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A Splendid Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co., By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1.

Arthur Augustus Sits Down.

"YOU fellows weady?"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy asked the question, as he came to the doorway of the School House at St. Jim's.

A crowd of juniors stood outside, on the steps and the drive, and a brake was in waiting. There was a buzz of talk and laughter. The St. Jim's fellows were in high spirits. They were breaking up for the holidays.

Jack Blake was chatting with Tom Merry on the steps, when D'Arcy came to the door. He turned a severe glance upon the swell of St. Jim's.

"Ready!" he echoed. "We've been waiting for you for hours."

"Weally, Blake——"

"Well, for five minutes, anyway," said Blake. "Are you ready at last?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Got your best necktie on?"

"Weally, Blake——"

"And your diamond stud?"

"Weally——"

"And your spats?"

"Blake——"

"And your highest collar——"

"My deah boy——"

"And your toppest topper——"

"I wefuse to listen to any more of these fivulous wemarks," said D'Arcy loftily. "I am weady to get into the bwake."

And he descended the School House steps.

D'Arcy did indeed look a picture; he had forgotten none of the things that Jack Blake had enumerated. His collar was very high and very white, and his boots were only equalled in their polish by the gleam of his silk hat.

There had been rain the previous day, and there were still little pools of water on the drive, and D'Arcy trod with great care as he went towards the waiting brake, which was to bear a crowd of the juniors to the station.

"Mind the step," said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"The bottom step's the lowest," added Monty Lowther, with the gravity of an owl.

D'Arcy turned to Lowther, and adjusted his eyeglass, and favoured the humorist of the Shell with an inquiring gaze.

"May I twouble you to wepeat that wemark, Lowthah!" he asked.

"Certainly," said Lowther, in his blandest tone. "The bottom step's lowest."

"Weally, Lowthah, that is quite obvious, you know. I wegard you as an ass."

Lowther gazed at the swell of St. Jim's fixedly. Ho

A DOUBLE-LENGTH TALE OF TOM MERRY NEXT THURSDAY.

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seemed to be watching Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's mouth, and D'Arcy paused and looked perplexed.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Go on," said Lowther excitedly.

"Weally, you know—"

"Yes, I thought so; I was right," said Lowther, turning to Tom Merry. "It's his lower jaw that moves."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors gave a roar, more at the expression upon D'Arcy's face than at Lowther's ridiculous remark.

"You uttah ass!" exclaimed D'Arcy. "I wegard you—"

Lowther pointed.

"There, you can see for yourselves now! It's the lower jaw!"

"Weally, you ass—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy sniffed.

"I wegard you as a set of asses!" he exclaimed. "Lowthah is an uttah ass! Tom Mewwy, you are anothah ass! Blake is anothah ass! You are all asses!"

"Well, you ought to know," agreed Tom Merry. "You ought to know all about donkeys, Gussy; I know you're an authority on family matters."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Might I venture to point out that the luggage is in the brake, and the driver's waiting, and the train won't wait," said Manners of the Shell.

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"We've waited for ten minutes while Gussy put on his necktie," said Harry Noble, otherwise known as Kangaroo of Australia. "I vote that we don't wait any longer. I don't mind chucking Gussy into the brake."

"Hear, hear!"

"I uttably wefuss to be chuckd into the bwake."

"My dear chap, we simply won't take a refusal," said Tom Merry. "Collar him!"

"You ass—"

"Now, all together!" shouted Blake.

The juniors made a simultaneous movement towards the swell of St. Jim's.

D'Arcy made a hurried jump on the step of the brake, to get aboard before he could be seized.

In his excitement he missed the step.

"Look out!" shouted Monty Lowther.

But it was no use looking out; besides, Arthur Augustus had no time to look out. He fell back in a sitting posture on the ground.

There was a splash.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lowther.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Gweat Scott!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus had sat down in a wide puddle.

He sent a splash of muddy water on all sides of him, and several of the juniors received drops of it on their faces and clothes; but they did not mind that. D'Arcy's face, as he sat in the puddle was worth it.

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

The juniors roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry and Blake, almost choking with laughter, ran forward to help the swell of St. Jim's to his feet.

D'Arcy staggered up out of the puddle, leaning heavily upon the two juniors.

"Ow!" he gasped, as the water ran down his clothes. "Yow! My twousahs must be wained! I feel vewy wet."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, they'll soon get dry!" said Tom Merry. "Jump into the brake."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Jump in," said Blake.

"I wefuss to do anythin' of the sort. I shall have to change my twousahs before I go."

"Rats!"

"They're all right."

"Only a little damp."

"Jump in!"

D'Arcy took no notice. He was squirming round, monacle in eye, trying to get a glimpse of the seat of his trousers. The trousers were of a light pattern, and there was a great splash of mud on them, and certainly they would have looked rather remarkable in the street. But the juniors were in a hurry to be off, and they didn't want to be delayed while D'Arcy did more changing.

D'Arcy's monacle dropped from his eye, as he twisted round, and he replaced it, and squirmed round again, anxiously trying to catch a fair view of the patch of mud behind him.

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THURSDAY: "COUSIN ETHEL'S TREAT." A splendid tale of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's, by MARTIN CLIFFORD.

The juniors yelled.

"Ever seen a kitten chasing its tail?" said Digby.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Dig—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go it, Gussy!"

"This is as good as a circus."

Gussy chasing his trousers, twice nightly!" gasped Lowther. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Chuck him into the brake!"

"I wefuss to be chuckd into the bwake! I am feahfully mudday, and I shall have to change my twousahs."

"Rats!"

"No time!"

"Can't wait!"

"Get in!"

"I wefuss to do anythin' of the sort."

Tom Merry looked at his watch.

"Train goes in twenty minutes!" he exclaimed. "Now, how long will it take you to change your things, Gussy?"

"I weally don't know, you know. I shall have to have my twain unworcd, and—"

"What?"

"You've got to unpack your box to get a pair of bags!" roared Blake indignantly.

"Yess, watbah!"

"And—and you think we're going to wait! The cheek!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"We shall lose the train, Gussy."

"I am sowwy, Tom Mewwy, but I cannot consent to twavel in mudday bags. Taggles, kindly take my twain in again."

"Which?"

"I will give you an extra shillin' for your twouble."

"Suttingly, sir."

"Let that box alone!" roared Tom Merry. "We're going to catch this train!"

"Weally, you know—"

"Chuck him into the brake!"

"I wefuss—"

The juniors rushed at the swell of St. Jim's.

But D'Arcy meant business, or, as he would have called it, "biznay."

He dodged the rush, handed off Tom Merry, tackled Lowther, and rolled him over, and made a break for the doorway, for all the world like a Rugby three-quarter getting away and heading for the line.

He vanished into the School House, and there was a roar from the juniors.

"After him!"

They rushed up the steps.

At that moment Mr. Railton, the master of the School House stepped into view, and the juniors stopped suddenly in their rush; just in time to avoid bowling over the House-master.

Mr. Railton smiled genially.

"Just off, boys?" he remarked.

"Yee-es, sir."

"You've no time to lose for your train."

From upstairs came a faint click, and Tom Merry & Co. knew that D'Arcy had locked himself in Study No. 6, to make terms from behind a fastened door.

"We shall be catching the next train, sir," said Tom Merry.

CHAPTER 2.

Off for the Holidays.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY did change his trousers. He declined to come out from his fastness till Tom Merry & Co. had agreed to make it pax, and the trunk was unworcd, and the trousers changed, and the swell of St. Jim's was satisfied. But the others were not satisfied. They raged.

They had particularly wanted to catch that train, to obtain another at the junction at Wayland, and the losing of it threw all their plans out of gear.

D'Arcy was responsible, and the juniors were wrathful.

A party of the St. Jim's juniors were going down to Tom Merry's place for the first part of the vacation, and the journey was a long one, and they could not afford to lose trains at the beginning of it.

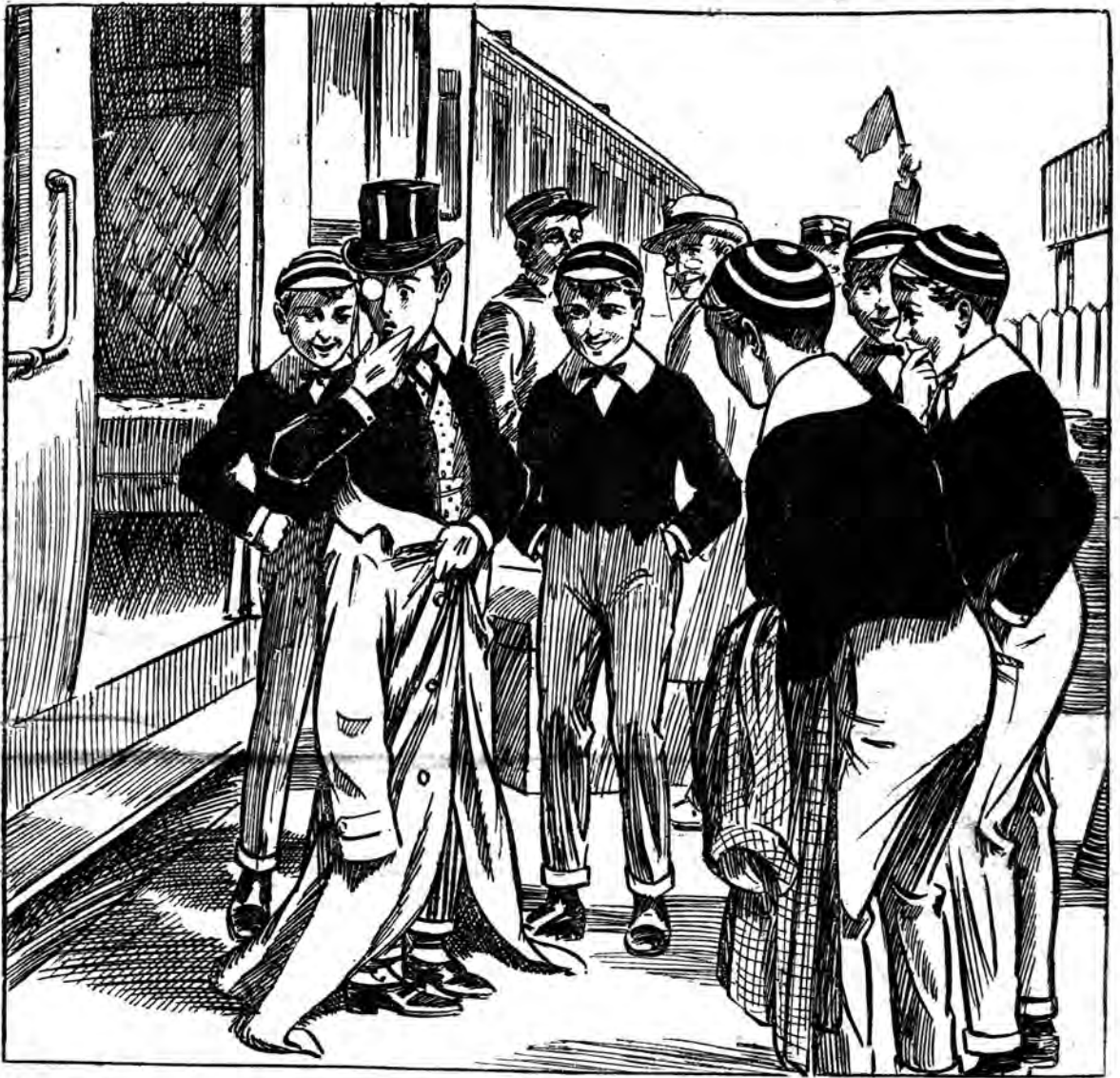
But the train was lost; and Tom Merry hunted out a timetable to seek a fresh train to serve his purpose.

He grunted wrathfully over the time-table.

"All through Gussy's blessed trousers!" said Blake wrathfully.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Oh, scat! Why couldn't you keep out of the puddle, if you didn't want your trucks to be mudday?"



D'Arcy hopped out of the carriage with a coat half on, and stood in the middle of a group of grinning juniors, with a very red face. "You uthah asses!" he exclaimed, "Theah is no cause for this wibald laughtah."

"Weally——"
 "Besides, why couldn't you travel in muddy bags?"
 "Imposs., deah boy."
 "We've lost the train."
 "Sowwy; but——"
 "It will be a much longer journey now, and we shall have to wait half an hour at Wayland Junction."
 "It's vewy unfortunate, but——"
 "All through you——"
 "Weally, deah boy——"
 "Blessed if I know why Gussy wasn't suffocated at birth!" said Herries, with a growl. "Why doesn't somebody painlessly extract him now?"
 "Weally, Hewwies——"
 "The cheek of it!" growled Kangaroo. "He thinks the British public have nothing to do but to keep an eye on his bags."
 "Weally, Kangawoo!"
 "Never mind," said Tom Merry cheerfully. "We shall arrive at Huckleberry Heath about two hours later than we intended."
 "All through Gussy's bags!"
 "Yah!"
 "Weally, deah boys——"
 "Better send a wire to Miss Fawcett," said Lowther.
 "Yes, rather!"

"Yaas, that's a good ideah," said D'Arcy. "Miss Pwiscillah may be anxious about us if we don't awwive by the earliah twain. I should be vewy sowwy to cause any anxiety to your estimable govahness, Tom Mewwy."

"Go hon!"
 "Besides, Cousin Ethel will be there—she'll be there before us now," said Manners severely; "all through Gussy."

"Weally, Mannahs——"
 "Oh, don't talk—you make me tired!"
 "Weally——"
 "Scat!"

The telegram was despatched to Miss Fawcett, Tom Merry's old governess. The juniors waited with all the patience they could muster for the next train.

They saw a good many fellows off in the meantime. The unused brake was taken by a crowd of other fellows, and for a long time brakes were coming and going.

Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, shook hands with Tom Merry for good-bye, and the juniors gave the popular Sixth-Former a ringing cheer as he went off with Monteith, the head prefect of the New House, who was spending the holiday with him.

As the school grew thinner and thinner, Tom Merry & Co. found themselves almost alone in the shady old quadrangle.

Tom Merry and some of the others were chatting on the

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NEXT THURSDAY: "COUSIN ETHEL'S TREAT." A splendid tale of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's, by MARTIN CLIFFORD.

School House steps, when Figgins & Co. of the New House strolled by.

Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn stopped and looked at the School House chums.

"Hallo!" said Figgins, in surprise. "You still here?"

"Yes, rather!" said Tom Merry.

"Looks like it, doesn't it?" remarked Lowther.

"I thought you were catching the 11.25?"

"So we were."

"It was all through Gussy," explained Tom Merry. "At the last moment he decided to change his trousers."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"So we lost the train," said Tom Merry. "We hope to catch the next one, unless Gussy decides to change his waistcoat or his socks just when we're starting."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wufuse to allow these wiculous wemarks to pass, Tom Mewwy. I certainly did insist upon changin' my twucks, but only because I had sat down in the mud!"

"I don't know why he does these things," said Tom Merry, "but you know Gussy! What train are you New House bouders going by?"

"The 12.30."

"That's our train."

"Well, there'll be room for all of us," grinned Figgins. "We shall be about the last lot."

"I wish you were coming down to my quarters," said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Figgins nodded.

"Thanks," he said. "As a matter of fact, we sha'n't be very far away from you part of the time. Kerr and Wynn are going to stay with me in Somersetshire, but part of the time we're going to an old friend of my governor's in Sussex, within twenty miles of Huckleberry Heath, so we may see you."

"Jolly good!"

"It's a cricketing place," said Figgins. "We may be able to get up a match—New House against School House, you know, out of school."

"Wippin', deah boy!"

"Here comes the brake," said Tom Merry. "Were you walking to the station, Figgy?"

"Yes, the luggage was sent on, but—"

"Get into our brake, then."

"What-ho!" said Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn, with one voice. The brake stopped outside the School House. The juniors began to clamber in. A lad came out of the house with a bag in his hand.

It was Jerrold Lumley-Lumley, the new boy at St. Jim's—the Rank Outsider, as the fellows called him. Untruthful and spiteful, the new boy certainly deserved the estimation in which the St. Jim's fellows held him.

He was on extremely bad terms with Tom Merry & Co. His early training among a rough class in New York—before Mr. Lascelles Lumley-Lumley became a millionaire and sent his hopeful son to an English public school—had not fitted him to chum up with fellows like Tom Merry; nor did he care to change his ways.

He looked round him as he came out.

"Going to the station?" he asked.

"Yes," said Tom Merry shortly.

"Give me a lift?"

Tom Merry hesitated only for a moment. He was always an obliging fellow, and he overcame his dislike for the Outsider's company.

"Certainly, if you like," he said cheerily.

"You're going to Wayland Junction to catch a train there, I suppose?" said Lumley.

"Yes."

"Which train?"

"The 1.20 down."

"Curious! That's my train."

Tom Merry's face fell a little.

"Your train?"

"Yes. It stops at Forest Burford, I believe."

"Forest Burford!" shouted Figgins.

Lumley stared at him.

"Yes, that's where I'm going for my holiday," he said.

"My hat!"

"What's the matter with you?"

"Why, Kerr and Wynn and I are going to be there for a time, that's all—it's only twenty miles from Tom Merry's place, too!"

The new boy smiled unpleasantly.

"Then I shall have the doubtful pleasure of seeing you during the holiday," he remarked.

"You needn't trouble," said Figgins politely.

Lumley flushed.

"Well, get in," said Tom Merry hastily, desirous to avoid hot words on breaking-up day. "Time we were off."

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THU "COUSIN ETHEL'S TREAT." A splendid tale of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's, by MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"Yaas, wathah, deah boys!"

The juniors piled into the brake, and the driver moved off. They were almost the last to leave St. Jim's.

Blake gave D'Arcy a stern look.

"All your fault!" he growled.

"Weally, Blake, I think you might let the subject dwop now, deah boy."

"Rats! All through—"

"Pway wing off!"

"And we've got the Outsider planted on us for the whole journey," grunted Digby, in an undertone; "all through Gussy!"

"Yaas, that's wathah wotten; but, of course, I couldn't foresee that the howwid boundah would be catchin' the same twain. But in any case, I could not have consented to twavel in muddy bags."

Blake snorted.

"I've a jolly good mind to sit you down in the next puddle, just as a punishment!" he exclaimed.

"Weally, Blake—"

Monty Lowther chuckled.

As the brake rolled down the lane, the wind caught Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's hat, and he had to hold it on to avoid losing it. He had no attention to bestow upon the others, and he did not even notice that Monty Lowther was leaning towards Blake and whispering to him.

Jack Blake burst into a loud chuckle. Then Arthur Augustus glanced at him.

"What's the joke, deah boy?" he asked.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Oh, you'll see presently!" said Blake. "Little boys shouldn't ask questions!"

"If you allude to me as a little boy, Blake—"

"Order!" said Tom Merry.

"Blake has addressed me with gwoss diswpect—"

"Quiet!"

"Oh, don't mind Gussy!" said Jack Blake, in a tone of patient resignation. "He's always like this when he finds himself in a brake. He thinks he's on a beanfeast, you know, and he loses his head a little. He'll simmer down in time."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

At this aspersation upon his character, D'Arcy could only gaze at Blake in speechless indignation. His indignation was so deep that it kept him quite silent all the way to the station, and he did not speak till he alighted. Then he spoke!

"Blake, I weward you with contempt."

"Hear, hear!" said Blake cheerfully.

Then they went into the station.

CHAPTER 3.

Stuck Fast.

THE juniors were in good time for the local train to Wayland Junction. Tom Merry's party numbered eight, and Figgins & Co. made eleven, and the Outsider twelve. All but Lumley crowded into one carriage. There wasn't much room, but they wanted to be together. Lumley got into the next carriage. There was very little that was chummy or spontaneous about him, and he did not want to be crowded.

"For this relief, much thanks!" grunted Jack Blake, as the porter closed the carriage-door. "We sha'n't have the Outsider with us as far as Wayland, anyway."

"Not much woom in this cawwiage," said D'Arcy, who was standing up at the end. "Which of you chaps is goin' to give me a seat?"

"Don't all speak at once," said Figgins sarcastically.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you know—"

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"I think Lowther ought to get up and give Gussy a seat," said Kangaroo.

To the surprise of most of the juniors, Monty Lowther rose at once.

"Thanks for the suggestion, Kangy," he said. "Sit down, Gussy."

The swell of St. Jim's hesitated a moment.

"Weally, Lowther, you're awfully kind!" he said.

"Yes, ain't I?" agreed Lowther.

"I twust it will not inconvenience you to give me a seat?"

"My dear chap, I'd rather stand than sit on that seat," said Lowther. "Sit down, my son. It's only proper that one of us should make way for the great Gussy."

"Weally—"

"Sit down."

Monty Lowther pushed D'Arcy into the seat. The other juniors were all grinning. Lowther took D'Arcy's place and stood up serenely.

"Thank you vewy much," said D'Arcy. "I am weally vewy much obliged to you, Lowther." He carefully pulled up the knees of his trousers. "Bai Jove!"

"What's the matter?"

"The seat feels a little damp."

"Damp!"

"Yaas. I twust you haven't been spillin' any of your wotten gingah-beah over this seat, Fatty Wynn?"

"Not at all," said Wynn. "I've only got one bottle, and I can't afford to spill that, just for you to sit in."

"The seat was dry enough when I was on it," said Lowther.

"Vewy well; I suppose it is all wight."

"Why don't you get up and sec?" demanded Digby.

"Well, I have just awwanged the knees of my twousahs, you know."

D'Arcy evidently regarded that as unanswerable. The juniors grinned, and the train rattled on. Fatty Wynn extracted sandwiches from the open end of a packet he carried.

"You've got a long journey ahead of you," said Figgins warningly.

"We stop half an hour in Wayland, you know; I can get some more."

"Twenty minutes," said Kerr.

"Well, that's enough to get a fresh supply of sandwiches," said Fatty Wynn. "It's no good starting a journey hungry. Always lay a good solid foundation; that's my idea."

And he munched away busily.

The sandwiches were finished by the time the train ran into the station. Figgins threw the door open, and the juniors poured out upon the platform.

Tom Merry and Figgins ran off to see to the luggage at once. There was an excited voice from the carriage they had left.

"Gweat Scott! Help!"

"Come on out, Gussy!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Why don't you come out?" called out Blake. "The train's going on to a siding as soon as the luggage is off."

"Help!"

"What's the matter?"

"Ow! I'm stuck to the seat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wescue, deah boys!"

Arthur Augustus made heroic efforts to rise. The juniors stared in at the carriage with grinning faces.

D'Arcy was tightly fastened to the seat.

His face was red with exertion as he strove to rise.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"We shall have to leave him behind," grinned Monty Lowther. "How lucky it is that it's not I who am stuck there!"

"You wottah!" roared D'Arcy. "You did this on purpose. It is a twick. I'll give you a feahful thwashin'."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus made a desperate effort to tear himself from the seat. There was an ominous sound of tearing and rending.

"Take care, Gussy!" gasped Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gweat Scott!"

"What's the matter?" exclaimed Tom Merry, hurrying back along the platform. "The luggage is out. Why don't you get out, Gussy? You'll be shoved on to a siding."

"Ow! I can't get out!"

"My hat!"

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

"He's stuck to the seat," chuckled Monty Lowther.

"You wottah! You've done it on purpose; that's why you gave me your seat."

"My dear chap—"

"You uttah wottah!"

"Well, it must have been the liquid glue," said Lowther.

"I had a bottle of it, and I haven't it now, and Gussy said the seat was damp."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's rough on the trousers," said Manners sympathetically. "Gussy has lost one train through the last pair. We shall lose him through this pair, if he doesn't buck up."

"Bai Jove!"

"Make an effort, old chap!" exclaimed Tom Merry, laughing. "Here, we'll take your arms and pull."

"Thank you vewy much, deah boy."

"Pull away! All together!"

"Here goes!"

"Ow! Yow! Yah! Yaroooh!"

"Put your beef into it!"

"Yaroooh! You're bustin' my arms, you know. Yah!"

Yow!"

"He's coming!"

He came—suddenly.

There was a terrific tearing, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came away from the seat. But he left a large patch of cloth sticking to the lardened glue there.

"Phew!" gasped Blake. "Gussy, you'll want patching."

"Bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Lend me a coat, somebody."

"Here you are!" said Tom Merry. "Put it round you, quick. We can't have you going round like this."

"Gussy thinks he's on a beanfeast," said Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Jump out!"

D'Arcy hopped out of the carriage with the coat half on. He finished donning it, and stood in the midst of a grinning circle of juniors, with a very r-d face.

"You uttah asses, there is no cause whatever for wibald laughah!" he exclaimed.

But the juniors seemed to think there was. They yelled.

"Lowthah—"

"Keep him off!" ejaculated Monty Lowther, dodging behind Tom Merry. "He's dangerous!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Lowthah, I insist upon givin' you a feahful thwashin'!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Better sit down the rest of the journey, and keep the coat on, Gussy," remarked Kangaroo.

"I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort."

"You can't take the coat off," said Blake. "We're not particular, any of us, but it wouldn't do, you know. I appeal to all the fellows."

"Quite right; it wouldn't do."

"Rather not!"

D'Arcy became crimson.

"You uttah asses! I mean that I shall wefuse to pwoceed upon this journey until I have a new pair of twousahs."

"Rats!"

"I am firmly wesoolved upon that point. We shall have to unpack a box—"

"No fear! It's wheeled off to the down platform already."

"Or else go out into Wayland and buy a pair of bags."

"My dear chap, you'd get the most unfashionable garments in a country town like this," said Blake, with a grave shake of the head. "It wouldn't do."

"I insist upon havin' a new pair of bags before I pwoceed with the journey."

"Train goes in twelve minutes," said Kerr, looking at his watch.

"My word!" gasped Fatty Wynn. And he dashed off at top speed in the direction of the buffet.

"I hardly like to appeah in the public stweets like this," said D'Arcy, "but I shall have to do so, unless one of you fellows goes for me, to purchase a new pair of twucks."

"Well, I suppose I ought to do that," said Monty Lowther, "as it was my glue that Gussy sat in. It was careless of Gussy—"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"But I'm quite willing to go," said Lowthah. "Gussy can't remain in that state till we get to Huckleberry Heath, I suppose."

"Certainly not, deah boy!"

"Train goes in eleven minutes," said Kerr.

"Bettah buzz off, Lowthah. Take this banknote and change it."

Lowther shook his head.

"No, I'm going to stand the trousers, Gussy, as it was my fault."

"Weally—"

"I insist upon it."

"But—"

"You must really leave it to me."

"My dear Lowthah—"

"Train goes in ten minutes."

"Weally, Kerr—"

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ALL BOOKS BY MARTIN CLIFFORD

"I'll buzz off," said Lowther. "Wait on the down platform for me."
And he ran out of the station.

CHAPTER 4.

Monty Lowther is Very Obliging.

TOM MERRY & CO. proceeded to the platform from which the train was to start for home.

The express was not in sight yet. The luggage was piled on the platform ready, with piles of other luggage; and there was a goodly crowd of passengers on the platform. The juniors of St. Jim's stood together, with two exceptions—Monty Lowther was absent, and Fatty Wynn was laying in provisions at the buffet. Tom Merry had arranged for a lunch-basket to be put in the carriage, but Fatty Wynn preferred to make assurance doubly sure by laying in an extra supply.

Kerr kept an eye on the station clock, and on the line. Kerr was a careful youth, and had never been known to lose a train in his life.

"Here she is!" he exclaimed.

The express was coming in.

With a whirr the train rushed into the station, and stopped. There was an opening and banging of doors at once.

Tom Merry looked round anxiously.

"Get Fatty out of the buffet, Figgins!" he exclaimed.

"Right-ho!" said Figgins.

He ran off to the buffet, and returned with Fatty Wynn, his hand tight on the collar of the plump junior.

The St. Jim's party entered the train. Jerrold Lumley stepped into the same carriage as Tom Merry, and took a corner seat. The juniors looked out anxiously for Monty Lowther. He could not be seen in the crowd on the platform.

D'Arcy was very anxious.

"The ass will miss the twain!" he exclaimed.

"Looks like it," growled Manners. "We shall never hear the end of your blessed bags, I suppose."

"It's all Gussy's fault, of course."

"Weally, Kangawoo—"

"We can't miss the train," said Tom Merry. "Miss Fawcett would be alarmed. Lowther will have to follow by the next if he misses this. But—"

Blake winked.

Tom Merry understood. Lowther was not likely to miss the train. He was holding back to the last moment, that was all.

"Here he is!" shouted Digby suddenly.

Lowther came tearing along the platform, with a bundle swinging in his hand. The juniors waved to him.

"This way!" shouted Tom Merry.

"Here you are, Lowther!"

"Wun like anythin', deah boy."

Lowther came panting up.

He hurled the parcel into the carriage, unfortunately catching Jerrold Lumley on the chest with it, and bundled in after it himself.

Lumley jumped up savagely.

"What did you do that for?" he shouted.

Lowther was sprawling among the juniors' legs, and a porter was slamming the door. The engine was screaming.

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed D'Arcy. "That was a close shave, deah boy."

"Done it!" gasped Lowther. "Did that parcel hit anybody when I chucked it in?"

"Yes, it did," roared Lumley. "It hit me."

"Dear me!" said Monty Lowther. "I hope it isn't damaged."

"You—you rotter—"

"Eh?"

"You did it on purpose!"

"Yes, I chucked it in on purpose," said Lowther innocently. "I didn't want to leave it on the platform, you know, after taking the trouble to fetch it."

"Look here—"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Tom Merry. "Don't make a fuss over a trifle, Lumley."

Lumley glared at him. He made a sudden grasp at the parcel, and jerked it towards the window. The window was down, and in another moment Lumley would have hurled the parcel out upon the line.

But Figgins grasped him in time and dragged his arm back. Kerr wrenched the parcel from the Outsider's hand.

"No, you don't!" grinned Figgins.

"Let me go!"

"With pleasure! I don't like touching you!"

And Figgins pushed Lumley into his seat.

"You rotter!" exclaimed Lowther. "Look here! I think I'd better lick that boulder before we go any further."

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"Wats, Lowthah! He was goin' to throw away my twucks, and it's my place to give him a thwashin'."

"Look here, Gussy—"

"Look here, Lowthah—"

"Order!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Peace, you duffers! Remember it's holiday time. Do shut up, Lumley, and be civil."

Lumley grunted.

"Oh, all right!" said Lowther. "I don't mind. But, look here! Here are Gussy's new trucks. Where are you going to change 'em, Gussy?"

"Stop at the next station, deah boy."

"The express makes only one stop."

"Bai Jove!"

"Take 'em along and change in the lavatory," said Tom Merry. "You can wash some of the mud off your chivvy at the same time."

D'Arcy looked horrified.

"Mud! On my chivvy?"

"Yes, rather!"

"It's awful!" said Lowther. "There's a spot on your cheek."

"Bai Jove!"

"A whole spot, nearly a sixteenth of an inch in diameter," said Tom Merry severely. "You can't go about like that, Gussy."

"Bai Jove, no!"

The express was a corridor train. D'Arcy took the bundle and disappeared along the corridor.

Monty Lowther chuckled. Tom Merry caught the expression of his face, and laughed, too.

"What sort of trucks have you got for Gussy?" he demanded.

"You'll see soon."

"How much did you give for them?" asked Blake.

"Two and eleven."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"They were hanging up outside the second-hand clothes shop at the corner," explained Lowther. "They were marked 'A bargain—two and eleven.' I thought they would suit Gussy down to the ground—right down to the ground. You'll see."

The juniors watched for D'Arcy's return.

Those of the party who could not find room in the carriage were in the corridor adjoining, and all of them watched for Gussy.

It was some minutes before the swell of St. Jim's returned.

As soon as he came in sight there was a yell from the juniors.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus was wearing the new trousers Lowther had so kindly fetched for him.

They had cost Lowther two shillings and elevenpence, which might be considered cheap for trousers, but it really looked as if Lowther had been "done."

The trousers were of a rough material, and of a brilliant check design, almost on the scale of a chessboard. A large variety of colours added vivacity to the pattern. They reached to the floor as D'Arcy walked, although he had turned up the ends. As a matter of fact, the trousers were intended for a large, fat man, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was almost lost in them.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy looked worried.

"What do you think of these twucks, deah boys?" he asked.

It was evident that Arthur Augustus was troubled in his mind, for the spot of mud to which Tom Merry had called attention was still upon his face.

Tom Merry wiped his eyes.

"What do you think of them, chaps?" he asked.

And the juniors testified what they thought of them by a fresh yell of merriment.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

CHAPTER 5.

Toffee for Fatty Wynn.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY jammed his monocle into his eye and stared at the grinning juniors.

"Weally, deah boys—" he began

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I suppose you wegard these twousahs as widiculous?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Lowthah, I suppose you have bwrought me these twucks as a silly twick?"

"Don't look a gift-horse in the mouth, Gussy," said Manners admonishingly. "Lowther stood you those trousers, remember."

"Yaas, but—"



"I've made this in the last half-hour," said Lumley-Lumley, drawing a handful of coins from his pocket, gold mingled with silver. The chums of the New House looked at the money in surprise.

"It would be only decent to thank him——"

"I am convinced that Lowthah bought these twousahs for a wotten twick."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I have no wesource but to wear them," said D'Arcy.

"But I wegard Lowthah as a wottah of the deepest dye."

"Go hon!" said Lowther. "This is what comes of being obliging."

"Gussy is always ungrateful," said Manners solemnly.

"Weally Mannahs——"

D'Arcy sat down.

He maintained a dignified silence for some time, evidently feeling very much injured, but the juniors could not restrain their chuckles whenever they glanced at the trousers. People who came along the corridor looked in, and seemed to be taken with fits of coughing as they caught sight of D'Arcy.

The express rushed on through the green country.

Jerrold Lumley had grinned over the incident as much as the rest, and his good-humour seemed to be restored. As the train rushed on he yawned, and drew a leather case from his pocket and opened it, revealing a pack of cards.

"Any of you fellows feel inclined for a game?" he asked.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"Oh, we might play beat your neighbour," said Blake.

"I will play snap with pleasuah, deah boy," said D'Arcy. Lumley shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't play kids' games," he replied.

"Weally, Lumley——"

"Can't you play banker?"

"I can play bankah," said D'Arcy. "But you need countahs for that game, or nuts, or buttons, you know."

Lumley sniffed contemptuously.

"Counters! Nuts! Buttons! Are you off your rocker?"

he asked.

"Bai Jove!"

"You won't catch me playing for nuts and buttons."

Haven't you any tin?"

"Tin?"

"Yes. Are you afraid to risk it?"

"You uttah wottah——"

"We don't gamble, if that is what you mean," said Tom Merry quietly; "and you'd better put those cards away, Lumley."

"Bah! Haven't you the grit to play a little game?"

"Oh, shut up!" said Tom Merry. "It's not a question of

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grit, but of playing the blackguard as soon as we're out of sight of the masters' eyes. Put those cards away."

"Rats!"
"Put them away!" said Kangaroo.
"I won't!"
Tom Merry's eyes flashed.
"There's nobody here to play cards with you," he said.
"Put them away, or I'll throw them out of the window."
Lumley flushed, and put the cards back into his pocket. Then he left the carriage, and the St. Jim's juniors were relieved of his presence.

Blake drew a deep breath as he went.
"Blessed if I can stand that chap!" he said.
"Yaas, wathah, Blake! I wegard him as a wank wottah!" D'Arcy remarked. "Bai Jove! What are you gwinnin' at, Hewwies?"
"I just caught sight of your bags, that's all!" said Herries blandly.

"You uttah ass!"
"They'll make a sensation in Huckleberry Heath," Kerr remarked. "I'll wager that trousers of that pattern have never been seen there before."

"Weally, Kerr—"
"Well, Gussy expects to make a sensation wherever he goes," remarked Blake. "I think a vote of trousers—I mean a vote of thanks ought to be passed to Lowther."

"Hear, hear!"
"I wegard Lowthah as a wottah!"
"Ungrateful!"
"Weally, Blake—"
"Hallo, the train's stopped!"
"Last and only stop before our station," said Tom Merry.

"What's the matter, Fatty?"
Fatty Wynn had sprung to the door.
"I think I'd better get a few sandwiches," he said.
"We've got the lunch-basket."

"Yes, but—"
"Besides, you brought a whole cargo of sandwiches on the train," exclaimed Manners.
"They're all gone."

"Gone where?"
"Well, I was rather hungry, and—"
"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Oh, rats!" said Fatty Wynn warmly. "I believe in laying in a good foundation. I think I'd better get a few more, Figgy. Do let go my arm."

Figgins shook his head, and grinned.
"No fear!"
"I shall be hungry—"
"Rats! The train stops only five minutes—"
"Three, now," said Kerr.
"No time for grubbing."

"I'll cut to the buffet in a tick—"
"No, you won't!"
"I'll be back in a jiffy."

"Rats!"
"Look here, Figgy—"
"Oh, I'm looking, and I'm holding, too," grinned Figgins.
"You're not going to get off this blessed train, my fat tulip."

Fatty Wynn expostulated, but he expostulated in vain. The train started again, and Fatty Wynn was minus his sandwiches. He sat and frowned.
"Cheer up, Fatty!" said Kerr. "There's the lunch-basket, you know."

"Well, let's have it," said Fatty.
"Yaas, wathah! I'm feeling a little peckish myself, you know," said Arthur Augustus.
And the lunch-basket was opened, and its contents discussed with relish. Fatty Wynn did very well, and he kept on after the others had finished, till not a speck of provisions remained in the basket.

Then he heaved a sigh.
"Feel better?" said Figgins sympathetically.
"Yes, better."

"Could you eat any more?"
"Well, I could manage the same again, I suppose," said Fatty Wynn thoughtfully. "Still, it's all right; I can hold out now. I suppose you haven't any toffee about you, Figgy?"

"No."
"Did you have some milk-chocolate, Kerr?"
"Yes," said Kerr, "and ate it."

"Oh! I suppose you haven't any of those bullseyes left, Herries?"
"Sorry; none."

"Oh!"
"Bai Jove! I wemembah now, Wally gave me a packet of toffee before we started," said Arthur Augustus. "My minah went by the earliah twain, you know, and he shoved the packet into my hand when he said good-bye. It's in my pocket."

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Fatty Wynn brightened up.
"Well, if you don't want it, D'Arcy—"
"Not at all."
"You're awfully good."
"You're quite welcome, deah boy."
D'Arcy groped in his pocket, and found a little packet fastened up in paper. He handed it to Fatty Wynn.

"Thanks."
Fatty Wynn unwrapped the paper, and opened the packet. A chunk of toffee was revealed. Fatty Wynn regarded it with great doubt.

"It's all wight," said D'Arcy. "Wally told me he made it himself."
"Why did he give it to you?" asked Fatty suspiciously.
"Out of bwotherly wegard, I suppose."

"Oh!"
"Isn't it all wight?"
"It seems rather hard."
Fatty Wynn tried to break the toffee, and then tried to bite it. Neither attempt came to anywhere near success. Then he wrapped the paper round it to keep it clean, and put it on the carriage floor and stamped on it. He unwrapped the paper again, and found the toffee quite intact.

"It's wathah hard," remarked D'Arcy.
Fatty Wynn growled.
"That's why Wally gave it to you, chump!"
"Weally, Wynn—"

"Stick your teeth into it," said Monty Lowther encouragingly.
Fatty Wynn eyed the toffee dubiously, and tried. He succeeded in getting his teeth into it at last. But it was not so easy to get them out again.

"Groo-oo!" he gasped.
"Bai Jove! What's the mattah?"
"He's swallowed the chunk!" exclaimed Herries.
"Groo!"

"Pat his back!"
"Shake him!"
"Groo-hoo-roo!"
"Shake him—quick!"
"Groo-hoo!"

The juniors seized Wynn and shook him. They slapped and thumped his back, and shook him, and did all they could, but Fatty seemed to get no better. He gasped and gurgled wildly.

"Groo-hoo!"
"Bai Jove! He seems to be choking."
"Fatty, old man—"
"Thump his back!"
"Lemme alone!" roared Fatty Wynn, his teeth coming out of the toffee at last, and enabling him to speak. "Chuck it!"

"I say—"
"Stop it, you dummies!"
"But—"
"I'm not choking!" roared Fatty Wynn. "Stop it! Yow! My teeth were stuck in the stuff, that's all! Yarcoch!"

"Oh!"
"You silly asses—"
"Weally, Wynn—"
"Oh, go and eat coke!"

Fatty Wynn sat down gasping. The chunk of toffee was hurled from the window of the train. Fatty Wynn gasped and gasped, and he still had the complexion of a boiled beetroot when the train clattered to a stop.

CHAPTER 6.

Marked Cards.

TOM MERRY jumped up.
"Our station!" he exclaimed.
The train had halted. The luggage was tumbling out of the guard's van. Monty Lowther threw open the carriage door.

"Well, we say good-bye here," said Figgins. "We'll see you later, you know, when we're at Forest Burford."

"Good!"
"Yaas, wathah!"
Tom Merry & Co. crowded out on the platform.
Figgins & Co. alighted, too, to say good-bye to them. They shook hands all round, and Figgins gave D'Arcy a hearty slap on the back, which made the swell of St. Jim's gasp for breath.

"Weally, Figgins—" he exclaimed.

ANSWERS

"Good-bye, Gussy!"
 "Good-bye, Figgay, but—"
 "And take care of your bags."
 "Weally—"
 "Get in," said Kerr.
 Figgins, Kerr and Wynn clambered into the train again. Jerrold Lumley was looking out of the window of the next carriage. Tom Merry waved a hand to him.
 "Good-bye, Lumley."
 "Good-bye, and good riddance!" said the Outsider.
 Tom Merry laughed.
 "Nice-mannered youth," he remarked. "He must be the apple of his people's eye at home—I don't think!"
 "I wegard him as a wottah," said Arthur Augustus.
 "Lumlay, I wegard you as a wottah."
 "Bah!"
 "Weally, you wank outsidersah—"
 "Oh, dry up!"
 D'Arcy turned pink with rage. He made a motion to clamber into the train again.
 "Pway wequest the guard to stop the twain for a few minutes, Tom Mewwy, while I give that wottah a feashul thwashin'!" he exclaimed.
 Tom Merry roared.
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Welease me, Blake! I—"
 Jack Blake dragged his excited chum back from the train. The guard was slamming the doors already.
 "Keep off the grass, Gussy."
 "I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort. I insist upon givin' that wottah a thwashin' for his wank impertinence."
 "Ass—"
 "I wefuse to be called an ass. Guard, stop the twain!"
 "Haw, haw, haw!"
 "If you gwin at me in that unmannahly mannah, guard, I shall be compelled to chastise you. Bai Jove! The twain's movin'." Figgins.
 "Hullo!"
 "Pway pull the communicatah, deaf boy."
 "Ha, ha, ha!" roared Figgins.
 "I insist upon the twain bein' stopped—"
 Tom Merry & Co. closed round the excited swell of St. Jim's, and dragged him back from the train. They waved hands and caps to the three faces looking from the window of the carriage they had left.
 Figgins & Co. waved handkerchiefs in return as the train swept on.
 The express rushed on out of the station, and Figgins & Co., as it turned the curve, caught a glimpse of D'Arcy struggling in the grasp of the juniors.
 Then the platform vanished from sight.
 Figgins & Co. threw themselves down in their seats and yelled.
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Good old Gussy!" gasped Kerr.
 Jerrold Lumley put his head in at the carriage on the side of the corridor. He was grinning, too.
 "Hullo! What do you want?" said Figgins.
 Lumley came in and sat down.
 "Look here!" he said.
 He drew a handful of coins from his pocket, gold mingled with silver. The chums of the New House at St. Jim's looked at the money, and looked at him.
 "Well, we know you're rolling in filthy lucre," said Kerr.
 "You needn't cram the fact down our throats, Lumley."
 Lumley laughed.
 "I've made this in the last hour," he said.
 "Made it?"
 "Yes."
 "How on earth did you make it?" demanded Figgins mystified.
 Lumley drew the pack of cards from his pocket.
 "I've been playing," he remarked. "I met a sharper down the train, and let him get me into a little game. He started to skin me."
 "And you?"
 "I skinned him."
 "You've been gambling!" said Figgins.
 "Just a little sport, that's all."
 "You're a rotten cad, then," said Figgins bluntly. "Put that rotten money away; if you were decent, you'd chuck it out of the window."
 Lumley chuckled.
 "I'm not likely to do that," he remarked. "Look here, it's another quarter of an hour to Forest Burford. Will you have a little game?"
 "Not for money."
 Lumley shrugged his shoulders impatiently.
 "Well, let's play, anyhow," he said. "I'm sick of this journey, and one must do something."
 The New House chums would greatly preferred Lumley

to get out of the carriage; but he was there, and the journey was certainly growing tedious. They began to play nap—without stakes—a game that was interesting enough to those who played simply to while away the time, but exceedingly tedious to a gambler like Jerrold Lumley. But Lumley managed to extract amusement from it in his own peculiar way. He won all the time, and laughed at the surprise of the New House juniors, which was mingled with annoyance.

"You get such jolly good cards," said Figgins.
 "When he's dealer," said Kerr quietly.
 Lumley turned upon him fiercely.
 "What do you mean?" he exclaimed.
 The Scottish junior met his gaze calmly. Kerr never spoke without weighing his words; and he never retracted anything he had said.
 "I mean what I say," he said quietly. "You get first-rate cards whenever you deal yourself."
 "You mean to imply—"
 "Oh, hang it, Kerr," said Figgins uneasily, "don't say that you suspect a chap of cheating, you know!"
 "That's a bit too thick, you know!" said Fatty Wynn.
 "I know what I'm talking about."
 "Then you mean to say that I'm cheating, do you?" exclaimed Lumley.
 Kerr nodded.
 "Yes."
 "You dare—"
 "Do you think I'm afraid of you?" said Kerr contemptuously. "I dare to say what I think—or, rather, what I know. These cards are marked."
 "Marked?" exclaimed Figgins and Fatty Wynn in a breath.

"Yes. Look at this scrollwork on the back of the cards," said Kerr, turning over the cards as they lay on the newspaper the juniors were using as a card-table. "Every ace has a little extra scroll in the corner, and every king has the same in another corner, too. The queens have a spot at the end of the scroll. I've no doubt the other court cards are marked, too."

"My only hat!"
 Lumley sat silent and pale.
 The three juniors looked at him in silence for some moments.

"You unspeakable cad!" said Figgins at last. "I always knew you were a rank rotter, but I never suspected you of anything like this! Marked cards, by Jove!"

"I didn't know—" began Lumley.
 "Don't tell lies!" said Figgins unceremoniously. "A fellow doesn't carry marked cards, and win with them, without knowing."

"But—"
 Figgins rose to his feet.
 "I won't lick you," he said. "You deserve it, you rotten blackguard, but—Get out of this carriage!"

Lumley gave him one look, and went.
 Five minutes later the express stopped at Forest Burford, and they saw Jerrold Lumley leave the train. The chums of the New House breathed a sigh of relief when he went.

CHAPTER 7.

Not Pleasant for Gussy!

"THIS way for the local!" said Tom Merry.
 The luggage was already trundling off. The juniors followed it. They had only a few minutes in which to catch the local train which ran at long intervals to the sleepy village of Huckleberry Heath.

People on the platform looked at D'Arcy's wonderful trousers and smiled. The swell of St. Jim's looked very uneasy.

He twitched Tom Merry by the sleeve.
 "Tom Mewwy, deah boy—"
 "Come on, Gussy—this way!"

"I wathah think people are lookin' at my bags, you know—"

"Let 'em look!"
 "But I feel doocid awkward, you know, and—"
 "Run for it, then," said Monty Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah—"
 "Buck up!" said Blake.
 There was no help for it. D'Arcy had to run the gauntlet of every eye on the platform.

They reached the other platform, and found the local train waiting. The blushing swell of St. Jim's was glad to hide his amazing trousers in the first carriage he came to.

He sat, with a very pink face, and shook his finger at Monty Lowther's bland countenance.
 "I wegard you as an uttah wottah, deah boy!" he said.
 "If we were not both guests of Tom Mewwy's I should feel that I had no wesource but to thwash you."

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Monty Lowther clung to Tom Merry.

"Get in front of me," he moaned.

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Tom Merry, laughing. "It will be all right when we get to Laurel Villa, Gussy. You'll get a change."

"That's all vewy well, but—"

"I don't see that he wants a change," said Lowther. "He looks very striking."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The local train was soon in at Huckleberry Heath. Tom Merry & Co. alighted, and Arthur Augustus's trousers attracted general attention once more.

"Is there anything to meet us from Laurel Villa, Giles?" asked Tom Merry, with a friendly nod to the old porter.

Giles shook his head.

"No, Master Merry!"

Tom Merry pursed his lips.

"That's odd," he remarked.

"Did Miss Fawcett know what train we were coming by?" asked Blake, with a grin.

Tom Merry laughed.

"By George, I believe I forgot to mention that in my wire!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Never mind! It's not a long walk; and it's a beautiful day," said Tom. "We shall be able to stretch our legs a little. Send the luggage on as soon as possible, Giles, will you?"

"Yes, Master Tom."

"This way, you chaps."

D'Arcy hesitated.

"I should greatly pwefer a vehicle of some kind, Tom Mewwy," he remarked. "I have a gweat objection to appeawin' in the streets in these bags."

"Well, you can take the station cab," said Tom Merry. "It won't hold the lot of us, and we shall have to walk; but it will hold you—even with those trucks."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I do not wish to dwive alone."

"Then come on!"

"But—"

"My dear chap, we're all hungry, and there will be supper ready at Laurel Villa."

"Yaas, but—"

Jack Blake linked his arm in D'Arcy's and marched him off without waiting for any further objections.

The juniors of St. Jim's walked through the village.

Huckleberry Heath was a very quiet old place, but D'Arcy woke it up. The inhabitants mostly spent their time at the cottage doors or garden gates in the summer evenings, so most of the population were ready to observe the swell of St. Jim's.

They stared at the big-check trousers, and grinned. Some of them grinned, and some of them chuckled.

D'Arcy's face was crimson as he walked along, looking neither to the right nor the left. The elegance of the rest of his attire made the absurd trousers more noticeable.

"Bai Jove," murmured D'Arcy, "I wegard this as an absolute martyrdom!"

"Stick it out!" said Lowther encouragingly. "It will put you up to a wrinkle about losing trains and bothering people."

"You wank wottah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hallo, hallo! Home again, my lad!"

It was the cheerful voice of Mr. Dodds, the curate of Huckleberry Heath. He came upon the juniors at a street corner.

He shook hands warmly with Tom Merry and his comrades.

Mr. Dodd started as his glance fell upon the trousers.

"Dear me!" he ejaculated involuntarily.

"Oh, don't mind Gussy, sir!" said Lowther. "He's always doing these things, and it's no good our trying to stop him."

"No good at all!" said Kangaroo.

"Weally, you wottahs—"

"It's a way they have in the D'Arcy family," explained Manners.

"Mr. Dodds, I have been the victim of a twick—"

The curate laughed.

"I have no doubt of it, D'Arcy," he replied. "Well, I shall see you all to-morrow, I expect. Good-bye!"

"Good-bye, sir!"

The juniors tramped on.

Several more acquaintances of Tom Merry's in his native village stopped to speak to him and greet him, and to stare at D'Arcy's trousers.

The swell of St. Jim's breathed a little more freely when they were in the lane.

"Bai Jove," he murmured, "I wouldn't go through that THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 130.

again for worlds, you know! Pway buck up, deah boys, and let's get to Lauwel Villah as soon as poss."

"My hat!" exclaimed Tom Merry suddenly, as they came in sight of the gates of Laurel Villa, the dwelling of Miss Priscilla Fawcett.

"What is it?"

"Cousin Ethel!"

"What?"

"She's coming to meet us!"

Arthur Augustus halted in utter dismay. Thinking so much about the ridiculous figure he cut had prevented him from looking ahead.

It was seldom that D'Arcy forgot the important circumstance that he was to meet a lady; but he had certainly allowed it to escape his memory that he was to see Ethel Cleveland at Laurel Villa.

He jammed his eyeglass into his eye, and gazed along the lane in alarm. In the red light of the sunset the gates of Laurel Villa could be seen in the distance, and coming from them were two girlish figures.

They were far off as yet, but easily recognised as those of Cousin Ethel and Phyllis Monk—the latter the sister of Frank Monk, of Rylcombe Grammar School. Cousin Ethel and Phyllis were great friends, and they were spending part of their holidays together.

"Gweat Scott!" exclaimed D'Arcy, in utter dismay.

"What are you stopping for?" asked Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Come on!" said Tom Merry briskly.

"I wefuse to come on!"

"But you can't stay here!" grinned Tom Merry.

D'Arcy was crimson and excited.

"I uttably wefuse to face the ladies in this state!" he exclaimed. "I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort. Bai Jove, they're comin' in this diewection!"

"They've seen us, you know."

"It's howwid! What am I to do?" gasped D'Arcy.

"Come on!"

"I can't! I wefuse!"

"But—"

"Ethel's waving her hand," said Manners.

Tom Merry waved his cap back to the girls. They quickened their pace.

Arthur Augustus cast a wild glance round, and made a spring through the hedge, and ran.

"Come back!" roared Tom Merry.

But the swell of St. Jim's had fled.

Two minutes later Cousin Ethel and Phyllis Monk joined the juniors, and there were warm greetings all round. Ethel was a little perplexed, however.

"Isn't Arthur with you?" she asked.

The juniors made heroic attempts not to grin.

"He was," said Tom Merry; "but he's—he's—"

"He's—!" stammered Blake.

"Yes!"

"He's taken a short cut to the house!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Oh, I see! We shall see him there, then."

"Oh, rather!"

And they all walked together towards Laurel Villa, both the girls a little puzzled by D'Arcy's peculiar behaviour.

CHAPTER 8.

Caught.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS darted across the field at top speed, and did not pause till a clump of trees on the other side hid him from possible view. There he halted to take breath.

"Bai Jove!" he gasped. "It's simply wotten! What am I to do? I shall have to dodge into Lauwel Villah before the gals weturn, somehow."

It was possible to get to the villa across the field, and to enter at the back garden gate, and that D'Arcy resolved to do.

If he could get into the house unobserved, and escape to his room there, he could await the arrival of his luggage from Huckleberry Heath station, and refuse to be seen till he had obtained a change of attire.

D'Arcy waited only to recover his breath after his rapid run, and then dashed away in the direction of the villa.

He reached the quiet lane upon which the gardens at the back bordered, and arrived at the gate, and took a cautious look over it.

The extensive gardens seemed deserted; there was no one in sight.

D'Arcy opened the gate and went in.

Miss Fawcett's gardener was looking to the roses, and he turned his head and stared at the swell of St. Jim's as he heard his footsteps. But D'Arcy did not mind Mr. MacIlvaine. He hurried on towards the house.



"Lowthah, I suppose you have bwought these twueks as a silly twick?" said Arthur Augustus. "Don't look a gift horse in the mouth, Gussy," replied Manners, admonishingly. "Lowther stood you those trousers, remember."

His idea was to enter by the French windows of the dining-room, which were almost certain to be open, and so gain his room without being seen. The juniors of St. Jim's always had the same room when they came to Laurel Villa so there would be no mistake about that.

D'Arcy reached the dining-room.

The windows were open in the summer evening, and he could see no one in the room. He stepped in and crossed the door upon the hall.

That door was ajar.

Just as D'Arcy reached it, he heard a sound of voices on the other side, and recognised the tones of Miss Priscilla Fawcett and Vera Stanhope, Miss Phyllis's bosom friend.

D'Arcy groaned inwardly.

It was evident that both Miss Phyllis and Miss Vera had come down for the holiday with Cousin Ethel; and though this would have delighted D'Arcy at any other time, it was far from affording him pleasure now.

He stopped as he heard the voices.

The two speakers were coming to the dining-room, he could hear; and he thought of darting out into the garden again. But there was no time. Besides, it was probable that they merely meant to pass through the dining-room into the garden.

He whipped behind a screen that stood near the door—a big Indian screen that had accompanied Miss Fawcett twelve years before from Calcutta, home.

The next moment the door was pushed open.

Miss Priscilla Fawcett and Vera came in, the fresh young girl with her arm linked in that of the silver-haired old lady, and an affectionate look upon her face. Miss Fawcett was always a favourite with young people. She might be a little fussy over them, but her fussiness was prompted by affection.

"What a beautiful evening," said Vera. "Shall we walk in the garden till they come, Miss Fawcett? Ethel and Phyllis have gone to meet them."

D'Arcy breathed a sigh of relief. If they only passed through into the garden he would be able to slip upstairs unobserved.

But Miss Fawcett sat down.

"No; I am a little tired!" she said.

D'Arcy suppressed a groan.

"Run into the garden yourself, my dear," added Miss Fawcett.

Vera shook her head.

"No. Let me read to you—you were reading this afternoon, and you said that your eyes were tired."

Miss Fawcett smiled affectionately.

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NEXT THURSDAY: "COUSIN ETHEL'S TREAT." A splendid tale of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's, by MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"Dear Vera! Well, there is the book—you shall finish the chapter for me, if you like."

Vera fetched the book.

"You must not sit in the draught," said Miss Fawcett anxiously. "It is a most serious thing to sit in the draught. I am always trying to impress that upon my darling Tommy, but boys are so reckless. Will you have the windows closed, Vera dear?"

"I do not notice any draught, Miss Fawcett."

"Well, at least put the screen before the window."

"Certainly!"

D'Arcy stood petrified.

Miss Stanhope came towards the screen, in blissful ignorance of the fact that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was hidden behind it, like Lady Teazle in the play.

The swell of St. Jim's gave a gasp.

Vera started back in alarm.

"Goodness gracious!" she exclaimed.

Miss Fawcett looked round.

"What is it, child?"

"There—there is someone behind the screen!"

"Someone behind the screen! My dear child, are you sure?"

"I—I heard him."

"Ring the bell," said Miss Fawcett faintly. "It is a burglar! Shriek for help!"

"Bai Jove!"

D'Arcy stepped out from behind the screen.

"Pway excuse me, madam—"

In the dusk of the room and the shadow of the screen D'Arcy was not very clear to the view, and Miss Priscilla had her glasses off. She gave a wild shriek as he presented himself to her view.

"Help—burglars—help!"

"D'Arcy!" gasped Vera.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Help—burglars! Fire—thieves!" shrieked Miss Fawcett.

"My dear madam—"

"Help!"

Hannah rushed in at one door, and the gardener at the French windows. Two or three maids made an appearance, startled and alarmed. Arthur Augustus stood covered with confusion. Vera was trying to reassure Miss Fawcett.

"It is nothing, dear Miss Fawcett," she repeated. "It is only D'Arcy."

"D'Arcy!" repeated Miss Priscilla, beginning to understand at last that there was no burglar.

"Yes."

"But the man—behind the screen?"

"There was no one—only D'Arcy."

"D'Arcy behind the screen! D'Arcy, what were you doing behind the screen? I did not know that any of Tommy's friends had arrived."

"Weally, Miss Pwiscillah—"

The gardener retreated out of doors, grinning, and the maids were all giggling. Vera was trying not to laugh. The only serious persons present were D'Arcy and Miss Priscilla Fawcett.

"Are you sure there is no one else in the room?" exclaimed Miss Priscilla, whose alarm had not wholly subsided yet.

"Quite sure, dear," said Vera. "It is only D'Arcy."

"But—"

"I weally beg your pardon," said D'Arcy. "I have been the victim of a twick—"

"Oh!"

"I slipped into the house to change the widiculous attiah in which you see me now," said D'Arcy. "It is a wotten twick of Lowthah's. I hid behind the screen when you came in, so that you would not observe me, Miss Fawcett."

"I—I do not quite understand," said Miss Fawcett. "Get me my glasses, Vera dear. I do not quite comprehend."

"Pway allow me to vetiah, and I will explain latah!" stammered D'Arcy, who was eager to escape before Miss Fawcett obtained her glasses.

"Pray wait a moment."

Vera handed Miss Fawcett her glasses, and the old lady put them on, and looked at Arthur Augustus, and ejaculated: "My goodness! Extraordinary!"

The swell of St. Jim's rushed from the room. He dashed upstairs, and into his own room, and locked himself in; and he was there, in a mood of fury, when Tom Merry & Co. arrived at Laurel Villa, and their merry voices and laughter below apprised the swell of St. Jim's of their arrival.

CHAPTER 9.

Noble of Lowther.

"Gussy!"

"Where's Gussy!"

"Where are you, Gussy, old man?"

Tap, tap, tap!

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NEXT THURSDAY: "COUSIN ETHEL'S TREAT." A splendid tale of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's, by MARTIN CLIFFORD.

Arthur Augustus, who had been pacing the room, stopped his hurried walk, and turned to the door.

"Is that you, Tom Mewwy?"

"Yes, rather!"

D'Arcy unlocked the door.

The juniors of St. Jim's crowded in, grinning. Their looks showed that they had heard the story of the screen.

Arthur Augustus screwed his monocle into his eye, and regarded the chums of St. Jim's with a steady and dignified stare.

But his trousers rather took from the effect of his dignified attitude, and the juniors only roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, deah boys—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I have been placed in a most awkward and widiculous posish," said D'Arcy warmly. "I wegard you as a set of cacklin' wottahs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm going to thwash Lowthah. I wegard him as a beast!"

"Mercy!" exclaimed Lowther.

"Pway put up your hands, you boundah!"

Monty Lowther put up his hands, clasped together, in a beseeching attitude.

"Mercy, great signor! Quarter!" he yelled.

"Don't be a widiculous ass!"

"Mercy!"

"I shall stwike you if you don't put up your wotten fists!"

"Keep him off!" moaned Lowther. "I'm frightened to death. Oh, oh, oh!"

"Lowthah, you duffah—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Cheer up, Gussy—the luggage is coming from the station!" said Tom Merry comfortingly. "You'll get a change soon."

"I wefuse to cheer up—I mean, I am goin' to thwash Lowthah!"

"Hold him!"

D'Arcy was rushed back from Lowther, who was trembling excessively—though perhaps more with merriment than with fright.

"Wefuse me, you wottahs—"

"Make it pax!"

"I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort."

"Do you always treat your host in this way when you're on a visit?" Blake asked.

"Bai Jove!"

"Cheese it, Blake!" said Tom Merry, laughing.

Blake shook his head.

"It's my duty to bring to Gussy's mind the enormity of his conduct," he replied. "Gussy, I'm ashamed of you!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Aren't you ashamed of Gussy, Herries?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Aren't you, Dig?"

"I'm blushing for him," said Digby.

"Weally, Dig—"

"You other chaps—"

"We're all ashamed of him," said Kangaroo. "I can feel myself colouring all over, when I think of his conduct."

"Weally, Kangawoo—"

"You'd better behave yourself, Gussy," said Blake warningly. "I can't have you playing these tricks—going about in ridiculous two-and-elevenpenny trousers—"

"Why, I—I—"

"And hiding behind screens—"

"What?"

"For the purpose of frightening girls and old ladies—"

"I didn't!" shrieked D'Arcy. "You know I didn't."

"And then wanting to start a fight with your host on the very evening you arrive in his house," said Blake inexorably.

"I don't—I wasn't—I didn't."

"It looks to me as if Gussy's manners are going down," said Monty Lowther. "I can remember the time when he was quite a decent chap."

"You wottah—"

"So can I," said Kangaroo. "There was a time when he would have thanked a fellow very prettily for treating him to a new pair of trucks."

"You uttah ass—"

"Something ought to be done," said Blake. "I suppose it is young Wally who's had a deteriorating effect upon him. I shall have to speak to D'Arcy minor about the way he's bringing up his elder brother."

"You feahful duffah! You know perfectly well that Lowthah has played a wotten twick on me, and made me look a silly ass!" shrieked D'Arcy. "I am goin' to give him a feahful thwashin'. He has played a weally wotten twick on me, and you know it."

"Well, I don't mind letting bygones be bygones, if Gussy's agreeable," said Monty Lowther, with the air of a fellow making a generous offer.

"Hear, hear!"

"Now, that's jolly decent of Lowther," said Manners.

"What do you say, Gussy?"

D'Arcy seemed hardly able to find words for a moment.

"You—you uttah wottah!" he gasped, at last. "I am goin' to thwash Lowthah, and aftah that I am willin' to let bygones be bygones, if you like."

"Oh, Gussy!"

"You shock me," said Manners seriously. "I don't like to see any chap harbouring bloodthirsty feelings like that."

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"Lowther's made a fair offer," said Tom Merry, shaking his head. "I'm afraid you'll shock all of us, Gussy, if you don't accept it."

"But—"

"Are you willing to let bygones be bygones, Lowther?"

"Quite willing," said Lowther. "I'm not a chap to bear malice, you know; I never was. I'll overlook everything for the sake of peace."

"Well said!" exclaimed Manners, in the best manner of the good uncle in a goody-goody story-book. "Well said, brave youth! May your noble example infect—I mean inspire others to do likewise."

"You uttah ass! I tell you—"

"Shake hands," said Tom Merry.

"But—"

"Shake hands!" roared the juniors.

"I wefuse—"

"Gussy!"

"Don't be a bounder!"

"Shake hands!"

Monty Lowther held out his hand. Arthur Augustus hesitated some moments, but he took it at last in a gingerly way.

Monty Lowther gave him a grip that brought a gasp from his lips.

"Ow!"

"Now, bygones are bygones," said Lowther affectionately.

"Howevah, I still wegard you as a wottah," said D'Arcy.

"How nice to see little boys agree!" sighed Manners.

"Georgie—I mean Monty, don't you feel ever so much better now that you have forgiven D'Arcy?"

"Ever so much, dear Manners," said Lowther.

"Don't you feel ever so much better, D'Arcy?"

"Oh, wats!"

But Arthur Augustus did feel ever so much better when the luggage arrived from the station, and he was able to get rid of the terrible trousers, and to appear in public once more his own elegant self.

CHAPTER 10.

The Unexpected Guest.

THE holiday at Laurel Villa passed pleasantly and quickly enough for Tom Merry & Co. The weather was very fine, and the girls and the boys enjoyed themselves immensely, playing tennis or cricket, boating on the river, or rambling in the woods.

Tom Merry and his chums were looking forward, too, to the arrival of Figgins & Co., at Forest Burford, when they would see their rivals of the New House again.

Jerrold Lumley was staying at Forest Burford, too, and they were likely to see him again as well; but the juniors had already forgotten the Outsider.

But Lumley was destined to bring himself to their recollection, in a far from pleasant way.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus, one hot afternoon, coming up to Tom Merry and Blake with a racket in his hand, as they sat in easy attitudes in big garden chairs. "Bai Jove! Have you fellows evah noticed that tennis is a wathah exhaustin' game?"

"Awful!" said Blake sympathetically. "Hand me that lemon squash, Gussy."

"Weally, Blake, I should imagine that you could weach the glass yourself."

"Not without turning on my side."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Hand it over," yawned Blake. "Don't you know that it's exhausting to a chap to reach his own lemon squash?"

D'Arcy handed it over, and Blake sucked through the straw.

"That's refreshing," he said. "Take it and put it down, will you, Gussy?"

"Yaas, deah boy."

"And now stay here handy to reach it to me again when I want it."

"Weally, Blake—"

"He can't stay here," said Tom Merry. "I want him to go up to the house and fetch me a ginger-pop."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"I'm awfully fagged, you know," said Tom Merry pathetically.

"Are you weally, deah boy? What have you been doin'?"

"Reading."

"Bai Jove! Is weadin' vewy exhaustin'?"

"Yes, this kind of reading," said Tom Merry. "It's one of my governess's novels. It's a very popular novel just now, I believe, and jolly hard to get from the circulating libraries, there's such a run on it. I thought I'd have a look at it."

"What is it called, deah boy?"

"The Golden-Haired Captain," by the author of 'Under Two Bags,' said Tom Merry. "No, that's not it—that's another. This one is 'The Woman with the Can.' Listen—here's a sample: 'She lay back in the crimson depths of the chair, her sylph-like form swathed in the folds of the purple gown, her face as white as the chiselled marble, and her eyes burning with a slumberous fire from the dead whiteness of her chivvy—I mean her face. How's that for high?'"

"Bai Jove! I'll fetch you the gingah-pop with pleasuah, after that."

And D'Arcy fetched it.

He sat on the grass, and leaned against Tom Merry's chair. It was a glorious afternoon, and the sun blazed down on the garden before Laurel Villa, and on the white dusty road that ran past the garden gate.

"What are the fellows doing?" asked Tom Merry lazily.

"Mannahs is out with his camewah," said D'Arcy.

"Hewwies is w'iting to Taggles about his bulldog. Dig is asleep in the gwass. The others are playin' tennis, I believe. Cousin Ethel is beatin' them like anythin'."

"Good for Ethel."

"I am feelin' wathah exhausted, and I'm goin' to west. Bai Jove! How annoying for that beastly cyclist to be wingin' his bell just when I want to west!"

"Ting-ting-ting!"

It was a loud ringing of a cycle-bell in the lane that ran past the gates of Laurel Villa.

The St. Jim's juniors looked out lazily to see the cyclist as he passed the gate. The form of the rider shot into view at the gate, past the row of trees.

There it halted, with a jamming of brakes.

Tom Merry uttered an exclamation as he saw the cyclist.

"Lumley!"

It was Jerrold Lumley, the Outsider of St. Jim's. He jumped off his bicycle, and looked into the garden. A curious expression came over his face as he saw the chums of St. Jim's.

He leaned his machine against the fence, opened the gate, and came in.

Tom Merry sat upright.

"Hallo!" he said.

"Hallo!" said Lumley. "Here you are!"

"Yes, here I am," said Tom Merry. "And here you are, apparently."

"Not very welcome, I suppose?" said Lumley, with a sneer.

"Any St. Jim's fellow is welcome, if it comes to that," said Tom Merry. "There's a chair there; sit down."

Lumley sat down.

D'Arcy rose, and Blake sat up. Nobody there was glad to see Lumley, but as a St. Jim's fellow he was entitled to civility, anyway.

"I thought I'd give you a look in," said Lumley. "I'm having a frightfully dull time at Forest Burford. My uncle there is a crusty old bounder, and there's nobody of my own age about the place."

"H'm!"

"And the old boy gets wrathful if I go to the pub," said Lumley. "Of course, a fellow must dig up something to do, and I like billiards as well as anything."

Tom Merry's lip curled.

"So I came over to give you a look up," said Lumley. "If you don't want me, say so, and I'll clear off. Don't stand on ceremony."

"Stay to tea, anyway," said Tom Merry.

"Right-ho!"

"As a matter of fact, we don't get on, and it's no good pretending we do," said Tom Merry; "but I sha'n't be the one to be on bad terms with you. We've had our difficulties at St. Jim's, but we're on a holiday now."

"Exactly."

"Yaas, wathah! May as well give the boundah a chance," said D'Arcy.

"Oh, certainly!" added Blake.

Lumley grinned.

"Thank you; you're awfully kind. I'm not such a disagreeable beast, you know, if I'm treated properly. How are you fellows passing the time?"

"Pretty well."

"I mean, how do you amuse yourselves?"

"Oh, walking, cycling, tennis, cricket, boating, talking, THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 133.

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and a little dancing," said Tom Merry. "Nothing much in your line, I'm afraid."

"Not a little gamble on the quiet, now and then?"

"Certainly not."

Lumley yawned.

"Blessed if I know how you stand it. When I was in New York—of course, you chaps have never been in New York?"

"Off-side," said Blake. "As a matter of fact, we have all three of us. Gussy was kidnapped there, too, and held to ransom by a rascal called Captain Punter. He asked a high price, too, which showed that he didn't know Gussy."

"Weally, Blake—"

"But I dare say we don't know the place as Lumley does," said Tom Merry.

Lumley chuckled.

"Bet you don't," he replied. "I was raised there, you know, and I'm more American than English. I guess I had a good time, too."

"I don't think we should care for what you call a good time," said Tom Merry drily. "Hallo! Here are the girls!"

Jerrold Lumley coloured a little as he was presented to the girls. Cool and careless, and somewhat insolent, as he was in his dealings with his own sex, he was generally awkward in the presence of a girl. He would have liked to be impertinent and familiar, but somehow he did not find the courage for it.

Cousin Ethel seemed to make very much of an impression upon the Outsider. He drew D'Arcy a little aside as the others were chatting cheerily.

"Who is that girl?" he asked, in his brusque way.

D'Arcy adjusted his monocle, and gave the Outsider a glance through it.

"That is Miss Cleveland," he replied. "Didn't you catch her name?"

"Yes; but who is she—friend of yours?"

"My cousin," said D'Arcy, with a touch of haughtiness.

"Oh!"

Lumley stared at Cousin Ethel.

"Pretty," he said. "I like her."

"You are vewy good."

"I don't generally care for girls," said Lumley. "But I think I could get on with your cousin, you know."

"Weally!"

"Yes, I think so."

And Jerrold Lumley proceeded to join in the conversation, and to make himself as agreeable as possible to Miss Cleveland.

But Cousin Ethel hardly noticed him.

Perhaps, with the keen, unconscious instinct which Nature has bestowed upon the gentle sex as a defensive weapon, she realised that he was not what she would have called a nice boy; at all events, she had as little to say to him as possible.

But Cousin Ethel was always courteous, and so Lumley did not observe the bad impression he made upon her; and as a matter of fact, his perceptions were not of the finest.

Jerrold Lumley stayed to tea, and he contrived to sit next to Cousin Ethel at tea in the garden, under the shade of the old trees; and he entertained the girl with remarks and observations which would have come better from a man of forty than a lad of under fifteen, and which made Cousin Ethel wonder more and more what sort of a boy her new acquaintance was.

CHAPTER 11.

No Luck for Lumley.

"A H! Here you are!"

Jerrold Lumley uttered the words.

It was an hour after the merry tea under the trees in the grounds of Laurel Villa.

Cousin Ethel had gone down to the stream, with a book in her hand, to finish a chapter quietly which had been left

off in the middle when the tennis started. The sun was setting, and the river rolled like gold past the sloping, grassy bank. It was a beautiful scene, and very quiet, though within call of the house behind the trees.

Ethel glanced up at the Outsider's voice.

She had seated herself upon a fallen log, and opened her book, and was beginning to read, when the new-comer's voice interrupted her.

She lowered the book quietly.

Lumley's tone, as he said "Here you are!" was familiar, and did not please Ethel, but she smiled as she looked up.

"Yes, I am here," she said. "Does Miss Fawcett wish to see me?"

"Not that I know of."

"I thought you might have been sent for me."

"Oh, no!"

Lumley did not see in Ethel's tone a hint that he ought not to have come unless he had been sent.

Ethel dropped her eyes to her book again.

Lumley sat on the log beside her.

"Nice view from here," he remarked.

"Very."

"It's a quiet spot."

"Yes."

"But seems a little lonely."

"I did not notice it."

"Well, it's not so lonely now I'm here," said Lumley with a grin.

"No."

"Interested in your book?"

"Yes."

"What's it called?"

Ethel held up the book to show the title.

"Conquest of Peru," yawned Lumley. "Do you like that stuff?"

"I don't call it stuff."

"I should think you'd be reading a novel."

"My mother does not like me to read novels."

"Or newspapers, anyway."

Ethel smiled.

"I am not allowed to read newspapers, even if I wanted to; and I certainly don't."

Lumley stared.

"But you could read them if you liked, here," he said.

"Your mother can't see you here, you know."

Ethel could not help her lip curling a little.

"I should certainly not do so," she replied. "I am put upon my honour, of course."

Lumley laughed boisterously.

"Oh, come, that's too good!" he exclaimed. "Girls don't keep promises like boys, you know; and precious few boys do, for that matter."

"Is that your experience?"

"I guess so."

"Then you cannot have known either nice boys or nice girls," said Ethel. "Tom Merry, for instance, would never break a promise."

"Oh, I know he's a giddy saint," said Lumley. "We're not at all like Tom Merry. I'm not at all like him myself, for instance."

"No, I suppose not."

Lumley was silent for some minutes. He felt that he was not getting on very well with Ethel; he did not know why. He certainly did not intend to be humbugged, as he considered it. Lumley had heaps of worldly wisdom, and was fond of displaying it, and it was his pride that he was never taken in.

Cousin Ethel read on quietly.

"You really like that book?" said Lumley, at last.

"Yes."

"It's interesting."

"It is about the conquest of Peru by the Spaniards," said Ethel. "All the incidents are interesting, you see, though the writing may be a little heavy in places."

"PETE'S NEW PET."

A Splendid, Long, Complete Tale, by S. CLARKE HOOK, in

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PRICE ONE PENNY.



Splash! Tom Merry's eyes flashed as the Outsider disappeared under the water, and Cousin Ethel gave a little cry. "It's all right," said Tom Merry. "Don't be alarmed."

"And you wouldn't rather read a smart, up-to-date novel?"

"No; but I should not be allowed to in any case."

"But here—"
Ethel looked directly at him.

"Don't speak like that, please. I hope you would not be deceitful; but I do not like you to pretend that you would."

Lumley laughed.

"I should do as I like," he said. "Look here." He drew a pink paper from his jacket. "This is a sporting paper. Do you think I should be allowed to have it at St. Jim's?"

"I suppose not."

"Well, I have it here, you see."

"It is not right of you to do so."

"Rats!" said Lumley. "I generally do as I like, I guess. I suppose you don't know anything about horses?"

"Not horse racing, if that is what you mean."

"Look here, I'm in touch with a bookie, and if you like I could put a little on for you," said Lumley. "I know a dead cert. for the Newstead Stakes."

"Please do not think of such a thing."

"But you could make seven to one, in shillings or pounds, as you chose."

"I should not like to."

"Look here, I'll risk the sov. for you, if you like," said Lumley. "I've plenty of money. Shall I put a sov. on for you, and stand the loss if it goes, myself?"

"Certainly not."

"Why not?"

"I should not care for it."

Lumley stared at her.

"I suppose you are spoofing me," he said, at last.

Cousin Ethel stared.

"What?"

"I guess I've got my eye teeth-cut," said Lumley, with a grin. "I s'pose you think I should talk about it; but I know how to keep mum."

Ethel laid down her book.

"I think I had better go back to the house now," she remarked.

"Don't go yet."

"I think I had better."

"You haven't finished your chapter."

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"That can wait."
Lumley bit his lip.
"I suppose you mean you're tired of my company," he said tartly. "Why don't you speak in plain English?"
Cousin Ethel rose without replying.
Lumley rose too, his face dark and angry. He had been very civil and very generous, according to his own ideas, and he had been repulsed.
"Look here," he said, "I suppose you're rattled because you can't humbug me. I never was taken in, by a girl or anybody else. But sit down; let's have a talk."
"I prefer to go, thank you."
"Which means that I've offended you—eh?"
Ethel was silent.
"I'm blessed if I see how," said Lumley. "I suppose girls like to take chaps in—is that it?—and you don't get on with a keen fellow."
"I think you are very rude," said Ethel.
"Not like Tom Merry—eh?" sneered the Outsider.
"No," said Ethel quietly. "Not like Tom Merry at all."
"And never shall be."
"I am sorry, then."
"Oh, I shall never be a soft mug," said Lumley scornfully. "And that's what Tom Merry is. You could twist him round your finger, I know."
Ethel coloured; she was very, sweet-tempered, but the Outsider of St. Jim's would have made anyone angry at last.
"I should certainly never think of doing anything of the sort," she said. "Tom Merry would never speak disrespectfully to a girl, as you have done. Let me pass."
Lumley stood directly in her path. She could not leave the spot, except by passing him, for there was the river on one side, and a thorny thicket on the other. The Outsider did not move.
"Will you let me pass, please?"
"All in good time!" grinned Lumley. "I haven't finished this interesting little chat yet."
Ethel caught her breath.
"You will not keep me here against my will?"
Lumley shrugged his shoulders.
"Why not?"
The girl was silent. There was no answer to be made to a question like that. The fellow who was cad enough to put it could not be answered.
"Don't be in a hurry," said Lumley, grinning. "This little chat is getting quite interesting, you know."
"I want to go to the house."
"Nonsense!"
"Let me pass."
"Perhaps you wouldn't be in such a hurry to pass if it were Tom Merry here instead of me," said the Outsider, with a bitter sneer.
"Tom Merry would never be as rude and brutal as you are," said Ethel. "Let me pass, or I will call out to the others."
"Good! That would make quite a dramatic scene, and I know that that's what a girl is fond of more than anything else," said Lumley, laughing. "Distressed damsel—persecuting ruffian—handsome rescuer—ha, ha, ha!"
"I do not want to make a scene," said Ethel, with set lips.
"But for that, I should have called out before now. But if you do not let me pass—"
"I shall not."
The girl breathed quickly.
Lumley came a step closer to her.
"Come, now, you shall pay toll, and then you shall pass," he said, with a grin.
Ethel flushed scarlet.
Lumley took hold of her hands in both of his, with a mocking smile upon his face.
"Tom Merry! Arthur!" cried Ethel.
Lumley laughed mockingly.
"What a pretty scene! You really ought to be on the stage! I—"
He did not finish.
Two strong hands grasped him, and he let go Ethel's hands in his surprise. Before he could speak, or even see whom his assailant was, he was whirled round, whipped off his feet, and hurled into the water.

CHAPTER 12.

Arthur Augustus Jumps to Conclusions.

SPLASH!
Jerrold Lumley quite disappeared under the water, and Cousin Ethel gave a little cry.
"It's all right," said Tom Merry; "don't be alarmed."
Tom's eyes were flashing, and his face was red with anger. He stood with his fists clenched, looking towards Jerrold Lumley as the latter rose from the water.
Close to the bank the water was shallow, and Lumley, as he

scrambled to his feet in it, was submerged only to the waist. He was in no danger.

But he was drenched and dazed, and he blinked round him, knocking the water from his eyes in a confused manner.

He saw Tom Merry standing on the bank, and a black look came over his dripping face. He scrambled ashore.

Tom Merry's face hardened, and he looked as if he would knock the Outsider into the river again; but Cousin Ethel's hand fell softly on his sleeve.

"Don't, Tom."

"But—"

"Don't."

Tom Merry nodded.

"Very well, Ethel."

The Outsider dragged himself ashore. Water was running down his clothes, and his trousers were a mass of mud. His boots were clogged with it, and it squelched in the grass as he moved. His face was black with rage.

"You—you hound!" he muttered.

Tom Merry gave him a scornful look.

"Hold your tongue," he said, "and get out of this. You came here without being asked, but you were welcome to stay if you had been decent. Get out!"

Lumley smiled bitterly.

"I will go if you like—but there's no need for this dramatic bizney, you know. I wasn't going to hurt Miss Cleveland."

"Your touch is hurt enough to any decent person," said Tom Merry.

"I was only joking."

"So was I, then," said Tom Merry grimly, "and I shall repeat the joke if you don't apologise to Miss Cleveland and get out."

Lumley looked at Ethel.

"I am sorry," he said, "not because Tom Merry tells me to apologise, but—but I'm really sorry. Good-bye."

He plunged into the thickets.

The next moment Arthur Augustus arrived upon the scene. He, too, had heard Ethel call out, but he did not see the Outsider go.

Ethel had sunk upon the log again, pale and breathless. She had been very frightened, and she felt very unnerved.

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed D'Arcy. "Anythin' the mattah, you know? You're lookin' quite pale, Ethel!"

"It is all right, Arthur."

"I thought I heard you call."

"Yes, I—I called."

"Yaas?"

"But it is all right."

"I twust, Tom Mewwy, that you have not been playing any twicks?" said Arthur Augustus, with a severe look at Tom Merry through his monocle.

Tom Merry started.

"I!" he exclaimed.

"Yaas, you. Ethel is lookin' fwightened. If you have been makin' faces, or anythin' of that sort—"

"You ass!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, I decline to be called an ass. Young ladies are not fit subjects for jacin', you know, and I twust you have not been a thoughtless duffah."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Don't be absurd, Arthur," said Cousin Ethel softly.

"Oh!" said Gussy, rather taken aback by this unexpected attack. "Weally, Ethel—"

"I was startled, that was all."

"By Tom Mewwy?"

"No."

"Then what was the mattah?"

Ethel hesitated.

"It was Lumley," said Tom Merry, seeing that explanation was necessary. "He was rude, and I pitched him into the river, that's all."

Cousin Ethel, with a nod to them, walked away towards the house. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stood as if he were petrified.

He looked at Tom Merry, and then looked at the shining river. He jammed his monocle tighter into his eye, and looked at the river, and then at Tom Merry.

Tom Merry watched him in some surprise. Disturbing thoughts were evidently working in the brain of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, but Tom Merry could not quite guess what was the matter.

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed D'Arcy at last. "This is awfully sewious, you know!"

"Serious for Lumley, you mean!" said Tom Merry, laughing.

"And for you, deah boy."

"Oh, I'm all right!"

"But weally—"

"He was rude to Ethel," said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, and he certainly ought to have had a fealful thwackin', but—"

"Well, I chucked him into the water instead."

"But—"

NEXT THURSDAY: "COUSIN ETHEL'S TREAT." A splendid tale of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's, by MARTIN CLIFFORD.

D'Arcy paused, and looked at the river, his face very grave. Then he looked at Tom Merry again.

"Tom Mewwy, old man, I know you did it for my cousin's sake, and I am vewy gwateful, but it is awfully sewious, you know."

Tom Merry looked puzzled.

"Blessed if I can see anything to worry about!" he said.

"But—but the Outsidah, you know—"

"Yes?"

"The—the fellows. They'll miss him, and—"

"A good miss, too, I should say."

"But—but they'll ask where he is."

"I shall say he is gone."

"Well, that will be quite twue, certainly; but theah will be—inquiah about it, you know, and—"

"I don't see why there should be."

"But—but I suppose his people knew he was coming here."

"I don't know."

"If they knew they'll inquire."

"I don't see why."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, you don't appeal to undahstand the gwavity of the mattah. Of course, we had bettah keep it secwet if poss."

"I—"

"Or pewwaps it would be bettah to go stwaight to the police-station, and tell them the whole stowy at once—make a clean bweast of it, you know."

"What on earth for?"

"Well, it may all come out, and in that case it would be safest to have welayed the whole stowy fwom the beginnin', as well as more candid."

"Are you off your rocker, Gussy?"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Then what are you driving at?"

"It's bound to come out," said D'Arcy, shaking his head.

"I can't understand your not seeing how sewious it is."

"But—but why should it come out, and what would it matter if it does?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Weally—"

"Look here—"

"You must be an ass, Tom Mewwy. Suppose the boday is found?"

Tom Merry staggered.

"The—the what?"

"The boday."

"Whose body?"

"Lumley's, of course."

"Lumley's body!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Yaas."

Tom Merry stared dazedly at the swell of St. Jim's for some seconds. Then, as the egregious misapprehension of Arthur Augustus dawned upon his mind, he burst into a roar of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Oh, carry me home to bed!" gasped Tom Meryr. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"I am uttably shocked, Tom Mewwy! The fellah was certainly a howwid boundah, but undah the cires—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Tom Mewwy!"

Tom Merry simply yelled.

Three or four fellows came bursting through the trees. They found Tom Merry hanging on to a tree-trunk, gasping with laughter, and D'Arcy surveying him with surprise and indignation.

"What's the joke?" demanded Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What's happened?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here—"

"Ho, ho, ho!"

"Shake him!" exclaimed Blake. "Shake it out of him!"

They seized Tom Merry, and shook him, but all they could shake out of him was a hysterical laugh.

"Ha, ha, ha! Ho, ho, ho!"

CHAPTER 13.

A Letter from Figgins.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY stood with a pained, surprised look upon his aristocratic features. He was surprised at Tom Merry. Under the circumstances, the swell of St. Jim's thought that a great deal of gravity was called for.

"What on earth's the matter?" shouted Kangaroo. "Why don't you explain?"

"What is it, Tom Merry?"

"What is it, Gussy?"

"Explain!"

"Expound!"

"Explicate!"

"Weally, deah boys, I have nothin' to say. It is Tom Mewwy's secwet. I can only pwesume that the howwor of his posish, has turned his bwain."

"Eh?"

"He must be suffewin' fwom hystewics."

"Good gracious!"

"Pat him on the back," said Jack Blake.

"Yes, rather!"

"Now, then, all together!" shouted Kangaroo.

And they patted Tom Merry on the back with such vigour that he stumbled and rolled in the grass, and bumped on the ground, and then at last he left off laughing.

"Ow!" he roared. "Stop it, you asses!"

"Then explain!"

"I—I can't! Ha, ha, ha!" Tom Merry sat up in the grass and yelled: "Ask Gussy! He will tell you the history of the tragedy."

"My hat! Tragedy?"

"Ha, ha! Yes!"

The juniors turned to D'Arcy.

"Go ahead, Gussy!"

"Get on with the washing, old man!"

"Have I your permish, to welaye the cires, Tom Mewwy?" asked D'Arcy, turning his eyeglass upon the almost hysterical hero of the Shell.

"Ha, ha! Yes!"

"Vewy well! Lumlay was wude to Cousin Ethel—"

"What?"

"Where is he?" exclaimed Blake.

"Let's get hold of him!"

"We'll squash him!"

"We'll bump him!"

"And jump on him!"

"Weally—"

"Where is he?" roared the juniors in chorus. And, indeed, it would have been very unpleasant for the Outsider of St. Jim's if he had appeared among the indignant juniors at that moment.

D'Arcy pointed to the river.

The juniors followed the direction of his finger, and then stared at him.

"He's gone?" asked Kangaroo.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Across the river?"

"No."

"Down the bank, then?"

"No."

"Then where?" demanded Blake. "What are you pointing at the water for like a blessed wooden finger-post—"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Where is Lumley?"

"Tom Mewwy knocked him into the wivah!"

"What?"

"That is all, deah boys!"

The juniors looked startled for a moment. But a fresh yell of laughter from Tom Merry reassured them. D'Arcy was making some sort of a mistake.

"He's not still there, I suppose?" asked Digby.

"Ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry. "Of course not!"

"Bai Jove!"

"He got out before D'Arcy came up," explained Tom Merry. "Gussy jumped to the conclusion that he was drowned. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"He's been advising me to go to the police and make a clean bweast of it," sobbed Tom Merry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy looked petrified.

"Do you mean to say he was not dwowned, Tom Mewwy?"

"Hardly!"

"He got out of the wivah?"

"Of course he did!"

"Before I came up?"

"Yes."

"Then why did you not tell me so?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you ass—"

D'Arcy was interrupted. The juniors went off into a roar of laughter together, and the elegant junior's voice was drowned.

D'Arcy's eye gleamed indignation through his monocle.

"Weally, you uttah duffahs—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy gave one more indignant glance round, and strode away. The yells of laughter rang in his ears as he went. It was some time before the juniors recovered their gravity.

"Oh, this beats the record!" exclaimed Blake, calming down at last. "But where is Lumley, kid? He ought to be squashed!"

"He's gone!"

"You told him to get out?"

"Yes."

"Well, it's better for him if he has. But we'll have a look, and give him a bumping if he isn't gone yet."

"Good egg!"

And the juniors hurried away in quest of Jerrold Lumley. But he was not to be found, and his cycle was gone from the garden.

The Outsider of St. Jim's had evidently taken a hurried departure from the precincts of Laurel Villa.

"Your friend is gone, Tommy darling!" said Miss Fawcett, as Tom Merry came up to her chair in the garden. "He did not say good-bye."

"You must excuse him, dear," said Tom Merry. "He was in a hurry. He simply had to get off as quickly as possible."

"I am afraid he had some accident," said Miss Priscilla. "He was quite covered in mud when I saw him wheel out his bicycle."

Tom Merry coloured a little. But the arrival of the postman with the evening's letters saved him from the difficulty of pursuing the subject.

There were letters for most of the party, and one specially for Tom Merry, addressed in a big, sprawling hand that he knew well.

"Figgy!" he exclaimed.

The postmark on the envelope was Forest Burford. Tom Merry opened the letter quickly.

The letter was from Figgins.

"The Lodge, Forest Burford.

"Dear Tom Merry,—Here we are, and ready to meet you and lick you at cricket. We're making up an eleven of chaps staying here, and we shall be ready for you any day you like to come over. G. FIGGINS."

Tom Merry waved the letter in the air.

"Hurrah!" he shouted.

"What's the news?"

"Figgins & Co. are at Burford, and ready for the cricket match. We'll meet them to-morrow, and show them that the School House is cock-house, eh?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Hurrah!"

Tom Merry ran his eye over the juniors.

"Kangaroo, and Lowther, Manners, and myself—that's four. Blake, Herries, Dig, D'Arcy—that's eight. We want three more for the eleven."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I wonder—" Tom Merry's eyes danced as he paused.

"Yaas, deah boy!"

They all looked at him inquiringly.

"I wonder whether you would care to play?" said Tom Merry, looking at the girls. "There are three of you, you know, and we want three more in the eleven."

Ethel and Phyllis and Vera smiled together.

"Should we like it?" laughed Phyllis.

"What-ho!" said Vera.

"Very much," said Cousin Ethel brightly. "But—but is our form good enough?"

"Yes, I think so. I don't know what Figgy's team is like, but I don't suppose it's first-class, scratched up in a place like Forest Burford. Besides, you three are jolly good cricketers, you know."

"Yaas, wathah! I quite approve of Tom Mewwy's ideah."

"Hear, hear!"

"And you will come over and see the match, won't you, dear?" exclaimed Tom Merry, giving Miss Priscilla a hug. "We'll have the big brake from the Railway Arms, and go over in style—a regular beanfeast!"

"My darling Tommy—"

"Then that's settled! It will be a jolly outing,—kids!"

"Hurrah!"

"Yaas, wathah! Huwah!"

CHAPTER 14.

In the Brake.

THE next morning Tom Merry's eleven were in a state of excited expectation.

Tom Merry had written over-night to Figgins to tell him that they were coming, and to bid him prepare for a tremendous licking.

The big brake from the Railway Arms was to be at Laurel Villa at eight o'clock in the morning, for it was necessary to start early, and an early and substantial breakfast was eaten at Laurel Villa.

Miss Fawcett, of course, was coming, to take care of the girls—though, as a matter of fact, the kind old lady was as cheerful on the occasion of an outing as anyone else, and she was looking forward to the excursion.

D'Arcy uttered an exclamation as he picked up a letter beside his plate at the breakfast table.

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NEXT THURSDAY: "COUSIN ETHEL'S TREAT." A splendid tale of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's, by MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"Bai Jove! Here's a lettah frowm Wally!"

"Wally! Perhaps he's coming over," said Blake.

D'Arcy opened the letter.

"Bai Jove!"

"Well, what's the news?"

"We shall see Wally to-day."

"Where?"

"With Figgins. You know, Wally is stayin' at Eastwood with his friends Jameson and Gibson, for the holiday. It seems that Figgins has written to him, and the three of them are goin' ovah to play in Figgins's eleven."

Manners sniffed.

"Third-Formers, to play against us!" he exclaimed.

"Well, we have girls in the team, so it will be pretty well matched," said Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Eh?"

"I wegard that we mark as undiscweet."

"Rats!"

"I wufuse to—I mean—"

"Hallo! Here's the brake!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Get a move on!"

The juniors were up from the breakfast table in a moment. There was a general hurrying and scurrying, and coats and cricket-bags and other impediments were carried to the brake, and then Miss Fawcett and the girls were helped in, and the juniors crowded into their places.

D'Arcy glanced rather dubiously at the driver as the latter "tooled" the vehicle into the lane.

"I wathah think I had bettah dwive," he remarked.

"What do you think, Tom Mewwy?"

"I think it's going to be a fine day."

"I was not speakin' about the weathah. Hadn't I bettah take the wibbons, do you think?"

"Whose ribbons?"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Look out, Ethel," said Blake warningly. "D'Arcy says he is going to take the ribbons."

Cousin Ethel laughed.

"You uttah duffah!" said D'Arcy. "I was not alludin' to those wibbons. I meant the weins, of course."

"What wanes?" asked Digby, following Blake's lead and misunderstanding. "Do you mean the weather-vane on the church, and—"

"Ass! I mean the weins of the horses."

"I can't see any wanes on the horses," said Blake. "The horses may be on the wane—they look as if they'd seen service—but—"

"I wufuse to be misundahstood in this widiculous mannah. I weally think that I had bettah dwive, as that chap doesn't weally look as if he could manage four horses."

"Can't be did, Gussy. We've only got one neck each, you know."

"Weally, Blake—"

"And mine's got to last me sixty years, at least," said Blake gravely. "You can have it after I've done with it, if you like, but at present—"

"Pway don't be an ass. Wouldn't you ladies feel safah if I were to dwive?"

The girls laughed merrily.

"That's hardly a fair question," said Tom Merry. "It's just barely possible that this driver chap knows his bizney, you know, after being at it for thirty years."

D'Arcy gave a resigned shrug of the shoulders.

"Vewy well; if there's an accident, I wash my hands of the whole mattah."

"Aren't you going to wash unless there's an accident?" asked Blake.

"You misundahstand me—"

"I've noticed that Gussy is getting pretty careless lately, in matters of that sort," said Monty Lowther. "You remember the day we came down to Laurel Villa, you chaps, Gussy was wearing awfully cheap reach-me-down clothes."

The swell of St. Jim's gave Lowther a look that ought to have withered him on the spot. But he could not start an argument on the subject of those terrible trousers in mixed company, so he had to let it pass.

The juniors agreed, and the general opinion was expressed that they had better keep an eye on Gussy, and ward off future deterioration if possible; to all of which D'Arcy listened in a state of barely suppressed indignation.

But the swell of St. Jim's soon recovered his good-humour; and, indeed, it would have been difficult to be out of humour on a beautiful summer's morning, driving through lovely leafy lanes, in cheerful company, and with a cricket match ahead.

It was twenty miles to Forest Burford, but the brake covered the ground at a spanking rate, and the white road flew under the wheels.

As the brake turned a corner there was a sound of ringing bicycle-bells, and three cyclists came tearing along the road.

Buzz-zuzz! Ting-ting!

"Get out of the road, there, you beanfeasters!" roared a voice.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated D'Arcy. "I think we had better stop the bwake, Tom Mewwy, and get down and thwash that chap."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Weally, it is no laughin' mattah, and—"

"It's Wally!" said Blake.

"Wally! Gweat Scott!"

Through the thick cloud of dust raised by the three cyclists, three familiar faces were dimly visible; those of D'Arcy minor, Jameson, and Gibson of the Third Form at St. Jim's. They slackened down a little beside the brake, and looked up.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Wally, taking off his cap to the girls.

"Got any ginger-beer to give away, Tom Merry?"

"Not a drop," said Tom Merry, laughing.

Wally grunted.

"My only Aunt Jane! Do you go out on beanfeasts without anything to drink?"

Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass upon his cheerful minor.

"Weally, Wally—"

"Hallo! Have you got Gus there? What are you taking him out for?"

"We're going to play Figgins at cricket," said Tom Merry.

"Yes, but what is Gussy going for?" asked Wally innocently.

"You young wascal!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, indignantly. "If it were not for the pwesence of ladies, I would get down and thwash you on the spot."

"What spot?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally—"

"Don't you begin, Gus," said Wally, letting go his handle-bars with one hand, to wag an admonishing finger at his major. "I hope you're going to play cricket, as we're on the other side. It will save us fagging much."

"You young wascal—"

"Well, we can't stay here all day," said Jameson. "Get a move on!"

"Good-bye, kids!" said Wally, waving his hand, as he quickened his pace. "Next time you go on a beanfeast don't forget the ginger-beer."

"It's not a beanfeast, you young wascal!" shrieked D'Arcy, standing up in the brake, and shrieking after his minor. "You uttah duffah!"

"Sit down, Gussy!"

"I wefuse to sit down. I—"

The brake jolted over a stone, and D'Arcy sat down rather hurriedly on Blake's knees. Blake jerked him off, and he sat down on the floor of the brake.

"Gweat Scott! I—"

"It's curious," said Blake, looking round. "The mere getting into a brake has this effect on Gussy. He loses his head, you know."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Order, old man—order!"

From the distance came back a buzzing of bicycle bells as Wally & Co. disappeared up the road.

CHAPTER 15.

The Rival Teams.

"HERE they are!"

Figgins uttered the words.

Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn were standing in the lane that ran past the lodge gates. They waved their hands as the big brake rolled into sight.

"Here you are, my sons," said Figgins, as the brake halted, and his eyes danced as he saw Cousin Ethel looking down at him. "How jolly good of you to come," he added, as he shook hands with Ethel over the side of the brake.

Ethel smiled.

"We're playing," she said.

"Playing!"

"Yes."

"I—I don't—"

"We're in the eleven."

"Oh!" gasped Figgins.

"We shan't have much of a chance, then," said Kerr politely.

Cousin Ethel laughed again, and descended from the brake. The vehicle was driven in, as it was to wait for the juniors to take them home at dusk. Miss Priscilla and the girls were taken up to the house, where the latter were made acquainted with Figgins's uncle, the major.

Tom Merry & Co. knew the major well; they had spent a holiday in the South of France in company with Major

Figgins, and they liked and esteemed the old gentleman, somewhat brusque as he was in his manners. Brusque he might be, but he had a heart of gold. He greeted the girls and the boys warmly, evidently glad to see them, and ready to make much of them. Figgins's cousin, Archie Hilton, a handsome young man with a good-natured face, was staying in the house, and it transpired that he was playing in Figgins's eleven. Tom Merry and his chums greeted Hilton warmly, though there was a momentary embarrassment in Hilton's manner. The young man had not forgotten that there had been unpleasant incidents in their acquaintanceship when they were at Monte Carlo. The juniors had not forgotten it, either, as a matter of fact; but they acted as if they had, and Hilton was very quickly at his ease.

"I suppose you don't mind Hilton playing," Figgins remarked. "Of course, he's much older than any of you fellows, and above your form, I suppose; but some of my team are much below Shell form, so that will make it level."

Tom Merry nodded.

"That's all right," he said. "Who's playing?"

"We three," said Figgins, "and Hilton, and young Wally, Jameson, and Gibson. That's seven. I have two gardening chaps belonging to my uncle, they're very willing, but their cricket would make an angel weep. They'll balance Hilton, and make it fair. See?"

"That's all right."

"Then there's the page here—he plays in the village eleven, so I roped him in. He drops his 'h's' like hail-stones, but he can play. I suppose you don't mind playing him?"

"Why should we mind?"

Figgins coloured.

"I mean, he's a servant here, and—"

"Rats!" said Tom Merry. "There's nothing snobbish about me, I hope, or about anybody else in this team."

"Wathah not," said Arthur Augustus. "I am somewhat surprised at your waisin' the point, Figgay."

"Oh, all right!" said Figgins. "Of course, I ought to have known you better. He's a decent little chap; name's Wilkins."

"And who's your eleventh man?"

Figgins hesitated again.

"As a matter of fact, it's a chap you know," he said.

Tom Merry looked interested.

"Yes? A native of this place?"

"Oh, no; a St. Jim's fellow."

"A St. Jim's fellow! Staying with you, I suppose?" said Tom Merry. "One of the New House chaps?"

"No, a School House chap; and he's not staying with me. As a matter of fact, it's Lumley. I thought you knew he was staying at Forest Burford."

Tom Merry's face fell.

"Lumley! The Outsider?"

"Yes."

"Oh!"

"You don't like him?" said Figgins anxiously. "Well, I don't, either; but he came and asked me if he could play, and I was hard up for an eleventh man, and anyway he's a St. Jim's chap, you know."

"I know, but—"

"You object?"

"Well, I don't know about that," said Tom Merry slowly. "I've no right to object to a man in your team. But Cousin Ethel—"

"Ethel doesn't know him."

"He came to Laurel Villa yesterday."

"Oh! Doesn't Ethel like him?" asked Figgins anxiously.

"Of course, I didn't know anything about that."

Tom Merry paused.

He felt that it would be hardly the thing to interfere with the composition of Figgins's team, especially when the New House captain was so hard up for an eleventh man.

At the same time, it would be very awkward for Cousin Ethel to meet Lumley after what had happened at Laurel Villa.

"Well?" said Figgins.

"Oh, it's all right!" said Tom Merry at last. "You'd better play him."

"But—"

"That's all right, old man. It can't be helped now."

And Tom Merry left Figgins before he could ask any questions. Under the circumstances, it was more judicious not to let Figgins know that Jerrold Lumley had been rude to Ethel.

Tom Merry joined the girls on the cricket ground. There was a very fine ground at the Lodge, with a handsome pavilion; for the major was an old cricketer, and often had cricketing friends down to stay with him in the summer.

"Stumps are pitched!" said Ethel cheerily.

"Yes. By the way, Ethel—" Tom Merry hesitated.

The girl looked at him quickly.

"Yes, Tom?"

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NEXT THURSDAY: "COUSIN ETHEL'S TREAT." A splendid tale of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's, by MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"Lumley's in Figgins's team."

"Oh!"

"Figgins didn't know anything about his coming to Laurel Villa," said Tom Merry. "He'd kick him out if he knew. But that would muck up his team for the match. Do you mind if we pass it over, and let Lumley play?"

"It will be best, Tom."

"You don't mind?"

"Not at all."

Tom Merry looked relieved.

"All right. It would be rotten to spoil Figgys's eleven, and the fellow can play cricket, you know, cad as he is. But if you minded, I've only to say a word to Figgins, and he'd kick the rotter out like anything."

Cousin Ethel smiled.

"I don't mind," she said—"I mean, I don't mind enough to want to give Figgins any trouble. It would not be fair on him."

"Right-ho, then!"

Figgins came up with his followers, in cricketing attire. The Terrible Three looked them over.

They were certainly an oddly-assorted team.

Hilton was head and shoulders above the rest, and made a very handsome figure in flannels. Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn looked fit and trim. Wally, Jameson, and Gibson were fit, but of course small for such a match. The page, Wilkins, was fat and stumpy, but looked active enough. The two gardeners' boys were exceedingly clumsy in appearance, and none too bright in countenance. They were ruddy and good-natured and willing, but they did not look as if they knew much about cricket.

Figgins and Tom Merry tossed for choice of innings, and Figgins named the coin. He elected to bat first.

Major Figgins sat down on a garden-chair before the pavilion, to watch, with two or three acquaintances from the neighbourhood who had come in to see the match, and to stay to lunch. Tom Merry led his men—and girls—out to field. Just before Figgins came on the pitch to open the innings, the Outsider arrived.

There was a cool and insolent smile upon Jerrold Lumley's face as he glanced at Tom Merry & Co. They were careful to take no notice of him.

Figgins and Kerr came to the wickets, and Tom Merry put Kangaroo on to bowl, and the match started.

CHAPTER 16. The Cricket Match.

FIGGINS stole a glance towards Cousin Ethel as he took up his position at the wicket.

Miss Cleveland was fielding at cover-point, and very pretty and graceful she looked there.

Figgins would have preferred to have Ethel in his own eleven, though not much of a believer in girls' cricket, as a rule. Figgins, as a rule, was a dashing batsman, but to-day he felt a slight nervousness. It was not merely that he was playing under bright eyes; he had often played before a crowded pavilion. But he was afraid that Cousin Ethel or Vera or Phyllis might be hurt, especially Cousin Ethel.

Suppose a cricket-ball should strike Ethel—perhaps on the face—how awful it would be. Figgins felt very uneasy at the thought. He determined that his hitting should not be in the direction of cover-point, if he could help it.

Figgins had had a cricket-ball on his own nose once, and his friends said that the shape of his nose had never quite recovered from it; and Figgins knew what it was like. He knew a chap, too, who had had nearly all his front teeth knocked out by a cricket-ball. Suppose Ethel—

Figgins was quite scared with supposing. But the call of play forced him to drive such considerations from his mind. He faced the bowling.

Kangaroo was in good form. He sent down a ball that gave Figgins plenty to do, and kept it up. Five balls in the over kept Figgins busy, without a single run to the score. But Figgins was warming to his work now.

Clack!

The bat met the last ball of the over, and away it went. Figgins ran, and Kerr ran, and they crossed.

Smack!

What was that sound—of leather meeting palm?

There was a yell.

"Well caught!"

Figgins stopped.

Cousin Ethel was holding up the ball.

Figgins had been caught out at the first hit, and by Cousin Ethel.

His face fell for a moment.

Ethel smiled brightly.

"Well caught!" cried Tom Merry.

"How's that?"

"Out!" grinned the gentleman who was umpiring at that end.

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Figgins ran quickly towards Cousin Ethel. The whole field looked at him in astonishment.

What was Figgins up to?

Cousin Ethel met him with a glance of surprise.

"You caught me out?" said Figgins.

"Yes," smiled Ethel.

"It was an awful smack!" said Figgins anxiously. "You—you must have hurt your hand!"

Cousin Ethel laughed merrily.

"Oh, I thought you were going to make some objection to the catch!" she said.

"Oh, that's nothing!" said Figgins. "It's all in the game. I don't mind that. I was thinking about your fingers. You—"

"Oh, nonsense! It is all right," said Cousin Ethel. "I am not soft."

"Right-ho, then!"

And Figgins went to the pavilion.

"What a beautiful nature!" murmured Monty Lowther, with a grin. "I'm blessed if I've ever thought about the fieldsmen's fingers when I've been caught out."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I regard it as very decent of Figgins," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "As a matter of fact, it was wathah wuff on Ethel, but she stands it like a bwick."

"Who's next man in?" said Lowther. "Oh, it's Wally! Look out for squalls; here comes the terror of the Third Form!"

And Tom Merry & Co. laughed.

Wally heard the laugh, and looked round indignantly, and determined in his own mind that he would show the laughers that Third Form cricket was not to be despised.

But alas for Wally's determination!

Kerr made a score of one, which brought Wally facing the bowling, and Wally was bowled first ball by Jack Blake.

The hero of the Third looked at his wicket.

"My only Aunt Jane!" he ejaculated.

And the fieldsmen chuckled.

"I say, was that a trial?" called out Wally.

"Ha, ha! No."

"Out!" said the umpire.

"But—"

"Now, then, Third Form!" yelled Lowther. "Out you go!"

Wally snorted, and carried out his bat.

"This is quite exhilarating," grinned Monty Lowther. "Here comes the Outsider! Get him out first ball, Blake, or I'll scalp you."

"What-ho!" said Blake confidently.

But Blake was mistaken in his estimation of Lumley's powers.

Jerrold Lumley had earned contempt at St. Jim's by not playing cricket, and by openly professing a dislike and contempt of the great summer game.

The fellows had taken this to mean that he could not play; and, as a rule, either cricket or football is never spoken of contemptuously by those who can play.

But the case was different with Lumley.

He was undoubtedly what the juniors called a "rotter," emphatically a "rotter" in most respects; but he had played cricket under a professional coach to prepare for his life at St. Jim's, and though he did not care for the game, he was clever enough to benefit by the instruction.

His form now was, therefore, a surprise to the St. Jim's fellows.

Blake put in the best bowling he knew, but Lumley stopped it all, and twice out the ball away to the boundary. The fieldsmen exchanged wondering glances.

They had expected little of Jerrold Lumley, but it was pretty clear at the start that he was one of the best bats in Figgins's team.

Figgins's face brightened up as he watched from the pavilion.

"By George," he exclaimed, "Lumley's going to make a stand!"

"What-ho!" said Fatty Wynn. "He's a rank outsider, but he knows how to handle the willow. I say, Figgins, when do we have lunch?"

"Blow lunch!"

"Well, it's a rather important matter, and—"

"Look! There he goes!"

The last ball of the over sailed away from the Outsider's bat, and Lumley and Kerr ran, and ran, and ran again before it was fielded.

"Bravo!" shouted Figgins.

The odd run brought Lumley to the batting end again. Tom Merry tossed the ball to Kangaroo.

"Get him out!" he said.

The Cornstalk nodded.

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

Tom Merry's brows were knitted a little.

If any other fellow in Figgy's eleven had made a good stand against the bowling, Tom Merry would have taken it cordially enough; but he did not like Lumley, and he felt a curious sense of annoyance, which he tried to suppress as unsportsmanlike.

Apart from the match entirely, the fieldsmen would all have been glad to see Jerrold Lumley's wicket fall.

But it was soon clear enough that that was not likely to happen.

Lumley was in to stay.

There was a sneering smile on his face as he batted, facing every kind of bowling, and knocking it all over the field.

Tom Merry snapped his teeth as another boundary was taken.

"There's only one junior at St. Jim's who can bowl that chap," he said. "And that's Fatty Wynn—and Wynn's on his side."

"Yaas, wathah!"

And the fielding side looked serious about it.

Figgins's innings had begun badly enough, but already Lumley's score was at 20 for himself alone, and he was well backed up by Kerr, who added 10.

Tom Merry's bowlers exhausted themselves in vain upon Lumley's wicket.

But fate was overtaking him.

The home score stood at 45, of which 30 belonged to Jerrold Lumley, when the Outsider, flushed with success, ran a little too much risk.

The ball had gone into the long field, and twice the batsmen had run, and Lumley tempted fate a third time.

But Phyllis Monk was "on the ball."

Lumley had been encouraged to take that third run by the fact that it was "only a girl" after the ball.

But he soon learned that he had underrated Phyllis.

The ball was in her hand, and she swung up and returned it with lightning speed—not to the wicket-keeper, but direct at the wicket.

Crash!

Lumley realised the danger, and put on a desperate spurt, in a frantic endeavour to reach the wicket in time; but his bat was still a foot off the crease when the ball crashed into the stumps, and the bats went down, and the middle stump with them.

There was a delighted shout from the field.

"How's that?"

"Out!"

There wasn't much doubt on that point.

Jerrold Lumley was out.

He did not take his defeat kindly.

A black look came over his face, and his eyes glinted, and his teeth came hard together. He had done very well in his innings, but he was evidently not satisfied, and the fall of his wicket—and to a throw-in from a girl, too!—galled him bitterly.

Tom Merry looked relieved.

"I'm jolly glad to be rid of him," he remarked.

"Looks nice, doesn't he?" murmured Lowther.

"Oh, he's not a sportsman—he can't take it calmly."

"Might as well—he's got to take it, anyway."

Jerrold Lumley sullenly carried out his bat.

Figgins slapped him on the shoulder in his hearty way as he reached the pavilion. Figgins's honest face was beaming.

"Jolly good!" he exclaimed. "You've done splendidly, Lumley! You bouncer! I never dreamed you could play cricket like that!"

Lumley grunted.

"I was careless at the finish," he said. "I never thought a girl could throw in straight. Of course, it was a fluke!"

"It wasn't," grinned Wally. "It was a good throw-in!"

"Bah! What do you know about it?"

Wally was on the warpath at once. He did not intend to be bullied by Jerrold Lumley, or anybody else; but especially not Jerrold Lumley.

"I know more than you about cricket, I expect," he replied. "I dare say you could give me points about drinking and gambling, but when you come to cricket—"

"Shut up, Wally!" said Figgins.

"Well, let him shut up then," said Wally truculently.

"Fluke—eh? Why, I never saw a better or straighter throw-in in my life, Fluke! Rats!"

"Next man in, Fatty!" said Figgins, laughing.

Fatty Wynn drew on his batting gloves.

"Got any toffee about you, Figgy?" he asked.

"No. I gave you some; where's that?"

"I've eaten it. I feel a bit peckish, and—"

"Here's some milk chocolate," said Wally. "Stuff it in, and get to the pitch!"

Fatty Wynn grinned, and went down to the pitch chewing milk chocolate.

Fatty Wynn and Kerr together made the fur fly a little.

The score went up in jumps, and was soon at 75. Then Fatty fell a victim, and it was Vera Stanhope who brought the plump Welsh junior to grief.

Fatty had batted in fine style, till Tom Merry put Vera on to bowl.

Then it must be admitted that Fatty was ungallant enough to under-estimate the powers of a mere girl when it came to bowling.

Fatty did not guard his wicket as he should have done; and the ball came down a regular scorcher as it happened.

Crash!

Fatty Wynn woke up to the fact that he had a keen bowler to deal with, what time his stumps and bats were reclining on the sward.

"My hat!" ejaculated Fatty.

There was a yell from some of the juniors.

"What price ducks' eggs?"

Fatty Wynn coloured, and carried out his bat.

"My word!" said Tom Merry, laughing. "They call us the Terrible Three—but blessed if Cousin Ethel and Vera and Phyllis don't deserve the title more than we do. The girls have done all that's been done so far towards knocking Figgy's eleven out."

And Manners and Lowther agreed.

The remainder of the home innings did not occupy much time. The "tail" of the innings tailed off with little to show for itself. Kerr was not out at the finish, after being first man in.

The total for the innings was 94 runs, which Figgins was pretty well satisfied with; feeling quite assured in his own mind that with Fatty Wynn bowling, Tom Merry's eleven would never reach a figure to equal it. And as it was a single-innings match, all depended upon the batting in the next innings.

"Well, I'm glad that's over!" said Fatty Wynn, with a sigh.

"What!" exclaimed Kerr. "You're glad to see our wickets go down, you bouncer?"

"Oh, no!" said Wynn hastily. "I'm sorry, of course; but I was thinking of lunch. I'm awfully hungry, you see."

Fatty Wynn, however, was not the only one who was hungry. The innings had lasted a fairly long time, and all had keen appetites when it was over, and all welcomed the substantial lunch the major's housekeeper had provided.

Figgins hoped that Fatty Wynn, the great bowler, would distinguish himself in the visitors' innings; but however that might be, there was no doubt at all that Fatty Wynn would distinguish himself at the lunch.

He did.

CHAPTER 17.

The Cold Shoulder.

LUNCH was a merry meal to the cricketers.

All of them were in high spirits; the home team because they had made a good score, and the visitors because they were going to make a better one; or believed they were, at all events.

Only the Outsider wore a shade upon his face.

The juniors were civil to him, because in general company, and in Major Figgins's house, they could hardly be anything else.

But their looks showed their contempt and dislike plainly enough.

A fellow who could be rude to a girl was not the kind of fellow they cared to associate with; and Lumley had been rude, moreover, to Cousin Ethel, the girl whom the juniors esteemed above all others.

Ethel, Phyllis, and Vera contrived to have nothing to say to Lumley, without appearing to be studiously avoiding him, managing the matter with the tact which is a feminine attribute.

The boys were less tactful, and less careful of the Outsider's feelings.

As Blake expressed it, for two pins he would have knocked the "rotter" sky-high. As for Figgins & Co., they did not yet know the cause of the Outsider's especial offending; and they attributed Tom Merry & Co.'s manner towards him to the old feelings there had been against him at St. Jim's.

Lumley scowled as he heard the merry chatter in which he could scarcely join.

When lunch was over, he strolled out, and stood moodily under the trees. The sound of girlish voices near him made him look round, and he saw the three girls walking together, with their arms round one another's waists.

They made a pretty picture, and even Lumley's black face softened for a moment. He came awkwardly towards them.

They turned away.

"You don't want to speak to me—eh?" said Jerrold angrily.

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NEXT THURSDAY: "COUSIN ETHEL'S TREAT." A splendid tale of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's, by MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"No," said Ethel.
 "Why not?"
 "You know the reason best."
 "But—"

Tom Merry and Blake came quickly up, and the Outsider turned away. Both the juniors looked ready to eat him if he said another word.

Lumley walked away alone.

Envy, hatred, and all uncharitableness were running riot in his breast.

His face was still clouded when the cricketers came down to the ground for the second innings.

Figgins was grinning cheerfully.

"You're going to do most of the bowling, Fatty!" he said, slapping the Welsh junior on the back. "And mind, ducks' eggs galore for them!"

Fatty Wynn chuckled.

"We want them all out for about 20, you know."

"Good-egg!" said Kerr. "What are you thinking of, Fatty?"

"The lunch," said Fatty Wynn, with a happy smile. "Wasn't it ripping?"

"Poof!"

"Well, it was, you know. I remember the major stood us some decent feeds when he was in Nice with us, but this one beat the lot!"

Hilton came up with a smile.

"Will you give me some bowling, Figgins?" he asked.

"Certainly!" said Figgins, a little dubiously, for as a matter of fact Hilton had not cut a very fine figure in the home innings, being stumped by Blake for 3. But, of course, he might be a good bowler all the same.

"I am good with the ball," said Hilton. "I think I can promise you some wickets."

"Right-ho!" said Figgins. "You and Wynn shall have it between you, and we'll see how we get on, anyway."

"Good!"

"You chaps ready?" called out Figgins.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, so are we—"

And Figgins & Co. and their followers went into the field. The ball was given to Archie Hilton for the first over, though as a matter of fact Figgins would have preferred Fatty Wynn to open the bowling. But politeness came first; and after all one over did not matter much.

Jerrold Lumley tapped Figgins on the shoulder.

"Will you give me some bowling?" he asked.

"Well, I've got Hilton and Wynn," said Figgins.

"I can bowl."

"Yes, but—"

"You might give me a chance. I will take wickets. I promise you that. I've coached with a professional—a good county bowler," said Lumley.

Figgins nodded.

"Very well; if I need a change bowler, I'll give you a chance."

And with that Jerrold Lumley had to be content.

He went into the slips to field, with a savage expression upon his face. There was no doubt that Jerrold Lumley would do his hardest against the visiting team; not from a sportsmanlike desire to do his best for his side, but from spite against his adversaries.

Tom Merry opened the innings with Jack Blake, and the innings was lively from the start—lively, that is, in one sense, but dead in another, as far as Tom Merry & Co. were concerned.

CHAPTER 18.

Last Man In.

TOM MERRY received the first over, and lived through it, but that was all he did. Hilton's bowling was too good to be scored off. Then Jack Blake faced the ball in the hands of Fatty Wynn.

Fatty Wynn, the terror of all the junior bats at St. Jim's, was in fine form.

His fat face was glowing, his eyes were shining, and he moved with a springy step that told of the pink of condition.

Fatty Wynn meant business. The Terrible Three and their comrades saw it at once, and were prepared for trouble. And there was trouble!

Fatty took a little run, and turned himself into a catherine-wheel, and sent the ball down like a bullet.

Jack Blake swiped at the ball—at all events at the place where the ball ought to have been—but his bat did not find it.

The stumps found it, however, or it found the stumps; and the middle stump went out of the ground with the bails.

"My hat!" gasped Blake.

"How's that?" yelled the delighted fieldmen.

"Out!"

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NEXT THURSDAY: "COUSIN ETHEL'S TREAT." A splendid tale of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's, by MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"What price ducks' eggs?" grinned Jerrold Lumley.

Herries came in next, and was clean bowled, and then Manners, and Manners dropped to the first ball from Fatty Wynn.

Figgins gave a yell of delight.

"The hat trick! Hurrah!"

"Bravo, Wynn!"

Fatty Wynn grinned modestly. He was too used to hat tricks to feel very much elated about it, but he was glad he had pleased Figgins.

"Go it, Fatty!" chuckled Kerr.

"More wickets!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Kangaroo joined Tom Merry, and Fatty Wynn found him a tough nut. He scored six off the rest of the over, and lived through it.

Hilton bowled again, and then Tom Merry began to score.

A little later, Kangaroo fell to a smart catch from Figgins, and carried out his bat for fifteen, and Digby came in.

Digby retired, clean bowled by Fatty Wynn, and in the next over Monty Lowther was caught out by Kerr.

"Six down for twenty-eight," said Tom Merry to himself, and in spite of his pluck he looked a little serious.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came in next.

The swell of St. Jim's came down to the wickets buttoning his gloves, with his bat under his arm, with the peculiarly graceful walk which was one of his distinguishing traits.

"Good old Gussy!" chuckled Figgins. "Wipe him out, Fatty!"

"What-ho!" said Fatty Wynn.

The demon bowler of the New House did not expect much trouble with Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. But it is the unexpected that always happens.

D'Arcy did not score much, but he defended his wicket well, and both the batsmen showed signs of getting well set.

Hilton and Fatty Wynn bowled their best, but they were not to be moved, though the character of the bowling, and the excellence of the fielding, cut down the margin of runs.

Lumley eagerly met Figgins's eye as the field crossed over a little later. Figgins gave him a short nod.

"Pitch the ball to Lumley," he said. "Go and see if you can take Tom Merry's wicket, Lumley."

"I'll try," said Jerrold eagerly.

He went on to bowl against Tom Merry.

Tom Merry smiled confidently. He did not fear Lumley's bowling. As a matter of fact, Lumley had exaggerated his own powers in that line. He could bowl well, but not nearly so well as Fatty Wynn.

The over was eventless, except that it produced a couple of runs for Tom Merry. Lumley bit his lip hard as he came off.

"All right," said Figgins cheerily. "Can't expect everything, you know. Don't be downhearted."

"Give me another over," said Lumley.

"All right—after this."

Hilton took an over, without success, and the score was creeping up. Then the Outsider was put on to bowl again, this time against Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

D'Arcy stood in his usual graceful attitude, as if it were really too much trouble to swing the willow; but when it came to batting no one had really a keener or quicker eye or a surer hand.

Lumley put all he knew into that over, but it was in vain.

D'Arcy whipped his bowling all over the field, and scored run after run from it, till Lumley was red with rage.

"Good man!" murmured Monty Lowther, watching from the pavilion. "I think he'd like to eat Gussy without salt, What?"

"I think so," said Blake. "Blessed worm! Why can't he be a sportsman?"

"Ain't in him," said Digby.

"My hat! I believe he'll chuck the ball at Gussy's head if this goes on much longer," chuckled Monty Lowther.

Lumley was preparing to deliver the last ball of the over. But he bowled, and Monty Lowther's prediction was not verified. D'Arcy cut the ball away to the boundary.

"Bravo!" exclaimed Major Figgins, clapping his brown hands.

But fate was overtaking D'Arcy. In the next over he changed places with Tom Merry, and received the bowling from Fatty Wynn, and his wicket fell in runs.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated D'Arcy, as his middle stump fell, with the bails, leaving the off stump reclining on its back.

"Is that out, deah boy?"

The umpire chuckled.

"Ha, ha! Yes, that's out. Did you want all three stumps down?"

Arthur Augustus carried out his bat. The visitors were seven wickets down for 50 runs, and the remaining batsmen were—girls!

Tom Merry looked a little serious as Vera Stanhope came in.

Forty-five runs were wanted to win, and he hardly believed that he would be able to get them backed up only by girls.

And, as a matter of fact, it soon became clear that he, at all events, would not have much to do with getting them, whether they were got or not.

For in the next over he was caught out by Jerrold Lumley, from a ball from Hilton. The Outsider of St. Jim's grinned as he held up the ball.

"How's that?" he cried.

"Out!"

Tom Merry went back to the pavilion. Plucky as he was, and resolute, he could not help looking and feeling grave.

"Next man in," he said, with a smile, to Phyllis Monk.

And Miss Phyllis went to the wickets.

Tom Merry stood beside Cousin Ethel, who was the last man in. The girls had preferred to be left to the tail of the innings.

"Looks bad," said Tom Merry.

Cousin Ethel nodded.

"Forty-five to get to win," remarked Blake.

"They may be taken," said Ethel quietly.

"By girls?" asked Herries, in uncomplimentary surprise.

Ethel laughed. Blake trod on the foot of his too candid chum, and Herries stared down to see what it was. Cousin Ethel did not seem to notice.

"Phyllis and Vera are both good bats," she said. "I think I can bat a little myself, too."

"We've seen you bat," said Tom Merry. "We know it."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, then, I don't think the innings is hopeless yet."

"Wathah not."

"If you pull it out of the fire, I think we'll hand over to you the title of the Terrible Three," grinned Monty Lowther.

Cousin Ethel laughed, and watched the cricket without replying. Fatty Wynn was bowling again, against Miss Vera's wicket.

The Welsh junior was feeling a little doubtful in his mind at first. His natural politeness made him wish to make things easy for a member of the gentle sex. At the same time, he was there to take wickets, and he didn't want to risk losing the match for his side. After a little reflection, he decided that he was bound to play his hardest, and that it would be more merciful to put the other side out of their misery as soon as possible.

Curiously enough, however, the "other side" did not seem to be in a hurry to be put out of their misery.

Miss Vera stopped every ball that Fatty Wynn sent down, and the two girls scored runs off them, much to the surprise of the fieldsmen.

Cousin Ethel smiled as she heard the involuntary exclamations of surprise round her, from Tom Merry, and his comrades, who were expecting the finish of the innings at almost any moment.

Major Figgins twisted his white moustache and laughed. "Gad!" said the major. "The girls are cutting a good figure there, begad! Why, they'll win the match yet!"

"Hurrah for the Terrible Three!" chirruped Kangaroo. And they all laughed.

"Well caught!" exclaimed Tom Merry suddenly.

Miss Vera had knocked the ball fairly into Lumley's hand. The Outsider tossed it up and caught it again, and asked "How's that?"

Vera carried out her bat, but she left the score at 65. 30 runs were wanted to win.

"Last man in," said D'Arcy—"I should say last gal."

Cousin Ethel nodded, and took up her bat.

And there was a buzz of keen interest among the cricketers as Cousin Ethel joined Miss Phyllis at the wickets. It was the last throw of the dice for the visitors.

CHAPTER 19.

The Winners.

COUSIN ETHEL stood at the wicket, a graceful figure. She faced the bowling with perfect coolness, although it was Fatty Wynn who had the ball.

The spectators, including the batsman who were "out," looked on with keen interest.

The fate of the innings, and of the match, depended upon the girls—a sufficiently unusual state of affairs to awaken the keenest interest in the game.

Tom Merry had given up the match as lost when his own wicket fell; but a hope was creeping into his breast now. The girls might pull the game out of the fire yet!

Fatty Wynn was bowling his best. There was no doubt about that. But at the same time it was possible that innumerable ginger-beers and chunks of chocolate during the match had taken the edge off Fatty Wynn's form.

Still, his bowling was undeniably good.

Cousin Ethel faced it coolly enough, however. And there

was evidently a great deal of strength in the supple arms of the girl.

The ball went on many a long journey, and Figgins & Co. were given plenty of leather-hunting.

The home team were surprised, and not wholly pleased. Excepting Figgins. Figgins grinned all over his face with evident delight.

He took as much pride in the exploits of Cousin Ethel as if she belonged to his own team, and cheered every good hit, although it was adding to the score against his side.

Tom Merry could not help grinning at Figgins's loud bravos.

"Good old Figgins!" he murmured. "What a sportsman!"

"How's the score now?" asked Blake looking round.

"Eighty-six."

"My hat! It's creeping up."

"Yaas, wathah! I shouldn't wonder if we win aften all," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, rubbing his hand. "It was a jolly wippin idea of mine, you know, to play the gals in the eleven."

Tom Merry stared.

"Your idea!" he ejaculated.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, of all the cheek—why, it was my idea from the start!" exclaimed Tom Merry indignantly.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Well hit!" roared Kangaroo.

The ball was over the boundary again, and the girls smiled at one another across the pitch, with four runs to their credit without the trouble of running.

"Begad!" said the major. "Splendid! What?"

"Wippin!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "Hear, Figgins!"

"Hurrah!" roared Figgins.

"You giddy chump!" growled Wally. "What are you hurrying for? They're going to lick up, you champion duffer!"

"Eh?" said Figgins.

"They're licking us, fathead!"

Figgins rubbed his nose.

"By George!" he said. "That's true! Never mind—may the best team win, you know. If they lick us, hurrah for them!"

"Well, of all the chumps—"

Fatty Wynn bowled again with deadly intent. The fieldsmen were all on the look-out for catches; including Figgins, who was keen enough, in spite of his curious enthusiasm for the enemy.

Jerrold Lumley was as watchful as a cat. He saw his chance at last.

The ball had fled, and Cousin Ethel and Phyllis were running, once—twice—thrice!

The ball was returned to Lumley from the long field. Lumley caught it, and flung it in with the same movement.

Ethel saw the danger and threw herself forward. She fell upon her knees, the end of her bat on the crease.

The next instant the wicket crashed down under the ball from Lumley's hand.

"Out!" yelled Lumley.

The umpire shook his head.

"Not out!"

"Hurrah!" roared Figgins.

"Bravo!" shouted Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove! Hawway!"

Lumley was crimson with rage. He really thought that wicket had gone down simultaneously with the clump of the bat on the crease, and he was always ready to stretch a point in his own favour.

"It's out!" he roared angrily.

The umpire, a gentleman of fifty, an acquaintance of the Major's, stared at the boy, and frowned.

"Not out!" he repeated.

"I tell you—"

"Hold your tongue!" exclaimed the umpire angrily.

Cousin Ethel had gained her feet. She was standing flushed and very pretty.

"I think my bat was on the crease," she said.

"I know it was," said the umpire, "or I shouldn't have given you not out."

Lumley strode up to the wicket.

"I object!" he shouted. "It was out!"

Figgins strode after the recalcitrant Outsider, grasped him by the shoulder, and swung him round. The angry junior turned a furious face upon his skipper.

"Stop that!" said Figgins peremptorily.

"I tell you—"

"Hold your tongue! How dare you question the umpire's decision?"

"It's favouritism, rank favouritism, that's what it is!" yelled the Outsider.

Figgins's brow grew black.

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NEXT THURSDAY: "COUSIN ETHEL'S TREAT." A splendid tale of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's by MARTIN CLIFFORD.

He pointed to the pavilion.

"That's your way," he said curtly.

"What?"

"Get off the field!"

"But—"

"You're ordered off the field," said Figgins curtly.

"That's your way. Get out!"

"I won't go!"

"Get off!"

"I won't!"

Figgins stepped closer to him, looking very grim.

"I give you two seconds to clear," he said. "Then I'll throw you off if you don't go! Take your choice!"

The Outsider gave him a furious look, and stamped away towards the pavilion. He hurled his bat into the pavilion, and strode away.

"I say, Figgy," called out Tom Merry, "you're not going to play a man short?"

"Yes, I am," said Figgins. "That dirty boulder will never play on the same field with me again, I can promise you."

"I wegard Figgay as havin' acted in a stwictly pwopah mannah."

"Go hon!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Look here, fair's fair," said Tom Merry. "We'll lend you a man."

"But—"

"Take Digby."

"I'm willing," said Digby.

"Oh, all right," said Figgins. "Come on, you can field in Lumley's place."

And Digby joined his former adversaries for the finish of the match. It was a curious change of sides, but Digby was loyal to the core, and prepared to work his hardest for Figgins's eleven.

But the luck of the day was evidently with the batting side.

Cousin Ethel and Miss Phyllis were well set at the wickets now, and even Fatty Wynn could not move them, and Hilton was powerless.

Slowly but surely the score crept up.

Ninety-one—ninety-three—ninety-four!

The scores had tied; and still the batsmen were well set at the wickets. Figgins gave the ball to Fatty Wynn once more.

"It's the last chance, Fatty," he said. "Either a wicket goes down in this over—or there's the winning hit—do your best."

Fatty Wynn nodded.

"I will, Figgy, old son."

And he did his best. But fortune was favouring the gentler sex now. Cousin Ethel met Fatty Wynn's first ball with a swipe that sent it far on its journey.

Miss Phyllis had started from her end when Ethel's clear voice was heard.

"No need to run, Phyllis."

And there wasn't—it was a boundary.

The match was won—well won!

"Hurway!" shouted Arthur Augustus.

The juniors swarmed on the field, shouting.

"Hurrah!"

"Bravo!"

"Votes for women!" yelled Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! It's wippin'! Let's chair them off, deah boys!"

"Don't be an ass, Gussy."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Cheese it!"

And D'Arcy realised that perhaps his suggestion was a little too enthusiastic. But the girls walked back to the pavilion surrounded by a cheering crowd, and with happy smiles upon their faces.

Tom Merry's team had won the match—but there was no doubt that the greater part of the credit was due to the "Terrible Three"—Phyllis, Vera and Ethel.

CHAPTER 20.

Neck or Nothing!

TOM MERRY & CO. enjoyed the tea on the lawn, in the sunset, after the exciting match.

All the juniors were merry enough. Figgins & Co. had been beaten, but after all, both sides could not win, and the match had been a well-fought one. Besides, it was almost a pleasure to be beaten by Cousin Ethel, so Figgins declared—a sentiment which was cheered heartily, though Wally was observed to grunt.

It was a merry meal; and no one missed the Outsider.

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NEXT THURSDAY: "COUSIN ETHEL'S TREAT." A splendid tale of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's, by MARTIN CLIFFORD.

Jerrold Lumley had gone; and they were glad that he had gone.

Now that the match was over, Figgins learned what had happened at Laurel Villa, and he knitted his brows over the story; and if the Outsider had been still there, it is probable that Figgins would have made an example of him.

Still, on account of Miss Priscilla and the girls, it was just as well that a row was avoided by Lumley taking himself off.

The Laurel Villa party were to return home in the dusk and the major gave orders for the horses to be put in the brake. The sun had disappeared, when the juniors and the girls put on their coats and hats at last.

"Where's the brake?" said Tom Merry, looking out at the door.

"Hark!"

There was a sound of a thunder of hoofs on the drive. A few moments later, the driver appeared in view, running towards the house.

Tom Merry ran down the steps to meet him.

"Anything wrong?" he cried.

"The horses have run away, sir!"

"With the brake?"

"Yes!"

"Great Scott! How did it happen?"

"There's somebody in the brake, sir—he nipped in, and I only came out in time to see him drive off—but I think the horses are running away with him, from the speed they went at."

"Which way have they gone?"

"Towards the gates, sir."

"Phew! Are the gates open?"

"Yes, sir."

Tom Merry listened intently.

The thunder of the hoofs was dying away in the distance towards the gates. The four horses were evidently going at a great speed—either running away, or driven recklessly by whoever was in the brake.

"Who could it be?"

"I thought it was one of the young gentlemen joking at first," said the driver, "but they are all here."

A name leaped to Tom Merry's lips at once.

"Lumley!"

"Bai Jove! The Outsider!"

"My hat!" exclaimed Lowther. "Then he collared the brake, to strand us here to-night! The worm!"

"It's a rotten jape," said Tom Merry grimly. "We—"

"Ah!"

"Bai Jove!"

Wally, Jameson, and Gibson had just wheeled their bicycles out for the homeward run. The lamps were not yet lighted on them. Tom Merry signed to Blake and Lowther, and ran towards the Third-Formers.

"Here, what are you up to?" exclaimed Wally, as Tom Merry jerked his cycle away.

"I want your machine—"

"Well, of all the cheek—"

"Must; explain to him, Figgy."

And Tom Merry put his leg over the bicycle, and pounded away. Blake and Lowther were after him in a flash, leaving the Third-Formers staring blankly.

Down the dark drive the three cyclists swept together.

In a minute or less they were at the gates, and the lodge-keeper called to them, but they did not reply.

Out into the shadows of the road they swept.

Far away ahead they caught the glimmer of light from the brake, which was going along at top speed.

In the glimmer of the starlight Tom Merry made out a youthful form in the driver's seat, and he was relieved to assure himself that the horses were not running away. The Outsider was driving; and Tom Merry knew that Lumley could drive well.

It was a jape.

But it was an ill-natured jape, which might mean trouble enough for the Laurel Villa party; for no preparations had been made at the major's house for their reception, and suddenly to have to find accommodation for twelve persons, four of them ladies, would have very much taxed the resources of Major Figgins's housekeeper.

And unless the brake was recaptured, there was no possibility of getting back to Laurel Villa that night.

"We'll have him yet!" exclaimed Blake, between his teeth. "What a rotten jape! This is in return for his being ordered off the field."

"The rotten boulder!" said Lowther. "It's just like one of his tricks—"

Tom Merry clicked his teeth.

"I'll back the bikes against the brake any day!" he exclaimed.

"What-ho!"

And, indeed, the cycles were gaining fast on the brake. The pace of the latter had slackened down; the Outsider, not knowing that he was pursued, did not seem in so great a hurry now.

He glanced back, but for some time did not see the machines or their riders. The cyclists had no lamps, and they made little noise.

But the Outsider caught sight of them in the starlight at last. In the quiet of the country lane, the chums of St. Jim's heard the startled exclamation he gave.

The whip cracked.

"Back up!" muttered Tom Merry. "He's seen us!"

"What ho!"

The cyclists tore on.

Jerrold Lumley was urging the horses on to a reckless speed now. But the cyclists were steadily gaining. It was fortunate for all concerned that it was a lonely road, and deserted at night.

Pop!

It was a sudden explosion like a rifle-shot.

Tom Merry turned his head.

"What's that?"

"Tyre bust!" gasped Lowther. "Keep on! I'm done!"

He jumped off his machine.

Tom Merry and Blake scorched on. There was no use in stopping, and two of them were enough—twice enough—to tackle the Outsider.

"Stick it out!" said Blake cheerily.

On they swept.

The horses were thundering along at top speed now, but the cyclists were close behind the brake. There was narrow room between the brake and the ditch, but Tom Merry steered his bicycle that way. Blake shot ahead of him, and came up the side of the brake. Lumley glanced down, and set his teeth, and drew the horses a little to one side, so as to force Blake to ride into the ditch, or to be crushed under the brake.

Blake had no choice in the matter, and the reckless young ruffian in the brake gave him no time to think. Cycle and cyclist ran into the shallow ditch, and the brake's wheel scraped the edge of the ditch as it swept on.

Blake was hopelessly behind.

But Blake's disaster had given Tom Merry his chance. He had ridden on the other side of the brake, where for the moment there was ample room.

He shot ahead, and passed the brake, pedalled on furiously for fifty yards, and then crammed on the brakes and jumped off. He swung the cycle into the hedge, turned round, and waited.

The brake came tearing on.

Lumley could not have stopped it then if he had tried. Tom Merry stood ready. It was no light task to board a brake going at top speed, but Tom knew what he was about.

He allowed the heavy vehicle to pass him, and sprang up behind on the step, holding on for dear life.

A moment more, and he was rolling in the brake.

Lumley stood up, and turned round, cutting at him savagely with the whip. Tom Merry leaped to his feet.

Three savage cuts he received before he reached Lumley. Then the Outsider of St. Jim's was dragged down into the brake, and they rolled together on the floor, fighting fiercely.

But at that game Jerrold Lumley was no match for the hero of the Shell.

He was pumelled into submission in a couple of minutes, and left gasping in the bottom of the brake, while Tom Merry clambered into the driver's seat.

Left uncontrolled for even only a few minutes, the horses had taken full advantage of it; and they were now fairly running away with the brake.

Tom Merry grasped the reins.

Tom was a good driver, and he had driven four horses before; but he had never had such a task as this presented to him.

But he did not lose his nerve.

The brake, and his own life and Lumley's now depended upon his handling of the team; for an accident was likely enough to be fatal.

And unless the horses were subdued, an accident might happen at the first turning, and certainly would happen if they met anything in the road.

With exhaustless patience, Tom Merry strove to regain control of the horses, never losing his courage or his presence of mind for a moment.

Slowly, but surely, he reduced the mad speed, and brought the frightened animals back to a sense of obedience to the rein.

The pace of the brake slackened.

Tom Merry heard a gasp behind him.

"I guess that was a close call for both of us," said the Outsider.

Tom Merry gave the Outsider a glance.

Lumley had a black eye, and his nose was streaming red. But there was a grin on his face. He seemed to take his defeat with curious complacency.

"You cad!" said Tom. "There might have been an accident."

"I guess I thought there would be," said Lumley coolly.

"You do know how to drive, some."

Tom Merry made no reply. He brought the brake to a halt at last, and then turned to Jerrold Lumley again.

"Get out!" he said.

"Oh, all serene!"

Lumley jumped out of the brake, and disappeared into the darkness.

Tom Merry turned the brake in the road, and drove back towards the house, which was now more than a mile distant. He stopped to pick up the cycle he had left in the hedge. A few minutes later he came upon Blake, standing by the ditch, caked in mud, and supporting a bicycle with a twisted wheel, equally muddy.

"Oh, you've got the brake!" exclaimed the Fourth-Former.

"And you've got the mud!" grinned Tom Merry.

"Jump in, and shove the bike in. I don't know how Wally & Co. will get home to-night."

Lowther was encountered halfway to the Lodge, wheeling his machine. He was glad enough to get it, and himself, into the brake.

"Where's Lumley?" was his first question.

"Gone!"

"I'd jolly well like to punch his head."

"His head's punched," said Tom Merry, laughing.

"That's all right."

Ten minutes later Tom Merry drove the brake up in triumph to the lighted door of the major's house. Miss Priscilla gave a cry of relief.

"My darling Tommy! You are safe!"

"Safe as houses!" said Tom Merry cheerfully. "Nothing damaged—except the bikes. Here they are, kids!"

There was a howl of wrath from Wally & Co.

"You can't ride them home to-night, that's a dead cert," grinned Figgins. "You'll have to stay over-night, Wally, that's all."

"Just so," said the major.

"Good!" said Wally. "And we'll look for Lumley before we go in the morning!" A suggestion which was received with great favour by Jameson and Gibson.

Tom Merry & Co. and the girls mounted into the recaptured brake. They took quite an affectionate leave of Figgins & Co. and the major, with promises on both sides of mutual visits to be made in the near future.

After the brake had rolled off on its homeward journey, Figgins stood gazing after it dreamily, the soft touch of Cousin Ethel's hand still lingering on his palm. Fatty Wynn nudged him several times.

"Ain't you coming in, Figgy?"

"Eh?"

"I say, supper's ready!"

"What?"

"Supper!"

"Supper! Eh? Oh!"

"What on earth's the matter with him, Kerr?" said Fatty Wynn, in amazement. "He doesn't seem to understand!"

"Let him alone!" he advised.

"Oh, rats!" said Fatty Wynn warmly. "I'm not going to see a chap miss his supper if I can help it. I say, Figgy, come in! Supper, you know—supper!"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" said Figgins; and he walked away, leaving Fatty Wynn so much surprised, that it was a full minute before he went in to his own supper.

The brake contained a jolly party as it rolled homeward. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gave his opinion on the cricket match at length, and mentioned Figgins cheering the hits of the rival side.

"I must say I regard Figgay as a great sportsman," said D'Arcy. "Figgay has his faults, but I must remark that he is a really good sort, you know—the kind of chap a fellow ought to be pwnd to chum with."

"Hear, hear!" said Tom Merry & Co. heartily.

And Cousin Ethel gave Arthur Augustus a sweet smile; so sweet a smile, in fact, that Arthur Augustus was very glad indeed that he had put on his pink necktie. Cousin Ethel did not often give him so sweet a smile as that, and D'Arcy, in default of any other possible explanation suggesting itself, put it down to that really attractive and becoming necktie.

THE END.

(Another long, complete story of Tom Merry & Co. next Thursday, entitled "Cousin Ethel's Treat," by Martin Clifford. Order your copy of the "Gem" Library in advance. Price One Penny.)

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NEXT THURSDAY: "COUSIN ETHEL'S TREAT." A splendid tale of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's, by MARTIN CLIFFORD

The First Chapters of a Splendid Serial Story.



READ THIS FIRST.

Oswald Yorke, a youth of eighteen, joins the Navy under peculiar circumstances, becoming a midshipman aboard the frigate Catapult under the name of John Smith.

The frigate is wrecked, and but a handful of her crew are saved. The survivors, including Oswald, are accommodated at the house of a planter named Wilson on the island of San Andrade.

The frigate Cynthia, with Admiral Sir Samson Eastlake on board, calls at the island, and the Catapult's officers are taken on board. Oswald and his friend Maxwell are rated as midshipmen. Oswald soon falls foul of Mr. Briggs, the Cynthia's ill-natured second lieutenant, and is mastheaded as a punishment. His early disgrace arouses the admiral's displeasure, and Oswald's indignation against Mr. Briggs waxes hot.

(Now go on with the story).

The Fight with the Pirate-Ship.

The wind was blowing freshly from the north-west, and the Cynthia was bowling along over a crisp sea, so that Oswald's position was one of discomfort and considerable danger.

But he was not in the mood to care whether he fell from his airy perch or not.

"It would be a good thing—a fit ending to my miserable life!" he muttered. "There would be none to miss me, many to be glad that I am gone. Hallo!" he muttered to himself, forgetting for a moment all his troubles. "Is that a sail? It looks like one."

He strained his eyes in the direction in which he fancied he saw the sail. The frigate was rolling considerably, and he had to wait for a few moments before she righted. Yes; it was a sail, without doubt.

His first impulse was to hail the deck with the information; then he remembered he was there for punishment, and not on the look-out, so he shut his mouth tightly and held his peace.

It was nearly a quarter of an hour later that the look-out man hailed the deck.

"Two sails on the lee bow!"

"Two sails?" muttered Oswald. Yes, sure enough the man was right. There were two sails in sight.

Meanwhile, there was considerable excitement on deck, for Mr. Hope had suggested it was very possible the two sails might turn out to be the missing Rattler and the Albatross.

The Cynthia now made all sail, and stood in pursuit. The wind increased to half a gale, and she ploughed through the tumbling sea in grand style. Oswald seemed to have been forgotten, but this fact did not greatly disturb him. Clinging to his hand-hold, he watched the issues of the chase with excited interest. The strong wind was all in favour of the heavier vessel, and as the minutes wore on it could be plainly seen that she was gaining on her chase.

Meanwhile, on deck Captain Garvin had ordered all the men aft on the quarter-deck, and made a short speech to them.

"My men," he said, "if these two vessels turn out to be the Gem Library.—No. 130.

NEXT THURSDAY: "COUSIN ETHEL'S TREAT." A splendid tale of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's by MARTIN CLIFFORD.

the Rattler and the Albatross, I cannot tell you there will be much prize-money to be earned, but we have a greater duty to perform than lining our pockets with an enemy's gold. The ruffians who man the Rattler foully murdered all her crew. They were Englishmen, as we are, and their blood cries out for vengeance. Shall we revenge them?"

"Ay, ay!" roared the men.

"Yes, we will revenge them!" cried the captain. "And not only them, but the unfortunate young officer who, though guiltless of any breach of discipline, took the loss of his ship so much to heart that he killed himself rather than face the court-martial that would have awaited him. We will avenge him and his men these ruffians foully murdered. If we were dealing with a noble and a generous foe I would say to you, 'Fight for your country's cause and for the honour and glory of your King, but be generous in your strength: give your quarter where quarter is asked; be merciful as you are victorious'; but now I tell you, remember your countrymen foully murdered. Avenge them with sword and fire; slay, and spare not! To such ruffians as these, mercy is a mistake—clemency is a crime!"

The little speech was received with a roar of cheers. And half an hour later the cheers burst forth anew as Mr. Hope, looking through the glass, declared without hesitation that one of the sails, now plainly in sight, was the Rattler.

"I have sailed in her too long to mistake her," he said confidently. Then he added, with involuntary admiration: "The rascals know how to manage her! Our own poor lads couldn't have got more out of her than these are doing now."

It was true the crew under Kester's direction were straining every effort to get away from the frigate, but the wind continued to blow at half a gale, and in the strong winds the heavier vessel had the superiority in speed.

"The brutes mean to fight, after all!" said Captain Garvin, with an exclamation of satisfaction.

This was true. The two schooners had shortened sail. Flight, they saw, was an impossibility, and nothing remained for them but to show their teeth.

"You fight with a rope round your necks," Kester told his men. "There is no quarter with us; give none. Fight like men or devils—but fight!"

The half-naked, savage crew responded with a deep growl. There were no cheers given on board the pirate schooners. Cheers could not come from such throats as these.

"The sail-trimmers must stick to their posts," said Captain Garvin, "for I mean to fight these scoundrels under sail, in case they try to give me the slip. Remember to keep the guns very much depressed, or we shall be firing over them instead of into them."

The Cynthia was now within two cable-lengths of the foremost schooner, which proved to be the Albatross. She was a very large schooner, and armed to the teeth. Sixteen guns she carried, and a crew of half-frantic savages, that swarmed on her deck and yelled curses and defiance at the oncoming frigate.

"Over to the lee guns!" sang out Captain Garvin. "When we round to fire as they bear. Now, hands by the lee braces! Quartermaster, abaft! Mind the boom sheet! Port, there—port hard, Dyson!"

"Port it is, sir!" roared out the helmsman.

The frigate swung round, shooting up under the stern of the Albatross, and discharging a broadside into it as the guns bore.

The broadside, however, did little damage, for, in spite of Captain Garvin's instructions, the guns were not sufficiently depressed. A good deal of rigging was cut about and damaged, half a dozen men on the deck were bowled over, and that is about all.

The two schooners opened fire simultaneously, and sent a hail of shot pattering against the frigate's side.

Up at the masthead Oswald could look down and see the vessels indistinctly through a thick veil of smoke. Below him was turmoil and strife. He could hear the yellings of the pirates and the deep, fierce growl of the British, mixed with an occasional scream of pain as some luckless wretch fell.

It was a strange feeling to look down and see men struggling for life and death beneath him, and where he was the fresh breeze fanned his cheek, and the heavens over him smiled down serenely, as though there were no such thing as war, bloodshed, and death.

Then suddenly a change came over his feelings. One of the men on the schooners had spied the lonely figure perched between sea and sky, and a well-directed shot sent the splinters flying from the mast half a dozen inches above Oswald's head. Oswald slipped round the mast so as to protect himself as far as possible, and waited. Another shot whistled past his ears; a third grazed his shoulder, and produced a stinging sensation.

And now a perfect volley was fired into the air. The white splinters glanced from the bruised mast; a rope cut through by a shot lashed the air and beat him across the face. Then suddenly the attack ceased. Oswald had been slightly wounded in half a dozen places, and the blood was trickling down his face and into his eyes.

He dashed it away, and saw that a score of men were swarming up into the schooner's rigging. They worked like fiends, setting all sail, and in a few moments the schooner began to draw away. Evidently the pirates had had more than enough of it, and were anxious to get out of such close quarters.

The breeze was lulling perceptibly, and the pirates, hoping to be favoured by the light and shifting wind, now devoted all their attention to flight.

Oswald could hear Kester's voice roaring out imperative orders to his men. Once or twice he could even catch a glimpse of the ruffian standing on his deck, cool and calm, where the shot was falling fast and thickest.

Captain Garvin called up the chief gunner, a man whose marksmanship was one of the glories of the Cynthia.

"Fredericks," he said, "those scoundrels must not escape! A hundred guineas if you bring down the Rattler's mast!"

"I'll do it without the hundred guineas, sir!" responded the man cheerily.

He rushed to the bow gun, all primed and loaded.

"Is it double-shot?" he cried to the man who had been serving it.

"Ay!" responded the other, stepping back to give place to Fredericks.

The gunner took the lighted match and stepped up to the gun. He sighted it coolly, and with infinite care, then straightened himself up.

The next instant he dropped forward without a groan, with a bullet-hole in his head, and fell across the gun-carriage.

A second man sprang forward and dragged away the dead body, and instantly applied the match. But it was too late. That shot from the schooner had saved the schooner's mast. The shot fell astern, doing no damage, and in a few moments the Rattler was speeding away as lightly as a bird on the wing, leaving the Cynthia far astern.

Captain Garvin looked up despairingly at the sky.

"If it would only come on to blow again!" he said, with almost a choke in his voice. But his prayer was unheard and unheeded. The wind dropped to a murmuring breeze, which wafted the light-sailing schooners rapidly out of gun-shot, while it left the heavier vessel labouring far astern.

Favoured by the light and shifting breeze, the brace of pirates escaped, leaving the crew of the Cynthia to gaze after them with fierce longing.

"Never mind, my lads; our vengeance is only deferred. We shall have the pair of them one of these days, and then our reckoning will be all the heavier. Who is that up at the masthead?"

"Smith, sir!" said Maxwell.

"Smith! Why, good heavens, he must have been there through the whole engagement! Who sent him there?"

"I did, sir. He is mastheaded for punishment," said Mr. Briggs.

"You should have called him down before we engaged," said the captain sternly. "Kindly desire him to return to deck immediately."

Ten minutes later Oswald, feeling very dizzy, stepped on to deck, his face covered with blood. A stream of blood was oozing from his shoulder; there were several bullet-holes in his clothing.

The admiral looked at him in silence. It was Captain Garvin who spoke.

"They've marked you from the decks of the schooners, Smith?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then why did you not return to deck?"

"I was ordered to the masthead, sir," replied Oswald coolly.

"Go below, my boy, and ask the surgeon to dress your wounds," said the admiral kindly. Then Oswald turned away. The admiral turned to Mr. Briggs with a look of stern displeasure on his face.

"Sir," he said, "the first duty of an officer is to respect the life and safety of every man under him. Your duty was to have immediately removed Smith from a useless place of danger. You failed in your duty. See that this does not happen again. Had the boy been killed, your carelessness and thoughtlessness would have amounted practically to murder!"

Mr. Briggs turned away without a word. His was not the nature to take a public reprimand without bitterness, and he registered a vow that he would be even with the cause of his temporary disgrace.

Captain Burgoyne Defames the Dead, and Refuses an Invitation to a Duel—Arrest, or Something Like it.

As the "Cynthia" neared Kingston, the attitude of Captain Burgoyne underwent a noticeable change. The presence on board of the admiral and Captain Garvin was sufficient to keep him from indulging in his usual intemperate habits. But that was not all; he tried his best to make himself agreeable to all with whom he came into contact. He fawned and flattered Dr. Telford; he was genial and affable with Mr. Pringle and Fid. Even to Oswald he became extraordinarily friendly, while to Maxwell his manner became almost fatherly.

It was the same with Mr. Brabazon—he never before had anything but a scowl or an oath for Oswald—until, one morning, through Oswald's one morning, and walked up and down the quarter-deck with him in this fashion.

"I can't make it out," Oswald said.

"You're precious innocent," sneered Maxwell. "Can't you see the pair of them are funky? There'll be an inquiry into the loss of the Catapult as soon as we touch port. We shall all have to give evidence, and so the skipper and Brab are getting very friendly all of a sudden. They know that they are in a tight place if we like to open our mouths; and, by George, if they give me a chance to talk, I'll tell them all something!" Maxwell ended.

On the evening when they dropped anchor in Kingston Harbour, Dr. Telford sent for Oswald and Maxwell to his cabin.

"Sit down, boys," he said cheerily, pointing to a sea-chest on which Oswald and Maxwell, with some squeezing, found room.

"I have sent for you," Dr. Telford began, "as this is probably the last opportunity on which we may get a quiet word together. To-morrow we shall land, and possibly none of us may return to the Cynthia again. Of course, you know that an inquiry will be held regarding the loss of the Catapult. Captain Burgoyne's position at the present moment is a very unenviable one. A captain who has lost his ship is always looked upon with some distrust, but when it can be proved that the loss was entirely due to himself, then his punishment may be a very heavy one—death even, and, at least, dismissal from the service."

"The Catapult was lost through Captain Burgoyne's fault," Maxwell said boldly.

Dr. Telford did not answer.

"A searching inquiry will be made," he went on, "and all those who have survived the vessel will be subjected to a severe examination. I have no wish to bias you, nor to instruct you what you are to say; I only want to impress on you two things. Tell the truth simply, volunteer no statements, and defend the memory of Mr. Fryer."

"Defend Mr. Fryer!" exclaimed Oswald.

"Yes; for I think that Captain Burgoyne intends to lay all the blame, if he can do so, on to Mr. Fryer's shoulders."

"The cur!" said Maxwell fiercely.

"I am not sure," said Dr. Telford, "but what we ought, immediately on landing, to go and make our report as to the behaviour of the captain of the Catapult and his second lieutenant; but I think that, as an inquiry will be held, we may wait until then. Captain Burgoyne is now disposed, I notice, to be extremely friendly. I need not say to you

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that I have too much faith in both of you to think for a moment that you may be led away, and induced to bear witness that is not strictly true. That's all. I thought it better to have these few words with you."

As he spoke Dr. Telford held out his hand, which Maxwell and Oswald grasped in turn. They turned away and left the cabin.

Despite the assumed cheerfulness and good-humour, it was not difficult to see that both Captain Burgoyne and Mr. Brabazon grew more and more uneasy as the time approached for them to leave the Cynthia. The latter was looking wretchedly ill and weak when he stepped into the shore-going boat, so ill, that even Oswald pitied him, though he knew that it was only fear that blanched the lieutenant's cheeks.

The admiral had left the Cynthia at daybreak with Captain Garvin, and it was now Captain Burgoyne's duty to go and lay before him the report he had prepared on the loss of the Catapult. Immediately the boat touched shore, Captain Burgoyne, followed by Brabazon, walked rapidly away, leaving the rest to their own devices.

Dr. Telford and Mr. Pringle landed and walked off together, so that Maxwell and Oswald found themselves their own masters. With the exception of their stay on the island, they had not set foot on dry land since leaving England.

The sandy streets were alive with drays conveying merchandise from the wharves to the stores. The houses were nearly all of two storeys, most of them surrounded by piazzas, where the merchants were interviewing their customers in the shade.

But the negro population preferred the sunshine, and the men—great hulking black fellows—lay basking in the sunlight.

"Ho, see da leetle massa man-o'-war ossifers! Ho, massa, take pity on poor brack fellows, massa! Beg one little feepenny, massa! Massa Breetesh ossifers want to see all de sight ob de town?" asked one. "I show massa everyting for one maccaroni!"

"Get out!" said Maxwell.

There were eight or ten niggers following them, begging on leetle feepenny, or offering to show them the sights for one maccaroni. A few minutes of their landing.

"Go away!" shouted Maxwell, losing his temper.

"Ho, massa; do anything for massa."

"Go away; I've got no money!" said Maxwell angrily.

"Oh, massa will hab him joke! Massa got morest money dan him know what to do wid!" said one flat-nosed giant.

"I tell you—!" began Maxwell. Then an idea struck him; he pulled his empty pockets inside out, and walked down the street. For a moment the crowd of beggars stood looking after him with amazement depicted on their faces; then, with a few derisive jeers and yells, they took to their heels and went scampering down the road.

Oswald and Maxwell wandered about the town all the morning, looking at everything that was worth looking at, until it suddenly struck them that they were hungry. Maxwell had told the negroes the entire truth when he said he had no money. He had not a halfpenny in his pocket, neither had Oswald, and it looked very much as if they would have to go without their dinner, or hurry back to the Cynthia.

They had made up their minds to the latter course, and were making their way back to Tye wharf, when suddenly they were hailed from the piazza of a house.

"Smith! Maxwell!"

They looked up, and there was the old admiral, surrounded by a group of naval officers, among whom were Captain Burgoyne and Mr. Brabazon.

"Where are you two boys going?" asked the admiral.

"Back to the Cynthia, sir, for dinner," said Maxwell.

"Come on, both of you," said the admiral cheerily.

He turned and said a few words to a tall, dark-haired man in civilian's dress, who proved to be the

admiral's agent, Mr. Grimphorne, who received the two boys with a great show of goodwill.

"We shall dine in half-an-hour, young gentlemen," he said. "You are welcome to a seat at my table."

Oswald and Maxwell entered the piazza with such a feeling of nervousness at suddenly finding themselves in such good company; but they need not have troubled themselves, for no one took the slightest notice of them. The admiral now retired, and the officers grouped themselves about Captain Burgoyne, and expressed deep sympathy with him in the loss he had suffered.

In one of the corners the two lads sat listening. "We could tell them a tale if we liked," Maxwell muttered in Oswald's ear.

Besides Mr. Grimphorne there were two other civilians present, and four men in the dress of naval officers, two being captains of vessels lying in the harbour, and the other two lieutenants. One of the captains was a stout, jolly-looking man, with a round, red face, and a loud, hearty voice. This was Captain Turnbull, of the Fireball, who had come to pay his respects to the admiral.

It was scarcely a week since he himself had dropped anchor in the harbour with a couple of rich prizes, and, in consequence, he had received the congratulations of the admiral, and was on the best terms in the world with himself, and quite willing to bestow sympathy on a brother officer to whom fortune had not proved quite so kind.

"This gentleman was my second lieutenant on board the unfortunate Catapult," said Captain Burgoyne, presenting Mr. Brabazon.

Captain Turnbull bowed.

"And your first lieutenant; do I understand that he was among the lost?"

"He is dead," said Captain Burgoyne shortly.

There was a pause of some moments, then the other captain, Captain Maher, of the Turtle, spoke.

"Did not Fryer sail with you, Captain Burgoyne?" he asked.

"That was my late first lieutenant's name," said Captain Burgoyne stiffly.

"And he is dead, poor fellow; a good sailor, and one of the—"

"I am sorry that I cannot agree with you, sir," said Captain Burgoyne stiffly. "Excuse me, but I prefer not to speak of Mr. Fryer with you now."

There was another pause, then one of the lieutenants spoke up hotly.

"I beg your pardon, sir, Mr. Fryer was a personal friend of mine. I deeply regret to hear of his death; but I can see no reason why his name should not be mentioned."

"There is a reason, sir," said Captain Burgoyne stiffly. "That reason is known to myself and this gentleman."

"I knew Mr. Fryer well by repute; he bore one of the best characters in the service," said Captain Turnbull.

"I am sorry that he did not act up to it, then," said Burgoyne.

"You mean—" began the lieutenant who had previously spoken.

"I mean, sir," retorted Burgoyne haughtily, "that I prefer not to discuss Mr. Fryer with you or with anyone else. You will understand my repugnance to speak of him when I tell you that he is the cause of my present unpleasant position."

"The cause of—the loss of the Catapult, you mean?" asked Captain Maher quickly.

"I prefer to say nothing; but, since you force me to speak, I say yes."

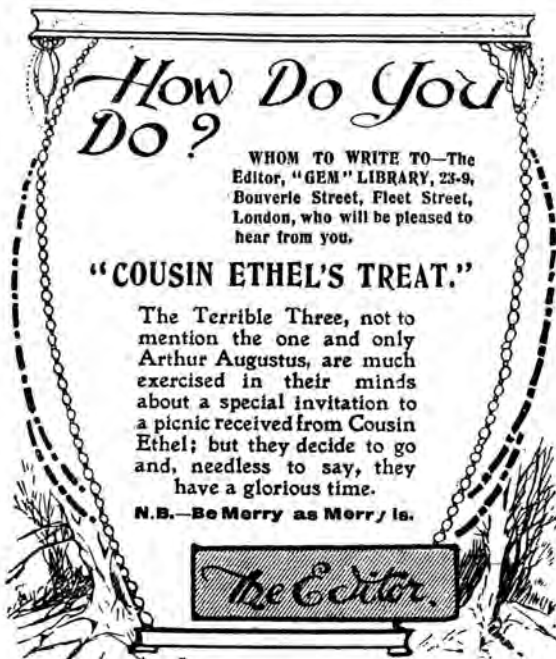
"I cannot, and will not believe it," said the young lieutenant sharply; "and I will not stand by and hear a dead man defamed!"

"You call me a liar?" shouted Burgoyne, swinging round on his heel, and facing the young man.

There was a moment's pause; and then, from a totally unexpected quarter, came the answer:

"I do!"

(Another instalment of this thrilling serial will appear next Thursday)



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