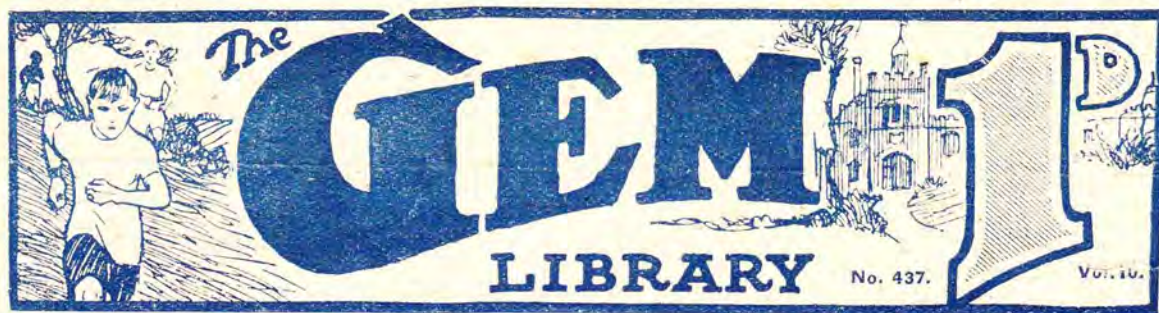


A STRANGE SECRET!

A Magnificent New, Long, Complete Tale of School Life at St. Jim's.



**THREE OF OUR READERS FROM
BONNIE SCOTLAND!**



THIS WEEK'S CHAT



Whom to Write to —
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For Next Wednesday:

"A SCHOOLBOY'S SACRIFICE!"

By Martin Clifford.

In the grand, long, complete story which will appear next week, a prominent part is played by George Wilkins, the staunch supporter of the great George Alfred Grundy. These two fall out through a foolish misunderstanding, and poor Wilkins, seeking new quarters, is taken in and—very nearly—done for by Ernest Levison. Things are looking very black indeed for Wilkins. Expulsion threatens him. But he is saved by the self-sacrifice of a chum—the only fellow who has stood by him through his troubles—Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. D'Arcy takes on the burden of guilt, and leaves St. Jim's in disgrace on the night of a tremendous storm. Of the way in which his three chums, with Wilkins, Grundy, and Wally D'Arcy, go in search of him on the downs; of how Grundy and Wilkins fall into deadly peril, and of how Wilkins redeemed his character by his heroism. All this you will read in the great story of

"A SCHOOLBOY'S SACRIFICE!"

A WOUNDED CHUM.

Only a short time ago I gave among the notices one from Private Fisher, of the Northants Regiment, asking for a mouth-organ. To-day I have heard from his younger brother, with much regret, that Private Fisher has been dangerously wounded in France. His mother has gone to him. My informant writes that both his brother and he have been readers of the "Gem" and "Magnet" ever since they first appeared, and he says that if his brother should recover, as I hope most sincerely he will, nothing would delight him more than to see that the Editor of the dear old papers should have thought it worth while to write a few words about him for one of them. We will all hope that our friend Fisher may read this, and go on to read another few hundred issues of the "Gem," at least.

PRaise OF THE "GEM" FROM INDIA.

A most interesting letter has reached me from a reader in Bombay, who claims that, though she is a married woman, no boy could possibly be keener on the "Gem" than she is. Nor is she alone in this keenness. Her friends also read and admire the paper, and they have many arguments as to their favourite characters. My correspondent puts that staunch fellow Figgins first; but some of her friends give Tom Merry an easy first place, because he is so good-looking, and has such beautiful blue eyes! Well, well! Tom is put first by many readers at home, of course, but scarcely for those reasons. I am almost ashamed to confess that I could not have answered off-hand a query as to the colour of his eyes. I shall remember in future, however.

NOTICES.

Will any boys not over 15 who want to join a cricket team at Portsmouth write either to V. Thomas, 2, Longs Road Landport, or to W. Palmer, 10, Funtington Copner, Portsmouth, enclosing stamped and addressed envelopes?

Private A. E. Nobbs, 19360, 13 Platoon, D Coy., 8th Battalion, Royal Berks Regiment, B.E.F., France, would like back and current issues of the Companion Papers.

L. Dennison, c/o Mr. Stepan Iplieian, 3, Chapstow Street, Manchester, wants to buy the numbers of the "Gem" containing "Cousin Ethel's Schooldays."

A. Fletcher, 65, Netherfield Lane, Parkgate, Rotherham, wants to buy the numbers of the "Gem" containing "Figgins' Fig-Pudding" and "Figgins' Folly," and the number of the "Magnet" of "The Sunday Crusaders."

H. Nelson, 44, Lawson Street, Maryport, Cumberland, wishes to get the number of the "Gem" containing "Tom Merry in the Rockies."

G. H. Cayton, 174, Doncaster Road, Wath-on-Deerne, wishes to form a "Gem" and "Magnet" League, and will be glad to hear from anyone in the neighbourhood interested. He also wants to buy back numbers of both the "Gem" and "Magnet" between 200-300.

Miss Elsie Gott, Westholme, Stocks Lane, Chester, wants the "Gem" containing "Figgins' Fig-Pudding."

Private H. Carrick, A Company, 7th Battalion, 2nd Infantry Brigade, A.I.F., France, would be glad to correspond with readers, and to have the "Gem," "Magnet," and "Penny Popular," both current and recent back numbers.

S. H., 23, St. Vincent Street, Stoke, Devonport, wants to buy "Through Thick and Thin."

John Roberts, H.M.S. Partridge II., c/o, G.P.O., London, asks for back and current numbers of the "Gem" and "Magnet."

K. G. Jones, Westleigh, 37, Paget Road, Wolverhampton, wants the issue of the "Gem" containing "The St. Jim's Airmen."

S. Goldberg, 179, Westgate Road, Newcastle-on-Tyne, wants to buy the following Nos. of the "Boys' Journal"—27, 30, 32, 35, 37, 38, 39, 41, 42, 43, 48, 49, and 50.

Private R. E. John, 26945, C Company, 10th (S.) Battalion, Welsh Regiment, B.E.F., France, would be glad to correspond with a girl reader.

L. J. Haynes, 12, River View, New Berry, Cheshire, will send particulars of the Correspondence Club he has started to any reader over 16 who will forward a stamped and addressed envelope.

W. R. Penrose, 9, Salecombe Terrace, Plymouth, wants to buy both "Gems" and "Magnets" of the 1d. series.

A. Bland, 22, Berners Road, Wood Green, N., is forming a social club in his district, and would be glad to hear from any reader who would care to join.

E. Fisher, 59, Costa Street, Middlesboro', and W. J. Sagar, 29, Surrey Street, Middlesboro', are joint Hon. Secs. of the Allies' Correspondence Club, and would be glad to hear from any reader wishing to join. Speciality—correspondence in foreign languages. Stamped and addressed envelopes, please!

Andrew Kershaw, Sea Scout, H.M. Coastguard Station, Norman's Bay, Pevensy, Sussex, would be glad to have letters and papers from fellow-readers, or to meet any of them—ages 15-16—living near his station.

H. Patrick, 47, Ilfley Road, Hammersmith, W., wants to form a local "Gem" and "Magnet" League, and would be glad if anyone interested would apply to his address.

Eric W. McLean, 53, Manchester Road, Altrincham, would be glad to hear from any artistic readers who would help in illustrating an amateur magazine.

Miss Irene Hetherington, 40, Flambray Road, Bridlington, would be much obliged if any reader would let her have a copy of the "Gem" containing "Figgins' Fig-Pudding."

Benjamin Athletic C.C. want home and away matches with junior teams. Hon. Sec., W. R. Tanner, 7, Warner Street, Barnsley, N.

Rifflman J. Banks, K.R.R., Salonika Forces, thanks heartily all readers who have written, and will answer them all as soon as he can.

G. Edwards, 22, Level Street, Brierly Hill, wants to form a "Gem" and "Magnet" League locally, and will be glad to hear from any readers interested.

George Mitchell, 3, Peely Street, Belfast, has formed a "Gem" and "Magnet" League, open to readers anywhere in the U.K., and would be glad to hear from anyone who cares to join.

Private H. H. Evans, 10607, B Company, 7th South Staffs Regiment, Egyptian Expeditionary Force, wishes to thank readers who sent papers. He and his chums would be ever so much obliged to anyone who would forward a mouth-organ.

Your Editor

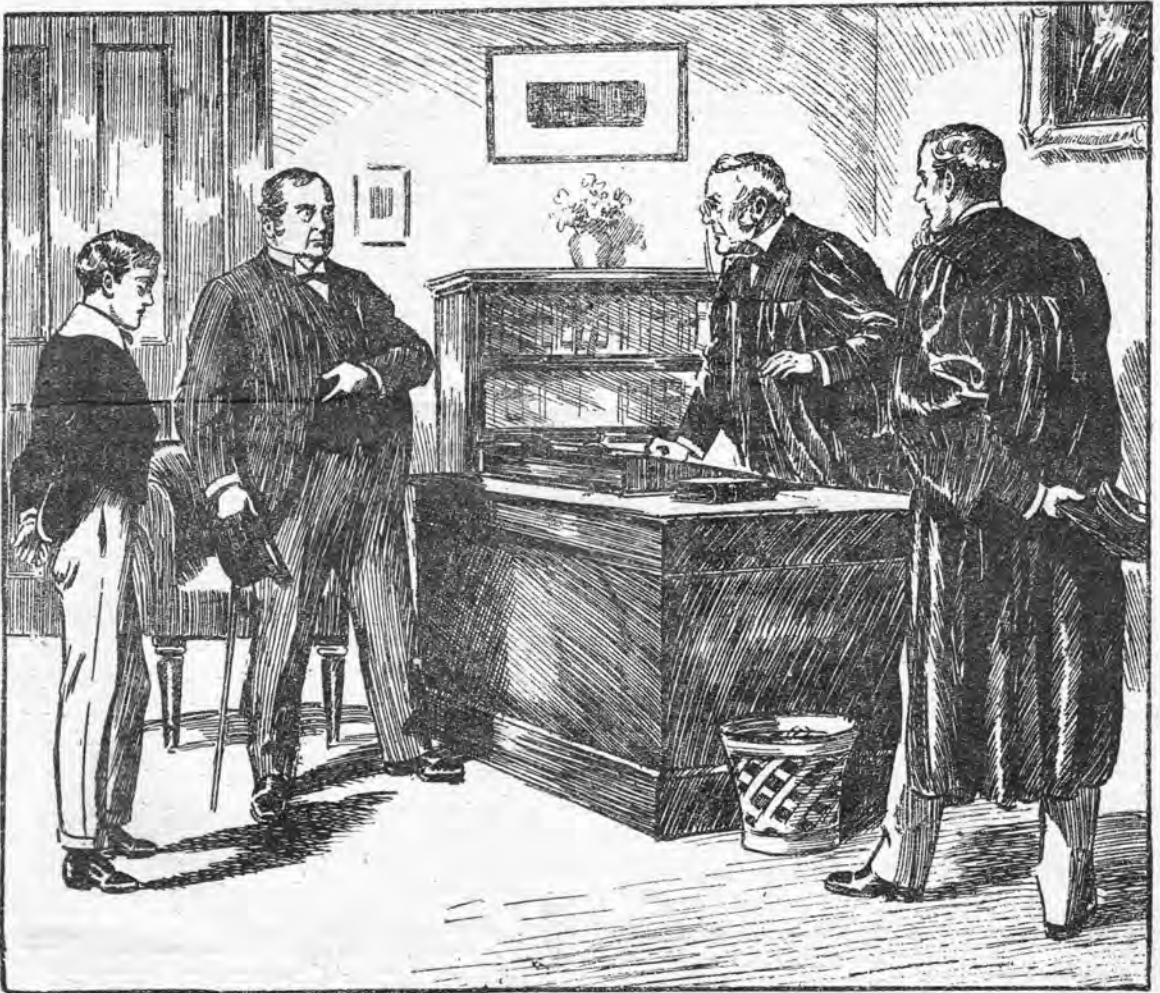
PUBLISHED IN TOWN
AND COUNTRY EVERY
WEDNESDAY MORNING



COMPLETE STORIES
FOR ALL, AND EVERY
STORY A GEM!

A STRANGE SECRET!

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



"I must tell you facts," said Mr. Hawes, "and the facts are, that this boy's real name is George Purkiss, and that last year he was a prisoner in Hilehall Reformatory." "Impossible!" exclaimed Dr. Holmes.
(See Chapter 5.)

CHAPTER 1. The Funk's Champion.

"FUNK!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had just come out of the School House with his new chum, Outram of the Fourth, when that offensive word smote his ears.

Arthur Augustus looked round, his eye glittering through his eyeglass. Pratt of the New House was grinning at him from the quad, and as he caught D'Arcy's eye he repeated cheerfully:

"Yah! Funk!"

The remark was not meant for Arthur Augustus. Nobody at St. Jim's would have dreamed of calling the swell of the Fourth a funk. It was addressed to his companion, Outram of the Fourth, the new boy at St. Jim's. And the fellow to whom it was addressed flushed slightly, but did not speak, or otherwise take notice of the offensive Pratt.

"Pway excuse me a moment, Outwam, deah boy, while I thwash that wottah," said Arthur Augustus, with aristocratic deliberation.

Outram caught his arm.

"Never mind him!" he said hurriedly.

"Wats! I'm goin' to thwash him!"

Arthur Augustus shook off Outram's detaining hand, and

Next Wednesday,

"A SCHOOLBOY'S SACRIFICE!" AND "INTO THE UNKNOWN!"

bore down on Pratt of the New House. Pratt stood his ground, grinning.

"Why don't your friend the funk speak up for himself?" inquired Pratt.

Arthur Augustus did not reply. He pushed back his cuffs and sailed in. Pratt did not have time to ask any more questions; he had plenty to do to defend himself from D'Arcy's onslaughts. In a moment they were fighting hammer and tongs.

Biff, biff! Tramp, tramp, tramp!

"Hallo! What's the row?" Tom Merry of the Shell came out of the School House with Manners and Lowther. "Gussy going it again!"

"Go it, Gussy!" said Lowther encouragingly.

"Mop him up!" said Manners. "Give the New House bouncer one for me!"

It did not take long for a crowd to collect. "Scraps" were not uncommon at St. Jim's. But a fight just outside the School House, almost under the Housemaster's window, was rather unusual. Some thoughtful and considerate fellows gathered between the combatants and the house, with the idea of screening the fight as much as possible from Mr. Railton's window.

"You uttah wottah, take that!"

"You School-House cad, take that!"

Tramp, tramp, tramp, tramp!

"Gussy again!" exclaimed Jack Blake, as he arrived on the scene with Herries and Digby. "Gussy, you ass! This is the tenth time this week!"

"Gussy, you fathead!" yelled Herries. "You'll have Railton out in a minute!"

"Wats!"

Arthur Augustus had Pratt's head in chancery by this time, and was pommelling valorously. Pratt was roaring, and pounding at Gussy's noble ribs. Both the combatants were quite reckless of Housemasters now.

"Drag 'em apart!" said Tom Merry. "What's the blessed row about?"

"Pratt called Outram a funk!" grinned Crooke of the Shell. "Gussy's fighting his battles, as usual. The funk can't stand up for himself."

Outram's cheeks burned, but he did not speak. Tom Merry gave him a glance of contempt.

"Stop them!" he said. "Railton will be out in a minute!"

"Here he comes!" said Lowther.

"Cave!"

But the two fighting-men were too excited to heed the warning. They were still struggling and hammering furiously when Mr. Railton strode upon the scene, his brow dark with anger. The crowd parted to allow the Housemaster to approach.

"D'Arcy! Pratt!" thundered Mr. Railton. "Cease at once!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Oh, lor!" gasped Pratt.

The two combatants separated at last, gasping for breath and looking very flushed and untidy. Mr. Railton surveyed them with a thunderous brow.

"Now, what does this mean?" he exclaimed sternly. "How dare you fight in the quadrangle, under my very windows!"

"Bai Jove! I'm sorry sir!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"I think you were to blame, D'Arcy. From my window I saw you attack Pratt."

"I weally had no choice in the mattah, sir. Pwatt applied an oppwobvious epithet to a fwient of mine, so I was bound to thwash him."

"You have been concerned in a number of disturbances during the past week, D'Arcy. You seem to me to be a quarrelsome boy."

"Oh, no, sir! Not at all, sir! Büt I cannot allow the boundahs to apply oppwobvious wemarks to a fwient of mine!"

Mr. Railton stared at the swell of St. Jim's.

"Am I to understand, D'Arcy, that you take it upon yourself to fight battles for all your friends?"

"Nunno! Not exactly, sir. I'm standin' up for Outwam."

Mr. Railton glanced at Outram.

"And why, D'Arcy?"

"Because—because I feel it a dutay, sir!" said Arthur Augustus, mopping his nose with his handkerchief. "Outwam is a chap with vevy high pwinciples—"

"What?"

"His pwinciples pwevent him fwoni fightin', sir," explained Arthur Augustus. "Some of the fellahs wegard him as a funk. But, as a fellah of tact and judgment, I have a gweat respect for him. I do not pwofess to undahstand his wemarkable pwinciples, but I wespert pwinciples on—on pwinciple."

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sir. So, as Outwam does not thwash the wottahs, sir, I thwash them for him; so it is all wight."

Some of the juniors grinned. Mr. Railton looked very curiously at Arthur Augustus.

"And is this the reason why you have been concerned in so many disturbances of late, D'Arcy? The matter has been reported to me."

"Yaas, sir. I am not at all quawwelsome."

"Such quixotic conduct is likely to cause as much trouble as if you were quarrelsome, D'Arcy. You will take two hundred lines. Pratt, I shall report you to your Housemaster."

"Yaas, sir!" said D'Arcy respectfully. And Pratt grunted.

Mr. Railton, looking somewhat perplexed, returned to the house. Arthur Augustus continued to mop his noble nose.

"Two hundred lines!" he said. "That's wathah wuff for thwashin' a New House wottah!"

"Thrashing your grandmother!" snorted Pratt. "You couldn't thrash me in ten years!"

"Why, you cheeky wottah—"

"Bow-wow!" said Pratt.

It looked as if the combat would recommence; but Tom Merry & Co. pushed in between the foemen.

"You cut off, Pratt!" said Tom Merry. "You want bumping for coming on the respectable side of the quad. I give you two seconds!"

The two seconds were enough for Pratt. He did not want to be bumped. He disappeared towards the New House.

"As for you, Gussy," continued the captain of the Shell severely, "I've a jolly good mind to bump you!"

"I should wufese to be bumped, Tom Mewvy."

"You silly ass!" growled Blake. "You're getting into scraps every day. If Outram doesn't mind being called a funk, what do you want to chip in for?"

"I wegard it as a dutay, Blake!"

"Fathead!"

"I wufese to argue the mattah with you, Blake! I am goin' to bathe my nose!"

"Well, it needs it, ass!"

Arthur Augustus went into the house with his handkerchief to his nose. It certainly did need bathing. Outram, with a gloomy brow, followed him in, and went to his study.

"I'm jolly well fed-up with this!" growled Blake. "That fellow could stand up for himself if he liked, only he's a rotten funk! Gussy ought to chuck him!"

"No good arguing with him!" snorted Herries. "Instead of chucking him, he's made us take him up! That's the kind of obstinate mule he is!"

"I wish he's get out of St. Jim's!" growled Digby. "What does he want here, anyway? This isn't the proper place for funks!"

"According to Levison, he's going soon!" grinned Monty Lowther. "Levison's uncle's coming to-day."

"Oh, blow Levison and his uncle!" said Blake. "I jolly well wish Levison's yarn about him was true, then he'd have to go!"

"Cheer up, and let's get down to cricket!" said Tom Merry.

The juniors went down to cricket; but Jack Blake was still looking grumpy. It was a thorn in Blake's side that his noble chum persisted in keeping up his friendship with the funk of the Fourth.

It was a disgrace to Study No. 6, and Blake & Co. had quarrelled with Gussy about it; but as D'Arcy was as firm as a rock, or as obstinate as a mule, they had come round, and agreed to make friends with Outram themselves. But, as Blake said, Study No. 6 did not like funks, and they tolerated Outram only for D'Arcy's sake, and they were growing very exasperated with Arthur Augustus.

CHAPTER 2.

The Accident.

LEVISON of the Fourth was in his study when Percy Mellish came in, grinning.

Levison was busy. He had a sporting paper open on the table, and was making pencil marks in it, while he smoked a cigarette. Such were Levison's agreeable manners and customs. He thrust the cigarette and the paper behind him quickly as the door opened, but they came into view as he saw that it was only Mellish.

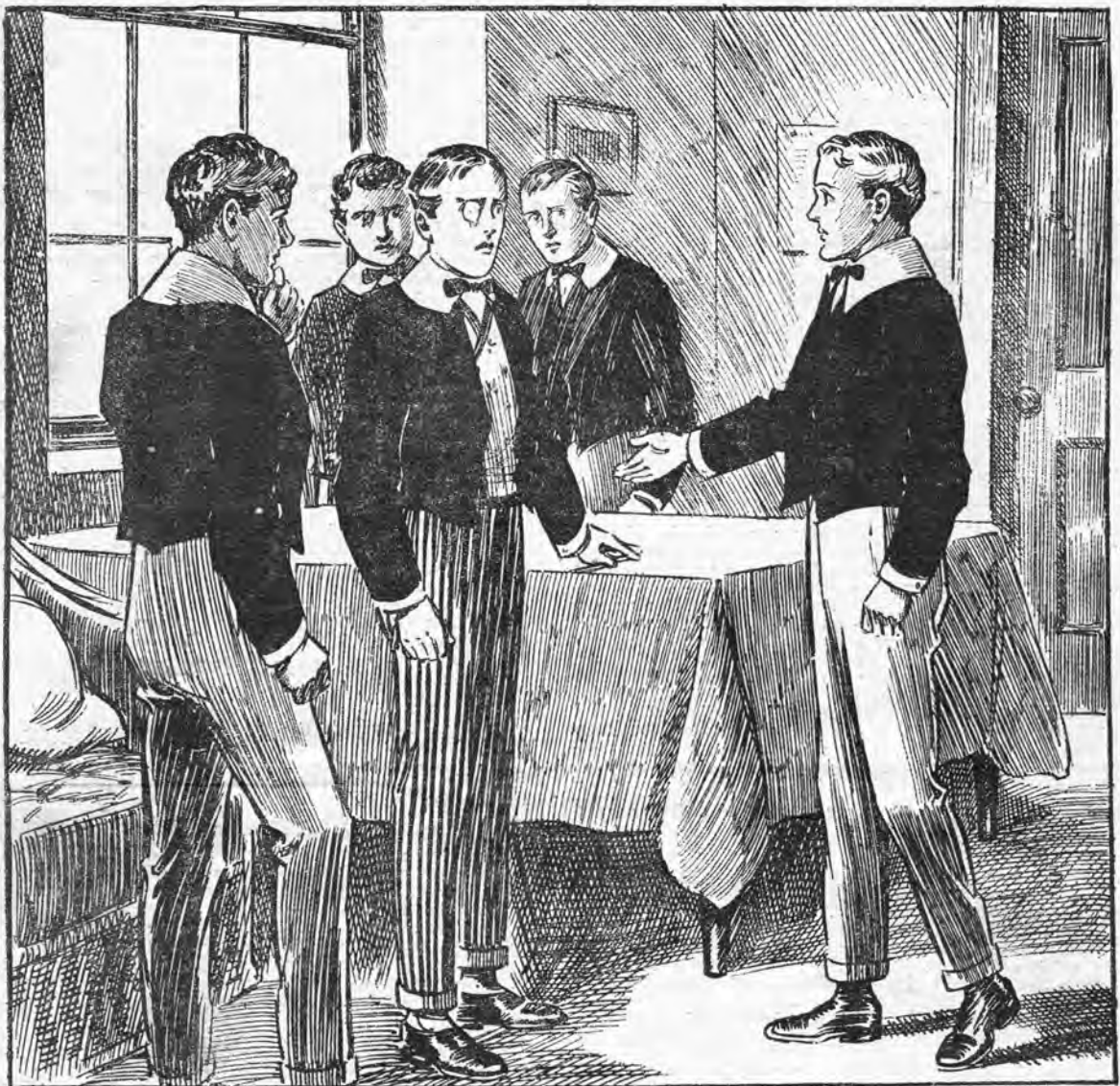
"Shut that door!" he growled.

Mellish closed the door, with a chuckle.

"Did you think it was a prefect?" he said.

"Oh, rats!"

"How are you getting on with Weekes, the bookie?" grinned Mellish. "I hear that Blake and his pals found you with him the other day, and gave you a hiding each. Is it true?"



"I must go!" said Outram. "I have already told Mr. Railton the truth. I am going to leave St. Jim's in the morning, and—and I'd like you to think the best you can of me!" "We shall always think of you as a splendid chap," said Tom Merry. (See Chapter 13.)

"Mind your own business!"

"I heard Dig speaking of it," said Mellish, laughing. "Blake licked you, while Gussy laid into the bookie with a big stick! He, he, he!"

"They may be sorry for it before long!" snapped Levison. "What was that row about in the quad?"

"Oh, Outram again! Pratt called him a funk, and Gussy went for him. The silly ass has had a fight every day for a week past!"

Levison smiled cynically.

"That cad Purkiss is keeping the game up well," he remarked. "But he's going to be bowled out to-day."

Mellish yawned.

"Still on that yarn?" he said.

"You don't believe it?"

"Of course I don't! Nobody does. The fellows think you've taken a dislike to Outram, and made up that yarn about him. That's the kind of reputation you've got!" grinned Mellish.

"Why should I dislike him?"

"D'Arcy says it's because Outram's a decent chap, and you're a rotter!" said Mellish cheerfully. "He says it's natural for a rotter to dislike a decent chap. I suppose he's about right—what?"

"Oh, don't be funny!" snarled Levison. "All the fellows

are down on Outram, and yet they're down on me for telling the truth about him."

"Telling whoppers, you mean! What's the good of keeping it up? You've said that Outram is an impostor—that his real name is Murkiss, or something."

"Purkiss—George Purkiss!"

"Well, Purkiss—and that he was a prisoner in Hiltall Reformatory last year, where your uncle's boss, and was there because he half-killed a man in a row at Brighton."

"That's the truth!"

Mellish laughed heartily.

"Well, what's the good of asking chaps to believe such a yarn, when the fellow's a funk and afraid of his own shadow? A chap who half-killed a grown man in a fight, and was sent to a reformatory for it—would he let a kid call him a funk and punch him? According to your yarn, he's a regular ruffian, and he must have plenty of pluck, at least. And the whole school knows that he's a sneaking funk."

"That's his little game," said Levison. "I tell you that kid is as strong as a horse, and a splendid boxer, and he could knock out Kildare of the Sixth if he liked!"

"Ha, ha! And he let me punch his nose without hitting back!"

"That's his game, I tell you. He's come here under a false name, and he doesn't mean to get known as a fighting-

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NEXT WEDNESDAY: **"A SCHOOLBOY'S SACRIFICE!"**

man. That would be evidence that he was really Purkiss of Hilstall Reformatory. He's playing the part of a quiet and peaceable chap, so as to make the distinction clear. Don't you see?"

"Well, he might within reason, but not to the extent of having his nose punched. A chap would only take that if he was a real funk!"

"Well, there's going to be proof this afternoon," said Levison. "My uncle, the governor of Hilstall, is coming here."

"My hat! You've been ass enough to write that idiotic yarn to your uncle?"

"Every word! I've told him that George Purkiss, his prisoner last year, is at St. Jim's, posing as a new boy, under the name of Valentine Outram. He was jolly surprised to hear it, and he's coming to see the Head. He's coming in his car this afternoon."

"Well, he must be an ass to take any notice of such a yarn!" commented Mellish. "He can't know what a whopper-merchant his nephew is."

"I've sent him a photograph of Outram," said Levison sourly. "I took it with Julian's camera last week when the cad wasn't looking. I've got his letter here. He says he recognises the photograph as that of Purkiss!"

"There must be a likeness, then."

"It isn't a case of a likeness—he's the chap!" said Levison. "And when my uncle comes, you'll see that Purkiss will be bowled out!"

"I shall see that you'll get into a row," said Mellish. "You told your yarn to Railton, and he proved conclusively that Outram's what he says he is. He told you you'd be licked if you said any more on the subject."

"I'm risking that. It will be all right when I've proved it's true. I'm doing this from a sense of duty, of course!"

"Oh, of course!" grinned Mellish. "What a chap you are for sticking to a yarn, Levison! How do you account for Major Outram thinking this chap is his son, and Sir Robert Outram believing he's his nephew?"

"Purkiss has done them somehow."

"Then there must be a real Outram, who's been done away with, as this chap has come in his name?"

"Of course!"

"Then what's become of him? I suppose the genuine Outram wouldn't stay away and let a chap named Purkiss come here in his place?"

"He may have been kidnapped—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Or murdered!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Mellish.

Levison rose angrily to his feet.

"Well, you'll jolly well see this afternoon!" he exclaimed. "Mr. Hawes—that's my uncle—will recognise him, and tell the Head so. That will be the finish! Time my uncle was here, too! I'll get down to the gates and meet him!"

"I'll come with you," said Mellish, following Levison from the study. "By the way, do you know what Lowther was saying—"

"Hang Lowther!"

"He says that if you keep on with Weekes, the bookie, and your other nobby friends, you'll soon have to go and stay with your uncle for good!" chuckled Mellish. "Lowther says it's lucky you've got a reformatory in the family! He, he, he!"

"Oh, shut up!"

Levison scowled as he made his way to the school gates. Whether it was a sense of duty, as he said, or malice, the cad of the Fourth persisted grimly in his strange accusation against the new boy. Since Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had chummed with Outram, however, Levison had not ventured to call Outram by the name of Purkiss, or to repeat his story in public. He had received one tremendous licking from the warlike Gusey, and one was enough for him.

But Gusey's drastic measures only made Levison more determined to prove his case, and show up the "reformatory ruffian," as he called Outram, before the whole school.

Outram was generally regarded with contempt as a hopeless funk, and perhaps a plausible story against him might have found credence for that reason. But that the funk of the School House had been a dangerous ruffian, sent to a reformatory for injuring a man in a fight, was altogether too "steep." Levison might as well have accused him of being a German spy. The mere idea was so absurd that it was hardly necessary for Outram to prove his identity, but he had, as a matter of fact, proved it conclusively.

Both he and his people were personally known to Mr. Railton, and that settled the point, if anything could.

Even Levison's own friends laughed at the story, and advised him to think of something better. It was scarcely possible to think of Outram, the funk of the Fourth, as

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George Purkiss, the dangerous young ruffian who had fought with a warder at Hilstall Reformatory.

Levison and Mellish looked out of the gates. It was time for Mr. Hawes of Hilstall to arrive. Mellish was grinning. His opinion was that Mr. Hawes would have his journey for his pains, and that he would "jaw" his nephew for bringing him to St. Jim's for nothing.

A small motor-car came in sight from the direction of Rylecombe. It was speeding along the road at a great rate. There was only one man seated in it, driving. Levison uttered an exclamation:

"That's my uncle's car!"

Mr. Hawes was evidently in haste. The car came whizzing along the road, and Mellish uttered a sharp exclamation as a big market-cart turned out of a field into the road.

"Great Scott! There'll be an accident!"

Levison turned pale.

The carter had not seen the car, and the big market-cart almost filled the road directly in the path of the rushing motorist, who was certainly exceeding the legal speed-limit.

The two juniors gazed on spell-bound.

It seemed inevitable that the motor-car must dash fairly into the big vehicle blocking the road.

"He'll be killed!" panted Levison.

Crash!

The motorist had seen his danger. He jammed on his brakes, and turned the car into the grassy bank by the roadside.

With horrified eyes the two juniors watched the car climb the bank and roll over. There was a crash and a sharp cry. The motor-car lay on its side, and the motorist was pinned beneath it.

CHAPTER 3.

In the Shadow of Death!

"HELP"

Levison uttered the shout as he ran down the road towards the overturned car. The lad in charge of the market-cart was staring blankly at the wrecked car. Mellish ran back into the quadrangle, calling for help, and a crowd of St. Jim's fellows came from all sides. The news of the accident interrupted the cricket practice, and Tom Merry & Co., still in flannels, came crowding out into the road.

Levison had reached the car, and was looking at his uncle with horrified eyes. The governor of Hilstall was pinned under the car, but, as if by a miracle, he was not crushed. He had fallen in a hollow of the soft, grassy bank, and the car was across him, pressing him down; but the hollow into which he had sunk had saved him from most of the weight. But the soft earth was yielding under the heavy car, which was sinking lower almost visibly, and the white face of the pinned man was full of horror and the fear of death.

"Uncle!" panted Levison.

The sudden, tragic occurrence had unnerved the junior, cool as he was usually. He stared at his uncle with helpless apprehension.

"Get help!" the governor of Hilstall muttered hoarsely.

"Help!"

"Help!" shouted Levison.

The St. Jim's fellows were gathering round now, in an excited crowd.

Tom Merry was first on the spot.

"For Heaven's sake, get the car moved somehow!" pleaded Levison. "It's my uncle!"

Tom Merry knitted his brows.

There were enough of the juniors to drag the car down the sloping bank, but to move it was fearfully risky for the pinned motorist. The slightest slip would throw the full weight upon him, which meant instant death.

The unfortunate man understood his danger.

"Be careful!" he muttered. He had kept his coolness, though the shadow of death was upon him. "If the car slips, I'm a dead man! Be careful!"

"We must move it somehow," said Tom, his face very white.

"It's sinking on me!" gasped the governor. "It's harder every moment. I shall have to take the risk."

"If—if somebody could push under it, and shove it upwards a bit!" muttered Jack Blake.

"Who could shift that weight?" said Tom.

"Impossible!" said Mr. Hawes. "Besides, the risk is too great. 'Lift the car away as best you can, and I must take my chance.'"

"Hold on!"

It was a quiet voice. Outram of the Fourth had joined the crowd.

TUCK HAMPER'S ARE GIVEN AWAY TO READERS OF THE "BOYS' FRIEND," 1st.

Even at that terrible moment, the eyes of the governor of Hilstall turned upon Outram's face, with a startled look. Evidently he recognised the junior, or fancied that he did.

But Outram hardly glanced at him.

"You cannot drag the car away without crushing him," said Outram.

"You got back!" said Blake gruffly. "Funks are no good here!"

"Yes, clear off, Outram!" said Tom Merry.

"I think I can help him," said Outram quietly.

"You!"

Outram nodded.

"If someone got under the car—there is room in that hollow beside him—and raised the weight on his shoulders—he could crawl out. I think I could do it."

"You!" shouted Blake. "Are you as strong as a horse, you fathead?"

"I think I am strong enough."

"This isn't time for gas!" growled Herries. "A chap who crawled under the car would pretty certainly get crushed as soon as it moved."

"I shall risk that."

"You—you risk it!"

"Yes; give me room."

Outram dropped on his knees beside the overturned car.

The St. Jim's fellows watched him almost dazedly. Tom Merry caught him by the shoulder.

"Outram! You can't! The risk's too great——"

"Let me go!"

"And you can't do it; you're not strong enough. I'm stronger than you are, and I couldn't move that weight from underneath!"

Outram smiled faintly.

"Let him alone!" muttered Levison. "He can do it—he's strong enough. He's as strong as any two chaps here."

The juniors fell silent.

If Outram of the Fourth was indeed George Purkiss, the reformatory ruffian, as Levison had declared, doubtless he was able to carry out that task which required strength which even Tom Merry, athletic as he was, did not possess.

Was it possible—was it possible that Levison's accusation was true?

No hand was raised now to stop Outram.

With perfect coolness, though his handsome face was pale, the funk of the Fourth squeezed himself into the hollow beside the pinned motorist. There was easy room for the slim form of the junior. The stout, middle-aged governor of Hilstall was pinned beneath the car and the yielding earth, but the slim junior glided into the space beside him without difficulty.

The juniors watched him spellbound.

Was this the funk of the Fourth—this the fellow who had taken a blow from Mellish without a word—who had been ragged and despised for his want of courage—this fellow who was calmly facing the risk of a fearful death?

Outram was fairly under the car now.

With his back and shoulders against it, he was exerting his strength to rise on his knees, and thus raise the weight higher.

The juniors grasped the car, and lent him what aid they could.

The great mass moved.

The strength exerted by the junior underneath was amazing—incredible in a lad of his years. The car moved.

Slowly but surely it rose, till it was clear of the man who was pinned in the hollow of the bank.

Half a dozen hands grasped the governor of Hilstall, and helped him to drag himself from beneath the car.

He sank down exhausted on the grassy bank.

At this moment Mr. Railton arrived on the scene.

Outram, flat on the soft earth in the hollow, was crawling out into view, the car sinking to its former level. But there was room for the slim, wiry form of the junior to emerge.

The Housemaster stared at him blankly.

"Outram!" he gasped.

Tom Merry gripped Outram as he emerged, and helped him to his feet. The junior's face was deadly pale, and his eyes had a glazed look. The terrible exertion had told on him. His breath came in long, shuddering gasps.

"Not hurt, old chap?" exclaimed Blake. It was the first time he had called the funk of the School House "old chap."

Outram shook his head without speaking.

"Outram," said Mr. Railton, in a moved voice, "my dear lad, you have shown wonderful courage!"

"And he's a funk!" muttered Herries, half-unconsciously.

"Not much of a funk, I think!" said Tom Merry.

"The boy has saved my life," said the governor of Hilstall. "Heaven be thanked that he was not injured!"

"It's Purkiss, uncle!" muttered Levison. "It's the fellow you came to see."

"He saved my life!" repeated Mr. Hawes.

"But—but you're going to see the Head?" said Levison.

"Can I help you in, uncle?"

Mr. Railton helped the governor of Hilstall to rise, and Mr. Hawes disappeared in at the school gates with him. Levison followed slowly.

Tom Merry & Co. surrounded Outram, who was leaning on the car, breathing heavily.

"Feel done up?" asked Figgins.

Outram nodded.

"What have you been pretending to be a funk for?" demanded Monty Lowther warmly. "What was the little game, you ass?"

Outram smiled slightly.

"I told you I was not a funk," he said.

"But you acted like one. You let Mellish—a worm like Mellish—punch your nose, and didn't slaughter him!" exclaimed Manners. "And you risked your blessed life for a stranger!"

"You might have been killed, Outram," said Tom Merry quietly.

"I know."

"And—and you weren't afraid?"

"No."

"But where did you get that dashed strength from?" exclaimed Herries. "Why, I couldn't have shifted that weight, or half of it!"

"You must be as strong as a horse!" said Tom Merry, with an odd look at Outram. "You could handle all those chaps who were ragging you, the giddy lot together, if you liked!"

"I know."

"Then why didn't you?"

"I've told you that I'm not a fighting-chap."

"Oh, I'm blest if I understand you!" said Tom impatiently. "You won't fight a fellow you could lick easily, and you'll risk your life to save a stranger! I give you up!"

"Blest if it doesn't look——" began Crooke of the Shell, and then he paused. Crooke had always been one of the new junior's persecutors; but even Crooke felt a little remorse now.

But the juniors understood what was in his mind.

Levison had maintained that Outram was playing a part—that he was stronger than any fellow at St. Jim's, that he was not a funk, that his whole game was to make clear a distinction between himself and George Purkiss of Hilstall!

Outram read easily the thoughts in the minds of the juniors, and a bitter smile came over his face. Without a word he turned and walked away. Tom Merry & Co. exchanged an uneasy glance.

"He's a splendid chap!" said Tom, after an awkward pause.

"And he's not a funk!" said Blake.

"No fear! I don't think anybody will call him a funk after this."

"But—but this bears out what Levison has always been saying."

"But the fellow proved that he was Outram, and not Purkiss," said Tom decidedly. "That's been clearly proved. Levison is a liar, all the same. But I think even Levison will shut up now. That man Outram saved is Levison's uncle, and he had brought him here to show Outram up, as he calls it. A reformatory hooligan would not risk his life to save another fellow's—especially the life of a man who had come to denounce him."

"Not likely!"

"Outram's true blue! And if Levison says another word against him we'll scrag him!"

The juniors returned to the school in a puzzled frame of mind. Their opinion of Outram had improved, but he puzzled them more than ever. Arthur Augustus, who prided himself upon his judgment, had always believed that Outram's "principles" kept him from fighting, and that he was not a funk. Principles of that unusual kind were not very well understood by the St. Jim's fellows. But they had to admit now that the great Gussy was right—unless, indeed, the character Outram had assumed at St. Jim's was a blind, as Levison averred. And even Tom Merry, though he strove to drive the suspicion from his mind, was haunted by it—the suspicion that the cad of the Fourth had been right, after all, in his accusation, and that Valentine Outram had come to St. Jim's under false colours.

ANSWERS

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NEXT WEDNESDAY! "A SCHOOLBOY'S SACRIFICE!"

CHAPTER 4.

Levison Asks For It!

ARTHR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY smiled. He really could not help smiling. The swell of St. Jim's had been busily engaged in bathing his noble nose during the excitement of the motor accident. When he came into public view again, he found all St. Jim's talking about it. He hunted up Blake and Herries and Dig, and learned the particulars from them.

Then he smiled. It was a lofty smile—the smile of a fellow of tact and judgment who had been right all along the line, and had seen things which were hidden from less powerful intellects.

"I won't say I told you so, deah boys—" began Arthur Augustus.

"No, don't!" growled Blake. "Certainly not, deah boy! I won't pile it on!" said Arthur Augustus magnanimously. "But pewwaps you chaps will admit now that I was wight?"

"Oh, rats!" "I pwesume that you do not still considah Outwam a funk?"

"Well, we can't!" said Herries. "He can't be a funk to do what he's done."

"He has an objection to fightin', you know—it's a case of pwinciple, as I have told you fellahs sewveral times. I saw it all along, and did him justice. That is why he has nevah licked Cwooke or Mellish for their beastly impertinence."

"Blest if I understand it!" said Blake, with a shake of the head. "Unless Levison was telling the truth by accident."

"What has Levison to do with it?"

"He says Outram is really George Purkiss, of Hilstall Reformatory."

"That is wotten slandah, of course!"

"Yes; we all thought so. But Outram has been keeping it dark that he's as strong as a horse, and making out that he's a funk, and all that. What was he doing that for?"

"Wats! His pwinciples—"

"Oh, blow his principles! Yet Levison's yarn couldn't be true, because it's proved that this chap is Outram right enough, and not Purkiss. Only Levison's brought his uncle here to prove his case. And—and I saw Mr. Hawes looking at Outram, and it was easy enough to see that he knew him."

"It is a case of wemarkable wesemblance. There was a chap vewy like Tom Mewwy in Wylcombe once, you wemembah."

"Ye-es; I suppose it's possible. It's a jolly queer bizney," said Blake. "Anyway, Outram's a good sort. Chap must be decent to do what he did."

"Yaas, wathah! Pewwaps you fellahs will admit now that I was wight, and will wely on my tact and judgment on futuah occasions."

To which Herries and Dig and Blake responded unanimously:

"Rats!"

Arthur Augustus sniffed, and walked away to meet Outram, who had come out of the School House. Outram was looking quite himself again now, but there was a cloud on his brow.

"I congwtulate you, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus. "You have wathah shut up those asses who were callin' you a funk!"

Outram nodded.

"Still feelin' the stwain?" asked D'Arcy.

"No; I'm all right."

"I wathah think Levison will come and apologise to you now," said D'Arcy. "I suppose he must feel wathah gwateful."

Outram smiled bitterly.

"You know who that man was?" he asked.

"Yaas; Levison's uncle."

"Yes; the governor of Hilstall Reformatory," said Outram, biting his lip. "Levison has got him to come here to identify me. He's with the Head now. I suppose I shall be sent for."

"Yaas; and that's wathah lucky. It will cleah up the whole mattah. Levison will have to admit that you are not Purkiss when his uncle tells him so."

Outram was silent.

"Of course, it's wathah wotten to be wowwied by caddish accusations like this," said Arthur Augustus sympathetically.

"I was a fool to help that man," muttered Outram moodily.

"Bai Jove!"

"Don't you see what it means? I can see it in the fellows' faces already. They don't think I'm a funk now. I don't care a rap what they think about that. But they think I'm a

spoof, and every chap is beginning to wonder whether I'm really Purkiss, after all!" said Outram savagely.

"But you can pwove that you are not?"

Outram gave him a strange look.

"Oh, yes; I can prove that I am Valentine Outram," he said. "Purkiss was a fighting-chap—a great boxer; not a fellow much like me, except in looks."

"Exactly!"

Levison of the Fourth came up.

"You're wanted, Purkiss," he said. "The Head wants you in his study."

Outram went into the house. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's eyes blazed at the cad of the Fourth.

"You have called my fwend Outwam by that offensive name again, Levison!" he said.

"I've called him by his right name!" sneered Levison.

"It's going to be proved now."

"You are still keepin' up that wotten yarn, aftah Outwam has saved your uncle's life?"

Levison shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't see that that makes any difference. A convict's a convict, all the same, I suppose? Purkiss gave himself away by doing that—showed up all the humbug he's given us since he's been here. It was a nail in his own coffin, and he was a fool to do it."

"I won't argue with you, Levison. You are too disgustin' to talk to! But I told you that I would thwash you when-evah you insulted my fwend Outwam, as his high pwinciples pwevent him from thwashin' you himself. Put up your hands, you wottah!"

"Oh, go and eat coke! Yaroooooh!" roared Levison, as he caught Arthur Augustus's left with his chin.

He went down with a bump. D'Arcy pushed back his cuffs.

"Now come on, and have some more, you feahful wottah!"

Levison gave him a deadly look as he picked himself up. But he did not come on. He went into the School House, gritting his teeth.

CHAPTER 5.

No Luck for Levison.

OUTRAM of the Fourth tapped at the door of the Head's study, and entered.

His face was a little pale, his brow clouded; but he was quite calm.

Mr. Hawes was in the study with the Head, as well as Mr. Railton. Their eyes turned on the Fourth-Former as he entered.

"You sent for me, sir?" said Outram.

"Yes, my boy," said Dr. Holmes kindly. "In the first place, I wish to express my admiration for the great courage and presence of mind you have shown this day. Mr. Railton has told me of your action, and I congratulate you, Outram. And this gentleman, Mr. Hawes, wishes to thank you for the aid you rendered."

"It was nothing, sir," said Outram, colouring.

"It was a good deal to me," said Mr. Hawes, his keen eyes resting curiously upon the boy's face. "You saved me from death, or at least from serious injury, at a terrible risk to yourself. This makes my task here a very awkward and disagreeable one. You are aware why I have come?"

"I have guessed, sir," said Outram. "Your nephew has made a ridiculous accusation against me, and you have come to prove that he is mistaken."

Mr. Hawes coughed.

"Not exactly," he said. "My nephew wrote to me that a boy who was once in my charge, as a prisoner in Hilstall Reformatory, had come to this school under an assumed name. Ernest Levison saw that boy while he was staying with me on a vacation last year. I did not heed this statement very much at first, as it seemed quite incredible; but he sent me a photograph—your photograph. And then I could not help seeing that his statement was correct."

"Mr. Hawes!" exclaimed the Head.

"I have no alternative but to say so, sir," said Mr. Hawes. "I am sorry for this boy, who has evidently changed in character, and has to-day rendered me an immense service. But I must tell you the facts. And the facts are that this boy's real name is George Purkiss, and that last year he was a prisoner in Hilstall Reformatory."

"Impossible!" said the Head.

"Impossible!" repeated Mr. Railton. "Levison informed me of his strange suspicion that day Outram came to the school. I dismissed it at once. I forbade him to mention the matter again."

"He was convinced of its truth," said Mr. Hawes, "and when I saw the photograph, I could not doubt that it was



"Get on my back!" said Outram. "But you—you can't cawwy me a mile," protested D'Arcy. "I could carry you ten miles. Come!" Arthur Augustus made no further demur. Outram caught him up and bore him away along the dusky footpath. (See Chapter 11.)

right. I felt it my duty, Dr. Holmes, to come here and warn you that you are harbouring a dangerous character, who has somehow entered your school under false pretences and a false name."

"I thank you!" said the Head. "It was undoubtedly your duty to warn me, if you were convinced that such was the case. But it is a mistake."

"One moment," said Mr. Railton. "What character did this boy Purkiss bear in your establishment, Mr. Hawes?"

"The worst," said Mr. Hawes. "He was imprisoned for injuring very seriously a man with whom he had quarrelled and fought at Brighton. The man was a rough, and, perhaps, deserved little sympathy; but Purkiss showed an almost diabolical temper, and hammered him mercilessly, with the result that he spent several weeks in hospital. He was treated as a juvenile offender, and confined to Hilstall for three months. His sentence was lengthened to six months for an attack upon a warder."

"What character has this boy borne in the school, Mr. Railton?" asked the Head. "He is in your house."

The Housemaster smiled slightly.

"He has never, I believe, been engaged in a fight since he came here, sir. So far from being quarrelsome and violent, he has shown a peaceable disposition to a very remarkable extent—to such an extent that he is generally considered a coward by the rest of the boys."

"That does not bear out your description, Mr. Hawes, you must admit."

"It certainly does not," said Mr. Hawes, rubbing his plump chin. "The boy's character has evidently changed for the better. If you choose to keep him here, Dr. Holmes, it is not my business to dissuade you; in fact, after what he has done to-day, I should be very ungrateful to attempt to do so. But it is my duty to repeat that he is here under a false name."

"I had hoped," said the Head, "that a personal interview with Outram would convince you of your mistake."

Mr. Hawes shook his head.

"On the contrary, it confirms my belief. I know his face perfectly well; in age and size, in everything, he is George Purkiss. But what does the boy himself say? My lad, now that you know I recognise you, surely you will not keep up this deception?"

Outram's eyes had a hunted look.

"I can only repeat, sir, that my name is Valentine Outram," he said. "I am the son of Major Outram, now at the Front."

Mr. Hawes shrugged his shoulders.

"My uncle is Sir Robert Outram, and I have lived with him ever since my father went to the war, sir."

"I can corroborate those statements," said Mr. Railton quietly. "I am acquainted with both the father and the

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uncle of Outram. Sir Robert Outram brought him to this school when he came."

"The governor of Hilstall looked somewhat staggered.

"But the boy—"

"I saw the boy two years ago at his father's house," said Mr. Railton. "He was then thirteen."

"I—I confess I am perplexed, then," said Mr. Hawes. "You are sure that this is the same lad you saw at Major Outram's house two years ago?"

"Perfectly certain. I have tested him by speaking of certain incidents of my visit, and he remembered the details perfectly well."

"It is extraordinary," said Mr. Hawes.

"I trust you are satisfied now, sir?" said the Head, smiling a little.

"I am very puzzled, but I still believe that that lad is George Purkiss, who was under my charge last year," said Mr. Hawes. "I cannot doubt that."

"It is a case of resemblance," said the Head decidedly. "Outram, I am sorry you have had to go through this unpleasant examination. Pray do not dream for one moment that I doubt you."

"Thank you, sir!"

"You may go now."

Outram left the study.

"It is a very perplexing case, gentlemen," said Mr. Hawes. "I fear that it may mean that a crime has been committed. This boy has evidently taken the place of a lad named Valentine Outram, with such success that he has deceived the real boy's father and uncle."

"You think that a boy of fifteen would be capable of such a deception?" exclaimed Mr. Railton.

"Impossible!" said the Head.

"It seems very nearly incredible, I admit. But there is no other explanation."

"That explanation does not fit all the facts," said Mr. Railton quietly. "The boy Purkiss was in your hands last year. But the year before that I saw this boy at his father's house. The supplanting of Outram must, therefore, have taken place two years ago, if this boy is Purkiss. After that, he stayed in your reformatory for six months. Now, sir, if he was an impostor bearing the name of Valentine Outram two years ago, how comes it that he was a reformatory convict bearing his own name one year ago?"

"I confess that I have no answer to that, sir," said Mr. Hawes, after a long pause. "It really does seem as if it is a case of mistaken identity, founded upon a remarkable resemblance. Yet I would almost stake my life that this boy is George Purkiss. However, I see that it is useless to pursue the matter further."

And Mr. Hawes, evidently in a state of great perplexity, took his leave.

"A very remarkable matter," said the Head, when he was gone, "and very unfortunate for Outram."

"Very," said Mr. Railton. "His resemblance to a desperate character like Purkiss may cause him trouble at other times. Perhaps I had better speak to Levison on the subject, and warn him to cease any mention of the matter."

"Yes, certainly."

A little later Levison of the Fourth was called into Mr. Railton's study. The Housemaster spoke to him with exceeding plainness, and warned him that a flogging would result if he repeated his statements concerning Outram of the Fourth. Levison left the study with a sullen brow.

"The rotter!" he muttered, clenching his hands. "He's fooled them—fooled even my uncle! But he can't fool me! He's Purkiss, and I'll show him up somehow. I'll prove to all the school sooner or later that he's Purkiss. He nearly gave himself away to-day—if the fellows could only see it. Sooner or later he'll quite give himself away—sooner or later!"

And the cad of the Fourth found much comfort in that reflection.

CHAPTER 6.

Mr. Weekes Lays His Plans.

MR. WEEKES, of Wayland, was seated upon a grassy bank, in the shade of the thick trees in Rylcombe Wood, and keeping an eye on the footpath.

The fat bookmaker was smoking a big black cigar, and he had a pink paper outspread on his knees; but he read with only one eye, so to speak, keeping the other on the alert.

As a footstep sounded on the grassy path, Mr. Weekes half rose, and then settled down again as he saw that the new-comer was Levison of the Fourth.

Evidently they were old acquaintances.

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Levison nodded to the bookmaker, leaned against a tree close at hand, and lighted a cigarette.

"Afternoon!" said Mr. Weekes. "I been waiting for you."

"I came as soon as I could," said Levison.

The bookmaker glanced along the shady path again.

"I don't like coming near that blessed school, and that's a fact," he said. "Tain't much more'n a week ago, and you know wot 'appened."

Levison nodded.

"D'Arcy and his friends collared you, and D'Arcy licked you with your own stick," he remarked.

Mr. Weekes' red face grew a deeper crimson.

"I'll make 'em pay for it!" he said. "Let 'em wait till I get a chance, with a few pals with me. Let 'em wait—specially Master Stuck-Up D'Arcy! I'll teach 'em to lay 'ands on a honest man."

"I've heard them talking about it," said Levison. "They intend to serve you the same every time they find you near the school, because of your affair with that ass Skimpole."

"You got a licking, too," growled Mr. Weekes, apparently not pleased by the way Levison was dwelling upon the unpleasant incident.

"I haven't forgotten it."

"Look 'ere, you told me it was business, in your note," said Mr. Weekes. "I've walked 'ere from Wayland. I don't see why you couldn't tell me your idea in the letter—"

"Catch me putting anything of the sort in a letter!" said Levison, laughing. "I'm not quite so soft as that. If you mean business, Weekes, I can tell you how to get even with those rotters."

"Only give me a chance!" said Mr. Weekes, clenching his grubby hands. "I've got some pals as will 'elp me—the Ferret, and Bill the Smasher, and Ikey Mo, and a few more. Let's get a chance at the young whelps, that's all!"

"Then it's a go," said Levison. "You don't want to tackle the whole crowd together—they might be too much for you. There's D'Arcy—never mind the others. D'Arcy knocked me down yesterday afternoon."

"The young gent seems to 'ave a fancy for knocking a chap down," said Mr. Weekes. "He won't feel like knockin' anybody down arter I done with 'im!"

"You can spare time for him on Saturday?"

"Any day you like. I ain't busy in these 'ere days—wot with racing mucked up by the blessed war, and nothin' doin' anywhere," said Mr. Weekes discontentedly. "'Ow can I get at the young rip on Saturday?"

"He's going over to Abbotsford on his bike," said Levison. "I heard him telling his friends about it—it means that he'll have to stand out of the cricket on Saturday. His brother, Lord Conway, is at Abbotsford Camp now, home from the Front, and D'Arcy is going to visit him there."

"And he'll go alone?" asked Mr. Weekes, with a cunning gleam in his eyes.

"Yes; his pals are in the House team. They'll be playing cricket, and they can't go with him."

"Good!"

"He will come back towards dark, most likely—perhaps after dusk—and he will come this way. The fellows always use this footpath as a short cut across from the Wayland road. They're not supposed to ride here, but they always do. This path is very lonely at night."

Mr. Weekes nodded.

"He'll be pretty tired, too, after a long ride like that, and an afternoon at the camp," said Levison coolly. "Two or three of you could make a pretty picture of him. Mind, he will put up a fight—he's a silly, dandified ass, but he can hit jolly hard." Levison rubbed his nose reminiscently. "I can't handle him."

"I'll 'ave three or four with me," said Mr. Weekes. "I dessay he will 'ave enough about him to pay for the trouble."

Levison set his lips for a moment. His revengeful nature spurred him on to take this method of vengeance; but he had not foreseen that Mr. Weekes would think of robbery as well as violence. But he nodded.

"You'd better take care that he doesn't recognise you, if that's your game," he said.

"I'd take care of that, anyway. It would be a six months' stretch for what I'm goin' to give 'im, if I was known."

"Cover your faces with something—a handkerchief would do—and don't speak a word to him," said Levison.

"I know the game—tain't the first time I've 'ad a 'and in such a game, since I was warned off the racecourse owing to a misunderstandin'," said Mr. Weekes. "I dessay he can pay us for our trouble—a gold tucker, what!—and a diamond pin, and some loose cash. And when he crawls 'ome to the school, I'll bet you his father wouldn't know 'im. I'm much obliged to you, Levison."

"Not at all. Hallo! Look out!"

There was a sound of voices on the path, and the Terrible

Three came in sight from the direction of Wayland, with D'Arcy and Blake and Outram following them down the footpath.

They caught sight of Mr. Weekes and Levison at the same moment. The bookmaker gritted his teeth. It roused all Mr. Weekes' honest indignation to reflect that he couldn't show himself anywhere near St. Jim's without being "handled" by those high-handed young gentlemen. Mr. Weekes would have appealed to the police for protection, if his relations with the gentlemen in blue had not been very strained.

He jumped up at once, and disappeared into the wood in a very great hurry. The Terrible Three came up at a run.

Levison regarded them with a sneering smile.

"Geegoes again, what!" said Tom Merry, with a curl of the lip.

"Mind your own business!" said Levison.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself, you rotter!" growled Manners. "You'll get it in the neck when a prefect spots you some day."

"That needn't worry you."

"Disgracing the school worries us, though," said Tom. "If we could have got hold of your precious friend, we'd have jolly well bumped him!"

"Yaas, wathah!" chimed in Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I gave the wottah a fealful thwashin' the othah day, and I am quite pweared to give him anothah. Undah the cires, as he disappeared, I think we had bettah bump Levison."

"Good egg!" said Blake.

"Jolly good idea!" said Monty Lowther heartily. "Come and be bumped, Levison, dear boy. It's for your own good, you know."

"Hands off, you rotters! Oh! Ah! Oh!"

Bump, bump, bump!

Tom Merry & Co. walked on, leaving Levison of the Fourth sitting in the grass. They felt that they had done their duty. Levison looked after them with glittering eyes. If he had felt a twinge of remorse for the rascally compact he had made with Mr. Weekes, it was gone now.

CHAPTER 7.

The Shadow of Suspicion.

"WOTTEN!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy made that remark in Study No. 6, in tones of emphatic indignation.

"Hullo! What's biting you?" yawned Blake. "Nothin' is bitin' me, Blake. Pweay don't be widiculous! I wegard it as wotten, in fact, wevolutin'."

"Lend a hand in getting tea, instead of jawing, old chap," suggested Herries.

"Bothah tea! It's disgustin'."

"You might open the sardines," hinted Dig.

"I wefuse to wowwy about the sardines, Dig. I wegard it as uttably disgustin', and I considah that you fellahs ought to back me up. Poor old Outwam—"

"Oh, Outram again!" groaned Jack Blake. "I wish that fellow had never come to St. Jim's."

"Same here," said Dig. "Anybody seen the tin-opener?"

Arthur Augustus regarded his chums with a gleam in his eyes. He took off his eyeglass and polished it, and replaced it, with great deliberation.

"It's simply outrageous," he said. "I quawwelled with you boundahs once, because you were down on old Outwam. You wegard him as a funk. I wegard him as a decent chap with vewy peculiah peaceful pwinciples. Who was wight?"

"Oh, don't say over again you told us so!" implored Blake. "We've had that well rubbed in already."

"I wepeat, who was wight?" demanded Arthur Augustus.

"Two or three days ago, Outwam wisked his life to save a chap—and it was a chap who had come heah to do him harm. I think he pweared that he wasn't a funk."

"Ancient history," said Blake. "Nobody calls him a funk now. He's a queer animal, but he's not a funk."

"Exactly! But while he was considahed a funk, he was dwopped upon, and tweated with gwoss diswpect, and he would nevah have had a fwend if I had not taken him undah my pwotection."

"If you know where the tin-opener is, Gussy—"

"Bothah the tin-openah! In the mattah of Outwam bein' a funk, you fellahs have to admit that I was wight. You could weally have welied on my tact and judgment. But you waited for pweof. Well, now Outwam has pweared that he is not a funk, you are down on him again, and all the fellahs are down on him."

Blake grunted uneasily.

"I'm not down on him," he said; "but—but—"

"It's all so fishy," said Herries. "I don't like fishy chaps."

"I wefuse to allow my fwend to be chawactewised as fishy. What have you got against him?"

"Well, nothing exactly," said Blake. "But—but—"

"But what, you ass?"

"Oh, nothing!"

"I quite undahstand you, Blake. Since Outwam has pweared that he is not a funk, you have begun to believe that wotten yarn of Levison's."

Blake was silent.

"Cwooke and Mellish and Piggott and Clampe and that cwew believe it now," said D'Arcy. "I am weally ashamed to see fwends of mine agweein' in anythin' with Cwooke and his wotten set!"

"Well, a chap's bound to agree even with Cwooke in some things," urged Blake. "F'rinstance, Cwooke believes that the earth is round, and so do I!"

"And he believes that Gussy is a silly ass," remarked Dig, "and so do I!"

"And that he's a frabjous jay," observed Herries, "and so do I!"

"Wats! I wepeat that it's disgustin' and wevolutin'! All because a chap has shown vewy wevmarkable pluck, without bein' a quawwelsome, fightin' beast—"

"Look here, Gussy, we're not down on Outram; but it's fishy," said Blake. "I laughed at Levison's yarn in the beginning, and so did all the fellows. That was when we believed that Outram was a timid funk, and when he kept up that he couldn't fight, and all that. Well, now it's come out by accident that he isn't a funk, and that he's strong enough to knock out a chap in the Sixth. He could mop up Cwooke & Co. with one hand, if he liked. What has he been pretending for? I don't like humbugs myself!"

"He wasn't pwetendin'. It's against his pwinciples to fight—like those Pacifist chaps you hear about."

"Oh, rubbish!"

"If you chawactewise my wemarks as wubbish, Blake—"

"Well, rot, then!" said Blake. "If a chap's sane, it can't be against his principles to hammer a chap who punches his nose. Outram told you he'd a beastly temper, and was trying to keep it in check. All the House knows it. We thought that was an excuse for funking—"

"And you were w'ong—"

"Yes. We admit that. But what he said bears out what Levison said. Levison says he was sent to a reformatory for getting into a fight and half-killing a chap in a fearful bad temper. After that he might make up his mind to keep out of the fighting—I don't know. He's a queer chap, if that's the case; but it might be a sensible thing to do, if he can't trust his temper. Anyway, he's been spoofing us, and all the school knows that the governor of Hilstall went away believing that he was George Purkiss."

"The governah of Hilstall is an uttah ass!"

"Oh, rats! He knew Purkiss well enough; and they have photographs and things to know 'em by in prisons," said Blake. "If Outram's above board, there was no need for him to spoof us as he's done. I don't believe he's Purkiss, but I say it looks jolly fishy!"

"That's it," said Herries. "I wouldn't say I believe Levison's yarn exactly. But it looks fishy. It's no good jawing, Gussy. If you jawed us deaf and blind, it wouldn't make any difference to the other chaps. They all think the same."

"Yaas; and I considah it simply wevolutin'!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus excitedly. "And whatever othah chaps think of him, I am stickin' to him thwough thick and thin!"

"You always were an ass!" agreed Herries.

"It's a wotten shame! If he had let that old boundah be cwushed to death undah the motah-cah, you wouldn't have believed a word against him!"

"That's true enough—that gave him away!" said Blake.

"It's unfortunate, but there you are!"

"So you weally believe, Blake, that poor old Outwam has made away with Majah Outwam's son, and taken his place?"

Blake shifted uncomfortably.

"I don't say I believe it. I say it's fishy, and I don't like people, who are fishy. There's a lot of suspicious circumstances, too. Outram's supposed not to be able to box. But—but I believe he could box all right if he liked; and Levison says that fellow Purkiss was a first-class boxer."

"You uttah ass! Outwam boxed with me once, and I knocked him all ovah the place. He was a wegulah duffish at boxin'!"

"Spoof!" said Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Look here, I know it's spoof," said Blake. "I saw him at the punch-ball the other day. I could tell by the way he hit the ball that he could box if he liked."

"As a mattah of fact, Outwam has nevah actually said that he cannot box."

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A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

NEXT WEDNESDAY: "A SCHOOLBOY'S SACRIFICE!"

"No; but he's let everybody believe so, and allowed you to box him baldheaded, when he could have knocked you off your feet if he's liked."

"I wufuse to cwedit for a single moment that he was spoofin' me!"

Blake yawned.

"Well, let it drop, and let's have tea," he said. "I'm fed up with Outram, anyway!"

Arthur Augustus breathed hard.

"I wufuse to let it dwop! I am stickin' to Outwam, and I expect this studay to back me up. Evewybody is down on him now because he wisked his life to save a stwagah. That's what it amounts to."

"Well, that's a rotten way of putting it, but it can't be helped," said Blake. "For goodness' sake, let's have tea, and blow Outram!"

"Wats!"

Arthur Augustus retired from the study and closed the door hard. He was simply burning with indignation.

He strode along the Shell passage to Tom Merry's study, and entered it like a hurricane. The Terrible Three were at tea.

"Hallo! Wherefore that thunderous brow?" asked Monty Lowther cheerily. "Has the order gone forth that the Fourth shall not turn up their trousers?"

"Pray don't be an ass, Lowthah! I have come to speak to you about poor old Outwam—my fwied Outwam!"

Tom Merry and his chums looked serious at once.

"Those asses in my studay more than half cwedit Levison's wotten yarn," said Arthur Augustus. "It's wewolvin'! I twust you fellahs do not believe anythin' of the sort?"

"Well, we don't believe it," said Tom slowly; "but it's jolly queer. It seems to be proved that the chap is really Outram, but—but—"

"But wats!"

"It's no good, Gussy!" said Manners decidedly. "I don't want to say anything against Outram, but it looks fishy. I don't hold with Levison's yarns, but he said all along that Outram was spoofing us, and it's come out now that it was so. We thought he couldn't be Purkiss because he couldn't do what Purkiss had done. Well, now we know he could if he liked."

"I wegard you as bein' even bigger assés than Blake and Hewwies and Dig!" said Arthur Augustus, breathing hard.

"Thanks! Shut the door after you!" said Lowther. Slam!

Arthur Augustus met Kangaroo in the passage, and stopped him. The Cornstalk eyed his excited face curiously.

"Noble, deah boy, you do not believe that wotten yarn about Outwam bein' Purkiss?"

"I'm afraid it looks like it, Gussy!"

"Bai Jove! Are you a sillay ass, too?"

"Well, it looks—"

"Oh, wats!"

Arthur Augustus strode away, leaving the Cornstalk staring. He looked into Talbot's study, and found Talbot and Gore and Skimpole there.

"Talbot, deah boy, do you believe that wotten yarn about Outwam?"

"I'd rather not say anything about it," said Talbot quietly.

"Wats! Do you, Skimpole?"

"My dear D'Arcy, I have had no time to think of the matter," said Skimpole, blinking at him. "My time is taken up with the study of entomology at present."

"Oh, wubbish! Do you Goah?"

"Yes, I do!" said Gore.

"Then you are a sillay ass!"

Arthur Augustus quitted the study with that remark, leaving Talbot looking very grave, and Gore grinning.

The swell of St. Jim's did not seek any more supporters. He realised that he stood alone in his championship of the

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suspected junior. With a moody and indignant face, he made his way to Outram's study.

Arthur Augustus had been alone in standing up for the new junior, when the latter was condemned as a funk. Events had proved him in the right. He was alone now in defending the new junior from a much more serious suspicion. But Arthur Augustus was loyal to the core, and he never dreamed of failing his friend in this emergency. Through thick and thin, and in spite of evidence, Arthur Augustus was loyal to the strange junior of whom he had made a chum.

CHAPTER 8.

The Loyalty of Arthur Augustus.

OUTRAM was alone in the study.

He was seated at the tea-table, but he was eating nothing. His face was dark and moody.

It brightened a little as D'Arcy came in. To the lonely and suspected junior D'Arcy's unsuspecting and unwavering friendship was the only ray of sunshine. The devotion of Arthur Augustus meant very much to the outcast in those dark days.

"Havin' your tea, deah boy?"

Outram nodded.

"Do you mind if I join you? I haven't had my tea, Outwam."

"I'll be jolly glad!" said the Fourth-Former, with a sigh.

"I don't like feeding alone."

"Where are youah study-mates?"

Outram coloured deeply.

"They've gone out," he said.

He did not add that they were having their tea in another study, because they did not care for his society. But Arthur Augustus guessed it. His eye gleamed behind his monocle.

"I say, this is wotten, deah boy," said D'Arcy, after a pause, while Outram poured out the tea.

"It isn't pleasant for me," said Outram. "I was a fool to come here, I suppose. But how could I guess that Levison—"

He paused.

"How could you guess that Levison would spread such a wotten yarn about you?"

"Ye-es."

"And nobody would have believed a word of it, if you hadn't saved that man's life," said D'Arcy.

"Yes, that was a bad break," said Outram, with a faint smile. "Still, I'm not sorry I prevented Mr. Hawes from being crushed to death."

"Of course not. Can you box, Outwam?"

Outram started.

"Box! Why do you ask?"

"Some fellahs think you are only spoofin' in makin' out that you can't box."

"You remember how you knocked me about in the gym?"

"Yaas; it was vewy plain that you couldn't box," agreed Arthur Augustus.

"And that wotten beast Purkiss was a good boxah, accordin' to Levison. Pray don't think that I doubt you for one moment, Outwam."

"I'm not that kind of chap. I flattah myself that I can see whethah a chap is twue blue or not."

Outram's face was darkly troubled for a moment.

"You're a good chap, D'Arcy," he faltered.

"Nothin' of the sort. I wathah pwide myself on my judgment, that's all. Nothin' would make me ass enough to believe that you could possibly be that young scoundwel Purkiss!"

"That—that what?"

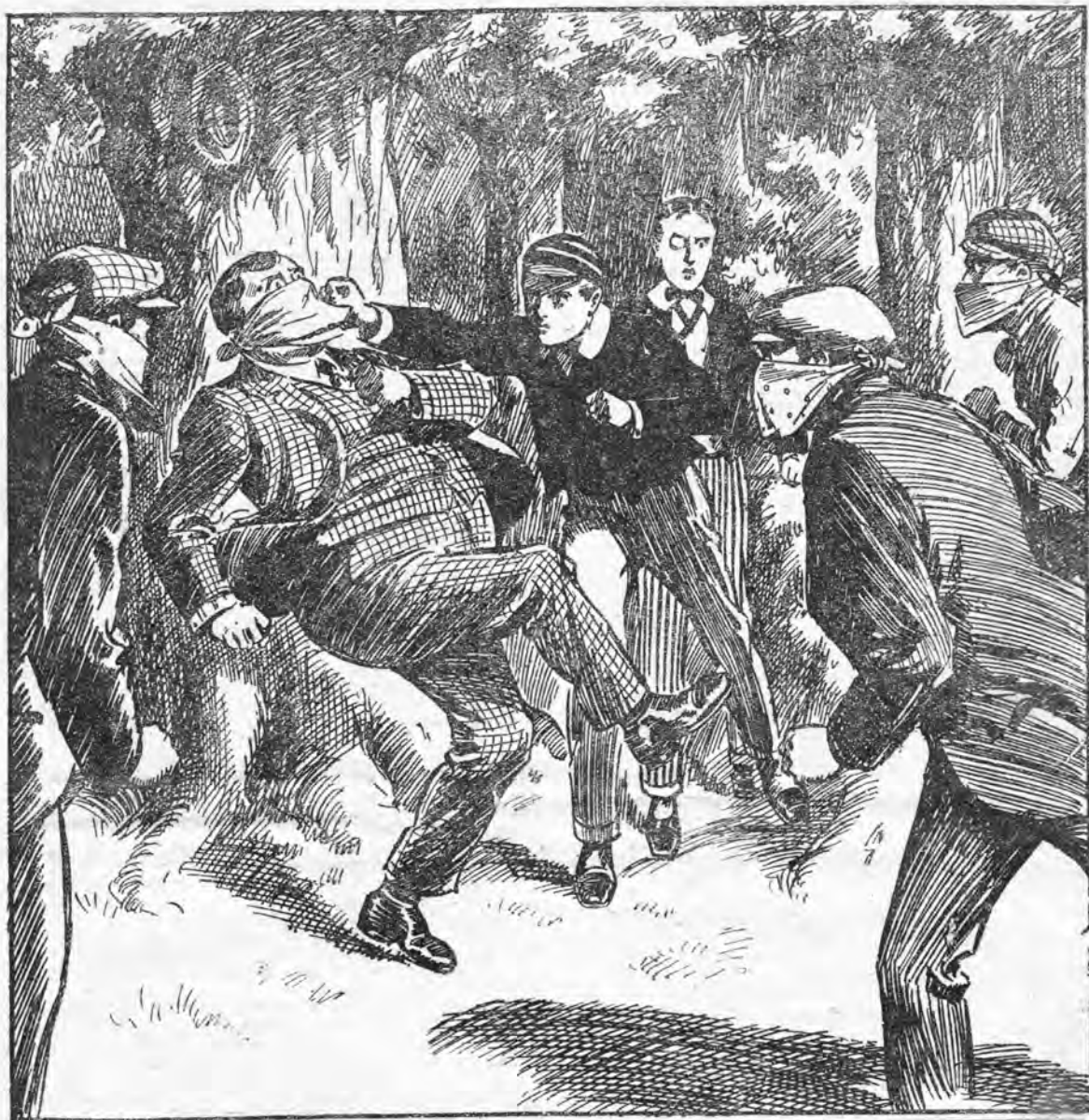
"I suppose he was a young scoundwel, as he was in a weformatowy for knockin' a man about vewy sewiously!"

OUR NEW COVER!

The war has been responsible for many changes—some of them big, some small. I am not going to pretend that the change that I am now obliged to announce is a matter of national importance, though I know that many loyal readers of the "GEM" will regret it. In future we shall no longer be able to give the paper its usual familiar blue coat, owing to the impossibility of getting the necessary dye. So you must look out for a white cover.

It does not necessarily mean that it is "GOOD-BYE TO THE OLD BLUE COVER!" It may be only an revoir after all. In the better days after the war it might appear again.

THE EDITOR.



Outram fairly hurled himself into the combat. Crash! Crash! There was a wild yell from Mr. Weekes as Outram's fist was planted fairly upon the handkerchief that hid his face. (See Chapter 10.)

"There—there may have been excuses for him," faltered Outram. "Suppose—suppose he was a fellow who was tremendously strong for his age, and had a hasty, rotten temper, because he'd always been allowed to have his own way at home, owing to his father being away in India? A chap like that might do more harm than he ever intended in a scrap, and be sorry for it afterwards."

"Bai Jove! You speak just as if you knew the fellah!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, in wonder.

Outram bit his lip hard.

"I—I don't mean that, of course," he said. "I was only putting a case. I don't like being hard on a chap who's down!"

"Quite wight," agreed D'Arcy. "Now, my deah chap, I'm backin' you up in this, of course. I'm stickin' to you, and somehow the othah fellahs have got to be bwrought wound."

"It doesn't look as if they ever will be," said Outram, with a sigh.

"I have been thinkin' it out," said Arthur Augustus. "I've got an ideah for clearin' the mattah wight up."

Outram looked at him curiously.

"You see, it's no use cullin' in your welations as evidence, because the chaps are beginnin' to believe that you have

spoofed Sir Wobert Outwam, thlthough bein' like his nephew, and that you are not Valentine Outwam at all. It appears that there is a surpwisin' wesemblance between you and that fellah Purkiss of Hilstall. Now, don't you see how the mattah can be cleahed up?"

Outram shook his head.

"Find Purkiss!" explained Arthur Augustus.

Crash! Outram's tea-cup fell into his saucer from his hand, and the tea flooded the table. He did not seem to notice it. He was gazing at D'Arcy across the table with startled eyes.

"What did you say?" he gasped.

"Bai Jove! I didn't mean to surpwise you like that, deah boy. That's my ideah—to find Purkiss!"

"Find him!" muttered Outram. "What—what good would that do?"

"Don't you see?" said D'Arcy eagerly. "This fellah Purkiss was at Hilstall Weformatowy last yah. He could be twaced. He must have gone somewhah aftah leavin' the weformatowy, you know. Vewy likely the police made a note of him, and pewwaps kept on his twack. Anyway, a detective could easily twack him out."

"But—but—"

"You have plentay of money, deah boy; and if you needed

it, I've got a fixah I could contribute, and I'd ask my governor for another, if necessary. All you've got to do is to explain to Sir Wobert Outram, and ask him to employ a detective to find that wottah Purkiss!"

"I—I couldn't! I—I should be ashamed to admit to my uncle that—that such a suspicion about me existed!"

"Well, powwaps there is somethin' in that," said D'Arcy, after a moment's thought. "Of course, Sir Wobert would be vewy shocked and angry. But you can do without Sir Wobert at all. We can employ a detective ourselves!"

"It wouldn't be possible. We're only schoolboys—"

"I will speak to Mr. Wailton about it. He is vewy angry with Levison for spweadin' that yarn. When I tell him you are suspected by the whole House, I am suah he will help us at once. You see, a detective could twack out that fellah Purkiss quite easily!"

"I—I suppose he could."

"Of course he could, deah boy! And when Purkiss is found, it will be all wight. Even Levison will have to admit that you are not Purkiss, when the weal Purkiss can be produced as evidence."

Outram was silent. His glance, as it dwelt on D'Arcy's animated face, was quite affectionate. The simple faith of the swell of St. Jim's seemed to touch him to the very heart.

"You're a good chap," he said, with a break in his voice. "I—I wish I'd known you years ago, D'Arcy. But—but—but—"

"We'll go to Wailton togethah."

Outram shook his head.

"I'd rather not," he said.

"But you want Purkiss found?"

"No."

Arthur Augustus stared across the table at his friend. For a brief second a chill of doubt invaded his breast. Why did not Outram want Purkiss found, when, as D'Arcy explained, that would clear up the whole matter beyond the shadow of a doubt?

But the swell of St. Jim's drove away that momentary doubt as if it were an unclean thing that had lodged in his breast.

"Outram, deah boy," he said gently, "I weally assuah you it is the wight thing to do. It would settle the mattah to everybody's satisfaction."

"They've no right to suspect me!" exclaimed Outram passionately. "I shall take no step whatever! Let them think as they like! A suspicion like that is beneath my notice!"

"Bai Jove! Pewwaps you are wight, deah boy!"

"I think I am," said Outram. "I shall take no notice of that rotten slander at all. I've proved that I am Valentine Outram. My father and uncle have proved it. What more can anybody ask?"

"Nothin'! They are unweasonable asses!"

"Only I—I don't want to make trouble between you and your friends," said Outram hesitatingly. "If—if you'd like to have done with me, I sha'n't be offended!"

To which Arthur Augustus replied emphatically:

"Wats!"

And when the two juniors left the study after tea, Arthur Augustus walked with his arm linked in Outram's, with a gleam of defiance in his eyes.

Outram might be regarded with suspicion by the whole school, but that was only an additional reason why Arthur Augustus should demonstrate as publicly as possible his unshaken faith in him.

CHAPTER 9.

Arthur Augustus Sticks to It!

DURING the following two or three days Outram of the Fourth was left very much to himself.

But for the loyalty of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy he would have been almost completely an outcast.

In that time of trial, the unswerving friendship and faith of the swell of St. Jim's stood him in good stead.

Tom Merry & Co. did not want to be hard on the "outsider" of the Fourth, but they could not help the distrust they felt.

They had agreed to regard Levison's accusation with derision and contempt. That was when they regarded Outram as a pusillanimous funk, utterly different from the "reformatory ruffian" Levison described. But they could not help believing now that he had been playing a part.

If all was fair and above-board, why had he been playing a part? There was only one answer to that question.

There was something "shady" he had been concealing.

Outram's proofs of his identity had seemed to be overwhelming. Those proofs were still just as strong. But suspicion was abroad, and it could not be helped.

And if the new junior was an impostor, bearing a name that did not belong to him, where was the real Valentine Outram? Levison hinted at a crime, and the juniors had laughed at his hints at one time. But they did not laugh now. If there was another Valentine Outram whose place this fellow had taken, something must have become of him. Where was he?

Mr. Hawes had left St. Jim's fully convinced that Outram was the boy who had been under his charge at Hilstall, and then known as George Purkiss. That was soon common knowledge in the school. Had Outram still borne his former reputation as a funk and weakling, the fellows would have agreed with the Head and Mr. Railton that the governor of Hilstall was mistaken. But there had come the startling discovery that Outram possessed abnormal strength for his age—a characteristic also of George Purkiss, and of very few others, in all probability. And his "funk" had been a pretence!

Tom Merry had the same idea as Arthur Augustus—that the matter could be settled to everybody's satisfaction by the finding of the real Purkiss—easy enough by an application to the police or a private detective. He made the suggestion to Outram in quite a friendly way, and Outram's curt refusal could only have one effect.

When the fellows knew that Outram did not desire Purkiss to be produced, that settled it for them.

Arthur Augustus might believe that Outram's motive was a lofty contempt for a slander, and a disdain to defend himself against it. But Arthur Augustus was alone in that opinion.

The belief gathered ground that the new boy in the Fourth was an impostor, bearing the name that did not belong to him. And, naturally enough, fellows did not want to have much to do with him.

He was never called a "funk" now. Certainly he was anything but a funk. And he had no raggings to fear. Crooke & Co. were not likely to venture to rag a fellow who was strong enough to tackle Kildare of the Sixth if he chose. They wondered why he had stood their raggings so long. And they found the explanation in the fact that he was really Purkiss, and was afraid of giving himself away. It seemed the only possible explanation.

There were warm arguments in Study No. 6. Blake and Herries and Dig were sorry, but they could not help their opinions. And Arthur Augustus was in a state of almost perpetual wrath and indignation.

"You're a good little chap, Gussy," Blake told him. "But

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you're an ass, you know. It's plain to everybody but you. Why don't Outram want Purkiss to be found?"

"He refuses to take so much notice of a wotten slandah."

"Rats!" said Herries. "If Purkiss were found, he would be found in Outram's study at St. Jim's."

"Wubbish!"

"And, look here, Gussy," said Blake seriously. "That chap's name isn't Outram at all. But there is a real Outram somewhere. He's been put away somehow or somewhere. The police ought to look into it, as a matter of fact."

"So you wegard my friend Outram as a kidnappah?" said D'Arcy, with breathless indignation.

"I dare say there's a gang of them," said Blake. "Anyway, where is Outram?"

"He is at St. Jim's."

"Rats!"

"Pewwaps you would like to wegard old Outram as a murdawah?" said Arthur Augustus, with the nearest approach to a sneer that he was capable of.

"Well, something's become of the real Outram," said Blake. "If the Head's satisfied, it's no business of ours. But if I were the Head, I should have the police at work on the job."

"I wegard you as an uttah ass, Blake!"

"Same to you, and many of 'em!" said Blake cheerfully.

The only effect of argument upon Arthur Augustus was to make him a little more demonstrative towards Outram of the Fourth.

And towards Levison he was bitterly hostile. It was all Levison's fault, Arthur Augustus considered. He had started the whole business. Levison had succeeded now. The whole House, so far as the juniors were concerned, had come round to his opinion. But Arthur Augustus made a point of "going for" Levison every time he heard him referring to "Purkiss." Levison had some painful experiences during those few days. Arthur Augustus would willingly have fought the whole House in defence of his friend. As he could not do that, he "took it out" of Levison on every possible occasion when the cad of the Fourth ventured to cast aspersions upon the outcast.

There was a House match on Saturday afternoon, but Arthur Augustus was standing out of the School House junior team. His elder brother, Lord Conway, was home from the Front, and at Abbotsford Camp, and Arthur Augustus intended to visit him there. And his chums learned on Saturday that he intended to take Outram with him. Blake at once tackled him on the subject.

"You're taking Outram?" he asked abruptly.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You'd better not."

"Wats!"

"Look here, Gussy," said Blake earnestly. "It will all come out about that fellow sooner or later!"

"Wubbish!"

"It will come out that he's an impostor, that he's been in a reformatory, and that he's done something with the chap whose name he's taken."

"Fathead!"

"And when it comes out, you oughtn't to be mixed up in it, you chump. What would Lord Conway think if he knew what the fellow's thought of here?"

"Old Conway would wegard you as a set of asses."

"Suppose you stay in and play cricket instead?" suggested Digby.

"Imposs, deah boy! I awwanged with old Conway to visit him, neahly a week ago. He is expectin' me this aftahnoon."

"He isn't expecting a reformatory hooligan along with you!" growled Herries.

"I refuse to heah that remark, Hewwies!"

"Oh, you're a champion ass!" said Blake. "I suppose there's no stopping you! Look here, if you like, I'll chuck the cricket and come with you instead of Outram."

"I shall be vevy pleased with your company, Blake, if you will promise to be chummy with my friend Outram. He will come, too!"

"Oh, rats!"

And Jack Blake did not chuck the cricket.

After dinner, Tom Merry & Co. went down to Little Side, and Arthur Augustus donned his natty Etous, and then looked for Outram. He found the outcast of the Fourth in his study. He was looking gloomy and grim.

"Weady, deah boy?" asked D'Arcy.

"Ye-es. You're sure you want to take me, D'Arcy?"

"I have asked you, haven't I, Outram?"

"Yes. But if you'd rather not, on second thoughts, as you're going to meet your brother and some of his friends

"Wats! Weally, Outram, you are speakin' as if there were somethin' in that wotten slandah against you!"

"I don't mean that, of course. But you know what all the fellows think!"

"Bothah the fellahs! Get into your clobbah, deah boy. It's a wippin' aftahnoon for a long spin."

Outram nodded, and went to the dormitory to change into Etous. The two juniors wheeled out their bicycles, while the cricketers were starting play on Little Side.

Levison of the Fourth was at the gates when they went out, and he started at the sight of Outram in D'Arcy's company.

"Is Outram going to Abbotsford with you, D'Arcy?" he exclaimed.

Arthur Augustus passed on with his noble nose in the air, disdaining to take the slightest notice of Levison's existence. The strangely-assorted chums mounted their machines and pedalled away.

Levison stared after them. He had not counted on that. Mr. Weekes and his precious friends would have two instead of one to encounter in the wood that evening, if Outram were keeping with the swell of St. Jim's all the afternoon. But, after all, they would be only two schoolboys against five or six grown men. The "mauling" of Arthur Augustus would come off, all the same, and Outram would come in for his share of it.

Careless of Levison and his reflections, and little dreaming of the dastardly scheme laid by the cad of the Fourth, the two cyclists pedalled away in the summer afternoon. Outram's clouded face cleared very soon, and he was cheerful enough by the time they arrived at Abbotsford, where Captain Lord Conway met them. And that afternoon was one of the brightest Outram had known since he had come to St. Jim's—a bright spot in the midst of the shadows that had so strangely fallen upon his life.

CHAPTER 10.

Caught in the Trap.

"W HAT a wippin' aftahnoon!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy made that remark in a contented tone as the two juniors were cycling home along the Wayland Road in the cool of the evening. They had left themselves just time to

reach St. Jim's by locking-up.

"Ripping!" said Outram. "Your brother's a splendid chap, D'Arcy. And he's met my father out there, too. He told me a lot of things about him. And he knew me by my likeness to the dad."

Arthur Augustus chuckled.

"I wish some of the chaps had been there to heah old Conway talkin' to you," he remarked. "It would have shown them what uttah asses they are. It is vevy remarkable that the chaps should let a wottah like Levison lead them by the nose. But it will all blow ovah in time."

"I'm afraid it won't," said Outram quietly; "and I'm afraid that if you stick to me, D'Arcy, you'll soon find yourself in trouble with your own friends."

"Oh, they will come round," said Arthur Augustus confidently; "and if they don't, I shall always tell them vevy plainly what I think of their bwains. They will have to admit in the long run that I am quite wight, you know. They always have to admit that in the long run."

Outram fell silent.

"Heah we are!" said Arthur Augustus, as they reached the end of the footpath that led away through the wood. "Lift your bike ovah this stile, Outram. We shall be home in less than half an hour now, and Taggles won't have any excuse for shuttin' us out and weportin' us."

The machines were lifted over, and the juniors remounted and rode along the dusky path through the wood.

The footpath was a lonely place towards nightfall, and the cyclists had it all to themselves, for some distance, at least.

But as they reached the heart of the wood, Arthur Augustus jammed on his brake. Three or four dusky figures appeared on the path ahead, blocking the way. The two riders slowed down, and as they did so, a couple of figures emerged from the wood behind them, cutting off their retreat.

"Pway get aside!" called out Arthur Augustus.

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NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

"A SCHOOLBOY'S SACRIFICE!"

A savage laugh was the only answer.

"Bai Jove! They mean to stop us!" ejaculated D'Arcy.

The two men behind were running on now, and the four ahead had closed up together. It was deep dusk under the trees, but the juniors could see that they were roughly-clad men, and that each of them had a handkerchief or neckerchief tied across his face to conceal the features.

Outram's teeth came together with a snap.

"Footpads!" he said.

"Gweat Scott!"

The two juniors jumped off their machines. It was evidently useless to charge the four burly men in the path, and they noted, too, that several big branches had been dragged across the footpath to prevent progress. They were trapped.

"Back up, deah boy!" said D'Arcy, quite coolly. "They're not goin' to wob us if I can help it."

Outram nodded.

The two bicycles were slammed against a huge tree-trunk beside the path. The juniors stood warily, waiting for the ruffians, who had joined forces, and were now advancing on them.

"What do you want?" demanded Arthur Augustus, when the party were within a few paces. "I warn you to keep your distance!"

A fat man, with a squat figure, evidently the leader of the party, chuckled in an evil way.

"We want you," he said, in a deep, husky voice, disguising his natural tones. "The other bloke can cut off!"

"If you intend to wob us—"

"That ain't all. You can clear off, young shaver!"

Outram did not move.

"Do you 'ear me?" exclaimed the fat man angrily. "You ain't our game. You can clear off, and don't waste time."

Outram shrugged his shoulders. Evidently he had no intention of deserting his chum.

"Well, if you'll 'ave it too, you can 'ave it!" growled the leader of the footpads. "Rush 'em!"

"Back up, deah boy!"

There was a rush of the footpads. It was evident that their intention was not merely robbery, and there was nothing to do but resist. Not that Arthur Augustus would have been tamely robbed, in any case. He put up his hands valiantly, and hit out fiercely as the roughs rushed on.

Outram's eyes glittered.

For a single instant hesitation was visible in his manner. But the sight of Arthur Augustus reeling under the blows of two of the footpads was more than enough for him.

He fairly hurled himself into the combat.

The result was a surprise for the footpads. They looked on Outram as a mere schoolboy of no more account than Arthur Augustus. But they very quickly found out their mistake.

Crash, crash!

There was a wild yell from Mr. Weekes, as Outram's fist was planted fairly upon the handkerchief that hid his face.

The bookmaker went down like a log—went down as if a cannon-ball had struck him. And one of his comrades fell across him with a shriek.

The others backed away hastily.

Those two terrible blows, dealt as if by a prize-fighter, had astounded them, and they backed off in alarm.

For the moment the two juniors stood unassailed.

Arthur Augustus panted. He was reeling against the big tree, dazed by several heavy blows that had reached him.

"Bwao, deah boy!" he gasped. "The wottabs! The feahful wuffians! Gwooh!"

Mr. Weekes crawled to his feet. The handkerchief had been knocked from his face, and he could be recognised now. His nose was streaming red, and his lip was cut. He stood almost dazedly, caressing his damaged face. The other man who had fallen was still sprawling in the grass, and evidently he was unable to rise. The five ruffians drew together, scowling and muttering.

"Arc you hurt?" muttered Outram.

"Wathab thumped!" said D'Arcy breathlessly. "Bai Jove! You were hittin' out like a steam-hammah, deah boy!"

He looked curiously at Outram. Mr. Weekes & Co. were still holding off, in a state of fury mingled with doubt.

A sudden change came over D'Arcy's face.

Outram saw it, and his teeth came together.

"Outwam!" D'Arcy's voice was a little shaken. "Outwam, deah boy, you—you—" He broke off.

Outram knew what was in his mind—what could not fail to enter even the unsuspicious mind of the swell of St. Jim's.

In that brief struggle, Outram had not even been touched—not a single blow had reached him. And with a couple of drives he had felled two men—one of whom was evidently quite knocked out. That he was a wonderful boxer, and of amazing strength, was not to be doubted longer. And D'Arcy remembered how he had had the gloves on with Outram in

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the gym, and had knocked him about helplessly. Blake had said that Outram was "spoofing" then. It was only too clear now that he had been spoofing. Kildare of the Sixth could not have stood up against Outram in a fair contest. His muscular development was rare—found once in a thousand times—or in ten thousand!

Arthur Augustus felt a chill at his heart.

"Outwam, deah boy!" he said feebly.

Outram smiled bitterly.

He had had that choice—to abandon his friend to ruffianly usage, or to betray himself—to betray the secret he had so long guarded. He had made the choice, knowing what the result must be—that to save his only friend, he had to forfeit that friend's faith and confidence, perhaps even his friendship. The bitterness of death was in his heart.

"Look out!" he muttered. Mr. Weekes had made a step forward, and his followers gathered behind him, growling. The attack was coming.

CHAPTER 11.

A Fight Against Odds.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS braced himself to meet the attack. He had had several savage blows already, and was very nearly knocked out. It was pretty clear that most of the fighting would fall to Outram.

But Mr. Weekes was disposed to parley.

"I give you a chance to clear off, you young prizefighter," he said hoarsely. "Our business ain't with you!"

"Both or neither!" said Outram.

"It's that howwid wascal Weekes," said D'Arcy, faintly. "That wotten bookmaker I thwashed the othah day."

Mr. Weekes ground his teeth.

"You're goin' to 'ave that back with interest, my pippin!" he said. "I won't leave a 'ole bone in your carcase, I promise you that! When I done with yer, I shall be surprised if you can crawl 'ome!"

"You uttah wascal!"

"I hain't no quarrel with this 'ere prizefightin' young 'ound," said Mr. Weekes. "I give 'im a chance to clear. You 'ear me, you young 'ound? You take a 'and in this game that don't concern you, and you'll get treated the same as the other. We'll maul yer till you can't crawl. Cut off while you've got the chance!"

"I'm staying," said Outram quietly, "and you won't maul us so easily, my man. I've knocked out tougher men than you!"

"Bai Jove!" murmured D'Arcy.

"I'm not only not going," said Outram, his eyes glittering. "but I'm going to thrash you, you scoundrel! You don't know what this means to me, but I'll make you suffer for the harm you've done. Come on, D'Arcy!"

And Outram, without waiting to be attacked, rushed forward and renewed the fight. Arthur Augustus backed him up valiantly.

In a second there was a fearful struggle, wild and whirling, in the shade of the trees on the lonely path.

Mr. Weekes went down under a drive that almost fractured his jaw, and another of the ruffians dropped half-stunned. At the same moment, Arthur Augustus was felled like a log, and he sank groaning into the grass.

He made an effort to rise, but sank back again.

Three of the footpads were attacking Outram savagely. He stood close beside his fallen chum, facing the odds gallantly.

Fierce blows had rained on him in those brief moments—his nose was streaming with blood, one of his eyes was blinking, his forehead was cut.

But he did not seem to feel his injuries.

His face was savage, his teeth were clenched, and he threw himself into the unequal combat as if he enjoyed it. The St. Jim's fellows would not have known the quiet, sedate Fourth-Former if they had seen him now. They would have taken him for some youthful champion of the ring.

Trample, trample! Crash! Bump!

With savage cries, the roughs assailed the junior as he stood over Arthur Augustus, defending him.

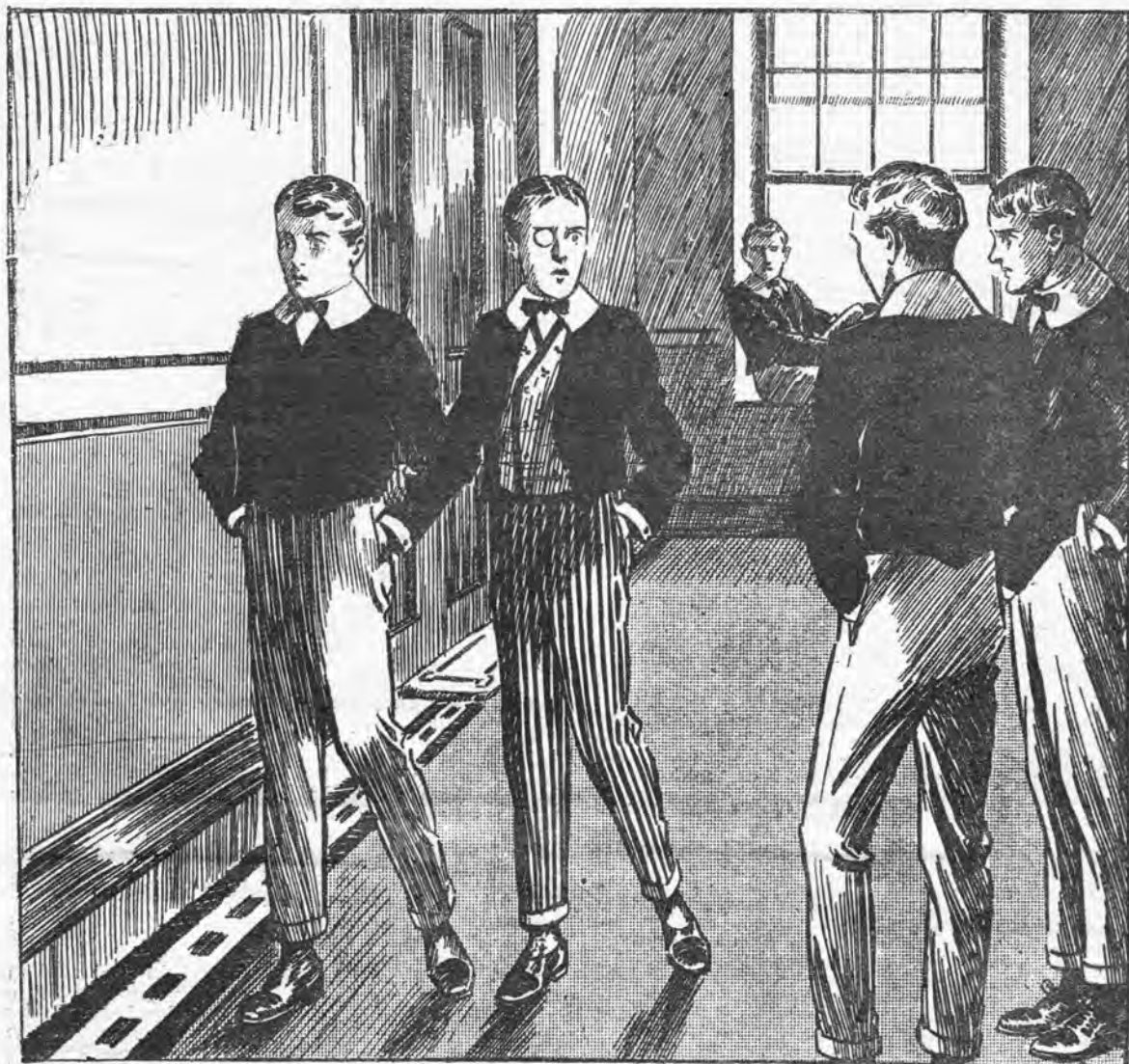
Four of them were down now, groaning in the grass, hurled there by drives that seemed to have come from a sledge-hammer.

The other two had fastened on Outram like cats, and were seeking to drag him down. Once on the ground, piled on by the ruffianly gang, even his amazing strength could not have saved him.

But he stood like a rock.

His fist was dashed into a savage face, with a blow like that of a mallet, and a groaning rascal dropped at his feet.

Outram closed with the other, grasping him as in bands of iron, and the ruffian fairly crumpled up in his grip.



When the two juniors left the study after tea, Arthur Augustus walked with his arm linked in Outram's, and a gleam of defiance in his eyes. (See Chapter 8.)

"Ow, ow! Let up!" he panted. Outram dragged him fairly off his feet, whirled him round, and hurled him to the earth with a crash. He groaned, and lay still.

The gang were beaten.

Mr. Weekes had already crawled away; he had had more than enough. One of his gang had followed him into the thickets.

Four of them sat or lay dazed in the grass, watching Outram with terrified eyes, and showing no desire whatever to renew the conflict.

"A bloomin' young prize-fighter!" groaned Mr. Weekes, as he crawled away in the thickets. "Oh, my lor! I ain't a tooth that ain't loose! Ow! That young 'ound would make a fortune in the ring! He could knock out the Bermondsey Chicken, by gum! Ow, ow, ow!"

Outram bent over Arthur Augustus.

"You're hurt?" he muttered.

"I—I—I'll try to get up!" muttered Arthur Augustus faintly. "I'm sowwy I couldn't help you, Outram! Where are they?"

"Knocked out!" said Outram coolly.

Arthur Augustus sat up.

His bruised eyes wandered over the field of battle. There were only four of the footpad gang to be seen, and they were making off, muttering and groaning. The swell of St. Jim's could hardly believe his eyes.

Outram raised the junior to his feet without an effort.

"They're going," he said. "It's all over, D'Arcy. I hope you're not very much hurt, old chap! I did my best!"

"I am wathah hurt, but it does not maitah. Those wottahs were goin' to injah me, because I thwashed that wottah Weekes. I—I might have been—" Arthur Augustus shivered a little as he realised what would have happened to him if Outram had not been there. "Outwam, deah boy, I am vewy much obliged to you!"

Outram smiled bitterly.

The swell of St. Jim's was full of gratitude, but his tone had changed. He could not help that. Even into the simple mind of Arthur Augustus the truth had been borne at last. There was only one fellow who could have put up that fight against odds, and that fellow was George Purkiss of Hilstall!

Arthur Augustus knew it now, and Outram knew that he knew it.

He avoided meeting Outram's eyes, afraid that his own would tell what was in his mind. But Outram did not need telling.

"Can you walk?" he asked quietly.

"My—my head is wathah swimmin'!" muttered Arthur Augustus, leaning heavily on his companion. "I—I will try!"

"You can't walk," said Outram, "and you can't ride. Get on my back!"

"What!"

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NEXT WEDNESDAY: **"A SCHOOLBOY'S SACRIFICE!"**

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"I shall have to carry you into Rylcombe, and get a trap or something. I'll come back for the bikes."

"You—you can't cawwy me a mile!"

"I could carry you ten miles! Come!"

Arthur Augustus made no further demur. Outram caught him up as if he had been an infant, and bore him along the dusky footpath.

Not a word was spoken as they went, but their thoughts were bitter. They reached the village at last, and the trap from the Railway Arms was engaged to take D'Arcy to the school.

"You're comin'," said D'Arcy, as Outram placed him in the trap.

"I'm going back for the bikes."

"You can't!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "Leave them there. Those wottahs may set on you again—"

Outram laughed grimly.

"They wouldn't set on me for a thousand pounds," he said. "Some of them will be laid up for a week or more, as it is. But there's no danger of a reformatory this time!" he added bitterly.

Arthur Augustus groaned.

The trap drove away towards the school, and Outram disappeared by the footpath through the wood.

CHAPTER 12. A Startling Confession.

THAT ass has missed calling-over!" growled Blake. Jack Blake was referring to the Honourable Arthur Augustus.

After the House match the chums of Study No. 6 had gone down to the gates to wait for D'Arcy. But Taggles came out to lock the gates as the dusk deepened, and the swell of St. Jim's had not arrived.

Blake & Co. went in to tea. When tea was finished, still Arthur Augustus and Outram had not put in an appearance.

They had been marked absent at calling-over, and Kildare had inquired after them. There was only one fellow in the School House who could have given information; and Levison of the Fourth had no intention of doing so.

Levison was not wholly easy in his mind.

He knew what must have taken place under the shadows of the trees on the lonely footpath. As the time passed on, and D'Arcy did not return, his uneasiness increased. He had intended that the swell of St. Jim's should be subjected to a terrible beating, beside which a flogging would be a pleasant experience. But he wondered now whether Mr. Weekes, in his rage and revenge, had gone too far, and inflicted some serious injury on the unfortunate junior. Levison was a rascal, but that thought alarmed him. When nine o'clock rang out, and D'Arcy had not returned, the cad of the Fourth was in a very unenviable frame of mind. He wished fervently that he had never thought of that cunning scheme for "getting even" with the swell of St. Jim's.

He pictured D'Arcy lying under the dark trees, perhaps crippled—perhaps in his blood; and he shuddered at the picture. But he dared not speak. If D'Arcy was there, there he had to remain. For his safety's sake, the cad of the Fourth must be silent.

Blake looked into Tom Merry's study, with a worried face. The Terrible Three were busy on "Tom Merry's Weekly," but they turned from their editorial labours as Blake came in.

"Hasn't Gussy turned up?" asked Tom.

"No. He's missed calling-over."

"Delayed at Abbotsford, perhaps?" suggested Manners.

Blake shook his head.

"Kildare's reported it to Railton, and he's telephoned to the camp. Lord Conway says D'Arcy and Outram left there at six."

"Then he's had lots of time to get in."

"He could have got in by calling-over, if he bucked up," said Blake. "Dash it all, what's become of him? He seems to want to miss bed-time as well as call-over!"

"Can't have been any accident," said Tom. "Outram's with him. Both of them can't have had accidents."

"Then why the dickens don't he come in?" growled Blake. "I don't like that rotter going with him!"

"My hat! You—you don't think—" ejaculated Tom Merry.

"Well, no; only the chap's a reformatory hooligan, and you never know when that kind of specimen is going to break out," said Blake uneasily. "You see, what can be keeping them? It's past nine."

"Punctures, perhaps," said Lowther.

"But they could have walked the whole distance in this time, or in less!"

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"It's jolly queer!"

The Terrible Three put the "Weekly" aside. They were as anxious as Blake. D'Arcy's absence was inexplicable; and somehow it added to their uneasiness to know that he was in the company of the fellow whom they believed to be George Purkiss, late of Hilstall Reformatory.

"Let's get down to the gates," said Tom.

Herries and Dig joined them in the passage. They were equally anxious about the missing junior. All the anxiety of the chums was for Arthur Augustus—none for Outram of the Fourth. And impossible as it seemed that the "reformatory hooligan" could have harmed his companion, a heavy disquietude weighed upon their minds.

There was a sound of a vehicle on the road, as they looked out through the bars of the big gate. A trap stopped outside.

"Gussy!" shouted Blake, in relief. "Is that you, Gussy?"

"Yaas, deah boy!" came a faint voice through the dusk.

"Anything the matter?"

"Yaas."

"Buck up, Taggles!"

The porter unlocked the gates, and they swung open. The trap turned in, and was surrounded in a moment by the juniors. Through the dusk they saw Arthur Augustus's face, pale, with dark bruises on it; and he was alone.

"What's happened?" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Where's your bike—where's Outram?"

"I've had a fearful adventure, deah boys! We were attacked in the wood—a gang of wotten footpads, with that wuffian Weekes—"

"Are you hurt?"

"Yaas. Only some hard knocks, though—not what that wuffian intended. Outram defended me," said Arthur Augustus quietly. "I was knocked wight out, but he kept them off, and licked them."

"Outram did!" ejaculated Blake, with a pang of remorse for his half-formed suspicions.

"Yaas, and cawwied me on his back to Wylcombe. I couldn't walk. He put me in this twap and went back for the bikes."

"Back into the wood, after dark, among those footpads!" said Lowther. "And that's the fellow we used to call a funk!"

"More like a lunatic, I should say!" remarked Manners. "If Weekes and his gang are still there—"

"He is quite safe, deah boys!"

"How many were there of them?" asked Digby.

"Six."

"And—and Outram beat off a gang of half a dozen roughs?" exclaimed Tom Merry.

Arthur Augustus crimsoned.

"Yaas," he said, in a low voice.

"Oh!" said Tom.

"Dwive on, please," said D'Arcy, and the trap rolled on to the School House.

The juniors followed it slowly, with sombre faces. During the drive home to the school, Arthur Augustus had been thinking hard. The scene in the wood had enlightened him—he could not help that. He knew what would be the verdict of St. Jim's when it was known. It would be taken as the final proof of Outram's imposture, and even D'Arcy would hardly be able to deny it now.

Outram had been playing a part, and, as if by the irony of fate, it was his pluck and devotion that caused the proofs to pile up against him. Had he allowed the governor of Hilstall to be crushed under the car? Had he deserted D'Arcy in the wood? Nobody but Levison would have believed that he was George Purkiss of Hilstall. His own brave action had condemned him, as Arthur Augustus realised miserably.

D'Arcy had wondered whether silence could be kept. But he knew that that was impossible. What had happened in the wood must be told; he had to account for the state he was in, and the police must be set on the track of the footpads. There was no concealing such an affray. Outram's gallant defence of his chum was fated to be the last nail in the impostor's coffin.

The impostor! Even D'Arcy could not help realising now that Outram was an impostor. It was the bitterest blow of all to the simple junior. His trust had been misplaced—yet, though he realised it, he could not falter in his friendship towards the lad who had stood between him and brutal injury. But his heart was as heavy as lead.

Mr. Railton came to the door of the School House, and stepped to the side of the trap as it stopped. His eyes fell upon D'Arcy's pale, bruised face with a startled look.

Arthur Augustus explained what had happened, and he entered the School House leaning hard on the Housemaster's arm. Blake and Herries and Dig hurried in, and they took him to study No. 6, to render what aid they could. Mr.

Railton went to the telephone and rang up the police-station to give them news of the affray.

Then he went down to the gates, in great anxiety for Outram. He had heard D'Arcy's story with the greatest astonishment, and he had fears for the safety of the junior who had gone back into the wood. But a little later there came a whirl of cycles on the road, and Outram pedalled up, wheeling D'Arcy's machine. He jumped off at the gate, and raised his cap at the Housemaster.

"Thank Heaven you have returned, Outram!" exclaimed Mr. Railton, in great relief. "How could you be so foolhardy as to venture back into such a dangerous place?"

"I did not think there was any danger, sir," said Outram quietly. "Those ruffians were gone!"

"They might have attacked you again; however, no matter. You are not hurt?"

"Only a bruise or two, sir."

"D'Arcy has told me how gallantly you acted, Outram." Mr. Railton looked curiously at the junior. "You have behaved very bravely and nobly, my boy. It is extraordinary you should have been able to deal with such odds. You must possess a very remarkably developed strength."

"Yes, sir," said Outram; "I am very strong."

"Outram!" Mr. Railton paused a moment. "You have shown great courage to-day. I am not unaware of the estimation in which you were held by your schoolfellows, owing to your disinclination to fighting. It appears clear now that you could have nothing to fear in any encounter—even with a senior. May I ask you, Outram, why you have exercised such an extraordinary patience, even to the extent of allowing your schoolfellows to believe you wanting in courage?"

Outram did not reply for a moment.

"I had a good reason, sir," he said at last. "I wasn't always so careful. I gave way to my temper once, and used my strength against a fellow, and—and it ruined my life. I had a lesson then, and—" He paused. "I can't stay at the school any longer, sir, after what has happened."

"What do you mean?" exclaimed the Housemaster.

Outram smiled bitterly.

"I mean that after this, sir, everybody at St. Jim's will be quite certain that I am George Parkiss, the boy-convict of Hilstall!"

"Nonsense! You have proved that your name is the name you bear."

"That is true, sir. I am Valentine Outram, but—"

"But what?"

"But I am George Parkiss, too," said the junior quietly. "It can't be kept dark any longer, and I must go."

"Are you out of your senses?" exclaimed Mr. Railton.

"It is the truth, sir. The whole House knows it!"

Mr. Railton gave him a startled look. He could read the dumb suffering in the boy's face.

"Take your bicycle in, Outram, and then come to my study," he said quietly.

"Yes, sir."

The Housemaster, with a knitted brow, strode back to the School House.

CHAPTER 13.

Under Two Names.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY lay back in the arm-chair in Study No. 6. His chums had been looking after him. They found a dozen big bruises on the hardly-used junior, and he was still somewhat dizzy, but he was recovering. Fortunately, no serious injury had been done. Tom Merry & Co. were silent now, and Arthur Augustus was silent, too. They knew one another's thoughts. D'Arcy's chum was George Parkiss, of Hilstall—he had been "spoofing," but there could no longer be a doubt. That was not all, for the miserable thought hammered in D'Arcy's mind—if his chum was Parkiss, where was the real Valentine Outram? Did the strange junior's secret include the secret of a terrible crime?

There was a tap at the door, and it opened.

Outram of the Fourth looked in. The juniors coloured as they looked at him, all feeling awkward and embarrassed. Outram came in quietly, and closed the door.

"I can come in?" he said.

"Of—of course," said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus. "I twust you are not feelin' vewy knocked about?"

"Not at all. And you—"

"I'm gettin' on all right. I was knocked out. That awful wottah Weekes meant to injah me vewy sewiously, I think. Jollay lucky that you were with me, Outwam!"

"It was lucky," said Tom Merry.

"And lucky I was able to deal with the brutes," said Outram. "Lucky that I am the fellow I am!"

There was a dead silence.

"Don't go," said Outram, as the Terrible Three made a move towards the door. "There's something I've got to say before I leave St. Jim's, and I'd like you to hear it."

"Leave St. Jim's!" repeated D'Arcy.

"Yes; it's come to that!" Outram's lips curved in a bitter smile. "You know as well as the rest that I am George Parkiss of Hilstall now."

Arthur Augustus gave a groan.

"Why—why didn't you tell me?" he muttered. "It—it's howwid. I—I didn't want to believe it, and it's a wotten shame aftah what you've done for me, only—only I couldn't help seein'—"

"Of course you couldn't help it," said Outram. "But perhaps I'm not quite so bad as you may have thought—all of you. Levison has suggested that I have got Valentine Outram out of the way somehow, and taken his place. It seems clear enough to you, I suppose, as soon as you know that I am the reformatory boy Levison took me for. But you need not think me worse than I am. I am Valentine Outram."

"You can't be two persons at once," muttered Lowther.

Outram smiled.

"I can—and I am," he said. "I am both Valentine Outram and George Parkiss. I am the son of Major Outram, and I am the prisoner of Hilstall Reformatory who was under the charge of Levison's uncle. Now that you know, I can tell you; but outside this study I shall still keep up the pretence I have tried to keep up so long—for the sake of my father's name. It will not take me long to explain. Last year, while my father was away at the Front, I was staying with my uncle, and at that time I went to Brighton for a holiday. There I got into a row with a rough. We fought, and—and I hurt him."

Outram's voice quivered a little.

"You know—now—that I am strong for my age. You would not guess it to look at me, but you know it now. I am a good boxer, and as strong as many prize-fighters years older than myself. I was proud of my strength once. Nobody could stand against me in a fight, and I was often in fights. But—but what happened that time at Brighton cured me of any desire to fight. The man I fought with was as much to blame as I was, so far as that went. But I lost my temper, I beat him, and he was hurt. He would never be the same man again afterwards, and—and I was taken in charge by the police. My victim went to hospital, and I was taken before the magistrates."

He paused again.

There was silence in the study.

"I found myself in a cell," resumed Outram, at last, his face very pale. "I had the prospect of punishment and disgrace before me—disgrace to an honoured name, disgrace to my people, disgrace to all who had anything to do with me. I knew that I must go to prison. But while I was thinking it out in the cell, a way out of that horrible disgrace came into my mind. I had nothing about me to prove my identity. I was in a strange town, where no one knew me, and I had refused to give my name when charged. I resolved that, when I was questioned, I would give a false name, and keep silent concerning my people."

"Oh!" said Tom Merry. He understood at last.

"I carried out this plan. I gave the name of George Parkiss—the first that came into my mind. I was tried, and sent to a reformatory—as George Parkiss. I became a prisoner at Hilstall."

"I—I undahstand now," said Arthur Augustus.

D'Arcy's face had brightened.

It was bad enough, but not so bad as Levison believed—as he had wanted to make others believe. "George Parkiss" had not come to St. Jim's under another's name. He had come in his own name. That much, at least, was true.

"But your people?" said Tom Merry, in wonder.

"My people did not know what had become of me. But, afterwards, I contrived to get a note sent to my uncle, telling him that I was gone to stay with friends in Scotland, and would write later. Even my uncle was not told what had happened to me. I was determined that no living being should ever know that George Parkiss, the boy convict, was Valentine Outram. My uncle was surprised, alarmed, anxious, as he did not hear from me again, but it could not be helped. Anything was better than disgrace. But—but you can imagine what my feelings were like, in the restraint of the reformatory, and—and I broke out again. My temper, always bad, got the upper hand, and I fought with a warder, and—and hurt him, and my sentence was lengthened. But—but that lesson was enough for me. When I was free at last, I had made a resolve."

Arthur Augustus nodded.

"You wosolved nevah to fight again?" he said. "I wemembah you told me somethin' like that the day you came heah."

THE GEN LIBRARY.—No. 437.

A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

"A SCHOOLBOY'S SACRIFICE!"

Outram nodded.

"I resolved that, whatever happened, I would never get into a fight again," he said. "I could not trust my temper or my strength. I went back to my uncle's house. He was angry at my long absence and silence. He questioned me, but I answered nothing. He supposed that I had been on a long holiday, and had been guilty of disrespect and negligence towards him, and he was angry, as you can believe. But I could not explain—I would not explain! The truth would have been a harder blow to him than his belief that I had been insolent and ungrateful. Naturally, he did not feel the same affection for me afterwards, and that is one reason why he sent me here. I came here, supposing that 'George Purkiss' was done with for ever, and that I could take up my life again as if that horrible incident had never happened. But I was mistaken."

"Levison!" said Blake.

"It was rotten ill-luck that there was a fellow here who had seen me at Hilstall. I never dreamed that the governor of the prison had a nephew at St. Jim's—of course, I could not guess anything of the kind. Levison had seen me there, and he knew me at once. But his accusation was not believed. It was easy enough for me to prove that I was Valentine Outram." The junior smiled slightly. "And—and my reserve—that caused me trouble, too, as you know. Whatever I am, I am not a coward, but only D'Arcy was able to see that I was not."

"Gussy was right," said Blake. "But—but—"

"I don't blame you," said Outram quietly. "You had no idea what I had been through, and you could not understand that a fellow might choose to be called a funk rather than enter into a scrap. I had had rather too much of scrapping. I had made a vow that I would never again raise my hand against anyone, and—and it was not hard to keep it. Not at first. But afterwards, when I was despised and avoided, I was tempted to break my word. But for D'Arcy I think I should have done so. But my luck was out all the time, for what happened when the governor of Hilstall came here gave me away, and you all guessed."

"We—we couldn't help it," faltered Tom Merry. "We didn't want to think badly of you, but—"

"But you thought I had been pretending to be a funk to make it clear that I was not George Purkiss. You were wrong—I did not pretend. It was rotten enough for me. But it helped me to keep the truth dark, and that helped me to keep to my resolve. But, after what had happened that day, I knew that the game would be up sooner or later. Still, I hoped that it might die away, that others would follow D'Arcy's example. So long as he believed in me I felt that I could stick it out. And now—"

He pulled himself together, as his voice faltered.

"I had the choice to-night of keeping D'Arcy's confidence by allowing him to be brutally used, or—or of losing it by defending him. You know what I chose. Then there was nothing left but to explain—and go. I'm going!"

"You're jollay well not goin'!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus hotly. "The whole thing isn't half so bad as that wottah Levison made out. You are not an impostah, only—only you have a wathah wotten secwet to keep. Nobody will wepeat what you've said outside this study—"

"Not a word," said Blake.

"And the othah fellahs will come wound in time," said D'Arcy.

Outram shook his head.

"It can't be! I can't explain to others what I've explained to you. I still have the secret to keep, for my name's sake. The affair will be forgotten when I'm gone, and the sooner the better. I must go—"

"But, weally—"

Arthur Augustus' voice died away. He knew that Outram was right, that St. Jim's was no place for him now.

Outram gave him an affectionate look.

"You know now that I have been in a reformatory—a prison!" he said.

"That makes no diffewence to me," said D'Arcy steadily. "You are my fwiend, deah boy, and I don't care for anythin' else."

"I must go!" said Outram. "I have already told Mr. Railton the truth. There was nothing else for it. I am going to leave St. Jim's in the morning, and—and I'd like you to think the best you can of me!"

"We shall always think of you as a splendid chap!" said Tom Merry, holding out his hand. "I wish you'd told us all this sooner. It's not nearly so bad as it looked. And we're not likely to forget that it was for another chap's sake that you gave yourself away."

"It's wotten for you to go," said D'Arcy. "Wotten! But we are always goin' to be fwiends, all the same, and I shall see you again somewhah else."

The next morning, by the first train from Rylcombe, Valentine Outram left.

The St. Jim's fellows wondered a little. Outram had drawn so much attention upon himself of late that his sudden departure could not fail to be commented upon.

Levison of the Fourth surmised that he had been "bowled" out, but at the first sneering word in regard to Outram the cad of the Fourth found himself collared by Tom Merry and Co. and bumped with great heartiness. And Levison held it wiser to keep his thoughts on the subject to himself after that.

Outram's secret remained a secret with Tom Merry & Co. Whether Outram was really Purkiss of Hilstall was still a problem with the rest of the fellows, and the matter was soon forgotten by most now that Outram had gone. Tom Merry & Co. thought kindly of the strange and wayward lad who had gone wrong, but had tried to atone for it, and who, by his own courage and devotion, had betrayed his own strange secret.

THE END.

NEXT WEDNESDAY.

A SCHOOLBOY'S SACRIFICE.

Another Magnificent Long Complete
Tale of TOM MERRY & CO. at
St. Jim's.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

Order Your Copy of 'THE GEM' in Advance.

INTO THE UNKNOWN!

This Week's Long Instalment
of a Magnificent New Serial
Story of Thrilling Adventure.

By **DAGNEY MAJOR.**

The Previous Instalments Told How

Mr. Thomas Whittaker, accompanied by his son Reggie, Jimmy Redford, Larry Burt, a Chinese servant named Sing Loo, Dr. Phенning, and a party of natives, of whom Phwa Ben Hu, nicknamed Toothy Jim, is leader, sets out to explore Patagonia in search of a specimen of the giant sloth, which is believed to be still existent there.

The party reaches Patagonia, and eventually fall into the hands of a race of giants. After exciting experiences, they are thrown into a cave, which is then sealed by means of a huge rock. They are left in pitch darkness, without food.

In a very short time they discover, to their horror, that giant toads have been let loose among them through holes in the walls, and a state of pandemonium prevails.

(Now read on.)

A Startling Discovery.

"Boys," went on Mr. Whittaker, "whatever you do, don't let the toads cling on to you. Shake them off at all costs; for if they once start sucking your ankles or legs the consequences may be serious. All of you come up to my end of the cave."

With expressions of horror and gurgles of suppressed disgust, Reggie, Jimmy, Sing Loo and Toothy Jim neared their leader, as they were guided by the sound of his voice.

Then Toothy Jim broke out again into wild utterance. Mr. Whittaker endeavoured to calm him, and at length ascertained that this crafty native, who had understood the rough meaning of part of the giants' language, owing to a word here and there being similar to his own tongue, had secretly wound round his middle, beneath his loincloth, a large net.

This net, explained Toothy Jim, would have to be stretched across their end of the cave, and held up by them in turns until they were released from their prison. The meshes would keep off the loathsome toads, and so once more would they defeat the nefarious schemes of the giant priests.

This clever and wily ruse was at once adopted, and in a very short time everyone in the cave was crowding to Dr. Phенning's end of the cave, where the toads had not yet ventured.

Sing Loo and Toothy Jim took the first turn at propping up the net with an arm on each side of the rocky walls, while Jimmy and Reggie, with legs wide apart, kept their feet on the edge of the meshes on the ground.

Every now and again a soft, heavy weight, as the horrid toads leapt onward and upward, shook the net. But the meshes held bravely.

"It reminds me of that beastly dish we had at school last term," said Reggie, "which we called toad-in-the-hole!"

"Which reminds me," said Mr. Whittaker, "that I am—and I'm sure everyone else is—very hungry."

"Sing Loo plenty leady for chop-chop!" cried out the Chinaman. "And me think velly good plan for Massa

Reggie to feedee this Chinaman while Sing Loo nettee toads in the holee."

It then dawned on everyone that in the excitement and horror at having discovered the toads all the food and water had been left at the entrance to the cave.

It was Sing Loo who at once volunteered to make a dash for the food, and Mr. Whittaker declared that he would accompany him.

Dr. Phенning relieved Sing Loo from holding up his end of the net, while Reggie, mounting on Jimmy's shoulders, gave Toothy Jim a little respite.

Holding up anything with both arms outstretched for three minutes taxes the strength of the strongest man.

Before Sing Loo made his dash for the food, Mr. Whittaker made him exchange his Chinese shoes for the doctor's stout English leather ones, encased his hands with a couple of handkerchiefs, and threw a coat round his face.

Then Sing Loo made a dash for the food, climbing over the net via Mr. Whittaker's shoulders.

They heard the plucky Chinaman panting and gasping and giving vent to exclamations of horror as he fought his way over the floor and over the beastly toads; but somehow he got back again with some food and water, which he passed over the net to Jimmy and Reggie.

It was an awful struggle to hoist him on to Mr. Whittaker's shoulders from the toad side of the net, but it was accomplished, though not without two horrid reptiles clinging tenaciously to his legs. These were beaten to pulp on the safe side of the meshes.

Sing Loo was heard to talk wildly and incoherently to his ancestors, and was understood to say that not for all the yen in China would he repeat the performance.

What the expedition really thought of Sing Loo's fine deed may be left to the imagination.

Everyone, groping about in the utter darkness, enjoyed that meal as they had never before relished anything. The water was cold and delicious, the cakes, rather like slightly sweetened bread, most acceptable.

Toothy Jim explained that, as far as he could gather with his very slight knowledge of the giants' language, the priests had put them into this cave to test their ability to overcome bites by poisonous toads. It was not an unknown torture in bygone days among Patagonian natives. The giant priests, so Toothy Jim supposed, resolved to give them all another chance should they come out alive from the ordeal—hence the food. They were not yet quite convinced of the doctor's powers as a firegod and as a magician.

While Dr. Phенning looked after his patient, who had fallen into a troubled slumber, Mr. Whittaker and the rest took turn and turn about in holding up the net to keep off the toads, and while this was in progress he told the boys about how they had stood on the skin of a giant sloth in the temple.

"It strikes me very forcibly," said Mr. Whittaker, "that we are not so very far from the district in which we might discover this gigantic brute alive."

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A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

NEXT
WEDNESDAY!

"A SCHOOLBOY'S SACRIFICE!"

"That'll be stunning!" cried Reggie.

"What's the prize to be for the one who brings it down?" asked Jimmy, who was perched on Reggie's shoulders, supporting the net.

"Sing Loo, plaps he learnce to ride on slothec's back," put in the Chinaman, who wanted to hear the boys laugh.

He got his reward.

Then Mr. Whittaker began to cross-question Toothy Jim, who told him that his grandfather had seen and captured a monster answering to the description of the giant sloth twelve hundred moons ago, or roughly, about a century.

His tribe had considered the mighty antedeluvian monster as something sacred, and it was kept in a huge cave. From what he had heard, Toothy Jim thought that, beyond question, the big skin in the temple with the coarse red hair on it was the hide of one of the enormous brutes.

So time, of which the prisoners could take no toll, passed away, everyone except poor Larry taking his turn to hold up the net or sleep.

When, according to Dr. Phenning's reckoning, they had been in the cave for about ten hours, and the sun should have been up for some time, and poor Larry was quite unconscious, Mr. Whittaker made a startling discovery.

He was idly digging in the fine gravel and sandy floor of the cave, when his hand came in contact with something hard.

In a few moments he had dragged up the object and ran his hand along a familiar-shaped weapon.

"Boys," he cried excitedly, "Phenning, I've found a revolver under the gravel and sand. Its pattern, to the touch, seems a bit out of date, but it means that either some white men may have been here before and have perished, or that there may be a rival expedition party up against us on the same mission as ourselves."

Before the King.

Just as Mr. Whittaker spoke, a very faint stream of light filtered through the far end of the cave.

"They are opening the entrance stone," whispered Mr. Whittaker. "If they are aggressive, boys, we'll fight to the last, and let 'em see we're British."

Slowly, very slowly the great stone at the entrance was sliding back. The sudden radiance of the brilliant sunlight that streamed through the ever-widening aperture had the effect of almost blinding the prisoners, who had been in total darkness for hours.

The net was still held in its place. Presently, as the watchers got more accustomed to the daylight, they saw standing at the entrance to the cave four giant priests, while behind them were grouped a number of giant soldiers.

The cave presented a horrid spectacle. There were over a hundred of those huge, loathsome toads, squatting down and blinking fitfully, with low, wicked-looking eyes, at the dazzling sunlight as it poured into the cave. Many of them were dead—battered to horrid shapeless pulp by the savage attack of their intended victims.

At sight of the little party huddled up behind the net at the far end of the cavern, the priests muttered something, signalled to the soldiers, and prostrated themselves before the whites.

Then the giant soldiers entered the cave, carrying some large bage fashioned of dried grass, and bundled up the toads one by one into the sacks, then took them away.

Presently the priests advanced, and the leader, making an obeisance to Mr. Whittaker, signalled to the doctor to approach. Then his reverence broke out into a wild harangue, pointing to the net and prostrating himself before the doctor, which Mr. Whittaker rightly interpreted as meaning that the great magician and god of fire had weaved the net, apparently out of nothing, and so had proved himself to be more than mortal.

The doctor bowed gravely to the priest, then pointed to Larry, who was by this time in a very high state of fever.

The priest beckoned to two more soldiers, who entered the chamber and carefully raised Larry on to two shields, while the doctor saw to wrapping the patient well up in his and Mr. Whittaker's coat.

A few moments later the whole party were being conducted on foot along the edge of the lava river towards that end of the Rock City at which they had made their entry the previous afternoon.

It was a wonderful sight that met the eyes of the explorers as they passed along through the Rock City.

Men, women, and children were going about their daily occupations, carrying water, fruit, eatables, but everyone paused to look at them as they came along.

The golden-capped summit of the pagoda-shaped tower of the temple glittered in the sun, and a continual stream of priests passed to and from its entrance.

The houses in the interior of the town were all built of stone, some of lava, and consisted of two storeys with flat roofs. Holes cut in oblong shape in the walls served as windows. Many of the women folk, none of whom were under six feet in height, were utilising the lava river for cooking purposes, boiling their food in stone vessels in the molten lava as it flowed sluggishly along till it vanished from sight under the temple.

There was no vestige of any animal life as far as the travellers could see. At last they came to a halt before one of the big buildings which was cut into the solid rock that formed the sides of the city.

Before them sat an old man, of giant stature but now somewhat bent, with a long white beard. He was seated on a raised dais, while round him were grouped what the travellers rightly conjectured were his courtiers. The old man was the king or chief of the giant city.

He greeted them with dignity and not a little awe, while Mr. Whittaker, Dr. Phenning, the boys, and Sing Loo and Toothy Jim bowed low before the throne.

Presently the king spoke, and what he said was evidently favourable, for he gave to one of his bodyguard standing near him a great rope of uncut gems, which the soldier, with a salute of his spear, handed to the doctor.

It was a magnificent gift, and worth a king's ransom.

The doctor then pointed to Larry, who was too ill to notice the proceedings.

The king motioned to another of his attendants, and a man, clad in a long, flowing robe of grass and weeds, came over to Larry, looked at him, muttered something to the doctor, and then spoke to the king. Shortly afterwards the explorers, with the exception of Toothy Jim, were conducted to a large, roomy house in the middle of the city, where they were allowed to remain unmolested, save for a cordon of soldiers drawn up outside.

Some fruit, rather like a banana, was brought, also some milk, which the doctor thought was obtained from some species of goat. With the fruit and milk Dr. Phenning had to rest content with regard to his patient, who would have to fight his battle with Nature.

"Think he'll pull through?" asked Mr. Whittaker gravely. "While there's life there's hope," returned Dr. Phenning. "He's got a very bad attack of malaria. I'd give all I have in the world for some quinine."

"Wonder what they've done with Toothy Jim and all our mules and baggage?" remarked Mr. Whittaker.

"Goodness knows!" responded the doctor. "Perhaps destroyed 'em."

"We'll see if we can't learn something of them," replied Mr. Whittaker, and he proceeded to scratch on the wall with a small charred stick that was lying on the floor a very passable sketch of the mules, llamas, baggage, and natives which on the previous day they had found surrounded by the giants. Then the leader beckoned to one of the soldiers who stood outside, and showed him the drawing.

The great man at once understood, and broke out into a smile. Then he disappeared.

"I tell you what, boys," remarked the doctor to Jimmy and Reggie. "It's going to be a job to get out of this place. As we passed along I noticed that every exit was barred and guarded, and the place at which we made our entrance yesterday was barred by a huge wooden gate, guarded by four soldiers."

"We'll have to escape, somehow," said Reggie.

"I'm not going to stay in this hole, for one," put in Jimmy.

"And Sing Loo, he no wantee to be thrown into the boiles lakee," said the Chinaman.

"Yes," agreed Mr. Whittaker, "but just look at those high, solid rock walls right round the city. How are we going to scale them?"

"This blave Chinaman he makee fiends with priestee and soldier boy. Sing Loo, he velly clute," said Sing Loo.

"The more time we have to spend here," went on Mr. Whittaker, "the greater chance have the rival party, if they're alive and if there is one and they have stolen a march on us, the less chance there is of getting the giant sloth. I did hear faint rumours before we left England that we might be up against a rival party."

"All the more sport," put in Jimmy. "Something to spar us on, and I bet we bag the giant sloth before they do, if it's to be got."

"Bravo, Jimmy!" cried Mr. Whittaker. "That's the spirit. And we'll win through yet; you can rest on that point. Why, after what we've gone through, fear nothing. But that toad business was a devil's device, and I wouldn't trust any of 'em after that. We could never have got through if it hadn't been for Toothy Jim's net. I

(Continued on page iii. of the cover)

INTO THE UNKNOWN!

(Continued from page 20.)

suppose the cunning beggar had a day or two previously stolen it from among our things and had hidden it under his loincloth by winding it round him. However, we'll forgive him the theft, as it saved our lives. I hope the copper scoundrel is all right and that they haven't hurled him into the boiling pot.

As he spoke, Mr. Whittaker was looking out from the door of the house, and he saw a party of soldiers and civilian giants approaching their home. On reaching the doorway one of them strode up to Mr. Whittaker and beckoned to him, the boys, and Sing Loo. By pointing vaguely over the rock city, he made them understand that he wished them to follow him. But Mr. Whittaker forbade Sing Loo to come, telling him to watch with the doctor lest anything might happen to the invalid.

Mr. Whittaker, Jimmy, and Reggie then followed their guides across the city to the farther side—where they had entered the previous day. They were then blindfolded, and presently found themselves walking on a rough path, while their clothes constantly brushed against leaves and brambles. So they knew they were out in the open country once more.

Presently they halted, and their eyes were unbandaged. What they saw made their hearts rejoice.

Right before them were their mules, baggage, llamas, rifles, and four natives—four left out of the large number with which they had begun their march into the unknown. Why these four had been spared it was impossible to conjecture, though the leader shuddered when he thought of the possible end of the missing natives.

Nothing had been taken away, though it was very evident that everything had been overhauled, as much of the baggage was lying strewn about the ground, and bales and boxes had been opened and hastily repacked.

Mr. Whittaker at once sought for the quinine, and found it after a very long search, as it had been hopelessly mixed up with other things. The leader then made a hasty selection of things which might be needed—change of clothes for all, medicine, scientific instruments, rifles, revolvers, and ammunition.

The giants apparently had not the slightest idea of what deadly weapons the rifle and revolver were, and examined them with an amused interest. They had evidently not seen the revolver which the doctor had used in the temple.

As soon as the leader had made his selection of goods, his guards made them up into bundles, exchanged greetings with the soldiers who were guarding the mules and goods, and then once more blindfolded the boys and Mr. Whittaker, and they began their march back to the Rock City.

They soon knew when the Rock City was reached, but they had been walking in it some time before their bandages were removed, and they were almost up to the house before they were allowed the use of their eyes.

But when they reached their stone dwelling they saw a most remarkable sight.

The doctor stood at the entrance, with Sing Loo, surrounded by a crowd of giants. Many of them, one at a time, were laying gifts at the feet of the doctor, consisting of various foods, drinks, uncut gems, gold vases, and ornaments, according to the rank or wealth of the donor.

Sing Loo seemed to be a great attraction, for many of the giants were gazing curiously at him, some having the temerity even to touch his pigtail, which seemed to cause the onlookers wonder and amazement.

"My golly!" exclaimed Reggie. "The doctor'll be the richest man in England if they go on filling him up with gold and gems like that."

"Wait till Sing Loo does some of his tricks on the llama, and then they'll worship his pigtail," commented Jimmy, with a grin.

Mr. Whittaker and the boys were greeted with many salams and murmurings when they arrived.

"It's all right, doctor," said Mr. Whittaker. "I've got the quinine, and some ether and chloroform, too," he added significantly.

Plans to Escape.

The doctor, bowing to the crowd, immediately disappeared into the house, where he devoted his entire attention to the patient, administering the life-saving quinine which meant all the world to Larry.

It was quite evident that the doctor was considered to be a god and a great magician, and that, in order to show their reverence and respect for so mighty a man, some of the populace were making him their votive offerings. Their whole attitude now seemed friendly. They were not rude

nor aggressive. They stayed outside the house, quiet and orderly, without any attempt to crowd inside.

There was no doubt that they had a wholesome fear of the giant guards who stood without.

Some hours passed, and the prisoners were allowed to remain unmolested by the populace, the curious ones of whom lurked outside in little groups, vainly hoping to catch a sight of the strange white people.

Meanwhile, the doctor and Mr. Whittaker, taking turn and turn about to watch the patient, were gravely talking over the turn events had taken, and a council was held to determine the course of action to be followed.

"There's one thing quite certain," said Mr. Whittaker, in low tones, "that we can't allow this state of things to continue, or we shall never achieve our object of capturing the giant sloth."

"But how are we to escape?" inquired the doctor, feeling Larry's pulse.

"That's what we've got to determine," answered Mr. Whittaker. "Now then, Sing Loo," he went on, turning to the Chinaman, "can't you set what you please to call your brains going, and devise some means of escape? Though, of course, we can't go until the sick boy is quite well again."

Sing Loo had no answer. He relapsed into stubborn silence; but Mr. Whittaker, glancing at the Chinaman's placid, expressionless face, knew that the resourceful Sing Loo's cute, subtle brain was at work devising some cunning scheme for their release.

"Can't Jimmy and I do a bit of scouting at nights to see how the land lies?" suggested Reggie, with eyes aglow with suppressed excitement. "We haven't been Boy Scouts for nothing, father."

"I'm afraid, Reggie," replied their leader, "that these giants would prove even too much for Boy Scouts, though I admire the spirit which prompted the suggestion."

"Let's have a shot," persisted Jimmy.

Mr. Whittaker smiled at the boys' eagerness, but shook his head.

"It would be suicidal, boys. I'm perfectly certain that a cordon of giants will be drawn around this house night and day, and that they may find that the doctor is only human after all, and then—" Their leader ended up with an expressive gesture. "It's my opinion," he went on at last, "that the cave where they found us exploring yesterday, and where we found those prehistoric drawings of the giant sloth on the walls, is sacred in the eyes of these giants, and that they won't forget in a hurry that we were taking treasures out of that hole into which Larry fell. I noticed in the temple a number of things which bore a strong resemblance in pattern and size to the treasures we saw in that cave. Perhaps it's some sacred burial-ground of former giant kings. Anyway, they'll keep a very sharp vigil over us, we can depend upon that."

"It seems to me," put in the doctor, "that it's up to me to convince them that we are more than mortal by giving an exhibition of real medicine, surgery, and a real good conjuring show. And if I haven't lost my old powers, they may be able to stand us in good stead."

"Give the old beggars the priests a real good show, doctor," put in Reggie, "and let Sing Loo be your comic man and super."

"We'll have to take care that they don't take so much fancy to us that they'll never give us a chance of going away!" put in Mr. Whittaker. "That's simply unthinkable! Fancy the rival expedition party capturing the giant sloth, and arriving in England first, I ask you!"

"Whatever happens, we must do our best to stop that," said Reggie.

"Sing Loo—he makes soldiers and priestess devils go muchee sleepy!" put in the Chinaman, with a cunning smile.

"What do you mean, Sing Loo?" asked Mr. Whittaker, with great interest.

The Chinaman rose, and, bending over Reggie in a very solemn and mysterious way, looked him steadfastly in his face and made mysterious passes across the boy's eyes with his hands.

Then he resumed his sitting posture, calm, placid once more.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Dr. Fleming, addressing the party generally. "Do you mean to say that Sing Loo can hypnotize, and we never knew it?"

"I was quite unaware that Sing Loo was so gifted," said Mr. Whittaker. "Now, then, Sing Loo, can you really make people go to sleep as you say?" he asked the Chinaman.

"This clever Chinaman he do muchee plenty things that come gleat suprise," answered Sing Loo, with sphinx-like gravity.

(Another splendid long instalment of this grand serial story next Wednesday. Order your copy of the GEM LIBRARY early.)

A Cash Prize for Every Contributor to this Page.



LOOK OUT FOR YOUR WINNING STORYETTE.

VERY STRANGE!

An old lawyer of the name of Strange, fearing he was going to die, said to his wife:
"My dear, when I die I should like these words engraved upon my tombstone: 'Here Lies an Honest Lawyer.'"
His good wife expressed surprise that he should have omitted to include his name, and asked his reason.
"That will not be necessary," he replied. "Everyone who passes will say at once, 'That's Strange!'"—Sent in by Miss M. Jackson, Rawcliffe.

NEATLY CAUGHT.

Mr. Henpeck, after a good dinner, dropped into an easy-chair to enjoy a quiet hour.
"John, my love," said his wife sweetly, "did you post that letter I gave you this morning?"
"Y-yes, dear," replied John.
"Where is the answer?" asked his wife.
"What answer? How could I bring an answer?" exclaimed her husband, in much bewilderment.
"The letter was addressed to you," replied Mrs. Henpeck.
"Oh, I didn't notice!" said John, and immediately fell into the trap by diving into his pocket for the letter which, of course, he had forgotten to post.
There was more trouble in the Henpeck family.—Sent in by E. Hyde, Smethwick.

A TIMELY RETORT.

A man rushed breathlessly into the station and accosted the porter.
"I say, porter, when does the half-past five train leave?"
"Five thirty."
"Well, the church clock says twenty-five past, the post-office clock says twenty-seven past, and your clock says thirty-two minutes past. Now, which am I to go by?"
"You can go by any clock you like, sir," replied the porter, "but you can't go by the train, because it has gone!"—Sent in by Harold Hayday, Cirencester.

HE KNEW.

Visitor (consolingly, to Tommy, who has upset a bottle of ink on the new carpet): "Tut, tut, my boy! It's no use crying over spilt milk!"
Tommy: "Of course not. All you do is call the cat, and he licks it up. But this happens to be ink, so mother'll do the licking!"—Sent in by Granville Hall, Cleckheaton.

BEWARE OF THE DOG!

A somewhat nervous old lady was gazing into a shop window, when a rather savage-looking dog ran excitedly up to her. She turned to the owner and said:
"Sir, will you kindly call your dog away from me?"
"Oh," replied the owner, "he is quite harmless, and will not bite you! See how he wags his tail!"
"Yes," responded the old lady; "but it is not that end I am worried about—it's the other!"—Sent in by J. Campbell, Glasgow.

A TERRIBLE TRAGEDY.

Her hair was in wild disorder. Her face was flushed, and her eyes flashed. She clenched and unclenched her fingers in agony and despair. Her indignation and anger were allied with keen despondency.
"Cruel one—oh, cruel one!" she cried, in anguished tones.
"I have borne with you too long! You have injured me—you have tortured me! And yet I could not bear to give you up! When first we met, how your ease and polish attracted me. When you became my very own, how my friends envied me! But your understanding is too small for my large soul. You have ruined my standing in society. If we had never met, I might have walked in peace. Begone! We part for ever!"
There came a moment's convulsive breathing, a grating of teeth, and a sharp sigh. It was all over; the tragedy was ended. By an almost superhuman effort she had pulled off her new shoe!—Sent in by D. Dixon, Dublin.

MUTUAL AID.

Sandy strolled into a shop bearing the sign, "Shaving, 1d.", and requested the removal of his three days' growth of beard. A small boy proceeded to apply the soap to his chin, whilst the proprietor removed the lather from another man's face. The boy was not feeling very energetic on that particular day, and Sandy was not at all satisfied with the progress he was making.
"Rub harder, lad!" he kept urging, when the boy would put on a momentary spurt, speedily relapsing into his original dreamy condition.
At last the Scot could stand it no longer.
"Laddie," he said, in a weary tone, "just hold your wee brush steady in wan place, an' I'll wangle me head."—Sent in by F. Harris, Kingsland, Herefordshire.

A "SMART" LAD.

Master: "Did you deliver my message to Mr. Smith?"
Boy: "No, sir. He was out, and the office was locked up."
Master: "Why didn't you wait for him, as I instructed you?"
Boy: "There was a notice on the door which said 'Return at Once,' so I came back as quick as I could."—Sent in by J. M. Cameron, Herne Bay.

HE GOT IT.

Jones: "A burglar broke into my house about three o'clock this morning, when I was on my way home from the club."
Smith: "Did he get anything?"
Jones: "I should say he did! The poor beggar is in the hospital now. My wife thought it was me!"—Sent in by A. Green, West Hartlepool.

AN AUSTRALIAN YARN.

An unusually tall man one day hurriedly entered Sydney Station, and, rushing up to a bystander, asked:
"Do you think I can catch the Brisbane express?"
The man addressed surveyed the other's long legs, and, slowly removing a big cigar from between his lips, replied:
"Well, it looks as if you might; but you'll have to hurry, for she left here half an hour ago!"—Sent in by J. Hewitt, Auburn, New South Wales.

As the "GEM" Storyette Competition has proved so popular, it has been decided to run this novel feature in conjunction with our new Companion Paper,

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