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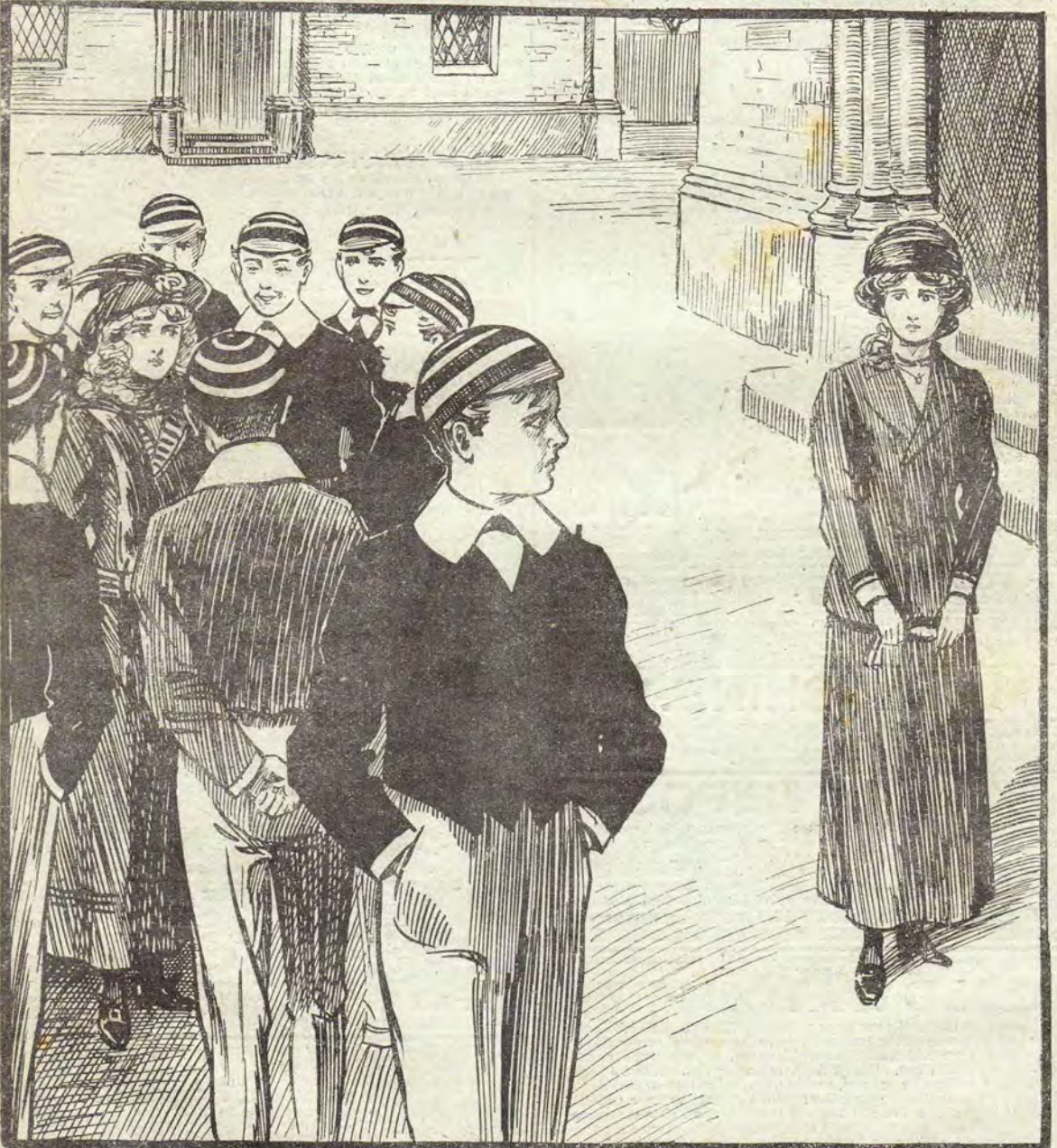
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REGINALD WRAY.

The GEM

LIBRARY VOL. 6.

No. 201.



Maud Bishop glanced timidly towards her brother. She had expected him to greet her with a gladness and affection equal to her own, but his look gave her a sudden, strange, cold feeling. He was not glad to see her! "Val!" she cried piteously. But Bishop did not make a movement to greet his sister. If it had been possible, he would have disowned her there and then before Cousin Ethel and all the fellows!

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ASHAMED OF HIS SISTER!

A Splendid, New, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1.

Bishop Loses His Temper.

"H, hang!"
The sudden exclamation made a dozen fellows look round, in the junior common-room in the School House at St. Jim's.

The evening post had come in, and a good many fellows were reading letters and postcards, some of the more fortunate ones extracting postal-orders, as well as parental advice, from the letters.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of the Fourth Form, had taken a crisp fiver from his letter, and was regarding it through his eyeglasses with considerable satisfaction. Blake, Herries, and Digby, D'Arcy's chums in the Fourth, were regarding it with satisfaction almost equal to D'Arcy's own. There was a half-holiday the next day, and that fiver was likely to be useful to more than one fellow besides its owner.

Tom Merry, of the Shell, was in luck, too. Besides a letter of eight pages in the almost unreadable hand of his old

governess, Miss Priscilla Fawcett, there was a postal-order for a pound. Tom Merry read the postal-order instead of the letter, putting that away in his pocket for future reference.

"Good!" said Tom Merry.

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

And then came the sudden exclamation from a less satisfied recipient of correspondence.

"Oh, hang!"

D'Arcy jammed his eyeglass a little tighter into his eye, and looked round at the fellow who had spoken, as did nearly everybody else.

It was Bishop, of the Fourth, a rather slim, good-looking junior, whose chief fault was a petulant and impatient temper, and a disposition to "swank." Swank was a thing that Arthur Augustus was always down upon. Blake had said that the reason was, that if there was any swanking to be done, Gussy could do it himself; but that was scarcely just to the swell of St. Jim's.

Next Thursday:

"THE RUNAWAY SCHOOLBOY!" AND "DEEP SEA GOLD."

No. 201 (New Series.) Vol. 6.

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"Oh, hang!" repeated Bishop angrily, apparently unconscious of the eyes that were turning upon him. "Oh, dash! Hang it!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Hang!"

Arthur Augustus looked a little sympathetic. There was no doubt about the genuineness of the dismay and annoyance in Bishop's face, and the swell of St. Jim's thought that he could guess the reason.

"Sowwy, old chap," he said. "What is it—a beastly tailah's bill?"

"No," snapped Bishop.

"Some howwid imposition in the account of your laundress, deah boy?"

"No."

"Your governah has failed to come up to the sewatch, I suppose, and hasn't sent you a wemittance?" said D'Arcy. "Pway be patient, deah boy. These governahs are all the same. My patah is gettin' quite unweasonable on the subject of fivahs. I wote to him that Cousin Ethel was comin' to-morrow, and I was simply bound to have an extwa fivah, but I did not vegard it as a cert. till I got it. You can never tell, you know, what your governah is goin' to do. You have to be patient with them."

"Oh, rats!" said Bishop. "It isn't that."

He crumpled the letter in his hand. Mellish, the cad of the Fourth, gave a chuckle. He had been glancing at the letter over Bishop's shoulder, unknown to its owner.

"It's a letter from a lady," grinned Mellish.

"Oh!"

"It's in a girl's hand, anyway."

"Phew!"

"Breach of promise, perhaps," said Levison. "Oh, Bishop!"

"Oh, don't be an ass!" exclaimed Bishop angrily.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus turned his monocle upon Bishop again.

"Weally, Bish, I twust that you were not expwessin' dis satisfaction at bein' honahed by a lettah from a lady!"

"Oh, rats!"

"If you say wats to me, Bishop—"

"Rats!" said Bishop irritably.

"Weally, you ass—"

"Oh, cheese it! Don't bother," said Bishop.

Arthur Augustus flushed red.

He was not by any means a quarrelsome fellow, but he had a very strong sense of his personal dignity. He rose to his feet, and pushed back his cuffs.

"Blake, deah boy, take my fivah for a minute."

Blake grinned.

"Certainly, my son. You won't want it back, I suppose?"

"Pway don't be an ass, Blake! Digby, deah boy, hold my jacket."

"Right-ho!" said Digby, and he laid hold of Arthur Augustus's jacket, grasping the swell of St. Jim's firmly by the shoulders.

"You uttah ass, Digby! I mean aftah I have taken it off."

"Oh, I see!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy handed his elegant Eton jacket to Digby. Then he pushed back his cuffs anew, and crossed over to Bishop. Bishop was looking at him with a scowl. It was evident that the letter he received, and which he still held in his hand, had upset the junior very much, and he was in an angry and savage temper. He crumpled the letter in his hand, and glared at Arthur Augustus, apparently not averse to a row with the swell of St. Jim's, as a means of wreaking the anger that was within him.

"Bishop, you wottah—"

"Oh, shut up!" said Bishop.

"I vegard you as a wude beast, and I am goin' to give you a feahful thwashin'."

"Rats!"

"Put up your hands, you wottah!" shouted D'Arcy.

Tom Merry interposed.

"Hold on, Gussy!" he exclaimed, pushing back the excited swell of St. Jim's. "Hold on, my son! Remember that Cousin Ethel's coming to-morrow. You don't want her to see you with a black eye or a thick ear."

"I should be extwemely sowwy for Cousin Ethel to see me with a thick eye or a black eah, Tom Mewwy—I mean a black eye or a thick eah—but I am bound to give Bishop a feahful thwashin'. Will you put up your wotten hands, you wottah?"

"Go and eat coke!" said Bishop.

Arthur Augustus expended no more breath in words. He rushed at the junior, and smote. The smite was a mighty one, but Bishop guarded it, and D'Arcy's fist shot past his shoulder, and D'Arcy's chest came into violent contact with Bishop's. Bishop at once grasped him, and they waltzed round the common-room in a deadly embrace.

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"THE DUFFER'S RETURN!"

Is the Title of the Splendid, Long, Complete School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. appearing in this week's "MAGNET" Library. Now on Sale. Price One Penny.

"Go it, Gussy!"

"Go it, Bish!"

"Pile in!"

"Lick him!"

The juniors gathered round in an excited circle. The fight was a little pleasant excitement to break the monotony of the evening. The two struggling juniors crashed into the table, and set it rocking, and a chess-board danced, and Bernard Glyn and Clifton Dane, of the Shell, who were playing chess, gave a simultaneous roar.

"Stop that, you silly asses!"

"Sowwy, deah boy—"

"Hurrah!"

"Go it!"

Tramp, tramp, tramp! The two combatants were "going it" hot and strong, but they were claspng each other much too tightly to do each other much harm. But suddenly they separated, and then rushed together again, hammering. D'Arcy received Bishop's fist full in the eye—fortunately his monocle was not there—and Bishop received an upper-cut that sent him staggering back, and he dropped to the floor with a crash.

"Down!" roared Blake. "Good old Gussy!"

"Hurrah!"

"Up you get, Bish!"

"Go for him!"

Bishop jumped up savagely. He rushed forward, but at the same moment Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, entered the common-room. Kildare was head prefect of the School House, and he had heard the row from afar. Kildare did not stand upon ceremony. He grasped Arthur Augustus D'Arcy by the collar with one hand, and Val Bishop by the collar with the other hand. He shook them both till their teeth rattled in their heads.

"Ow!"

"Bai Jove!"

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

Shake, shake, shake!

"Now, no more rows to-night!" said Kildare, as he released the gasping, panting juniors. "Keep quiet, or I shall come back again, and bring a cane with me."

"Ow!"

"Weally, Kildare—"

"Groo!"

"Oh!"

Kildare shook a warning finger at them, and strode from the room. D'Arcy and Bishop eyed one another dubiously, and then D'Arcy proceeded to put his collar straight, and Bishop to tie his necktie. He left it untied in the middle, and gave a sudden start and looked round.

"Where's my letter?"

"Your letter?" said Tom Merry.

"Yes; I've dropped it."

The juniors looked round the common-room for the letter. But it was not found. Bishop, with a troubled and angry face, searched right and left, under chairs and tables, in odd corners, but in vain. The letter had disappeared. So had Percy Mellish, the cad of the Fourth.

CHAPTER 2.

Both Eyes!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY stood before the glass in Study No. 6—his study in the Fourth Form passage in the School House—and closed one eye, and blinked at his reflection with the other. There was a distressed expression upon the aristocratic countenance of D'Arcy, of the Fourth. Round his eye, where Bishop's fist had struck, there was a deep glow of red, and whether it would turn to purple, and then to black, was a distressing question that occupied the whole of D'Arcy's thoughts. On the morrow, Wednesday, there was a half-holiday at St. Jim's, and Ethel Cleveland was coming over to the school, and D'Arcy shuddered all over at the thought of meeting his cousin with a black eye. But if the eye darkened it could not be helped. No wonder the swell of St. Jim's looked distressed, and regarded his damaged optic in the glass instead of doing his prep.

Jack Blake and Herries and Digby were at work on their preparation. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy could not help feeling that they were selfish at that moment. They seemed to be quite undistressed by his misfortune; in fact, they did not seem to notice it at all. The elegant junior looked round at them several times, but they were intent upon their work. He coughed once or twice, but they did not look up. He coughed at last very loudly, and Blake's eyes quitted his work for a moment.

"Hallo, Gussy! Catching a cold?"

D'Arcy sniffed.

"Certainly not, Blake!"



"My—my brother is angry with me for coming here," sobbed poor Maud. "I—I want to go!" "You shall go," said Ethel, protectingly. "I will look after you. Come with me!"

"What are you grunting about, then?"

"I wasn't gwuntin'."

"Oh, all serene!"

Blake's eyes dropped upon his work again. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy jammed his monocle into his eye, and then gave a little gasp. It hurt him. He allowed the famous eyeglass to drop to the end of its string, and glared at Blake without it.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Anything the matter?" asked Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Lost the fiver?"

"No, I have not lost the fivah."

"Got the toothache?"

"No, you uttah ass!"

"Then what's the mattah?"

"I am thinkin'—"

"Oh," said Blake sympathetically, "I see! You shouldn't start these things too suddenly, old man. Does it give you a pain in the head?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Digby and Herries quite suddenly.

"You fwabjous asses! I am thinkin'—"

"Well, leave off, if it hurts you," said Blake. "Take it gradually, a little at a time, and you may get used to it."

"I am thinkin' about my eye," said D'Arcy, with dignity, and disdaining any further notice of Blake's frivolous remarks.

"I have a howwid feah that it will be black to-morrow."

"Awful!" said Blake.

"Cousin Ethel is comin', you see," said D'Arcy. "It would be howwid to greet her with a black eye."

"Oh, I don't know," said Blake. "It might be black but comely, you know. As the song says, could you be true to eyes of blue when you've looked into eyes of black?"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Or would you be seen with eyes of green when you've looked into eyes of pink," said Blake. "Under the circumstances—"

"If you are goin' to be a fwivolous ass, Blake, this discuss had bettah close," said Arthur Augustus, with a great deal of dignity.

"Hurrah!" said Blake.

"Weally, you ass—"

"The fact is, old man, I want to get my prep. done," said Blake; "I'll discuss your beaux yeux afterwards."

"You feahful ass!"

"What I like about Gussy," said Blake, "is his nice, pretty, THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 201.

NEXT THURSDAY: "THE RUNAWAY SCHOOLBOY!"

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complimentary way of addressing a fellow. You can easily see that Gussy was carefully brought up."

Arthur Augustus made another attempt to jam his monocle into his eye, and then let it drop the length of its cord again. Blake surveyed his eye critically.

"I shouldn't wonder if it's a nice stove-polish colour by the morning," he remarked. "But I'll tell you what. If you like to go out for the afternoon, I'll make your excuses, and look after your cousin while you're gone."

"You frightful ass!"

"Well, I can't say fairer than that," said Blake. "You shouldn't get into these rows if you don't like black eyes. I'm sure I've tried to bring you up carefully. The best advice I can give you is to take care of your other eye, and not get a dot in that."

"I regard you as an ass!"

There was a tap at the door, and Mellish, of the Fourth, came in. D'Arcy broke off, and all four of the occupants of the study stared at Mellish, not very hospitably. The cad of the Fourth was not very popular in Study No. 6.

But Mellish did not appear to notice the hostile looks. He was grinning, like one in possession of a good joke, which he was anxious to impart to others.

"Have you fellows heard?" he asked.

"Heard what?" demanded Blake.

"About Bishop."

"Bai Jove! Has he got a black eye, too?" asked D'Arcy, with interest.

"Not that I know of. It's about that letter."

"Has he found it?"

"It's jolly odd," said Mellish. "The letter seems to have been lost in the tussle, and somebody has found it, and pinned it up on the notice-board in the hall. Queer, isn't it?"

"A rotten trick!" said Blake.

Mellish nodded.

"Yes, wasn't it? I happened to see it sticking there, but I didn't know what it was, and I drew attention to it. Some of the fellows have read it."

"Rotters!" said Blake.

"Yes," said Mellish agreeably. "It is rotten to read another chap's letter, I must say. Thing I'd never do myself. But some of them read it before they really knew what it was, you know. It was only a short letter and it was from Bishop's sister."

"Rats!" said Blake. "Why should a letter from his sister make him fly out in a temper, as he did in the common-room?"

Mellish chuckled.

"That's the joke of it," he said. "It seems that his sister Maud—nice name, ain't it?—his sister Maud is coming to see him to-morrow afternoon, because it's a half-holiday, you see."

"Well, why shouldn't she?" said Blake.

Mellish shrugged his shoulders.

"That's the queer part of it," he said. "That's what got Bishop's back up, anyway. For some reason he doesn't want her to come. I wonder why?"

"I don't see why you should wonder about it at all," said Blake. "It's no business of yours, Mellish."

"Quite so," said Mellish, still agreeable. "Not at all. Only it's odd, ain't it? Bishop puts on a lot of side about his home and his people, and perhaps—"

"Perhaps what?"

"Well, perhaps they ain't up to the mark, after all," said Mellish, with a chuckle. "Maybe Miss Maud will give the whole show away. Ha, ha, ha!"

Blake gave him a look of contempt.

"Well, even if that's the case, it's nothing to cackle over," he said. "Blessed if I know what you want to come and jaw to us about it for."

"Yaas, wathah! I regard your whole attitude in the mattah as wotten, Mellish. I cannot help suspectin' that you were the chap who found Bishop's lettah and put it on the notice-board."

Mellish chuckled again.

"Some of the fellows are saying you did," he replied.

D'Arcy jumped.

"What!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, I don't say so, of course!" said Mellish, with his peculiar gnomish grin. "Don't think the suggestion came from me. But some of the fellows say that you got up that row with Bishop so as to get at the letter and read it."

"Bai Jove!"

"Of course, I wouldn't say such a thing; but it's odd, ain't it, about the letter being lost just after you had been fussing with him."

D'Arcy gave the cad of the Fourth an angry, scornful glance.

"You 'uttah wottah!" he exclaimed.

"My dear D'Arcy—"

"You fvaibious cad! You picked up the lettah yourself,

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"THE DUFFER'S RETURN!"

and you have started this wotten story," the swell of St. Jim's exclaimed, in a white heat.

Mellish grinned.

"Well, come to think of it, I shouldn't be surprised if you had done it," he said thoughtfully. "You never did get on with Bishop, and—"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy pushed back his cuffs and advanced upon the cad of the Fourth.

"Get out, you 'uttah wottah!" he exclaimed. "Bai Jove, if you stay anothah second in this studay I shall throw you out!"

"Rats!"

Arthur Augustus rushed straight at the cad of the Fourth. The chums of Study No. 6 stared at Mellish in amazement. As a rule, Percy Mellish avoided all personal encounters, and he had been known to back out of a row with a Third Form fag. His unusual courage amazed the chums of the Fourth. It really looked as if Mellish had come to the study for the special purpose of picking a row with Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

If that was his object, he had certainly succeeded. Arthur Augustus was rushing upon him with brandished fists. Mellish—wonder of wonders!—stood his ground, and hit out as the swell of St. Jim's attacked him. His fist crashed into D'Arcy's left eye, and the swell of St. Jim's gave a gasp.

"Ow!"

"Mind your eye!" yelled Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove!" gasped D'Arcy.

His grasp was upon Mellish the next moment. Mellish was swung off his feet, and hurled through the open doorway into the passage. He crashed upon the linoleum, and rolled over, with a yell.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stood in the doorway, with his hands up.

"Now come in again, you wottah!" he shouted excitedly.

But Mellish did not accept the invitation. He picked himself up, gasping and scowling, and retreated down the passage. Blake burst into a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Blake—" began Arthur Augustus, turning from the doorway.

"Ha, ha, ha! You'll have both eyes black now!"

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy rushed to the glass. He peered into it with terrible anxiety. Round his left eye was a rim of deep red, as deep and as red as that round his right eye. Would the red deepen to purple? Was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy fated to meet Cousin Ethel on the morrow with two black eyes? D'Arcy turned from the glass, and faced his chums, in utter dismay.

"Bai Jove," he gasped, "that's why that wottah came here and picked a wow! He wanted to give me a black eye! Bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you fellows—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was a tragic moment to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. But his chums in Study No. 6 persisted in looking upon the comic side of the matter, and they yelled.

CHAPTER 3.

"Keeping Up Appearances!"

VALENTINE BISHOP was standing in his study, in the Fourth Form passage. He had the letter in his hand again. He had rescued it from the notice-board, where it had been pinned up by a japer—most likely Percy Mellish. A good many fellows had read the letter, or part of it, but few of them had any idea why that letter should have made Bishop angry. It was an ordinary letter enough; indeed, it might have been expected to cause the junior pleasure. But Bishop, as he uncrumpled the letter and read it through again, certainly did not look as if he derived any pleasure from it. It ran:

"Dear Val,—I am so glad that I shall be able to see you, as it happens, before the end of the term. Father has given me five shillings for my last birthday present, and I am going to spend it on a return ticket to Rylcombe, so that I can come and see you. I know you have a half-holiday on Wednesday afternoon, so I shall come then. My train gets in at Rylcombe at half-past two. I shall be so glad to see you again, dear Val, and I know you will be glad to see me. It will be lovely to see the school, and the ruins, and to see your study, that you have told me so many things about. If you are not playing football, you might meet me at the station; but I dare say you will be wanted for an important match, and if so, it does not matter. I shall be able to find my way to St. Jim's quite easily, I am sure. With best love, your affectionate sister,
MAUD."

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It was a simple letter, written in a plain, girlish hand, upon very plain and cheap paper.

Bishop crumpled it in his hand again, and with a sudden angry movement tossed it into the fire.

The flame caught the letter, and it flared up, and was reduced to white ash in a few seconds.

"Hang it!"

Bishop muttered the words between his teeth.

He moved restlessly to and fro in the study, with his hands thrust deep into his pockets.

His sister was coming to St. Jim's on the morrow afternoon!

Why not?

There was no one at St. Jim's who would have been able to understand Bishop's frame of mind at that moment, from what was generally known of the junior.

Bishop was a good-looking, rather elegant fellow. He dressed well, and though he did not spend much money, he always seemed to have money in his pocket. He paid up his subscriptions to the football club and the Hobby Club regularly. He had a large and airy way of talking about his "place" and his "people" that sounded imposing, and the general impression he gave was that he came of a wealthy family. He never asked anybody home, but he allowed it to leak out that he really didn't regard anybody in the Fourth as quite up to the mark to be asked home. The Fourth regarded Bishop as a fellow who was rather given to swank, and a little snobbish, but a wealthy chap, and worth knowing. Bishop, indeed, by habit had come to look upon himself in the same light. He had talked so much about his place and his people, that his people and his place had become realities in his imagination. But letters from home reminded him of the facts. Letters from home never pleased Bishop.

Letters from home always brought back to his mind a picture of a faded, troubled mother, and a wrinkled father's face—the face of a hard-worked, declining old man, who strained every nerve to keep his son at a decent school, and who, when quarter-day came round, had to perform a series of arithmetical gymnastics to make both ends meet.

Letters from home reminded Bishop of the mother who was content to strive and patch and save, of the father who was willing to work and deny himself everything that he needed in his old age, of the sister who was content to remain quietly at home, helping her mother, while all the resources of the family were expended upon her brother, for whom they all hoped and predicted a brilliant future.

Not that Bishop was ungrateful.

He felt keenly enough the sacrifices that were made for him. His father was a dear old boy, his mother an angel, and Maud was a brick—so Bishop said to himself many a time.

He looked forward to making something of his life, when he should have left St. Jim's, as much for the sake of repaying the many favours he had received as for any other reason.

His father and mother should have a comfortable old age, and Maud should dress like a princess, when he had made money, in some manner as yet undiscovered. They should realise that they had done well in doing so much for him.

But meanwhile—

Meanwhile, he had his position to keep up at St. Jim's. Nobody there suspected or even dreamed that he belonged to a poor home in a country town, where his father worked for a small salary in a local bank, and his sister did sewing to eke out the family income. What would the fellows have thought about it if they had known?

Most of them, as a matter of fact, would have thought nothing about it at all—would have forgotten if they had been told. But Bishop was sensitive, morbidly sensitive, on the subject.

It seemed to him that if his home poverty was known, it would become the great standing fact at St. Jim's—that fellows would nudge one another when he passed, and whisper that his father was an old, poor bank clerk, that his sister did sewing, that his mother did not—horror of horrors—even keep a maid!

Bishop shuddered at the thought.

So long as he asked nobody home, and none of his relations came to St. Jim's, the junior was able to keep up appearances, as he called it. Keeping up appearances—the Moloch upon whose altar so many sacrifices have been made in every class of society—was a sort of fetish with Valentine Bishop. Whatever happened, he must keep up appearances. Later in life, when he was a rich man, and had made an assured position, he could meet his old schoolfellows, and they would never know in what wretched poverty his boyhood had been passed. That was how he looked at it. And so he had gone from giving false impressions to telling actual falsehoods, about his place and his people; and had, in fact, involved himself in a network of deceit and assumption which might be shattered at any moment.

He had lied at both ends. To the St. Jim's fellows he had

represented his place and his people as being what they were in truth far from being. To the people at home he had hinted that he occupied a place in the life at St. Jim's which was very far indeed from his real place. So long as his people and the school were widely separated, all was well, and his people were too poor to think of paying visits at a great distance. His father had been to St. Jim's once, to bring Bishop there when he first came, and since then his people had not been near the school. It had not occurred to Bishop, in weaving his web of deceit, that a visit from home might happen, to bring his air-castles tumbling about his ears.

And now it was coming!

On the morrow afternoon Maud would be at St. Jim's—Maud, with her plain but sweet and patient face, her plain dress, of materials cheaper than those worn by the maids at St. Jim's, and her fingers showing only too plainly the signs of the long, long sewing which she did, partly that her brother might have pocket-money in his pockets, to "keep up appearances" at St. Jim's.

What was he to do?

If he had told the truth in the first place, it would not have been so bad. But if the truth came out now, and it was known that he had lied—lied because he was ashamed of his home and his people—what would the fellows think?

His cheeks grew crimson at the thought.

Ashamed of his people!

To what lower depth of meanness could he have descended? Ashamed of the sweet, kind, patient sister who worked for him, and who regarded him as the finest and grandest fellow the earth held!

"Oh, hang! Oh, dash it!"

Bishop paced the study angrily and miserably.

He was ashamed, ashamed; but he was not so ashamed as he was angry and miserable. Maud must not come!

But—

How could he write and tell her so?

It was impossible.

He could imagine the innocent pleasure with which she was looking forward to that visit to the school, with what glee she had received the unexpected present from her father, which enabled her to buy the railway ticket, otherwise far beyond her resources.

How could he write and tell her not to come?

But he must!

There was still time; the collection of letters at St. Jim's was not till eight o'clock. He had half an hour yet, and a letter collected by the postman at eight would be delivered at his home about ten o'clock the following morning, in time to stop Maud from starting on the journey.

Bishop flung himself into a chair, and drew pen and paper towards him. It was rotten, it was caddish, and he knew it. But it must be done!

He dipped the pen into the ink, and gnawed the handle feverishly. He began the letter.

"Dear Maud—"

Then he stopped.

What was he to say?

What could he say, that would not show only too clearly the miserable truth—that he was ashamed of the sister who should have been a source of endless pride to him? Could he wound her so—could he be so base?

But after all, why not lie? Lies came easily to Bishop since he had been at St. Jim's, chiefly occupied in "keeping up appearances."

He could say that St. Jim's were playing an out match—that the team needed him—he would be away all the afternoon. He was sorry, but it could not be helped. That, at least, would keep Maud away.

His cheeks were crimson with shame as he wrote, but he wrote. He finished the letter, and read it over, and signed it. The die was cast!

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NEXT THURSDAY: "THE RUNAWAY SCHOOLBOY!"

CHAPTER 4.

The Intercepted Letter.

LEVISON, of the Fourth, grinned as Mellish came into his study. The cad of the School House was looking very dusty and disturbed, and he was rubbing his nose with a hand that was spotted with red. He scowled as he caught the grin on Levison's face.

"Been through the mill?" grinned Levison.

Mellish grunted.

"Well, I dotted him in the eye," he said. "I hope he'll have a black eye for to-morrow."

Levison laughed.

"Good egg!" he said. "I hope he will! By the way, there will be more than one girl visiting the school to-morrow. According to the letter, Bishop's sister will be here the same time as D'Arcy's cousin."

Mellish shook his head.

"I fancy not," he replied.

"But the letter said so," said Levison. "I read the blessed thing through from beginning to end. She's coming to-morrow afternoon. Queer about the five bob, ain't it, after all the jaw we've had from Bishop about his people rolling in cash."

"I never quite took that in," growled Mellish. "He's never had anybody home."

"Never thought anybody good enough," said Levison. "At any rate, that's what he's always made out."

"All rot!" said Mellish. "I suppose D'Arcy would be good enough—he's a lord's son—and Glyn—he's the son of a giddy millionaire. I always had a suspicion that Bishop's people weren't up to the mark. If he had a stunning home, he'd have taken at least one chap home to it, so as to have an eye-witness that it was stunning."

"Well, as a matter of fact, I thought something of the kind myself," said Levison thoughtfully. "I should be glad to see the cad bowled out. He's put on airs towards me, and pretended to look down on me because my pater's only a solicitor. I wonder what his is?"

"I wonder!" said Mellish. "Nothing to brag of, or we should have seen him. I remember the day he brought Bishop to the school, and he was an old fellow dressed in black; looked something like a clergyman. I remarked that to Bishop, and he led me to suppose that the old fellow was a clergyman; but I remembered afterwards that he didn't exactly say so. He wanted to give the impression. Of course, it's respectable to have a parson for a father, if you can't show anything better."

"It would be a lark to show him up," grinned Levison. "If his sister comes here to-morrow, we can get the truth out, I expect."

"He won't let her come."

"But the letter—"

"The letter's plain enough. It shows that they've got no money, and his sister's quite unexpectedly got five bob to buy her railway ticket. Bishop's carrying on when he opened the letter shows how he was knocked up at the idea of any of his people coming here."

"Yes; but—"

"He can stop her by writing, and that's what he'll do," said Mellish. "I'll bet you a hat that he sends a letter out by the evening post to tell her not to come."

"Rotten cad!" said Levison.

Mellish looked at him with a peculiar glimmer in his eyes. "Yes," he said, "it's rotten and caddish, and he deserves to be shown up, don't you think, for being such a rotter?"

"Yes, rather! And I never could stand him, anyway. His airs would be bad enough if he had anything behind him, but to be patronised by a chap worse off than yourself is a bit too thick," said Levison.

"Exactly!"

"But how—"

"If he writes—I'm pretty certain he will—what price intercepting the letter?" said Mellish, in a whisper.

Levison started.

"Phew!"

"You needn't look so shocked about it," said Mellish, with a sneer. "You fished a letter out of the school box once—Glyn's letter."

"Yes, but—"

"You could do the same with Bishop's," said Mellish. "It's easy enough. It's pitch dark in the quad now, and nobody will be out there. The letter-box is across the quad. Blagg comes to collect the letters at eight. He's as regular as clockwork. It's as easy as rolling off a log."

Levison shook his head.

"Too risky," he said. "There was trouble enough before, and destroying a letter is a serious thing."

"No need to destroy it."

"But keeping it would be more dangerous."

"No need to keep it."

"What on earth do you mean?" said Levison testily. "You

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would have to destroy it or keep it, one of the two, I suppose, if you took it from the box."

"Not at all. You could re-post it after the collection. It would be collected to-morrow morning instead of to-night, and delivered at Bishop's home too late to stop his sister from coming. The collection in the morning doesn't go out till ten o'clock, and I know his people live at a big distance."

Levison looked very thoughtful.

"But you don't know for certain that he's posted a letter," he said slowly.

"I know he hasn't, so far," said Mellish coolly. "He went up to his study directly after the row with D'Arcy, and he hasn't left it since. We've only got to keep an eye on him, and if he posts a letter, there you are!"

"Good!"

"Hark!" said Mellish.

There was a sound of a study door opening further along the passage. Mellish stepped to his own door, listening. Footsteps were coming along the Fourth Form passage, and as they reached the study, Mellish opened the door suddenly and rushed out, as if in a very great hurry.

He crashed right into the junior who was passing.

It was Bishop.

Bishop staggered across the passage, and a letter he was carrying in his hand fell to the floor. Mellish caught a fleeting glimpse of the address—"Miss Maud Bishop." The junior picked up the letter again instantly.

"You clumsy ass!" he exclaimed furiously. "Why don't you look where you're going?"

"Sorry!" said Mellish blandly. "I didn't see you."

"Oh, you're a silly fathead!"

And Bishop went on his way. Mellish grinned softly, and stepped back into the study.

Levison fixed a glance of eager inquiry upon him.

"Yes!"

"It's all serene," said Mellish, in a whisper.

"He had the letter?"

"Did you see the address?" asked Levison, still a little dubious.

"Yes; it was to his sister."

"It might be to tell her he's glad to see her."

Mellish chuckled.

"I don't think so. But if it is, it won't do any harm delaying it in the post. And if it's to tell her not to come, it will be a jolly good thing to baulk him, and show the cad up. I've been fed up with his swank, for one."

"Same here!"

"You'll do it?"

Levison hesitated one moment.

"Yes," he said.

"Good!"

The two cads of the School House listened for the returning footsteps of Valentine Bishop. In a few minutes Bishop came along the passage, and they heard him go into his study and close the door. He had evidently placed the letter in the post-box in the school wall.

Mellish looked at his watch.

"Buck up!" he whispered. "It's nearly ten minutes to eight, and Blagg is never a minute late."

"Right-ho!"

Levison took a long, bent wire from his desk, and hid it under his jacket, and the two young rascals left the study. The cads of the Fourth had a distinctly virtuous feeling at that moment. They were going to show up a swanking cad, who was ashamed of his people—and certainly there was no great harm in that. But the baseness of the method they were adopting would have made any decent fellow shrink from it. But baseness in a scheme was no drawback in the eyes of Levison and Mellish. And their motives for wanting to "show Bishop up" were not particularly noble. Personal dislike and envy actuated them more than any other feelings. Bishop had swanked over them, and they had resented it without being able to score in their turn—that was their chief motive.

The old quad, was pitchy dark in the winter evening, and quite deserted. Levison and Mellish crossed over to the school-box unobserved.

"Here we are!" murmured Mellish.

Levison drew a quick breath.

"Hark!"

There was a sound of light footsteps. The two young rascals, terrified at the thought of being discovered close to the box—though, as yet, they had done no harm—terrified by the guilt of their consciences—crouched close to the wall in the darkness, scarcely daring to breathe.

Three dim figures flitted past them in the gloom and vanished.

The cads of the Fourth breathed again, as the faint pattering of running shoes died away in the distance and the darkness.

"Figgin's & Co. sprinting," muttered Mellish. "They always do."

"They didn't see us?"

"No fear!"

But Levison was still shaking a little, and he seemed to hesitate.

"Buck up!" whispered Mellish. "Someone may come to post a letter at the last minute, and you may have to chuck it!"

"Oh, all right!"

Levison fished in the box with his cunning contrivance of twisted wire. A letter came up, and Mellish felt it over.

"It's the size, anyway," he muttered. "Wait a minute while I look."

He drew behind a tree and struck a match.

"Well?" muttered Levison, as the match went out.

"It's all serene!"

"Good! We're in luck!"

"I suppose the letter was on top of the others, as it was posted last," Mellish remarked. "Anyway, it's all serene. Wait for Blaggy!"

"But—"

"He won't be many minutes now."

Mellish was right. Five minutes later, the postman was heard on the other side of the school wall. Blaggy unlocked the box and collected the letters in it from the outside; on the inside of the wall, there was only the slit for posting letters. The two juniors listened breathlessly.

They heard Blaggy close the little door of the letter-box, and relock it, and then tramp away down the road.

"All serene!" muttered Mellish. "Safe enough to post it again now. It won't go out till ten in the morning—too late."

"Wait a bit—we could read it—"

"Too risky!" muttered Mellish unasily. "Better get rid of it. They will simply suppose that Blaggy overlooked it in making a collection—but if there were a sign of opening, they might tumble. Better let it go."

"Oh, all right!"

Mellish dropped the letter into the box again. The two young rascals listened, and heard it fall with a faint thud into the empty box. Then they scuttled away across the dark quad, to the School House.

Bishop's letter, which he fancied to be on its way to Herefordshire, was still lying in the school letter-box—and was to lie there till ten o'clock on the following morning. Bishop would not have been quite so easy in his mind if he had known.

CHAPTER 5.

Monty Lowther's Little Joke.

TOM MERRY, Manners, and Lowther stood in a row in the junior common-room, when Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came in a little later. They met the swell of St. Jim's, face to face, and did not move, and D'Arcy had to stop very suddenly to avoid a collision. Arthur Augustus raised his eyeglass to his damaged eye, and let it drop again.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

The Terrible Three all bent forward at once, and peered at Arthur Augustus. He stared at them in astonishment.

"They're growing purple!" said Tom Merry solemnly.

"Purple as the luscious grapes on the shores of the Campagna," said Manners, with some dim remembrance in his mind of a classic poem.

"Black by to-morrow," said Monty Lowther, with a shake of the head.

"Weally, you chaps—"

"I'll tell you what," said Tom Merry, "you can go out on my bike to-morrow afternoon, Gussy, if you like!"

"You uttah ass—"

"Or you can take your books into the old tower, and study," said Monty Lowther, "and we will make some excuse for you to Cousin Ethel."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"You see, we can't let Cousin Ethel see you with two jolly black eyes," Lowther explained. "It wouldn't be respectful."

"Do you weally think they are likely to become black, deah boys?"

"Quite certain!"

"Oh, wats! It can't be helped, anyway," said D'Arcy. "I don't want any of your wotten wemedies, anyway, Lowthah. I wegard you as a humowous ass."

"I've got a lotion that would—"

"Wats!"

Monty Lowther shook a warning finger at the swell of St. Jim's.

"I warn you that your eyes will be black as the ace of spades when you get up to-morrow morning," he said solemnly.

"Wats!"

"Very well—we'll see," said Lowther. "If you like to let me apply some lotion now, I don't mind doing it."

"Wats!" And Arthur Augustus walked away, with his nose very high in the air.

"His eyes are all right, Monty," said Tom Merry, laughing. "What do you mean by saying that they will be black to-morrow morning when he gets up?"

"Bet you a new footer!" said Monty Lowther.

"Oh, rats! I'm not going to bet; but I know jolly well his eyes won't be black!"

"You'll see," said Monty Lowther.

"Hallo, here's Bishop!" said Manners, as that junior entered the room. "He's looking a bit more cheerful now. He was looking jolly upset over that letter of his—and somebody pinned it up on the board in the hall. Mellish says it was only from Bishop's sister, so I don't see why it should upset him so much."

Bishop was certainly looking more easy in his mind than he had looked since receiving the letter from his sister. Some of the fellows looked at him very curiously. So many of them had seen the letter on the notice-board, that it was known that his sister had written to him, and that she was coming to St. Jim's to see him on the morrow. Two or three fellows spoke to him on the subject.

"You never have your people here, Bish," Gore, of the Shell remarked, with a touch of malice. "What is your sister like?"

"Oh, she isn't coming!" said Bishop.

Gore stared at him.

"The fellows said that the letter—"

"Oh, that was a mistake!"

Gore chuckled.

"Well, as a matter of fact, Bish, I saw the letter myself," he said. "It was stuck up open on the notice-board. Aren't you going to let us see your sister?"

"Oh, mind your own business!" said Bishop. "I tell you she isn't coming after all!"

And he swung away, leaving George Gore staring in surprise. On several occasions, when the subject was broached, Bishop showed signs of irritation, and the fellows let it drop. They were not specially interested in Bishop, or his sister, but they were surprised and puzzled by Bishop's conduct.

When the Fourth Form went up to bed that night, Levison and Mellish were watching Bishop curiously. They could not help wondering what he would have said, if he had guessed that his letter was still lying in the school letter-box—especially if the letter contained, as they believed, an injunction to Maud not to come.

But Bishop could not guess that.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy glanced at his eyes very carefully in his little pocket-mirror before he went to bed. The prediction of Monty Lowther certainly did not seem likely to come true. The deep red rims had disappeared, and D'Arcy's eyes had resumed almost their normal appearance. The probability was that they would be all right on the morrow, and that he would not have the humiliation of appearing before Cousin Ethel with black eyes, as he had dreaded.

"Monty Lowthah is an ass," he confided to Blake. "My eyes will be all right."

"Not black?" asked Blake.

"No; quite all right!"

Blake looked puzzled.

"That's very odd!" he remarked. "They are blue now!"

"Yas, wathah!"

"What's going to make 'em change?"

"Eh?"

"I've heard of a chap who had a big scare, and whose hair grew white in a single night," said Blake. "But I'm blessed if I heard ever of a chap whose eyes turned white in the night."

"You uttah ass! I said wight not white!"

"Well, that's very lucid, at all events," said Blake.

"Oh, wats!"

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy went to bed. Monty Lowther looked in as he passed on the way to the Shell dormitory, and grinned at the swell of St. Jim's.

"Eyes right?" he asked.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"I'll lend you my lotion, if you like—"

"Wats!"

Lowther went on his way laughing. In the Shell dormitory, he placed a little bottle and a camel-hair brush on his washstand, near his bed. Tom Merry, and Manners, and Kangaroo, and Gore regarded it with surprise. It contained a dark-coloured liquid.

"What on earth's that?" asked Tom Merry.

"My lotion."

"What's it for?"

"Gussy's optics."

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"But he refused to have it," said Manners.
Monty Lowther chuckled.
"He's going to have it all the same. He's a sound sleeper, and I shall paste it on with that brush when he's fast asleep to-night."

"But—but his eyes aren't black, after all," said Kangaroo.
"They will be when I've put that stuff on," said Lowther calmly.

The chams of the Shell burst into a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Monty Lowther grinned and went to bed. The bluish-black stain in the little bottle would certainly give D'Arcy's eyes an appearance of having been blacked, if Lowther could succeed in painting it on while he was asleep. The surprise and dismay of the swell of St. Jim's when he awoke in the morning, and found himself adorned with a couple of big black eyes, could be imagined, and it made the Shell fellows roar.

Kildare looked into the dormitory, and glanced suspiciously at the hilarious Shell.

"What are you young rascals up to?" he demanded.

"Snuff!" said Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Kildare laughed, too.

"Well, get to bed," he said. "It's time the light was out."

And the Shell turned in, still chuckling. Kildare extinguished the light, and closed the door and retired. One by one the Shell fellows dropped off to sleep. But Monty Lowther did not slumber.

Eleven struck, and then the half-hour sounded dully through the night.

Monty Lowther sat up in bed.

"You fellows awake?" he asked.

There was no reply.

The rest of the Shell had evidently fallen asleep. Monty Lowther slipped out of bed, and hurried on some of his clothes, put the little bottle and the brush into his pocket, and quitted the dormitory.

It was ten minutes before he returned. As he opened the door, Gore, of the Shell, sat up in bed. He had awakened suddenly, and he heard the door open, and the sound of faint footsteps coming towards the bed. It flashed instantly into Gore's mind that it was some fellow from the Fourth Form dormitory on a jape.

He sat up in bed, and carefully and cautiously clutched his pillow, and raised it in the air. Taking aim by the sound of the faint footsteps, Gore hurled the pillow suddenly through the air with all the force of his arm.

Whiz!

There was a sudden yell in the silence of the dormitory.

"Oh! Ow!"

Crash!

Monty Lowther was quite unprepared for that sudden attack. He staggered over, and crashed down upon Tom Merry's bed. Tom Merry was startled into sudden wakefulness by the heavy fall of the Shell fellow upon him.

He started up.

"Ow! What the——"

"Oh!"

"Gerroff!"

Tom Merry shoved hard at the weight upon him, and Monty Lowther rolled off on the floor.

Manners, awakened, struck a match.

"Got him!" roared Gore. "Ha, ha, ha! Who is it?"

"Ow! You frabjous ass!"

"My hat, it's Lowther!"

"Oh! Ow! Oh!"

Gore stared at Lowther in astonishment in the glimmer of the match. Manners gave a yelp as the flame burnt his fingers, and the match went out.

"You fathead!" roared Lowther.

"Your own fault," said Gore. "What were you sneaking about in the dark for? Rats!"

"You ass!"

Tom Merry chuckled.

"Go to bed, Monty. Don't make a row, or we shall have a prefect coming up. Have you been to the Fourth dorm?"

"Yes," growled Lowther.

"Adorned Gussy?"

"Yes."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Monty Lowther turned in.

"Didn't he wake?" asked Manners.

"No; slept like a top all the time," said Monty Lowther, his good humour returning. "It will be a surprise for him in the morning."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the Terrible Three chuckled at the thought of the surprise that was awaiting the swell of St. Jim's when he awoke in the morning.

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CHAPTER 6.

Two Lovely Black Eyes!

CLANG, clang, clang!

The rising-bell was ringing out through the frosty winter air.

Jack Blake sat up in bed, and yawned and rubbed his eyes. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy followed his example.

"Bai Jove, you know," said Arthur Augustus, glancing towards the misty windows, "I believe that boundah Taggles gets up specially early every mornin' on purpose to fetch us out in the cold, you know. It can't be seven yet."

"It's ten past," said Lumley-Lumley.

"Bai Jove! How are my eyes this morning, dear boy?"

Lumley-Lumley looked at Arthur Augustus's eyes, and gave a howl.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Lumley-Lumley——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" howled Lumley-Lumley.

"You uttah ass!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blake, deah boy, will you look at my eyes?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You fwabjous ass! Digby, deah boy——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Digby.

Arthur Augustus glared round upon the dormitory. Nearly every fellow was awake now, and they were all staring at the swell of the School House and yelling with laughter. Arthur Augustus regarded them with amazement and anger.

"You uttah duffahs!" he exclaimed.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Faith, and it's a sight ye are!" roared Reilly.

"Pway what's the mattah, deah boy?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Are my eyes black, Blake?"

"Black as the giddy ace of spades!" yelled Blake. "Ifa,

ha, ha!"

"Gweat Scott!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy leaped out of bed. He rushed to the glass, and surveyed his face, and uttered an exclamation of dismay.

"Bai Jove, they're quite black!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There is nothin' whatevah to laugh at, you uttah asses!" said D'Arcy indignantly. "I wegard you as a set of fealful fatheads!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus might see nothing to laugh at, but the Fourth Form evidently did, for they yelled.

The swell of St. Jim's regarded his reflection in the glass in utter dismay. Over night, he had every hope that his eyes would present their normal appearance by the morning. Instead of which they were perfectly black. Each eye was surrounded by deep purple, and a finer pair of black eyes had certainly not been seen within the walls of St. Jim's.

"Bai Jove, how uttably wotten!" said D'Arcy.

Blake yelled.

"Ha, ha, ha! You can't let Cousin Ethel see you in that state, Gussy."

"Weally, Blake——"

"You will have to keep out of sight," grinned Bishop.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Bish——"

The Fourth Form yelled. The dormitory door was pushed open, and the Terrible Three presented themselves to view, fully dressed, and looking very fresh and cheerful.

"Hallo!" said Tom Merry. "You bounders are late! Where's the cackle?"

"Look at Gussy!"

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

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You uttah asses!"

"Perhaps you wish you'd tried my lotion now, Gussy," said Monty Lowther blandly.

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"I'll tell you what I'll do," said Lowther generously. "I'll rub the lotion on now if you like, Gussy."

"Wats! It wouldn't do any good," said D'Arcy.

"I'll guarantee an immediate cure."

"Wats!"

"Did you ever see such a Doubting Thomas?" exclaimed Monty Lowther indignantly. "Blessed if I'm going to take any trouble over such an ungrateful bounder. Come on, you chaps; let's get out into the quad."

"Hold on a minute, Lowthah!"

"Too late. Come on, Tom Merry!"

"Just a minute, Lowthah. If your lotion is any good, I should like to try it," said Arthur Augustus hesitatingly.

"I suppose it cannot make mattahs much worse, anyway."

"I don't see how it could," grinned Blake.

"Well, after what you've said——" began Lowther.



Temple, Dabney & Co. stood round Alonzo Todd, bowing like a set of mandarins. "So glad to see you," said Temple. "Greyfriars hasn't looked the same since you left!" Todd looked puzzled. "It's really very kind of you to say so!" he exclaimed. "But although I am very glad that I have been missed, it is difficult for me to imagine that my absence has caused any differentiation in the structural aspect of the buildings." (An incident from the grand, long, complete School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co., entitled "THE DUFFER'S RETURN," by Frank Richards, contained in this week's number of The "Magnet" Library. Now on sale. Price One Penny.)

"I wetwact it all, deah boy, if the lotion's any good," said Arthur Augustus, utterly dismayed and alarmed at the thought of Cousin Ethel finding him with two fully-blooming black eyes when she came that afternoon.

"Oh, very well," said Lowther, apparently mollified, "I'll try."

"Thank you vewy much, deah boy."

Lowther took the little bottle out of his pocket. Now, it contained a colourless liquid, which was, as a matter of fact, pure water, though Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was not aware of that circumstance. He wetted a folded handkerchief carefully with the liquid.

"Come here!" he said.

"Yaas, deah boy."

"Hold your head back."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Close your eyes, and don't open them until I tell you," said Lowther, who did not wish the swell of St. Jim's to see the stain coming off on the handkerchief.

"Vewy well, Lowthah."

D'Arcy stood with his head well thrown back, and his eyes closed. The other fellows sat up in their beds, or suspended their dressing, to watch the peculiar operation. The Terrible Three were grinning, and the Fourth-Formers could see that

some jape was on, though they could not quite guess what kind of a jape it was.

"Mind, don't open your eyes till I tell you," cautioned Lowther. "Promise!"

"Honah bwight, deah boy."

"Good!"

Lowther rubbed D'Arcy's eye with the wet handkerchief. To the amazement of the Fourth-Formers the eye almost immediately lost its discoloured appearance, and became quite normal in aspect. Jack Blake uttered an exclamation of amazement.

"My hat!"

"Is it workin', deah boy?" asked Arthur Augustus, with his eyes still tightly closed.

"Yes, rather!"

Lowther started on the other eye. By this time the Fourth-Formers could see the stains on the handkerchief, and they guessed what it meant. There was a yell of laughter that rang through the dormitory.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy made an uneasy gesture.

"Isn't it goin' all wight, deah boy?" he asked anxiously.

"Right as rain!" said Lowther cheerfully.

"What are the fellows cacklin' at, then?"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 201.

NEXT
THURSDAY

"THE RUNAWAY SCHOOLBOY!"

A Splendid, New, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"Oh, geese always cackle!" said Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy's second eye was quite cleaned. There was no trace of a black eye about him now.

Monty Lowther thrust the stained and discoloured handkerchief into his pocket. The Fourth-Formers were yelling with laughter, and D'Arcy's uneasiness was great.

"May I open my eyes now, deah boy?" he asked.

"Yes, certainly."

Arthur Augustus opened them, blinked at Lowther, and rushed to the glass. He uttered an exclamation of delight. His eyelids were white and unbruised; there was no trace whatever of discolouration.

"Bai Jove! That's wippin'!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I fail to see any weason whatevah for this laughtah, deah boys. I say, Lowthah, that is a wonderful lotion, you know. I am vewy gwateful."

"Not at all," said Lowther blandly. "Only too happy to be of use, Gussy."

And the Terrible Three quitted the Fourth Form dormitory, and gasped hysterically as they went down the passage. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy dressed himself in a cheerful and contented mood, utterly unable to account for the gusts of merriment that swept through the dormitory.

CHAPTER 7.

Lowther's Lotion.

D'ARCY looked very cheerful when he came down that morning. There was not a trace of damage about his eyes, and the great weight that had lain upon his mind was lifted. As he sat at breakfast at the Fourth-Form table, he cast more than one grateful glance across at the Shell table, where Monty Lowther was sitting, through his monocle. The monocle would go into its place in his right eye now, and D'Arcy was happy.

Mellish gave the swell of St. Jim's an unpleasant look. He had hoped that D'Arcy would have a black eye that morning, but his hopes were unfounded. He had not hit hard enough; although he had screwed up his courage to the sticking-point to tackle D'Arcy, he had not stood it out long enough to do any real damage. Arthur Augustus met his glance, and smiled affably.

"It's all wight, Mellish, deah boy!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, rats!" said Mellish.

"My eye was black this mornin'," said D'Arcy, "but Monty Lowther cured it with his lotion. I wegard that as a simply wonderful stuff."

"Rot!" said Mellish.

"It was the same with the othah eye, Bishop," said D'Arcy, with a nod to Valentine Bishop. "Lowthah's lotion cured it at once. You need not mind about it."

"I don't," said Bishop.

"Weally, deah boy—"

After breakfast D'Arcy joined the Terrible Three as they went out of the dining-room. He was feeling very grateful, and he could not help saying so. He tapped Monty Lowther on the arm in a very friendly way.

"I say, Lowthah, old man, it was awf'ly good of you to cure me like that, especially aftah I had expressed doubts about the lotion," he said.

"Not at all," said Lowther affably. "I couldn't have you looking a guy before Cousin Ethel, could I—not more than usual, I mean."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I am vewy gwateful," said D'Arcy, unheeding Tom Merry and Manners' merriment. "I wegard that lotion of yours as wonderful stuff. Could you tell a chap where you got it?"

Lowther grinned.

"Certainly," he replied.

Several juniors gathered round to hear the secret. Most of them were grinning. Arthur Augustus did not see any cause whatever for grinning.

"Awf'ly expensive, I suppose?" D'Arcy suggested.

"Not in the least."

"Quite cheap," said Manners.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"You can have as much as you like for nothing," said Monty Lowther cheerfully. "You get it out of the cold water tap at the end of the passage."

"Eh?"

"It's paid for in the water rate by the school, and we get it for nothing," Monty Lowther explained affably.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

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

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 201.

"THE DUFFER'S RETURN!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy jammed his monocle into his eye, and regarded Lowther doubtfully. He never did quite know what to make of the humorist of the Shell.

"Do you mean to say, Lowthah, that it was cold watah?"

"Ha, ha! Yes."

"With nothin' in it?"

"Nothing."

"But—but that is more wonderful still!" gasped D'Arcy. "I have nevah heard of black eyes being cured by wubbin' in cold watah!"

"There are more things in the heavens and the earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy," said Monty Lowther solemnly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But weally, I do not undahstand," said D'Arcy. "I wegard it as wonderful, and I do not see in the least what all these asses are cacklin' at."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Monty Lowther drew his handkerchief carelessly, as it were, from his pocket. D'Arcy's eyes rested upon the black stains upon it, and he started. He jammed his monocle in a little more tightly, and looked queerly at the handkerchief.

"Bai Jove, Lowthah! Is that the handkerchief you wubbed my eyes with?"

"That's it."

"What are those marks on it, deah boy?"

"They came off with your black eyes."

"Oh!"

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

Arthur Augustus gazed round him. The meaning of the merriment began to dawn upon him, and he became crimson with indignation.

"You uttah wottahs!" he ejaculated. "This is a twick."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Someone must have painted that stuff on my eyes while I was asleep!" exclaimed D'Arcy, in a white heat.

The juniors shrieked.

"And you knew it all along, you wottah!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, turning to Monty Lowther again. "You were only pullin' my leg, you fwightful boundah!"

Lowther gurgled hysterically.

"Who was it played that wotten twick on me?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pway stop that idiotic cacklin', Lowthah. I insist upon your tellin' me the name of the wottah who dabbed that stuff on my face while I was asleep. I shall have no alternative but to give you a feahful thwashin' unless you ansawah me."

Monty Lowther became very serious.

"Well, I could tell you," he said solemnly, "but if I do, you must promise to protect me. I'm afraid, you see."

"Wats?"

"If you'll promise, honour bright, that not a finger shall be laid on me. I will give you the name of the heinous villain," said Lowther.

"Vewy well!"

"You promise?"

"Yaas."

"Honour bright?"

"Yaas, watah!"

"Vewy well," said Lowther slowly. "I suppose that's all right."

"Now what's the name?"

"Montague Lowther."

"Eh?"

"Montague Lowther!" said the humorist of the Shell blandly.

D'Arcy stared at him. The juniors roared at the expression upon the aristocratic countenance of the swell of St. Jim's. Arthur Augustus seemed unable to find his tongue for a full minute. He simply stared at Lowther.

"Bai Jove!" he gasped, at last. "You uttah wottah! You—"

Lowther nodded.

"You fwightful wottah!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy dropped his eyeglass from his eye, and pushed back his cuffs. "You unspeakable wottah! Put up your hands!"

"Eh?"

"Put up your hands!" shouted D'Arcy.

"What for?"

"I am goin' to give you a feahful thwashin'."

Lowther shook his head.

"What about your promise?"

"Eh?"

"Honour bright, you know."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy paused, and lowered his hands, and allowed his glistening white cuffs to resume their place over his elegant wrists. He was fairly caught.

"Bai Jove! I forgot! I wegard you as a wottah, Lowthah! You have pwactically twapped me."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"However, a promise is a promise," said D'Arcy, "and I shall let you off."

"A thousand thanks, great chief."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Praw don't be an ass, Lowthah. I wegard you as a wottah, and I wufuse to considah you as a friend again. I wegard you—"

"Hallo, there's the bell!" said Blake.

"I wegard you—"

"Come on, Gussy!"

"You are intewwuptin' me, Blake."

"Yes, I know. Come on!"

And Blake marched his indignant chum away, leaving the juniors yelling. It was a long time before the juniors of the School House ceased to ask the swell of the Fourth Form whether he needed any lotion for the eyes.

CHAPTER 8.

Slackers All.

FIGGINS of the New House came over to the School House soon after morning lessons that day. There was a junior football match fixed for the afternoon, and Figgins seemed to be exercised in his mind about it. School House juniors and New House juniors generally had a House match when there was not a regular fixture for the combined team, if only to keep the ball rolling—in a double sense. But this afternoon, singularly enough, nobody was keen on footer.

The afternoon was clear and fine, and hard and sunny—just the afternoon for a really good, slogging game of footer. The juniors, as a rule, were very keen on the game, and even for junior House matches there was much competition to get into the teams. It might have been supposed that School House and New House juniors would have turned out most keenly that fine, clear afternoon.

But apparently they weren't going to.

The first sign of slackness came from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. He told Tom Merry that upon the whole he thought he ought to keep out of the team, and give some other fellow a chance.

"You see, it's all vewy well to play the best playahs always, but it doesn't give the othah chaps a look in, you know," D'Arcy explained.

"But I haven't been doing that," said Tom Merry. "I've given you a look in."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Still, stay out if you like," said Tom Merry. "I'll put in Reilly in your place; he's quite as good, and much keener."

"Wats! But it's all wight; put him in."

"As a matter of fact, I shan't be captaining the team this afternoon," Tom Merry added. "There's nothing like letting the thing go round, and giving every chap a chance. I've asked Kangy to skipper the team this time."

"Bai Jove!" said D'Arcy.

"Manners and Lowther are chucking it, too, this afternoon, and Hancock and Dacre are going in instead," said Tom Merry.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"It will be new blood all along the line," Tom Merry remarked. "Nothing like seeing what the other fellows can do, is there?"

D'Arcy made no reply. He walked away with a very thoughtful expression upon his face. As a matter of fact, D'Arcy's desire to give some other fellow a look in at footer was chiefly caused by the fact that his Cousin Ethel was coming to St. Jim's that afternoon. Arthur Augustus felt that he could not perform his cousinly duties at all thoroughly if he were playing footer. And he began to wonder whether Ethel Cleveland's coming was making any difference to the Terrible Three, too. It was very queer that the same thought should have crossed their minds all at once.

D'Arcy joined Blake and Herries and Digby in the quad. Blake looked at him out of the corner of his eye.

"Play up like anything this afternoon, Gussy!" said Blake. "All the old hands in the team will have to play hard, as there will be a lot of new blood. Dig and I are thinking of standing out, to give some of the other chaps a chance."

"Bai Jove!"

"Herries is going to play all the same."

"Yes, rather!" said Herries emphatically. "I can see Cousin Ethel after the match, I suppose, and I'm jolly well not going to miss a game of footer."

"Who's talking about Cousin Ethel?" said Blake sharply. "Don't be an ass! We're going to give the other fellows a look in!"

Herries sniffed.

"Lumley-Lumley is coming on well, and ought to have a chance in the House team," said Blake reflectively. "And there's young Jones, too."

"Quite right!" said Digby. "We don't want to be selfish."

"That's just what we want to avoid—being selfish," agreed Blake. "Don't you think so, Gussy?"

D'Arcy regarded the chums of the Fourth fixedly through his monocle.

"I think you are wottin'," he replied, "and I don't see what you and Dig and Tom Mewwy and Mannahs and Lowthah want to stand out of the match for. I can look atah my cousin without your assistance."

"My dear fathead—"

"Hallo, you chaps! Where's Tom Merry?"

It was Figgins's voice. The New House junior came over with his hands in his pockets, and a faint flush in his healthy cheek. Figgins, for once, looked a little self-conscious, though, as a rule, he was not at all given that way.

"Here I am!" said Tom Merry, coming down the steps of the School House. "You chaps ready for a jolly good match this afternoon?"

Figgins coloured.

"Well, the fact is," he said, "I—I just came over to tell you that I shan't be captaining the New House team this afternoon."

They stared at him.

"Bai Jove!" said D'Arcy.

"You—you see, a lot of the fellows have been talking about giving other chaps a chance," Figgins explained. "It's not good for a junior club to play the same chaps all the time, and not give the rest a look in. Of course, when it's a hard match one has to put one's best men in the field. But in a case like this—"

"Weally, Figgins—"

"Did you come over here to look for a thick ear, Figgins?" said Blake genially. "Because you're going the right way to get it."

"Ahem!" said Figgins. "What I mean is, I'm staying out of the team this afternoon, and French, of the Shell, is taking the lead for once, to see what he can do. Kerr is staying out, too. Thompson, of the Shell, will be in his place. And Fatty Wynn will stay out, because—because I really think the team ought to try a new goalkeeper for once."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Then there will be two new teams," he said. "As most of our team are staying out."

Figgins stared.

"What for?" he asked.

"To give the other fellows a chance," said Jack Blake blandly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ahem!" said Figgins. "Well—ahem—it's a good idea, you know. By the way, what time is Miss Cleveland coming?"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy adjusted his monocle to a nicety, and looked steadily at Figgins, who coloured considerably under his gaze.

"I fail to see what my cousin's coming has to do with your staying out of the New House team, Figgins," he said stiffly.

"Of—of course!" said Figgins. "I—I mean, of course. That is to say, of course not. But what time is she coming?"

"By the half past two twain."

"Oh, good!"

"At all events, she may," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "But it is vewy pwoab. that she will dwive ovah instead."

Figgins's face fell.

"Oh!" he said. "No good a fellow going to the station, then?"

"No good at all," said D'Arcy.

"Oh!"

"And if anybody went to the station, I should go to the station, Figgins," said D'Arcy. "I must say you take a remarkable interest in the proceedings of my cousin."

"Oh, not at all—not at all!" stammered Figgins.

And with a face of crimson hue, Figgins walked away. He joined Kerr and Fatty Wynn in the quad, and the School House fellows grinned after him. The only one who did not grin was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. He was looking very thoughtful.

"I wegard Figgins's conduct as wathah singulah, deah boys," he remarked. "And I wegard it as vewy remarkable that so many chaps should have decided to cut footah this afternoon."

"Yes, it would really be better for you to play this afternoon, Gussy, and buck the team up a bit, as so many of the old firm are standing out," suggested Monty Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Certainly!" said Blake. "I regard that as Gussy's duty. He ought to stand by the colours, and make sure of a giddy victory."

"I wufuse to do anythin' of the sort. I am weally bound

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 201.

to cut footah this aftahnoon, to look aftah my cousin. But you chaps—"

"We will help you," said Manners.

"Wats! I don't want any help."

"That makes no difference," said Lowther. "We feel bound to help you. After using my lotion and curing your black eyes, Gussy, don't be ungrateful."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You uttah ass! I weally fail to see why you chaps can't play footah this aftahnoon," said D'Arcy obstinately. "I will bring Ethel to see the match, if you like. Look here, Monty Lowthah, what are you cuttin' the House match for?"

Monty Lowther reflected.

"Lemme see! Oh, Bishop's sister is coming."

"You don't know her."

"No."

"Then what diffewence does it make if she comes?"

"None at all."

"Then that is not a weason for cuttin' the match?"

"Certainly not!"

"But you said—"

"My dear Gussy, I'd say anything to please you!" said Lowther affably. "If you don't like that reason, I'll give you another. I—"

"Pway don't talk out of your hat, you silly ass! Undah the cirms, I wegard this conduct of all the team as wepwehensible. I considah— Pway don't walk away while I am talkin', deah boys!"

But the dear boys apparently did not hear, as they continued walking away. And the rest of D'Arcy's considerations were wasted on the desert air.

CHAPTER 9.

Bishop's Sister.

AFTER dinner, Tom Merry & Co. were evidently in a state of expectancy. Cousin Ethel was to arrive between two and three, and the juniors were on the look-out for her. Soon after two the two junior House teams—with very much new blood in both teams—prepared for the match. Tom Merry & Co. strolled down to the field to see them begin, and to encourage them with cheers. Bishop was there, too, looking on, with his hands in his pockets and a thoughtful frown on his face. Tom Merry had offered Bishop a place in the reconstructed eleven, but Bishop had declined it. As a rule, he was very keen to play in the House junior team, but this afternoon he did not want to play. Bishop was not a bad fellow at heart, and he was feeling considerably conscience-stricken over the letter he had written to his sister the previous evening. It weighed upon the junior's mind, at times making him wish that he had taken the chances, and never written it.

It was rotten, utterly rotten, to have done it. He felt that, and he was feeling rotten enough about it.

True, he had worded the letter carefully. He had not written it in a way to wound Maud's feelings. She would never know that her brother did not wish her to come to the school. She would never know that he was ashamed of her poor, plain clothes, of her poor, work-seamed fingers, that would have betrayed so much that he wished to hide. She did not know that he was willing to sacrifice his duty and his brotherly affection upon the altar of the modern Moloch—keeping up appearances!

But he had only avoided wounding her by lying. And Bishop was not bad enough to lie without compunction. He had certainly fallen into an airy way of talking, which gave false impressions as to his home and his means. But actual lies were painful to him still. And to tell lies to his sister, who regarded him with unbounded admiration and trust, Bishop felt that it was "rotten!"

More than once that day Bishop wished that he had let things take their course. He had even thought of wiring to his sister to come after all.

But that would never have done! For, if she had come, she would certainly have learned some of the truth—that he had lied to her about being a member of the School junior team, that there was no out match that afternoon! She would learn that, as she had had the letter. It would not do to wire! Besides, it would not do for her to come. It was better for none of his people to be seen at St. Jim's.

But Bishop was uneasy and disturbed. He replied only in monosyllables to the remarks that were addressed to him.

Arthur Augustus, who never remembered offences for long, and who had already almost forgotten his row with Bishop of the evening before, tapped the junior on the shoulder in a friendly way. Arthur Augustus could see that Bishop was worried, and he imagined that he guessed the reason, and he felt sympathetic.

"So she's not comin', deah boy?" said D'Arcy.

Bishop looked at him.

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"THE DUFFER'S RETURN!"

Is the Title of the Splendid, Long, Complete School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. appearing in this week's "MAGNET" Library. Now on Sale. Price One Penny.

"What's that?" he said.

"I heard some fellow sayin' that your sister isn't comin' aftah all," said D'Arcy.

Bishop nodded.

"It's vewy wuff," said the swell of St. Jim's. "I'm sowwy! It is vewy wuff on you, aftah your expectin' her."

Bishop's face became a deep red. The sympathetic words of the swell of St. Jim's struck him like a blow.

"It's all right," he muttered.

"Yaas; but I'm sowwy, deah boy."

Bishop turned away his head. The whistle had gone, and the teams were playing. Kangaroo was captaining the School House juniors, and French the New House eleven. The chums of the School House watched the match with one eye, so to speak, keeping the other in the direction whence Cousin Ethel would come.

"Quarter to three!" said Figgins, looking up at the old clock in the tower, above the leafless branches of the elms.

"Bai Jove!"

Figgins strolled away with his hands in his pockets. Arthur Augustus gave him a suspicious look, and strolled away in the same direction. Tom Merry followed him, and then Manners and Lowther, and then Blake and Digby, and Kerr and Fatty Wynn. They all strolled down towards the gates.

Figgins suddenly broke into a sharp run.

A girlish figure had appeared in the gateway, and Figgins recognised it.

It was Cousin Ethel!

Bright and cheerful and healthy, and charmingly dressed, Cousin Ethel looked a perfect picture as she came in, and anybody might have been pleased to see her. There was no doubt that Tom Merry & Co. were pleased. Hats and caps flew off, and the juniors gathered round her with the most enthusiastic greeting.

"Bai Jove, Ethel! How jollay to see you, you know!"

"Ripping!" ejaculated Figgins.

"Which way did you come?"

"Nice drive?"

"Pleasant journey?"

"I wish you had let me meet you at the station—"

"Weally, Figgins—"

Cousin Ethel laughed merrily. She was on the best of terms with the juniors of St. Jim's, and she enjoyed their hearty welcome.

In the interest and pleasure of greeting Cousin Ethel, the juniors did not notice another figure that entered the school gates a few minutes later.

But Bishop did.

Valentine Bishop, and several other fellows, had followed Tom Merry & Co. from the footer ground, to see Cousin Ethel; and Bishop's eyes at once became riveted on the newcomer.

He turned deadly pale.

For a moment the junior seemed scarcely able to believe his eyes. He gazed at the girl, with a black frown gathering and darkening on his brows.

The girl had stopped within the quad, and was looking about her in a somewhat lost way. The strangeness and extensiveness of St. Jim's seemed to trouble her.

She was a pleasant-looking girl—not exactly pretty, but the kindness and simplicity in her face relieved it from plainness. Her dress was very plain and cheap—a contrast to that of the girl standing a dozen yards away—but it was in good taste. That she was poor, could be seen at a glance—but that she was good, and kind, and cheerful—that was quite as evident.

She looked round—and her eyes fell upon Valentine Bishop.

Her face brightened up at once.

"Val!"

She came eagerly towards him.

Bishop did not move.

His face was black, and bitter anger was surging up in his breast. She had come after all. In spite of the letter he had written—in spite of all—she had come—to disgrace him—to give him away to his schoolfellows! The pangs of conscience that he had felt that morning were gone and forgotten. He only wished that he had written more plainly in the letter—that he had told her the brutal truth, and so kept her from coming!

He did not make a movement to greet her. If it had been possible, he would have disowned her there and then.

Several fellows were looking towards her now. Maud did

ANSWERS

not notice them. She came towards her brother, her hands timidly outstretched. She had expected him to greet her with a gladness and affection equal to her own. But his look gave her a sudden, strange, cold feeling. He was not glad to see her.

"Val!" she repeated timidly.

"Maud! What are you doing here?"

Her blue eyes opened wide.

"I came to see you, Val. You had my letter?"

"Yes."

"Well then, last holiday, Val, you said that you'd like me to come and see the school," said the girl, with a moisture gathering in her eyes.

Bishop winced. He had said so, he remembered that; but he had not meant it. He had not regarded it as possible for Maud to come, and so he had said that, in his airy way. What a fool the girl was to have taken it seriously! Yet if she had doubted him, he would have been bitterly offended.

"But my letter—" said Bishop roughly.

"What letter?"

"The letter I wrote you last night," said Bishop angrily.

"I—I told you it was impossible—"

He paused. He had told her a lie, and she must discover now that it was a lie.

"I didn't have your letter, Val," she said timidly. "I didn't know you had answered mine, and as I had no answer, I came, of course."

"You didn't get my letter?"

"No."

"I posted it in time for the collection," said Bishop, biting his lips. "The fools have delayed it in the post, I suppose."

"I didn't get it, Val."

He gritted his teeth.

"Did you tell me not to come?" asked Maud, striving hard to keep back her tears.

"Yes," said her brother roughly.

"But—but why?"

"Because—"

He stopped. She had not had the letter, but it was certain to be delivered. When she returned home she would receive it—and read it—and would know. What would she think of him? At the thought that his sister—his sister of whom he was ashamed in the eyes of his schoolfellows—should despise him, Bishop felt his anger grow fiercer.

"Oh, never mind!" he said roughly.

"It can't be helped now, I suppose. Come—come into my study."

"But, Val—"

"Do as I tell you, Maud!"

Maud's lips trembled. She could not speak in reply. If she had spoken, she would have burst into a flood of tears. Never had Val spoken so unkindly to her. She could hardly believe that this was really her brother, who had always been kind enough at home.

What was the matter with him? Maud wondered miserably, as she followed the scowling, troubled junior to the School House.

CHAPTER 10.

The Fellow who was Ashamed.

LEVISON, of the Fourth, was standing on the steps of the School House, Mellish was with him, and both the juniors had their eyes fixed upon the brother and sister, as the latter crossed the quad. The two cads of the Fourth exchanged a glance and a grin.

"It's all serene," murmured Levison.

Mellish chuckled.

"Yes; the letter hasn't been delivered. If it was to tell her to stay away—"

"I rather reckon it was, to judge by his looks now," grinned Levison. "Did you ever see such a scowl?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"She looks a nice girl enough," said Levison, surveying Maud as she approached with her brother. "I like her face. But her togs give the show away, and no mistake! They must be as poor as church mice, for Bishop's sister to dress like that."

"Yes, rather!"

"Why, the maids here spend more money on their clothes," said Levison. "Look at her cotton gloves. Sally, the housemaid, doesn't wear cotton gloves."

"No fear!"

"And her boots—five-and-nine."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's why Bish didn't want her to come. No wonder he said, 'Oh, hang!' when he thought of her showing up here, in those duds," grinned Levison. "It's rough on Bish, after all his blessed lies about his people."

"Serve him jolly well right!" said Mellish. "He's swanked a bit too much. Why, they must be horribly poor."

"I should say so! And I remember him curling his lip because it came out that my people kept only one maid," said Levison, gritting his teeth. "I wonder how many his people keep?"

"None at all, I fancy, to judge by the way his sister dresses."

"She gives the show away, and no mistake," said Levison. "But she's too good for him, all the same. She looks nicer than he does. And a fellow must be a thorough worm to treat his sister as he's doing, whatever she's like. Look at him; he's not speaking a word to her."

"Yes—cad!" said Mellish; and, indeed, if a thing appeared to Mellish to be cadish, it must have been very cadish indeed.

"He's going to take her into the house, and keep her out of sight," said Levison.

Mellish grinned.

"I don't think!" he remarked.

"Exactly," grinned Levison. "I don't think, either. After all Bish's swank about his people, he can show them in public. That's my idea. If he doesn't bring his sister out for the fellows to see, we'll take care he's made to."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"As friends of Bishop's, we'll insist upon being introduced, in the first place," said Levison.

And Mellish nodded a grinning assent.

Bishop and his sister had reached the School House by this time. Bishop's conduct would certainly have moved the indignation of any fellow with decent feelings; the cads were more justified than they were, as a rule, when they played their impish tricks upon other fellows. There was no doubt that Bishop was acting cadishly, and the two cads of the Fourth felt quite an unusual glow of virtue at the idea of punishing him.

Bishop was tramping along with his hands thrust deep into his pockets, and a scowl upon his face. He did not speak to, or look at, his sister. Maud walked along by his side, with the miserable feeling that she was unwelcome, and trying hard not to cry. She knew how tears would annoy and exasperate her brother at that moment, and even then the poor girl was thinking of him, and not of herself.

As they came up the School House steps, Levison and Mellish stepped into their way, so that they had no choice but to stop. The two juniors raised their caps in the most polite and engaging way, and poor Maud probably thought that they were both very nice boys.

"Good-afternoon!" said Levison politely.

"Your sister, of course, Bish?" said Mellish.

Bishop scowled more darkly.

"Yes," he snapped.

"Oh, good! Introduce me."

"Yes, introduce us, please," said Levison, with a gracious smile at Maud. "We are both great friends of your brother's, Miss Bishop."

"Oh, yes, rather!" said Mellish.

Bishop gritted his teeth. But he could not very well escape, and he hastily performed the introduction, and led his sister into the house. Mellish and Levison exchanged a glance, and followed them in.

"Miss Bishop might like us to show her round the school a bit, Bish," Levison suggested.

"Nothing of the kind."

"Oh, come!" exclaimed Mellish. "Let Miss Bishop speak for herself."

"Yes, rather!"

Bishop turned savagely on the two juniors.

"Mind your own business," he exclaimed angrily. "Let me alone."

"Oh, really, Bish—"

"Get out!"

"Dear me; before a lady, too!" said Mellish. "I'm shocked at you, Bish! Hang it all, you might let us show your sister some civility."

Bishop went upstairs, and Maud followed him, very much puzzled and wondering. Levison and Mellish grinned at one another in the lower passage.

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"THE RUNAWAY SCHOOLBOY!"

"His lordship is going to keep her out of sight—I don't think!" grinned Levison. "Let's tell some of the fellows."

"What-ho!"

Bishop led his sister to the Fourth-Form passage, and into his study. Fortunately for Bishop, it happened that the fellow who had shared the study with him had left lately, and he had the room all to himself. Maud glanced about her timidly as her brother took her into the study. At any other time she would have been delighted to see the room, to look over Val's personal belongings and his books. But just now she was feeling too depressed to take much interest in anything.

Bishop closed the door.

He pointed to a chair. Maud sat down, heavily and sadly. She was tired after her journey. But she did not think of that. Her heart was aching, and she could hardly keep back her tears.

Bishop's frown was unchanged. What was he to say to her? The secret shame, the secret feeling that he was acting in a mean way, made him all the angrier.

"Maud!"

She looked up timidly.

"Yes, Val!"

"I—I wish you'd had my letter."

"I wish I had," said Maud.

He winced.

"I suppose it can't be helped now," he said wretchedly.

"I—I explained in the letter that—that I was occupied this afternoon."

"I did not know, Val. If—if I am in the way, I can go," said Maud. "If you were playing football, I should like to watch you."

Bishop bit his lip.

"I'm not playing football, after all. That's—that's off, as it happens." He could not confess that he had lied in his letter.

"Then how am I in the way, Val? Were you going out with your friends here?" asked Maud. "You could have let me know."

"But I wrote——"

"I did not get the letter."

"It's very odd," said Bishop restlessly. "but—but it's horribly awkward. You—you don't understand, Maud."

"I don't think I do, Val—excepting that you're not glad to see me here."

Bishop made an impatient gesture.

"It's not that, Maud. You know I should be always glad to see you, but—but——"

"But what, Val?"

"You don't understand. The fellows here don't know how poor we are at home. I—I've kept up appearances, as well as I could. You don't understand."

"You—you haven't told any—any——"

"Lies?" said Bishop bitterly. "Well, I dare say it amounts to that. You can't understand. This is an expensive school, and poor boys don't get much credit here. There's a chap here named Brooke—he's a day boy—his people are better off than us, as a matter of fact; but he has a lot to put up with because he's known to be poor. I could see that when I first came; and I never meant to have to stand that. I've kept up appearances pretty well. The fellows all think that I'm decently off at home."

Maud was silent.

"Now it will all be given away," said Bishop restlessly.

Maud started.

"You mean that I shall give it away?" she asked.

"Yes."

"But I shall not say a word."

He laughed miserably.

"It isn't necessary to say a word, you little goose. Don't you see the contrast between your clothes and mine, for instance?"

Maud flushed.

"I—I never thought——"

"Of course you didn't, or you wouldn't have come, I suppose."

"Val!"

"The harm's done now!" he said gloomily.

"But—but—but it was your own fault, Val," said Maud tearfully.

He stared at her.

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"My fault!" he exclaimed sharply.

"Yes," said Maud. "You—you told me how well you were getting on here—that you were popular with the fellows, and you never said a word about having deceived them."

"Deceived them!"

"I—I mean about keeping up appearances," stammered Maud. "Don't be offended, Val. I didn't mean to say that. I—I was led to suppose that the boys knew you just as you were, and—and that they would expect to see your sister plainly dressed, if they thought about the matter at all. If I had known——"

"You ought to have known!" said her brother roughly.

"But how could I? If you had told me that you were keeping up appearances, as you call it, and pretending that we were well off——"

He bit his lip.

"Oh, don't go on!" he exclaimed. "It can't be helped! The question is, what's to be done now?"

Maud rose to her feet.

"That is simple enough," she said quietly. "I will go."

"Yes, but——"

There was a tap at the door, and the handle turned. Bishop swung round to the door, and clapped his foot against it, and the door opened only a few inches.

"Who's that?" called out Bishop.

"Us!" said the voice of Levison.

And there was a laugh.

Bishop gritted his teeth. He opened the door, and stepped out into the passage, and drew the door shut behind him. Then, with his teeth set, and his brows knitted, he faced the crowd of juniors in the passage.

CHAPTER 11

The Cad!

BISHOP stared angrily at the crowd of fellows. Levison and Mellish and Crooke were there, with a good many fellows more decent than themselves, drawn there by curiosity. Gore and Smith minor, and Macdonald and several more of the Fourth and the Shell had come along to see Bishop's sister.

"What do you want here?" demanded Bishop savagely.

The juniors looked at one another.

"We've come to see your sister, Bish," said Levison.

"Well, you can't!"

"What's the objection?" asked Crooke.

"Oh, get out!"

"It's not fair play," said Mellish. "Bish is a regular brute to his sister. He's going to shut her up in the study, and not allow her to see the school or anything. I think we ought to kick Bishop out, and take the young lady round."

"Hear, hear!"

"Hold on," said Macdonald. "Don't be a cad, Mellish. If Bishop's sister doesn't want to see us, you're jolly well not going to force yourself on her."

"Look here, Mac——"

"You'll get a dot in the eye if you do!" said the Scottish junior warningly.

"Leave it to the lady herself," said Levison. "If Miss Bishop doesn't want to see us, we'll clear out."

"That's fair," said Crooke.

"Fair as a die."

"Let's see her, Bishop."

"Get aside, now."

Bishop clenched his hands.

"You can't!" he said.

"You sha'n't! Get along!"

"Rats!"

"Let Miss Bishop speak for herself."

"He doesn't want us to see her!" grinned Mellish. "It will give away all his swank, you know. She is dressed like a servant, and——"

"Liar!" exclaimed Bishop furiously.

Mellish chuckled.

"Let the fellows see her, then."

"Stand back!"

But Levison and Mellish and Crooke were advancing upon Bishop. They collared him, and tried to drag him away from the door of the study. Bishop struggled furiously.

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Maud Bishop stepped quickly towards her brother, and laid her hand upon his shoulder. "Val!" exclaimed the girl softly. "Tom Merry & Co. want you!"

There was a sound of footsteps in the passage, and an exclamation:

"Bai Jove, what's the mattah here?"

"Help!" shouted Bishop.

"Bai Jove, what's the wow?"

Tom Merry & Co. were coming along the passage. Cousin Ethel had gone into the Head's house to see Mrs. Holmes, and Tom Merry & Co. had brought in a supply of "tuck" from Dame Taggles's little shop to prepare an extensive refreshment in the study. They had come along at a fortunate moment for Bishop.

Tom Merry and Blake and Figgins seized Bishop's three assailants, and yanked them off. Bishop, gasping for breath, reeled back to the study-door.

"What's the trouble?" asked Tom Merry.

"Mind your own business!" snapped Levison.

The study-door opened.

Maud had heard the noise of the struggle, and she was alarmed for her brother. She came quickly into the doorway.

"Val! Are you hurt?"

She asked the question quickly and breathlessly, with the colour flushing in her pale cheeks.

Bishop gritted his teeth. Why did Maud want to appear at that moment, the most awkward of all moments for him? His eyes gleamed.

"No!" he growled angrily.

Tom Merry looked at him. He had never heard a fellow speak to any girl, especially a sister, in that tone of voice before. He began to think he had been a little too much in a hurry to save Bishop from a ragging.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy bowed most gracefully to Maud. The swell of St. Jim's did not even notice that she was plainly dressed. If she had worn anything gaudy or in bad taste, it would have struck his fastidious eye at once. But mere cheapness of material was nothing.

"Your sistah, Bish, I pwesume?" he exclaimed.

"Yes," grunted Bishop.

"Pway intwoduce me, deah boy!"

Levison grinned at Mellish.

"I think it's a pretty fair show up, now," he muttered.

Mellish nodded. The cads of the Fourth moved away down

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the passage. They felt that they had done enough—for the present, at least.

Bishop was pale with anger and chagrin.

He made Maud a sign to step back into the study, instead of performing the introduction asked for by D'Arcy, much to the surprise of the swell of St. Jim's.

"Bish, old man——"

Bishop stepped back into the room.

"Oh, don't bother!" he exclaimed.

D'Arcy looked at him in amazement.

"Weally, Bish——"

Tom Merry looked hard at Bishop. In the pale face of the junior, with its changing colour and harassed brows, he thought he could read the truth. His lip curled a little in contempt.

"I was going to ask you to bring your sister to a feed in my study, Bishop," he said. "Cousin Ethel is coming at four."

"Thanks, but——"

"If Miss Bishop would care to come, we should be glad to have her, and she might like to meet Cousin Ethel," said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Bring her, Bish, and come yourself," exclaimed Figgins.

"Thanks, no—my sister wouldn't care to come."

"Weally, Bish——"

Bishop closed the door of the study without any more words.

The juniors looked at one another. Bishop's conduct was unaccountable, or, rather, it could only be accounted for in one way. The fellow was ashamed of his sister, and he was fool enough to let it be seen, not realising that that very shame was more degrading to him than anything else could have been.

There was an awkward pause.

"Well, we'd better get on," said Kerr.

"Yaas, wathah!"

The juniors moved on to Tom Merry's study. They felt awkward and constrained. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's aristocratic face was very severe. In Tom Merry's study, he tapped the captain of the Shell on the arm. Tom Merry looked at him quietly.

"What's the matiah there, do you think, deah boy?" asked D'Arcy, in a low voice.

"It looks pretty plain," said Tom Merry.

"The fellow isn't glad to see his sistah."

"Apparently not."

"What an awful cad!"

"Yes."

"But—but she seems a nice gal," said D'Arcy, puzzled. "Why shouldn't the howlin' cad want to see her?"

Tom Merry shook his head.

"I'm afraid Bishop has been swanking about his people a bit too thick," he said. "I suppose his people are not so well off as he's made out. As a matter of fact, a good many people have suspected that before, if Bishop only knew it."

"Yes, rather!" said Kerr.

D'Arcy wrinkled his brows thoughtfully.

"And do you think he's ashamed of her giving him away?"

"I suppose so."

"Awful wottah!"

"Beastly!"

"Suppose I go and give him a feahful thwashin'?" D'Arcy suggested thoughtfully. "I should think it would do him good, and I should have lots of time to thwash him before Cousin Ethel comes in to tea."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"I don't suppose it would do him much good," said Tom Merry. "I dare say he deserves to be licked, but it would be hardly pleasant for his sister to see it."

"Yaas, pewwaps you're wight," agreed D'Arcy. "Pewwaps it would be bettah to give him a feahful thwashin' aftah the young lady is gone."

Figgins glanced at his watch.

"It's all right—half an hour to get ready yet," said Manners. "It's only half-past three."

"I was thinking——"

Figgins did not say what he was thinking, but quitted the study. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy jammed his monocle into his eye and glanced after him suspiciously.

"If that silly ass has gone to wait outside the Head's house for Cousin Ethel——" he began.

"I say, Gussy, help me with this ham," said Kerr.

"Nobody can cut up ham as you do."

"Certainly, Kerr, deah boy!" said D'Arcy, switched off from the subject of Figgins and Cousin Ethel, as Kerr intended that he should be. "I must say that cuttin' up ham is a delicate bizney, and wequires tact and judgment."

And D'Arcy gave his attention to the ham.

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CHAPTER 12.

Cousin Ethel is Angry.

C OUSIN ETHEL came out of the Head's house with a smile upon her lips. Perhaps, from her window, she had seen the somewhat lanky form of Figgins standing by the old elm-tree. She may have felt complimented at Figgins being willing to stand for half an hour on a cold day to gain the privilege of walking about twenty paces with her to the School House. She gave him a bright smile and a nod as Figgins detached himself from the elm-tree and joined her.

"Tea will be ready," said Figgins.

"Yes; but I am still two minutes early," said Cousin Ethel, glancing at the little watch pinned on her blouse.

"Yes; you're never late, Cousin Ethel," said Figgins, in great admiration.

Cousin Ethel smiled.

They entered the School House together, and more than one envious glance was thrown at Figgins as he mounted the broad staircase with the graceful girl at his side.

"It's in Tom Merry's study," said Figgins.

"Yes."

They passed down the Fourth-Form passage towards the Shell quarters. Figgins gave a sudden start as they drew near the door of Bishop's study.

From within the study came an unmistakable sound.

It was a sob!

Figgins started as if he had been hit. For it was a girl's sob, and to the big, rugged, tender-hearted Figgins the idea of a girl crying was inexpressibly shocking. That there were people so brutal that they actually made girls cry was a thing that Figgins never could understand.

Figgins's fists clenched instinctively, and his brows lowered. He knew that it was Bishop's sister who was in Bishop's study, and he would have parted even with Cousin Ethel at that moment for the sake of having a couple of minutes alone with Bishop.

Cousin Ethel slackened her steps.

Ethel was kind-hearted, and anyone in trouble always touched her heart. She was surprised to hear a girl's sob in a junior study in the School House. She had noticed Maud Bishop at the school-gates, but she had not seen her since or thought about her. She paused, and looked at Figgins in surprise.

"What is that?" she exclaimed.

"Sounded like somebody blubbing," said Figgins awkwardly.

"Do you know who it is?"

"I suppose it's Bishop's sister."

"His sister?"

"Ye-es."

"Why should she cry?"

Figgins was silent.

"Has she come to visit him?" asked Cousin Ethel.

"Yes."

"Is it the girl I saw come in at the gates a few minutes after I came in?"

"Yes, Ethel."

"She came down in the same train with me, and she looked very happy and light-hearted," said Ethel. "I spoke to her once, as we were in the carriage alone, and she told me she was coming to see her brother at St. Jim's, and I thought she was very fond of him, and very glad to come."

"Fonder of him than he deserves, I dare say," muttered Figgins grimly.

"Why should she cry now?"

Figgins said nothing.

"It is not possible that he is cruel to her?" said Ethel.

Figgins remained grimly silent.

"Figgins, you know what the matter is!" Ethel coloured. "I am not inquisitive, but—but I can't bear to hear her cry. Listen!"

There was no more sobbing, but in the passage they could hear deep-drawn, quivering breaths, which showed how hard-held were the sobs.

"Poor little thing!" muttered Figgins.

"What is the matter, Figgins? Shall I go in?"

"I—I don't know. You see——"

"Well?"

"I fancy, perhaps—perhaps her brother isn't too pleased to see her," said Figgins desperately. "I can't very well explain——"

Cousin Ethel coloured indignantly.

"Then he is a cad!" she exclaimed.

"That he jolly well is!" said Figgins very heartily. "I—I say, Cousin Ethel, shall I go in and hammer him?"

Ethel smiled.

"No; I will go in."

"But——"

"Go on to Tom Merry's study and say I'm coming."

Figgins hesitated a moment. But Cousin Ethel's word was law to him. He nodded, and passed on up the passage, and Cousin Ethel stopped at Bishop's door and knocked. There was a sudden, breathless ejaculation within.

"For goodness' sake, stop blubbing, Maud! Somebody's heard you!"

Ethel's eyes gleamed. She knocked again.

"Go away, confound you!" shouted Bishop's voice in the study.

Ethel did not go away. She had given ample warning of her coming, and now she opened the door and entered the study.

Bishop turned furiously to face the new-comer, but the fury died out of his face as he saw that it was Cousin Ethel. He stared at her blankly.

"Miss Cleveland!" he stammered.

Ethel did not even look at him.

She turned towards the forlorn little figure in the chair—Maud, crying as if her heart would break, but trying to restrain her pitiful tears.

"My poor dear!" exclaimed Ethel in quite a motherly way. She was perhaps six months older than Maud, but she seemed much older as she stood beside her protectingly, her eyes flashing as they turned upon Bishop.

Bishop looked at her sullenly.

He felt uneasy and ashamed. He had been explaining to Maud, in halting, shamed sentences, that she couldn't be seen round St. Jim's, and that she had better stay in his study till dusk, and then he would take her to the station. The girl's tears, which she could not wholly restrain, had irritated him very much. He felt that it was too bad that Maud should trouble him in this way, and then cry at a word as if he were an unfeeling brute.

But the poor child could not help crying.

"What have you done to her?" Cousin Ethel exclaimed indignantly.

"Nothing!" said Bishop, trying to laugh, and failing dismally. "Do you think I have been beating her?"

"I think you are brute enough!" said Ethel.

Bishop flushed crimson.

"Oh, hang it!" he exclaimed. "Look here, Miss Cleveland, I didn't ask you into my study, and you have no right to interfere here."

"Don't speak to me!" said Ethel.

"I wish you'd leave my study. As for Maud, this is only hysterical rot," said Bishop, in explanation. "Girls always turn the waterworks on for nothing, and— Oh!"

Smack! Cousin Ethel could not help it. She raised her hand and boxed Bishop's ear, and the junior staggered back with a cry of rage and astonishment.

Ethel did not look at him again.

She turned to Maud and tried to comfort her. Bishop rubbed his ear, and glared at Miss Cleveland. He was greatly inclined to hit her, although she was a girl.

"I—I— Hang it!" he stammered. "Look here, Miss Cleveland—"

"Don't speak to me!"

"But, I say—"

"Oh, do be silent!"

Bishop bit his lip with rage.

Ethel, taking no further notice of him, bent over Maud with a tender, kind caress.

"Don't cry, dear," she whispered—"don't cry! What has he done?"

"He—he is angry with me for coming here," sobbed poor Maud; "but I—I did not know. How should I have known that it would give him away—I—I mean—"

She broke off, realising that she was on the point of making disclosures that would be very disagreeable to her brother.

"Shut up, Maud!" growled Bishop.

"I—I'm not going to say anything, Val." Maud rose to her feet, and pushed back her hair from her tear-stained face. "But—but I can't stay here! I want to go!"

"Look here—"

"You shall go!" said Ethel, winding a protecting arm round the girl's waist.

"Come with me, my dear; I will look after you."

"I—I must leave the school at once—"

Ethel shook her head.

"You must not!" she said.

"Nothing of the sort! You are tired after such a long journey. Why, you told me so yourself when we were speaking in the train."

Bishop started. He had no idea that his sister and Miss Cleveland had made each other's acquaintance in the train coming to Ryecombe.

"Yes, but I have rested now," stammered Maud.

"You have not rested enough, and you must be hungry, too," said Ethel practically. "You certainly shall not leave the school till you've had your tea."

"But—but—"

"I am just going to tea in Tom Merry's study," said Ethel. "They will be glad if I bring a friend with me, and it will be ever so much nicer for me, too. Come with me!"

"She can't—" began Bishop.

Ethel turned upon him.

"Hold your tongue!" she exclaimed imperiously.

Bishop simply staggered. He had seen Cousin Ethel many times before at St. Jim's, but he had never seen anything to indicate that she had a temper. He could see that she had one now!

"I—I—" he stammered, and his voice trailed off.

"I—I cannot come, thank you!" said Maud, though Ethel's kindness had brought a flush of happy colour into her face.

"I—I have been crying, and they will see—"

"You shall come to my room first and bathe your eyes," said Ethel.

"But—but—"

"Come!"

"My—my brother doesn't want me to," faltered Maud. "You don't understand. I—I am so—so shabby!"

Ethel's eyes flashed.

"Is that it?" she exclaimed, as Bishop shrank before her eyes. "Oh, you wretched boy! Tell your sister at once that she may come, since she appears to want to regard your wishes. If you were my brother, I should box your ears for your impertinence."

"She can do as she likes!" growled Bishop, hardly knowing what to say in the presence of this unexpected feminine hurricane.

"There, you hear," said Ethel triumphantly. "Now come."

Maud hesitated, but Ethel's arm was about her waist, and Ethel, graceful and slim as she was, was quite strong. She drew the girl from the study. In the doorway she paused, and looked back at the sullen-faced Bishop.

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The Editor will be obliged if you will hand this book, when finished with, to a friend.



A Splendid, Long, Complete School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars.

By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.
Like Coker's Check.
"HE—the duke," gasped Harry Wharton.
"The duke?" stammered Niglett.
"The duke?" roared Bob Cherry.
"We're not going to stand it!"
The three chairs of the Remorse Farm at Greyfriars were full with anger and indignation. And they had come to be so. They had just read the first chapter of the Fourth Form after morning lessons, and they had failed to look at the notice-board in the hall. A crowd of fellows were gathered round the notice-board, their exclamations showing that some notice of unusual interest was posted.

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NEXT THURSDAY: "THE RUNAWAY SCHOOLBOY!"

"Go and tell Tom Merry that I shall be there in ten minutes, and that your sister is coming with me," she said. Then she walked away with Maud. Bishop stared after her in amazement. He was savagely angry and chagrined, and as ashamed as he was angry. He determined that he certainly wouldn't take Cousin Ethel's message to Tom Merry's study; but in spite of himself he felt that he had to, and he walked along to the Shell passage, biting his lips.

CHAPTER 13.

The One who was Wanted.

TOM MERRY looked up from the grate as Figgins came in. Tom Merry's handsome face was ruddy from toast-making. There was a huge pile of buttered toast in a dish in the fender, and the kettle was singing on the hob. Tom Merry jumped up. He expected Cousin Ethel to be with Figgins.

"Just in time!" he exclaimed. "Hallo! Where's Cousin Ethel?"

Figgins grinned rather ruefully.

"She's stopped in Bishop's study," he said.

"Bai Jove!"

"Bishop's study!" exclaimed Jack Blake, in surprise.

"What on earth for?"

"To speak to his sister."

"Does she know her?" asked Monty Lowther.

"They seem to have met in the train coming here."

"It's all wight," said D'Arcy. "Bishop's sistah is a vewy nice gal."

"But what's the row?" asked Kerr, who could see by Figgins's face that he had not told all. "Any trouble, Figgins?"

"She was crying," Figgins explained. "Ethel went in to speak to her. I suppose that unspeakable cad Bishop has been ragging the poor girl—for coming here, I suppose, and giving him away."

"The cad!"

"The worm!"

"The uttah wottah!"

"The fellow must have lied about his place and his people," said Monty Lowther thoughtfully. "But his sister's a much nicer girl than I should have expected Bishop to have. She's worth fifty of him."

"Fifty thousand, deah boy."

"Fifty millions, if you like," said Lowther. "If the cad only had sense enough to see it, his sister will do him credit, and give him a leg up here. For one, never knew his people were so decent. I suppose he's bothered because he's lied about their being better off than they are."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Mug's game!" said Kerr. "It's always bound to come out in the long run. As a matter of fact, Bishop never took fellows in as he imagined."

"Rather not."

"I shall make it a point to thrash Bishop!"

"Hallo! Here he is!"

Bishop's sullen face looked into the crowded study. The juniors regarded him with grim looks. More than one fellow there would have given him a licking, without ceremony, if his sister had not been in the School House. But they felt that they must postpone a little attention of that sort until Maud was gone.

"Well, what do you want?" demanded Tom Merry, shortly enough.

Bishop scowled.

"I don't want anything, only Miss Cleveland has given me a message for you!" he snapped.

"Bai Jove!"

"She is coming in ten minutes."

"Oh, good!"

"And she is bringing my sister with her."

"Bravo!"

"Bai Jove, that's jollay good!"

"Stay yourself, then, Bish," said Tom Merry, as courteously as he could, under the circumstances. It was hard to be courteous to a fellow whom he despised to the very marrow of his bones.

Bishop shook his head.

"Thanks, I won't!"

"Weally, Bish—"

Bishop trumped away sullenly up the passage. He went downstairs, and out into the quadrangle, still with the same sullen scowl upon his brows.

It was all up now, he reflected.

Cousin Ethel had quite spoiled his last attempt to keep his sister out of sight. All the fellows—the best set in the School House—would see her now, and make her personal acquaintance.

It was all over!

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 201.

"THE DUFFER'S RETURN!"

It was not only that they would see her shabby dress, her fingers seamed with the signs of incessant sewing—that was not all. Maud was innocent and artless, and she might talk too freely—might tell of the poor, poor home—might even allow the terrible fact to escape her that in the Bishops' household no maid was kept.

Bishop felt that if he were present he might exercise a restraining influence upon her. But the thought of watching her, making signs to her, frowning at her, under the bright eyes of Cousin Ethel, could not be entertained. Ethel would see that he did not bully his sister, and his presence would probably only confuse her, and perhaps end by making matters worse. He had to let things take their course.

What would the fellows think of him now?

One thing was certain—they would not think so badly of him on account of his poverty, or even his untruths about it, as they did on account of his treatment of his sister, who had come full of loving kindness to see him at the school, and had been greeted with such wretched ingratitude and coldness.

Bishop realised that.

He tramped in the quadrangle, his hands thrust deep into his pockets, his brows deeply lined. He caught sight suddenly of Cousin Ethel and Maud coming out of the Head's house. Cousin Ethel's ministrations had evidently done well for her new friend, for almost every sign of crying had vanished from Maud's face, and she was smiling happily. She did not see her brother under the elms, but passed into the School House—the two girls with their arms around one another's waists—and disappeared from Bishop's sight. He was left alone in the quad., in the growing dusk, and he had a strange feeling of being an outcast.

He entered the house slowly, some minutes after the girls had gone in.

As he reached the study, he could hear merry voices from the direction of the Shell passage. He went into his own room, and closed the door. His face was very dark, and his heart was very heavy.

It was strange. He had been ashamed of his sister. He had feared and dreaded that she would bring disgrace to him at St. Jim's. Yet, strange to say, his sister was friendly with Cousin Ethel, and entertained at tea by the best set of fellows in the School House, and he was not wanted. They wanted Maud, but they did not want him.

CHAPTER 14.

D'Arcy does not Make the Tea.

MAUD looked shyly at the juniors as she walked into Tom Merry's study with Ethel Cleveland. There was quite a crowd in the study, and Maud felt shy amongst so many. But Ethel was holding her hand, and Ethel's firm fingers gave the girl courage. The juniors all turned gladly enough towards Cousin Ethel, and greeted her warmly, and extended the same hearty greeting to her companion. In a very few minutes Maud felt quite at home.

She had been quite unconscious of her shabby dress when she came to St. Jim's; but her brother's conduct had made her very conscious of it. But under the kindly influence in Tom Merry's study, she forgot it again.

Figgins hurried to place a chair for Miss Cleveland, and another for Maud, and the two girls sat down side by side.

It was a new and strange experience for the quiet girl from a quiet country home.

The study was crowded, but the fellows gave the two guests of honour plenty of room. Outside in the quadrangle the early winter dusk was falling. But in the study the gas burned brightly, and the fire roared in the chimney, and all was bright and cosy.

The table was spread with a brilliantly white cloth—so white that it was pretty certain that it did not belong to a junior study. Gleaming crockery adorned the table, and although very few of the cups were of the same patterns, what did that matter? The guests in the study had brought crockery and cutlery, as juniors generally did to a study feed.

Chairs, too, were at a premium, but what was the need for chairs, when fellows could sit on stools or boxes, or on the window-sill?

Fatty Wynn turned a crimson face from the fire, where he was poaching eggs in the frying-pan. Fatty Wynn was enjoying his task, and he had been taking little snacks from time to time, his snacks amounting to more than a solid meal for anybody else. But Fatty Wynn had wonderful powers in this direction.

Fatty Wynn's face alone was quite enough to make anybody feel cheerful. Fatty took such a whole-hearted pleasure in a feed, that it made anyone hungry to see him.

"Done?" asked Tom Merry.

"Done to a turn," said Fatty Wynn.

"And the ham?"

"Perfect."
 "And the toast's all right," said Blake.
 "Yaas, wathah!"
 "Make the tea, Lowther."
 "Certainly."
 "Pewwaps I had bettah make the tea, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, a little doubtfully, "we want it wathah special on an occasion like this."
 "Oh, rats!" said Lowther.
 "Weally, Lowthah—"
 "I can make tea as easily as lotion for the eye," said Monty Lowther, in his blandest tone.
 D'Arcy turned his eyeglass indignantly upon the humorist of the Shell.
 "Weally, you fathead!"
 "Order—order!"
 "I wefuse to ordah!" said D'Arcy. "I—I mean to say—"
 "Never mind! Make the tea!"
 "Weally, Tom Mewwy—"
 "I'll warm the teapot for you, then, Gussy," said Monty Lowther. "You must allow me to help your royal nibs."
 "I wegard that as a ridiculous expression, Lowthah, but I will allow you to help if you like. You may as well make yourself useful. Pway make the teapot thowoughly hot."
 "What-ho!" said Lowther.
 "Pway give me the tea-caddy, Mannahs."
 "Here you are, my son."
 "Lemmie see," said Arthur Augustus, looking over the company, "there are twelve of us altogether. That will be twelve spoonfuls of tea, and thwee ovah will make fifteen. That will be all wight."
 "It ought to be all black," said Lowther.
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Pway don't talk out of the back of your silly neck, deah boy. Make the teapot hot, and hand it to me," said Arthur Augustus, beginning to measure out the tea.
 "All serene, Gussy!"
 Manners glanced at Monty Lowther as he was heating the teapot, and grinned. Lowther was doing it thoroughly. There is no doubt that tea is better made if the teapot is thoroughly dried and warmed first. But the way Lowther was warming the pot was not likely to improve the tea very much. The humorist of the Shell was heating the handle of the tea-pot, and it was likely to cause Arthur Augustus D'Arcy a considerable shock when he took it up.
 "Is that teapot weady, Lowthah?"
 "Certainly."
 "Hand it ovah, then, deah boy."
 "Hada't you better let me make the tea, after all?" said Lowther. "I dare say I should manauage it better."
 "Weally, Lowthah—"
 "You are bound to have some accident, you know," urged Lowther. "You know what an ass you are."
 "Weally, you impertinent fathead—"
 "You will drop the pot and bust it, or something—"
 "Wats!"
 "Well, have your way if you like," said Monty Lowther, in a tone of resignation. "But mind, I don't take any responsibility for this teapot after it passes out of my hands!"
 "Pway don't be an ass!"
 "Well, there you are."
 Lowther placed the teapot on the hob ready for D'Arcy. The swell of St. Jim's shot the tea into it.
 "That takes all the tea," he remarked. "But it will be all wight."
 "It should be all bl—"
 "Oh, wats!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Pway don't make those wotten puns ovah and ovah again, Lowthah. Is that kettle boilin', Blake?"
 "Yes, rather! Been boiling ten minutes!"
 "Tea should be made with watah just on the boil, and not watah that has been boilin' for a long time," said D'Arcy.
 "Pewwaps it would be bettah to throw it away and boil up a fwesh lot?"
 There was a general shout of protest.
 "Rats!"
 "Vewy well, deah boys—"
 "Buck up, Gussy!"
 "Make the tea!"
 "Vewy well!"
 Arthur Augustus took the teapot by the handle, preparatory to lifting it to where the kettle stood.
 The next instant he uttered a terrific yell.
 "Yow! Yaro-op!"
 Crash!
 The teapot crashed down into the grate, breaking into a score of pieces. The tea in it, not yet wetted, scattered over the cinders and over the dish of ready-made toast.
 Arthur Augustus performed a wild dance on the hearth-rug, sucking his fingers.

"Yow! Ow—ow! Yaro-op!"
 "What's the matter?"
 "You ass!"
 "Ring off!"
 "He's busted the teapot!"
 "And wasted the tea!"
 "Fathead!"
 "Yow! Yawo-op!" howled Arthur Augustus wildly.
 "I've burnt my fingahs! Yah! The handle of the teapot was hot! Yow! That fwightful ass Lowthah warmed the handle instead of the pot! Yo-o-o-ow!"
 There was a yell of laughter in the study.
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Yawo-o-o-o-op!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "You uttah asses!" gasped D'Arcy, sucking his fingers.
 "There is nothin' whatevah to laugh at! I am hurt!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Bai Jove! You did that on purpose, Lowthah, you uttah ass!"
 "Well, I warned you that you would drop the teapot, or something," said Lowther mildly. "It would have been better to let me make the tea, you see."
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "You uttah wottah—"
 "The tea's wasted now," said Tom Merry. "We shall have to get some more, and borrow a new teapot. That one was Kildare's, and I daresay he will make a row when it's taken back in that state. He's sure not to like it."
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Bai Jove! I—"
 "As Gussy is the cause of all the trouble, he had better go and scout for another teapot," Lowther suggested. "I suggest that he brings in two next time, in case he smashes any more."
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "You uttah wottah!" shouted D'Arcy. The exasperated swell of St. Jim's regarded Monty Lowther's suggestion simply as insult added to injury. For the moment the polished swell of St. Jim's forgot that there were ladies present, and he made a wild rush at Monty Lowther, and caught him round the neck, and got his head into chancery.
 "Now, you wottah—"

CHAPTER 15. A Late Repentance.

"STOP!"
 "Gussy!"
 "Fathead!"
 "Ladies present!"
 Maud rose to her feet in alarm. Ethel did not move. She knew that a contest was not likely to be a severe one with girls present in the study. Arthur Augustus had forgotten himself for a moment, but he was not likely to forget himself for more than that.
 "You uttah wottah—"
 "Yaro-oh!" roared Monty Lowther. "Yank him off! Yo-opp!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Gussy!"
 Many hands laid hold of the swell of St. Jim's. Many hands, it is said, make light work; but they did not make light work of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. The swell of St. Jim's was terrifically excited.
 "Now then, you feahful wottah—"
 "Gussy!"
 "Yank him off!"
 "Ladies present!" bawled Blake, in D'Arcy's ear. D'Arcy gave a jump.
 "Bai Jove!"
 He released Lowther at once.
 The humorist of the Shell staggered back, clasping his hand to his nose. From his nose a crimson stream oozed through his fingers. Arthur Augustus had pommelled him, and pommelled him hard, before he was dragged off and reminded of the important fact that there were members of the gentler and nobler sex in the study.
 Arthur Augustus gasped for breath. He turned towards the two girls, and his aristocratic face was crimson with shame.
 "I—I— Bai Jove!" he panted.
 "You fathead!" roared Lowther. "I'll—"
 "Shut up, Lowther!"
 "Look at my nose!"
 "Oh, blow your nose—I mean—"
 "He's dotted me on the boko!"
 "Serve you right for being a giddy humorist," said Blake, pushing Monty Lowther towards the window. "A chap can't make jokes without risking this sort of thing. The course of rotten jokes never did run smooth."

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NEXT THURSDAY: "THE RUNAWAY SCHOOLBOY!"

A Splendid, New, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.



"Look here, Blake—"

"Rats!"

"I—I—I'll—"

"No, you won't!"

Tom Merry and Manners and Blake busied themselves in pacifying Lowther, and above all, in keeping him apart from D'Arcy. As for Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, he required no pacifying. The moment that he recognised what an egregious breach of good manners he had committed, he was covered with shame and contrition.

He turned a crimson countenance towards the girls.

"My deah boys—I mean, gals!" he gasped.

Cousin Ethel looked at him severely.

"I am surprised, Arthur!" she said.

"Weally, Ethel—"

"I am shocked!"

"My deah gal—" said D'Arcy feebly.

"I never knew you were such a—such a—such a hooligan, Arthur!"

D'Arcy's face was scarlet.

"Oh, weally, Ethel, don't be so wuff on a chap!" he exclaimed. "It was all that duffah's fault, you know, and I always was a feahful chap when my tempah was woused, you know. I forgot that there were ladies pwesent—I did, weally! I am sowwy!"

"You have frightened Miss Bishop."

"Oh, I'm so sowwy!" said Arthur Augustus, in great distress. "I weally did not mean to frighten you, Miss Bishop!"

Maud smiled faintly.

As a matter of fact, she liked Arthur Augustus very much indeed, and his evident contrition at having lost his temper in her presence made her like him a great deal more.

"It was weally too bad of me!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Oh, I am weally vewy sowwy indeed! I apologise most pwofoundly, Miss Bishop!"

"It is quite all right," said Maud, smiling. "Never mind."

"And I apologise most pwofoundly to you, Ethel!"

"Never mind," said Ethel, smiling, too.

"And I apologise to you, Tom Mewwy, for havin' been guilty of such a feahful thing as askin' a waw in your study—anothah chap's quarters, bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"It's all right," said Tom Merry. "You are forgiven. Only—"

"I apologise to all you chaps."

"Oh, good!" said Kerr. "When you're finished apologise—if you ever are—we'll have tea!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Kerr—"

"You haven't apologised to me yet," said Monty Lowther, mopping his nose with his handkerchief.

Arthur Augustus jammed his monocle into his eye, and turned his glance scornfully upon the humorist of the Shell.

"I shall do nothin' of the sort, Lowthah! I wegard you as an ass!"

"He regards me as a looking-glass!" murmured Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"The question is, where is the tea coming from?" said Tom Merry. "One of you chaps cut down to the tuckshop and get some more."

"I will go, deah boy."

"Buck up, then."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy hurried out of the study. As he passed through the Fourth Form passage, he passed the door of Bishop's study.

Tramp—tramp—tramp!

There was a steady tramping to and fro of feet within.

D'Arcy passed on, without stopping; but he was thinking. He despised Bishop from his very soul, but he could not help feeling sorry for the wretched junior, too. D'Arcy had many little ways that savoured of the noble caste of Vere de Vere, but there never was anything snobbish about him. Snobbishness he regarded as one of the smallest and meanest of weaknesses. He simply could not understand the trait in anybody's composition. Yet, somehow, he felt sorry for the unfortunate snob of the Fourth. It was curious that, while Bishop had been overwhelmed with shame at the appearance of his sister at St. Jim's, she, Maud, was being made much of by everybody, and Bishop himself was left out in the cold.

D'Arcy obtained the tea at Dame Taggles's little tuckshop, and came back into the School House. As he came up the Fourth-Form passage there was still the steady tramp of feet in Bishop's study.

D'Arcy hesitated, paused, and tapped at the door.

There was no reply to the knock, and Arthur Augustus

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"THE DUFFER'S RETURN!"

D'Arcy went in. Bishop was tramping to and fro in the study, his hands thrust deep into his pockets, his face very lined, and looking pale in the gaslight.

He gave D'Arcy a sharp look.

"Feeling pretty wotten, old man?" asked D'Arcy.

Bishop nodded without speaking.

"I'm sowwy!"

Another nod.

"We're havin' a good feed in Tom Mewwy's study," said D'Arcy. "Come along! Your sister will be glad to see you, and so—and so shall we all. Twot along, deah boy!"

Bishop shook his head.

"I won't come," he said. "Thanks all the same! I—I—"

"Yaas, deah boy?"

"I'm beginning to see things as, I suppose, you see them," said Bishop, in a hesitating, broken voice. "I—I—I've been thinking."

D'Arcy looked at him curiously.

"Yaas?" he said.

"I've been a rotten cad," said Bishop miserably. "A chap never had a better sister than mine! She's as good as gold—you don't know how good she's been at home—to me, and to the mater, and to my father! She's an angel! And I—I was ashamed when I saw her here, because—because I've bragged about—about home, and it gave me away. Oh, I've been a rotten fool and cad!"

His voice broke.

D'Arcy looked at him very queerly. The misery in Bishop's face touched him, and he understood the remorse that was eating the boy's heart out. After all, the snobbery and hard-heartedness were only on the surface; the junior's nature was all right, he had no sooner committed his wretched fault than he was sorry for it.

"Bai Jove, deah boy!" began D'Arcy. "If you feel like that—"

Bishop gave a low groan.

"She'll never forgive me now!" he said, with a sudden catch in his voice. "I can't expect her to. I don't deserve that she should! I've been a rotten cad, and not fit to speak to her, and—and—"

He broke off. The tears were running down his cheeks. Arthur Augustus looked at him, and something like a lump came in his own throat.

"You're quite wight, deah boy!" said D'Arcy thoughtfully. "You have been an awf'ly wotten cad, and a feahful snob! But I wathah think that your sistah will forgive you—I weally think so, judgin' fwom what I see of her. I am wathah a fellow of tact and judgment, you know. Tell her you're sowwy—"

Bishop made a restless movement.

"It's no good now! But—but if I could have this afternoon over again— But what's the good of saying that?"

"Lots of good, deah boy; it shows you're sowwy!" said D'Arcy. "I wish you'd come along to Tom Mewwy's study."

Bishop shook his head.

"No, no!"

"Vewy well. But I'm glad to see you in this fwame of mind, anyway. I don't despise you half so much now, deah boy."

And Arthur Augustus, picking up the packet of tea that he had laid upon the table, returned to Tom Merry's study, leaving Bishop alone with his miserable thoughts.

CHAPTER 16.

All Serene!

MAUD looked up quickly as Arthur Augustus D'Arcy re-entered Tom Merry's study.

The swell of St. Jim's caught her eye, and he understood the thought that was passing through her mind.

As if by instinct the girl knew that he had seen her brother, and her quick, fleeting look showed that amid the cheery surroundings of Tom Merry's study, with the kind face of Cousin Ethel beside her, and the juniors all doing their best to make her happy, she was thinking of him—of the brother who had been ashamed to see her at the school.

"Awf'ly decent gal, bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy said to himself. "Much too good for that wottah! I wish I could swap my bwothah Wally for Bish's sistah, I do, bai Jove!"

He laid the packet of tea on the table. Manners had fetched the teapot out of Gore's study, the next room in the passage, and the kettle was still boiling. The little party had commenced their tea, and it was proceeding gaily. Many of the fellows guessed that Maud was inwardly worried about her brother, and they were trying to drive the thought from her mind by kind attentions. Fatty Wynn, in particular, had seated himself by her side, and he was pressing upon her all kinds of delicacies, apparently quite ignorant of the fact that

Maud was not likely to possess anything like his own wonderful assimilating powers.

"You can make the tea this time, Lowthah," said D'Arcy, as he laid down the packet.

Lowther rubbed his nose, and grinned.

"If you'd like to make it, I'll make the teapot hot for you, Gussy," he said amiably.

"Wets!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus leaned over Maud's shoulder. The swell of St. Jim's prided himself upon being a fellow of tact and judgment, but it sometimes happened that both his judgment and his tact were a little at fault. But on this occasion he showed that tact was not foreign to him, at all events.

"Pway excuse me, deah boy—I mean, deah gal!" he murmured. "I wathah think if you were to go and speak to your bwothah, he would come and have this little feed with us—I think so, weally!"

Maud looked up at him, startled.

"He is sowwy," whispered D'Arcy.

Maud coloured with pleasure.

"Thank you so much!" she faltered. "But—"

D'Arcy understood.

"He's already been invited," he said. "And all the fellows would be jolly glad if he came. I say, you chaps, you'd all like Miss Bish's bwothah to come, wouldn't you?"

"Yes, rather!" said the juniors, all at once.

They did not, as a matter of fact, care two straws for Miss Bishop's brother, but they were willing to have him, if it would please Maud. To please Maud, whom they had all come to like very much already, they would have gone to the length even of having Mellish or Levison, if it had been necessary.

"Oh, thank you!" said Maud.

"Pway go and fetch him!" said Arthur Augustus. "Blake will show you the way with pleasure, I know."

"Yes, rather!" said Blake.

Blake was occupying the chair next to Cousin Ethel. He rose to his feet as Maud rose, and D'Arcy made a movement to take his place. But Figgins was nearer, and Figgins cheerfully dropped into Blake's place.

Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass upon Figgins in a very expressive way, but Figgins apparently did not see it. He entered into talk with Cousin Ethel at once, appearing to be unconscious even of D'Arcy's existence.

"Upon the whole, pewpaws it would be battah for me to show Miss Bish. the way," the swell of St. Jim's remarked.

"Rats!" said Blake promptly.

"Weally, Blake—"

But Blake was already escorting Maud out of the study and down the passage. Arthur Augustus gave Figgins another look, which Figgins resolutely did not see. Evidently the New House junior had no intention of giving up his place now that he had obtained it.

Maud stopped at Bishop's door. There was no sound inside the study. The tramping of feet had ceased.

"Here we are!" said Blake.

He held open the door for the girl, and Maud passed in. She entered alone, Blake, with great delicacy, remaining in the passage. He had caught a glimpse of a junior with his face hidden, and he thought he had better not enter.

Maud looked at her brother. Bishop sat at his table, with his arms upon it, and his head on his arms, and his body was shaken by sobs. He was crying!

Maud caught her breath. She had never seen him cry before. She stepped quickly towards him, and laid her hand upon his shoulder.

"Val!"

Bishop started up. He had not heard her enter.

He looked up at her with a tear-stained face, his wet cheeks glistening in the glimmer of the gaslight.

"Maud!"

"Val—dear Val, I'm so sorry!" said Maud. "What—what is the matter? Is it—is it because I have come here?"

Bishop rose to his feet.

"No," he said. "Maud—dear Maud, I—I'm sorry! I've been a cad—a rotten cad—an unspeakable cad! I'm not fit to speak to you!"

"Val!"

"It—it came of my rotten nonsense in keeping up appearances here—telling lies, rather," said Bishop bitterly. "I don't suppose the fellows would have thought much—or cared much—if they'd known how things were at home with us. But—but I was a silly snob! And—and it's made me treat you rottenly, and you've always been too good to me. So have the pater and the mater, and I'm an ungrateful brute!"

The girl's eyes were soft with tears.

"Don't speak like that, Val! It was thoughtless of me—"

"It wasn't, Maud! I—I was really glad to see you, only—only— Oh, it's no good making excuses! I'm a rotten

cad, and that's what's the matter! I feel as if I can't look you in the face after what I've done."

Maud drew his tear-stained face towards her, and kissed his wet cheek.

"Don't think about it any more, Val," she said softly.

"I—I was hurt at first, but—I don't mind now. I knew you were all right at heart; I knew you were fond of me, Val, and would be sorry afterwards. It's nothing!"

"Oh!" said Bishop.

She drew him towards the door.

"Come, Val dear—they're waiting for you! They all want you to come, and—Ethel is so good—so kind."

Bishop hesitated.

"I—I can't come! I can't face them! They know what a miserable cad I've been."

"That is all over now."

"Oh, Maud—"

"Come, Val!"

He yielded. Maud passed her handkerchief over his face softly, but his eyes still looked a little red as he joined Blake in the passage. He looked at Jack a little uncertainly, but Blake appeared to notice nothing. He slipped his arm through Bishop's in the friendliest manner in the world.

"Come on, old son!" he said. "We're beginning, you know!"

"I—I say, Blake—"

"Lowther's making the tea, and all's ready," said Blake cheerily. "Come on!"

And he led Bishop and his sister into Tom Merry's study. The welcome he received put Bishop at his ease almost immediately, and Maud's face was covered with happy smiles. Lowther had made the tea—successfully this time—and a very happy party sat down to it.

There had been many a merry party in that study in the Shell passage, but none quite so jolly as this proved to be.

When the feed was over—and a ripping feed it was, as Fatty Wynn bore testimony—the table was cleared, and D'Arcy proposed a little music. That meant tenor solos from D'Arcy, but the juniors took them in high good-humour. The question of Maud's train arose, but Cousin Ethel persuaded her to stay the night—as Ethel was doing—in the care of Mrs. Holmes, and a telegram was sent home instead, and there was quite a keen competition as to who should cycle down to the village with the telegram. And Maud stayed, and the chums of St. Jim's and their girl guests had a very, very pleasant evening together, which ended all too soon.

On the morrow Cousin Ethel and Maud left the school together, escorted to the station by a crowd of juniors, Bishop among them, and from the affectionate parting of the brother and sister on the platform, it was easy to see that Bishop was quite forgiven, and that he was not likely again to be guilty of the wretched snobishness which had made himself and Maud so miserable for a time. And Levison and Mellish, much to their astonishment, found that in playing their trick with Bishop's letter, they had really done him a great service, for never again, as long as he lived, was Bishop, of the Fourth, likely to be ashamed of his sister!

THE END.

(Another splendid, long complete tale of the Chums of St. Jim's next Thursday, entitled: "THE RUNAWAY SCHOOLBOY" by Martin Clifford. Please order your copy of the GEM LIBRARY in advance. Price One Penny.)



Look for this face on the cover of the Xmas Double Number of the "Penny Pictorial." Now on Sale.

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NEXT THURSDAY: "THE RUNAWAY SCHOOLBOY!"

A Splendid, New, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

DEEP SEA GOLD!

A WONDERFUL NEW STORY OF AMAZING ADVENTURE IN A SUBMARINE MOTOR CAR.

By REGINALD WRAY.



The Previous Chapters of "DEEP SEA GOLD," specially re-written for this number of "THE GEM" LIBRARY.

Dick Dauntless and Jack Orde, chums of Weltsa College, are bathing in the sea early one morning, when they are suddenly seized by enormous octopus-like tentacles and dragged swiftly down beneath the surface of the water. They are pulled aboard a submarine motor-car, and are soon introduced to Captain Flame, the captain of the Octopus, as the strange craft is named.

The crew consists entirely of boys, with whom Dick Dauntless and Jack Orde are soon on good terms.

The chums learn that Captain Flame is bound for the Pacific with the express intention of searching for Dick Dauntless's millionaire father, who was a friend of his, and whose yacht the Morning Star, has long been reported missing.

They make for that dreaded mass of floating weeds known as the Sargasso Sea, and there, stuck fast in the midst of the weeds, they find both the Morning Star and the tug that had been sent out to aid her. While investigating, the Octopus is attacked by a body of Tankas—huge men who dwell in the crater of an extinct volcano. They defeat these, and invade the underground world where these strange men live.

After destroying the castle in the underground world, Captain Flame returns to his home, "The Islands," and quells a rebellion of the prisoners.

Dick Dauntless and the crew of the Octopus are sent to another part of the island for rest while the Octopus is being refitted. They are one morning bathing in the sea when Dick Dauntless utters the cry: "To the shore, quick! A shark!"

(Now go on with the story.)

The Amphibious Shark.

There was no need to repeat the warning. The boys had seen sufficient of the "tiger of the sea" not to willingly linger in his vicinity longer than they could help.

Splashing, and shouting at the top of their voices, all five made their way ashore, not pausing until they had reached the safety of dry land.

To their amazement and horror, the shark followed them. Using its fins as surely shark had never used those useful appendages before or since, it drew itself swiftly on to the narrow stretch of sand, flapping its huge tail, and opening and shutting its mouth in a most terrifying manner.

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"THE DUFFER'S RETURN!"

Is the Title of the Splendid, Long, Complete School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co appearing in this week's "MAGNET" Library. Now on Sale. Price One Penny.

It was the most illbred shark the boys had ever seen, and did not know its proper place at all.

It was all right, though rather unpleasant, for the huge brute to be master in its own domain beneath the waves; but that it should attempt to exercise the same sovereignty on dry land was unbearable.

The worst of it was it seemed perfectly at home on land, and darted after them in a series of strange, kangaroo-like bounds, whereupon the boys determined to let it have its own way, and very wisely retreated inside Jack's bungalow.

Gnashing its teeth with fury, the amphibious shark—surely the only specimen of its kind in existence—lunged itself angrily against the door, from behind which the boys were anxiously discussing how to rid themselves of their unwelcome visitor.

This was not an easy task by any means.

The only weapons the boys possessed was a Swedish knife and two penknives—perfectly inadequate weapons with which to assail so dangerous a foe.

Ten minutes after the shark had hurled itself against the door Jack Orde cautiously opened a window and peeped out. Their foe was nowhere to be seen.

Ready to dash back to safety at the first sign of danger, the boys emerged into the open just as the bell over the dining-bungalow proclaimed that breakfast awaited them.

Looking fearfully around, lest the land-trotting shark should be lurking behind the trees and bushes with which the lawn was dotted, they made their way breakfastwards.

Suddenly they came to an abrupt halt, gazing with staring eyes at where, seated at the head of the table, a cup of steaming coffee in one fin, a large slice of bread in the other, was the shark.

With a half-angry, half-laughing cry, Dick Dauntless dashed forward.

The shark saw him coming, and tried to wriggle to the floor.

Too late! Already Dick's strong arms were around it.

The next moment he had thrust his hand fearlessly into the creature's mouth and had drawn out a small rope of coarse, black hair, at which he tugged with merciless fury.

"Oh-ee! Oh-ee! You pullee my head off!" came in well-remembered accents from the shark's capacious interior.

"Come out, then, and show yourself, you little imp!" laughed Dick, hanging on to the pigtail like grim death.

The next moment Mopsa's pain-contorted face appeared between the shark's double row of saw-like teeth, then came his head and shoulders, and finally the rest of his body, whilst the empty shark-skin in which he had masqueraded fell to the floor.

"Thank you, Massa Dick! I am all out now!" he said, leering impudently at his five victims.

"What do you mean by playing your tricks on us, you mischievous little lump of original sin?" demanded Dick, releasing the Chinaman, and gazing with would-be sternness upon him.

"Quickest way to get ugly white boys out of the sea," explained the Chinaman, then burst into a loud roar of laughter, in which the others joined.

Suddenly he became serious, and, resuming the chair from which Dick had ejected him, helped himself to another cup of coffee and a plateful of eggs and bacon.

"Help yourselves, white boys!" he cried generously, adding, as Dick and his grinning companions obeyed: "Better eat quick, sharp, or Captain Flame very angry!"

"What are you driving at, Mopsa?" asked Jack Orde.

"Mopsa not driving at nothing," declared the Celestial, with his mouth full of egg and bacon. "Mopsa did all the driving he wanted to when you five boys ran away from poor little harmless Mopsa."

"But what has Captain Flame to do with it?" asked Allstraw.

"Only that he sent me to tell you to go to the castle," was the calm reply.

"Why didn't you tell us before?" growled Dick.

Then the conversation ceased, as the boys, their appetites sharpened by the swim and the violent exercise which, thanks to Mopsa, they had afterwards enjoyed, made a hearty meal.

The Theft of the Red Terror.

"Now, my lads, if you take my advice, you'll go for a scramble over the island. It may be the last opportunity to stretch your legs you'll get for some weeks; for to-night we set off in the Octopus and the Red Terror for England, home, and beauty," said Captain Flame, as the boys, having helped to get the two cars ready for sea, presented themselves at the castle for orders.

"Come on, Jack! We have just time to climb yonder peak!" cried Dick Dauntless, as his chum and himself emerged from the castle.

Jack Orde looked across the Island of Rest to the towering peak which shadowed the Island of Lost Hopes.

"All right! I'll bet you a stall at the first London theatre we enter that I am there first!" he agreed.

The next moment the two were speeding swiftly over the fields and meadows towards the drawbridge between the two islands.

As they ran they noticed that all traces of the late rebellion had been removed.

The broken fences were mended, the burnt bungalows, occupied by the warders and their families, rebuilt.

Giving the countersign to the sentry at the bridge-head, they crossed over to the Island of Lost Hopes. Starting from the stone platform, they vigorously attacked the precipitous peak.

It was not really difficult climbing, and, though a slip might have been followed by a fearful death on the wave-kissed rocks a thousand feet beneath them, there was nothing at which an Alpine climber would not have laughed.

Within half an hour of their start they stood upon a narrow ledge immediately beneath a triangular mass of rock, which rose like a huge bayonet above their heads.

Dick Dauntless had won the race by a few feet.

Throwing themselves on the ledge, they admired the magnificent panorama spread out beneath them and inhaling the cool, refreshing breeze which blew around the mountain-top.

The beauty of the scene amply repaid the boys for the labour of the ascent.

As far as the eye could reach was the broad expanse of the Pacific Ocean—a mighty waste of water, unbroken by a sail or the smoke of a steamer.

To their left lay the verdant Island of Rest, forming a striking contrast to the bare, vegetationless mountain top upon which they stood.

Gradually the boys became conscious of a strange rustling noise on the opposite side of the peak, and working their way round, saw two quaint, fluffy, large-beaked, little creatures, which they recognised as young albatrosses.

Barely had they made this discovery, than Dick Dauntless uttered a cry of alarm, and, grasping the stout, iron-shod staff with which each boy had provided himself, placed his back against a wall, just as, beating the air with their enormous wings, the parent birds flew to the protection of their young.

Jack Orde, whose back was towards the sea, had not at first perceived his danger, and it was only by a quick thrust of his companion's staff that he was saved from being knocked off the narrow ledge by a single sweep of the male albatross' enormous wings.

Screaming with anger, the birds circled above the boys' heads, now and again dashing in, striving to knock them off the ledge with their wings, or to strike them down with their huge curved beaks.

Fortunately the peak protruded above their heads or the boys could not have held their ground a minute against their swift and powerful assailants.

As it was Dick Dauntless' face was very grave.

He knew the fearless nature of these giants amongst sea birds, and feared lest even though they might be able to repulse their feathered foes' attack, they could not drive them off.

Again and again the birds charged, again and again the boys beat them off.

At last a lucky blow alighting on the elbow-like bend of the female bird's wing robbed her, temporarily, of strength, and the next moment she was fluttering helplessly towards the sea, followed by her screeching and anxious mate.

"Quick, Jack, now's our time! If we can only get far enough from their nest before they return, the albatrosses may not trouble us again!" cried Dick Dauntless, leading the way down the precipitous path by which they had ascended.

On a huge boulder, some two hundred feet off the drawbridge, the boys paused for breath. Glancing upwards, they saw the two albatrosses—the female had evidently speedily recovered from the effect of Dick's blow—circling high above the summit of the peak.

Dick looked carelessly over the side of the rock on which he stood, then, turning his head, beckoned Jack Orde to look also.

The boys were gazing into the circling plain which marked

the prisoners' abode, beyond which they could see the Red Terror standing on the brink of the waves, guarded by an armed sentry, who paced with slow, regular steps round and round the strange omnibus-like car.

From the Red Terror the boys' eyes turned towards the huge rock, on the face of which they could see a tiny figure which they knew to be Beppo Frascati, the sculptor, suffering the fearful punishment to which Captain Flame had doomed him.

A flood of pity for the wretched man filled Dick Dauntless' heart.

"I hope Captain Flame is not going to leave the poor beggar there," he said, half to himself, half to Jack Orde. "He is a fearful scoundrel, it is true, but even his treacherous crimes do not deserve so terrible a punishment. I'll ask Captain Flame to, at least, shift him to some more comfortable, better protected position—Hullo!" he added, the next moment, "What's he about? He's free!"

It was true.

Frascati had thrown off his chains, and clambering down the twenty feet of rock sprang to the ground.

A dozen figures joined him, amongst whom Dick recognised Karl Munchen.

For some minutes the little band remained whispering together, then stole silently off in the direction of the car.

Jack Orde laid his hand on his chum's arm. His face was deathly pale.

"They're about to attack the Red Terror! They will overpower the sentry and carry her off!" came in hoarse, anxious accents from his pale lips.

Dick Dauntless nodded.

He, too, had realised the object of those creeping figures. Making a trumpet with his hands he uttered a low, warning cry.

In vain, though in the clear light that obtained in these tropical regions he was able to see quite plainly all that happened, his voice could not reach the imperilled man.

A shuddering moan of horror burst from Jack Orde's lips. He seized Dick's arm and clung despairingly to him.

"They'll kill him, Dick! Oh, can we do nothing—nothing?" he gasped.

Dauntless shook his chum off.

"Shout, man—shout, if you would not see the poor wretch slain before your eyes!" he cried. "Now, both together! Hallo, there! Hallo! Hallo!"

In vain.

All ignorant of the fearful foes creeping upon him from out the gathering shadows, the man only shifted his rifle from the right shoulder to the left, and resumed his solitary march.

Frantic at thus finding himself helpless to avert the coming tragedy, Dick could do nothing but lean over the dizzy precipice and bawl himself hoarse, in a vain endeavour to attract the doomed man's attention.

Like men in the grasp of a fearful nightmare, the two watched the dark shadows close remorselessly round the sentry.

A wild shout of delight burst from the watching boys' lips.

Conscious at last that all was not right, the sentry had turned, and was gazing anxiously towards where the nearest foeman crouched.

"Hurrah, Jack, he has seen them!" cried Dick. "Good man—Ah! Merciful heavens, they have him!"

It was true.

Evidently acting under a prearranged plan one of the attackers had attracted the sentry's attention, whilst another—it looked like Frascati—crept up behind him, and had stricken the man senseless with a single blow from the iron-shod club with which he was armed.

Dick sprang to his feet.

"Come, Jack! We could not save the poor fellow, let us at least make sure that he is avenged!"

The next moment the two boys were rushing, as swiftly as the precipitous nature of their path would allow, towards the drawbridge.

The Fight in the Cave.

Captain Flame looked angrily up as Dick Dauntless burst unceremoniously into his room.

One glance at Dick's pale, anxious face, and he had sprung to his feet.

"What is it, boy? What has happened?" he demanded fiercely.

"The very worst, I am afraid, sir!" replied Dick solemnly. "Frascati has broken free, and has captured the Red Terror!"

A loud shout, that was almost a roar, of rage burst from Flame's lips.

For nearly a minute he did not speak, but the workings of his convulsed face betrayed the agitation that held him in its grasp.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 201.

NEXT THURSDAY: "THE RUNAWAY SCHOOL BOY!"

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Without a word he turned fiercely on Dick, and seized him by the throat.

For the moment Dick thought the inventor would murder him where he stood.

But releasing his hold he threw him angrily aside.

"Speak, boy! Tell me everything!" he ordered.

In as few words as possible Dick Dauntless related what he had seen.

Captain Flame listened in silence until the boy had finished his report.

With a despairing gesture, he turned on his heels and commenced walking swiftly up and down the narrow limits of the room.

Dick Dauntless watched his every movement with growing alarm.

Flame's face was as white as death itself.

His eyes blazed fiercely, and his whole frame trembled beneath the fierce rage surging in his heart.

Suddenly he ceased his perambulations.

Pausing before Dick he fixed his burning eyes on the boy's face.

But though Captain Flame was staring straight at him, he was evidently absolutely unconscious of the boy's presence.

"Hang the Italian scoundrel! He has been a thorn in my flesh ever since I first brought him to the islands!" cried Flame, at last. "But he has run his last course. No matter if I have to follow him to the utmost bounds of the earth I will find him; and then—"

He ceased speaking. Dick Dauntless shuddered. Never before had he seen such fierce malignity on any human face.

Suddenly Captain Flame seemed aware of the boy's presence.

He started violently.

Striding to the window, he remained for some minutes looking out over the island, then turned to Dick, saying, in his usual calm, cool tones:

"Come, Dauntless, we must after the villains! The fate of the world may depend upon our overtaking them ere they can sell the secret of my submarine car to my foes."

Dick Dauntless bowed without speaking.

He still seemed to feel the pressure of the inventor's fingers on his windpipe; and though he knew that at the time, Captain Flame was beside himself with rage and bitter disappointment, he still resented the unprovoked attack to which he had been subjected.

But as he followed the great inventor towards where his comrades awaited the summons to embark his anger vanished, and he remembered only the many benefits he had received at Captain Flame's hands.

Five minutes later he was racing by Flame's side, and at the head of a hastily assembled force of warders and Octopians, towards the toboggan railway waiting to take them to the Great Cave.

As, with the roll of the cars in their ears, they neared the cave, every heart was quickened by the sound of heavy firing before them.

A few minutes later the cave was reached.

A stirring sight met their gaze.

Stretched on the sands before the Octopus, a dozen warders were firing, with cool deliberation, at as many helmeted figures, who, rising above the waves to fire, then disappearing as soon as they had pulled the trigger of their rifles, were stretched in a long line before where the top of the Red Terror's conning-tower rose above the waters.

Two bodies rising and falling in the gentle surf showed that the warders had not fired in vain.

As the newcomers springing from the cars, and flinging themselves down in the firing line, commenced blazing away, a loud bellow, as of some monster in pain, echoed and re-echoed through the cave.

It was the Red Terror's syren, signalling the attackers to retire.

Immediately the firing ceased, and a swirling whirlpool of water alone marked the place where the stolen submarine-car had been a moment before.

"Octopians to their posts!" shouted Captain Flame, adding as he looked around him, "Where's Mr. MacIntyre?"

"Here, sir!" cried the engineer, thrusting his head from out the Octopus' conning-tower.

"How are your engines?" queried Captain Flame.

"Ready to go anywhere or do anything," was the immediate reply.

Captain Flame strode through the car's open door.

"Good, old friend! You have never yet failed me," he cried, as he hastened to the conning-tower, and, grasping his engineer's hand, squeezed it gratefully. "To them, Mac; get more power out of them than you have ever done before, for never since they were made have we needed them more."

Without a word MacIntyre hastened away, leaving Captain Flame to screw down the top of the conning-tower, and

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 201.

"THE DUFFER'S RETURN!"

take his place at the steering-wheel. As the word reached his ear that all was ready below, he touched a switch, and the Octopus seemed to spring into the waves, so quickly did she sweep down the shelving shore.

The pursuit of the Red Terror had commenced.

Sending the beautiful vari-coloured fish with which the water-cave was crammed flying in all directions, the Octopus sped swiftly towards the sea.

Dick Dauntless had expected that the chase would end almost as soon as it had commenced. The Red Terror would surely find her way barred by the coral barrier which surrounded the islands.

To his amazement he saw the huge gates leading into the tunnel that pierced the coral wide open.

He had forgotten that Karl Munchen, who had once stood high in Captain Flame's favour, knew the secret of the hidden entrance to his late master's lair.

Making his way to the conning-tower, he gazed anxiously into Captain Flame's face.

The great inventor was to all outward seeming as calm and self-possessed as ever, but there was a light in his dark, piercing eyes which boded ill to the crew of the Red Terror if they fell alive into his hands.

Half-way through the tunnel Captain Flame increased the speed of his engines.

He feared lest Frascati should try to delay them by closing the outer valves.

Neither was this precaution thrown away.

Barely had the Octopus shot from out the tunnel, like a shell from the mouth of some enormous cannon, than the mighty valves swung to, closing with a clang which resounded like the booming of an enormous drum in their ears.

They were safely through, but another second would have seen the Octopus caught between the closing gates, like a rat in the jaws of an enormous trap.

Before them lay a long stretch of golden sand, on which the marks of the stolen car's huge pads appeared in a series of enormous indentations.

Of the Red Terror herself nothing could be seen, but with such a trail to follow they could not well miss their quarry.

Alas! ere long the sand ceased, and they were obliged to slow down, and pick up a more difficult trail, over a rocky ocean bed, where the only marks they had to guide them were the crushed shells and the torn weeds over which the chase had passed.

In the Sea-Mole's Run.

From the first Captain Flame had not under-estimated the difficulties of their quest. He knew that even with the slight start they had secured, the overtaking of the Red Terror would be but a question of time and luck.

It might well happen that on the trackless ocean bed the fugitives might double like a coursed hare, and leave them baffled and defeated.

And that is exactly what did happen, though it is doubtful if Frascati and his companions in villainy would have succeeded but that the Octopus was delayed by what was perhaps the strangest adventure mortal men have ever experienced.

It happened in this way.

They had reached the bottom of a deep valley, many thousand fathoms beneath the surface, and were proceeding at almost full speed, for the ground was of soft soil, which showed plainly the impression of the foremost car's huge pads, when Dick Dauntless, who had relieved Captain Flame at the wheel, uttered a cry of delight, and peered eagerly through the lenses.

Scarcely half a mile away, surrounded by a flurry of mud and swirling waters, was the object of their chase.

As a hound redoubles its pace when it passes from scent to view, so the Octopus increased her speed.

Dick's cry brought Captain Flame to his side.

"There she is, sir, just ahead! We will come up with her in a few minutes," he declared excitedly.

Without a word the inventor bent over the tentacles' wheels, and drew the wire cables into the hull of the car.

When they again emerged the slender tip of each was armed with a huge bar of iron, shaped like a spike, a hook, or a broad, flat hammer head.

Captain Flame was anxious to recapture the Red Terror, but if that was not possible he was prepared to destroy her, rather than let her go scatheless, to carry disaster and destruction to the mercantile navies of the world.

"Stand by to carry out my every order without a moment's delay. Frascati is not the man to surrender without a fight, and upon your prompt obedience the issue of the fight may depend," he said, in calm, quiet, but determined tones.

"Ay, ay, sir!" assented Dick; then, peering at the swaying car which they were now rapidly overhauling, he prepared for the coming fight.

Presently from a window at the Red Terror's stern peered

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Fascinated, Captain Flame and Dick Dauntless, in the Octopus, watched the battle of the two giant sea-monsters commence. The very earth shook as the two mighty creatures rolled, now this way, now that. (See page 26.)

two white, frightened faces, one of which Dick Dauntless recognised as that of Karl Munchen.

So close were they, so powerful the lenses through which he gazed, that Dauntless could see the German's lips trembling, his eyes almost starting from his head with terror.

Suddenly the two faces disappeared. Evidently their owners were pulled back by somebody close behind them, and the next moment the handsome but evil face of the sculptor appeared at the window.

Beppo Frascati's face showed traces of the sickening terror which possessed his soul, but his eyes shone with the baleful light of an undying hatred, and, thrusting his fist close to the glass, he shook it angrily at their pursuer.

Well might those within the captured car fear the worst.

Fearful indeed must the avenging form of the Octopus have looked as her huge torpedo-shaped body cleaved through the water, her huge cables bent back in graceful curves over her bows, as though in the act of hurling the weighty tools with which she was armed at her flying sister.

"We are almost within striking distance, Dick," cried Captain Flame. "Steer close to her stern, but be ready to

swerve aside at any moment, in case Frascati tries to wreck us by forcing a collision."

Dick nodded.

Excitement held him dumb.

Suddenly he sprang to his feet, bearing with all his weight upon the foot-brake.

Before him, where a few seconds before had been level earth, soared to a thick mud by the madly revolving wheels of the Red Terror, a huge, long mound, some ten feet in height and of an unknown width, had arisen.

To Dick's amazement this mound was being extended at an incredible speed up the left side of the valley. Already its rising end had disappeared from view over the brow.

But the boy had little time for wonder.

Captain Flame's angry voice rang in his ears.

"After them, Dauntless! What are you stopping for? Over the mound, lad, or through it, I care not which! The scoundrels will escape us!" he cried, in a voice hoarse with impatience.

Dick hesitated no longer.

Removing his foot, he released the brake, and the car sped madly on.

In a moment it had struck the foot of the mound; the next its pointed bows had disappeared beneath the earth, its front wheels revolved once or twice in empty air, then the whole car pitched bows foremost into the mysterious tunnel which had appeared so suddenly in their path.

It was only by a swift turn of the wheel that Dick saved the car from plunging into the opposite bank of the strange excavation.

Bringing her to a halt, he glanced inquiringly at Captain Flame, who was peering through the lenses, anger, rather than astonishment, depicted on his countenance.

"What is it, sir? What has happened?" asked Dick.

"We have let the Red Terror slip through our fingers, that is what has happened," returned the captain savagely.

"We're in the run of a sea-mole, and it may be hours before we get out."

"A sea-mole?" repeated Dick. "I never knew there were such things."

"Very likely not," retorted Captain Flame. "I have spent more years than you have months at the bottom of the sea, yet I do not know half the wonders the ocean contains."

"What kind of creature is it, sir?" asked Dick, as, in obedience to a signal from Captain Flame, he restarted the Octopus in the direction the tunnel ran.

Captain Flame shrugged his shoulders.

"I have seen its tunnels stretching for miles beneath the sea, and once across an island in the West Indies, but I have never seen the animal itself," he replied; adding, with a low laugh: "And to be perfectly honest, I have no wish to encounter an animal that can burrow a tunnel through the earth at the rate of twenty miles an hour large enough to contain an express train. Slow down to half-speed, and keep a good look-out for an opening. It will go ill with us if the sea-mole should take it into its head to return and find us here."

Needless to say, Dick had no more wish than Captain Flame to encounter so huge a creature, and kept a sharp look-out for weak places in the roof or sides through which he might guide the car.

But none presented itself, though they crept up a sloping acclivity which must have been the side of the valley, then negotiated a steep descent, to find themselves on level ground once more.

Suddenly Captain Flame leant over Dick, and shouted down a speaking-tube to MacIntyre to reverse the engines.

His quick ears had caught a strange, sliding, grinding noise in the distance, and he knew that the sea-mole was returning.

Barely had the car begun to move backwards, when Dick almost let the wheel slip from his nerveless fingers.

Immediately before them had appeared two huge claw-armed and webbed feet, above which arose a huge rounded head.

From the centre of this head projected a stout nose, terminating in a broad, flat surface, which was divided into five thick, tapering fingers, like the points of a starfish.

Though, so far as those on board the Octopus could see, the mole had no eyes, it was evidently well aware of the car's presence, for as they retreated it continued to advance, opening and closing its finger-like extremities in a most alarming manner.

"What a fearful brute! What strange creatures the sea holds!" said Dick, who, with Captain Flame by his side, still controlled the movements of the car from the conning-tower.

"Not more so than the earth, although much larger, Dick," replied the inventor. "That creature is nothing more nor less than a huge star-nosed mole of your English pastures, but of course amphibious."

Ere Dick could speak again they were alarmed by a loud ringing of the telephone-bell.

The next moment Will Avery, who was on look-out duty in the stern, was heard crying excitedly.

"Stop! For Heaven's sake, stop! The sea-mole's mate has cut off our retreat!"

Captain Flame and Dick Dauntless looked at each other in speechless dismay.

A minute before they had been rapidly leaving their first enemy behind, only to find that they were rushing to meet a similar and perhaps more dangerous foe.

Hemmed in both front and rear, with the straight walls of the mole's run on either side of them, whither could they flee?

"To the left—quick! To the left!" came in hoarse, excited tones from Avery.

Though at a loss to understand the order, Dick obeyed it almost before his chum had finished speaking.

Round swung the car, and, with a sigh of relief, Dick saw the tunnel open out, as the Octopus swung backwards down a slanting passage that ran at right angles to the one in which they had been trapped.

"Stop her—stop her! For mercy's sake, stop her!" rang out Avery's voice, loud and shrill down the telephone.

Again Dick obeyed, putting on the brakes with all his

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 201.

might. Then, as Avery's voice, raised in wild appeal, still reached them from the stern, he threw over the telegraph to "Full speed ahead."

"What are you playing at? Do you want to rip the cylinders out of my engines?" came the indignant voice of Mr. MacIntyre through the speaking tube.

Dick made no reply, for at that moment, with a jar that shook the stout hull from stem to stern, the car's hindpart sloped downwards, and the racing engines told that the wheels were meeting with no resistance.

An ominous grating noise came from under their feet, and through the glass of the conning-tower Dick could see the rough sides of the tunnel, in which they then were, gliding slowly past.

Suddenly the grating ceased, the car shivered like a ship tugging at her anchors, and a glance outside revealed the fact that they were motionless at last, thanks to the wire rope tentacles which, under Captain Flame's skilful manipulation, had buried their strong though slender tips deep into the sides, bottom, and roof of the tunnel.

"Where are we, Avery?" demanded Captain Flame.

"Hanging over the edge of a bottomless pit, sir," replied Will, in tones that told more plainly than words how terrible was the danger that menaced them.

"See that the tentacles do not work loose, Dick. I will find out what our position really is," said the great inventor, moving towards the conning-tower's door.

But ere he had descended the short flight of stairs a loud exclamation from Dick Dauntless caused him to retrace his steps.

The boy was half-standing up in his seat, gazing with horror-stricken face at the huge sea-mole which had paused before the side-passage in which the car had taken refuge.

It was moving its queerly-shaped nose round and round in what, under other circumstances, would have been a ludicrous manner. Now and again it raised its round head, exposing to view a hideous-pointed mouth, armed with white, needle-like teeth.

Even as Captain Flame reached the boy's side the swiftly-moving nose became perfectly still.

Then, its fingerlike points extending and contracting, it moved towards the car.

Captain Flame sprang to the tentacle wheels.

Better to face the unknown dangers of the pit over which they hung than remain there to be crushed and torn to pieces by the sea-mole!

Another moment and the car would have plunged into the unknown.

Already the inventor had cast one of the tentacles loose, when they were almost deafened by a loud, angry roar from the mole.

It had turned towards the tunnel once more, its huge claws throwing up the dirt in barrowfuls, as an angry bull paws the ground, whilst its bristling hair made it look twice as big as it had been.

The reason was not far to seek.

A few seconds later the second mole came into view, charging fiercely at the first one.

Fascinated, Captain Flame and Dick Dauntless in the conning-tower, the remainder of the crew in the chart-room, watched the infuriated monsters.

Sweeping round, the first sea-mole faced its antagonist.

In a moment the fingers of its broad nose were interlocked in those of its foe, and this battle of giants had commenced.

The very earth shook as the two mighty creatures rolled, now this way, now that.

Now one would gain a little advantage, and would push his foe resistlessly back, whilst the water became darkened by mud from huge lumps of soil from the roof of the tunnel.

At last the new-comer prevailed.

Pushing his enemy before him, he passed out of view.

Dick Dauntless started, as one aroused from sleep, as Captain Flame shook him by the arm, crying:

"Quick, Dauntless! Now is our chance to escape. Keep the wheels moving, so that when I drag the car on to solid ground they will help her forward. There's little time to spare. Those sea-moles are fighting for their dinner, and which ever wins will be anxious to sample us."

"Ay, ay, sir! But I never thought I would be finding myself running away from a mole!" replied Dick. Then, after a warning shout to MacIntyre to "Stand by!" he put the telegraph to "Dead slow."

It was no easy task for the stout wire ropes to drag the heavy hull from the brink of the precipice, for they had little to cling to. But at length the pad-armed wheels obtained a sure grip on the side of the pit, and half a minute later the car stood on firm ground once more.

"Full speed ahead, Dick! Careful round the corner!" cried Captain Flame cheerily.

THE DUFFER'S RETURN!

is the Title of the Splendid, Long, Complete School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. appearing in this week's "MAGNET" Library. Now on Sale. Price One Penny.

Dick nodded, and the next moment the Octopus was flying towards the main tunnel as quickly as her strong wheels could force her through the water.

A dozen revolutions of their mighty wheels would land them in safety.

A rousing cheer rose to the excited boys' lips.

But ere it could find utterance what looked like nothing so much as a huge dark brown curtain flashed before them.

There was no time to reverse the engines or apply the brakes.

Sweeping forward at nearly forty miles an hour the Octopus struck the sea-mole full in the side.

Hurled from off their feet by the force of the collision, the boys rolled about the floor as the car swayed and trembled like a ship in a stormy sea.

Then she resumed an upright position in her wide-based wheels, and Dick Dauntless sprang once more to the steering-wheel.

Round flew the spokes under his strong young hands.

Plunging forward like a thing of life, the Octopus barely escaped disaster by plunging headlong into the side of the tunnel as Dick steered her round the corner.

But a miss is as good as a mile, and a minute later she was rapidly leaving the scene of the combat far behind.

Ten minutes later they reached the furthest limit of the tunnel, and by the aid of her strong tentacles the Octopus burst through the roof, and gained the outer sea once more.

The Giant Oysters.

The next week was one of constant activity, yet of constant disappointment.

Again and again they came upon the tracks of the Red Terror, only to lose them when they thought they were most certain of success.

It was heartbreaking work, rendered the more trying by Captain Flame's impatience.

His "black hour" seemed never to leave him.

One day they came across the wreck of a small schooner in a bay where they had gone for fresh water. There were unmistakable marks of the Red Terror's wire tentacles upon her, and they knew that she had been seized, perhaps her crew murdered, by the ruthless scoundrels who had stolen the submarine car. Captain Flame became almost a madman.

He rushed about the car, hurling curses at everyone he met, until even Dick avoided him as much as possible.

The only time when he was at all bearable was when they found the Red Terror's tracks, then he became his own calm, impassive self, until the trail was lost, and they were wandering aimlessly about the ocean once more.

The next day Captain Flame was sitting in the chart-room, gnawing his nails, as was his wont when the "black hour" was upon him, when word from Orde, who was at the wheel, that he had found the wheel marks of the Red Terror once more, brought him swiftly to his feet.

Rushing from the room, he made his way to the conning-tower.

Dick Dauntless, who had been reading in another part of the room, walked to the glass front of the car.

A thrill of excitement swept through his frame.

Yes, Jack Orde was right. Before them lay a double line of the deep indentations left by the Red Terror, looking fresher and plainer than they had seen for several days.

He was about to make his way to the conning-tower, when the slowing down of the car warned him that something out of the common had been seen.

Returning to the plate-glass window, he looked out.

An ejaculation of astonishment burst from his lips.

Before him was spread a bed of the most wonderful oysters he had ever seen.

Growing on rocks or pillars of coral they presented a truly wonderful sight.

Not a shell was less than six feet across, whilst many must have been nearly four times as long.

They were all partly open, as oysters always are when in deep water, and every shell contained an enormous pearl.

A minute later a bell rang summoning the crew to the armoury.

Dick found Captain Flame impatiently awaiting him.

A single glance at the great inventor's face showed that, for the time, at any rate, the Red Terror was forgotten.

His eyes shone with the same light, his face bore the same expression, Dick had often seen upon it before when the rich treasure trove of the sea lay at his feet.

The entire crew of the Octopus were assembled in the armoury, except Mr. MacIntyre, who could never be induced to leave his beloved engines, and Mopsa who, much against his will, had been ordered to remain behind and keep the

Octopus as close to the pearl-gatherers as the oyster-bearing rocks would allow.

In addition to the rifles and sword-belts, each of the little party carried a short, stout instrument, not unlike a house-breaker's jemmy, with which to pry open the shells of the enormous bivalves.

Urged by Captain Flame's impatience, the little party were soon wandering amongst the giant oysters, marking with greedy eyes the enormous pearls they contained.

But when Harry Munston would have attacked one of the enormous oysters, Captain Flame bade him stand back.

"Your arm would be crushed to splinters between those strong shells if you touched one of the oysters' sensitive fronds," he declared warningly.

"Then how are we to get the pearls, sir?" demanded Munston, looking longingly at a pearl as large as a hen's egg.

Without a word, Captain Flame held the thick iron bar upright in one hand, and thrusting it between the yawning shells, rested the sharp end on the lower valve.

Immediately the top shell dropped like the lid of a box, but was kept from closing entirely by the stout iron bar.

At a sign from the inventor, Munston struck at the glistening white shell immediately beneath the valuable excrescence.

Aias, his jemmy glanced off the mother of pearl, and, striking the pearl, shattered it into a hundred pieces.

Captain Flame was furious.

"Clumsy idiot!" he growled. "You have lost ten thousand pounds by that unlucky stroke. Back to the Octopus before you do further mischief."

As the crestfallen boy obeyed, the inventor tried to release his crowbar.

In vain.

It was as immovable as though it was part of the shell itself.

It soon became evident that the number of large pearls they would secure would be limited by the number of jemmies they had brought with them.

Passing by a quantity of smaller gems, they at length paused before a huge shell, the upper half of which might well have formed the ceiling of a good-sized room.

Within lay a pearl of peculiar brilliancy and beauty, far larger than the one the luckless Munston had shattered.

"Thrust in your jemmy, Dick. Be careful it is perfectly upright, or it may be wrested from your grasp," ordered Captain Flame.

As Dick Dauntless obeyed, the upper shell descended on the bar with a force that jarred the boy's arm to the very shoulder.

But the iron bar withstood the shock, though the ends were buried deep in the rich mother-of-pearl of the upper and lower shell.

Warned by Munston's misfortune, Captain Flame inserted the chisel-like edge of the jemmy beneath the wondrous pearl, and, chipping the shell away, had soon set it free.

Slipping the pearl into a pouch at his belt, Captain Flame led the way in search of other gems.

At places the oysters grew so close together that they could barely pass between them.

Each time one or other of the boys brushed against a monster shell, it would close with a snap, which told how little chance of escape they would have if caught between those mighty valves.

Soon each of the boys had secured a pearl, the like of which had never been seen before.

Their last iron bar gone, Captain Flame reluctantly gave the order for the little party to retrace their steps.

Barely had they turned in the direction in which they had left the car, when Will Avery, who had clambered on to the closed shell of a giant oyster, pointed to the left of where they were standing, crying:

"There's a whopper! The father of all the oysters, I should say."

"Whereabouts, Avery?" asked Captain Flame, adding, with a sigh: "But it is no use, we have no more jemmies. Come down, my boy."

But Will Avery made no effort to obey.

Shielding his eyes with his hand—more through habit than because it was the slightest use beneath the waves—he was gazing earnestly in the direction he had indicated.

Then from his lips came the unexpected announcement which sent a thrill of excitement surging through every heart.

"There's a man approaching the big oyster. A human being like ourselves, dressed in sea-grown clothes, and a diving helmet."

Captain Flame shot a swift glance over the little party to assure himself they were all there.

"He's stopped near the oyster," continued Will. "He has thrust his hand inside it. He has— Oh, it has got him!"

(Another grand, long instalment of this thrilling adventure serial will be contained in next week's issue of THE GEM LIBRARY. Also a splendid tale of DAWN OF ST. JIM'S, by MARTIN CLIFFORD, entitled, "THE RUN-AWAY SCHOOLBOY." Order well in advance. Price 1d.)

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A Splendid, New, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

NEXT THURSDAY: "THE RUNAWAY SCHOOLBOY!"

OUR NEW WEEKLY FEATURE

**Next Week's Story.**

For our next Thursday's issue, Martin Clifford has written a long, complete school tale which cannot fail to "hold" every GEM reader, young or old. The title of this really splendid story is

"THE RUNAWAY SCHOOLBOY,"

and when I reveal the startling fact that the junior who runs away from the old coll. is none other than the one and only Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth Form, I know that I have said enough to ensure

"THE RUNAWAY SCHOOLBOY"

being appreciated in full.

A Grand New and Original Competition.

I should like particularly to draw my chums' attention to the Splendid New Competition in this week's issue of "The Magnet" Library, in which

Fifty Cash Prizes

are to be won by readers. A wonderful little

Miniature Edition of Our Popular Companion Paper

is being given away free, and all competitors are asked to do is to bind this midget issue neatly together, and send it in to "The Magnet" Editor. In case any of you do not want one of the Fifty Money Prizes, this original Miniature Edition of the famous story-book is well worth obtaining and keeping as an interesting novelty. Remember this! The Editor of "The Magnet" is prepared to buy a large number of these marvellous "Miniature Magnets" at 1s. per copy.

Your Editor's Promise.

A word in your ears, my reader friends. I have something good in store exclusively for GEM readers—something that you can all look forward to in the form of a new and interesting GEM competition, in connection with which I shall give away a number of splendid presents each week. But the particular point I wish to lay stress on is this—every winner will choose his or her own prize! Look out for full particulars of this grand new scheme in next week's issue of THE GEM. You might give your friend a hint, too!

Our Correspondence Exchange.

Miss Flossie S., of Brook Road, Lower Swinford, Stourbridge, would like to correspond with Sybil L., of Johannesburg, South Africa.

E. Fisher, of 29, Tadman Street, Kessle Road, Hull, would like to exchange picture-postcards with a girl reader of London.

Cecil Stock, Box 266, Cape Town, would be pleased to correspond with a boy reader of THE GEM.

R. Hook, of Mootes Cottages, East Bower, nr. Bridgewater, Somerset, and his two friends, would be glad to correspond with any other readers of THE GEM Library.

Miss E. Gilda Bernini, 1, Duncan Terrace, Islington, N., would very much like a reader, of either sex, to correspond with her.

Ernest Dempsey, of Hotel Metropole, Stockton-on-Tees, would very much like a girl chum to correspond with him.

C. H. Taft, 115, Brunswick Street, C-on-M., Manchester, would be pleased if some Gemite in Canada, Australia, or New Zealand, would correspond with him, age 16 or 17.

Leonard A. Smith, of the Barracks, Grantham, Lincolnshire, will be pleased to exchange picture-postcards with any reader of THE GEM.

Douglas Alexander, of Cloverdale, Station Road, Hairfield Park, Victoria, Australia, will send to all readers of THE GEM who are interested in stamp collecting, a set of Victorian stamps in return for a set of any other stamps which they may send him.

A. E. Piggott, of 238, Thorold Road, Ilford, Essex, who is 16 years of age, would like to correspond with a girl reader of THE GEM about his own age.

F. L., of 87, Gloucester Road, Newcastle-on-Tyne, wishes to correspond with a girl Gemite in the Colonies.

Miss Phyllis Welch, of Hatboro' Cottage, Churchill Road, Upper Parkstone, Dorset, would like a boy Gemite to correspond with her.

Victor C. Liddaman, of 4, Carthew Villas, Hammersmith, W., and who is 18 years of age, fair-haired and "medium-looking," would very much like to correspond with a girl reader.

T. Westlake, of 231, Hotwell Road, Hotwells, Bristol, wishes to correspond with a girl reader of about 16 or 17.

Two readers of THE GEM, age 16, would like to join a football club somewhere in the vicinity of Bermondsey or Peckham. Please apply E. Smith, 13, Barkworth Road, Bermondsey.

Otto Bernstein, 25a, Kongens Gade, Kristiansand, Norway, would be pleased to have a London or Cardiff correspondent (Cardiff preferred).

Miss M. Williamson, and Miss C. Hamilton, both age 16, would very much like to correspond with two boy Gemites. Letters to be addressed to M. Williamson, 150, Albert Street, Dundee.

Flashlight Photography for Beginners.

Now that the winter is here, and the dull weather makes it difficult to be successful with ordinary-light photography, there is no reason, provided the amateur is keen enough, why artificial light should not be used.

To most amateurs, where electric arc-lamp and the other various forms of artificial light are obtainable because of the expense, "artificial light" most likely means a

Magnesium Flashlight.

This magnesium light is very powerful, and is, therefore, extremely suitable for night photography.

The working of a flashlight apparatus is by no means as easy as it first seems to be; yet, if worked properly, for subjects that require sharp shadows and details in high lights, the resulting negatives should be able to stand comparison with any daylight pictures.

There are three forms of magnesium—viz., magnesium wire, ribbon, and powder. Only two of these are of any value at all in photography, and out of these two, the powder is the most suitable, the only difficulty attached to it being to get the whole of the charge to burn. The easiest and most safe method of igniting this powder is by blowing it through a flame, and the only objection that can possibly be raised is the amount of smoke that is formed.

A very good

Flashlight Apparatus

can be made in the following way:

The first thing to be constructed is a stand, after the shape of the one shown in Fig. 1, with a crossbar fixed on the top. Previous to fixing this crossbar on to the upright, a small wooden shelf, about 2½ inches wide, should be tacked on to the bottom of it. This is where the lamps are to be placed.

Next fix four reflectors, obtainable at any photographic outfitter's for a few pence, on the top of the crossbar, with their reflecting-sides pointing in the same direction as the shelf (see A. in Fig. 2). The diagram described here will be reproduced on this page next Thursday, when this interesting article will be continued.

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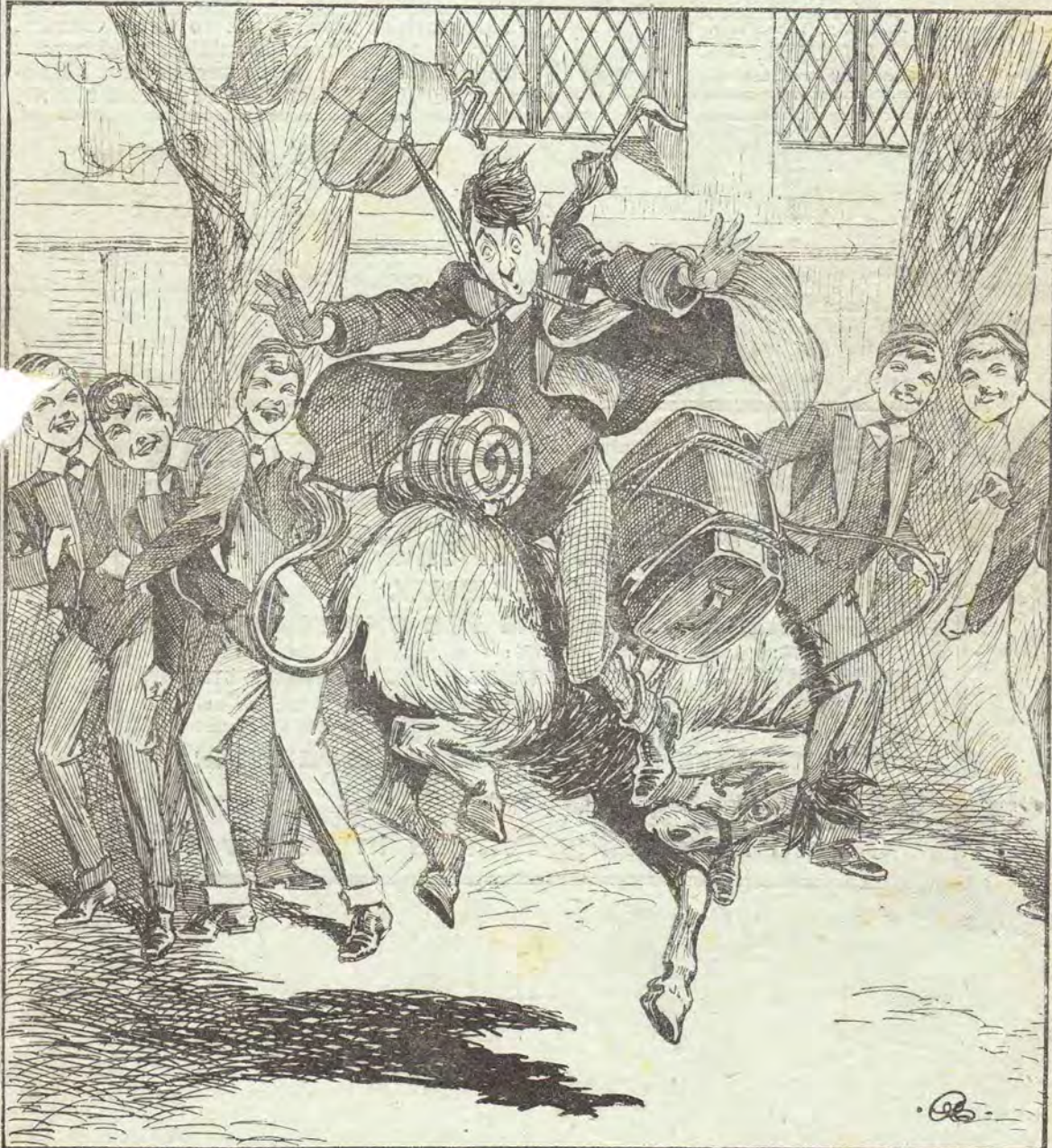
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Temple gave the donkey a tap on the flank and let go the rein. The donkey started, and, finding himself free, careered into the Close, carrying the unfortunate Alonzo with him, amid wild yells of laughter. (See Chap. 6.)