

202

"THE RUNAWAY SCHOOLBOY!"

A Splendid, Long, Complete Tale of Tom Merry & Co. and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.
By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

GRAND
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of St. Jim's.

By

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CHAPTER 1. D'Arcy Refuses.

"I WEFUSE!"

It was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, who spoke. He spoke in a perfectly clear and distinct voice, which was heard by all in the Fourth Form-room—a voice that there was no mistaking.

D'Arcy was standing up in his place in the Form, and his eyes were fixed upon Mr. Ratcliff, who stood before the class, with a cane in his hand and a deep, dark frown upon his thin face.

Mr. Ratcliff seemed unable to believe his ears. He stared at Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stared at him and put both his hands behind his back. And all the fellows in the class stared at D'Arcy in amazement and uneasiness.

"Gussy," murmured Jack Blake, who was sitting beside D'Arcy in the front row of desks — "Gussy, old chap—"

"Silence, Blake!" snapped Mr. Ratcliff.

Blake closed his lips hard. Mr. Ratcliff's cold, flinty eyes glittered as he looked at D'Arcy.

"D'Arcy!"

"Yaas, sir!"

"I have ordered you to hold out your hand."

"I am quite aware of that, Mr. Watcliff."

"Will you obey me?"

"No, sir!"

Quite clear and distinct came the reply of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. There wasn't any

hesitation about it. And D'Arcy's hands remained behind his back.

There was a pause—a long, long pause. A pin might have been heard to drop in the Fourth Form-room at St. Jim's.

The juniors wondered what was going to happen next. Bitter anger was gathering in Mr. Ratcliff's face. The thin, wiry hand that held the cane tightened upon it spitefully. Yet he seemed at a loss for a moment.

"You refuse to obey me, D'Arcy?"

"Yaas, sir, I wefuse!"

Another pause.

A thrill ran through the Fourth Form. There was not a fellow there who did not feel like backing up D'Arcy. But it wouldn't do. D'Arcy might be in the right, and he certainly had heaps of pluck. But it wouldn't do. Masters, as Blake had often said, were a necessary evil, and had to be put up with. It was necessary to be tactful with masters.

They had a way of coming down on a fellow which really couldn't be resisted. But Arthur Augustus D'Arcy seemed to be unconscious of that. Or he did not care. At all events, there he stood, erect and calm, his hands behind his back, and his eyes meeting Mr. Ratcliff's steadily and unflinchingly.

Mr. Ratcliff was not the master of the Fourth. It was the Fifth Form, at St. Jim's which had the honour and pleasure of possessing him as a Form-master. But Mr. Lathom, the little, good-natured gentleman who instructed the Fourth, was not well, and Mr. Ratcliff had taken his class, the Head taking the Fifth in his place that morning. Mr. Ratcliff, there was no doubt about it, was a

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decidedly bad-tempered master, and in rainy weather he was always more bad-tempered than at other times. Perhaps he felt twinges of rheumatism, or perhaps murky skies affected his spirits.

It was a rainy morning, and when Mr. Ratcliff came into the Fourth Form-room, the Fourth had been prepared for an unpleasant time. Figgins had whispered to the fellows near him to mind their p's and q's. And Figgins knew, for he was a New House chap and Mr. Ratcliff was House-master of the New House at St. Jim's. As his House-master, Mr. Ratcliff had many times shown Figgins the unpleasant side of his nature, and given him the benefit of the rough edge of his tongue. The School House portion of the Fourth Form seldom came into contact with Mr. Ratcliff, and D'Arcy was a School House fellow. Perhaps that was why he was especially restive under the hand of Mr. Ratcliff.

Mr. Ratcliff did not like D'Arcy, or Blake, or Herries, or Digby—the chums of Study No. 6 in the School House. Not that they had ever done anything intentionally to offend him. Mr. Ratcliff had a way of taking offence where none was meant; and he knew, too, that they did not like him, and he resented that. He had shown a disposition to pick upon the chums of Study No. 6 that morning.

Blake had gone through it first. His constraining had been pronounced disgraceful, though it was really quite up to the mark for the Fourth Form, and he had been given a hundred lines from Virgil to write out. Blake had taken it philosophically. He took Mr. Ratcliff as he took the rain or the hail—as something unpleasant that could not be helped.

Digby had had the next turn. He was given forty lines for talking, though, as a matter of fact, he had been far too cautious to open his lips while Mr. Ratcliff was looking.

Then Herries was visited with punishment for shuffling his feet. It was Patsy Wynn who had shuffled his feet, but Herries did not say a word. It was no use arguing with Mr. Ratcliff. Patsy Wynn, who had tried to explain, was given fifty lines in addition to those imposed upon Herries.

Then had come Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's turn. Mr. Ratcliff had descended upon him quite suddenly for talking in class, and had ordered him to hold out his hand to be caned.

D'Arcy had not talked in class. Mr. Ratcliff had had his back to him, and had turned upon him suddenly with the accusation.

D'Arcy tried to explain patiently. Mr. Ratcliff refused to listen. His only reply was a reiterated order to D'Arcy to hold out his hand.

Then came the climax.

D'Arcy refused.

That was how matters stood now. For a moment or two, perhaps, Mr. Ratcliff wished that he had not been hard and unjust. But having taken up a position, it was difficult to retreat without loss of dignity.

Either he or D'Arcy had to give way.

Which was it to be?

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy did not look like giving way. He stood as firm as a rock, strong in the justice of his cause.

Upon Mr. Ratcliff's brows anger grew darker and darker.

The pause seemed to the juniors to last a terribly long time. What was going to happen? Direct disobedience was utterly unknown in the Form-room. If little Mr. Lathom had made a mistake, he would have listened to a fellow who tried to explain. If he had persisted, even when he was in the wrong, the juniors would have submitted more or less cheerfully, reflecting that at all events he meant to be just.

But the case was different with Mr. Ratcliff.

He had picked upon the swell of St. Jim's for nothing. And Arthur Augustus, with the blood of all the D'Arcys boiling in his veins, was standing up for justice.

He did not mean to give in, be the consequences what they might.

His glance never faltered as he met the angry, glittering eyes of the Housemaster of the New House.

Mr. Ratcliff came a step nearer to the elegant junior, his hand tightening harder upon the cane.

"D'Arcy!"

His voice was hard as iron.

"Yaas, sir."

"Will you hold out your hand?"

"No, sir."

"Do you dare to disobey me?"

"I was not talkin', sir—"

"I have only your word for that," said Mr. Ratcliff, with a very unpleasant sneer.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy flushed crimson.

"I regard it as quite sufficient, sir," he said. "I regard it as a fellow's duty, sir, to take another fellow's word, sir. It is wotten and blackguardly to doubt a fellow's word, sir!"

Mr. Ratcliff gasped.

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So did the Fourth Form. They knew Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's views upon the subject, but they were not views that could be very well explained to a master.

"This—this insolence—" began Mr. Ratcliff thickly.

"I am sorry to appear insolent, sir, but I have a right to expect my word to be taken, sir. Mr. Lathom would not doubt my word."

"Once for all, D'Arcy, hold out your hand!"

"I refuse!"

Mr. Ratcliff did not speak again. He strode nearer to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the cane upraised in his hand. D'Arcy met his eyes unflinchingly.

"You had better not strike me with that cane, sir!" he said very distinctly. "I warn you that I shall resist!"

"What!"

"I refuse to be punished for somethin' I haven't done, sir. I regard it as unjust and tyrannical!"

"D'Arcy!"

Mr. Ratcliff gasped out the word.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stood as firm as a rock. The Fourth Form held their breath. What was going to happen next? D'Arcy was a fellow of his word, and it really looked as if the Fourth Form-room would be the scene of an unseemly struggle between a junior and a master.

Perhaps Mr. Ratcliff had sense enough to feel that that would not do. If a junior refused to be caned by him, his course was clear—to send him in to the Head. That was all he could do, if he expected the Head to uphold him afterwards. And that was what he decided upon.

"Very well, D'Arcy," said Mr. Ratcliff, between his teeth. "You do not belong to my Form, and I shall leave you to be dealt with by Dr. Holmes! I will give you a note to take to the Head."

D'Arcy did not reply.

Mr. Ratcliff stepped to the Form-master's desk, and hastily scribbled a note. He signed to D'Arcy to step out before the class. The swell of St. Jim's obeyed quietly. Consistently with his personal dignity, to which Arthur Augustus attached a very great importance, he felt that he could obey Mr. Ratcliff thus far.

Mr. Ratcliff handed him the note.

"Take that to Dr. Holmes, in the Fifth Form-room!" he said. "I have reported your insolence and disobedience to him. He will deal with you."

"You have chawactewised me as insolent and disobedient,"

he said.

"Yes, certainly!"

"Then I must decline to take the note to Doctor Holmes,"

he said.

"What!"

"I decline—"

Mr. Ratcliff's face was red with rage. His thin hand rose to point to the door.

"Leave the class-room at once!" he thundered. "I will report your utter insolence to the Headmaster myself, D'Arcy."

"I—"

"Not a word! Go!"

Arthur Augustus walked quietly to the door, and out of the Form-room. The juniors drew a deep, deep breath as the door closed behind him.

CHAPTER 2.

No Use Arguing.

FOR the remainder of the morning there was suppressed excitement in the Fourth Form-room at St. Jim's.

The juniors were very careful.

Mr. Ratcliff was simmering with fury, and he was watching for opportunities to catch the Fourth-Formers napping, as it were; and they did not give him opportunities if they could help it.

But punishments were handed out freely. Half the class had impositions by the time the Form was dismissed.

When he had dismissed the Fourth, Mr. Ratcliff strode away with rustling gown and frowning brow.

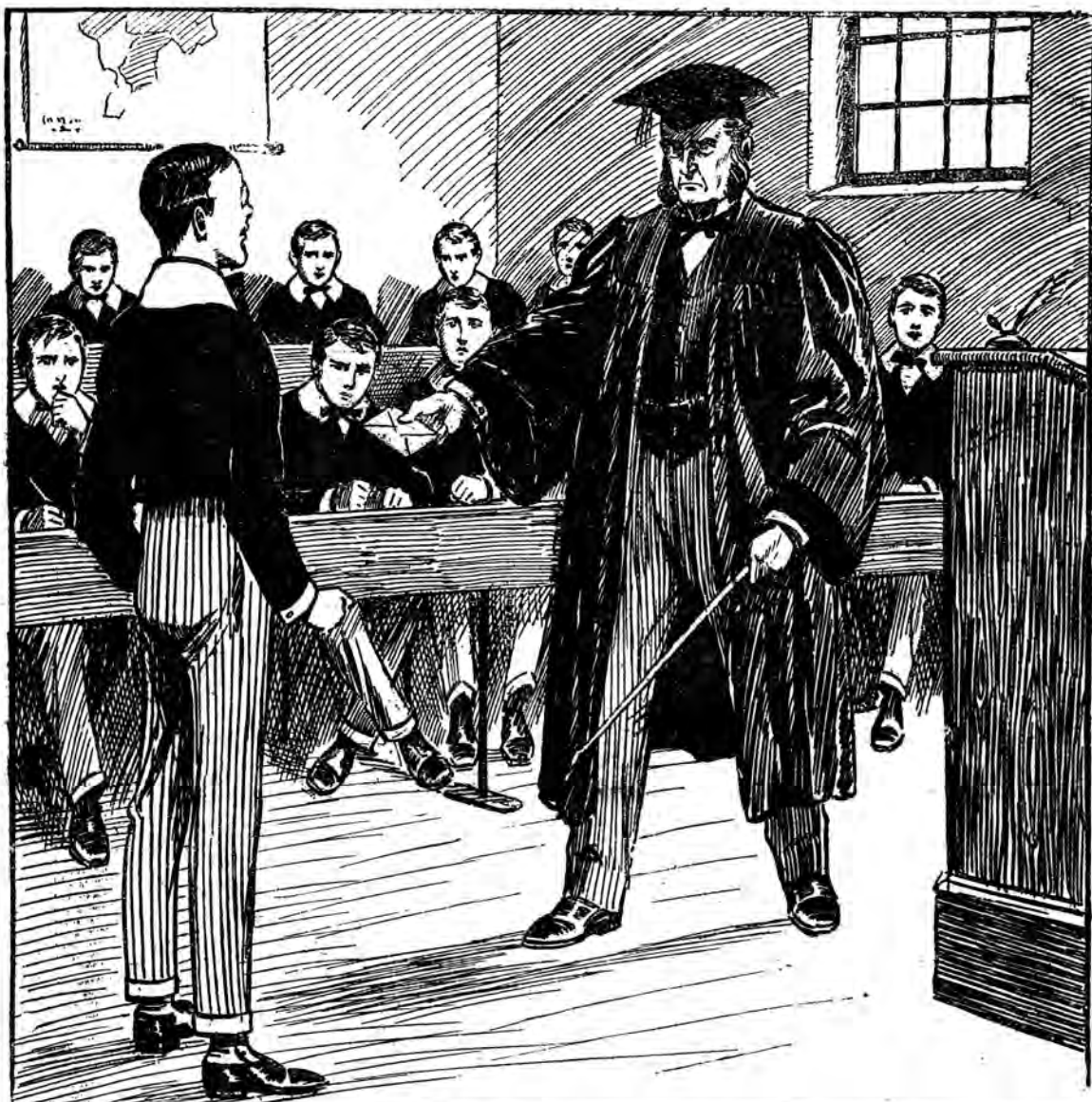
The Fourth Form gathered in the passage in groups, discussing the happenings of the morning in excited whispers.

What would happen to D'Arcy?

Although he had been so provoked by the New House-master, it was a serious thing to disobey orders from those in authority, and the only question was—what punishment would the Head mete out the swell of St. Jim's.

Sympathy was all with D'Arcy, of course, excepting in the case of a few enemies in the Form—fellows like Levison and Mellish. Levison and Mellish regarded the trouble D'Arcy had fallen into with ill-concealed satisfaction.

"Fellows have been expelled for less than that," Levison remarked, with relish.



"Do you refuse to obey me, D'Arcy?" exclaimed Mr. Rateliff, in a voice as hard as iron. The junior's glance never faltered as he met the glittering eyes of the angry master. "Yaas, sir," said Arthur Augustus firmly. "I wefuse!" (See Chapter I.)

"Yes, rather!" said Mellish. "I shouldn't be surprised if D'Arcy gets the order of the boot."

"Fancy Gussy sacked," grinned Levison.

"Quite a come-down for the high and mighty."

"What-ho!"

"Oh, shut up, you cads!" exclaimed Jack Blake angrily.

"Yes, shut up!" said Herries. "I suppose you want Gussy to be sacked, you rotters!"

"It's all Figgy's fault," said Digby unreasonably. "What do you mean by having such a rotten Housemaster, Figgy?"

"Yes, what do you mean by it, intiorely?" demanded Reilly.

Figgins looked glum.

"Oh, I don't stand up for Ratty!" he said. "He's a worm, if ever there was one! It was rotten of him to come down on Gussy like that."

"Rotten isn't the word," said Blake. "It was beastly!"

"Caddish!"

"Faith, and ye're right!"

"Poor old Gussy!" grinned Levison. "I can just imagine him being sacked, and—"

"Shut up!" roared Blake.

"Rats! I suppose a chap can talk if he likes."

"No, you can't!" said Blake. "I don't like it! Shut up!"

"Yes, rather!"

"I'll say what I like," said Levison defiantly. "I shouldn't be sorry if Gussy was jolly well sacked! He ought to be sacked for his cheek! I shouldn't mind if you lot were sacked with him, too! I—— Oh!"

Biff!

Jack Blake was too worried about his chum to have any patience to waste on the cad of the Fourth. He hit out straight from the shoulder, and Levison's remarks were suddenly interrupted. The cad of the Fourth sat down violently, and Blake glared down at him with blazing eyes and clenched fists.

"Now get up, you cad, and I'll knock you down again!" he shouted.

"Ow!"

"Hallo! What's the matter, kids?"

It was the voice of Tom Merry, of the Shell.

The Shell Form had just come out of their Form-room, and Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther—The Terrible Three—were marching down the passage with linked arms. They

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almost fell over Levison—Monty Lowther, indeed, trod on him, but perhaps that was not wholly accidental.

Blake turned round with a flushed face towards The Terrible Three.

"Hallo, you Shell bouncers!" he said ungraciously.

"Gussy's in the wars, that's all."

"Poor old Gussy!" said Monty Lowther sympathetically. "Has the order gone forth that collars shall be less than six inches high?"

"Oh, don't be an ass!"

"Or has it been ordained that a fellow shall wear only one silk hat at a time?"

"You silly ass!"

"Or has the Head come down heavily upon lavender kid gloves?" asked Manners, with a very sympathetic look. "I always said that Gussy was over-doing it."

"Cheese it!" said Tom Merry, observing the signs of real distress in Blake's face. "Is it something serious, Jackie?"

"Yes," said Blake.

"Oh, sorry!" said Lowther, at once. "What's the matter with the old chap?"

"Ratty."

Tom Merry nodded comprehendingly.

"Oh, old Ratty was taking your class this morning, I know!" he said. "It's hard cheese! Has he been cutting up rough?"

"Yes," said Blake. "He was down on Gussy, and Gussy, for once, hadn't been talking. It was one of those rare occasions when he hadn't."

"Poor old Gussy!"

"And Gussy refused to be cared."

"Phew!"

"And refused to take in a note to the Head."

"My hat!"

"And was dismissed from the Form-room, and now Ratty has gone to report him to the Head," said Blake dolefully.

The chums of the Shell looked serious enough now.

"By Jove! That's rotten!" said Tom Merry. "It's a rotten shame, of course, but Gussy will get it in the neck."

"Where is he?" asked Manners.

"In the study, I suppose. I'm going to see."

"We'll come."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was in the study. The clungs of the School House found him with his necktie off, and he was examining two nice new neckties. He glanced round as they came in, and nodded.

"What on earth—" began Blake.

"I'm twyin' on a new necktie," D'Arcy explained.

"What on earth for?"

"I suppose I shall have to go in and see the Head. A chap wants to look respectable on an occasion like this."

"By Jove!"

"I wathah like this one with the silvah babs," said D'Arcy thoughtfully. "But on the othah hand, the one with the pale blue spots agrees with the colah of my eyes. Of course, a fellow ought to be careful that the colah of his tie does not disagree with the colah of his eyes. But—"

"Oh, chuck the ties away!" said Tom Merry.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Do you know that you're in danger of being flogged?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Nothin' of the sort! I should weifuse to be flogged."

"Eh?"

"As I have not twansgressed in any way, I should uttahly weifuse to be flogged," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with perfect serenity.

"You—you ass! Suppose the Head—"

"I should wemonstwat with the Head. In any case, I should leave St. Jim's before I would submit to undeserved castigation, deah boys."

"Leave St. Jim's!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry & Co. gazed at one another helplessly. When the swell of St. Jim's took the bit in his teeth, so to speak, there was no reasoning with him. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was quite impervious to argument when he had made up his mind.

"But—but, you ass—but, you fathead—but, you chump," said Blake, in forcible tones, "you will have to obey the Head!"

"Which of these neckties do you pwefer, Blake?"

"Bother the neckties!"

"It's wathah an important mattah! You see—"

"Oh, rats!"

And Blake, out of patience, quitted the study, the rest of the juniors following him. It was too exasperating to see the swell of St. Jim's devoting all his attention to neckties, when he was in danger of a flogging, if not of being expelled from the school.

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CHAPTER 3.

Gone!

LEVISON, of the Fourth, looked into Study No. 6 a little later.

There was a peculiar grin upon Levison's face. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had decided upon a tie, and had tied it to his satisfaction, and was surveying the result in the glass. He saw Levison's reflection in the glass besides his own, and glanced round with a frown. There was no love lost between D'Arcy and the cad of the Fourth.

"Weally, Levison, I wish you would not entah my studay without knockin'," said Arthur Augustus stiffly.

"I've come with a message for you," said Levison.

"That was no weason why you should not knock at the door, deah boy."

"Oh, rats!"

"Weally, Levison—"

"The Head wants to see you."

"Weally!"

"Mr. Rateliff told me to tell you."

"Vewy well!"

"You're to be flogged."

"Wats!"

"Taggles has been sent for," said Levison, with great satisfaction. "The whole school is to be assembled in hall, and you are going to be flogged in public."

D'Arcy's face turned a shade paler.

"Impos!" he murmured.

"Well, you'll see," said Levison. "I don't see what else you could expect, after checking a Housemaster as you did."

"Bai Jove!"

"The Head's frightfully ratty," said Levison. "I don't know whether you're to be expelled after you're flogged. I shouldn't wonder."

D'Arcy was silent.

In spite of his courage and his coolness, he could not help being struck and impressed by Levison's message.

The state of affairs was serious enough. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was determined not to submit to a public flogging, even if he had to leave St. Jim's.

But the Head, if he condemned him to be flogged, was not likely to leave him the choice of quitting the school instead.

He had said that he would remonstrate with the Head. He could remonstrate easily enough, but it was not likely to make any difference. And any objections he raised were not likely to be regarded. Taggles, the school porter, would hoist him upon his back, and if he resisted, the prefects would help. He would be flogged, whether he liked it or not, if once he set foot within the Head's study.

Arthur Augustus realised with sudden clearness that there was no doubt whatever upon that point. He stood irresolute.

"Well, are you going?" asked Levison.

"Mind your own bizney, deah boy!"

"Better buck up," suggested Levison. "Ratty will be here himself to fetch you if you don't show up in the Head's study pretty soon. You don't want to be carried bodily along the passages like a naughty baby."

"Pway hold your tongue, Levison!"

"I'm giving you good advice," said Levison. "Come along, my son! After all, a flogging will very likely do you good, you know."

"Oh, shut up!"

"You have been asking for a licking for a long time, you know," said Levison agreeably. "It is really just what you want, if you only knew it."

"Will you leave my study, Levison?"

"Yes, when I'm finished," said Levison. "What I think is—Oh! Leggo, you ass!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy grasped the cad of the Fourth with both hands, and swung him round.

In spite of his elegant ways, Arthur Augustus was athletic. The cad of the Fourth had no chance whatever against him.

"Now, you uttah wottah—"

"Ow!"

Biff!

Arthur Augustus's elegant boot was planted forcibly behind Levison, and he went spinning into the passage.

"Yarcoop!"

Bump!

The cad of the Fourth dropped on his hands and knees on the passage floor.

"Ow!" he gasped. "Oh!"

D'Arcy slammed the study door.

Levison rose to his feet, and with a scowl upon his brow, and a venomous expression upon his lips, he slunk down the passage.

In the study, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stood undecided.

What was he to do? He was breathing hard and quickly.

What should he do? He would not be flogged; he was resolved upon that.

But in that case it was futile to stay in his study, and wait there until Mr. Ratcliff or a prefect came to take him by force.

There was only one alternative!

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy threw an overcoat over his arm, picked up his silk hat, and quitted the study, a couple of minutes after Levison had been ejected.

He went downstairs with a grim and determined expression upon his aristocratic features. He glanced round for his chums, not wishing to see them, but they had gone out into the quadrangle.

Arthur Augustus reached the doorway of the School House, and jammed his eyeglass into his eye, and glanced out into the misty quad.

The juniors were gone down to the playing-fields to fill in the time before dinner, and his way to the gates was unbarred.

D'Arcy ran quickly down the steps of the School House, and crossed towards the gates. Reilly, of the Fourth, nodded to him as he drew near the gates.

"Faith, and where are ye goin', D'Arcy darling?" he inquired.

"Out, deah boy."

"What about Ratty?"

"Blow Watty!"

"But isn't he going to—"

"Sowwy, I can't stop, Weilly, deah boy. Good-bye!"

"Faith, I say—"

"I'm goin' to w'rite to Blake!" D'Arcy called back as he passed on.

Reilly stared.

"Write to Blake!" he exclaimed. "What do you mean? How long are you going away for, thin, ye omadhaun?"

But Arthur Augustus did not reply. He was turning the corner into the road.

"D'Arcy! Gussy!"

D'Arcy disappeared.

"Faith, and I can't make him out intoirly," murmured the Irish junior. "Phawt does he intind to do, intoirly?"

He ran to the gates and looked after D'Arcy.

The slim and elegant figure of the swell of the School House was just disappearing round a bend in the lane. Reilly was very much puzzled. There was evidently no information to be got from Arthur Augustus himself, and he decided to consult Blake on the subject. Although he was not a special chum of D'Arcy's, Reilly liked him, as most of the St. Jim's fellows did, and he was concerned about him just now.

Meanwhile, Levison had dusted himself down, and returned to the passage outside the Head's study, where Mr. Ratcliff was standing. The New Housemaster glanced at him.

"Did you give D'Arcy my message?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," said Levison.

"Where is he, then?"

"I don't think he's coming, sir."

Mr. Ratcliff started.

"What! You told him that the Head wished to see him at once, did you not?"

"Yes, sir," said Levison meekly.

He did not add the other things that he had told D'Arcy. Mr. Ratcliff would have been angry enough if he had known that the cad of the Fourth had enlarged upon his message to the culprit.

"And he is not coming?"

"I think not, sir."

"We shall soon see about that!" exclaimed Mr. Ratcliff grimly.

He went into the hall, where Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, was chatting with Darrel, of the Sixth.

"Kildare! Will you kindly go to D'Arcy's study—No. 6 in the Fourth Form passage—and fetch him to the Head's study?"

Kildare looked at the New Housemaster in amazement.

"Fetch D'Arcy, sir!" he repeated.

"Yes. He refuses to obey the Head."

Kildare nodded shortly. He did not like Mr. Ratcliff any more than the other fellows did, and he did not like receiving orders from him. But he did as he was asked.

Mr. Ratcliff waited. Levison silently departed. He did not want to face Arthur Augustus when he came. It was some minutes before Kildare returned, and when he returned, he returned alone.

Mr. Ratcliff gave him a sharp look.

"Why have you not brought D'Arcy, Kildare?"

"He is not there, sir."

"Not in his study?"

"No, sir."

Mr. Ratcliff bit his lip.

"Very well. Have him searched for at once. The Head is waiting for him. I leave it to you, Kildare."

And Mr. Ratcliff turned upon his heel.

CHAPTER 4.

Bolted!

"WHERE is Gussy?"
"Where's D'Arcy?"
"Anybody seen Gussy?"

Up and down the School House of St. Jim's those questions were being asked.

The Head wanted to see D'Arcy, and D'Arcy was not to be found. All the school soon knew that.

The juniors of the School House were impressed into the service of looking for him. As the general impression was that a licking awaited Arthur Augustus when he was found, they were not very keen about finding him.

Fellows looked up and down the passages, and into the studies, and even into the coal-lockers, and, in fact, in all places where the swell of St. Jim's was not at all likely to be. They reported to Kildare that they could not find him, and the prefects hunted for the missing junior, and hunted in vain. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was not to be found.

He did not appear at dinner-time, and his place was empty at the Fourth Form table, in the School House. By this time it was pretty clear to most of the fellows that he was outside the gates of St. Jim's. Reilly had told D'Arcy's chums of having seen the junior leave the gates, and they wondered where he had gone.

"Just like Gussy to stick in the village, and wait for it to blow over," Jack Blake remarked.

"No bizney of ours, though. We're not going to tell Ratty where to find him!"

"No fear!" agreed Digby.

"But it will be all the worse for him when he comes back," said Tom Merry. "You see, he can't stay away and cut afternoon lessons."

"I shouldn't be surprised if he does," said Blake.

"That would be serious."

"It would be just like Gussy when he's on his dignity."

And Tom Merry, on reflection, agreed that it would. But it would mean trouble—serious trouble, and he hoped that the swell of St. Jim's would not keep his back up to that extent.

When the Fourth Form went into their class-room that afternoon one place was empty. Mr. Ratcliff glanced over the Form keenly. He was surprised at the length to which the swell of the Fourth was carrying his resistance, but he fully expected to see Arthur Augustus in his place for afternoon lessons. But he was not there.

"Blake!" rapped out Mr. Ratcliff.

"Yes sir," said Blake, as respectfully as he could. He did not feel very respectful towards the New Housemaster.

"Where is D'Arcy?"

"I do not know, sir."

"Do you know whether he is purposely staying away from lessons?"

"I don't know anything about it, sir."

"That is not the way to answer me, Blake. Take fifty lines!"

"Thank you, sir!"

"Take a hundred lines, Blake!"

Blake made a grimace. Mr. Ratcliff was biting his thin lips with anger. He was deeply exasperated with everybody, including himself. Although D'Arcy might be severely punished for his disobedience, none the less it made Mr. Ratcliff look ridiculous to be disobeyed. And Mr. Ratcliff was very sensitive on the subject of his personal dignity.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy did not come in for lessons. When the Fourth Form were dismissed he had not been seen.

The Fourth-Formers crowded out into the passage in a state of excitement. Where was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy? What had become of him? He could not intend to remain long away from the school; that seemed impossible.

But where was he?

"He's wandered into a necktie shop, and he's still there, looking over the neckties," said Kangaroo, of the Shell.

And there was a laugh.

But Tom Merry & Co. did not laugh. They were too anxious about the swell of the School House. What had become of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy?

Mr. Raitlon, the master of the School House, questioned the boys, and it was easy to see that he was anxious, too.

But they could give no information.

All they knew was that D'Arcy had gone out of the school gates after morning lessons. Reilly, of the Fourth, had seen him go, and nothing had been seen of him since.

Mr. Raitlon looked very grave. The School Housemaster knew, of course, of the trouble in the Fourth Form-room, and in his heart he resented very deeply Mr. Ratcliff having picked upon a School House boy to wreak his bad temper upon. But he could not let the juniors see that.

Mr. Ratcliff was perplexed by D'Arcy's absence, and perhaps he hoped that the junior had run away from school, in order that his punishment might be more severe: As a matter

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of fact, the "flogging" had existed only in Levison's imagination, but Mr. Ratcliff would have been quite pleased if it had come to pass.

D'Arcy's disappearance had to be communicated to the Head. When the boys came out after tea, D'Arcy was still not to be seen, and a party of prefects went down to the village to look for him.

The juniors saw them go, and would gladly have joined in the search; but the early winter evening had set in, and they were not allowed to go.

It was quite late when the prefects returned, tired and muddy and bad-tempered. They came without the swell of St. Jim's.

Excitement at the school ran high now.

D'Arcy had run away!

There seemed to be no doubt upon the point, especially when it leaked out that Kildare had reported to the Head that he had learned something there of the missing junior's movements. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who was well known by sight at the station, had taken a ticket for Wayland Junction, and gone in the train.

He had run away from school!

The news buzzed up and down St. Jim's, and the Head and Mr. Railton were observed to look very anxious.

The chums of Study No. 6 were in dismay.

They never knew quite what to expect of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who had his own opinions and his own ways upon all matters, but that he would run away from school was something they could not have looked for.

Why had he done so?

Of Levison's false message to the swell of St. Jim's they knew, of course, nothing. The cad of the Fourth was careful to hold his tongue about it. If it came out that he had falsified the message to D'Arcy, he was quite prepared to brazen it out. The chums of the School House never thought of Levison at all in connection with the departure of the swell of St. Jim's.

A gloomy trio of juniors gathered in Study No. 6 that night for preparation. Blake and Herries and Digby did not feel inclined for talk. They missed their chum, and they were anxious about him, and they dreaded what would happen when he was brought back to St. Jim's. That he must be found and brought back in the long run was certain.

"It's rotten!" said Blake, at last. "Poor old Gussy! And to-morrow afternoon he was going to play in the junior match against Topcliffe!"

"Blessed if I shall feel like playing at all if he isn't back!" said Digby gloomily.

"Nor I!" said Herries. "I wonder——"

"You wonder what?" said Blake, as Herries paused.

"I wonder if he's too far off for Towser to pick up the scent. My bulldog Towser would track him down——"

"Oh—br-r-r-r!" said Blake.

"Look here, Blake, you remember how Towser tracked down the Head when he was lost——" began Herries warmly.

There was a knock at the door, and Tom Merry opened it. He came in with a letter in his hand, and Manners and Lowther followed him in.

"Letter for you, Blake," said the three together.

"Thought we'd bring it up."

"Thanks!" said Blake carelessly. "Chuck it on the table."

"But it's in Gussy's hand."

Blake jumped up.

"What! Gussy's?"

"Yes, rather!"

Jack Blake almost snatched the letter. Truly enough, it was addressed in the neat, slight caligraphy of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, to Jack Blake, Esquire, School House, St. James' Collegiate School, Sussex.

"Postmark's Wayland," said Monty Lowther.

Blake tore the letter open.

"Read it out!"

"Right!"

Blake read out the letter:

"Dear Blake,—I have left St. Jim's as it is quite impossible for me to submit to personal castigation for nothing. When I received the message that I was to go in and be flogged, I decided to leave the school. I am not going home, as I think very probably my governor would send me back. I think perhaps I shall go as a soldier, or if I am not old enough for that, I shall very likely become a detective, or a pioneer in South Africa.—Kindest regards to all the fellows.

"Always yours,

"ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY."

"P.S.—Please take care of my clothes for me.—A. A. D'A."

The chums of the School House exchanged glances.

"My hat!" said Tom Merry.

"My word!" murmured Digby.

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"He's going as a soldier!" said Monty Lowther faintly.

"Oh, my!"

"Or as a pioneer in South Africa!"

"Or—or a giddy detective!"

"Poor old Gussy!"

The juniors did not laugh. They would have laughed heartily enough, but they were too anxious about Arthur Augustus. There was only one thing to be done with the letter. Jack Blake took it at once to Mr. Railton's study.

CHAPTER 5.

Something for Levison.

MR. RAILTON read Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's letter carefully.

He smiled a little, probably over D'Arcy's idea of going for a soldier; but his face became immediately grave again.

"I do not quite understand this, Blake," he said. "D'Arcy speaks of having received a message that he was to go in and be flogged. Those are his words."

"Yes, sir," said Blake.

"There was no intention on Dr. Holmes's part to flog D'Arcy," said the School Housemaster. "Dr. Holmes intended to speak to him very seriously, and came him for disobedience to a master; but there was no intention of flogging him. He must have misunderstood the message, or——" Mr. Railton paused. "Who took the message, Blake?"

"Levison, I think, sir."

"Send Levison to me."

"Very well, sir."

Blake left the study, and sent Levison in. The cad of the Fourth was shaking a little within, but outwardly he was quite cool.

Mr. Railton fixed a searching glance upon him as he entered.

"Levison, you took a message to D'Arcy to-day that he was wanted in the Head's study."

"Yes, sir," said Levison.

"What was the message you gave?"

"That Dr. Holmes wanted to see him, sir."

"Nothing more?"

"I suggested that he should go immediately, sir, as it might lead to more trouble for him if he did not."

"Anything else?"

"Not that I remember, sir."

"You did not tell him that he was to be flogged?"

"I did not know myself, sir."

"That is not a direct answer, Levison. Did you, or did you not, tell D'Arcy that he was to go to the Head's study to be flogged?" asked Mr. Railton, with a frown.

Levison shook his head.

"He might have thought I said so, sir——"

"Did you say so?"

"No, sir," said Levison, driven to the lie direct.

"Then why should D'Arcy assume so?"

"I said I hoped he would not be flogged, or something to that effect, sir, and that fellows were generally flogged for disobeying a master, or something of that sort."

"Only that?"

"I can't remember the exact words, sir, but it was something to that effect."

"It is very odd that D'Arcy should assume that he was to be flogged if you said nothing more than that, Levison."

"Well, D'Arcy's not a very intelligent chap, sir," said Levison, with perfect coolness. "When he gets an idea into his head——"

"I hope you have spoken the truth, Levison," said Mr.

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Railton. "Unfortunately, I have detected you on several occasions speaking untruthfully."

"Does D'Arcy say—"

"D'Arcy certainly understood that your message was that he was to be flogged, and that it was fully decided upon."

"It was a misunderstanding, sir."

"For that reason D'Arcy has committed the serious offence of leaving the school without permission," said Mr. Railton.

"Has he run away, sir?"

"Yes."

"I'm sorry, sir, if I am to blame in any way. So far as I remember, I delivered Mr. Ratcliff's message word for word."

"Very well, Levison; you may go. But I think you will probably hear of this matter again when D'Arcy returns to the school."

"I hope—"

"That is enough; you may go."

Levison quitted the study.

Mr. Railton took D'Arcy's letter to the Head. Dr. Holmes read it over, and smiled a little, as the Housemaster had done, and then frowned.

"The foolish boy is under a mistake," he said. "But it is very serious what he has done, Mr. Railton. It is not a light offence to run away from school. Have you any idea where he has gone?"

"He says he is not going home," said Mr. Railton thoughtfully. "I have no idea where else he might go."

"Probably he will change his mind, and return to Eastwood House," said the Head. "It would be best in any case to telegraph to Lord Eastwood, and ask him if his son has come home. He must know of what has happened, at all events."

"I quite agree with you, sir."

"The boy must be found and brought back without delay. If he has not gone home, he may get into serious mischief." And the wire was sent at once to Lord Eastwood.

The reply came later in the evening, and the Head and the School Housemaster read it with anxious brows.

"Nothing known here of Arthur.—EASTWOOD."

The two masters exchanged glances.

"Then he has not returned home?" said the Head.

"Evidently not."

"He must be searched for. Perhaps you would not mind going over to Wayland and making some inquiries there."

"I will go with pleasure," said Mr. Railton.

The whole School House knew very soon of the telegram, and they saw the Housemaster leave the school for Wayland. They waited anxiously for his return.

"I daresay Mr. Railton will find him at Wayland," Tom Merry said hopefully. "Anyway, there will be some news at Wayland Junction, if Gussy took the train there."

"It's all through Levison," said Jack Blake wrathfully. "If he hadn't told Gussy lies, Gussy wouldn't have bolted like this!"

"That's so!"

"If Railton doesn't bring Gussy back with him, we'll go and see Levison in his study," said Herries.

"Yes, rather!" said all the juniors together emphatically.

It was late when Mr. Railton returned.

He came back alone.

It was soon known that all his inquiries had been useless. D'Arcy had left the train from Rylcombe at Wayland Junction, but had not taken a ticket for anywhere else. He had been seen to leave the station and go into the town. Nothing further was known. In Wayland, so far as Mr. Railton could ascertain in so short a time, nothing had been observed of him.

The swell of St. Jim's was lost!

Telegraph and telephone were already at work, and he was being watched for on the railway-line, but it was doubtful if that would lead to anything; for it was pretty clear that D'Arcy had foreseen that movement, and that he had avoided the railway on purpose.

"He's bolted!" said Blake dolefully. "He's struck across country somewhere, and goodness knows where he will get to, or where he will be found!"

"It's Levison's fault!" said Tom Merry.

"Yes, rather!"

"Let's go and see him."

Six or seven angry juniors presented themselves in Levison's study. Mellish and Lumley-Lumley, Levison's study-mates, were there with him, and the three were finishing their prep.

Levison changed colour a little as Tom Merry & Co. entered the study. He rose to his feet and promptly placed the table between him and the invaders.

"Hallo!" said Lumley-Lumley, looking up from his work.

"What do you fellows want?"

"We want Levison!" said Blake grimly.

Lumley-Lumley laughed.

"I guess you can have him," he said indifferently.

"Look here—" began Mellish.

"Are you going to interfere, Mellish?" Blake demanded.

Mellish shrank back.

"Oh, no!" he said. "But —"

"Then shut up!"

And Mellish shut up.

"You took Mr. Ratcliff's message to D'Arcy this afternoon, Levison," said Blake, fixing his eyes upon the cad of the Fourth. "You led him to believe that he was going to be flogged."

"He may have misunderstood—" began Levison.

"Rats! He couldn't have thought so unless you said so. He says plainly in his letter that he was told to go in to be flogged."

"Look here—"

"He's got himself into trouble, through your rotten lies!" said Tom Merry.

"I—I—"

"There will be a big row over his running away," Blake went on, "but Gussy isn't going to get all the trouble. You're going to have some, Levison, and you're going to have it now."

Levison made a spring for the door.

In a second he was grasped by two or three pairs of hands, and swung back into the study. The faces of the juniors were grim and angry.

"Bump him!"

"Help!" yelled Levison.

Bump! Bump! Bump!

"Ow! Yow! Yow-ow!"

Bump! Bump!

"Ow! Help!"

Levison was not enjoying the process. He fought, and kicked, and scratched, but he was bumped and bumped again, and his inkwell was poured over his head, and the ashpans from the grate was emptied down his neck. Tom Merry & Co. were very much in earnest. The wild yells of the cad of the Fourth brought a crowd along the passage, but they looked on and cheered. There was no sympathy for Levison. Kildare, of the Sixth, pushed his way through the crowd, and looked angrily into the study.

"What's this row about?" demanded the captain of St. Jim's.

"Ragging Levison," said Tom Merry cheerfully.

"Merry!"

"He tied to Gussy, and made him run away," Blake explained.

Kildare nodded. He knew all about the message which had been misunderstood, according to Levison's account, and he did not believe a word of Levison's explanation.

"Ow!" yelled Levison. "Kildare! Stop them! Look what they've done to me."

"Serve you right," said Kildare shortly. "Let him alone now, you kids. Order must be kept here."

The juniors were quite willing to let Levison alone. He had had his punishment, and they left him rubbing ink from his hair and ashes from his neck, and trooped out of the study.

Levison had been reckoned with for his treachery, but Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was gone, and was not to be found. Where was he? The chums of St. Jim's went to bed that night with heavy hearts—heavy with the knowledge that their chum was lost.

CHAPTER 6.

A Meeting in the Dark.

"**B**AI jove!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy made that remark.

The rain, which had been drizzling on and off all day, was coming down steadily now.

The downfall, which had caused fresh twinges to Mr. Ratcliff's rheumatism at St. Jim's, and made the footer field sloppy for the hardy juniors who stuck to their practice, was growing worse with the advance of night.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had not forgotten his umbrella. As he was starting out in rainy weather, in a silk hat, he was not likely to forget that most important accessory.

But the umbrella seemed of little use. Rain came round the umbrella and under it, and the swell of St. Jim's was damp all over, his coat was wet, and his boots and trousers were muddy, and his silk hat was beginning to resemble the skin of a drowned rat.

And he did not know where he was.

He had carefully avoided the railway after reaching Wayland, knowing well enough that as soon as the Head knew he had run away, he would be telegraphed for along the line.

His desire was to get to London, and disappear among the crowds of the metropolis, but it was not a desire on his part

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to find a man in uniform waiting for him when he stepped out of a train at the terminus, to take him ignominiously back to St. Jim's, there to meet the punishment he had fled from, with some more added because of his flight.

It was necessary, if he was not to be recaptured, to keep away from the railway, and Arthur Augustus kept away from it.

The only alternative was tramping to London, and D'Arcy commenced to tramp. It occurred to him that it would not be exactly safe to take the direct London road, either, as he would undoubtedly be searched for in that direction.

With great astuteness, he made a wide detour to the southward, and found himself in a new and undiscovered country, which might have been part of the continent of America for anything that he could observe to the contrary.

That it was not part of the continent of America, but part of the county of Sussex, he, of course, knew quite well, but which part was a mystery.

He was probably not within a good many miles of St. Jim's, and that was all that he could feel certain about.

Darkness was coming on, to add to his difficulties, and the rain was coming down with the steady persistence with which rain does come down when one is far from shelter.

The sun had long ago disappeared, and the grey winter evening deepened into night, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy halted at last, in the muddy, shadowed road, and looked about him, and uttered an exclamation of discomfort and dismay.

"Bai Jove!"

It was very unpleasant.

"Bai Jove!" repeated Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, looking round him with a grim expression at the dank hedges and leafless, dripping trees, dimly visible in the gloom of night. "Bai Jove, I believe I'm lost!"

He had reasons for the belief.

He was certainly lost!

After looking round him for some minutes, he realised that it was useless for him to stand there, and he tramped wearily onward again.

He passed a sign-post in the midst of four cross-roads, and tried to see the sign, but it was impossible in the darkness, and every match that he struck was instantly extinguished by the wind and the rain.

He tramped on again, taking a road at random.

For all he knew, he might be walking back directly towards the school he had quitted, and the thought of that made his steps slacken.

He was tired, and he was wet, and his boots were full of water, and he sneezed several times.

He thought of the dormitory at St. Jim's, and the white, warm bed, with a feeling of homesickness.

After all, it was no great fun to run away from school.

Then he thought of the flogging.

To be haled up before the assembled, expectant school, hoisted upon the back of the grinning Taggles, and flogged—

The thought of it made the blood of the swell of St. Jim's boil in his veins.

Never!

Anything but that!

Better to be tramping, as he was doing, through the rainy night, without knowing where he was to lay his head for rest and shelter. Not for a moment did he regret having resisted the tyranny of Mr. Ratchiff.

If he could only find an inn of some sort—even a hedge alehouse—anything to afford him shelter from the rain, and an opportunity of drying his clothes, and a bed of some sort for the night.

But Arthur Augustus gave up the thought of an inn as too ambitious. He would have been glad, at last, to find a barn where he could drag in his weary limbs to rest.

"Bai jove!"

He had blundered against a gate in the darkness.

He stopped, and caught it with his hands, and the umbrella slipped aside, and a sheet of rain descended upon him as if a bucket of water had been inverted over his head. Arthur Augustus gasped, and erected the umbrella again.

"Ow! Weally!"

The gate swung and creaked. Mud was thick round his feet. D'Arcy realised that he had inadvertently wandered, in the darkness, from the high road, and turned up some by-lane leading to a farm. The gate barred further progress, but not for long. D'Arcy forced it open, and passed through.

The lane must lead to a farm building of some kind. He was sure of that, and it was a lucky discovery. If it was only a barn or a cowshed he found, it would afford him shelter from the rain.

He tramped on through the darkness.

Squelch! Squelch!

How deep the mud was on the field-path D'Arcy did not know, but it seemed fathoms deep, as he dragged his clinging boots through it. He gazed round him for a light, but there was no gleam from a hospitable window. All was blackness—and rain!

Bump!

He collided with something solid, and realised that it was a wall. He felt along the wall in the darkness, and his hand came upon a door, that opened to his touch.

"Thank goodness!"

Arthur Augustus passed into the building. A close smell of hay and straw greeted him, and he knew that he was in a barn. He lowered his umbrella, and pushed the door shut behind him. Blackness surrounded him. Outside sounded the incessant pouring of the rain.

Arthur Augustus stood gasping, dripping, and squelching, but the rain was no longer beating upon him, the searching wind no longer blowing, and he felt an almost heavenly sense of relief.

"Bai Jove, that's bettah!" he murmured.

He groped his way forward.

He stumbled upon hay, and allowed himself to sink down upon it. He took off his wet silk topper, and laid down his umbrella, and sank into the soft, warm hay.

In his fatigue and wet weariness, he had forgotten even his clothes; he was glad to lie in the hay, and draw it over him to get warm.

Suddenly, as he settled down into something like comfort, he started, and strained his ears to listen.

A sound had come to him through the blackness. It was a sound of deep and steady breathing.

He was not alone in the barn!

Arthur Augustus listened, with beating heart. Was it an animal? Had he inadvertently lain down near some horse or mule, that might kick out at any moment, or—was it a human being—some desperate tramp, perhaps, who might—

From the darkness came a voice, dispelling his doubts as to whether his neighbour was an animal or a human being. With the voice, impelled, doubtless, by the breath of the speaker, came a smell of strong liquor.

"Matey!"

CHAPTER 7

Robbed!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS started.

The voice was hard, thick, and coarse. Arthur Augustus thought that he could guess the kind of man that it belonged to, and he pictured him dirty, and tattered, and beery, and unshaven, and smelling of spirits. Smell of spirits he certainly did. Save for the voice, the smell of spirits was all D'Arcy knew of him, for certain, so far.

"Matey!"

By such a man as he mentally pictured, Arthur Augustus did not like being addressed as "matey." But he had no choice in the matter. Beggars could not afford to be choosers, and he was not in a position to impress the stranger with a sense of his real importance.

"Matey!"

"Did you address me?" asked D'Arcy.

There was a moment's silence. Perhaps D'Arcy's voice was a surprise to the invisible man in the hay.

There was a slight chuckle after the silence.

"Yes," said the voice. "Come off!"

"Eh?"

"Come off!"

"Come off this hay, do you mean, my dear fellow?" exclaimed D'Arcy, in surprise.

"No; come off, that's wot I mean! Don't come it over me!" said the voice.

"Come what?"

"Style!"

"I fail to undahstand you," said D'Arcy, with chilling dignity. "I entirely fail to undahstand you!"

Another chuckle.

"Who are you?" asked the voice.

Arthur Augustus was about to reply, when the thought occurred to him that he wanted to cover up his tracks. He did not wish to leave traces for the pursuers from St. Jim's.

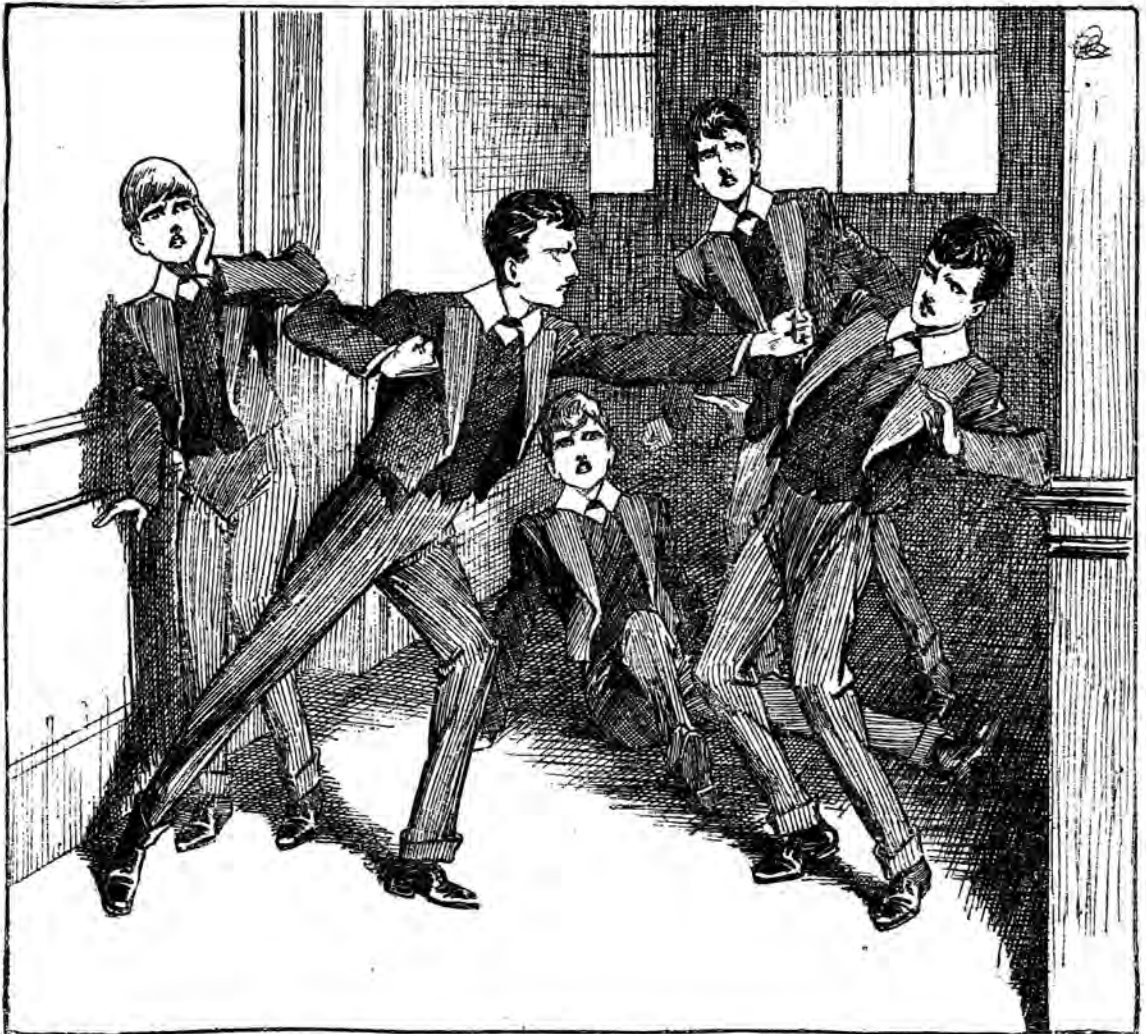
"I do not wish to give you my name," he replied.

"No," said the voice, with a sympathetic note in it. "All serene, matey! Lot of us 'as to keep our names dark at times!"

"What do you mean?" demanded Arthur Augustus sharply. "I twust you are not insinuat'ing that I have any disreputable weason for concealin' my name!"

Chuckle again.

"Certainly not, matey! Not at all! I ain't going to tell you mine."



Talbot ran at the juniors, smiling right and left. "Get out, will you?" he roared, and the Removites scattered in amazement, backing away hastily from the angry Fifth-Former. (An incident from the grand, long, complete School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co., entitled "AGAINST HIS FATHER'S WISH," by Frank Richards, contained in this week's number of The "Magnet" Library. Now on sale. Price One Penny.)

"I certainly do not desire to know it."
 "You can call me Walker," went on the voice, with another chuckle—"Johnny Walker, that's me!"
 "Wently, Mr. Walkah—"
 "Where do you come from?"
 "I'wom—" D'Arcy was about to say "school," but he checked himself. "I am goin' to London," he said.
 "You've got a long way to go."
 "Yaas, wathah!"
 "Tramping it?"
 "Yaas."
 "It's a long road," said Mr. Walker sympathetically—"long and 'ard. I know. But when a man can't pay his fare, he ain't no choice but to walk, 'as 'e?"
 "That is not the case with me!" said D'Arcy stiffly.
 "No. You've got the rocks?"
 "The what?"
 "The dibs."
 "The—the—the dibs?"
 "The rhino," explained Mr. Walker.
 "I am afwaid I do not quite compvehend you, Mr. Walkah."
 "The needful! The necessary! The ready! The brass! The cash!" translated Mr. Walker.
 "Oh, I see! Yaas, I have plenty of money!"

"My word!" said Mr. Walker, in a changed tone of voice.
 "'Ave you, reely?"
 "Oh, yaas!"
 "Then why don't you ride, 'stead of tramping it?"
 "Because I pwefer to walk, for my own weasons!"
 "My heye!"
 "I am vewy tired now, and should pwefer to sleep," said D'Arcy politely. "If you have no objection, I will do so."
 "Not at all," said Mr. Walker. "Got any grub about you?"
 "I am sowwy—no!"
 "Hungry?"
 "Yaas; a little."
 "I've got a crust I'd share with you, and pleased," said Mr. Walker generously, "and somethin' in a flask that will make you warm."
 D'Arcy could have eaten a crust at that moment, with keen relish. But he thought of the smell of spirits, and the probably dirty state of the tramp's clothing. He could have eaten a crust, but not an unclean one.
 "Thank you vewy much!" he replied. "I won't wob you."
 "You won't be robbing me, matey," said Mr. Walker, with

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a chuckle. "I'd only be too glad to 'elp a mate in distress. I s'pose you're on tramp, the same as I am?"

"I suppose I am on twamp."

"You must let me give ye somethin' to eat," said Mr. Walker.

And there was a sound of the man crawling through the hay towards the junior.

D'Arcy declined again, but Mr. Walker still crawled on. The swell of St. Jim's reflected that he could take the crust, but was not bound to eat it. Mr. Walker would not see what he did with it in the darkness, and he did not like to wound the man, tramp as he was, by repeated refusals.

"Very well," he replied. "Thank you vewy much!"

"Not at all, ole pal! Where are you?" asked Mr. Walker.

"Here!"

"Good enough!"

Guided by D'Arcy's voice and a movement he made, Mr. Walker crawled towards him through the intense darkness.

The smell of spirits came closer and closer, and it made D'Arcy feel a trifle sick. The hot breath, laden with spirit fumes, fanned his cheek for a moment, and involuntarily he jerked away his head. Even D'Arcy's politeness could not stand too great a strain.

"Ere you are!" said Mr. Walker.

"Yaas— Oh!"

"By gum!"

A hand that seemed of iron grasped the swell of St. Jim's by the shoulder, and another fastened upon his throat.

He was forced down upon his back in the hay, and the next moment a heavy knee was planted on his chest, keeping him there.

"Now, then!" said Mr. Walker genially.

"Oh!"

"Don't wriggle!" went on the voice. "You're all right! I ain't goin' to 'urt you, not if you dub up the dibs!"

"You uttah wascal!"

"If you've bin foolin' me," said Mr. Walker, "it's all right! If you're a pal, and ain't got nothin' on you, I can take a joke with any man. But if you're heeled, my pippin, I'm going to make a raise. See?"

"You feahful wottah!"

Mr. Walker, still grasping D'Arcy's throat with his left hand, began to grope over him with his right. Arthur Augustus clenched his fist hard, and struck out in the darkness, in the direction where he calculated Mr. Walker's face must be. His knuckles came into contact with a set of teeth, and there was a gasping howl from Mr. Walker, and he swayed sideways and fell into the hay.

Arthur Augustus made a spring to rise.

But the tramp's grasp was upon him immediately, and he was dragged down into the hay, and then the hay was scattered as they struggled furiously.

Arthur Augustus put up a plucky fight, but he was naturally no match for a full-grown man. He was crushed down into the hay again, and Mr. Walker took both his wrists in one hand, in a hard, grinding grip.

"Would you?" he panted.

"You f'wightful wottah!"

"Will you be quiet now?"

"No! You scoundwel!"

A fragment of whipcord was bound round D'Arcy's wrists, in spite of his resistance. Then he lay at the mercy of the tramp. It was strange and eerie, that struggle in the darkness with a man he could not see—strange and terrible to lie there helpless at the mercy of an unseen foe.

"I reckon," said Mr. Walker, in low and gasping tones—"I reckon you have been giving it to me straight, and you've got the dibs about you!"

"You wottah!"

Mr. Johnny Walker chuckled breathlessly.

"We'll see!" he remarked.

And he did see. He rifled D'Arcy's pockets, as he lay helpless in the hay, with an expertness which showed that his nimble fingers had been through many a pocket before. He cleared out every pocket—money and watch and chain and tie-pin and even sleeve-links—all of them disappeared into the invisible rags of Mr. Walker.

The swell of St. Jim's resisted as much as he could. He was thinking of his intended journey to London, and how difficult it would be with nothing in his pockets. But his resistance was in vain.

Mr. Walker chuckled several times, with evident satisfaction at each new find. By the time he had finished rifling Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's pockets he was about seven pounds the richer, without counting the jewellery, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was penniless. When he was satisfied that there was nothing more to be obtained, the tramp rose from his victim.

"Thankee kindly!" he remarked. "You've given me a loose tooth, but Johnny Walker don't bear malice for a little thing like that."

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"You uttah wascal!"

"He, he, he!" chuckled Mr. Walker. "I don't know who you are, or where you've come from, but I should guess that you've run away from somewhere, and my advice to you is, young gentleman, to go back there. If you take my advice, it will be worth what you've paid me for it. He, he, he!"

"Weturn my wproperty, you dishonest wottah!"

"He, he, he!"

D'Arcy heard a door open and close. Mr. Walker was gone, risking the rain for the sake of getting to a safe distance from the scene of the robbery. Arthur Augustus jumped up, blindly, and staggered to the door. He bumped against it, but he could not even get it open, with his hands tied.

"Oh!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "The uttah wottah! I should weally nevah have imagined that there was such a feahful wottah in existence! I should like to have him in the gym, at the coll. with the gloves on! I would give him a feahful thwashin'! Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus struggled with the cord that was tied round his wrists. It was half an hour before he succeeded in removing it. Then he was able to open the door, and attempt the pursuit of Mr. Walker, if he chose. But with reflection had come wisdom—Mr. Walker had long ago disappeared; and even if he found the tramp, he was not able to deprive him of the stolen property. Searching for Mr. Walker in the darkness and rain would be a somewhat more serious task than searching for a needle in a haystack. Arthur Augustus resolved not to attempt it.

He hung up his Eton-jacket and hat to dry, and then he threw himself into the hay, and covered himself up, and, keeping warm, he tried to think out plans for the morrow—how to reach London moneyless, and how to raise money when he arrived there. He was still thinking it out, when he fell asleep, and he did not open his eyes again till the watery sun was glimmering in at the windows of the barn.

CHAPTER 8.

Trouble with the Fourth.

MORNING at St. Jim's.

Jack Blake turned out of bed in the dusk of the winter morning, before the clang of the rising-bell rang over the old quad.

There was an empty bed in the Fourth-form dormitory in the School House, and the eyes of the juniors turned towards it when they rose.

Where was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy?

What had become of the swell of the School House? How had he passed that night, during which the rain had never ceased to patter against the panes of the dormitory windows?

The chums of the Fourth were looking anxious enough when they went downstairs. There was no going out into the quad, in the rain and mud, and they stood in the hall, looking out of the misty windows, waiting for breakfast.

The Terrible Three joined Blake when the Shell came down.

"No news?" said Tom Merry.

Blake shook his head.

"Rotten!" said Monty Lowther.

Blake nodded. He was not in a humour for talk. Where was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in that wintry, cold, and rainy weather?

Mr. Lathom was still indisposed that morning, and when the Fourth Form went into their class-room Mr. Ratcliff took them again. Mr. Ratcliff was looking sourer than ever. Many things had combined to embitter his temper.

In the first place, he knew that several of the masters, at least, and most of the boys, blamed him for D'Arcy's running away, and laid upon his shoulders the responsibility if any harm came of the escapade of the Fourth-Former.

In the second place, the rainy weather was causing him cruel twinges of rheumatism, and that always made him extremely bad-tempered.

He felt very spiteful indeed towards the boy who had run away; and, though the Head, officially, condemned Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's conduct, Mr. Ratcliff could not help having a suspicion that Dr. Holmes found some excuse in his mind for the boy.

The Head had heard, of course, the whole story, and, although he had not blamed Mr. Ratcliff, the latter felt that he was not regarded as blameless. He had been sour-tempered, and he had refused to take D'Arcy's word—which the Head himself would have taken at any time. D'Arcy had done wrong, doubtless, to disobey a master. But it could not be denied that he had received very sore provocation—and Mr. Ratcliff felt that the Head was thinking so.

And that exasperated the New Housemaster very much.

Any idea of an excuse for D'Arcy irritated him. The boy had been disobedient, and he had crowned all by running away from school—and he should be searched—and brought back by force, and made an example of—that was Mr. Ratcliff's view.

Any mercy to the runaway Mr. Ratcliff was inclined to construe as a personal insult to himself; and as the Head was bound to uphold a Housemaster, he was placed in a somewhat difficult position.

The looks of the Fourth Form, when Mr. Ratcliff took the class in the morning, showed what they were thinking of.

With few exceptions, the boys were anxious about D'Arcy; and they regarded Mr. Ratcliff as the cause of all the trouble.

They treated him with outward respect, but their resentment and dislike were very visible in their looks.

Mr. Ratcliff was in a bad temper, and not likely to pass any fault unpunished. As it happened, it was Levison whom he picked upon first. Levison was squirming uncomfortably in his seat, and Mr. Ratcliff rapped out at him sharply.

"Levison!"

"Yes, sir?"

"Cannot you sit still?"

"If you please, sir, I'm aching," said Levison. "I was ragged last evening by D'Arcy's friends, sir, and I'm still aching."

"Oh!" said Mr. Ratcliff, with a gleam in his eyes. "And why were you ragged, as you call it?"

"The fellows thought it was my fault, D'Arcy running away, sir."

"Indeed! Give me their names," said the New Housemaster.

Even Levison hesitated at that. It was not only against all the unwritten laws of the school to sneak, but it was hardly safe to do so. There was the vengeance of the Form, afterwards, to be feared.

"If you please, sir, I—I'd rather not tell their names, sir," said Levison. "I was only explaining to you, sir."

Mr. Ratcliff frowned.

"Blake!" he rapped out.

"Yes, sir," said Blake.

"Did you interfere with Levison last night?"

"Yes, sir," said Blake coolly.

"What did you do to him?"

"Bumped him, sir, and ashed and inked him," said Blake with perfect serenity, "because he's a rotten cad, sir."

"Take five hundred lines, Blake."

"Thank you, sir."

"I presume that you, Herries and Digby, were concerned in this disgraceful ragging?" said Mr. Ratcliff, fixing his cold, hard eyes on Blake's chums.

"We were concerned in the ragging, sir, but we didn't consider it disgraceful," said Digby sturdily. "Levison deserved it—"

"I don't desire any remarks of that kind from you, Digby. Take five hundred lines each, and stay in this afternoon to write them out—and Blake as well."

"If you please, sir—"

"Not a word!"

Jack Blake rose to his feet. His face was a little pale; but he was very grim and determined. It was not only his anger at Mr. Ratcliff's treatment, but his anxiety about D'Arcy which made him determine to measure strength with the New Housemaster.

"I decline, sir," he said.

Mr. Ratcliff jumped.

"What! Blake!"

"I decline to stay in this afternoon, sir, unless specially ordered to do so by the Head, or by my own Form-master!"

"Blake!"

"So do I, sir," said Digby.

"Same here!" shouted Herries.

"Herries! Digby! Blake! Stand out before the class at once!" thundered Mr. Ratcliff, taking his cane from his desk.

The juniors stood grimly still, and did not take a single step to obey the order. Mr. Ratcliff grasped his cane so tightly that his knuckles stood out white.

"Blake! Will you stand out before the class?"

No reply.

"Blake!"

Blake did not move. Mr. Ratcliff looked at the junior, and the junior looked at Mr. Ratcliff, and there was a long pause.

CHAPTER 9.

The Revolt of the Fourth!

MR. RATCLIFF realised that he had gone too far once more. Authority was behind him, no doubt; but the more trouble he had with the Fourth, the more he weakened his case against Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. If he sent junior after junior in to the Head, the Head would want to know when it was to end. As a matter of fact, continual trouble in the Fourth Form-room would be a confession of his inability to manage the Fourth, and would cause the Head to imagine that perhaps D'Arcy had not been so much in the wrong, after all. Perhaps Blake was thinking of that as he stood up in his place and met steadily the angry, steely eyes of the master of the New House.

"Blake!" rasped out Mr. Ratcliff. "I order you to stand out before the Form! You will disobey at your peril!"

Blake did not move.

"Digby, come here!"

Digby was motionless.

"Herries—"

Herries sat down.

There was a buzz in the Fourth Form. Excitement was growing among the juniors. The state of the Form was perilously near a revolt.

"Silence!" shouted Mr. Ratcliff.

The buzz died down.

"I have never come across such a set of rowdy, ill-trained boys," said Mr. Ratcliff. "I might be taking a class of hooligans in a London slum."

"Just about your mark!" said a voice.

And there was a giggle.

"Who spoke?" demanded Mr. Ratcliff furiously.

No reply, but a long buzz.

"Who said that?"

Buzz, buzz!

"Silence!"

Buzz, buzz, buzz!

"The whole class is detained for the afternoon," said Mr. Ratcliff between his teeth. "I detain the whole of the Fourth Form till five o'clock!"

The juniors stared. It was Wednesday, and a half-holiday. Although the weather was rainy, and football out of the question, a half-holiday was a half-holiday all the same. The idea of being deprived of it made the juniors decidedly "ratty."

The buzz increased in volume.

Mr. Ratcliff waved his thin hands in the air, and waved his cane, and rapped it on his desk.

But it was all in vain. The Fourth Form had got completely out of hand. Figgins, and Fatty Wynn, and Hancock were rattling their feet on the floor. Macdonald and Pratt were buzzing through folded blotting-paper, with a noise like a hive of bees. Blake, and Herries, and Digby were talking openly. The noise was growing in the Form-room to a roar.

"Silence!" shrieked Mr. Ratcliff.

Buzz, buzz, buzz!

"I will cane the next boy who makes a noise!"

Buzz, buzz, buzz, buzz!

Mr. Ratcliff grasped his cane, and brought it down across Brooke's shoulders. He was unlucky, as usual, and, as a matter of fact, Brooke was almost the only fellow in the class who was not joining in the rag.

He started up with an exclamation.

Thwack! Mellish received the second cut, and he gave a yell. Thwack! The cane came down across Reilly's shoulders, and the Irish junior, without stopping to think, jumped up and brandished his fists at Mr. Ratcliff.

"Ye spalpeen!" he roared. "And what are ye after doing intirely?"

"Reilly—"

"Faith, and I'm not staying here to be bullied!"

And Reilly left his place and tramped towards the door.

Mr. Ratcliff stared after him in anger and amazement. The Fourth Form were all upon their feet now, and there was a roar of excitement in the Form-room.

"Reilly!" shrieked Mr. Ratcliff. "Come back! Go to your place, sir!"

Reilly made no reply. He swung open the heavy door of the Form-room, and then looked back at his Form-fellows.

"Follow me, kids!" he shouted.

There was a cheer.

"Hurrah!"

"Buck up, Fourth!"

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"They can't expel the whole Form, I guess," chuckled Jerrold Lumley-Lumley. "Come on!"

"Hear, hear!"
Mr. Ratcliff stood waving his arms excitedly, and shouting he hardly knew what as the Fourth Form marched out of the Form-room.

There was no mistake about it! They marched right out into the passage, and down the passage to the door into the quadrangle.

There was a shimmer of falling rain, but the juniors did not care for that. They marched out into it, yelling.

Mr. Ratcliff stood in the almost empty Form-room. Two boys alone remained of the whole Form—they were Mellish and Levison.

Mr. Ratcliff was almost raving. He took no notice of Mellish and Levison. He followed the Fourth Form into the passage, and there stopped. It was useless for him to follow them out into the quad., and it was raining.

He certainly could not herd back two score of revolted pupils like a flock of sheep. They would not come; and he could not force them. Mr. Ratcliff was realising the painful truth that authority is only powerful so long as it is directed by justice.

The New Housemaster stopped in the passage, fuming, for some minutes. Mr. Railton came down the passage from the Sixth Form-room, and looked at him in surprise.

"What is wrong?" he exclaimed quickly.
"It is the—the result of D'Arcy's action," said Mr. Ratcliff, choking with rage. "The whole of the Fourth have followed his example."

Mr. Railton started.
"Goodness gracious! Where are they?"
"They have left the Form-room."

"Dear me!"
Mr. Railton made a step towards the door on the quadrangle. But he paused. He had no right to interfere between Mr. Ratcliff and the Form he was temporarily taking charge of, and he knew that Mr. Ratcliff would resent such interference.

He went into his study instead. Mr. Ratcliff was left to think out the problem alone. What to do he had not the faintest idea.

The Head was taking the Sixth just then, and Mr. Ratcliff did not care to go into the Form-room, before the wondering eyes of all the Sixth, and tell the Head that he did not know how to manage a junior Form.

But to give the Fourth their head, so to speak—
He glanced out into the quadrangle.

The Fourth-Formers had gone into the gymnasium, no doubt to get out of the rain. They evidently had no intention of returning to the class-room.

Mr. Ratcliff could hardly believe that it had happened. His own Form, the Fifth, never treated him like this. True, he never treated the Fifth as he had treated the Fourth—but in any case, a senior Form would not have broken out like this. But the Fourth had taken the bit between their teeth with a vengeance.

Mr. Ratcliff glanced into the almost empty Form-room. Mellish and Levison were sitting there, and they were grinning at one another. Although they had not joined in the revolt of the Form, they enjoyed Mr. Ratcliff's discomfiture as much as anybody. Unfortunately for them, Mr. Ratcliff caught the grins upon their faces.

"Mellish! Levison!"

The two cads of the Fourth became dutiful and serious again at once. But it was too late; and besides, Mr. Ratcliff was in want of a victim.

"So you appear to regard this occurrence as amusing?" he exclaimed.

"Oh, no, sir!" said Mellish.

"Not at all, sir!" said Levison.

"Then why were you laughing?"

"Laughing, sir?" stammered Mellish.

"Yes, laughing!" ground out Mr. Ratcliff.

"I—I wasn't, sir. I—I—it was a slight facial contortion, sir; I—I've suffered from it since a was a—a kid, sir!"

"Come out here, both of you!"

The cads of the Fourth looked at one another. They began to wish that they had joined in the revolt after all. It looked as if they had remained behind only to meet the whole of Mr. Ratcliff's wrath."

"Hold out your hand, Mellish!"

"Oh, sir—"

"Your hand!" thundered Mr. Ratcliff.

Mellish was not of the stuff of which heroes are made. He cast a weak glance towards the door, and then held out his hand.

Mr. Ratcliff did not allow the cane to fall lightly. Mellish received two on each hand, and squirmed with pain as he went back to his place. Levison was given the same punishment, and then Mr. Ratcliff, somewhat solaced, left the Form-room, to consider how he should deal with the revolted Fourth.

Mellish and Levison sat grunting and groaning in the deserted Form-room.

"Ow!" muttered Mellish. "The beast! This is what we get for—for sticking to our duty!"

"Oh, rats!" said Levison.

"Look here, Levison—"

"Oh, shut up!"

And Mellish rubbed his hands and grunted.

CHAPTER 10.

Dogged.

RAINY morn was glimmering in at the windows of the barn when the eyes of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy were opened to the light.

The swell of St. Jim's sat up in the hay.

He was feeling stiff and tired and clammy, and had an impression of heavy trouble on his mind, the result of the dreams that had been engendered by his strange surroundings and his strange adventures. He had been dreaming that Mr. Johnny Walker and Mr. Ratcliff had both been chasing him round the Fourth Form-room at St. Jim's, picking his pockets as he ran, and he was making all sorts of vain endeavours to save at least his gold watch—that magnificent twenty-five guinea ticker that had been a birthday present from his father, and was quite famous in the Fourth Form at St. Jim's.

The swell of the School House sat in the hay, rubbing his eyes. For the moment he hardly knew where he was, or how he had got there.

But as the mists of sleep cleared from his mind, he realised what had happened—and that he was penniless.

He felt hopelessly in his pockets.

There was nothing there. Money and trinkets and watch and chain, even his pocket-book—all was gone.

Mr. Walker had cleaned him out thoroughly, with a thoroughness which showed that Mr. Johnny Walker was an old hand at the business.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy staggered to his feet, and donned his Eton jacket and overcoat.

"Bai Jove!" he murmured. "This is wotten—utahly wotten! I am stony bwoke, and I am gettin' feahfully hungwy. This is simply howwid!"

It was! The warmth of the hay had kept him from catching cold in the night, but he was feeling damp and stiff and cramped. He picked up his silk hat—it was a wreck from the rain, but he had no other, and he put it on his head.

He wondered where he was—that he was in a barn was certain, but whether it was attached to some farmhouse he did not know. What was he to do, and where was he to go? He had decided the previous day not to go home, in case his father should send him back to St. Jim's—but now he had no choice in the matter—he could not go home if he wanted to; he had no money to pay his fare. It would be a weary tramp of many a long mile if he walked it.

But what was he to do?

Going as a soldier, or going to sea, seemed less attractive prospects now than when the ideas had flitted through his mind at St. Jim's.

He thought of finding his way to the nearest police-station and lodging a complaint against Mr. Walker, but he soon gave up the idea. He could not do so without giving his name and address, and if he did that, he would indubitably be sent back to St. Jim's.

Besides, how was he to identify Mr. Walker? He knew nothing of the man but his voice and his scent of spirits.

"Bai Jove!" said D'Arcy at the end of his reflections. "It's wotten—wotten all along the line! But I won't go back to St. Jim's."

His mind was made up on that point, at all events. The rain was still dropping, but it was not heavy as it had been the night before. D'Arcy picked up his umbrella, and opened the door, and looked out into a field that was weeping with rain. Hedges and trees, leafless and bare, glimmered with raindrops, and the ground was like a bog.

D'Arcy shivered at the prospect.

"Ow! Wotten! But I won't go back! That's imposs."

Gr-r-r-r!

ANSWERS

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A dog came growling and barking round the corner of the building, and he flew directly at D'Arcy.

The swell of St. Jim's jumped back.

"Bai Jove! That's worse than Towsah! Keep off, you brute!"

Gr-r-r-r!

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy thrust at the dog with his umbrella, and the animal receded a little, still barking furiously.

"Hallo, Fangs! Wot's the row?"

It was a hoarse voice from round the barn, and a man in big boots, with a sack over his shoulders to keep the rain off, came into view.

He stared at D'Arcy, and then glared.

"Tramp—hey?" he exclaimed, his red face growing redder with anger.

The swell of St. Jim's flushed indignantly.

"Twamp!" he exclaimed. "How dare you?"

"Eh?"

"I wegard you as an insolent wottah."

The labouring man stared at D'Arcy. The muddy and dishevelled state of the swell of St. Jim's justified him in his supposition that the junior was a youthful tramp. And with that belief in his mind, he was not pleased with D'Arcy's style of address.

"Well, I'll be blowed!" he exclaimed.

"Keep that wotten dog off!"

Gr-r-r-r!

"Been sleepin' in the barn, 'ave you?" said the red-faced man. "I'll show you, you dirty young tramp! Get off this ground!"

"You uttah ass—"

"Wot!"

"I wegard you as a cad! I have slept in your barn for shelter from the wain, and as a decent Chwistian, you ought to be willin' to afford shelter to a chap in the wain!" the swell of St. Jim's exclaimed indignantly.

"I'll be blowed!" said the astonished man.

Gr-r-r-r!

D'Arcy brandished his umbrella at the dog.

"Keep that wotten beast off!" he shrieked. "He will fasten upon my twousahs in a minute!"

"Haw, haw, haw!"

"You uttah wottah—"

The red-faced man roared.

"Haw, haw, haw! Go it, Fangs! Seize 'im!"

"Bai Jove! Oh!"

"Seize him!" roared the red-faced man. "Haw, haw, haw!"

"You—you feahful wuffian!" gasped D'Arcy, addressing the red-faced man, but keeping his eyes upon the dog, which was leaping at him, and circling round him, with deadly intent, only kept off by continual thrusts of the umbrella. "You frightful wuffian! Call that wotten brute off! I am willin' to pay you for sleepin' in your wotten barn, if that is what you want!"

The man grinned.

"All serene—pay up!" he said.

"Vewy well—" A desolating thought struck the swell of St. Jim's, and he paused. "Bai Jove, I can't! I've been wobbed!"

"Haw, haw, haw!"

"You ass! I've been wobbed—I was wobbed in your wotten barn last night of a gold watch and chain and six pounds!"

"Haw, haw, haw!" roared the red-faced man. Evidently he did not believe a single word of D'Arcy's statement, but regarded the story as an excellent joke.

"If you doubt my word, you frightful wottah—"

"Haw, haw, haw! Go for him, Fangs!"

"Keep that wotten dog off—"

"Seize him!"

Gr-r-r-r!

Fangs made a savage leap at D'Arcy, and as the umbrella was thrust at him again, he succeeded in seizing it in his teeth.

He almost dragged it away; but D'Arcy's grip closed upon the handle, and a tug-of-war ensued for the possession of the umbrella.

The dog's teeth were firmly fastened in it, and D'Arcy would not let go, and they backed and tacked round the yard for some time in a struggle for the umbrella, while the red-faced man held his sides and roared.

"You uttah brute—"

Gr-r-r-r!

"Let go, you howwid animal—"

Gr-r-r-r!

"Bai Jove! I—"

Gr-r-r-r!

"Haw, haw, haw!"

D'Arcy gave the umbrella a terrific wrench. The dog hung

on to it, and was lifted almost into the air. There was a loud crack, and the umbrella broke, and half remained in the dog's jaws, and half in D'Arcy's hand. Broken ribs and torn silk connected the two halves, and prevented D'Arcy from using his piece as a weapon.

"Seize him, Fangs!"

Gr-r-r-r!

Fangs leaped at D'Arcy again, dropping the umbrella. The swell of St. Jim's ran for it. The wrecked umbrella remained on the ground, and D'Arcy sprinted through the muddy field as he had seldom sprinted on the cinder-path at St. Jim's.

Splash! Squelch! Splash!

He pounded on through mud and puddles, with the dog bounding behind, and the red-faced man, doubled up with laughter, looking after him and roaring.

"Haw, haw, haw!"

There was a sudden rending sound.

"Yawwoh!"

The dog's teeth had fastened upon D'Arcy's jacket behind. The brute hung there for a moment, and then his weight dragged out the piece of cloth his teeth had fastened upon, and he fell heavily to the ground.

Arthur Augustus rushed wildly on.

There was a hedge before him and a road beyond. He expected to feel the dog's keen teeth in his flesh the next moment. The brute was snarling just behind him. A wild leap, and D'Arcy cleared the hedge, and the dog fell short behind him.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy alighted in the road, and fell forward on his hands and knees. The dog ran up and down on the inner side of the hedge, barking. From the distance could be heard faintly the merriment of the red-faced man.

"Haw, haw, haw!"

CHAPTER 11.

A Change of Attire.

"H, deah!"

Arthur Augustus picked himself up.

He was smothered with mud, and his hands were deep in it, his face was thick with it—there was mud upon his collar, and his tie, and his face, and his hair.

But that dreadful dog was still barking in vain, running up and down behind the hedge, so the swell of St. Jim's had something to be thankful for.

"Oh, deah! Bai Jove, I wegard this as wotten!" gasped D'Arcy.

He looked at his hands, and looked at his clothes. He picked his battered hat out of a puddle. Somewhere near the barn in the field lay his torn and broken umbrella, and somewhere else his coat, which he had dropped there. He set the wrecked topper on the back of his head, and gasped. Cold and rainy as the morning was, perspiration was running down the face of the swell of St. Jim's.

There was a tearing and growing in the hedge, and D'Arcy realised that the red-faced man's dog was striving to work a passage through.

D'Arcy had the courage of a hero where it was only danger that was to be faced. But the ripping and tearing of one's clothes was a more serious matter. He thought there was no shame in running from that. He started down the road, leaving the dog tearing and snarling at the hedge. Faintly, on the breeze, came a sound of hoarse merriment.

"Haw, haw, haw!"

D'Arcy dropped into a walk as soon as the sounds died away behind him.

The rain was still falling.

Pale and yellow, the sun looked up over a weary, weeping landscape.

Where was he?

D'Arcy had not the least idea. There was no sign of a town or even a village. Over the fields rose the smoke of a farmhouse, but D'Arcy had little doubt that that farmhouse was the home of the red-faced man, and he was not likely to find hospitality there. He was likely to find only Fangs waiting for him.

He tramped on.

He was hungry, and he was wet, and he had no money in his pockets. As a matter of fact, he was hopelessly lost. He had no means of getting to London, and no clear idea of what he could do if he did get there.

Only one thought was quite clear and resolved in his mind—he would not return to St. Jim's to be flogged.

That was certain, in the midst of the many uncertainties that beset the unfortunate hero of the Fourth Form.

"Bai Jove! If I could only find that wottah Walkah!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "I would make the frightful secondwel give up his plundah. It is vewy wotten bein' stawnded without any beastly money. Yow!"

Tramp—splash—squelch!

The rain was falling more thickly.

A haystack, tarpaulined from the rain, caught his eye in

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a field close by the road. It was possible to get at least shelter from the rain under the edge of it, and D'Arcy resolved to do so. He was hungry, but that could not be helped.

He clambered over a fence, and approached the haystack: He started as he caught sight of a tattered form crouching under the edge of the hay, evidently in search of shelter from the wet—a tramp, like himself, only a man who was accustomed to the life. The man looked sullenly and evilly at D'Arcy, and muttered something, and another unkempt, evil face looked out of the hay. D'Arcy hesitated a moment. The second face was that of a boy of about his own age, lined with want and rough living, with dishonesty written in every feature. But the swell of St. Jim's wanted shelter, and he reflected that he had nothing left to be robbed of. He pushed on.

"Hallo!" said the man.

"Good-mornin'!" said D'Arcy gracefully.

"Got a bite to eat about yer?" asked the rough-bearded man.

"I am sowwy—no."

"Nor terbacker?"

"I do not smoke."

The younger of the two tramps burst into a chuckle. "Eavy swell come down in the world, farver," he remarked.

The elder tramp grunted.

"Wotcher want 'ere?" he demanded of D'Arcy.

"Sheltah, my good man."

"Don't you 'good man' me," said the other evilly. "Got any money about yer?"

"I was wobbled last night."

"Got the price of a pint?"

"No."

"Nothink at all, eh?"

"I am sowwy—no."

The man's wicked eyes roved over him. In the daylight he could see that D'Arcy's clothes were good and expensive, although wet and stained with mud. What D'Arcy was wearing had cost ten or twelve pounds, and the clothes were still of value.

"On tramp?" asked the man.

"Yaas."

"Where are you going?"

"To London."

The man stared.

"You gotter long way to go," he said.

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus, with a sigh.

"And I haven't had any bwekkah, eithah. But at pwesent I shall be glad to get out of the wain."

The rough-bearded man picked up a cudgel out of the hay. It was a dangerous-looking cudgel, with spiky little knobs at the end.

"See that?" he asked, holding it up for D'Arcy to look at.

"Yaas!"

"Very well. You don't want it on the napper, I s'pose?"

"Certainly not."

"Very good. Take them duds off."

"What?"

"Strip!"

"Weally, my good man—"

"Erbert, change clothes with the young gent," said the tramp.

The youthful tramp grinned.

"What a go!" he murmured.

D'Arcy drew back indignantly.

"I wefuse to change clothes with this person!" he exclaimed, eyeing "Erbert" with extreme disfavour. "His clothes are howbibly dirtay and waggid; and, besides, I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort."

A very evil and threatening look came over the tramp's rough face, and he twirled the heavy cudgel in the air.

"You're asking for it!" he remarked.

"My good man—"

"Take off them clothes!"

D'Arcy looked at the man, and looked at the cudgel. Resistance was impossible; a single blow would be enough to stretch him stunned upon the ground, and then his clothes would be taken away.

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easily enough. And there was no doubt that the ruffian would strike him down almost as soon as look at him. There was little trace of human-feeling in the hard, coarse, drink-sodden face of the tramp.

"Vewy well," said D'Arcy. "Howevah—"

"'Nuff jor!" said the tramp. "Take them duds off!"

"Erbert chuckled, and soon threw down his wet rags. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stripped more slowly. The tramp, fingering the cudgel, watched him with sour eyes. He seemed half inclined to use his cudgel, anyway, even if no resistance were made.

The man was in a savage temper; perhaps a night passed under the scanty shelter of a haystack in wet weather was not conducive to kindness of heart. The fact that D'Arcy had evidently come from circumstances more comfortable than his own was enough to make the savage, hungry tramp hate him.

"Put them togs on, 'Erbert."

"Wotto!" grinned 'Erbert.

And the young rascal dressed himself, with great satisfaction, in the elegant garments of the swell of St. Jim's.

Although the clothes were wet, they were much more warm and comfortable than the rags 'Erbert had been wearing, and their value at a pawnbroker's would be considerable when the hopeful father and son arrived at some place where they could dispose of them.

D'Arcy stood shivering, and mere cold compelled him to den the rags that 'Erbert had discarded.

The change in his appearance was very great. He had been wet and muddy before, now he was ragged and dirty as well. The tramp looked at him with a sneering grin, and jerked a dirty thumb towards the road.

"That's your way!" he said.

D'Arcy looked at him.

"I wequire sheltah fwom the wain," he said mildly.

The cudgel rose in the air.

"That's your way!" repeated the tramp callously. "We don't want you 'ere."

D'Arcy stepped away from the haystack. The ruffian watched him with sour, savage eyes as he tramped into the road.

"Bai Jove!" murmured D'Arcy.

In the dropping rain the swell of St. Jim's tramped on down the muddy road. Something very like despair was beginning to eat into the junior's heart.

CHAPTER 12.

Put in His Place.

"It is very, very unfortunate!" said Dr. Holmes.

The Head of St. Jim's wore a worried look.

He was sitting in his study with Mr. Ratcliff, and the New Housemaster had been pouring out his grievances, which were not lessened in his account of them.

Mr. Ratcliff attributed the whole of the unfortunate happenings in the Fourth Form-room that morning to the heinous example of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

If D'Arcy had not set the example of disobedience and revolt the Fourth Form would not have followed it. That was the burden of Mr. Ratcliff's song.

The Head hardly knew what to think or to do.

It was necessary for the Head to uphold a master's authority, but at the same time he could not help suspecting that Mr. Ratcliff had been tactless, to say the least of it.

"It is very unfortunate!" he repeated.

"It is D'Arcy's fault from beginning to end," said Mr. Ratcliff. "After such an example, obedience could not be expected from the rest of the Form."

"Yet Mr. Lathom has no trouble with the Fourth," said the Head—he could not help saying that.

Mr. Ratcliff bit his lip.

"A special set was made by D'Arcy and his friends," he said. "The ringleader undoubtedly was D'Arcy. If he were adequately punished I think the whole matter could be allowed to drop."

"He is not at school now."

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"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, as he tramped dismally on in the dusk, through the mud and pouring rain. "Bai Jove! I believe I'm lost!" (See Chapter 6.)

"He will be found, I presume, and brought back?"

"Oh, yes, undoubtedly."

"A public flogging would meet the case, I think," said Mr. Ratcliff. "It would have to be a very severe one, of course."

The Head coughed.

"Otherwise, I think that even my own Form, the Fifth, will hardly respect my authority in the future, if juniors are allowed to flout it with impunity," said Mr. Ratcliff tartly.

"Ahem!"

Mr. Ratcliff compressed his lips with silent anger. He wanted the Head to sympathise with him, and promise the most condign punishment for the missing junior; but Dr. Holmes did not seem very much inclined to gratify him.

"I suppose D'Arcy will be punished?" said the New House-master, after a pause.

Dr. Holmes nodded.

"Yes. That is inevitable," he said.

"He has run away from school. If it should get into the papers there will be nothing short of a scandal."

"I fear so."

"He may not be found for days, and the searching for him will make the affair the talk of the whole country-side," said Mr. Ratcliff.

"It is very unfortunate."

"I must say I think the trouble is partly due to Mr. Lathom's extreme casiness with his Form," said Mr. Ratcliff.

"Ahem!"

"Discipline seems to be at a very low ebb in the Fourth," said Mr. Ratcliff. "It is very different in my Form, sir."

"Ahem! Mr. Lathom has told me that he can now resume

charge of his Form," said Dr. Holmes. "You need not be troubled in that direction any further, Mr. Ratcliff."

"I am glad of it, sir."

"I have no doubt Mr. Lathom will be able to reduce the Form to order; and if he cannot, I shall interfere," said the Head. "As for D'Arcy—"

"He must be found."

"Undoubtedly!"

"And when he is brought back to the school I trust that he will be severely flogged, sir!" said the New House-master.

The Head was silent for a moment.

"I am bound to leave that somewhat with you," he said.

"If you demand a severe punishment for D'Arcy, Mr. Ratcliff, as you are the offended party—"

"I do, sir, undoubtedly!"

"Very well."

Mr. Ratcliff rose.

"I think that it is the only thing to meet the case, sir," he said. "Of course, I should yield cheerfully to your judgment. But I certainly think that D'Arcy should be flogged in public as soon as he returns to the school."

"Very well," said the Head again.

And Mr. Ratcliff quitted the study.

He did not look wholly dissatisfied. At all events, there was a flogging in store for D'Arcy when he was brought back; and that was something to look forward to. And that the runaway would be found and brought back to St. Jim's was certain. It was only a question of time.

Blake and Herries and Digby were in the passage, talking to the Terrible Three, when Mr. Ratcliff came by. Although Mr. Ratcliff had told the Fourth that they were detained for

the afternoon, not one of them—not even Mellish or Levison—had gone into the Form-room. Blake was discussing with Tom Merry & Co. the advisability of spending the half-holiday in making a search for the missing swell of St. Jim's.

Mr. Ratcliff paused, and looked at the juniors.

"Blake!" he said, very distinctly.

Blake looked round.

"Yes, sir," he said.

"It is past two o'clock, Blake."

"Yes, sir."

"I think I detained you for this afternoon."

"Yes, sir."

"Then go into your Form-room at once!"

Jack Blake did not move.

"Will you obey me, Blake?" said Mr. Ratcliff harshly.

Blake's eyes gleamed.

"I will obey my own Form-master or the Head," he replied.

"Blake——"

"Here comes Lathom!" whispered Tom Merry, as the form of the little gentleman was seen in the passage.

"Appeal to him, Blake!"

Blake nodded.

Little Mr. Lathom was looking pale and somewhat ill. He had had a cold, and he had left his room before he had intended to do so, on hearing how matters were going in the Form-room in his absence. Mr. Lathom was a lover of order, but he was very kind to his boys, and they all liked him; and he knew perfectly well that there would never have been such an outbreak if he had been in charge of them. He could only conclude, therefore, that it was mainly Mr. Ratcliff's fault. And Mr. Lathom, good-tempered little gentleman as he was, resented very much the treatment of his Form by the New Housemaster.

Mr. Ratcliff glanced at Mr. Lathom, and then addressed himself to Blake again. He thought that the Form-master could scarcely fail to back him up.

"Will you go into your Form-room, Blake?" he exclaimed, loudly enough for Mr. Lathom to hear.

"I will if Mr. Lathom tells me to, sir," said Blake.

Mr. Lathom came up.

"What is that?" he exclaimed.

The New Housemaster set his teeth.

"Blake refuses to obey my orders!" he exclaimed.

"I will do anything that you tell me, sir," said Blake, looking at Mr. Lathom, and taking no further notice of Mr. Ratcliff.

"What are you ordered to do, Blake?"

"I am detained for the afternoon, sir."

"Why?"

"I don't know, sir."

"For insolence!" burst out Mr. Ratcliff angrily. "For directly refusing to obey my orders, Mr. Lathom!"

Mr. Lathom looked at the speaker with mild dislike.

"I have resumed charge of the Fourth Form now, Mr. Ratcliff," he said. "You need not take any further trouble about my boys."

"Hear, hear!" said a voice down the passage.

And little Mr. Lathom pretended not to have heard the ejaculation.

"I suppose that my orders to the Fourth are not to be rescinded, now that you have resumed charge of them, Mr. Lathom?" exclaimed the New Housemaster sharply.

"Ahem!"

"I detained the whole Form——"

"Indeed! For what?"

"Insubordination, sir!" rapped out Mr. Ratcliff. "A more insolent and disgraceful set of boys it has never been my lot to see!"

"That description does not fit the Form as I know it," said Mr. Lathom quietly. "You seem to have been very unfortunate in your dealings with the Fourth. With very few exceptions, I have found all my boys obedient and respectful."

"We respect you, sir!" said Blake, his tone implying very forcibly that he did not respect the master of the New House.

"Is that the way for a boy to speak?" demanded Mr. Ratcliff passionately, his thin hands working as if he wanted very much to box Blake's ears—as undoubtedly he did.

"Ahem! No," said Mr. Lathom. "Pray be silent, Blake!"

"Yes, sir."

"But I must ask you, Mr. Ratcliff, to leave my boys in my charge now," said Mr. Lathom. "I am quite capable of taking care of my own Form!"

"Then they are not to be detained as I have ordered?"

"I do not see any reason why they should be detained."

"Sir!"

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"I think the matter may as well drop now," said Mr. Lathom calmly.

Mr. Ratcliff gave him one furious look, and then strode away. Mr. Lathom shook his head. He did not want to take the New Housemaster down before the boys, but he had had no choice in the matter; Mr. Ratcliff had given him none.

"Thank you, sir!" said Blake to the Fourth Form-master. "We are all very sorry that there has been trouble, sir. It wouldn't have happened if you had been here, sir."

"Very well, Blake; say no more about it," said Mr. Lathom hastily.

And he gave the boys a kind nod, and walked on.

"Isn't he ripping?" said Jack Blake. "Rippingest master at St. Jim's, and if old Ratty had been anything like him, poor old Gussy wouldn't be wandering about now!"

"What about looking for Gussy?" said Tom Merry.

"Good egg!" said Kangaroo, of the Shell. "Why not make up a party, and hunt up and down for him. It's too wet for footer, anyway, and Tom Merry's had a wire from Topcliffe that they're not coming on account of the rain."

"Good! Let's!" said Blake.

And the juniors made their preparations for the search.

CHAPTER 13.

Ratty on the Track.

TOM MERRY & CO. had determined to search for the missing junior, but they had little idea where to begin. The search would have to start at Wayland, doubtless, where the last trace of Arthur Augustus D'Arey had been lost. But in which direction he had gone from Wayland, and whether he had gone on foot or in a conveyance, they did not know. It was a great deal like searching for a needle in a bundle of hay, but it was better than waiting anxiously for news and doing nothing.

All St. Jim's was growing anxious about D'Arey now.

He had been missing for more than twenty-four hours, and nothing had been heard of him since he left the railway-station at Wayland Junction.

The Head had been in constant communication with his father, and with the police authorities, and D'Arey's description had been circulated far and wide; but no news had been received of him.

He was not only missing—he was lost!

And the fellows had cause to be anxious. D'Arey was well-dressed, and he had money in his pockets, and he might have fallen into lawless hands at any time, especially if he were tramping the country at night. There was no telling what misfortunes or accidents might have happened to him. Of all the fellows at St. Jim's, Arthur Augustus D'Arey was probably the least fitted to face the world and rough it "on his own."

Even Levison had ceased to look satisfied about it. It was not only the ragging that had changed his views; but if anything serious happened to D'Arey, Levison felt that the responsibility would rest upon him. And that was not a pleasant thought, even for the mad of the Fourth.

During the afternoon Mr. Railton went over to Wayland to make another attempt to pick up news of the fugitive, and Mr. Selby, the master of the Third, went down to the police-station in Rylcombe to speak to the inspector there.

But Tom Merry & Co. had little doubt that if D'Arey was found, they would be the fellows to find him. They had more faith in themselves. Tom Merry crossed over to the New House to see whether Figgins & Co. were willing to join in the search. The hero of the Shell found Figgins & Co. in their study. Figgins and Kerr were staring out of the window, and making remarks on the weather, and Fatty Wynn was comforting himself by roasting and eating chest-nuts at a great rate.

"Hallo!" said Figgins gloomily, as Tom Merry came in.

"Heard anything of Gussy?"

"Nothing yet."

"I wonder where he is?" said Figgins. "No joke for him, if he's tramping about in this blessed rain!"

"May be hungry, too," said Fatty Wynn sympathetically.

"I wonder whether he thought of taking any sandwiches with him? It would be just like poor old Gussy not to think of it."

Tom Merry laughed.

"I don't suppose he thought of it," he said. "But he had plenty of money, so Blake says."

"It's not safe to carry money about the country roads at night," said Kerr.

Tom Merry nodded.

"We're going to look for him," he said. "Would you fellows care to come?"

"Yes, certainly!" said Figgins. "Where are you going to look?"

"Begin at Wayland."

"Not much chance of finding him," said Kerr.

"Better than doing nothing."

"Well, that's so," agreed Kerr.

"Ratty's gone out," said Figgins; "Monteith said that he's gone to look for Gussy. Anxious to get him flogged, I suppose."

"Hang him!" said Tom Merry.

"With pleasure. I suppose there's no doubt that Gussy will be flogged when he comes back to St. Jim's. Ratty will insist upon it, and I don't see how the Head can say no, after what's happened."

"Can't be helped."

"It won't be much catch for Gussy to be brought back, even by his friends, if he's going to be flogged as soon as he's here," said Kerr.

"Well, I know that," said Tom Merry. "But he must come back. He's bound to be found and brought back sooner or later, and the sooner he comes back, the less serious it will be for him. And he may get into some mischief. Fellows have been half-murdered by tramps on lonely roads, for a good deal less than Gussy has on him."

"That's true enough."

"He must be found and yanked home, and he will have to stand the flogging, that's all," said Tom Merry. "It can't be helped."

"Well, we'll come," said Figgins.

"Are you ready?"

"Yes, when I've got my mac."

"Hold on!" said Fatty Wynn. "Better make some sandwiches to take. You never know what may happen."

"Oh, rats!"

"Look here, Tom Merry, suppose we were to get hungry—"

"Br-r-r-r!"

"Well, I'm jolly well going to take something to eat," said Fatty Wynn warmly. "I'm not going to risk getting hungry, and perhaps having to wait a whole half-hour for a meal."

"Look here—"

"We'll call in at Dame Taggles, as we pass, for some sandwiches," said Tom Merry. "Buck up! We're supposed to be back by dark."

The juniors, wrapped up in coats, and caps, and macintoshes, left the New House. Fatty Wynn paused at the tuckshop to make purchases, which he packed into a little bag, while Tom Merry fetched Blake & Co. from the School House. Kangaroo, and Reilly, and Jerrold Lumley-Lumley had joined the party. There was a dozen all told when they quitted the gates of St. Jim's, and tramped out into the muddy road.

"Groo-o-o!" said Blake. "What rotten weather!"

"Take the train to Wayland, or the short cut?" asked Tom Merry.

"Oh, walk it!"

"Right-ho!"

The juniors tramped by the footpath through the wood. It was wet and rainy and muddy; the leafless trees dripped upon them, and the path squelched under their boots. But they did not mind. They tramped on into Wayland, and reached the market town. As they entered the High Street, Figgins uttered a sudden exclamation.

"Ratty!"

It was Mr. Ratcliff.

The New Housemaster, with a waterproof coat on and an umbrella up, was passing within six paces of them, but he looked neither to the right nor to the left in the rain. There was an intent expression upon his face, and but for Figgins's exclamation he would probably have passed the juniors unnoticed. As it was, he halted.

"What are you boys doing here?" he exclaimed harshly.

"Looking for D'Arcy, sir," said Tom Merry.

"Nonsense! You School House boys, I suppose, may run wild if you like, as your Housemaster chooses to permit it; but you, Figgins, and Kerr, and Wynn, will return to the school at once," said Mr. Ratcliff tartly.

"If you please, sir—"

"Not a word! You may take a message from me to Dr. Holmes. You will tell the Head that I have learned something of D'Arcy's movements, and that I am going to see if I can find him. That is all."

"But, sir—"

"Go!"

The juniors looked at one another. It was impossible for the New House juniors to refuse; they were under the orders of their Housemaster at all times. Figgins & Co. were very much inclined to rebel; but they felt that it would not do.

"Very well, sir," said Figgins, between his teeth.

"Good-bye, you chaps!" said Fatty Wynn. "You'd better take the sandwiches. We shall be back in time for tea."

"Thanks, old son!" said Tom Merry.

Kerr bent towards Tom Merry and whispered in his ear.

"Ratty says he knows something about Gussy. If you keep an eye on him, you'll get on the track—if Ratty really knows anything. See?"

"What-ho!" murmured Tom Merry, sotto voce.

And the three juniors of the New House departed. Mr. Ratcliff watched them go frowningly, and then turned and walked on. And in the dropping rain, Tom Merry & Co. followed him, keeping him in sight, as he turned out of the town into the road across the moor.

CHAPTER 14.

An Unexpected Meeting.

"WAIN—and more wain! Oh, wats!"
Thus Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

The ragged, tattered figure that was tramping along the muddy lane looked very little like that of the one-time swell of St. Jim's—the elegant junior who had been the glass of fashion at the old school.

Even his aristocratic features were half-disguised by the splashes of mud, which he was weary of wiping off.

It was afternoon now, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was tired, and hungry, and lost!

Since leaving St. Jim's he had not broken his fast. Twenty-four hours had passed, and passed miserably enough for him. D'Arcy had never been so long without food before, and it was not surprising that he was faint and weary. And the worst of it was, that there seemed to be no end of his troubles in sight. He had no food, and food could not be got without money—and he had no money, nor any prospect of getting any. His resolve was still firm not to return to the school. But he was thinking of home, and the excellent larder of Eastwood House. If he remained on tramp penniless, there seemed to be no prospect before him but that of starvation.

He sat down upon the step of a stile, in the rain, and looked about him wearily.

He was bone-tired, and he had never known what it was to be so hungry before. Hunger was changing to a feeling of sickness from want of food.

What was he to do?

Even if he decided to go home, how was he to reach home? He was many miles from Eastwood House.

He had learned where he was at last. He had read a signpost in the lonely road, when he started tramping again, after waiting long in the vain hope that the rain would stop, under the lee of a building by the road.

And on the signpost he had read the discomfiting legend:

"WAYLAND—1 MILE."

That was where he was. The wild country stretching round him was Wayland Moor, where the St. Jim's fellows had often gone on paperchases. In his happier days he had probably run across this very lane that he was now surveying so wearily.

Undoubtedly he had been wandering in circles most of the time, and the barn where he had passed the night was probably within a few miles of St. Jim's.

D'Arcy had indomitably set his back upon Wayland, and tramped on; but his pace was slow, and his spirits were sinking.

He felt that he was almost done.

As he sat upon the step of the stile, with a steady and persistent drizzle of rain descending upon him, he felt that he was not capable of further efforts, unless he could get at least one meal inside him.

How was he to do that?

He had no money—it was scarcely possible for him to earn any—and begging—at the mere thought of begging, the swell of St. Jim's felt his cheek burn.

He could not do that. He was in the position of him of the olden time, who could not dig, and was ashamed to beg.

But what could he do?

Squelch!

D'Arcy looked up at the sound of a footstep in the mud of the lane. A man was coming along, with his coat collar up about his ears, and his head bent, and an umbrella up. The umbrella concealed the man's head and face—D'Arcy could see nothing of him but the top of the umbrella, and his macintosh.

The swell of St. Jim's fixed his eyes upon the man as he came nearer. If he wished to ask for assistance, now was his chance; but—

"If he's a decent chap, I might get a loan, and assure him that it would be sent back to him by my fathah," the swell of St. Jim's thought to himself.

Then he glanced down at his clothes. Who was likely to believe that that ragged, forlorn youth was the son of Lord Eastwood?

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It was not likely. But it was a chance, and as the men came tramping nearer, D'Arcy resolved to try. It was his last chance; if he did not succeed, it seemed likely that he would have to make his choice of giving himself up and being sent back to St. Jim's, or of dying by the roadside.

D'Arcy stepped out into the lane as the stranger came abreast of him.

"If you please, sir," he began, politely raising the battered silk hat that still remained to him, after all his adventures. "Erbert had not taken that along with his clothes.

The man stopped, with a sudden start as of surprise, as if he knew D'Arcy's voice. The umbrella was raised, and D'Arcy saw the face of the man he was speaking to.

He started back with a gasp.

"Watty!"

It was Mr. Ratcliff, the master of the New House at St. Jim's.

The meeting was unexpected on both sides. D'Arcy would as soon have expected to meet Julius Cæsar as Mr. Ratcliff on that lonely road over the moor; and Mr. Ratcliff, although he was looking for D'Arcy, had never dreamed that the boy he was in search of would turn up and speak to him of his own accord in this way.

"D'Arcy!"

"Mr. Watcliff!"

"So I have found you," said Mr. Ratcliff, with a disagreeable smile. "I have been looking for you, D'Arcy."

"Bai Jove!"

"I received some information in Wayland," said Mr. Ratcliff, with the same disagreeable look. "I chanced upon a boy tramp who was wearing an Eton suit, and it immediately occurred to me to question him, because I guessed that you would change clothes with someone to elude pursuit."

"Oh!"

"I find that I was right."

"Bai Jove!"

"I made the boy answer me," said Mr. Ratcliff, "and he confessed that he had changed clothes with you at your request."

"It was a wotten whoppah," said D'Arcy wrathfully. "It was a wuffian who was with him who made me change clothes with him. They wobbled me of my clothes."

Mr. Ratcliff sneered.

"You can keep your falsehoods for Dr. Holmes," he said.

"I am not likely to believe them."

Arthur Augustus flushed crimson.

"I am tellin' the truth," he exclaimed indignantly.

"Nonsense! I guessed that you would change clothes with someone, if you had an opportunity, and this beggar-boy was doubtless glad to do so, with the intention of pawn-ing your clothes."

"I tell you—"

"But I should not have expected even you, D'Arcy, to have the effrontery to appear in the daylight in such rags as these," said the New Housemaster.

"Weavly, Mr. Watcliff—"

"I shall take you back to the school just as you are, and show you in your present disgraceful state to Dr. Holmes, and leave him to form his own conclusions," said Mr. Ratcliff. "Then you will take your flogging."

D'Arcy backed away a pace or two, his eyes gleaming.

"I shall not take a floggin', Mr. Ratcliff," he said. "As for appearin' in these howwid wags, I had no choice about the mattah, as the wuffian threatened me with a big stick."

"Nonsense!"

"Do you think I should change into these filthy tattahs if I could help it, sir?"

"I think you are capable of any disgraceful action, D'Arcy. I am ashamed to be seen with you, but I must take you back. Come!"

D'Arcy backed away another step.

"I am not goin' back to St. Jim's," he said.

"Boy," thundered Mr. Ratcliff, "do you dare to disobey me? If you do not return with me willingly, I shall drag you back to the school by force."

D'Arcy's eyes gleamed.

"I don't think that you will find that vewy easy, sir," he said, backing away a little further, and keeping a wary eye on the master of the New House.

"D'Arcy!"

"I wufuse to come with you."

Mr. Ratcliff made a hasty step forward. D'Arcy, all his fatigue seemingly gone at the thought of being taken back forcibly to the school, darted across the road, and kept his distance. Mr. Ratcliff breathed hard through his nose. D'Arcy had the advantage of him now, for the swell of St. Jim's could hardly get any dirtier or muddier or wetter than he was, while Mr. Ratcliff was very particular about not getting either muddy or wet. He was trying to keep

the umbrella over his head as he pursued D'Arcy, but a chase on such terms was not likely to be successful.

"D'Arcy," he shouted, "how dare you?"

"I am not goin' back!"

"Come here at once!"

"Wats!"

"What?" gasped Mr. Ratcliff.

"Wats!" repeated Arthur Augustus recklessly.

Mr. Ratcliff made a rush at him. The wind caught his umbrella, and whirled it out of his hand. His foot splashed into a puddle, and mud splattered up into his face. He reached the swell of St. Jim's, but D'Arcy twisted under his outstretched arm, and dodged into the middle of the road again.

"Bettah give it up, sir," said Arthur Augustus. "I am not comin' back to the coll."

Then Mr. Ratcliff threw prudence to the winds, and made a wild rush at the elusive junior, careless of the rain.

Arthur Augustus turned and ran down the road. Splash, splash, squelch he went through the mud and puddles, with Mr. Ratcliff splashing and squelching close upon his track.

Some distance away, a party of rainy juniors turned the bend in the road, and stopped to stare at the sight of a respectable Housemaster in full cry after an elusive figure in rags.

"My hat!" shouted Tom Merry. "It's Ratty, and he's after somebody!"

"Gussy!"

"I shouldn't wonder! Come on!"

And the chums of the School House hurried on.

CHAPTER 15.

Some More Grist for Mr. Walker's Mill.

"B AI Jove! He's aftah me!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy looked back over his shoulder, and saw the long, thin figure of Mr. Ratcliff in hot pursuit.

The New Housemaster was streaming with rain now, but he was reckless of the rain. He was in so great a rage that he had forgotten even the twinges of rheumatism. He dashed after Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and his rain-coat flew in the wind behind him.

"D'Arcy! Stop!"

Arthur Augustus only murmured "Wats!" under his breath. He had not the slightest intention of stopping.

He left the road, and scrambled over a shallow ditch, and took to the ragged, dripping furze on the moor.

Mr. Ratcliff pounded on after him through rain and mud. But high, ragged furze and stunted bushes grew thickly on the moor, and they hid Arthur Augustus from sight in a few minutes. The New Housemaster pursued him furiously, but in vain. And out of the muddy road Tom Merry & Co. dashed on, past the place where D'Arcy had taken to the moor, and now every step was taking the juniors further away from the scene.

Neither D'Arcy nor Mr. Ratcliff knew that Tom Merry & Co. had passed, nor, indeed, that they were near at hand at all.

D'Arcy was thinking only of escape, and Mr. Ratcliff only of capturing the elusive swell of St. Jim's.

But the New Housemaster was not in a fit condition for a footrace, and the mud was clogging his steps, and the rain was beating down upon his head.

He paused at last in the midst of the tangled, dripping thickets, panting for breath, and utterly spent.

"Oh!" he gasped. "The young scoundrel! Oh!"

He panted and panted.

It was full five minutes before Mr. Ratcliff's breath came back. Then, as he felt himself capable of further efforts, he bent his head to listen for some sound which might guide him as to D'Arcy's whereabouts.

There was a rustle in the weeping bushes, and Mr. Ratcliff uttered a sudden exclamation, and plunged through in the direction of the sound.

A smell of spirits, and a smell of tobacco smoke, greeted him, but he hardly noticed them. He plunged wildly upon a figure under a small tree in the midst of the thickets. His hands grasped wildly at it.

"Now, then—"

"Hallo, matey!" said a hoarse voice, which came laden with spirit fumes and foul tobacco. "Ands off!"

Mr. Ratcliff started back.

Under the tree was a comparatively dry spot, and in that spot a tramp had camped out.

The remains of a lunch were on the ground, and the man himself was sitting in a coat, with a spirit-flask beside him, smoking. His red face and bloodshot eyes showed that he had been drinking.

Mr. Ratcliff released him. The man was a decidedly ugly-

looking customer, and the New Housemaster would have been exceedingly sorry to quarrel with him in that lonely place.

"I—I beg your pardon!" he stammered.

"I should say so!" said the tramp.

"I—I am looking for—for a boy—a pupil," stammered the New Housemaster. "Have you seen him pass this way?"

"No, I ain't."

"Th-thank you!"

Mr. Ratcliff receded. The rough-looking man rose to his feet.

"Don't be in a 'urry," he said.

"My good man—"

"Old 'ard!"

The man's tone was so threatening that Mr. Ratcliff halted, in spite of himself. He was in no condition for a hard run, and he was a wisp of a man in comparison with the tramp. He realised that he had fallen into dangerous quarters.

"You—you want to—to speak to me?" he murmured.

"Certainly, my—my good fellow!"

"I reckon so. You ain't too proud to speak to Johnny Walker, hey?"

"Certainly not—certainly not!" stuttered Mr. Ratcliff.

"But—but I am rather pressed for time. I—I—"

"Old 'ard!"

"Yes, certainly, but—"

"You're all alone 'ere, I s'pose?" said Mr. Walker.

"Yes, yes—I mean—"

"Sit down under that tree."

"But—but, my good fellow—"

"Sit down!"

Mr. Ratcliff helplessly obeyed.

The tramp stood surveying him with a grin. Mr. Walker was grinning evilly. He had evidently been drinking; part of the proceeds of the previous night's robbery in the barn had certainly gone in refilling his spirit-flask, perhaps more than once. But he was not too intoxicated to know what he was doing. And a well-dressed gentleman of middle age was not always to be met in a lonely spot. Mr. Walker thought that his star was in the ascendant. He had raised quite a nice little sum by his meeting with Arthur Augustus D'Arcy the previous night. But he really thought that his meeting with this thin, sour-featured gentleman might turn out to be more profitable still.

"Can you 'elp a pore feller on the road?" he asked.

"I—I—I—"

"Can't, hey?" said Mr. Walker threateningly.

"I—I—perhaps a shilling," stammered Mr. Ratcliff. It gave Mr. Ratcliff a sort of pain to part with money.

Mr. Walker laughed hoarsely.

"P'raps that's all you've got about yer?" he suggested humorously.

"I—I have a little mosey, but—"

"But you ain't giving it away, hey?"

"Certainly not! I—I—"

"You'll 'and it hover to me," said Mr. Walker.

"But, my good man—"

"I ain't a good man," said Mr. Walker humorously. "I'm a bad man, and don't you forget it. And I'm werry bad when people don't do wot I tell 'em."

"I—I—I—"

"You'll 'and over wot you've got in your pockets," said Mr. Walker. "Cash; likewise watch and chain. I'm 'ard up."

"Look here," said Mr. Ratcliff, plucking up something like spirit at the thought of being robbed in this barefaced way. "if you rob me, I shall report the matter immediately to the police, and you will be followed and arrested."

Mr. Walker looked at him fixedly. He was standing a little unsteadily upon his legs, but he was quite in condition to handle Mr. Ratcliff, or two Mr. Ratcliffs, for that matter. "You'll report it to the perlice?" he questioned.

"Most decidedly!"

"And at once, I suppose?"

"Immediately I get back to Wayland," said Mr. Ratcliff, feeling that he was making some impression upon the ruffian. "You will be followed at once, and arrested before you can get away."

"P'raps you won't tell the perlice about it so quick, though," Mr. Walker suggested.

"I shall do so at once."

"You mayn't have a chance," Mr. Walker explained. "I might tie you up to this tree, you know, with this 'ere cord, and you couldn't."

"You—you ruffian!" gasped Mr. Ratcliff. "I—I should catch cold, and—probably pneumonia. I might have a fatal illness. I—I—"

"That would be 'ard lines," said Mr. Walker. "But better than Johnny Walker goin' to the stone jug. Wot do you think?"

"I—I will give you what I have if you allow me to depart unmolested," gasped Mr. Ratcliff, with horrid visions in his mind of what his rheumatism would be like if he were tied up there on the rainy moor for hours.

Mr. Walker chuckled.

"I reckon I can't trust you," he said.

"You ruffian! I—I—"

"Better language!" said Mr. Walker. "Ain't I told you that I'm 'ard up. Ain't you got no 'uman feelings?"

"I will give you—"

"I reckon I can take it," said Mr. Walker. "Fust of all, I'm goin' to tie you to that tree, old gent."

He advanced upon the unhappy master of the New House at St. Jim's.

Mr. Ratcliff made a desperate spring to escape. The grasp of the tramp fastened upon him at once, and he was swung back.

Mr. Ratcliff was not a brave man by any means, but he closed with the tramp, and began to struggle desperately for his liberty.

It was not of much use. The tramp's strong hands closed upon him in a grasp of iron, and he was forced back and back till he was forced to the ground.

He came down heavily into the damp grass, with the tramp upon him, and Mr. Walker proceeded to take a comfortable seat upon his chest, crushing him still more heavily upon the soft damp soil.

"Help!" shrieked Mr. Ratcliff.

Mr. Walker chuckled.

"I reckon there ain't nobody 'ere to 'ear!" he remarked.

"Help! Help!"

"Oh, stow it!" said Mr. Walker. "You ain't got a pleasant voice, nohow."

"Help! Help!"

There was a wild hope in Mr. Ratcliff's heart that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy might hear him, and come to his aid. He was sure that the Fourth-Former of St. Jim's was not far away.

After the way he had treated the swell of the Fourth, he might have been supposed to be unwilling to accept any aid from him. But feelings of that kind did not trouble Mr. Ratcliff in the least. Pride of that kind was not one of his failings.

"Help!"

His shriek rang far through the wet thickets.

There was a crash in the bushes.

Mr. Walker gave a start. Someone was dashing through the thickets at top speed. The tramp glared round uneasily.

As he did so, a figure that was elegant, in spite of its ragged attire, burst from the thickets, and hurled itself upon him.

"Bai Jove! It's all wight, Watty!"

And Mr. Walker, dragged from the fallen Housemaster, struggled furiously in the grasp of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

CHAPTER 16.

Coals of Fire.

"BURN yer! I'll—I'll—"
"You uttah wottah!" gasped D'Arcy.
"You young 'ound! Leggo! I'll—"
"Bai Jove! I know your wotten voice now!" panted D'Arcy. "You are the wottah who wobbled me last night!"
"Hang yer!"

Mr. Walker made a tremendous effort to throw the junior off.

But he had been taken at a disadvantage. D'Arcy's first grip had dragged him backwards, and he had fallen to the ground, and D'Arcy was on top.

And as he struggled D'Arcy hit out.

The swell of St. Jim's was not a match for the tramp, by any means; but he was athletic, and he was brave, and he had the advantage for the moment.

His fists crashed into Mr. Walker's face as they struggled, and dazed him.

"Help, Mr. Wotcliff!" panted D'Arcy. "Pway lend a hand! I am afraid this awful wottah will be too much for me!"

"Burn yer!"

"You wascal! Pway help me, Watty!"

Mr. Ratcliff had staggered to his feet.

He was breathless and exhausted, and his first impulse was to rush from the spot, and make his escape while he could.

But he could not flee and leave the gallant junior to struggle alone with the dangerous ruffian. Even Ratty drew the line at that.

He looked round for a weapon. Mr. Walker was fighting hard, and it was evident that in a couple of minutes he would have tossed the junior aside, and then—

Mr. Ratcliff caught up the metal-bound spirit-flask in a tight grip, and sprang towards the ruffian.

His arm rose and descended. The heavy flask crashed

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A COLUMN OF CHRISTMAS TRICKS.

A CANDLE TRICK.

A candle placed in water may appear at first thought a strange candlestick, but many readers may be surprised that such a candlestick is quite serviceable.

First of all, weight the end of a piece of candle (previously used) with a nail, so that when the candle is put into a vessel holding water, the liquid will be flush with the edge of the candle without wetting the wick.

Tell your audience that you will now light the candle, and that it will burn brightly to the very end.

This seems strange, but you cannot fail to perform this scientific experiment other than successfully.

A BOTTLE TRICK.

If you ask your audience whether they think you can blow sufficiently hard enough to make your breath pass right through a glass bottle, they will no doubt greet such a question with laughter.

But seeing is believing.

Get a big round bottle (a jam-jar will do), and place a lighted candle behind it. You must then place yourself so that the bottle is interposed between the light and yourself, take in a deep breath, and blow. The candle light will disappear immediately.

Of course, the bottle has really directed your breath round the curve of the sides, uniting at the back, and extinguishing the flame.

A PENNY TRICK.

Ask one of the party to draw a penny from his pocket, and, without showing it to you, note the date of the coin, and turn it face upwards on the table.

You then say that "you can tell the date."

He will probably laugh, and challenge you. Next, study the coin very seriously, and then solemnly tell your victim the actual day of the month.

A LIGHT TRICK.

Tell your audience that you can light a candle without touching the wick.

To perform this little trick, you must light a candle in the usual fashion, being careful that the wick is a good length and burns well. Extinguish it suddenly with a puff, and then apply a lighted match to the smoke an inch or so from the wick. The candle will immediately burn up, and your boast will be justified.

AN "IMPOSSIBLE" TRICK.

You will no doubt find many members of your audience proud of their "steady" hand. There will probably be one amongst them who actually boasts. You will be able to score off him when you challenge him that he will not be able to move a glass of water from one table to another without spilling every drop it holds.

You must then fill a tumbler with water to the very brim. Next, place a sheet of perfectly flat, stout paper on to the top of it, place the palm of your hand on top of this, then turn the glass upside down very quickly, and most carefully. Place it upon a table, and then withdraw the sheet of paper from under it.

The water will not run out, as no air can get in; but your "boastful" friend with the steady hand will not be able to move the glass without losing the water.

A BANANA TRICK.

To perform this trick, you must, first of all, prepare the banana by cutting off one end with a sharp knife, and rip the peel up all round about an inch or two.

Next, get an empty bottle, pour a few drops of methylated spirit inside, and drop a lighted match to ignite the spirit. Do not hold your face over the bottle!

Directly the flame has died out, put the prepared end of the banana into the neck of the bottle, and leave it. In a few minutes you will find that the banana has fallen into the bottle, while the skin remains on top.

This little trick can also be manipulated with a shelled, hard-boiled egg.

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"AGAINST HIS FATHER'S WISH!" The Splendid, Long, Complete School Story appearing in this week's number of the

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THE RUNAWAY SCHOOLBOY.—(Continued from page 19.)

upon the ruffian's bullet head, and Mr. Walker gave a sudden gasping groan, and collapsed. His grasp upon D'Arcy relaxed, and he lay limp in the grass, half stunned.

Mr. Ratcliff's arm swung up again, and his hard eyes gleamed cruelly. But D'Arcy interposed his hand.

"That's enough, Mr. Watch! Don't hit a man when he's down."

"D'Arcy!"

"It's all wight now. There's a wope there. Give it to me, and I'll tie him up!"

It was the cord with which Mr. Walker had intended to tie his prisoner to the tree after robbing him. Mr. Ratcliff could not help smiling grimly as he picked it up, and passed it to D'Arcy.

The ruffian began to struggle feebly as D'Arcy passed a noose of the cord round his wrists. But he was past resistance. D'Arcy drew the noose tight and knotted it, and the tramp was helpless.

The swell of St. Jim's rose, gasping.

He had received several terrific blows in the brief combat, and his nose was bleeding, and his left eye was closed.

But little did he care for that. He had vanquished the ruffian who had robbed him in the barn the previous night, and he was satisfied. Mr. Walker, slowly recovering from the heavy blow he had received, blinked at the Housemaster and the junior, and wrenched at the cord upon his wrists. But he wrenched in vain.

"Got him, sir!" said Arthur Augustus.

"D'Arcy!"

"This wascal wobbled me last night, sir," said D'Arcy. "He wobbled me of my watch and chain and sleeve-links and about six pounds and a tie-pin. I will look through his pockets, and see whethah they are here!"

And Arthur Augustus turned out the tramp's pockets quite scientifically.

His eyes beamed with satisfaction as he found his watch and chain and other articles of personal adornment. The money was not all there. Mr. Walker had evidently spent part of that. But D'Arcy found four sovereigns and some silver.

Mr. Walker watched him with his evil eyes.

"Good!" said Arthur Augustus. "This is all wight! I am 'specially glad to get that watch back, because it was a birthday present from my governah. I wonder how we shall get this wuffian to the police-station?"

Mr. Walker looked very much alarmed.

"You lemme go, young gent," he implored. "I—I—"

"You wotten wascal!"

"I've been outer work a long time," pleaded Mr. Walker, "and—"

"Yaas, wathah, about forty-five years I should say!" said D'Arcy. "I suppose you are about forty-five years old, you wottah!"

"D'Arcy," said Mr. Ratcliff, who had recovered his breath by this time, "I—I thank you for coming to my assistance in this way!"

The words came out with a great effort. It was not a pleasant task to Mr. Ratcliff to thank the junior whom he had persecuted and driven into running away from school. Neither did he like feeling that he owed his safety and, probably an escape from a painful experience and serious illness, to the boy he had been pursuing with the most spiteful and uncharitable intentions.

Arthur Augustus nodded cheerfully. In the excitement of tackling Mr. Walker, and recovering his stolen property, he had almost forgotten that he was on terms of warfare with the New House master.

"That's all wight, sir!" he replied. "I heard you yellin'—ahem, I mean callin'!—out, and, of course, I was bound to come. I thought that pewwaps you had fallen into one of the chalk-pits on the moor."

"You must come back to the school with me, D'Arcy."

The swell of St. Jim's backed away, his eyes beginning to gleam.

"Imposs!" he replied.

"But, D'Arcy—"

"I have wesolved, sir, that I will not be flogged, and I twust you will not take advantage of the fact that I have helped you."

Mr. Ratcliff coughed a little.

"I do not intend to do so, D'Arcy. I ask you to come back to the school with me, because I have resolved to pardon you."

"Oh!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus.

It was a great effort for Mr. Ratcliff, but he made it. He knew that the story of Arthur Augustus's unthinking generosity and courage would be all over St. Jim's, and for

common decency's sake he could not insist upon the punishment of the boy who had risked a fight with a dangerous ruffian to rescue him.

That would have been a little too "thick," even for Mr. Ratcliff.

Whether Mr. Ratcliff was actuated more by gratitude, or by regard for appearances, we will not undertake to say, but certainly he had made up his mind that it was impossible for him to pursue the persecution of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy any further.

And, having made up his mind on that point, Mr. Ratcliff felt quite a glow of generosity in his breast, and a feeling of having done something exceedingly kind and generous—quite a new feeling for him!

"You have acted very bravely, and—and very dutifully, D'Arcy," he said. "I—I thank you for what you have done."

"Oh, that's all wight, sir!"

"As for this ruffian," said Mr. Ratcliff. "He intended to tie me to this tree, so that he could make his escape after robbing me. I will tie him to the tree to wait until the police can be sent for him."

"Good egg, sir!"

Mr. Walker burst into all sorts of protestations, and as they were of no avail, he began to kick and struggle. But his hands were fast, and his resistance was in vain. He was tied to the tree, as securely as the limited amount of cord at his captor's disposal allowed.

"Come, D'Arcy!" said Mr. Ratcliff. "You need have no fear in returning with me. The Head has been kind enough to say that your punishment rests with me, and I have only to ask him to forgive you, and he will do so."

D'Arcy was touched a little. So long as Mr. Ratcliff was his enemy, D'Arcy had defiance to oppose to tyranny. But at a sign of surrender all his hostility vanished, and he was more than anxious to meet his old enemy half way.

"You are vewy kind, sir," he said. "I am sowwy that there has been all this twouble. But—but, weally, sir, I—I was tellin' the twuth yesterday, sir, when you asked me if I was talkin', and I said I wasn't! It was the twuth, sir, and I was awfully wacky at your doubtin' my word, sir. But—but pwehaps I wasn't so respectf'ul as I ought to have been to a mastah, sir, and I beg your pardon!"

"Very well, D'Arcy," said Mr. Ratcliff, quite kindly. "I accept your assurance, and we will say no more about it. Come!"

And they left the spot, followed by some observations from Mr. Walker, which it would be quite impossible to publish.

CHAPTER 17.

Back at St. Jim's.

TOM MERRY & CO. came tramping into St. Jim's, tired and hungry and wet, and somewhat cross, long after calling over. They were disappointed. They had seen nothing, and heard nothing of the swell of St. Jim's, and they had never recovered Mr. Ratcliff's track after losing it on the moor. All they had discovered on the moor was a man tied to a tree, who had told them how he had been tied there by footpads, and whom they generously released, about half an hour before the police, following the directions they had received, came to look for Mr. Walker. By that time Mr. Walker was far away, and it was not probable that he would be seen in the vicinity of Wayland again. Excepting for this one little incident, Tom Merry & Co. had nothing to tell, after a weary tramp for hours on the wet moor.

A surprise awaited them when they came in.

The first person their eyes fell upon was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of the Fourth Form. The swell of St. Jim's was waiting for them in the hall of the School House. He was dressed as immaculately as ever, and offered a striking contrast to his appearance at the time when Mr. Ratcliff had encountered him on Wayland Moor. From his carefully brushed hair to his gleaming boots, from his spotless collar to his gleaming monocle, Arthur Augustus was a thing of beauty and a joy for ever.

The juniors stared at him blankly.

"My only hat!" ejaculated Tom Merry.

"Great Scott!"

"D'Arcy!"

"Gussy!"

"My word!"

"Phew!"

"Is it Gussy, or is it h's ghost?" asked Monty Lowther, in wonder.

(Continued on the next page.)

Next Thursday's Grand, Long, Complete
School Tale of Tom Merry & Co.:

A COLUMN OF CHRISTMAS GAMES.

CALLINGS.

Each person in this game adopts some trade or profession. The oldest member of the party reads out a paragraph from some social paper. When he pauses and points at one of the party, that person must reply instantly some sentence in connection with his calling, or the stock he generally sells. This is how the game should proceed:

Reader: "To the regret of the many who were at Bristol Castle yesterday afternoon, Lady Flyer was not present. There was a marvellous display of—"

Here the reader glances at the bootmaker, who exclaims:

"Brown laces!"

Reader: "—which have been sent for the Men's Happy Days Association. Lady Hove, the president of the society, was dressed in—"

Glances at doctor.

Doctor: "Lint bandages."

Reader: "—and her beautiful daughter wore wonder-ful—"

Plumber: "Brass taps."

Reader: "On her arrival at the bazaar, Lady Hove was presented with—"

Tobacconist: "A clay pipe."

Reader: "—by the six-year-old daughter of Lord Bell, who looked very charming in—"

Fruiterer: "Turnip tops."

Reader: "Numerous people well known in the social world were contributors, and the article most admired was—"

Fishmonger: "A haddock."

Reader: "Presents of all kinds were on view, and much admiration was expressed for the—"

Drapier: "Silk blouse."

Reader: "—presented on behalf of the cause by Lady Boggins, who wore her famous jewels, and whose hat was trimmed with—"

Confectioner: "Cream buns."

The reader can imagine, given this example, the amount of laughter such answers cause.

THE "TELEGRAPH" GAME.

Paper and pencil must be served round to each player, upon which any twelve letters are given, with enough space left between for words to be written in.

The host now gives a subject, such as an accident, invitation, or a request, etc. From five to ten minutes is given while each player composes a telegram from the letters handed on to him by his right-hand neighbour.

As soon as the proposed time is up, the telegrams are thrown into a hat, and read aloud to the players by the host.

Example—Subject, an accident:

L	O	B	H
W	F	O	T
P	H	H	H

The individual who has these letters placed before him could write out the following message:

"Looking Over Balustrade, Hilda's Wig Fell Off. Tell Police. Hilda Heartbroken.—Hubby."

Some very amusing and original telegrams can be written, and as they are read out they will be greeted with roars of laughter.

PROVERBS.

The member of the party, who has previously retired from the room, enters, to stand in the centre of a semi-circle. The leader of the semi-circle then claps three times with his hands, and at the third clap each player shouts one word of the proverb as loudly as possible and simultaneously with the rest. This is done three times, and the member standing in the centre is invited to tell the party what the proverb is.

If one word gives the key to the person not in the secret, the member who has shouted it takes his place. As an example, in the proverb, "A rolling stone gathers no moss," it may happen that the word "moss" provides the keynote. That being the case, he or she who has shouted it takes the place of the one who correctly guesses the proverb.

The proverb, of course, must contain as many words as there are players, and each person shouts only the one word allotted to him.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 202.

Please order your copy early.
By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"DISOWNED BY HIS BROTHER!"

THE RUNAWAY SCHOOLBOY.—(Continued from page 21.)

"Hallo, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus turning his eyeglass upon the wet and weary searchers. "I hear fivom Figgie that you chaps have been lookin' for me."

"Gussy!"

"D'Arcy!"

"You—you—you—"

"So you've come back!" growled Jack Blake.

"Yaas, wathah."

"Been flogged?"

"Certainly not. I should decline to be flogged."

"Did Ratty find you?"

"Yaas, wathah, and I found him," grinned D'Arcy.

The rainy juniors surrounded him. They were glad to find Arthur Augustus safe and sound at the school, but they were puzzled and exasperated.

"How did it happen?" shouted Herries.

"Yes, you ass—how did it happen?"

"Why aren't you licked?"

"What does it mean?"

"If you chaps won't intewwupt a fellow, I will explain," said Arthur Augustus. "Mr. Watcliff had the misfortune to fall into the hands of a howwid twamp while he was lookin' for me, and I wescued him."

"My hat!"

"Undah the cirs., Watty—I mean Mr. Watcliff—decided to let bygones be bygones," explained the swell of St. Jim's.

"We tied the twamp to a tree—"

"What!" shouted Tom Merry.

"We tied the twamp to a tree, to wait for the police—"

"Where?" demanded Kangaroo excitedly.

"On Wayland Moor."

"My hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's the chap we let loose, then," said Monty Lowther.

"I thought there was something fishy abt his yarn about footpads. I dare say he would have robbed us if we hadn't been such a crowd. My hat!"

"Well, you uttah asses!" said D'Arcy.

"Oh, cheese it! So Ratty's let you off?"

"Yaas, wathah! He has asked the Head to let the mattah dwop, and I have an impresson that Dr. Holmes is sewy pleased to do so," said Arthur Augustus. "I have had a lecture, and that is all. Watty isn't such a wottah, you know. He has his good points."

Blake grunted.

"Jolly good mind to bump you for looking so spick and span, when we're wet and fagged out," he said.

"Yes, rather."

"Please don't play the giddy goat, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus, retreating in some little alarm, as the muddy, rainy juniors closed round him. "I've got a feed weady in the study, and Figgins & Co. are waitin' up there, and Fatty Wynn has done the cookin'. You'd bettah go and change your clothes, and come and feed."

The juniors' faces cleared at once.

"Hear, hear!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

And ten minutes later a very cheerful party was seated round the tea-table in Study No. 6, disposing of the very excellent feed provided by the swell of St. Jim's, and listening to the recital of his thrilling adventures when he was "A Runaway Schoolboy."

THE END.

(Next Thursday, the long complete school tale of Tom Merry and Co. is entitled "Disowned By His Brother," and introduces Ferrers Locke, the famous detective. Please order your copy of "The Gem" Library in advance. Price one penny.)

MUGS!

Any number of people can join in this highly amusing game. The party must kneel down in a circle on the floor, with hands spread out before them.

The leader of the party then turns to his neighbour, and with a solemn look on his face, says: "Can you play Mugs?"

Never having heard of such a game, he will reply:

"No, I can't."

The query is asked by each person, and is replied to in the negative until everybody has been asked, when the leader again asks:

"Can you play Mugs?"

Neighbour: "No."

Leader: "Then what on earth are we all kneeling down here for?"

The nonplussed expression on each person's face which follows this last question is extremely odd, and after a moment's pause gives way to roars of laughter.

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DON'T MISS "AGAINST HIS FATHER'S WISH!" The Splendid, Long, Complete School Story "MAGNET" LIBRARY. 1st.

THE BOY MAKES THE MAN.

By Eugen Sandow.

I think if boys knew with what interest the world follows their sayings and doings there would be far more boys of whom the nation would be justly proud.

Don't think I am going to read you a lecture on behaviour, because I shall do nothing of the sort. Boys are not fond of lectures, and it is not a question of "behaviour" that is my subject, anyway. No; I simply want to talk to you boys about the subject which should interest you most—yourself.

I want you to think of yourself as something more than "just a boy." I want you to think of yourself as a coming man, and the question I want to ask is, "What kind of a man are you going to be?"

I am sure you do not want to grow up a pallid, weak, sickly man, a man with stooping shoulders, no muscle, no strength—a man who is always ailing, and who is never able to enter heartily into the work and play of life.

No! You want to be a fine, strong, well-developed fellow. Quite right; that is a natural boyish ambition, and it can be realised if—if you choose.

The matter is one which rests entirely with yourself, for "the boy makes the man." What you do now, and think now, and eat now, decides the kind of man you will be; and if you want to grow up a real manly man you must begin now by training your body as you want it to develop.

Exercise, training, and proper feeding—these you have the grand secret of Man-Building. Strong men are not born; they are made. You may perhaps be weak now, but that does not mean you must remain so. You can make yourself strong.

I was born weak, but I made myself strong, and my method was physical culture and careful feeding. There you have the simple secret of my success.

I made considerable use of cocoa, and it was then that I realised what a grand health-and-strength-builder cocoa could be if its manufacture was improved.

Just recently I have been able to give effect to my ideals in this respect, and the result is my new Health and Strength Cocoa—a wonderfully nourishing and digestible food beverage, which I recommend everybody to drink, particularly growing boys.

For breakfast a cup of my Health and Strength Cocoa is simply ideal. To begin with, it is so delicious in flavour—quite like chocolate—that you will enjoy it more than any other beverage you ever tasted, and in addition it is more strengthening and nourishing than any other food drink.

If you use my Cocoa regularly for breakfast and supper you will soon notice a difference in your power and strength.

Your body, your brain, your nerves, benefit by every cup of this energising beverage. You look and feel better; you are better, and you are laying the foundations of that robust manhood which it is your ambition to attain.

Such benefits as these are "worth while," are they not? They will make it certain that your body will reap the fruits of physical betterment as it could never do if you were not thus providing the proper sustenance for its development.

You—and the other members of the family also—can make a week's test of these important facts at a cost of 7½d.—the price of a full-weight ½-lb. tin of my Cocoa. It is not a big sum to pay for your entry into the road to bodily health and strength, is it? You should get a tin to-day, and start using it at once, for the sooner you begin the better for your health, welfare, and your success in life.

Sandow's Health and Strength Cocoa is sold in ½-lb. tins at 7½d., ½-lb. tins 1s. 3d., 1-lb. 2s. 6d., by all Grocers, Chemists, Provision Dealers and Stores. If it cannot be obtained locally, it may be procured direct (and post free) by sending P.O. or stamps to cover the required amount, to Mr. Eugen Sandow, Elephant & Castle, London, S.E.



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 Weltsea 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 this underground world.

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

The rebels capture the Red Terror, Captain Flame's new submarine motor-car, and escape in it. Captain Flame gives chase, but loses the trail. The crew of the Octopus are collecting pearls from a giant oyster-bed, when Will Avery startles his companions:

"There is a man approaching us, and— Ah, that giant oyster has got him!" he cries.

(Now go on with the story.)

Chased by the Red Terror.

Will Avery's face shone deathly pale through the glass of his helmet, a look of intense horror quivered in his eyes.

Seizing Captain Flame by the arm, he tried to drag him towards where he had seen the fearful sight.

The great inventor shook himself free.

"It is one of the Red Terror's crew. Why should I raise a finger to save him from the fate he so richly deserves?" he cried angrily.

"Because he is a human being. A man of flesh and blood

like ourselves," replied Avery; then, without pausing to argue further, he darted away, followed by Dick Dauntless and Jack Orde.

For a moment Captain Flame hesitated. Then, with a shrug of the shoulders, followed.

Presently he emerged from the rocks and coral on which the giant oysters clung, to find the boys clustered against an oyster so large as to draw an exclamation of astonishment from even the great inventor's lips.

The monster—for monster it indeed was, even amidst its giant companions—measured quite thirty feet across, and stood some hundred yards from the outer fringe of the bed, like some mighty monarch standing aloof from his court.

It looked in the distance like a huge table, for it was growing from an enormous anemone-covered boulder.

Captain Flame approached the group of boys.

As he advanced they parted, disclosing the unfortunate man Avery had seen, hanging limp and motionless by the left arm, which was buried up to the shoulder between the mammoth oyster's shells.

A single glance sufficed to show that the man was dead.

Even as Captain Flame marked the expression of agonised horror on the poor wretch's face, the upper shell of the oyster was slowly raised, and the body dropped at his feet.

But he scarcely heeded it.

His eyes were riveted upon an enormous ball of the most delicate pink that lay just within the huge shell.

It was a pink pearl of a shade and size which would make it the most wonderful gem in the whole world.

Then the huge valves slowly descended, hiding the priceless treasure it guarded from view.

An overmastering desire to possess that unique pearl took possession of Flame.

Drawing his sword, he passed round the oyster in search of some opening along its corrugated edge through which he might insert the steel blade. But in vain.

As well might he have sought to pierce with his frail blade the outer wall of some old-time castle.

Suddenly Dick Dauntless saw a look of alarm flit across the inventor's usually impassive face.

His eyes had alighted on the dead man, and it had reminded him that others knew of the existence of that wonderful oyster bed—perchance, had seen the pink pearl itself!

As though in confirmation of his fears, Charlie Steele grasped him by the arm, crying, in horror-laden tones:

"The Red Terror! Run! Run!"

It was true!

Swaying from side to side, as she rolled over the uneven ocean bed, her thick tentacles standing out straight before the bulging, armour-plated shield which protected her bow, like the feelers of some huge creeping thing, the stolen submarine-car was advancing rapidly upon them.

Flight and fight seemed equally out of the question.

Ere they could reach the shelter of the bed of giant oysters they would be overtaken, and, caught in the open, would be crushed beneath the car's huge wheels, stretched mangled on the ground by blows from the waving tentacles, or, what all dreaded even more than death, borne hopeless prisoners into the car.

They had their rifles, it is true; but what would their puny balls avail against that moving mass of highly-tempered steel.

But Captain Flame had grasped the full significance of their peril as soon as the danger had arisen.

Unlike the Octopus, the Red Terror possessed no telescopic lenses, and perhaps they had not yet been seen.

Already he had marked a tangled mass of seaweed some fifty yards beyond the mammoth shellfish.

Even when safe within the Octopus they had always been careful to avoid such places, for the slimy weeds often hid loathsome creatures, such as none but those who have penetrated into the mysteries of the lower seas so much as guess at. Fearful monsters that never rise to the surface, and so large that the largest drag net would not do more than glide harmlessly over their enormous bodies.

But beneath those weeds lay their only chance of safety, and Captain Flame was not the man to hesitate.

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Please order your copy early. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

Next Thursday's Grand, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co.:

"DISOWNED BY HIS BROTHER!"

"On your hands and knees, lads, and follow me. Dauntless, bring up the rear!" he ordered, in crisp, quick tones.

Without a moment's hesitation, the boys obeyed.

A second later Dick was creeping slowly after his comrades, who, led by the great inventor, were heading straight for the undergrowth of weeds and the nameless horrors it might contain.

At first they were not seen, for the Red Terror continued on her course towards the mammoth oyster.

But all too soon Dick Dauntless uttered a warning cry, and sprang to his feet.

"She's seen us, lads! Make for the weeds!" he cried, for the Red Terror was too close to allow any hope that they might reach the shelter they sought, save by a swift, despairing rush.

The next moment the boys were flying for dear life across the twenty yards that yet remained to be covered.

Her syren bellowing weirdly, as though Frascati sought to strike terror into his foes' hearts, the Red Terror swept towards them.

On, on they went, their fearful pursuer covering three yards to their one.

Yet so short the distance that the weeds were reached whilst yet the submarine-car was ten yards behind them.

"Scatter, boys, to right and left; the villains cannot see us now!" cried Captain Flame. "Don't leave the weeds. I will try to regain the Octopus, and bring her to your assistance. Dauntless, follow me."

But there was no response, and after waiting a moment to repeat the order Captain Flame was compelled to move swiftly and silently away, for the Red Terror was almost upon him.

Turning sharply to the left, Captain Flame made off at right angles to where the Red Terror had entered the weeds, and, half-buried in their luxuriant growth, was thrashing about with her huge tentacles as a beater drives game from a Highland moor.

Disdaining to run, Captain Flame strode swiftly between the thickly-growing reed stalks.

Presently he reached a spot some two hundred yards from where Frascati still beat the thick growth in the vain hope of driving out his foes.

Suddenly he saw that which sent a thrill of delight through his heart.

Coming towards him from beyond the giant oyster-bed was the Octopus. MacIntyre had heard the Red Terror's syren, and was hastening to the rescue of the imperilled ones.

Stealthily leaving the shelter of the weeds, Captain Flame glanced in the direction of the enemy's car.

He could just see her flat top rising above the weeds.

Scarce quickening his speed, he made towards the Octopus.

A joyful shout in his rear caused him to turn round.

Tom Allstraw and Jack Orde had also seen the Octopus, and were hastening towards her. Captain Flame frowned.

He feared lest the Red Terror should have heard the boys' excited shouts. Nor were his fears unfounded.

A glance towards where he had last seen the car showed that the Red Terror was backing down the path she had made through the weeds.

"Make for the car, lads. I will cover your retreat!" cried the inventor.

"Mayn't we stop to help you fight her, sir?" implored Jack Orde.

"Do as I order! Your folly has already attracted our foes' attention. Is not that mischief enough for one day?" was the stern reply.

Not daring to argue further, the boys sped on, and had soon tumbled headforemost into the Octopus' water-dock.

Striding over the ocean bed, Captain Flame heard the thunder of the Red Terror's wheels close behind him.

A quick glance over his shoulder showed that he was about equi-distant between the two submarine cars.

His life hung in the balance, yet he scorned to run.

He would rather die than be chased to the safety of his car like a frightened rabbit to its burrow.

Presently, when his ears told him that the Red Terror was close at hand, he came to an abrupt halt, turned, and, with folded arms and proudly raised head, faced his foe.

Frascati's evil face appeared at a window in the Red Terror's bows. His face was convulsed with gloating triumph.

A mocking smile curved his thin, pale upper lip.

Suddenly a look of baffled hate flashed from his eyes. He turned to bawl an order down a speaking-tube.

Urged forward by powerful engines, the Red Terror seemed almost to spring at the apparently doomed man.

But Frascati's hate-inspired manoeuvre came too late.

Already the Octopus's wire-rope tentacle was round Captain Flame's waist, he was jerked swiftly on one side, and borne rapidly through the water, whilst the Red Terror rolled swiftly over the very spot the inventor had occupied a moment before.

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Arriving at the nick of time, the car had snatched him from out the very jaws of death, and, swerving aside, had allowed the Red Terror to glide by at express speed.

A minute later Captain Flame entered the Octopus's conning-tower.

Removing his helmet as coolly as though he had not just been face to face with death, he handed it to Mopsa, who, with tears streaming down his cheeks, hastened forward to welcome him.

One of Captain Flame's rare, sweet smiles parted his lips as he laid his hand gently upon the little Chinaman's shoulder.

"Thought the Red Terror had me that time—eh, Mopsa? You forget that, until my work is done, I bear a charmed life," he said, in low, gentle tones.

Raising his master's hand, Mopsa pressed it to his lips, then hastened away with the helmet, whilst, with a friendly nod to Harry Monston, which showed he had forgotten, or, at any rate, forgiven, the destruction of the pearl, Captain Flame took his place at the steering-wheel.

Wheeling the Octopus round in a narrow circle that lifted her outer wheels quite off the ground, Captain Flame found the Red Terror had also turned and was prepared for battle.

Forcing over the telegraph to "Full speed ahead," Captain Flame launched his wonderful submarine car straight at her rival, her syren booming forth deep-toned defiance.

An answering roar came from the Red Terror, and the next moment the two mighty, skilfully designed, and carefully built cars were charging at each other in full career.

Onward they rushed, casting sand and stones from the ocean-bed behind them with every revolution of their mighty wheels.

A touch on an ivory key set bells ringing the warning "Prepare to ram!" throughout the Octopus.

A moment later, with a jar which seemed as though it must inevitably destroy both cars, the Red Terror and the Octopus collided.

So fearful was the shock that both cars rose on their front wheels like rearing horses.

But neither suffered damage.

Their intertwined tentacles, acting as buffers, had absorbed the shock of the collision.

The Octopus's bows slanted upwards at an alarming angle, whilst the terrified boys clung, in agonising suspense, to chairs, tables, and anything else which offered support to their nervous grasp.

For nearly a minute the two cars remained, each poised on its hind wheels. Then the Red Terror glided backwards, and both returned to a level heel once more. But their tentacles were still interlocked. And now began a fearful struggle for supremacy.

Tugging, pushing, wrenching this way and that, the two cars, like fiercely fighting monsters, tried to overthrow the other, as their directors manipulated the wheels which worked their writhing, snakelike tentacles.

The Octopus was the lighter of the two, but she was worked by one to whom the manipulation of the feelers had become second nature.

Lacking in practice, as in readiness of resource, Frascati soon realised that unless he could break free, the overthrow of the Red Terror was but a matter of time.

Still, he was not wanting in courage, and though the Red Terror was almost thrown over on her side again and again, he stood gamely to his wheels.

His face flushed, the light of battle in his eyes, Captain Flame steered and fought his car with masterly skill.

Wearing at length of the fight, he sought to give the Red Terror her death-blow by throwing her completely over on her side.

But he had only one hand with which to manipulate the tentacles, so calling Jack Orde forward, bade him take the wheel.

Eagerly Jack obeyed.

Alas, even as Captain Flame moved aside to allow Orde to take his place, Frascati reversed his engine, throwing into their cylinders all the reserve power he possessed.

The manoeuvre, coming as it did just when both the Octopus's steering-gear and tentacle wheels were held in a loosened grip, was successful, and, drawing swiftly away from her foe, the Red Terror turned to fly.

With a cry of disgust, Captain Flame almost threw Jack Orde off the driving-seat, then, telegraphing for full speed, started in pursuit.

But the Red Terror had obtained nearly a minute's start, and though the Octopus strained every nerve to overtake her, she could not decrease the distance between the two cars.

Presently Captain Flame abandoned the pursuit.

It went sorely against the grain to do so, but Dick Dauntless and Charlie Steele were still in the thick undergrowth of weeds near the giant oysters, and he feared lest some evil should befall them.

Amongst the Flesh-Eaters.

In the meantime Dick Dauntless, in obedience to Captain Flame's hastily-shouted order, had turned abruptly to his left. But barely had he taken a couple of strides in the direction ere, chancing to look over his shoulder, he was dismayed to see Charlie Steele, evidently beside himself with terror, rushing ahead, with the huge Red Terror thundering in his rear.

Wheeling round, Dick dashed to the boy's assistance. In a dozen strides he had reached his side.

Already the Red Terror was close behind them. Dick Dauntless could hear the rapid thud of the huge pads, muffled by the thick carpet of weeds on which they fell, and the more ominous swish, swish, swish of the tentacles as they beat the weeds flat to right and left of the car.

To swerve aside was to invite certain death beneath those swiftly rising and descending ropes of steel.

In a moment Dick had decided upon his course of action. Throwing both arms round Charlie Steele's small body, he dragged him to the ground, clasping one hand over his mouth as he opened his lips to scream.

The next moment the flat bottom of the car had passed completely over them.

Springing to his feet, Dick Dauntless half lifted half carried the trembling boy to where a cavellike opening promised a safe hiding-place.

Within this hollow they crouched until the car backed past them on its way from out the thicket of weeds.

"Courage, Charlie; there is no danger now. We will soon be safely back in the Octopus!" cried Dick Dauntless encouragingly.

Cheerfully though he spoke, his face belied his words. It was deathly pale. Do what he might he could not keep his upper lip from trembling.

The walls of what he had taken to be a cave, were slowly contracting, the entrance growing smaller each moment.

He looked upwards, to see a number of long, needlelike points descending upon them.

He turned towards the entrance once more. It was almost closed.

The next moment he had seized Charlie by the arm, and was dragging him out of their treacherous hiding-place.

He was only just in time. Indeed, it was only by throwing himself forward that he succeeded in wriggling through the contracted entrance.

To his surprise, that which he had taken for earth was soft and elastic to the touch, and though the pressure around them was considerable, Dick had little difficulty in drawing Charlie after him.

Springing to his feet, Dick drew his sword, and turned, ready to meet the expected attack of the monster from which he had so narrowly escaped.

To his surprise, there was no sign of a foe. The little cavern in which they had taken refuge looked exactly as it did when he had first entered.

For the first time he noticed something strange about the mouth of this cave. Around its sides, bottom, and top were a number of half-circular indentations, which reminded him strangely of the petals of a flower.

Bidding Charlie remain where he was, he drew his sword, and, thrusting his way through the weeds on one side of the cave, found, as he had half expected, a huge cuplike body terminating in a long stalk as big round as a man's thigh.

Where had he seen a flower like that before?

Even as he puzzled over the problem, a large fish, chased by a huge eel, darted for shelter within the deceitful opening. Immediately the outer edges of the cavellike flower began to close inward, and the spikes, descending, pierced its scaled sides ere it could escape.

The next moment the petal-like entrance had closed completely over the struggling victim.

The boys turned pale, as they realised how narrow their escape from a fearful death had been.

"Is it alive, Dauntless?" asked Charlie Steele, in hushed, awed tones.

"I can't say," replied Dick, in an equally low voice. "All I know is, we will never be nearer death than we were when within that fearful opening. It is a marine flesh-eating plant, similar to the fly-catcher you have doubtless seen in green-houses at home, and the huge flower of the same species which is exhibited at Kew Gardens. But come away; I— Look out! The eel is attacking us!" he added, in alarmed tones, for the huge, snakelike creature, baulked of its prey, was rearing its writhing folds high above their heads.

Dick Dauntless's warning had not come a moment too soon. Even as the words left his lips the eel struck.

But Charlie Steele was on the alert. Young though he was, he feared nothing of flesh and blood. It was only the grotesque and terrible that paralysed his limbs and numbed his nerves.

Darting forward just as the eel struck at his friend, he plunged his sword to the hilt in its body.

Maddened by the pain of the wound, the huge brute turned upon its plucky little assailant. Down swooped the fearful, fang-armed head, straight at where the brave youngster, scorning to fly, though terror-stricken by his foe's fearful appearance, awaited the onslaught.

Charlie Steele gave himself up for lost. He was unarmed. The eel's muscular contortions had torn the stout blade from his grasp.

Dick Dauntless saw his comrade's peril. With a shout of encouragement, he lunged upwards with all the strength of his well-trained muscles, and thrust his sword straight into the eel's yawning mouth.

Fortune guided the stroke. Piercing the monster's tongue, the keen blade passed upwards, and, entering the roof of the eel's mouth, pierced its brain.

Withdrawing his blade, Dick Dauntless sprang aside, and watched the dying eel's contortions.

A cry from Charlie Steele caused him to turn round. The youngster was pointing with trembling hand, at the flesh-eating plant which was slowly opening, disclosing the mangled body of the unfortunate fish.

Already half its former size, the fish was rapidly dwindling, as its flesh was absorbed by that fearful aquatic plant.

The thought that the fish's fate might easily have been their own, filled Dick's heart with rage against that terrible plant.

No longer should it thrive upon the denizens of the sea.

Bidding Charlie follow, he hastened behind the curving petals, and attacked the wide stem which attached it to the parent root, with his sword, until he had cut the stout stalk in halves, and the fearful flower sank, wilted and dying, on the bottom of the ocean.

Dick Dauntless surveyed his handiwork with grim satisfaction.

"Come along, Charlie. Let us leave this horror-haunted spot!" he cried, turning on his heel.

Followed by Steel, who had with difficulty recovered his sword from the dead eel's body, he strode off.

Five minutes later Dick Dauntless paused, and looked with perplexed brow around him.

To the best of his belief he had walked in the right direction, yet instead of the rock-dotted ocean-bed, low-growing weeds still surrounded him.

With a stunning sense of despair the truth burst upon him. He was lost in that horror-haunted weed-jungle beneath the waves.

"Which way, Dick?" asked Charlie, confident in the elder boy's ability to get him out of the dangers by which they were surrounded.

"Straight on, old chap," replied Dauntless, unwilling to raise what might prove groundless fears in the youngster's breast.

Forcing a way through the thick undergrowth of weeds, he led the way onward, straining his eyes to pierce the murky light that obtained amid those thick-growing weeds.

Presently he uttered a loud cry of joy as his quick eyes detected an open space before them.

A minute later they stood on the verge of a veritable desert of sand, which stretched as far as their limited vision would carry.

For a moment Dick Dauntless hesitated, then strode determinedly forward. Uninviting though the waste of sand before them looked, it was at least open country, and consequently promised a quicker view of the Octopus, which, he well knew, was by this time searching for them.

Unless—and his heart almost ceased to beat at the thought—the Red Terror should have defeated or disabled them.

The next moment he had laughed the thought to scorn. So great was his confidence in Captain Flame, that the mere idea of the inventor being defeated seemed absolutely ludicrous.

For nearly an hour they plodded wearily over that dreary, submarine desert, until at length, worn out with the heavy walking, Charlie Steele begged Dick to halt for a few minutes' rest.

Unwillingly Dick consented, and, as the younger boy dropped, with a weary sigh, on the soft, yielding sand, seated himself on an outcropping rock.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 202.

Next Thursday's Grand, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co.: **"DISOWNED BY HIS BROTHER!"** Please order your copy early. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

The Desert of the Sea.

Resting his head on his hand Dick Dauntless looked anxiously around him.

A great sadness was creeping over his soul, for never had he seen so desolate a region.

Look where he might naught but sand met his gaze.

Yet it was not the absence of vegetation alone which gave the scene such an air of depression.

Something was missing—something to which he had grown long accustomed, but to which he could not put a name.

Suddenly the truth flashed upon him.

He sprang to his feet with a cry of alarm.

What lent this desert of the sea its fearful, unnerving character, was its awful solitude.

It was a desert of the dead!

Not a plant grew upon, not a fish swam past, not a creeping thing crawled over those level sands.

The very shellfish, present everywhere else, were absent here.

Gladly would Dick have welcomed the most fearful monster the sea had ever harboured.

The silence, the deadly monotony, the quietude that existed everywhere was almost more than he could bear.

"Come, Charlie, we must be moving!" he cried at length, unable to stand his own company longer, and stricken with a sudden fear lest the brave little fellow was dead.

To his relief Charlie Steele opened his eyes, looked up with a bright, though sleepy smile, and yawning vigorously, rose to his feet.

But as the lost ones trudged over the never ending sands, the smile faded from his lips; the desolation of the desert had seized upon him also.

Presently Dick uttered a cry of delight, and pointed to a dark, uncertain shadow, evidently in pursuit of a smaller one, which, moving swiftly overhead, darted this way and that as it sought to avoid its foe.

Nearer and nearer drew the shadows, until the boys could make out it was a huge codfish, pursued by an enormous sturgeon, that could not have been an inch under thirty feet in length.

Pausing in their march the boys watched the chase with interested eyes.

These two fish, the hunter and the hunted, were the first signs of life they had seen for many hours, and, somehow, seemed to bring them once more into touch with their kind.

Suddenly the ood seemed to double up when immediately above their heads, then fell like a stone right at the boys' feet.

And there it lay stone dead, without so much as a gasp or a quiver of its mighty muscles.

Then came a second and a louder thud close beside them, and, turning, they saw, to their amazement, the mighty sturgeon lying dead alongside its intended victim.

It was not only the sudden death which had overtaken these giants of their kinds which impressed the boys, but the completeness of their dissolution. Not only did life seem to flee at a breath, but their bodies became stark and cold even before they had touched the sand.

Nor was that all.

Even as the horror-stricken boys gazed, the huge bodies began to swell, showing that corruption had already set in, and, within a minute of their death, the two fish were floating towards the surface, their enormous frames distended to double their proper size.

Charlie Steele looked appealingly at Dick Dauntless, his eyes asking the question his pale, bloodless lips could not frame.

Dick Dauntless' sole reply was a despairing gesture as he pointed in the direction they had been travelling.

But barely had he taken a dozen steps ere he came to an abrupt halt, a look of fearful intelligence on his face.

Slowly he drew his sword from its sheath.

The keen blade, formed of a special steel which would resist the action of ordinary seawater, was covered with rust from point to hilt.

It was not the red rust to which he was accustomed, but a hideous bluish-drab, as though the steel itself was sick.

Without a word Dick Dauntless sheathed his blade, and he commenced his weary, hopeless tramp.

"What did you look at your sword for, Dick?" Charlie Steele ventured to ask at last.

For a moment the elder boy hesitated.

"Don't be alarmed, Charlie," he said at last. "So long as we keep the masks over our faces we are all right—and we could not very well remove them if we tried to, could we? I believe the water around us is impregnated with a strong poison, possibly arsenic, which has killed, or driven away, every sign of life."

Charlie Steele turned paler than ever, and trudged for some time by Dick's side without speaking.

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Suddenly he came to an abrupt halt, and, pointing to their left front, tried excitedly:

"Look, Dick, the Octopus!"

As he spoke he began to run forward, shouting at the top of his voice, and waving his hands wildly above his head.

But barely had he covered half a dozen yards ere Dick Dauntless had overtaken him, and, tripping him up, rolled over with him on the sand.

Charlie would have risen, but the elder boy held him down.

"Keep quiet, you young ass! It is the Red Terror!" he announced.

In a moment Charlie ceased to struggle, and, trembling in every limb, watched the stolen submarine motor-car draw nearer and nearer.

Dick Dauntless touched him on the side.

"Do as I am doing. It is our only chance!" he whispered.

Charlie looked at his companion and saw that he was thrusting his elbows into the sand, and shoving his outstretched legs and body deep into the coarse yellow grains.

On their way thither they had often grumbled about the looseness of the sand over which they were toiling, little guessing that, ere long, that very quality would save them from a fate worse than death.

Soon they were buried until only the tops of their helmets showed.

Barely had Dick—who had delayed the complete covering of his own body until he had assured himself that his little companion was safe—ceased to burrow, ere, moving slowly, for the clinging sand clogged the wheels, the Red Terror passed by so close that her huge feelers could easily have snatched them from their sandy bed.

Waiting until the stolen car was dim and indistinct in the distance, the boys wriggled from out their hiding-place.

"Come on, Charlie! If we follow the Red Terror's track she will lead us from this fearful desert!" cried Dick, as they shook the clinging sand from their clothes.

"I'll feel more comfortable when she is out of sight, though," declared the youngster, as he trudged manfully by Dick's side, between the huge trail left by the Red Terror's wide wheels.

Two hours later they met signs which showed that the edge of Death Desert, as Dick had named this sandy waste, was near.

Though instinct warned them not to come too near, fish of all kinds could be seen moving about far above their heads, and, ere long, the sand was dotted with outcropping rock on which grew sickly and unsightly patches of weed, to which clung a few hardy mussels.

Gradually the signs of both vegetable and animal life grew stronger and more frequent until, at length, the sight of various crawling things moving about on the ocean bed warned Dick that they were beyond the area of poisoned waters.

The Chase of the Red Terror.

Soon the ground grew more uneven, the vegetation more vigorous.

Presently Dick, who was leading, came to an abrupt halt, and raised his head with a warning gesture.

Murmurs of angry voices had reached his ears.

Motioning Charlie to follow, Dick made his way to a miniature forest of weeds, which hid a cluster of huge rocks from view.

Under shelter of these rocks he crept forward, until he reached a spot from whence a strange, and, to him, a welcome sight met his gaze.

Buried up to her axles in a bed of soft, sticky mud, was the Red Terror, whilst around her were a number of her crew, cutting weeds and hurling them under the wheels to give them a grip.

For half an hour Dick Dauntless and Charlie Steele watched the men who had stolen the second submarine car, throwing bundles of seaweed into the mud over which the Red Terror was making her way, literally inch by inch, to firmer ground.

"Oh, Dauntless, if Captain Flame was only here, he would have his enemies at his mercy!" whispered Charlie Steele excitedly.

"Just what I was thinking. But he isn't; we must do our best to find him. Tired, little 'un?"

"Not very," was the brave reply, as the boy hastened after Dick, who was already retracing his steps.

It was something like looking for a needle in a bottle of hay, this searching for the Octopus on the boundless ocean bed, but fate befriended them, and, about an hour later, the boys quickened their steps as the deep, mournful cry of the car's siren sounded immediately ahead.

She was evidently some distance away, but the very

thought that they were travelling in the right direction gave renewed strength to their tired limbs.

Again and again the siren sounded, growing nearer and nearer each time.

But Fate had not yet grown tired of tantalising the lost boys, and, just when they thought that another ten minutes would see them safely lodged in the Octopus, her resounding siren grew further and further away.

Hitherto hope and excitement had kept them up, but when the mournful booming became fainter and fainter in the distance until at length it ceased altogether, even Dick Dauntless' brave spirit sank, and he felt inclined to sink down on the rugged ocean bed, and give way to the despair which filled his heart.

But he fought off the unworthy impulse, and pressed gamely on, until at length he was rewarded by hearing the Octopus' siren booming forth beyond a low range of weed-covered hills.

Presently the submarine-car came into view, and soon her waving tentacles proclaimed that the boys were seen.

Ten minutes later they were safe within the car's stout hull.

"Where have you been, Dauntless? But for you I would not have lost touch with the Red Terror," was Captain Flame's angry greeting.

"Nor have you now, sir. With ordinary luck she ought to be at your mercy within an hour," replied Dick.

"You have seen her, then, Dick?" demanded Captain Flame excitedly.

"Yes, sir; and with your permission, I will steer the Octopus to where she is hung up in a bog, and, as far as I can see, likely to remain so for some time," was the reply.

Captain Flame's brow cleared.

"Do that, my lad, and I'll forget my previous disappointment," he cried eagerly.

Without another word Dick Dauntless entered the conning-tower, and, supplanting Will Avery at the wheel, set the Octopus' head in the direction from whence he had come.

But Dick Dauntless did not go straight back to the bog in which the car was held prisoner.

To do so would have necessitated their running the risk of being themselves embogged; but he took a circuitous route, which would, he hoped, cut off the Red Terror's retreat.

In this he was not disappointed. But the booming of the Octopus' siren had warned Frascati and his comrades that their inveterate foe was close at hand, and, working with an energy borrowed of fear, they had succeeded in extricating the car, just as the Octopus loomed in sight.

It was evident that Frascati and his men had perceived the Octopus almost, if not quite, as soon as Dick saw them.

At any rate, he dashed off so swiftly that one of the crew, unable to reach the shelter of the water dock, was thrown down and crushed beneath the Red Terror's huge hind wheels.

Dick would have stopped to assist the unfortunate man, but a single glance sufficed to show that he was beyond human aid.

Though the man had been an enemy, the rage of the Octopians against the rebels who had seized the sister car was increased tenfold by this callous abandonment of their comrade.

As it happened the nature of the ocean bed over which they were now travelling, suited the peculiar construction of the Red Terror's wheels, and she began to draw slowly away; but as night fell the Octopus had so far retrieved her lost ground as to be able to keep the Red Terror within the wide circle of her searchlight's beams.

Northward, ever northward, sped the chase. Now over undulating plains, now twisting, and turning, through some gloomy mountain pass, with rugged, submarine heights, rising a thousand feet above their heads, or falling over some sheer precipice to unknown depths beneath their feet.

Now the car would be toiling painfully up the boulder-strewn side of a mountain, to rush down on the opposite side at a fearful speed.

For twenty-four hours the Octopus clung tenaciously to the Red Terror as she led them over interminable chains of mountains, buried deep beneath the sea, compared with which the Himalayas were but foot hills.

It was the rugged nature of their road which enabled the Red Terror to maintain her lead. Had it been on more level ground the Octopus would by this time have overtaken her.

At length the mountains grew less precipitous, until presently, with a cry of joy, Dick Dauntless saw a gentle slope ending in a level plain.

Down rushed the Red Terror, the Octopus clattering in her rear scarce half a mile away.

Then as the slope gave place to an enormous stretch of level country, covered with short weeds which might easily have been taken for grass, Captain Flame entered the conning-tower, and, motioning Dick to retain his place at the

steering-wheel, took up his old position near the switch-board from which the tentacles were manipulated.

"Let her have her head, Dauntless!" ordered Captain Flame. "Bring us as close as you can get to our foe's stern. Once I get within touch I will lock my wire hawsers about her axles, and she shall never get away again."

Dick Dauntless nodded.

Well he knew that when Captain Flame spoke in those tones it meant stirring times ahead.

In the Whirlpool's Grip.

It soon became evident that Frascati and his men had not wasted their time, but had perfected themselves in the driving of the car until they were almost as expert as Captain Flame and his able boy-lieutenant.

Finding themselves in danger of being overtaken, the crew of the Red Terror doubled like a frightened hare, darted off at right angles, hurled rocks backwards over their hull to obstruct their pursuer's path—in fact, did everything they could to escape capture and the fearful punishment which must inevitably follow.

Again and again ejaculations of baffled rage burst from Captain Flame's lips, as his wide-flung tentacles scraped against the Red Terror's stern but failed to grip her smooth sides.

As each time the throw was made Dick Dauntless shot off power, the Red Terror was able to pass out of reach ere the attempt to seize her could be resumed.

Again and again she slipped from her would-be captors, only to be overtaken almost immediately afterwards.

"What's that ahead, sir?" asked Dick Dauntless, after one of these ineffectual attempts to grasp the Red Terror.

Captain Flame looked through the telescopic lenses.

"Can't make it out, Dick," he replied. "It's absolutely impossible, or I'd say we were heading straight for the surface—and we must be a good three thousand feet beneath the waves. Now, quick, lad! Whip and spur!" he added, breaking off abruptly, as he hurled the writhing wire tentacles once more at the fleeing car.

A smothered ejaculation of delight arose from both Captain Flame's and Dick Dauntless's lips, as the extreme tip of one of the Octopus's tentacles closed round the Red Terror's axle.

But, as though conscious of her peril, the rebel car sprang forward with a bound that snapped the tapering end as easily as though the stout wire rope had been but a piece of thread.

At the same moment the laughing, taunting face of Beppo Frascati appeared at the stern window, and his voice, hoarse with triumph, rang through the water as he cried:

"Why attempt the impossible? You may get your wire ropes around the Terror, but you'll never hold her; or, if you do, it will be to your destruction! Beppo Frascati and the gallant souls who are sharing his fortune will never return to the cursed Island of Lost Hopes."

"You speak truly, scoundrel!" retorted Captain Flame. "Never again shall any on board the Red Terror breathe the fresh air of heaven."

"Look, sir! Look!" interrupted Dick Dauntless at that moment. "It is daylight we can see ahead!"

"Nonsense, boy!" retorted Captain Flame. "And yet—Good heavens, look at the Red Terror!"

The last words were dragged from his lips by the strange behaviour of the leading submarine car.

A few seconds before it had been thundering on, swaying slightly from side to side, at a tremendous speed. Now, without a moment's warning, it was snatched from the ground and borne off at right angles to its former course.

Dick's hand rested on the brake.

"No, no! Let her be! Where the Red Terror goes we will follow!" cried Captain Flame.

The next moment all choice was taken from them, as they struck the same irresistible current which had swept the Red Terror off her feet, and were themselves carried at a dizzy speed in her wake.

Soon they found that their course was a gentle curve; and, glancing through the windows on their right, they saw, through a crystal-clear mass of water, a wide, open space, down which the full beams of the sun shone brightly.

Beyond appeared a wall of water similar to that which encompassed the Octopus.

Dick had shut off the engines, yet the submarine car was being carried onward at a tremendous speed.

For the first time, so far as Dick could remember, Captain Flame uttered an exclamation of terror, as he laid his hand somewhat unsteadily on Dick Dauntless's shoulder and, pointing through a slab of pure crystal in the floor immediately before them, said, in awe-stricken, husky tones:

"Merciful heavens! Look! We are being carried, in the grip of some fearful whirlpool, to the centre of the earth!"

(Another splendid, long instalment of this thrilling adventure serial in next Thursday's GEM Library. Order your copy in advance. Price 1d.)

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"DISOWNED BY HIS BROTHER!"

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OUR SPECIAL WEEKLY FEATURE



A MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL "GEM" READERS.

Next Week's Story.

For next week Martin Clifford has written a really magnificent tale of St. Jim's, entitled

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This is a powerful school tale of absorbing interest, in which an old friend in the person of Ferrers Locke, the famous detective, plays a conspicuous part. Whatever you do, if you appreciate a really good story, don't on any account miss

"DISOWNED BY HIS BROTHER."

Our Splendid New Competition.

Elsewhere in this issue my readers will find full particulars of a Great New Competition, which I am about to commence. This competition will be a weekly one, and very simple, and each week

Ten Handsome Presents

will be given away as prizes, a unique feature, as I mentioned last week, being that which allows

Every Winner to Choose His Own Prize

from the enticing and comprehensive list published on page iv. of this week's cover, wherein will be found useful and delightful presents for readers of all tastes.

The new and simple competition will be open to all my readers, and every one of you will have an equal chance of gaining one of the handsome prizes. There is no entrance fee, and if you don't win one week, you can try again the next.

While on the subject of competitions, I should like to draw attention again to the original and interesting one now in progress in our popular companion paper, "The Magnet" Library. The wonderful little miniature "Magnet" which is being given away bit by bit each week in our companion paper will form a most interesting souvenir, and the fascinating work of binding the midget pages together to form a complete miniature "Magnet" Library is made doubly fascinating by the fact that the Editor is offering

Fifty Money Prizes

in connection with it. Now is the time to start this original competition. This week's "Magnet" Library contains full particulars and four Midget Pages.

Flashlight Photography for Beginners.

Now for the lamps. These are four in number, because one lamp is of practically no value by itself. The lamps can be made suitably and cheaply out of the tin spheres which are sold at most confectioners, containing sweets, and which are in two parts. Take one half and flatten the bottom in a little, so that it will rest, without fear of falling, on the shelf. Next bore a hole near the bottom, and insert a small piece of brass tubing. On to this brass tubing fit a length—about 2 feet—of indiarubber tubing (D in Fig. 1). The next thing to do is to obtain some cotton-wool, and fasten it round the top of the semi-sphere with a thin piece of wire (G in Fig. 2). Treat the other three halves in the same manner, and the

four lamps will be ready to fix on the shelf. This can be done by means of a small iron staple being nailed down over the tubing into the shelf (E in Fig. 2).

The four lengths of rubber tubing have eventually to be joined into one, so that the lamps can be connected with the bulb (C in Fig. 1). To do this, three glass Y-pieces (B in Fig. 1) must be obtained from a chemist. Then fix as shown. The bulb, like that of a motor-horn, is made of rubber, and can be obtained for a small sum.

When all connections are made the lamps are ready to charge with powder.

Soak the cotton-wool, round the tin semi-spheres, with methylated spirit, and pour into the lamps about 6 grains of magnesium powder.

Focus the model, and, when all is ready, light the cotton-wool and press the bulb. This action sprays the powder through the flame, where it ignites and causes a brilliant illumination.

Note.—The cap of the camera may be left off during all this final preparation. The lamps can be attached to the bulb working the shutter; but as to the benefit of this, the photographer can form his own opinion.

Now for a

Few General Hints.

There should be no mirrors in the room, as they are apt to reflect the flash of light and so cause the picture to have an artificial appearance.

If a background is used, it should be large.

The camera should be fixed about chin level (of the model), and the lamps should, of course, be fixed about a foot and a half above the top of the camera.

The fastest of plates should be used, such as "Imperial," "Flashlight," "Ilford," "Monarch," or one of the many other brands of plates specially prepared for flashlight photography.

In the developing, plenty of time must be allowed, for the somewhat rapid appearance of the image on this kind of plate is apt to tempt the beginner to stop development too soon.

Probably the first flashlight negatives will want a lot of retouching—they usually do—but as even professionals get negatives that need this "mending," the amateur must not be discouraged if his first attempts prove failures.

Our Correspondence Exchange.

J. G. Britton, 14, Common Street, Sandport, Portsmouth, would like to correspond with a reader of either sex, age about 17 or 18.

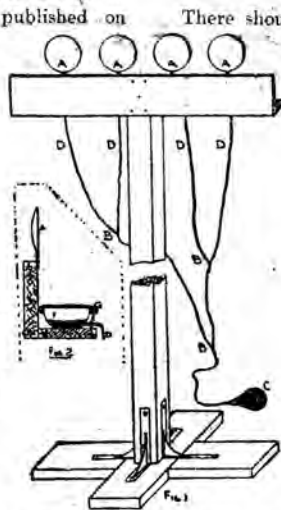
P. Turner, 32, Stainsby Road, Poplar, E., would like a girl Gemite about 16 to correspond with.

T. Austin, of Ambleside, Broomberry Drive, Gourock, who is 14 years old, and "somewhat like Fatty Wynn," would like a Gemite in Gibraltar to correspond with him.

Merle, Free Press Office, Wellington, Somerset, age 16, would very much like to correspond with a boy or girl reader of THE GEM.

Will a boy or girl Gemite, age about 18 or 20, living in Australia, South Africa, America, or New Zealand, correspond with Miss Ethel Preuse, 12, Silver Street, Bloomsbury Square, London, W.C.?

YOUR EDITOR.



Diagrams of the Stand which is necessary for Flashlight Photography (See the Article on this Page).

"AGAINST HIS FATHER'S WISH" is the title of the grand, long, complete school story, by Frank Richards, contained in this week's number of our splendid companion paper, "THE MAGNET" Library, the cover of which is reproduced below. Ask for "THE MAGNET" Library to-day. Price 1d.

The Magnet 1^d

Library

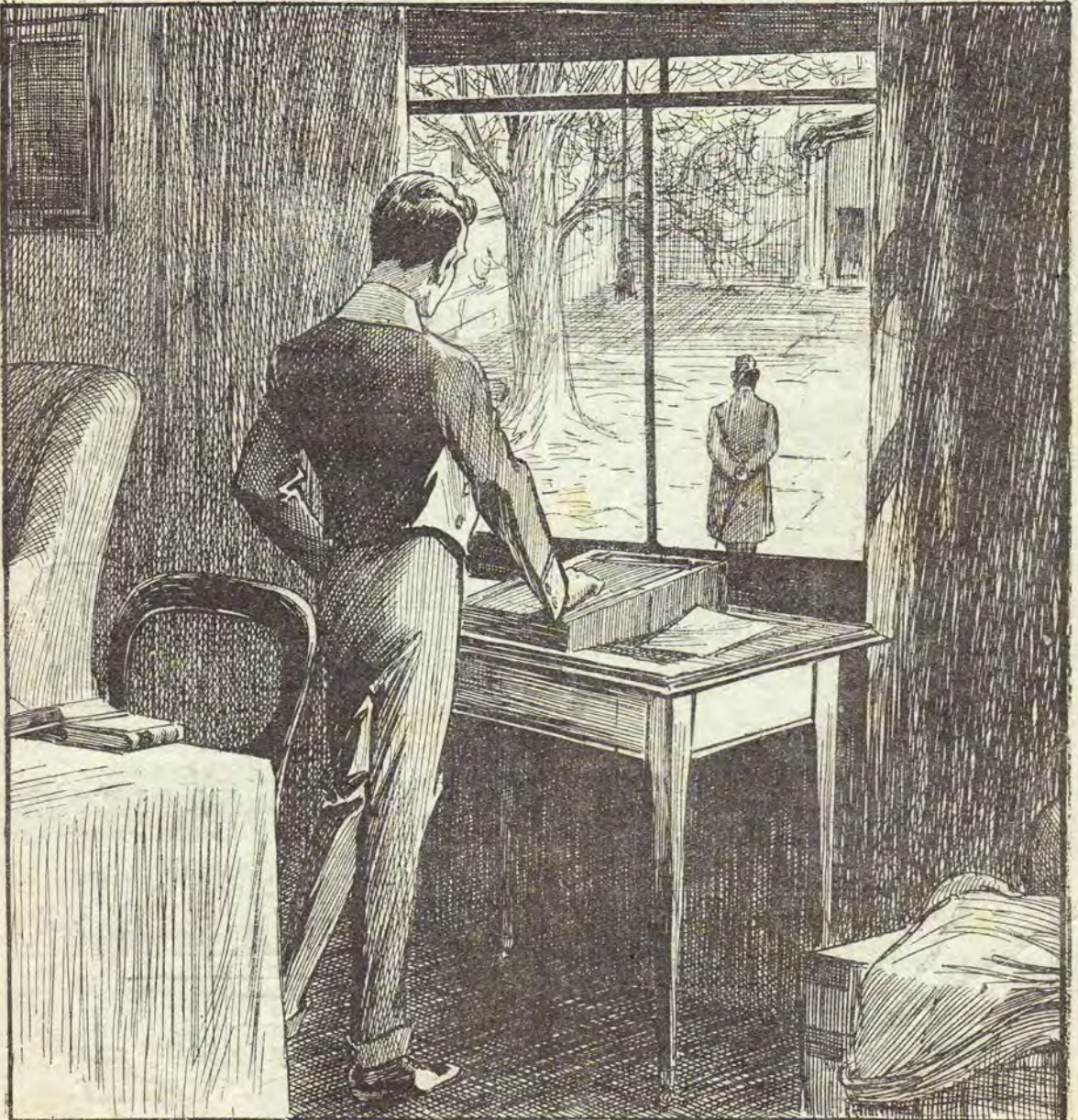
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Vol. 6.



THE MISGUIDED FIFTH-FORMER PARTS FROM HIS FATHER IN ANGER!

PRESENTS!

In next Thursday's simple competition you can choose any one of the following prizes:

Penknife, Fountain-Pen, Mouth Organ, Box of Chocolates, Brooch, Pencil Box, Magnetic Compass, Scout Billican, Scout Knife and Fork, Scout Semaphore Flags, Scout Haversack, Jar of Sweets, Cigarette-Card Album, Picture-Postcard Album, Cuff-Links, Telescope, Nail Scissors, Electric Torch, Stamp Album, Hatpins, Photographic Dark-room Lamp, Photograph Album, Dog Collar, Dog Whip, Clothes Brush, Hairbrush, Story-Book, Box of Paints, Kite, Steam Vertical Engine, Doll's Tea-Set, Harmless Pistol, Amusing Game (taken from a large assortment of novel table games), Box of Draughts, Set of Chessmen, Bicycle Bell, Bicycle Repair Outfit, Bicycle Oilcan, Bicycle Lamp, Fishing-Rod (three joints), Spirit Level, 2ft. Four-fold Boxwood Rule, Hatchet, Fretwork Saw, Cricket-Ball, Serviette-Ring (with initial engraved).

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