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TRUE BLUE!

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



The swell of St. Jim's was dressed in footer togs and was carrying a large suit-case and a hat-case as well. Jack Blake looked at him blankly. "Going away for the week-end, Gussy?" he asked. (See Chapter 10.)

CHAPTER 1.

Gussy Makes a New Chum!

"G WEAT SCOTT!"

The startled exclamation left the lips of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy in a sudden cry. He jammed on the brakes of his bicycle, and looked back over his shoulder.

"Bai Jove! A wunaway—"

The peaceful quiet of the afternoon was suddenly disturbed by a girl's cry of terror and the thud of a horse's hoofs on the dusty high-road. A small dog-cart was dashing down the steep hill towards Arthur Augustus, a girl clinging to the reins, helpless, but still pluckily trying to pull in the maddened horse.

Next Wednesday.

"D'ARCY'S DARING!" AND "COUSIN ETHEL'S SCHOOLDAYS!"

No. 411. (New Series.) Vol. 9.

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Arthur Augustus realised the girl's danger in a flash. Something had startled the horse, no doubt, and the animal had the bit between its teeth. The reins would break before the girl could succeed in pulling the horse up.

And if she didn't succeed in pulling up the animal? The swell of St. Jim's knew exactly what must happen in that event.

The horse would continue its mad career to the bottom of the hill, and instinctively it would try to swerve round the right-angle bend at the bottom. If it attempted to do that, nothing could save the trap from being overturned.

A monocle slipped from Arthur Augustus' eye, and the blood raced through his veins. In another moment the trap would be thundering past him, and something would have to be done.

But what was there that could be done?

The swell of St. Jim's thought of flinging himself from his bicycle, and attempting to bar the horse's progress, but there was no time for that. By the time he could dismount the fear-maddened horse and the trap would be past, and then nothing in the world could save the girl.

Already the horse's head was almost level with Arthur Augustus' back wheel.

Recklessly the St. Jim's junior scorched ahead. It was a very steep hill, and fortunately Arthur Augustus' machine was fitted with a high gear. But the horse had a flying start. Already Arthur Augustus had lost ground, for he was only level with the trap's wheels now.

The swell of St. Jim's bent his head over the handlebars. His breath came in quick gasps as he scorched down the hill, straining every muscle to gain on the horse. For a moment he thought he could not succeed until it was too late, until the remaining hundred yards of the hill had been covered, and the right-angle turning reached.

Arthur Augustus shuddered as he thought of that right-angle turning. It would be all over then.

With all the strength of his deceptive frame, Arthur Augustus scorched on. He was level at last with the horse's flanks. A few yards more, and something might at least be attempted.

But the swell of St. Jim's had no plan in his head. There had been no time to make plans. His only idea was to get level with the terrified animal's head, or, perhaps, get in front of it altogether.

"Pway keep calm! In anothah moment—"

Arthur Augustus' words died away in a gasp. He was level with the horse's head at last, and there was scarcely fifty yards left of the hill. Again, there was no time for making plans.

Arthur Augustus glanced once ahead at the wall of the house which marked the bottom of the hill. No doubt the horse would swerve away from that.

It was utterly impossible to imagine that the trap could get round the bend.

"Gweat Scott!"

Arthur Augustus gasped again, and then he acted instinctively. He released his hold on the handlebars, and he grabbed wildly at the horse's reins, close to the bit.

The swell of St. Jim's missed with one hand, but he got a grip with his right, and an instant later he was swung from his bicycle-saddle.

There was a sound of grinding metal as the wheel of the trap passed over the bicycle. The horse swerved to the right, but Arthur Augustus still clung to the reins. The horse reared in his mad gallop, then its head went down. The swell of St. Jim's feet struck the hard road with numbing force.

But he still clung to the horse's head, and he now had a grip with the other hand as well. The frightened animal had lost pace, but it was rearing and shying in a terrible manner.

Arthur Augustus clung tighter to the reins. The swell of St. Jim's had no thought of trying to save himself. He tightened his grip on the reins, and his weight was beginning to tell on the horse. The animal was stopping.

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At last Arthur Augustus was able to keep his feet firmly on the road, but the terrified horse dragged him another dozen yards. Still, the struggle was over now, for Arthur Augustus knew a good deal more about horses than many of the St. Jim's juniors thought.

"Steaday! Steaday!"

The swell of St. Jim's brought the horse round, until it was facing the fence, and the sight of the hedge helped to stop the animal. He stood still at last, quivering and trembling in every limb.

Unconsciously, Arthur Augustus patted the wet, vein-swollen neck.

"Bai Jove! That was wathah a neah thing!" he said quietly. "Howevah, it is quite all wight now!"

The girl in the trap looked down at the junior. She was very white, but her glance was quite steady. Arthur Augustus removed his hand from the horse's mouth, and felt for his tall hat.

"Bai Jove! I am afwaid I have lost my toppah!"

"Yes, you have," the girl answered slowly.

"And I wegwet to say I must be in a vewy dishevelled condish!"

"You are; very!"

"Yaas, wathah! But under the cires—"

"Under the cires you consider you ought to be excused!" said the girl, laughing suddenly. "What is your name?"

"D'Arcy," said Arthur Augustus. "I am in the Fourth Form of the School House at St. Jim's. I twust you are not vewy upset, deah boy—I mean—"

"Yes, I know what you mean," smiled the girl. "I am very upset, as a matter of fact, so upset that I am not going to attempt to thank you now. D'Arcy, if you have nothing better to do this afternoon, come to Fir Grove at four o'clock, and have tea with the mater and I. I want to say quite a lot of things to you."

"Bai Jove!"

"Can you come?"

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus, turning a little pink. "I shall considah it a vewy gweat pleasure! Bai Jove!"

"Then ask for May Werner," answered the girl.

And before Arthur Augustus could speak again the girl wheeled the now-calm horse round, and drove off along the dusty road. The swell of St. Jim's stood looking after her.

The girl's pluck in driving the runaway off like that fascinated Arthur Augustus. He could do nothing but stare until the girl rounded the bend.

"Bai Jove! What an uttably wippin' gal!"

Arthur Augustus muttered the words aloud, but there was any amount of excuse for his absence of mind. Seated in the dog-cart, May Werner certainly had looked as ripping as she had proved herself plucky.

And Arthur Augustus had been invited to take tea with her at four o'clock. The swell of St. Jim's hastily consulted his watch.

"Gweat Scott! It's neahly thwee alweady, and I have to change my attiah! I shall have to huvwwy like anythin'! I say, deah boy, have you anythin' vewy pwessin' to do just now?"

The "deah boy" stopped in a dreamy saunter along the high-road, and viewed Arthur Augustus with a grin. At his best, the "deah boy" must have been a tramp, but apparently he had come down in the world. He raised his hat with a lofty air.

"As a matter of fact, I 'ave an appointment with the Prime Minister," he said; "but as we're old friends, he won't mind waiting. Do you want me to 'old your 'orse's 'ead—"

"Bai Jove!"

"Or mind the motor, sir?"

Arthur Augustus screwed his monocle in his eye, and stared severely at the dishevelled-looking tramp.

"Pway don't twy to be funnaw, as I am not in the mood foah humah!" he said frigidly. "If you want to earn half-a-crown, cawwy that bicycle to St. Jim's!"

"Right-ho!" said the tramp, with another grin. "I'll send the Prime Minister a picture-postcard of Rylcombe to make up for it. Straight on, isn't it, young gent?"

"Yaas; stwaight on!"

And Arthur Augustus walked on in front.

The tramp showed no desire to hurry, and Arthur Augustus reached St. Jim's long before his bicycle.

There was a very distant expression in the eyes of the swell of St. Jim's, as though his thoughts were far away. He even walked past Figgins & Co. of the New House without seeing them. The New House juniors stared at him blankly.

But Arthur Augustus never noticed.

He walked on, looking at his watch at frequent intervals, and he swung into the school grounds at a good pace.

"There he is!"

"Here's the young ass, chaps!"

"Gussy, you burbler, you chump——"

Arthur Augustus started violently. Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther of the Shell came towards him at a rush. Behind the Terrible Three ran Jack Blake, Herries, and Digby of Study No. 6.

The half-dozen juniors came across the quadrangle at racing speed.

CHAPTER 2.

A Precious Engagement.

"Gussy, you shrieking ass!"
 "Weally, Tom Mewwy——"
 "You raving duffer!" stormed Tom Merry.
 "We've been looking all over St. Jim's for you!"

"Bai Jove!"

"You burbling lunatic!" cried Jack Blake, putting down a picnic-basket. "You've already wasted nearly an hour of the afternoon! Bump the young duffer! Frog's-march him across the quad! Boil him in oil!"

The School House juniors crowded round Arthur Augustus wrathfully. They had been looking for him everywhere ever since lunch, and now they had found him—strolling across the quadrangle at three o'clock in the afternoon!

Tom Merry breathed hard through his nose.

"No good wasting any more time," he said warmly. "We'll bump him later. Yank the young duffer along."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"For goodness' sake don't let him start cackling!" exclaimed Monty Lowther. "He'll stand there imitating an old hen until we're old enough to wear long, grey beards. Collar the young ass!"

Arthur Augustus screwed his monocle in his eye, and faced the indignant juniors. They were staring at him in mixed anger and surprise. Arthur Augustus shook his head.

"I'm vewy sowwy to disappoint you, deah boys, but I am afraid we shall have to postpone our journey to the cave——"

"W-what!"

"Postpone our picnic, Mannahs; that is, put it off until anothah day."

"You shrieking ass, Gussy!" breathed Tom Merry. "Figgins & Co. are watching us. Come along before they smell a rat, you burbler!"

But Arthur Augustus shook his head again.

"I should be vewy pleased to come along undah diffent cires, deah boy; but I wegwet to say we cannot go to the cave to-day as—as I have somethin' else to do."

"How much?"

"I dare say I shall be fwee to join you to-morrow or the next day; but it is uttably imposs foah me to come with you this aftahnoon, so we shall have to postpone the picnic. I twust you wealise that I am vewy sowwy."

"Brrr!"

"Of all the young asses——"

Tom Merry and Jack Blake seized the elegant junior by his arms. Tom Merry's teeth were gritted.

"You can come or not, just as you jolly well like, Gussy," he said; "but, in any case, we're going. Hand over Manners' photograph of the cave, anyway."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"Yes, really!" shouted the incensed Tom Merry.

"You've already wasted half of the afternoon. Hand over the photograph, ass!"

Arthur Augustus waved his hand loftily.

"I uttably wefuse to be chawactapwised as an ass!" he said, with dignity. "And I wegwet that it is uttably imposs foah me to comply with your wequest! Surely, deah boy, you wealise that the picnic must be postponed!"

"Rats!"

"As many rats as you can think of, you jabberwock!" cried Manners. "Give me back my photograph! Come on, you lunatic!"

Arthur Augustus waved his hand again.

"But I have explained that it is imposs foah me to come to the cave this aftahnoon, deah boys," he said, in surprise. "I twust you wasp the fact that the picnic must be postponed. It is vewy pwob that I shall be able to come with you one day latah this week—vewy likely to-morrow—but—— Welease me, Tom Mewwy! Digbay, you wuffian! Lowthah, you wascal!"

"Hand over the photograph," said Tom Merry, through his nose. "We ask you for the last time."

"But I cannot come with you, deah boys!"

"Blow whether you come with us or not!"

"I have a vewy important appointment."

"Blow your appointment!"

"But——"

"And blow your butts!" shouted Tom Merry. "Bump the young ass! Take the beastly photograph out of his pocket!"

"You uttah wottah!"

"On the ball!"

"Altogether, chaps!"

And the half-dozen juniors rushed at Arthur Augustus and seized him. Digby and Manners grasped him round the knees; Tom Merry and Jack Blake clasped him by the arms; and Lowther and Herries charged into the small of his back.

The swell of St. Jim's went down to the quadrangle with a sounding thud.

"You weckless wuffians!"

"Rats!"

"You uttah wottahs!"

"Bow-wow!"

Tom Merry & Co. and Jack Blake and Herries and Digby were past standing on ceremony. For over an hour they had been hunting high and low for Arthur Augustus. They had found him at last, but he had refused to join in the picnic to the ripping new cave the juniors of the School House had just discovered, and he refused to hand over the photograph Manners had taken of the cave entrance. Without the photograph it was quite likely that Tom Merry & Co. would not be able to find the cave again.

It had a concealed entrance on the side of a shrub-covered hill, and Manners' photograph was the only clue to its whereabouts.

It was scarcely to be expected that Tom Merry & Co. would stand upon ceremony in the circumstances.

"Bump him!"

"Three of the best, chaps!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus was bumped until the breath was shaken out of his body. He gasped loudly.

"Tom Mewwy, you wottah——"

"Where's the photograph, then?"

"I wefuse to tell!"

Bump!

Arthur Augustus was bumped again, an extra special one. He gave vent to a shriek.

"Tom Mewwy, I shall administrah a feahful thwashin'! Jack Blake, you wuffian——"

"The photograph!" snorted Tom Merry. "Where is it, ass?"

"I wefuse——"

Bump! Thud!

"O-oh!" shrieked Arthur Augustus. "You uttah wottahs! I wefuse—I wefuse—the wotten photogwaph is in my bweast-pocket!"

"Good!"

Manners plunged his hand in Arthur Augustus' breast-pocket and unearthed the photograph, an unmounted

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print showing very little more to a casual observer than a group of trees on a hillside.

A glance told Tom Merry & Co. that it was the photograph required. They all let Arthur Augustus fall back on the quadrangle with a bump.

Monty Lowther looked down at him severely.

"Just in time, Gussy," said the humorist of the Shell. "In another minute you might have been properly bumped!"

"Gweat Scott!"

"Oh, don't apologise!"

"Bai Jove!"

"We know you can't help these spasms," went on Lowther, as the swell of St. Jim's sat up in a gasping state. "You'll outgrow them when you get older. Ready, chaps?"

"Rather!"

"Get on with the washing, then!"

And, picking up the picnic-basket, Tom Merry & Co. marched off. Arthur Augustus staggered to his feet.

"Tom Mewwy, stop—"

"Rats!"

"Jack Blake, I ordah you to stop—"

"Bow-wow!"

"Hewwies—Digby—Lowthah—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The six juniors had passed through the school entrance of the quadrangle, and had reached the road. They were on their way to Tom Merry's cave.

Arthur Augustus stared after them. It was a very ferocious stare indeed, but it did not seem to damp the merriment of the six juniors marching off along the dusty high-road. They were all chuckling in huge delight, Herries and Digby carrying the heavy picnic-basket between them.

The swell of St. Jim's turned on his heel and walked into the school with as much dignity as was possible with his collar anchored by the back stud only and his left knee sticking through his usually perfectly-creased trousers.

CHAPTER 3.

An Unwelcome Visitor.

"ROTTEN!"

Figgins of the New House voiced the remark in open disgust. Kerr nodded gloomily, and even Fatty Wynn looked depressed for once in his life.

"Absolutely rotten!"

"If the German bounder must be met at the station," said Figgins warmly, "why couldn't the Head have sent Tom Merry & Co., or Redfern, or someone else? What did he want to choose us for? Jolly unfair, anyway."

"Beastly!"

Figgins & Co. stared moodily along the high-road, which ran from St. Jim's to the town of Rylcombe. The three juniors from the New House were seated along the top bar of a five-barred gate not very far from the school, and they all looked very gloomy indeed.

But their gloominess was not to be wondered at.

It was a perfect afternoon for football. The sun was shining quite brightly, and the footer ground would be in good form. Figgins & Co. wanted all the practice they could get, too, if Rylcombe Albion were to be beaten in the forthcoming match.

But there were a dozen other things Figgins, Kerr, and Fatty Wynn might have done that half-holiday, and they would have all been delightful. Instead, Figgins & Co. would have to walk to Rylcombe Station and meet the four o'clock train from Wayland Junction and welcome Herr Muller, the new temporary German master.

If Herr Muller had been an English master or a French master it would not have been so bad, but giving up a half-holiday to meet a German went very much against the grain with Figgins, Kerr, and Fatty Wynn.

"Why couldn't the German bounder have arranged to come by the two o'clock train instead?" demanded Figgins. "We could have met him then, and got it over!"

"And put in some footer," growled Fatty Wynn, "and then had something to eat."

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"Or gone for a run," said Kerr.

"Rotten!"

Figgins slashed again with his stick.

It had been quite by chance that the Head had asked Figgins & Co. to meet Herr Muller. Perhaps Dr. Holmes had considered he was doing the New House juniors an honour, but if that were so, it was the sort of honour Figgins & Co. could very well have done without.

Naturally the juniors could not very well meet a new master arrayed in footer togs, so they had not been able to have a little net practice beforehand. Instead, they had had to change into their best attire and sit on the gate and wait until it was time to go to the station.

It was nearly time to start on the long walk now, and Figgins looked moodily along the road towards St. Jim's.

"Why couldn't Herr Schneider put off being ill until the end of the term?"

"What does St. Jim's want a German master at all for?"

"Or German, for the matter of that," said Fatty Wynn. "It's a rotten language, a rotten country, and a rotten bore—"

Fatty Wynn stopped speaking. Half a dozen juniors came swinging along the road at a fine pace, two of them carrying a huge picnic-basket. Fatty Wynn's eyes sparkled at the sight of the basket.

"Hallo, you School House bounders!"

Tom Merry & Co. started. They all nodded, and attempted to walk on. Figgins stared suspiciously.

"What's the wheeze, young Merry?"

"Oh, we're going to have a little picnic, Figgy."

"Where?"

"Over there," answered Tom Merry, waving his hand vaguely. "Sorry we can't stop!"

"Is—is there grub in that basket?" asked Fatty Wynn, with a note of pathos in his voice.

"Y-yes, only the lid's tied down—"

"I've got a knife, if you care to open the basket to see if the things are all right," said Fatty Wynn, his gloominess gone for a moment. "I don't mind doing it for you, Herries, old chap."

"No time!"

"It won't take a minute."

"As a matter of fact, we're in an awful hurry, Figgy," said Tom Merry. "Hope you chaps are getting in form for the Rylcombe Albion match. I don't want to have to leave you out of the team, you know."

"Bow-wow!"

"Here's the knife, Herries," said Fatty Wynn hopefully. "I'll open it for you."

"Some other time, kid!"

"But—"

"See you later!" said Tom Merry, and the six juniors walked on hurriedly.

Figgins' suspicious stare became more suspicious than ever. Tom Merry & Co. were walking very hurriedly indeed.

"Those School House bounders are up to something, chaps!"

"Looks like it, anyway."

"I—I say, if that basket is full they must have any amount of grub," said Fatty Wynn wearily. "Perhaps—perhaps they've got some of those new steak and kidney pies."

"Blow steak and kidney pies!"

"Oh, I say, Figgy—"

"And blow Tom Merry & Co.!" retorted Figgins, jumping down from the gate. "If we're going to meet that beastly German bounder we'd better start."

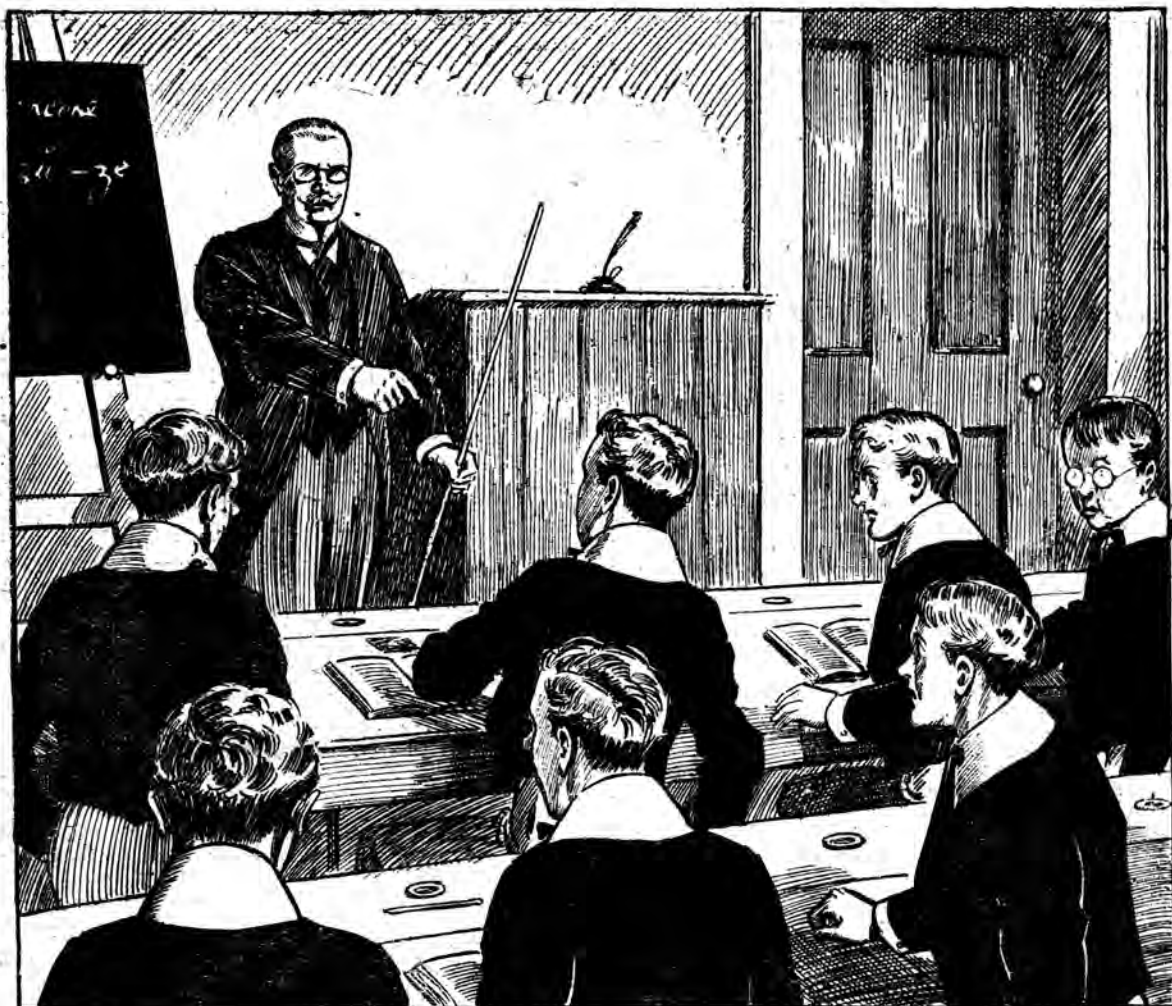
"Brrrrr!"

Figgins & Co. started off down the long, dusty road for the station. They walked on in gloomy silence, the sound of a bicycle bell suddenly breaking in upon their thoughts.

"Pway get out of the way, deah boys!"

Figgins turned quickly. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was cycling cautiously to meet them, although the swell of St. Jim's was scarcely in cycling togs.

He was wearing a bran new tall hat, his perfectly-fitting, lavender-coloured suit looked as if it had just



"What have you on the desk in front of you?" asked Herr Muller. Manners started violently. "Only a—a photograph——" Manners stopped speaking and glanced at Tom Merry in dismay, for the photograph on his desk was the clue to the entrance of Tom Merry's cave. (See Chapter 7.)

come from the tailor's, while his patent leather shoes sparkled in the sunlight, so that Kerr humorously shaded his eyes.

Arthur Augustus dismounted with great caution.

"Figgay, deah boy, can you tell me the time?"

"Half-past three, ass!"

"Is it, weally? Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, gingerly placing one foot on the step of the machine he had borrowed from Harry Noble. "I have vewy little time to waste."

"Where are you going, Gussy?"

"Oh, just for a wun wound, Figgay."

"With Tom Merry & Co.?"

"No, wathah not!" said Arthur Augustus in alarm. "I twust they are not in fwont, as, in the light of wecent events, I cannot help regarding them as a wuff set of wottahs."

"Well, where are Tom Merry & Co. going?"

"To the cave, deah boy."

Figgins started violently.

"To—to the—what?"

The monocle dropped from Arthur Augustus' eye and an alarmed expression crept into his face. He hastened to gloss over his slip of the tongue.

"Weally, deah boys, I must be goin'!"

"Rats!"

"Weally, I must, as I have a vewy important appointment."

Kerr chuckled loudly.

"Yes, you'll have to hurry, Gussy!" grinned the

Scottish junior. "I suppose it's the young lady from the linendrapers' again. Are you going to take her on the river? Oh, don't blush, Gussy; we all know you."

Arthur Augustus went a bright pink.

"You uttah waggah, Kerr! I twust I am not in the habit of blushin', and I wufuse to discuss the mattah with you. Pway get out of the way!"

But Figgins & Co. refused to move. Figgins was fixing the swell of St. Jim's with a stony stare.

"It doesn't matter an atom who you are going to meet, Gussy," he said severely. "We want to hear more about the cave Tom Merry is going to. Where is it, ass?"

"Weally, Figgay——"

"Has Tom Merry found a new cave somewhere?"

"Out with it, Gussy!"

Arthur Augustus firmly fixed his monocle in his eye and looked at the suspicious New House juniors through it. Then he took a good grip on the handlebars of his borrowed machine.

Figgins & Co. waited impatiently.

"Is the cave in the woods, ass?"

"How long has Tom Merry known about it?"

"Bai Jove——"

Figgins took a determined step nearer the elegant junior. There was a very grim expression on the face of the tall New House junior.

"Gussy, we don't want to roll you in the ditch."

"Or bump you in the dusty road!"

"Or frog's-march you to Rylcombe with us," added Figgins; "but we're jolly well going to have a few facts

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NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

"D'ARCY'S DARING!"

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about Tom Merry's cave. Tom Merry can't go about the country sneaking caves. Some of you School House bounders will be trying to rope in a stretch of the river soon. Collar him!"

"On the ball! Rush the young duffer!"

"Gweat Scott!"

Arthur Augustus wheeled his bicycle round in a flash, made a wild hopping movement, with his foot on the pedal, and got into the saddle. Figgins grabbed wildly at the rival junior's coat tails.

"Got him—"

"Yank him off the machine, Figgys!"

"Oh!" yelled Figgins. "O-oh!"

And he thudded down flat on his chest in the dust. Arthur Augustus was cycling along the road back towards the school at a racing pace, and all chance of capturing him was gone.

Figgins scrambled to his feet.

"The burblin' young rotter!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Kerr choked back his laughter, for Figgins looked very warlike. He brushed the dust off his clothes with his cap.

"We'll be on Tom Merry's track after this," he said indignantly. "What an awful nerve those School House bounders must have, collaring caves and not telling anyone about them."

"Frightful cheek!"

"Wait until we've finished with Herr Muller!" said Figgins darkly. "We'll show Tom Merry & Co. that they aren't the only pebbles on the giddy beach!"

And Figgins & Co. walked on to meet the new German master who was to take Herr Schneider's place at St. Jim's for the time being.

The three New House juniors reached the station just as the local train came steaming in. They watched the first-class compartments glide past with a great deal of suppressed excitement and a certain amount of indignation.

"He'll be no end of a bounder, of course!"

"Don't see how a German could be anything else!" muttered Kerr.

"My hat," said Fatty Wynn, "that must be the chap. I—I expect he'll stand us a tea like Mr. Bailton always used to."

Figgins grunted. A tall, though not very powerfully-built man had just stepped from the train. He was walking towards the juniors, carrying a suit-case in his hand.

Figgins looked at him with a steady glance.

To the New House junior's way of thinking, it was a typically German face he saw—eyes far apart, fair hair, and spectacles. But in the matter of age Figgins was a good deal surprised.

At the most Herr Muller could not have been more than thirty.

The new master stopped in front of the juniors.

"You are poys from der school?" he demanded rather than asked. "You have been ordered to meet me—eh?"

"We were asked to meet you, sir," said Figgins through his teeth.

Herr Muller grunted.

"Well, you can go back to the school now," he said, with a guttural, unmistakably Teutonic accent. "I have no use for you. I have ordered a trap in advance."

And the new German master walked on without another word.

Figgins & Co. stared after him indignantly. They had given up their half-holiday, and they had walked all the way from St. Jim's to meet this ill-mannered German, and he had dismissed them as though they had been page-boys from the school.

Figgins & Co. went pink.

Herr Muller was getting into a large, roomy trap. There would have been heaps of room for the juniors to get in as well, but the German did not even look at them, let alone offer them a lift.

Instead, Figgins & Co. would have to tramp all the way back, while the new master rode. Figgins choked.

"The awful rotter!"

"The bounder!" said Kerr hotly. "What a frightful outsider!"

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"Oh, he's a German! What can you expect from a Hun!"

And Figgins led the way out of the station.

The tall leader of the New House juniors did not usually take dislikes to people on the spur of the moment, but he had taken a very real dislike to Herr Muller. The German's manner had been far ruder than his actual words. He had completely ignored the juniors; he had treated them as though they had been dirt.

Figgins & Co. were not used to that sort of thing. And from a German, too. The New House juniors' blood boiled.

"We'll get even with the brute if that's the sort of game he's going to play!" said Figgins darkly. "If Herr Muller thinks he is going to treat St. Jim's fellows as the German officers treat their men, he's going to find out his mistake!"

"Did you see how he pushed Fatty Wynn out of the way?"

"The awful bounder!" stormed Figgins. "I believe we're going to have trouble with him, and no mistake!"

Figgins & Co. walked back towards St. Jim's, hot with indignation.

CHAPTER 4.

Gussy's Word of Honour.

"THE fearful wottahs! They have put me all in a wretched fluttah!"

Arthur Augustus spoke the words aloud as he cycled away from Figgins & Co. at a great pace. He was still scorching at a great pace along the dusty main road long after Figgins & Co. had turned their back upon him.

As he reached the corner the swell of St. Jim's glanced back over his shoulder. He heaved a sigh of relief when he saw that the New House juniors were not following. In spite of that, though, Arthur Augustus felt very wrathful.

The violent scorching had made him hot, and there was a slight amount of dust on his usually immaculate trousers. Arthur Augustus hated feeling hot, and he loathed dust in any circumstances. In the present circumstances it reached a calamity.

"I weally ought to wush back and change my twousahs," he said to himself. "Bai Jove, there isn't time, though! I shall have to huwwy like anythin'!"

Arthur Augustus hated hurrying, whether he was on foot or on a machine, but there was no help for it this time. He would be compelled to make quite a long detour to Fir Grove now, and it was very nearly four o'clock.

He was due at Fir Grove for tea with May Werner at four, and it would never do to be late. He cycled on, and took the bend by the church at a good pace.

"Ass!"

"Look where you are going, duffer!"

"It's that burbler, Gussy!"

Harry Noble, Bernard Glyn, and Clifton Dane happened to be walking abreast along the road in the direction of Rylcombe. They jumped wildly to right and left, and Arthur Augustus only just escaped collision with them.

"Sowwy, deah boys!"

"Sorry, he blowed!" shouted Harry Noble. "Why didn't you ring your bell?"

"I nevah thought of it, Kangahwoo! Howevah, I cannot stop, as it is neahly four o'clock—"

And the rest of Arthur Augustus' sentence was lost in the distance. He cycled on, leaving Cornstalk & Co. staring after him in astonishment.

"Bai Jove!"

The church clock had just struck the hour of four, but Fir Grove was in sight now. It was a charming little creeper-covered cottage at the foot of the hill. Arthur Augustus free-wheeled down the incline, and was conscious of a violent throb at the heart before he was half-way down.

A graceful, girlish figure was standing at the garden gate of Fir Grove, and she was waving. Arthur Augustus waved back. A moment later the swell of St. Jim's dismounted, and found himself shaking hands with May Werner.

"Bai Jove, I twust I am not late, Miss Wernah!"

"No; you are wonderfully punctual. But come in and be introduced to mother. She is lounging to meet you."

Miss Werner held open the gate, and Arthur Augustus walked into the pretty little garden. A white-haired, beautiful old lady was sitting at the open casement of a pretty, old-fashioned sitting-room.

She held out her hand, and looked into Arthur Augustus' eyes. Arthur Augustus went pink.

"So you are the boy my daughter has been talking about all the afternoon," she said. "D'Arcy, how can I thank you?"

"Pway don't mention the mattah, Mrs. Wernah!"

"But I have thought of nothing else since May came home. I don't believe I shall think of anything else for days."

"Weally, it was nothin'!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, pinker than ever. "I ain onlay too glad that I was in the posish to wendah your daughtah a twiflin' service!"

"Do you call saviag my life a trifling service, D'Arcy?"

"No, wathah not, Miss Wernah! That is to wemark—"

The swell of St. Jim's foundered badly, and Mrs. Werner smiled. May, looking prettier even than she had in the trap, laughed outright.

"I should take a fresh piece of paper and start again, if I were you, D'Arcy!" she suggested. "But suppose we forget all about it, and have tea? I am sure you must be dreadfully hungry."

May Werner stepped through the open casement, and the swell of St. Jim's followed her. With a cheery laugh, the girl pointed to an easy-chair, and a moment or two later Arthur Augustus was being plied with cake of so many different kinds that Fatty Wynn's mouth would have watered at the mere thought of them.

And all the time May Werner and her mother chatted, chiefly about St. Jim's.

"Da tell me some more about your beautiful old school," exclaimed May Werner, as she handed Arthur Augustus some more tea. "Is anything very exciting happening there now?"

"We've got a vewy important footah match comin' off soon."

"Shall you play?"

"Yaas, wathah, bai Jove! And there is gweat excitement ovah the expected awvival of a new mastah—an outsidah of a German, bai Jove!"

"How—how do you know he is an outsider, if he hasn't arrived yet, D'Arcy?"

"Well, he's a German, you know—"

"And you consider all Germans are outsiders?"

"Bai Jove, yaas!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "I didn't once, but that was befoah I knew their weal chwactah. I should be vewy sowwy to think that a fwend of mine did anythin' but bar the Huns, Miss Wernah."

"You would?" answered Miss Werner thoughtfully.

Then she turned abruptly.

Someone had tapped at the door.

A maidservant pushed the door open in response to Mrs. Werner's invitation. A tall, though not very powerfully-built man, wearing spectacles, came into the room. May Werner took his proffered hand, and led him across the room to Arthur Augustus.

The swell of St. Jim's rose politely to his feet.

"D'Arcy, this is Herr Muller, a friend of mine," May said. "I think I may say D'Arcy is also a friend of mine."

"Und all your friends are mine, May," answered Herr Muller, and he sat down.

Arthur Augustus remained standing.

There was an expression of amazement on his face, and his monocle had dropped from his eye. He stared at Herr Muller as if there was something extraordinary about his fellow guest.

There was something extraordinary about him, too, in the eyes of Arthur Augustus, for the man had spoken with a decided German accent. The name of Herr Muller was as familiar as it was unpleasant to his ears, too.

"Bai Jove—"

"Whaddt did you say, my poy?"

"I—Bai Jove, is it poss that you are the new mastah

at St. Jim's?" said Arthur Augustus faintly. "I am certain I heard your name mentioned before."

"Yes; I am the new temporary master," answered Herr Muller, in guttural tones.

"And—and you are a German?"

"Why shouldn't I be a Sherman, my poy?"

"I—I really don't know," answered Arthur Augustus vaguely. "Bai Jove, Miss Wernah, I must be goin' now as it is gettin' wathah late."

May Werner jumped to her feet again, and stepped to the casement window. Mrs. Werner shook Arthur Augustus' hand and smiled at him, but Herr Muller took no notice.

He was pouring himself out some tea, which suggested that he was very much at home in the Werner family. Arthur Augustus noticed the little incident.

May Werner walked to the garden-gate with the swell of St. Jim's. She seemed rather silent, and she stopped for a moment or two at the gate.

"Are you going straight back to school, D'Arcy?"

"Yaas, I think so—"

"And you will see a lot of the other juniors," went on May Werner—"Tom Merry, Jack Blake, and Figgins, and all the others you have spoken about?"

"Yaas, wathah; I expect I shall see them—"

"And, of course, they are all interested to hear about the new German master?"

Arthur Augustus nodded. As a matter of fact, the St. Jim's juniors were more than interested in the arrival of the temporary German master, for there was a deal of subdued feeling of a resentful nature in the Fourth Form and the Shell. Still, Arthur Augustus did not mean to tell May Werner that.

Perhaps the girl guessed.

"You did something for me this afternoon, for which I shall never be able to repay you, D'Arcy," she said, after a short pause. "I wonder if you will do something else for me?"

"Bai Jove, yaas—"

"It may not be very easy."

"It will be a vewy gweat pleasure to do anythin' in my power, Miss Wernah. Pway believe that!"

Miss Werner looked searchingly at the swell of St. Jim's, then quietly dropped her hand on his arm.

"I want you to do your best to persuade the other juniors not to judge Herr Muller until they know him," she said. "My father had a school in the old days, so that I know that a master's happiness depends a great deal upon the way the boys regard him. The juniors of St. Jim's will be able to make or mar Herr Muller's happiness, D'Arcy."

"Bai—bai Jove—"

"And I want you to try to make him comfortable at the school, and persuade the other juniors to make him comfortable," added Miss Werner. "Herr Muller is a very old friend of my family."

"Yaas, wathah—"

"And you will do your best?"

"I will do anythin' I can, Miss Wernah," said Arthur Augustus. "It is vewy wgwettah that Herr Mullah happens to be a German—I mean, I will speak to Tom Mewwy and Jack Blake diwectly I get back to St. Jim's."

"Thank you, D'Arcy," answered Miss Werner, and she ran quickly into the house.

Arthur Augustus stood looking after her. He was a good deal flustered and a little uneasy.

It had been all very well to promise to help Herr Muller, but, as Miss Werner had said, it was not going to be easy. The feeling at St. Jim's over the temporary German master had already reached the indignation stage, and the man had not been met yet, as far as Arthur Augustus knew.

As a rule, the juniors of St. Jim's did not pass sentence upon a man until there was cause, but Herr Muller was a German. It was not to be expected that St. Jim's could have any sympathy for a Hun.

Arthur Augustus realised all that. The task May Werner had given him was going to be very difficult indeed.

The swell of the School House took his bicycle from the hedge, and mounted it.

"It seems hardly poss that a wotten German can be a

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friend of a wippin' family like the Wernahs, bai Jove!" he mused, as he peddled slowly away. "I wondah if the wottah is a friend or not. I considah it highly pwobable that he is a wolf in sheep's clothing, bai Jove!"

That certainly might be so, but it did not alter the fact that Arthur Augustus had given his word to befriend the Hun. The memory of that promise troubled the swell of St. Jim's all the way back to school.

CHAPTER 5.

Righteous Indignation.

"O F all the howling outsiders!"

"The beastly Hun!"

Figgins & Co. of the New House swung along the dusty high-road from the station, indignant and wrathful. They had gone to the station to meet Herr Muller in certainly anything but a willing spirit, but they had intended to greet the new temporary master respectfully enough in spite of his nationality.

Naturally, Figgins, Kerr, and Fatty Wynn thoroughly detested Germans, and anything German, but they had been quite prepared to bottle up their dislike. They had meant to meet Herr Muller with an open mind, and overlook his nationality for the moment.

And their reward had been anything but thanks.

Herr Muller had treated them with rudeness and caddishness. He had snapped at them in his hateful German accent, and he had gone off in a trap, leaving the juniors to walk. It was not likely that Figgins & Co. could be anything but badly ruffled.

"A beastly German spy!"

"A rotten Hun!"

"A rank outsider!" growled Kerr. "The beast ought to be interned, whether he's naturalised or not! He—he ought to be under lock and key, I say!"

The three juniors swung along, warm with indignation. They all spoke in loud, angry voices, and none of them heard the sound of bicycle tyres on the road behind them.

"Wait till we get the rotten Hun at St. Jim's!" stormed Figgins.

"He's not going to stay long, anyway!"

"He's not going to stay as long as he thinks he is," said Kerr angrily. "St. Jim's doesn't want Germans, and we're not going to have them—"

"Hallo, deah boys!"

Figgins & Co. stopped in the middle of their angry discussion, and turned hastily. Arthur Augustus rode up, and dismounted from his borrowed machine.

"Just goin' to St. Jim's, deah boys?"

"Where did you think we were going," growled Figgins—"the North Pole?"

"Weally, Figgay—"

"Oh, rats!"

Figgins & Co. moved on, but Arthur Augustus refused to be left behind. He had only just left Fir Grove and Miss Werner, and his mission was strong in his mind, however distasteful it might be. Herr Muller must be befriended.

"Befoah long I wathah fancay the new German mastah will awvive at St. Jim's, Figgay—"

"He has arrived, ass?"

"Well, he has awvived in the neighbourhood, pewwaps," said Kerr the swell of St. Jim's, with a slight start. "It's poss you may have seen him pass along this woad."

"We saw him all right."

"Did you weally, bai Jove?"

"As a matter of fact, we met him at the station," said Figgins darkly. "We went there to meet his rotten train."

"Weally, Figgay, I must wegard that as a vevy kindlay action. Pewwaps you wealised that a wotten—that a German cut off fwom his own people, bai Jove, and in a cuntry of enemies, must feel vevy lonelay—"

"What?"

"Naturally, I do not like Germans, as a genewal wule," went on Arthur Augustus. "In fact, I cannot help wegarding them as fwightful wottahs, but I think it quite poss that there may be one or two exceptions."

"My aunt!"

"No doubt you went to the station, deah boys, under the impresson that Herr Mullah would be a wottah,"

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added Arthur Augustus. "I admit that I wathah expected to find the new mastah a wottah myself, but one never knows—"

"Eh?"

"What's that, Gussy?"

"Herr Mullah is, unfortunately, a German, but fwom what I have seen of him, or wathah, his fwriends, I think his ideahs must be English, bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus. "I have weason to believe that Herr Mullah may be quite a decent sort, in spite of his being a wotten German—"

"You believe—how much?" shrieked Figgins.

"That Herr Mullah may be quite a decent sort," answered Arthur Augustus thoughtfully; "and so I considah it is wathah up to the St. Jim's juniors to lend him a helping hand—"

"Lend him—a what?"

"Lend him a thick ear, you mean!" shouted Figgins.

"What's happened to you, Gussy? What have you been doing?"

"Nothin', deah boy!"

"Then what's made you a rotten pro-German?"

"I uttably wefuse to be descwibed as a pwo-German," cried Arthur Augustus with rising indignation. "I have joined a wippin' league to bar Germans, and I jolly well do bar the wottahs. But in the case of Herr Mullah—"

"Herr Muller is a rotter."

"A real Hun!"

"And Gussy's a pro-German!" cried Fatty Wynn wrathfully. "Now I come to look at him closely, he is rather like the Crown Prince!"

"Wynn, you libellous wottah!"

Arthur Augustus gave vent to a shout of utter amazement, mixed with the deepest wrath. To be accused of wishing to befriend a German was pretty bad, and to be suspected of pro-Germanism a great deal worse. Both these accusations were almost unbearable, but Wynn had gone very much further. The Welsh junior had gone beyond the limit.

He had found a likeness in Arthur Augustus' aristocratic features to the Crown Prince of Germany. It was more than Arthur Augustus could stand.

"You—you awful wottah!"

"So you are!" cried Fatty Wynn. "Your nose and the Crown Prince's might have been made in the—the same machine!"

"You fwightful duffah, Wynn!"

"I'm not like the Crown Prince, anyway! Ow! Garcoo! Oh, my hat!"

Arthur Augustus had been unable to stand any more. He had rushed at Fatty Wynn and smote hard.

The swell of St. Jim's had intended to make connection with the chest of the Falstaff of the New House with a stiff left-hand drive, but the blow had landed a little too low for the chest. Fatty Wynn doubled up and gave vent to a yell of anguish.

"Oh! Yaroco!"

"You wottah!" shouted Arthur Augustus. "You wetched New House boundah! Welease me, Figgay! Kerr—welease me instantly!"

"No jolly fear, kid!"

"Figgay, if you don't welease me, I shall administah a feahful thwashing all wound!"

Fatty Wynn recovered his lost breath with a series of gasps. He was vevy wrathly indeed.

"Bump the young ass!" he gasped. "He hit below the belt. All Germans hit below the belt, especially the Crown Prince!"

"I uttably wefuse to be likened to the Cwown Pwince, whom I wegard as a wottah of the first wathah. If you wuffians don't welease me instantly— O-oh!"

Arthur Augustus' protest ended in a loud gasp as he sat down on the high-road. He was being severely bumped, and his protests fell on deaf ears.

Figgins & Co. were in an advanced state of angry indignation. They were angry with Herr Muller. They were indignant with Arthur Augustus for expressing friendship for the new temporary master, and Fatty Wynn, at any rate, had an additional grievance of a personal nature.

He was still breathing in painful gasps from the left-hander delivered by the swell of St. Jim's. He lent a very willing hand in the bumping of Arthur Augustus.

"You wuffians! Figgay, you wetch!"

Bump!

"Fatty Wynn, you uttah hooligan——"

Bump!

"Kerr, you beast," shrieked Arthur Augustus, "welease me and I will administrah a fwrightful thwashin' all wound. Welease me—welease me——"

Arthur Augustus finished his remark with a shriek which had something of a gasp in it. Figgins & Co. had released him by rolling him in the ditch at the side of the road.

There had not been much rain lately in that part of Sussex, but there was a good deal of mud in the ditch. The spot where Arthur Augustus had been rolled in was particularly muddy.

He sat up in the mud in horror.

"Figgay, stop! Wynn! Kerr!"

But Figgins & Co. took no notice. They were marching off along the road towards St. Jim's, chuckling as if the bumping of Arthur Augustus had done them good.

The swell of St. Jim's scrambled from the ditch and stood with his arms held away from his sides. He was literally dripping with mud.

"The awful boundahs—the fwrightful——"

Words failed Arthur Augustus. His usually perfectly creased trousers were plastered with mud; there was mud all over his elaborate but carefully selected waistcoat, and there was mud on his face.

If this first attempt on the part of Arthur Augustus to befriend Herr Muller was a sample of the reward of future efforts, the prospect was not pleasant. Apparently Miss Werner had spoken truly when she had said Arthur Augustus' task would not be easy.

But the swell of St. Jim's was made of very stern stuff when it came to a question of principles. He had given his word to Miss Werner to lend a helping hand to Herr Muller, and he was not likely to go back on that word. But it certainly was not going to be easy.

Arthur Augustus realised that to the full as he cycled hastily towards the school, with the mud on his trousers gradually drying and caking about his knees.

CHAPTER 6.

Herr Muller.

"NOT a word, Blakey!"

Tom Merry whispered the caution through closed lips. Jack Blake, Herries, and Digby of Study No. 6 lay perfectly still in the thick undergrowth which covered one side of a hill in Rylcombe Wood.

Manners and Lowther of the Shell remained in a crouching position. All six juniors listened with strained ears.

They were leaving the entrance of the cave in the hill-side they had found a few days ago, but as yet they were still invisible to anyone who might be passing along the pathway through the woods.

Quite a dozen yards of very thick undergrowth covered the entrance to the cave, which no doubt accounted for the fact that the fine, roomy cavern had remained undiscovered all these years. It probably would have remained undiscovered for a good many years more, but for Towser, Herries' famous bulldog.

Towser had gone into that particular patch of undergrowth after a rat, and Herries had wormed his way in after Towser, and so the cave had been discovered.

So far only Tom Merry & Co. of the Shell, and Jack Blake & Co. of Study No. 6 knew of its whereabouts, and the only clue to its entrance was a rather uninteresting snapshot of a hillside Manners had taken.

Naturally, Tom Merry and the other juniors wished to keep their great discovery secret. They all remained in the undergrowth in dead silence for a full minute.

"What's the matter, Tommy?"

Jack Blake asked his question in a whisper, and Tom Merry answered in a still lower voice:

"I thought I heard someone moving about on the pathway."

"An animal, most likely."

"It might have been."

Tom Merry waited and listened for another half-

minute; then cautiously wormed his way ahead. He reached the end of the undergrowth and glanced out.

As far as he could see, the woodland path was quite deserted. Jack Blake chuckled:

"False alarm, young Merry!"

"I—I'm pretty certain I heard something!"

"Well, there isn't anything now, anyway," said Digby, as he followed Tom Merry and Jack Blake from the undergrowth. "So long as Manners isn't ass enough to lose that photograph, the cave's our giddy secret!"

"Dry up!"

"What's the matter now?"

"You ass!" hissed Tom Merry.

Digby poked his head and shoulders out of the undergrowth and gasped aloud. A man of medium build was standing close to a tree on the opposite side of the pathway. He was staring at Tom Merry & Co. through his glasses.

"Whadt are you poy's doing in that undergrowth?"

Tom Merry started violently. The question had been flashed at him in a commanding voice, with a harsh rasp in it, but it was not that which startled Tom Merry. The hero of the Shell could not help noticing the strong Teutonic accent.

Tom Merry looked very hard at the man.

"Answer me, poy!"

"I don't see that I am called upon to answer a stranger's questions unless I want to," retorted Tom Merry. "We St. Jim's juniors have a perfect right in these woods."

"I didn't ask that. I want to know what you were doing in that undergrowth? That was my question."

"And my answer is—find out," said Tom Merry, angry at the man's manner. "Come on, chaps!"

But Tom Merry's path was barred. The man with glasses planted himself right in front of the St. Jim's junior.

"Do you know who I am?"

"I haven't the faintest idea."

"I am the new temporary master at St. Jim's," answered the man in guttural English. "My name is Herr Muller. Und now I repeat my question. Whadt were you doing in that undergrowth?"

An expression of dismay flashed across Tom Merry's face. He had had no idea that this stranger could be the new master, or he would have framed his answers in very different language. The Shell junior looked blankly at the master.

Herr Muller glanced at the startled faces of all the juniors. The silence which followed was broken by himself in the end.

"Ach! So you will not answer my quesdntion," he said. "That is regrettable from your point of view, my poy's. I shall remember your faces. You will all come to my room at St. Jim's for punishment this evening."

And he walked on.

Tom Merry & Co. looked blankly after him. If Figgins & Co. had been upset by their first meeting with Herr Muller, Tom Merry & Co. were still more upset. Their faces were very set and grim-looking as they stared after the German master.

"The howling cad!"

"The—the beast!"

Tom Merry and Jack Blake spoke together. Both juniors had had a lengthy experience of schoolmasters, but they had never been unfortunate enough to meet one like Herr Muller before.

Again, it was more the new master's manner than his words which ruffled the juniors the wrong way. The harsh, domineering manner Tom Merry & Co. had always heard belonged to Germans was very strong in Herr Muller. This unpleasant manner coming on top of his nationality was not calculated to make any better impression on the School House juniors than it had on Figgins & Co. of the New House.

"A beastly bully!"

"A rank outsider!"

Tom Merry, Monty Lowther, and Manners strode on. Jack Blake, Herries, and Digby walked after them, a few yards behind. All were in a very wrathful state of mind, and hot with indignation as they swung through the St. Jim's gateway.

Indignant silence had fallen upon them, but it was

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broken by a well-known voice as the six marched across the quadrangle.

"Pway stop, deah boys!"

Tom Merry & Co. started, then stared frigidly at Arthur Augustus. The swell of St. Jim's came to meet them.

"In ordinary cires, Tom Mewwy, I should wemonstrate with you for your wegwettable wudeness earlish this aftahnoon—"

"Rats!"

"Pway don't intewwupt me in that widiculous mannah, Hewwies!"

"Bow-wow!"

Arthur Augustus screwed his monocle into his eye, and viewed the heated-looking juniors through it. He waved his hand in a lofty, forgiving manner.

"We will pass ovah what happened when we met befoah," he said. "I am willing to let bygones be bygones, bai Jove, as I wish to speak about anotheah mattah. You will be pleased to heah that Herr Mullah has awwived, deah boys."

"Brrrr!"

"He awwived onlay a vewy few minutes ago, and I have been thinkin' mattahs ovah," went on Arthur Augustus. "Of course, it is vewy wegwettable that Herr Mullah is a German—I wathah fancy he wegweets the dweadful fact himself—and so I think it is wathah up to us juniors to lend him a helping hand."

"What?"

"Pway don't shout, Mewwy, deah boy!"

"Lend what?"

"A helping hand," answered Arthur Augustus quickly. "As a mattah of fact, I have a pivate weason—a weason connected with a word of honah, bai Jove!—that we will all try to make Herr Mullah vewy comfortable for the short time he will wemain at St. Jim's."

"My aunt!"

"You—you burbling ass, Gussy—"

"Pway don't intewwupt me, Digbay, deah boy. I have thought the mattah ovah vewy carefully, and I twust you will see with me. It has occuwved to me that it would be a wippin' ideah to ask Herr Mullah to tea in Studay No. 6 this aftahnoon. No doubt he is wathah lonely—"

"Herr Muller in Study No. 6!"

"A rotten German to tea!"

"It's come at last!" cried Tom Merry. "Gussy's stark, staring mad this time. Collar him! Bump the young ass!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy— Munnahs, you wuffian! Yarooo!"

But it was too late. The Terrible Three of the Shell rushed at Arthur Augustus, and he was as wax in their hands. Jack Blake, Herries, and Digby lent their aid, and the swell of St. Jim's went down to the quadrangle with a sounding thud.

"Altogether, chaps—"

"Three of the best and one for luck!"

Bump!

"O-oh!" shrieked Arthur Augustus. "You wuffians— you wottahs!"

But Tom Merry & Co. paid no heed. They bumped Arthur Augustus with a will, and when they had finished the swell of St. Jim's was in a breathless and very dishevelled state. He sat up and gasped.

Tom Merry & Co. were retreating in the distance, and they turned deaf ears to Arthur Augustus' orders to stop.

"Bai Jove—"

Arthur Augustus choked aloud, then suddenly he felt a hand laid on his shoulder. The swell of St. Jim's was on his feet in a flash. Herr Muller, the new master, was standing by his side.

"Have those boys been bullying you, D'Arcy?" he demanded, in a voice which was anything but harsh. "If they have they shall be severely punished!"

Arthur Augustus gasped again. About the last thing in the world Tom Merry & Co. would be likely to do would be to bully anyone.

"No, wathah not, sir!"

"But I saw them bending over you. Had they attacked you?"

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"No, weally. I wegard the affair as a wag."

"A what?" asked Herr Muller.

"A wag, sir!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. But the beautiful accent of the swell of St. Jim's seemed to be too much for Herr Muller.

He frowned in perplexity.

"It certainly looked as if it were a case of bullying!" he exclaimed. "However, if you say it was not, I will not inquire further. But I want you to look upon me as a friend, D'Arcy."

"Bai Jove—"

"After you left Fir Grove just now," continued the new master, "Mrs. Werner explained to me what you had done for Miss Werner earlier this afternoon. The Werners are old friends of mine, and I shall not forget. I am not going to thank you now, D'Arcy, but I shall remember."

The German walked on, and Arthur Augustus stood looking after him. The man's words had been spoken in such earnestness that the swell of St. Jim's had scarcely noticed the German accent.

For the moment Arthur Augustus forgot the war, forgot Germany's lost honour, and thought only of Herr Muller's quietly spoken words. There had been real feeling in them, which had not been lost upon the School House junior.

"Vewy likely the Wernahs have done him a good turn," mused Arthur Augustus, "and he is gwateful. Ovahlookin' the twighful fact that he is a German, I cannot help wegardin' Herr Mullah as wathah a good sort."

And Arthur Augustus went into the School House, more determined than ever to keep his promise to Miss Werner, and lend a helping hand to the new temporary master.

CHAPTER 7.

Skimpole's Misfortunes.

"SILENCE!"

Herr Muller rapped out his order in what the Shell juniors could not help considering a bullying, overbearing voice. More than one junior looked curiously at the new master.

Herbert Skimpole, for instance, blinked at him through his glasses as though the new master presented a new subject for study to the brainy man of the Shell. Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther sat very still.

The Terrible Three had just left Jack Blake & Co., and were now in the preparation-room. They had entered it while Dr. Holmes was introducing the German master to the Shell.

The kindly old Head of St. Jim's had been more kindly than usual over the introduction. Perhaps he had tried to introduce Herr Muller without prejudice, but if he had, he had not succeeded where Tom Merry & Co. were concerned. The Terrible Three of the Shell had taken their places, but they had not been influenced by the Head's kindly words.

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther did not feel at all kindly disposed towards Herr Muller.

"Silence!" suddenly cried the German master again. "Stop making that clattering noise, boy!"

Herbert Skimpole started. Herr Muller was looking at him, and Skimpole rose quietly to his feet.

"Please, sir—"

"Sit down, boy!"

"Yes, certainly, sir; but if you will allow me to explain I believe I shall be able, in a very few words—"

"Sit down!"

"Y-yes, sir!" gasped the long-winded Skimpole, and he sat down.

He had scarcely taken his seat when the clattering broke out again. It was a curious, irritating clatter, not unlike the sound which would come from a tin can if someone were gently rattling a marble in it. Herr Muller wheeled round from the blackboard angrily.

"Which boy is doing that?" he thundered.

"Pardon me, sir—"

"Is it you?"



A graceful, girlish figure was standing at the garden gate of Fir Grove waving her hand, and Arthur Augustus waved back. (See Chapter 4.)

"No, sir!" gasped Skimpole. "I merely wish to explain—"

But the brainy man of the Shell did not get further in his remark than that. Herr Muller struck his pointer harshly on the desk in front of him.

"If there is another sound, the boy responsible will go before the Head," he said. "You boys had better understand at once that while I am in charge of a class, discipline will be very strict. I—"

Herr Muller stopped speaking. Tom Merry chuckled loudly, and Monty Lowther gave vent to an open laugh which he tried to change into a cough. The metallic clattering had started again, and was continuing. It was very loud indeed during the moment or two following Monty Lowther's outburst of laughter.

Herr Muller turned a stormy glance upon Skimpole.

"Stop that noise instantly!"

"Yes, sir," answered Skimpole. "With pleasure, sir, because it irritates, not to say distracts, me too."

Skimpole spoke very politely, and rose to his feet. Then he turned quickly, and walked towards the door. Herr Muller stared at him in amazement for an instant or two.

"Boy, stop!"

Skimpole started violently and obeyed. The new master was glaring at him.

"Come here!" ordered Herr Muller.

"Certainly, sir!"

Skimpole made his way towards the blackboard, blinking in surprise. He did not quite understand this new German master, and he was quite startled when Herr Muller dropped his hand on his shoulder.

The new master was very angry looking.

"What is your name?"

"Skimpole, sir."

"Then, Skimpole, we must learn to understand each other, and the sooner the better," ground out Herr Muller. "When I give an order, it has to be instantly obeyed; I do not often repeat an order!"

Skimpole blinked in a puzzled manner. Tom Merry & Co. were listening with bated breath. The unpleasant clattering had stopped altogether.

"My hat! I wish I were in Skimmy's shoes."

"Just for a few minutes," breathed back Lowther.

"Skimmy will hash it all—"

"Dry up!"

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NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

"D'ARCY'S DARING!"

Herr Muller's hand was still resting on Skimpole's shoulder, and the brainy man of the Shell was blinking in astonishment. If the German master thought he was putting fear into Skimmy's soul he was failing, for Skimmy had nothing to be afraid about.

Herr Muller broke the pause in a low, crisp voice.

"I told you to stop that noise," he said, "and you pretended not to understand me. That is impertinence, Skimpole."

"Dear me, no, sir, really—"

"But I say it was impertinence!"

"It was quite unintentional, sir!" gasped Skimpole.

"I think all the masters here—in fact, I think I may say that every one I have come in contact with, has found me to be quite the reverse of impertinent. I always make it a point to listen carefully to the remarks of all people older than myself."

This time it was Herr Muller who gasped. His anger was not altogether without excuse, for it is unlikely he had met anyone quite like Herbert Skimpole before. The famous brook was not in it with Skimpole for going on when once he started.

The new master swung the junior round.

"You are to stop that clattering!" he thundered. "If I hear it again— Where are you going, boy?"

"Outside, sir!"

"Outside?"

"Yes, sir!" gasped Skimpole, a good deal flustered. "It's the ventilator which is making the clattering noise. It often does, but I can easily stop it with a piece of paper, if you will allow me to go outside for a moment, sir."

Herr Muller looked at Skimpole. Tom Merry and the rest of the class were chuckling loudly; some were even laughing outright.

"It was not a good beginning for a new master.

"Take a hundred lines, Skimpole!" he cried.

"A hundred lines, sir? Please, sir, what for?"

"Sit down!"

"Certainly, sir, but—"

"And if you speak again during this class you will go before the Head!" cried Herr Muller. "Silence, you other boys—silence, I say!"

The laughter died away, and Skimpole sat down. He looked bewildered, and Tom Merry leant across to him.

"Hard luck, Skimmy!"

"Dear me! If I could understand what I have done—"

"Oh, he's an awful beast!" whispered Tom Merry. "But what can you expect from a Hun. Manners and Lowther and myself will help you with the lines."

Herr Muller glanced towards Tom Merry at that moment, so the whispered conversation had to come to an end. Skimpole sat still, looking very puzzled, and a good many of the Shell juniors glanced indignantly towards Herr Muller.

Everybody in St. Jim's knew Herbert Skimpole and his ways only too well. All the Shell knew that no other master at the school would have given Skimmy an impot for what was really no fault of his own.

As Lowther said, Skimmy couldn't help being an ass. Tom Merry acquiesced heartily to that remark.

"It's just the sort of thing a rotten German would do!"

"Skimmy didn't do anything."

"Of course he didn't," breathed Tom Merry. "Just because the St. Jim's Hun made an ass of himself, he jumped upon poor old Skimmy."

"Rotten!"

Herr Muller wheeled round suddenly.

"Some of you boys are talking! Manners, what are you doing?"

"N-nothing, sir!"

"What have you on the desk in front of you?" asked Herr Muller.

Manners started violently.

"Only a—a photograph—"

Manners stopped speaking, and glanced at Tom Merry in dismay. The photograph on Manners' desk was the clue to the entrance of Tom Merry's cave.

Herr Muller was crossing the room towards the Terrible The Gem Library.—No. 411.

Three with a quick stride. Tom Merry caught Manners by the arm.

"Ass!"

"But—"

"Put the thing away, duffer!"

But it was too late. Herr Muller had reached Manners' desk, and his hand was on the photograph. He picked it up quickly.

"What is this, Manners?"

"A—a snapshot, sir!"

"I can see that, my lad!" said the German. "What is it a snapshot of?"

Manners glanced appealingly at Tom Merry. For an instant he did not answer.

"It's a scene in Rylcombe Woods, sir."

Herr Muller grunted. The snapshot was quite nicely taken, but it was certainly not a pictorial view. But then Manners hadn't tried to make a picture. His face was very dismayed looking as Herr Muller examined the print.

The German master turned on his heel.

"You can have your photograph after class," he rapped out; and he went back to his own desk.

He set down Manners' photograph in front of him, and an open book at his side. The new master appeared to be reading from his book, but Tom Merry was not so sure.

Herr Muller seemed to be taking a great deal of interest in Manners' snapshot.

"Suppose he recognises the spot, Merry?"

Manners whispered his question, and for a moment Tom Merry looked alarmed. He shook his head after a moment's thought, though.

"He's not likely to do that, kid," Tom Merry said. "There's hundreds of similar views in Rylcombe Woods."

"Well, what right has he to take it?" exclaimed Manners indignantly. "The thing was only lying on the desk. I took it out of my pocket so that it shouldn't get broken. I wasn't doing anything to it."

"Oh, he's a beast of a Hun!"

"Well, if this is how he's going to take prep," said Manners darkly, "he's not going to have much of a time at St. Jim's. Jack Blake and Figgins and Wally D'Arcy of the Third won't stand much of that sort of thing."

"Neither will the Shell."

"Rather not!" growled Tom Merry. "That blessed German has got to be taken down a peg before so long."

But Herr Muller looked that way again, so it was judicious to be silent. The new master might be a German and he might be a beast, but he had been placed in authority by Dr. Holmes, so he would have to be accepted.

But Herr Muller's regime as temporary master was not going to be a peaceful one if he meant to continue in the way he had started at the old school.

CHAPTER 8.

The Cave.

"HERE they come, Figgy!"

Kerr of the New House whispered the information in a very low voice, for Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther were walking quickly past the gymnasium.

Behind the three Shell juniors were Jack Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy of the School House Fourth. All seven juniors were walking very quickly indeed.

Figgins & Co. watched through the gymnasium window suspiciously.

It was the morning after the arrival of Herr Muller at St. Jim's, and Figgins & Co. were up at an unusually early hour. It had been their intention to get a little footer practice before breakfast.

The sight of Tom Merry & Co. crossing the quadrangle put all thoughts of football out of Figgins' head, though. The School House juniors were certainly not going down to the footer field.

Figgins crept cautiously to the gymnasium doorway and peered out. He chuckled slightly as he saw Tom Merry lead the way through the school gateway and turn sharply to the left.

"They've gone down the lane, kids."

"On their way to Rylcombe Woods."

"And Tom Merry is suspected of having found a cave," said Figgins indignantly. "The School House bounders haven't any right to collar caves."

"Frightful nerve!"

"All caves found by St. Jim's juniors ought to be the property of the school," continued Figgins warmly. "If Tom Merry has found a cave, the New House juniors aren't going to be kept out of it."

"Rather not!"

Figgins & Co. looked at one another indignantly. It wasn't at all pleasant knowledge that Tom Merry and his chums of the School House had discovered the cave.

"On their giddy track!" said Figgins suddenly. "We owe it to the New House to find out where the cave is."

"It's not Tom Merry's cave, anyway," said Kerr vaguely. "It belongs to the Crown, or someone like that."

"That's so!"

Figgins & Co. left the gymnasium and made for the high-road. They no longer thought of changing into footer things and indulging in practice at the goal nets.

"Down the lane, chaps."

"Right-ho!"

"Saunter along as though we are just out for a stroll," said Kerr cautiously. "We'll solve the giddy mystery this morning, if it snows!"

The New House trio sauntered quickly along the lane, being fairly certain of their way until the woods were reached. There two or three pathways going in different directions amongst the trees faced them. Figgins called a halt.

The three listened intently. Unless they could hear any of the juniors in front of them, it was going to be difficult work tracking Tom Merry & Co. now.

But the luck was with the New House juniors. Figgins could distinctly hear the rivals forcing their way amongst the foliage.

"After them, chaps."

"Tread lightly, Fatty!" cautioned Kerr. "We don't want them to think they are being tracked by an elephant, or anything like that!"

Fatty Wynn snorted and led the way. His burly form cleared an easy pathway through the shrubs and high-growing bracken.

For nearly half a mile the New House juniors scouted through the fine old woods. Every now and then they had to stop and listen, but they were always able to hear the rivals in front. Figgins chuckled at the ease of the task.

"As easy as falling off a form, kids!"

"Rather!"

"Dry up!"

Fatty Wynn had stopped again. His two chums were quite close to him, and all three peered through the trees. They could see Tom Merry & Co. only a few yards in front of them.

Figgins, Fatty Wynn, and Kerr remained in absolute silence.

Tom Merry & Co. had stopped in front of a lot of thick undergrowth which covered the side of a hill.

"Is this the spot, deah boys?"

It was Arthur Augustus who was speaking. Figgins & Co. stood motionless.

"Yes, this is the spot all serene," exclaimed Manners, holding a photograph from his pocket. "Trust me!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Don't cackle so much, kids," exclaimed Tom Merry. "Go on, Blakey."

Jack Blake dropped to his knees and crawled into the thick undergrowth. Figgins & Co. watched with growing excitement. Jack Blake hadn't come out of the undergrowth, but Herries and Digby were following him into it.

"The blessed cave entrance is there somewhere!"

Figgins whispered the words into Kerr's ear, and the Scots junior nodded. There could be no doubt that Tom Merry & Co. were entering their cave, for they were all disappearing one after another.

Only Arthur Augustus and Lowther remained on the pathway now.

"Aftah you, deah boy!"

"Right-ho, kid!"

And Lowther, too, disappeared into the shrubbery.

Arthur Augustus chuckled, pulled up his trousers, and lowered himself to his knees gingerly.

"It is vewy dustay, deah boys!"

"Frightful!" came Lowther's muffled voice.

"How wotten!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "You know, we shall weally have to find anothah way into the cave, deah boys, as I wuin a pair of twousahs evewy time we come heah."

A chuckle came from the undergrowth, and the top portion of Arthur Augustus disappeared. Figgins & Co. were about to start forward, when Kerr caught Figgins and Fatty Wynn by the arm.

"My hat!"

Someone had just come from the woods on to the path and was striding towards Arthur Augustus' cautiously retreating form. Figgins held his breath. The newcomer was Herr Muller, the German master.

"D'Arcy, what are you doing there?"

The new master had recognised the swell of St. Jim's by his glaze kid shoes and his elegant spats. Arthur Augustus started violently, and withdrew his head.

"Gweat Scott!"

"D'Arcy, is there a cave in there?" demanded Herr Muller. "I heard some juniors speak of a cave yesterday. Is it in there?"

"Bai Jove!"

"Answer me, D'Arcy!"

"Yaas, sir, certainly. I twust I always answah mastahs and eldahs—"

Before Arthur Augustus could finish his sentence Lowther's muffled voice came from the undergrowth.

"Gussy, why don't you come in? Don't be an ass!"

"Ah!" exclaimed Herr Muller. "D'Arcy, stand up, please!"

Arthur Augustus stood up in dismay. The next moment Herr Muller dropped to his knees, and crept quickly into the undergrowth. Monty Lowther called to him encouragingly.

"Come on, old ass!" the Shell junior said. "Anybody would think trousers were the only things you cared about—My only Aunt Jane!"

Monty Lowther had reached the cave—a fine high-roofed cavern—and he was standing up at the entrance. An instant later Herr Muller was also on his feet, facing Lowther.

Tom Merry, Jack Blake, and the others were at the back of the cave, examining a little passage with the aid of electric torches. Monty Lowther's exclamation of amazement made them all turn round.

"What's the trouble, Monty?"

"What's happened?"

"My only hat!" murmured Lowther, and he waited for what would happen next.

The humorist of the Shell had not long to wait.

Without the slightest warning Herr Muller also flashed on an electric torch—a finely-made instrument, which sent a glaring light all over the cave.

"How long have you boys known about this cave?"

Tom Merry dropped his own torch in amazement. He recognised Herr Muller's guttural voice at once, although he could not see the new master.

"How long have you boys known of this cave?" repeated Herr Muller.

"N-not very long, sir—"

"Does anyone else know about it?"

"No, sir."

"None of the villagers, or people living in the neighbourhood?"

"I don't think so," answered Tom Merry. "We discovered it three days ago, quite by chance."

"Ah!"

Silence fell on the little group in the cave. Herr Muller broke the pause sharply.

"You boys had better get back to the school at once!" he exclaimed. "You will be late for breakfast. You are not to tell any of the other boys about this cave, because—because it won't do to have all the St. Jim's juniors coming here."

"We intended to keep it a secret, sir."

"Then, that's all right, Merry," answered Herr Muller. "Go at once!"

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NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

"D'ARCY'S DARING!"

Tom Merry & Co. had to obey, but it went very much against the grain. They had discovered the cave in a spot which was certainly not out of bounds. It was not pleasant being turned out of the cave when any other master at St. Jim's would have taken an interest in it.

Certainly none of the masters would have turned the juniors out in that abrupt manner. Tom Merry thought of that as he crawled through the undergrowth.

The School House juniors gained the pathway one after another, and a fresh surprise awaited them. Figgins & Co. were standing there with Arthur Augustus.

Figgins looked sympathetic and interested.

"What's happened, Merry?"

"Rats!"

"Don't be an ass!" exclaimed Figgins. "We know all about your rotten cave, and we saw Herr Muller go into it."

"Blow Herr Muller!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Is he still in the cave?" asked Figgins, in surprise.

"Dunno where he is!" growled Jack Blake. "Gussy, I believe it was your cackling that brought the Hun to the spot."

Arthur Augustus shook his head.

"No, weally, deah boy!" he protested. "I was just cawwlin' through the wotten undahgwrowth, when he awwived quite suddenly. I wathah fancy these New House boundahs have been followin' us, Tom Mewwy."

"Like their blessed cheek!" said Tom Merry wrathily.

The hero of the Shell glared at Figgins, and Figgins grinned. Tom Merry and Jack Blake exchanged glances. The secret about the cave was out now, as far as Figgins & Co. were concerned, anyway.

"I suppose we've got to let the New House bounders into it, Blakey?"

"Oh, I suppose so!"

"Of course you have!" declared Figgins heartily. "If it's a decent cave we'll have a ripping time there."

Patty Wynn nodded.

"Rather!" the Falstaff of St. Jim's agreed. "I vote we all come here after footer practice this afternoon and have a little snack. I've got a new cooking-stove, and if we bring some sausages—"

"Right-ho!"

"And think how topping it will be to come here on wet afternoons!" exclaimed Figgins. "It's jolly lucky for you School House chaps that we've found out about the cave. You jolly well have to come to the New House for decent ideas of running a wheeze like this."

"Bow-wow!"

Arthur Augustus suddenly started forward.

"Bai Jove, deah is Herr Mullah, deah boys! Pewwaps it would be bettah if we wethahed."

"Heaps better!" growled Jack Blake.

And the juniors hurried away just as Herr Muller crept from the cave.

CHAPTER 9.

An Express Letter.

"WHAT about taking our bicycle-lamps, deah boys?"

"Good idea, Gussy!"

"Yaas, wathah, because the cave is fwightfully dark!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "Bai Jove, Wynn, you aren't weally going to take all those pwovisions?"

"There'll be scarcely enough to go round, Gussy."

"Gweat Scott!"

The morning break had just arrived, and Tom Merry & Co. and Jack Blake, Herries, and Digby were very busy in Study No. 6, preparing for the picnic in the cave. The picnic was to take place directly after the Albion match that afternoon, and there were many details to attend to.

Figgins, Kerr, and Patty Wynn had just hurried across from the New House, and Wynn's estimate of the provisions which would be required was very liberal. Arthur Augustus watched the stout junior packing a huge basket, his monocle thoughtfully poised in his eye.

Fatty Wynn was showing enormous interest in his task, as though it were a labour of love.

"Better have too much than too little," he remarked.

"Everything is spoilt if one is hungry, you know."

"I—I suppose so, deah boy. How many buns are there in those bags?"

"Only forty or so, and that's about four each. I'd better slip along to the tuckshop and get a few more. There's someone at the door, Blakey."

Jack Blake jumped to his feet, and hurried across the crowded little study. He opened the door cautiously.

"Is that you, Kildare?"

Jack Blake started a little. It certainly was not Kildare, the brawny captain of St. Jim's, who was standing in the doorway, but it was an equally well-known form at St. Jim's.

To Jack Blake's amazement, Dr. Holmes was paying a visit to Study No. 6.

It was a very long time indeed since the Head had visited the famous Fourth Form study, and Jack Blake looked uneasy. Dr. Holmes' kindly old face did not suggest trouble, though.

"Blake, I understand you juniors have discovered a cave in Rylcombe Wood?"

Jack Blake started again, violently this time.

"Yes, sir!"

Dr. Holmes smiled kindly. All the juniors were staring at him.

"I am sorry to have to interfere with your amusements, boys," the Head exclaimed; "but I am afraid I must put the cave out of bounds!"

"Out of bounds, sir!"

"Oh, sir!"

Dr. Holmes held up his hand.

"Please understand that I am doing this for your own safety," he added. "Caves, I know, are very interesting,

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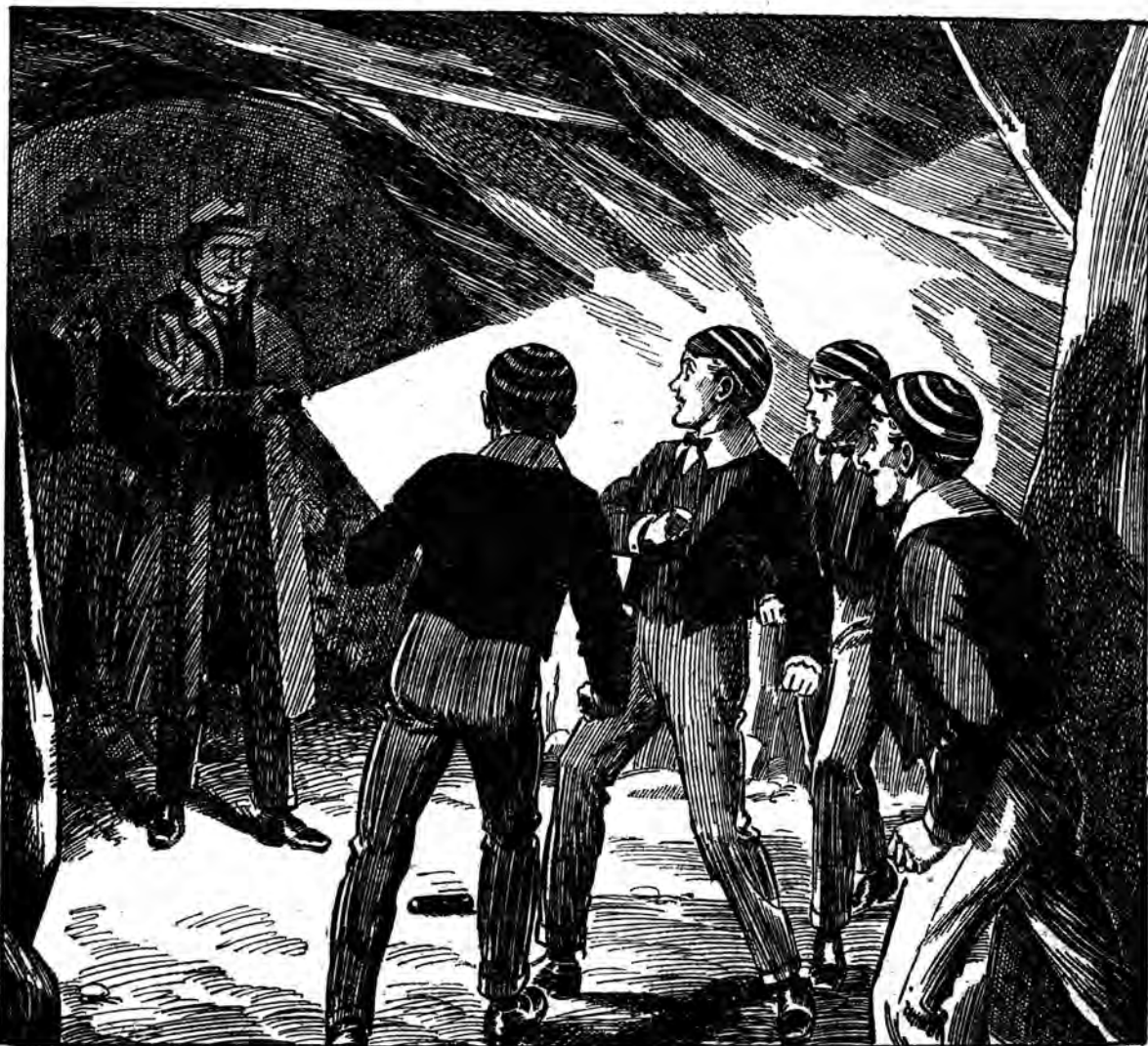


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Without the slightest warning Herr Muller flashed on an electric torch, a fine, newly made instrument which sent a glaring light all over the cave. "How long have you boys known about this cave?" he asked.
(See Chapter 8.)

but they are not always safe. There have been many cases of roofs falling in, and I hear that the roof of your particular cave is in a very bad state. You must not go there again, boys."

"Bai Jove, doctah—"

"Please, sir—"

"The cave roof is quite all right, sir," said Tom Merry desperately. "I looked at it particularly. It isn't cracked anywhere."

"Herr Muller tells me that it is anything but safe," smiled the doctor. "As I understand that none of the other boys know of the cave, there is no need for me to put that portion of the woods out of bounds officially, if you ten juniors will give me your words of honour not to enter the cave again?"

"Bai Jove!"

"I have your word of honour, D'Arcy?"

"Yaas, sir, of course, onlay—"

"And you other boys will also promise?"

There was a chorus of "yeses," because there was nothing else to be done. The Head left Study No. 6 without another word. The promise the juniors had given was quite sufficient, in Dr. Holmes' eyes.

Arthur Augustus screwed his monocle in his eye and faced the other juniors.

"This is vevy disappointing, deah boys."

"Disappointing, you ass?"

"Rotten is more like the word," said Tom Merry angrily. "The cave is perfectly safe."

"Of course it is."

"And if it isn't, I don't see how Herr Muller could tell!" exclaimed Kerr logically. "The Hun wasn't in the cave more than half a minute."

"The beast has done it out of spite!"

Arthur Augustus shook his head at the angry dispute. He waved his arm disapprovingly.

"Pway calm yourselves, deah boys."

"Rats!"

"And pway don't intewwupt me, Figgay, when I am speaking. I am vevy disappointed about the cave myself, but I twust you wealise that there is the usual anothah side to the question, bai Jove!"

The juniors stopped speaking, and stared at the swell of St. Jim's. As far as Figgins & Co. were concerned, it was rather a frigid stare.

"What's the young ass cackling about now?"

"I'm not cackling, Figgay!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus loftily. "I am merely weasoning in a cleah and logical mannah. I feel quite certain Herr Mullah has acted for what he considahs to be our good."

"W-what?"

"How much—"

"For our good, deah boys," continued Arthur Augustus. "Personally, I agwee with Tom Mewwy that the cave is

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quite safe, but Herr Mullah thinks othahwise, bai Jove! I want you to wealise that, if he has made a blundah, he has acted foah our safety in speaking to the Head about the cave."

"My—my hat!"

"A beastly Hun acting for anyone's good but his own!"

"A rotten German——"

Arthur Augustus waved his hand again. His attempt to calm the anger of the other juniors was of almost a parental nature.

"Pway weason calmly, deah boys!" he exclaimed. "It seems impwob, I know, but it is just poss that there may be one or two decent Germans; not many, of course, but just one or two. I have weason to believe that Herr Mullah is not at all a wottah——"

"My only Aunt-Jane!" gasped Figgins.

"Gussy holding a brief for the Hun!"

"No, weally——"

The juniors crowded round the swell of St. Jim's. They were astonished and heated.

"I believe there's German blood in Gussy's veins, chaps."

"You uttah wottah, Fattay-Wynn!"

"I jolly well believe there is!" cried Wynn heatedly. "He's more like the Crown Prince than I thought he was. You take your monocle out of your eye, Gussy, and you are the dead image of the Crown Prince."

Arthur Augustus gasped in horror. Amongst all his pet aversions, the Crown Prince of Germany easily held first place.

"You uttah wuffian, Wynn!"

"Gussy's like a German in manners, too," grinned Jack Blake. "I don't suppose you can help it, kid, but it's very unpleasant for your chams."

"The mannaahs of a Hun! Blake, withdwaw those words!"

"There, he's bullying you now, Blake," said Monty

Lowther, shaking his head. "All people with German blood in their veins bully."

"Withdwaw that wemark!" shrieked Arthur Augustus. "Montay Lowthah, if you don't withdwaw that wemark——"

"Bow-wow!"

"Gussy, if you're not careful you'll get interned one of these days."

"Figgay, take that back—take that back instantly!"

"Why is Gussy like Von Kluck?" asked Lowther seriously. "I haven't thought of the answer yet, but it's a jolly good riddle to put in the next number of the 'Weekly.'"

But that remark of Lowther's proved to be the last straw which the elegant back of Arthur Augustus could stand. He rushed wildly at the humorist of the Shell, and flung his arms round his neck.

"You wottah—you wascal, Lowthah!"

"Lemme go!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The unexpected attack had taken Monty Lowther unawares, and excitement and just wrath lent Arthur Augustus undue strength. Before Lowther could save himself the two juniors were rolling on the floor of the study.

Tom Merry, Jack Blake, Figgins, and the others gathered round, roaring with laughter. The swell of St. Jim's was in deadly earnest, though.

"Withdwaw your widdlewous wemarks, Lowthah!"

"Rats!"

"Withdwaw them instantly, or—— Gweat Scott!"

The struggling juniors had brought up against the coal-scuttle, and the vessel had toppled over. A fine assortment of Derby nuts rained on the rivals.

"My hat!"

"Bai Jove!"

The two juniors sat up and glared at each other. Lowther's collar hung by the back stud only, and Arthur Augustus' necktie was round his chin.

"You raving ass!"

"You weckless wuffian!"

The rivals were gasping, then suddenly they both started to their feet. The door had been pushed open, and Taggles, the school porter, stood framed in the doorway.

"A letter for Master D'Arcy," he snuffled. "Hexpress post, which is funny goings-on, seeing the letter is wrote on pink paper, hiff the envelope is anythin' to judge by."

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus took the envelope, and forgot all about his dishevelled state for a moment. Certainly, the envelope was of a pale shade of pink, and the handwriting pretty and distinctly feminine.

In addition to that, there was a distinct odour of Parma violets about Arthur Augustus' express letter.

Monty Lowther sniffed audibly.

"From the linendraper's young lady at Rylcombe——"

Arthur Augustus went a deep pink.

"Pway don't be so uttably widdlewous, Lowthah!" he said, facing the grinning juniors. "Wemarks like that are in wank bad taste!"

"Oh, of course, if you don't want it known——"

"I must wefuse to discuss the mattah, you waggin' wuffians! I wealise now that you were all waggin' when you had the fwithful cheek to compare me with the Cwown Pwince and Von Kluck. But I must wemark that it will be bettah if you wefwain fwom similar wags in future, bai Jove!"

"Go hon!"

"I wefuse—I mean——"

Tom Merry chuckled. Arthur Augustus was obviously a good deal confused about his express letter.

"Perhaps it's from Cousin Ethel, Gussy," suggested the hero of the Shell.

"That's poss, of course. Olway——"

"Open it, and see, ass!"

Arthur Augustus hesitated. He didn't for a moment think the letter came from his Cousin Ethel, for the handwriting was not in the least like hers; but the swell of St. Jim's didn't want to make a mystery about the affair.



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He picked up a paper-knife, and carefully tore open the envelope.

"Bai Jove!"

"Is it from Cousin Ethel, kid?"

"No, wathah not, deah boy!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, reading his letter. "Bai Jove! I must see Herr Mullah at once!"

Tom Merry and the other juniors started violently. That any sane junior could wish to see the St. Jim's Hun at once, or at any other time, passed their comprehension.

"Is—is anything the matter, Gussy?"

"No, Figgay."

"Then, why do you want to see Herr Muller?"

"I have a message to give him, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus evasively. "Pway excuse me!"

The juniors stared harder than ever at the swell of St. Jim's. It amazed them that Arthur Augustus could have a message to deliver to the new master who had only been a very few hours at St. Jim's.

"Has—has that letter anything to do with the message you've got to give to Herr Muller?" asked Jack Blake a little uneasily.

"Yaas, deah boy."

"Gussy, who sent you that letter?"

Arthur Augustus went pink again, and hastily slipped the letter and the envelope into his pocket.

"Pway excuse me answahin' that question, Blake, deah boy!" he said, in confusion. "It—it is wathah a personal mattah. And pway excuse me, deah boys!"

And before Tom Merry & Co., or the rival juniors from the New House could say anything else, Arthur Augustus hurried from Study No. 6.

CHAPTER 10.

Befriending Herr Muller.

"M I hat! What's Gussy up to, Blake?"

Figgins asked the question in a puzzled voice, as Arthur Augustus swung from the study, and Jack Blake looked equally puzzled. He shrugged his shoulders and shook his head.

"Blessed if I know, and that's a fact!"

"Haven't you any idea who sent him that letter?"

"Not the slightest!" said Jack Blake, laughing.

The other juniors looked doubtfully at one another.

Arthur Augustus was often a subject for wonder amongst the juniors of St. Jim's, but this was a bigger puzzle than usual. Tom Merry laughed shortly.

"Blow Gussy!" he said. "If he means to befriend Herr Muller he won't get many St. Jim's juniors to help him. The Hun is a rotter! He's only had the cave put out of bounds to spite us! Just the sort of thing a rotten German would do!"

"An awful outsider!"

"That's true," agreed Jack Blake. "But slanging the beast won't do any good! The picnic is off, of course; but you may as well pick the team to play Rylcombe Albion this afternoon, Merry. There's just time, if we hurry up."

"Right—ho!"

Tom Merry tore a slip of paper from his notebook, and uncapped a pencil. Rylcombe Albion were a new team, recently formed in the village for the express purpose of giving the soldiers billeted in the neighbourhood a chance of getting a game before they crossed the Channel to play the greater game on the battlefields of Flanders.

The Albion had challenged the St. Jim's second eleven, and Tom Merry had jumped at the chance of giving the soldiers a match. Naturally, the Shell junior was anxious to field a very strong side.

"We shall want all the weight we can muster, chaps," Tom Merry exclaimed. "They'll be ever so much heavier than we are in any case. I suppose you Study No. 6 kids are all right?"

"Rather!" exclaimed Jack Blake.

"Good egg! What about you, Figgay?"

"Oh, we three are all serene, kid!"

"That's the style!" laughed Tom Merry. "Well, with Merry, Manners, and Lowther, the pick of the bunch

and Reilly, we've got a topping side! Hallo! Here's the one and only back again!"

Arthur Augustus looked into the study, his monocle in his eye, and his hair rebrushed. He seemed to be in rather a flustered state of mind.

"Are you picking the team, deah boys?"

"Rather!" said Lowther seriously. "It's a jolly aristocratic side, too, with a Crown Prince in it."

"Lowthah, you wottah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus glared at the humorist of the Shell, but decided to treat the remark as unworthy of a reply. The swell of St. Jim's turned his back on Lowther, and faced Tom Merry.

"I'm quite willin' to play this aftahnoon, deah boy!"

"Go hon!"

"In fact, I shall be delighted to play," continued Arthur Augustus, "provided we kick off vewy punctually, and I am able to get away at a quarter-past four, bai Jove!"

Tom Merry looked puzzled.

"What's on at a quarter-past four, kid?"

"A—a pwivate affair, deah boy."

"Oh, that's all right!" answered Tom Merry frigidly: "We don't want to pry into your affairs, and you'll be able to get off the footer field at four o'clock, if you want to. There goes the bell, chaps!"

The juniors had to scud away to their various classrooms. Jack Blake, Herries, and Digby glanced curiously at Arthur Augustus as the four Study No. 6 juniors made their way down the passage.

"What's all this giddy mystery about, Gussy?"

"There is no mystery, Blake, deah boy."

"Then why all this balmy concealment?" demanded Jack Blake. "And why are you so anxious to be so friendly with Herr Muller?"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Look here, Gussy!" exclaimed the chief of Study No. 6. "If you've got your young self into a scrape, or anything like that, and we can help—"

"Gweat Scott!"

"Are you in a scrape, kid?"

"No, wathah not!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "I twust I have fah too much tact and judgment to get into sowapes, deah boy!"

"Then what are you worried about?"

Arthur Augustus let his monocle drop from his eye. He glanced doubtfully at Jack Blake.

"I'm not wowied at all, Blake; onlay I have wathah a difficult task—"

"Can we help you out, kid?"

Arthur Augustus hesitated. He was not quite sure of his ground in the light of recent events.

"You could help, deah boy, and I should considah it a vewy fwriendly act—"

"Get it off your chest, then!"

"Fire ahead, kid!"

"Thanks awfully!" answered Arthur Augustus. "I am afwaid I cannot explain the details vewy fullay, but if you would lend me a helping hand in befriending Herr Mullah, bai Jove—"

"Befriending Herr Muller?" shouted Jack Blake.

"After he's had the cave put out of bounds?" cried Digby.

"And treated old Figgy & Co., like the cad he is, when they went to meet him at the station?" demanded Herries. "I'll bribe Towser to go for the Hun, if you like!"

Arthur Augustus gasped aloud. His chums were storming at him.

"Weally, deah boys—Howevah, I see we had bettah let the mattah dwop."

"I should jolly well think you had—"

"I'd sooner befriend a raving lunatic than the St. Jim's Hun."

"Then I will not pwess the mattah just now, deah boys."

And Arthur Augustus walked on ahead. Jack Blake, Herries, and Digby followed, more puzzled than ever, and their surprise certainly was not lessened when Arthur Augustus turned up at the school gates after dinner.

The swell of St. Jim's was dressed in footer togs, but he was carrying a large suit-case and a leather, tall hat-case as well. Jack Blake looked at him blankly.

"Going away for the week-end, Gussy?" he asked.
 "No, wathah not, deah boy," answered Arthur Augustus. "I have a pwessin' appointment at half-past four, bai Jove, so I shall have to change in the pavilion at Wylcombe. Heah comes the 'bus, deah boys!"

The juniors scrambled into the 'bus, and on it, for Tom Merry's eleven usually had a good many supporters for their away fixtures.

It was not a long run to the Rylcombe Albion ground, and Arthur Augustus heaved a sigh of relief when the 'bus pulled up at the gates.

"The othah side are quite weady, Tom Mewwy."
 "And there's a pretty useful 'gate,' too," exclaimed Tom Merry. "We shall have our work cut out this afternoon, chaps, and no mistake."

"That's vewy twue," agreed Arthur Augustus, leading the way on to the ground. "Pway don't waste any time tossing for choice of end, deah boy, as I want to play wight to the end. It will be wotten if I had to wush away at a cwitical point in the match, bai Jove!"

"Yes, very rotten for you," said Tom Merry. And a young lance-corporal came to meet him and shake hands.

The lance-corporal was the Albion's captain, and he was fortunate in the spin of the coin.

"We defend that end," he laughed. "I may say that practically our whole side is drawn from the Thirteenth Blankshires, and Lieutenant Baxter is refing."

"Good!" said Tom Merry. "As quick as you like, chaps."

The St. Jim's junior eleven ran into the pavilion and deposited their coats, then Tom Merry led his side on to the field. They found themselves opposed to a finely-built, fit-looking eleven in Rylcombe Albion, with a tremendous handicap in the matter of weight against St. Jim's.



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That, however, could not be helped. Tom Merry's eleven had justly earned a name in the county for clever footwork, and clever footwork has often beaten weight when the refereeing is fair.

And Lieutenant Baxter could be depended upon to use the whistle fairly.

Tom Merry kicked off to the accompaniment of encouraging cheers from both sets of partisans.

CHAPTER 11. In the Last Minute!

ST. JIM'S were the first to get away, some quick passing and repassing between Tom Merry, Jack Blake, and Monty Lowther carrying the leather up the field.

But the home defence was very strong and keen. Tom Merry was pulled up by the Albion's bustling right-back, and the soldier eleven had a chance of showing their form. Tom Merry and the rest of the St. Jim's forwards watched anxiously.

The Albion swept down the field, but they relied upon the kick-and-rush type of attack. Tom Merry saw that, and heaved a sigh of relief. If the Albion had been as clever with their feet as they were strong and plucky, the schoolboy eleven could scarcely have had a look in.

"It's going to be a case of brains v. beef, Blake," Tom Merry whispered. "We shall have to play up like anything."

"Rather! Oh, well played, Kerr!"

The Scots junior from the New House, always one of the most reliable backs the St. Jim's second team could field, had got in a fine overhead kick. The leather came sailing beautifully to Tom Merry's foot.

"Altogether, chaps—"

"Yaas, wathah! On the ball, Tom Mewwy!"

But there was no need to urge Tom Merry on. The Shell junior was racing along with the ball at a fine pace.

One of the home defenders rushed at him, but Tom Merry was ready. He slipped the ball away to Jack Blake, and another dozen yards of ground were gained.

"Blake—Blake, deah boy!"

Arthur Augustus called appealingly, and Jack Blake nodded. He waited until he had drawn the half-back, then whipped the leather out to the wing.

Arthur Augustus took the pass in his stride. The swell of St. Jim's scudded along the touch-line at great speed, his monocle flying behind him at the end of its black silk cord.

Someone got in Arthur Augustus' way, and there was a thud. The Albion player went down, and Arthur Augustus swept on.

"Sowwy, deah boy!"

"Don't mention it!" panted the soldier footballer. "By gad!"

Arthur Augustus had dropped a fine centre-right into the goalmouth.

Tom Merry rushed in. The ball seemed to be a foot or so out of his reach, but the Shell junior did not hesitate. He sprang in the air, and got his head to the ball.

There was a slight thud, then a roar.

"Hooway!"

"My hat!"

"Well scored, Tommy!" shouted Jack Blake, thumping his rival on the shoulder. "Ripping goal, kid!"

Tom Merry had scored first blood within five minutes of the kick-off.

Rylcombe Albion restarted the game with rare dash. They went off the mark as though they meant to carry the ball past Fatty Wynn under the St. Jim's crossbar by sheer weight.

Figgins and Kerr were in fine fettle at full-back, though, and the rush was stopped. But the Albion came on again, their half-backs backing the forwards up well.

Figgins and Kerr booted desperately, and Herries and Digby dropped back to help them. But it was no good. The khaki eleven were playing desperately to equalise.

"Altogethah, deah boys!"

"Well kicked, Figgins!"

But Figgins' clearing kick was charged down. There was a moment of breathless suspense, then Fatty Wynn was seen to fling himself across his goalmouth—a desperate attempt to keep out a fast, ground shot.

Wynn got the tips of his fingers to the ball, but he could do no more. The leather went into the corner of the net, and the scoring was one all.

"Well played, Albion!"

"Altogether, School!"

The rival teams started from the kick-off at cup-tie pace. The soldiers were playing a fine, clean game, and Figgins, Kerr, and Fatty Wynn were being repeatedly called upon. But the New House juniors were putting up a stirring defence.

The St. Jim's forwards were not far behind, though, in matter of attacks. Led by Tom Merry, they swept up the field again and again, and Jack Blake went very close with a terrific first time kick just before half-time.

A moment or two later, Tom Merry struck the crossbar with a shot which would never have been saved if it had been the necessary few inches lower.

Then it was the Albion's turn, and Fatty Wynn saved in a wonderful manner from the soldier centre-forward. Again the New House junior flung himself along the goal-line, but this time he succeeded in tipping the ball round the goalpost.

The flag kick was well taken, but Figgins' head saved the situation. The leader of the New House juniors headed out when it looked almost certain the Albion forwards would succeed in rushing the ball through.

Kerr kicked wildly, and the leather sailed over the little pavilion. Before it could be thrown into play again, Lient. Baxter whistled for the "breather."

"Jolly good game, old chap!" exclaimed Tom Merry to the Albion's centre-half. "A draw about represents the play, don't you think?"

"Rather!"

"Let's hope the better team wins," said someone else; and one of the Albion's supporters handed round a tray of lemons.

The teams crossed over, and the Albion kicked off. They started with another rare rush, which threatened to carry everything before them, but Figgins and Kerr were safer than ever.

Kerr was right at the top of his form. The slight strain of Scottish caution in his blood stood St. Jim's in wonderful stead that afternoon, for Kerr scarcely made a mistake.

If Figgins went for the ball and was beaten, Kerr somehow managed to be in exactly the right place to rectify the mistake. Figgins knew that, and so could take risks, the partnership being very nearly perfect.

The St. Jim's halves were settling down into a hard defensive game, too, and whenever the ball was got to the front line, Tom Merry & Co. made excellent use of it.

But the defence on both sides had gained the upper hand, and the scoring was still one all at a quarter of an hour from time.

Both citadels had had desperately narrow escapes, but neither custodian had been beaten again, and the match was increasing in pace. It was quite a hurricane cup-tie game now.

"Tom Mewwy—Mewwy, deah boy!"

Tom Merry had the ball and was careering through the opposing half line in great style. He feinted to pass to Jack Blake; then slung the ball out to Arthur Augustus instead.

The swell of St. Jim's raced ahead, tricked his half in his stride, and whipped the leather back into the goalmouth. Jack Blake flung himself at the ball, and there was a shout.

The Albion custodian had taken the ball right off the School House junior's foot.

"Oh, well played, sir!"

Tom Merry shouted his remark in genuine enthusiasm, and Jack Blake joined him. The soldier goalkeeper had saved what had looked like a certain goal.

But Rylcombe Albion had no time to wait for congratulations. The ball had been got away to their forwards, and the whole five of them were sweeping up the ground towards Fatty Wynn.

"On the ball, Kerr!"

"Take the man, Figgy!"

There was no need to tell Figgins and Kerr what to do, though. It was a long time since the St. Jim's full backs had put up such a fine defence.

Figgins rushed in and Kerr waited. Figgins got the ball and slipped it back to his chum, and Kerr did the rest very coolly. He booted up the field, and the leather was nicely trapped by Arthur Augustus.

The swell of St. Jim's flashed the ball in towards Jack Blake, and Blake whipped it back again. The St. Jim's right wing were making splendid ground.

The centre kick, when it came, was very good, but again luck was against St. Jim's. Tom Merry's shot was charged down, and the Albion were on the war-path once more.

Led by their centre-forward, half the team tried to rush the ball into the School penalty area, but Figgins and Kerr were still at the top of their game. They kept the Albion front line out until a minute or two before time.

When the chances seemed all in favour of the match ending in an honourable draw, the Albion's centre dashed past Figgins.

Kerr came across to intercept him, but the Scots junior was too far away. The Albion centre dashed for Fatty Wynn, with no one else to beat.

"Come out, Wynn!"

"Come out, deah boy!"

All manner of advice was hurled at the St. Jim's custodian, but he was not given much time in which to listen to it. He saw the Albion centre coming for him; then the soldier footballer shot.

Thud!

The forward crashed the ball in towards the corner of the net. It looked as if a miracle would be required to prevent a score.

But Fatty Wynn was on his mettle. With that intuition which marks a born goalkeeper, the New House junior had moved to the left just as the Albion forward shot. It was splendid judgment, for Wynn had moved the right way.

He had only time to take one long stride, then he was put to the test.

Fatty Wynn saw the ball flashing away for the corner of the net, and the Falstaff of St. Jim's did not hesitate. He flung himself bodily at the leather, and he got his sturdy fist to it as he fell headlong.

"My hat!"

"Oh, well saved Wynn!"

The St. Jim's partisans shouted themselves hoarse in one huge roar. Fatty Wynn had beaten the shot out, and the leather was at Kerr's feet.

The Scots junior booted, but his kick was charged down. Fatty Wynn was still flat on his chest on the goal-line, and Figgins sprang under the bar.

An Albion player kicked in; and Figgins jumped in the air. He got his head to the ball just in time.

"Well saved!"

"Hooway, Figgay!"

"Get rid of it," shouted Figgins. "Anywhere! Herries!"

But Herries, at centre-half, did not believe in kicking anywhere; he had his forwards to feed.

He headed the ball neatly to Jack Blake.

"Tommy!" shouted Jack Blake, and he flashed the leather ahead.

Tom Merry gritted his teeth. There was just time, if the luck would hold good. The captain of the Shell dashed away with the ball at a pace which perhaps only Figgins on the field could have beaten.

Swerving and feinting, Tom Merry cut through the home half line in great style. He reached one of the backs and rushed straight at him.

But Tom Merry did not mean to try conclusions in a charge. He had a much better plan than that.

Just as he reached the back, the Shell junior got his foot under the ball and lifted it over the full-back's head.

Before the defender quite grasped the situation, Tom Merry was round his man. The other back came dashing across the goalmouth, but Tom Merry was waiting for him.

The St. Jim's centre-forward trapped the ball and

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darted away at right angles with it. Then he wheeled again, and he was dead in front of goal.

Someone rushed at him, but Tom Merry's head was very cool. His chance had come, and he took it.

Thud!

Tom Merry dropped to one knee and crashed in a terrific shot. The Albion's goalkeeper flung himself along his goal-line just as Fatty Wynn had done such a short time ago, but it was a hopeless attempt.

The soldier's custodian never had a chance. The ball crashed into the net, and the game was won and lost.

"Hooway! Wippin' goal, Tom Mewwy!"

"Three of the best for Merry!"

"Hooray!"

The juniors crowded round the captain of the Shell, for there was not time left enough even to kick off again. As things panned out, Tom Merry had scored with the last kick of the match.

Tom Merry was too excited to feel embarrassed as the juniors crowded round him. It had been a great match, and the end of it had been full of thrills.

"Ripping!" cried Jack Blake.

"Good old Merry!"

"And good old Fatty Wynn!" exclaimed Jack Blake. "Figgins, what about tea in Rylcombe, with Fatty Wynn and Tom Merry as guests?"

"Hear, hear!"

Arthur Augustus came into the centre of the crowd, enthusiastic and excited.

"Figgay, dear boy, that is a wippin' ideal!" he exclaimed. "But the feed will have to come off some othah day—"

"Rats!"

"Pway, don't intewwupt, Digby. I shall be onlay too delighted to take the chair at a spweed given in honah of Fatty Wynn, who pvented the Albion winnin', and Tom Mewwy, who won the game foah us—onlay too delighted. But as I have a vewy important appointment at half-past four, the spweed will have to be postponed."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Jack Blake—"

"Go hon!" chuckled the chief of Study No. 6. "You chaps, the feed comes off at the cafe at four-thirty. If you can come, you'll be welcome, Gussy; if not, we'll try to bear the disappointment of your absence."

"Pway be weasonable, Blake—"

"Rats!"

"But—"

"Bow-wow!" said Jack Blake, laughing. "Herries and Dig have got all our coats and caps, so let's get on with the washing."

And the juniors scudded towards Herries and Digby, leaving Arthur Augustus staring after them in wrath.

CHAPTER 12.

Mysterious Explosions.

"LET'S take the pathway through the woods, chaps!"

Jack Blake made his suggestion as the nine juniors, who had had tea together at the cafe, passed the post-office at Rylcombe.

The hard, main road would not be at all pleasant walking, and there was no particular hurry.

"Yes, through the woods, kids," agreed Tom Merry. "My aunt, Gussy and Reilly were asses to miss that feed!"

The other juniors laughed. The tea which had been held in honour of Tom Merry and Fatty Wynn, the star performers in the footer match, had been as successful as the match itself. There had not been a single hitch. Even Fatty Wynn himself had had to admit he couldn't eat anything else when the spread was over.

Laughing and chatting, the juniors swung along. It was a beautiful clear evening, for the moon was out, and there was a cold snap in the air. It was very pleasant in the fine old woods.

"Heaps better than driving back in the crowded old 'bus!" laughed Tom Merry. "Get us fit for the next match, too!"

"Rather!"

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"And give Fatty Wynn an appetite for supper," grinned Monty Lowther. "It must seem funny for you not to feel hungry, Fatty."

"Oh, I say, Monty—"

Fatty Wynn stopped speaking, and started. A curious sort of muffled boom had suddenly disturbed the stillness of the woods. The juniors instinctively stopped dead.

"My hat! What was that, Merry?"

"Blest if I know!"

"Sounded as if they were blasting stone in the quarry," suggested Herries doubtfully.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"Can't be that, kid," he said. "The quarry's too far away, and if it weren't, they wouldn't be blasting in the dark—My aunt, there it is again!"

Tom Merry & Co. looked round in blank amazement. The sound certainly was like the noise made by a blasting charge being ignited; but there was nowhere in Rylcombe Woods where blasting could be going on.

Besides, the noise was so strangely muffled. It didn't echo at all amongst the trees.

"Can't be Zeps, anyway," said Monty Lowther. "Zeps can't travel underground."

"You thought the sound came from the underground, Monty?"

"Well, I suppose it couldn't, really, but—"

"I thought it did, too!"

The nine juniors listened intently. There was not a sound to be heard now, except the gentle rustle of the trees in the evening breeze.

The juniors racked their brains for an explanation, but there seemed to be none. How in the world there could be two distinct explosions in Rylcombe Woods was beyond them.

Boom!

"My hat!"

The deep note sounded again, and in spite of it being very muffled, it seemed to be quite close. Manners looked round in amazement.

"My only Aunt Jane!"

"What's the matter, kid?"

"Do you see where we are?" whispered Manners breathlessly. "Don't you recognise the spot? Look at that undergrowth there!"

"Phew!"

Tom Merry whistled excitedly.

"The entrance to our cave!" he exclaimed quickly. "Chaps, we are right in front of our cave, and—"

Boom!

A fourth explosion interrupted Tom Merry's remark, but the captain of the Shell was certain of one thing.

"It came from our cave, chaps!"

"You think so, Merry?"

"Sure of it, Blake!" flashed Tom Merry, and he dropped to his knees in the undergrowth.

Figgins hastily caught his arm.

"You can't go into the cave, kid," whispered the New House junior. "We gave our words of honour to the Head—"

"I'm not going in, Figgay."

"But—"

"I'm going to look in," breathed Tom Merry. "The Head told us not to go into the cave because the roof was unsafe. There is no reason why we shouldn't look in."

"That's so."

Tom Merry didn't answer. He was crawling silently through the undergrowth, and Jack Blake was just behind him. Figgins followed close on Blake's heels.

"Perhaps it wasn't in the cave, after all."

"Perhaps—"

But any doubt as to the locality of the strange explosions was settled before Figgins could finish his sentence. There was quite a loud explosion just in front of them, and they were all distinctly conscious of the shock.

Instinctively, the three juniors halted. It was not pleasant being in the black undergrowth, with mysterious explosions taking place a few yards ahead.

Tom Merry gritted his teeth. He did not understand the affair, but there was something suspicious about it.

Unless the explosions were caused through some escape of natural gas, there must be someone in the cave who

was responsible for them. Tom Merry meant to find out at any cost.

He crept on, then suddenly stopped dead. There was a white light ahead.

"My—my hat!"

The exclamation came from Tom Merry's lips in a startled whisper. He could see into the cave at last, and the white light came from a powerful electric torch.

The captain of the Shell could see the torch lying on a stone.

For an instant the bright light dazzled the juniors, then all three of them saw the kneeling form of a man beyond the electric torch. The man's back was turned to the entrance of the cave, and he was fumbling with a little bottle-shaped object painted a dull grey.

For an instant Tom Merry thought it was a bottle the man had in his hand, then an amazing thing happened. The man suddenly swung his arm round, and hurled the bottle-shaped object at the wall of the cave.

Tom Merry distinctly saw the missile leave the man's hand, and an instant later there was a sharp, clear explosion. The noise was deafening in the cave, however muffled it had been to the juniors outside.

"Great Scott!"

Jack Blake, peering over Tom Merry's shoulder, gasped aloud. A second afterwards the man kneeling in the cave wheeled round, and snatched at the electric torch. There was a slight click, and the cave was plunged in darkness.

Tom Merry started up on his knees.

"Who is there?" he shouted. "What are you doing in this cave?"

The words echoed again and again round the cavern walls, but there was no answer, except in Tom Merry's own voice. As the echo died away the cave was in deathlike silence.

"Who is there?"

Tom Merry shouted again, but no one answered. The juniors looked at one another with puzzled glances.

They could not go into the cave and solve the mystery that way because of the promises to the Head. And yet the mystery ought to be solved.

That part of Sussex had not escaped from spy rumours any more than other localities, and, to say the least of it, it was startling to discover some stranger causing explosions in a cave in the centre of peaceful Rylcombe Woods. Tom Merry & Co. were in a dilemma.

The three crawled back to where the other juniors were anxiously waiting. Tom Merry looked very puzzled indeed.

"What's to be done, chaps?"

"Blest if I know!"

"We can't go into the cave, anyway," said Figgins firmly. "We know the chap is in there, and you say there isn't another way out of the cave. I believe one of us ought to go for a policeman or one of the special constables guarding the line."

"My hat!"

Tom Merry looked at Jack Blake, and Jack Blake looked at Figgins. The School House juniors were a little doubtful about sending for the police.

"I—I suppose we had better," admitted Tom Merry. "It's a jolly funny story to tell, though, because there can't be anyone in the world who would have reason for blowing up the cave."

"And if there were, the chap who meant to blow it up wouldn't stay inside while he did it," added Kerr logically.

"Then what does it mean?"

"Blest if I know," said Kerr. "I say, what about pretending to walk off and hiding on the other side of the path. Perhaps the chap will come out then."

"We might do that, of course."

"And if it doesn't work, one of us will slip back to Rylcombe for a policeman," said Figgins. "There's more in this than we think."

"Set!"

Tom Merry made the sign for silence, and the juniors stopped talking. Someone was coming along the pathway.

"My aunt!"

"Herr Muller, you chaps!"

The juniors were startled at the sudden appearance of

the new temporary master. Herr Muller came towards them at a swinging stride. He had a leather bag in his hand, and he was wheeling his bicycle towards the school.

He stopped dead as he reached the juniors.

"What are you boys doing here?" he demanded.

"You have been in the cave again?"

Tom Merry shook his head indignantly.

"No, we haven't, sir!" he exclaimed. "We gave our promises to Dr. Holmes—"

"Then what are you doing here?"

Tom Merry hesitated, although he could not have said why he did so. Perhaps Herr Muller's nationality had something to do with it.

Herries broke the pause suddenly.

"There's someone in the cave, sir, letting off explosives."

"Nonsense, boy!"

"There is, sir. Merry and Blake and Figgins have seen him."

"Then you have been in the cave, Merry?" cried the temporary master. "I shall report you to the Head, both for disobedience and speaking falsely to me."

Tom Merry flared up.

"You can please yourself about that, sir," he said angrily. "Most masters at St. Jim's take our words of honour. Figgins, one of us had better go for a constable."

Herr Muller turned quickly.

"What do you want a constable for?"

"To search the cave, sir."

"A constable is not needed for that," said Herr Muller sharply. "I intend to search the cave myself."

And before Tom Merry & Co. could answer, Herr Muller put down his leather bag, and made his way through the undergrowth to the cave entrance. Tom Merry stood still, a good deal more excited than he appeared. What was to happen now?

"Merry!"

"Yes, sir."

"Come here, please, through the undergrowth!"

Tom Merry dropped to his knees at once, and crept towards the cave entrance. He could see a light flashing about in front of him, and rightly guessed Herr Muller was responsible for it.

The temporary master was kneeling just inside the cave. Tom Merry came up very quickly, then he started.

Herr Muller was flashing the light from a powerful electric torch all over the cave, and the cave was empty. There was not a sign of anyone being there.

"My—my hat!"

"You are satisfied that the cave is empty, Merry?"

"Yes, sir, of course; but—"

Herr Muller turned angrily upon the junior. He directed the light full on Tom Merry's face.

"What am I to understand by this?" he demanded.

"Were you playing a practical joke upon me?"

"No, sir; certainly not."

"Then you still think there was someone in this cave?"

"I know there was, sir," answered Tom Merry quietly.

"I saw him, and so did Blake and Figgins."

Herr Muller shrugged his shoulders impatiently.

"Well, the cave is empty now," he snapped, "and you say there is no other exit. Your story and the facts as we see them now are difficult to reconcile. You juniors had better go back to the school at once, or you will be late for preparation."

Tom Merry flushed. He thought by the master's manner that Herr Muller did not believe his story, but there was nothing to be gained by pressing the point. If it came to that Tom Merry did not care very much what Herr Muller believed or did not believe.

The captain of the Shell joined the other juniors waiting excitedly outside the cave.

"What happened, Tommy?"

"Have you caught the man?"

"There isn't anyone there, Figgy," answered Tom Merry quietly. "He's disappeared."

"My aunt!"

"Then there must be another exit from the cave," exclaimed Kerr thoughtfully. "People can't disappear in thin air, you know."

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NEXT
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"D'ARCY'S DARING!"

"Perhaps the man came out of the cave directly we left the undergrowth," exclaimed Jack Blake. "He may be hiding in the undergrowth now."

"He may be—"

Before Tom Merry had time to finish his sentence Herr Muller came from the cave. He seemed angry at finding the juniors still on the path.

"Why haven't you boys gone?" he demanded. "Merry, I told you to go back to the school at once."

"Yes, sir."

"Then go at once!"

The juniors turned away, Figgins pausing for an instant to pick up Herr Muller's bag for him.

"Your bag, sir. My hat!"

Figgins stood looking down at the bag in blank amazement.

It was so heavy that it had been as much as the New House junior could do to raise it from the ground with one hand.

"Put that bag down!" thundered Herr Muller. "Leave the woods instantly!"

The juniors hurried on, with Figgins bringing up the rear. The leader of the New House Lower School was very puzzled looking.

What could have been in Herr Muller's bag that made it so heavy? There was no answering that question, but it was certainly strange that the new master should be carrying a small leather bag through Rycombe Woods which was so heavy that Figgins could scarcely lift it.

Figgins of the New House could not understand the mystery as he followed the other juniors towards St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 13.

Herr Muller's Accident.

"MUST you really go now, D'Arcy?"

May Werner asked the question in genuine regret, and Arthur Augustus' reply was equally regretful.

"Yaas, wathah, Miss Wernah. I am afwaid I have stayed a vewy long time."

"You haven't outstayed your welcome, anyway."

"Bai Jove, it's wippin' of you to say that! I nevah noticed that the time was flyin' so wapidly; one doesn't when one is havin' a wippin' time. But I weally must wush off now, or I shall be late foah pwep."

"Then rush, by all means," laughed May Werner. "But you must promise to come again."

"Yaas, wathah; and thank you awfully foah sendin' me that express lettah invitin' me. I gave your message to Herr Mullah, and he said he would come to see you this evenin'. It weally has been awfully wippin', Miss Wernah."

May Werner offered her hand as she opened the door, and Arthur Augustus' eyes rested for an instant on a beautiful diamond ring on the girl's little hand. May Werner went a deep pink, and held her left hand behind her.

"I won't ask you to admire the only piece of jewellery I wear, D'Arcy, although I believe you are a judge in such matters," she exclaimed. "I am afraid my poor ring came from Germany."

"Fwom Germany, Miss Wernah!"

"From Berlin," smiled the girl. "But that was before the terrible war broke out."

"Bai—bai Jove!"

"A St. Jim's junior couldn't be expected to admire anything that came from Berlin, could he?" added Miss Werner. "But you certainly will be late for prep, D'Arcy; it is half-past six."

The girl waved to Arthur Augustus from the porch of Fir Grove, and the swell of St. Jim's raised his hat. He walked on down the dark lane, but he did not hurry, in spite of the nearness of the hour for preparation.

As a matter of fact, Arthur Augustus was not thinking of preparation at all. He had another matter on his mind—a weighty matter which puzzled and even alarmed him.

"Fwom Berlin—a wing fwom Berlin, bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus walked on, thinking hard. Why was

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Miss Werner wearing a wing which came from Berlin? She had never been in the Hun's capital, Arthur Augustus knew; although she had travelled a good deal in more pleasant parts of the Continent, so she could not have bought the ring herself. It must have been given to her by someone.

"Herr Mullah, bai Jove! Herr Mullah must have given her the wing."

That seemed a very likely explanation, because it was not probable that Miss Werner was acquainted with other Germans. It seemed certain that Miss Werner's German ring was a gift from the St. Jim's Hun.

Arthur Augustus' face expressed his dismay.

Was it possible that May Werner was engaged to be married to Herr Muller? Arthur Augustus started at the thought, but he could not dismiss it. When a pretty girl like Miss Werner received a gift of a ring from anyone, it generally means an engagement-ring.

Arthur Augustus knew that, and the thought horrified him. The swell of St. Jim's had promised to lend Herr Muller a helping hand at the school, but it had never entered his head until this moment that the German and the pretty English girl were engaged to be married.

The swell of the School House had nothing against Herr Muller except his nationality, but that was quite sufficient. It was a horrible thought to imagine for a moment that May Werner meant to marry a Hun.

"Bai Jove! I cannot believe it!" muttered Arthur Augustus. "It is uttably imposs, and—"

"Hallo, Gussy!"

"Here's the one and only, chaps!"

Arthur Augustus jumped at the sudden hail. Before he had time to collect his startled thoughts Harry Noble, Clifton Dane, and Bernard Glyn had caught him up. Behind Cornstalk & Co. was Talbot, and all were laughing and happy looking.

Harry noble clapped the swell of St. Jim's on the shoulder.

"Know the time, kid?"

"Bai Jove, yaas, it must be gettin' late!"

"Oh, it's a lot later than that!" laughed Harry Noble.

"We shall have to sprint for it if we want to get to St. Jim's in time for prep."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Arthur Augustus agreed as to the need of haste, but he did not move. The other juniors looked at him in surprise.

"Going to stay here all night, kid?"

"No, wathah not!"

"Anything the matter, Gussy?" suddenly asked Talbot quietly.

"Bai Jove!"

Talbot looked keenly at Arthur Augustus. Talbot had often been in the gravest difficulties himself, and the minor troubles of others roused his sympathies at once. His own unhappy past had only made Talbot more anxious to make other fellows happy, if he could.

"If anything's the matter, Gussy—"

"No, there isn't anythin' the mattah, deah boy, onlay."

"Only what?"

"I'm wathah puzzled, Talbot," answered Arthur Augustus. "Usually I am wathah well informed on mattahs of social customs, bai Jove, but I am in wathah a wotten dilemmah foah the moment. I have completely forgotten how a girl wears an engagement-wing, deah boy."

"A what wing?"

"Engagement-wing, Kangahwoo, you ass!"

Harry Noble gasped aloud.

"My only—Aunt Jane!"

"Oh, my hat, Gussy!" choked Clifton Dane. "And you know all the time that the draper's young lady is going to marry that chap. Gussy, there isn't a ghost of a chance for you."

Arthur Augustus went a deep beetroot red.

"Dane, you ass," he shrieked; "you waggin' duffah! I onlay want to know how a girl wears an engagement-wing foah—foah a weason of my own!"

Harry Noble chuckled.

"Oh, I see, Gussy!" he answered. "I thought for the moment that you and the draper's young lady— How—"

ever, it was my mistake. I believe a girl usually wears an engagement-ring on one of her fingers. Not sure, of course, not being up in these matters, but I know people always wear wrist-watches on their wrists and hats on their heads."

"You sillay ass!"

"On—the left hand, of course," grinned Clifton Dane.

"I know that, you duffah!" stormed Arthur Augustus.

"I want to know on which fingah, bai Jove!"

"Humph!"

Cornstalk & Co. looked at one another doubtfully. Bernard Glyn was the first to break the pause.

"I expect it depends upon the size of the ring which finger is used," he said vaguely. "If it happens to be a small ring, then on the little finger. A large ring would probably be worn on the thumb!"

"You uttiah ass! Talbot, deah boy, do you know? These wottahs are simply waggin'."

Talbot of the Shell laughed quietly.

"Third finger of the left hand, of course," he explained.

"Is that what you wanted to know?"

"Gweat—gweat Scott!"

Arthur Augustus looked at Talbot as if the Shell junior had supplied some world-startling information. In a way the information was startling to Arthur Augustus, though, for May Werner had been wearing the diamond ring from Berlin on the third finger of her left hand.

That could only mean that she was engaged to be married to Herr Muller. May Werner, a pretty English girl, engaged to be married to a Hun, to a member of the race which wrecked Belgium and sends Zeppelins by night to murder defenceless people.

Herr Muller was a naturalised German, no doubt, but the same blood which ran in the Hun's veins was in his. Arthur Augustus was terribly shocked.

Cornstalk & Co. and Talbot looked at him in amazement.

"Gussy, you ass, what's the matter?"

"What did you want to know about the ring for?"

"Something is the matter, kid."

Arthur Augustus shook his head. It was no business of his, of course, how Miss Werner chose to plan her future life. But she was such a ripping girl, who played hockey and seemed so happy.

She was not likely to find much more happiness in life if she married a Hun, though.

"Gussy, we must get along, or we shall be late."

"Yaas, wathah, Talbot, deah boy, onlay— Bai Jove!"

"Look out, chaps!"

Harry Noble gave the warning in a sharp cry, and a bicycle bell rang at the same instant. A cyclist dashed round the corner, his machine swaying as if he were applying the brakes too suddenly.

The sharpness of the turn seemed to have taken him unawares.

"My hat!"

The cyclist had swerved too close to the side of the road, and there was a slight crash as the right-hand pedal of his machine struck a milestone.

The machine twisted round, then the cyclist pitched over the handlebars, and fell in a heap on the road with a sickening thud. He lay where he had fallen, perfectly motionless.

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus sprang to the side of the fallen cyclist, and Cornstalk & Co. were only a foot or so behind him.

Harry Noble struck a match.

"Is he badly hurt, Gussy?"

"I don't know, Kangahwoo, but his head is bleeding."

"Here, light the bicycle lamp again, Noble!" exclaimed Bernard Glyn. "The glass is smashed, but I expect it'll burn all right. My aunt!"

The battered bicycle-lamp flared up with a smoky flame, and Bernard Glyn shone the flickering light on the fallen cyclist. It showed up his white, though bloodstained, face very clearly.

"Gweat Scott! It is Herr Mullah!"

"Is—is he dead?"

"No, I don't think so," said Harry Noble quickly. "No, I can feel his heart beating, but he's badly stunned. Ought he to have some brandy, do you think?"

"I don't know, deah boy, but I don't see how we can obtain any here. Shall I wun to that farmhouse, Kangahwoo?"

"Wait a minute!" flashed Clifton Dane. "Perhaps there's a flask in his bag, chaps."

Harry Noble wheeled round. A small leather bag was still fastened to the back carrier on Herr Muller's machine, but it was only secured there by a strap. Bernard Glyn had the strap unfastened in no time.

"Hold the light, Gussy."

"Wight-ho!"

"Is there a flask, kid?" cried Harry Noble. "I——"

Bernard Glyn had the bag open, but there certainly was no flask amongst the contents of the bag.

Instead, it was full of the most extraordinary objects for a schoolmaster to be carrying about—little, bottle-shaped metal objects. There must have been a dozen or more of them altogether, and a few fragments of metal as if some of the little instruments had been smashed to atoms.

Bernard Glyn, the inventor of St. Jim's, sprang to his feet.

"Keep that light away, chaps!"

"What's the matter?"

"Keep the light away!" cried Bernard Glyn. "Those things are bombs or miniature hand-grenades. If they are loaded, there is enough explosive in that bag to blow up half St. Jim's."

"My only Aunt Jane!"

"Bombs!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Did you say bombs, Glyn?"

"Yes, I did," answered Bernard Glyn grimly. "We'll leave those things where they are, and attend to the owner of them."

For an instant or two the juniors could do nothing but stare at one another. Naturally, Cornstalk & Co. had been ready enough to suspect most things from a German, but that a recognised schoolmaster of St. Jim's should be found cycling at night with a whole bag full of miniature grenades was startling to say the least of it.

Talbot was the first to recover from the general amazement.

"One of us must slip across to that farmhouse for assistance," he said briefly. "Herr Muller is worse hurt than stunned. Shall I go, Noble?"

"Yes, kid."

"Well, raise his head from the ground," flashed Talbot.

"I shall be back in a minute or two."

He darted away, and the other juniors knelt round the unconscious schoolmaster. It was easy to see now that Herr Muller was seriously injured.

"What—what does it all mean, chaps?"

"What can it all mean but one thing?" said Harry Noble, in a low voice. "Herr Muller is another of the many enemies in our midst. He has pretended to be a friend of England, and he has been making bombs."

"To—to blow up St. Jim's?"

Harry Noble shook his head.

"No, I don't suppose they were for that, Dane," he said. "No doubt they were for something of greater importance than that, but it's no good guessing. By the sheerest chance Herr Muller's game has been shown up, and the authorities will discover all the rest of it."

"And to think he's a master at St. Jim's!"

"That's pretty awful, and no mistake. Here's Talbot back again."

Talbot came hurrying up with a couple of farm-hands.

The Shell junior glanced hastily at Bernard Glyn.

"The farmer says Herr Muller had better be taken into the farm!" Talbot exclaimed. "It's ever so much nearer than St. Jim's."

"Yes, of course."

"And we're to carry him there at once."

"What about a doctor?"

"The farmer has sent for one already," answered Talbot. "What about that bag, Glyn?"

"I'll take charge of that," answered the schoolboy inventor. "Shall I take it to St. Jim's at once?"

Talbot nodded. Bernard Glyn was not required to help carry Herr Muller to the farmhouse, for the two farm-hands were doing that quite easily by themselves.

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NEXT
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"D'ARCY'S DARING!"

Talbot glanced inquiringly at Harry Noble.

"Some of us must stay with Herr Muller."

"Yes!"

"Must be with him all the time," went on Talbot. "This is a serious matter, Kangaroo."

The Cornstalk nodded. He understood what Talbot meant. Herr Muller must not be left alone for an instant whether he was conscious or not. No risks must be run of the German making good his escape.

Already Harry Noble and Clifton Dane were following the farm-labourers towards the house. Bernard Glyn looked at Arthur Augustus.

"What about you, kid? Are you going to the farmhouse, too?"

"No. I——"

"You're coming to St. Jim's with me, then!" exclaimed Bernard Glyn. "Good!"

Arthur Augustus shook his head.

"No, dear boy; I am afraid I cannot come to St. Jim's just yet," he said hastily. "I have somewhere else to go."

And before Bernard Glyn could answer, the swell of the School House walked slowly down the lane.

But Arthur Augustus did not look very happy at that moment. His path led back to Fir Grove, the home of May Werner, and Arthur Augustus' thoughts troubled him a good deal.

He must tell May Werner of the accident which had happened to Herr Muller, and the breaking of bad news is always a painful task. But there was a still more painful task than that.

May Werner must be made acquainted with Herr Muller's true character at once. Arthur Augustus realised that that must be done, for the girl's own sake if not for anyone else's.

The prospect of May Werner marrying a German at all had been a painful enough prospect in Arthur Augustus' eyes, but the swell of St. Jim's had been ready to think the best possible good of Herr Muller.

As things had panned out, though, that was impossible now. Herr Muller had been found with a bagful of bombs or hand-grenades, and so he had broken faith with his adopted country. He had not hesitated to let his oath of allegiance go by the board, as so many other Germans have let theirs.

May Werner must be told the truth about that, and the only one who could tell her was Arthur Augustus. He hated his unpleasant duty, but he did not shrink from it.

The swell of St. Jim's knew enough about the world to realise that he was acting solely for May Werner's good, however much his story must hurt her. She could not be left in ignorance of the true character of the man she was engaged to marry.

But, in spite of his determination, Arthur Augustus hesitated for an instant on the garden path of Fir Grove. He hated his task thoroughly.

Abruptly he screwed his monocle in his eye, without being aware of the act, and stepped up to the front door. He rang the bell quietly.

CHAPTER 14. Gussy's Surprise.

"MY hat!"

Tom Merry spoke in a voice of amazed incredulity. Jack Blake and Figgins, who had come across from the New House, looked equally astounded. But, then, everyone else in crowded Study No. 6 was in a very excited state.

Harry Noble's account of what had happened to Herr Muller was a bombshell of high explosive power to the juniors of St. Jim's. Kangaroo had to tell the story over and over again.

"That's all I know, Merry," the Australian junior exclaimed. "Herr Muller came round that corner near Fir Grove, and his bicycle skidded or something. He had a bag with him, and Bernard Glyn says it was full of bombs——"

"Great Scott!"

"And Muller is still at the farm?" asked Tom Merry breathlessly.

"Yes, with slight concussion of the brain, the doctor says. Clifton Dane and myself stayed with him. We have come straight from the farm now, and a couple of special constables are watching Herr Muller."

"My aunt!"

"He'll be arrested, of course, when he regains consciousness."

"Not much doubt about that, Figgy," said Harry Noble gravely. "It's an offence to be in possession of explosives at all during war-time, even for an Englishman."

"That's so."

"And you are sure they were bombs in the bag?" exclaimed Figgy.

"Bernard Glyn said so."

"My hat!" suddenly exclaimed Tom Merry. "We saw someone letting off explosives in our cave, and the man disappeared. Afterwards we met Herr Muller just outside the cave."

"And the bag?" cried Figgins. "You remember I spoke about how heavy it was, Merry? Kangaroo, was it a brown leather bag, a bit larger than an ordinary football-bag?"

"Yes, shaped like a portmanteau——"

"That was the bag I picked up, then," said Figgins. "Merry, it was Herr Muller we saw throwing bombs at the cave wall. There must be another way out of the cave, after all, and Herr Muller slipped out, and met us on the pathway."

"Phew!" whistled Tom Merry. "That's about it, kid."

"And we shall be wanted at the court-martial, or trial, or whatever will happen to Herr Muller."

"Looks like it," said Tom Merry.

The juniors looked from one to another in suppressed excitement.

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther had happened to meet Bernard Glyn, as the schoolboy inventor came into the school on his way from the scene of Herr Muller's accident. Naturally Bernard Glyn had told of the exciting events which had happened, and then he had hurried on with Herr Muller's brown bag to the Head's room.

Bernard Glyn had not come back yet. He had not appeared at prep, but Harry Noble and Clifton Dane had reached the school as soon as the lesson was over.

Tom Merry & Co. and Jack Blake, Herries, and Digby had promptly rushed the young Cornstalk to Study No. 6, and Figgins, Kerr, and Fatty Wynn had been sent for from the New House. The story of Herr Muller's accident was all over St. Jim's by now.

Study No. 6 was packed to overflowing.

Ever juniors like Mellish and Gore and Grundy, who did not often visit the famous Fourth Form study, were eager to get in. Levison, too, was there, and Lumley-Lumley, the millionaire's son. All the Lower School was desperately eager for details.

"Where's Bernard Glyn now, anyway?"

"Still with the Head, I expect."

"He hasn't been seen since he arrived with Herr Muller's bag!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "He'll come straight here, when he can. Lumley-Lumley, is that someone hanging at the door?"

The millionaire's son opened the study door, and a shout went up. Bernard Glyn was standing in the doorway. The schoolboy inventor looked very grave, indeed.

"What's happened, Glyn?"

"Where there really bombs in that bag?"

Bernard Glyn nodded quickly. He had just come from the school laboratory, where the chemistry master had been at work examining the bombs.

Of course the examination had been quite an unofficial one. It had been undertaken for safety's sake, in case any of the infernal machines might possess a clockwork timing device. Bernard Glyn had been present at the examination, and it had been very thrilling.

"Yes, they were bombs all right."

"My hat!"

"But they weren't loaded with explosive charges," went on Bernard Glyn. "All the little machines were empty, but four or five shattered fragments of metal at the bottom of the bag were portions of bombs which had been exploded."

"Phew!"

"The explosions we heard in the cave, chaps!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Herr Muller must have had five or

six loaded bombs, and used them in the cave. We heard the explosions."

"But what was he trying to blow up the cave for?"

Tom Merry looked very puzzled indeed. Certainly Herr Muller had not succeeded in blowing up the cave, and it did not seem likely that the German had been trying to do so. As Tom Merry & Co. had noted at the time, it was not to be supposed that anyone would attempt to blow up a cave and remain inside it during the attempt.

There was a mystery about that somewhere.

"Blessed if I can understand that part, chaps!"

"Jolly funny."

"Oh, there's bound to be a lot we don't understand yet," said Figgins quietly. "All we know is that Herr Muller is proved to have had bombs in his possession, and he'll have to explain what they were for. It's quite possible he meant to wreck a railway-bridge or blow up a troop train."

"Yes, that's possible."

"What an awful rotter he must be!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Pretending friendship to one country, and really acting for the enemy. He must be the worst type of German, even."

All the juniors agreed with that remark. There seemed to be no saving clause in Herr Muller's betrayal of his adopted country.

Tom Merry rose quietly to his feet.

"There goes the dormitory bell, chaps," he said. "I expect we shall hear full details before long—Hullo, here's Gussy!"

Tom Merry opened the study door, and the elegant form of Arthur Augustus came hurrying along the passage. But the swell of St. Jim's was not walking with his usual leisurely stride. He was hurrying very rapidly indeed.

"Hullo, deah boys!"

"Hullo, kid!" answered Tom Merry. "We can't stop to jaw now, the bell has gone."

"Yaas, wathah. I noticed that it was wingin' as I came into the school. Pway stop, Tom Mewwy, foah a moment!"

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther stopped and looked at Arthur Augustus inquiringly. Figgins, Kerr, and Fatty Wynn were coming from Study No. 6, and they stopped, too.

It was just possible Arthur Augustus had some further news about the latest St. Jim's sensation. The swell of St. Jim's certainly was in a very excited state.

He held up his hand. All the juniors were staring at him blankly.

"Pway be pweared foah a surprise, deah boys," he exclaimed. "I am twyin' to bweak the news to you gentlay, bai Jove!"

"Aas!"

"Duffer!"

"If you've anything to say, Gussy, say it," cried Figgins. "It's your last chance before you're bumped for being a pro-German!"

Arthur Augustus gasped. The New House junior's remark staggered him.

"A—a pwo-German! Howevah, I see that you are onlay waggin', Figgay, othahwise I should have to administah a frightful thwashin'. But to get on with the washin', bai Jove! I want you to wemembah that it is quite poss that Herr Mullah is one of the best, that mattahs do not always appeah in their twue light at first glance! Welease me, Tom Mewwy! Figgins, welease me!"

But the Terrible Three of the Shell and Figgins & Co. of the New House had had enough. Arthur Augustus' method of breaking the news, whatever it might be, was too slow for the rivals of St. Jim's.

They rushed Arthur Augustus against the passage wall.

"Out with it, Gussy!"

"Get it off your chest, kid!"

"Gweat Scott! You wuffians! Tom Mewwy, you wottah!" shrieked Arthur Augustus. "I am tellin' you as wapidly as I can. You ought to have been able to see all along that Herr Mullah isn't a German at all!"

"What?"

Tom Merry & Co. shouted as if possessed of a single

voice between them. They released the swell of St. Jim's and stood glaring at him.

Arthur Augustus panted.

"It's quite twue, deah boys," he gasped. "Herr—or wathah, Mr. Mullah has wecovahed consciousness, but befoah that happened I heard the twue story fwom Miss Wernah, a—a fwieend of mine. Mr. Mullah is an Englishman, and has been working evah since the war started on a new explosive he has invented!"

"A new explosive?"

"My only Aunt Jane!"

"A wippin' new explosive, which is going to make the Huns sit up, bai Jove!" continued Arthur Augustus. "Some of you fellows heard him exploding vewy small charges in our cave, I undahstand, but they were onlay expewiments in a new kind of hand-grenade he 'thinks is goin' to be vewy useful. His weal invention, the wippin' new explosive, has been accepted by the War Office."

"My hat!"

"But—but why didn't Herr—Mr. Mullah work in a Government laboratory, or somewhere like that?" said Tom Merry in amazement. "He would have had proper apparatus."

Arthur Augustus shook his head.

"Mr. Mullah wanted to, but the War Office didn't considah there was anythin' in the invention," the swell of St. Jim's explained. "Mr. Mullah knew there was a vewy gweat deal in it, so worked on by himself."

"I see!"

"But what about his pretending to be a German?" said Tom Merry, still mystified. "What on earth made him do that?"

"Oh, that has nothin' to do with the pwesent invention, deah boy," answered Arthur Augustus. "Mr. Mullah lived foah a long time in Berlin, and when he came home and wanted to teach in an English school, the headmastah of his first school mistook him foah a German. As it was pwetty certain that Mr. Mullah would not be accepted as a teachah of German in an English school unless he were a German, he didn't twouble to cowrect the mistake. But all that was long befoah the war."

"My hat!"

"And I suppose he came to St. Jim's as a German because all his references spoke of him as a German," said Jack Blake.

"Yaas, wathah; and now he is wecognised by the War Office, and will pwobably be a vewy wick man. He is goin' to mawwy Miss Wernah in a few weeks!"

"Who is Miss Werner?"

"A fwieend of mine, Tom Mewwy," said Arthur Augustus hastily, "and we are to be all asked to the weddin'. But befoah that, Mr. Mullah is going to ask the Head to let us have a half-holiday, and there is to be a wippin' partay at Fir Gwove."

"Hooray!"

"And about the cave?"

"Oh, that's all wight, too!" said Arthur Augustus. "The woof of the cave is quite safe, but Mr. Mullah had to get it fwom us foah his expewiments. He didn't want anyone to see him at work, and that is why he was wathah wude to you at the station, Figgay. He didn't want to make fwieends with anybody, foah he wanted to be left uttally alone."

"How long have you known Mr. Mullah wasn't a German, Gussy?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Not vewy long, deah boy," answered Arthur Augustus. "About twentay minutes, as a mattah of fact. But all along I have had a sort of intuition—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That is to say, a vague ideah—"

"Bow-wow!" laughed Tom Merry. "You didn't know any more than we did, ass. I say, you chaps, we must rally the juniors, and give Mr. Muller a ripping cheer when he comes into the school to-morrow!"

And, needless to say, the cheer raised a very respectable echo in the fine old hall of St. Jim's when it was given.

THE END.

(Do not miss "D'Arcy's Daring!" next week's grand story of St. Jim's, by Martin Clifford. Order now.)

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 411.

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

WEDNESDAY: "D'ARCY'S DARING!"

OUR GREAT SCHOOL SERIAL STORY!

COUSIN ETHEL'S SCHOOLDAYS

A Magnificent Serial Story dealing with the adventures of Tom Merry & Co. of St. Jim's and their Girl Chum. Specially published at the earnest request of readers of the "Gem" Library.

BY MARTIN CLIFFORD.

The Previous Instalments told how:—

ETHEL CLEVELAND, a pretty English girl, and cousin to ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY, the swell of St. Jim's, goes to St. Freda's to continue her education.

On the first day of her arrival at the school, she is attracted by the personality of DOLORES PELHAM, a high-spirited girl of Spanish descent. Subsequently, Ethel saves Dolores from disgrace, and the two girls become firm friends.

One afternoon D'Arcy drives his cousin and Dolores over to St. Jim's to witness a football match between the School House and New House.

They are met on the road by a party of St. Jim's fellows, who invite the girls to walk back with them for the remainder of the journey.

Dolores accepts the invitation. This displeases Ethel, as she does not think it fair to her cousin, and a slight misunderstanding arises between the two girls.

(Now read on.)

Chipping D'Arcy.

Kerr, who was a loyal chum, if ever there was one, took Figgins' bicycle away, and while the talk had been going on he had dusted Figgins down.

Figgins walked off between Cousin Ethel and Dolores as proud as a prince in the direction of St. Jim's. The tower of the old school could be seen in the distance, rising over the trees.

"You can shove that machine into the twap if you like, Kerr," said D'Arcy a little glumly.

"Oh, it's all right! I'll ride and wheel it," said Kerr. "Have you had a pleasant ride from St. Freda's, Gussy?"

"Yaas, wathah—until the horse ran away."

"Whose fault was that?" grinned Fatty Wynn.

"Well, Miss Pelham was dwivin', but it was weally my fault, I suppose, for twustin' her with the weins. But—"

"Jolly lucky we happened to come along," said Kerr severely.

"Yaas, wathah! By the way, how did you happen to be on the woad here?" asked D'Arcy. "Aren't you playin' in the match this aftahnoon?"

The two New House juniors grinned.

"Yes. You see, we thought we'd come and meet you, that's all. It's a long time since we've seen Cousin Ethel, you know."

"You noticed Miss Pelham, of course?" D'Arcy remarked.

"Yes. Looks as if she's got a temper," Kerr remarked, in a tone of candid criticism.

"Weally, Kerr—"

"That's just how it is, Gussy."

"I wegard her as a stunning gal," said D'Arcy, with emphasis—"a weally stunnin' gal!"

"Go hon!"

"Did you notice her eyes?"

"Yes—pink, I think."

"You uthah ass! They are black, with a shade of blue in them. Weally wonderful eyes, and vewy Spanish," said D'Arcy. "Did you see her nose?"

"Well, I looked at her face, and I didn't notice that any nose was missing, so I must have seen it."

"You uthah ass! It is simply wippin—"

"Her nose is?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, let it rip," said Kerr; and Fatty Wynn chuckled.

"You duffah! It was a weal Gweek nose—"

"Oh, yes; I've heard of that—the genuine Græco-boko," said Kerr solemnly. "Have you made any survey of her mouth?"

"It was a weamarkably pwetty mouth like—like—"

"Like an opening rose," suggested Kerr, "or like a pack-oase!"

"You wibald ass—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wefuse to discuss that stunning young lady with you wottahs," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy disdainfully. "I wegard you as beasts!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you cacklin' asses—"

"He's got it again!" shrieked Kerr. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"You uthah ass!"

D'Arcy climbed into the trap and dashed away, too indignant to speak. The wheels rattled down the road. Kerr and Wynn looked at one another and roared.

"Good old Gussy!" chuckled Kerr. "He's always doing it! Remember the time he got engaged to the vicar's daughter?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Fatty Wynn.

"Blessed if I like his selection this time, though!" said Kerr. "That girl's got a jolly temper, I can tell you, and I don't like the way she made Ethel walk off and leave Gussy stranded. It wasn't playing the game."

"Girls don't play the game," said Fatty.

Kerr sniffed.

"Yes, they do—nice girls."

"Then you think Cousin Ethel's friend isn't a nice girl?"

Kerr coloured.

"Oh, I don't want to say that! She must be nice in most ways, or Cousin Ethel wouldn't chum with her, of course. But I think she treated Gussy badly, and I think that Ethel feels it, too. But it's no business of ours; and, anyway, it's a rotten thing talking about girls. Let's jaw over the match."

And the subject of the afternoon's match lasted the chums of the New House all the way back to St. Jim's.

Wilful Dolores.

Figgins felt a slight compunction when he walked the two girls away, and left Arthur Augustus in the road with the trap. He had suggested walking, without thinking the matter out much, because he wanted to walk with Cousin Ethel. On reflection, he saw that it would have been better for the girls to remain with their escort, and he saw that Ethel had wished to show D'Arcy that amount of consideration.

It was Dolores who had arranged matters. But Figgins was far too generous and chivalrous a fellow to criticise a girl in his own thoughts, and he dismissed the matter from his mind as he walked towards the school.

Cousin Ethel was a little quiet and subdued. She was vaguely annoyed at the turn affairs had taken, and though

she hated to appear to be finding fault with Dolores, she could not help admitting to herself that Dolores was to blame.

Naturally, she was very quiet to Figgins, and Figgins would have noticed it all the more if Dolores had not kept up an almost incessant talk.

Dolores seemed to be perfectly happy and contented.

Never had Ethel seen her in such spirits.

Whether it was the excursion, or the excitement of the mishap in the trap, or the effect of Figgins, was not to be seen, but certainly Dolores was very happy and animated now. Her eyes were sparkling, and her voice was seldom silent.

Figgins hardly listened to what she said.

One word from Cousin Ethel was worth more to him than dozens of sentences from Miss Pelham, though the latter's voice was very pleasant to listen to when she chose.

"And this is St. Jim's?" Dolores exclaimed, as they entered the great, grey old gateway, and the old quadrangle lay before their eyes.

Figgins nodded.

"Yes. I forgot you had not seen the school before, Miss Pelham!" he exclaimed.

Miss Pelham compressed her under-lip for a moment. She was quite aware already that Figgins was thinking only of Ethel.

But the next moment she was all smiles.

"Yes, I have never seen the place before," she said. "How I should love to see it—to explore all those queer old places!"

Figgins laughed.

"That's the ruined tower," he said. "It was knocked up like that by a chap—lemme see, who was that chap who had King Charles' head chopped off?"

"Cromwell," said Ethel, with a laugh—the first time she had laughed.

"That's it," said Figgins. "Cromwell. He was a tremendous goer, Cromwell was. Some silly bounders held this place against him, and he brought that tower down about their ears. It's—it's awfully interesting, really!" said Figgins, who had never felt interested in the old tower before, but realised all of a sudden that it was a most extremely interesting place. "Suppose we all three explore it now?"

"I should love to!"

Ethel's face was cold.

"I have explored it, you know," said Ethel gently. "It is all quite familiar to me."

Dolores pouted.

"Ethel, my dear, do let me see it!"

"Yes," urged Figgins. "Tom Merry says there are some bloodstains on the flags, you know. Lowther said they're only the marks of muddy boots; but they're awfully interesting. Even if they're only bootmarks, they might be Cromwell's boots, you know, or King Charles', or one of those old johnnies."

"You shall take Dolores to see the tower while I go in to speak to Mrs. Holmes," said Ethel.

Figgins' face fell in a way that was not complimentary to Dolores.

"Oh!" he said.

"I am sure Dolores will like it."

"Certainly," said Dolores calmly.

There was no escape for Figgins.

"I—I shall be pleased," he stammered.

Ethel nodded to them both, and went on towards the Head's house. Ethel was a frequent visitor at St. Jim's, and Mrs. Holmes, the Head's wife, was always glad to see her, and there was always a room ready for her when she came to stay.

Cousin Ethel's face was not so bright as usual when she walked away from Figgins and Dolores. Something seemed to be aching in her heart.

But she could not put her thoughts into words, even to herself. Dolores was wilful, Dolores was wayward—that was all; and she had known that on her first day at St. Freda's. But—

Ethel would not think of that "but."

She was hurt, but she was determined not to feel hurt. She ran into the Head's house, and Mrs. Holmes greeted her with great affection. And if an odd expression passed for a moment over Mrs. Holmes' kind face when she learned that Ethel's friend was with Figgins, exploring the old tower, it was only for a moment.

Why had not Ethel remained with Dolores?

Was it because—although Ethel would not admit as much to herself—her intuition told her that her friend did not want her, or was it because she was hurt and offended, or both?

She hardly knew.

But one thing she knew well enough, and that was that she wished that D'Arcy had never written that letter to her

at Miss Penfold's, and that she had never brought Dolores Pelham with her to St. Jim's.

But it was too late to think of that now.

Figgins has to Go.

Cousin Ethel did not look back as she left Figgins and his new friend. If she had done so, she would have seen Figgins' expressive face lengthen in a way that was not flattering to Dolores. Figgins' eyes followed Ethel till she disappeared into the Head's house, and Dolores watched him the while, with a half-amused and half-provoked expression.

When the door had closed behind Cousin Ethel, Figgins seemed suddenly to awake to the fact that he was not alone.

He turned to Dolores again, with a quick blush.

"I—I beg your pardon!" he stammered. "Did—did you say that you would like to explore the—the tower?"

"Yes," said Dolores calmly.

"This way," said Figgins.

He was very silent as he guided the Spanish girl into the old tower. Dolores did not seem to notice it. She talked cheerfully enough, without heeding Figgins' random answers.

Figgins was thinking about Cousin Ethel. Figgins was only too conscious of his failings and of his clumsiness in dealing with girls. He thought it quite possible that he had somehow offended Cousin Ethel without in the least intending to do so. Figgins, who had learned to follow and to know every expression upon the girl's face, knew what Cousin Ethel's brows meant when they were arched in a certain way. What was the matter? he wondered.

Figgins was feeling miserable.

Under the circumstances, Figgins was not a cheery companion for Dolores Pelham. But he did his duty nobly. If his thoughts would wander, that was not Figgins' fault.

"And the cannon-shots?" said Dolores. "Where are the marks?"

"Oh, here they are!" said Figgins, halting before a fragment of battered wall. "You see the marks there? They are the bloodstains—I mean, the cannon marks. King Charles had his cannon planted over there, by the elm-trees."

"King Charles!" said Dolores.

"I mean Cromwell," said Figgins. "It really doesn't matter."

Dolores laughed.

"No, I suppose it makes no difference now," she said. "And was the place taken by assault?"

"Yes. After they brought the wall down here, the Ironsides came up at a run, and the goalie had no chance," said Figgins—"I mean, the Cavaliers were quite done in. Those old Puritan johnnies were beggars to fight, you know. Chap was killed here, by the window—last chap to put up a fight in the place."

"How interesting!" said Dolores.

"Yes, isn't it?" said Figgins, staring through the window in the direction of the Head's house.

"What is there out of the window to see?" asked Dolores, with elaborate innocence.

Figgins started guiltily.

"Oh, n-nothing!" he said.

"What is that house over there by the trees?"

"The big one? That's the School House."

"No; the smaller building joined to it—the one you were looking at?"

Figgins coloured.

"That's the Head's house."

"Oh, I see! Dr. Holmes lives there?"

"Yes, that's right."

Dolores smiled.

"This is a most interesting old place!" she exclaimed. "I have heard, too, that you have a very ancient chapel at St. Jim's."

"Yes, jolly old," said Figgins vaguely. "Thousands of years—two or three hundred, at any rate."

"I should love to see it!"

Figgins bore it like a man.

He had imagined that when they were finished at the tower he would be able to escort Miss Pelham to the Head's house, and then knock about with a chance of seeing Cousin Ethel and ascertaining whether she were really "waxy"—as poor Figgins put it to himself—a most important matter for Figgins.

But it was evidently not to be done. Figgins was a polite chap, as far as his lights extended. His intentions, at all events, were first-rate.

"Oh, certainly!" he said.

"It is such an interesting old place," said Dolores. "It is so—so pleasant to think that we are standing upon the very spot where Cromwell was killed."

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

NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

"D'ARCY'S DARING!"

Kerr to the Rescue.

Figgins stared.
"Cromwell wasn't killed," he said. "It was the Cavalier johnnies who pegged out."

"Oh, yes, of course!" said Dolores carelessly. "The—the Cavalier johnnies. What a curious name for the Cavaliers! Why did they call themselves johnnies?"

"They—they didn't," said Figgins. "I called 'em johnnies, you see. I meant chaps."

"Oh, I see! And where is the old chapel?"

"Over by the beeches."

"Shall we go?"

"Of course, if you'd like to see it!" said Figgins.

"I should love to see it!"

"Come this way, Miss Pelham."

"But I am taking up so much of your time," said Dolores.

"Oh, that's nothing!"

"You are quite sure?"

"We're always glad to show our little sights to visitors," said Figgins, thus, with immense diplomacy, avoiding a direct answer, at which Miss Pelham smiled.

"Then we will go," said Dolores amicably. "You are so kind to show me about the place like this! And it is so pleasant to see a really interesting place with a guide who is so thoughtful, so careful, and so attentive all the time!"

"I'm sure you flatter me," said Figgins, who was never known to detect sarcasm, however thickly laid on.

"Not at all," said Dolores. "I shall always remember your kindness, Mr. Figgins."

"Figgins," said the junior.

"Oh, yes—Figgins!"

They left the old tower. Figgins had a private wish that the ancient chapel of St. Jim's—interesting relic of past times as it was—would be swallowed up in the earth before he could reach it.

That was not likely to happen. But something just as good, and a little less tremendous, occurred. Kerr came racing over the quadrangle to overtake them.

"Figgins! Figgys!"

Kerr had already changed into his football things, and had a long coat on. His face was pink with running.

Figgins turned round.

"What's the row, Kerr?"

"Have you forgotten the match?"

"By Jove!" said Figgins.

Kerr almost glared.

"You've forgotten it!" he roared.

"Blessed if I hadn't!" said Figgins.

"Dear me!" said Dolores. "I remember now. You were playing a cricket match this afternoon. That was what Ethel and I came over to see."

"A football match," said Figgins, while Kerr was silent. He knew that that little mistake had been intentional on Miss Pelham's part; but Figgins never suspected a girl of being capable of "spoofing."

"Oh, yes, a football match!" assented Dolores. "Has it begun?"

"No," said Figgins, laughing. "You see—"

"You see, that duffer's our skipper, and we can't play without him," said Kerr. "You must excuse him, Miss Pelham. Can I see you to the Head's house while Figgins goes and changes? There isn't a minute to spare. The School House chaps will be booing us if we're late."

Dolores looked at Kerr.

"Why, of course!" she said. "How stupid of me to forget that you were playing cricket—I mean baseball, this afternoon!"

"Football," said Figgins.

"Yes, I mean football."

"You'll excuse me, won't you?" Figgins said. "It was idiotic of me to forget the match!"

Dolores nodded with a smile.

Figgins raised his cap and raced off, and Kerr walked with Miss Pelham to the Head's house.

There was very little conversation on the way. What little there was, was done by Kerr. Miss Pelham did not feel cordial towards the Scottish junior, and it was not Dolores' way to pretend what she did not feel, and sometimes she neglected the laws of courtesy when she was angry.

And she was angry now.

Why, she could hardly have told; but she was.

Kerr left her at the door of the Head's house, after it was opened. Dolores gave him the slightest of nods, and went in without a glance back.

Mrs. Holmes met her in the hall.

"You are Ethel's friend?" she said, with her kind smile.

"Yes," said Dolores.

"Yes, this is Dolores," said Ethel, coming out of the drawing-room. "Dolores, dear, this is my kind friend, Mrs. Holmes."

Dolores allowed Mrs. Holmes to shake hands with her. Her manner was polite in her stately Spanish way, but it was not cordial. Mrs. Holmes gave the Spanish girl a very curious glance. She was one of the very many people who did not understand Dolores.

"Come into my room, dear," said Ethel.

And she led Dolores up to the pretty little room she occupied when she was a visitor at St. Jim's.

Mrs. Holmes glanced after them. She was thinking what a charming contrast there was between Dolores' dark beauty and the fair skin and lovely blue eyes of the English girl. She was thinking, too, that Ethel's new friend probably had a trying temper, and that Ethel must need all her sweetness and disposition to keep on terms of close friendship with her.

About Figgins.

"So this is your room?" said Dolores.

She had noticed, of course, a constraint in Ethel's manner, but she seemed determined to be in high spirits and see nothing.

She went to the window as she spoke.

Outside the window rose the big branches of an elm-tree, but beyond that was a wide view of the old quad and the playing fields.

Fellows could be seen already gathering on the junior football ground for the match.

"Yes," said Ethel.

"What a charming room!"

"Yes."

"And you have it all to yourself?"

"Except when Mrs. Holmes' niece is here," said Ethel.

"She is a dear girl, and a kind friend of mine."

Dolores' dusky face clouded.

"You have many friends, Ethel?"

"Yes."

"You love this other very much?"

"Very much."

Dolores compressed her lips.

"And she is your chum, as you call it?"

Ethel smiled.

"Oh, no, not that! You see, she is nearly ten years older than I am—quite a woman. But we are great friends."

The Spanish girl's face cleared, but the shadow on it, though only momentary, had shown what a depth of jealousy there might be in the passionate heart.

"I don't like you to have other friends beside me, Ethel," she said. "I know it is silly of me, but I shall never have another chum."

Ethel was silent. She could not help thinking that if Dolores valued her so much, she might have acted in a different manner that afternoon.

But Dolores was resolved not to see that anything was the matter. Dolores was in one of her most wilful moods that day.

"What a charming old place this is, Ethel!" she exclaimed.

"And the boys are very nice! Will you help me with my hair, love? That dash in the trap has made it quite untidy. What a dear fellow your cousin is to let me drive!"

"Arthur is always kind."

"Very different from the tall person," said Dolores, with a yawn, as Ethel unbound her thick masses of hair—"the—the Wiggins. I think his name is."

"Figgins," said Ethel.

"Yes, Figgins. What an extraordinary name!"

"I have never noticed that it is extraordinary. Figgins is one of the best and kindest boys in the school," said Ethel, with a little warmth.

Dolores gave her a sidelong glance.

"And a very particular friend of yours, Ethel dear?" she asked.

"Not more than the others."

"Honour?"

"Of course!" said Ethel, with the first appearance of irritation she had shown. "How oddly you talk, Dolores! I don't quite understand you."

"You have not noticed that Figgins—"

Dolores paused.

"Suppose we don't discuss Figgins," suggested Cousin Ethel quietly. "We shall have to hurry, dear; they will be beginning the match."

"Well, we don't want to see the beginning," said Dolores. "It will be a frightful bore, of course. Football matches always are."

"I don't think so."

(Another long instalment of this grand school serial next Wednesday, describing an exciting footer match at St. Jim's. Order your copy early.)



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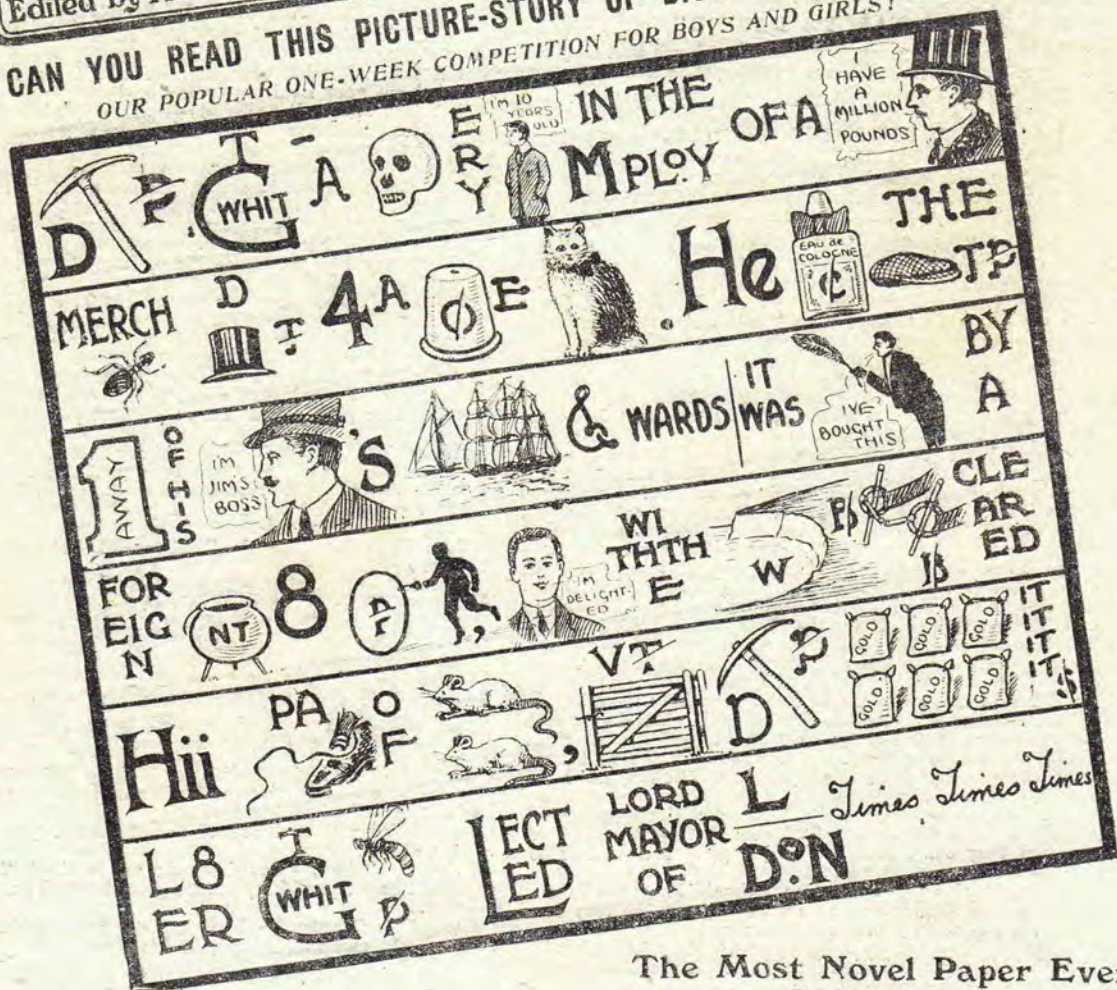
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For Next Wednesday:

"D'ARCY'S DARING!"

By Martin Clifford.

The immortal Arthur Augustus takes the leading part in next Wednesday's grand, long, complete story of St. Jim's. Maddened by an injustice meted out to his younger brother, Gussy enters into warfare with Mr. Selby, the sour, thin-lipped master of the Third. The feud between master and boy reaches a truly alarming stage, especially when the swell of St. Jim's, having been confined to Nobody's Study, alias the punishment-room, escapes in daring fashion, to go over to Rookwood and play for Tom Merry's team. Mr. Selby gives hot chase in the Head's private car, and in doing so falls into grievous danger, from which he is extricated by

"D'ARCY'S DARING"

and resource. I can assure my Gemite chums that they will fairly revel in Martin Clifford's latest production.

A TOUCHING EPISTLE.

Most of the letters in my daily postbag are of a bright and entertaining order, but occasionally a touch of tragedy is introduced, as shown by the following communication:

"Dear Editor, This is the first time I have had the pleasure of writing to you, and, having got over my 'blushfulness,' I sincerely hope it will not be the last.

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OUT TO-DAY!



FRANK NUGENT,
Art Editor.



H. VERNON-SMITH,
Sports Editor.



HARRY WHARTON,
Editor.



ROBERT CHERRY,
Fighting Editor.



MARK LINLEY,
Sub-Editor.

BUY
IT
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**The GREYFRIARS 1^D
HERALD. 2**

No. 6. Vol. 1.
Week Ending
Dec. 25th, 1915.

Edited by Harry Wharton & Co of Study 1. Greyfriars School.

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OUR POPULAR ONE-WEEK COMPETITION FOR BOYS AND GIRLS!

D P C A ERY IN THE OF A
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OFF HIS S & WARDS IT WAS BY A
FOR EIG N 8 P F W W CLE AR ED
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GRAND TUCK HAMPERS AS
PRIZES! FIRST LIST OF
PRIZE-WINNERS in this issue.

The Most Novel Paper Ever
Published!

The Paper With
"The Magnet Library"
Behind It!



THIS WEEK'S CHAT



Whom to Write to —
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 OUR · THREE · COMPANION · PAPERS!
 "THE MAGNET" THE "PENNY CHUCKLES."
 — LIBRARY — — POPULAR — — 1/2°
 EVERY MONDAY | EVERY FRIDAY | EVERY SATURDAY.

For Next Wednesday:

"D'ARCY'S DARING!"

By Martin Clifford.

The immortal Arthur Augustus takes the leading part in next Wednesday's grand, long, complete story of St. Jim's. Maddened by an injustice meted out to his younger brother, Gussy enters into warfare with Mr. Selby, the sour, thin-lipped master of the Third. The feud between master and boy reaches a truly alarming stage, especially when the swell of St. Jim's, having been confined to Nobody's Study, alias the puni vaunt-room, escapes in daring fashion, to go over to Rookwood and play for Tom Merry's team. Mr. Selby gives hot chase in the Head's private car, and in doing so falls into grievous danger, from which he is extricated by

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