam and Eve," said the Cornstalk seriously. "Further back than that, it's lost in antiquity."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pway don't wot, deah boy."

"I'm not rotting," said Kangaroo. "If Berkeley can trot out a longer pedigree than that, I'll give him best, but it's my belief he can't."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He's an amateur cwicketah," said Arthur Augustus, changing the subject. "He plays for his county, you know."

"Oh, I know," said Kerr. "One of those giddy amateurs, I suppose, who picks up twice as much in expenses as a professional picks up in wages."

"Well, pewwaps so. I believe he's a wathah expensive chap," said D'Arcy. "I can't say I like him myself much; but he's a good bat."

Tom Merry was silent.

He knew that in giving a cricket week, Lord Eastwood would be guided rather by the cricket form of the young men among his guests than by any other consideration. As a cricketer, Berkeley was doubtless all right.

But his manner in speaking to Lovell was very different from Lord Conway's, and it was not what Tom Merry would have called decent.

The juniors watched the bowling with great interest.

There was so much swagger about Cecil Berkeley as he went to the wicket that they were all prepared to be pleased if his wicket went down.

And down it did go.

The first ball from Lovell knocked it to pieces, and Berkeley started, and stared at his reclining stumps in angry astonishment. That he was angry could hardly be disguised—in fact, he took little trouble to disguise it.

D'Arcy clapped his hands.

"Well bowled."

"Yes, well bowled, indeed," said Lord Conway. "Had you there, Berkeley."

Berkeley bit his lip.

"It was a fluke," he said.

"Let him try again," said Lord Conway, with a grin.

Lovell took the ball that was tossed back to him. His lips were set in a tight line, from which Tom Merry gathered that he was inwardly, if not outwardly, ruffled by the manner of the swaggering amateur, and meant to give Berkeley the hottest bowling he was capable of.

Berkeley stood well on the defensive.

But he was no good against that ball.

It broke in at an impossible angle—or so the batsman deemed it—and swept his middle-stump out of the ground.

Berkeley uttered an oath.

"I'm out of form to-day!" he exclaimed angrily, and he threw the bat on the crease and walked away towards the house.

Lovell smiled grimly.

Lord Conway's brows came together. He was surprised that a fellow should lose his temper so easily, and he was annoyed at such an exhibition before the boys.

He picked up the bat.

"Thanks, Lovell," he said, "you're in wonderful form. I only hope the Gipsies' wickets will fall as easily."

The juniors of St. Jim's strolled away. Tom Merry chuckled.

"Lovell took him down beautifully, in the best possible way," he remarked. "I rather like that chap Lovell. He's awfully decent."

"I'd bet ten to one he was a Cornstalk," said Kangaroo musingly, "only—"

"Only he isn't."

"Yes," said Noble, with a laugh.

They went in to tea. Tea was over when a telegram was brought in to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Bai Jove!" he exclaimed, "that will be fwom Wally! I twust this answah is worded in a pwopahly wespectful mannah."

"Let's see it!" grinned Figgins.

"Certainly, deah boy."

D'Arcy tore open the flimsy envelope, and revealed the slip. The juniors read it, and gave a shout of laughter that drew all eyes upon them.

Wally's reply was a little longer this time—in fact, twice as long; two words instead of one.

"More rats!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Figgins. "More rats!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Going to wire back?" asked Monty Lowther, with a grin.

D'Arcy hesitated, and shook his head.

"No. I wufuse to waste any more cash on the young wascal! When I get back to St. Jim's, I shall make it a point to give him a feahful thwashin'."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And it was the last of the telegrams.

CHAPTER 4.

The Woes of Wally.

"WALLY!"

"Hallo!"

"Where are you, you duffer? What's the rotten smell of burning?"

"I'm here, cooking a blessed herring, and I'm burning it because I'm interrupted by a silly duffer," said Wally cheerfully.

Jameson grinned as he came into the Third Form room at St. Jim's.

It was the evening, and the Third Form at St. Jim's had the room to themselves for the time, lessons being things of the past.

The fags were mostly there, amusing themselves in faggish ways. D'Arcy minor was cooking a herring at the Form-room fire, the said herring being skillfully impaled upon two pens; but it was necessary for D'Arcy minor to get very near to the fire, and his face was ruddy and perspiring, nor was the cooking of the herring progressing with perfectly satisfactory results.

Wally blinked round at Jameson.

"You'd better take a turn with this herring," he said.

Jameson shook his head and grinned.

"Thanks. It's too warm for me."

"That's what I say," broke in Jones of the Third. "What do we want a fire for in this scorching weather? Hang it all, I think D'Arcy minor might go and cook his beastly herrings somewhere else."

"And the smell!" said another fag, with a snort.

"And the burning, too."

Wally grunted.

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"You can all go and eat coke," he said. "I'm going to have a herring for tea, if I bu'st something. I said I would."

"Stick to it, Wal," said Curly Gibson encouragingly. "You're bound to get that herring cooked in the long-run."

"Open the window, somebody," said Jameson.

"Don't!" grinned Jones. "The herring might do a bunk."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Wally glared at the facetious Jones.

"This is a jolly good herring," he exclaimed. "I gave three ha'pence for it."

"Then it must be a ripper."

"Only it talks."

"Yes," said Jameson, with a wag of the head, "I prefer a herring not to talk. I never did care for the conversational powers of herrings."

"Oh, cheese it!" said D'Arcy minor. "What do you want, anyway? You've made me burn the herring with your clatter."

"I looked in to ask if you'd had any more wires."

Wally chuckled.

"No."

"No more parental advice from the great Gussy?"

"Nix."

And Jameson chuckled, too.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's telegrams had caused considerable gaiety in the Third Form at St. Jim's, and the prepaid replies had furnished more merriment still.

The fags were rather sorry that Arthur Augustus had stopped sending telegrams.

"Well," said Jameson, "it was funny; but we're no forrarder. Gussy hasn't found a way for you to go home for the cricket week, and take a couple of your special chums."

"Not yet."

"But will he?"

"I hope he will."

"And if he doesn't?"

"Then we shall have to slide."

Jameson whistled. Wally spoke with perfect coolness, as though absenting themselves from school without permission were quite an everyday affair.

But Jameson knew perfectly well that it was not. Jameson already, in anticipation, saw the grim face of the Head, and felt the cane singing on his palm.

"I say, Wally, that would be serious," he remarked.

Wally snorted.

"Are we going to miss the cricket week?" he demanded.

"Not if we can help it."

"We've missed two days of it already. I think we've been jolly patient," said Wally, in an injured tone.

"We have," grinned Curly Gibson.

"Because—"

"Look at the herring!"

A terrible smell of burning pervaded the room, and there was a yell of protest from the fags. Wally, in his interest in the discussion, had forgotten the herring, and the tail of it had gone between the bars and caught alight.

"Phew! It's done for now!"

"Rats!"

"Put it out!" roared Jones. "Chuck it out! Stamp on it!"

"Poof!"

"I'm suffocating!"

"Well, can't you do it quietly?"

"Look here, young D'Arcy—"

"Rats!"

Wally waved the herring in the air to extinguish it. It was not very securely fastened upon the two pens which answered the purpose of a toasting-fork, and it swung off them, and described a half-circle in the air, and found a resting-place on Jameson's waistcoat.

"Oh!" shouted Jameson.

He jerked the herring off to the floor.

There it was promptly "passed" by Jones, who had had enough of the smell of cooking, and it flew through the air from the end of his boot.

"Stop it!" roared Wally.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pass!" roared Jones. "On the ball!"

"Pass, you duffers!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the herring was passed on, and then centred back to Wally, falling at his feet in several fragments.

Wally gazed at the wreck in dismay and wrath. No one seemed to sympathise. Even Jameson and Gibson, with whom he had intended to share that herring at tea, were yelling with laughter. Perhaps they were secretly not displeased to be deprived of the far-from-attractive morsel which was to have graced the tea-table.

"Well, you rotters?" exclaimed Wally.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll give you 'Ha, ha, ha'!"

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And Wally rushed at Jones, and promptly got his head into chancery.

Jones yelled and struggled.

Wally was a terrible youth when he started fighting in earnest, and the loss of the herring upon which he had expended so much pains, had exasperated him.

"Ow!" roared Jones. "Stop it! I give you best! Vah!"

"You young bounder! Take that—and that——"

"Ow! Yoop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's right, give him a jolly good licking!" said Jameson, who had laughed at the loss of his chum as much as anybody. "Go for him!"

"On the boko!" said Curly Gibson. "That's right!"

"Yow! Help!" roared the hapless Jones.

There was a sudden shout as the Form-room door opened.

"Cave!"

Mr. Selby, the master of the Third Form at St. Jim's, looked in with his thin face and his sour brow.

Wally and Jones instantly separated.

Mr. Selby surveyed the startled fags with a sour smile. He knew that his arrival had interrupted a fight. Wally's excited and untidy look, and the fact that Jones was mopping his nose with a crimsoned handkerchief, were sufficient proofs of it—to say nothing of the din he had heard as he approached the Form-room, and the unnatural stillness that had now fallen upon the fags.

"Ah! I trust I do not interrupt you?" said Mr. Selby, in the sarcastic way that always made his pupils want to throw things at him. "Is my arrival inopportune?" Silence.

"I trust you are not bleeding at the nose, Jones?" said Mr. Selby.

"Groo!"

"Are you?"

"Ye-es, sir!"

"Ah! I am afraid your health is bad! It is a bad sign to bleed at the nose."

"I—I knocked it against something, sir!" stammered Jones.

"Oh, indeed! Against what?"

"I—I didn't see, sir!"

That was perfectly true, for Jones's head had been in chancery while Wally was pummelling his nose, and he had certainly seen nothing.

"Perhaps D'Arcy minor can explain?" said Mr. Selby.

"I—I think I must have knocked Jones's nose, sir!" stammered Wally.

"With your fist, I presume?"

"I suppose so, sir!"

"You suppose so?" said Mr. Selby satirically. "You are not sure?"

"Ye-es, sir."

"You will take fifty lines each, Jones and D'Arcy minor!"

"Ye-es, sir."

And Mr. Selby closed the door.

Wally looked at Jameson and Curly Gibson, and gave a hopeless shrug of the shoulders.

"Curious that the Selby-beast is always down on me," he said. "And he was bound to be worse this time than any other."

"Well, fifty lines won't hurt you," grinned Jameson. "I'll help you do them."

"Oh, blow the lines! I was going to have another try to get his permission to go home for the cricket week."

"Ha, ha! Not much chance of that!"

Wally's lips set determinedly.

"Look here, Jimmy, the Head left it to our Form-master to decide whether I could have the holiday or not—"

"And he decided not."

"Exactly. He's got a prejudice against me."

"How odd!"

"He doesn't like me for some reason."

"For a dozen reasons, I should say!"

"Oh, don't be funny! Look here, we've got to get over Selby somehow, and make him love us, and inspire him with gratitude and attachment."

Jameson stared.

"Off your rocker?" he asked pleasantly.

"No; I've got a wheeze!"

"A wheeze for getting round the Selby-bird?"

"Yes."

"I know your wheezes," said Jameson distrustfully.

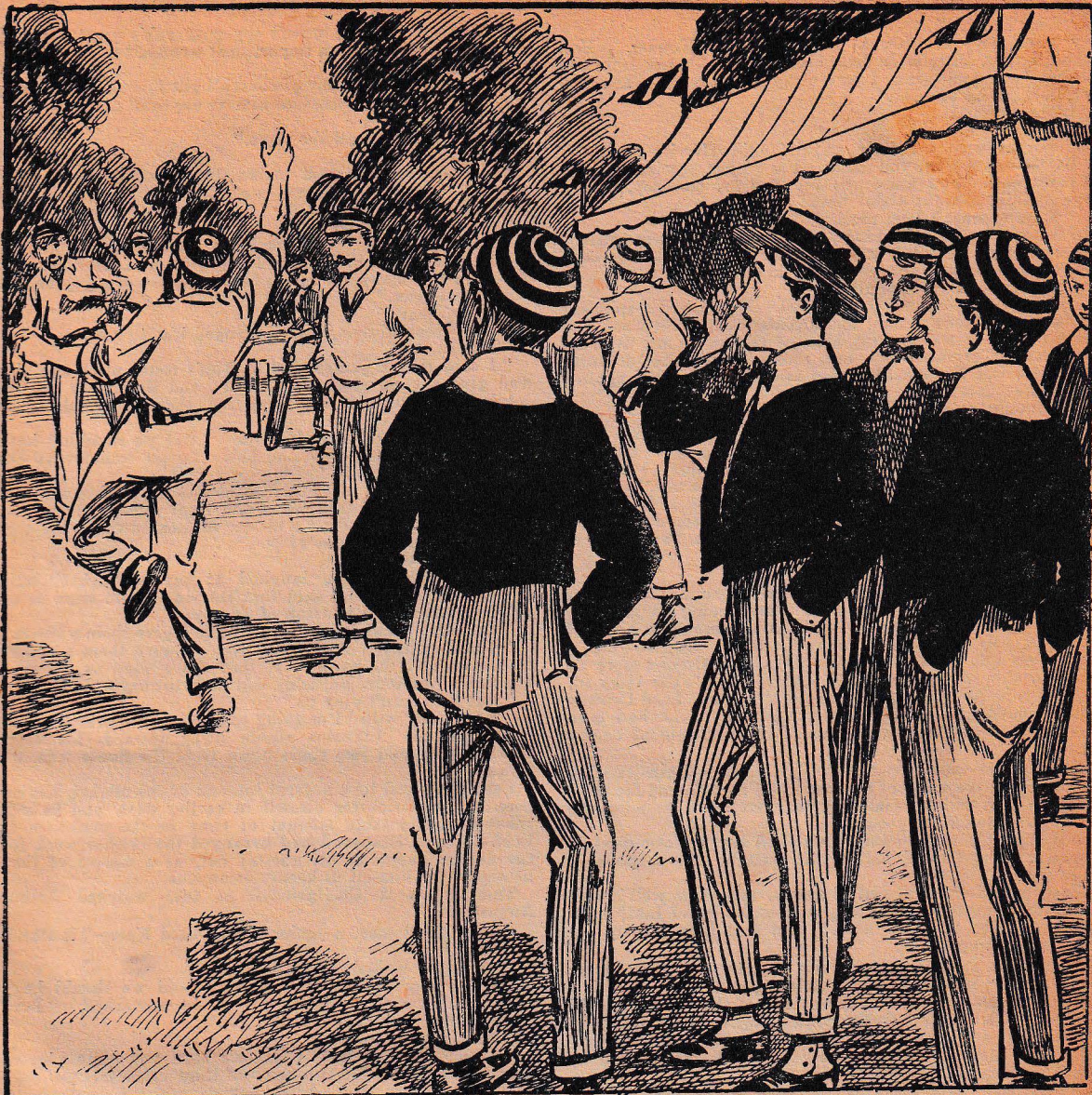
"Will it work?"

"Well, it will either make Selby overflow with grateful regard, or get a flogging for each of us!" said Wally. "Are you chaps game?"

And Jameson and Curly Gibson replied at once:

"We are!"

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"They look wathah a decent lot, you know," remarked Arthur Augustus, surveying the visiting team, which was putting in a little preliminary practice, "I wathah appprove of them."

CHAPTER 5.

A Case of Personal Dignity.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY rose and brushed a crumb from the sleeve of his jacket, and carefully arranged his monocle in his eye.

"You fellows coming out?" he said.

"Yes, rather!" said Tom Merry cheerfully.

"I'm not!" said Manners. "I've got some photographs to develop."

"Wats!" said D'Arcy.

Manners glared at him.

"I've been taking photographs for two days," he said. "I've got a lot of ripping pictures. I've got that chap Lovell at the wicket, just taking a late cut that was a perfect daisy, and I believe it's come out all right. Then I've got him bowling. I took a series of snaps in the Woodford match when he did the hat trick. Then I've got Mr. Berkeley—"

And Manners laughed.

"What's the joke, deah boy?"

"Oh, I snapped Berkeley mufing a catch, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You young scamp!" said Lord Conway, who happened to

overhear the remark. "You may as well leave that negative undeveloped till you're back at school."

Manners grinned.

"So I will," he said.

"Pewwaps you won't mind leavin' the development ovah a bit, Mannahs," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I particularly want all you fellows to come out."

"What's on?"

"I will explain."

"Oh, all right! Follow the man from Cook's!" said Monty Lowther.

And the juniors of St. Jim's followed D'Arcy out.

They were all looking and feeling very cheerful, with perhaps the exception of Herries, who had a thoughtful cloud upon his brow. Jack Blake slapped his chum on the shoulder.

"Penny for your thoughts, old man?" he remarked.

Herries started a little.

"Oh, I was just thinking!"

"Anything wrong?"

"I hope not."

Blake stared at him.

"You hope not. What do you mean?"

"I was thinking of Towser."

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"Oh, Towser!"

"Yes," said Herries, a little nettled; "Towser. You know I trust Taggles to feed him when I'm away from the school, and once when I was away Taggles gave him the wrong kind of biscuits."

Blake grinned.

"Awful!" he said.

"No; it wasn't exactly awful," said Herries seriously. "But it was rotten, you know. I'm rather particular what Towser eats. You know, he bit Taggles one day, and I was awfully anxious about him."

"Taggles wasn't hurt much?"

"Taggles! Who's talking about Taggles? I was anxious about Towser. I didn't know whether he mightn't have been poisoned or something; you never know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake.

"I can't see anything to cackle at. If you had a splendid bulldog like Towser you'd feel anxious about him when you were away. It was awfully kind of D'Arcy to ask us down here for the cricket week, but, really, I felt a bit doubtful about leaving Towser. But you fellows were so set against his coming here."

"I should rather say so!"

"What-ho!" chimed in Digby, with great feeling.

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Towser hasn't the slightest respect for a fellow's twousahs, Hewies, and you must acknowledge that yourself."

"Well, I can't help thinking about him a bit," said Herries. "I think I'll stroll down to Easthorpe presently and send Taggles a wire, and warn him to be careful to keep to the biscuits I told him about."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors had reached the cricket ground. A number of Lord Eastwood's guests were there, going to practice. The days were very long and light, and there were hours of daylight yet, and Lord Conway's team was meeting a dangerous side on the following day. The Gipsies were an amateur side of great strength, and it was a little risky for a country-house team to meet them at all, but Lord Conway had confidence in his side, more especially as it had been strengthened by the engagement of the professional bowler Lovell.

The Gipsies—who, needless to say, were not gipsies, that simply being the name of the club—had been famed for their victories that season, and they fully expected to wipe the Eastwood side off the ground.

But Lord Conway, when he watched the performances of Lovell, chuckled to himself at the thought of a surprise in store for the visitors.

Eastwood House was full of guests, and some well-known cricketers were there, enjoying the hospitality of Lord Eastwood, and the "cricket week" that had been got up for their entertainment.

"The team are going to practise now, Gussy," Tom Merry remarked. "We'd better keep off the grass."

"Oh, there's room for us at our end of the ground!" said Blake. "We shan't interfere with a match on this side."

"Well, as a matter of fact, I'd rather watch the players," said Tom Merry. "There's a jolly lot to be learned by watching that chap Lovell."

"What-ho!" said Fatty Wynn, who, as the junior champion bowler of St. Jim's, was supposed to know something about it. "I believe I pick up a new wrinkle every time I see him deliver the ball."

"And his batting's good, too," Figgins remarked.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Then let's watch instead of playing," said Blake. D'Arcy shook his head.

"We're going to play them," he said.

"Eh?"

"We're goin' to play the house team."

"Dreaming, old chap?"

"I am not dreamin', deah boy," said D'Arcy calmly. "We're goin' to play the house team. There are eleven of us."

"My dear ass—"

"I refuse to be called an ass."

"But you are one, you know," said Kangaroo. "Why, there are Oxford Blues and giddy I. Zingari in Lord Conway's team."

"All the bettah!"

"And they won't play us."

"Yaas, they will. This is how the mattah stands, deah boy: Mr. Berkeley—"

"Oh, Berkeley!"

"Yaas, Berkeley has had the awful cheek to speak disrespectfully of our cricket."

"Go hon!"

"My opinion is that he knew perfectly well that I was there and heard what he said, and he said it on purpose,"

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said D'Arcy. "If he wasn't my governah's guest I should chawactewise him as an impertinent wottah."

"Hear, hear!"

"Of course, as he is my governah's guest, undah the family woff, I cannot chawactewise him as anythin' of the sort."

"Ha, ha!"

"But I think so, all the same."

"Good!"

"Berkeley made a most contemptuous wemark about kids' cricket," went on D'Arcy, warming to the subject. "I immediately took him on."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Good old Gussy! Did you leave a whole bone in him?"

"I do not mean to say that I thwashed him, Tom Mewwy. It would be impos. for me to tweat a guest of my governah with diswrespect."

"Hear, hear!"

"But I took him on, and challenged him to meet us."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I said that a junior side at Jim's could meet any side and give a good account of itself; and that after his wemarks our personal dig. wequired that we should meet them!"

"Good old Gus!" said Figgins. "But we shouldn't have a look-in against a side like this. Lovell would take the wickets six to an over."

"That's where I had him!" said D'Arcy, with a smile of great wisdom. "I said we would meet any amateur side. That bars Lovell—and, as a matter of fact, Lovell is the only weally good bowlah they've got."

"Good old Gussy!"

"He laughed—yaas, laughed at my wemarks!" said D'Arcy warmly. "He said that the side would wipe us all off the gwound in a quarth of an hour."

"Oh, rats!" said Tom Merry. "We'd give them a tussle."

"Yaas, wathah! And we're goin' to give them a chance to make good the swank. If they don't wipe us out in a quarth of an hour, Berkeley will have to sing smallah."

"But they won't play us."

"Yaas, they will. I'm going to speak to Conway."

And Arthur Augustus strode away towards his elder brother, who had just come down from the house with his father.

Lord Eastwood took a great interest in the cricket, having been a great cricketer himself in earlier days, and he still spent a considerable amount of time in the enclosure at Lord's. Lord Eastwood had arranged the cricket week for the entertainment of his guests; but, as a matter of fact, he enjoyed it himself as keenly as anyone.

Tom Merry & Co. grinned as they watched Arthur Augustus.

"They won't meet a junior team," said Kerr—"it stands to reason."

Tom Merry looked thoughtful.

"Well, they're out for practising, and we should be a good scratch side to practise on," he remarked. "Lord Conway may look at it in that light."

"Well, yes; but—"

"As a matter of fact, I haven't been any more pleased than Gussy has by the side some of these cricketers put on," said Tom Merry seriously. "I know we're a junior side, and they're big players; but I don't like being patronised."

"Hear, hear!"

"And—as Gussy isn't present—I must say that I don't like that chap Berkeley, and I privately consider him a swanking cad."

"You've got him right," said Kangaroo. "That's just what he is! Lovell always treats him with respect, and yet he's always going out of his way to show by his manner that

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he looks on Lovell as a chap paid to be here. I've noticed that."

"Yes, I was thinking of that. Lovell's a professional, but he's jolly well the better gentleman of the two."

"Yes, rather!"

"I hope they'll play us," said Tom Merry. "There's plenty of daylight left for as long as the match is likely to last, I suppose."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gussy's pitching it to his governor."

And the group of juniors watched Gussy with great interest. The cricketers were standing about, and they, too, looked towards the swell of St. Jim's. They were ready for the practice to begin, and Arthur Augustus was detaining their skipper.

CHAPTER 6.

D'Arcy Puts It Plainly.

"I WANT to speak to you, Conway," said Arthur Augustus seriously.

Lord Conway smiled.

"Buck up, then, Gussy; the fellows want me."

"I won't detain you long, and it's vewy important," said D'Arcy. "You are goin' to pwactise now?"

"Yes."

"Vewy well! It would be a good ideah for you to take your practice by playin' us."

"Eh?"

Lord Eastwood laughed.

"My dear Arthur," he said, "you would not ask the team to play a junior side from school?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"But—"

"We would give them all the pwactice they want," explained D'Arcy.

Lord Conway grinned.

"Well, there's something in that!" he said. "It would give the side some combined practice, father."

"Yes, but—"

"Berkeley has expressed the opinion that you could wipe us off the field in a quartah of an hour," said D'Arcy. "I want to see it done."

"But—"

"If you fail to do so, Berkeley must admit that he swanked."

"My dear Gussy—"

"Leavin' out pwofessionals, too—Berkeley is strong on amateurs playin', and you can put anothah amateur in instead of Lovell. We don't undahtake to play him."

"But—"

"You cannot wefuse, Conway. Aftah what Berkeley has said, it would be wotten bad form not to give St. Jim's a chance to show what they could do."

Conway laughed again.

"Well, if you were a senior side," he said—"if you were a senior side, and had Sixth Form cricketers—fellows like Kildare and Darrel at St. Jim's. But—"

"We can put up a good game, deah boy."

"But—"

"I wefuse to be wefused!" said D'Arcy firmly. "If you wefuse to meet us, aftah what Berkeley has said, I shall wegard you as a lot of swankhahs, and shall look upon you all with pwofound contempt."

Lord Conway gave his father a comical look.

"Shall I speak to the fellows, dad?" he asked.

"Yes," said Lord Eastwood, laughing softly. "It will be practice—and amusing."

"Well, I'll see, Gus."

"Vewy good, Conway!" said D'Arcy, in a stately way.

Lord Conway strolled off towards the cricketers. His father went to one of the seats, where there were a good many spectators for the practice. Most of the guests at Eastwood House, if not all, were greatly interested in cricket.

Arthur Augustus waited for Conway to rejoin him. He saw Conway talking to the cricketers, and most of them were laughing—a fact that made the swell of St. Jim's look more stately than ever.

Conway came back in a few minutes.

"The fellows are agreeable," he said.

"Vewy good!"

"We'll play you, leaving Lovell out of the side."

"That's wight!"

"Then come on!"

"Excuse me a moment. I must explain to Lovell. I should not like him to fancy that he was bein' left out fwom any sort of disweward, you know."

Lord Conway smiled as D'Arcy walked over towards Lovell.

The young professional was standing by himself, not joining in the talk and laughter of the cricketers. He was the only professional in the side, and, of course, very much alone. Although most of Lord Eastwood's guests were civil enough to him, there was, of course, no bridging the gulf between them. But only Cecil Berkeley ever made it apparent by his manner that he looked upon the professional bowler as a paid employee.

"We're playin' Conway's side, Lovell, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus.

Lovell smiled.

"Indeed, sir!"

"Yaas, wathah! And they're goin' to give you a wost. I stipulated that you should be left out of the team, because I know we couldn't stand up to your bowlin'. You see?"

"I see!" said Lovell, with a smile.

"I stipulated for an amateur side," said D'Arcy. "I know you're too good for us. I thought I would explain, Lovell, deah boy!"

"Thank you!" said Lovell quietly.

And D'Arcy, with a friendly nod, returned to his chums. They greeted him with a grin, and a general monosyllabic inquiry:

"Well?"

"It's all wight," said D'Arcy. "They're playin' us."

"Good!" said Tom Merry. "We'll give them a run for their money, anyway."

"You fellows can bat first!" called out Lord Conway.

Tom Merry smiled grimly. He knew he was given the batting so that the senior side would not have to pile up a crowd of useless runs. Conway intended his men to take one run in excess of those scored by the juniors.

But Tom Merry was not to be treated in this off-hand way. The house team had chosen to play St. Jim's juniors, and Tom Merry meant that his eleven should be treated with proper respect.

"Thanks!" he said. "But we'll stick to the rules, if you don't mind. We'll toss you for choice of innings."

Lord Conway grinned at his companions.

"Oh, very well!" he said.

And they tossed, and it fell to Tom Merry to choose.

"You chaps can go in first," he said.

Lord Conway nodded.

"What the dickens are you sendin' them in first for, Tom Mewwy?" asked D'Arcy.

"I know what I'm about," said Tom cheerfully. "Fatty Wynn is the chap who's going to cover us with glory. They think we're no good, and while they're swanking Fatty is going to take their wickets. See? When we have to stand up against their bowling, I don't suppose we shall last long; but one thing's jolly certain, we won't give them a chance to declare."

"Good!" said Figgins.

"We depend on you, Fatty."

Fatty Wynn wetted the palms of his hands, and rubbed them.

"I'll do my best," he said.

"Mind you do! If you don't do hat tricks galore we'll serag you," said Kangaroo.

"I'm feeling in awfully good form," said Fatty Wynn.

And Tom Merry brightened. He knew what the Welsh junior could do when he was in form; and unequal as the match was, he felt that there was a surprise in store for the Eastwood House team.

CHAPTER 7.

Something Like a Surprise.

LORD CONWAY looked at the house team with a comical expression. Most of them were in high good-humour, taking the whole matter as a joke. Berkeley was inclined to be annoyed, as if not considering the affair quite consistent with his dignity.

"We're to bat first," said Conway.

"Rot!" said Berkeley. "What are you playing them for?"

"Well, that's cool, as it was a remark of yours to my young brother that's the cause of it, Berkeley," said Conway.

"It's ridiculous!"

"Oh, I don't see that!" observed Sir Frank Monson, a handsome young cricketer, who was one of the best bats in the house team. "It will be practice."

"They can't stand up to us for a minute," growled Berkeley. "We shall knock up runs, and then dismiss them for nothing, and have our trouble for nothing. Confounded if I feel like knocking up runs against a baby team!"

"Stuff!" said Raby, who was an old St. Jim's fellow, and had been a great cricketer in the Fifth and Sixth in his time. "The old school always turns out good stuff, and

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kids as they are, they'll play like anything but babies, I promise you."

"That's right!" said Conway. "I know they put up a good game for a junior side."

Berkeley sniffed.

"Let Berkeley open the innings," suggested Sir Frank Monson. "He's got us in for this, and it's only fair that he should get the runs we want."

"Good!"

"Quite right!"

"Berkeley begins!"

It was a chorus from the house team.

"Stuff!" said Berkeley.

"You can't refuse," said Raby. "You've let us in for this match, and between ourselves, it wasn't a nice thing you said to young Gussy."

"We only want a dozen runs," said Lord Conway pacifically; "then we'll declare, and let them bat. They won't knock up a dozen against us."

"Hardly!"

"Oh, I'll get them if you like!" said Berkeley ungraciously.

"Go it!"

And Berkeley went out with Pelham to open the innings, Pelham taking the bowler's end.

Tom Merry had already taken his men into the field, and disposed them, and Fatty Wynn was given the ball, with dire threats as to what would happen to him if he failed his side in this emergency. It wasn't often that the juniors of St. Jim's faced a team of grown-up men—in fact, never. The senior eleven at St. Jim's would not have expected victory in such a tussle. Tom Merry & Co. didn't expect it. But they meant to give a good account of themselves, and to steal as many wickets as possible before the house party woke up to the fact that they needed to be careful.

Fatty Wynn said he would do his best, and grinned at the dire threats. They weren't needed to make the sturdy Welsh junior stand up for his side.

Tom Merry grinned as he saw that Berkeley was taking the first over. The swaggering batsman of the house team imagined that he had no difficulties whatever ahead of him. He was all swank. And Tom Merry felt that if Berkeley could be dismissed for a duck's-egg, he would not have lived in vain.

Berkeley took his place with his usual manner suggestive of being monarch of all he surveyed, and quite incapable of being moved by a mere human bowler. As he was a man of nearly thirty, and the bowler in question was only half his age, there should have been some grounds for his confidence in this case. But it was said of old that pride goeth before a fall.

Fatty Wynn took Berkeley's measure. He had sent down several trials to the wicket-keeper, and he felt that his hand and eye were in their finest trim. Fatty Wynn would have taken wickets galore against a junior side that afternoon. He hoped that his bowling would be effective even against batsmen who had batted at Lord's and the Oval. But that remained to be seen.

The fat Fourth-Former gripped the ball, and walked back from the wicket to get his run. Then he came loping forward, and turned himself into a catherine-wheel.

The ball flew from his hand like a pip from an orange.

Berkeley swiped at the place where he supposed it to be. He certainly was careless, but perhaps if he had been careful the result would have been the same, for the ball was a very tricky one. Berkeley meant to show the juniors that they were taking on an impossible contract by swiping the ball away for a boundary.

But it didn't work out exactly like that.

The willow swept empty space with a mighty sweep, and then a soft click astounded the ears of the batsman.

He looked at his wicket.

The balls were on the ground; the leg-stump was reclining at an intoxicated-looking angle. From the group of fellows waiting their turns to bat came an irresistible chuckle. They couldn't help it.

After Berkeley's manner, it was too comic to see him dismissed at the first ball of the first over.

Berkeley gazed at his wrecked wicket. His face flushed with rage as he heard the chuckle of his fellow-batsmen.

"My hat!" ejaculated Sir Frank. "This is too good!"

"Comic!" said Raby. "I told you the old school turned out good cricketers."

"You did."

"How's that?" shouted Tom Merry.

And a white-whiskered Indian colonel who was umpiring at the batsman's end chuckled grimly, and said "Out!"

"Out!"

"Yaas, wathah!" chimed in Arthur Augustus D'Arcy from short-slip. "Fatty Wynn, I regard you as havin' nobly sustained the credit of the old school."

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And Fatty Wynn grinned cheerfully.

Berkeley carried out his bat. There was nothing else for him to do. But his face was very dark; he could not conceal his anger and chagrin. His friends looked at him with comical expressions, but did not speak to him as he came off. Berkeley was not in a mood to be chipped just then.

"Next man in!" said Lord Conway, with a droll look at Monson.

Sir Frank laughed, and went down to the wickets.

The young baronet was not likely to be dismissed so easily as Berkeley. He put on much less side, but he was a surer bat. Fatty Wynn knew from the look of him that he would take some moving. But there were clever fieldsmen as well as a good bowler in the St. Jim's side.

Fatty Wynn sent down the ball, and Sir Frank smiled and cut it away. He cut it into slip, and there was a sudden spring into the air of an elegant form; an eyeglass dangled out to the end of its cord, but the ball was in the hand of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

And then there was a roar.

"Caught!"

"Oh, well caught!"

D'Arcy held up the ball with his left hand, and adjusted his monocle with his right. He smiled serenely at his comrades' yell of delight.

"Oh, ripping, Gussy! Ripping!"

"Gorgeous!"

"How's that?"

"Out!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Sir Frank grinned rather ruefully as he made his way back.

"They're a set of tough young rascals," he said. "You'd better look out, Raby."

Raby grinned, and took his place at the wicket.

He did look out, and the juniors were not given many more chances. Raby and Pelham began to make the running now.

Seven runs were taken for the rest of the over, and when the field crossed Raby still had the bowling. Then Tom Merry bowled, and the over added a single to the score.

"Get him out, Fatty, there's a good porpoise," said Tom, tossing the ball to the Welsh junior.

Fatty Wynn grinned.

"I'll try!" he said.

And he did try, with surprising results to Raby. The middle stump went out of the ground, and reposed on its back, and Raby whistled.

"Out, by Jove!"

And he walked away.

Three down for 8 runs. Lord Conway burst into a laugh.

"We shall never get over this," he said. "Those cheeky youngsters will be cackling over it for ever and ever."

"Go in and make up the dozen, Conway."

"I suppose I'd better."

Lord Conway went to the wicket. He added two twos to the score, and then the figure stood at 12.

Then Conway declared.

The house innings closed for 12 runs, and Tom Merry's side had to bat. But Tom Merry & Co. meant to make the seniors repent their confidence.

"They've declared!" Tom Merry remarked. "We'll make them bat a second time, anyway. We must get 13 runs at least."

And the juniors vowed that they would.

CHAPTER 8.

St. Jim's on their Mettle.

TOM MERRY opened the innings with Figgins. They were two of the best hitters in the junior side, though Jack Blake made a good third. They went to the wickets with the determination to stand up for St. Jim's, and do the best that in them lay. It would be no small triumph for a schoolboy side to compel the house eleven to bat a second time, and thus virtually to admit that they had been too cocksure in declaring their innings closed for a dozen runs.

The cricketers went out to field, most of them grinning. Berkeley was still grim, but Sir Frank and Raby had taken their defeat quite good-humouredly. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy patted Fatty Wynn on the back as they stood looking on.

"It was jolly good, Wynn," he remarked. "You hadn't a chance to show all you could do as they declared so soon, but in the next innings—"

"And there will be a next innings," said Kangaroo. "They mean to dismiss us for about one or two, and make us follow our innings, with another one or two. But they'll find St. Jim's bats a little tougher than that."

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"Help! Help!" shrieked the Third Form-Master. "Help! Drag him away!" "Rescue!" shouted Wally & Co. And the three conspirators dashed up and seized the trailing chain of the bull-dog.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You bowled remarkably well, Wynn," said Lord Eastwood. "I have never seen a lad bowl better."

And Fatty Wynn coloured with pleasure.

Raby went on to bowl. He bowled to Tom Merry's wicket. Tom was well on his guard. He stopped three balls of the over with success, and then he hit out. It was a big swipe, such as had often called forth cheers on the cricket ground at St. Jim's. Tom Merry waved Figgins back as he made a motion to run.

"Stay where you are, Figgy."

And Figgins grinned.

"Right-ho!"

Tom Merry knew, without looking, that it was a boundary. And so it was. Four for St. Jim's! They had opened well.

The over finished, and then Pelham bowled to Figgins. Figgins knocked up two runs, and was then bowled clean by Pelham. He looked a little grim as he carried out his bat, but Tom Merry gave him an encouraging grin in passing.

"It's all right, Figgy."

"Out for 2!" growled Figgins.

"If everybody does as well, we're all serene."

"Well, that's so, too."

Kangaroo came in.

Kangaroo lived through the rest of the over, and added one, and had the bowler from the other end. Monson took the ball.

Kangaroo put in some hitting that would have done credit to a senior team, if not to a county side. A boundary was followed by two 2's and St. Jim's roared.

The house cricketers looked grim.

With the junior score at 15, it was evident that the seniors would have to bat again. They had expected to dismiss Tom Merry & Co. for 2 or 3. Then the juniors would have followed on, and been dismissed again for 2 or 3 more. That was the programme, but it hadn't worked out like that.

The juniors were naturally jubilant.

They were putting up a better show than they had expected.

The waiting batsmen watched eagerly as the batting went on. Tom Merry and the Cornstalk chum were standing up wonderfully to the bowling.

"Splendid!" exclaimed Figgins, as Tom Merry cut the ball away, and the batsmen ran, and ran again.

"Ripping!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We'll give 'em a tussle!" said Monty Lowther, rubbing his hands gleefully. "I say, Figgy—"

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Lowther paused.

Figgins had suddenly left his side, and was bolting away at top speed, as if in pursuit of a ball upon the fielding of which a county match depended.

"What the dickens—"

"Bai Jove!"

"What the—"

"It's Cousin Ethel!"

A graceful girlish figure was coming towards the cricket-ground. It was Ethel Cleveland, D'Arcy's cousin. Figgins had sighted her first. It was extraordinary what a keenness of vision Figgins had when there was the slightest chance of seeing Cousin Ethel. He had reached her side before the other juniors knew that she was there.

"Oh, Miss Ethel!" he exclaimed breathlessly, as he dragged off his cricket cap.

Cousin Ethel smiled.

She shook hands with Figgins. Her little slim hand entirely disappeared within Figgins's big brown one, and Figgins touched it very gently, as if afraid of hurting it.

"So jolly glad to see you," said Figgins, bubbling over with delight. "Gussy said you would be here for the cricket week, you know."

"Yes, I've just arrived," said Ethel brightly. "I heard there was a match on, so I came out at once."

"We're playing the house team," said Figgins, as they walked down to the field. "Of course, it's an awful cheek on our part. But we're showing them that even juniors can stand up for a bit."

"I am sure of that."

"Jollay glad to see you, Ethel, deah boy—I mean deah gal," said Arthur Augustus. "There's a wathah good match on."

"Hallo, there goes Tom Merry's wicket!" exclaimed Digby.

But Figgins did not even look. He was looking after Cousin Ethel, and finding her a comfortable seat beside Lord Eastwood, her uncle.

Tom Merry carried out his bat. The score stood at 22.

Lord Conway laughed awkwardly.

"We must stop this," he remarked. "It's absurd. Go and get the Cornstalk out, Berkeley."

"Oh, good!"

Berkeley took the ball and went on. Lovell, the professional, stood looking on. Lovell had an eye to a batsman's form, and he knew by Harry Noble's look that he would not be easily disposed of by a bowler of Berkeley's calibre.

Berkeley sent down the ball, and Kangaroo cut it away over the boundary. He tried again, and 3 resulted.

Lovell smiled softly.

But the smile died away from his face as he looked at Kangaroo with more attention. He had not particularly noticed the Australian junior before, in the crowd of boys, with whom the professional bowler came naturally little in contact.

Now, as he watched the Cornstalk, he seemed to find something strangely interesting in his face, and he no longer smiled.

Kangaroo was out at last, not to Berkeley's bowling. Raby took his wicket, and the young Colonial came out leaving the score at 34.

Then the cricketers set to work in deadly earnest, and wickets fell faster.

Kangaroo was standing looking on, when Lovell joined him. The Cornstalk glanced up at the handsome, sturdy professional bowler.

"Excuse me," said Lovell quietly, "you are from Australia?"

Kangaroo nodded.

"What-ho!" he said. "I hail from Victoria."

He looked at Lovell keenly. As the bowler had brought the subject up of his own accord, Kangaroo felt no hesitation in pursuing it. Otherwise, a delicacy would have kept him from speaking of the professional's private affairs.

"You have been in Australia," he said.

Lovell nodded.

"I thought I'd seen you there," said Kangaroo eagerly. "Weren't you a Cornstalk? I'll stake anything I've seen you playing at Melbourne."

"I am not an Australian."

"No. They tell me you're a Surrey man," Kangaroo remarked.

"I was born in Surrey."

"But you've been over the water?"

"Yes."

"Played there?"

"I've played cricket everywhere I've been," said Lovell, with a smile. "I generally contrive to get into a game if there's one going."

Kangaroo nodded. Lovell's manner was frank, but he could not help seeing that the bowler had not replied to his

question. Lovell had not stated whether he had played as a professional cricketer in Australia.

"I used to go down to the matches a lot at Melbourne," said Kangaroo, "especially when the English teams were visiting us. I saw a lot of the big matches. There was a professional in one of the home teams who was wonderfully like you, and had just your style of delivery. It wasn't a common style."

"No?"

"He used to take the wickets in fine style, too—just as you do."

"Thank you!" said Lovell, laughing.

"Hallo, there goes Lowther's wicket!" said Kangaroo, glancing at the field for a moment. Then he turned to Lovell again. "I suppose you couldn't be the same chap, for if I remember, his name wasn't Lovell."

"Do you remember his name?"

Kangaroo scratched his head.

"I don't know—yes—it was—a name something like yours in sound—Lovell—no, it was Luttrell. That's it—Luttrell."

"That settles it, doesn't it?" said Lovell, with a curious smile.

And he turned away. Kangaroo looked back into the field. Berkeley was fielding, close to the spot where the two had been talking, and he had lounged back towards the ropes, with his hands in his pockets, evidently careless of his fielding duties.

Kangaroo met his glance.

Berkeley turned away quickly.

But Kangaroo had caught the strange expression on his face, and he knew that Berkeley had heard his talk with the crack bowler—and that Berkeley attached some importance to it. The Cornstalk felt annoyed for a moment. He knew that Berkeley did not like the professional, and he was irritated that the disdainful amateur had heard what he said. Yet surely there was nothing in it that Berkeley could use—even if he wished—to Lovell's detriment.

Surely—yet Berkeley's expression made the Cornstalk feel uneasy for the moment. But his thoughts were soon taken elsewhere by the fall of the St. Jim's wickets.

The tail of the junior innings had not taken the men long to dispose of. Tom Merry & Co. were all down for 40.

CHAPTER 9.

Snatching a Victory.

ALL down for 40!

Considering the side they were playing, Tom Merry & Co. had done wonderfully well, and the cricketers were not grinning now. They had had a tussle to get rid of the youthful batsmen, and they had been taught to respect the St. Jim's eleven. A junior side that could knock up 40 runs against a team including several county players was not to be despised.

And the great men were in rather a difficulty now. They had to bat again; that was inevitable. If they batted to their full strength, there was no doubt that they would pile up a total of runs that would make it impossible for the schoolboys to equal the total. There was no doubt about that; but there was equally no doubt that if they took the time to pile up enough runs to make their position secure, it would be dark before the match was ended, and the match would count as unfinished—that is to say, a draw.

To draw with a schoolboy team was a bitter pill to swallow!

Berkeley snapped his teeth at the idea.

The other fellows were annoyed, too. They had taken the match as a huge joke; but there was no doubt that a draw was a draw; and this team, composed of fellows not one of whom was over fifteen, and many much below that age, would be able to declare truthfully enough that they had drawn with a side composed of county players, M.C.C. members, and I Zingari.

And the men did not like it.

"We declared too soon," said Raby ruefully.

"No doubt about that," remarked Monson. "It's all Berkeley's fault. What the deuce did he get us into this absurd position for?"

"I was against playing the young fools," said Berkeley.

"But you were the cause of it."

"Well, it's no good talking of that now," said Lord Conway. "We're committed to the match. The question is, shall we risk declaring the second innings? If we declare for, say, 50, the boys won't have a chance of coming up to us, and we shall have time to finish before dark."

"They might just top it," said Pelham.

"Well, if we take the time to put on a safe score, we shall have to leave it unfinished."

"It's a giddy puzzle," said Raby.

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"Oh, declare at 50!" said Berkeley.
 "I suppose that's the best," said Lord Conway. "It would be too ridiculous to draw with a schoolboy side." And the house team batted again.

Tom Merry pinched Fatty Wynn's plump arm as he led his men into the field.

"Go it your hardest, Fatty!" he said.

And Fatty Wynn said:

"What-bo!"—as if he meant it.

"Go in and win," said Cousin Ethel, with a bright smile to Figgins, and Figgins went on the field feeling as if he could make the most astounding catches, with Cousin Ethel's bright eyes watching his achievements.

The men were playing now as hard as if they were already meeting the Gipsies, who were due the next day. The unexpected tussle the schoolboys had given them had quite changed their views and their plans. They had not expected to have to work for a victory, but they had to work now, and there was no mistake about that.

Tom Merry & Co. were gleeful.

To have a first-class cricket side on their mettle was an achievement they might well be proud of.

Lord Conway specially selected his batsmen to start, with the idea of knocking up a decent score as quickly as possible, and declaring, so that there would be still time to take all the St. Jim's wickets before dark.

He was bent upon that.

Country house cricket is seldom first-class, but, as it happened, the team got together for the Eastwood cricket week was first-class, and they felt it to be impossible to allow junior schoolboys to claim to have drawn with them.

And they worked hard.

Lord Conway opened the innings with Raby, and batted as hard as if he had been batting against Surrey or Lancashire at Lord's.

The runs piled up.

But the wickets fell, too. Fatty Wynn soon accounted for Raby, and Pelham was caught out by Tom Merry. Kerr, with a lucky throw-in, accounted for Berkeley, the lofty amateur again having the cruel luck to be dismissed for a duck's egg.

He strode off the ground in a temper he could not conceal, and left the spot immediately. He returned to the house to console himself with a cigar and a whisky-and-soda, neither of which was a good preparation for a tough match on the morrow.

The runs piled up at a pretty good speed, but at a good expense of wickets, and they were six down for fifty runs.

There was certainly not an hour left of daylight sufficient for the game. Now, the St. Jim's first innings had lasted an hour. If the second lasted the same time, the match would be unfinished, even if a single wicket remained to fall. Lord Conway had only fifty runs to add to the first score of twelve; but he could not afford to stop for more, if he was to win. At the risk of being beaten, he resolved that the match should not be a draw.

He accordingly declared the innings closed.

Tom Merry chuckled.

"Gussy, old man, you're a genius!" he said. "If you'd sprung this on them earlier in the day, they'd have made sure of it. Now they're between the devil and the deep sea. They must leave something to chance, or leave the match unfinished."

"I nevah thought of it in that light, Tom Mewwy."

"I know you didn't; but it's just as good as if you did!" grinned Tom Merry. "My lads, we're going to beat them."

"Beat them!" said Figgins, with a deep breath.

"Yes, beat 'em," said Tom Merry firmly. "Don't you see, we want only twenty-three runs to win. They've had to give us the chance. We've got an hour to get them in. We're going to get them."

"Bai Jove!"

"They've cut it too fine!" grinned Tom Merry. "It's not often a schoolboy team has a chance of licking a side that's really and practically an M.C.C. side. But we're going to do it."

The juniors chuckled.

It was curious; but owing to the peculiar circumstances of the case, there was a real possibility that they would win.

The thought was almost intoxicating.

Of course, if there had been ample time, and the opposing captain had not felt bound to declare in each innings, they would have had no chance. They had not expected to have one, but Fate was working for them, and a victory was a victory, so long as it was brought about by fair means. And there was no doubt that a victory won by reason of the over-weening confidence of the opposite side was a real one. It counted!

Tom Merry & Co. began their second innings in a mood of grim determination.

The men's bowlers were determined, too. Berkeley reappeared, and did some bowling, but not of a kind that reflected any credit on his side. Tom Merry knocked up eight runs in a single over from Berkeley's bowling, and the lordly amateur was not entrusted with the ball again by his captain.

The score crept up, and the wickets went down. Seven down for twenty runs; but Tom Merry was still at the wicket, and Kangaroo was his partner. Two runs wanted to tie, and three to win.

Lord Conway's lips set hard.

He sent Raby on to bowl, regretting that Lovell was not in the team. Even Berkeley was regretting that now. The professional would have knocked over every wicket without another run being scored, and saved the match. It was extremely doubtful if the amateurs would succeed in doing so.

Tom Merry's wicket went down, and Figgins took his place. Figgins was inspired by the knowledge that Cousin Ethel's eyes were upon him.

How glorious to make the winning hit under the eyes of Cousin Ethel! And he felt, rather than saw, the girl make a movement of keen interest; he knew that her eyes were on the game, that she was almost breathless now.

Pelham bowled to Figgins.

Figgins marked that ball. He simply could not miss it. He could not fail, while Cousin Ethel was watching him.

Smack!

The willow met the leather, and the leather went on its journey—far, far from the grasp of the fieldsmen. Tom Merry threw his cap into the air with a wild yell.

"Hurrah! A boundary!"

"Hurrah!"

"Gweat Scott!"

"Boundary—boundary!"

The juniors yelled.

A boundary it was!

Figgins had made the winning hit. The total of the St. Jim's score was at sixty-four now, and the men's total was sixty-two. The juniors had a run more than they wanted, and a couple of wickets they did not need.

They had beaten the men by wickets!

Cousin Ethel was on her feet now, clapping her hands, her eyes dancing with delight. Lord Eastwood laughed, and shouted hurrah as heartily as any boy there.

The faces of the men were a study.

They had been beaten.

It was owing to an odd conjunction of circumstances, true; but there it was—they had been beaten, and the schoolboys had wickets to spare.

"Bettah luck next time, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with an air of consolation that made the best-tempered fellows there want to kick him. "We can't all win, you know."

"You young ass!" said Lord Conway, half laughing.

"Weally, Conway—"

"It's all your fault, Berkeley," said half a dozen indignant voices, as the juniors of St. Jim's trooped off, grinning and gleeful.

And Berkeley growled, and went off to find another whisky-and-soda.

CHAPTER 10.

Wally's Wheeze.

"WHAT'S the wheeze?"

Jameson asked the question. Curly Gibson was just as eager, but he did not speak. Wally had led them from the class-room, not intending that the projected wheeze should be shared by other confidants. Only the three special scamps of the Third were to share in the scheme, and to get a holiday if it succeeded, and a licking if it failed.

Wally stopped in the window recess in the passage, and looked up and down like Moses of old to make quite sure that no one was nigh.

"Well?" said Jameson.

"It's all right," said Wally. "I think it will work. We're going to touch Selby's heart, and make him shed tears of gratitude and affection."

"Oh, don't be an ass!"

"Fact! When he loves us, he will intercede with the Head for us, and we shall get permission to go down to Eastwood for the cricket week."

"H'm!"

"I'll believe that when I see it," said Curly Gibson.

"You'll see it soon, fathead," retorted Wally. "Do you suppose that Selby hasn't got any feelings. It stands to reason he has."

"Well, get on!"

"When three kids save him from a harrowing experience

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NEXT
THURSDAY:

"THE JAPE AGAINST ST. JIM'S."

at the hands of a fierce, frabjous bulldog, he is bound to be grateful."

"Never knew a bulldog had any hands."

"If you're going to be funny, Jameson——"

"Oh, get on!"

"You know that Selby goes to read in the Head's garden on sunny evenings like this," said Wally. "He sits in the garden chair under the giddy wistaria, and studies some blessed book or other—trigonometry, very likely. It would be like him, and that's the sort of fodder he thrives on. Well, suppose Herries' bulldog got loose."

"Why should it?"

"Suppose it got into the Head's garden!"

"That's not likely, even if it did get loose. The Head's garden is a long way from the kennels."

"And suppose it attacked Mr. Selby in a savage and frabjous manner——"

"It never attacks a master."

"And suppose——"

"You're doing a jolly lot of supposing," said Curly Gibson."

"Suppose," went on Wally imperturbably—"suppose three kind youths about our size heard the wild yells of the beloved teacher——"

"Oh, leave that stuff for Blake's serial in 'Tom Merry's Weekly,' and talk English!" growled Jameson.

"Suppose we heard the wild yells of the beloved teacher," said Wally firmly, "and rushed to the rescue."

"No fear."

"Not much!"

"Ass! That's the act where Selby gets grateful."

"Oh!"

"We rush in, and drag off the savage beast. He bites you."

"Does he?" said Jameson emphatically. "He's jolly well not going to bite me."

"Now, look here, Jameson, you're not going to spoil a good scheme by any of your rotten selfishness," said Wally warmly. "If it all happens like this, the bite will give the bizney the finishing artistic touch, and Selby will simply have to do the touching gratitude act."

"He's not going to bite me."

"Now, be sensible."

"Rats!"

"If you're going to spoil a ripping good wheeze——"

"I'm not going to be bitten by any old bulldog."

"I suppose it had better be Curly, then."

"I suppose it hadn't," said Curly, with great promptness.

"Look here, Curly——"

"No fear!"

"Let him bite you, Wally!" exclaimed Jameson suddenly, as if struck by a really brilliant idea. "If he bites you it will be just as good, and as originator of the idea, you ought to have the bite."

"Don't be an ass!"

"Let him have a go at your leg——"

"If you're going to talk rot, Jameson——"

"I don't see it!" exclaimed Curly Gibson. "My view is that Jameson's idea is a jolly good one. I don't see why he shouldn't bite you, Wally."

Wally snorted.

"Well, we'll give up the idea of a bite, as you chaps don't seem to catch on to it," he said. "We'll do the best we can without it."

"But——"

"Nuff said. I can't stand here talking all day," said Wally. "It's time we carried out the wheeze. Selby will be in the garden soon. He always goes out after tea, and sticks in the same giddy chair."

"But how is Towser going to get loose?"

"You're going to unfasten his chain, Jimmy."

"Oh!"

"And how will he get into the Head's garden?"

"You two kids will lead him there."

"I suppose we could," said Jameson, a little dubiously. "But he's a jolly sight more likely to attack us than to attack Selby. Why should he go for Selby?"

"I know Selby's got a chivvy enough to make dogs bark," said Curly Gibson; "but I don't suppose Towser will go for him."

"There will be something under Selby's seat that Towser wants," said Wally. "I've got some specially strong cat's-meat. It's a bit too wangy for Pongo, but there's no reason why Towser shouldn't have it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It will be under Selby's chair, and you bet Towser will niff it the moment he gets into the garden. He'll go for it like a shot; you know what a hungry beast he is, and Taggles is feeding him only on biscuits while Herries is away, and Towser isn't a vegetarian. Now, when Selby sees Towser coming bolting for him, he won't guess that it's a niffy bit of cat's-meat; he'll think it's himself, and he'll bolt. I shouldn't wonder if he kicks Towser, and then——"

"My hat! There would be fireworks."

"Yes, rather. We rush in and seize Towser, and drag him away, and then there's the gratitude act, and permission to go home for the cricket week. Selby couldn't do less."

Jameson nodded thoughtfully.

"Well, it sounds all right," he said, "only remember how rottenly all your wheezes have been working out lately. You tried to touch Selby's heart by shoving flowers on his desk, and got a licking. It's my belief that Selby hasn't got a heart."

"Rats! He must have some sort of a one, and we're going to touch it," said Wally.

"Well, we'll try."

"I'll buzz off and get the cat's-meat, and you chaps go and get Towser out without letting anybody see you, of course."

"What-ho!"

And the three young rascals hurried off to carry out the "wheeze." Five minutes later, Wally was in the Head's garden with the cat's-meat, carefully wrapped in thick brown-paper, for the scent of it was trying even to Wally, who had strong nerves.

Well did Wally know Mr. Selby's favourite seat. He had "japed" his Form-master there before. In excuse for the scamp of the Third, be it said, that Mr. Selby was really a most unpleasant-tempered man, and he was generally down upon Wally, whether that hopeful youth deserved it or not. He generally did deserve it, and perhaps Mr. Selby thought the few odd times when he didn't did not count. Wally couldn't be expected to see it in that light.

The cat's-meat was soon reposing under the seat, and certainly the aroma it cast upon the evening air was sufficiently strong. It quite killed the scent of the may blossoms close at hand.

Wally disappeared into the shrubbery.

There he waited.

About five minutes passed, and a whistle from the direction of the quadrangle warned the scamp of the Third that his chums were ready with Towser. He whistled back, to show that the coast was clear, and Jameson and Gibson came plunging into the thick, high shrubbery, leading Towser between them.

Towser seemed a little excited.

Perhaps it was merely the sense of freedom, for he had missed his usual runs since Herries had gone away. Perhaps the aroma of the cat's-meat had already caught him. He had his nose to the ground, and was sniffing.

Wally chuckled softly.

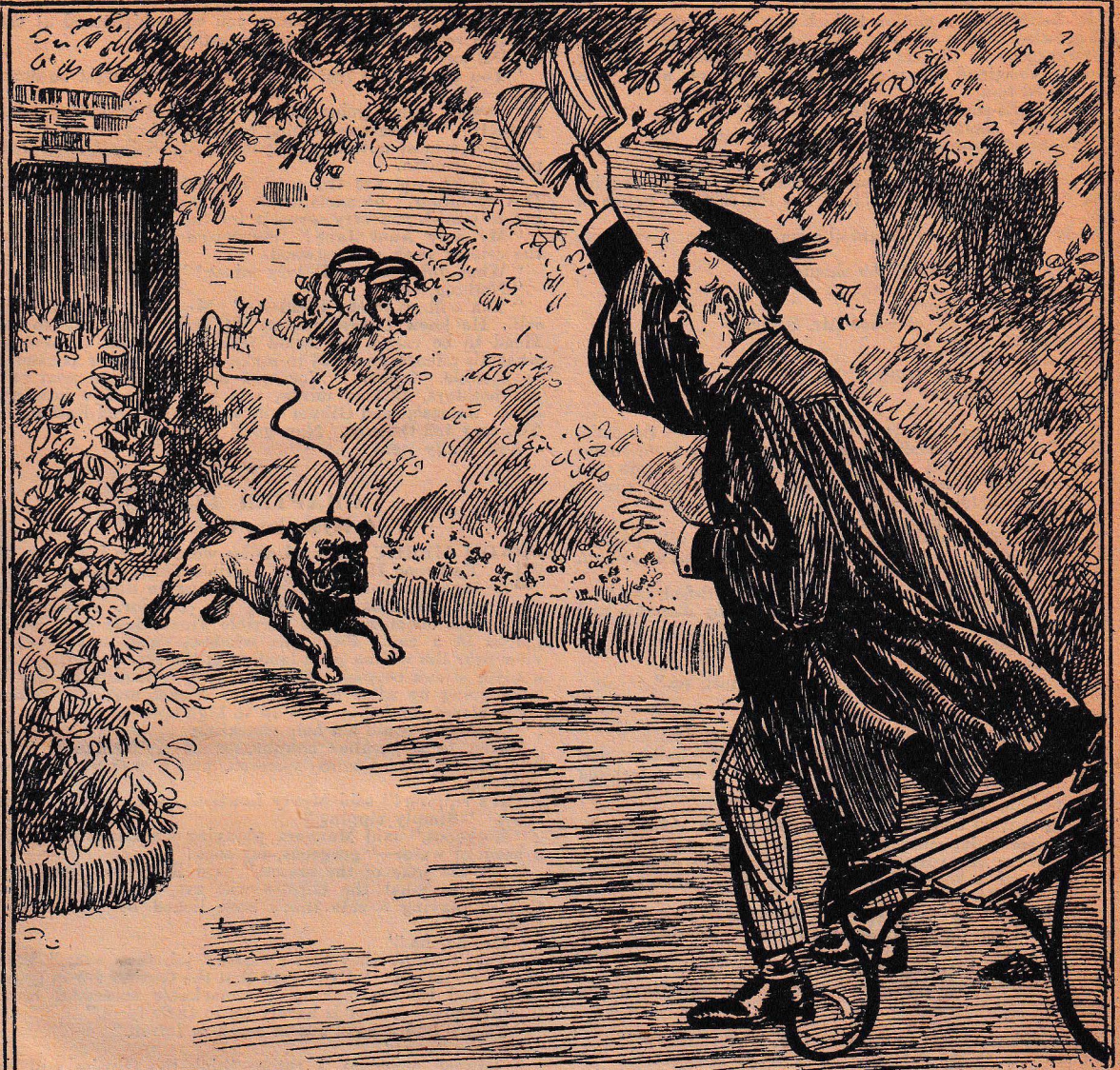
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"Goodness gracious!" exclaimed Mr. Selby, turning pale. "That savage animal is going to attack me! Shoo!" But he might as well have "shooed" a motor-car, or the rising tide, as Towser. Right at the garden-seat came the bulldog.

"He's on the track," he murmured. "Herries always said that Towser could track down anything or anybody, and I know he tracked down a kipper once."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Quiet. It's time for the Selby bird to settle."

And the juniors waited.

Towser was making efforts to get loose now, and his straining was in the direction of the seat which was the favourite resort of Mr. Selby on a summer evening. It was pretty clear that he had scented his prey. Wally took a turn of his chain round a trunk, or the three fags would have found it difficult to hold him in.

"Quiet, good doggy," whispered Wally soothingly. "Good dog!"

"Hist!" Jameson held up his hand.

Through an opening of the shrubbery, the three fags caught a glimpse of a figure in cap and gown.

Mr. Selby was coming.

CHAPTER 11.

And How It Worked.

MR. SELBY came up to the seat with a book under his arm. The labours of the day were over, with the exception of taking his class for an hour's preparation in the evening, and Mr. Selby's usually corrugated brow had cleared a little. He sat down upon the seat with a sigh of comfort.

It was certainly a pleasant spot. The thick may trees were behind it, and they were still crowded with blossom, and the air was sweet with the scent of it. The seat was secluded.

Mr. Selby opened his book, and then looked up from it, and sniffed in a suspicious way.

"Dear me," he said, aloud, "what an extremely strong scent the may has this evening. It is quite remarkable."

Three youthful visages wrinkled up into grins in the shelter of the shrubbery.

"It is really far from pleasant," went on Mr. Selby. "One might almost suppose it was not merely the may blossom. It is positively annoying."

"Time!" muttered Jameson.

Wally nodded.

He loosened Towser's chain.

The bulldog darted away like an arrow from a bow. In a few seconds he burst upon the astonished and horrified vision of Mr. Selby.

The Third Form-master stared blankly at the bulldog as the animal bore down directly upon him.

"Goodness gracious!" he exclaimed. "There is that savage animal loose, and—and it is going to—attack me!" Mr. Selby turned pale. "Shoo!" he exclaimed desperately, throwing up his hands.

He might as well have "shooed" a motor-car or the rising tide. Towser was on the track of the cat's-meat. Right at the seat he came.

Mr. Selby made a motion to kick him, and Towser paused and growled. Then he came on again, growling fiercely.

Unconscious of the cat's-meat under the seat, Mr. Selby naturally imagined it was his calves Towser was after. His heart failed him.

"Help!" he shrieked. "Help! Help!"

"Rescue!" shouted Wally.

"What-ho!" murmured Jameson.

And the scamps of the Third rushed to the rescue.

Mr. Selby had jumped upon the seat, and was waving his book wildly at Towser, who took not the slightest notice of him.

Wally rushed up and caught the trailing chain of the bulldog.

"Lend a hand, chaps!" he shouted.

"Right-ho!"

"Gr-r-r!" said Towser.

"Drag him away!" shrieked Mr. Selby.

"Gr-r-r!"

"All right, sir."

"It's all right, Mr. Selby."

"Come on, Towsy."

"Gr-r-r!"

It required some pluck to drag Towser away from the cat's-meat. But Wally artfully kicked the prize out from under the seat, with a good passing kick that sent it into the shrubbery, and Towser rushed after it. The fags rushed after Towser, holding on the chain.

Mr. Selby gave a gasp of relief.

"The horrible animal!" he exclaimed. "I—I will speak to Dr. Holmes about it. I—I will not have it allowed to remain at the school. It is scandalous."

Wally came rushing back. Towser, quite satisfied now that he had the cat's-meat, was being led away by Jameson and Gibson.

"All right, sir," exclaimed Wally. "He's gone."

"Oh, dear."

"We've got him, sir. I hope you're not hurt, sir."

"N-n-no, I think not."

Mr. Selby descended from the seat.

He began to realise that he was looking very foolish.

He had betrayed an unreasoning terror of the bulldog, and three fags had shown a courage far in excess of his in tackling the bulldog and dragging Towser away.

The Form-master was very red.

He felt that he had looked absurd in the eyes of his pupils, and that feeling far outweighed any sentiment of gratitude.

It was what the young schemers might have expected, if they had had a ripper knowledge of human nature, and especially of Mr. Selby's nature.

The Form-master fixed a stern glance upon D'Arcy minor.

"How did that wretched dog get loose, D'Arcy minor?" he asked.

"Looks as if the chain came off the lock, sir."

"That is very odd. Somebody must have been taking the dog out, and allowed it to run loose."

"Yes, sir."

"How did you come into the garden, D'Arcy minor?"

"I came in at the gate, sir," said Wally innocently.

"I do not mean that. Where were you when I called?"

Wally shifted uncomfortably.

He had come there to be thanked with affecting gratitude, if not to be hugged by the rescued Form-master, and here he was being put through a catechism instead.

He began to feel that there was something amiss with the scheme somewhere, and that he had counted too confidently upon the softening effects of gratitude.

"I—I was in the shrubbery, sir," he said.

Mr. Selby frowned.

"Trespassing, I suppose."

"Well, sir—"

"Juniors are not allowed in the Head's garden without special permission. Had you special permission, D'Arcy minor?"

"N-n-no, sir."

"Had Jameson and Gibson?"

"N-no, sir."

"Then you were all three trespassing."

Wally was silent.

"It is very odd that you should be all three trespassing just when I was here, and that wretched dog was let loose," said Mr. Selby sourly. "Should I be doing you an injustice, D'Arcy minor, in suggesting that you set the dog loose purposely?"

Dismay sat in the face of D'Arcy minor.

It occurred to him that Mr. Selby had mistaken his vocation, and that he ought to have been a detective instead of a Form-master in a public school. But he had nothing to say.

"I think I have the facts now," said Mr. Selby, with a sour smile. "But having played this disrespectful and outrageous trick, D'Arcy minor, why did you prevent the dog

from attacking me? I presume you were frightened at the possible results of your wanton rascality."

"Oh, sir!"

"You were afraid that some serious injury might be done, and—"

"Towser wasn't going to hurt you, sir," said Wally desperately. "There was nothing to be afraid of."

It was a most unfortunate speech. Mr. Selby turned from pink to crimson.

"I think you are the most insolent boy in the school, D'Arcy minor," he exclaimed. "I shall have no resource but to punish you very severely for this outrage."

"My only Aunt Jane!" murmured Wally, thinking of the cricket week at Eastwood.

"What did you say, D'Arcy minor?"

"Nothing, sir."

"You will go to the Head—" Mr. Selby checked himself. He knew D'Arcy minor. If Wally were sent to the Head to be caned, he would make it a point to explain what his offence was, and to make Mr. Selby look as absurd as possible. "Ahem! You will stay in for the next two half-holidays, D'Arcy minor, and will write five hundred lines. Jameson and Gibson will write a hundred lines each. You may tell them so. Now go!"

And Wally went!

CHAPTER 12.

A Mysterious Meeting.

TOM MERRY chuckled as he went up to his room at Eastwood House. The Terrible Three shared a room together, the other fellows being in different rooms on the same floor, along the corridor. Kangaroo was in the room with the Terrible Three, four beds being placed in a row. From the windows there was a wide view over the rolling park-land, with the river winding like a silver streak beyond. The four Shell fellows of St. Jim's were going up after that peculiar cricket match with the house eleven, and they were all in high spirits.

Tom Merry could not help chuckling.

Owing to a peculiar conjunction of circumstances they had beaten Lord Conway's eleven, and it was a cause for rejoicing.

"It's ripping!" said Monty Lowther, as he kicked off his shoes. "Simply ripping!"

"Gorgeous," said Manners, plunging his scarlet face into a basin of water—"gorgeous, my sons!"

"It's the joke of the season," said Kangaroo, grinning. "I wonder what the Gipsies will say, when they learn they're playing a side that's been licked by a schoolboy team?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"They'll think they had an easier job than ever," Tom Merry remarked. "I've heard that the Gipsies are in great form, and they're making a remarkably successful tour. Country-house cricket is hardly up to their form."

"They'll find a hard nut to crack in Lovell."

"Yes, rather!"

"Between ourselves, I rather think the Gipsies will be beaten," said Kangaroo. "The house team here is a good one. Lovell is magnificent. Even Berkeley can play if he chooses, and he'll choose this time—he's got his reasons, I think, for particularly wanting to beat the visitors to-morrow."

The Shell fellows looked at the Cornstalk.

"What do you mean, Kangy?"

"I mean, Berkeley's one of those bounders who bet on the game," said Kangaroo.

Tom Merry's lip curled.

"You think he's got money on the match?"

"I know he has."

"How do you know?"

"He said so to Pelham in my hearing. He doesn't make a secret of it."

"The rotter!"

"Yes, it's rather rotten," agreed Kangaroo, towelling his glowing face. "It's rotten to turn a game like cricket into a gamble. But Berkeley's just that kind of chap. As a matter of fact, I'm pretty certain that he's one of the gentlemen players who live on cricket, just as the professionals do, and he probably makes as much by betting as in expenses. More honest to come out into the open and call himself a professional, to my mind."

"Yes, rather!"

"Who says a run out into the woods?" said Manners, glancing from the window. "I want to select a place for taking photographs. I'm going to have a complete set of pictures of this place."

"Gussy and the rest are going to the village, I think."

"That's all right—we'll see 'em later."

"Good!"

The four Shell fellows left the house, and strolled through the gardens into the park. The deep, scented woods reminded them of the surroundings at St. Jim's. Mile on mile of shady woods lay around Eastwood House.

The juniors rested easily along in the dusk. They were not inclined to exert themselves after the match. They came out on the bank of the river, and Tom Merry threw himself down in the deep grass. The sun was sinking behind the woods, and the moon was rising, and the scene by the river was very beautiful.

"This is a lovely place," Tom Merry remarked. "Let's take a rest. I've used my legs enough for one day, I think."

"Right you are!"

And the juniors rested in the deep grass and ferns, under the overhanging trees, with the stream running and rippling almost at their feet. They chatted about St. Jim's as they rested, till the stroke of an oar in the water caught their ears.

"Somebody out for a moonlight row," said Tom Merry lazily.

"One of the fellows, perhaps."

"Very likely."

From the deep shadows where they lay, they glanced out on the river, lit now only by the beams of the rising moon. The sun was almost gone. A boat came into view, but not from the direction of the house. A man was in it, pulling from the village. He rested on his oars as he came opposite the bank where the juniors were, and looked straight towards them.

"Nobody we know," said Lowther.

"Is he looking at us?"

"No; he can't see us in this shadow."

"He's staring straight towards the bank."

Tom Merry nodded.

"He's waiting for somebody."

"Phew! Poachers—eh?"

"I shouldn't wonder."

The Shell fellows lay very quiet.

They knew that there had been a great deal of poaching lately on Lord Eastwood's estate—not the petty poaching of a rabbit or two by the country people, but a systematic poaching by fellows who disposed of their plunder to rascally agents who sold the game in the neighbouring towns to dealers who did not ask questions. If anything of that sort was intended now, Tom Merry & Co. meant to interfere. They lay quiet and watched.

A gleam of moonlight played on the face of the man in the boat. It was a thick, red, coarse face, but not like the face of a countryman—it was evidently a town-bred man's countenance, and not a pleasant one.

For several minutes the boat remained there, the oars moving sufficiently to counteract the draw of the current. Then the man, who had been searching the bank with his eyes, pulled in close to the reeds, and jumped ashore. He was standing within three yards of the juniors, but the bulk of a big tree interposed, and the shadows swallowed them up. He stood waiting, grunting to himself with impatience the while.

There was a sound of footsteps in the wood, and a man came brushing through the foliage.

Tom Merry drew a quick breath.

This was evidently the poacher. But the juniors had to make sure before they acted. Tom Merry sat up in the grass, ready.

"I've been waiting for you," said a thick, unpleasant voice. "I've been here some time. Oh, all right; it doesn't matter! Have you got the tin?"

The reply was probably a shake of the head, for the juniors heard nothing, and the thick voice went on more loudly.

"You've not! Then you'll have to take the consequences. You mean to say that you've put me to all this trouble for nothing?"

There was a low murmur of a voice in response.

The thick tones went on.

"Speak out, man, there's no one to hear us! We're alone in the wood—nobody within a mile. You've owed me, and owed me again—and it's coming to an end."

Another murmur.

"The match to-morrow," went on the loud tones. "Yes, I shall make a good bit over it. I've got bets on with half a dozen fools who backed the house team—and the Gipsies will make hay of them."

Tom Merry started.

These words showed him that his first supposition had been incorrect. The men who were holding this mysterious meeting on the river-bank were not poachers. The man who had come in the boat was a bookmaker; and the other man—who was he?

The other voice murmured again.

"Rot!" broke out the bookmaker. "The house team win—and against the Gipsies! Rot!"

"It's true."

The juniors caught the voice this time. Low as it was, it struck them that there was something familiar in the accents.

"Impossible!"

"It's true, Banks. That professional chap, Lovell, is a terror, I tell you. I don't like the man, but I can see what his form is like. He will make hay of the Gipsies' wickets to-morrow. The Gipsies will lose."

"Lose!"

"Yes. The men you've been betting with have fooled you—they knew Lovell's form, and that is why they were willing to take you on."

"You think I've been taken in?"

"I know you have."

There was a short silence.

Tom Merry rose to his feet.

"I know that voice," he muttered.

"So do I," said Kangaroo quietly. "It's Berkeley's."

"Yes."

"Jolly curious, this," said Manners.

"Yes; but we can't let 'em go on talking, and hear what they say. It's no bizney of ours," whispered Tom Merry.

"Let's slide."

"Right-ho!"

The juniors were curious. They could not help being so. There was something very mysterious in Berkeley meeting the bookmaker in this secret way, and warning him that he was about to lose his money on the Eastwood match. But common principles of honour forbade them to play the eavesdropper.

They rose from the grass, and moved away into the wood.

They did not desire to show themselves—that would be very awkward for Berkeley, if he knew they had seen him there with the bookmaker.

But quietly as they moved, there was some rustling of the bushes, and as they went, they heard a sharp exclamation.

"What's that?"

It was Berkeley's voice.

"Only the wind in the trees," said the bookmaker mockingly. "You're all nerves."

That was all the juniors heard as they disappeared.

CHAPTER 13.

The Traitor.

BERKELEY ran into the shadowed thicket and listened. The rustle had died away, and quiet reigned in the wood. After listening a few moments, the cricketer returned to where the bookmaker was standing. Mr. Banks had not moved, excepting to light a cigar.

He looked at Berkeley contemptuously through the smoke of it.

"You're as nervous as an old woman," he said.

Berkeley gritted his teeth.

"I've got my reputation to consider," he said. "If it were known that I had dealings with you, Banks—"

"It will be known pretty soon," said Banks coolly.

"What do you mean?"

"Either that, or you settle up."

"Don't be a fool, Banks. Can't you see that I'm putting you on to a good thing?" said Berkeley. "I owe you—what?"

"Two hundred pounds."

"And how much have you got on the match?"

"Twice as much."

"Then you stand to lose four hundred pounds if the Gipsies are beaten?"

"Exactly."

"You will lose it."

The bookmaker removed his cigar from his mouth.

"Are you trying to scare me, or is there really something in it?" he demanded. "I've heard of this chap Lovell, and know his form, but I did not know he was in Lord Conway's team."

"He is, and he will take wickets as easily as he pleases. Hang it, I've played the Gipsies many a time, haven't I? Yorke, their captain, may stand up to Lovell's bowling, but they haven't another man who can. It's intended to be a two-day match; my belief is that it will last only one day."

"And the house will win?"

"Yes."

The bookmaker smoked for some minutes, silent and thoughtful.

"If that is so, you've given me a good tip," he said. "I suppose there's still time to hedge, as public opinion is strongly in favour of the Gipsies, but—"

"You'll stand to lose a lot."

"I'm afraid so."

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"THE JAFE AGAINST ST. JIM'S."

"Well, I've got a scheme."

"To save the tin?"

"Yes."

"In what way?"

Berkeley lowered his voice.

"Suppose the house lost, after all? I could fix it."

Banks started.

"You—you mean——"

"That would save you four hundred, and bring in the profit you expected—pretty long odds, probably."

"Yes; I get eight hundred if the Gipsies win."

"Out of that you can cancel my debt to you, and hand me a hundred," said Berkeley. "That's fair."

"It's fair, if you can do as you say. I suppose you could let yourself be bowled—that would be easy enough, but—excuse me—you're not the backbone of the team. If Lovell's in such splendid form as you say, your throwing away a wicket in the innings wouldn't make much difference to the result."

"I could stop Lovell playing."

"How?"

"I needn't explain," said Berkeley coolly; "I believe I can do it. And if you agree to my terms, I will. If not—not."

The bookmaker pursed his fat lips.

"That's all very well," he exclaimed, "but I've only got your word for it that Lovell is as dangerous as you say; and if he doesn't play, how am I to know that you haven't been rotting?"

Berkeley shrugged his shoulders.

"If he does play, you can say good-bye to your money, that's all," he replied.

"It's not good enough."

Berkeley reflected.

"Well, let the first day be played, or, rather, the first innings, if the Gipsies bat first," he said. "As soon as Lovell has bowled you'll see his form. I suppose you can see the match, or keep yourself posted how it's going on?"

"I shall be down here."

"Good! Lord Eastwood has arranged for all the tenants and the country people to come and see the match, if they choose, and you can easily get in with the crowd. As soon as Lovell bowls you'll see that he's bowling your four hundred away."

"And then——"

"Then, if you want to save your bacon, you'll have to come to terms with me, and I'll see to it that Lovell's teeth are drawn."

The bookmaker nodded.

"That's a fair arrangement," he said. "You're sure you can manage Lovell?"

"Quite sure."

"Money, eh?"

"Oh, no!" said Berkeley, with a slight laugh. "If he sold the match, he would want more money than I could pay; and, as a matter of fact, I'll do the outsider this justice, I don't believe he'd even think of selling a match."

"Then how——"

"That's my secret."

"You mean that you know something about him—something that gives you a hold over him," said the bookmaker curiously.

"Perhaps."

"Well, keep your secret," said Banks abruptly. "If it turns out as you say, and you save my tin by stopping Lovell playing, I'll stick to the terms you suggest. We'll arrange it after the first innings of the Gipsies."

"That's right!"

"Then I'll meet you after that innings," said the bookmaker. "When the Gipsies have batted, if Lovell is dangerous, as you say, I'll meet you."

"And we'll have the agreement down in a businesslike way."

"Yes."

"That's satisfactory. After the Gipsies' first innings, then, I'll be here, as soon as I can fix it," said Berkeley. "Or, rather, we'd better meet somewhere nearer the house. We may have to bat soon after the Gipsies, and in that case I mayn't be able to get away for more than a quarter of an hour."

"True! Where shall I be?"

Berkeley reflected for a moment.

"Come to the summer-house in the gardens, near the river. There will be no one there on the day of the match."

"Good!"

"Then it's settled?"

"Right!"

The bookmaker stepped into the boat. Berkeley watched him as he went down the current, and the dusk of the river swallowed him up.

There was a bitter look upon the amateur's face.

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He turned away to walk through the woods back to the house with a gloomy brow.

"What would the fellows say if they knew?" he muttered. "I should be cut dead—kicked out of the club, kicked out of society, except that of men like Banks. And I suppose I should deserve it. But I'm in a hole; it can't be helped. I've had such rotten luck that I can't afford to be particular."

And with that reflection Berkeley tried to dismiss the matter from his mind.

When he came into the house, Tom Merry saw him, and he gave the amateur a curious glance. He could see the signs of gloomy thought in Berkeley's face.

Berkeley did not even look at the junior

"Under the thumb of a blessed bookmaker," murmured Monty Lowther. "It's a rotten position, Tommy; don't ever get into it."

Tom Merry laughed.

"I'm not likely to," he said. "But if that's how things stand with Berkeley, one can forgive the chap for not being specially sweet-tempered. That fat bouncer doesn't look the kind of chap one would like to owe money to."

"You're right."

Arthur Augustus came towards the Shell fellows with a beaming smile.

"The Gipsies are awwivin' to-night," he announced. "The match begins early to-morrow mornin'. I wonder what they will say when they hear that we have licked the house team?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

CHAPTER 14.

Wally Bolts.

"WELL?"

Jameson and Curly Gibson uttered that monosyllable together, as Wally joined them. They had tied up Towser once more in the kennel, and come back to meet their chum.

They looked anticipative.

The scheme had worked out so well, as far as they knew, that success seemed certain, if Wally's confidence in Mr. Selby's capacity for gratitude was not misplaced.

"Well?"

Wally grinned.

"Well?" he replied.

"Are we going this afternoon?" asked Jameson. "There's time to catch the evening train."

"Heaps of time, and to do a little packing first," said Curly Gibson. "I suppose we'd better take bags, not a trunk?"

"Bags!" said Wally vaguely.

"Yes, bags. It will save trouble."

"May as well pack 'em now," said Jameson.

"Yes; come on."

"Hold on!" said Wally.

"What's up?"

"We're not going."

"Eh?"

"Deaf?" said Wally pleasantly. "We're not going."

"N-n-not going?"

"No."

"But——"

"It hasn't worked," said Wally gloomily. "Selby's a beast, and an unjust beast. He ought to have been a policeman, not a Form-master. He's a rotter!"

"I know he is, but——"

"He wasn't grateful."

"Not after we saved him?" exclaimed Jameson.

Wally shook his head.

"No. He only slated me for being in the Head's garden without permission, and made a guess about how Towser got loose."

"My hat!"

"And wasn't he grateful for being saved?" demanded Curly Gibson.

"He hasn't any gratitude in his composition, I believe," said Wally bitterly. "I don't believe he's a man at all; he's just a mathematical machine."

"And we're not going?"

"We're not."

"Great Scott!"

"He's gated me for two half-holidays——"

"Phew!"

"And given me five hundred lines——"

"My word!"

"And you two a hundred each."

"What!" yelled Jameson and Gibson together.

"A hundred each," said Wally calmly.

The two fags glared at him. They seemed to be hardly able to realise the facts for the moment.

"A hundred lines each!" said Jameson, at last. "So that's how your giddy scheme has worked out, is it?"

"It's not my fault," said Wally. "The milk of human kindness was left out of Selby's composition somehow. It's not my fault if he has a set of the books of Euclid in the place of a heart."

"This is your giddy scheme!" went on Jameson, unheeding. "A hundred lines each!"

"Oh, bump him!" said Curly Gibson wildly. "We've been fed up with his wheezes, but this is a little too much."

"Here, hold on!"

"Bump him!"

"Hands off! I— Oh!"

Jameson and Gibson rushed upon their hapless leader, and he was whirled off his feet and bumped.

Twice, thrice they bumped him on the ground with great energy, and then they left him gasping for breath, and walked away, somewhat relieved in their feelings, but still feeling decidedly wrathful and indignant.

Wally sat up and gasped.

"Rotters!" he murmured. "This is what comes of wasting one's brain power planning holidays for other chaps. Blessed if I bother about them again!"

And Wally walked painfully away.

There was no doubt that the great scheme for getting down to Eastwood for the cricket week had been a ghastly fiasco. But Wally had not given up the idea of going. In the Third Form dormitory that night he tackled his chums again on the subject.

"You kids game for another try to-morrow?" he asked.

"Oh, go and eat coke," said Jameson."

"And heaps of it," said Curly.

Wally snorted.

"Don't be slackers," he said. "I'm going; you'd better come."

"No floggings for me."

"Not for me!"

"No fear!"

"Go to sleep, Wally; your wheezes are no good."

Wally turned in.

"Well, I'm going," he said. "I can't catch it much worse than I've caught it already, and that's one comfort. And when I'm home I'll persuade the guv'nor to make peace for me here. When I tell him all the dodges I've been through to get leave, it's bound to touch his heart."

"About as much as we touched Selby's!" growled Jameson.

"Rats!"

"And many of 'em!" said Curly Gibson.

Wally sniffed.

"Well, I'm going, that's all," he said.

And on the morrow he went.

He was missed from the class-room, and Mr. Selby, with a very green look in his eyes, made inquiries, and reported to the Head, and a very warm time was intended for Wally when he re-entered the ancient walls of St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 15.

The Gipsies' Match,

IT was a sunny morning at Eastwood. The juniors of St. Jim's were up with the sun, and most of the cricketers were early, too. Stumps were to be pitched at an early hour. The match was intended to last two days, but some of the men were of opinion that it would require fully that time, if it were not unfinished at the end of the second day. That opinion was not held among the Gipsies. They had been making a successful tour, in which they had beaten several county teams on their own grounds, and country-house teams galore. They had little doubt about walking over Lord Conway's eleven in the easiest way in the world.

But the fact that Mr. Banks had found men ready to lay good money on the Eastwood House team showed that Lord Conway's men had backers. Lovell's form was well known to men in the know; hence the ease with which Banks had succeeded in securing odds against the Gipsies—favourites with most.

Tom Merry & Co. looked at the Gipsies when they went to the nets in the morning for a little preliminary practice.

They were a fine-looking, athletic lot, and Yorke, their captain, an old Cambridge Blue, was famous as a hitter of Jessopian power.

"They look wathah a decent lot, you know," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, surveying the cricketers through his monocle. "I wathah approve of them."

"Don't let them hear you say so," implored Monty Lowther.

"Why not, deah boy?"

"They would get swelled heads at once, and—"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy turned his eyeglass round upon the grinning juniors. "I fail to see any cause for mewwiment," he remarked.

"Go hon!"

"They are in wathah good form," said D'Arcy, turning his eyeglass upon the cricketers again. "The house team will have a tussle, deah boys; but I wathah think that Lovell will make hay of some of them."

"Thank you!" said a cheery voice at D'Arcy's elbow.

He turned, and saw the young professional.

"Good-mornin'," he remarked. "What do you think of the Gipsies, deah boy?"

"Very good form."

"But you will beat them, eh?"

"I hope so," said Lovell, with a smile.

At breakfast there was a crowded table. Eastwood House was full of guests, all cricketers or their relations. The talk ran on the coming match. Figgins spent most of his time in explaining cricket matters to Cousin Ethel. The girl was deeply interested in the game, and what Figgins didn't know about it wasn't worth knowing. Perhaps, however, she could not have stood so much cricket if she had not been interested in Figgins, too.

When the stumps were pitched there was a good crowd on the ground.

Village folk and country folk had come in from all sides to see the game, or at least, part of it, and among the spectators was a fat, red-faced man with flashy watchchain and rings and beetling brows, with little, keen eyes under them.

Lord Conway's glance fell upon him, and the viscount frowned.

"That's Banks, the bookmaker," he remarked to Berkeley.

"I wonder what he's doing here!"

Berkeley glanced at the fat man.

"Banks, by Jove!" he said.

"I suppose he's been putting some of his rotten money on the game," Lord Conway remarked. "Looks like it, his being here."

"I shouldn't wonder."

"It's a pity some way can't be found to stop that," Lord Conway said, with a frown. "Banks is one of the bookmakers who are turning their attention from racing to cricket and football, and they'll make the game a gamble just as horse-racing is, in the long run. Then it will be good-bye to a decent game."

Berkeley nodded.

"I've a jolly good mind to have him shown off the ground," said Lord Conway.

"Well, the public are admitted," said Berkeley. "Banks is one of the public, and you don't know for certain that he's here for any harm."

"I can guess pretty correctly, I think."

"No good making a row, Conway."

"Perhaps you're right. I wish he'd get out."

And Lord Conway took no further notice of Mr. Banks.

The sides tossed for choice of innings, and it fell to the Gipsies to bat first. Yorke went in with another man to open the innings, and Mr. Banks pricked up his ears, so to speak. Now he was to ascertain whether Berkeley's information with respect to the professional bowler was to be relied upon.

Lord Conway put on Raby to bowl the first over, and Yorke and his partner knocked up eleven runs for the Gipsies. In the second over Lovell took the ball.

Lovell walked on with a quick, springy step. His handsome face was glowing with health and keenness. He looked at the top of his form, as indeed he was.

He grasped the ball, and faced the batsman.

Yorke, the Gipsies' captain, faced him calmly enough. He knew that Lovell was good stuff, but he did not know how dangerous he was.

The house eleven looked on keenly.

They knew that they had a surprise packet in Lovell, and they were anticipating the effect of his bowling on the visitors with much inward enjoyment.

Lovell took a little run, and the ball left his hand.

Click!

Yorke's wicket went to pieces in a flash.

"My hat!" said Yorke aloud, in his astonishment.

There was a buzz in the crowd.

"Well bowled!"

"Oh, well bowled!"

Lord Conway smiled.

Yorke carried out his bat, and another man took his place. A minute more, and the new man's bails were on the ground.

"Hurrah!"

"Bwavo!" shouted Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, waving his Panama hat. "Bwavo! Wippin!"

A third man came in.

He met with the same fate.

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His wicket went down at the next ball, and there was a yell of "The hat trick! Hurrah!" Lovell looked quietly satisfied.

He had performed the hat trick in the first over, and it was a feat to be proud of against batsmen like the Gipsies. Grim enough looked the visitors.

They were three down for eleven runs, and it was a bad beginning to the match they had looked forward to as little more than a walk-over.

The batsmen played Lovell very carefully after that.

"My only hat!" said Yorke, to his friends. "They've got a wonderful man there! He'll play for England in the next Test, if I'm any judge. He's regular mustard."

And the Gipsies agreed that he was.

The St. Jim's juniors were looking on very keenly. They felt that they were backing up Lovell, somehow, and they were very pleased to see him doing so well.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus. "What did I tell you, deah boys? Pway stop pokin' me in the wibs, Blake."

"Ass, here's a telegram for you."

"Wats!"

"The boy's been waiting five minutes."

"Bai Jove, I think it's wainin' telegrams," said D'Arcy, turning round and taking the buff envelope from the boy. "I suppose it's fwom that young wascal Wally again. I weally thought that he had dwooped the subject."

He opened the telegram.

"Bai Jove!"

"What's the news?" asked Kerr.

"That young wascal!"

"What's he done?"

"He's bolted!"

"Phew!"

"My hat!" said Digby. "There'll be a row!"

"Poor old Wally!" said Fatty Wynn feelingly. "I suppose he knows there's some jolly good feeding going on here."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There'll be trouble," said Tom Merry. "Lord Eastwood is certain to bundle him back." D'Arcy nodded.

"The young wascal foresees that," he remarked. "He's wired to me to help him make his peace with the governah."

"By George, that's good!"

"Here's his telegram—it must have cost him a lot. 'Dear Gus,—I've hooked it.' That is a howwibly vulgah expression."

"Does Wally say that?"

"No, you duffah; I say that. Wally says: 'I've hooked it. I shall be home by the twelve train. Meet me in summer-house at twelve-thirty to arrange how to break it to the pater.—WALLY.'"

The juniors grinned.

After his major's strict injunctions to him not to think of "bolting" from St. Jim's, it was considerably cool of Wally to call upon Arthur Augustus to make his peace for him. But Wally knew his major.

"You'll have to do it, Gussy?" grinned Kangaroo.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Hallo, there goes another wicket."

Lovell was bowling again.

Arthur Augustus thrust the telegram into his pocket, and watched the bowling. Lovell was dangerous enough. It was pretty clear that the Gipsies' innings would not last after lunch.

And it did not.

At twelve o'clock the last man was out, and the Gipsies' innings closed for a total of 70 runs—about a third as many as they had confidently expected.

Berkeley glanced round for Banks in the crowd as the cricketers went off. The bookmaker had disappeared. The amateur left his comrades as soon as he could, and hurried away to keep his appointment.

CHAPTER 16.

What Wally Heard in the Summer-house.

"EARLY, by Jove!"

Wally made that remark.

The scamp of the Third Form at St. Jim's had stepped out of the train at precisely twelve o'clock at Easthorpe; but he had obtained a lift on a farmer's cart as far as the park gates, and so he had arrived much earlier than he had anticipated.

It was not yet ten minutes past twelve when he entered the summer-house—as quietly and stealthily as a cat.

Wally knew that it would not do to see his father at once.

He had no desire to be sent directly back to St. Jim's.

With Arthur Augustus as a go-between, peace might be made, and the earl might relent, and intercede for his youngest son with the Head of St. Jim's.

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So Wally entered the summer-house quietly, and at the sound of a footstep approaching it from outside, five minutes later, he was on the alert at once.

He knew that both his father and his eldest brother came to the little building in the wood at times, and he didn't want to be discovered there by either of them.

He started up and listened.

The footsteps were coming directly towards the summer-house. Wally looked round quickly. There were several big garden chairs inside the building, and the Third-Former promptly ensconced himself behind one of them, kneeling on the ground to be completely covered by the high wicker back, near the wall.

A minute later, someone entered the summer-house.

Wally could not see who it was, and he dared not look—he would himself have been seen at once. He remained crouched behind the chair. The new-comer paused for a moment or two, and then came directly towards the chair, and sat down in it heavily.

Wally hardly breathed.

If it should be his father, the game was up if he was discovered. How long the visitor would stay in the summer-house was a problem, too. Suppose he was still there when D'Arcy came at half-past twelve to keep the appointment. It would be just like D'Arcy to blurt out the facts.

Wally groaned in spirit. But he made no audible sound.

He heard the scratching of a match, and then the scent of a cigar was wafted to him. The strong, coarse smell of it showed him that it could not be Lord Eastwood who was smoking. It was neither his father nor Lord Conway. But it might be just as dangerous to betray his presence to a guest of the house.

Wally remained very still.

There was a quick footstep at the entrance of the summer-house, and the man seated in the wicker chair gave a grunt.

"I've waited for you again, Berkeley!"

"I came as soon as I could."

"Well, the match has gone as you say," Banks remarked, puffing at his cigar. "The house team are bound to knock up more than seventy, I suppose."

"At least a hundred."

"And the Gipsies will do no better in their second innings."

"Not if Lovell bowls against them."

"I believe you."

Banks smoked in silence for some minutes. Berkeley stood watching him without speaking. He was sure of the bookmaker now.

"Well," said Banks, at last, "I suppose it must be as you suggested, Mr. Berkeley."

"Good!"

"If Lovell drops out of the match——"

"Yorke will agree to Conway's playing a substitute; but there's no one at Eastwood to be afraid of. It'll be some bungling amateur."

"Then the Gipsies——"

"Will win."

"And my money's safe," said the bookmaker.

"And mine."

Banks nodded.

"Yes."

"You hand me back my paper, and a hundred pounds in addition," said Berkeley quietly. "That's understood?"

"I agree."

"We'll have it in black and white."

The bookmaker grinned.

"An agreement like that wouldn't look well in writing, Mr. Berkeley, and it would do you more harm than good to show it."

"We sha'n't put it in writing like that. You will book it in the form of a bet—you to pay me three hundred pounds if the Gipsies win. Out of the three hundred you keep the two I owe you."

"That's all serene."

Wally hardly breathed.

Cool and nerry young scamp as he was, he was terrified at what he was hearing, and he did not know what to do. He simply dared not show himself.

"And now," said the bookmaker, "how are you going to prevent Lovell from playing?" Berkeley shrugged his shoulders.

"As I said before, that's my business."

"Are you sure you can do it?"

"Yes."

"Then you have a hold on him?"

"Perhaps."

The bookmaker frowned darkly.

"Why can't you speak out?" he demanded. "We're in this thing together."

"So long as Lovell doesn't play for Conway, that's all that concerns you," said Berkeley coolly. "I keep my secret."

"Oh, have your way, then."

"I mean to."

Mr. Banks rose to his feet.

"Well, I suppose that's about all," he said. "I may as well get out of this. No need to risk our being seen together."

"Quite so," said Berkeley. "I—"

He paused, with a change of colour.

There was a distinct sound of footsteps coming towards the summer-house. Wally heard them, too, and breathed with relief. He guessed that Arthur Augustus was coming to keep the appointment he had made by telegram.

"Hang it!" muttered Berkeley. "We mustn't be seen here! Get out of the window, Banks, and cut off through the bushes!"

Banks granted.

"No fear! I'm not climbing out of any windows at my time of life!"

"You'll be seen——"

"That doesn't matter, if you're not seen with me," said Banks quickly. "You cut off by the window, and I'll walk out. Whoever it is, will only suppose I strolled in here for a smoke."

Berkeley hesitated for a moment, but it was evidently the only thing to be done. He stepped out of the low window of the summer-house and disappeared into the trees. The book-maker walked boldly enough towards the door. He met Arthur Augustus D'Arcy as he crossed the threshold.

The swell of St. Jim's turned his eyeglass upon the book-maker.

"Good-afternoon!" said Mr. Banks jovially. "I just strolled in for a smoke, you know."

And he walked on before the elegant junior could reply.

Arthur Augustus cast a suspicious glance after him. He did not like Mr. Banks's looks. Then he entered the summer-house.

He glanced round. There was no one visible.

"I'm early," murmured the swell of St. Jim's. "Wally isn't here yet. Pewwaps he hasn't left the school after all. I— Bai Jove!"

He broke off with an exclamation as Wally rose to view behind the big chair, with a face so pale that Arthur Augustus forgot the lecture he had intended for him, and looked at him with great anxiety instead.

"Gweat Scott, Wally, what's the mattah? Are you ill?"

"No!" gasped Wally. "But I've just been listening to two awful rotters. They're planning to give away the match."

"Bai Jove!"

And the swell of St. Jim's listened in astonishment and growing horror as Wally explained.

When the fag had hastily stammered out what he had heard, D'Arcy grasped him by the arm.

"Come to the governor!" he exclaimed. "He's the preppah person to know this!"

Wally hesitated.

"He doesn't know I'm here," he said.

"He must know now, Wally. We can't leave these awful wascals to cawwy out their plan. Come on!"

And he simply dragged the fag from the summer-house.

CHAPTER 17.

Lovell's Reply.

LOVELL came out after lunch and strolled in the grounds. There was an interval before the home innings commenced, and Lovell was not wanted to bat first, in any case. Tom Merry observed him stroll into the park, and noticed that Cecil Berkeley walked in the same direction a little later. He little guessed what was the intention in the mind of the amateur.

"I want to speak to you, Lovell."

Lovell stopped.

He looked at Berkeley with cool, clear eyes. The amateur hesitated a minute or two; he did not like approaching the subject he had in mind.

"Yes?" said Lovell simply.

"We can talk safely here, I suppose?" said Berkeley, with a glance round.

Lovell looked surprised.

"Yes," he said. "There is no one to listen, if that is what you mean. But what would it matter?"

"A great deal."

"Yes?"

"The fact is, it's rather a curious matter," said Berkeley, plunging into the subject. "I want to ask a favour of you."

Lovell could only stare. That the gentleman amateur, who had always treated him with scarcely-veiled disdain, should care to ask a favour of him, was surprising enough.

"It's rather a peculiar one, too," said Berkeley, the colour coming into his cheeks in spite of himself. "I want you to drop out of the team for the rest of the match, and, of course, not to mention that I have anything to do with it."

Lovell could scarcely believe his ears.

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"You want me to drop out of the team?" he repeated.

"Yes."

"Are you mad?"

"No."

"I think you must be, to make such a request," said Lovell. "Even if I were not bound by honour not to desert the side, I am paid for my services by Lord Eastwood, and I should be a rascal not to play. And I certainly shouldn't dream of dropping the match now to please you or anybody else."

"I don't expect you to do it to please me, of course. I expect you to do it with an eye to your own interests."

"I don't see it."

"You remember a little talk you had with the Australian lad yesterday," said Berkeley.

Lovell started.

"Yes. I did not know you heard it."

"Well, I did hear it, and it made a lot of things clear to me."

"I don't understand you."

"I had been wondering where I had seen you before," said Berkeley, coolly. "That little talk made it plain to me. It was in Melbourne, two years ago, when I was over there with an English team, playing the Colonies. You were a bowler for an Australian side that met us at Melbourne."

Lovell did not speak.

"Your name wasn't Lovell then," went on Berkeley. "It was Luttrell. Luttrell gained a great deal of attention, and was widely mentioned in the Colonial press as a wonderful bowler, and there was talk of sending him to England in the next team. I remember a newspaper mentioning that he was not Colonial born, but a Surrey man by birth."

Still Lovell was silent.

"Luttrell was never sent to England with the Australian eleven, however," went on Berkeley. "He disappeared from Melbourne very suddenly—to avoid the police, who were after him for the forgery of a cheque by which he cleared three hundred pounds. He escaped, and from some inquiries I made by telegraph yesterday, it's pretty clear that he's never been tracked out by the police, if I did not know it already."

"Well?"

Lovell's face was deadly pale, but he spoke quite calmly.

Berkeley shrugged his shoulders.

"Well," he said, "it's pretty clear, I think. You call yourself Lovell, a Surrey man, and so you may be; but in Melbourne two years ago you were Luttrell, and you are wanted by the Melbourne police for forgery!"

"Well?"

Berkeley made an angry gesture; the reiteration of that sharp, contemptuous monosyllable irritated him.

"You are in my hands," he said. "A word to the police, and you would be extradited to Melbourne to take your trial."

Lovell smiled grimly.

"You know it," said Berkeley. "I shall speak that word or not, entirely according to how you act now. I want the Gipsies to win!"

"You want your own team to lose?"

"Yes."

"The side you are playing for!" exclaimed Lovell, in contemptuous surprise.

"I don't intend to discuss it with you!" said Berkeley, flushing. "I want the Gipsies to win, and that's enough. I believe they can win if you don't bowl against them in their second innings. I want you to drop out after the home innings."

"And let the enemy win?"

"Yes."

"And if I refuse?"

"I shall denounce you to the police!"

Lovell drew a deep breath.

"Suppose I go straight to Lord Conway now," he said, "and repeat what you have told me, word for word?"

Berkeley smiled contemptuously.

"You're welcome to do so, if you like," he said. "You cannot imagine that Lord Conway would believe a word of it, I suppose? I should deny it from end to end!"

"You scoundrel!"

Berkeley's face went crimson.

"That's enough!" he exclaimed harshly. "I didn't come here to bandy words with a criminal! Will you do as I ask?"

Lovell shook his head.

"You refuse?"

"Yes."

"Have you thought of the consequences?" demanded Berkeley, amazed and furious.

He was alarmed and confounded by the blank refusal of the professional. He had not doubted for a moment that the professional would jump at his terms to save his skin.

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"Yes," said Lovell quietly.

"And you are prepared to face them?"

"Yes."

"You must be mad! Look here!" exclaimed Berkeley abruptly. "You will have guessed that I have money on the match. I suppose you really mean that you want your whack. If so, put it in plain English. How much do you want?"

"Nothing!"

"Then you definitely refuse?"

"Definitely!"

Berkeley ground his teeth. He thought of Mr. Banks, and the promise he had given him—of the certain ruin awaiting himself if the Gipsies lost the match. He had counted too surely upon his power over the professional.

He clenched his fists in bitter rage.

"You—you dare to refuse!" he hissed. "You—you forger—you beggarly hound—"

"There's my reply to that!"

Lovell's fist lashed out, and Berkeley staggered back, and rolled on the grass. Lovell gave him one look, and walked slowly away.

There was a cry of surprise. Lord Conway, who had come to look for Berkeley, had caught sight of him just as he fell under Lovell's blow.

He ran up to assist the dazed amateur to rise.

"What on earth does this mean?" he exclaimed.

Berkeley staggered up. He had a last card to play, and he played it. He made a gesture after the retreating form of Lovell.

"You saw it?" he muttered thickly.

"Yes. Have you been quarrelling with Lovell?"

"Quarrelling—with a criminal! No!"

Lord Conway stared at him.

"A criminal! What do you mean, Berkeley?"

"I mean that he is a criminal—that he's wanted by the Australian police for forgery, and that he may be arrested any minute! You can't let him play for the rest of the match!"

CHAPTER 18.

In the Dark.

LORD CONWAY stared blankly at Berkeley.

"What on earth do you mean?" he exclaimed.

"Lovell a criminal! Lovell in danger of arrest!"

"Yes."

"You're dreaming!"

"I'm telling you the exact truth!" said Berkeley, calming himself.

He realised now that he had one chance left of keeping his arrangement with the bookmaker.

If he could brand Lovell as a criminal, an escaped forger wanted by the police, Lord Conway could not possibly allow him to continue playing in the Eastwood side.

At any cost he would have to drop such a player.

That knowledge, and the desire to be revenged upon Lovell, made Berkeley bitterly determined to ruin the young professional.

Berkeley's head was throbbing from the blow Lovell had given him. But he was cool and collected now, and savagely determined.

"I'm telling you the truth!" he repeated. "Lovell is a forger!"

"Impossible!"

"He is being hunted by the Melbourne police!"

"I did not know he was ever in Australia."

"He was a professional bowler there two years ago."

Lord Conway could only stare.

"He is a Surrey man," he said at last.

"So he has led you to believe!"

"But—"

"He went under the name of Luttrell in Australia," said Berkeley. "I saw him when I was playing out in the Colonies, and for a long time I've thought I'd seen him before. It occurred to me all of a sudden just now, and I taxed him with it."

"And he—"

"You saw for yourself."

Lord Conway was silent.

"He struck me," said Berkeley. "I will not soil my hands on the scoundrel; but you can't keep him in the team, Conway."

"Well, look here, Berkeley, if you accused a chap of a thing like that, it's not surprising that he should hit out," said Lord Conway bluntly, "and he's more likely to do it if he's innocent than if he's guilty."

Berkeley bit his lip.

"Does that mean that you do not believe me?" he exclaimed.

"Of course not! I take your word; but I shall want proof

before I believe that you're not mistaken," said Lord Conway. "What proof have you?"

"I know the man."

"Yet for some days you've been thrown with him continually, and did not recognise him?"

"I was puzzled at first, but I am sure now."

"You are quite certain there is no mistake?"

"Quite!"

"It might be a resemblance—"

"Not at all!"

"Did Lovell admit anything?"

"Was he likely to?"

"I suppose not. But frankly, Berkeley, I can't believe this! I respect Lovell—I've seen a lot of him, and I've found him a decent chap. I simply can't believe that you're right! There must be some ghastly mistake."

Berkeley breathed hard.

"Let him explain it, then," he said. "I only ask to be allowed to accuse him face to face, and then if he has anything to say, let him say it."

Lord Conway nodded.

"Well, that's only fair," he remarked.

"If he's a criminal, you will not play him for the rest of the match?" Berkeley exclaimed.

"Of course not! It would be impossible! But it's most unfortunate. As a matter of fact, the Gipsies will lick us if Lovell drops out. You must have seen that he's the backbone of the team."

Berkeley shrugged his shoulders.

"I should be very sorry for that, but I'd rather lose a match than win with the assistance of a member of the criminal classes!" he said. "You couldn't in common decency allow such a man to handle a bat here!"

Lord Conway frowned.

"I hope I don't need instructing in what to do if this is true," he said. "But, to be frank, Berkeley, I can't help saying that you dislike the chap, and most of us have noticed it, and I think very likely that has prejudiced you. I want this proved before I believe it, in common fairness to Lovell."

"His name isn't Lovell, it's Luttrell, and I don't think he'll venture to deny it," said Berkeley. "Anyway, let's see!"

"Come on, then!"

They walked away towards the cricket ground, the direction Lovell had taken.

The young professional was there.

He was standing alone under a big tree beside the ground, with a gloomy expression upon his face.

Tom Merry had spoken to him, but the young man was in a preoccupied state of mind, and had not even heard him.

He did not reply, and Tom Merry, seeing that he was deep in thought, had left him alone.

Lovell did not look up as Lord Conway and Berkeley approached. His eyes were fixed upon the ground.

The juniors of St. Jim's noticed the grave look on Lord Conway's face, and they instinctively knew that there was trouble in the air.

They were in a group at a short distance, out of the reach of voices, but they could not help seeing.

"Something's up," Tom Merry remarked. "Lovell's got the blues an' inch thick!"

"And Conway looks as if he's going to a funeral!" said Figgins.

"Yes; he does."

"Can't see what the trouble is," Lowther remarked. "Lovell has done wonderfully well against the Gipsies. Conway certainly can't have any fault to find with his bowling."

"Hardly."

"Gussy's wanted," said Kerr. "Gussy ought to be here to look after his elder brother. Conway looks as if there was trouble on hand, and now's the time for Gussy's fatherly advice."

The juniors chuckled.

"By the way, where is Gussy?" asked Fatty Wynn.

"Gone to meet Wally."

"They ought to have shown up by this time."

Tom Merry looked round.

"My hat! There they are!"

Two figures had appeared in sight in the distance, moving towards the house. They were Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and his minor, and they were hurrying along, both looking very excited.

Tom Merry gave a whistle.

"Something up there, too," he exclaimed. "There's trouble in the air this afternoon. What's the matter with Gussy?"

"Let's go and see."

The juniors cut across to intercept the swell of St. Jim's. Arthur Augustus hardly glanced at them.

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"Don't stop me, deah boys," he exclaimed. "I'm in a feahful huwwy."

"What's happened?"

"You see, I'm in a huwwy."

"What's the trouble?"

"Pewwaps I may explain pwesently. At pwesent I am in a huwwy to see my governah."

"You're not taking Wally in to be licked, surely."

"Oh, no!"

"Rather not," said Wally, with a warlike look. "I'm going in because—"

"Come on, Wally—"

"Look here, Gussy—"

"Latah, deah boys, latah!"

"But—"

"Huwwy up, Wally!"

"I'm coming!"

And Arthur Augustus dragged his minor away towards the house.

The St. Jim's juniors stared after them in blank astonishment.

"What on earth's the matter?" exclaimed Figgins.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"Can't understand it," he said. "Gussy can't be excited like this about Wally bolting from school. Besides, it was the arrangement that he was to make the peace for Wally—and now he's taking him directly in to Lord Eastwood."

"It's curious."

"Let's make Gussy explain."

"Good; we can't have him getting into this habit of keeping secrets," exclaimed Blake. "If he's got a secret he can tell us, and we'll help him keep it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Collar him!"

"What-ho!"

The juniors dashed on at top speed after Arthur Augustus. The swell of St. Jim's heard them coming, and his eyeglass glimmered over his shoulder for a moment, and then he broke into a run.

"Come on, Wally!" he gasped.

They ran on.

But there was no escaping Tom Merry and Blake and the long-legged Figgins.

The three juniors overtook D'Arcy, and seized him, and they rolled on the grass together. And the rest of the crowd, rushing on, rolled over them as they rolled.

Arthur Augustus gave a stifled yell.

"Ow! Gerroff! Yowp!"

"Gerroff!" yelled Wally.

"Oh!"

"Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Gerroff!"

"Leggo!"

"Dear me, what does this mean?" exclaimed Lord Eastwood, stepping from a French window and looking upon the excited scene in great surprise. "I trust that you lads are not quarrelling."

Tom Merry extricated himself, and jumped up, very flushed and dishevelled.

"N-n-n-no, sir," he exclaimed. "We—we were helping Gussy with his education, sir."

"Eh?"

"Teaching him not to keep secrets, sir."

Lord Eastwood laughed.

"So you are keeping secrets, Arthur?"

"Ow!"

D'Arcy dragged himself from the melee in a dishevelled state.

He groped for his eyeglass and blinked dazedly at his father.

"Bai Jove!" he gasped. "If all these chaps weren't my guests, I'd give them all a feahful thwashin'!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You uttah asses—"

"Arthur!"

"I have been thwown into quite a fluttah," said Arthur Augustus. "I was comin' to see you, fathah, on a most important matter."

"Indeed!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Then why didn't you explain it, ass?" demanded Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Dear me," exclaimed Lord Eastwood, catching sight of Wally, "what is Walter doing here? I imagined he was at school."

And his brow bent severely at Wally.

The scamp of the Third Form at St. Jim's dropped his eyes.

"You see—" he began.

"It's all wight, Wally," said D'Arcy, "I am sure the

patah will look ovah your vewy sewious fault when he knows the facts. Come in!"

"But—" began Lord Eastwood.

"It's vewy important, dad."

"I was just going out to see the second innings."

"It's awfully important."

"Well, well, come in, both of you," said Lord Eastwood. And he led the two juniors in by the French windows from the terrace.

Tom Merry & Co. looked at one another in great surprise.

"What on earth is the matter?" exclaimed Manners.

"Blessed if I know."

"Something's up."

"Looks like it."

"Well, I dare say we shall know later," said Kerr. "Let's get back to the cricket. The home team will be starting their innings."

"Yes, rather!"

And the juniors returned to the cricket-ground in a very puzzled and perplexed frame of mind. They waited impatiently for Arthur Augustus to rejoin them, but the interview with his father was evidently an important one, for the swell of St. Jim's did not come.

CHAPTER 19.

To Go or Not to Go.

MEANWHILE, Lord Conway and Berkeley had joined Lovell under the elm tree. The young professional did not observe their approach, and he did not look up till the viscount spoke to him. The gloom on his brow was so evident that Lord Conway felt a chill. What was the matter with Lovell—unless there were truth in what Berkeley alleged?

"Lovell," said the viscount, a little sharply.

Lovell started.

He looked up quickly, and the colour came into his face.

"Yes, sir," he said.

"I want to speak to you. Mr. Berkeley has just told me a most extraordinary thing."

"Yes?"

"If it is true, you cannot remain in my team, or in cricket at all so far as England is concerned," said Lord Conway gravely. "I hope it is not true, however."

"Yes."

"Mr. Berkeley thinks he recognises you as a man he saw playing under the name of Luttrell in Melbourne some time ago."

"Yes?"

"This man, Luttrell, was a criminal."

"Yes?"

"Well, have you anything to say?"

"What do you want me to say?"

"Deny that you are the man, if it isn't true," said Lord Conway sharply.

Lovell gave a slight shrug.

"My name is Lovell," he said.

"Your real name?"

"Yes."

"Have you ever been known as Luttrell?"

"Never."

"You are not—not—" Lord Conway hesitated.

Lovell smiled bitterly.

"No," he said, "I am not a criminal. I am not wanted by the police. Mr. Berkeley has made a mistake."

Lord Conway heaved a sigh of relief.

"You hear that, Berkeley?" he said.

"Yes, I hear it," said Berkeley derisively; "but I don't believe a word of it."

Lovell's eyes glinted.

"Mr. Berkeley accuses me of being a fugitive from justice," he said. "Has he told you that he asked me to become a criminal here—that he asked me to sell the match we are playing, and to the Gipsies?"

"What?"

"It's a lie," said Berkeley.

"He had concluded that I was the man he supposed me to be," said Lovell quietly. "He threatened me with exposure if I did not give the match away."

"Liar!"

"Impossible!" said Lord Conway, looking from one to the other in dismay and amazement. "You cannot expect me to believe that, Lovell."

"It is true."

"Why should Berkeley wish his own side to lose?"

"He has his reasons, I have no doubt. Perhaps his friends the bookmakers could explain to you."

"This is infamous, Lovell! I could not possibly believe anything of the sort," said Lord Conway angrily. "This absurd accusation against Mr. Berkeley makes me more inclined to believe the charge against you."

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"I have told you because it is the truth," said Lovell quietly. "I am ready to leave the team at any moment you please."

"Unless you are guilty I don't want you to go. Mr. Berkeley has not proved his accusation yet, and—"

"I will prove it," said Berkeley, between his teeth. "After what he has said about me, I will have no mercy on him. Call the boy, Harry Noble—the boy they call Kangaroo."

"What does he know about it?"

"He recognised Lovell, too."

"But—"

"Call him."

"Oh, very well!"

Kangaroo was standing at some distance, chatting with Tom Merry; the juniors had just returned after the bumping of Arthur Augustus.

Lord Conway called to him, and the Australian came up wondering.

"Do you want me?" he said.

"Yes," said Berkeley. "We want your evidence, Noble. Had you ever seen Lovell before you came to Eastwood?"

Harry Noble closed his lips, and looked inquiringly at Lord Conway. He did not mean to let Berkeley extract a word from him against Lovell.

"Please speak, Noble," said Conway, with a worried look. "This is an important matter, and we want to get at the facts."

"Speak out!" said Lovell quietly.

"Very well," said Kangaroo. "When I met Lovell here I thought I had seen him before."

"In Australia?" said Berkeley.

"Yes."

"Under another name?"

"The fellow I took to be him had another name, and then I remembered that I knew it couldn't be Mr. Lovell," said Kangaroo.

"Because Lovell assured you so?"

"I would take Mr. Lovell's word against anybody's," said Kangaroo quietly.

"Thank you, Noble!"

"But you thought he was the man you had seen bowling at Melbourne at first?" asked Lord Conway.

"Yes."

"From a resemblance?"

"Yes; they were wonderfully alike."

"And anything else?"

"They had the same delivery in bowling," said Kangaroo. "Mr. Lovell is not a common bowler, and it struck me."

"But you are assured now that you were mistaken?"

"Yes."

"Only on Lovell's word," said Berkeley.

"Mr. Lovell's word is good enough for me," said Kangaroo, with a flash in his eyes.

"Thank you!" said Lord Conway. "That's enough, Noble."

Kangaroo nodded, and walked back to his friends.

"Well, is that pretty clear?" said Berkeley, with a curl of the lip. "I suppose you don't imagine that Noble was deceived by a chance resemblance as well as myself?"

Lord Conway shook his head.

"I have told you all I have to tell you, sir," said Lovell, taking no notice of Berkeley, and looking directly at the viscount. "If you wish me to leave the team, I am willing to do so."

"Where were you the year before last?" asked Lord Conway suddenly. "If you were in England at the time—"

"I was not."

"Were you in Australia?"

"Yes."

"In what part?"

"Melbourne."

"I think that settles it," said Lord Conway quietly.

"How soon can you leave Eastwood?"

"In five minutes."

"Take your time, but go."

"Very well."

"And now, Berkeley—"

"Conway!"

It was Lord Eastwood's deep voice.

He had joined them unperceived, and his frowning, stern face made the viscount start as he looked at him.

"Yes, father?" he said.

"Stay, Lovell," said the earl.

Lovell hesitated.

"Stay!"

"Very well, sir."

"You, too, Mr. Berkeley."

"Certainly!" said Berkeley, looking in surprise at the earl, and at Arthur Augustus and Wally, who were with him.

"What is it?" asked Lord Conway.

"A matter that must be settled before the second innings is played," said Lord Eastwood quietly.

CHAPTER 20.

Wally Bears Witness.

BERKELEY gave a start. He had no idea of what Wally had heard in the summer-house, but the tone and look of Lord Eastwood struck him with a vague uneasiness.

"I wish to speak to Mr. Berkeley," said the earl. "May I ask if you were in the summer-house in the garden a short time ago, Mr. Berkeley?"

Berkeley turned pale.

"Or, rather, I should not put the question in that form," said Lord Eastwood. "I do not wish to entrap you. I know that you were there."

"I—I—"

"You met Banks, the bookmaker, there."

"What!"

"Do you deny it?"

Berkeley drew a deep breath.

He knew now that he must have been seen in the summer-house at the same time as the bookmaker, but that he had been overheard also he could not guess. He realised that he would have to tread warily.

"I was certainly there," he said. "I really do not see the drift of your remarks, Lord Eastwood. Am I to be called to account for my actions here? I strolled into the summer-house for a smoke. Banks was there."

"I had better speak out plainly," said Lord Eastwood.

"My youngest son has left school without permission, to come down here for the cricket week. He hid in the summer-house till Arthur should meet him, intending that Arthur should arrange to make his peace with me. While he was hidden there he heard a certain conversation between you and Mr. Banks, the bookmaker."

Berkeley almost staggered.

That Lord Eastwood was in possession of the whole facts was clear to him at once, as if by a lightning flash.

His brain swam for the moment.

Ruin—black ruin and disgrace—seemed to overwhelm him.

Lord Eastwood's eyes were fixed upon him accusingly.

"You arranged with Mr. Banks to prevent Lovell from playing in the remainder of the match, in order that the Gipsies might win, your reason being that bets were pending on the result, Mr. Berkeley."

"I—I—"

With all his nerve, Berkeley could not immediately recover himself, or think of a plausible falsehood.

He stood unsteadily, his face deadly white.

"Have you any denial to make, Mr. Berkeley?"

"Yes, yes!" muttered the amateur hoarsely. "It's not true!"

"You accuse my son of having invented the story?"

Berkeley almost groaned.

What was the use of accusing Wally of anything of the sort? The story was one which could not have been invented by the fag. Wally had come there fresh from school, without even knowing that Lovell and Berkeley were there, or knowing anything about them.

His story was true on the face of it, even if Lord Eastwood had not known that his youngest son, scamp as he was, was incapable of falsehood.

"It is true," said Lord Conway.

"It's a lie!" muttered Berkeley. "The boy's mad—mad! I met Banks there, but—but we talked of nothing of the sort."

"It's too late for that," said Conway. "It agrees only too well with what Lovell has just told me, that you tried to prevent him from playing in the rest of the match."

Berkeley groaned.

Everything fitted together so well against him, that there was hardly a loophole left through which he could have hoped to crawl, if he had been in possession of all his keenness. And he was not himself now. He was utterly dismayed and thrown off his balance by the sudden turn of affairs.

And there was no mercy in the faces before him.

The baseness he had been guilty of was too black.

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A cricketer who would sell his side, a villain who would threaten another player into betraying a match, was too base for pardon.

"Well?" said Lord Eastwood.

"It's a lie!" said Berkeley. "The boy's fallen asleep there and dreamed it. There's not a word of truth in it. Will you take the word of a young cad who confesses himself to be an eavesdropper?"

"Bai Jove!" began Arthur Augustus.

But Wally interrupted him.

"I didn't mean to listen," he explained. "I was hiding there, and you came in and talked, and how could I help it?"

"It's a plot!" said Berkeley. "I—I——"

"You rotter!" said Wally forcibly. "You know jolly well that it's true enough. You know you arranged with Banks to sell the match."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Berkeley was almost gasping for breath.

"I'm sorry, Lovell," said Lord Conway. "I can see now that it was all false. Berkeley used your resemblance to the Melbourne bowler as a trick to get rid of you. You won't leave the team? I take back what I said."

Lovell nodded.

"It's as you wish, sir," he said.

"Then you'll play?"

"Very good."

Berkeley's eyes blazed.

"Then you are going to play him!" he exclaimed. "You are going to play that man—that forger—that criminal!"

"Hold your tongue!"

Berkeley panted.

"I have been insulted here!" he exclaimed. "I am no longer a guest of yours, Lord Eastwood. I will go——"

"You will certainly go," said Lord Eastwood.

"But that scoundrel has not heard the last of this," said Berkeley passionately, pointing at Lovell with a shaking finger. "I shall go directly to Scotland Yard. In two hours' time there will be a detective here, and if Lovell is gone you will be held responsible for his escape."

Lovell's lip curled.

"Is there anything in this?" asked Lord Eastwood.

"I am sure there is not," said Conway. "It is false; Lovell is true blue. I won't hear another word against him. As for you, Berkeley, the sooner you get out of the place the better. And don't trouble to recognise me in future."

Berkeley ground his teeth.

"I will go," he said. "Look for the police, that's all."

And he strode away.

Raby came striding over from the cricket-ground.

"I say, they're waiting to begin the innings!" he exclaimed. Hallo, what's wrong? Anything the matter?"

"Yes; Berkeley's not playing any further," said Lord Conway abruptly.

"Why?"

"He's leaving Eastwood."

"Phew!"

"It's—it's important," said Lord Conway. "Tell Yorke, will you, and ask him about our playing a substitute for the rest of the match. I'll join you in a minute."

"Right-ho!" said Raby.

And he walked away, looking astonished.

Berkeley looked back once, and then disappeared into the house. A quarter of an hour later he was driving furiously to the station.

Lord Conway held out his hand to Lovell.

The professional started a little, and then grasped it.

"You are playing, Lovell?" said Conway.

"Certainly!"

"Then come on!"

And they went to the ground, where the other cricketers were awaiting them impatiently. Lord Eastwood looked at Wally.

• The scamp of the Third stood silent.

"You young rascal," said Lord Eastwood. "So you have bolted from school."

"Not exactly bolted, dad," said Wally meekly. "I've left."

"Without permission?"

"I tried to get permission."

"And it was refused?"

"Owing to a series of misunderstandings."

Lord Eastwood smiled.

"Well, your arrival here has been so fortunate that I don't think I shall punish you as you deserve," he said. "I ought to send you directly back to St. Jim's to be caned for your impudence in running away. But——"

"But you won't, dad?"

"No, I won't. I'll try to excuse you to Dr. Holmes, and—and you can stay here till I hear from him, at all events."

"Hurrah!" yelled Wally.

And Lord Eastwood followed Conway. Wally performed an impromptu breakdown, Arthur Augustus looking on in rather a shocked way.

"Pway don't be so extwemely obstwepewous, Wally," he said. "I wégard it as wathah bad form."

"Oh, don't you begin, Gus."

"Weally, Wally!"

"It's ripping!"

"Yaas, wathah; but——"

"I knew I should fix it somehow," said Wally cheerfully. "Won't Jameson and Curly be sold for not coming—hey?"

"Yaas, but——"

"Let's go and see the cricket, Gus. Can't stand here, listening to you all day."

"Why, you've been doin' all the talkin', and——"

"Oh, cheese it, and come on!"

And Wally scudded off to join the juniors of St. Jim's, who were grouped round Cousin Ethel, and Arthur Augustus followed more slowly, with a more circumspect regard for his dignity.

CHAPTER 21.

Cleared Up!

THE home innings had started now, and Tom Merry & Co. were looking on with great interest. Lovell was not so great a batsman as he was a bowler, and the substitute played in the place of Berkeley was a poor bat. The home side, therefore, could not be expected to make a very great show. But they were quite sure of beating the score made by the Gipsies, and they did.

The innings lasted till dusk was beginning to fall, and the light was failing, and the batting would have had to cease anyway for the day, when the last wicket fell.

Eastwood House were all down for 140.

It was exactly twice the score made by the Gipsies, but it was not so many as the latter would have scored, but for Lovell's bowling.

Lord Conway knew that, and he knew how much he owed the young professional.

The first day's play was over now, and it had ended greatly to the advantage of the home team. With Lovell at his best, Lord Conway had little doubt that the second day's play would have a similar result.

The cricketers were in high spirits.

The St. Jim's juniors shared their satisfaction.

As Blake remarked, it was a satisfaction to know that they had beaten a team which could beat the Gipsies.

Lovell was made very much of by Lord Conway, but most of the fellows knew that there had been something up, and that it was in connection with Berkeley's departure.

Of the real reason for Berkeley's going nothing was said. It was best to keep the whole matter quiet, unless, indeed, Berkeley carried out his threat of bringing in the police to wreak his spite against Lovell.

That was regarded, so far, as an idle threat.

Lord Conway did not think that Berkeley himself really believed in his accusation against the young bowler.

But he was to learn differently. Tom Merry had noticed a stranger on the ground, among the crowd, watching the final innings.

Lovell was last man in, and when his wicket fell the innings closed, and the stranger who was watching followed the handsome young professional with his eyes.

Several of the juniors had remarked the interest that the quietly-dressed, keen-eyed stranger took in the professional.

As Lovell walked off the ground with Lord Conway, the stranger approached them, taking off his bowler hat in a respectful way.

Lord Conway looked at him inquiringly.

"Excuse me, sir," said the newcomer. "You are Lord Conway, I think."

"Yes."

"And this is Mr. Lovell, the professional cricketer?"

"Yes."

"Then my business is with you."

Lord Conway looked surprised.

"What business can you have with me?" he said. "I am not aware that I have ever met you before."

The other smiled.

"You have not," he said. "Your business has not lain in the direction of Scotland Yard, I presume."

The viscount started.

"Scotland Yard!"

"Yes, I am Inspector Blaine."

"Oh!"

Lovell looked at him hard.

"Your business is with me?" he said.

The inspector nodded.

"Exactly. We have received some very curious information, and I have come down here to examine into the

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matter, to see whether there is anything in it. My own impression was that a mistake had been made, but it was my duty to ascertain the truth. Will you kindly step into some place where we can talk in private."

"Come into my rooms," said Lord Conway shortly.

He led the bowler and the detective into his own quarters. He turned on the electric light, and closed the door.

"Now," he said, "I suppose this means that you have received a visit from Mr. Cecil Berkeley?"

"That is the case."

"He has accused Lovell of being a man named Luttrell, who was accused of forgery in Melbourne two years ago?"

"Exactly."

"Well, it is false; he made the accusation here, and we treated it with the contempt it deserved," said Lord Conway hotly.

The detective coughed.

"I am afraid it is a matter for proofs," he remarked. "Mr. Berkeley's statement seemed to me absurd, I admit, but on finding the photograph of the forger, Luttrell, I found that it was exactly like a picture of Mr. Lovell published in a sporting paper. I therefore resolved to investigate the matter."

"Quite right," said Lovell.

"I am willing to hear any explanation Mr. Lovell has to make."

Lovell hesitated.

"It is a matter that concerns myself alone," he said. "But as you are an officer of the law, you are entitled to know the truth. If I succeed in satisfying you of my innocence, however, I suppose the matter will not go further?"

"Naturally."

"Very well. I have never been known by the name of Luttrell, and I am not the man Mr. Berkeley supposed me to be."

"I was sure of that," said Lord Conway.

"Thank you, but I was in Melbourne at the time Luttrell was playing for an Australian club, and I knew him well. My name is not really Luttrell, as Mr. Berkeley supposed, but Luttrell's real name was Lovell."

"Oh!"

"He was my brother."

"Ah, I see!"

"He was—was unfortunate," said Lovell, colouring. "I may as well speak plainly. He got into trouble in England, and changed his name on going to Australia. We were both born cricketers, and he took it up there. I went out to see him, and to satisfy myself that he was on the right road. I came in time to find him in fresh trouble, and while I was there he fled from Melbourne, with the police on his track. I left the place quietly, and as you may guess, I have never mentioned the relationship to anyone."

The detective nodded.

"The resemblance, both in looks and style of play, was natural enough," said Lovell; "but you understand that it would do me no good professionally to have it known that the man who committed forgery in Melbourne two years ago was a relation of mine. Goodness knows I could not help it, and poor Frank was the victim of a set of scoundrels who made him their tool and their scapegoat. He has paid for what he did, but I did not feel inclined to explain any of the circumstances to Mr. Berkeley. It was no business of his, as far as I could see."

"Quite so," said Inspector Blaine slowly; "but, excuse me, have you any proof that you can give, that this brother of yours really exists?"

"Ample! If you communicate with the Melbourne police, you will find that Luttrell was arrested three months after his flight, in Ballarat, and was sentenced to prison for two years," said Lovell. "They will tell you also that he is still serving his sentence."

The inspector smiled.

"It will mean only a cable," he said. "I shall certainly do so; and I may as well say now that it is only a matter of form, and that I believe every word you have said, sir. If Mr. Berkeley had thought of inquiring in Melbourne, it would have saved us some trouble. Pray excuse me for having troubled you."

"Not at all; it was your duty."

And the inspector took his leave.

"I am sorry for this, Lovell," said Lord Conway. "I quite understand that you wished a matter like that to be kept secret, and it was shameful of Berkeley to drag it into the light; but you can depend upon my silence."

Lovell looked at him.

"Do you want me to play in the team now?" he said.

"Of course."

"I am not a criminal, as Berkeley supposed, but I am the brother of a criminal," said Lovell gloomily.

"That is nothing to me. I know you are as straight as a The Gem Library.—No. 124.

man could be, and that's all I want to know," said the viscount. "There's my hand."

And Lovell's eyes were moist as he grasped the hand of Lord Conway. His step was much lighter as he quitted the room.

CHAPTER 22.

Berkeley Disappears.

THE next day came the finish of the Eastwood match.

Lovell had never bowled so well as he did against the Gipsies in their second innings, and they were dismissed for 60, a smaller total than they had made on the first day of the match.

When the home side batted again, they did so with a full confidence of victory, a confidence that was not misplaced.

They won hands down, with four wickets to spare.

Tom Merry & Co. cheered uproariously as the winning run was scored.

"Bai Jove," remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "It's simply wippin'." Conway, deah boy, I congwatulate you."

Lord Conway grinned.

"Thanks, Gussy," he said. "It's pretty good, isn't it, considering the way you fellows licked us."

"Yaas, wathah," said Arthur Augustus innocently.

And the juniors roared.

That day Lord Conway heard news of Berkeley, too—he had left the country in haste, and Mr. Banks and a dozen other creditors were raging over it. But they raged in vain. Cecil Berkeley was gone for good, and county cricket knew him no more.

The St. Jim's juniors enjoyed their cricket week keenly enough; but undoubtedly the fellow who had the best time was Wally.

Lord Conway and his father knew that but for Wally's coming Lovell would have left Eastwood in disgrace, and the match would have been lost; and they made much of him. Lord Eastwood used his influence to make the scamp's peace at St. Jim's, and succeeded, and Wally stayed as long as Tom Merry & Co. did, and was a great trial to Arthur Augustus, the elegant junior's only consolation being that Wally had not been able to bring Pongo with him.

"Well," said Tom Merry, on the last day of that famous cricket week. "We've had a jolly good time, and I beg to propose, second, third, and pass unanimously, a vote of thanks to Gussy for having us down here."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hear, hear!"

"The pleasuah was entirely mine, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus, more Chesterfield than ever now. "I—"

"Hear, hear!"

"I—"

"Hear, hear!"

"Weally, deah boys—"

"Hear, hear!"

"Weally—"

"Hear, hear!"

And Arthur Augustus gave it up.

THE END.

NEXT WEEK!

"The Jape against St. Jim's."

Another Splendid School Tale of
TOM MERRY & CO.

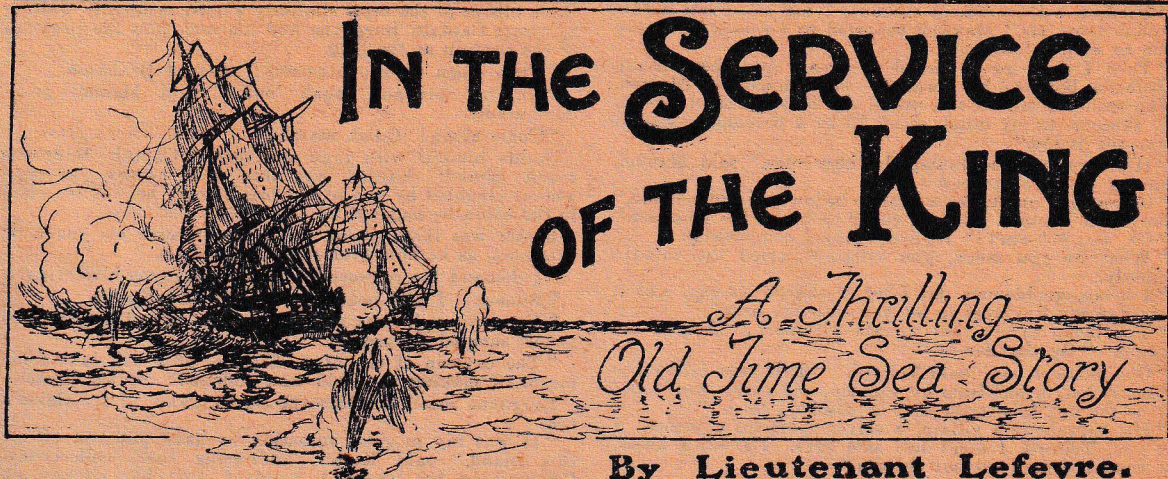
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The First Chapters of a Splendid Serial Story.



By Lieutenant Lefevre.

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. The slaver comes to anchor off a small island, and Kester and a negro named Bimby go ashore and enter a house where a number of men are seated. Only one, however, a stout man lounging in a rattan chair, makes any move to greet the slave-captain.

(Now go on with the story.)

A Gang of Rascals.

"Bless my soul, Captain Stevens," said the fat man, holding out a fat, moist hand. "I thought you were five hundred miles away from San Andrade! Have you come to take a bale or two of my cotton to Kingston?"

"I could do that easily enough. I am running for Kingston in ballast," said Kester, exchanging a quick look with the stout man.

The latter elevated his eyebrows almost imperceptibly, as though to warn Kester to be careful, and then turned to introduce him as Captain Stevens, of the *Black Rose*, to the rest of the company.

Beside the host—the stout man in linen—there were six others present, one of whom was introduced to Captain Stevens as Captain Hutt, of the schooner *Albatross*, now lying in the bay. A tall, sallow Spaniard proved to be the mate of that schooner. A third was a son of the host, while the other three were in the uniform of the British Navy, and were introduced as Lieutenants Hope and Fife, and Mr. Davis, the last-named being only a lad.

"You don't happen to have fallen in with a felucca, Captain Stevens?" asked Lieutenant Hope. "She is a craft named the *Gnat*, and is strongly suspected of being a privateer, if not something worse."

"I wish I could assist you, sir," said Kester seriously. "I have seen nothing of such a craft. May I ask if you are looking out for her?"

"We chased her until we lost her in the storm, and then we put in here for some slight repairs, and in the hopes that we should hear something of her whereabouts."

"I presume that is your schooner in the bay—the armed schooner?"

"Yes. We were ordered out expressly to make a capture of this felucca, and also of another vessel, which seems to be in league with her; but our information about the other craft has been very meagre."

"I am sorry I can't assist you," repeated Kester.

The officers shook hands with their host and with Captain Hutt, of the *Albatross*.

"When do you think you will put to sea again?" asked the fat man.

"We hardly expect to get the work finished to-morrow, but by the next morning we hope to continue our search for the *Gnat*," replied the lieutenant.

"Then to-morrow I shall expect you to dine with me."

"We will come with pleasure."

And with a good many handshakes all round the young officers took their departure.

Not for some considerable time after they had gone did those who remained open their lips, then the man who had been called Captain Hutt broke the silence.

"Well, Kester, what wind blows you this way?" he said, in a low voice.

"An ill-wind, as usual," replied Kester. "We have just lost a heavy cargo of black ivory, and—Bimby is outside."

The Spaniard rose and opened the door, and Bimby came in and shook hands with the company.

"Dey ossifers gone on board dat footy little schooner in de bay," said Bimby. "What dey here foh?"

It was explained to him how the armed schooner *Rattler* happened to be in the neighbourhood.

"And de *Gnat*—she get away?" asked Bimby anxiously.

"Oh, the *Gnat*'s safe enough, unless she makes up her mind to put in here," said Hutt. "By thunder, I would give something to see that confounded schooner put out!"

"I wouldn't," said Kester quietly.

"You wouldn't! Why not?" asked Hutt, surprised.

"For a very good reason—I want her to stay."

The others looked at him questioningly.

"What crew does she carry?" asked Kester.

"About a score, and she is well armed."

"So much the better," rejoined Kester quietly. Then he cried lightly: "I have come back to the old place and the old trade, lads, and I've taken a fancy to that same schooner; and, what is more, before I am many hours older I mean to be in possession of her."

"For Heaven's sake, be careful what you do!" cried the stout man anxiously.

"You need have no fear of that, Wilson. I shall make my plans carefully, and I shall not fail."

Prisoners—Recollections.

It was late in the afternoon when Kester and Bimby returned on board the *Black Rose*. The negro seemed to be labouring under great excitement, as was evidenced by the rolling of his eyeballs, and the hoarse, guttural sounds that came from his throat. The white man, however, was cool and unconcerned.

"Yes, she fine little soonah fo' sure!" Bimby muttered, nodding his head in the direction of the *Rattler*.

"She will serve our turn," said Kester. They went below, and Kester sent one of the crew to conduct the survivors of the *Catapult* to his cabin.

Oswald and Maxwell had been on deck during the afternoon, curiously examining the island off which they lay anchored.

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NEXT THURSDAY:

"THE JAPE AGAINST ST. JIM'S."

"It's a quiet little hole," Maxwell said. "I wonder if the captain intends putting us off here, or if he will send us on board that Government schooner?"

"There is a Government schooner lying at anchor within gunshot of us, sir," Maxwell reported to Captain Burgoyne when he went below.

"Then I shall go on board at once," said the captain. "Order a boat to be lowered," he commanded Manuel. "The sooner I am off this vessel the better I shall like it. Her skipper, to my mind, seems to be a precious rascal, if I am any judge."

"Him precious bad-rascal, dat bery sure," said Manuel, grinning from ear to ear.

"Go on deck and order a boat to be lowered and manned," ordered the captain. "I am going on board the schooner."

"Oh, no, yo' ain't!" replied Manuel composedly.

"What do you mean, you villain?" cried the captain furiously.

"I mean, genblemen, dat I lef in charge ob you, and it more dan my life wort to let you leab the brig."

"You mean to say that we are prisoners!" shouted the captain. "By thunder—"

"One moment, sir," said Telford. "This poor fellow has evidently had orders from his captain, and surely you would not be the one to suggest that he disobeys them?"

"His captain is a villain, a slaver—perhaps a pirate. I tell you, Telford, I don't feel safe here. For all I know, the scoundrel may cut our throats."

Dr. Telford shrugged his shoulders.

"He would hardly have taken the trouble to rescue us and restore us to health if he had meant to do as you say. After the kindness we have received from this man, it would certainly be churlish to leave his ship without asking his consent."

"The sooner I quit this ship the better I shall be pleased. Now, then, fellow, off with you! Have a boat lowered, and—"

"Sorry, sah, but ordahs am ordahs, and can't disobey dem."

"Then, if you will not obey me, my own men shall. Fid, Maxwell, Pringle! On deck, if you please! Insist on a boat being lowered. If the crew won't do it, you will have to do it yourselves. I will not stay on board this brig another hour!"

As he spoke Captain Burgoyne advanced towards the cabin door, but fell back suddenly as Manuel, thrusting his hand into his pocket, suddenly brought forth a pistol, which he pointed straight at the captain's head.

"Sorry, sah, but ordah must be obeyed," he said coolly.

"My ordah, sah, am dat you not leab this cabin while de captain on sho'."

Without a word Captain Burgoyne retired, and flung himself down despondently on to a sea-chest.

"So we are prisoners then?" asked Lieutenant Brabazon.

"Cert'nly, sah; pris'ners awaitin' de captain's pleasure, sah."

"I am afraid, Dr. Telford, that we are in a most perilous position," said Brabazon nervously.

"Not so perilous as we were when we were dying of thirst in the Catapult's boat," said the surgeon coolly. "Evidently, for some reason, this captain does not wish us to leave this vessel, and I suppose he is quite within his right to detain us."

"They are an awful-looking set of blackguards, the crew, sir," said Maxwell, in an undertone.

"We owe them a great deal, though, Maxwell," replied the doctor, with unflinching good-humour.

"And perhaps they mean to make us pay," said Maxwell.

"By thunder!" suddenly shouted the captain. "I shall report this confounded brig-captain to the commander of that schooner, and bring him to book for his insolence. I should like to know by what right he dares—"

"De prisoners am to attend de captain in his cabin!"

The announcement was made

by one of the black crew, who had suddenly opened the door in the middle of the captain's speech.

He had a drawn cutlass in his hand, and behind him were three others of the crew similarly armed, evidently waiting to escort Captain Burgoyne and his men into the presence of the captain of the brig.

"Then—then we are prisoners!" gasped Brabazon.

"Oh, yo' pris'ner, suah 'nuff!" said Manuel good-humouredly.

"Come along! Quick march!"

Beside himself with rage and terror, Captain Burgoyne found himself hustled out into the narrow passage, where, attended by one of the brig's crew, he was marched to the cabin he had visited once before that day.

Kester was there alone, waiting to receive his guests or prisoners, as he now preferred to call them.

"I demand the reason—" began Burgoyne blusteringly.

"Silence! I will hear you later!" said Kester.

"You—you will hear me later—you! Who the deuce are you?" shouted Burgoyne.

"The captain of the brig. Silence, or I will take some means of making you hold your tongue!" replied Kester.

Burgoyne recoiled before the steely glance of the slaver's eye.

"It was my original intention to have put you off on this island," said Kester, addressing them collectively. "Something has occurred, however, that has altered my plans. Although I feel very reluctant to do so, I yet must ask you one and all to consider yourselves as my prisoners."

"Surely—" began Dr. Telford.

"As my prisoners! I believe that some of you are officers, and, therefore, I am willing to take your parole—your word of honour that you will make no attempt to escape, but will remain here quietly on board the brig obeying orders until I release you from your oath."

"I do not admit your right to detain us, and, therefore, I refuse to make any such promise," said the surgeon hotly.

"I will certainly leave the brig the first chance I get!" said Mr. Pringle.

"And I!" said Maxwell and Oswald, in a breath.

"I expected some such reply as this," replied Kester, unmoved, "therefore, with much regret, I shall have to place you in irons, and put a strong guard over you."

"You will repent this!" said Captain Burgoyne passionately.

"I have repented a good many things in my time," rejoined the other. Then suddenly he fixed his eyes on Burgoyne's face. "Do you know a little English village named Wilminster?" he asked quietly.

Burgoyne and Oswald started simultaneously, and looked at the speaker. Fortunately for Oswald, Burgoyne was too surprised himself to notice his midshipman's astonished start.

"I do know this village, but—"

"In that village there lives a miser—a usurer, named Maydew. Do you happen to know him, too?" asked Kester quietly.

Oswald's heart beat rapidly. What was all this leading to? Who was this man? How came he to know of Wilminster and of Maydew?

Burgoyne hesitated.

"I deny your right to question, but, since you ask me, I do not know this man," he said.

"Liar!" said Kester quietly. He took the letter, which had been abstracted from Burgoyne's pocket, and threw it across the table. "Here is a letter from the miser Maydew to his dear nephew—yourself."

"Well, and what of that? What is it to you whether I am related to this Maydew or not?"

(Another long instalment of this thrilling serial will appear next Thursday.)

How Do You Do?

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"THE JAPE AGAINST ST. JIM'S."

Cousin Ethel is the culprit here, and the separate Co.'s are beautifully taken in. Needless to say, D'Arcy's "dig" is very much upset.

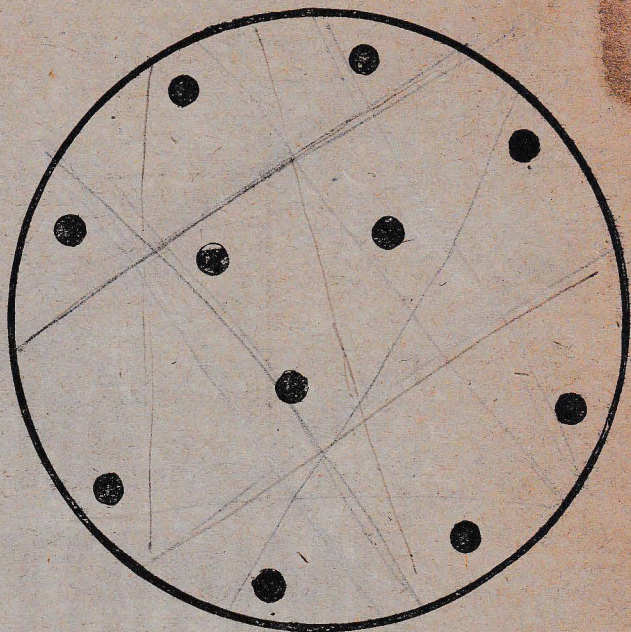
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