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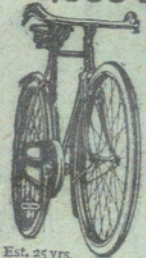
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By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1.
Backing Up Gussy.

"I WANT all you fellows to back me up!"

Tom Merry & Co. ceased discussing the forthcoming cricket match with the Grammar School, which was the great topic of interest at St. Jim's now, and fixed their eyes inquiringly upon Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth Form.

Morning lessons were over at St. Jim's, and quite a little crowd of juniors were standing outside the School House talking cricket, and laying plans for knocking the Grammarians sky-high, or higher, at the grand old game.

Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther, the Terrible Three of the Shell, were doing most of the talking. But Jack Blake and Digby and Herries of the Fourth contributed a good share, and Kangaroo and Reilly and Lumley-Lumley did their little bit. In fact, most of the voices were going at once, when the swell of St. Jim's came out of the School House with a very serious expression upon his aristocratic features, and broke in—"butted in," as Lumley-Lumley expressed it in his American slang.

"I want all you fellows to back me up!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy repeated, wagging a slim forefinger at the group of juniors.

"Back you up?" repeated Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy."

Arthur Augustus was very serious. He was standing with his back to the school wall, and he was too serious and preoccupied to notice the wink that passed from one junior to another, and the general movement they made towards him.

"It's a vewy, vewy important occasion," said D'Arcy, jamming his eyeglass into his eye, and regarding Tom Merry & Co. thoughtfully. "It is a time for all the fellows here to line up like—like anythin', you know, and back me up!"

Jack Blake chuckled softly.

"I suppose you mean that, Gussy?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You want us all to back you up?" demanded Monty Lowther.

"Yaas!"

"All together?"

"Yaas!"

"Here?"

"Yaas!"

"And now?"

"Yaas!"

"Good!" said Tom Merry heartily. "We'll do it. You fellows are all agreed?"

"Certainly!" said all the fellows, with one voice.

"Ready?"

"Yes."

"Then come on, and back Gussy up!"

Tom Merry gave the signal, and the juniors advanced in line upon the swell of St. Jim's. D'Arcy gazed at them in astonishment.

"Weally——" he began.

"It's all right, Gussy!" said Tom Merry. "We're going to back you up. Collar him!"

"Bai Jove! I—I—— Ow!"

D'Arcy had not time to say any more. Half a dozen pairs of hands fell upon him, and he was grasped, and backed up against the School House wall with terrific force.

Next Thursday:
"FOR THE SAKE OF THE SIDE!" AND "WINGS OF GOLD!"

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Biff!

"Yawooh!"

"Back him up!" exclaimed Blake heartily. "Now is the time for all of us to line up together and back Gussy up!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Biff!

"Yawooh! You uttah asses! I didn't mean—yow!"

Biff!

"Yawooh! Help! Oh!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's elegant Eton jacket scraped on the rough bricks, and tore up the back with the force of the impact. His silk hat toppled over his eyes, and knocked his eyeglass off, and then that silk hat was a hopeless wreck.

The elegant junior struggled furiously in the grasp of his enthusiastic backers-up.

"Yow, yow! Ow! Welease me!"

"Back up!" roared Tom Merry.

"Hurrah! Back up!"

Biff!

"Yowp! Oh!"

"Are you satisfied?" demanded Blake.

"You uttah ass! You dangewous lunatic! Ow! No, I'm not! I'll——"

"Not satisfied yet!" exclaimed Tom Merry, in surprise. "Well, my hat! Never mind, there's no amount of trouble we wouldn't take for you, Gussy, if you really want us to back you up. Is there, you fellows?"

"No fear! Go it!"

Biff!

"Ow! Help! Gweat Scott! You fearful asses, you misunderstand me entirely. I ordah you to welease me at once——"

"Faith, and we're backing you up, Gussy darling!" exclaimed Reilly.

"Yaooh! Oh!"

Arthur Augustus struggled out of the grip of the juniors. He looked dishevelled and wild-eyed.

"You fwightful asses!" he roared. "You have misapwehended my meanin'. I didn't ask you to back me up against the wall, you dangewous asses!"

"Sorry!" said Tom Merry politely. "The wall was handiest. What did you want us to back you up against—the door?"

"No, you ass!"

"The elm-trees," said Monty Lowther. "Come out into the quad., and we'll——"

"You uttah duffah! I tell you——"

"Well, we can't back you up against the roof," said Blake.

"Anything that we can do, we're willing to do."

"Let's try the wall again," suggested Manners.

Arthur Augustus backed away—without assistance this time—and glared.

"You silly asses! I believe you have misundahstood me on purpose!" he shouted. "I have a gweat mind to give you a feahful thwashin' all wound!"

"Oh, Gussy!"

"Don't be ungrateful, after all the trouble we've taken."

"Faith, and we're ready to back ye up again——"

"Against anything or anybody!" said Monty Lowther solemnly.

And the juniors made a forward movement with hands outstretched. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy backed further away into the School House steps. The lowest step caught him behind the calves, and he sat down with startling abruptness.

"Oh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He's backing himself up now!" grinned Lowther. "Why don't you let us do it, Gussy? We're ready and willing. Chaps, now is the time for us to line up and back Gussy up——"

"You awful ass——"

"Come on!" roared Reilly.

Arthur Augustus jumped up, and whipped up the School House steps, with the juniors rushing after him. They were evidently determined to back him up. The swell of St. Jim's dodged into the School House.

"Keep off, you fwightful asses!" he roared. "I tell you——"

"My dear Gussy, you've told us already what you want, and we're doing it——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Collar him!"

Arthur Augustus fled into the School House hall, and ran right into Mr. Railton, the master of the School House.

"Don't stop me, you ass!" shrieked D'Arcy.

"What!"

"Oh, I—I beg pardon, sir!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "I didn't see that it was you, sir! I—I——"

Mr. Railton smiled, and grasped Arthur Augustus D'Arcy by the collar and steadied him. Tom Merry & Co. came in with a rush and a whoop, and stopped suddenly at sight of the Housemaster, and tried to assume an expression of lamb-like innocence. But it was too sudden, and they did not quite succeed.

Mr. Railton looked at them grimly.

"Well?" he said.

"Ahem!" said Tom Merry. "We—we——"

"We——" said Jack Blake.

"Exactly!" murmured Monty Lowther. "We——"

"We were backing up Gussy, sir," said Tom Merry cheerfully. "He asked us to back him up, and when we began he changed his mind. That's all, sir. It's not a row."

"You uttah ass!" shrieked D'Arcy. "I meant I wanted you to back me up in a figuwative sense, not jam me against the wall, you silly ass!"

"You didn't say 'figuratively,'" said Tom Merry, with a shake of the head. "I appeal to all the fellows. Did he say 'figuratively'?"

"No fear!"

"Nothing like it!"

"You uttah asses——"

Mr. Railton smiled.

"I am afraid you have been the victim of a joke, D'Arcy," he said. "Let there be no more of this, please!"

And the Housemaster walked away, smiling, and the swell of St. Jim's was left facing the grinning juniors, minus his hat and eyeglass, and breathing fury.

CHAPTER 2.
A Cousin From Canada.

"YOU fellows are a set of wotten wuffians!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy at last. "I wefuse to wegard you as fwiends!"

"Oh, Gussy!"

"I don't believe you misundahstood me at all! It was a wotten jape!"

"Gussy, old man——"

"And I wefuse to let you back me up now!" said D'Arcy, with great dignity. "I considah this wotten of you! I shall go ovah to the New House, and ask Figgins & Co. to back me up!"

Tom Merry laughed.

"Well, we only gave you what you asked for," he said. "We did our little best. When you mean figuratively, you should say figuratively. But what is the trouble, Gussy? What do you want us to back you up for?"

"I wefuse to tell you now!"

"Oh, Gussy!"

"Wats!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy turned away with great dignity, and ascended the stairs to the Fourth Form passage. The juniors heard the door of Study No. 6 close with a slam above.

Monty Lowther chuckled softly.

"The one and only Gussy is on his noble dig," he remarked.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry looked a little concerned.

"It was irresistible," he said. "It was so funny to back Gussy up like that. But it just occurs to me that he may really want us to back him up over something. Is he in a scrape, Blake?"

Blake, as D'Arcy's study-mate in No. 6, was supposed to know. Blake shook his head.

"Not that I know of," he said. "He had a letter a little while ago, and he was staying up in the study to read it when we came out, I think. But I remember he took out a fiver with the letter from the envelope, and so I suppose it was a tip from his pater."

Monty Lowther looked quite contrite.

"You ass! Why didn't you tell us he had a fiver?" he demanded. "That alters the case, of course. Perhaps he wanted us to back him up in standing a big feed."

"My hat!"

"And now he'll go and stand it in the New House instead," chuckled Lumley-Lumley. "I guess we were a little too previous with that giddy jape."

"Come on!" said Tom Merry.

"Where?"

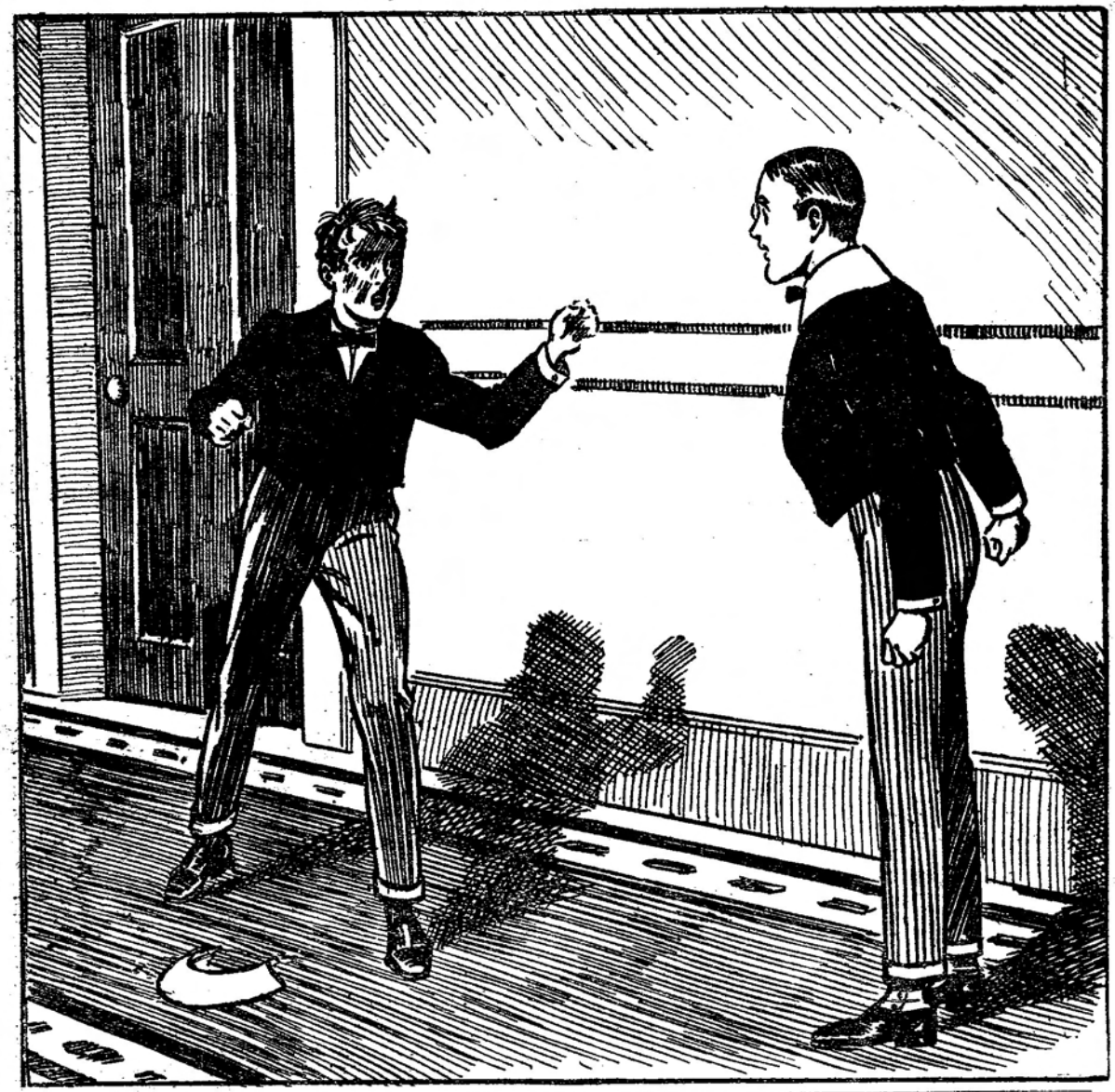
"We must make it up with Gussy."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors were half-serious. It was not really the feed they were thinking of; but they did not like D'Arcy to be offended. The swell of St. Jim's was a never-ending source of gaiety to the chums of the School House, but at the same time he was the most popular fellow in the school, with perhaps the exception of Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, and Figgins, of the New House.

Tom Merry & Co. marched up to the Fourth Form passage, and knocked at the door of Study No. 6, and tried to open

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Wally jerked of the nice clean collar, and tousled his beautifully-brushed hair, and dabbed his hands on the dustiest part of the wall, and then rubbed them on his face; and the unusual neatness of his appearance disappeared as if by magic. "There!" said Wally savagely. "That's quite good enough for that waster to see. Let me catch you trying to make me respectable again, Gussy, that's all!" (*See Chapter* 10.)

it. But the door was locked in the inside, and from within the study came a sound of vigorous brushing. The swell of St. Jim's was evidently attending to his trousers, which had scraped violently against the brick wall of the School House, and badly wanted brushing.

Tom Merry knocked at the door again.

There was no answer to the knock. The sound of vigorous brushing continued without intermission.

"Gussy, old man!"

"Who's there?"

"Us."

"Pway go away!"

"But I say, Gussy——"

"My name is D'Arcy!" came a freezing reply from within. "I am Gussy only to my fwiends!"

"Oh, Gussy! But we've come to apologise!"

"Oh!"

"From one gentleman to another, you know, an apology is always sufficient to set a matter quite right," said Tom Merry through the keyhole.

"And then the bags won't need brushing," murmured Monty Lowther.

And the juniors in the passage chuckled softly.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——" There were obvious signs of relenting in Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's voice. "Undah the circs.——"

"Chap can't apologise through a keyhole, you know, Gussy," said Tom Merry, in honeyed tones.

"Vewy well. I will open the door."

"Good egg!"

The study door swung open. The juniors marched in with grave faces. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stood in his shirt-sleeves. The split jacket lay on the table, and there was a clothes-brush in D'Arcy's hand, with which he had been active upon his dusty trousers. He gave the crowd a glance of lofty and offended dignity.

The juniors all took their caps off at the same moment, and bowed low to Arthur Augustus.

"Sorry!" came a chorus.

"Weally, you fellows——"

"I apologise, thou apologisest, he apologises," said Monty Lowther blandly. "We apologise, you apologise, they apologise——"

"You uttah ass!"

"Well, I can't say more than that," said Lowther. "Can anybody do it in Latin or Greek?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wegard you as an ass, Lowthah!"

Next Thursday's Grand, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co. "FOR THE SAKE OF THE SIDE!" By MARTIN CLIFFORD. Order Your Copy Early.

"So he is!" said Tom Merry. "Shut up, Lowther! Gussy regards you as an ass, and you are an ass! This is where you ring off! You can keep your funny stories for the next number of the 'Weekly.' Gussy, behold us with humble and contrite hearts——"

"Almost weeping!" said Blake solemnly.

Monty Lowther sobbed.

A smile broke over the offended visage of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"It was wathah funnay," he said. "Of course, I know you were only wottin'. But I twust I can take a joke with any chap. The sewious part of the mattah is that you have pwactically wuined my twousahs. A joke should always stop short of inflictin' damage on a fellow's twousahs. You fellows seem to have no more wegard for a fellow's twousahs than Hewwies' bulldog Towsah. Howevah, from one gentleman to another an apology makes evewythin' all wight!"

"Hurray!"

Arthur Augustus put on a fresh jacket.

"I shall have to have that jacket mended," he said. "It will do to wear in the class-room. Will you give me a bwush down behind, Blake?"

"With pleasure!" said Blake blandly.

And he did. He nobly resisted the temptation to use the brush as if it were a hammer, and he brushed the dust off with sedulous care.

"And now to come to business," said Manners.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You want us to back you up?" inquired Tom Merry.

"Yaas."

"You've had a fiver from your governor in that letter?" Blake said.

"Yaas."

"And you're going to blow it?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Then you've called on just the right fellows to back you up," said Blake affectionately. "Come on; we'll give the tuck-shop a look in!"

D'Arcy looked at him in surprise.

"But my cousin isn't here yet, Blake," he said.

"Eh?"

"My Canadian cousin, you know."

"What?"

"Never heard of him," said Digby.

"Well, as a mattah of fact, I nevah heard of him, deah boys, until to-day, or, if I did, I'd forgotten the chap," said D'Arcy. "But my governah has told me all about him in this letter. He's lived in Canada all his life, you know, and he's come over to England on a visit, and he has a cuwiosity to see what a British public school is like before he goes back to the backwoods, you know. I don't know what kind of a chap he is, but the pater says he is wathah bweezy. I don't know if that means that he's a wegular wuffian. I've nevah seen the chap."

"Oh!" said the juniors.

"The patah doesn't say how old he is, but I take it he's a young man," said D'Arcy. "He hasn't been to Eastwood yet. He's comin' in here, appawently, on his way down to my patah's house. My patah hasn't seen him eithah. I'm wathah anxious to see what sort of a boundah he is. You see, a chap bwought up in the backwoods may be wathah wuff. But whatevah sort of a chap he is, I'm goin' to stand by him. Blood is thickah than watah, you know!"

"Thicker than ink!" said Monty Lowther thoughtfully.

"And that's why I want all you fellahs to back me up," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, warming to his subject. "You see, the chap is a Canadian. He comes fwom a distant part of the Bwitish Empire, and it is our dutay, as twue Bwitons, to show that we welcome chaps fwom ovah the seas. Hands acwoss the sea, you know, and all that."

"Hear, hear!"

"My ideah is to give him a weally wousin' weception, so that he can tell them in Canadah that the Bwitish Empire is still goin' stwong, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Therefore," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with dignity, "I call on all you fellows to back me up, and give him a good time while he's here, and no larks!"

"Not a single lark!" said Lowther solemnly. "Not even a blackbird! Not a——"

"Oh, shut up, Monty!"

"When is he coming?" asked Tom Merry.

"Pwobably this week, the patah says," replied D'Arcy. "He's sent me a fivah, so that I shall be in funds on the occasion. My cousin is goin' to let me have a wiah, sayin' when I'm to expect him. It may come quite suddenly. But undah the peculiah circs., I shall wegard it as a dutay to thwow all othah engagements aside, and look aftah my Canadian cousin. Hands acwoss the sea——"

"What's his name?"

"Aubwey."

"Might have guessed that," murmured Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"His othah name," said D'Arcy loftily, "is Smith."

"Oh!"

"My patah's sistah mawwied a man named Smith," D'Arcy explained. "I have weflected on that subject, and I have come to the conclusion that Smith is a weally splendid old Bwitish name. Howevah, I shall not call him Smith. I shall call him Cousin Aubwey. If he awwives here suddenly, I expect you fellows—— What's that?"

It was a slight sound at the door. Jack Blake made a leap at the door, and flung it wide open, and Mellish of the Fourth rolled headlong into the study. The juniors did not need telling that he had been listening at the keyhole.

CHAPTER 3.
Mellish Has an Idea.

"BAI Jove!" ejaculated D'Arcy.

"Ow!" gasped Mellish.

The cad of the Fourth rolled on the study carpet, and sat up, and blinked apprehensively at the juniors. They were regarding him with looks of wrathful disgust. Mellish generally knew everything that was going on in the School House, and this was his method.

"I—I happened to lean against the door!" he stammered.

"Oh, shut up!" said Tom Merry, in disgust. "It's bad enough to listen at keyholes, without telling lies about it."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"There was nothing secret in what we were talking about," went on Tom Merry. "But you're not going to listen at keyholes and get off scot-free. Kick him out!"

Mellish scrambled to his feet.

The juniors, at a sign from Tom Merry, lined up in a double row to the door, and each of them had his right foot drawn back ready. Mellish had to run the gauntlet to get out of the doorway, and he did not like the prospect.

"I—I say——" he stammered.

"Get out!"

"But—but I——"

"Start him with a kick, Gussy!"

"Certainly, deah boy!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy started Mellish with a kick, and the sneak of the Fourth uttered a yell, and ran for the doorway. Then the ready right feet lunged out, and he yelled again, and Jack Blake yelled. A too hasty drive from Reilly had caught him on the ankle instead of catching Mellish.

"Ow!" roared Blake.

"Faith, and phwat did ye get yer foot in the way for?"

"Oh, you ass!"

Mellish whirled out of the study, with three or four distinct aches distributed about his person. He dashed along the passage breathlessly, and had reached the end of it before he discovered that he was not pursued. The door of Study No. 6 had closed again, and the chums of the School House were discussing the coming advent of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's Canadian cousin. Mellish halted, and scowled and panted, and retraced his steps to his own study.

The cad of the Fourth shared that study with Levison and Lumley-Lumley. The three had been three of a kind at one time. But since Lumley-Lumley had taken up with Tom Merry & Co., he had had little to do with Mellish or Levison, and he kept out of the study as much as he could. Lumley-Lumley was in No. 6 now, with Tom Merry & Co.; but Ernest Levison was in Mellish's quarters as he entered. Levison was alone there, sitting by the window, and reading.

He looked up inquiringly as Mellish came in panting, and slammed the door.

"Anything up?"

"Those cads in No. 6!" growled Mellish.

"Oh! Another row?"

"I've got on to something, Levison," said Mellish, in a low, eager tone. "I think that it's possible to pile up a big jape on those cads, and make Gussy look a ridiculous ass! It came into my mind while I was listening to them."

Levison's face changed. It was not so long since Levison would have jumped at any chance of "getting at" Study No. 6 in the Fourth, and he would have brought all his keenness and cunning to bear upon the subject. But just lately Levison had been through some very unpleasant experiences. He had had so narrow an escape of being expelled from St. Jim's that he had not yet recovered from the shock. And the chums of the Fourth had treated him so decently since, with the evident intention of giving him a chance, that Levison's hard heart was a little moved by it. So he shook his head in reply to Mellish's eager words.

Mellish stared at him in angry surprise.

"You won't take it on?" he demanded. "Look here! Gussy has a cousin coming here—a cousin he's never seen, and who may be a rank outsider for all Gussy knows. Do you see where our chance comes in?"

"I don't want to see."

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"We should want some money," said Mellish. "But Crooke of the Shell would put up the cash for the sake of taking down those cads in No. 6. We could work it. I tell you I've got a simply ripping idea. It came into my head——"

"I tell you I don't want to have anything to do with it," said Levison uneasily. "The chaps in No. 6 have been decent to me, and I'm going to let them alone. Besides, japes on them generally work out the other way. That thing we fixed on Brooke, by taking a paper from their study. It looked a dead cert., and you know how it ended."

"This is different. Even if it came out it would be only a jape."

"I'm having nothing to do with it!"

Mellish glowered at him.

"You've lost your nerve because they sent you to Coventry," he sneered.

"You can put it that way if you like. I'm not going to have any more of it, anyway."

"Crooke will go into it with me," said Mellish. "I know that! I suppose I can depend on you to hold your tongue. You're not going to start a new career of goodness by telling tales about a chum?"

Levison flushed angrily.

"Of course I sha'n't say a word," he said.

"Good, then!"

Mellish quitted the study, and walked on into the Shell passage. He knew that Crooke of the Shell was in his study. And an odour of cigarette smoke as he opened the door would have been evidence enough. That was one of the little amusements of Crooke of the Shell. The unhealthy-complexioned, flabby junior stared at Mellish through a haze of blue smoke.

"Shut the door, you ass!" he growled. "Nice for me if a prefect looked in."

"Or Tom Merry, either," said Mellish.

"Blow Tom Merry! I don't care for him or any of them. They had the cheek to come into my study last week and burn my cigarettes—Tom Merry, and Blake, and D'Arcy. There were three of them, so I couldn't do anything. I'd have smashed any one of them if he'd come alone!"

"Of course you would!" agreed Mellish, who knew perfectly well that Crooke would as soon have thought of trying to smash Kildare of the Sixth as any of the juniors whose names he had mentioned. "It was like their cheek."

"I'll make 'em sit up for it some time!" growled Crooke.

"I can tell you how."

"Is that what you've come for?" asked Crooke, eyeing him curiously.

"Yes."

"Then take a fag and go ahead!"

Mellish lighted a cigarette. There was toffee on the table as well as cigarettes, and Mellish would much rather have had the toffee. But he would not have admitted that for worlds.

"Gussy's got a cousin coming here from Canada, fellow he's never seen, and who may arrive any minute by sending a telegram first," Mellish announced.

"What's that got to do with us?"

Mellish explained. And as he explained a grin dawned upon the pallor of Crooke's unhealthy face and expanded into a laugh, and he laughed so heartily that he swallowed the smoke from his cigarette, and began to cough instead.

"What do you think of the wheeze?" demanded Mellish.

"Ripping! Groooohghup! First chop!" gasped Crooke. "It's a half-holiday to-morrow afternoon, and that's our chance. We'll fix it up this evening."

"Done!" said Mellish.

And the two young rascals chuckled loud and long over their scheme—whatever it was.

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CHAPTER 4.
Very Enthusiastic.

THAT D'Arcy of the Fourth had a Canadian cousin, and that that Canadian cousin was coming to pay him a visit at St. Jim's, and that the Canadian cousin was supposed to be a wild and breezy son of the Western prairies, soon became known to all St. Jim's.

All St. Jim's took an interest in the matter.

There was really no need for Gussy to ask the fellows to back him up, as he had done with such disastrous results to his trousers. The St. Jim's fellows—the juniors, at least—were enthusiastically keen to back him up in entertaining the Canadian.

There was a Canadian fellow in the Shell at St. Jim's—a School House boy, Clifton Dane; there was an Australian, Harry Noble—otherwise known as Kangaroo. So Colonials were not unknown at the old school; and the two Colonial juniors were very popular. And it was indeed considered rather a distinction for D'Arcy to have a cousin from Canada. A fellow who had ridden bucking bronchos on the wild prairies and lassoed buffaloes on the vast llanos, and paddled canoes on the great lakes, and perhaps dug for gold on the Klondyke—that was the kind of fellow to be a hero in the eyes of the Saints. Perhaps there was a fault or two in their geographical ideas; but whether the Canadian cousin had ridden bronchos, mustangs, or mere ponies, and whether he had ridden them on prairies, plains, or llanos, it was all one to the Saints—they were prepared to give him a hearty, not to say uproarious greeting.

The New House fellows were as keen about it as the School House.

As Figgins of the Fourth nobly said, this was no time for House rows; this was no time for little rivalries. It was a question of receiving with honour a representative of the vast dominions over-seas, and cementing the bonds that held together the great and glorious British Empire. It was a time for all St. Jim's to stand shoulder to shoulder and show the Canadian chap what the Mother Country thought of her sons who carried high the far-flung banner of Empire.

D'Arcy was asked incessant questions that afternoon about his Canadian cousin. Fellows came over from the New House to ask him—fellows of all Forms. Even high and mighty Sixth-Formers condescended to be interested in the subject. Some of the fags had an idea that the Canadian cousin would arrive mounted upon a bucking broncho, with a revolver in each hand, as they had seen Buffalo Bill and Shoot-'Em-Dead Sam in highly-coloured pictures in American periodicals. All were agreed that he would wear a huge slouched hat like Theodore Roosevelt in the "Daily Mirror," and that he would reckon and guess, if he did not calculate.

"I suppose he's ridden wild horses on the llanos out there, D'Arcy?" said Lawrence of the Fourth, with wide-open, interested eyes.

Arthur Augustus sniffed.

"They're not called llanos in Canada," he said.

"But they are llanos, I suppose, whether they're called llanos or not?" said Owen. "Do you know whether he has ever killed any Indians?"

"Ass! They don't kill Indians now!"

"Has he ever gone gold-seeking in the Klondyke, Gussy?" demanded Gore.

"I weally don't know, Goah!"

"He'll be able to tell us yarns about the prairies and the diggings," said Redfern. "Look here, we shall have to have him over in the New House one evening."

"Yes, rather!" said Figgins; Kerr, and Wynn, with emphasis.

"How long is he going to stay, Gussy?"

"I weally don't know."

"What is he like?"

"I haven't the faintest ideah, deah boys."

"How old is he?"

"I'm sowwy I can't tell you."

"Will he bring his pistols?"

"I don't suppose he's got any, you ass."

"What rot! Of course he's got some, ye gossoon!" said Reilly decidedly. "How can you be safe living in a log hut on the prairie without revolvers?"

"But I don't suppose he lives in a log hut on the pwairie, deah boy. All Canadians don't live in log huts on the pwairies."

"Anyway, I suppose he will weah a slouch-hat?"

"Pewwaps. My patah didn't mention in his letter," said D'Arcy, with a touch of sarcasm. "I should think, howevah, that he would sport a toppah, comin' to St. Jim's."

There was a yell of derision at once.

"Rats!"

"Rot!"

"Bosh!"

"Fancy a chap coming from the giddy prairies in a topper."

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"He wouldn't think of it."

"Bosh! He will have a Panama."

"Or a sombrero."

"Or a bearskin cap."

"Yes, rather!"

"Weally, deah boys——"

"You don't know anything about it, Gussy, old son!" said Jack Blake, patting him kindly on the shoulder.

"Weally, Blake——"

"We shall have to stand him a big feed," said Fatty Wynn thoughtfully. "We must show the Canadian chap something about British hospitality."

"Yaas, wathah! You are quite wight there, Fatty!" said Arthur Augustus. "We're poolin' funds in the School House to stand him a wippin' feed."

"The New House ought to have a hand in that," said Kerr decidedly.

"What-ho!"

"Let's all whack in together," said Figgins.

"Vewy well—just as you like, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus graciously.

"And they "whacked in" together, as Figgins suggested.

The funds raised to feed the Canadian were great, and certainly he would have been well fed if he had had a Gargantuan appetite.

The juniors were very keen to know when he was coming. But on that point D'Arcy could give no information, because he did not know himself. He was to receive a telegram when the Canadian cousin was coming, and that was all he knew.

"Let's hope it's to-morrow, as it's a half-holiday," said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"He would be bound to choose a half-holiday to come," Manners remarked.

"But he may not know that we have a half-holiday at St. Jim's on Wednesdays," remarked Aurthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Again the opinion of the swell of St. Jim's was laughed to scorn.

The juniors declined to entertain the notion that there was any corner of the globe so benighted that the inhabitants had not heard of St. Jim's, and of the manners and customs there.

"Bai Jove," Arthur Augustus D'Arcy remarked to his chums at tea in Study No. 6, "I weally think that the fellows wegard my cousin as their cousin as much as mine! I weally wegard it as a cheek. I've wemarked before that Figgins seems to wegard my Cousin Ethel as his Cousin Ethel. It's a nerve, you know. I shall insist upon havin' my wights of pwoperty wegarded."

"My dear chap, he's common property," said Digby.

D'Arcy turned his eyeglass upon the offending Dig.

"If you mean to wemark that my cousin is common in any way, Dig——" he began.

"But I don't, ass!" said Digby cheerfully. "I said he's the property of all, only you can't understand English. We're jolly well not going to allow you to appropriate him as you do Cousin Ethel."

"Weally, Dig——"

"No fear!" said Herries, with emphasis. "I regard him as belonging to the whole study. I wonder how he will like Towser?"

"Weally, Hewwies——"

"I suppose he plays cricket," said Blake. "They play cricket in Canada, you know. We can get up a game while he's here, and make him bat."

"Yaas, that's a wathah good ideah! I'm glad to see the school backin' me up in this way, deah boys. But I wefuse to have my cousin taken out of my hands. I considah——"

"He can show us some shooting, too," said Digby.

"You are intewwuptin' me, Dig——"

"Just so! I wonder how often he can hit the bullseye with his deadly revolver?" said Digby.

"You ass! It stands to weason that he won't cawwy awound a wevolvah in England, even if he does in Canadah—and I'm sure he doesn't."

"Rats! How would he get on if he were suddenly attacked by a Comanche if he hadn't a revolver?" demanded Digby warmly.

"But the Comanches don't live in Canadah, and——"

"I don't care where they live. Don't argue," said Digby. "I suppose there are Redskins in Canada. By Jove! I wonder whether he's ever been scalped?"

"I should fancy that my cousin would uttahly wefuse to be scalped," said D'Arcy, with dignity.

"Wouldn't have much choice if he were bound to the torture-post, with the Redskins dancing round him," said Digby, licking his lips at the mental picture. "I say, it must be simply splendid to live out there and have all sorts of adventures!"

"Jolly well wish that telegram would come," said Blake.

"I'm awfully keen to see him. I wonder if he will bring his mustang?"

"Broncho," said Digby—"they have bronchos there."

"Mustangs!" said Blake decidedly.

"Bronchos!" said Digby, with obstinacy.

"Look here, Digby, you ass——"

"Look here, Blake, you fathead——"

"I say mustangs——"

"I say bronchos——"

"Hurrah!" shouted Herries, who was looking out of the window.

"What are you yelling about, you ass?" demanded Blake crossly.

"Here comes the telegraph boy!" said Herries excitedly. "I just spotted him in the quad."

"Hurrah!"

"It must be for Gussy!"

"Come on!"

And four juniors, leaving their tea unfinished, went helter-skelter down the stairs—even Arthur Augustus D'Arcy forgetting for once the repose which stamps the caste of Vere de Vere.

CHAPTER 5.
Mellish's Little Plot.

"WHATCHER lookin' at?"

It was not a polite or pleasant question. And the dusty, tobacco-stained, rum-smelling gentleman who asked it was not a polite or pleasant object.

Mellish of the Fourth, and Crooke of the Shell, receded a little. They had specially sought out that dusty and unpromising-looking individual, but now that they had found him they did not feel inclined to get too close to him.

The tramp lay in the shadow of a tree on the border of Wayland Moor. The sun shone down upon his whisky-bronzed face, his ragged clothes, and his tousled hair. It was very evident that he had lately visited the Peal of Bells in Wayland town, and there had drunk not wisely but too well of the refreshments provided by that establishment. He had been sleeping off the effects of his potations, and he had awakened in far from an amiable humour.

He was a young man in years, but he might have been any age from his looks. He exhaled odours of rum and cheap tobacco. He glared at the two juniors while he groped in his tattered and dirty attire for a pipe.

"We've been looking for you," said Crooke mildly.

"Ho!" said the tramp.

"You remember meeting me," said Mellish politely. "I saw you yesterday—I gave you twopence in Rylcombe Wood."

"I'd ha' twisted your ear if you 'adn't," said the tramp, without any great expression of gratitude for the twopence.

"Ahem! I remembered you, you see," said Mellish, "and that's why we came to look for you. We've got a job for you."

The man sat upright, and stared at the juniors as if electrified. It was as if the mere thought of a job had a startling effect on him.

"Work?" he demanded.

"No, no, not work!" said Mellish hastily. "Of course, I—I wouldn't think of that."

"No fear!" said Crooke.

"But an easy job—quite a little game, in fact, and the pay will be good," said Mellish. "In fact, we want you to help us in a little joke!"

"Ho!" said the tramp.

"When you stopped me yesterday—ahem!—I mean when I spoke to you yesterday, you told me you had tramped here, and you were a stranger in these parts," said Mellish.

"Yes, that's so."

"Nobody knows you about here."

"No, they don't!"

"That's good. Now, will you do what we want, and we'll pay you. What's your name?"

"My name's 'Enry 'Arris," said the tramp, eyeing him suspiciously, "and wot's it got to do with you, young feller-me-lad?"

"Nothing," said Mellish, with determined civility. "Only we want you to help us. I suppose you don't often get a sovereign?"

"'Ow do you know I don't?" said 'Enry 'Arris truculently.

"H'm! I mean, would you like to earn a sovereign—and a big feed thrown in, and a lot of fun?" asked Mellish.

"Anything to drink?"

"Lemonade, and ginger-beer, and—and tea."

'Enry 'Arris snorted.

"I said to drink!" he growled, with deep disgust.

"Well, you could have anything you liked to drink afterwards," said Mellish, "and perhaps I could get you something while the job was going on."

"Wot's the job?"

Mellish and Crooke exchanged glances. It had come to the point now, and they were both feeling a little nervous. But they had spent two hours looking for their man, and now they had found him, it was necessary to go through with it.

"We belong to the school," said Mellish—"the big school by Rylcombe, you know. There's a chap there—chap named D'Arcy, who's expecting a cousin to visit him from Canada."

"Ho!"

Mr. 'Arris lighted his pipe. He seemed to be restored to something approaching good humour at the prospect of getting a sovereign without working, and thereby being enabled to wallow in his favourite intoxicants. He blew out a cloud of vile-smelling smoke, and the two juniors tried not to cough.

"D'Arcy has never seen his cousin, and doesn't know anything about him," went on Mellish, "only he's expecting him to be a rather rough sort of a chap. We've got the idea of planting you on him."

"Wot!"

"It would work as easily as anything," said Mellish eagerly. "It would be an awful lark, you know. Gussy doesn't know when his cousin's coming—most likely next week. You could turn up to-morrow afternoon, and claim to be Aubrey Smith—that's the cousin's name. The wilder sort of joker you are the bigger the jape will be on D'Arcy. You can come squiffy if you like."

"Ho!"

"You'll roll into the school, and announce that you're Aubrey Smith from Canada, and that you've come to visit your cousin, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy," said Mellish. "Nobody will know any better. They'll simply think that Gussy's got an awful rotter for a cousin——"

"Wot!" roared Mr. 'Arris.

Mellish jumped back.

"I—I—I didn't mean that. I mean the fellows will think that Gussy's cousin is down on his luck, you know. It will be as easy as rolling off a log. The fellows are making all sorts of preparations for D'Arcy's cousin. They're going to stand a big feed—all sorts of things to eat—and you will have a high old time."

The tramp grinned.

"You don't like this D'Arcy?" he asked.

"Oh, yes; but—you see—it's a jape!"

"Don't tell lies!" said Mr. 'Arris uncompromisingly. "You hate the bloke, and you're doin' this to disgrace him."

Mellish smiled feebly.

"Well, we—we want to take him down a peg or two," he admitted.

"I'm hon!" said Mr. 'Arris. "Did you say a sov'ring, or two sov'rings?"

"I said a sovereign."

"Well, you'd better say two, or the job won't come orf," said 'Enry 'Arris. "If it's worth a quid to yer, it's worth two quid."

The juniors hesitated.

"A quid is good pay for an afternoon's fun, with a big feed thrown in," said Crooke.

"You 'ear me?" said Mr. 'Arris. "I says two quid, and wot I says I sticks to."

Crooke and Mellish exchanged glances. After all, the cad of the Shell had plenty of money, and such a humiliation for D'Arcy would be cheap at the price.

"Well, say two quid," said Crooke. "Five bob now, and the rest after the job, if you bring it off all right."

"The rest after the job any'ow," said Mr. 'Arris firmly. "Or else you'll 'ear from me. I could break you into two bits with one 'and!"

Crooke receded a pace farther back. He felt that he was playing with two-edged tools in having dealings with Mr. 'Arris.

"That's all right," said Mellish hurriedly. "We're sure that you'll play the game, and we take your word."

"Which when I give you my word, I allers keep it, like a gentleman," said Mr. 'Arris darkly.

Mellish coughed. He had certainly not looked upon Mr. 'Arris as a gentleman hitherto, but he was quite willing to accept the startling information with civility.

"Quite so," he said. "You'll do it."

"Money talks," said Mr. 'Arris.

He held out a brown and exceedingly dirty hand. Mellish glanced at Crooke, and the cad of the Shell counted out five shillings into the horny palm of Mr. 'Enry 'Arris.

They were transferred to some recess in the rags of Mr. 'Arris, and the tramp rose to his feet. There was a thirsty gleam in his eyes. It was quite plain where the tramp was going—and where the five shillings were going.

"Hold on a minute," said Crooke hastily. "We must give you some information about the chap, you know, so that you won't give yourself away."

"I'm thirsty," said Mr. 'Arris briefly.

"Yes, but——"

"I'll see yer to-morrow," said Mr. 'Arris, with a wave of his hand. "You can tell me all about it, then. I must be orf now—I've got to see a man about a dorg!"

"All right," said Mellish. "Mind you meet us, because I'm going to send a wire to D'Arcy now to tell him his cousin's coming."

The tramp chuckled.

"Orl right! I want to earn them two quidlets!"

"In the same place, here, to-morrow," said Mellish, "at two o'clock."

"Yes."

"Good! We'll let you have another five bob then for refreshments before you start," said Crooke, "and thirty bob later."

"Good hegg, guv'nor! Nighty-bye!"

And the disreputable hero of the road rolled away towards Wayland town.

The juniors looked after him, and grinned at one another.

"He'll do all right," said Mellish. "He won't miss the chance of making two quid. He'll arrive at St. Jim's in great style."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's all the better to have a jaw with him just before he goes, too," said Mellish thoughtfully. "We can prime him up to the chin then with what he's got to know, and he won't forget it. Now, let's go to Wayland post-office, and we'll send the wire."

And the two young rascals followed in the direction taken by Mr. 'Enry 'Arris, chuckling as they went.

CHAPTER 6.
The Telegram.

"HERE it is!"

"A giddy telegram!"

"A wire for Gussy!"

"Buck up, Gussy!"

The sight of the telegraph-boy crossing the quadrangle had created quite a furore among the St. Jim's juniors.

Not only had Blake and his chums come rushing down from Study No. 6. The Terrible Three came speeding over from the direction of the cricket-field, where they had been finishing some bowling practice. Figgins & Co. came from the New House at a run, and Redfern, Lawrence, and Owen started up from nowhere and bore down upon the telegraph-boy.

Glyn and Kangaroo and Dane and Gore and Thompson and a crowd of other fellows seemed to start up out of the earth like Roderick Dhu's clansmen on the mountainside. Nobody seemed to have any doubt that the telegram was for Gussy. In fact, it seemed impossible that it should not be for Gussy—from the Canadian cousin. All St. Jim's wanted it to be so, and the wish was father to the thought.

Other people at St. Jim's had telegrams, of course. The telegraph-boy from Rylcombe was quite familiar in the quad. But on this occasion, the whole crowd of juniors felt that the wire must be for D'Arcy, or else that there was something seriously wrong with the workings of the universe.

And they were right—it was for D'Arcy.

The telegraph-boy, grinning a little, and wondering what the excitement was about, stopped at the steps of the School House, where the juniors were crowding to meet him.

"Master D'Arcy," he said.

"Hurray!"

"Hip-pip!"

"Here you are, Gussy!"

D'Arcy had recovered from his hurry. He lounged forward elegantly to take the telegram. Before opening it, he bestowed a sixpence upon the youth from Rylcombe post-office. Then he glanced round. The juniors were eyeing him like wolves, or like footballers waiting for a penalty-kick to be taken.

"Open it!"

"Let's have the news!"

"When is he coming?"

"Buck up!"

"Get a move on!"

"What are you waiting for?"

"I've left my penknife upstairs, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus, with majestic calm. "Can you lend me a penknife, somebody?"

"Ass!"

"Haven't you got a giddy thumb?"

"I wefuse to open an envelope with my thumb. I am willin' to use a penknife instead of a papah-knife, but I wefuse to use my thumb!"

"Ass!"

"Fathead!"

"Weally, deah boys——"

"Take it off him!" roared Lawrence.

"I wefuse to have my telegwam taken off me!" said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "If you fellows can lend me a penknife——"

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Figgins found a penknife in a pocket, and handed it to D'Arcy with forced calmness. The swell of St. Jim's thanked him politely, opened the penknife with calmness, and slit the buff envelope. Then he took out the anxiously-expected telegram.

The crowd of juniors made an eager movement.

"Read it out, Gussy!"

"Buck up!"

"Vewy well, deah boys!"

"Is it from your Canadian cousin?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Hooray!"

"When is he coming?" roared a score of voices.

"To-mowwow afternoon."

"Didn't I tell you he'd come on a half-holiday?"

"It stood to reason, of course."

"You can all wead it, deah boys," said D'Arcy, holding up the telegram to the general inspection.

And the juniors read it eagerly.

"D'Arcy, School House, St. Jim's. Arriving early Wednesday afternoon.—AUBREY SMITH."

"Hooray!"

"'Handed in at Wayland, at 6 p.m.,'" read out Tom Merry. "Why, he's at Wayland, then, already!"

"Only a few miles away," said Blake.

"Why doesn't he come on at once?"

"He could have stayed the night here."

"The Head would have given him a room."

Arthur Augustus nodded.

"Pewwaps he has business in Wayland, deah boys, or he may be seein' the town, you know, or stayin' with some fwiend," he remarked. "Of course, he must know that we could put him up here if he liked. I think I will wish back to him to come on this evenin' if he can."

"There's no address on the telegram, excepting Wayland," said Redfern.

"Bai Jove! I nevah thought of that!"

"You'll have to wait till he comes," said Tom Merry. "But it's all serene. We'll give him a ripping reception to-morrow afternoon!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We had a House match on for to-morrow afternoon," Tom Merry remarked, glancing at Figgins. "I suppose that had better be postponed?"

Figgins nodded assent at once.

"Oh, yes! We don't have a Canadian cousin come to St. Jim's every day. We'll give Mr. Smith the afternoon."

"That is weally vewy considewate of you, Figgins. But pway allow me to wemark that Aubwey is my cousin."

"Oh, rats! He's our cousin!" said Figgins. "Same as Cousin Ethel—cousin to all the school! Don't be selfish!"

"Weally, Figgins——"

"Yes; Gussy mustn't be selfish," said Blake, with a shake of the head. "You'd better stick that telegram up on the notice-board, Gussy, for all the school to read!"

"Oh, vewy well!"

"And we may as well do the shopping for the feed now," said Fatty Wynn, with a grin of satisfaction. "Look here, on a special occasion like this, we'd better get some of the things from Rylcombe. We'll get a pass out from Kildare, and go down to Rylcombe and do some of the shopping now."

"Good egg!"

"Half a dozen had better come, to carry the things."

And half a dozen went with Fatty Wynn, Kildare, of the Sixth kindly giving them a pass out of gates for the purpose. Kildare himself was very much interested in the cousin from Canada, which was really wonderfully kind and polite on the part of Kildare, of the Sixth. For Kildare, of the Sixth, was the captain of St. Jim's, and a very great person in the eyes of the juniors—greater by far than a Prime Minister or a Secretary of State, or any common person of that sort. Indeed, the juniors of St. Jim's were quite convinced that Kildare was the greatest person in the United Kingdom with the solitary exception of his Majesty King George the Fifth.

The telegram was pinned up on the notice-board, and read with great interest by crowds of fellows. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, meanwhile, made his way to the Third Form-room with a thoughtful frown upon his aristocratic brow. D'Arcy's minor, Wally—his full name was Walter Adolphus, but he was called Wally, because, as Blake said, life was short—Wally was in the Third Form at St. Jim's, and on the special occasion of a visit from a cousin from Canada, D'Arcy was anxious about his minor; for Wally, so far from living up to the example of elegance set by his major, was one of the inkiest and untidiest of the fags of the Third—which is saying a great deal.

"Where are you off to, Gussy?" Blake called out.

"I'm goin' to see Wally. Wally will have to be decent to-mowwow," said Arthur Augustus. "I shall insist upon his bein' perfectly wespectable for once."

Blake chuckled. He did not think that the swell of St. Jim's would be successful. Wally was adamant on such matters.

Arthur Augustus entered the Third Form room. Most of the Third were there, and his minor among them. Wally's appearance was certainly not promising. The hero of the Third was showing Jameson a trick in wrestling, and he was looking about as untidy as a fag could possibly look.

"That isn't the way, fathead!" said Wally, as D'Arcy came in. "You put your foot so, and then give a twist with your left, so—and there you are!"

Bump!

There Jameson certainly was. He had sat down on the floor with considerable violence, and, instead of thanking Wally for his instructions, so thoroughly illustrated, he glared at him ungratefully, and roared.

"You ass!"

"Well, you asked me to show you——"

"I didn't ask you to biff me on the floor, you fwabjous ass!"

"Wally, deah boy——"

"Hallo, cocky!" said D'Arcy minor, looking round. "Would you like me to show you a trick in wrestling? I've got it from young Clifford; he's a Lancashire chap, and knows a lot about wrestling. You take hold so——"

Arthur Augustus receded.

"Pway don't be a young ass, Wally. I don't want to learn any wotten twicks. I've come here to speak to you sewiously."

Wally stared.

"You've come to speak to me seriously?" he demanded.

"Yaas, wathah."

"Then out you go! Bear a hand, you chaps!"

"Weally, Wally—— Oh!—ow!——yawooh!"

At Wally's signal a crowd of fags rushed upon the swell of the Fourth, and he was rushed out of the Form-room before he knew what was happening. He sat down heavily in the passage outside, and the door was slammed and locked. From within the Form-room came a sound of joyous chuckling. Arthur Augustus rose rather painfully to his feet, and knocked at the door.

"Wally, you young wascal——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let me in at once!"

"Are you going to talk?"

"Yaas."

"Then you don't come in here. Buzz off, or we'll come out to you and bump you along the passage."

"You awful young wascal!"

But Arthur Augustus took the hint, and departed. He knew Wally!

CHAPTER 7.
Great Expectations.

WHEN Mellish and Crooke came in, they saw the telegram on the notice-board, and stopped to read it, and grinned. That telegram seemed to afford the cads of the School House a great deal of amusement. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy passed while they were grinning over it, and he paused. As a rule, D'Arcy had little to say to either Mellish or Crooke—they were not the kind of fellows he chose to talk to. But just now Arthur Augustus was flowing, as it were, with the milk of human kindness.

"You've seen the telegwam, you fellows?" he asked.

"Yes," said Crooke. "What's it stuck up here for?"

"For all the coll. to wead, deah boys. All St. Jim's is goin' to back me up in givin' my cousin fwom Canada a good weception."

"So he's coming?" said Mellish.

"Yaas, wathah. Awwiving to-mowwow afternoon, early. He's in Wayland now, stoppin' there for the night, I suppose," said D'Arcy.

"Oh, good!"

"On an occasion like this," went on D'Arcy graciously, "I think evewybody here ought to buwy all pwivate diffewences, and I shall be glad to welcome you fellows to the feed, if you care to come."

"What-ho!" said Mellish.

"It is a time for the whole coll. to stick together, and extend a hearty welcome to a chap fwom the dominions ovah-seas," said D'Arcy. "It's a case of shouldah to shouldah for the old flag, you know."

"Good egg—quite so—we'll back you up as much as anybody," said Crooke.

"Thank you vewy much, Cwooke."

And Arthur Augustus passed on with a beaming smile. The two plotters looked at one another, and chuckled softly.

"They've swallowed it whole!" murmured Mellish.

"He, he, he!" sniggered Crooke.

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"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Greyfriars juniors, as the rascally bookmaker rose to the surface of the shallow pond again, spluttering with wrath, and mud and water. "You young scoundrels! Owp! I'm ch-ch-ch-choked!" he spluttered. (*An incident in the splendid, long, complete tale of school life, entitled "THE ROAD TO RUIN," by Frank Richards, which is contained in this week's issue of "THE MAGNET" LIBRARY. Now on sale. Price one Penny.*)

"Not a bit of suspicion!"

"Not a fragment!"

"Of course, they couldn't have any," said Mellish. "They were expecting a telegram from Aubrey Smith, and they've got a telegram from Aubrey Smith. What more could they want? There was nothing to be suspicious about."

"There'll be something to be surprised about, though, when Cousin Aubrey rolls in to-morrow!" chuckled Crooke.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But mum's the word!"

"What-ho!"

And the two plotters kept their own counsel. Not even a whisper was allowed to escape to Levison—Levison was not to be depended upon now in their little plots. But in the Fourth Form and the Shell dormitories that night, Mellish and Crooke chuckled as they heard the discussion of the reception that was to be given to Cousin Aubrey when he arrived at St. Jim's. The preparations had been great, and the next afternoon was to witness some high jinks in honour of the representative of a distant part of the great empire upon which the sun never sets.

In the junior dormitories the discussion ran on, indeed, to quite a late hour, before the juniors fell asleep.

And in the morning, when St. Jim's turned out to the clang of the rising-bell, the discussion was resumed with inexhaustible interest.

Cousin Aubrey was coming that afternoon!

That was all that the juniors talked about and thought about. Even cricket had paled into insignificance before the great event.

Some of the younger fags still held firmly to the belief that Cousin Aubrey from Canada would arrive upon a galloping mustang, foaming at the nostrils, perhaps with a revolver in his hand.

Fatty Wynn had made all his preparations for the feed. So many fellows were coming, in honour of Cousin Aubrey, that it was impossible to think of having the feed in any study. No study would have accommodated a quarter of the guests, no matter how closely they had packed themselves. But there was the Hobby Club-room, which the juniors used for big meetings, and the Hobby Club-room was at their disposal. Many a big feed had taken place in that famous apartment, but none on so grand a scale as this. It was a case of all hands to the mill, and the preparations that went on in the Hobby Club-room were really stupendous.

During morning lessons the juniors talked in whispers of the celebrations coming on in the afternoon, and a great many of them earned lines for inattention and forgetfulness.

But what were lines to them?

Nothing!

In the Imperial enthusiasm that possessed them, they cared no more for lines than they would have cared if they had still had Bernard Glyn's famous invention, the line-writing machine, at their disposal.

So long as they didn't have to stay in that afternoon to write out the lines, they were satisfied.

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After dinner the final touches were given to the preparations for the Canadian hero, and D'Arcy went round looking for his minor, determined to impress upon him the necessity of being as respectable as possible, for once, that afternoon.

D'Arcy minor was not easily to be found. D'Arcy minor was as keen about Cousin Aubrey as Arthur Augustus was, but he was not so keen about being made a credit to the family for the occasion.

While the juniors were busy with making everything ready for Cousin Aubrey, Crooke and Mellish strolled out of the school, and took their way by the footpath through the wood to Wayland Moor. No one noticed them go—no one cared whether they went or stayed. Crooke and Mellish were not persons of importance. But if the St. Jim's juniors had had an inkling of their mission, they would certainly have been interested. Mr. 'Enry 'Arris was smoking a dirty, short, black pipe under the tree when the two juniors arrived at the place of appointment.

He grinned and nodded to them. Mr. 'Arris seemed to be in a high good-humour. Perhaps it was the prospect of the glorious "drunk" he would have when he left St. Jim's with thirty solid shillings in his pocket. Perhaps it was the thought of getting possession of that sum of money without doing any work for it, or even having to take the trouble of stealing it. Perhaps he had a sense of humour, and the "japo" he was going into appealed to it. Or perhaps all these influences combined to make him unusually amiable. Be that as it may, he certainly was in an excellent temper, and he grinned cheerfully at the two plotters as they came up. He was just a little less ragged and dirty than he had been the day before, too.

"Arternoon!" said Mr. 'Arris genially. "Where's that five?"

Crooke placed five shillings in his hand.

"And thirty this evening, when it's all over," he said.

"Jest so!" said Mr. 'Arris.

"Now, just listen, and we'll tell you all about Gussy and his pater, and where Smith is supposed to come from, and all that," said Mellish.

"Go ahead!"

Mellish went ahead, and explained as much as he knew of the things Cousin Aubrey must be supposed to know. The tramp listened attentively, evidently making mental notes. He was entering into the little game with a keenness that delighted the plotters. They certainly could not have found a more suitable impostor than 'Enry 'Arris.

"You think you can carry it through all right?" Mellish asked.

Mr. 'Arris nodded emphatically.

"Yep!" he said, speaking in American. "I've tramped in Canada and the States two or three year ago, and I know the country orkright."

"That's good!" exclaimed Mellish, with satisfaction. "You can pitch it to them about bucking bronchos, and mustangs, and rolling prairies, and shooting Indians, you know."

"You bet!" said Mr. 'Arris, in American again.

"Ha, ha, ha! That sounds ripping!"

Mr. 'Arris looked pleased—he was not above the influence of praise.

"I'll carry it through all right," he said. "You trust me. I'll go and get a nip, and then come along to the school."

"Good egg! Mind you don't appear to recognise us if you see us among the fellows—that would give the whole game away."

"I'll be careful."

And the two plotters returned to St. Jim's in great spirits, with the comfortable assurance that the sham Cousin Aubrey would arrive there soon after they did.

CHAPTER 8.
Making Wally Respectable.

"WALLY, deah boy——"

"Oh, my only Aunt Jane!"

"Weally, Wally——"

Arthur Augustus had run his minor down at last. Wally had been carefully keeping out of his way since dinner-time, knowing full well D'Arcy's deadly intention of making him respectable for the afternoon. But he was cornered in the quad. now, and there was no escape. D'Arcy bore down upon him with uplifted forefinger.

"Weally, deah boy, I've been lookin' for you quite a long time."

Wally grunted.

"You needn't have taken the trouble!" he remarked.

"It is a vewy important occasion, Wally," said Arthur Augustus, with severity. "I need not wemind you that the cwedit of the family is at stake. We've got a cousin awwivin' fwom Canadah this aftahnoon——"

"Rats! He's coming from Wayland this afternoon," said Wally. "He came from Canada weeks ago."

"Pway don't be an ass, Wally. He will expect to see us both lookin' decent. I am dwessed wespectably myself, and I expect the same of you. Now, Wally, old man, just for once let me help you to look decent."

Wally grunted again. Although his manner was as a rule extremely disrespectful to his major, Wally really thought a very great deal of Arthur Augustus. And perhaps his conscience told him that D'Arcy was in the right this time. At all events, there were signs of yielding in his face.

"Come on, Wally, deah boy," said D'Arcy encouragingly. "You can put on your new Sunday clothes, you know, and a clean collah, and your nice Sunday toppah——"

Wally looked rebellious.

"Not the topper!" he exclaimed.

"Yaas. That's vewy important."

"Hang it all, why won't a cricket-cap do?"

"On a special occasion like this, with a chap comin' all the way fwom Canadah——"

"I don't suppose he cares twopence whether I wear a topper or a coal-scuttle, for that matter," said Wally peevishly. "He will come in a sombrero himself."

"Now, weally, Wally——"

"Oh, ring off!" said Wally, with resignation. "I'll do as you like—I know you'll go on jawing till I do!"

"Come on, then, deah boy. I'll help you dwess."

"I'm not a giddy infant!" roared Wally. "You'll be wanting to wash my face and hands next!"

"Well, you must admit that they want washing," said D'Arcy severely. "Nobody would suppose that you had bathed this morning, only that it is imposs. for a D'Arcy not to bathe in the mornin'."

"That ass Curly biffed me with a dusty cush.," Wally explained, drawing his sleeve over his face to clean it—not very successfully, for he had been leaning against the school wall, and his sleeve was extremely soiled.

"Come on, Wally; I'll help you," said D'Arcy encouragingly.

And Wally, with unusual meekness, allowed his brother to lead him away. Curly Gibson and Jameson, his chums in the Third Form, met him in the doorway of the School House, and stared at him inquiringly.

"What's the little game, Wally?" demanded Curly.

Wally snorted.

"I'm going to be made respectable for my blessed cousin from Canada to admire."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Like a giddy lamb to the slaughter!" chuckled Jameson.

"Break away, Wally."

Wally looked for a moment as if he would break away, but Arthur Augustus's brotherly grip closed more tightly upon his arm, and he was led up to the Third-Form dormitory. Arthur Augustus closed the door, and poured out water into a basin.

"All weady, Wally."

"Look here, I don't need washing! That's all rot——"

"You've got dust all ovah your face, Wally, deah boy, and your hands are inky. Buck up! Aubwey may be here any minute now."

"Oh, blow Aubrey!" murmured Wally.

But he washed dutifully. Then he changed his clothes. D'Arcy insisted upon a change, even to his boots. And when he saw Wally's socks he insisted upon the fag changing them, too. Wally gave a rebellious roar.

"I suppose Cousin Aubrey ain't going to look at my socks?"

"You nevah know what might happen, deah boy. Pway be wespectable."

"I never was respectable, and I won't be respectable!" growled Wally. "It's middle-class to be respectable! Yah!"

"I will get out the othah socks, Wally.

"My only Aunt Jane! What a valet you would have made!" said Wally admiringly.

"Weally, you young wascal——"

"If the family ever goes on the rocks when Lloyd George has done financing, you will always be able to get a job as gentleman's gentleman, Gussy!"

"Pway don't be a cheeky young ass, Wally! Heah are your socks."

Wally jammed on the socks, and then jammed on the boots, and dragged the laces tight. Arthur Augustus uttered an anxious exclamation.

"That won't do, Wally!"

"What won't do?" roared the fag.

"You haven't got the laces even. I don't see why you can't weah button boots, but I suppose you would always have buttons off if you did. Pway allow me to lace the boots, and I will make the laces quite even."

"Oh, my only aunt!"

D'Arcy laced Wally's boots. Then he selected the cleanest collar in the fag's supply of collars, and Wally looked at it grimly. If there was anything that Wally hated with a hatred

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worthy of a Corsican it was a clean and stiff, starched collar. When he put them on it generally took him but a very short time to abolish their state of stiffness and starchedness.

"This looks all wight, Wally. Where's your stud?"

"Here you are."

"You cannot wear a bwass stud, Wally," said D'Arcy, looking in utter disdain at the big, cheap stud the fag held out. "You must have some decent studs somewhere. You had a whole set of gold studs your last birthday fwom Aunt Adelina."

"I changed them with Pratt of the Fourth for a pocket-knife with three blades and a corkscrew," Wally explained. "I got this one for a penny in Wayland on market-day."

"You awful young wascal!"

"There was a thing in the knife for getting stones out of horses' hoofs, too," said Wally, in extenuation; "and a tin-opener."

D'Arcy sighed. He felt that the depravity of youth was far beyond his powers of dealing with. He groped in his pocket and fished out a gold stud. D'Arcy was never without an extra stud in case of accidents, just as he always carried an extra eyeglass in a little leather case in his waistcoat-pocket. That careful custom of his was well-known in the School House, and Blake had once humorously suggested that he should carry an extra pair of trousers rolled up under his arm—a suggestion which D'Arcy had replied to only with a sniff.

With the aid of D'Arcy's gold stud the collar was triumphantly fixed, and then the swell of St. Jim's grasped a hair brush. Wally backed away apprehensively.

"Look here——" he began.

"You must have your hair bwushed, deah boy."

"Well, I'm not going to have a parting, anyway!"

"Yaas, it is weally indispensable, deah boy, and you look so vewy wespectable with your hair parted in the middle——"

"I'm not going to be made to look like a choir-boy!" shrieked Wally. "Hands off!"

"Well, I will part it at the side, then. Pway don't be an ass!"

Wally groaned, and submitted to having his hair parted at the side, and brushed. He was feeling an uncomfortable feeling all over of being perfectly neat and tidy from head to foot, and the strangeness of it was almost uncanny, and it unnerved him.

"Are you done now?" he asked.

D'Arcy jammed his eyeglass into his eye, and surveyed him with scrutinising care.

"Yaas," he said, "you look quite decent, and a cwedit to the family. I twust you will keep like that. Keep away fwom the Third Form chaps, and walk with me."

"Catch me!" murmured Wally.

"Aunt Adelina would be delighted if she could see you now, deah boy. So would the patah. You look like a weal D'Arcy now."

"I feel like a stuffed dummy!"

"Weally, what——"

The dormitory door opened, and Mellish of the Fourth looked in, grinning.

"You here, D'Arcy? The fellows are shouting for you. Your cousin's come!"

"Great Scott! Thanks, deah boy! Come on, Wally!"

Mellish vanished, and D'Arcy major and minor rushed down the stairs after him to greet the cousin from Canada.

CHAPTER 9.

A Surprise for St. Jim's.

HE had come!

A crowd of fellows had been adorning the ancient gateway of St. Jim's with their persons, watching the road for the stranger to arrive.

Whether he walked over from Wayland through the wood, or took the train to Rylcombe and came up the lane, he was bound to appear to view first in the white high-road that ran past the gates of St. Jim's, and there they waited and watched.

They knew that they were waiting for the Canadian cousin, but they did not know what he would be like. Some of them were waiting for a sunburnt man in a slouched hat. Some for a tall fellow in a beard. Some for a dashing chap mounted upon a prancing mustang. But certainly there was no one in the thickening crowd who was waiting for the individual who actually came in sight—a shabby, stubbly-bearded tramp, in a ragged and battered bowler-hat, with the signs of drink only too visible in his face.

When he appeared, slouching along the road, nobody thought of him in connection with the expected cousin from Canada.

He came tramping on, and halted outside the gates of St. Jim's. He removed the short black pipe, which was gripped upside down in his grimy teeth, and spoke:

"I guess this is St. Jim's?"

The juniors looked at him. The "guess" hinted of America, but even yet they did not imagine that this grimy stranger could be the Canadian cousin.

"You've guessed right!" said Tom Merry, feeling called upon to reply, though he was far from liking the looks of the stranger.

"Then this is the place."

"Eh?"

"Master D'Arcy here, I suppose?" asked the tramp, casting his eyes over the group, and exhaling a perfume of rum and tobacco, which made the more fastidious of the juniors back away from him.

Tom Merry thought that he understood.

"Oh, you've got a message for D'Arcy?" he exclaimed. "You come from Wayland?"

"Yep."

"Sounds like America," grinned Blake. "Do you come from America?"

"I guess so."

"You've got a message for D'Arcy?" asked Figgins.

"I wanter see him."

"Do you come from his cousin?"

The man stared.

"I guess I am his cousin," he said.

The whole crowd staggered.

"His cousin!"

"You!"

"Rats!"

"Rot!"

"Come off!"

"Draw it mild!"

The grimy stranger glared.

"I guess I'm Aubrey Smith, from Canada," he said. "I'm D'Arcy's cousin, and I've come to see him. Ain't he got my telegram?"

"Your—your telegram!" faltered Tom Merry.

"Yep."

"You—you sent a telegram?"

"Yep—from Wayland yesterday, tellin' him I was coming this arternoon."

"Oh!"

"Great Scott!"

"Oh, carry me in to die!" murmured Lumley-Lumley. "I guess this will be a shock for Gussy! Poor old Gussy!"

The juniors stared at the grimy stranger blankly. For a moment some of them thought of the possibility of a trick, that the grimy tramp might have learned about the matter somehow, and had come there to palm himself off as D'Arcy's cousin from Canada. But surely he could not have the nerve if the real cousin might come along at any minute. The telegram had stated plainly enough that D'Arcy's cousin was to arrive early that afternoon. D'Arcy had said that possibly he might be a rough sort of chap. He was certainly rough enough!

"My only hat!" murmured Tom Merry, too astounded to be polite. "You—you—you are D'Arcy's cousin!"

"I guess so."

"From Canada?"

"You bet!"

"Cousin Aubrey?" gasped Redfern.

"That's my name."

"Oh!"

"I'll cut off and tell Gussy!" said Mellish.

And he cut off.

Cousin Aubrey entered the gateway. The juniors made way for him. If he was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's cousin he had a right to enter. And if he was from Canada they did not want to hurt his feelings. But as they gazed upon Cousin Aubrey the hands-across-the-sea idea suffered from a violent shock.

Cousin Aubrey walked into the quadrangle, looking about him with perfect coolness. He had evidently been drinking, but he was not intoxicated. There was a slight roll in his gait, but that was all. The juniors turned in after him, gazing at him, and gazing at one another in dismay.

"My word!" said Digby. "What will Gussy say when he sees him?"

"Blessed if I know!"

"Looks as if he's been on the rocks for a long time!" sneered Crooke. "Must have worked his passage over from Canada, I should say."

"There's no disgrace in that," said Tom Merry quietly. "A chap can't help being poor. But he can help being dirty and drunk, and—and this is awful!"

"Frightful!" said Herries. "If I had found that chap wandering round the school I should have set Towser on him. I shouldn't have taken him for Gussy's cousin."

"It seems impossible!" said Figgins.

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"Can't be a jape, can it?" said Redfern thoughtfully.

"How could it? The telegram said he was to come early, and he's come," said Manners. "If it's a swindle, he might have sent the telegram himself."

"H'm! But how would he know anything about Gussy's cousin—his name, and that he was from Canada—and expected here?" said Kerr. "Gussy himself didn't know it till yesterday afternoon!"

"That's a clincher!" said Figgins.

Indeed, it did seem to be a clincher!

The last doubt that the new-comer was what he pretended to be vanished from the minds of the juniors. This was Gussy's Canadian cousin.

"Must be the man!" said Kerr. "Why should a stranger play such a game, even if he knew the facts, which is impossible? The man's a stranger here. He couldn't know anything about the cousin from Canada. And a man'd have nothing to gain by such a trick, except being kicked out when the real Johnny came along. Gussy isn't going to give him any money or anything."

"Quite so!"

"He's genuine enough," said Tom Merry blankly. "It's awful, but he's genuine. And—and it's up to us to give him a good time."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Hands across the sea, you know!" said Tom Merry firmly. "After all, other fellows have disreputable relations as well as Gussy! Gussy isn't the fellow to turn his back on a poor relation, and we've promised to back him up. He seems rather a bounder, but he may be all right underneath."

"His heart may be in the right place, even if his aspirates are not," Monty Lowther suggested.

"And he's from Canada," said Figgins. "From a far dominion under the British flag, you know, and it's up to us to show that we back up the Colonies."

"Yes, rather."

"Whatever he is, and whatever he does, we're going to give him a good time, and take it smiling," said Tom Merry firmly. "Shoulder to shoulder, you know, and don't let him suspect for a moment that we—that we don't like his looks."

"Honour the stranger within the gates, you know!" said Kangaroo.

"That's the idea!"

"It's a big order intirely," said Reilly doubtfully.

"But it's got to be done! Come on!"

The juniors followed the stranger from afar as he zigzagged across the quadrangle towards the old School House.

In a dismayed and whispering crowd they brought up the rear, and they arrived at the steps of the School House just behind Cousin Aubrey.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and Wally appeared in the doorway, rather flushed with the hurry of their rush down from the dormitory. Both of them were looking as clean and neat as new pins.

They halted on the top step, gazing at the dilapidated stranger and at the surrounding crowd of juniors in amazement.

D'Arcy jammed his monocle into his eye.

"Mellish said that my cousin had awwived!" he exclaimed.

"So he has," said Blake.

"Where is he?"

"Here."

"Weally, Blake——"

The grimy stranger stared at Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and came up the steps and held out a grimy hand that was quite innocent of a glove and evidently always had been.

"You're D'Arcy?" he exclaimed jovially.

D'Arcy gazed at him.

"Yaas," he said faintly; "I'm D'Arcy."

"My Cousin Gussy—eh?"

"Oh!"

"How do you do, Cousin Gus?"

For a moment Arthur Augustus almost staggered. He would have given a term's pocket-money and his gold watch for the floor to open and swallow him up. But it didn't, and D'Arcy recovered himself in one moment more. He grasped the grimy hand in his own white and well-shaped one, and shook with great cordiality.

"How do you do, deah boy? Welcome to St. Jim's!"

CHAPTER 10.

Arthur Augustus is Equal to the Occasion—And so is Wally.

"HURRAY!"

The juniors burst into a cheer, which relieved the tension of the situation.

Certainly Arthur Augustus had played up splendidly.

He had not been able to avoid a single second of amazement and horror; but it had been one second only.

Now he was all himself.

His manner indicated no surprise, no horror, no disgust, no awkwardness. It was the polished and urbane manner of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy at his best. It was a blood relation who was claiming his hospitality, and blood was thicker than water. Whatever the stranger was, whatever he might be, he could claim D'Arcy's hospitality to the uttermost extent, and D'Arcy would not be found wanting.

Wally was standing open-mouthed, like a newly-landed fish in appearance, and he seemed to come out of a trance as D'Arcy clapped him on the shoulder and presented him to Cousin Aubrey.

"My only Aunt Jane!" he gasped.

"This is my young bwothah, Wally, Cousin Aubwey," he said. "He is very anxious to see you, the same as we all are."

Cousin Aubrey grinned.

"Shake!" he said.

Wally shook.

The handshake left some slight stains on his hand, and he furtively rubbed it on his trousers.

Arthur Augustus turned to the crowd of juniors.

"Gentlemen of St. Jim's, this is my cousin fwom Canadah. I call upon you for thwee cheers for Canadah!"

"Hurray!" roared the juniors. "Hip, hip, hurray!"

"Pway step up to my studay, Cousin Aubwey!" went on D'Arcy. "You are pwobably in need of some wefweshment aftah your journey."

"I could do with a drink," confessed Cousin Aubrey.

"Ahem! This way, please."

"Good hegg!"

D'Arcy did not shudder.

"Tom Mewwy," he said, "will you see about the awwangements in the Hobby Club-woom. You might come up with me, Blake."

"Right-ho!" said Blake. He would have done anything for D'Arcy at that moment, so sorry was he for the wretched predicament the swell of St. Jim's was in.

Cousin Aubrey stamped upstairs, leaving considerable traces of mud and dust on each step. The preliminary of wiping his boots on the mat did not seem to occur to him, and courtesy prevented D'Arcy from suggesting it.

Blake pressed D'Arcy's arm as they followed.

"I'm sorry!" he whispered.

"Sowwy for what, deah boy?"

"This awful let-down."

"If you are wefewwin' to my cousin, I twust you will not speak diswespectfully of him to me, deah boy."

Blake stared.

"Why, you ass——"

"Wats!"

It was clear that the swell of St. Jim's had resolved to swallow his dreadful cousin whole, so to speak. He was not going to listen to a word against him even from his best chum. Perhaps he was trying to make himself think that Cousin Aubrey was all right, that any little thing that was lacking in outward appearances was only due to a rough and rather breezy life on the wild prairies.

Wally was following them up, still apparently in a kind of trance. But as they reached the study in the Fourth Form passage, Wally appeared to come out of his trance.

Blake and the gentle stranger entered the study, and Wally grasped Arthur Augustus by the arm and dragged him back as he was going in. D'Arcy's eyeglass jerked out, and he turned round upon Wally wrathfully.

"Wally, you young ass——"

D'Arcy minor glared at him.

"So that's the chap?" he muttered fiercely.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"That's the chap you've made me dress up for like a giddy tailor's dummy!" said Wally, in a ferocious whisper.

"Weally, Wally——"

"Well, then, look here!"

Wally jerked off the nice clean collar and the tidy necktie, and twisted them in his hands and hurled them along the passage. Then he rubbed his hands through his hair, and ruffled and towsled it and quite destroyed the beautiful parting that had cost D'Arcy many patient minutes. Arthur Augustus watched him, petrified. Wally was not finished yet. He dabbed his hands on the dustiest part of the wall, and rubbed them on his face, and the beautiful and unusual cleanliness of his countenance disappeared as if by magic.

ANSWERS

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 224.

DON'T MISS "THE ROAD TO RUIN!" The Splendid, Long, Complete, School Story appearing in this week's number of the "MAGNET" LIBRARY, 1D.

"There!" he snorted.

"Wally!" gasped Arthur Augustus faintly.

"That's good enough for that awful thing," said Wally savagely. "Let me catch you making me respectable again, that's all! You ass!"

"Wally!"

"You fathead!"

"Weally, you young wastah——"

"You chump!"

"You cannot entah the studay in that state, Wally," gasped D'Arcy, in horror, as D'Arcy minor made a motion to pass into No. 6. "You are worse than usual; you have even no collar on."

"Good enough for that waster to see."

"Wally, I forbid you——"

"Rats!"

Wally plunged into the doorway. He was boiling with wrath at the trouble he had gone through in the dormitory. He had wasted half an hour, when he might have been playing leap-frog or rounders, and he had made himself horridly uncomfortable—for what? To present a respectable appearance before a grimy stranger who came in rags and dirt and half-drunk! No wonder Wally was simmering over with indignation.

"Wally!" D'Arcy grasped his insurgent minor as the fag plunged into the study doorway. "I can't—I wefuse——"

"Leggo!"

"Quiet!" said D'Arcy, in a terrified whisper. "He will hear! Wally——"

"I don't care if he does. If he's good enough for me like that, I'm good enough for him like this!"

And Wally struggled in. They whirled into the study together, struggling. Cousin Aubrey looked round, and Arthur Augustus released his minor as suddenly as if Wally had suddenly become red-hot, and coloured violently.

Blake looked at Wally, and grinned. The hero of the Third chuckled in reply. Certainly he looked more worthy now of his dreadful cousin from Canada.

Arthur Augustus had to let the matter pass. He could not hurl Wally forth from the study in the presence of the cousin from Canada, though, as a matter of fact, Cousin Aubrey was more accustomed to rows than his aristocratic cousin, Arthur Augustus, supposed at the moment.

Cousin Aubrey had seated himself in the armchair, and lodged a pair of very worn and dusty boots on the table. He put his thumbs in the armholes of his waistcoat, and surveyed the study

"I'm thirsty!" he remarked.

"Yaas, deah boy. What would you like to dwink?"

"Whisky," said Cousin Aubrey, "and water."

"Wh-h-hat?"

"And not too much water," added Cousin Aubrey.

"My deah fellow——"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy cast a helpless look at Blake. Blake chuckled. Wally chuckled still more emphatically. The Third Form fag was beginning to think that a great deal of fun might be "dug up" out of the visit of Cousin Aubrey. Certainly, he was like no visitor that had ever before been received at St. Jim's.

"You didn't 'ear me, perhaps?" said Cousin Aubrey. "What's the matter with whisky-and-water?"

"I—I—I'm afwaid we have no whisky in the studay, deah boy," faltered Arthur Augustus.

"Oh, brandy will do!"

"I—I am afwaid that there is no bwandy, eithah."

"Well, rum, then!"

D'Arcy shuddered.

"We haven't any wum!"

Cousin Aubrey grunted discontentedly.

"What have you got to drink, then?" he asked.

"Well, there's watah——"

It was Cousin Aubrey's turn to shudder.

"Ow!" he said.

"And lemonade——"

"Ow!"

"And gingah-beer——"

"Groo!"

"Or we can make you some tea——"

"Poof!"

"I am twuly sowwy that we cannot pwovide intoxicatin' dwinks!" said Arthur Augustus, with some dignity. "But it is against the wules of the coll. for any fellow to have anythin' of the kind about."

"Oh, all serene!" said Cousin Aubrey. "It's all right. I ain't thirsty enough to drink water, or lemonade, or ginger-beer, or tea. Never mind."

"I'm vewy sowwy——"

"My only Aunt Jane!" murmured Wally. "Look here, Gussy, is this what you call being hospitable to a chap from the place where the giddy sun never sets? Knox, of the Sixth, keeps whisky in his study."

"Wally!" said D'Arcy, in a terrific voice.

"I've seen the bottle when I was fagging for him," said Wally calmly. "I could get the locker open with a chopper, and on an occasion like this——"

"Wally!"

"On an occasion like this, when it's a question of backing up the British Empire, I wouldn't mind biffing open Knox's locker with a chopper."

"Pway shut up, Wally! The fellows are pweparin' a weally decent feed downstairs, Cousin Aubwey. Pewwaps you would like a wash or a bwush down——"

"Do I look as if I want them?" demanded Cousin Aubrey.

"No, no! Of—of course not!" exclaimed D'Arcy hurriedly. "I—I wasn't hintin' at anythin' of the sort. But aftah a journey——"

"I'm used to roughin' it," said Cousin Aubrey. "On the rollin' prairie we don't 'ave time for washes and brushes-up. Nope!"

"I—I suppose not, but here——"

"You should have seed me arter I'd tramped from Montreal to Quebec!" said Cousin Aubrey, with a chuckle. "This is nothin' to wot I looked like then."

"I—I did not know that you were down on your luck, deah boy."

"Wot would I come and see my relations for if I wasn't down on my luck?" demanded Cousin Aubrey.

This was a poser, and D'Arcy gave it up. Cousin Aubrey was apparently only aware of one possible motive a man could have for visiting his relations.

"But I'm 'ungry," said Cousin Aubrey. "I'm ready for that feed."

"Vewy well, deah boy; but if you'd like me to give you a bwush down——"

"I wouldn't!"

"I could lend you a comb——"

"I guess I don't want no comb." Cousin Aubrey surveyed himself in the glass, and seemed satisfied with the result of the inspection. "If I ain't good enough for you, Cousin Arthur——"

"Pway don't say that, my deah Aubwey!" said Arthur Augustus, in real distress. "You are vewy welcome, and I am delighted to see you."

"Orlright, then," said Cousin Aubrey. "Where's that feed?"

"This way, deah boy!"

And Arthur Augustus, very unhappy at heart, but keeping up a calm and polite countenance—and nobly trying to feel that his cousin was indeed welcome—led the way out of the study. He had hoped to induce Cousin Aubrey to make some slight improvements in his toilet, but Cousin Aubrey was evidently not to be induced; and the politeness of the swell of St. Jim's was equal to even this terrible strain.

CHAPTER 11.

The Feed.

TOM MERRY & CO. were in the Hobby Club-room waiting.

They all had their best smiles on, as Monty Lowther expressed it.

They had set out to make a great fuss of the cousin from Canada, and they were going to do it.

Everything that was a little odd in his looks or his ways they were determined to set down to the natural breeziness of a son of the boundless prairies. After all, a man who was engaged, to quote Figgins, in carrying the banner of Empire into the wild wastes of the world, couldn't be expected to dress in Bond Street style, or to talk like a Piccadilly masher.

The breeziness of Cousin Aubrey was certainly a little "thicker" than anybody had expected. But they were determined to be pleased, and, above all, to be hospitable.

"Here he comes!" said Manners from the door, which gave a view upon the staircase.

There was a movement of interest in the room at once. Fatty Wynn turned a ruddy face from the big fire at the end of the room, where he was giving some final artistic touches to various dishes provided for the delectation of Aubrey Smith.

"It's all ready," he said. "I hope he's got a good appetite. This feed will be rather a record."

"The visitor's rather a record, too," said Monty Lowther.

And there was a chuckle.

Cousin Aubrey, still a little unsteady in his gait, came downstairs between Blake and D'Arcy, with the grinning Wally following in the rear. He looked as dusty and dirty and seedy and blackguardly as when he had gone up. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy hoped fervently that none of the masters would see him, though he did not put that hope in actual words to himself. But on awkward occasions, it seems impossible for people to avoid turning up just where they are not wanted. Cousin Aubrey had almost reached the bottom

Next Thursday's Grand, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co. "FOR THE SAKE OF THE SIDE!" By MARTIN CLIFFORD. Order Your Copy Early.

of the stairs when Mr. Railton, the Housemaster of the School House, came in from the quadrangle with Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth.

The amazement of the two masters at the sight of Cousin Aubrey may be imagined. They stopped dead, staring at the hero of the highway. Mr. Lathom fumbled with his glasses, and put them straight, as if doubting the evidence of his eyes. Mr. Railton frowned darkly.

"Blake!"

"Yes, sir," murmured Jack Blake.

"Who is this man? What have you brought him into the school for? How dare you? What does this mean?"

"Pway excuse me, Mr. Wailton, sir!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with stiff dignity. "This gentleman is my cousin, sir."

"What!"

"My cousin fwom Canadah, sir."

Mr. Railton was not easily astonished. He had had to do with boys for many years, and he had grown hardened to surprises. But now he almost staggered.

"Your cousin, D'Arcy!" he repeated, and his voice was quite faint.

"Dear me!" murmured little Mr. Lathom. "Bless my soul!"

D'Arcy's face was crimson. But he stood firmly by the side of his disreputable relation, and did not withdraw the arm that was linked in Cousin Aubrey's. Blood was thicker than water.

"Yaas, sir," said D'Arcy. "Pway allow me to intwoduce my cousin from Canadah, sir—my cousin, Aubwey Smith."

"Good heavens!" muttered Mr. Railton.

"Glad to see yer, sir," said Cousin Aubrey. "You must excuse my comin' in a rather rough and ready way. We don't stand on ceremony out there on the perarers, sir."

Mr. Railton gulped down his astonishment. He knew all about Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's Canadian cousin being expected at St. Jim's. Certainly, he had not anticipated beholding an object like this. But D'Arcy had had permission for his cousin to come, and there was no getting out of that. The Housemaster gave Cousin Aubrey a short nod, and turned away and went into his study.

"Nice and polite, ain't he?" said Cousin Aubrey, rather resentfully. "P'r'aps he thinks that I ain't good enough to come to this 'ere school."

"Not at all, deah boy," said D'Arcy hastily. "You mustn't take any notice of Mr. Wailton's ways. It's all wight."

"Ho!" said Cousin Aubrey.

"Pway, come on. The feed's quite weady, deah boy!"

The mention of the feed restored Cousin Aubrey's good humour. He allowed himself to be led into the Hobby Club-room. The aspect of that room was very cheerful. The large table in the centre, round which the schoolboy clubs were accustomed to hold their meetings, had been increased in size by several other tables being jammed up close to it. The whole was covered with a succession of spotless tablecloths, specially borrowed from Mrs. Mimms, the house-dame, for the occasion. There were certain inequalities in the surface of the combined tables, but all the fellows were agreed that that did not matter in the least.

What did matter was the splendid array of eatables and drinkables disposed to great advantage upon that extensive table.

Seldom, if ever, had St. Jim's beheld such a spread.

Seldom, too, had Cousin Aubrey beheld such a one. His eyes glistened as he looked at the well-spread board. The crowd of juniors in the room gave a cheer as he came in. They were going to be pleased with the Canadian cousin, or they would know the reason why.

"Hurray!"

"Hurray for Canada!"

"Hurray for Cousin Aubrey!"

"Hip-pip!"

"Genel'men," said Cousin Aubrey, with a wave of his dirty hand—"genel'men, I thanks yer!"

"Hurray!"

"It does me proud," continued Cousin Aubrey, evidently persuaded that a speech was expected of him. "It does me proud, it really do, to 'ave a welcome in the hold country like this!"

"Bravo!" shouted Figgins.

"Hip-pip!"

"It goes to my 'eart," said Cousin Aubrey, laying his hand upon the liquor and tobacco stains which almost concealed his waistcoat. "It does me proud! Genel'men, I propose to drink the 'ealth of the Brish Hempire, and 'er Colonies, and may 'er shadder never grow less!"

"Bravo!"

Tom Merry stood up to reply.

"Cousin Aubrey, we're jolly glad to see you at St. Jim's. We recognise you as a true son of the great Empire upon which the sun never sets. We'll drink that toast with pleasure. Pour out the Rhine wine."

The Rhine wine was a figure of speech. It was lemonade and ginger-beer that the juniors poured out, but they poured them out generously, amid a loud popping of corks. A foaming glass was handed to Cousin Aubrey, and he turned quite pale under his dirt.

"Wot's that?" he said.

"Ginger-pop—the best!"

"Genel'men, in the Wild West we don't drink toasts in ginger-pop!" said Cousin Aubrey severely. "Where's the whisky?"

"Oh!" said Tom Merry & Co.

"We can't keep ourselves up to the mark on the wild perarers on ginger-pop," said Cousin Aubrey.

"No—no, of course you can't," assented Tom Merry, dubiously. "But—but——"

"Dash it all, a guest's a guest, and he's entitled to what he wants!" whispered Figgins. "We must get him something to drink."

"But—but how——"

"There's some in the house somewhere. By Jove! Taggles!"

"Good egg! Cut off, and see Taggles. Offer him anything he likes."

Figgins dashed off.

There was little doubt that intoxicating drinks could be found in Taggles' lodge. Taggles, the school-porter of St. Jim's was well-known to be a strict teetotaler; but that, as Monty Lowther said, was only when he wasn't drinking. If Taggles was a strict teetotaler in practice as well as theory, certainly the rubicund hue of his nose did him a great injustice.

"It's all sewene, Aubwey, deah boy," said D'Arcy, with relief. "Figgy has gone to get you somethin' you like."

"Now we're talkin'," said Cousin Aubrey.

And, with a more contented mien, he allowed himself to be led to his place at the table. He sat down, and looked at the serviette provided for him by the care of his generous entertainers. He seemed a little puzzled as to the use it was to be put to. It must be admitted that table-napkins did not always find a place at the hospitable board when the juniors stood feeds; but on special occasions they could be very high-class in their arrangements. The high-class arrangements were wasted upon Cousin Aubrey, however. The son of the wild and woolly West was a stranger to table-napkins, and, after regarding it with surprise for some moments, he blew nose with it, and put it in his trousers pocket.

The juniors kept their countenances as admirably as if the said countenances had been carved in wood or marble. From their looks, one might have imagined that they were habitually accustomed to seeing their guests use serviettes as pocket-handkerchiefs. Politeness could no further go.

A dozen juniors crowded round Cousin Aubrey to help him. He was not backward in helping himself, either. He took a knife in his right hand as if it were a sword, and a fork in his left as if it were a dagger. Then he started.

There is a famous story of a German gentleman who complained of the orchestra in his hotel at dinner-time, because it prevented him from hearing himself eat. An orchestra would not have troubled Cousin Aubrey in the same way. He could easily have beaten a brass band.

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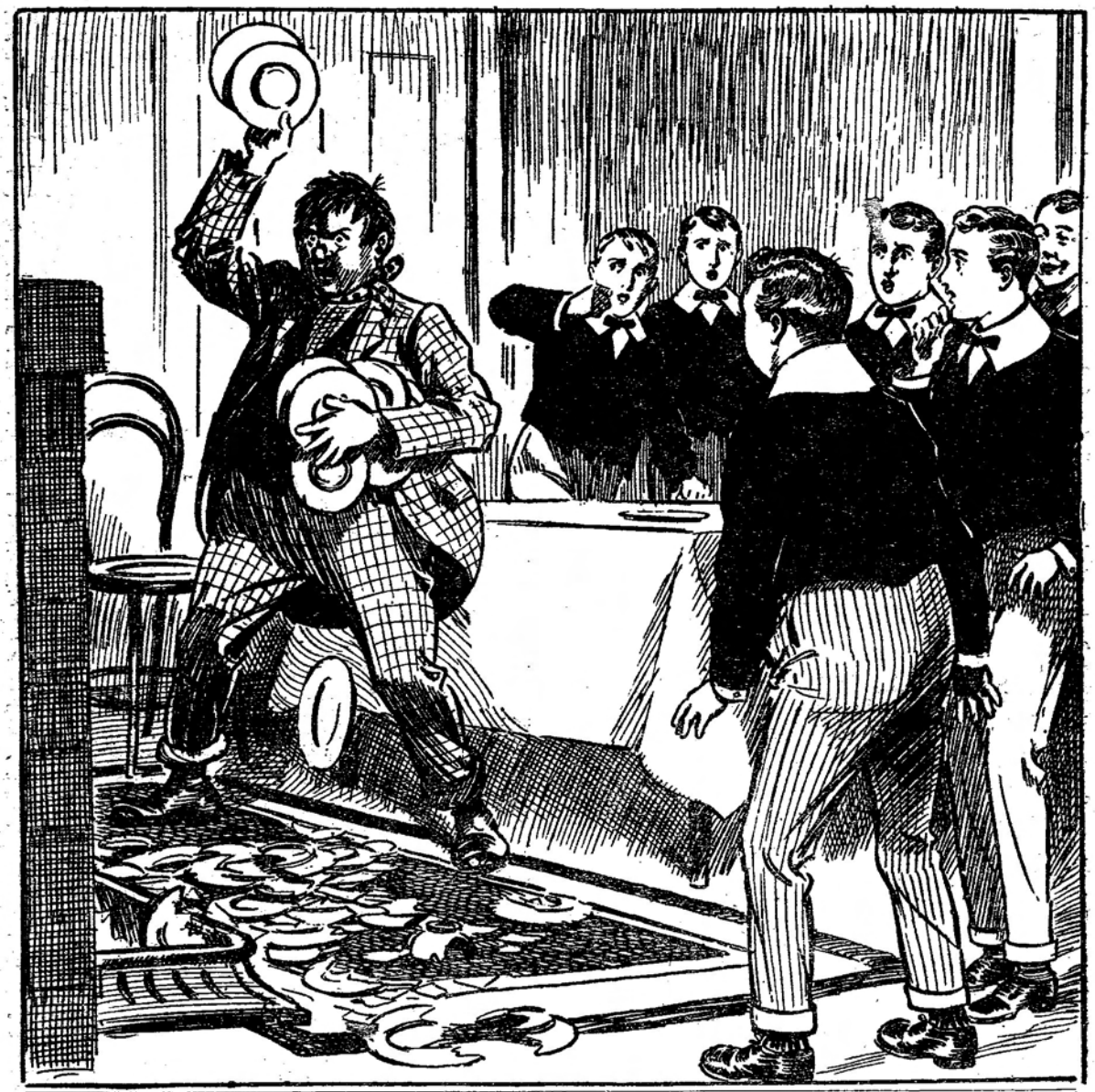
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The situation was growing very peculiar, not to say intolerable. To be almost on fighting terms with a guest was a new experience to the juniors of St. Jim's. But they had never had such a peculiar guest before. Cousin Aubrey was something quite out of the ordinary, for he seemed to find a great solace in the smashing of the crockery. Crash! crash! crash! Plates and glasses, and cups and saucers, and dishes went crashing into the grate, till the pile of broken china rose high before the fender. *(See Chapter 13.)*

For some minutes there was little heard in the room excepting the steady, rhythmic champing of Cousin Aubrey's jaws.

Then he looked up, holding a piece of rabbit impaled upon his fork, and a potato impaled upon his knife, and spoke.

"Where's that beer?"

"Ahem!"

"Whisky, beer, or rum, I don't care!" said Cousin Aubrey generously. "We ain't pertickler on the perarers."

And his knife and fork chased one another to his mouth. Arthur Augustus watched him as if fascinated. Courtesy prevented him from making any remark. But he was in momentary terror of seeing Cousin Aubrey increase the already considerable size of his mouth by the use of the knife as a utensil for conveying viands thither.

"Go and see if Figgy's coming, Kerr," said Tom Merry.

"Right-ho!"

Kerr ran off. Liquid refreshments not yet being forthcoming, Cousin Aubrey seemed content to go on with the more solid part of the entertainment. He kept three or four juniors very busy helping him. Fatty Wynn's fears that he might not have brought an appetite equal to the occasion proved to be quite groundless.

CHAPTER 12.

Another Telegram.

"NOTHIN' of the kind!" said Taggles.

Figgins was negotiating with the school-porter. Figgins, certainly, would not have touched whisky or rum or beer himself; but the laws of hospitality, especially to a cousin from the uttermost bounds of the Empire, were above all other considerations. Figgins felt that the reputation of St. Jim's was at stake. The school could not fail in hospitality to a visitor from the over-seas dominions of his Majesty King George the Fifth. When Cousin Aubrey returned to the wild and woolly West, he might relate his experiences at St. Jim's round a dozen camp-fires on the wild prairies. And surely then it would be too bad to have to say that his thirst was unregarded by his hosts. If he had asked for champagne or Tokay, the juniors would have felt that it was up to them to provide it. Of the consequences that might arise from providing a man of Cousin Aubrey's appearance with strong liquor, the boys had not thought. Such considerations naturally did not enter into their minds.

"You know, Master Figgins," said Taggles impressively.

"Heverybody knows that I'm a strict teetotaler. The lips that touch liquor, Master Figgins, shall never touch mine."

"Well, Cousin Aubrey doesn't want to kiss you, that I know of," said Figgins. "All he wants is some of that filthy stuff you lap up, Taggy."

"I tell yer——"

"Any kind of muck will do—whisky, rum, brandy, gin, or beer," said Figgins. "Blessed if I see why ink wouldn't do. It's just as nice to taste. Now, what have you got, Taggles?"

"Nothin' of the kind."

Figgins extracted a half-sovereign from his waistcoat pocket. It was part of the funds pooled for the entertainment of Cousin Aubrey. Taggles' beery eye glistened at the gleam of gold.

"Now, then, Taggy——"

"Perhaps I might find a bottle of whisky wot I keep for the toothache," said Taggles, as if struck by a sudden thought.

Figgins grinned.

"Find it quick, will you, and there's half a quid."

"I don't know as I've really got any," said Taggles defensively. "But I remember I was goin' to 'ave some for the toothache."

"Quick! Cousin Aubrey's thirsty."

Taggles disappeared into his lodge, and came back with a bottle of whisky in his hand. Figgins had a strong suspicion that he could have produced two or three more, if he had liked, and that he would have done so at a half-sovereign a time. But one bottle was quite enough for Cousin Aubrey. Figgins did not imagine that there was anybody in existence who could drink a whole bottle of whisky. He was not yet fully acquainted with Cousin Aubrey from Canada.

"'Ere you are!" said Taggles, looking greatly surprised, as if he had not really expected to find any whisky. "It was there, arter all! 'Ow much am I to keep outer this arf-sov., Master Figgins?"

"Keep the lot, Taggy. It's all in the funds, and you're an angel in disguise," said Figgins. "This will do Cousin Aubrey beautifully."

And Figgins concealed the bottle under his jacket, and raced back towards the School House. He met Kerr coming out in quest of him.

"Got it?" demanded Kerr.

"Yes. Here it is!"

"Good egg. He's asked for it four times."

"Ha, ha, ha! What do you think of Gussy's Canadian cousin, Kerr?" chuckled Figgins.

"I think he's a coughdrop."

"Breezy—hey?"

"Breezy isn't the word for it!" grinned Kerr. "I wonder if there are any more at home like him?"

They hurried into the Hobby Club-room.

Cousin Aubrey had already made great devastation among the viands. Round him on the floor and on the tablecloth were fragments of bones and crusts. Cousin Aubrey was not a tidy eater. But, as D'Arcy whispered to Blake, they must be bound to wuff it at meal-times on the pwairie. And Jack Blake nodded a sympathetic assent.

Cousin Aubrey looked round thirstily as Figgins came in with Kerr.

"Got it?" he demanded.

"Yes."

"Wot is it?"

"Whisky."

"Hooray!" said Cousin Aubrey.

Figgins placed the bottle on the table. Cousin Aubrey mixed himself a glass of whisky-and-water. The amount of whisky he put in took away the breath of the juniors. The amount of water was not large. But Cousin Aubrey tossed it off without winking.

"My word!" murmured Digby.

Figgins looked rather alarmed.

"I—I hope we haven't done wrong in getting him the whisky?" he muttered. "We only meant to be hospitable, anyway. It's all right, Gussy. I suppose he won't get—er——"

"Weally, Figgins——"

"He won't get squiffy, I suppose?" whispered Figgins.

D'Arcy turned his eyeglass freezingly upon Figgins.

"If you are hintin' that my cousin might get squiffay, Figgins——"

"Oh, all right, if he won't!" said Figgins.

"It would be uttahly imposs. for a D'Arcy to get squiffay, deah boy."

"But he's a Smith," said Monty Lowther, with a grin. "It's possible for Smiths to get squiffy, isn't it?"

"Yaas, I suppose so."

"Well, suppose the Smith half of him gets squiffy," suggested Lowther. "The D'Arcy half may not be able to keep the Smith half in order."

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"It depends on which half of him is Smith, and which half D'Arcy," said Monty Lowther, in a very thoughtful way. "If the top half is Smith, that's the half he's pouring the whisky into, and I'm afraid that half will get squiffy——"

"I wefuse to listen to your idiotic jokes, Lowthah!"

"There he goes again with the whisky!" murmured Manners.

"Phew!"

"He will be raving soon," grinned Crooke.

"Well, that's nothing to grin about, ass!" said Redfern crossly. "I say, Gussy, keep an eye on your cousin. Don't let him get too wild and woolly."

"Weally, Wedfern——"

Cousin Aubrey finished his third glass of whisky, forgetting to put any water in it this time. His face was almost purple now, and his eyes had a rolling look. He went on with his meal, however, his knife and fork making more clatter than before.

Arthur Augustus was secretly dismayed. The idea of a relation of his getting intoxicated made him feel almost ill. And if the liquor got into Cousin Aubrey's head and he became uproarious, what then?

D'Arcy shuddered.

"I suppose it's a way that they have on the giddy prairies," remarked Herries. "Better let him alone. Must be hospitable."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Besides, he won't hurt anybody——"

"I twust that you do not suspect a welation of mine of hurtin' anybody owin' to the influence of liquor, Hewwies?"

"There he goes again!"

"'Ere's to you!" said Cousin Aubrey, swamping whisky into a glass, and unfortunately swamping a good deal of it outside the glass. "'Ere's to all of us! And may you never be 'ard up for a drink!"

And he guzzled again.

"Oh, deah!"

"This is getting interesting," Mellish murmured to Crooke. "I fancy he'll start breaking things soon."

Crooke chuckled.

"Better keep out of the way, in case of accidents," he murmured.

"Yes, rather!"

The two plotters drew back to the window overlooking the quad. As Cousin Aubrey became more excited with liquor it occurred to them that he might forget his caution and blurt out the fact that he knew them.

Mellish whispered his fears to Crooke, and the Shell fellow nodded.

"Let's get out," he said. "Anyway, may as well be off the scene if he starts ramping."

And the two juniors quitted the room. They left the School House, and strolled round towards the open window of the Hobby Club-room, through which they could get a view of the interior and watch the proceedings.

Mellish uttered a sudden exclamation:

"Look there!"

Crooke looked round, and uttered an exclamation, too.

The telegraph-boy from Rylcombe had entered at the gates and was coming towards the School House. He had a telegram in his hand.

"I wonder if it's for Gussy?" murmured Mellish.

"I wonder? Great Scott!"

"If the real cousin should come along to-day——"

"My hat!"

"I'll soon see!"

Mellish ran to meet the telegraph-boy.

"That wire for D'Arcy?" he asked breathlessly.

"Yes, sir."

"Good! He thought it was, and he sent me to fetch it. Hand it over."

"Here you are, sir."

The lad handed Mellish the envelope, and Mellish went into the House with it. The telegraph-boy had no suspicions. But Mellish did not take the wire into the Hobby Club-room, he hurried up to his study with it, and Crooke followed him. The study was empty, and the two young rascals locked the door.

"It's for Gussy?" asked Crooke.

"Yes. Look!"

"The boy oughtn't to have given it to you."

Mellish shrugged his shoulders.

"That's his look-out!" he said.

The cad of the Fourth stirred the remains of the study fire together and jammed the kettle upon the blaze. Crooke watched him rather uneasily.

"You're not going to open it?" he asked.

"Yes, I am."

"But, I say, that's rather thick!"

"I don't care. I can seal it up again so that Gussy won't know."

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"But—but, I say——"

"Oh, rot!"

Mellish held the envelope over the steam that began to issue from the spout of the kettle. The flimsy envelope came open easily. Crooke turned a little pale as the cad of the Fourth drew the telegram out. He was unscrupulous enough, but opening another fellow's correspondence seemed to him rather past the limit. But Mellish did not seem to mind. He held up the telegram to Crooke, and the Shell fellow, in spite of his scruples, read it:

"Coming by the afternoon train. Arrive about six.—"AUBREY SMITH."

The two plotters stared at one another.

"My hat!" ejaculated Crooke, with a deep breath. "He's coming to-day, then."

Mellish knitted his brows.

"Of course, we couldn't foresee that!" he said. "It was a thousand to one that he wouldn't come to-day, I thought."

"I don't know—he might pick a half-holiday to come."

"Well, it can't be helped now. 'Enry 'Arris may be gone before he comes; and if he isn't they can settle it between them," said Mellish, with a shrug of the shoulders. "We can keep out of the way. This wire was sent from London; and the real Smith won't be here until six. Time for Aubrey to have his fling and get out. If they're still here there may be a row."

"He, he, he!" chuckled Crooke. "But what are you going to do with that wire?"

Mellish gummed the envelope again.

"Lose it!" he said cheerfully. "Somebody will pick it up in the quad.—later on—unopened. That's all."

"All serene!"

And the two plotters left the study. The intercepting of the telegram had saved their plot.

In the Hobby Club-room Cousin Aubrey, little dreaming of the narrow escape he had had of being detected, or that the real Aubrey Smith was then on his way to Greyfriars, was devoting himself to the feed—and especially to the bottle of whisky; and his entertainers, determined to be hospitable as they were, could not help growing more and more alarmed.

CHAPTER 13.

Cousin Aubrey Breaks Out.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY preserved the repose which is the distinguishing trait of the caste of Vere de Vere; but it was only by a great effort.

Cousin Aubrey had made deep inroads upon the whisky bottle, and he evidently intended to finish it. And the purple hue of his complexion, the thickness of his breathing, and the rolling of his eyes, showed that he was sinking deeper and deeper under the influence of the potent liquor.

D'Arcy's fixed persuasion that a relation of his could never get into a state of beastly intoxication was rudely shaken. Whether it was the Smith half or the D'Arcy half of Cousin Aubrey that was to blame, certainly he was getting into a most hilarious state.

Some of the juniors were grinning, and some of them were looking alarmed. Some of them wondered what Cousin Aubrey might do.

"Suppose we knock the bottle over by accident, Gussy?" Tom Merry whispered.

Arthur Augustus nodded.

"Yaas, pewwaps that's a good ideah, deah boy."

"I'll do it!"

Tom Merry reached across the table towards a plate of oranges, as if to take one, and knocked his elbow against the whisky bottle. It crashed over on a plate, and there was a gush of liquor upon the tablecloth. Cousin Aubrey gave a kind of howl, and grabbed the bottle and set it upright.

"You clumsy idiot!" he roared.

Tom Merry coloured. He had not expected the distinguished guest to use expressions of that sort.

"Ahem!" he stammered.

Cousin Aubrey held the bottle tightly.

"You clear orf!" he growled.

"Ahem——"

"Oh, shut up!"

"Pway, don't mind him, Tom Mewwy, deah boy!" murmured Arthur Augustus softly. "Chaps are bound to be wathah wuff in their way of speakin' on the pwairie."

"All serene, Gussy!"

Cousin Aubrey poured what was left of the whisky into his glass and drank it at a gulp. His eyes rolled more wildly than ever. He lifted the empty bottle and hurled it into the grate, where it broke into pieces with a terrific crash.

"Oh!" ejaculated the juniors.

Cousin Aubrey chuckled.

"Ho!" he said. "That's my style!"

"Weally, Cousin Aubwey——"

Cousin Aubrey rose unsteadily to his feet, grasping the edge of the table for support, and glared across the table at his aristocratic cousin.

"Who are you?" he demanded.

"Eh?"

"You 'ear me!" said Cousin Aubrey. "Who are you!"

"I? You know me, deah boy!" said D'Arcy, in dismay. "I'm your cousin, Arthur, you know."

"You ain't!" said Aubrey.

"Weally, deah boy——"

"You little pink-eyed bounder!" said Cousin Aubrey.

"Bai Jove!"

"Get hout!"

"What!"

"Houtside!" roared Cousin Aubrey. "I don't like your sort! I ain't taking any of your sort. You get hout, or there'll be trouble. You 'ear me?"

"But weally, Cousin Aubwey——"

"Har you going to get hout?" roared Aubrey.

"Oh, deah!"

"Better go, Gussy," whispered Blake. "He's getting excited."

"But weally, Blake——"

"Go—quick—he'll go for you!"

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus, in great distress and alarm, stepped outside the Hobby Club-room into the passage. He was in a state of bewilderment. He had determined to swallow his terrible cousin whole, so to speak; but what was he to do if the man made a disturbance in the school? The mere thought of it made D'Arcy feel cold all over.

Cousin Aubrey seemed to be somewhat placated by the departure of the swell of St. Jim's. He muttered wrathfully to himself on the subject of pink-eyed bounders and thick ears. The juniors were all silent now, wondering what would happen. Some of the fellows had slipped out of the room—quietly. They were fed up with Cousin Aubrey.

Cousin Aubrey's rolling eye seemed to be looking for mischief. He began to collect the plates upon the table, and hurl them after the whisky-bottle.

Crash, crash, crash!

"Here, hold on!" roared Manners. "You mustn't smash the crockery like that!"

Cousin Aubrey glared at him.

"Who's goin' to stop me?" he demanded ferociously. "I arsk you, who's a-goin' to stop me? You 'ear me?"

"Let him do as he likes," said Tom Merry. "We can't lay hands on a guest! Dash it all, we can pay for the crocks!"

"Oh, my Auntie Jeanette!" murmured Wally, in ecstasy. "What larks!"

"Rather more than a lark!" grunted Jack Blake. "We shall have a pretty penny to pay for this giddy crockery."

"Can't be helped," said Tom Merry, as cheerfully as he could. "Hospitality, you know—honour the stranger within the gates—hands across the sea——"

"Oh, blow hands across the sea!"

Crash, crash, crash, crash!

Cousin Aubrey seemed to find a great solace in the smashing of the crockery. He cleared the table with speed and care. Plates and glasses and cups and saucers and dishes went crashing into the grate, till the pile of broken china rose higher than the fender. And the contents of the dishes went along with the dishes, and all kinds of viands were added to the pile. Fatty Wynn snorted with indignation, but Figgins and Kerr held him back. The fat Fourth-Former looked as if he wanted to rush upon Cousin Aubrey and slay him.

"He's only a little excited," said Tom Merry softly.

"My hat!"

"Go it, Cousin Aubrey!" shouted Wally. "This is gorgeous! Here you are!"

And the fag pushed crockeryware across the table to Cousin Aubrey, to keep him supplied with ammunition.

Crash, crash, crash! Smash, smash!

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's eyeglass gleamed in at the door. Cousin Aubrey seemed to know that he was looking in, for he swung round with a dish in his hand, and hurled it. The swell of St. Jim's whipped back in time, and the dish smashed on the wall across the passage.

"Bai Jove!" gasped D'Arcy.

"Here, stop that!" shouted Tom Merry. "You'll do some damage."

"Who's going to stop me?"

"I will, if you chuck any more crockery at anyone," said Tom Merry determinedly.

Cousin Aubrey glared, but perhaps something in the junior's tone had an effect upon him, for he made no further reply.

The situation was growing very peculiar, not to say intolerable. To be almost on fighting terms with a guest was a new experience to the juniors of St. Jim's. But then they

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never had such a very peculiar guest before. Cousin Aubrey was something quite out of the ordinary.

Crash, crash, crash!

The last of the crockery was deposited in the grate. Then Cousin Aubrey looked round for fresh worlds to conquer.

"I'm goin' to see the 'Ead!" he announced.

"What!"

The juniors were horror-stricken.

If Cousin Aubrey went to see the Head in that state they almost fainted to think of what would happen.

Cousin Aubrey glared ferociously.

"Where's the 'Ead?" he roared. "Ain't I good enough to see the 'Ead—hey?"

"Of—of course you are!" said Blake. "Too good, in fact. But—but the Head is—is engaged."

"In fact, married!" said Monty Lowther.

"Oh, shut up, Lowther!"

"I'm goin' to see the 'Ead!" said Cousin Aubrey. "P'r'aps he'd stand a feller somethin' to drink. Where's my Cousin Arthur? Where's the pink-eyed bounder?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Here I am, deah boy!" said D'Arcy faintly. "But I have a vewy stwong objection to bein' chawactewised as a pink-eyed boundah!"

"Gimme your 'and!" said Cousin Aubrey, apparently having forgotten the enmity he had shown towards the elegant junior. "Now, lead 'on!"

"Yaas, deah boy! Come on!"

Arthur Augustus had to lead the way. But he led it in a direction exactly opposite to that leading to the Head's study. In the empty Form-rooms Cousin Aubrey would not be able to alarm the school, or to do much damage

CHAPTER 14.
Two of Them.

COUSIN AUBREY leaned heavily upon D'Arcy's arm. His legs showed a strong inclination to travel in different directions, which made it difficult for him to walk. To steady himself he put one arm affectionately round Arthur Augustus's neck, and in that attitude they staggered together down the passage.

"Pway help me, Tom Mewwy, deah boy!" murmured D'Arcy, in a stifled voice. "He is fwightfully heavy! Pway back me up!"

"Like a bird, old son!"

Tom Merry had no wish to come into close contact with Cousin Aubrey. He felt that it might soil him all over. But he played the game heroically, and backed up the suffering swell of St. Jim's. He took Cousin's Aubrey's other arm round his own neck, and took half the weight of the distinguished visitor. Between them they propelled Cousin Aubrey down the passage.

"What—what—what is this?"

Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell, stood suddenly before the juniors. The procession halted. The juniors were simply horror-stricken, but Cousin Aubrey was quite cool.

"'Allo, old cock!" he remarked. "How do yer do?"

The master of the Shell, the most dignified and staid gentleman at St. Jim's, not even excepting the Head, was electrified.

He jumped almost clear of the floor.

"Wh-wh-wh-what!" he gasped faintly.

"Come and have a drink!" said Cousin Aubrey generously. "I've struck ile this arternoon, and I've got thirty bob to burn. Come and wet!"

"Good heavens!"

"I know you!" resumed Cousin Aubrey, gazing with rolling eyes at the horrified master of the Shell. "You owe me money!"

"What?"

"You're the bar-keeper at the Peal o' Bells, ain't you?" demanded Cousin Aubrey.

Mr. Linton almost fainted. That he could be taken for a barman was wildly impossible. He gazed at Cousin Aubrey in horror.

"Who is this man?" he demanded, at last.

"If you please, sir," groaned Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, "he's my Cousin Aubwey fwom Canadah."

"What?"

"I had permission to entertain him at the school, sir, this afternoon," said Arthur Augustus. "He's weally wight—all wight, sir, only a little bweezy!"

"Breezy!" gasped Mr. Linton.

"Yaas, sir. It's a way they have in the Wild West, I think sir," said D'Arcy. "He's weally all wight, sir."

"He is intoxicated!" shouted Mr. Linton.

"Only a little hilawious, sir."

"Take the man out of the house at once!"

"But weally, sir——"

"Instantly!" cried Mr. Linton angrily.

"Wot's that?" said Cousin Aubrey belligerently. "Who's goin' to put me out? It ain't closing time yet, young man, not by long chalks!"

"Leave the house, sir!"

"No fear, young man. I'm willing to pay for all I drinks," said Cousin Aubrey, apparently still under the impression that Mr. Linton was the barman of the Peal of Bells in Wayland, "and it ain't time yet. Wot time do you close? Answer me that!"

"Take him away!" said Mr. Linton faintly.

"I'll take you away, you skinny little boiled howl!" said Cousin Aubrey, suddenly releasing himself from Tom Merry and D'Arcy, and prancing towards Mr. Linton, brandishing his fists. "Now, then, if you're a better man than I am, put up your dukes and prove it! You 'ear me?"

"Oh, good heavens!"

Mr. Linton backed away in alarm and horror, and Cousin Aubrey followed him, waving a pair of very large and very dirty fists in the air.

"Put 'em up!" he roared.

"Take this man away!" gasped Mr. Linton.

"Put 'em up! I says to yer——"

Tom Merry & Co. made a rush, and collared Cousin Aubrey just in time, as he was about to hurl himself upon the astounded Shell-master. They grasped the cousin from Canada, and held him fast, in spite of his struggles, and Mr. Linton walked away, quite dazed and bewildered.

"Do be quiet, Cousin Aubwey, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus, almost tearfully.

Cousin Aubrey roared.

"Quiet! Not me! I ain't a quiet bloke! Where's my thirty bob?"

"What?"

"Where's my thirty bob? You 'ear me?"

"What thirty bob, deah boy?"

"My thirty bob!" shouted Cousin Aubrey. "I don't trust you further'n I kin see you. I guess I want that thirty right here and now."

"He's wavin'!" said D'Arcy, in distress. "Bai Jove! I wish we hadn't got him that whisky. What can we do with him, Tom Mewwy? Advise me, deah boy."

"Blessed if I know!" said Tom Merry hopelessly. "We shall have a tremendous crowd round if we take him into the quad."

"I'm goin' to see the 'Ead!" announced Cousin Aubrey. "I want my thirty bob!"

"Oh, Gweat Scott!"

"Get him into the Form-room," said Blake. "There's nobody there."

And Cousin Aubrey was piloted into the empty Shell Form-room. He sat down on one of the desks, and gazed about him vacantly. The juniors, relieved to get him into a quiet place, collected round the doorway to cut off his escape if he tried to go. But Cousin Aubrey seemed to be content to rest where he was for the present.

"Oh, bai Jove!" murmured D'Arcy. "What a day we're havin'!"

"We are!" grinned Monty Lowther. "Next time you have any relations come to see you, Gussy, you'd better wire for a special constable to be here, too, to look after them."

"Weally, Lowthah, you ass!"

The voice of Cousin Aubrey was raised again.

"Where's my thirty bob?"

"What on earth does he mean, deah boys?" asked Arthur Augustus, in utter bewilderment.

"Thirty boblets!" roared Cousin Aubrey. "I arsk yer, as man to man, whether I wasn't promised thirty bob for this 'ere job?"

"What?"

"I'm 'aving that thirty bob, or there'll be a row!" said Cousin Aubrey, and he shook his fist, and slid from the desk, and landed upon the Form-room floor with a heavy bump.

"Oh! Ow!"

Aubrey sat on the floor, and gasped. He seemed surprised to find himself there, and he looked round suspiciously, as if wondering whether there had been an earthquake. The juniors could not help bursting into a chuckle, he looked so utterly ridiculous.

"Larfin', are yer?" said Cousin Aubrey sulphurously. "I'll show yer! I'm goin' to 'ave that there thirty bob. You 'ear me?"

"Give him thirty bob, for goodness' sake!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "We've got that much left out of the funds for the feed, I think. For goodness' sake let him have anything he wants, if it will keep him quiet."

"Yaas, wathah! Waise the money somehow," said the distressed Arthur Augustus.

Thirty shillings were not difficult to raise. Cousin Aubrey held out a dirty paw, and the money was counted into his palm. He grunted as he transferred it to his rags.

"That's orlright," he said. "You ain't cheatin me! I'm

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fair and square. Thirty bob was the amount, and thirty bob I mean to 'ave. You 'ear me?"

All St. Jim's might have heard Cousin Aubrey, as a matter of fact. He was roaring. He rose to his feet, but his legs travelled away from him, and he sat down again with a bump.

"Who shoved me?" he roared.

"Bai Jove! Nobody shoved you, Aubwey. You fell down."

"Yer a liar!"

"Oh, deah!"

"I'll fight anybody who says as I fell down!" roared Aubrey ferociously. "Come 'ere, you pink-eyed bounder, and I'll smash you!"

"I wefuse to be called a pink-eyed boundah!"

"Come 'ere!"

"I decline to come there!"

"Then I'll fetch yer!" said Cousin Aubrey, scrambling up. "I'll show yer! You can't come any of yer old buck with me. Who says I'm drunk?"

"Nobody said so," said Tom Merry.

"Yer a liar!" said Cousin Aubrey elegantly. "That pink-eyed bounder said so, and I'm goin' to smash him! Ho!"

He made a wild plunge at Arthur Augustus. The dismayed swell of St. Jim's dodged among the desks, and Aubrey lumbered and staggered unsteadily after him, breathing fury and alcohol.

"What larks!" grinned Wally joyously.

The next moment he did not think it such a lark. Cousin Aubrey, finding that he could not capture the elusive swell of St. Jim's, whipped round upon D'Arcy minor, and grasped him.

"Got yer!" he growled.

"Here, I say, hold on!" roared Wally indignantly. "I mean leggo! Oh!"

He wrenched himself away from Cousin Aubrey. The tramp reeled after him, and fell upon the floor. He sat up, blinking.

"I guess I'll make you hop!" he stuttered. "Wait till I get my barker hout!"

Some dim idea that he was supposed to be from Canada and the wild prairies was working in the tramp's confused brain. He groped in his rags as if he supposed there was a revolver there. There was a wild rush of the juniors to the door.

"Run for it!" yelled Figgins.

"Wun like anythin', deah boys!" gasped D'Arcy.

The juniors streamed out of the Form-room, and tore down the passage. Kildare met them at the end of the passage with a stern brow.

"D'Arcy——"

"Wun for it, deah boy!" panted D'Arcy. "He's fwightfully dwunk, and he's got a wevolvah!"

"Good heavens!"

The juniors, greatly alarmed, streamed into the quadrangle. Some of them had hoped that the cousin from Canada would bring his revolver with him, and would show them some shooting. But, under the present peculiar circumstances, they did not want to be near the gentleman from the wild and woolly West when he started firing.

They streamed out into the quadrangle in great excitement. The crowd surged and eddied round a tall and handsome young man, with a sunburnt face, and a slouched hat, who had walked in at the school gates, and was striding up to the School House. In their excitement they did not notice him for the moment.

"Hallo!" exclaimed the stranger. "What's the row here? Is it a fire, hey?"

The juniors all turned to look at him. The tall young man was regarding them with good-humoured astonishment from under the wide brim of the slouched hat.

"Hallo!" said Tom Merry.

"Hallo!" returned the stranger. "I guess you look scared! What's the trouble?"

"Man in there drunk, with a revolver!" said Tom Merry, wondering who the stranger was. "He says he's going to shoot!"

"It's my Cousin Awbwey from Canadah," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, "and he's bwoken out! Pway don't go in, sir! It's dangewous!"

The tall man stared at him.

"Your Cousin Aubrey from Canada?" he ejaculated.

"Yaas."

"Then who are you?"

"My name is Arthur Augustus D'Arcy," said the swell of St. Jim's, with some dignity.

The tall young man burst into a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy groped for his eyeglass, jammed it into his eye, and surveyed the hilarious stranger with lofty astonishment.

"I fail to see anythin' to laugh at!" he said.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, my deah sir——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the sunburnt stranger. "Ha, ha, ha! So you're D'Arcy, are you—you are Augustus? And you've got a Cousin Aubrey from Canada kicking up a row in there!"

"Yaas. But——"

"Then you've got two of them!" grinned the stranger.

"Two of them!"

"I guess so."

"Weally, I fail to undahstand you!"

"It's easy enough," said the sunburnt young man cheerfully. "You see, if you're Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of St. Jim's, I'm your Cousin Aubrey from Canada!"

"What!"

There was a shout of amazement from Tom Merry & Co.

"You!"

CHAPTER 15.
The Order of the Boot.

COUSIN AUBREY from Canada laughed.

The juniors were staring at him in blank amazement.

They could not doubt his statement. The sunburnt young man in the slouched hat was exactly what they expected to see, when they had first anticipated the visit from the Canadian cousin. But if he was the genuine Cousin Aubrey from Canada, who was the man in the Form-room? Certainly, D'Arcy, of the Fourth, hadn't two Cousin Aubreys from Canada!

"You—you mean to say that you are my Cousin Aubwey?" ejaculated Arthur Augustus, at last, in hopeless bewilderment.

"I guess so!" said the Canadian cheerfully. "Didn't you get my wire?"

"Yaas. You said you'd come this aftahnoon——"

"I didn't! I said I'd arrive about six, and it's six now."

"There's a mistake somewhere," said Tom Merry. "We had a wire from Wayland last night, signed with your name——"

"Well, I didn't send it!" grinned Cousin Aubrey the Second. "I've just come down from London, and I wired before I started."

"Bai Jove!"

"Somebody else sent that wire last night then, and signed your name to it," said Figgins. "Blessed if I can make it out! Who's that man in there?"

"I knew all along that a welation of mine couldn't possibly act in such an awful mannah," said Arthur Augustus. "The man is an impostor, of course!"

"My hat!"

"It's a jape—somebody's put him up to this," said Blake, "and whoever it was, has got hold of Mr. Smith's telegram and suppressed it!"

"What an awful wottah! Bai Jove!"

"We'll soon see who that man is," said the Canadian. "He's called himself by my name, but he isn't me—that's a dead cert.!"

"No; that's quite imposs.!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Canadian strode towards the steps of the School House. Tom Merry caught him by the sleeve.

"Don't go in!" he exclaimed. "He's got a revolver—he said he had, anyway, and——"

The sturdy young Colonial laughed.

"I'll risk the revolver, if he's got one," he said.

"Weally, Cousin Aubwey——"

"It will be all O K!"

And the Canadian strode into the House. In the hall there were several of the masters and prefects assembled, looking amazed and bewildered. The voice of the tramp could be heard roaring from the Form-room.

"Come on, all of yer! I'll wipe up the floor with the lot of yer! Come on, I says! You 'ear me?"

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Dr. Holmes. The Head of St. Jim's had been brought out of his study by the terrific uproar. "What—what is to be done?"

"It is D'Arcy's cousin from Canada, apparently, sir," said Mr. Linton. "The man is a fearful ruffian, and quite intoxicated!"

"Bless my soul!"

"We'll have him out, if you like, sir," said Kildare.

"Hold on!" said the Canadian cheerfully. "Allow me to remark that I am D'Arcy's Cousin Aubrey from Canada!"

There was a general exclamation.

"What!" said Mr. Linton. "You! Then——"

"Some impostor appears to have come here in my name," explained the Canadian. "I'm going to interview him! But I'm Aubrey Smith from Canada!"

"Bless my soul!"

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"Then it is—is a—a—a trick?" gasped Mr. Linton.

"I guess so!"

"Extraordinary!" gasped the Head.

"I'll run him out, and make him explain," said Aubrey Smith cheerfully.

He strode down the passage, and entered the Form-room. The tramp was on his feet again now, and he sparred up to the genuine Cousin Aubrey at once.

"Come hon!" he roared. "I'll show yer!"

The Colonial chuckled.

"I'll come on, with pleasure!" he replied at once.

And he came on like a whirlwind. Mr. 'Enry 'Arris hit out furiously and blindly, but he was knocked round the Form-room as if he were a punching-ball.

It seemed to the unhappy Mr. 'Arris that a whirlwind or an earthquake, or both combined, had suddenly struck him.

Cousin Aubrey the First dropped heavily on the floor at last. He sat there, rather sobered by his terrific experiences, and blinking at the gentleman from Canada.

"Had enough?" demanded Mr. Smith.

"Groo! 'Ands off!"

"Well, I guess you'll do!" said the Canadian, with a nod. "Now I'll see you off the premises, if you don't mind."

He did not wait for Mr. 'Arris to say whether he minded. He stooped and grasped the tramp by the back of the collar with a grasp of iron, and half-carried, half-dragged him out of the Form-room and down the passage.

The tramp wriggled painfully, and spluttered wildly in the powerful grip of the young Canadian. But he did not try to resist. One of his eyes was closed, and his nose was a little sideways. He did not want the other eye closed. He felt as if he had been through a threshing-machine already.

"Here he is!" announced the Canadian. "Do you want to ask him anything before I pitch him into the road?"

The fellows crowded round. The hall was crammed. There were exclamations and laughter on all sides. The tramp looked a wretched object enough, and he had certainly had his punishment. And Arthur Augustus, in his relief at finding that the dreadful person was not really his cousin, felt that he could almost forgive Mr. 'Enry 'Arris for the trick he had played.

"Who are you?" demanded the Head severely.

Mr. 'Arris blinked at him out of his still serviceable eye.

"I'm 'Enry 'Arris," he said.

"What did you come here for, calling yourself by this gentleman's name?" the Head exclaimed, frowning.

"It was a lark!" said Mr. 'Enry 'Arris feebly. "That's all it was—a lark! I was give thirty bob for the job, sir. It was only a lark on the young gents!"

"My hat!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "That's what he meant by asking for thirty bob. He was paid to come here and play this trick."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And who employed you to do this?" asked the Head sternly.

"Two young gents, sir," gasped Mr. 'Arris. "Which it was only a lark, sir, and I 'opes no offence!"

The iron grasp on the back of his collar had reduced Mr. 'Arris to a wonderful state of sweet reasonableness. A little lamb could hardly have been more tame than was the erstwhile truculent tramp.

"It is inexcusable," exclaimed the Head. "There has been a dreadful disturbance. Do you know the names of the boys who employed you to play this ridiculous joke?"

"No, sir"

"Can you see them here?"

Cousin Aubrey the First blinked round at the crowd. But he was not likely to see them there. Crooke and Mellish were hiding in the box-room above, very careful indeed to keep out of sight just then.

"Might have been Grammarian chaps, sir," suggested Tom Merry. He did not think so; but, as he said, it might have been, and he did not want the japers to be punished. The jape was not exactly one that Tom Merry would have played himself, but all the juniors were agreed that they didn't want the investigation to go further.

The Head pursed his lips angrily.

"It was a most outrageous thing," he exclaimed. "I shall severely punish the boys if they are discovered. Let that man be seen off the school premises at once."

"Come on!" said Mr. Smith cheerily.

Tom Merry & Co. escorted the Canadian and the tramp to the school gates. Mr. 'Enry 'Arris went with remarkable quietness. The Canadian marched him into the open gateway, and with a twist of his powerful arm spun him into the road. Mr. 'Arris sat down in the dust with a yelp.

"Now cut off," said Aubrey Smith, laughing; "and if you ever make use of my name again——"

Mr. 'Arris did not wait to ask what he would do. He jumped up and ran. The juniors grinned as the speeding figure passed out of sight down the lane.

"Well, he's gone," said Tom Merry, "and we're jolly glad he's not Gussy's cousin after all. There wasn't really much likeness between them——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—— Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus exclaimed suddenly.

"What's the matter now?"

"That awful twamp—he's gone——"

"Well, you didn't want him to stay, did you?" grinned Figgins.

"No, you ass; but—I nevah thought of it—he's got our thirty bob!"

There was a rush to the gates. But the tramp was long out of sight, and, under the circumstances, he was not likely to be seen near St. Jim's again. The thirty shillings had vanished, and they were not likely to be seen again either.

"Well, never mind," said Tom Merry, laughing. "Let him go. Mr. Smith, you must excuse us for having taken that awful rotter for you, but we had never seen you, you know."

The Canadian laughed.

"I guess that's all O K," he said. "It's the biggest joke I've struck for a long time."

"Yaas, I ought to have known it couldn't be poss.!" said Arthur Augustus. "It was widiculous to be taken in like that. We're all awfully glad to welcome you to St. Jim's, Cousin Aubwey."

"Yes, rather—welcome to the old country, sir!" said Figgins. "Jolly glad to welcome any chap from Canada."

"Hear, hear!"

"Thanks very much!" said Cousin Aubrey, smiling.

"We had a splendid feed ready for you, sir," said Fatty Wynn regretfully. "That awful rotter has wrecked it—and smashed all the crockery. But if you don't mind waiting a few minutes, sir, we'll look after you all right."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Come on," said Fatty Wynn, "some of you show Cousin Aubrey round the school while we get a feed ready!"

"Good egg!"

Cousin Aubrey smilingly assented. He seemed all health and spirits and good-humour. He declared himself delighted with St. Jim's, and delighted with the fellows, and delighted with things in general. And there was no doubt that the fellows were delighted with him. The Head shook hands with him very heartily, and welcomed him to St. Jim's, and begged him to stay for some days, which Cousin Aubrey cheerfully promised to do. And he made the juniors joyous by telling them that he would be glad to play in a cricket match, and promised to show how they played cricket in Canada. The impression the real Cousin Aubrey made upon the fellows was as good as Mr. 'Arris's impression had been bad.

And Fatty Wynn & Co., stretching their credit at the school shop to its utmost limits, provided a feed to welcome the stranger from afar; which, if not quite so extensive as the previous one, was quite as good, and quite big enough. And the Hobby club-room—newly swept and garnished after its devastation by Mr. 'Arris—presented a very cheery and hospitable appearance as Mr. Aubrey Smith was led into it by a most enthusiastic crowd of juniors.

Arthur Augustus sat at the feed with his cousin on his right hand, beaming. He was proud of his cousin from Canada, as, indeed, he had reason to be. Cousin Aubrey was a cousin whom anybody might have been proud of.

Two fellows did not join in the celebrations—Crooke and Mellish. They were only too glad that their share in the transaction had not come out. But nobody wasted a thought upon Crooke and Mellish. The fun in the Hobby club-room was fast and furious, though in a different way from that of the first Cousin Aubrey. Cousin Aubrey the real gave a song after the feed, and then Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of course, gave a tenor solo, and the juniors, in the merriment of the moment, clapped him uproariously, and D'Arcy took that for an encore, and gave them another, and when that was finished, the juniors considerably moderated their transports.

But, tenor solos notwithstanding, it was a most joyous and successful celebration, and all the fellows of St. Jim's agreed that Cousin Aubrey was a ripping fellow, and that the British Flag was in no danger of being lowered in any part of the world so long as it was backed up on the frontiers of Empire by fellows like Gussy's Canadian Cousin.

THE END.

(Next Thursday: "For the Sake of the Side," another splendid, long complete tale of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's, By Martin Clifford. Order your GEM Library in advance. Price ONE PENNY.)

DON'T MISS "THE ROAD TO RUIN!" The Splendid, Long, Complete, School Story appearing in this week's number of the "MAGNET" LIBRARY, 1D.

OUR GRAND SERIAL STORY.

WINGS OF GOLD!

The Story of the Most Terrible and Amazing Journey Ever Made By Man.

Edited from the Notes of Maurice Fordham, Esq.

By SIDNEY DREW.

CHARACTERS IN THIS GRAND STORY.

MAURICE FORDHAM and LANCE MORTON—Two healthy and wealthy young Britons, owners of the yacht Foamwitch, and the wonderful aeronef, Wings of Gold.

PROFESSOR LUDWIG VON HAAGEL—The famous German scientist, also noted for his clumsiness.

CROOKS—The ship's cook.

JOSEPH JACKSON or SHOREDITCH JOSE—A Cockney member of the crew, whose constant companion is a game bantam named the Smacker.

TEDDY MORGAN—Ship's engineer.

WILLIAM TOOTER—The hairy first mate.

The Foamwitch is on an expedition with the object of exploring the strange land which is believed to lie beyond the barrier of eternal ice near the South Pole.

As soon as the first land is reached the construction of the aeronef, Wings of Gold—which has been carried in pieces on the Foamwitch—is proceeded with, and in it begins a wonderful voyage into the heart of the Antarctic.

Fearful creatures, thought to be extinct since prehistoric times, are encountered when the adventurers reach a mysterious mountain country never before trodden by the foot of civilised man.

Once the aeronef is wrecked; but, by dint of much ingenuity and hard work, is repaired, and her head is turned towards the North. A terrific wind, however, springs up, and Wings of Gold is forced through a ravine in the mountains, and the crew find themselves flying over a large inland lake, surrounded by the vast, unknown mountains. They encounter such fearful creatures here that they decide to go back and return to the Foamwitch; but investigation reveals that the ravine is now blocked up, and they are prisoners in that vast enclosure.

Their tinned provisions have all gone bad, and the adventurers are in a bad case, when, cruising gently along, they come upon first an isolated human being, a jet-black giant nine feet high, and then upon a whole city, which they name the City of Triangles from the way it is laid out. Suspicious at first, the race of black giants and their king soon become well-disposed towards Wings of Gold, Crooks particularly making a great impression. A native servant is given to him, and is at once christened Tarrytop. One day Wings of Gold almost falls a prey to a gigantic octopus, but is rescued in the nick of time by a party of natives led by their king, whom Crooks has christened Big Ben. In return for this service, Big Ben, from his gestures, is evidently asking a favour in his turn, but the adventurers are at first unable to make out what it is that he requires.

(Now go on with the story.)

A Bargain—The Way Out.

"Two lingos being different," remarked the cook, "they ain't the same. Why not? That's sense. But faces being the same, likewise arms, we can do the deaf and dumb, which is still more sense."

Crooks touched Big Ben on the arm, waved his arms in the same direction, then looked at him inquiringly. A smile of understanding crossed the native's face. He drew back, clutching his spear fiercely with both hands, and said a few words to Hercules, who drew back along the deck.

"Blow me if it ain't a fust-class sparrin' match!" Jackson yelled. "Dot 'im on the point, Ben! Dot 'im!"

"Some men is fools!" said Crooks, fixing his eye steadily on the Cockney. "An' why not? Fools is useful, though they ain't so ornamental as Tooters. Not 'arf!"

"Shut up," Tooter growled, "or I'll——"

Tooter broke off short with his threat, and glanced at Big Ben, who had lain himself on the deck, with his spear. The two men slashed and stabbed at each other wildly, Big Ben at last dropping his enemy with an imaginary wound. But no sooner was he down than one of the other natives sprang up and rushed at Big Ben, who was beaten back until he fell on his knees.

"Ain't it a pantomime?" Jackson gasped. "A fair knock-out for the 'Ippodrome! But what's the shindy mean?"

"What's it mean, cookey?" asked Fordham.

"Clear as mud, sir," Crooks answered, "which, not being by nature clear, is a paradox." He turned to Big Ben, whose face was streaming with perspiration. "What's the game, old burnt face?"

Big Ben waved his arms wildly, first towards the city, and then towards the crew of the ship.

"Argarmi! Argarmi!" he wailed, a terrible note of pleading in his voice.

"It's help, sir; and why not?" Crooks said. "There's evidently another of these yere tribes about, which, seeing as 'ow the country offers every advantage—'unting, and such like—is as it should be. Why not?"

"You've hit it!" cried Lance. "They're being threatened by some more powerful tribe than themselves. What say you, Maurice? Are we to help them?"

"Yes, I'm with you there."

"And you, dad?"

"So that mein specimens are safe I care not," Von Haagel answered promptly. "Give unto me ein gun, und ich——"

"No blessed fear!" said Tooter, in his beard. "You ain't exactly a fust-class marksman yet. It'll be all below, batten hatches, when you start."

"Then we'll do it," said Lance quietly. "Tell him, Crooks."

"Now, then, Tarbox," Crooks said, with a grin, prodding Big Ben playfully in the chest, "keep yer weather heye on me, weather heyes bein' good fer obserwating. Why not?"

Crooks's pantomime was short, but it was evident that the natives understood it, and one by one they knelt at the feet of the lanky cook.

"Lot o' blessed hasses!" growled Tooter.

"It's me beauty, Tooter," grinned Crooks. "It were on me father's side, which, me bein' a boy, was 'anded down sudden like to me."

"Back for the city, Teddy," Fordham ordered, turning to Morgan, who had gone back to his beloved levers. "We're seeing this thing through. The Maxim ought to do the job for them."

Crooks dived below to attend to the cooking, and Fordham knew that it would be impossible to make him do anything else while engaged on the work in hand.

By the time the meal was prepared and eaten—Big Ben and Hercules helping vigorously in this direction—Wings of Gold was hovering over the centre pyramid of the City of Triangles.

"They're making ready," Lance said to Fordham, as he looked over the bulwarks.

He was right. Through the narrow streets hundreds of men, all armed, were hurrying. Some carried great bundles of wood, with which they were barricading each entrance into

Next Thursday's Grand, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co. "FOR THE SAKE OF THE SIDE!" By MARTIN CLIFFORD. Order Your Copy Early.

one of the triangular streets, others had large quivers of arrows, which they laid down beside the barricades.

"They've got ideas of their own," said Fordham. "Look at the lines of the defence—first the moat and the wall, then the first triangle. If that is carried they will fall back to the next, and so on until the centre is reached."

"Let us hope it won't come to that."

"No fear! Once the Maxim begins to kick, you'll see 'em run."

Wings of Gold floated down softly to the ground, and the natives and her crew alighted.

As Crooks stepped down all the men near bowed to the ground, crying:

"Argarmi! Argarmi!"

"A flat in these yere parts wouldn't be so dusty," remarked the one-eyed man, with a grin.

"Get to work, cooky!" Lance said. "You've got to bargain with Big Ben. If we help him he shows us the way out."

Crooks followed Big Ben into his house, and the others waited outside. Von Haagel leant disconsolately against the wall, staring at the drawings on the house before him.

"It's not right!" he muttered. "The mastodon should dead have been this many centuries. It is not right."

Ten minutes later Crooks emerged from the house carrying a substance very like rough parchment in his hand.

"Got it?" asked Lance eagerly.

"Bet he ain't!" growled Tooter.

"Envy is a sin," Crooks remarked. "Some that has no whiskers has no envy, men being different, and——"

"Shut up," Fordham ordered, "and out with your news!"

Crooks spread out the parchment, and the men, bending over it, saw it was a map drawn remarkably well in red paint.

The lake, the City of Triangles, the aqueduct were distinctly marked. Over these the men skipped hastily, their eyes travelling to the great range of mountains. These were drawn distinctly enough, and Crooks laid a finger on the spot where Wings of Gold must have crossed.

"Yes," said Lance sharply; "but we can't go that way again."

"We must not risk mein peautiful specimens," said Von Haagel solemnly.

"Specimens is beautiful," Crooks remarked, "but ways out is better still, which, being discovered, is there."

He laid a finger on a spot right opposite to where they had crossed the mountains, and there a valley or gorge was plainly indicated.

"Hurrah!" cried Lance. "The way out!"

"Which is good things when you're through them. Why not? But mind the crush!"

The Sentry Comes In, and All is Ready for the Fight—The Attack on the First Line—The Maxim Gets to Work.

"What do you say to doing a bit of scouting, Teddy?" Lance queried as evening was drawing in.

Already the natives were assembled to a number close on a thousand round Big Ben's dwelling, evidently waiting for the time when they would have to man the wall.

"Can't be done, sir," Teddy Morgan answered promptly. "We're none too well supplied with power now, and we shall want it all to-night. Suppose we didn't beat the enemy off, we might have to run for it, and I've no wish to get stuck with a covey of pterodactyls about. They're not so bad in cases, but alive—ugh!"

"You're right, Teddy. We'll hang on here until our turn comes. Hallo! What's Crooks up to?"

The long, lean, one-eyed man certainly presented a strange appearance as he emerged from the hold of Wings of Gold. He had discarded his usual duck trousers, etc., and was now garbed in a gorgeous robe of feathers, his belt over it. In this was stuck a brace of pistols, and in his hands he swung the huge copper-headed axe.

"What's the game?" Fordham asked, coming up at that moment. "You'll get your feathers blown off when we begin to move, cook."

Von Haagel came bounding up the steps and rushed at Crooks.

"Ach! Ein new specimen!" he yelled. "It is to me grand."

"Same to me, sir," Crooks agreed coolly; "but I ain't bein' packed in a case just yet."

"Your pardon, mein Crooks!" Von Haagel said, with obvious disappointment in his voice. "I had not thought to see you so peautiful, mein freund."

"Live an' learn, sir; die and drop it. Why not?"

"But what's the game?" Lance cried. "Chief A——"

"Chief Argarmi!" Crooks answered, with a grin. "The chief leads—right costume, feathers in fashion. Why not?"

"You're going with them?" Fordham cried. "Look after yourself, cooky; we can't spare you."

Crooks leapt down to the ground after a hearty handshake all round, and disappeared into the chief's dwelling. Night had already fallen, and not a star was to be seen. The natives began to chant monotonously—"like blessed sirens," as Jackson remarked. Morgan stood by the levers ready to act. The Maxim had already been brought up again from below, and Tooter was leaning against it, smiling expectantly and chewing vigorously.

A sudden commotion below shook the place; the chanting ceased amid a clash of arms, and a dark figure came running out of the darkness.

"The alarm!" Lance said, between his teeth, turning towards Morgan. "All ready?"

"Ay, and waiting!"

Big Ben, followed closely by Hercules and Crooks, dashed out of the house. A wild yell was raised, and, with the chiefs leading, the whole force of fighting men dashed away through the streets.

"Let her go!" said Lance hoarsely.

He held a rifle in his hands, and the light in his eyes showed that he meant to use it. Fordham and Jackson were armed in a like manner, while Von Haagel had become possessed in some remarkable manner of a huge blunderbuss.

With a whizzing and a roaring, the screws began to cut the air, and like a ball thrown slowly upward Wings of Gold rose from the ground. At present she carried no lights, but right amidships Morgan had rigged up a searchlight, which was presently to play a prominent part.

"Keep her low," Fordham said coolly, "and run for the outer wall."

Wings of Gold darted swiftly away, and as she tore along the men on board of her could already hear the cries of battle. The fight was in full sway.

The outer wall was reached, and the airship hung stationary, and the searchlight flashed out.

"There are thousands of them!" cried Lance excitedly. "Look at them swarming up the wall!"

He was right enough. The searchlight darting here and there revealed a great struggling mass of forms, and the glint of many weapons.

"Shall I say 'Go!' sir?" shouted Tooter eagerly, shouldering the Maxim.

"No; hold!" answered Lance sharply. "There's no telling friends or foes in that mass. We must wait for the wall to be carried; then, when Crooks and the rest are behind the barricade, let her go."

The black mass surged and eddied round the wall, passing over it in waves, until the first of the triangular streets was swarmed with struggling, fighting men. Crooks, his face whitened with the powerful searchlight, could be plainly seen wielding his great axe, a pile of dead growing around him.

"They're going for the barricade!" Morgan cried.

Hardly were the words out of the man's mouth than the fighting mass seemed to split, the defenders rushed for the first barricade, and most of them got safely behind it. With wild yells, the enemy followed.

"Now!" Lance yelled, turning to Tooter. "Let her rip!"

Beaten Back—Worse to Follow.

With a spiteful, hissing roar the Maxim spoke, a thin line of fire stretching out of the muzzle, along which travelled the leaden messages of death.

Tooter had not forgotten his old skill, and within a minute fully a score of the closely packed natives had fallen.

"Keep the light on 'em," yelled Tooter, "while I gi' 'em another dose!"

"They're game, anyhow!" Lance shouted into Fordham's ear above the rattle of the Maxim. "There's not a sign of retreat."

Von Haagel, dragging his huge blunderbuss behind him, hurried across the deck.

"Ach! You shall see it!" he grunted. "I will them frighten!"

There was a loud roar, followed by a wild yell of pain, and both Lance and Fordham rushed towards the spot, fearing that the professor must have met with a serious accident. Their fears were soon set at rest, however, when they saw Von Haagel sitting up rubbing a tender part of his anatomy.

"Himmel!" he gasped. "It is ein dumkopf! It kick like——er——"

"Mule?" Lance suggested.

"Tanks—jah!"

This little scene had not stopped Tooter and the Maxim for a second, and the gun continued to roll out its bullets with deadly precision until its water-jacket was steaming.

The fight was still raging furiously down below, Crooks, the chiefs, and the natives holding the barricade with grim

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determination against the enemy, only a few of whom could attack at a time, while the rest were exposed to the devastating fire of the Maxim, though unable to strike a blow.

"They'll be making for the roofs in a minute, sir!" cried Morgan, as he brought Wings of Gold round a trifle, so as to give Tooter a better chance.

"Wouldn't I like to be darn there—not 'arf!" Jackson yelled. "I'd do my bit, sonny—not 'arf!"

Morgan's words proved true. Finding they could not carry the barricade, and that many of their number had fallen under the heavy fire of the Maxim—which, although it must have been terrible to them in its strangeness, still did not appal them—they clambered upon each other's shoulders and so reached the roofs of the houses.

For a moment the rattle of the Maxim ceased, and Tooter looked over his shoulder at Morgan.

"Run her closer down, Teddy," he said hoarsely, "and I'll teach them!"

The whirring screws slackened their speed, and Wings of Gold drifted down until they were not twenty yards above the roofs, which were now dark with swarming forms. The barricade was only a few feet away to the left; and those on the airship could pick out Crooks, the blood streaming from a cut on his head, still slashing and hacking with his great axe.

"Back to the next street!" Tooter yelled. "And I'll larn 'em!"

"Why not?" Crooks shouted back, glancing up for a second, after felling one of the enemy to the ground with a split skull. The next moment he had touched Big Ben on the arm, and pointed back to the next barricade.

The action was understood. Wild cries rose above the din of the battle, and the defenders bolted back towards the next barricade.

"Now's our chance!" Lance shouted, for he had grasped Tooter's idea. "Slowly round the roofs, Teddy."

Wings of Gold moved forward, keeping no more than twenty feet above the roofs. Already some of the men had jumped down into the street beyond, but others were still swarming over the houses like bees. Into these crashed the Maxim's bullets; wild screams rent the air, and dark bodies, lifeless and mangled, rolled from the slanting roofs into the streets below.

It was too awful!

"Stop!" cried Fordham hoarsely. "This cannot go on! It is nothing less than slaughter!"

"It are a bit thick," Jackson agreed between his teeth. "Why not try rockets on 'em, sir? What moves dog-hapes may move these 'ere coves."

Lance and Fordham dived below, and returned with a handful of rockets, and also a bundle of Roman candles that had somehow got among the former.

"They'll think the stars have gone wrong," said Lance with a grin, "and——"

"Sharp's the word, sir," said Tooter. "They're at the second barrier."

As there was no rocket stand on deck, Lance balanced the rocket against the bulwarks. A second later it soared off at an angle, and, by sheer luck, burst right over the enemy, dozens of glistening, burning stars falling among their bare, black shoulders. Wild yells of fear rang out, which increased as another rocket, fired by Fordham, burst.

"Keep the pot a-boilin'!" Jackson yelled, snatching up a rocket and holding a match to the fuse. In his excitement he forgot to balance it against the bulwarks, and the sparks gushed out, making him drop the rocket with a yell.

But that was not the worst of it. The rocket darted off across the deck, cannoned against Teddy Morgan's legs, and rushed straight at Von Haagel's legs. The professor saw it coming, and turned to fly, but it was too quick for him. With a whack it caught him full upon the seat of his trousers; the sparks set fire to them, and in a moment they were alight.

"Sit on 'em, dad!" Fordham shouted, hardly able to keep back his laughter. "Sit on 'em!"

Von Haagel, seeing the wisdom of the advice, obeyed promptly, but, as luck would have it, the rocket had caught in something on the deck, and was fizzing out sparks on the identical spot. The consequence was that Von Haagel sat right down on top of it.

Bang!

The rocket burst, and the professor leapt up, surrounded by a cloud of red stars.

"Help, mein poys!" he yelled. "Help!"

Smothering their laughter, Lance and Fordham rushed to his assistance, and between them they put out the fire, which had really done very little damage to the professor.

"Best go below," Lance suggested, "or you'll be catching cold, dad."

"The rockets ha' done the trick!" Tooter cried regretfully, taking an empty cartridge-belt from the gun. "They're running like blazes!"

A retreat had indeed set in in dead earnest. The enemy, leaving a hundred of their number dead, were rushing to the outer wall, with Crooks and the natives in hot pursuit. Flights of arrows lessened the ranks of the flying men, but the survivors, waiting for nothing, rushed on.

To the outer wall Crooks and his followers carried the pursuit, but no further.

In the woods they would have stood no chance against their more numerous enemy, and there, too, Wings of Gold would have been practically powerless to follow. Yelling with triumph, shouting fierce war-songs, the defenders returned to the centre of the town. Only one or two sentries were left at the walls, it evidently being considered that the enemy had been too well beaten to return.

"Licks 'Appy 'Ampstead 'oller!" Jackson remarked with a grin. "Talk abaht singin'! Pipe on, me merry bullfinches!"

"We'll go and pick old Crooks up," Lance said, turning to Morgan. "Bet he can do with a drink."

"There are others!" the engineer remarked quietly.

"Good for you, Teddy!" Fordham said with a grin. "I'll bring the whole canteen on deck for once. Meanwhile, head her for old Big Ben's shanty."

A Peace Celebration — Crooks Surprises the Natives Still More—An Alarm—A New Peril—Teddy Morgan's Idea.

Wings of Gold descended gently among the yelling natives, and her crew, accompanied by the professor, who had donned another pair of the necessary garments, leapt down from her side.

"Cooky," Lance said warmly, grasping Crooks, whose head was bound with a blood-stained cloth, "you're a hero!"

"Why not?" Crooks replied modestly. "To die is usual; once being enough, let it come when it likes."

"And what's going to happen now?" Fordham asked.

"Regular free-and-easy, sir, without the beer—which, there seeming to be no beer in these 'ere parts, is natural. Why not?"

Torches were being stuck on high poles by the natives, and the glare of these made the space round the chief's house as bright as day. A kind of throne, not unlike a sofa on stilts, for each leg was about twelve feet high, had been erected, with a ladder leading up to it. On the space between those legs the royal band of musicians had taken their position, and were now contriving to make a most abominable and unnerving row.

"Reminds you of a German band, doesn't it?" Lance whispered to Fordham, but not in so low a tone that Von Haagel failed to hear him.

"You are wrong, mein poy," he said sharply. "We in our country do the musicians keep, und to you what you call the rottairs send. It is so."

"Didn't mean to offend you, dad," said Lance penitently.

"Impossible, mein dear Lance!" said Von Haagel warmly, his face wreathed in smiles. "Mein freunds are mein freunds always and for ever being."

Crooks, looking fantastic in his feather robe and the cloth round his head, strode towards the ladder, and slowly mounted the throne.

"Argarmi! Argarmi!" the natives yelled, and the long, lean, one-eyed man waved his arms in reply. He beckoned to Big Ben and Hercules, and they sat beside him.

"'Allo," Jackson remarked, "we're on the king lay, too. That's me—not 'arf!"

Jackson spoke the truth. Crooks was motioning them to join him on the throne, which was capable of seating a round dozen.

"You go up first, dad," Lance said. "We'll catch you if you fall."

Up the professor went without mishap. The others followed after him, and in less than a minute they were all seated on the throne, their legs dangling in rather an undignified manner.

"Only wants a string and a bent pin," Jackson said with a grin, "and what-ho for the tiddlers!"

"There are them as are fitted for high places, which, being natural, is right. But them as is not fitted, might be'ave when elevated. Why not?"

"Shut yer jaw!" Jackson growled savagely

"Which is good when required to be done," Crooks answered, "but speeches being expected, they should be made."

"Hang it, he's going to address them!" Fordham whispered to Lance. "Old cooky fairly takes the biscuit for cheek!"

Crooks had risen, and was leaning one hand upon his

great axe. He held up his weapon, and a great burst of yelling broke from the men below. He raised his hand, and the shouting ceased.

"Seein' as how you ain't likely to understand me," said Crooks, waving his arms dramatically, "it don't signify much what I says, and for why? Because, you bein' a lot of grinnin' savages, without even the personal advantages of Tooter——"

"Shut it!" that worthy growled.

"You ain't in a position to contradict my statements, which is full of wisdom and truth, which is also true. Why not?"

Crooks kept on in this strain for a clear five minutes, much to the amusement of his comrades, and apparently to the delight of the natives. When he stopped speaking, he indulged in a short pantomime, which was evidently understood by the natives, for they gave vent to a great shout. Most of them drew back, leaving a great circle in which a score remained. These men threw off all their clothing save a loin-cloth, then drew up in a line, their great spears, the blades of which were dull with the blood of their enemy, in their hands. They bowed low to those on the throne, and Crooks waved his hand.

With a loud noise the band broke into a weird chant of melody, the score of warriors straightened themselves up, drew apart, and then leapt into the wildest war-dance imaginable. Spear clashed against spear with such seeming ferocity that it appeared impossible that the performers could escape injury. Wilder and wilder the dance grew, the crowd yelling encouragement, and beating their spears together.

"Oh, for a camera and a flashlight!" Fordham cried.

As suddenly as the wild dance had started it ceased, and the warriors, panting with their exertion, threw themselves prone upon the ground.

"Ain't it a treat?" Jackson said. "It licks our alley on a Saturday night 'oller—quite 'oller!"

"Argarmi! Argarmi!" the natives yelled wildly, and Crooks grinned round on his companions.

"Kings is good things," he remarked, "but their job ain't light, by no means. Jackson, my sparrer, where's the orgin?"

"Right dahu on the spot," the Cockney answered, promptly producing his beloved instrument.

"Then let her rip with:

"'Dinah, I loves yer truly—
'Oo says it's all my guff?'

"Which," added Crooks, "being poetry ekal or sooperior to Shakes, is not bad. Why not?"

Without more ado, Crooks slid down the ladder to the ground, faced the throne, and waited for Jackson to strike up. The mouth-organ started merrily, and Crooks, in a voice that could not have been excelled, and probably not even equalled, for sheer want of music, began to howl out the song. Lanco yelled with delight, and Fordham and the rest were nearly as bad. But the natives were impressed by it in quite another way, and stood silent, awed admiration writ large upon their faces.

The song came to an end, but not Crooks' turn, for he started on a slow double-shuffle, varying it with an exhibition of high kicking, and ending with a back somersault which nearly landed him on his face. As he mounted on the throne again the natives fairly yelled themselves hoarse.

"Peautiful, dear Crooks!" Von Haagel cried. "You are of the geniuses made."

"Not 'arf!" Jackson agreed enthusiastically. "'Ang me if you ain't a regular show!"

A tall man, garbed only in a loin-cloth, dashed from among the shadows of the houses into the light. The glare of the torches revealed blood upon his lips, and he sank down opposite the throne.

"Wounded!" said Lance sharply.

"Run out!" Morgan corrected. "He's brought news of some sort. Let's hope it doesn't mean more fighting. There's been enough bloodshed to last me a lifetime."

"Same 'ere, cocky."

Half a dozen of the natives had gathered round the prostrate man, and Big Ben, descending hastily from the throne, joined them. A liquid of some kind was put to the man's lips, and he sat up, gasping out something in a terrified voice.

Big Ben turned and beckoned to Hercules, who instantly joined him. The two chiefs conversed together in a low tone for a few moments, then the latter darted into the nearest house, and emerged a little later with a piece of parchment and a burnt stick. With these in his hands he mounted to the throne.

"What's up, Cooky?" Lance answered eagerly

"Not knowin' yet, can't say. Time may bring wisdom, which is sense."

Hercules drew rapidly on the parchment with the burnt stick, and Crooks watched the operation eagerly. Figure after figure was drawn, and the one-eyed man's face grew unusually set and almost haggard. When Hercules had finished, Crooks took the parchment and stared at it intently; then he passed it on to Von Haagel.

"Mastodons!" the professor gasped. "Ein tribe mit men behind them!"

Lance and Fordham glanced at each other, and then at Crooks, half guessing the truth.

"Clear, sir?" Crooks remarked calmly, but between his teeth. "Why not?"

"An army of mastodons!" Lance gasped.

"Right, sir!"

"Strike me, but this ain't 'arf a beanfeast!" Jackson ejaculated, taking a hitch at his belt as if he meant at least to tackle one of the great brutes single-handed.

"What's to be done, Crooks?" Fordham asked hoarsely.

"Give the word, sir," Crooks answered coolly; "but I stand by them, 'avin' promised, and promises being made to be kept. I'll see it through. Why not?"

"Then we're with you!" Lance cried. "Sink or swim, we'll stick to the darkies still."

"Which 'as eggsactly 'it my sentiments," Jackson remarked.

"And mine, sir," Tooter growled.

"And you, dad?" Lance asked, turning to the professor.

"Mit you, lad," Von Haagel answered, the light of battle in his eyes. "Let us the mastodon wipe out; they have no right to live so late."

Crooks turned to Hercules, who was waiting expectantly, nodded his head vigorously, and gripped him by the hand. At this a great shout of joy rose from the crowd below.

"We're in for it," said Morgan coolly; "but how are we going to knock those brutes over?"

"Leave 'em to me," Tooter growled. "I'll tick 'em off."

"The maxim would not kill, mein freund," Von Haagel said, shaking his head vigorously. "One, perhaps, but not the herd."

For some minutes perhaps there was no sound, save the yelling of the natives; then Morgan, who had been sitting with his face between his hands, turned to the others.

"Will you risk Wings of Gold?" he asked hoarsely.

"Yes, if the others will," answered Lance shortly. "What do you say, boys?"

The answer was a ready affirmative.

"Then to work!" Morgan cried. "We've got to get the forescrew off Wings of Gold!"

"What for?" Fordham asked in amazement.

"To use her as a ram," Morgan said quietly.

"Which are the words of wisdom, Teddy," said Crooks.

There was not a moment to be lost. Probably, the attack of the enemy, now reinforced by great mastodons, would not take place before dawn, but there could be no certainty about that. The crew of the airship set to work under the directions of Morgan, with all possible speed.

That they were about to take a great risk, they all knew well enough, but they did not mean to hesitate. To use the airship as a ram would mean keeping her perilously near the ground and the houses; but they did not mean to hesitate. To those brave men the risk was not appalling.

"Let's hope they won't attack before it's light," said Morgan, as he worked away vigorously with a spanner. "If it's to be a dying job, I'd rather die in the light."

Two hours' work sufficed to clear away the screw and its gear; but this did not content Morgan. A great risk was to be run; but there was no object in making it worse than it need be. Aided by the others, he set to work riveting extra plates over the nose of the airship, and the task was not completed until day was beginning to dawn.

Crooks, who had changed into his usual attire, dropped his hammer, and hurried towards the hatch.

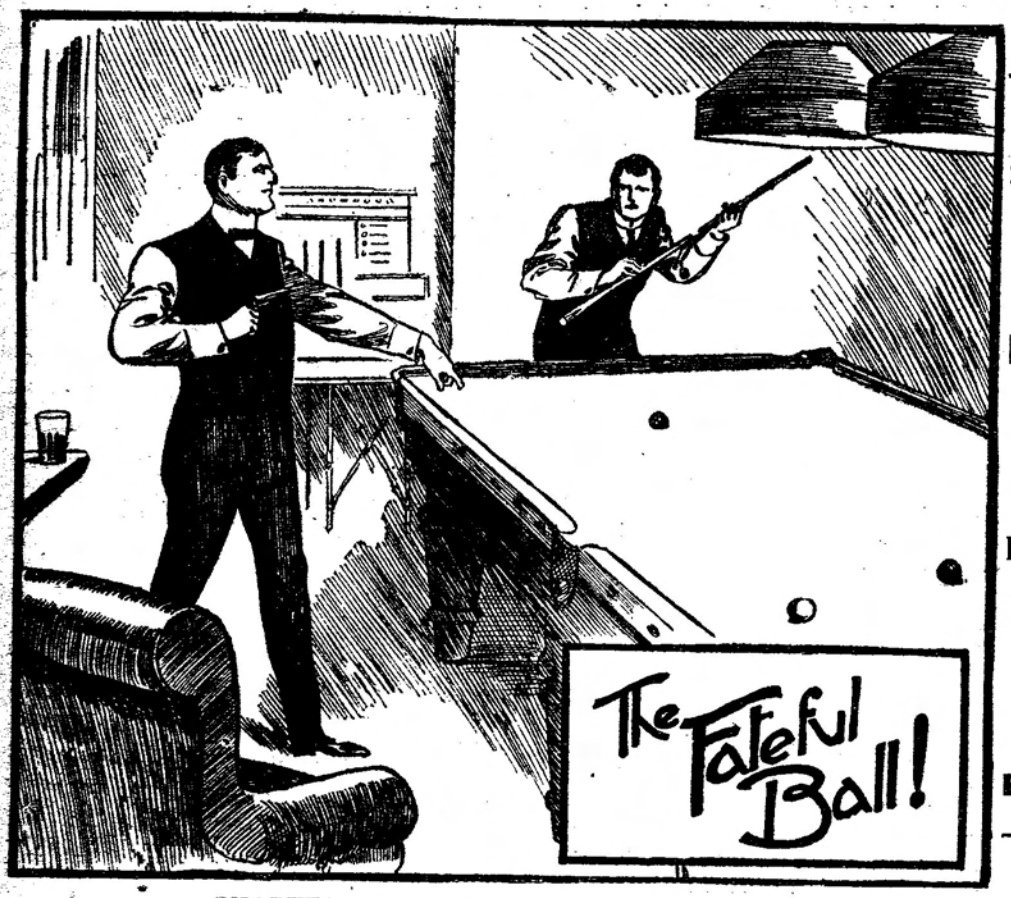
"What's up?" Lance asked.

"Grub, sir," Crooks answered. "The labourer is worthy of his hire. The same applies to food. No food, no fight. Why not?"

"Hanged if I'm not hungry," Lance remarked, as Crooks dived below. "Good old Crooks!"

(Another grand instalment of this thrilling serial next Thursday.)

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A Grand, New Series of Short, Complete Stories, introducing FRANK KINGSTON, DETECTIVE, —: AND :— DOLORES— His Pretty Lady Assistant.

Next Thursday: "THE 11.12 EXPRESS!"

CHAPTER 1.

The Billiard Match—Waller Plays Badly—The Tragedy.

"BY Jove! Waller's off colour, and no mistake!"

"There's something wrong."

"Pollard will win, sure enough."

These, and many other whispered remarks, made themselves heard in the crowded room. For the rest the only sounds were the sharp crack of bonzoline billiard balls as they cannoned. The brilliant lights gleamed down upon the green table, and the two players proceeded with the game with grim faces.

The match was a professional one—a match that had been talked of for days. James Waller was a steady player, and had been champion of the world. In this game he was opposed by a new-comer, Henry Pollard by name, who had proved himself to be a dangerous opponent. Nobody knew exactly where Pollard had come from; but a month or two previously he had made himself prominent. The result was a big match had been arranged between Pollard and Waller, the veteran.

It was nearly over now, and it was plain to all that Waller would be beaten. At first it had been thought he would knock Pollard completely out, but for the last hour or two he had been playing wildly, allowing the new champion to catch up to the score, and pass it.

Waller's supporters were anxious. They had expected much from him, and yet he was now playing at random, taking difficult shots in a manner that would not have done credit to an amateur. Somehow, all his confidence seemed to have vanished during the last hour, and his hand trembled visibly as he bent over the table to take a stroke. His face, too, was set and haggard.

"Not feeling up to it, are you?" inquired Pollard, in a low voice.

"It's all right," said Waller. "I shall be better in a moment. This smoke is troubling me a little."

"Open the window wider, please," said Pollard, looking round. "And Mr. Waller would take it as a favour if you gentlemen would refrain from smoking."

The game continued. But Waller's play grew worse, if anything. Pollard, on the other hand was piling up his score by leaps and bounds, and it was recognised by everybody present that the game was his.

One individual—a tall, quiet-looking man of about thirty—sat watching the game with great interest. Once or twice, as Waller made an extra bad shot, he shook his head uncertainly.

"There's something wrong with him," he told himself—"badly wrong!"

The quiet-looking man was Frank Kingston, the celebrated detective, and he took a great interest in billiards. He, like the others, had expected Waller to "knock spots off" Pollard. Apparently the reverse was the case.

"I can't understand it," murmured Kingston, to himself. "I know Waller to be a steady man, and an even steadier player. He looks now very much under the influence of drink."

Yet the detective could not be correct, for Waller had not touched anything stronger than water for at least two hours. The game was very nearly finished, and Pollard was well ahead; yet it was plain to everyone that the elder player was striving all he knew to win.

But, somehow, all Waller's shots seemed unsteady, and the simplest cannons were bungled. Waller himself realised how badly he was playing, and passed a hand wearily across his eyebrows.

"I can't make it out!" he murmured. "My head's spinning like a top, and yet less than an hour ago I was as fresh as paint!"

A big break by Pollard finished the game, and the beaten man, with a faint smile, came forward and extended a hand.

"Well, you've got the game, old man," he said cheerfully. "But I really don't think you would have won if I'd been in form. I feel absolutely——"

As Waller spoke he staggered back a trifle, then sank, without a sound, into the arms of three or four men who stood by.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed somebody. "He's fainted!"

Waller was lifted up, and carefully laid upon one of the large settees, and for a moment there was confusion. All the spectators were talking excitedly over the result of the match, and this fresh excitement was unexpected.

"Better fetch a doctor," suggested one gentleman.

The door opened, and somebody hurried out. Meanwhile, Frank Kingston had stepped down from his seat, and was bending over Waller, making an examination. Nobody seemed to stop him, although he was a stranger to them all. Somehow Kingston's personality seemed to command

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obedience, and when he had pushed his way through nobody questioned him.

The detective bent over Waller, felt his pulse, then sniffed his lips. Finally he looked up with a grave face.

"I am afraid the doctor will arrive too late!" he exclaimed.

"Too late! What——"

"Mr. Waller is dead," said Kingston quietly.

"Good heavens!" cried Pollard, in a strained voice, pushing forward feverishly. "Dead! It's a lie! He's only fainted—I tell you he's only fainted! How the dickens do you know anything about it?" he added fiercely to Kingston.

The detective rose to his feet.

"I know quite well that what I said is the truth," he replied. "It is a terrible shock, of course, Mr. Pollard, and I quite understand——"

"But he can't be dead!" shouted Pollard wildly. "Great heavens, it's impossible!"

He pushed through the crowd of gentlemen, and bent over Waller. But not a sign of life was visible, and Kingston stood looking on calmly and interestedly.

A few minutes later the doctor arrived, and he verified Kingston's statement.

"The cause of death was heart-failure," he announced, after a short examination. "Evidently Mr. Waller had a weak or diseased heart, and the excitement of this game was too much for him."

The occupants of the room were feeling strangely subdued, and Pollard, the winner of the match, turned as pale as chalk. Kingston, although apparently sleepy-eyed, was watching him intently.

"I don't like it," Kingston told himself. "If Waller didn't die of poisoning, then I'm no judge of drugs. Yet the doctor didn't suspect anything at all. That, in itself, is not surprising, for the case looks very much like one of heart failure. But it's not; I'll wager a thousand pounds on that!"

A few minutes later the detective was bound in a taxi for his rooms at No. 100, Charing Cross. And his clean-shaven, immobile face, gave no sign as to what was passing in his mind. Yet the detective had already decided to inquire further into the strange death of the billiard champion.

"It was no ordinary death," he murmured with conviction. "Waller was murdered!"

CHAPTER 2.

Kingston's Decision—He Takes Tim to Hampstead.

FRANK KINGSTON went straight into his laboratory when he arrived at his rooms. He switched on the light—the time was about nine o'clock at night—and unlocked a small safe which stood at the end of the bench.

On the door being opened, an array of tiny phials stood revealed. Kingston used the safe expressly for keeping his collection of Oriental drugs. Most of them had been given to him by his friend, Professor Polgrave, who knew practically every drug and poison in the world. Kingston often spent hours with the old scientist at his home in St. John's Wood, and, during those hours, he stored into his brain whole volumes of information.

The detective picked up one of the little phials, removed the cork, and sniffed the contents. For a second he felt dizzy, then his brain cleared again. To an ordinary person the drug would have been apparently unscented, but Kingston could detect a faint, peculiar odour which, once smelt, was not easily forgotten.

"It is the same," he declared. "A drug of this description is responsible for the death of poor Waller. And, unless I am very much mistaken, I think I can lay hands on the murderer."

He sat down, thinking.

"When I announced that Waller was dead," he mused, "Pollard turned as white as a sheet, and said that I was lying. He lost his head completely for a few moments, and no one would have done that unless he had previous knowledge of a drug being administered. Yet Pollard was certainly not acting. The question is, what connection has he with the matter?"

Kingston was convinced that Pollard was connected with the tragic affair, and for no other reason than to satisfy himself that justice was done, he decided to investigate the matter, and thresh out the truth.

"And the motive?" he asked himself. "Supposing Pollard to be guilty, what possible motive could he have for murdering his opponent in a billiard-match? It's rather a puzzle."

The detective rose to his feet, and rang the bell. Tim Curtis, his young assistant, was not long in putting in an appearance.

"Slip your overcoat and cap on, Tim," said Kingston. "I want you to come with me over to Hampstead."

"Right you are, sir!" exclaimed Tim eagerly.

In a few moments he was ready, and the pair left the house together. A taxi was soon conveying them to Hampstead. Kingston had made enquiries, before leaving the hall where the match had been played, and found that Pollard lived in that district. The detective explained to Tim what had happened, and what his suspicions were in regard to the victor of the match.

"I'm going to face him, young 'un, and make him tell me what he did it for, for I am convinced no one else is responsible for Waller's death."

"Crumbs, sir! It's a funny case," said Tim. "What am I to do?"

"I want you to remain outside the house within hearing distance," replied Kingston. "If you should hear my usual signal—a whistle—I want you to call a policeman and enter the house. If you don't hear the whistle you'll know everything's all right, and I shall appear before long."

"But ain't it dangerous for you to go in there alone, sir?" asked Tim anxiously. "The chap thinks he's carried it off without no one suspectin' him, an' he'd be riled when he found you knew all about it."

"That's very probable, Tim," smiled his master; "but I don't think Pollard will prove a very difficult customer to deal with. I've a fancy to carry this case through without any assistance, if possible."

The taxi soon arrived at its destination, and Kingston and Tim found themselves before a rather small, new-looking house in a side street at Hampstead. Kingston knew nothing of Pollard beyond the fact that the man had suddenly sprung into prominence as a billiard-player, and that he was generally disliked by all who came in contact with him. It was but two months ago that he first became known.

Kingston walked openly up to the front door, and was admitted by a maidservant. He had not sent his real name in. He found himself in a large room, in the centre of which stood a full-sized billiard-table, upon which Pollard evidently practised.

"I'll tell Mr. Pollard you're here, sir," said the maid. And she left Kingston alone.

The detective, although he looked languid enough, was examining everything with his remarkably keen eyes. Suddenly he stepped across the room with light footsteps, opened the cupboard of a sideboard, and looked inside. He closed it again, and turned his attention to another cupboard opposite. This time he picked up a small purple phial and smelt it.

"By Jove!" he murmured. "I thought there was a possibility of finding this, but never thought I should have such luck. It's proof beyond question."

He slipped the phial into the top of his boot, and then calmly seated himself in one of the chairs. Only just in time, for fifteen seconds later the door opened, and Pollard appeared. He was looking pale and haggard, and looked at Kingston almost in fear.

"Well, sir?" he demanded. "What—— Oh, you're the gentleman who was at the hall this evening watching the match between myself and Mr. Waller?"

"Yes," replied the detective quietly. "It was a very sad occurrence, though I can't possibly find any reason for your opponent's sudden decease. At least, I do not think the police will arrive at the true explanation."

Pollard started back.

"What do you mean?" he exclaimed hoarsely. "You know perfectly well Waller died from the effects of the excitement on a weak heart."

"Pardon me!" said Kingston evenly. "Mr. Waller died as the direct result of a drug which you yourself administered to him!"

CHAPTER 3.

Kingston Speaks Out—Red orSpot—The Capture.

HENRY POLLARD staggered as if struck. Then, with remarkable rapidity he recovered himself, and Kingston saw that his face was distorted with wild fury and chagrin. Five minutes ago he had thought himself absolutely secure—now it seemed that the opposite was the case.

"What do you mean?" he snarled. "Who are you?"

"Who I am doesn't matter," replied Kingston, "but I know that you are the murderer of James Waller. I hold proof of that in my possession. Waller was killed by a certain Oriental drug—as a doctor will discover when a post-mortem examination is made—and I have just found some of the same drug in this room. It's no good, Pollard! Why don't you confess, and have done with it?"

Pollard shrank back.

"You hound!" he muttered thickly. "How did you know?"

"I knew as soon as Waller was dead that he had been murdered. Come, Pollard, it's not the slightest use denying facts. Why not let me call a policeman and get it over quickly?"

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"I didn't mean to do it!" whispered Pollard, looking at Kingston with wildly-staring eyes. "You've found me out, hang you, but I swear before Heaven that I didn't mean to do it!"

"But you did do it!"

"Not in mind—not in spirit!" cried the wretched man. "I was thunderstruck when you said Waller was dead—thunderstruck and terrorised. I realised in a moment that I should be looked upon as a murderer if the truth came out. I had no more idea of killing him than I had of flying."

Kingston looked straight into the other's frightened eyes, and knew that he was telling the truth.

"But why did you give him the drug?" he asked.

"Listen! I will tell you why," said Pollard tensely, his face pale and bloodless. "I am penniless, or nearly so, and I made a private wager with Waller that I could beat him. The wager was for five thousand pounds. Waller knew that he could win, and I knew it, too. But I had decided that he shouldn't win; I wanted that money badly, and I was prepared to go to a certain length to gain my end."

"Go on," said Kingston quietly.

Pollard licked his lips to moisten them.

"I had in my possession a little bottle of Indian poison or something," he continued. "A little of this in a glass of water had the effect of making a man feel dizzy and shaky an hour afterwards. My idea was to give Waller some of this to make him play badly, and I managed to slip the drug into his glass when he was drinking a Bass with me soon after six. I swear that I meant no real harm by it. But I gave him too much, and it—it killed him. Good heavens! I would rather have thrown the whole scheme up than this should have occurred!"

Pollard sank forward with his face in his hands, and Frank Kingston sat in the opposite chair looking at him. The detective knew quite well that the billiard-player was speaking the truth, and somehow Kingston felt sorry for him. He was a scoundrel, of course, but by administering an overdose of the drug he had ruined his plan and committed a murder.

Kingston could understand now why Pollard had been so agitated when he knew that Waller was dead. It must have been a terrible blow to him.

"I am glad you have told me this," said the detective quietly. "Your sentence will, of course, be heavy, but I think the charge will be manslaughter, not murder. I had better call a policeman——"

Pollard sprang to his feet.

"You won't!" he shouted.

"I warn you that it is useless to make a struggle——"

"Useless, is it?" cried the other savagely. "By Jove, we'll see whether it's useless!"

And he sprang at Kingston like a wild animal. The detective could see by the look of Pollard's eyes that the man had suddenly become insane with fear and chagrin. Before Kingston could realise what had occurred—for Pollard had acted in the third of a second—he found his throat grasped as in a vice.

Kingston himself was possessed of terrific strength, but Pollard had grasped him in such a manner that if Kingston endeavoured to get free he would only succeed in strangling himself. So, without further ado, he suddenly collapsed, and lay limp upon the carpet.

"Ah, you've had enough, have you?" panted Pollard hoarsely. "By thunder, I'll never let myself be taken! It's either I'm hung or—— Ah, I'll do it right now, and finish off this interfering hound at the same time!"

He dropped Kingston and crossed over to the sideboard. Next minute he produced from a locked cashbox a large wad of cottonwool. From the centre of this he took two billiard-balls—the red and the spot. These he placed on the table, and turned to Kingston with a chuckle of maniacal fury that was horrible to hear.

The detective still lay on the floor, feigning to be unconscious. As a matter of fact, he was as fresh as ever, and quite ready to overpower the madman—for there was no doubt that the terrific strain had resulted in Pollard losing his senses. But Pollard had a large revolver in his left hand now, and a maniac with a revolver is an ugly customer to have to deal with.

The only thing would be to humour him, Kingston decided. Then he could seize his opportunity when it arose. Five minutes ago the detective had thought the affair was tame, but now matters were altered.

Pollard bent over him.

"Come on; get up!" he whispered gently. "We'll have a game of billiards."

And he went off into a laugh. Kingston rose to his feet, keeping a wary eye on his companion. He prayed that nobody would come, for the opening of the door might be the signal for Pollard to start firing his revolver. But apparently his mind was set on billiards, for he pointed to a cue which was leaning against a chair.

"There you are," he said, in a calm voice; "there's your cue. We'll have a game together, eh—a game of life and death? You'll decide whether you live or die, my friend!"

Kingston hadn't turned a hair, but he knew quite well that he was in a difficult position. He was much stronger than his adversary, but Pollard took care to keep the table between them. Had Kingston made a sudden dart round he would probably have paid for his rashness with his life. No; his only chance was to bide his time. He was dealing with a madman, and he knew he would have to have all his wits about him.

"What do you mean?" he asked, picking up the cue, and glancing at the table. The two balls Pollard had produced were about a foot apart at the bottom of the table, while a third one was at the top.

"I mean this," chuckled the other. "One of these two balls down here is not a billiard ball at all, although it looks like it. It is a bomb, and a sharp crack will be sufficient to explode it. And it would kill both you and I, and blow this room to pieces. You understand, my friend? You have your choice. You can send this third ball here at either the red or spot, and if you succeed in hitting the harmless one I'll let you go free."

Kingston examined the end of his cue.

"I'll give you ten seconds in which to decide," went on Pollard, his eyes looking like living coals. "At the end of that time I shall fire, and blow your brains out!"

Kingston realised that it was useless to remonstrate. Pollard was insane, and did not care a rap about his own life being sacrificed. Being a professional billiard-player, his mind naturally turned to the game. Kingston was between two fires. If he did not take the shot with his cue Pollard would take a shot with his revolver.

"One!" said Pollard ominously. "Two—three——"

Kingston placed his cue in position. Already he had made up his mind which course to pursue. There were but a few seconds left now in which to act. The great detective was as calm as it is possible for a man to be.

"Four—five!" exclaimed the madman in quick succession.

Then, quick as a flash of lightning, Frank Kingston swung his cue round. It was the only chance. Indeed, the detective had been expecting every second to feel a bullet entering his flesh. With Pollard in his present condition there was no telling when he would pull the trigger. Kingston swung the cue across the table before Pollard realised it.

Crack!

The cue struck the revolver and sent it flying out of Pollard's hand. It hit the floor and went off, the bullet flying past Kingston's right, and shattering a picture-glass.

"You—you——"

But Pollard's snarling words were drowned in the shrill whistle which left Kingston's lips. Next moment the two men were grappling, and in spite of Kingston's tremendous strength, he had his work cut out to overpower the madman. But he did so, and when Tim burst in presently with two constables they found the famous detective calmly kneeling on his captive keeping him down.

* * * * * * * * * * *

"Well, Tim, the murderer of poor Waller is safe in the hands of the police," said Kingston, as he and his young assistant drove back to No. 100, Charing Cross. "The man is not really a murderer in spirit, but he deserves punishment."

"He's gone balmy, ain't he, sir?" asked Tim.

"That, I think, will be only temporarily, my boy. By Jove, I'll warrant Dolores will be surprised when she sees the morning paper! She was half inclined to go to that billiard match, but I'm very glad she didn't."

"Rather, sir! But, I say, what about them billiard balls—them two what was lyin' on the table when we busted in——"

"Oh, those, Tim!" murmured Kingston languidly. "Here they are, in my pocket. You see, they are merely ordinary bonzoline balls, and Mr. Henry Pollard was simply pulling my leg!"

THE END.

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For Next Thursday.

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"FOR THE SAKE OF THE SIDE!"

is a story that will be thoroughly appreciated, and my readers will be wise to order next week's number of THE GEM Library in advance.

A Splendid Tonic.

A reader, living in Melbourne, whose initials are T. C. I., in a pleasant letter testifies to the value of THE GEM and "The Magnet" stories as an antidote for wearisome hours of hard study.

"Dear Editor,—Just a line or two to praise the qualities of THE GEM and 'The Magnet.' I have been a constant reader for the past three years of THE GEM, but have taken 'The Magnet' from the start. I remember when it was a halfpenny in England. The growth of 'The Magnet' and THE GEM has been wonderful. I like the Editor's Chat page. I think it is a grand improvement.

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I shall look forward to my chum's promise, contained in a postscript, that he will write to me again soon.

Replies in Brief.

C. H. (Tottenham).—Many thanks for your excellent letter. I am afraid I cannot give you a definite date for the publication of "The Boys' Friend" Library threepenny book you desire so much. Thanks for your criticism and suggestions.

"Enthusiastic Reader" (Coventry).—I was very pleased to get your nice letter, which interested me very much. I am sorry that the request you make is one that I am unable to grant, as it is my rule to treat the names and addresses of the chums who write to me as strictly confidential unless I have their express permission to make them known.

"Colonial Reader" (H. P., South Melbourne).—I was glad to have your letter and suggestion. Yes, the stories you mentioned were written by Martin Clifford, and published from this office.

V. T. C. S.—Thanks for your card. I was glad to have your opinion of the two popular companion Libraries. Keep your eye on your favourite papers for the sort of competition you will like, before long.

Miss Dorothy B. (Adelaide, S. Australia).—I was very pleased to receive your letter, and to hear how much you enjoy reading the tales of Tom Merry & Co. Why not try passing your back numbers on to non-readers?

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E. S. Haynes, Sherbrooke, Promenade, Seacombe, has a few numbers of THE GEM and "The Magnet" Libraries he wishes to exchange.

G. Coxon, Holly House, Victoria Street, Melbourne, Derbyshire, will exchange twelve "Boys' Friend" 3d. Libraries for any thirty numbers of THE GEM, between 50 and 100.

W. F. W., 47, Lansdown Road, Forest Gate, E., wishes to obtain Nos. 188-212 of THE GEM Library.

T. Selby, 5, Clift Street, Hoxton, N., has a few back numbers of THE GEM and "The Magnet" Libraries for sale.

Swimming for Beginners.

In these days of cheap public baths, there is little excuse for any boy being ignorant of the useful art of swimming, which it behoves everyone to learn.

The time may come to any lad when his life, and perhaps the lives of others, depend upon his swimming powers.

The art is also of great value as a form of healthy exercise, and above all, it is very easy to acquire, provided the learner goes the right way about it at the commencement. The first step is to acquire confidence in the water; the natural nervousness that so often assails the non-swimmer in the water must be resolutely overcome. When about to commence trying to swim, walk out into the water up to the neck, and then face about, so that you will have the reassuring feeling that your initial efforts will lead you into shallower water at every stroke. The most common stroke, and the easiest for a beginner, is the breast-stroke, the motions for which should be as follows: Place your hands in front of your chest, with fingers pressed together. Hold the hands with the thumbs touching, and the backs of the hands upwards, then lean gently forward in the water, give a kick off from the bottom, and at the same time shoot the hands forward to their fullest extent. Now sweep both arms fully backwards until the hands are opposite the shoulders, when they must be brought up again to the breast in readiness for the next stroke. So much for the arm motion, and the leg motions must be made simultaneously with those of the arms. As the arms are being brought up close to the chest, draw the legs close up under the body and shoot them out wide apart by straightening out the knees; then as the legs, after completing their action, are brought up in readiness for another stroke, shoot out the arms again and bring them round as before.

After a few attempts you will be able to perform both the arm and leg action at the precise moment, causing your body to be propelled powerfully through the water.

A final hint to all swimmers is this: Never bathe for at least two hours after a heavy meal, or serious consequences may ensue. The best time for bathing is between ten and two o'clock, when the sun is at its full. The best water of all to bathe in—or the easiest to swim in—is, of course, the sea.

THE EDITOR.

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