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WEDNESDAY:

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famous junior's early schooldays. — EDITOR.

CHAPTER 1.

Quite a New Arrangement!

'STONY!'
"Busted!"
"Broke!"

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther looked at one another lugubriously.

The Terrible Three of St. Jim's were in their study, in the Shell passage in the School House. It was a Wednesday, a half-holiday at St. Jim's, and a bright, keen wintry afternoon. The chums of the Shell had planned a little excursion for that afternoon. They were almost ready to start when they made the above painful discovery.

Tom Merry ran his hands through his pockets.

"Nothing there!" he said, after a vain search. "I was relying on you chaps this afternoon—my new footer cleared me right out!"

"And I was relying on you two," grinned Monty Lowther. "I've been stony for two days already!"

"And I was relying on you two!" said Manners. "My last three bob went for a new roll of films this morning."

Monty Lowther snorted.

"Just like you, you ass, to blue the last available funds in rotten films for your rotten camera," he remarked. "Fat-head!"

"Well, how was I to know—?" argued Manners.

"Poof! But I'll tell you what," said Lowther, struck by a sudden thought. "You can sell them to Levison, of the Fourth. He does photography, and he will give you half price for them!"

"Half-price for a roll of new films, you ass!"

"Well, eightpence is better than nothing," said Lowther.

"It isn't better than a roll of films," said Manners. "Be-

sides, I'm going to take my camera out. What's the good of camera without films?"

"What's the good of a camera anyway?" retorted Lowther.

"Look here, you fathead—!"

"Look here, you ass—!"

"Peace, my children, peace," said Tom Merry, waving his hand. "This isn't the way to raise the wind. The question is, what's going to be done?"

"We're going to be done, I think," growled Monty Lowther. "I'm not even expecting a remittance, and the post doesn't come in till three anyway."

"Same here," said Manners. "I sha'n't have anything till Saturday. Look here, Lowther, I heard Crooke offer you half a crown for your knife with three blades the other day."

"Yes, I know he did; it cost nine-and-six!"

"Well, half a crown is better than nothing—!"

"Eh!"

"You sell Crooke your knife, and we'll say nothing more about the films," said Manners.

"Well," said Lowther, in measured tones, "of all the silly asses—!"

Tom Merry laughed.

"Cheese it," he said. "Let's get along to Study No. 6. Gussy is generally rolling in quids, and Blake, or Herries, or Dig may have something. If they're stony, we'll go over to the New House and try Figgins & Co. Come on!"

"But about those films—!" said Lowther.

"About that knife—!" said Manners.

"Ass!"

"Fathead!"

"Oh, shut up, both of you!" bawled Tom Merry. "Shut up, and come on, or those bounders will be gone out for the afternoon."

Tom Merry hurried down the passage, and Manners and Lowther, with a mutual snort, followed him. Tom Merry

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kicked open the door of Study No. 6 in the Fourth-Form passage. The sound of voices told him that Blake & Co. were at home. Jack Blake's voice could be heard as he came down the passage.

"I suppose we shall have to wait till three. It's rotten!"

"Yaas, wathah!" replied the voice of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "It will be all wight then. Hullo! What do you Shell boundahs want?"

Blake and Herries and Digby and D'Arcy, the chums of the Fourth Form, were all at home. It was a little singular, too. It was not like them to be shut up in a study on a fine afternoon. Tom Merry guessed that they had been having a discussion similar to that in his own study, and his hopes fell.

"You fellows rolling in quids?" he asked. "If you are, you can hand out a loan—till Saturday. I get a remittance then."

Blake grunted.

"I've got three-halfpence," he said. "Dig has got a ha'penny, and Herries a French penny. Gussy's got nothing. The silly ass has blued all his tin on a rotten toppah."

"It isn't a wotten toppah," said Arthur Augustus indignantly. "It is a wippin' new toppah, quite the latest thing. I sat on a toppah in the quad, the othah day, owin' to my minah biffin' a footah at me, and I was bound to have a new one. And I only paid twenty-seven-and-six for it!"

"Nuff to keep the study in funds for weeks!" growled Blake. "Weally, Blake—!"

"We were going out this afternoon," growled Blake, "and we've found that we're all stony."

Tom Merry grinned.

"Same here!" he said. "We came along to borrow a quid."

"We were going to come to you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry looked inquiringly at Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Sure you haven't got a loose quid you've forgotten?" he suggested. "You might have one in another pocket, you know?"

"I haven't a single soveveign left, deah boy," said D'Arcy, with a shake of the head. "But it will be all wight at three o'clock."

"Remittance coming?" asked Monty Lowther.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Much?"

"Fivah."

"Oh, good! You'll be able to ladle out a quid, then?"

"A soveveign, deah boy, with pleasuah."

"A quid—!"

"A soveveign—!"

"Quid—!"

"Soveveign—!"

"Quid or soveveign, whichever you like," said Tom Merry, cheerfully.

"But is it sure to come, Gussy? We don't want to be kept hanging about till three o'clock on false pretences, you know. Is it a dead cert?"

Arthur Augustus nodded.

"Yaas, wathah! You can wely on it, Tom Mewwy. I wrote to my govannah on Monday, and explained to him that I weally must have a largah allowance. I said it was infwa dig for a chap like me to be in wegulah wisk of wunnin' short of money. I said it would be a good idee to make a new awwangement entirely about my pocket-money."

"H'm!" said Blake, doubtfully. "But will your governor play up?"

"Oh, yaas," said D'Arcy, confidently. "I've put it to him vewy plainly. In fact, I have insisted upon his makin' a new awwangement. There will be a fivah at least in his lettah, and I specially asked him to post it not latah than this mornin', so that I should get it this aftahnoon without fail. It will be all wight—and a fivah will see us all through till we get our wegulah cash on Saturday."

"Good!" said Tom Merry. "How long is that blessed postman going to be?"

"Quarter of an hour yet, at least!" growled Blake.

"Patience, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus. "Ewewy thin' comes to him who waits, you know."

"But we're going over to Wayland for the matinee at the Theatre Royal," said Monty Lowther, "and we don't want to be late. Let's go down and wait for the postman."

"Good!"

The juniors proceeded downstairs. They left the School House, and walked out into the fresh, keen wintry air of the old quadrangle. There were shouts from the football ground, where the First Eleven were playing a Fifth Form team. But the juniors, for once, were not thinking of football. Monty Lowther, who had a great inclination towards the stage, specially wanted to see that matinee at Wayland Theatre Royal, and Tom Merry and Manners were going over with him, as they said, to keep him out of mischief.

The juniors strolled down to the school gates, and watched the road for the postman. Crooke of the Shell was standing there, probably waiting for the postman, too. He gave the chums of the School House a glance of great disfavour. The cad of the Shell was on the worst possible terms with Tom Merry & Co. Manners nudged Monty Lowther.

"Chance for you with that knife," he whispered.

"Oh, rats!"

"Half-a-crown, you know—!"

"Rot!"

"Here comes the postman!" exclaimed Herries. "He's early. Buck up, Blagg, old man!"

Blagg, the Rylcombe postman, halted in the gateway with a cheery grin. It was not an unusual experience for Blagg to be met by juniors anxious for remittances.

"Artemoon, young gentlemen," said Blagg.

"Lettah for me, Blagg, deah boy?"

"Yes, Master D'Arcy."

"Oh, good!"

"Letter for me, too," said Crooke.

"Yes, Master Crooke."

"Well, hand mine over—that Fourth Form kid can wait."

Arthur Augustus jammed his famous monocle into his eye, and turned a severe glance upon the cad of the Shell.

"Weally, Crooke—!" he exclaimed.

"Take your letter, ass!" said Blake.

"Weally, Blake—!"

"Are you going to keep Blagg holding it out all the afternoon?" demanded Digby.

"Bai Jove! Sowwy, Blagg, deah boy."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy turned back to the postman, and took the letter Blagg was holding out. Then Blagg sorted out Crooke's letter. D'Arcy glanced at the crest on his envelope, and smiled with satisfaction.

"It's all wight, deah boys," he said; "it's fwom the patch!"

"Hear, hear!" said Blake.

"Open it!" exclaimed Digby.

Crooke had received a registered letter, and was signing for it with an air of great importance. Crooke had had a remittance, at all events, whatever Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was getting. D'Arcy felt in his waistcoat pocket for a penknife, and slit the envelope with great deliberation. If Arthur Augustus had been famishing, and a remittance had arrived at the last moment, he would probably not have opened his letter with his thumb. He cut the envelope open quite carefully and slowly; while the exasperated juniors stood round and glared at him like wolves—or like footballers waiting for a penalty kick to be taken.

"Buck up, you ass!" said Jack Blake, sulphurously.

"Weally, Blake—!"

"Hurry up!" roared Tom Merry.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—!"

"Oh, don't talk to him!" groaned Digby. "It will only make him longer. It's all right if there's a remittance. If there isn't, we'll bump him till he sees stars."

"Yes, rather."

"I should uttably wefuse to be bumped, Dig, deah boy," said D'Arcy, pausing in opening the letter. "I should wegard—"

"Open that letter, you fathead!"

"I wefuse to be called a fathead—"

Arthur Augustus drew a letter out of the envelope; the other fellows restraining their remarks with great difficulty. D'Arcy unfolded the letter, and looked puzzled. Then he jammed his eyeglass a little tighter into his eye, and peered into the envelope. Then he looked round him.

"What are you looking for?" roared Blake.

"Did I drop a fivah?"

"No, you didn't!"

"Bai Jove! It's vewy wemarkable. There doesn't seem to be one in the lettah!" said Arthur Augustus, in surprise. "Howevah, I will wead the lettah."

He read it.

"Well?" howled the juniors.

"Bai Jove! Look at that, deah boys! I wegard the govannah as havin' failed uttably to play the game!"

The juniors looked at the letter. It was short, if not sweet, and very much to the point:

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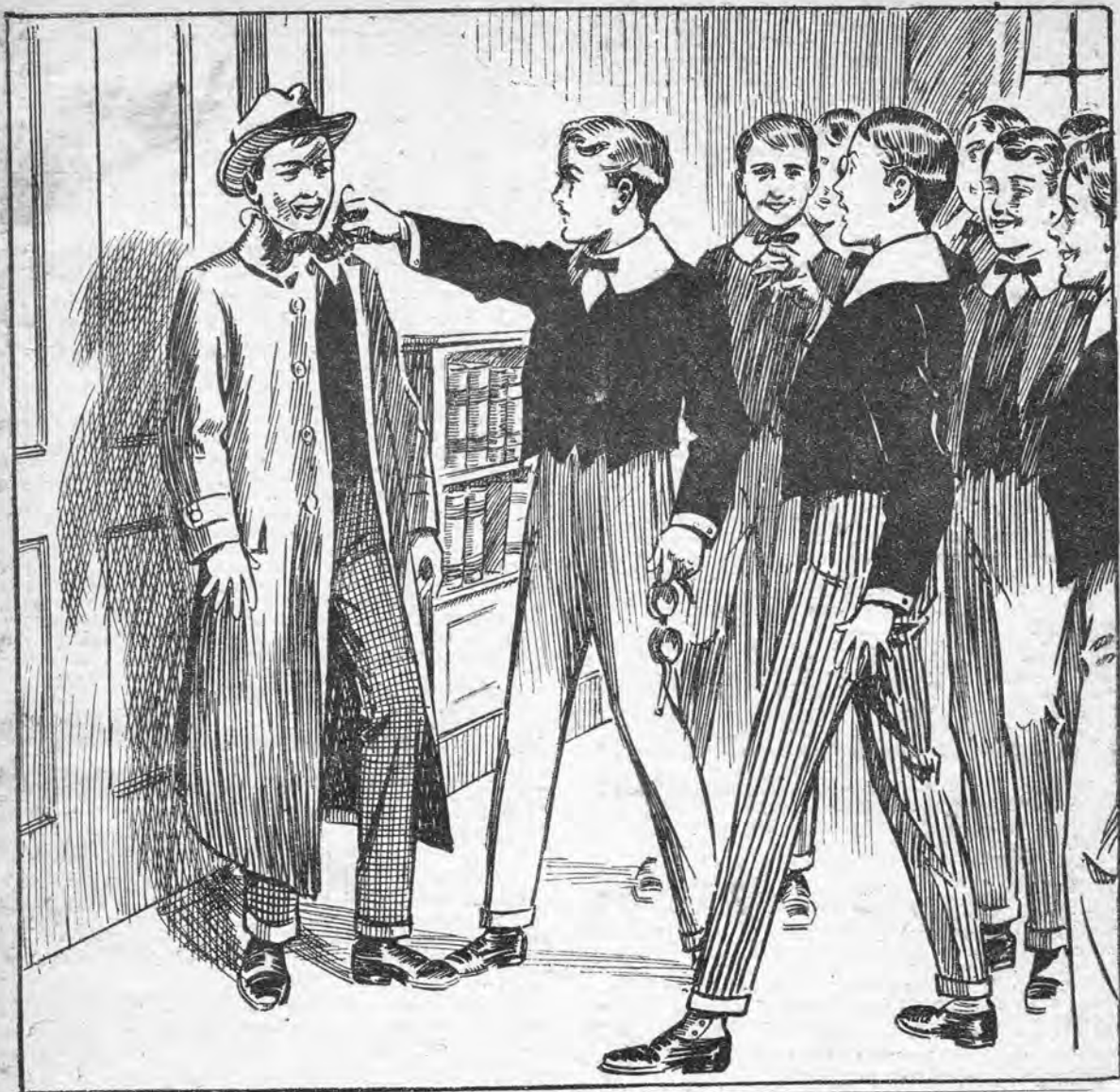
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(See column 2, page 27 of this issue.)

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RED-LETTER DAYS: "PENNY POPULAR" FRIDAY AND "MAGNET" MONDAY!



The Colonel started to his feet. Tom Merry jerked off the goggles, and the grey beard came off with them. The well-known face of Figgins was revealed, grinning sheepishly. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gazed blankly. "Gwont Scott!" he gasped. "Figgins, bal jove, you fwightful wottah!" (See Chapter 10.)

"Dear Arthur,—I have decided to adopt your suggestion, and make an entirely new arrangement about your allowance. As you are very careless with money, I shall try the experiment of not sending you any allowance at all for a few weeks, in order that you may realise the value of it. I think this is an excellent idea, and should be glad to have your opinion about this new arrangement.—Your affectionate Father."

The juniors looked at D'Arcy, and D'Arcy looked at the juniors.

"So this is what we've stayed in till three o'clock for, is it?" said Jack Blake, in measured tones.

"You ass!"

"You fathead!"

"You burbling jabberwock!"

"Bump him!"

"Weally, deah boys—Ow! oh! Yah! Leggo! Yawwooh!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy descended upon the earth with a sounding bump.

Tom Merry & Co. walked back into the quadrangle, leaving the swell of St. Jim's sitting in the gateway, looking very much surprised, and gasping for breath.

CHAPTER 2.

A Raid on the New House!

TOM MERRY looked out of his study window thoughtfully. The wind was whirling the fallen leaves about the old quadrangle. Afar on the playing-fields the footballers could be seen. The match was nearly finished. Behind Tom Merry, in the study, Manners and Lowther were engaged in a heated argument. It was too late for the matinee at Wayland now; but another pressing question was troubling the Terrible Three. It was nearly tea-time, and there was nothing for tea. The cupboard in Tom Merry's study was in the same state as that of the celebrated Mother Hubbard. The Shell fellows, of course, could have had tea in Hall, at the common table. But that was not what they wanted. On a keen winter afternoon, what they wanted was a cosy little tea in the study, with a good fire going, and plenty of hot buttered toast. Manners was of opinion that if Lowther sold his knife to Crooke, the half-crown resulting from the sale would stand a very good tea in the study. Monty Lowther, on the other hand, was of opinion that if Manners sold his films to Levison for one-and-sixpence, the tea could be stood quite comfortably for eighteenpence.

Tom Merry did not take part in the discussion. He was thinking out the problem. It was a problem that knocked

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any of Euclid's into a cocked hat. It was only Wednesday; and nobody expected any remittances until Saturday. How were the chums of the Shell to live on nothing for four days? How were they, in the first place, to put anything on the tea-table that afternoon? Tom Merry wrinkled his brows in thought. He was still thinking it out, when a voice floated up from below in the quadrangle. Two juniors had stopped quite near Tom Merry's study-window, and their voices came quite distinctly to his ears. He glanced down. The two juniors were Figgins and Fatty Wynn, of the New House; both Fourth-Formers. Figgins & Co. were the deadly rivals of Tom Merry & Co.; and it was rather unusual for them to have stopped so near the School House to discuss their plans. But Tom Merry understood, as he heard what they said.

"We'll have it in the old chapel," said Figgins.
"Right-oh!" said Fatty Wynn. "Pratt and Thompson have both got their eyes open, and we don't want a crowd. There will be just enough for three, and we don't want them walking into the study to take their whack."

"Good!"
"I'll get it now," said Fatty Wynn. "Mrs. Taggles told me the pies would be ready at four, and it's turned four now. You and Kerr get the things ready in the chapel."

"Right-oh!" said Figgins.
"Then I'm off! Mind Pratt doesn't see what you're up to; we shall have a crowd of them round if they know it's steak-and-kidney pies."

"I'll be careful!"
Fatty Wynn rolled away to the tuck-shop, and Figgins scudded off towards the New House. Tom Merry chuckled silently, and turned back into the study. Warfare was always raging between the two Houses at St. Jim's—at least, so far as the juniors of both Houses were concerned. And Tom Merry thought he saw now where tea was coming from.

Monty Lowther and Manners were still arguing, and they were growing quite excited.

"Half-a-crown will get a better tea than eighteenpence," Manners was saying.

"Eighteenpence will be cheaper," said Lowther.

"But I want my films,"
"And I want my knife."

"I'll lend you my knife when you want one, if that's all."
"Well, I'll lend you films when you want 'em, if that's all!"

retorted Lowther. "I've got some old used ones."

"You ass! I can't take photographs on used films, can I? What sort of photographs would they make?"

"What sort of photographs do you make, anyway?" Lowther retorted.

"Why, you silly ass!" roared Manners, "I——"

"Peace!" said Tom Merry.
"That silly chump says——"

"And that silly ass says——"

"Peace!" said the captain of the Shell firmly. "No need to sell anything. We're going to sell Figgins & Co.!"

"What!"
"I know where tea is coming from!" grinned Tom Merry.

"Figgins & Co. are going to have steak-and-kidney pies in the ruined chapel."

"My hat!"
"And we're going to be there! What?"

"Good egg!" said Monty Lowther heartily. "It will be one up against the New House, and a jolly good feed into the bargain. Dame Taggles' steak-and-kidney pies are simply ripping. We could have bought one if Manners had sold his silly films to Levison."

"If you'd sold your old knife——"

"Shut up!" roared Tom Merry. "If either of you says films or knife again, I'll biff you! Shut up!"

"Well, those rotten films—Oh!" roared Lowther, as Tom Merry kept his word, and bestowed the "biff." "You silly chump——"

"Come on," said Tom Merry serenely. "We'd better take Blake & Co., as there will be three of the New House bounders. We don't want a battle, but a feed this time."

"Right-oh!" said Manners.

The Terrible Three hurried out of the study. They met Blake & Co. downstairs, just about to go into the dining-room, and stopped them.

"Where are you going?" asked Tom Merry.

"Tea in Hall!" grunted Blake. "Nothing in the study. These are hard times, and no mistake. Gussy's spent our tea for a month on his new topper."

"Weally, Blake——"

"Oh, scat!"
"I refuse to scat——"

"Come with us!" said Tom Merry. "We're going to stand a tea!"

"Oh, good! Have you raised the wind, then?"
"No; it's a House raid."

"Bai Jove! That's a good idea! We'll make Figgins & Co. stand our tea!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

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"That's the wheeze. They're having steak-and-kidney pies. They're going to feed in the ruined chapel, and we're going to drop in on them."

"What are they going to feed there for?" asked Blake, in surprise. "Jolly cold weather for a picnic, I must say."

"Fatty Wynn's afraid of company in the study," grinned Tom Merry. "He thinks the steak-and-kidney pies will be safer in the old ruin."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"It's a little mistake of his; they won't be so safe, as it happens; but Figgins & Co. don't know that! We'll get on the ground first, and ambush them."

"Yaas, wathah!"
"Kangaroo, old chap, come on!" exclaimed Tom Merry, catching the Cornstalk junior in the hall. "You, too, Glyn. The more the merrier."

"What's the row?" asked Kangaroo.

"House raid."

"Oh, good! I'm on!"

And nine juniors hurried out of the School House together. There were certainly enough of them to deal with Figgins & Co. But Tom Merry knew it was possible that the New House trio might have somebody with them; and he did not wish to run the least risk of one of them scuttling off with the feed while a struggle was in progress. The steak-and-kidney pie, or pies, were destined for the School House.

The School House juniors skirted the building, and hurried through the leafless elms towards the ruined chapel.

The old chapel was one of the most ancient parts of St. Jim's, and dated from its monastic days. It was little more than a mass of tumble-down masonry, with here and there a shattered doorway or casement. But there was plenty of cover for an ambush. There was no sign of Figgins & Co. when the Terrible Three and their allies arrived in the ruins. Near the entrance to the old crypt, there was a clear space of level flagstones, where picnic parties often gathered in the summer. Tom Merry & Co. took cover among the masses of old brickwork, and waited.

Five minutes passed.

"Bai Jove! It's wathah cold here!" Arthur Augustus murmured.

"Feet cold?" asked Monty Lowther.

"Yaas, wathah!"
"Put them in your hat!"

"Weally, you ass——"

"Shut up!" said Kangaroo. "I can hear somebody!"

"They must be awful asses to feed in the open air on a day like this," murmured Arthur Augustus. "Are you quite sure they're comin', Tom Mewwy?"

"Yes, ass!"
"But how do you know, deah boy?"

"I heard them say so. Figgins and Fatty Wynn stopped almost under my window to jaw."

"Bai Jove! Pewwaps they were pullin' your leg, deah boy."

"Eh!"
"Might have been spoofin' you, you know——"

"Are you looking for a thick ear, Gussy?" asked Tom Merry politely.

"Bai Jove! No!"
"Then don't you hint that a New House waster could spoof me! They're coming right enough," said Tom Merry severely.

"By Jove! There they are! Quiet!"

Through an opening in the old masonry, Figgins & Co. could be seen entering the ruins.

Figgins, Kerr and Wynn came in together. There was nobody else with them. Fatty Wynn was carrying a parcel in both hands, evidently with the greatest care. Figgins was speaking, and his voice came to the ears of the ambushed juniors.

"Careful with that pie, Fatty!"
"Right-oh, Figgy."

"If you drop it you'll crack the dish——"

"I'm not going to drop it, you ass! Do you think I'd risk wasting the gravy?" Fatty Wynn exclaimed indignantly.

Tom Merry gave D'Arcy a triumphant glance.

"Well, isn't that all right?" he demanded, in a whisper.

"Bai Jove! yaas!"
"Wait till they get close," murmured Blake. "Let Fatty Wynn put the pie down before we go for them! We don't want to risk breaking the dish and losing the gravy."

The juniors chuckled silently.

Figgins & Co. came on, and stopped within six paces of the ambushed School House fellows, and Fatty Wynn laid down the parcel on a flat piece of masonry. He rolled back the cloth, and revealed a large pie-dish, with a beautiful crust over it. A slight steam was rising from the pie, and the sight of it made the School House fellows' mouth water. It was a keen day, and they had not had their tea; and the sight of that tempting pie made them feel quite famished.

"There!" said Fatty Wynn. "Now—hallo——"

There was a sudden rush of feet.
 "Collar them!" roared Tom Merry.
 "Look out!" yelled Figgins.
 But the School House fellows were upon them with a rush. Figgins & Co. went rolling over in the grasp of five or six fellows, and Tom Merry caught up the pie.
 "Rescue!" roared Figgins. "Rescue, New House!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Come on!" shouted Tom Merry.
 And leaving Figgins & Co. sprawling breathlessly upon the old flags, Tom Merry & Co. dashed away with the captured pie. They did not mean to eat it in the ruins, and give the New House fellows time to turn the tables on them. They rushed the prize away at once to the School House.

The raiders were gone in a moment, their footsteps and laughter dying away in the distance. Figgins & Co. sat up, and looked at one another. They did not seem wrathful. Figgins grinned, and Kerr laughed, and Fatty Wynn chuckled a fat chuckle.

"Gentlemen," said Figgins, "this is where we smile!"
 And they smiled, loudly.

CHAPTER 3. With Kind Regards!

TOM MERRY & CO. rushed the prize into the School House. Figgins's yell for rescue had not been answered, but if it had been, the New House fellows would have had to be very quick to intercept the raiders.

They dashed breathlessly into the School House, Tom Merry with the captured pie, wrapped in the cloth, safe in his grasp.

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "We've done the boundahs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Hallo!" exclaimed Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, meeting the juniors as they swarmed in. "What's the excitement about?"

"N-n-nothing!" stammered Tom Merry.
 "We—we've been running."

The captain of St. Jim's glanced at the wrapped-up pie.

"What have you got there?" he asked.
 "Steak-and-kidney pie for tea!" said Tom Merry.

"Oh!" said the St. Jim's captain.
 "Will you come and have some, Kildare?" asked Tom Merry hospitably.
 "It's a ripping pie, and there's simply heaps of it. I've never had such a big one before. And we got it cheap."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 Kildare shook his head.
 "Thanks all the same; I've had my tea," he said. "I hope you'll enjoy your pie. Don't drop it on the stairs."

"No fear; we're not going to risk losing the gravy!" grinned Blake.

"Wathah not!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors carried the pie carefully upstairs, leaving Kildare looking after them rather suspiciously. Cutts of the Fifth stopped them on the landing.

"What's that?" he asked.
 "Pie!"

"Good!" said Cutts. "I haven't had my tea."
 "Come and have some with us, then," said Tom Merry. "It's simply a ripping pie, and it's a jolly big one! There won't be anything else but pie, but there will be plenty of pie. It's steak and kidney!"

"Good egg!" said Cutts. "I'll come!"
 "Right-oh, come along!"

The juniors proceeded to Tom Merry's study, accompanied by the Fifth-Former. Tom Merry deposited the great pie on the table.

The juniors surrounded the table in great glee. The steam was still rising from the crust of the enormous pie. The crust was beautifully browned, and gave promise of the excellent things within.

"Plates!" said Tom Merry. "We shan't want any cups or saucers, because it won't run to tea. We've got some bread, and there's plenty of salt and pepper. But you chaps will have to fetch your own plates and knives and forks."

"Wight-oh, deah boy!"
 The juniors proceeded in search of cutlery, while Tom Merry laid the cloth upon the table, and Monty Lowther furnished salt and pepper. Cutts of the Fifth reposed himself in the arm-chair the while. It was an honour to the juniors for a Fifth-Former to

come to tea with them; at all events, so Cutts regarded it, and he wished to make the fact clearly understood.

"Here you are!" said Blake, coming in with a plate under each arm, and a couple of knives and forks in either hand.

The others followed him in with a further supply.
 Tom Merry took up a knife, and presided over the pie.

"If we had any lemonade, we'd drink to the founder of the feast," he remarked. "We really ought to give Figgins & Co. a cheer."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You got that from Figgins?" asked Cutts.

"Yaas, wathah!"

The Fifth-Former chuckled.

"Well, hand it out!" he said.

Tom Merry stuck the blade of the knife through the crust for a beginning. He expected a jet of luscious steam to arise through the opening. But it didn't. The knife went in a couple of inches, very easily, and then stopped. It had struck something hard.

"Cut away!" said Manners.

Tom Merry looked bewildered.

"I—I can't!" he said. "The knife's stuck in something! My hat! The steak Mrs. Taggles used must have been frightfully tough!"

He dragged the knife out again with an effort, and pushed it through the crust in another place. There was the same result.

"Queer there's no steam," said Blake. "Looks as though there's no gravy!"

"Pewwaps Tom Mewwy spilt it bwingin' it here——"

"Ass!" said Tom Merry politely.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"Loosen the crust round, and take it off in a piece," said Lowther.

"Good egg!"

Tom Merry slid the knife round the edge of the pie-dish. The crust should have come up quite easily. But it didn't.

"Looks as if it's glued down!" said Blake facetiously.

"Or gummed!" grinned Digby.

"Oh, buck up with that pie!" said Cutts, yawning. "Don't keep a fellow waiting all night!"

Tom Merry slashed a gap in the crust, and turned the piece out. Then he looked into the pie. Then a very queer expression came over his face. He slashed at the crust again, and removed a larger portion.

Then all the juniors could see into the interior of the pie-dish.

There was a yell.

"Great Scott!"

"What is it?"

"My hat!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Spoofed!" yelled Kangaroo.

Tom Merry gazed speechlessly into the pie. Concealed by the luscious crust, but revealed now that the crust was removed, was an ancient boot! There was nothing else in the pie-dish, excepting some torn-up leaves of an old exercise-book, evidently put in for packing. The ancient boot was dirty and muddy, and looked as if it had been picked off a dust-heap after reposing there for some weeks exposed to wind and weather. Tom Merry gazed at it like a fellow in a dream. Was this the pie that Figgins & Co. had been so anxious to keep to themselves that they had taken it to the ruined chapel instead of to their own study in the New House?

"Spoofed!" roared Blake.

"B-b-b-but——" stammered Tom Merry.

"Spoofed!"

"Dished!"

"Done!"

"I—I—c-c-c-an't understand it!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Figgins & Co. were going to eat that pie——"
 "I hope they'd have enjoyed it, if they had," said Cutts of the Fifth sarcastically. "Of all the silly jossers that ever jossed, I think you chaps are about the jossiest. Poof!" And Cutts of the Fifth stalked indignantly from the study.

Tom Merry stared at the pie, and the other fellows glared at Tom Merry. They hardly noticed the indignant departure of Cutts of the Fifth. Cutts was nothing to them now. They were thinking of the pie, and the elaborate jape Figgins & Co. had worked on them.

"Oh, you burbling jabberwock!" said Jack Blake. "You awful, terrific noodle!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You frightful chump!" said Kangaroo.

"You unspeakable duffer!" said Bernard Glyn.

"Yaas; I warned you that Figgins & Co. were spoofin' you, Tom Mewwy," said Arthur Augustus, solemnly wagging his fore-

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finger at the unhappy captain of the Shell. "Of course, they saw you at the study window, and spoke for you to hear, and you fell into the trap like a silly ass. Bai Jove!"

"B-b-b-but—" gasped Tom Merry.

"B-b-b-but!" mimicked Blake, sarcastically. "Do you think you can butt the old boot away, and butt in a steak-and-kidney pie instead?"

"B-b-b-but—"

"Listen to him!" said Herries. "Like a giddy gramophone that won't stop!"

"Yaas, watah! I wegard Tom Mewwy as an ass!"

"B-b-b-but—"

"Oh, go on!" said Blake. "Pile it on! B-b-b-but—it's a pleasure to listen to you. Better than eating pie!"

"B-b-b-but Figgins was going to eat that pie!" said Tom Merry. "Figgins has been spoofed himself over that pie! That's what it is!"

"Yes, very likely," said Monty Lowther, loyally backing up his chum. "Perhaps Figgins raided it from Redfern—"

"Perhaps he raided Redfern's grandmother!" roared Blake. "Look at that!"

He jerked out the boot. Underneath it, in the pie-dish, a card lay, and upon the card, in the well-known handwriting of Figgins of the Fourth, were written the words:

"WITH KIND REGARDS FROM FIGGINS & CO.!"

"Oh!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Well, you ass—"

"Oh!"

"He's left off saying 'b-b-b-but,' and started saying 'oh!'" said Blake. "Blessed if I'm going to stay here and listen to him, I'm off!"

And the Fourth-Formers departed wrathfully from the study. Arthur Augustus D'Arey turned in the doorway to fix his eyeglass severely upon Tom Merry, and wag an admonitory forefinger at him.

"Tom Mewwy," he said, "I wegard you as an ass!"

And then the swell of St. Jim's followed his chums. Kangaroo and Glyn went out of the study laughing. The Terrible Three were left alone, looking at the pie, and at one another.

"Oh!" said Tom Merry at last.

"Oh!" granted Lowther. "I endorse D'Arey's remark. You're an ass! I'm going down to tea in Hall. You can eat that old boot if you like! I don't care; you can have my whack, and welcome!"

And Monty Lowther stamped out. Manners followed him. Tom Merry snorted. There was a terrific crash as he hurled the pie-dish into the grate, and then he followed his chums downstairs to tea in Hall.

CHAPTER 4. D'Arey's Decision.

"I 'M goin' to earn my livin'!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arey made that startling announcement in Study No. 6.

The four chums were in the study after tea. They had had tea in Hall, a tea that Blake described as doorsteps washed down by ditch-water. That description was not complimentary, and was hardly just to the tea provided by the authorities of St. Jim's. But the juniors were exasperated at missing the usual brew in the study. Hard-upness seemed to be the general state now. Many of the juniors ran through their weekly pocket-money long before Saturday. Some of the fellows, like D'Arey, depended upon tips from kind relations to keep the wolf from the door. But there seemed a dearth of tips about this time. Crooke of the Shell, certainly, had had a handsome remittance that afternoon. But the chums of the Fourth would not have borrowed of the cad of the Shell, even if he would have lent to them—which was extremely doubtful.

Levison of the Fourth, too, was in funds; but it was equally impossible to borrow of Levison. Bernard Glyn of the Shell, who was the son of a millionaire, could generally be depended upon for a loan. But he had spent all his available funds on a new supply of dry batteries for a wonderful telephone he was making. Whether the telephone would be of any use, and whether the dry batteries would be of any use after he had finished with them, were deep questions nobody cared to solve. The gist of the matter was that the schoolboy inventor was as hard up as everybody else. Kangaroo was stony, owing to the delay of a remittance from Australia; and Reilly of the Fourth had borrowed all that Lorne of the Fourth had left, so neither of them was available now. It was, as Blake said, a most disgusting state of affairs, and there seemed no rift in the cloud. The chums of the School House would have to live from hand-to-mouth till Saturday. Blake seemed to be rather doubtful, really, whether they would survive it. True, the fare provided for St. Jim's fellows was hearty and wholesome, and there was plenty of it. But a stranger hearing the juniors discussing the situation, might have come to the conclusion that they were just on the verge of a serious famine.

It was under these circumstances that D'Arey's great announcement was made, and it caused Blake and Herries and Digby to sit bolt upright and stare at him.

They had been discussing the matter at endless length. They had turned over every possible way of getting cash. They had, they thought, thrashed the matter thoroughly out, and come to the conclusion that there was nothing to be done. It was reserved for Arthur Augustus D'Arey to think of that startlingly novel method of getting money—earning it!

"Better put that in the Christmas Number of the 'Weekly,'" said Blake, after a pause. "You can head it—'Funny Sayings of a Funny Ass.'"

"Weally, Blake—"

"The question is," said Herries, "whether we can raise the wind. I actually haven't enough biscuits to last Towser till Saturday."

"Horrid!" said Blake.

"Yes, isn't it? I can't feed Towser on odds-and-ends either; he's jolly particular what he eats. Now—"

"I made a wemark, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus firmly. "I have thought this mattah ovah, and I have made up my mind. I wegard it as wotten to be dependant for pocket-money upon a capivicious govannah. Evah since Lloyd George brought in that blessed Budget, or Insurance-tax, or whatever it is—I'm not quite cleah what it is, but I know it's somethin' to do with Lloyd George—well, evah since then, my patah has been very particulah about fivahs. He says he can't afford them. That's why I've thought of this ideah. If it works all wight, I shall suggest it to my patah."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"I can imagine the noble earl earning his living," grinned Digby. "My dear chap, noble earls are a drug in the market, I suppose he's never learned a trade."

"No," said Arthur Augustus thoughtfully, "that's watah a disadvantage of bein' born in the uppah ten, you know. A chap doesn't learn a twade. And if the Chancellor of the Exchequer keeps on as he's started, we shall have to do somethin' or othah, soonah or latah. But that's not the question now. The twouble is, that we are out of tin, and my govannah has wefused to play the game. He weguards me as a useless ass!"

"No!" said Blake, with a look of astonishment.

"Yaas, it's a fact!"

"Well, I always said your pater was a chap of judgment," said Blake judicially.

"You uttah ass!"

"The question is," said Herries thoughtfully, "whether Towser would eat the kind of biscuits young Wally gets in for his dog Pongo. If he would—"

"I am goin' to show my govannah that I am not a useless ass," said Arthur Augustus firmly, "and I am goin' to wite to him, and tell him that, undah the cires, I wefuse to accept any more pocket-money."

"Phew!"

"I am wresolved upon it, deah boys. I am goin' to earn my livin'!"

Blake and Herries and Digby looked at one another. Arthur Augustus made the statement with a seriousness that almost made them shriek. But they retained their gravity by dint of great efforts.

"Good wheeze," said Blake. "Young Brooke earns his living, doesn't he? Of course, he's only a day-boy."

"I suppose a D'Arey can do what a Bwooke can do, deah boy."

"I don't know. He must keep at it pretty hard," said Blake, with a shake of the head. "You know what the poet says on that subject?"

"I am unaware that any poet has said anythin' about Bwooke of the Fourth."

"Oh, yes—Tennyson," said Blake cheerfully. "Don't you remember—he says: 'Men may come, and men may go: But I go on for ever.'"

"You uttah ass, that was a little bwook—not Bwooke of the Fourth!"

"My mistake," said Blake blandly. "I wondered how Tennyson came to know Brooke. Tennyson wasn't a St. Jim's chap. But what trade are you going to take up?"

"I haven't decided that yet. Of course, there are lots of twades. I think I should like to be a big City financier," said D'Arey modestly. "They have lots of money, and that's a great advantage in any twade. I pwefer a job where there isn't much to do, and lots of pay."

"Go hon! I believe jobs like that are rather popular."

"But you see, I shall wun it while I am at school, same as Bwooke does, so I'm afwaid bein' a big City man is out of the question."

"It would require capital, too," said Blake gravely.

"Yes: City men live in the capital, you know," said Digby.

"A capital idea," said Blake.

"Pway don't make wotten puns, deah boys, at a sewious moment. We get enough of that fwom Lowthah of the Shell."

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I am goin' to earn my livin', and if you like I'll put you chaps in the way of doin' the same. The question is, what line can a fellow earn money at while he's at school. Bwooke is a day-boy, and he does his work at home. I should have to do mine in the study here."

"Then it couldn't be shipbuilding, or anything of that sort," said Blake gravely.

"Pway don't be an ass!"

"What about hiring yourself out as a scarecrow to the farmers in the neighbourhood?" exclaimed Digby enthusiastically, as if struck by a brilliant idea. "You would get about twopence an hour. And you wouldn't need to make up for the part."

"Weally, you uttah ass!"

"Or you could become a railway director," remarked Blake thoughtfully. "They get splendid salaries, and ride about in special trains sometimes."

"What about a banker?" asked Digby, "I don't know that you need any experience. Moses started in the banking business without any experience."

"Moses!" said D'Arcy, in amazement.

"Yes, you remember he gave Pharaoh a check on the bank of the Red Sea," said Digby.

"You uttah clump!"

"What about becoming an artist?" suggested Blake. "You could borrow some colours from that chap Tadpole at the Grammar School, or mix 'em up yourself. I've heard that all the Old Masters used to mix their own colours. You'll be a young master, of course; but there's no harm in borrowing a good dodge. And no practice is necessary; you just shov the colours on, and if nobody can make out what the picture's meant for, you're a Futurist. If they can make out part of it, you're only an ordinary Impressionist. Squeeze out all the tubes together on the canvas, and get a dog to walk over it, and you'll be jolly certain of making a name."

"Or Gussy might be an Opera singer," suggested Digby. "He can sing tenor solos, you know. They wouldn't pay him to sing, but they might pay him to leave off."

Arthur Augustus rose to his feet.

He jammed his famous monocle into his eye, and took a scornful survey of the three grinning juniors.

"I wegard you as uttah asses!" he said. "I wefuse to discuss the mattah with you any furthah. I will go and see Tom Mewwy about it. I wegard you as silly chumps!"

And Arthur Augustus walked out of Study No. 6, and closed the door behind him with a slam that could be heard the whole length of the Fourth Form passage. And Blake and Herries and Digby chuckled, and fell to discussing the great problem again, how to raise the wind before Saturday. Apparently they had no faith whatever in the ability of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy to raise cash by the extremely novel and extraordinary method of working for it.

CHAPTER 5.

Not Serious!

TOM MERRY brought his fist down upon the study table, with a thump that made the pens dance on the inkstand, and the ink in the well.

"Cheese it!" he exclaimed.

"There's no cheese," said Monty Lowther, "any more than there is anything else."

"I'm fed up!"

"More than I am, I feel as if I'd been missing meals for weeks."

"I thought it was a real pie."

"Well, never mind the pie," said Monty Lowther magnanimously, "we'll let you off the pie, if you'll only think of some way of raising the wind. Are we going to have tea in Hall for the rest of the week, and avoid the tuck-shop as if it were a lecture-hall?"

"The only thing I can think of," said Manners, "is for Lowther to sell his old knife to Crooke."

"The only thing I can think of," said Lowther, "is for Manners to sell his rotten films to the other silly photographing ass."

"Look here, you fathead!"

"Look here, you clump!"

Tom Merry thumped the table again emphatically.

"Do stop jawing," he exclaimed, "we've got to think this out! There never was such a dearth of cash. Every fellow seems to have blued all his own and all everybody else's. How on earth are we going to raise funds? We haven't paid the printer for the last number of the 'Weekly' yet, and we all owe accounts at the tuck-shop. I don't like writing to Miss Fawcett for money, but really it begins to look like the only possible thing to do."

"There's my giddy uncle," growled Monty Lowther, "he's got piles of money, but he never hands it out. He says I'm extravagant. Me!"

"I've just stuck my people for a new daylight developer," said Manners thoughtfully, "otherwise—"

Monty Lowther snorted.

"Just like you, you ass! Beastly photography again! Now, if it had been a Sandow developer, there would have been some sense in it. Though, to tell the truth," he added thoughtfully, "there were some scents in your old developer."

"Oh, bosh!" said Manners. "Don't make puns now. Let's think what's to be done. No good leaving it to Tom Merry. We can't eat old boots."

"Look here," began Tom Merry wrathfully, "let that subject drop. If—"

"There's nothing like leather," suggested Monty Lowther.

Tom Merry jumped up.

"Look here, you chaps—"

There was a tap at the door, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came in. Tom Merry sat down again. The Terrible Three turned hopefully to the swell of St. Jim's.

"Got a fiver?" asked three voices in unison.

Arthur Augustus shook his head.

"Got any cash at all?"

"No, deah boys. I've got a wippin' ideah, though."

The Terrible Three snorted. It was very plain that they did not consider D'Arcy's ripping ideas at all equal to cash in value.

"It's a wathah we remarkable ideah," said Arthur Augustus. "I have pwopounded it to Blake and the othahs, and they have weceived it like a set of silly asses, so I have bwrought it to you fellows. I want you to back me up, and entah into the thing with me, and we shall have plenty of money all wound."

"Plenty of money!" repeated the Terrible Three.

"Yaas—heaps!"

"How on earth are you going to get plenty of money?" demanded Tom Merry. "Are you thinking of putting your gold watch up the spout?"

"Certainly not. I should decline to do anythin' of the sort, and I wegard it as wathah wotten to call a pawnbwokah's establishment a spout, deah boy. Howevah, I am not thinkin' of pawnin' my tickah. There are other ways of waisin' the wind. Now, just turn it ovah in your mind, how to waise money, and it will occur to you."

The Shell fellows knitted their brows in thought.

"Borrow?" said Tom Merry.

D'Arcy shook his head.

"Beg?"

"No, deah boy."

"Steal?"

"Certainly not."

"Well, they're the three well-known methods," said Tom Merry thoughtfully. "I dare say there are other ways—or sub-divisions. Chap can make money now by going into Parliament."

"I am not thinkin' of that!"

"Well, I give it up. Ask us another?"

"What's the answer to that one?" asked Lowther.

"Work!"

"Eh!"

"Work!" repeated Arthur Augustus D'Arcy firmly.

"Work!" said the Terrible Three, again in unison.

"Yaas."

"My hat!"

"I was thinkin' the mattah ovah, deah boys, and it flashed into my bwain all of a sudden," said Arthur Augustus, with justifiable pride. "Of course, I know it's a wathah we remarkable ideah. But there are heaps of chaps who make money by workin' for it—waylay portahs, and gwocer's boys, like that chap Gwines in Wylcombe, and—and schoolmastahs, you know—and genewahs in the Army, and—and stokahs on ships, you know."

"What a beautiful assortment," remarked Monty Lowther. "Which are you thinking of starting as—a general in the Army, or a stoker on a ship? I should prefer the general's job, myself; the stoker has to work harder for less pay—and a stoker's job is risky, too."

"Pway don't be an ass, deah boy. I am goin' to work to earn my livin'. Bwooke of the Fourth does it, and why shouldn't I?"

"Echo answers why!" said Tom Merry.

"Does it?" said Monty Lowther in surprise. "Then there's something queer in the acoustics of this study. Echo ought to answer 'I' to that remark."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now, if you fellows can make any sensible suggestions as to the line of business it would be advisable for me to take up, I should be vewy glad to heah you," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

ANSWERS

"Bricklaying!" suggested Lowther. "Great demand in our days of jerrybuilding."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Extra Christmas postman, a little later in the season," Manners suggested.

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"Harvesting, making hay and things," said Tom Merry.

"But they don't do harvesting in Novembah, deah boy."

"No-o—that's a drawback. But you could put it off till next summer."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"I know!" exclaimed Lowther. "You shall work for us."

"What!"

"We want a man-of-all-work in the study!" Monty Lowther explained blandly. "We'll pay you regular wages. You don't want any more money from your pater. When it comes, you can hand it over to us, and we'll pay it to you in the form of wages. You can find a lot of work to do here—sweeping up the study, washing the crocks, cleaning footer boots—"

"You frightful ass—"

"Well, I'm trying to be helpful," said Lowther.

"There is only one practical ideah that has occurred to me," said D'Arcy. "You chaps wemembah that I was wathah a dab at amateur detective bizney."

"Oh!" said the Terrible Three with a gasp.

"When Fewwahs Locke the detective, was here, lookin' aftah that cwaacksman who turned out to be Mellish's cousin, I had the honah of helpin' him—"

"Yes; you opened a window or something, didn't you?" Lowther remarked.

"I had the honah of helpin' Fewwahs Locke," said D'Arcy, unheeding. "I have often thought that if I evah had to take to work, I should turn detective. With my powahs of makin' deductions and things—"

"Runs in the family, doesn't it?" asked Lowther.

"I don't know, Lowthah! Why?"

"I mean, your pater makes deductions. He has been making deductions from your allowance," said Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You ass; when I say deductions, I do not mean deductions, I mean deductions," D'Arcy explained lucidly. "The infinitive form of the verb is deduce, not deduct. There are deductions and deductions. I mean deductions."

"Clear as mud," said Lowther.

"Unfortunately, there is no detective work to be done in a school," said Arthur Augustus despondently. "I can't win a detective bizney fwom Study No. 6. I shouldn't be allowed to miss classes to take up the cases."

"No, very likely you wouldn't," said Tom Merry gravely. "Masters are very unreasonable beasts sometimes. If they caught you deductin—"

"Deducin', deah boy."

"If they caught you deducing when you ought to be grinding Latin verses, they would very likely get waxy. Of course, you could explain to the Head that you're taking up a private detective business, and would very likely have to be called away from lessons every now and then."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy looked sharply at Tom Merry. The Shell fellow's face was quite grave and serious. D'Arcy coughed.

"How do you think the Head would be likely to take that?" he asked.

"Try him!" said Lowther. "Leave the door open when you begin—and put on your running shoes."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you uttah asses cannot be sewious—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Terrible Three. "D'Arcy the Detective! Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly chumps—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You burblin' asses—"

"Ha, ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus stalked out of the Shell study and slammed the door with a more vigorous slam than that he had bestowed upon the door of No. 6. It was evident that he was not going to be taken seriously in Tom Merry's study, and that the Terrible Three did not believe in work as a method of obtaining cash.

But the aristocratic face of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was resolute.

"I'll jollay well show the boundahs that I'm not such an ass," he murmured. "I'll jollay well pprove to them that I can earn my livin'. Yaas, wathah!"

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy set all his wits to work on the subject, and when he went to bed that night he was still thinking of it, and he dreamed of it; and he dreamed that he was a detective, chasing a stoker and a general in the army over a hayfield—from which mixed vision of the night he awoke in the morning with the great problem still unsolved.

CHAPTER 6.

Looking for a Situation.

"BOY Wanted—"
"Eh?"
"Light work with horse and van—"

"What?"

"Respectable woman seeks daily work—"

"What the—"

"Lady seeks employment at charing—"

"Mad!" said Monty Lowther compassionately. "Quite potty! Poor old Gussy! I knew he was getting a little potty when he began to talk about work last night! It's a hopeless sign when a fellow like Gussy begins to talk about work! Poor old Gussy!"

"Mother's help wanted, thirteen in family, wages two shillings—"

"Oh, dear!"

Arthur Augustus looked up at last. Morning lessons were over at St. Jim's, and the juniors had come upon Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, seated upon one of the oaken benches under the old elms in the quadrangle. D'Arcy had the local paper, "The Rylcombe Gazette," open on his knees; but he was not looking for St. Jim's footer reports, or the descriptions of local matches. He was reading down the advertisement columns. And Tom Merry & Co simply stood and stared at him. Reading newspapers at all was not much in their line, but they thought they could have found something a little more interesting, even in the local "rag," than a list of char-ladies who wanted situations, and a list of situations that wanted char-ladies.

"Pway don't intewrupt me, deah boys," said the swell of St. Jim's. "Bai Jove! I wathah think that will suit me!"

"What will suit you?" asked Blake.

"This advertisement. Listen, deah boys. Boy wanted—"

"Oh, my only winter bonnet!"

"—to cawwy wound medicines. Apply aftah twelve and befoah two, at Mr. Pyson, chemist, Wylcombe. I suppose I could cawwy wound medicines."

"My hat!" roared Blake. "Are you looking for a job?"

"Yaas!"

"Oh, my Aunt Maria!"

The juniors stared at Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. They had chuckled, the previous evening, over his idea of raising money by earning it. It was such an extraordinary idea that they felt they were entitled to chuckle. But to find that he still had the same idea the next day, and that he was in deadly earnest about it, was a great surprise.

"I think I can see him carrying round medicines," gasped Digby. "Oh, you chum! You'd better stick to the private detective idea."

"But how am I to get any pwivate detective work at school. Dig?"

"Advertise for it," said Digby, winking the eye that was farthest from Arthur Augustus. "Put an ad. in this paper—Private detective work undertaken at the shortest notice. Desperate criminals run down on the spot! Clues found or manufactured in any number. Handwriting proved to be anybody's you like, on the best expert system. Finger-prints and foot-prints a speciality!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You uttah ass, Dig!"

"By Jove, it's not a bad idea," said Tom Merry, laughing.

"The paper comes out to-morrow, and if you like to shove the advertisement in to-day, Gussy, it'll be in print to-morrow. You can use an assumed name, of course—call yourself Sexton Blake Junior—or Nipper the Second—or Ferrers Locke minor—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I am goin' to apply for this situation as ewwand boy," said Arthur Augustus, rising with dignity and folding the paper. "I shall ask Mr. Pyson to allow me to take the medicines wound in my spare time, out of class hours. I don't know what the salawy will be—but if it's only a pound a week, it will keep me in pocket-money."

"Pound a week!" roared Blake. "Two bob, you ass."

"I should wufuse to work for two shillin's. Howevah—"

"Try the advertisement, Gussy!" pleaded Tom Merry.

"You know you were born to be a giddy detective. Very likely Sexton Blake or Sherlock Holmes may see it, and if they happen to have difficult cases on hand, they'll come and consult you."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Put it in, Gussy!" said Blake.

And the juniors all chimed in with the same advice. They could see that Arthur Augustus was determined to carry out his idea of raising money by working for it; and they did not want him to make a round of Rylcombe asking for jobs at the shops. They could foresee the kind of reception the elegant youth would meet with when he went after a situation as a half-timer in a chemist's shop. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy hesitated. He looked suspiciously at his chums. Blake and Digby were taken

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with a sudden fit of coughing; but the others were quite grave.

"I haven't any tin to pay for the advertisement, deah boys," said D'Arcy.

"That's all right; Mr. Tiper knows you," said Tom Merry. "He prints the 'Weekly' for us, doesn't he, and we owe him a bill already. Couldn't be a better recommendation than that."

"Bai Jove, it's a good idea! There may be some mystery in Wylcombe that requires to be solved," said D'Arcy, his eye gleaming behind his eyeglasses. "If it is a small case, like somebody wobbin' a till, that's a beginnin'. Fewwahs Locke did not become famous all at once, I suppose."

"No; he may have started by robbing tills," said Lowther; "I mean by tracking down chaps who rob tills. Draw up the advertisement. Assume a striking name—something like Sleuth—or Blughound—"

"Sleuth will do!" said D'Arcy. "Bai Jove!" He dotted down with a pencil on the margin of the paper, "SLEUTH, PRIVATE DETECTIVE! Care of Study No. 6, School House, St. Jim's. Cases of all kinds undertaken. Missing relatives, missing jewels, missing property of all kinds, recovered at the promptest notice."

"Put in umbrellas," said Monty Lowther.

"Umbrellas, deah boy?"

"Yes, people often lose umbrellas," said Lowther, "and even when they don't lose them, you know, people like their umbrellas re-covered."

"You fidgetful duffah!"

"Shut up, Lowther," said Tom Merry, warningly. "This is a serious matter. If D'Arcy gets two or three hundred guineas a case, we shall make him share out. In fact, he can take us on as his assistants—like Nipper and Tinker, you know, or Dr. Watson. I should not object in the least to anyone handing me fifty quid for finding a murderer or an umbrella."

"Good egg!" said Blake heartily. "It's understood that if we back Gussy up in this, he takes us all on as Nippers and Tinkers when he gets the bizney fairly going?"

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus, unsuspectingly. "I'll buzz down to Wylcombe on my bike now, deah boys, and take this advertisement in, and then it will be out to-morrow. I may get my first case to-morrow. Bai Jove! It would be wippin' to be able to show my governah a cheque for a hundred or a couple of hundred guineas, for discovowin' the missin' jewels or the lost will, you know!"

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy rushed away for his bicycle, and was soon pedalling at a great rate towards the village of Rylcombe, to be in time to get that important advertisement inserted in the current week's issue of the local paper. And when he was gone, the juniors collapsed on the bench, and yelled. They yelled and roared till the tears ran down their cheeks. Figgins & Co. of the New House came strolling by, and they halted at the sight of the immoderate mirth of the School House fellows.

"Still tickled over that pie?" asked Figgins, genially. And Korr and Wynn chuckled.

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

"What's happened?"

"Gussy has! Ha, ha, ha!"

And in the exuberance of their mirth the School House fellows forgot all about the outrage of the pie, and between their sobs they confided the whole story to Figgins & Co. And Figgins & Co. collapsed upon the grass, and shrieked.

CHAPTER 7.

Gordon Gay Has An Idea.

"HALT!"

"Stand and deliver!" Three youths in mortar-boards lined up across the lane, as Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, mounted upon his handsome "jigger," was riding into Rylcombe. Arthur Augustus put the brake on, and slowed down. The trio were Gordon Gay, Frank Monk, and Wootton major, of Rylcombe Grammar School. They looked as if they meant mischief. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy jumped off his bike.

"Pax, deah boys!" he exclaimed.

Gordon Gay shook his head.

"Pax is off!" he said. "We haven't ragged any of you St. Jim's bounders since we came back from the seaside. We were just looking out for some of you. You have come like the flowers in May; like corn in Egypt in one of the lean years. Collar him, kids!"

"Weally, deah boys—!"

Arthur Augustus was promptly collared by the humorous Grammarians.

"Now, shall we slay him outright, or put him to the torture first?" asked Gordon Gay, with a meditative look.

"Pway don't be an ass, deah boy!" remonstrated Arthur Augustus. "I have said pax, and I mean pax. I'm in a fearful huwwy!"

"You're in a fearful waistcoat!" said Wootton major.

"Weally, you silly ass—!"

"Shall we put him on the bike backwards, and tie his feet to the pedals?" suggested Frank Monk, in a thoughtful way.

"Weally, deah boys, I twust that you will make it pax when I have said pax," said the swell of St. Jim's. "I've got to get to the office of the 'Wylcombe Gazette' before the staff goes out to dinna. They both go at one o'clock."

"What's the little game?" asked Gordon Gay. "New edition of the 'Weekly'?"

"No. Somethin' more important than that."

"Advertisement for a lost dog?"

"No, you ass! I don't mind tellin' you fellows about it," said Arthur Augustus. "You can walk down to the pwintah's with me, if you like."

Gordon Gay bowed to the ground.

"Thanks, great lord! Come on, you chaps. I suppose we must let him off—we'll go round and look for Tom Merry instead. Now, what's on, Gussy?"

And the Grammarians, quite amicable, in spite of their ferocious remarks of a few minutes earlier, walked round D'Arcy as he wheeled his bicycle into the village. Arthur Augustus was not at all loth to explain. He was very full of his latest idea; besides, the Grammarians would probably see the advertisement in the local paper, anyway.

"I'm goin' to put an advertisement into the Wylcombe papah," Arthur Augustus explained. "I'm goin' to take on detective work."

The Grammarians fairly jumped. If Arthur Augustus had declared that he was going to take on Jack Johnson for a dozen rounds, they could not have been more surprised.

"You're going to what?" gasped Gordon Gay.

"You're going to which?" demanded Monk.

"I suppose it's wathah a surprise to you," said Arthur Augustus, rather pleased with the effect of his announcement upon the Grammarians. "The fact is, we are all fidgetfully hard-up at St. Jim's—all the fellows are stonay, and I've refused to take any more pocket-money from my patah. I had to think of some way of waisin' money, and all of a sudden it flashed into my bwaïn that a splendid ideah would be to earn some."

"Earn it!" gasped Monk.

"Yaas."

"My only sainted grandmother!"

"Good egg!" said Gordon Gay, heartily. "There are lots of things D'Arcy could do—regular job as a tailor's dummy, for instance. Or a job in a freak collection—!"

"Weally, Gay—!"

"Think how he'd look outside Mr. Wigg's shop, in a reach-me-down suit, with a label: 'For Pier and Prom. One Guinea'!" said Gordon Gay, enthusiastically.

"You uttah ass!" said D'Arcy. "Pway don't wot; this is a weally sewious mattah. I darsay you fellows heard about a cwacksman comin' to St. Jim's last week, and Fewwahs Locke, the detective, comin' to collah him! He collahed him all wight, and I helped him. Fewwahs Locke accepted my offah of assistance."

"Humorist, I suppose?" suggested Monk.

D'Arcy did not reply to that remark.

"That was weally what put it into my head," he explained. "Fewwahs Locke can fix his own fees. Of course, I shan't get hundweds of guineas at the start."

"No, probably not!" grinned Gordon Gay.

"But even a fivah is not to be despised," said Arthur Augustus, with a wise shake of the head. "Fiyahs are jolly useful, I can tell you. There's a chap at our school, a day-boy, who earns his own livin', you know—I've always felt a vewy great admiration for that chap. It nevah occurred to me to do it before, somehow, but I'm goin' to do it now. There is a vewy great satisfaction in havin' lots of money and earnin' it oneself. Somethin' attempted, somethin' done, you know, 'To earn a night's wposure.'"

The Grammarians seemed in danger of suffocating.

"There's nothin' whatevah to laugh at, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus. "I have a gift for detective work, and I'm goin' to turn in a few guineas a week that way. Of course,

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I shall do it undah an assumed name. The Head might waise some objections otherwise."

"Oh, great Scott! He might!"

"That's the advertisement," said D'Arcy, displaying it. "I wathah think that's likely to bwing in some wplies, don't you?"

The three Grammarians read the advertisement.

"My only Uncle Peter!" murmured Gordon Gay. "Are you really going to shove that into the local paper?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And—and take up cases?"

"Yaas."

"And run down giddy criminals and things?"

"Certainly!"

"Oh, crums!"

"Here we are, deah boys," said D'Arcy, as they arrived outside the office of the "Rylcombe Gazette." "Good-bye."

"Good-bye, and good-luck!" grinned Gordon Gay.

"Thank you, deah boy."

Arthur Augustus leaned his machine up against the office, and went in. Gordon Gay & Co. stared at one another, and chuckled gleefully.

"Well, of all the wheezes——!" said Wootton major.

"Do you think he'll get any answers to that ad.?" asked Monk.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Sleuth the detective! Blughound the giddy man-hunter!" chorried Wootton major. "Oh, my hat! If that doesn't take the whole giddy biscuit factory——!"

"But he will get an answer!" said Gordon Gay.

"Eh? Rot!"

"But he will!"

"How on earth do you know?" demanded Frank Monk, staring at the Cornstalk junior.

"Because I'm jolly well going to send him one."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We haven't done any amateur theatricals since we came back from the giddy sea," said Gordon Gay. "This looks to me like a gorgeous opportunity."

The Grammarians burst into a roar.

They leaned up against the printing-office, and yelled till the tears were running down their cheeks.

"Not a word!" said Gordon Gay. "Come on! Gussy mustn't see us again; we don't want him to smell a mouse! Come on!"

And the three Grammarians, chuckling with glee, went their way. Five minutes later Arthur Augustus came out of the "Gazette" office, and found them gone. He mounted his bicycle and rode back to St. Jim's in a satisfied mood.

He was just in time for dinner. Tom Merry & Co. met him as he came into the dining-room in the School House, and D'Arcy nodded to them cheerfully.

"In time?" asked Tom Merry.

"Yaas, deah boy."

"You've got the advertisement in?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Good!" grinned Blake. "The answers will come pouring in to-morrow. You'd better get ready for business; you will need a revolver and some handcuffs."

"Bai Jove! I nevah thought of that!"

"No good catching criminals if you can't handcuff them," said Monty Lowther, with a shake of the head. "Sherlock Holmes always does, and then hands 'em over to the police. Click!—and it's done! It's quite easy—in a book, at any rate. And then the revolver—you will want a trusty revolver. When you order it, specify that it must be a trusty one."

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"And mind you write the order plainly," said Lowther, seriously. "If they missed the 't,' they might send you a rusty one, you know. There's a great deal of difference between a trusty revolver and a rusty revolver—more than it sounds."

"If you persist in playin' the giddy ox, Lowthah——!"

"You will want a licence," remarked Kangaroo. "Of course, Herries could lend you his dog licence."

"You uttah ass——!"

"Well, people are fined for carrying revolvers, either trusty or rusty, without a licence. But I forgot—you're a poet, Gussy—I remember your poem on 'Spring is Humming'——"

"Spring is Coming," you silly fathead!"

"My mistake," said Kangaroo. "I meant 'Spring is Coming.' Well, as you're a poet, it will be all right—you can use your poet's licence."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus elevated his aristocratic nose, and walked into the dining-room. Tom Merry & Co. followed him, chuckling.

CHAPTER 8.

The First Client.

TOM MERRY & CO. found themselves, the next day, still in hard times—but at tea-time things looked up.

Monty Lowther and Manners had settled the burning question whether the films or the pocket-knife should be sold to raise funds. Monty Lowther was determined not to sell his pocket-knife, and Manners was equally determined not to sell his films. But they settled the matter quite satisfactorily; Manners sold Lowther's pocket-knife to Crooke for half-a-crown, without consulting Lowther—and Lowther disposed of Manners' films to Levison for eighteenpence, without consulting Manners. And so at tea-time, on Friday, there was an unexpected rush of funds in Tom Merry's study.

Tom Merry had gone through the pockets of several old garments, in the hope of discovering some overlooked coin there. He discovered nothing but some moths. He went down to the study in a hopeless frame of mind; but he found Manners and Lowther there, both of them looking quite cheerful. Monty Lowther gave him a very bright nod.

"Tea-time!" remarked Lowther.

Tom Merry granted.

"It will have to be tea in Hall again," he said. "I've hunted high and low! Blessed if I ever knew such a famine for cash! We're like the giddy seed in the parable—we've fallen on stony places, and no mistake."

"It's all right——"

"Yes, it's all right," said Manners.

Another grunt from Tom Merry.

"Well, you may think it all right," he said. "I don't. I think it's rotten!"

"I've got some cash!" said Lowther.

"Cash!"

"Yes!"

Tom Merry rushed at his chum and hugged him.

"Come to my arms!" he gasped. "I've almost forgotten what cash looks like! How much have you got?"

"One-and-six."

"Hurrah!"

"We'll have a ripping spread, and make up for lost time," said Manners.

"Well, I don't know that it will be very ripping, on eighteenpence," said Lowther. "But we'll do the best we can."

"Oh, I can put some to that," said Manners.

"My hat!" exclaimed Tom. "Is it raining manna? How much have you raised?"

"Half-a-crown!"

"Bravo! That's four bob altogether! We'll have the kids from No. 6 to tea—it's only cricket, as Gussy is going to stand us something handsome out of his first fees as a private detective."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But where did you get the tin?" asked Tom Merry curiously. "I've been trying to borrow right and left, and high and low, but everybody is stony."

"Sold something," said Lowther carelessly.

"How odd!" said Manners.

"What's odd about it?" asked Lowther.

"Why, I've sold something too!"

"What did you sell?"

"Oh, something that wasn't much good," said Manners, very carelessly. "What did you sell, Monty?"

"Only some old rubbish. Let's get down to the tuck-shop."

"Come on," said Tom Merry.

"Hold on a minute," said Manners, a sudden suspicion coming into his mind, and he went to the table drawer. "Has anybody seen my films?"

"Films!" said Monty Lowther innocently.

"Yes; I left a roll of films here. I was going to use them to-morrow afternoon, when I take my camera out."

"Well, if you don't want them till to-morrow afternoon, look for them to-morrow," said Monty Lowther affably. "Let's get tea now."

"I want to know where those films are!"

"Oh, blow the films!" said Tom Merry. "I'm hungry."

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RED-LETTER DAYS: "PENNY POPULAR" FRIDAY AND "MAGNET" MONDAY!

"You say you sold something for eighteenpence, Lowther?"
 "Yes: one-and-six."
 "Have you sold my films?" roared Manners.
 "Oh!" ejaculated Tom Merry. "Eighteenpence! Ha, ha, ha! Never mind, Manners, old man; you can't eat films, you know."

"Have you sold my films?" yelled Manners.
 "Well, what was I to do?" argued Lowther. "You'd have sold my pocket-knife. You can buy new films any time. Blow your films! Come and have tea."

"You—you—you burglar!"

"My dear chap—"

"My films—"

"Oh, rats!"

"You—I'll—oh—I—"

"Never mind, we'll sell Monty's pocket-knife to-morrow, Manners, old man," said Tom Merry, consolingly.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Manners. "We shan't sell it to-morrow—I've sold it to-day!"

"What!" shouted Lowther.

"You left it on the table, you silly ass—and I've sold it to Crooke, you fathead—for half-a-crown, you jossler!" roared Manners.

"You've sold my pocket-knife!"

"Yes! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why, you—you cheeky ass—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Manners. "Your pocket-knife can keep company with my films. Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you—you—"

Tom Merry stepped between his two chums.

"Peace, my infants, peace!" he said soothingly. "Anyway, we're going to have tea. It's just as good as if you'd sold the rotten things yourselves, you know—"

"My pocket-knife—"

"My films—"

"Oh, come down to the tuck-shop and shut up. It's done now."

And Manners and Lowther, realising that it was no use complaining over spilt milk, allowed the matter to drop. Each of them had the consolation for his own loss of knowing that he had sold the other's property, however. And, after all, four shillings were four shillings, and they had escaped tea in Hall for once. Tom Merry led the way down the passage, and stopped to look in at Study No. 6.

"You fellows coming to tea?" he asked.

Blake jumped up.

"Yes, rather," he said. "Any tea going?"

"Yes; we've got four bob!"

"Hurrah!"

"Sowwy, deah boys, I can't come," said Arthur Augustus, in a stately way. "Business hours, you know."

"What!" exclaimed the Terrible Three together.

"Business hours. You see, I'm expectin' some answhahs to my advertisement; the papah was out this mornin'. I'm twyin to persuade Blake to act as my office clerk, but the silly ass won't!"

"No fear!" grinned Blake.

"I shall want a clerk, if I'm goin' to do any business," said D'Arcy. "I'm willin' to pay good wages—when the fees come in, of course. My ideah is that Blake ought to wait at the door and take down the names of callahs. It's a good ideah to keep up appearances in any business. Fellows bring you more business if they think you've got a good business goin' already."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Better come and have tea," suggested Tom Merry. "I think very likely there won't be any callers this afternoon."

"I twust there will be. Thank you, deah boy, but I think I had better remain on the pwemises, in case of business lookin' up."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry & Co. went their way, and Arthur Augustus was left alone in the study. The swell of St. Jim's was not displeased to see his chums depart. He felt that a private detective needed an office all to himself, and that it would look unbusiness-like to have three Fourth-Form fellows sprawling about the office. As soon as Blake and the rest were gone, Arthur Augustus put the study very tidy. He placed pen and ink on the table ready for use, and a couple of large notebooks, and several old envelopes, and threw some crumpled letters on the floor. Then he was ready for the rush of custom.

Was the rush coming? The good folk of Rylecombe had had time to read the advertisement; to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest it. If any of them had lost cash, dogs, umbrellas, or relatives, surely they would realise the great advantage of calling in the aid of Sleuth, the detective, to find the articles. Arthur Augustus had inserted in his advertisement a note to the effect that business hours were from five to half-past six. It would not do, he felt, to have clients calling when he was in the class-room. As he sat waiting at the study table, he wrote out a notice to pin on the study door: "MR. SLEUTH, PRIVATE DETECTIVE—OFFICE."

He opened the study door, pinned up the notice, and then resumed his waiting.

A quarter of an hour passed, and then footsteps came along the passage. They stopped at the door of Study No. 6.

Arthur Augustus's heart beat hard.

Of course, probably it was only some junior coming to see him, but—

Tap!

"Come in!" said D'Arcy.

The study-door opened. A figure in a motor-coat, with huge goggles covering up most of the face, and thick, grey whiskers covering up the rest, stood in the doorway. Arthur Augustus rose to his feet, his heart thumping. The man in the motor goggles was evidently a stranger at St. Jim's. Why had he come to Study No. 6, if not—

There was no doubt about it! It was the first client!

"Pway come in!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Excuse me," said the stranger, in a deep, hoarse voice, as if he had a cold, "is this the office of Mr. Sleuth?"

"Yaas, wathah! Pway walk in!"

The client walked in.

CHAPTER 9.

A Business Interview!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY did his best to conceal his excitement and his satisfaction. He knew that it was not business-like to show either. A client must not be allowed to suppose that he is the first client who has ever entered an office. People only want to do business with those who had done business before, which is certainly a little hard on beginners. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy would gladly have assumed the airs of a Ferrers Locke or a Sexton Blake. He felt keenly the need of a big bloodhound lying on the rug, or of a gentle Dr. Watson, before whom his client could speak quite freely. But, of course, the famous Sexton Blake had to start in life without a bloodhound; and Sherlock Holmes conducted many cases with success before he met Dr. Watson. Arthur Augustus assumed as business-like a manner as he could, and determined to do his best.

He placed a chair for his client, and begged him to be seated. Arthur Augustus knew so little of business that he actually allowed his visitor to sit with his back to the light, and sat facing it himself. One does not learn business all at once! The visitor sat down, without removing the coat or the motor goggles. He coughed very hard.

"I twust you have not a cold, my deah sir," said D'Arcy.

"Huh-huh!" said his client.

"Vewy tweechevous wathah," said D'Arcy, wisely.

"Yes. Huh! Yes," said the client hoarsely.

"Pway how can I be of service to you, my deah sir," said Arthur Augustus.

"Huh!" coughed the visitor. "I have called to see Mr. Sleuth!"

"I am Mistah Sleuth!"

"Huh! Indeed!"

"Yaas, wathah! That is my pwofessional name," D'Arcy explained. "I—I think you did not send up your name by my—my clerk, sir?"

"Huh! I did not see your clerk!"

"Ahem! I suppose he is gone ovah to the tuck-shop—ahem! —I—I mean he is pwobably engaged on that little mattah of the missin' bonds," said Arthur Augustus.

"You may call me Colonel Pipkin!"

"Bai Jove! I mean, vewy good, deah boy—that is to say, de h sir."

Arthur Augustus made a note on his cuff. He had heard that professional detectives do that; and it did not occur to him that there was a risk of valuable clues being lost in the laundry.

The swell of St. Jim's was feeling elated. His first client was a colonel, and a colonel was impressive enough to begin with. Generals and ambassadors would come later.

"I am vewy pleased to meet you, Colonel Pipkin," said D'Arcy, carefully disguising the fact that he had never heard the name before. "A welaetion of the Huntingdonshire Pwipkins, I pwesume."

"Not that I am aware of," said the client, in his hoarse voice. "I have seen your advertisement in the 'Rylecombe Gazette,' Mr. Slop—"

"Sleuth, my deah sir."

"Yes, I mean Sleuth. I want to know whether you can take up my case?"

"Pway allow me to look ovah my engagement-book, my deah sir," said Mr. Sleuth, taking up an enormous notebook, and turning over several blank pages in a professional way. "Ahem! The affiah of the bonds can stand ovah, and I shall not need to look into the mattah of the missin' diamonds just now." He was musing aloud. "Yaas, Colonel Pipkin, I am quite at liberty, as it happens, to take up your case now."

"May I ask you what your fee is, Mr. Sleuth?"

D'Arcy waved his hand in quite the Sherlock Holmes manner.

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"I pwefer not to discuss such details, sir," he said. "I nevah take a case unless I am personally interestwed in it, and the fee is a minah considewation. Howevah, I may say fifty guineas."

"Fifty which—I mean what?"

"Guineas, sir."

"Are you sure you can do it at the price?" asked the gentleman in the motor goggles anxiously. "I do not desire you to work too cheaply, Mr. Sleuth."

"Vewy well. If the case is weally difficult, we will say a hundred guineas," said D'Arcy, feeling that he was getting on. "Howevah, that, as I have wemarked, is a minah considewation. What is the case? You can speak quite fweely."

And Arthur Augustus dipped a pen into the ink.

"Ahem! Before we go into details, sir, perhaps you could give me some example of your powers of deduction?" suggested the colonel. "I understood that that was always done by modern detectives."

"Quite simple, my deah sir," Arthur Augustus looked at his visitor through the famous monocle. "You came from the village in a vehicle of some sort, and it was in a vewy dustay condish inside. I deduce that it was a motor-cah. If you will allow me to go into personal mattahs—"

"Certainly—certainly!"

"Vewy well. Then I must wemark that you are a bachelor. I also observe that you had lunch comin' down, and dwank beer with your lunch."

The client appeared astounded.

"Marvellous!" he exclaimed.

D'Arcy waved his hand.

"Nothin' at all, my dear sir, to a twained intellect," he replied.

"But may I ask how you make these marvellous deductions, Mr. Sleuth?"

"I am quite willin' to explain," said D'Arcy, in his Sherlock Holmes manner. "In the first place, the lane is mudday, owin' to wecent wain; but there is no sign of mud on your boots or twousahs, so I deduce a vehicle from the village."

"Wonderful!"

"As you are wearin' motah goggles, sir, I deduce a motah-cah."

"Amazing!"

"There is a gweat deal of dust on your coat, and so I deduce a vehicle that is in a dustay condish inside."

"Marvellous! But about the lunch?"

"There are spots of gwease on the fwont of the coat, and signs of beer bein' spilt there. That shows that you were wearin' the coat while you lunched, and so it was on your journey down."

"Extraordinary!"

"And I deduce that you are a bachelor, sir, because a mawwed man would not be allowed to go out in a dusty coat or a dusty car," said D'Arcy. "His wife would see that it was dusted. Am I right?"

"Yes, certainly I am a bachelor," said the colonel. "I have never been married, not once in my life. It is a thing I do not go in for at all."

"Ahem! And now to bizney—I mean, business."

"You are willing to take up a dangerous case, Mr. Sleuth?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"To risk your life?"

"A D'Arcy—I—I mean a Sleuth—is always weady to wun wisks. Pway let me have a few details, Colonel Pipkin."

"Very good. My wife has disappeared," said the colonel, in awe-inspiring tones.

D'Arcy jumped.

"Your—your wife?" he exclaimed.

"Yes. My d-d-d-ear wife!" said the client, with a sob.

"B-b-b-but I undahstood you to say that you were a bachelor," said Arthur Augustus, in bewilderment.

The colonel paused. It was indeed a little difficult to reconcile his various statements, and he needed to collect his thoughts.

"Pray excuse me," he said, after a pause. "I—I am so fearfully upset by my loss, that I have scarcely co-co-command of myself! Boo-hoo!"

"Pway take time to wecovah yourself, my deah colonel," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sympathetically.

"It is not my wife. I—I was really alluding to my mother," said the colonel, in explanation. "The mistake was due to my agitation. My mother has disappeared."

"I am vewy sowwy to hear it."

"Without leaving a trace behind," said the colonel. "It is terrible. Boo-hoo! Excuse these tears—even an old soldier feels the dreadful loss of his mother! Yes, sir, while I was in South Africa, fighting for the Empire, my mother was stolen away by a gang of Anarchists!"

"Bai Jove! That was wathah a long time ago, wasn't it?" exclaimed D'Arcy, in surprise.

"Time does not check the flow of filial grief," said the colonel, with a husky sob. "My mother has disappeared. The police are useless. You must be aware of that, if you have perused

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detective novels to any extent. They are always useless; and nothing is ever discovered, excepting by an amateur detective."

"Yaas."

"But at last," said the colonel, lowering his voice, and looking round fearfully, "at last a clue has been received—are we alone here?"

"Quite alone, my deah sir."

"There is no danger of eavesdroppers?"

"None whatever."

"Then I will speak! Hear me!" said the colonel. "An anonymous letter reached me this morning. It ran: 'Your wife—I mean, your mother—is kept a prisoner in the crypt under the ruined chapel in a famous school in Sussex. I can tell you no more! My life is in danger! The name of the school begins with a "J."—AN UNKNOWN FRIEND.'"

"Bai Jove! Have you that lettah now?"

"It is destroyed."

"Ah! That is vewy unfortunate."

"Yes, no doubt you could have deduced from the handwriting in what part of Sussex to look for the school in question?" said the colonel.

D'Arcy gave his client a sharp look, but Colonel Pipkin was quite serious.

The swell of St. Jim's coughed slightly.

"I have no doubt that I should have been able to make some discovevry fwom it," he said. "But, without that, I twust I shall succeed."

"What, can you divine already where this mysterious school may be?"

"I think I have got a vewy cleah ideah alweady!"

"Marvellous!"

"The twained intellect works vewy quickly, my deah sir. I have no doubt that I can lay my fingah upon the vewy spot!"

"Wonderful!" cried Colonel Pipkin.

"Wonderful to the untwained mind, pewhaps," said Arthur Augustus modestly. "Your stowry is weally vewy wemarkable, my deah sir, and I am extremely interestwed in it. Of course, it is imposs. that your mother has been kept all the time in the ewypt at St. Jim's—at the school weferred to, I mean. Doubtless, she has been wemoved there fwom anothah hidin'-place. But we shall find her—"

"Wonderful!"

"In fact, I think I may pwomise to explore the ewypt in question this vewy aftahnoon, and find the missin' lady, if she is there—"

"You will venture into the ewypt?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You will go armed, of course?"

"Pewwaps I had bettah take my twustay wevovlah," said D'Arcy thoughtfully.

"Excuse me. A rusty revolver might not go off at the right moment—"

"Twusty, my deah sir—I said twusty."

"Ah! my mistake. And you will resene my dear wife—"

"Your mothah, you mean?"

"Yes, yes—that is to say, my mother! Oh, my—"

He was interrupted.

A kick from the passage sent the study door flying suddenly open, and a crowd of juniors appeared in the passage. Arthur Augustus started to his feet. Tom Merry and Blake walked in, each of them carrying a plate upon which were rounds of hot, buttered toast. Digby followed with a tin of sardines, and Monty Lowther with jam. The other fellows looked in from the passage.

Arthur Augustus turned crimson.

The interruption was utterly ridiculous just as an important business interview was proceeding. He jammed his monocle into his eye, and simply glared at the visitors. The colonel retreated into the shadiest corner of the study, and seemed strangely uneasy.

"Weally, deah boys," exclaimed D'Arcy, "this is too bad. Pway wun off! You must not come into my office in business hours!"

"As the mountain wouldn't come to Mahomet, Mahomet's gone to the giddy mountain," Blake explained. "We've brought you some tea. If you are going to stick here playing the giddy ox, you're not going without your tea!"

"You'ntah ass!"

"Well, I call that grateful!" said Tom Merry.

"Hallo! I didn't know you had a visitor," exclaimed Blake, in astonishment.

"Pway wetire, deah boys," said D'Arcy, in an agonised whisper. "This is my first client."

"Your first w-w-w-what?"

"Client, you ass! Chap's lost his mother, and come to me to find her. I'm to have a hundred guineas," whispered D'Arcy. "Pway buzz off, and don't intewwupt."

His whispered announcement did not have the expected effect. Instead of being properly impressed by the sad circumstances of a missing mother, and the tremendous prospect of a fee of a

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hundred guineas, the juniors stared blankly at D'Arcy for a moment, and then burst into a terrific yell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, deah boys—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We tire from this study—I mean, this office—at once, you wottah wottah!" exclaimed the amateur detective indignantly. "I'm disgusted with you! Go away at once!"

Tom Merry & Co. did not go away. Instead of that, Tom Merry signed to all the fellows to crowd in, and closed the door.

"Tom Mewwy, I insist upon your wettwin!"

"We're jolly well going to know who this merchant is first!" said Tom Merry. And the other fellows chimed in emphatically:

"What-ho!"

CHAPTER 10.

Japing the Japer.

TOM MERRY made a stride towards the gentleman in coat and goggles. Arthur Augustus interposed excitedly:

"We tire, you ass!" he exclaimed. "How dare you intahfere with my client?"

"Your client?"

"Colonel Pipkin is my client," said Arthur Augustus, with a great deal of dignity.

"Colonel which?"

"Pipkin, you ass!"

"Well, we're jolly well going to have a closer look at Colonel Popcorn before we leave this study!" said Tom Merry.

"We are!" said Blake. "We is!"

"It is not Popcorn, you ass! It is Pipkin—Colonel Pipkin! Pway excuse these young waseals, my deah colonel. They do not know any bettah, and I shall chastise them all pwsently for their impertinence!"

The colonel nodded. He seemed to have lost his voice.

"Pway we tire, deah boys—"

"Can't you introduce us to Colonel Pompom?" demanded Monty Lowther. "We're your assistants in the giddy bizney, aren't we? He can speak freely before your friend Watson."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You frightful ass!"

"Can't you see you're being spoofed, Gussy?" roared Tom Merry. "You howling ass!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"I'm going to have a look at Colonel Popcorn without those giddy goggles on his chivvignonny!" said Tom Merry. "Take 'em off, Colonel!"

"You impertinent wottah!"

"Take off those goggles, Colonel!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The colonel did not reply. He made a sudden rush for the door. So sudden and so swift was the rush that he broke through the crowd of juniors and reached the door before they could stop him. But before he could get the door open Tom Merry and Co. recovered from their surprise, and they simply piled on the colonel. He was grasped, and swung back from the door, and hurled into the armchair. He sat in the chair violently and gasped.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated D'Arcy. "Gweat Scott!"

He gazed at the gasping colonel in profound amazement. He could not help suspecting now that all was not as it should be. If the colonel was a genuine client, why had he made that sudden and determined effort to escape?

"Now we'll have the goggles off," said Tom Merry, laughing.

"What-oh!" said Blake.

The colonel started to his feet. Tom Merry jerked away the motor-goggles, and the grey beard came off with them. The well-known face of Figgins of the New House was revealed, grinning sheepishly.

Arthur Augustus stared at him blankly. The sudden metamorphosis of Colonel Pipkin into Figgins of the Fourth took the amateur detective's breath away.

"Gweat Scott!" gasped D'Arcy. "Gweat Christophah Columbus! Figgins! Bai Jove, you awful wottah! You frightful spoofah!"

"Figgins!" roared the School House juniors.

Figgins threw off the motor-coat, and retreated to the corner of the study, and put himself in a defensive attitude. The big coat had concealed his Etons from head to foot. Tom Merry looked at the coat.

"That belongs to the Head's chauffeur," he said; "so do the goggles. And the whiskers, I suppose, belong to Kerr's make-up box."

Figgins grinned.

"Well, we saw Gussie's advertisement in the 'Rylcombe Gazette,' and we thought it was only fair to give him a start," he said. "I believe in helping beginners. If you silly asses hadn't come in he was going to search for my wife in the old crypt."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And we were going to shut him up there," said Figgins

regretfully. "You've spoiled a good jape. We wanted to see Sleuth the detective searching in the old crypt—searching for a way out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus's face was a study.

The juniors, as they looked at him, roared again. D'Arcy looked as if all the blood in his body had been pumped into his face.

"Well, it was a good jape," said Tom Merry. "But we can't have you New House kids japing the School House. You've got to be properly respectful towards the cock-house of St. Jim's."

"Rats!" said Figgins cheerfully.

Arthur Augustus began to remove his elegant Eton jacket.

"Pway take your jacket off, Figgins," he said.

"Thanks, it's all right on," said Figgins affably. "Cold without a jacket in November."

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

"Order!" said Jack Blake. "Order! Fearful thrashings are barred."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Figgys came here to jape the School House. The School House is going to jape Figgys. One good turn deserves another."

"Hear, hear!"

"Jolly good wheeze!" said Tom Merry heartily. "Figgins, I call upon you to surrender."

"I call upon you to go and eat coke!" replied Figgins.

"Collar him!"

"Mind, I shall hit—oh—ah—ooooop!"

With a rush the School House juniors brought Figgins to the floor. Three or four of them sat upon him to keep him there.

Tom Merry opened the window.

"I expect Kerr and Wynn are hanging about to see how Figgys gets on," he remarked. "Yes, there they are under the trees. Hallo!"

"New House, ahoy!" shouted Blake.

Kerr and Wynn looked up. They were lounging under the elms with apparent carelessness, but they did not look careless now. They understood from the hail from the window of study No. 6 that all was discovered.

"Waiting for Figgins?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Figgins!" said Kerr innocently. "Where's Figgins?"

"We'll send him out to you."

"Is he there?" asked Fatty-Wynn, with elaborate simplicity.

"Well, a relation of his, one Colonel Popcorn, is here," said Tom Merry laughing. "If you wait we'll send him out." He turned back from the window. "Lock the door in case the bouncers should try to rush the house."

Blake turned the key in the lock.

"Now stand Figgys up! There's a cord here; tie his hands in case he should wriggle. It's bad for boys to wriggle."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Lemme go!" roared Figgins.

"Yes, when we've done with you," said Tom Merry agreeably. "Shove that coat on him again, and the goggles, and the beard. He is going out again in all his warpaint—with some more added. Give me your colour-box, Blake."

"Ha, ha! Here you are."

Figgins struggled desperately. But he was jammed into the motor-coat, and his hands were tied down to his sides and his ankles shackled together. Then the beard and the goggles were fastened upon his face again. Then Tom Merry painted his nose a brilliant red, and painted a light blue upon his ears. The aspect of Figgins was decidedly striking by this time.

"Doesn't he look a bute?" said Monty Lowther admiringly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's wrathful face broke into a smile. "Bai Jove, he does look wippin'!" he remarked.

"Lemme go!" gurgled Figgins. "Ow!"

"Yes, we're going to send you back to the New House, this side up with care," said Tom Merry cheerfully.

"My hat, he can't be sent out of the house in that style!" exclaimed Kangaroo. "He'll have all the house round him before he's down the stairs."

"He's not going out by the door. There's a window here."

"Phew! Do you want to break his neck?"

"We've got a rope."

"Good egg!" said Blake. "We'll lower him down." He leaned out of the window. "Kerr, old man, stand ready! Look out in goal!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Blake uncoiled the rope. It was fastened securely to Figgins round the body under his armpits, and then he was lifted on to the window-sill. All the juniors held on to the rope, so there was no danger of Figgins falling. But he gasped as he was pushed out of the window:

"Oh, you rotters! Oh!"

"Now, are you going to jape the School House any more?" asked Blake affectionately, as Figgins was lowered beneath the window-sill, and stopped there.

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"Yes!" roared Figgins. Blake squeezed buttered toast down Figgins's neck. The unfortunate hero of the New House wriggled wildly, and his heels beat a tattoo against the old stone wall.

Kerr and Wynn, too far below to help their chum, glared up in rage. A crowd was gathering to look at the peculiar sight, and roars of laughter greeted the appearance of Figgins.

"Lower away!" roared Gore, from the quadrangle. "Ha, ha, ha! What is it?"

"Figgins, by George!" ejaculated Clifton Dane. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! Lemme down, you silly asses!" roared Figgins. "No hurry," said Blake serenely. "Now, we all admit that Gussy is a silly ass—"

"Weally, Blake—"

"But we're not going to see him japed. If Gussy likes to play the giddy ox, Gussy is going to play the giddy ox ad lib."

"Hear, hear!"

"You feahful ass, Blake—"

"Therefore," said Blake calmly, "he is not going to be japed by New House wasters. Figgins, old man, are you going to jape Gussy any more over his detective bizney?"

"Yes!" roared Figgins.

"Give him the jam, Lowther."

"Ow!" roared Figgins. "No!"

"Honour bright?"

"Yes, hang you!"

"Good! Gussy, you will now be able to play the giddy ox without any more clients from the New House—"

"I wegard you as an ass, Blake!"

"Lower away!" roared the fellows in the quadrangle. The rope was paid out. Figgins slid down the wall slowly, his heels rattling against the stones. Kerr and Wynn made a clutch at him as soon as he came within reach, and began to untie him. The crowd roared.

"Gentlemen," said Tom Merry, from the window, "this is a New House duffer who came over to jape the School House! He came for wool, and is returning shorn."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yaas, wathah! Of course, I wasn't weally taken in. I had a stwong suspish—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you fellows—"

Figgins was released, and Fatty Wynn and Kerr hurried him away across the quadrangle amid yells of laughter from the fellows. The chums of the School House watched the weird figure till it disappeared.

"Now you may as well come and have tea, if you haven't any more clients to see, Gussy," said Tom Merry blandly.

And Arthur Augustus thought he might as well.

CHAPTER 11. Missing Property!

THERE was much chucking in the junior common-room in the School House that evening. The subject, of course, was the new departure of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the amateur detective, and the visit of his client from the New House of St. Jim's. One fellow had cut the famous advertisement out of the "Rylcombe Gazette" and pinned it up on the wall of the common-room, where all the world could run and read. Fellows came up to D'Arcy with serious faces and told him that their grandmothers were missing, and would he undertake kindly to search for them.

The swell of St. Jim's was fed up with the subject long before bedtime, and he retired to study No. 6 to escape. But even there he was not safe. There came a tap at the door as Arthur Augustus sat reading a volume of Sherlock Holmes, and his minor, Wally of the Third, looked in, with Joe Frayne grinning over his shoulder.

D'Arcy looked up, and turned his monocle upon the fags.

"Got a remittance from home yet, Gussy?" asked Wally.

Arthur Augustus shook his head.

"No, Wally. I have refused to receive any more remittances from home."

Wally stared.

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"What are you going to do for tin, then?" he inquired. "Earn it, deah boy."

"Oh, my only Aunt Jane!"

"Weally, Wally—"

"Is that what you've started the detective bizney for?" asked Wally, with a grin.

"Yaas."

"How much have you made so far?"

"Pway don't be an impertinent young ass."

"Well, I'm going to write to the pater for some tin," said Wally, "and I'll put in a word for you. It's a half-holiday to-morrow, and we must raise the wind. Are you still keeping up the business of Sherlock Holmes, Limited?"

"Yaas, wathah."

"Good! I'll give you some tips in the deducing line," said Wally affably. "I can tell by the fact that you've got no money that you are stony broke."

"Weally, you young ass—"

"That's where you say 'Wonderful!'" said Wally.

Joe Frayne chuckled. Arthur Augustus looked round for something to throw at his humorous minor. Wally held the door with one hand, and proceeded with his deductions.

"The fact that your feet are not bare reveals to the trained intellect that you've got your boots on," pursued Wally, cocking his head thoughtfully on one side; "and the striking circumstance, on the other hand, that your head is bare shows that you don't wear your hat indoors."

"You uthah young ass, cleah out at once," shouted his exasperated major.

"Ha! When you raise your voice, it is louder," said Wally.

"Did you notice it, Frayne?"

"Yes," chuckled Frayne.

"Very good," said Wally, approvingly. "You are coming on, Watson—I mean Frayne. On the other hand, now that Gussy is not speaking, he is silent. You notice that?"

"Wonderful," said Joe Frayne.

"Elementary, my dear Watson, elementary," said Wally, modestly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus jumped up and seized a cricket bat. The two fags slammed the door and fled, and their chuckles died away down the passage.

The amateur detective, looking very flushed, sat down again; but he was not left in peace for long. He looked round irritably as Reilly, of the Fourth, looked into the study. But the Irish junior's face was so serious that D'Arcy was disarmed.

"Whatevah is the mattah, Weilly?" he exclaimed.

Reilly groaned.

"Sure, and I want ye to help me, D'Arcy darling."

"I am quite at your service, dear boy. Do you mean in a professional way?"

"Faith, and I do."

"Pway state the case, deah boy."

"Can I speak freely before Dr. Watson?" asked Reilly.

"Weally, Weilly—"

"My toffee's disappeared," said Reilly mysteriously. "It's a most remarkable disappearance. It was a good-sized chunk of toffee, and the last I saw of it it was in my hand. Then it vanished."

"Weally, I can hardly take notice of such a trivial mattah as the disappearance of a chunk of toffee," said D'Arcy, with a sniff. "Howevah, in ordah to show my powahs as a detective, Weilly, I am willin' to find your toffee for you."

"Do you think you can do it?" said the Belfast boy, doubtfully.

"Yaas, wathah! Pway let me have a few details. Where were you at the time?"

"In my study, next to this."

"Anybody with you?"

"Yes. Kerruish, my study mate."

"Did he touch the toffee?"

"No; he was on the other side of the table."

"You say you had it in your hand?"

"Faith, and I had."

"And it disappeared?"

"Intirely," said Reilly mournfully. "Me illigant toffee."

"Did you lay it down somehow?"

"No!"

"Did somebody take it from you?"

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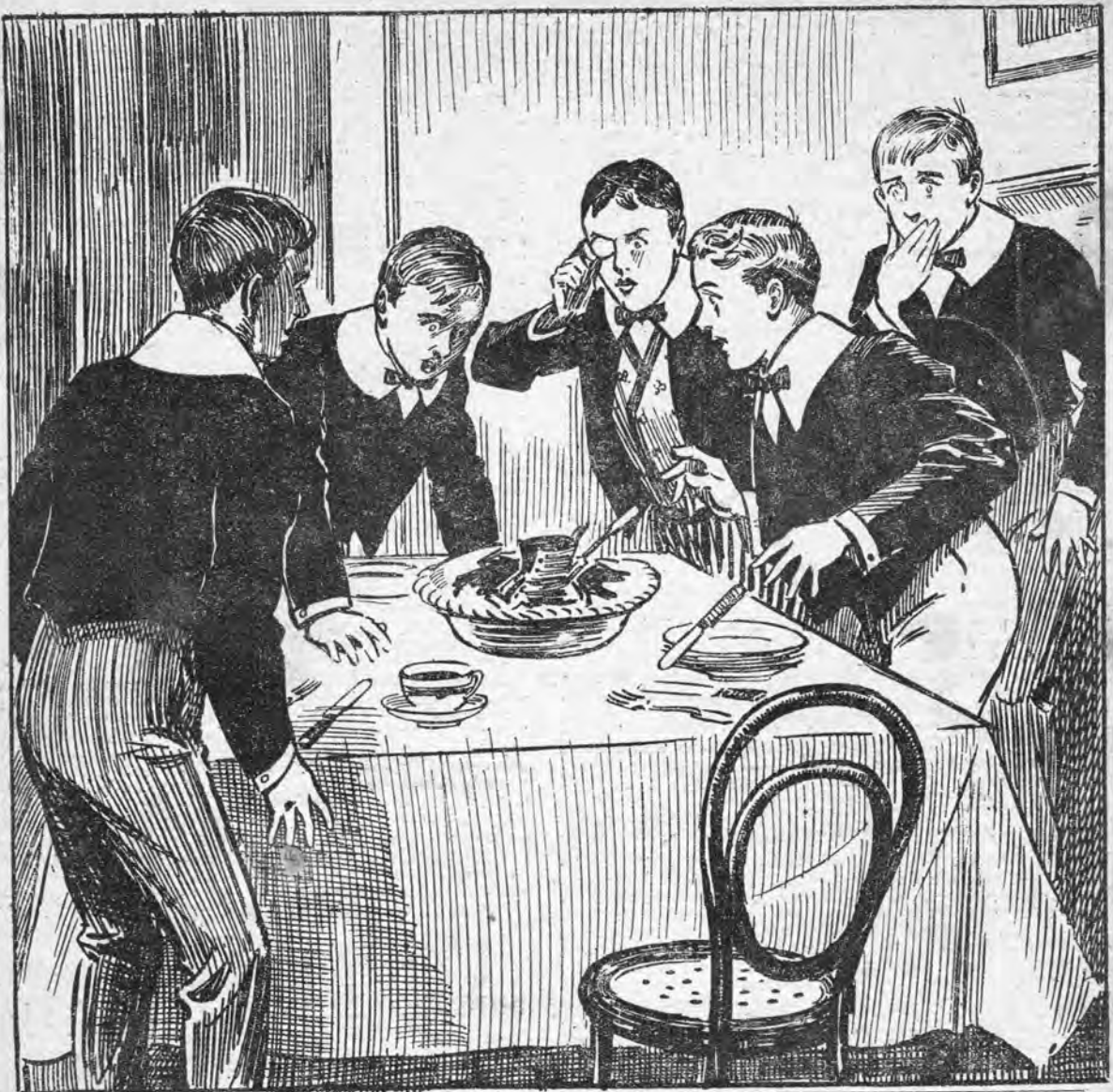
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Tom Merry gazed speechlessly into the pie. Concealed by the luscious crust, but revealed now the covering was broken was an ancient boot. There was nothing else in the dish except some torn-up leaves of an old exercise book! (See Chapter 3.)

"Nobody."

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus, looking deeply interested, in spite of the triviality of the article at stake. "That is a vewy intwestin' pwoblem. It is certainly a mystewy what became of the toffee under those cires. You are sure you did nothin' with it?"

"Nothing but put it into my mouth," said Reilly.

"Eh!"

"Then it disappeared, and I haven't seen it since."

Arthur Augustus made a spring towards the cricket bat, and Reilly sprang towards the door. The door slammed behind Reilly, and the cricket bat banged on the door. There was a yell of laughter from the passage, and Arthur Augustus returned to his seat flushed and furious.

It was ten minutes before he was disturbed again. Then Bernard Glyn, the schoolboy inventor, put his head into the study. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy glared at him.

"If you have come here to wot, Glyn," he began.

"I want to ask you a question," said Glyn, cheerfully. "I suppose you can explain it, being a professional detective. If I missed something in my study, would that show that there was a thief in the school?"

"Have you missed anythin'?"

"Yes."

"Not a jape, you ass?" asked D'Arcy, suspiciously. Arthur

Augustus might be excused for growing suspicious by this time.

"Honour bright!" said Glyn.

"All sewene. What have you missed?"

"First, a clock."

"Anythin' else?"

"Yes; a vase. Then a picture."

"Bai Jove! And you don't know who's taken them?"

"I didn't say anybody had taken them," said Glyn. "I simply said that I missed them. That's all I know. What I think is not evidence. What I know is, that I've missed them."

"But if you miss them, and you didn't give anybody permish to take them away, they must be stolen," said D'Arcy. "Have you missed anything else?"

"Yes, several things. But the clock, and the vase, and the picture I've missed this evening."

"Bai Jove! I must look into this! Can you give me some details?"

"I think I've given you the lot; I missed the articles this evening, that's all I know," said Bernard Glyn. "If you can solve the mystery, go ahead." He opened the door of the study again, and then looked back from the doorway. "By the way, there's another detail I ought to mention—"

"What is that, deah boy?"

"I've been practising with an air-gun in the study."

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"What diffidence does that make, Glyn?"

"None at all. I'm not a good shot yet, and that's how I came to miss the clock, the vases, and the picture," explained Glyn cheerfully. "I daresay I shall hit them when I've had a little more practice."

He closed the study door just in time. Arthur Augustus was making a rush at him. The Shell fellow retreated down the passage chuckling. He had been using the verb to miss in another sense, and he did not mean that the articles were missing.

Arthur Augustus did not sit down again. He remained standing, with his cuffs pushed back, ready for the next joker who came into Study No. 6. He did not have to wait long. The door was thrown open, and Jack Blake strode in.

"Come on, Gussy!" he exclaimed cheerfully, "we—oh—why—what—yaroooh! Help! He's gone mad! Yaroooh!"

Blake pranced round the study with Arthur Augustus clinging wildly to him, and pommelling him for all he was worth.

"Take that, you silly ass! Bai Jove! And that! You frightful chump! And that! You burblin' jabahwock! and that—"

Herries and Digby rushed into the study and dragged the excited swell of St. Jim's off his victim. Blake clung to the table and gasped, and glared at Arthur Augustus.

"You dangerous lunatic!" he roared. "What did you do that for?"

"Because I'm fed up with your wotten jokes," gasped D'Arcy.

"Jokes, you chump! Where's the joke in coming to tell you that it's bedtime?" roared Blake.

"Bai Jove! Did you—"

"You—you—you—!" Blake caressed his nose, and dabbed it with his handkerchief. "You—you unspeakable chump—!"

"Weally, deah boy, I thought it was anothah wotten japhah," said Arthur Augustus in great distress. "I twust I have not hurt you? I apologise!"

"Can you apologise my nose straight again?" yelled Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"You—you—you—"

"Fwom one gentleman to anothah, an apology is quite suffish," said Arthur Augustus, with a great deal of dignity. "Pwray say no more about it."

And Arthur Augustus walked away to the Fourth-Form dormitory, leaving Blake dabbing his nose, and Herries and Digby shrieking like a pair of hyenas.

CHAPTER 12.

A Very Important Communication.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS closed his eyes immediately he was in bed that night, and either fell asleep or pretended to do so. Apparently he did not hear the remarks that passed from bed to bed in the Fourth-Form dormitory. The talk of the juniors ran entirely upon detectives, professional and amateurs, and they made deductions and discussed clues, all for the benefit of the swell of St. Jim's. Bishop deduced from the fact that he was not snoring, that he was not really asleep; whereupon Arthur Augustus D'Arcy began to snore, and the whole dormitory chuckled. But the swell of St. Jim's refused to be drawn, and the juniors dropped off to sleep at last, leaving Arthur Augustus to go to sleep too, and dream about finger-prints and foot-prints.

The next morning Arthur Augustus was first up in the Fourth-Form. He went down early to escape personal remarks about private detectives and New House colonels. As he looked out of the School House, he discovered Taggles the porter in talk with Kildare of the Sixth, with a letter in his horny hand. Taggles was evidently explaining. D'Arcy was near enough to hear him, and his heart bounded as he heard.

"There ain't no sich name 'ere, as I says to Blagg the post-man," said Taggles. "Mr. Sloosh, that's the name, care of Study No. 6, Master-Kildare, but there ain't a Sloosh that I knows on. It's a mistake, I says, but Blagg says the letter is for 'ere, so I took it in."

"Let's see it," said the captain of St. Jim's.

Taggles held up the letter. It was in a shiny, square envelope, sealed with a big, red daub of sealing-wax. It was addressed to Mr. Sleuth, care of Study No. 6, School House, St. Jim's."

Kildare looked very puzzled.

"Some jape of those young rascals, I expect," he said. "Hallo, D'Arcy! Do you know anything about this letter?"

D'Arcy came down the steps.

"Yaas, wathah!" he replied.

"There ain't no Master Sloosh at this 'ere college," said Taggles, with a shake of the head.

"It's for me," said D'Arcy.

"But your name ain't Sloosh, Master D'Arcy."

"That is my pwofessional name, Taggles," said D'Arcy, with becoming dignity.

Taggles seemed as if he were going to fall over.

Kildare stared hard at D'Arcy, as he took the sealed letter from the nerveless hand of the porter.

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"Your professional name, did you say, D'Arcy?" asked Kildare.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Would you mind explaining what you mean, if you are not talking out of the back of your neck?" said Kildare, politely.

"Yaas. You wemembah when Fewwahs Locke was healh, I helped him in his case against the cwacksman?" said D'Arcy.

Kildare grinned.

"Yes," he said. "What about it?"

"Well, I am startin' as an amateur in Fewwahs Locke's business."

"What!"

"Of course, I'm not goin' to take any of Fewwahs Locke's clients away," said Arthur Augustus, hastily. "I twust you do not think I'm the kind of chap to go nosin' aftah anothah chap's job."

Kildare roared.

"I am simply goin' to pick up a few hundred guineas as a pwivate detective," explained D'Arcy. "I have adopted the name of Sleuth, as soundin' more pwofessional. What's the mattah, Kildare, deah boy? Are you ill?"

Kildare certainly looked ill—something like convulsions, or sudden hysteria. He staggered away without replying, leaving D'Arcy looking after him in astonishment.

"Bai Jove, what's the mattah with the skippah, Taggy?" said D'Arcy, turning round to the school porter. But Taggles was staggering away in another direction, apparently seized by sudden convulsions in the same way as Kildare.

Arthur Augustus looked puzzled. However, the letter claimed his attention, and he retired to a bench under the old elms to read it.

He turned the letter over in his hands, and regarded it carefully through his eyeglass. As it was addressed to him in his professional name, it must, of course, be from a client. It flashed into D'Arcy's mind that it might be from another client like Colonel Pipkin, but he dismissed the suspicion. Figgins had promised that there should be no more japing of D'Arcy on the score of his detective business by New House fellows, and Figgins's word was his bond. Besides, the postmark on the letter was Wayland, the market town some distance from St. Jim's.

"It's a client," murmured D'Arcy. "The advertisement is bwingin' forth fwuit—ware and wewfreshin' fwuit, as some poet says."

He slit the envelope, after carefully scrutinising the outside. D'Arcy was not yet sufficiently advanced in the science of deduction to tell whom a letter was from simply by looking at the postmark, or by the angle at which the stamp was placed on the envelope; neither could he, so far, tell from the shape of envelope whether the writer had grey whiskers or a bald head. All that would come in time, when he had sufficiently studied the methods of Sherlock Holmes. At present he was driven to the common or garden resource of opening the letter and looking inside.

He unfolded the letter. He jammed his monocle a little more tightly into his eye, and scanned the letter eagerly. His heart gave a great jump. For this is how the letter ran:

"Dear Mr. Sleuth,—If you are disengaged at the present time, may I engage your professional services? The matter is extremely delicate—so delicate that I do not care to enter into details in writing. If you can take up my case, pray meet me to-day, at three o'clock, at the stile in Rylecombe Lane. I shall be there to wait for you.—Yours truly,

"JOHN JONES."

"P.S.—Bring your revolver."

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "Bai Jove! It's a weal case at last!"

There could be no doubt about it. The letter had been posted in Wayland, miles away, the previous night. True, a fellow might have cycled over to post it, for the sake of the postmark; but then, had not Figgins undertaken that there should be no more japes? It was not a St. Jim's japer, that was certain. It might be a member of the general public with humorous tendencies, certainly. But D'Arcy thought he could read earnest genuineness in every line of the letter. John Jones, too, was a steady and reassuring name. The letter was all right—it was a client. And there was danger! Arthur Augustus did not mind danger. His only regret was that want of funds had compelled him to start in the detective business without either a blood-bond or a trusty revolver.

Arthur Augustus rose to his feet, and put the letter into his pocket. He strolled into the School House, and met the juniors crowding out. Tom Merry clapped him on the shoulder.

"Had a remittance, old son?" he asked.

"No, deah boy."

"But you've had a letter," said Blake.

"Yaas, I've had a lettah."

"You don't mean to say your governor has had the nerve to write again without sending a remittance?" exclaimed Blake indignantly.

"The lettah is not fwom my governah, deah boy."

"Awat Adelina, then?"

No; it is not from a relation at all."

"Spare his blushes," grinned Monty Lowther. "Can't you guess that it's a bill-doux? I deduce from the pink colour in Gussy's cheeks, that the letter is from Miss Bunn, in Rylcombe."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You uthah ass, Lowther!"

"Then who's the lady?" demanded Tom Merry.

"As a mattah of fact," said Arthur Augustus, drawing himself up to his full height, "as a mattah of fact, deah boys, the lettah is a business lettah, and deals with pwofessional mattahs, othahwise, I shoud be vewy pleased to show it to you."

And Arthur Augustus walked away. The juniors stared after him for a moment, and then Blake gasped weakly:

"Another giddy jape!"

And Tom Merry & Co. roared:

"Ha, ha, ha!"

CHAPTER 13.

Several Things Needful.

MR. LATHOM, the master of the Fourth Form, found Arthur Augustus somewhat trying in class that morning. The swell of St. Jim's was thinking of John Jones and his letter, and the meeting in Rylcombe Lane in the afternoon. The disappointment over the case of Colonel Pipkin made the amateur detective all the more eager to get on to a real case; if only to prove to the unbelieving scoffers of the School House that his business was a real business, and that he could earn money by his own efforts just as if he had been born to do so. What was the matter with the private affairs of John Jones he did not know; but whatever it was, he was determined to set it right. If Mrs. Jones was missing, he would find her; if any of the little Jones's had been abducted, he would recover them; if John Jones had lost a hundred thousand pounds worth of bonds, he would recapture them; if his near and dear relatives had been murdered, one by one, by an unknown assassin, D'Arcy would hunt that assassin down without mercy, and bring him to his richly-merited doom.

The amateur detective was thinking of these deep matters instead of his lessons; and Mr. Lathom, who did not know that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was a detective at all, was very much surprised and exasperated.

But when Arthur Augustus informed him, at last, that Rome was founded by John Jones—in a moment of absent-mindedness, of course—Mr. Lathom lost all patience.

"What did you say, D'Arcy?" he exclaimed.

"I beg your pardon, sir, I should have said Sherlock Holmes," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy in a flutter.

"What?"

There was a chuckle from the Fourth. They knew what Arthur Augustus was thinking of, though Mr. Lathom did not.

"Sowwy, sir," said D'Arcy, reddening. "I mean Womulus and Wenus, sir."

"D'Arcy!"

"Ya-a-a-s, sir!"

"You are not thinking of your lessons!"

"Oh, sir!"

"And if you do not pay more attention, D'Arcy, I shall detain you this afternoon," said the Fourth Form-master severely.

Arthur Augustus almost shuddered. Detention that afternoon would mean missing the appointment with John Jones, and losing the first great case that had come his way. He made a tremendous effort to appear interested in the early days of the Roman Republic; but he had never felt so bored in his life with the virtuous Tullius and the wicked Tarquin.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's body was in the Form-room, but Mr. Sleuth's mind was keeping the appointment with John Jones; and there was a great struggle between the two.

Fortunately, everything comes to an end; and morning lessons were over at last on that eventful Saturday.

Arthur Augustus hardly ate his dinner. Dinner was a trivial thing in comparison with the great case of John Jones. The amateur detective was a little worried in his mind about the necessity of taking a revolver. He had not one of those useful articles; indeed, if he had had one, it would have been much more dangerous to himself and John Jones than to anybody else. But he felt keenly the need of a trusty revolver, without which a detective is not complete; but the only weapon he could take was his heaviest cane. Handcuffs, too, were wanting; and if D'Arcy effected a capture, it would be a little difficult to dispose of the criminal without handcuffing him. If, like the famous Sexton Blake, he had had a large-sized bloodhound to watch

his prisoners, he could have dispensed with the handcuffs, but the bloodhound was wanting, as well as the other appurtenances of a well-equipped detective. Arthur Augustus thought the matter over. Revolvers and handcuffs were out of the question until business looked up a little. But he did not see why a bulldog would not answer the purpose as well as a bloodhound. And after dinner he simply astounded Herries by asking to be allowed to take Towser out for a walk that afternoon.

Herries stared at him blankly, hardly able to believe his ears. D'Arcy certainly was fond of dogs; but he was not fond of close quarters with Towser. Towser, as Arthur Augustus always maintained, had no respect whatever for a fellow's trousers.

"You want to take Towser out?" repeated Herries blankly.

"Yaas, deah boy."

"What for?"

"For a walk."

"Well, I'm glad to see you're coming round at last," said Herries, with a sniff. "You never liked taking Towser out."

"I should like to this afternoon, deah boy."

"Well, I don't know," said Herries thoughtfully. "You're such a careless ass, you know, and you might let him bite somebody. I don't want to run any risk of Towser getting blood poisoning, or anything of that sort."

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"I'll tell you what," said Herries. "I'll come with you, and we'll both take Towser."

"Imposs, deah boy."

"Why is it impossible, ass?"

"I'm goin' to keep an appointment."

"Oh, rot! I suppose you don't want to take a bulldog with you to see Miss Bunn!" exclaimed Herries crossly.

Arthur Augustus turned pink.

"You uthah ass, Hewwies!" he exclaimed. "I am not goin' to see Miss Bunn. I have too much respect for that young lady to think of meetin' her in a suwweptitious way. As a mattah of fact, it is a case!"

"Eh?"

"I am goin' to see a case!"

"What kind of a case?" asked Herries, staring. "Do you mean a packing-case?"

"Weally, you ass—"

"Or a watch-case? Or a hospital case?"

"I am goin' to look into a case—a case for a detective, you ass!"

"Oh!" Herries seemed interested at last. "And you want Towser to track somebody down? Good! You know what a splendid tracker Towser is. You remember how he tracked down the chaps who—"

"I don't want him to do any twackin'. Weally, Hewwies—"

"Well, I'll bring him if you like," said Herries. "You can treat me as Dr. Watson, you know, same as Sherlock Holmes. I'll say, 'Wonderful! Wonderful! Just like Dr. Watson, if you like.'"

"You feahful ass—"

"Well, I can't trust you out with Towser alone," said Herries. "He might bite some tramp, and injure his health."

"I wegard you as an ass, Hewwies. I cannot take you with me, because the case is a vewy confidential one—too delicate to be witten down, in fact!"

"Some rotten jape, I expect!" snorted Herries.

"Oh, wats!"

Arthur Augustus turned away. Herries called after him:

"Ask your minor to lend you Pongo, Gussy!"

Gussy sniffed. He was not likely to take Wally's wretched little mongrel with him. Towser was an imposing bulldog, and would have filled the place of the regulation bloodhound; but Pongo would have been absurd. But Herries would not allow Towser out of his sight. So the amateur detective had to make up his mind to proceed to take up the case in a dogless state, as well as handcuffless and revolverless.

Tom Merry clapped D'Arcy on the shoulder as he came out of the School House at three o'clock. D'Arcy had his coat on, and a very handsome topper, and a cane under his arm.

"Coming down to the footer, Gussy?" asked the Shell fellow.

Arthur Augustus shook his head.

"Sowwy, deah boy; you'll have to excuse me this afternoon."

"But we're playing the New House!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "My dear kid, don't you want to have a hand in beating Figgins & Co?"

"Sowwy! Play Weelly instead. He's a good man!"

"Oh, yes, Reilly will play, and he'll be quite as good!" agreed Tom Merry. "But you didn't tell me you were missing the footer this afternoon. Is that the right way to treat your skipper, Gussy?"

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"I am sowwy, Tom Mewwy. I apologise," said D'Arcy gracefully. "As a mattah of fact, I have been vewy much taken up with an important case—"

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

"Weally, you ass—"

Tom Merry staggered against the stone balustrade of the steps, and yelled. Arthur Augustus gave him a disdainful glare, and walked on. Tom Merry gasped. Monty Lowther and Manners came out of the house. They looked after the retreating figure of Arthur Augustus, and then looked inquiringly at Tom Merry.

"What's the matter?" demanded Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What is it, you ass?" asked Manners.

"Ha, ha, ha! Gussy!" sobbed Tom Merry. "He can't play footer this afternoon—ha, ha, ha!—because—ha, ha!—he's taken up—ha, ha, ha!—an important case!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Manners and Lowther.

Arthur Augustus heard the laughter as he went, but he did not deign to look back. He marched out of the gates of St. Jim's with his nose very high in the air, and his eye gleaming behind his eyeglass.

"Silly asses!" murmured D'Arcy. "He laughs best who laughs last, the pwoverb says. Wait till I have wecovahed the stolen bonds—or the missin' wife, whichever it is—then we shall see what we shall see!"

Which was indubitably true.

CHAPTER 14.

Something Like a Case.

"BAI JOVE! There he is!"

D'Arcy caught sight of him as he came down Rylcombe Lane towards the stile.

He was a little man—about the same height as D'Arcy himself. He had ginger-coloured whiskers and beard, and thick eyebrows of the same colour. He was dressed in a black frock-coat and grey trousers, and wore a silk topper, and a large pair

of spectacles. He looked a decidedly respectable gentleman of middle age. He was walking up and down, apparently to keep himself warm, close by the stile, and Arthur Augustus had no doubt that this was his unknown correspondent.

D'Arcy halted, and raised his silk topper in his best style.

"Mr. Jones, I pwesume?" he said.

The elderly gentleman blinked at him through his spectacles.

"Yes," he said, in a wheezy voice. "Are you Mr. Sleuth?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

The elderly gent held out his hand, and D'Arcy shook hands with him warmly.

"I am very pleased to meet you, Mr. Sleuth," said the elderly gentleman. "I understand, from your arriving here, that you are able to take up my case."

"Yaas, Mr. Jones," said Arthur Augustus. "I happen to be at liberty at the pwesent moment. I am puttin' off the case of the marquis's diamonds for a bit."

Mr. Jones looked up and down the lane.

"You have not been followed?" he asked.

"Bai Jove! I think not!"

"My enemies are near!" said Mr. Jones, in a deep and thrilling whisper. "They have dogged me from Wayland."

"Bai Jove!"

"I trust you have not forgotten your revolver?"

"You may wely upon me to do all that is nesses., my deahsir," said D'Arcy, evading that awkward question. "Pway let me have some details. You can speak quite fweely before my—ahem!—I mean you can speak quite fweely."

"I am dogged by Anarchists!" whispered Mr. Jones.

"Gweat Scott!"

"There is one of them in the wood now, and I fear I shall not reach Wayland alive!"

"Wely upon me!"

"Let us get out of sight, then," said Mr. Jones nervously. "Come into the wood."

Arthur Augustus followed him over the stile. They went

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down the footpath, under the leafless trees. Autumn winds had swept the wood of leaves, and it was possible to see a great distance among the trees and bushes. Mr. Jones gave a sudden start, and pointed into the wood.

"Look!" he whispered in terror-stricken tones.

"Bai Jove—what is it?"

"The Anarchists!"

D'Arcy jammed in his eyeglass a little tighter, and looked. There was undoubtedly a lurking form among the trees—D'Arcy caught a glimpse of a dark and swarthy face, and a thick, black beard. Then the lurker disappeared.

D'Arcy's heart jumped.

If he had wanted proof of the genuineness of the case, he had it then. John Jones was evidently being dogged by a dark, Italian-looking Anarchist, who was lurking in the wood, perhaps with some deadly weapon just ready for use. D'Arcy thought of gleaming stilettoes and exploding bombs, and shuddered. He regretted the trusty revolver and the bloodhound more than ever. But the blood of all the D'Arcys flowed in his veins, and his courage did not fail him.

"You saw him?" whispered Mr. Jones.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Would you know him again?"

"Yaas, I think so."

"There is another of them," muttered Mr. Jones. "If you could track them down and arrest them, Mr. Sleuth, I should feel safe."

"Bai Jove!"

"I trust you have not forgotten the handcuffs?"

"Ahem! We'll make sure of them all wight, if we once swest them," said Arthur Augustus. "Am I to understand that your life is threatened, Mr. Jones?"

"You see for yourself, my dear sir. I decline to subscribe a million pounds towards the funds of the Brotherhood of Blood and Bones—you have heard of it? A very famous organisation of Anarchists. Unless I subscribe I am a dead man—and these two members of the Brotherhood are sent to slay me."

"Gweat Scott!"

"The police can do nothing," said Mr. Jones pathetically. "If I were to go to Scotland Yard, and tell them the story I have told you, they would laugh at me."

Which was very probable!

"I rely upon you, Mr. Holmes—I mean Mr. Sleuth," said Mr. John Jones, tapping Arthur Augustus on the chest as he spoke. He did not appear to be at all surprised at finding Mr. Sleuth, the detective, so extremely youthful; perhaps he thought it was some skilful disguise—perhaps! "I rely upon you absolutely. I think you will be able to track down those two villains and arrest them in the wood, and then I shall be safe. Then you will be able to obtain information from them, and break up the society of Blood and Bones."

Arthur Augustus looked rather serious. Hunting down two armed Anarchists in a wood was rather a steep task for a junior of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's. But he had undertaken the case now, and there was no retreat.

"Look!" exclaimed Mr. Jones suddenly. "The other!"

A dark and swarthy face with black moustaches looked for a moment out of the trees, and then vanished.

Arthur Augustus thrilled.

"Bai Jove! This is gettin' excitin'!" he murmured.

"Hunt them down!" gasped Mr. Jones. "Hunt them down, or I am a dead man! You shall have a cheque for any amount you care to name—but arrest them! Hunt them down!"

"Yaas, but—"

"I will wait for you here," said Mr. Jones. "If you do not return in a quarter of an hour, I shall know that you have been murdered, and I will engage another detective."

D'Arcy shivered.

It was all very well for Mr. Jones to say so coolly that he would engage another detective if D'Arcy was murdered, but—But that arrangement would not be so satisfactory to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy as to Mr. Jones.

"Hunt them down!" exclaimed Mr. Jones. "Look—I will hide in this thicket while you are on the track. Bring them back prisoners, and you shall have a fee of ten thousand pounds."

"Vewy well, my deah sir."

"Hurry, hurry! Every minute is precious!"

Mr. Jones concealed himself in the thicket, and D'Arcy set off into the bushes to search for the lurking Anarchists. He held his thick cane ready for use, but he could not help wondering what he would do if he met them. He regretted now that he had not allowed Herries to come with Towser. Fortunately, he did not meet the Anarchists. He tramped in the wood for a quarter of an hour, but there was neither sign nor sound of the two swarthy members of the Brotherhood of Blood and Bones.

Arthur Augustus looked at his watch.

If he did not return in a quarter of an hour, Mr. Jones was going to assume that he had been murdered. Fortunately, he had not been murdered, so he thought he had better return and reassure Mr. Jones.

He made his way back to the footpath, and looked into the

thicket where Mr. Jones had concealed himself. He did not see him.

"It's all wight, Mr. Jones," he said.

No reply.

"Mr. Jones! Are you there?" called out D'Arcy, in terror that something dreadful might have happened to his client while he was absent.

There was a deep groan from the thicket.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's very hair stood on end.

"Mr. Jones! Bai Jove—my deah sir—"

Groan!

Arthur Augustus plunged wildly into the thicket. He almost stumbled over a body stretched at his feet in the brambles and fallen leaves.

It was the body of John Jones.

He lay upon his back, and there were dreadful red stains upon his white collar, upon his ginger whiskers, and upon his cuffs and his shirt, and upon his cheeks. The crimson stains told their own fearful story. D'Arcy dropped upon his knees beside the fallen man.

"Mr. Jones! Good heavens! Gweat Scott! My deah sir—"

Silence!

"Mr. Jones! Pway speak—"

But Mr. Jones was still and silent! Evidently he had been struck down by the Anarchists, the remorseless emissaries of the Brotherhood of Blood and Bones, and D'Arcy had returned only in time to hear his last groan!

CHAPTER 15.

Mr. Sleuth's Last Case.

D'ARCY knelt beside the murdered victim of Anarchist vengeance, his very blood freezing in his veins.

There were red stains on his fingers as he touched the unfortunate man.

He shuddered as he looked at him.

"Bai Jove! Poor chap!" murmured D'Arcy huskily.

"This is simply howwible!"

He remembered that in a similar case Sherlock Holmes would have placed his hand upon the fallen man's heart, to ascertain whether life was really extinct. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy proceeded to do as much for Mr. Jones.

To his surprise and joy, he found Mr. Jones's heart beating away quite cheerfully. If Mr. Jones was dead, he was remarkably gifted with a heart, for his heart was beating in a perfectly normal manner.

"Thank goodness!" exclaimed D'Arcy, in great relief. "He is not dead! I suppose he must have fainted from his fearful injahwies."

Groan!

"Mr. Jones, my dear sir—"

Mr. Jones's eyes opened feebly.

"Ha, villains!" he gasped. "Never! Slay me if thou wilt—I mean if you will—but never, never will I subscribe a single quid to the funds of the Brotherhood of Blood and Bones!"

"It's all wight," said D'Arcy. "It is I!"

Mr. Jones blinked at him over the spectacles, which had fallen a little sideways.

"Ha! Sleuth!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"They have slain me!" groaned Mr. Jones. "You are too late! But track them down—track them down to their doom!"

"Yaas, wathah! But pway let me see—"

Mr. Jones waved him back.

"Useless, Mr. Blake—I mean Holmes—that is to say, Sleuth. I am a dead man! Do not waste time on me! Track them down!"

"But weally—"

"Vengeance!" murmured the dying man. "Track them down!"

There was a rustle in the bushes.

Two swarthy fellows bounded out, and Arthur Augustus was seized ere he could spring to his feet, and borne to the ground.

"Aha! The detective!"

"Slay him!"

"Bai Jove! You awful wottahs!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, struggling in the grasp of the two Anarchists.

"Slay him! Cospetto, likewise carambo!" roared one of the Anarchists, in a voice, however, that sounded very English.

"Corpo di Bacco!" yelled the other. "Slay him!"

"By Jove! Wescue! I uttably wefuse—"

"Aha! My gleaming stiletto shall be dyed in your giddy gore!"

"Oh, gweat Scott!"

Arthur Augustus struggled desperately. The two Anarchists were not big men—indeed, one of them was shorter than D'Arcy himself. Somewhat to his own surprise, Arthur Augustus succeeded in hurling them off, and sprang up.

The two swarthy ruffians seemed dazed by their fall. They lay gasping on the ground.

"Quick, the handcuffs!" cried Mr. Jones, with great energy, considering that he was on the point of death.

"Bai Jove, I haven't any—"

"Bind them, then!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Arthur Augustus pulled a cord from his pocket, and hurled himself upon the nearest Anarchist. The ruffian had evidently been dazed by his fall, for he did not resist. Arthur Augustus bound his hands in a twinkling. Then he turned to the other. The second ruffian struggled a little, but only a little. D'Arcy bound his wrists together, and then rose, gasping.

He had captured the Anarchists!

Both the dreadful ruffians, the remorseless emissaries of the Brotherhood of Blood and Bones, lay gasping at his feet, prisoners.

"Capchahed, bai Jove!" ejaculated D'Arcy triumphantly.

"Cospetto!" gasped one of the Anarchists.

"Carambo!" yelled the other.

"Sapristi!"

Mr. Jones groaned deeply.

"You have captured them," he said faintly. "Take them to the police-station!"

"But you, my dear sir—"

"You can send a stretcher for me—"

"Yaas, I suppose that's the best thing to be done," said D'Arcy.

"Yes, yes. Hurry, lest they escape!"

"They jolly well won't escape, deah boy!" said D'Arcy.

"I'll huwky like anythin', Mr. Jones, and I hope you will wecovah all wight. Come along, you villains!"

"Cospetto!"

"Corpo di Tobacco!"

"Huwwy up, or I shall touch you up with my cane, you awful scoundwells!"

"Corpo di Carambo!"

"Sapristi!"

Arthur Augustus might be excused for being triumphant. He had read, often enough, of captured villains who ejaculated "Sapristi!" when they were caught; and now he had captured two desperadoes, complete with swarthy complexions, black beards, and sapristi. What would the St. Jim's fellows say now?

He compelled the prisoners to rise, and marched them off through the wood. The two Anarchists proceeded very slowly, but they had to go; and at length Arthur Augustus succeeded in getting them as far as the end of the footpath, where it entered Rylcombe Lane. The two Anarchists declined to get over the stile, but D'Arcy brandished his cane; and they ejaculated "sapristi" again and climbed over.

"I'm goin' to take you to the station, you awful wottahs!" said D'Arcy. "Huwwy up!"

"Cospetto!"

"Carambo di sapristi!"

Arthur Augustus looked up and down the lane. He hoped to see somebody to help him with the prisoners, and he was not disappointed. Quite a little crowd of fellows in mortar-board caps came hurrying along the lane. D'Arcy recognised the Grammarians—Gordon Gay, and Wootton minor, and Tadpole, and Carboy, and Lane, and Gustave Blanc, and several more of the Fourth Form at Rylcombe Grammar School. Never had the sight of the Grammarians been so welcome to the eyes of the swell of St. Jim's. And—as it never rains but it pours—from the direction of St. Jim's half a dozen juniors appeared in sight—Tom Merry and Lowther, and Manners and Blake, and Kangaroo and Herries. The two parties of juniors arrived at almost the same time.

They stared at Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and his prisoners blankly.

Gordon Gay & Co. were grinning. Tom Merry & Co. looked utterly amazed.

"What on earth—" said Blake.

"What the dickens—"

"Pway lend me a hand with these wascals, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus loftily.

"Who are they?" roared Tom Merry.

"Anarchists!"

"What!"

"They are members of the Bwothahhood of Blood and Bones."

"Oh, my hat!"

"I have capchahed them!"

"You frightful ass!" roared Tom Merry.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Can't you see that those beards they're wearing are false?" yelled Tom Merry.

"What!"

"We came out to look for you, Gussy," grinned Monty Lowther. "I think it's just as well that we did. We knew it was some jape."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

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"Good 'old Gussy!" sighed Blake. "Always discovering mare's nests! Always digging up trouble! Who's the japer this time? Some of these Grammarian bounders, I suppose?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Gordon Gay & Co.

D'Arcy frowned and looked at his prisoners. Now that he examined them closely, it was clear enough that the black beards were artificial.

"They are in disguise," said D'Arcy. "Natuwally, they would be in disguise, when they came down here to commit a murdah."

"A—a—a—what?"

"A murdah!" said D'Arcy firmly. "They have murdahed my client, Mr. Jones."

"My hat! You seem to be a great deal of use to your clients," grinned Blake. "But perhaps he will turn out not to be murdered, after all."

"I shouldn't wonder," said Gordon Gay.

And the Grammarians roared.

"He is covahed with blood!" said D'Arcy.

"What!"

"His collar and whiskers were all wed—wed with blood."

"Red ink, more likely!" grunted Herries. "It's a jape, you ass!"

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"They were red with something, certainly," said Gordon Gay. D'Arcy stared at him.

"How do you know, Gay?"

"Because I've got them here."

"What!"

"Here you are!" said Gordon Gay cheerfully.

The Grammarian junior drew a set of ginger-coloured whiskers and beard from his pocket. D'Arcy's eyes almost started from his head. There were the ginger whiskers that Mr. Jones had worn, and they were stained with red; but D'Arcy could guess by this time that it was red ink, and not blood.

"I—I—you—you—" gasped D'Arcy.

He noticed now that Gordon Gay was carrying a bag in his hand. Gay opened it, and disclosed a neatly-folded frock coat. "I'm still wearing the bags," he explained.

D'Arcy gasped.

He looked at the Cornstalk junior's lower extremities, and saw that he was indeed wearing the grey trousers that had clothed the nether limbs of Mr. John Jones. Even yet he did not quite understand.

"Gordon Gay! You awful wottah! Do you mean to say that you have been wobbin' a dyin' man of his clothes?" he ejaculated.

Gordon Gay yelled.

"Ha, ha! No. I was the dying man!"

"What!"

Gordon Gay put the ginger whiskers and beard on his face for a moment. Arthur Augustus jumped as he saw Mr. John Jones standing before him. He understood now.

"Bai Jove! You—you frightful wottah!"

The Grammarians roared. The St. Jim's fellows roared too. The expression upon Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's face might have moved a stone image to merriment.

"Oh, my only Aunt Maria!" said Blake, with tears running down his cheeks. "Oh, my word! Oh, my sainted Uncle Theophilus! Gussy, you will be the death of me!"

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus turned to his two prisoners. The two swarthy Anarchists were grinning now. Carboy had cut the cord with which D'Arcy had bound their hands, but they showed no inclination to escape.

"Who are you, you wottahs?" roared Arthur Augustus wrathfully.

He realised at last that, under the circumstances, they could not very well be really Italian Anarchists and members of the Brotherhood of Blood and Bones.

"Cospetto!" said one of them.

"Corpo de Tobacco!" said the other.

Arthur Augustus jerked at their black beards and moustaches. They came off in his grasp. Then, in spite of the dark stains upon their skin, they were recognisable as Frank Monk and Wootton major of the Fourth Form of Rylcombe Grammar School.

There was a fresh roar of laughter.

Arthur Augustus understood now how he had captured the Anarchists so easily, single-handed. He understood why the injured Mr. Jones had wanted to remain alone. Mr. Jones had recovered as soon as the amateur detective had turned his back, had changed his things, and cut off to join the rest of the Grammarians, and intercept D'Arcy and his prisoners on the way to the police-station. Even Gordon Gay's sense of humour stopped short of allowing D'Arcy to march Monk and Wootton into the police-station on a charge of being Anarchists.

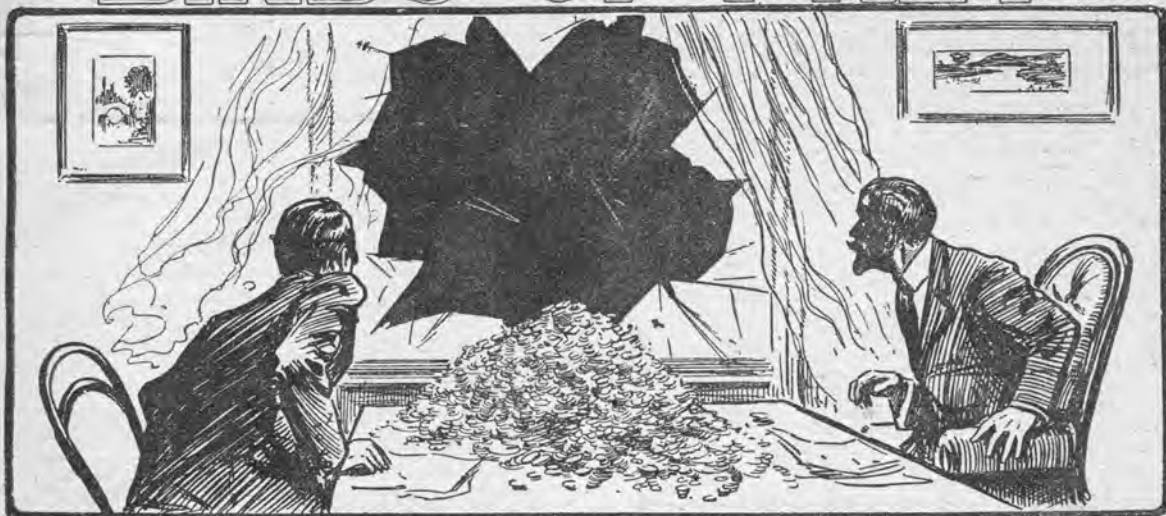
Arthur Augustus D'Arcy looked at the two revealed Anarchists. Then he looked at Gordon Gay and the Grammarians. Then he

(Concluded on page 27.)

RED-LETTER DAYS: "PENNY POPULAR" FRIDAY AND "MAGNET" MONDAY!

OUR SPLENDID NEW SERIAL.

BIRDS OF PREY



A Thrilling Story Dealing with the Adventures of Nelson Lee, Detective.

By MAXWELL SCOTT.

THE FIRST CHAPTERS BRIEFLY RE-WRITTEN.

On the bleak November afternoon when we first make the acquaintance of Jack Langley, the famous consulting electrical engineer, he is sitting in his office, writing out a report, when his clerk ushers in a man dressed entirely in black, who tells Jack that he is a member of the Sheffield Town Council. Something has gone wrong with the electric machinery, and he asks Jack to accompany him to the town to attend to the matter.

Jack Langley agrees, and the two enter the Sheffield train. A little while before the train is due to steam into Sheffield Station, the Man in Black offers Jack a drink from his flask. Suspecting nothing, Jack drains it off at a single draught; but the moment he has swallowed the stuff he knows that he has been drugged.

He becomes insensible, and the Man in Black then quickly opens the carriage door, and flings him out on to a tarpaulin held by four masked men stationed on the side of the line.

When the young engineer recovers consciousness, he finds himself in an enormous coiners' den—a miniature Royal Mint. He is told by the man who successfully duped him, and who appears to be known as the Squire, that if he repairs one of the coiners' dynamos he will be allowed to go free.

Jack executes the repair, but the promise is not kept, and instead of being allowed his freedom, he is forced to go aboard the yacht *Dolphin*, which belongs to the great secret society known as the Order of the Ring, of which the Squire is one of the heads. Jack, however, succeeds in freeing himself from his bonds in the darkness, and plunges over the rail into the dark waters of the Channel, followed by several revolver shots.

He escapes the shots, but by ill-luck is picked up by the Firefly, another ship belonging to the Order of the Ring. On board he meets Nelson Lee, who is trying to break up the secret society. The two make an attempt to capture the officers of the ship, but they fail, and while trying to escape Nelson Lee is imprisoned in the hold.

The Chief and the Doctor decide to get rid of the Firefly altogether, and call the crew off to the Dolphin, having first placed an infernal-machine in the lifer's hold. Nelson Lee, however, flings this overboard just before it explodes, and saves the ship. The Firefly, whose furnaces are out, hoists her sails, and attempts to elude the Dolphin in the dark. The latter vessel, however, comes in pursuit. "She is crowded with armed men waiting to board us," says Nelson Lee to the frightened crowd of passengers. "And she'll be up with us in less than a quarter of an hour."

(Now go on with the story.)

At the Mercy of the Storm.

"Then what's to be done?" said a lieutenant despondently. "If the passengers are to be believed, there isn't a rifle or a revolver aboard."

"But there are four nitro-glycerine bombs," said the detective grimly.

The lieutenant shrugged his shoulders.

"Much use they will be against a hundred armed and desperate men!" he said.

"We shall see!" said the detective meaningly.

He closed the glass, and left the bridge. Without apprising anyone of his intention, he went down into the engine-room, picked up the four explosive bombs, and placed them in his pocket, wrapping each one separately in a piece of cotton-waste. He then returned on deck. The Dolphin was a quarter of a mile astern, and overhauling them hand-over-hand.

He urged the passengers to retire to the saloon. Some of them demurred at first, but finally they complied with his request, and left the deck to himself and the lieutenant. The detective then slipped round to that side of the mainmast

which was farthest from the Dolphin, and stealthily swarmed up into the rigging.

Nearer and nearer came the Dolphin, till at last she was only a ship's length astern. Not a soul aboard—not even the lynx-eyed Chief—observed the solitary figure of Nelson Lee, crouching in the rigging.

Two more minutes, and the Dolphin's nose was abreast of the Firefly's stern; two more, and the vessels were alongside, with only a narrow strip of sea between their respective hulls.

"Now, my lads, out with the grappling-irons!" cried the Chief. "We'll soon——"

His sentence ended in a gasp of alarm, for at that moment his eyes fell on Nelson Lee. Quivering with excitement, he raised his rifle to his shoulder; but ere his finger could press the trigger, the detective sent the first of the bombs on its mission of destruction.

The Chief saw it coming, and threw himself flat on his face. The Doctor and the rest of the crew instinctively followed his example. But they need not have feared. The detective's aim was not to take life, but to wreck the Dolphin's engines:

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and, with this end in view, he flung the bomb at the skylight of the engine-room.

The bomb exploded the moment it came in contact with the glass, and the skylight ceased to exist. The engines, however, were still unharmed, but Nelson Lee had counted on this, and, with lightning-like rapidity, he hurled a second bomb through the breach which the first had made.

What the bomb did he never knew. He heard it explode, of course, and he saw an eruption of steel and wood. For the rest, it was enough for him that the engines suddenly ceased to work, that the Dolphin was immediately enveloped in a cloud of steam and smoke, and that when at last the cloud dissolved, the Dolphin was a quarter of a mile astern, and was rolling like a helpless log on the rapidly-rising sea.

He lowered himself on deck, and mounted the bridge, where the young lieutenant greeted him with a voluble torrent of enthusiastic congratulations.

"It was splendid—magnificent!" he said. "It was the bravest act I ever witnessed!"

"It was nothing," said the detective modestly. "Anybody who could aim straight could have done the same."

"Maybe," said his companion. "But only a man of lion-hearted courage would have dared to run such a frightful risk. I thought it was all over with you when that scoundrel on the bridge caught sight of you and raised his rifle."

"So did I," admitted Nelson Lee. "But enough of this. I've come to ask you what you think of the weather, and our prospects of bringing the Firefly safely to port."

The lieutenant shook his head.

"I don't like the look of things at all," he said. "Both the wind and the sea are rising at a furious rate, and with only one sail to depend upon and no crew, I'm afraid it's likely to go hard with us. Have you any idea where we are?"

"No. But I should scarcely think we are out of the Channel yet," said Nelson Lee. "How's the wind?"

"Due south."

"Then, in all probability, we are now driving towards the coast of Cornwall."

"That's the conclusion I've arrived at myself."

The detective pondered.

"You know more about navigation than I do," he said.

"What do you advise?"

"I should lower the mainsail," said his companion. "I shouldn't lower it altogether, you know. I should just leave enough standing, and no more, to give us steerage way. I should then light another tar-barrel as a signal of distress; and if you can find any rockets aboard, I should fire them at intervals. There's no longer any reason why we should try to conceal our whereabouts, you know, for we've nothing to fear from the Dolphin now."

The detective approved of these suggestions, and promptly set to work to carry them out. First of all, he made his way to the saloon, and told the passengers exactly how matters stood. When the tar-barrel had been lighted and placed in position, he called upon those who had helped him before, and requested them to assist him to shorten sail. Whilst this was being done, the rest of the passengers brought up the women and children from the hold, and made them comfortable in the dining-saloon, where coffee was brewed, and an impromptu meal prepared. Then all on board set themselves, with as much philosophy as they possessed, to await the course of events.

As the long, dark night wore on the gale continued to increase in violence, and lashed the sea into ungovernable fury. From time to time, huge billows struck the Firefly broadside on, and all but flung her over on her beam ends.

At other times mountainous seas broke over her stern, and deluged her decks from end to end. All attempts to keep the tar-barrel blazing proved utterly unavailing, and as Nelson Lee was unable to find any rockets or hand-lights, the steamer laboured along, now on the crest of a foaming wave, now in the trough of the sea, without any means of making her peril known to the various ships that ever and anon flitted past her in the darkness.

At last the long-feared crisis came. It was midnight. The detective had gone on to the bridge, and was trying to persuade the young lieutenant to take a spell of rest, whilst he—Nelson Lee—took charge of the wheel. Suddenly, above the howling of the wind and the thunder of the waves, an excited shout was heard from the man who was on look-out duty:

"Breakers ahead!"

The next instant the crash of rending timbers was heard, the Firefly trembled from stem to stern, the mainmast snapped and fell overboard, the vessel came to a sudden, jarring stop, and canted over on her side.

"Heaven help us now!" groaned Nelson Lee. "We are on the rocks!"

Little did he dream, when he uttered these words, that the Dolphin was drifting after them, and was doomed to strike on the selfsame rocks before the morning dawned.

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Shot by an Unseen Hand.

Penleven Cove is a rugged, rock-bound inlet on one of the wildest and most desolate stretches of the Cornish coast. Its entrance is guarded by two towering, cave-infected cliffs, which rise almost perpendicularly out of the sea. On the summit of each of these cliffs stands an ancient, grey-walled mansion. The larger of the two, which stands on the eastern cliff, is Penleven Grange. Between the two, fringing the shores of the bay, is the thriving little hamlet of Penleven.

It was here that the Firefly came ashore. The rocks upon which she struck are locally known as the "Devil's Fangs," and were situated at the foot of the cliff whose summit was crowned by Trevanger Hall.

Viscount St. Aidan, the owner of the Hall, was a young man and a bachelor. On that dark November night when the Firefly met her doom, he was playing whist with three of his friends in a cosy little room he called his "den." One of his guests was a college chum, who was staying at the Hall. Another was the village doctor from Penleven. The third was his friend and neighbour, Sir Philip Aylmer, who lived at Penleven Grange.

A hand had been played, and the viscount was cutting for a fresh deal, when a footman entered the room, and handed him a hurriedly-pencilled note. His lordship opened it; then a look of eager excitement crossed his face.

"Who brought this note?" he asked.

"A fisher-lad from Penleven, my lord," replied the footman.

"Is he waiting for an answer?"

"Yes, my lord."

"Then tell him to inform Mr. Wright that I shall be only too pleased to place my house at his disposal. Have the servants gone to bed?"

"No, my lord."

"That is well. Tell them to light a fire in the dining-room, and another in the library, and to get out all the blankets, rugs, and— On second thoughts, you'd better tell the housekeeper I wish to see her. She'll understand better than I do what things to get ready."

The footman withdrew, and the viscount turned to his three companions, who had listened to the foregoing conversation in undisguised bewilderment.

"This note is from Wright, the chief of the Penleven coastguards," he said. "He tells me that an unknown vessel, evidently a large passenger-steamer, has come ashore on the Devil's Fangs, and is rapidly breaking up. He and his men have rigged up the rocket apparatus, and are now engaged in hauling the passengers ashore. As there are over a hundred of them, and as there is no house in the village large enough to accommodate them until morning, he wants to know if I will give them shelter for the night. Ah, here you are, Mrs. Pollock!"

This last remark was addressed to his housekeeper, who at that moment entered the room. In a few brief sentences he told her what had happened, and instructed her to make all the necessary preparations for receiving the shipwrecked passengers, and making them comfortable for the night.

Then he turned to his three companions again.

"What do you say?" he said. "Shall we go down on the beach and watch the work of rescue, or shall we stay here to receive the passengers?"

Sir Philip voted for remaining indoors, but the doctor and the viscount's friend were strongly in favour of going down to the beach. As the viscount himself was in favour of this latter course, it was finally adopted, and the four men accordingly donned their coats and caps and sallied forth.

The scene which met their view, on emerging from the house, was both wild and picturesque. Half-way up the cliff a number of blue lights had been lighted, and by means of their weird, unearthly light the Firefly was seen to be wedged, with a list to port, between two of the well-named fangs of the reef.

Her bows had practically disappeared, shivered into splinters by the force with which she had struck. Her bridge, together with her mast and funnel, had been swept away by the roaring waves, which ever and anon broke over her; and all that remained of the once trim pleasure-yacht was a battered and unsightly hull, upon which, expecting nothing less than instant death, was a shivering, panic-stricken crowd of weeping women and despairing men.

On the rocky beach at the foot of the cliff stood an eager throng of fishermen and coastguards. The latter had succeeded in establishing communication with the wreck by the simple device of firing a rocket across her deck with a long, light cord attached to the stick. By means of this cord the men on board the Firefly had hauled a hempen hawser aboard, and had fastened the end to the stump of the steamer's mast.

RED-LETTER DAYS: "PENNY POPULAR" FRIDAY AND "MAGNET" MONDAY!

The coastguards had then carried the other end of the hawser a few yards up the face of the cliff, and had made it fast to the trunk of a tree.

With the help of the fishermen, the hawser had then been hauled sufficiently taut to make it hang high above the surface of the waves, in gently curving line, from the wreck to the shore. A canvas cradle had then been slung on to the hawser in such a way that it could be made to travel backwards, from the cliff to the wreck, and from the wreck to the cliff, as often as might be required.

All this had been done before the viscount and his three companions appeared on the scene. The cradle had been hauled along the hawser till it reached the Firefly's side, and two of the passengers, a woman and a child, had been lifted into it. The cradle had then been hauled back to shore, and by the time the viscount and his friends arrived at the foot of the cliff, the woman and child had been lifted out, and the cradle was on its way back to the wreck again.

"Have you discovered the name of the vessel yet?" asked the viscount, addressing the chief coastguard.

"Yes, my lord," replied the coastguard. "She's the Firefly, outward bound from London on a three months' cruise down the Mediterranean."

At the mention of the vessel's name Sir Philip uttered an exclamation of dismay.

"The Firefly!" he gasped. "Good heavens, that's the vessel in which Ethel sailed!"

He flung himself down on the nearest boulder, and buried his face in his hands. His companions naturally thought that he was overcome with fear for his niece's safety. As the reader may have guessed, however, his agitation had an altogether different cause. He had paid the Order of the Ring a thousand pounds on condition that the Doctor poisoned Ethel before the Firefly returned to port. He knew nothing of the tragic events which had happened earlier in the day, and, consequently, he was under the impression that Ethel was still on board, that she would presently be rescued, and that the whole of his heartless plot for securing her death would be nipped in the bud.

"I'm awfully sorry for you, old man!" said the viscount kindly. "I know how I should feel if there was anybody I cared for on board that wreck. But don't lose heart. The vessel is breaking up, I admit, but it's hardly likely that she'll go to pieces before they get the women off. Cheer up! With ordinary luck it won't be long before Miss Aylmer is standing by your side."

Sir Philip roused himself, and staggered to his feet. Those around him gazed at his haggard, woebegone face, and told themselves that they had never known before how much Sir Philip cared for his niece. Little did they dream that the fear which was blanching his cheeks was not the fear that Ethel might be drowned, but the fear that she might be saved.

The first woman who had been rescued had been too exhausted to answer any questions, and had been carried, more dead than alive, up the winding path that led to Trevanger Hall. The next three women who had been brought ashore were equally exhausted, and were also removed to the Hall without being subjected to the ordeal of questioning. The next made a brave attempt to tell her rescuers what had happened, but fainted before she could finish her tale. The little that she told, however, was sufficient to give rise to intense excitement and sensation, and each of the other passengers, as the coastguards hauled them ashore, was eagerly questioned for additional details.

In this way the whole of the terrible story was gradually unfolded. There are no words in the English language to describe Sir Philip's state of mind as he listened to this startling tale, which was not told all at once, but little by little, as each succeeding passenger was brought ashore, and sent up the cliff to Trevanger Hall. Those who saw his terror-stricken face, and observed his inward agitation, thought that he was distressed by the news that Ethel had been made a prisoner, and taken aboard the Dolphin. But again they were mistaken. It was not of Ethel that he was thinking now, but of himself.

Did the passengers know? Did they even suspect that he was hand-in-glove with the scoundrels they were denouncing? Did they know or suspect that he had bribed the Order of the Ring to encompass Ethel's death?

Did they know that to all intents and purposes it was he—Sir Philip Aylmer—who was practically responsible for the sensational events which had culminated in the Firefly's destruction?

If they knew nothing of all this he had nothing to fear. If they knew it, or suspected it, there was not a moment to be lost. He must flee the country before the police arrested him. As the long night wore on his fears began to subside. Passenger after passenger was hauled ashore and sent to the Hall. Each of them had something fresh to tell, but none of them appeared to harbour the ghost of a suspicion that

Ethel Aylmer had been sent aboard the Firefly to meet her doom. All of them seemed to think that she had joined the vessel, like they had, in search of health and pleasure; and that the Chief had taken her away with him for the sole purpose of using her as a means of forcing Jack Langley to join the Order. None of them even mentioned the name of her uncle and her guardian.

Under these circumstances, it was only natural that Sir Philip should conclude that his fears were groundless. In fact, he was just beginning to flatter himself that everything had really happened for the best, when, all of a sudden, like a bolt from the blue, a scrap of conversation fell on his ears, and plunged him once more into abject, panic-stricken terror.

"We don't know everything even yet."

It was the voice of one of the rescued passengers whom the viscount was assisting up the winding path.

"Mr. Lee says that Mr. Langley was perfectly right when he described the Firefly as a murder ship. He says he knows for a fact that the doctor had been paid to poison one of the lady passengers. He knows the lady's name, and the name of the man who bribed the doctor to murder her, but he wouldn't tell them to us, for fear that—"

The voice died away, and the rest of the sentence was inaudible. But Sir Philip had heard more than enough. At one fell swoop his new-born hopes had been dashed to the ground. His secret was known—known to Nelson Lee.

For a moment or two the discovery numbed his brain, and rendered him incapable of thought. Then a ray of hope flashed through his mind and galvanised him into life again.

Nelson Lee was apparently the only man who knew his guilty secret. He had not yet told the passengers the name of the victim whom the Doctor had been bribed to poison, nor the name of the man who had paid the bribe. Clearly, then, if Nelson Lee should happen to die before he had time to reveal what he knew—

Another scrap of conversation floated down from the winding path and interrupted the train of Sir Philip's thought.

"Yes, that's Nelson Lee standing on the upper deck, with a pocket-handkerchief in his hand. We wanted him to be the first to come ashore after all the women and children had been saved; but he wouldn't hear of it. He said he would leave the ship when everybody else had been saved, but not before, so we needn't try to persuade him. Splendid fellow, isn't he?"

"Splendid fool!" muttered Sir Philip, between his clenched teeth. "If he's going to be the last to leave the ship, I've ample time to get ready to receive him."

He turned on his heel, and began to ascend the cliff.

"Hallo! Had enough of it?" called out the viscount.

"Won't you stay and help us to give Nelson Lee a rousing welcome when he comes ashore? I'm sure you'll agree with me that he deserves one, and he won't be long now."

"I want to question some of the women about Ethel," said Sir Philip. "You'll find me at the Hall when you come up."

He made his way to the summit of the cliff, and then entered the house. Taking advantage of the confusion which everywhere reigned, he slipped upstairs, without attracting observation, and entered the viscount's "den." The viscount was the captain of a local rifle corps, and his rifle stood in one corner of the room, with his bandolier beside it. To extract a cartridge and to slip it into the breech of the rifle was the work of a moment. To conceal the rifle beneath the folds of his flowing ulster was the work of another. Then the would-be assassin crept stealthily out of the house, and made his way by unfrequented paths to a clump of stunted bushes half-way down the face of the cliff.

In the meantime, the last of the passengers had been hauled ashore, and the cradle had been sent back for Nelson Lee.

Crouching behind the bushes, with the rifle to his shoulder, Sir Philip saw the detective lower himself into the cradle. He saw him give the signal to those on shore to "haul away." He saw the cradle, with its human freight, glide along the hawser towards the cliff. He waited until it had half completed the journey—till Nelson Lee hung poised in mid-air above the hungry waves—then he pulled the trigger and fired.

A tongue of flame leaped through the stunted bushes, and a short, sharp crack blended with the thunder of the breakers on the rocky beach below. The bullet which had been meant to pierce the detective's heart cut through the strands of the straining rope on which the cradle hung.

As if by magic, the hawser snapped in twain, and the next instant, to the horrified amazement of the crowd below, the cradle with its solitary occupant was swallowed up and lost to view in the madly tossing breakers.

The Poison Discs.

The moment his dastardly deed was accomplished, Sir Philip turned and fled. With swift but stealthy steps he made his way back to the top of the cliff, and re-entered the house.

Unseen by the servants, he stole upstairs to the viscount's

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Sir Philip waited until Nelson Lee hung poised in mid-air above the hungry waves, and then he pulled the trigger. Crack! The bullet snapped the straining hawser in twain, and the next instant the cradle, with its solitary occupant was lost to view in the madly-tossing breakers! (See Page 23.)

"den," where he rapidly removed the empty cartridge-case, and replaced the rifle in its accustomed corner.

He then went down to the dining-room, where a large number of the passengers were assembled, and began to question them concerning Ethel's fate.

A few minutes later the door was suddenly flung open, and one of the rescued passengers—the young lieutenant, as a matter of fact—burst into the room in a state of seething excitement.

One glance at his pale, scared face was sufficient to tell the occupants of the room that something out of the common had occurred; and with one accord they sprang to their feet, and greeted him with a simultaneous shout of "What's the matter?"

"Matter enough!" he replied, in a hoarse, excited voice. "An attempt—happily unsuccessful—has been made on the life of Nelson Lee!"

At the words, "happily unsuccessful," Sir Philip's heart almost ceased to beat, and an icy shiver shook his frame.

"Unsuccessful!" Was it possible that his plot had failed? The bare thought took his breath away. He clutched the back of a chair for support. He turned away his face to hide his agitation. He strained his ears to catch the rest of the young lieutenant's speech.

"Whilst we were hauling him ashore," continued the lieutenant, "some scoundrel, at present unknown, fired at him from behind a clump of bushes half-way up the cliff. The bullet cut the hawser clean in two, and the cradle dropped into the sea. By a lucky chance, Mr. Lee succeeded in extricating himself from the tangle of ropes and canvas, and struck out for the shore. Before he had taken a dozen strokes, he was overtaken by an enormous breaker, which rolled him over and over like a cork, and finally cast him ashore at the foot of the cliff. We all thought that he was dead, but after the doctor had examined him, he said that he was only stunned, and that with rest and care he thought that he would pull round. The coastguards are now bringing him up to this house, and the fishermen have organised themselves into a search party to hunt for the scoundrel who fired the shot. I'm going to join them, but I thought I'd better come here first and tell you what had happened, so that if any of you cared to help in the search you could do so."

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Most of the male passengers immediately volunteered to join the search-party, and left the room in company with the lieutenant.

Sir Philip followed after them—not for the purpose of aiding them in their search, of course, but for fear that his agitation should betray him to those who remained behind.

There was now no longer any room for doubt that his plot had failed. The detective was not dead, but only stunned. In a few hours—perhaps even in a few minutes—he would recover consciousness, and the baronet's guilty secret would be revealed.

No wonder that Sir Philip's face was deathly pale! No wonder that his teeth were chattering like castanets! No wonder that his brow was wet with bead-like drops of clammy perspiration!

Scarcely knowing where he was going, or what he intended to do, he staggered out of the house, and wandered down the winding path that led to the foot of the cliff.

Half-way down he met the little procession which was toiling upwards towards the Hall. At the head were the viscount and the doctor from Penleven. Behind them were four of the coastguards bearing the unconscious form of Nelson Lee on a roughly-constructed litter.

The rest of the coastguards, together with the viscount's college chum, had joined in the hunt for the unknown man who had fired the shot.

The moment Sir Philip caught sight of the sad procession he was seized with unreasoning panic. For one brief instant he was tempted to turn and flee; then he pulled himself together, and advanced towards the viscount with an air of pretended concern.

"This is terrible—terrible!" he exclaimed, gazing at the detective's senseless form. "I've only just heard the news, and hurried out to meet you. What does it all mean? Who can have been guilty of such a dastardly deed?"

The viscount shook his head.

"I can't imagine," he said. "The whole thing is a bewildering mystery. There's no one in this neighbourhood, so far as I'm aware, who has anything to gain by injuring Nelson Lee. Yet one doesn't like to think that any of those whom he had risked his life to save could have perpetrated such an act of despicable treachery."

RED-LETTER DAYS: "PENNY POPULAR" FRIDAY AND "MAGNET" MONDAY!

Besides, even if any of the passengers had desired to murder him, how and where could they have procured a rifle?"

"You are quite sure it was a rifle?" asked Sir Philip.

"Absolutely certain. We can't recover the bullet, of course, for it's lost in the sea; but everybody who heard the report agrees with me that it was a rifle."

"Did the bullet wound him?"

"It's hard to say," said the doctor, breaking in. "His whole body is covered with wounds and bruises, but none of them has quite the appearance of a bullet-wound. Judging by the way in which he struck out for the shore after the hawser parted, I should say that the bullet did not wound him—or, at any rate, didn't inflict any wound of any consequence."

"Do you think he will recover?"

"Yes."

The word struck a chill of terror to Sir Philip's heart, and for the rest of the ascent he preserved unbroken silence.

Upon reaching the Hall the detective was conveyed to the viscount's bed-room, where the doctor, assisted by Sir Philip and the viscount, undressed him and laid him in the bed.

A messenger had been sent to Penleven for the doctor's "emergency bag," and as soon as this arrived the doctor set to work to dress the detective's wounds. When this had been done he took from his bag a silver-plated pocket-case, in which were half a dozen tubes of tiny discs, a small glass syringe, and a couple of hollow needles.

"What are you going to do now?" asked the viscount, who was an interested spectator of the proceedings.

"I'm going to give him what we call a hypodermic injection of strychnine," said the doctor.

"Strychnine!" gasped the viscount and Sir Philip, in one breath; and the latter added: "But I thought strychnine was one of the deadliest poisons known?"

"So it is," said the doctor; "but, like many other poisons, it is an extremely valuable medicine if used in sufficiently minute doses." He took out one of the tubes from the pocket-case, removed the cork, and shook three or four of the discs into the palm of his hand. "Each of these discs contains one-tenth of a grain of nitrate of strychnine," he said. "Two of them would make a man seriously ill; three would kill him on the spot. A single disc, dissolved in water and injected beneath the skin, acts as a powerful stimulant to the heart, which is exactly what Mr. Lee requires at the present moment."

As Sir Philip listened to this explanation a hungry, wolfish look stole over his pallid face.

Three would kill him!

If he could only manage to secure the syringe and the tube of strychnine discs! If the doctor and the viscount would only leave the room for a minute or two! The baronet trembled from head to foot at the thought of what might be done.

The doctor dropped one of the tiny discs into the barrel of the syringe, and replaced the rest in the tube from which he had taken them. He put the tube back in the case, and took out one of the needles. He placed the case on a small table at the foot of the bed; then he poured a few drops of water into the syringe, and screwed the needle on to the end.

When the disc had dissolved, he seated himself on the edge of the bed, and pinched up a fold of skin on the detective's forearm. He thrust the point of the needle into this fold, and injected the contents of the syringe into the arm. He then withdrew the point of the needle, and laid the empty syringe by the side of the case on the small round table already described.

"If all goes well—" he began, with his finger on the detective's pulse; but before he had time to complete his sentence a knock was heard at the bed-room door, and a footman made his appearance.

"If you please, sir," he said, addressing the doctor, "Mrs. Pollock would like you to come down to the dining-room at once. One of the ladies there has been suddenly taken ill."

"All right; I'll be down in two two's," said the doctor.

The footman still lingered at the door.

"Well, what are you waiting for?" asked the viscount sharply.

"Beg pardon, my lord," said the flunkey, "but I thought perhaps you'd like to know that there's another vessel coming ashore."

"Another!" gasped his lordship. "What a night we're having! What kind of vessel is it this time?"

"A small screw steamer, my lord," said the footman. "The rocket-men are following her along the coast, but they seem to think she'll break up and founder before they can render any help. You can see her lights quite plainly from the library window."

Little did his listeners guess that the "small screw" was the steamer which was driving ashore was none other than the Dolphin. Yet so it was; and so they were destined to learn before many minutes had passed.

"I must just run down and have a look at her," said the viscount excitedly.

"And I must run down and attend to the lady in the dining-room," said the doctor. "You don't mind being left with Mr. Lee for a minute or two, Sir Philip?"

"Not at all," said Sir Philip. And his eyes lit up with a sudden blaze of malignant triumph.

The two men accordingly left the room, closing the door behind them. Almost before they were out of the room Sir Philip snatched up the doctor's syringe, and rapidly unscrewed the needle. In feverish haste he placed three of the strychnine discs in the barrel of the syringe, and added a few drops of water. Then he screwed on the needle, glanced nervously round the room, and stole to the side of his still unconscious victim.

Baffled.

The detective's arm was lying out upon the counterpane. It was bare from the elbow to the wrist, just as the doctor had left it. Sir Philip scanned it with an eager, gloating stare. He found the minute puncture where the doctor had inserted the needle of the syringe. He pinched up a fold of the skin, exactly as he had seen the doctor do. Then a hasty footstep outside the door caused him to start back with a gasp of alarm. He had barely time to thrust the syringe into his pocket ere the door was opened, and the doctor hurried in.

"That's a bad case down in the dining-room," he said, as he walked towards the table at the foot of the bed. "The poor woman is delirious. I shall have to give her an injection of morphia to keep her quiet."

He picked up the silver-plated case, and glanced round the room with an air of puzzled surprise.

"Seen my syringe anywhere?" he asked. "I thought I left it on this table."

Sir Philip turned away, ostensibly to look for the syringe, but really to hide his agitation.

"Didn't you take it with you when you went downstairs?" he said, striving to speak calmly.

"I don't think so," said the doctor. "My impression is that I laid it down on the top of this case."

"I don't think you did," said Sir Philip. "I seem to remember seeing it in your hand when you left the room."

"Perhaps you're right," said the doctor. "I was a little bit excited at the time, I know, and it's just possible that I may have taken it downstairs, and laid it on the dining-room table. I'll run down and see."

Suiting the action to the word, he turned on his heel and quitted the room. The moment his back was turned, Sir Philip whipped out the syringe, and once more glided towards the bed. But the Fates were against him. Just as he was about to thrust the needle into his victim's arm, the door was suddenly flung open, and the viscount burst into the room, and the young lieutenant and five or six of the Firefly's passengers at his heels.

"Prepare for a surprise!" cried the viscount excitedly. "You heard the footman say just now that a vessel was coming ashore?"

Sir Philip slipped his hand behind his back to hide the syringe from view, and nodded his head. He dared not trust himself to speak, lest his mortification should betray itself in the tones of his voice.

"Well, what do you think?" continued the viscount eagerly. "What do you think that vessel is? What do you think is her name?"

Sir Philip shook his head.

"Tell him," said the viscount, turning to the young lieutenant.

"We were searching in the wood at the back of this house for the man who fired at Nelson Lee," said the young lieutenant. "By-and-by a coastguard met us, and told us that another vessel was coming ashore. He told us what sort of a vessel she was, and this rather roused our suspicions, so we hurriedly made our way to the edge of the cliff. One of the blue lights was still burning, and the moment we set eyes on the vessel we saw that she was the Dolphin."

"The Dolphin!" almost screamed Sir Philip, his eyes starting from his head in horrified dismay. "The vessel on which my niece and Jack Langley and the Chief—"

His voice died away in a groan of despair. He staggered back as though he were going to fall, but the viscount darted forward and caught him in his arms. As he did so, his eyes fell on the syringe in Sir Philip's hand.

"Bear up, old man!" he said sympathetically. "And, for goodness' sake, be careful what you're doing with that syringe, for Heaven only knows what might happen if you

pricked yourself with the needle! You've had a trying time of it to-night, but all may still come right in the end. If the Dolphin only comes ashore at a convenient spot, there's no reason why Miss Aylmer shouldn't be rescued, after all."

Sir Philip shivered from head to foot, for this was exactly what he feared. If the Dolphin came ashore, and those on board were rescued in the same manner as those on board the Firefly had been rescued, what would be the result? The Chief and the Doctor, with all their rascally accomplices, would be taken into custody the moment they stepped ashore. Ethel and Jack would be free to tell their startling tale of the baronet's heartless attempt to encompass his niece's death. All would be known—all would be lost!

"Do you think—" began Sir Philip, in a husky voice; but before he had time to complete his question, the doctor reappeared.

"This is very strange," he said. "I can't find my syringe anywhere."

"Sir Philip has it," said the viscount.

With marvellous presence of mind, Sir Philip pressed the piston-rod, and squirted the contents of the syringe on the floor.

"Yes, it's here," he faltered. "I—I found it under the table after you had left."

The doctor took the syringe, and eyed Sir Philip with a suspicious air.

"You're very white!" he said meaningly.

"And no wonder!" retorted the viscount. "Have you heard the news? That vessel which is coming ashore is the Dolphin, the vessel on which Sir Philip's niece is a prisoner."

"Ah!" The doctor's suspicions vanished as if by magic, and gave place to compassionate sympathy. He understood now—or thought he understood—why Sir Philip was pale and unnerved. "Poor fellow!" he said, laying his hand on Sir Philip's shoulder. "These constant shocks, this prolonged suspense, must be terribly hard to bear, but don't get downhearted. If those on board the Firefly could be rescued, why not those on board the Dolphin?"

He had scarcely finished speaking ere the viscount's college chum rushed into the room.

"Isn't it horrible?" he panted. "I shall never forget this night as long as I live. You knew that another vessel was coming ashore?"

"Yes," said the viscount quickly, with a dim foreboding of what was coming.

"Well, she struck on the very end of the Devil's Fangs, and smashed her bows to smithereens. For about ten seconds she remained on the rocks, then she suddenly slipped back into the water, and sank like a stone. Every single soul on board has gone to the bottom!"

A painful, deathlike silence fell on the little group. Every eye was instinctively turned towards Sir Philip.

"Catch him!" cried the young lieutenant suddenly.

But the warning came too late. With a deep-drawn sigh—a sigh that his companions thought was called up by his grief for Ethel's fate, but which was really a sigh of heart-felt relief—Sir Philip stumbled forwards, and fell to the ground in a dead faint.

Sir Philip's Schemes.

Sir Philip's swoon was not of long duration, but as soon as he came round the doctor insisted upon giving him a sleeping-draught, "to calm his excited brain," as he explained, which put him to sleep, and kept him asleep for the next ten hours.

When he awoke he found himself on the couch in the viscount's "den." The sun was streaming through a mullioned window at the end of the room, and a clock on the mantelpiece pointed to half-past twelve. For several minutes he lay in a dreamy reverie, forgetful of all that had happened the previous night, oblivious of the sword which was hanging over his head. Then, all at once, with a whirlwind rush, his memory came back, his terrors returned.

Had Nelson Lee recovered consciousness yet? Had he told what he knew of the baronet's guilty connection with the Order of the Ring? Such were the questions which flashed across his awakening brain, and racked him with torturing suspense.

He sprang from the couch, and staggered towards the bell-pull. He would ring for one of the servants, and ask for news of Nelson Lee. If the detective had recovered consciousness he would slip away, and make his escape while the coast was clear.

His hand was on the bell-pull when the door suddenly swung open, and the viscount peered into the room.

"Ah! You're awake, I see!" he said, as he closed the door and entered the room. "I just peeped in to see if you were all right. How are you feeling after your long sleep? Better, I hope."

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 249.

"Yes, I'm all right now, thank you," said Sir Philip. "But how is our friend Nelson Lee?"

"Still unconscious," said the viscount gravely.

Sir Philip breathed more freely. "Has he spoken yet?"

"Not a word."

Sir Philip grew quite cheerful.

"Who's with him?"

"A nurse from Penzance. We wired for her as soon as the telegraph-office was open. She arrived about an hour ago. The doctor and I sat up with him until she arrived."

"What does the doctor think of him? Does he think he'll come round?"

"Oh, yes! He thinks he'll probably remain unconscious for another twelve hours or so, but he's quite confident that he'll pull through all right in the end."

Sir Philip shivered. His cheerfulness began to evaporate.

"Have they found the man who fired at him?"

"No. The whole affair remains as it was at first—an inexplicable mystery."

"Any news of Ethel?"

The viscount shook his head.

"I'm afraid you'll never hear of her again," he said.

"About thirty bodies have been washed up from the Dolphin up to the present, but Miss Aylmer's is not amongst them; nor the Chief's, nor the Doctor's, nor Mr. Langley's. It is just possible, of course, that their bodies may be washed up later, but the coastguards seem to think that no more bodies will be recovered now, for the tide was ebbing strongly at the time of the wreck, and the probability is that the rest of the bodies have been carried out to sea."

"Has the Firefly broken up?"

"Yes. All that remains of her now is a litter of wreckage."

"And the passengers?"

"Have all departed to their several homes—all except Nelson Lee, of course, who stays here as my guest until he is able to resume his task of unmasking this villainous Order of the Ring."

Again Sir Philip shivered.

"You're cold!" said the viscount.

"I am," said Sir Philip feebly. "It's frosty, isn't it?"

"Yes. The wind went down about four o'clock, and was succeeded by an iron frost. Otherwise, the day is a perfect one—a cloudless sky, brilliant sunshine, and hardly a breath of wind. But come downstairs and have some breakfast."

Somewhat to the viscount's surprise, Sir Philip declined his hospitable invitation, and announced his intention of returning home forthwith. The fact of the matter was that the baronet was desperately afraid that Nelson Lee might recover consciousness, and reveal what he knew while he—Sir Philip—was in the house. In addition to this, he was anxious to be alone, in order that he might concentrate his thoughts, and devise some scheme for diverting the peril by which he was threatened. In spite of the viscount's protests, therefore, he ordered his horse—upon which he had ridden over the night before—to be saddled and brought round; and a few minutes after one o'clock he rode away, and returned to Penleven Grange.

It was half-past one when Sir Philip reached the Grange, where he shut himself up in the library, and gloomily reviewed the events of the past few days. He called to his mind how, less than a week ago, he had paid the Order of the Ring a thousand pounds to remove his niece from his path. The Chief, the Squire, and the Doctor had all been present when the bargain had been struck, and the Chief had pledged his word that no one but themselves should ever know that Sir Philip had had any part or plot in the contemplated crime.

Since then, however, in some way or other which Sir Philip could not even guess, Jack Langley had got wind of the dastardly plot, and had revealed the secret to Nelson Lee. Probably he had also taken Ethel into his confidence, so that in the end the number of those who had shared the guilty secret had been six.

Four of these six—the Chief, the Doctor, Ethel, and Jack—had perished in the wreck of the Dolphin. That left two who knew that Sir Philip was in league with the Order of the Ring, and had bribed them to murder his niece. One of the two was the Squire. There was nothing to be feared from him. The other was Nelson Lee. But Nelson Lee was unconscious. And so long as he remained unconscious Sir Philip was safe. And if the detective should die without recovering consciousness the danger would be over.

At this point in his ruminations, Sir Philip rose to his feet, and began to pace the room with rapid, agitated strides.

"If Nelson Lee should die without recovering consciousness!" he murmured.

(Another long and thrilling instalment of this splendid serial in next Wednesday's Grand Christmas Double Number of the "GEM" Library. Order your copy early.)

RED-LETTER DAYS: "PENNY POPULAR" FRIDAY AND "MAGNET" MONDAY!

HARD TIMES.

(Continued from Page 20.)

looked at Tom Merry & Co. A terrific yell of laughter rose from all of them. The fellows simply rocked with merriment.

Gordon Gay & Co. went up the lane, doubled up with mirth, and turning round every now and then to wave their beards at D'Arcy. D'Arcy stood petrified.

"Jolly lucky for those giddy Anarchists that you didn't take your rusty revolver, Gussy," Monty Lowther remarked.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, deah boys—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus elevated his aristocratic nose very high in the air, and walked away in the direction of St. Jim's. The juniors followed him, still chuckling. Blake tapped the swell of St. Jim's on the shoulder, but D'Arcy turned away.

"I wegard you as wottahs!" he said. "Pway leave me alone! I wefuse to wegard you fellows as fwiends!"

"Oh, Gussy!"

"I wegard you as wank outsiders!" said Arthur Augustus loftily. "Pway don't talk to me!"

Blake exchanged a wink with the other juniors. Arthur Augustus was very much on his dignity, but there was an easy and certain method of bringing Arthur Augustus round at any time.

"Gentlemen," said Blake, "this is where we apologise. From one gentleman to another, an apology sets everything right."

"Hear, hear!"

"Vewy well, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus graciously, "I accept your apology. And weally I am glad you came out for me, or those Gwammawian wottahs would have wagged me still more, vewy likely."

"And I've brought a letter for you, that came soon after you went out," said Blake cheerfully. "If there's a remittance in it, I'll stand you a feed."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus took the letter.

"It's ffrom my patah," he said.

"Yes, open it. Can't you see we're all on tenterhooks," said Monty Lowther.

D'Arcy opened the letter. His face cleared very much as he read it.

"Dear Arthur,—I hear from Wally that you are very much in want of money. As I think you have had a sufficient lesson by this time, I shall resume sending your allowance as usual. Your affectionate FATHER."

There was a crisp five-pound note in the letter. The rustle of the banknote was as the music of the sphere to the ears of the impecunious juniors. When one was in funds, all were in funds. The hard times had ended at last.

"Bai Jove, that's all right! The governah puts it so nicely that I weally think I shall ovahlook the whole occuwwence, and tweek him as if nothin' had happened," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy thoughtfully.

"I should," said Blake solemnly.

"Afiah all, a chap must allow his patah a little wun for his money," said Arthur Augustus magnanimously. "I shall tweek the patah just as if nothin' had happened. I shall allow him to send my allowances."

"Hear, hear!"

"If he makes you an allowance, you'll make allowance for him!" suggested Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And upon the whole, deah boys," said D'Arcy, in a burst of confidence, "I think I shall give up this detective biznay. It's wathah difficult to wun a detective business and work in the Fourth Form as well. I sha'n't need to waise money by extwoordinawy means now, so I shall give up earnin' it. So long as the patah plays the game I shall be all right."

"Hear, hear!" said Blake heartily. "And as your remittance has come first, Gussy, I vote that we proceed forthwith to blue it. We'll ask Figgins & Co., and everybody, and have a really stunning feed."

"Yaas, wathah!"

And they did. And there was a tremendous celebration in Study No. 6, to celebrate the end of D'Arcy's career as a private detective, and the close of the distressful period of Hard Times.

THE END.

NEXT WEDNESDAY - - -

"NOBODY'S STUDY!"

A double-length tale of Tom Merry & Co. The finest School Story MARTIN CLIFFORD has ever written. ORDER IN ADVANCE.

A NEW FREE

CORRESPONDENCE EXCHANGE.

The only names and addresses which can be printed in these columns will be from those readers living in any of our Colonies who desire Correspondents in Great Britain and Ireland.

Colonists sending in their names and addresses for insertion in the columns of this popular story-book must state what kind of correspondent is required—boy or girl, English, Scotch, Welsh, or Irish.

Would-be correspondents must send with each notice two coupons, one taken from "The Gem," and one from the same week's issue of its companion paper, "The Magnet." Library. Coupons will always be found on page 2 of both papers, and requests for correspondents not containing these two coupons will be absolutely disregarded.

Readers wishing to reply to advertisements appearing in this column must write to the advertisers direct. No correspondence with advertisers can be undertaken through the medium of this office.

All advertisements for insertion in this Free Exchange should be addressed: "The Editor, 'The Gem' Library, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C."

D. H. Cairns, Day Dawn, West Australia, wishes to correspond with readers living in Cork.

Miss R. Wallmann, age 15, 191, High Street, Fremantle, Australia, wishes to exchange picture-postcards (views, stamped on picture side) with readers living in England.

Tan Eng Han, 761, North Bridge Road, Singapore, wishes to correspond with readers living in England.

W. G. R. Smith, Maison Rafaele di Santis, Alexandria, Egypt, wishes to correspond with "Gem" readers (girl or boy).

L. A. Ryan, Box 898, Johannesburg, South Africa, wishes to correspond with a girl reader in England, age 18-19.

E. Lambe, 2544, St. Dominique Street, Montreal, Canada, wishes to correspond with a boy or girl reader in England, age 20.

D. A. E. Denichaud, Benoni, Transvaal, South Africa, wishes to correspond with a girl reader, age 17-18, living in London, who is interested in photography.

M. Thomas, 450, 13th Street, N.W. Hill Hurst, Calgary, Alta, Canada, wishes to correspond with readers living in New Zealand or South Africa, who are interested in stamp-collecting.

G. C. France, 35, Diebel Street, West End, Kimberley, South Africa, wishes to correspond with boy or girl readers living in England.

J. Emery, 1A, Doris Street, Kensington, Johannesburg, South Africa, wishes to correspond with a young lady living in the British Isles, whose age is between 17 and 19.

Miss E. Andrews, 51, Isipingo Street, Bellevue, Johannesburg, South Africa, wishes to correspond with a reader living in England.

J. B. Cragg, c/o J. W. Weir & Co., Ltd., P.O. Box, 106, King William Town, South Africa, wishes to correspond with a girl reader.

J. Jefferies, P.O. Box, 210, G.P.O., Perth, West Australia, wishes to correspond with a girl reader, age 16, living in England.

C. F. Baird, c/o State School, Boulder, West Australia, wishes to correspond with readers in England or Africa who are interested in stamp collecting.

Miss J. Dieperink, Post Office, Witpoortje, Transvaal, South Africa, wishes to correspond with a boy reader living in Wales or Scotland, age between 17 and 20.

J. Couldrey, 656, Chausse, Montreal, Canada, wishes to exchange postcards with girl readers living in any British Colonies, between the ages of 18 and 22.

A. Crawford, Brantford Post Office, Ontario, Canada, wishes to correspond with an English girl reader, age about 17.

The Editor specially requests Colonial Readers to kindly bring the Free Correspondence Exchange to the notice of their friends.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 249.

A Perfect Feast of Good Reading. Order this Grand Issue in Advance!

NEXT WEDNESDAY: **Grand Christmas Double Number!**

OUR SPECIAL WEEKLY FEATURE



Next Wednesday's Grand Christmas Double Number.

Our next issue of "The Gem Library" will be the Grand Christmas Double Number—the number which is looked forward to most keenly throughout the year by all Gemites. "The Gem Library" has won for itself a grand reputation for the surpassing excellence of its annual Christmas Double Number, but I can confidently assure my chums that next Wednesday's issue will create a record of its own as regards the excellence of the complete stories which it will contain.

First and foremost on the list of contents comes the grand, double-length, complete school story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's, which is entitled:

"NOBODY'S STUDY!"
By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

This is, without doubt, one of the most vividly interesting and powerful stories that have ever flowed from the masterly pen of that amazing writer, Martin Clifford, and is bound to create something very like a sensation. The compelling interest which surrounds the doings of the schoolboy characters throughout the story is greatly enhanced by the weird and mysterious circumstances leading up to the romantic discovery that is made in

"NOBODY'S STUDY!"

My readers will find that this magnificent, long, complete tale is one that they will read with the utmost enjoyment.

The second complete story on the list is entitled:

"THE HOUND OF THE MOOR,"
By ROBERT W. COMRADE.

In this magnificent tale an old friend reappears, in the person of Frank Kingston, that amazing man whose peculiar talents and extraordinary personality eminently fit him to take his place as one of the most successful crime investigators of modern times. The thrilling interest and breathless excitement of

"THE HOUND OF THE MOOR"

makes this grand story one that will be long remembered by all who read it.

In the third place comes another splendid, complete school tale, dealing with the adventures of the irrepressible Gordon Gay & Co., of Rylcombe Grammar School. The title of this story is:

"THE GRAMMAR SCHOOL'S TRIUMPH!"
By PROSPER HOWARD.

and the theme of it is a grand and audacious jape played by the famous Grammarian Cornstalk Co. upon their rivals of St. Jim's College.

The astounding nerve displayed by Gordon Gay & Co. in carrying out their audacious prank, and the amazing scenes and incidents that take place during their visit to the stronghold of their ancient rivals, compel the admiration and laughter of every reader of

"THE GRAMMAR SCHOOL'S TRIUMPH,"

—one of famous Prosper Howard's masterpieces!

Last on the list of good things contained in next Wednesday's Grand Christmas Double Number—last but not least—comes a splendid instalment of our grand serial,

"BIRDS OF PREY!"
By MAXWELL SCOTT.

Nelson Lee's latest move in the dangerous game he is playing with the infamous Order of the Ring leads up to some thrilling events, while exciting incidents mark every fresh phase of the situation.

Altogether, next Wednesday's instalment of

"BIRDS OF PREY"

is one which any Gemite would be sorry indeed to miss. My chums can look forward to a real treat—a feast of rattling good stories—next week. "Everything of the best" is the keynote of next Wednesday's

GRAND CHRISTMAS DOUBLE NUMBER.

Next Friday's "Penny Popular."

As each number of our new companion paper "The Penny Popular" is published, the chorus of approval from delighted readers grows and grows. Each week I am inundated with congratulatory letters—a proof that "The Penny Pop." has at one bound leaped into high favour with all who have been hitherto feeling the need for a weekly volume of really good reading matter for consumption during the leisure hours of the week-end.

"That week-end gap," which has been the subject of so many complaints in the past—the gap between "Gem" Wednesday and "Magnet" Monday—is now filled, once and for all, and if the enthusiastic "Penny Pop." readers can be believed, it is very well filled, too. My "Gem" Library readers will find that the issue of our grand new companion paper which will be on sale on Friday of this week, will contain three magnificent complete tales of Tom Merry & Co., Jack, Sam, and Pete, and Sexton Blake respectively, which will worthily maintain the wonderful reputation for excellence which the first few issues have won for "The Penny Popular."

How to Increase Your Height.

The question is often asked whether it is possible for a person to increase his or her height by means of special treatment, after the natural growth has ceased. Many of my readers have written up to ask me this question, and to inquire particulars of the treatment that may be necessary to add to their stature.

The answer to the question is that in most cases it is possible to add a certain amount to one's height simply by

Exercising in the Right Way,

and without the use of any expensive appliances or special treatment.

By carefully training the muscles of one's body so as to obtain the fullest possible development in an upward direction one may "grow" another inch or more even after the natural growth of the body has ceased. This is proved by the fact that many Army recruits gain appreciably in height within a few months of their first joining, the reason being that the hard course of correct exercising they have been put through has caused

A General Development

in their bodies—they have filled out and expanded in every direction, including that of height.

Many of the ordinary occupations of to-day tend to stunt the growth and cause the contraction, rather than the expansion, of the body. This is all the more reason why a certain amount of time should be devoted

Every Day by Everybody

to the task of training the body in the way it should go.

Those of my readers who are short of stature and are desirous of increasing their height should make a point of practising the following exercise regularly every day:

In the first place, it is necessary to

Stand Erect

and rise on the toes while raising the left arm over the head. Now try to touch the ceiling. You will not be able to, of course; but see how near you can get to it, without jumping, but by merely raising yourself as high up on your toes as possible.

Sink back to normal position, and let the arm fall to the side again.

Repeat six times, using right and left arms alternately.

The muscular development caused by the regular use of this exercise will tend to increase the height.

THE EDITOR.