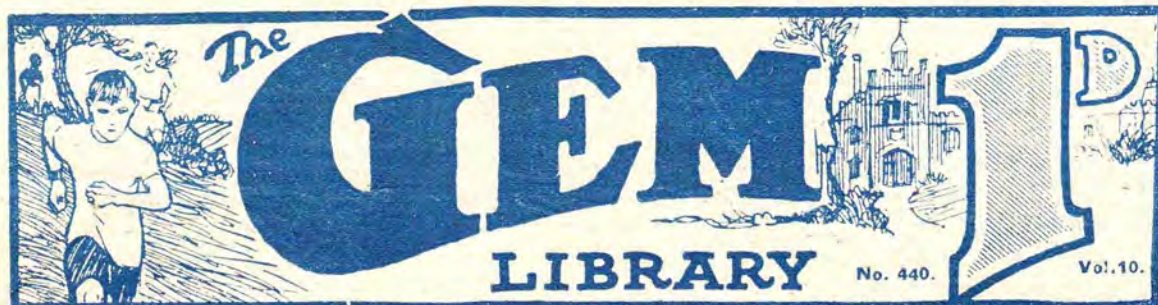


MONEYBAGS MINOR!

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



TWO STAUNCH READERS!



THIS WEEK'S CHAT

Whom to Write to —
EDITOR "THE GEM" LIBRARY.
 THE FLEETWAY HOUSE, FARRINGTON ST. LONDON E.C.
 OUR · THREE · COMPANION · PAPERS!
 "THE MAGNET" · THE "PENNY" · CHUCKLES.
 — LIBRARY — — POPULAR — — 1/2°
 EVERY MONDAY · EVERY FRIDAY · EVERY SATURDAY.



For Next Wednesday:

"TOO CLEVER BY HALF!"

By Martin Clifford.

The find story which appears next week centres round St. Leger, one of the black sheep of the Fifth Form, who is caught smoking and gambling in the woods by the Ryll by a governor of the school. Major Stringer, although knowing St. Leger by sight, is unaware of his name, and the culprit refuses to give it. St. Leger takes counsel with Cutts, who suggests the establishment of an alibi. Baggy Trimble is brought into the plot, though his part in it is that of an accessory scarcely conscious of what he is doing. The story they endeavour to get belief for is that it could not have been St. Leger whom the major saw, because at that very time the Fifth-Former was being rescued from grave peril by Trimble fully a mile away. Major Stringer reports the offence; but the alibi proves effective for the time being, and St. Leger is held innocent. The Terrible Three and the chums of Study 6 know that the yarn is not true, for the simple reason that Trimble was in their company, as an uninvited guest, at the time when the rescue was supposed to have taken place. But they cannot play the parts of informers; and the secret only comes out in the long run because of the unspeakable Baggy's greed and blackmailing ways. Then St. Leger discovers that he and his friend Cutts have been

"TOO CLEVER BY HALF!"

FROM AN AUSTRALIAN GIRL READER.

From far-away Queensland there reached me lately a letter which interested me very much, and which I am sure will interest my readers. The girl who wrote it has neither mother nor father; but she has four brothers—or, rather, she had, for now they are only three—and, reading between the lines, one realises that, however much she may have missed the care of a mother, she has not wanted for fatherly care. The brothers have seen to that.

She meant to write to me a long time ago, she says, but she made up her mind to wait until all four of her brothers had become staunch supporters of this paper. Two of them, the eldest and the youngest, were already so, but for some time the other two refused to be persuaded.

Then one day, when she was ill, one of the two sat by her. She fell asleep, and he took up a copy of the "Gem" to while away the time. When she awoke he was hunting through her books and papers and sorting out every number of the "Gem" he could find! So was he converted, and he brought over the last remaining non-reader of the four.

Now three of the four have gone to the war, leaving behind them only the youngest, a lad of seventeen, to look after their sister. And the eldest has laid down his life for his country. He was killed while carrying despatches. "Died on the field of honour," as the fine French phrase, which cannot be bettered, has it.

She might have kept them all with her, keen as they were to go and do their duty. But she said "Go!" She asks me if she did rightly. There can be but one answer: "Yes." It was a hard choice for a girl to have to make, but she chose well.

Among their parting words were: "Now, mind this! If you miss sending us even one number of the 'Gem,' you may expect to get your young neck screwed when we come back." So they left her with a jest, not because they did not feel the parting, but because that is the way of the Briton all the world over. To make a jest of danger, to fight laughing, yet none the less grimly, that is the Briton's way. And there are no finer Britons anywhere than these from the great island continent, who helped so largely to make of Anzac a name that will thrill hearts as long as the world holds a fighting-man.

NOTICES.

For Correspondence, Etc.

J. A. Hart, 15, Broadwater Road, Lordship Lane, Tottenham, N., who is a violinist, would be glad to hear from a fellow-reader (boy) in his neighbourhood who can read music at sight, and would be willing to accompany him for practice on the piano.

J. E. Paget, 10, Union Road, Nether Edge, Sheffield, wants to buy war souvenirs and relics. Full description and price required should be given when writing.

J. Hetherington, 53, Kingswood Road, Chiswick, W., would be glad to hear from possible contributors to a small amateur journal he is starting. Stamped and addressed envelope, please.

W. Marsh, 64, Tintern Road, Perry Bar, Birmingham, would like to hear from one or two cadet readers.

Leagues.

J. P. Hess, Balachava House, 7, Oxford Road, Kilburn, N.W., is forming a "Gem" and "Magnet" League for home and overseas correspondence and exchange and gifts to soldiers and sailors, and will be glad to hear from anyone interested.

William Knapp, 8, Firbank Road, Peckham, S.E., is forming a "G." and "M." League, open to anyone in the United Kingdom, and will be glad to hear from all who would like to join.

J. Huddart, 36, Anchor Road, Barrow-in-Furness, would like to hear from the hon. sec. of any "G." or "M." League anywhere near him.

G. Llewellyn, 268, Main Road, Darvall, Sheffield, wants to form a "G." and "M." League for boys, and to run a magazine in connection with it. Please write, or call between five and six.

Back Numbers, &c., Wanted.

H. Hindley, 3, Thelwall View, Knutsford Road, Grappenhall, near Warrington, wants to buy "Gems" and "Magnets" about vol. 3.

Howard Newton, 17, St. John's Grove, Croydon, wants No. 363.

Driver F. H. Kent, 83406, R.F.A., No. 2 Sec., Divisional Ammunition Column, Salonica Forces, would be glad if any reader would send him the "Gem" and "Magnet" regularly.

B. H. Braybrook, 8, Letts Road, Far Gotton, Northampton, No. 325 of the "Gem."

W. G. Hier, 112, High Street, Neyland, Pembrokeshire, wants to buy Nos. 256 and 257 of the "Gem," and Nos. 246 and 247 of the "Magnet."

For Cricket and Football.

Everton Junior C.C. (average age 15½) want matches, three-mile radius of Stanley Park.—Hon. Sec., Peter Graham, 12, Goschen Street, Everton, Liverpool.

James Needs, 32, Sonning Street, Roman Road, Barnsbury, N., wants to form a footer club for next season, and will be glad to hear from anyone in his neighbourhood who would care to join.

St. Hilda's C.C. (average age 14) want Saturday afternoon matches, home or away, two-mile radius of Jesmond.—Hon. Sec., S. B. Smith, 115, Tavistock Road, West Jesmond, Newcastle-on-Tyne.

Turbinia C.C. (average age 16) want Saturday afternoon matches, home or away, four-mile radius of Newcastle.—Hon. Sec., E. Sandells, 3, Cleghorn Street, Heaton, Newcastle-on-Tyne.

Whitechurch Juniors A.F.C. and C.C. want Saturday afternoon cricket fixtures within five-mile radius, and also to fix up footer matches for next season.—Hon. Sec., John Partridge, Penlan House, Melingriffith, Whitechurch, near Cardiff.

Your Editor

PUBLISHED IN TOWN
AND COUNTRY EVERY
WEDNESDAY MORNING

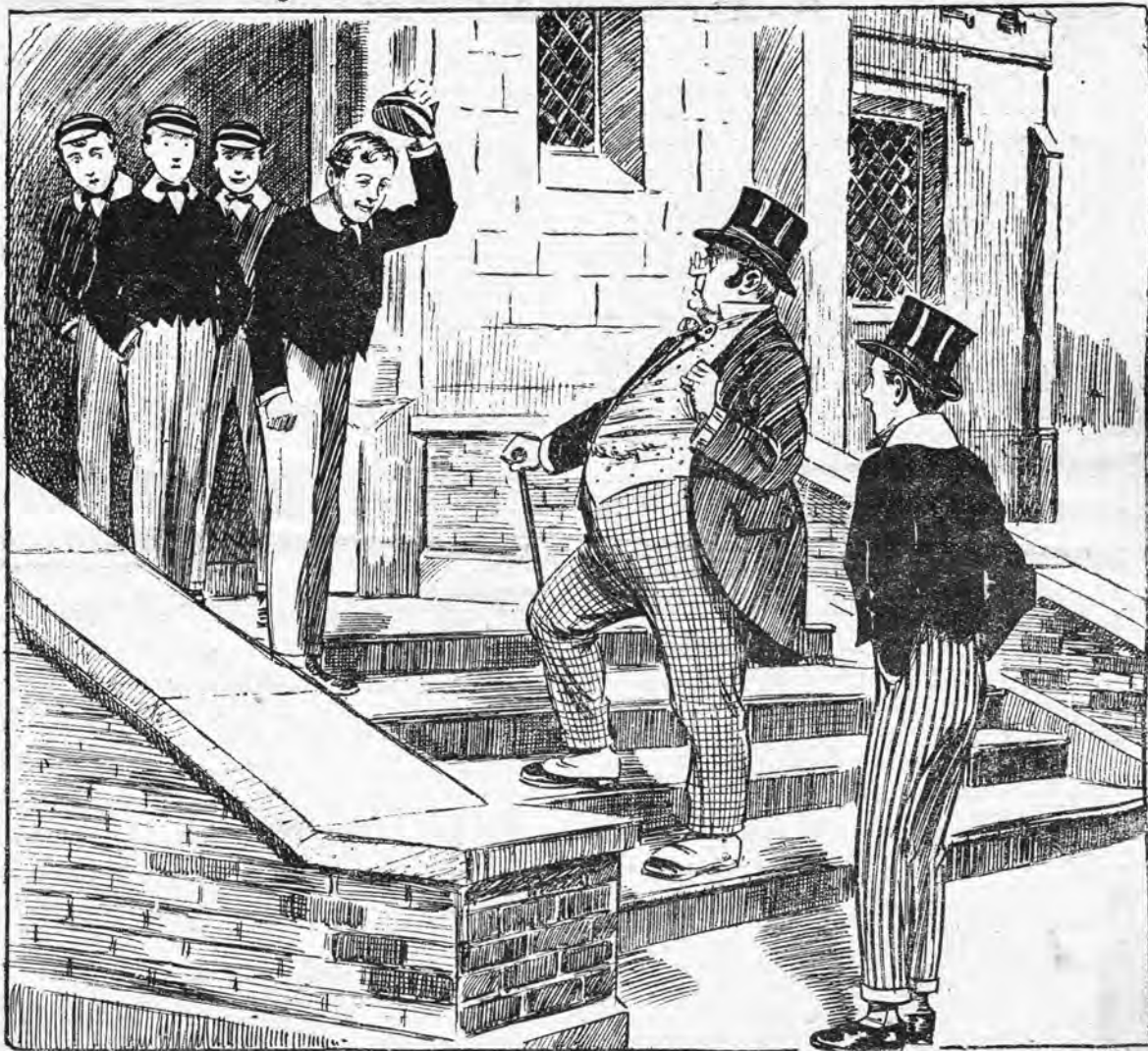


COMPLETE STORIES
FOR ALL, AND EVERY
STORY A GEM!

MONEYBAGS MINOR!

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

By **MARTIN CLIFFORD.**



Monty Lowther raised his cap very politely to the newcomers, as they came up the steps of the School House. "Excuse me, sir!" he said. "Mr. Racke, I believe?" (See Chapter 2.)

CHAPTER 1. A New Arrival.

"**W**ACKE!"
"Eh?"
"Wacke!" repeated D'Arcy of the Fourth.
He spoke in a very thoughtful tone, with a very thoughtful look. Three inquiring stares were turned upon him by Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther.

"Is it sunstroke?" Monty Lowther inquired affably.
"Try ducking your napper in the fountain."

"Weally, Lowthah—"
"Do you mean that you want a whack?" asked Tom Merry.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"
"Otherwise," said Manners, "what are you burbling about?"

"Wats! It sounds familiah."

Next Wednesday.

"TOO CLEVER BY HALF!" AND "INTO THE UNKNOWN!"

"What does it?"

"Wacke."

"Either Gussy has gone off his rocker," remarked Tom Merry thoughtfully, "or else he is trying to pull our leg. In either case, it's time to bump him."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy backed away hastily.

"Pway don't play the giddy ox, deah boys! I was simply wemarkin' that it sounds familiah, and I must have heard it somewhere befoah."

"What?" shrieked the Terrible Three together.

"Wacke, of course!"

"If he says whack, I suppose he means whack," said Lowther. "Give him what he's asking for."

Whack, whack, whack!

Tom Merry bestowed the first whack upon Arthur Augustus' shoulder, which spun him towards Manners. Manners gave the second whack, and spun him towards Lowther. Monty Lowther delivered the third, which sat Arthur Augustus down on the steps of the School House with a heavy bump.

"Gwoogh!" gasped Arthur Augustus breathlessly.

The Terrible Three grinned down at him from the top step.

"Satisfied?" queried Tom Merry. "If you want any more whacks, we're yours to command. Say the word!"

"Yawwooh!"

"That isn't the word."

"You uttah asses!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "You feahful wuffians! Gwoogh!"

Jack Blake came out of the School House with Herries and Digby. They stared at the swell of St. Jim's as he reposed on the steps, trying to recover his breath.

"Well, that's a jolly dangerous place to sit down," said Blake. "Suppose somebody walked on you, Gussy?"

"Gwooh! I am not sittin' down—I mean, I did not intend to sit down! Those three uttah Pwussians have wolloed me ovah!" shrieked Arthur Augustus, scrambling to his feet. "Pway hold my eyeglass, Blake, while I give them a feahful thwashin'!"

"He asked for it," said Tom Merry. "He distinctly said 'Whack!' so we whacked."

"I did not say whack, you howlin' duffah! I did not pwo-nounce an aspirate in the word. I said Wacke."

"And what in thunder did you say Wacke for?" demanded Blake, in astonishment.

"I was wepeatin' the name because it sounded familiah, and I wondahed where I had heard it," said Arthur Augustus, glaring at the Terrible Three. "I weally do not believe it was a misunderstandin', you uttah Huns! I wegard you as Pwussians!"

"Name!" said Lowther. "Do you mean to say you know somebody named Wacke?"

"Certainly not!"

"Then what the merry dickens do you mean, if you're not right off your rocker?" asked Herries.

"I am not off my wookah, Hewwies. I was alludin' to the new kid. Twimble has told me there is a new kid comin' in the School House, and his name is Wacke. And I have heard the name befoah somewah."

"My hat!" said Tom Merry. "If a new kid comes with a name like Wacke, he will get chipped. Why doesn't the duffer change it to Jones, while there's time?"

"First I've heard of the new kid," said Blake. "Odd how Trimble knows everything! I suppose he always will so long as they make keyholes to doors. So you know the new merchant, Gussy?"

"I do not know him, Blake. But I have heard the name befoah. I think I heard it mentioned by my bwothah Conway—somethin' to do with the Army. I have heard old Conway speakin' in a disappwovin' way of somebody named Wacke, I am suah. I was wondewin' if this new chap is the same chap, or a connection of the chap. He's comin' to St. Jim's this aftahnoon."

"Well, never mind Wacke," yawned Blake. "New kids don't matter, so long as they don't shove them into Study No. 6. Coming down to cricket—if you've finished sitting on the steps?"

"Bai Jove!"

"Well, what's biting you now?"

"Nothin' is bitin' me, Blake, and I wegard the question as widiculous. I wemembah now," said Arthur Augustus, somewhat excitedly. "Old Conway was talkin' about Wacke the last time he was home from the Fwont. It's a firm—Wacke & Hacke, the gweat contwactahs."

"Fathead!" hooted Blake. "That isn't Wacke, It's Racke."

"Yaas. I said Wacke."

"Racke, you ass!"

"Yaas, Wacke," said Arthur Augustus innocently.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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"I see nothin' whatever to cackle at! Pewwaps you've heard of Wacke & Hacke, the contwactahs. They supply somethin' or othah for somethin', or somethin'," said Arthur Augustus, a little vaguely. "They supply it in enormous quantities, you know, and make twemendous pwofits, and woll in money, you know. I wemembah old Conway was speakin' wathah severely about Wacke & Hacke making enormous war pwofits. He was wathah disgusted. It's wathah peculiah that a contwactah gets more money than a chap in the twenches, isn't it?"

"The further from the trenches, the bigger the pay," remarked Blake. "Nothing unusual in that."

"Yaas, I suppose so. All the decent chaps are in the twenches, and the wottahs stay behind to make money," remarked Arthur Augustus thoughtfully. "Upon the whole, I'd wathah be one of the twench chaps. Self-wespect is worth more than bawwels of wotten money!"

"Hear, hear!" said Tom Merry. "You talk like a picture-book, Gussy. Give it to them like that in the House of Lords—when you get there. So Racke & Hacke are coming to St. Jim's?"

"I suppose they've made a lot of money, and now they're going to have a first-class, slap-up education?" grinned Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Lowthah, you are an ass! The Wacke who is comin' here can't be one of the contwactahs themselves. They're old johnnies in the City. I was wondahin' if it is a connection—pewwaps the son and heir of the contwactah, you know—"

"The heir of the guilty gold?" said Lowther. "My word, I shall look out for that chap, and chum with him! We'll ask him into our study. He will be worth knowing, if he's a Racke belonging to Racke & Hacke. It's a tremendous firm. The more the British Army extends, the more Racke contracts."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wats! I was going to make a suggestion to you fellahs. Of course, a fellah is naturally disgusted with wottahs who make war pwofits. I should feel it a gweat stwain to be polite to a shipownah. But if this young Wacke is a son of old Wacke, he is not wesponsible for his patah makin' pwofits out of the war, and it is up to us to tweat him civilly. It's the same as if his fathah was a burglar, you know—it would not be his fault."

"Ha, ha!"

"Hallo! What's that thumping row?" exclaimed Digby. Zip-zip! Hoot! Buzz!

A huge motor-car swung in at the gates of St. Jim's. The juniors all glanced towards it curiously. It was a whacking car—tremendous in size. It came up the drive with a roar and a rush.

"Bai Jove! That isn't the Head's cah—that's been given to the Wed Cwoss—"

"Racke, I'll bet you!" grinned Lowther.

"Pway don't be hasty in your judgments, Lowthah! It is shockin' bad taste to use motor-cahs for pleasuah in war-time, and you have no wight to suggest that Wacke is doin' anythin' of the kind."

Buzz! Buzz! Gr-r-r-r-r!

The big car ground up the gravel, and came to a halt in front of the School House. Toby, the page, much impressed, rushed out to open the door. A fat man of middle-age and a lad of about fifteen or sixteen descended. The roar of the great car had drawn general attention to the spot, and fifty pairs of eyes at least were turned upon the new arrivals.

CHAPTER 2.

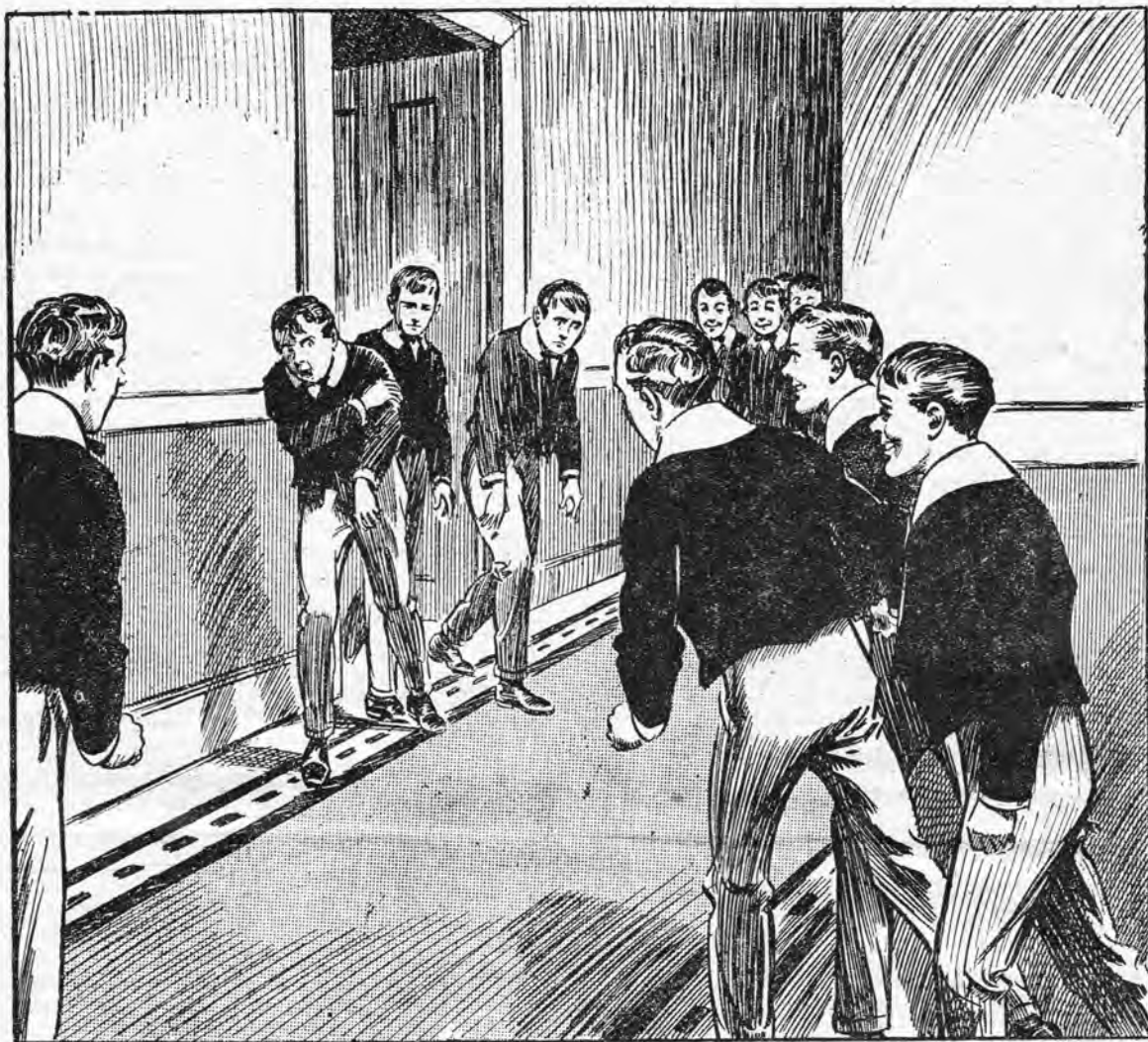
The Millionaires!

TOM MERRY & CO. did not exactly stare at the newcomers, but they could not help regarding them with interest. The tremendous car, which was worth fifteen hundred guineas at least, was alone an object of interest. And the two personages who had descended from it were interesting, too, in their way.

Evidently they were father and son. The father was fat and florid, with a nose that somewhat resembled an eagle's beak, and gold-rimmed glasses perched on it. His jaw was square, very square, though some of its squareness was hidden by layers of fat. His clothes were well-cut and evidently expensive, and upon his ample waistcoat was a heavy gold chain; in his tie a diamond pin worth sixty pounds at least. Diamonds glittered from his shirt-cuffs, too; his sleeve-links were worth more than his tiepin. The glitter of his silk hat, however, almost outshone his prominent diamonds.

The son was somewhat pasty in complexion, and far from sturdy; but there was an air of consequence about him that struck the juniors at once. He also was inclined to gorgeousness in attire.

TUCK HAMPERS ARE GIVEN AWAY TO READERS OF THE "BOYS' FRIEND," 1st



The Head's study door opened, and Crooke & Co. limped out. "Sacked?" asked a dozen voices, as they came squirming down the passage. (See Chapter 10.)

Apparently he was blessed with much money, and did not believe in hiding his light under a bushel. He was dressed in Etons, but he wore, like his parent, a fancy waistcoat of prominent design, and a watchchain that could be observed at a considerable distance. There was also a glitter of diamonds about him.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of the school, the glass of fashion, and the mould of form in the House, never wore diamonds, excepting on state occasions a tiny stone in his tie. The aspect of the new arrivals gave Arthur Augustus a pain. Big diamonds had a worrying effect upon Gussy's noble nerves.

Some of the juniors grinned. They could not help it. Monty Lowther raised his cap very politely to the newcomers, as they came up the steps of the School House. There was a lurking glimmer in Monty Lowther's humorous eye. He foresaw some fun in the new boy.

"Excuse me, sir!" said Lowther politely. "Mr. Racke, I believe?"

The fat gentleman paused.

"Yes, my lad."

"So happy to see you here, sir! Happy and honoured! We have heard of your great work for the country, sir, during the war!" said Lowther.

Mr. Racke smiled genially.

"Quite so—quite so! Aubrey, these are some of your future schoolfellows!"

Aubrey looked at the juniors, and nodded carelessly. Aubrey evidently had a very good opinion of himself. There was none of the diffidence of a new boy about Aubrey.

Mr. Racke and his hopeful son passed into the House, Toby showing them to the Head's study.

Tom Merry & Co. looked at one another.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Manners.

"Bai Jove, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus faintly. "I weally don't know how I shall stand that chap in the School House! Do you think he could be persuaded lath to buwy his diamonds in the garden?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Spending-it-now!" grinned Lowther. "That's the giddy motto of the Racke family. I suppose the family income was thirty bob before the war, and it's thirty thousand pounds now. And they're spending it now!"

"Who wouldn't be an Army contractor?" grinned Blake. "Well, it's a comfort that the war benefits somebody. I suppose Racke & Hacke believe in fighting it out to the bitter end—what!"

"I should jolly well say so!" said Manners. "What I chiefly like about that chap is his name—Aubrey! I wonder if he was called Aubrey before the war?"

The juniors chuckled.

Trimble of the Fourth came hurrying along the passage.

"Has he come?" he asked excitedly.

"He's come," said Tom Merry. "You can give us all a rest now, Trimble. Young Racke can lend you all you want, and never miss it!"

"They're frightfully rich!" said Trimble, his eyes glistening. "Rolling in money, you know! My pater knew them before the war, and they hadn't fifty quid to their name, my pater says. They don't speak to him now. I'm going to

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NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

"TOO CLEVER BY HALF!"

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

be an Army contractor when I grow up. I hope there'll be another war then!"

"Pooh! This one will last your time!" said Blake. "What I don't understand is, how the Head is letting that young bounder into St. Jim's! It's rather a come-down for the old school!"

Trimble blinked at him.

"Why, you ass," he gasped, "I tell you they're rolling in money! Old Racke is going to be a baronet, my pater says, and that costs an awful lot! He could buy up this school on the profits of a single contract, and never miss the money! If the war lasts another year, old Racke will be a billionaire. He's a millionaire now. I'm going to be jolly civil to young Racke, I can tell you!"

"Yes, you would be!" grunted Blake.

Arthur Augustus gave Trimble a look of sovereign disdain.

"Bai Jove, I shall have to weconsidah my ideah!" he remarked. "If a chap is vewy civil to that young boundah, it will look like being aftah his wotten money! I shouldn't wondah if some fellahs stuck up to him for his money! It seems howwid, but I weally think Twimble is capable of it, I do weally!"

"Oh, you're an ass!" said Trimble. "Of course, I'm going to be civil to him, and—and ask him home to Trimble Hall, and all that!"

"Better get the Hall built before you ask him to it," suggested Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Trimble grunted, and rolled away, to station himself in the passage near the Head's study, evidently to claim acquaintance with the new boy at the earliest possible moment.

Tom Merry & Co. grinned, and went down to the cricket-field. For Aubrey Racke and his money they did not care two pins.

But there were other fellows of Trimble's way of thinking. Many of the St. Jim's fellows had relations in the Army, and some of them had heard of the great contractors, Messrs. Racke & Hacke. And those who had heard of them had heard of their wealth, which was tremendous. Levison and Mellish and Crooke joined Trimble in the passage.

It was some time before the door of the Head's study opened, and Mr. Racke and his son came out. They glanced carelessly at the group in the passage, as they went to the door. Mr. Racke stepped into the huge car, and bade good-bye to his son. Trimble & Co. watched them with respectful attention.

"Good-bye, Aubrey!" said Mr. Racke. "Now, I'm leaving you here to make your new start. Mind you do me credit!"

"Yes, that's all right!" yawned Racke junior.

"If you want any more money, you've only got to drop a line."

"I will," said Racke.

"Plenty now—what?"

"I think so—fifty or sixty."

"My son is not to be stinted in anything," said Mr. Racke, with a proud glance at the junior's pasty face. "You're to keep your end up here, Aubrey. Anything you want you're to have!"

"I'll remember."

"You're to keep your end up with the best of them," said Mr. Racke. "And don't forget about making friends with young D'Arcy, the son of Lord Eastwood. I expect you to do that."

"All serene."

"Don't spare the expense, mind."

"I won't."

"Well, that's about all. Good-bye, Aubrey!"

Mr. Racke had finished his parental advice. A fat hand shook a flabby one, and the great car rolled away with a rush and a roar.

Aubrey remained standing on the steps of the School House, with his hands in his pockets, and a bored look on his face. He glanced round as Baggy Trimble came up to him with an ingratiating grin.

"Jolly glad to see you, Racke!" said Trimble heartily.

Racke stared at him.

"You don't remember me?"

"No, I don't."

"My name's Trimble."

"Never heard it before."

"Haven't you?" said Trimble, a little unpleasantly. "My father used to do business with yours before the war."

"I dare say he did," yawned Racke. "The pater did a tremendous amount of business."

"Not so much before the war!" grinned Trimble. "My pater had to collect an account from Racke & Hacke, and they kept putting him off!"

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"Oh, rot!"

"Then you don't remember me?"

"No, certainly not!" said Racke, with emphasis.

"What a bad memory!" said Trimble, still grinning.

"Your pater has a bad memory, too. I think he called you Aubrey just now?"

Racke started.

"What about it?" he demanded fiercely.

"When I saw you two years ago——" said Trimble.

"Oh, shut up!"

"Do you remember me now?"

"Ye-es," said Racke unwillingly. "I—I remember you!"

"Good! I thought you would!" said Trimble agreeably.

"We're going to be great friends here, ain't we, Aubrey?"

He emphasised the name with a chuckle.

"I've got to see the master of the Shell," said Racke, without replying to Trimble's remark. "Can you tell me where to find him?"

"Come with me, dear boy!"

Trimble took Racke's arm quite affectionately, and led him into the house. Racke made an angry motion to throw Trimble's arm off.

"Oh, I say, Aubrey——" began Trimble.

Racke set his lips, and left his arm where it was. With linked arms, they arrived at Mr. Linton's door.

Levison and Mellish and Crooke stared after them in surprise.

"Well, my hat!" ejaculated Levison. "Trimble's done the trick; he's palled on with the giddy millionaire at the start."

"Cunning beast!" growled Mellish.

Racke went into the Form-master's study, and Trimble came back along the passage, beaming.

"You seem to be getting on all right with the millionaire!" granted Crooke.

Trimble smiled.

"Yes, rather; we're really old pals, you know—quite old pals. I'm going to be very chummy with Aubrey." And Trimble chuckled a fat chuckle.

And when Racke came out after his interview with the master of the Shell, Baggy Trimble joined him at once, and persisted in being chummy with him; and Aubrey, for reasons best known to himself, stood it without demur.

CHAPTER 3.

No Takers!

"HALLO, here's young Spending-It-Now!" remarked Monty Lowther.

The Terrible Three had come in from the cricket, and were on their way to their study, when they came upon Aubrey Racke in the passage.

The resplendent youth glanced at them.

He was standing at the doorway of Tom Merry's study, No. 1 in the Shell, and looking into the room, empty at that moment.

He made room for them to pass into the study, and they gave him a nod, though not much pleased or impressed by the youthful Racke.

"This room belong to you?" asked Racke.

"Yes, this is our study," said Tom. "Are you in the Shell?"

"Yes."

"Got your study yet?" asked Tom politely. He did not care two pins whether Racke had his study yet, but Tom was always civil to a new fellow.

"Not yet," said Racke. "Mr. Linton is going to tell me about it. He said something about finding room for me. Do you generally go three to a study here?"

"Yes; sometimes four. But the smaller rooms have only two," said the captain of the Shell. "I hope you'll get a comfortable room."

This was said in a tone that hinted that the conversation was at an end. But the heir of the Racke millions did not move from the doorway.

"I've been looking into the studies," he remarked. "This one seems to be about the best of the bunch."

"Yes, it's one of the best."

"I should like this study."

"Ahem! You see, we're three already. We could hardly find room for a fourth," said Tom.

"Highly honoured," said Monty Lowther solemnly. "We know what a distinction it would be for us, Racke. But we're full up."

"Full up and fed up," murmured Manners.

Racke laughed.

"I don't want to share the study with you," he said.

"Oh, good!"

"I want it to myself."

"Eh?"

"It's about the best room in the passage. I don't think much of the accommodation here, anyway," said Racke, with a curl of the lip. "I thought a big public school like St. Jim's would have no end of style. These shabby little rooms, though—"

"These what?" exclaimed the Terrible Three, with one voice.

"Shabby little rooms," said Racke.

"Oh, cheeky ass!"

"You, no offence, you know! But after what I've been used to, this comes as rather a shock to me."

"Well, my hat!"

"You dreamt that you dwelt in marble halls?" asked Monty Lowther pleasantly.

The juniors chuckled. It was quite true that the junior studies at St. Jim's were not palatial. Nobody expected them to be; in fact, nobody but a purse-proud bounder could possibly have wanted a palatial study.

"You see," went on Lowther, "it's really your waistcoat, Racke, that makes the study look shabby—by contrast, you know. Didn't you notice, out of doors, that the sun looked rather pale beside your watch-chain?"

Racke frowned.

"Well, about this study," he said abruptly. "I should like it. I suppose there would be no objection to a fellow having a room repapered and redecorated—at his own expense, of course?"

"I don't know whether the Housemaster would object," said Tom. "But we've never had a chap here before who wanted to do it. We've got a couple of millionaire's sons—Glyn and Lumley-Lumley. But they're quite decent."

"I don't see why a fellow shouldn't be comfortable. I should want new furniture, too. I couldn't live among those old crocks!"

"Mention it to Railton," said Lowther. "Railton would simply rush to new-furnish a study for you, my infant. If he's short of cash, owing to war-time, he would do it on the hire-purchase system."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Of course, I mean at my own expense," said Racke. "I've got plenty of money. I intend to furnish my study regardless of expense."

"Well, buzz off, and get on with it," said Manners. "Shut the door after you, will you?"

"But about this study—"

"Good-bye!"

"I should like this study. I should want it to myself, too. Could you three fellows arrange to change into another?"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"I'll make it worth your while, of course. I don't expect favours for nothing."

The Terrible Three looked at Racke, and looked at one another. The idea of giving up their own study, their somewhat shabby but beloved old quarters, at the request of a stranger, struck them as comical. But Racke's offer to make it worth their while made them jump.

"Worth our while?" repeated Tom Merry.

"Certainly."

"You mean, you'd let us bask in the light of your countenance, and the blaze of your diamonds?" asked Lowther.

"I mean, I'd make it worth your while. It's worth a fiver to me."

"A—a fiver!"

Racke took a little leather purse—a very expensive purse, with a big gold monogram on it—from his pocket, and opened it. It was crammed with banknotes, as the Shell fellows could not help seeing. The new fellow in the Shell had at least fifty or sixty pounds in his possession.

Tom Merry & Co. were not the kind of fellows to be much impressed by money. And the knowledge of where Racke's money had come from was in their minds, too. Their feeling was one of mingled contempt and compassion for the fellow who was "swanking" with his share of the bloated war-profits of Racke & Hacke.

Racke detached a five-pound note from the rest, and held it out between a fat finger and thumb.

"There you are!" he said.

The Terrible Three looked at it.

"Are you offering us money?" gasped Tom Merry, hardly able to believe his ears and his eyes.

"Isn't it enough?"

"Enough!" snapped Tom.

"If it isn't, name your figure. I'm not accustomed to bargainin' when I want a thing," said Racke arrogantly.

"I can afford to have what I want. I'll make it a tenner if you'll let me have the study."

"Bump him, scalp him, or frog's-march him?" asked Lowther.

"Rag the silly ass!" growled Manners. "I've got a cricket-stump here! Chuck him across the table, you two!"

"Hold on!" said Tom Merry.

"Look here, this study isn't going to be insulted by that putrid outsider!" roared Manners.

"He doesn't know any better," said Tom pacifically.

"Look here, Racke, I'll give you a friendly tip. Don't go about St. Jim's offering chaps money, or you'll get scalped."

Racke shrugged his shoulders.

"I've had money borrowed of me already by three fellows, and I haven't been here two hours," he said.

Tom bit his lip.

"I dare say I could guess the names of the fellows who have borrowed it," he said. "There are not many of that sort here. Anyway, your money isn't wanted in this study. And, considering the way you came by it, it would be rather better taste to keep it a bit dark."

"What do you mean? I had it from my father," said Racke, flushing.

"Oh, we know all about Racke & Hacke," said Tom impatiently. "I don't want to slang your father to you, so I won't say what I think on that subject. But you'd better not swank too much with the Racke war-profits at St. Jim's. War-profits leave rather an unpleasant taste in the mouth."

Racke laughed sneeringly.

"I've generally seen people pretty keen after them, all the same," he remarked. "My pater isn't the only man who's making pots of money out of the war. What are the ship-owners doing?"

"Disgracing their country," said Tom quietly. "But never mind that. Put that banknote out of sight, and take yourself out of sight, and think yourself lucky that you're not bumped. Good-bye!"

"But I want this study!"

"Don't be an ass! Clear off!"

"I suppose I haven't offered you enough; but I should think a tenner—"

"Will you get out, you horrid worm?"

"If you think I'm going to make it a pony, you're jolly well mistaken!" said Racke warmly. "I've got lots of oof, but I'm not going to chuck it away!"

"Gentlemen," said Monty Lowther, "talking to this rotten oof-bird being no use, I suggest that we bump him!"

"Hear, hear!" said Manners.

"Here, hold on!" shouted Racke, in astonishment, as the two Shell fellows grasped him. "What's the little game?"

Bump!

"Yaroooh!"

"That's the little game," explained Monty Lowther. "Will you clear off, and take your loot with you?"

Bump!

"Yooop! Leggo! Help!"

Bump!

The third bump landed Aubrey Racke at some distance from Study No 1. Manners and Lowther returned to the study, grinning, leaving the heir of Racke & Hacke seated on the study floor, gasping.

CHAPTER 4.

Blake's Reply.

"BAI JOVE! What are you doin' down there, deah boy?"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy paused in astonishment, and turned his celebrated eyeglass upon Aubrey Racke.

That youth was seated on the floor, looking dusty and dishevelled, and pumping in breath, as the swell of St. Jim's came along.

Racke glared at him. He was a little hurt and very breathless, and in a state of anger and fury.

"I've been assaulted!" he howled.

"Bai Jove, that's wotten! I don't believe in these twicks on a new kid, even a wathah unpleasant new kid," said Arthur Augustus. "Pway allow me to assist you to wise, deah boy."

Racke accepted a helping hand from the swell of the School House. He rose gasping to his feet.

"Who's been playin' twicks on you, deah boy?" asked D'Arcy sympathetically. The swell of St. Jim's concluded that Racke had been bumped on account of his father's war-profits, and he felt that it was unjust. It was not Racke's fault that his pater belonged to the vampiro species.

"Three beastly cads!" growled Racke. "Thank you! I'm all dusty!"

"Pway step into my studay, and I will give you a bwush down!" said Arthur Augustus politely.

"Thanks!"

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NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

"TOO CLEVER BY HALF!"

Racke followed the swell of St. Jim's, and they entered Study No. 6. The study was empty, as Blake and Herries and Dig had not yet come in from the cricket. Arthur Augustus selected a handsome ivory-backed brush, and proceeded to brush down Racke's dusty Etons.

Racke glanced round the study with interest. It was a very pleasant study, larger than Tom Merry's, with a wide, big window, giving an extensive view of the quadrangle and the playing-fields, and the New House across the quad. The furniture, certainly, was in the somewhat chipped state natural to junior furniture. But there were some articles of value about the room that caught Racke's eye. The brush D'Arcy was handling was worth a guinea, and there was a bronze clock on the mantelpiece that was worth ten times as much. Racke felt that there was money about, and it made him feel very friendly.

"You in the Shell?" he asked.

"No; I'm in the Fourth, deah boy!"

"Oh, I'm in the Shell!" said Racke. "That's the Upper Fourth, isn't it?"

"Yaas, though the Shell boundahs pwetend that it's the Lower Fifth," said Arthur Augustus. "It's weally the Uppah Fourth, in a way, at least. Have you met Tom Mewwy yet? He is captain of the Shell—a vewy decent chap."

"I've only met the three rotters who bumped me in the passage," said Racke. "I've met some Fourth-Formers—Trimble, Levison, and Mellish. I don't think much of them."

"You are quite wight there."

"This is a jolly good study—as studies go here," said Racke.

"Yaas; we're wathah pwoud of our quartahs," said Arthur Augustus complacently. "It's considahed wathah a distinction to belong to Studay No. 6. There, I think your clobbah is all wight now."

"I dare say you know a chap here named D'Arcy?" remarked Racke.

"Bai Jove! Yaas, wathah!"

"He's the son of Lord Eastwood, isn't he?"

"Yaas!" said D'Arcy, with a smile.

"And his brother's a lord, too?" said Racke.

"You appeah to know all about it, deah boy. But old Conway isn't exactly a lord—as the eldest son, he takes the courtesy title, that is all."

"I want to see D'Arcy," said Racke. "Perhaps you could introduce me to him?"

"Quite easily."

"Friend of yours?" asked Racke.

"Yaas; I have a vewy high opinion of him," grinned Arthur Augustus. "As a mattah of fact, I am D'Arcy of the Fourth, Wacke."

"Oh, are you?" said Racke, staring at him. "The Honourable Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, second son of Lord Eastwood."

"Yaas!"

"I'm jolly glad to meet you!" said Racke, holding out his hand.

"You are vewy flattewin'," said Arthur Augustus, shaking hands with Racke, with great politeness.

"My pater has met your brother, Lord Conway," said Racke.

"Ahem!"

Arthur Augustus coughed, as he remembered some of Lord Conway's remarks on the subject of Racke & Hacke, and bloated war-profits.

"My pater's firm is connected with the Army," said Racke. "I'm goin' into the Army when I grow up. I'm goin' into the Guards, of course. I wouldn't be found dead in a line regiment."

"Pwobably not," said Arthur Augustus urbanely. "A line wegiment is good enough for my bwothah Conway, but I pwesume a Wacke is bound to be wathah particulah."

"Well, my idea is to have the best that money can buy, you know," said Racke. "What's the good of being immensely rich if you don't get a show for your money? The pater's goin' to be a baronet shortly, too! That costs money."

"Yaas, I pwesume it does," said Arthur Augustus. "When King James the First invented bawoneties, he sold them at a thousand pounds each; but I believe the pwice has gone up."

"Nearer ten thousand, I should say," said Racke. "And even then, you have to know how to go about it."

"Yaas; knowledge of that kind must be vewy valuable," said Arthur Augustus. "I suppose as Mr. Wacke becomes wiahah and wiahah, he will pwogress wight up through the peewage, and finish up as a duke. I suppose it will be wathah disappointin' to him not to be able to become a pwince."

Racke blinked at Arthur Augustus. He did not quite know how to take him. Arthur Augustus proceeded to lay the cloth for tea. The cloth was somewhat grubby, and there were several holes in it. Such things would happen in junior studies, Racke glanced at it with surprise and disdain.

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"I say, D'Arcy!"

"Yaas, deah boy?"

"I suppose I could share this study?"

"Oh, cwumbs!"

"What did you say?"

"The fact is, deah boy, Shell fellahs aren't allowed to share studies with Fourth-Formahs. The two Forms are kept distinct, you know."

"But I dare say that could be arranged. I would speak to the Housemaster about it, if you really wanted me in this study," said Racke eagerly.

Arthur Augustus writhed inwardly. He did not want Racke in that study—the prospect of such a thing made him shudder all over. But his politeness forbade him to say so.

"We should get on together first-rate, you know," said Racke.

"Bai Jove! Do you think so?"

"Oh, yes. I'd have the place smartened up a bit, too! I've got lots of money, you know."

"Have you weally, deah boy?"

"My idea is to have the room re-furnished throughout," said Racke. "I'd send an order to London, and give 'em carte blanche. Regardless of expense, you know."

"I hardly think I should care to have my studay furnished wewardless of expense in war-time, Wacke."

"Oh, that's all rot, you know!" said Racke. "Spendin' money is good for trade, I suppose. Why shouldn't a chap spend his money, when he's got lots? I can have all I choose to ask my pater for."

"You are a vewy lucky chap."

"If you're ever short of tin, you mention it to me," said Racke generously. "I've always got a spare fiver for a friend."

"Oh, cwumbs! I—I mean, thanks awf'ly, deah boy, but I will not twouble you."

"Well, what 'bout sharing the study?" asked Racke. "I'd like it no end. I understand that you have tea in the studies, here. There'll always be a jolly good table in my study, and I shouldn't ask you to stand any of the expense."

"I should hardly care to sponge on you, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus, nobly controlling his feelings. He was repenting him that he had acted as a good Samaritan towards this unspeakable bounder. He wondered how he could possibly get Racke to leave the study, without actually asking him to go.

"Well, is it a go?" asked Racke. "I'll cut off and ask the Housemaster, if you like, and I dare say it could be fixed up for me to stay here."

"Ahem! I—I think—"

"You'd like me here, I suppose?"

"Oh, deah! The—the fact is, we're four alwedy," said D'Arcy. "I'm afwaid that Blake and Hewwies and Dig would not care for a fifth."

"I dare say I could arrange it with them."

"Ahem!"

"Suppose I arrange it with them, it's all right, what?"

"Yaas, if you like," said Arthur Augustus, with a slight smile. He knew that there was no possibility of Blake and Herries and Digby agreeing to have the war-profit bounder in Study No. 6.

There was a sound of footsteps in the passage. Jack Blake came in, and pitched his bat into a corner. Herries and Digby followed him into the study. The three juniors glanced at Racke in some surprise.

"Hallo, young war-profits!" said Blake. "Have you been chumming up with young war-profits, Gussy?"

"Weally, Blake, that it wathah a diswepctful way of alludin' to Wacke!"

"Oh, I don't mind!" said Racke. "Lots of people gird at war-profits, because they haven't a chance of gettin' a finger into the pie."

"If you think I'd like to have a finger in such a dirty pie, my pippin, you're mistaken!" said Blake warmly.

"Outsiders always say that," said Racke. "It's a lot of rot, this talk about war-profits. A man has a right to charge as much as he likes for his goods, and to hold them back to get his price."

"Suppose his workmen did the same?" said Blake. "That would be called striking in war-time, and awfully unpatriotic."

"Oh, that's different, of course!"

"It's the same thing, and if workmen were as big rotters as war-profit-monsters, the country would go to the giddy bow-wows," said Blake. "Luckily, they're not. But what

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"You've come back to take a hand?" Racke asked. "Why— Oh, my hat!" It was not D'Arcy, but Mr. Railton, and he stood looking down at the dismayed gamblers with a thunderous brow. (See Chapter 7.)

about tea? You were going to have tea ready, Gussy, you image!"

"I object to bein' called an image, Blake. I have been bwushin' down young Wacke. Some boundahs have been bumpin' him."

"I suppose his diamonds dazzled them," said Herries.

"How much did you lend on those diamonds, Racke?"

"Lend on them!" said Racke, in surprise.

"Yes. You're a pawnbroker, ain't you?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Hewwies, you are vewy personal!"

"Well, a chap shouldn't wear diamonds in his cuffs," said Herries. "He must expect to get chipped about it if he does."

"Some fellows can't afford to," sneered Racke.

"No; we can't all make war-profits," said Herries. "Some of us would be ashamed to, I hope."

"Rubbish!"

Herries' eyes gleamed.

"I don't want to hammer a new kid," he said. "There's the door, Racke!"

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"What the dickens is the fellow doing here?" growled Herries. "How you can stand his diamonds and his watch-chain, I'm blessed if I understand!"

"Wacke wants to share this studay, deah boys—"

"Can't be did," said Blake, at once. "Sorry, Racke, no room!"

"I want to share the study with D'Arcy, not with you," said Racke disdainfully. "I've made friends with D'Arcy."

"Oh, bai Jove!"

"Same old Gussy!" growled Blake. "Every unspeakable toad fixes himself on Gussy. But it's no go, Racke. You can't share this study."

"I suppose it can be arranged," said Racke, who had apparently learned nothing from Tom Merry & Co. "You don't seem to have too much cash in this study—"

"Eh?"

"Judging by your tablecloth, and your butter in a soap-dish," said Racke, with a sneer.

Blake breathed hard.

"If a fiver would be any use to you, you've only got to say the word," said Racke. "I'll stand you three fellows a fiver to clear out of the study, and leave it to D'Arcy and me."

Jack Blake did not reply. When he recovered from his astonishment, he strode towards Racke, and fastened a finger and thumb on his ear with a grip like a vice. Racke gave a howl as he was forcibly led to the door.

"What do you mean?" he yelled. "Let go my ear! I—I—"

"Outside, you toad!"

Racke was swung into the passage by the ear, and the door of Study No. 6 slammed on him. He stood in the passage, rubbing his crimsoned ear, and blinking with rage at the door of the study. There was no mistaking Jack Blake's reply.

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NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

"TOO CLEVER BY HALF!"

CHAPTER 5. Gussy's New Friend.

AUBREY RACKE attracted considerable attention in the Shell the next day.

Everybody who had heard of Racke and Hacke, and their unsavoury millions, had a look at the new junior.

A dozen fellows, perhaps, had heard of Racke and Hacke before Aubrey came to St. Jim's. But everybody had heard of them now. And the fellow whose father had been a poor man in 1914, and a millionaire in 1916, naturally excited some interest.

Besides, as Monty Lowther remarked, the millions were on view. All millionaires didn't display their wealth in this open-handed way to an admiring public. A chap who wore sixty or seventy pounds' worth of jewellery, and carried fifty pounds in banknotes in a five-guinea pocket-book, was worth looking at; as worthy of regard, according to Lowther, as anything in the Zoo.

In everything but his wealth, Racke was a perfectly commonplace person. Perhaps it was natural that he should "swank" a little about the only unusual attribute he possessed. As a matter of fact, he did not swank a little. He swanked a lot. The change in the fortunes of the Racke family had come suddenly, and had quite turned the Racke heads. The happy family lived, talked, and breathed wealth. And to see a fellow living, talking, and breathing wealth was a novel experience for the St. Jim's fellows.

There were wealthy fellows at the school. Arthur Augustus D'Arey had a very liberal allowance. Bernard Glyn, of the Shell, was remarkably well provided for; but no one would have guessed it from his conversation. Lumley-Lumley of the Fourth was the son of a millionaire, who grudged him nothing; but Lumley-Lumley did not talk about the millions of the Railway King. He was, in fact, rather shy of the subject.

There was no shyness of that sort about Aubrey Racke.

His talk, sooner or later, was sure to veer round to the subject of money. If a fellow spoke to him of cricket, Racke would mention what he had paid for his bat; of course, twice as much as anybody else would have paid. If boating was mentioned, Racke would refer to the fact that he had a boat of his very own, the very best thing that money could buy.

He played very indifferent cricket with his expensive bat; and he was a poor hand at rowing the valuable boat; but trifles like that did not matter to Aubrey. It was the wealth that counted, in his eyes. Indeed, having seen Manners at work with his camera, and finding that it was an expensive presentation camera, Racke promptly telephoned to Blankley's for a new camera twice as expensive as Manners'. Racke and Hacke's money were soon a standing joke in the School House.

Some of the fellows were of opinion that the Head oughtn't to have admitted such an out-and-out bounder to St. Jim's at all. Possibly the Head considered that St. Jim's would do Aubrey good, and that Aubrey would not do St. Jim's any harm. In that Dr. Holmes was perhaps slightly mistaken, not knowing much of the youthful Racke's character.

Before Racke had been two or three days at St. Jim's, he had half a dozen nicknames. Monty Lowther always alluded to him by the remarkable title of "Spending-it-now." Kerr of the New House called him Racke, R.O.E., and when Racke inquired what the initials stood for, he found that they stood for *Regardless of Expense*. Finn, the American, called him the Gold-Bug; and he was called Croesus minor, and Rothschild minor, and Gradgrind junior. But Racke did not mind. He took all those titles as testimonials to his wealthy importance.

Fellows with a humorous turn of mind sometimes delighted in drawing him out, and making him talk of his wealth to a grinning circle in the common-room. Monty Lowther would ask him solemnly why he did not wear ear-rings, which would give him an additional excuse for loading his person with gold and precious stones. Lowther also suggested to him to wear his ten-pound notes in the form of a necklace, so that all St. Jim's could feast their eyes upon them.

Racke was assigned to Crooke's study, which was really the most suitable place for him. George Gerald Crooke was a purse-proud bounder, though in comparison with Racke he was as moonlight unto sunlight, as water unto wine. Crooke's study-mate had recently left, so there was a vacant place. Racke found that all his wealth could not procure him a study for himself. But he got on very well with Crooke, who was glad to have a study-mate who did not want to borrow money of him.

Tom Merry & Co. regarded Racke with mingled contempt, compassion, and amusement. But there were plenty of

fellows willing to make friends with him. Levison and Mellish, and Clampe and Piggott, chummed with him at once—as far as he would let them. Impecunious fellows found that they could put up with all Racke's little ways, on the chance of picking up the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table. Trimble of the Fourth overflowed with affection for him. But friends of this kind were not really what Racke was looking for. He wanted to get on pally terms with the best fellows in the school—that is to say, the best from a social point of view.

Arthur Augustus D'Arey, as the son of a viscount and the brother of a lord, and a connection of no end of titled people, was the fellow he had marked out as his especial chum.

Racke, who expected to be flattered himself, was willing to flatter Arthur Augustus to any extent to obtain the boon of his friendship.

D'Arey of the Fourth was the easiest-going fellow at St. Jim's, and he found it difficult to keep the friendly Racke at a distance.

He could not bear to hurt anybody's feelings, and he did not know how to convey to Racke the fact that his friendship was not desired. But—as he pathetically confided to Blake—Racke made him "shuddah." Gentle hints were no use to Racke—he was blind to them. He was determined to be friendly with the Honourable Arthur Augustus, and the swell of St. Jim's really began to fear that in self-defence he would be bound to bestow upon the heir of millions a "feahful thwashin'."

"I weally cannot stand the chap talkin' to me, deah boy!" he told Blake. "Do you think it would be feahfully wude to tell him so?"

"Not at all!" said Blake. "I'll tell him for you if you like!"

"Ahem! I don't want to hurt his feelin's, you know!"

"That's all right; he hasn't any!" said Blake reassuringly.

"Chaps who blot on war profits don't have feelings!"

"Of course, it is wathah flattewin' for the chap to be keen on my society," said Arthur Augustus. "I'm awfully obliged to him! But—that tie-pin, you know—it's howwid bad taste! And—and he stuck his thumbs into the arm-holes of his waistcoat when he was speakin' to me this mornin', and it made me shuddah. And—and he told me all about his money!"

"Well, he hasn't anything else to talk about," said Blake. "This is the penalty you pay for being a hopeless aristocrat, Gussy! But I'll tell you how to get rid of him, if you like!"

"I should be awfully obliged to you, Blake—if it could be done without woundin' his feelin's!"

"Quite easy! Tell him it's a mistake about your pater being a lord, and that your brother is a private Tommy, and that your mater takes in washing," said Blake cheerily. "Then he'll cut you dead!"

"Weally, Blake, you would not weally mean to imply that the fellah is persistin' in speakin' to me because of my patah's title!"

"You ass, what did you think he was after, then?"

"Wats! I do not like the chap vewy much, but I wufuse to believe that he has such a howwid, wotten motive for bein' friendly!"

Blake chuckled.

"Did you put it down to your own fascinations?" he asked agreeably. "My dear chap, you haven't any!"

"I wegard that we mark as wude, Blake!"

And Arthur Augustus dropped the subject and strolled away. Racke of the Shell spotted him in the quadrangle, and joined him. Arthur Augustus suppressed a groan.

"Half-holiday to-morrow!" Racke remarked. "I'm thinkin' of takin' a motor-car out for a run. You'd like to come?"

"Thank you, deah boy; I'm afwaid I have anothah engagement!"

"Oh, chuck it up and come with me!" urged Racke. "Look here, I'm going to have a first-class motor from Wayland, and a rippin' lunch-basket—I'm havin' champagne put in—"

"Bai Jove!"

"We're goin' to have a high old time! I want you to come!" said Racke.

"It would be uttably impos. for me to join a party dwinkin' intoxicatin' liquah, Racke. And I feel bound to say that I disapprove of havin' motahs out for picasuah in war time!"

"Oh, that's all rot, you know!"

"I am not accustomed to hearin' my wemarks chawacterised as wot, Racke!"

"You can bring your friends, if you like!" urged Racke.

"My fwends will be playin' ewicket to-morrow. But—bai Jove, I've got wathah a good ideah! Suppose you call at Wayland Hospital in the eah and take out some of the wounded soldiahs! They like a wun, you know!"

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Racke snorted.
 "Yes, I'm likely to!" he said.
 "You owe those poor chaps a debt of gwatitude, you know!" said D'Arcy.
 "What rot! They've been paid, I suppose!"
 "As a matter of fact, Wacke, they have not been paid! What they get cannot be called bein' paid! I should wegard two hundred a yah as the smallest possible weasonable sawlay for a chap who goes into the twenches. But I do not think they are paid anythin' like that!"
 "No, I jolly well imagine not!" grinned Racke. "Not quite! But, look here, Gussy—"
 "Would you mind not callin' me, Gussy, Wacke? We are not weally so intimate as all that, you know!"
 "Look here, old chap, you come in the car to-morrow, and I'll send the car to the hospital for the soldiers on Monday, and take out half a dozen of them for the whole day!"
 "That would cost you an awful lot of money, Wacke!"
 "Pooh! That's nothing to me!"
 "It would be a vewy good deed!"
 "Oh, I don't mind, if you think so!" said Racke. "Lots of titled people do it. Now, is it a go about to-morrow?"
 Arthur Augustus hesitated. But he thought of the pleasure a day out in the green country would afford the wounded Tommies, and he felt that it was worth a little sacrifice on his part. He nodded at last.
 "Yes, Wacke! Thank you vewy much, deah boy!"
 "Good!"
 "But if I'm comin', Wacke, pway don't have any champagne packed in the lunch-basket. It is against the wules!"
 "Anythin' you like!" said Racke.
 "Then, it's a go, deah boy!"
 And Racke was satisfied; and the same evening he wrote to his affectionate parent informing him that he was getting on famously with the son of Lord Eastwood, and that he had no doubt that next vacation he would receive an invitation to Eastwood House, where he would meet any number of "nobs."

CHAPTER 6.

Racke's Party.

"TOM Mewwy!"
 "Hallo, my son!" said the captain of the Shell.
 "Wherefore that troubled brow?"
 "I shall have to stand out of the cwicket this afternoon, deah boy!" It was after morning lessons on Saturday. "You have remarked several times that Julian is as good a cwicketah as I am, so I suppose you wouldn't mind puttin' Julian in?"
 "Not in the least!" said Tom cheerily. "In fact, it's time Julian had a show in a House match. But you're an ass to cut cricket on such a ripping day!"
 "Can't be helped, deah boy! I'm goin' out for the aftahnoon."
 "Going out with Spending-it-now?" asked Monty Lowther.
 "Weally, Lowthah!"
 "Behold, he blushes!" said Manners.
 "I am not blushin', Mannahs, you ass! I happen to be goin' out for the aftahnoon with young Wacke!"
 "Well, it may do him good," said Tom Merry judiciously. "Perhaps he will learn manners from you, Gussy!"
 "Yaas, I wegard that as vewy pwob. So it's all wight about the House match, Tom Mewwy?"
 "Right as rain, my infant! Don't worry!"
 "Weally, Tom Mewwy, you speak as if it is a mattah of utter indifference whethah I play in the House match or not!"
 "So it is, deah boy!" said Tom, and the Terrible Three walked on, leaving Arthur Augustus frowning.
 Tom Merry had taken it quite equably; but Blake was not so equable when he heard of it. Herries and Dig were not in the House team, and Blake considered that Study No. 6 ought always to be well represented on such occasions. After dinner, he ran Arthur Augustus down and tackled him on the subject.
 "What's this rot about your missing the House match?" he demanded.
 "Under the cires, Blake, I can't play this aftahnoon. I am wathah sorry to miss the cwicket. I twust you will twy to keep your end up against the New House."
 "Oh, that all right!" said Blake. "You won't be missed, as far as that goes!"
 "Wats!"
 "But it's rot. What are you going out with young Billions for, after making out that you don't like the chap?"
 "There is no harm in goin' out with him for once, Blake!"
 "Has he lent you a fiver?"

"I wegard that question as insultin', Blake!"
 "You're a silly ass!" said Blake, with Yorkshere directness. "The less you see of that bounder the better! He's no class! He's chummy with Crooke and Levison and Trimble and that lot. He smokes!"
 "I have nevah seen him smokin'."
 "I believe he gambles, too. Trimble says he drinks!"
 "Twimble is a backbitin' beast!"
 "And he's a swankin', purseproud cad, anyway!"
 "I feah that I cannot listen to you wunnin' Wacke down, Blake, as I have agweed to go out with him this aftahnoon!"
 "Fathead!" growled Blake. "What sort of a time will you have with Crooke and Levison? You know their little games when they're out of sight of the prefects!"
 "Bai Jove! Are Cwooke and Levison goin' with Wacke?"
 "I heard Crooke say so."
 "I was not awah of that. Howevah, I have given Wacke my word now, and I cannot withdwaw it. It is wathah howwid, but there you are!"
 "Well, don't come home tight," said Blake.
 "You howwid ass—"
 "If you come back smellin' of smoke and spirits, we sha'n't admit you to the study. That's a tip!"
 "I wufuse to listen to such howwid suggestions, Blake! I am suah they will behave themselves decently in my pwesence!"
 "They couldn't if they tried, and I'm jolly sure they won't try. Look here, tell Racke you can't come, and come down to the cricket!"
 "Imposs! He is dependin' on me!"
 "You could quarrel with him," suggested Blake. "Suppose you knock him down—"
 "I wufuse to knock him down!"
 "Then he wouldn't want you to come," urged Blake.
 "Go and give him one in the eye now!"
 "I wegard you as an ass, Blake!"
 "Coming, Blake?" yelled Herries from the quadrangle; and Blake had to go down to Little Side to join Tom Merry & Co. there.
 Arthur Augustus proceeded to look for Racke in a somewhat worried frame of mind. He had not bargained for the company of the blackguards of the School House. But he could not dictate to Racke what friends he should take with him in his car.
 He found Racke in the doorway of the School House, with Crooke and Levison. The latter two grinned agreeably at Arthur Augustus.
 "Time the car was here," Racke remarked.
 "Here it comes," said Levison.
 A big car turned in at the gates, and rolled up to the School House. It was a handsome, well-found car, and Arthur Augustus regarded it with an approving eye. In any other company he would have enjoyed a run in that big automobile. But politeness forbade him to express any opinion on the company he so unexpectedly found himself in.
 "All ready?" said Racke.
 "Yaas, deah boy."
 The four juniors entered the car. Baggy Trimble came dashing out of the School House with his hat on.
 "Here I am, Racke, old fellow!" he exclaimed.
 "And there you can stay!" said Racke curtly, closing the door of the car.
 Trimble blinked at him indignantly.
 "Look here, you know, you want me to come, I suppose?" he exclaimed.
 "Your mistake: I don't!"
 "Oh, I say, Aubrey—"
 "Drive on!" said Racke.
 Trimble held to the handle as the chauffeur started the engine.
 "Look here, Racke, I'm coming, of course!"
 "You'd better let go; you'll get pulled over."
 "Is this what you call being friendly?" demanded Trimble.
 "Not at all!"
 Crooke and Levison grinned.
 "Of course, I don't want to come if my company isn't welcome," said Baggy, with dignity. "As my pal Gussy is in the party—"
 "Is Trimble a pal of yours, D'Arcy?" asked Racke.
 "Bai Jove! This is the first I've heard of it!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Let go, Trimble, you ass!"
 "Will you lend me a quid, Aubrey?" asked Trimble.
 "I lent you a quid yesterday."
 "Well, you've got plenty!" sneered Trimble. "Your pater swindles the Government out of millions of 'em, doesn't he?"
 Racke did not reply, but he reached out, and thumped

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NEXT
 WEDNESDAY!

"TOO CLEVER BY HALF!"

Trimble on the hat. There was a yell from Baggy as the topper was squashed on his head.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Yow-ow-ow!"

Trimble let go the handle, and the car swung down the drive. Baggy Trimble extracted his head from his hat, and shook his fat fist after the car.

"Yah! I won't come now!" he yelled. "Yah!" He broke into a run after the car, and overtook it as it slowed down, turning out of the gates. "I say, you chaps, his name isn't Aubrey! His name's Peter! He, he, he! He's called Aubrey since they swindled the Government and got rich quick! He, he, he!"

The car swung into the road.

"Good-bye, Peter!" yelled Trimble.

And the party started.

CHAPTER 7.

A Very Merry Party.

RACKE sat with a crimson face in the car. Arthur Augustus avoided looking at him. He understood that the wretched snob's feelings could not be pleasant at that moment, after Baggy Trimble's surprising revelation.

But Crooke and Levison were grinning. It suited the cads of the School House to be friendly with Racke, but privately they thought no better of him than the other fellows did, and they were greatly tickled by the revelation. More than once they had wondered why Rothschild minor endured Trimble's familiarity, and lent him "quids." Evidently it was to keep that awkward fact dark; and at the first refusal to meet his demands, Trimble had blurted it out. Crooke and Levison enjoyed the situation.

"What a wippin' cah!" Arthur Augustus remarked, by way of getting off the subject.

But Racke's dear friends were not at all disposed to get off the subject. They lacked the exquisite manners of the swell of St. Jim's.

"Cheeky young rotter, that Trimble!" said Crooke. "I suppose it's true that he knew you before the war, Racke?"

"No, it isn't!" said Racke savagely.

"I've heard him say that his pater did business with yours, and couldn't collect his accounts from Racke & Hacke. Of course, I don't believe it!" said Crooke, in a tone that implied that he did believe it.

"It's all lies, of course!" said Racke. "Old Trimble was a commercial traveller, I think, and my pater turned him down!"

"Of course, your people were always rich, weren't they?" said Levison.

"Of—of course they were," said Racke.

"It's just rot of Lowther to nickname you 'Spending-it-Now'!" continued Levison agreeably.

"At any rate, I do spend it!" snapped Racke. "You don't seem to have much to spend, Levison!"

"I haven't," said Levison, with a laugh. "I couldn't have paid my whack in this car. I'm willing to sponge on you like Crooke and D'Arcy, and I own up!"

"Weally, Levison—"

"But if Trimble didn't know you," said Crooke, in a thoughtful sort of way, "how does he get that queer idea into his head that your name's Peter?"

"It's a lie!"

"Then your name really isn't Peter?"

"Of course it isn't!" roared Racke.

"Peter's a jolly good name!" said Levison. "I've got an Uncle Peter. Still, I think I shall call him Uncle Aubrey after this!"

"It sounds more aristocratic!" grinned Crooke. "What do you think, D'Arcy?"

"I do not think at all about mattahs that do not concern me, Cwooke!"

"Yes, let the subject drop: Racke doesn't like it," remarked Levison.

"Oh, certainly! It's all right, Racke; we don't believe for a moment that your name isn't Adolphus—I mean, Aubrey," assured Crooke. "I suppose you were named after a relation—what! Some rich uncle?"

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Racke did not appear to hear the question, and his dear friends let the subject drop at last, though with the intention of making it the joke of the School House when they returned to St. Jim's.

The car buzzed on by green lanes and dusty roads. It was a splendid summer's afternoon, and the drive was enjoyable enough. Arthur Augustus tried to feel at his ease; but it was not easy for him to join in the chat of his companions.

Crooke and Levison talked "geegees," a topic which was evidently agreeable to Racke. Some of Racke's overflowing wealth evidently went on "geegees." When the car was a dozen miles from St. Jim's, Crooke produced his cigarette-case and passed it round. Three young rascals began to smoke.

"You'll have a fag, D'Arcy?" said Crooke, with a grin.

"I thank you, Cwooke, but I will not have a fag."

"Oh, come, we're out for the day!" said Crooke. "No chance of prefects spotting us here. No humbug, you know!"

"I decline to wep to that wemark, Cwooke!"

"Well, please yourself," said Crooke, shrugging his shoulders. "Blessed if I see the use of keeping up a game of spoof so far from the school!"

"There is such a thing as bein' respectable, Cwooke."

"No harm in a smoke," yawned Levison. "These are good fags, too. I hope the smoke doesn't bother you, D'Arcy," he added, as the swell of St. Jim's coughed.

"As a mattah of fact it does a little Levison."

"Sorry!" said Levison.

He continued to smoke, giving Arthur Augustus the benefit of it as much as possible. There was, as Crooke had said, little danger of being spotted by anybody belonging to St. Jim's. Arthur Augustus fervently hoped that they would not pass anybody he knew while he was in the company of three such unspeakable bounders. Even the promised treat for the hospital patients on Monday did not reconcile the fastidious Gussy to the company he was in.

"Where are we going to stop?" asked Levison.

"Picnic on the seashore," said Racke.

"Ripping!"

The rapid car was eating up the miles, and the sea came in sight at last. Wide and blue, the Channel rolled in the summer sunshine, dotted with sails and the smoke of steamers.

"Bai Jove! That's wippin'!" said Arthur Augustus.

"It's been a splendid wun, Wacke."

"It's a topping car!" said Racke. "They're charging me two bob a mile, garage to garage, you know."

Levison and Crooke grinned, and Arthur Augustus shuddered.

"Racke, R.O.E.!" murmured Levison.

"You'll have a tidy bill to pay," remarked Crooke.

"Oh, that's nothin' to me!" said Racke airily. "I can afford it!"

"Oh, deah!" murmured Arthur Augustus.

"Did you speak, Gussy?"

"N-n-unno!"

The car stopped in the road near the shore, and the juniors alighted. Racke lifted out a heavy lunch-basket. He gave instructions to the chauffeur to wait, and the party went down the shore, and selected a spot for camping.

The picnic was very enjoyable by the side of the blue, smiling sea, and the run in the car had given the juniors an appetite. The lunch-basket had been packed, like everything appertaining to Aubrey Racke, regardless of expense. It was, as Levison declared, a feast for the gods. Arthur Augustus frowned as a couple of long-necked bottles came into view.

"Champagne, by gum!" said Levison. "That's simply topping!"

"Oh, let's have a good time, and hang the expense!" said Racke. "Fish out the glasses, will you—four!"

"Thwee will be enough," said Arthur Augustus quietly. "I do not dwink champagne, Wacke."

"Oh, be pally, you know!" said Crooke. "A short life and a merry one!"

"You would get into a feahful wov if the Head knew!"

"Well, you're not going to tell the Head, I suppose?" said

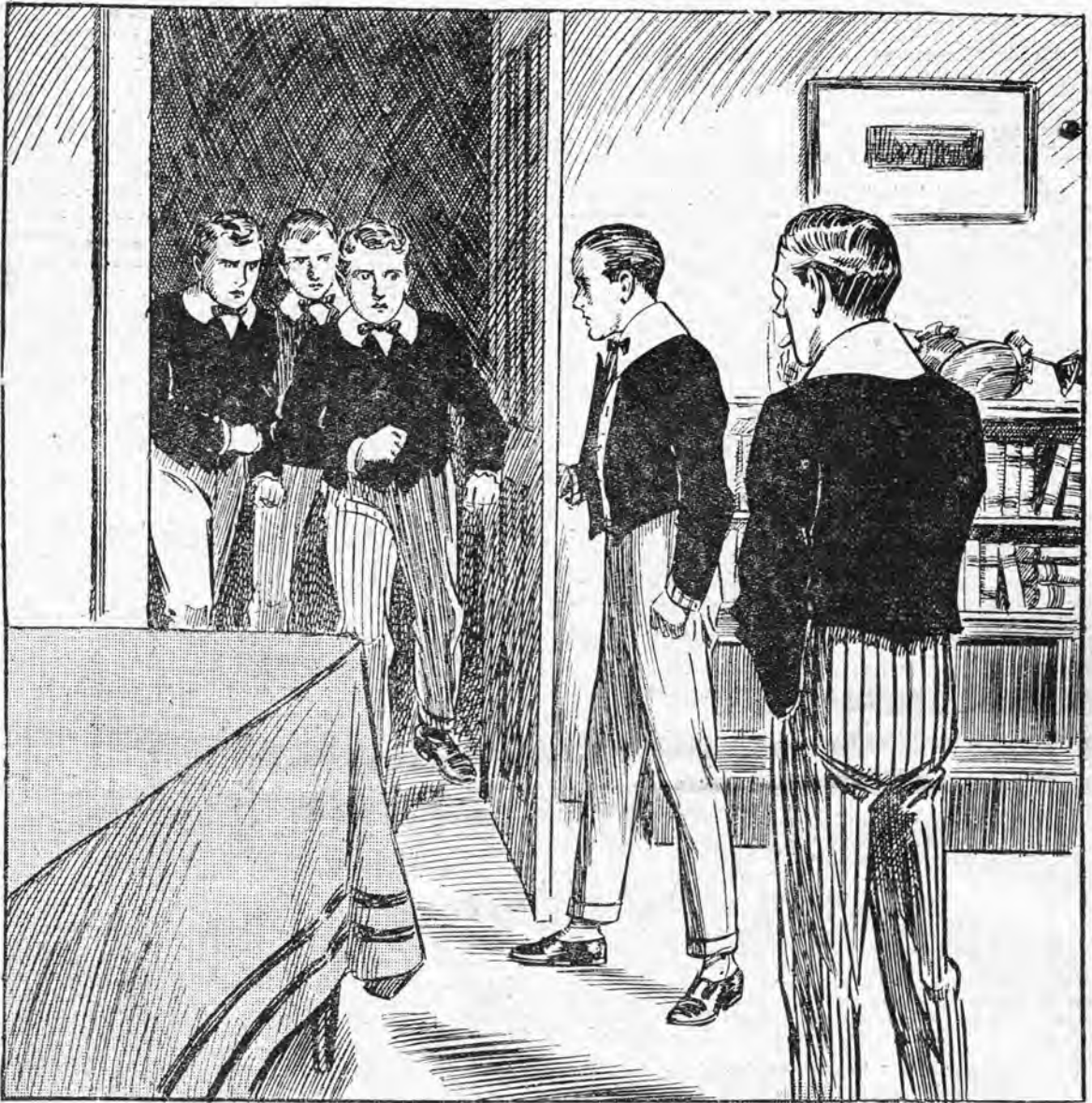
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The door was pushed wider open, and Blake and Herries and Digby and the Terrible Three came in. Racke gave them a sneering look. "Don't handle him, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus, quietly. "I have had a vewy painful shock." (See Chapter 13.)

Racke. He had tossed off a couple of glasses in a way that showed that champagne was no new drink to him. It had the quality, at least, of being much more expensive than ginger-beer, though perhaps not equal to it as a beverage.

Arthur Augustus sat on the sand in a state of restive discomfort. He was longing for the outing to be over; he felt that his politeness would not stand much more of the company of these riotous bounders. But his sufferings had not reached the maximum yet. The feed being over, Racke produced a pack of cards, to the evident satisfaction of Levison and Crooke. Both of them had hopes of relieving Rothschild minor of some of his wealth.

"What's the game going to be?" said Racke. "You play bridge of course, Gussy?"

"Yaas!"

"Any objection to a quid a hundred?"

"Oh, my hat!" said Levison. "Draw it mild! We're not all giddy millionaires, 'spending it now,' you know!"

"I do not play bwise for money, Wacke."

"What do you play it for?" grinned Racke, who was excited with the wine he had swallowed. "Look here, I'll lend you some money, if you like. I've got lots!"

"I wefuse to gamble!"

"Oh, don't be an ass! You don't want to look on while we play. I suppose?"

"Certainly not! If I had known you intended anything of the sort I would not have come with you," said Arthur Augustus, with deep resentment. "If you are goin' to gamble, I will take a stroll."

"Take a stroll and be hanged!" said Crooke, who was red and flushed. "We don't want any nincompoops here!"

"If you allude to me as a nincompoop, Cwooke—"

"Well, why don't you have a game, and leave humbug at home?" said Crooke aggressively. "Do you think Kildare or old Ralton might happen on us, twenty miles from the school?"

"I do not think anythin' of the kind. I am thinkin' of my self-wespect."

"Oh, don't be funny!"

Arthur Augustus clenched his fists for a moment. But it was not much use to fight Crooke of the Shell; that would not undo his folly in having joined such a party. He walked away along the shore with his noble nose high in the air.

Crooke and Levison and Racke laughed scoffingly.

Racke, under the influence of the champagne, seemed to have forgotten his desire to keep well in with the Hon. Arthur Augustus. The three young rascals proceeded to gamble, and

Racke's famous pocket-book came into view, with the greedy eyes of Levison and Crooke on it.

But Racke did not prove an easy pigeon to pluck. After an hour's play, George Gerald Crooke was scowling and morose—he was several pounds out of pocket. Levison had done very well, though; he had annexed a fiver belonging to Racke. The Fourth-Former was looking very cheery.

Arthur Augustus had not appeared. The swell of St. Jim's did not intend to return until the hour fixed for starting back to the school.

"This is somethin' like," remarked Racke. "No reason why a chap shouldn't have a good time when he's at school, that I can see, especially when he's got plenty of money."

"Oh, give us a rest about the money!" snapped Crooke, who was in a very ill-humour after his losses. "We know you're rich, Peter Racke."

"Cheese it, Crooke!" said Levison hastily, as Racke's brow darkened. "Keep your temper. You shouldn't play if you can't lose!"

"Who can't lose!" snapped Crooke.

"Well, keep your temper!"

"Who's not keeping his temper?"

"Oh, shut up!"

"If you want a thick ear, you cad—"

"Don't begin to row now!" said Racke savagely. "Your deal, Crooke!"

Crooke sullenly took the cards and dealt. There was a step on the rock path, and Racke looked round, expecting to see Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"You've come back to take a hand?" he asked. "Why—Oh, my hat!"

It was not D'Arcy!

It was Mr. Railton, the Housemaster of the School House, who stood there looking down at the dismayed gamblers with a thunderous brow.

CHAPTER 8.

Brought to Book.

UTTER dismay fell upon the trio.

The cards slipped from Crooke's unsteady hand, scattering over his knees and on the sand.

Mr. Railton did not speak.

His grim glance took in the whole scene—the empty, long-necked bottles on the sand, the flushed faces of the three juniors, the cards, the cigarettes, the money. The three juniors sat frozen. Racke was the least dismayed. He had not been long enough at St. Jim's to realise the full seriousness of the escapade. But he knew that it was serious. Crooke and Levison were almost frozen with fear.

What on earth had brought Mr. Railton there? They were twenty miles from St. Jim's, in a lonely spot on the sea-coast. It was not unusual for Mr. Railton to take a little run down to the sea on a half-holiday, but the juniors had never dreamed of falling in with him. It was the wildest of chances that he should have chosen that afternoon for a breath of sea air—that his walk on the coast should have led him in their direction. That had not entered into their calculations at all.

The Housemaster had been sauntering along the shore carelessly enough when he spotted the party. At a distance he had taken them for a gang of riotous trippers. As he came nearer he had seen that they were St. Jim's fellows. Then he

had walked directly towards them, the sand deadening his footsteps, and his arrival came as a complete surprise to the blades of St. Jim's.

The silence was terrible. Mr. Railton broke it at last.

"Crooke, Levison, Racke! Get up!"

The juniors rose to their feet.

Crooke and Levison were pale. Racke was trying to recover his nerve. It was not for Racke, the son of Racke the millionaire, heir of the ill-gotten millions of Racke & Hacke, to be bowled over by an angry Housemaster. But in spite of his upstart insolence, Racke quailed under the stern eye of the Housemaster of St. Jim's.

"I need not ask you what this means!" said Mr. Railton, his tone as cutting as a knife. "I can see only too well. So this is the way you amuse yourselves when you are out of sight of the school?"

"I—I—I—" stammered Crooke, with a deadly look at Racke. Expulsion from the school was looming over him, and at that moment he could have struck the upstart at St. Jim's senseless with keen pleasure. This was the result of helping Racke to "spend it now!"

"I take you as the one chiefly responsible, Crooke, as you are the eldest," said Mr. Railton.

"It isn't true, sir!" shouted Crooke. "I was led into this. It was Racke's idea from the beginning!"

"Is that true, Racke?"

Racke gave the cad of the Shell a glance of contempt. His precious pal was not likely to stand by him in the hour of danger.

"I brought the party out, sir!" he said. "I'm not denyin' it. I don't see why a chap shouldn't have some fun when he can afford it!"

"You call this fun!"

"Yes, sir!" said Racke.

"The—the fact is, sir," said Levison, "it—it was really only a—sort of joke, sir! We are not in the habit of playing cards, of course. We thought it would be rather a lark to try!"

"Yes, that's it, sir!" said Crooke, quick to catch the cue from the more cunning Levison. "I've never played cards before—for money, I mean! I've played round games at Christmas for—for nuts!"

Mr. Railton looked at them hard.

Naturally, he did not know the two rascals so well as they knew one another, and he was not unwilling to believe that matters were not quite so bad as they looked at first glance.

"You hardly seem to be aware of the seriousness of the matter!" he said. "Are you aware that if a policeman saw you so engaged you would be liable to arrest and prosecution?"

"Oh, sir!" gasped Crooke.

He knew it well enough, but it suited him to appear quite ignorant of that dreadful possibility.

"Is—is it possible?" ejaculated Levison.

"You know that gambling is illegal, I presume?"

"Oh, yes, sir; but we weren't gambling!" said Levison confidently. "I—I hope you don't think so badly of us as that, sir!"

"What do you call it, then, Levison?"

"Well, it was just a lark, sir!"

"I hope you are speaking truthfully, Levison, and that you did not realise the seriousness of what you were doing," said the Housemaster quietly.

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"I assure you, sir—"

"It was only a game, sir!" said Crooke. "Of course, it was wrong—I know that! But I didn't think of it before. Racke just proposed a round of cards to kill time, that was all. We—we weren't going to keep our winnings, of course!"

"Of course not!" said Levison, looking quite shocked.

"I am afraid I cannot wholly believe that statement," said Mr. Railton drily. "I am willing to believe that you did not realise to the full the rascality of your conduct. I shall report this matter to Dr. Holmes to be dealt with, and leave it in his hands. I trust that he may consider a severe flogging sufficient to meet the case."

"Oh, sir!"

"You deserve to be expelled from the school—all of you!" said Mr. Railton. "Racke, as a new boy, is probably least to blame."

"I don't see any harm in it, sir!" said Racke.

"What!"

"I've done it before, often enough!"

"Indeed! Am I to understand that you were allowed to smoke, and gamble, and drink at home?"

"I've generally done as I liked!"

"You will not be able to do as you like at school, Racke! Indeed, I think the Head may consider that St. Jim's is not a proper place for you, after your very peculiar training."

Racke's jaw dropped.

"I—I don't want to leave St. Jim's, sir," he faltered.

"You will probably have no choice about that. You have apparently added drinking to your other vices," said Mr. Railton, with a glance at the champagne bottles. "I would never willingly have believed that such conduct was possible among St. Jim's boys!"

"We—we just tasted the stuff to see what it was like, sir!" said Levison. "It was packed in the luncheon-basket by mistake!"

"By mistake, Levison?"

"Oh, yes, sir! Racke telephoned for a tip-top lunch, and the duffers couldn't have known it was for schoolboys. They sent us just the ordinary lunch-basket of the most expensive kind! We didn't know the champagne was in it till we unpacked it!"

"That's so, sir!" said Crooke. "I had just a sip—it quite made me sick, sir!"

"You ordered the lunch-basket, Racke?"

"Yes, sir!"

"Where did you order it?"

"At Blankley's, in Wayland, to be put in the car, sir."

"Did you specify that champagne was to be placed in the basket?"

"N-n-no, sir!"

"Did you explain to them that you were a schoolboy?"

"N-n-no, sir!"

"Are you willing that investigation should be made at Blankley's, and the terms of your order inquired into?"

Racke was silent. It needed only a question at Blankley's to reveal the fact that he had specifically ordered the champagne to be packed in the lunch-basket. Mr. Railton's lip curled.

"I do not think I need ask you any more questions," he said. "You will return to the school at once! You came, I suppose, in the car I passed on the road?"

"Yes, sir!"

"You will return immediately. On my return I shall report the matter to Dr. Holmes. You will certainly be flogged, and you may be expelled from the school. Another point! I understand, from your remark as I came up, that you had a companion here?"

The three juniors exchanged glances. They had forgotten Arthur Augustus D'Arcy for the moment.

"Was he a schoolfellow?" asked Mr. Railton.

Racke drew a long breath.

"No, sir!" he said distinctly. "A fellow I knew, that's all!"

Crooke and Levison were silent. Crooke would have been glad enough to drag D'Arcy into his disgrace, but after what Racke had said he could not speak.

"You assure me that it was not a St. Jim's boy?" asked the Housemaster.

"Yes, sir," said Racke calmly.

Even at that moment the heir of Racke and Hacke realised what a claim it would give him upon the son of Lord Eastwood, to "face the music" without having dragged D'Arcy into it! As for being "sacked" from the school, Racke did not believe that would happen. He simply could not realise that the Head might expel a fellow with so much money.

"Very well!" said Mr. Railton. "If he does not belong to the school his conduct is no concern of mine. You will return at once, and remain within the gates!"

"Yes, sir," said Levison humbly.

Nothing more was said. In silence the Housemaster watched the three merry blades—not so merry now—take their departure, and the big car rolled away with them in the direction of the distant school.

CHAPTER 9.

Looking After Gussy.

TOM MERRY smiled as a big motor buzzed in at the gateway, and rolled up to the School House. The House match was over, and the Terrible Three were chatting on the steps when the merry party came home.

"Here comes young Spending-it-now!" grinned Monty Lowther.

"They don't look very joyful, though!" Manners remarked critically, surveying the three juniors as they alighted from the car.

"Where's Gussy, I wonder?" Tom remarked.

The big car rolled away, and the three blades came up the steps. Racke was looking cool and unconcerned, as far as he could; but Levison and Crooke made no attempt to conceal their dismay. The two young rascals were completely knocked over by the discovery.

They were anticipating the interview with the Head with the gloomiest forebodings.

"Hallo! Had a good time, Racke?" asked Tom Merry.

"Rippin'!" said Racke coolly.

"Oh, let us be joyful!" grinned Monty Lowther. "Wherefore that worried frown, Crooke, my merry blade?"

"Go and eat coke!" growled Crooke, and he swung sullenly into the house.

"Anything happened?" asked Tom.

Levison shrugged his shoulders.

"Railton dropped on us!"

"Railton!" ejaculated the Terrible Three.

"Yes. He had chosen this special afternoon for a trot by the sea, and he dropped right on us! Rotten luck!"

Tom Merry looked puzzled.

"Well, Railton isn't dangerous, excepting to Germans," he said. "What did it matter if he dropped on you?"

"We happened to be playing cards."

"Oh, you rotter!"

"And the champagne bottles were in evidence. It was rather a knock-out!"

"Who wouldn't be a merry blade?" grinned Lowther.

"Did you ask Railton to take a hand in the game? Or offer him some cham?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I think it'll be a flogging," said Levison, rubbing his hands. "I think we shall get out of the sack—Racke being a new boy—and myself a youngster under Crooke's influence—"

"My hat!"

"It may come hardest on Crooke," said Levison coolly. "As an older fellow than me, he ought not to have led me into it!"

"More likely you led him, in my opinion," growled Manners.

"Lucky Railton isn't of your opinion, then!" said Levison calmly. "I shouldn't wonder if Racke is sacked, though."

"They won't sack me in a hurry," sneered Racke. "My pater would kick up a row, I can tell you!"

"The Head would tell your pater to go and eat coke—in more classic language," remarked Monty Lowther. "You're in a bad box. You'd better not come any swank with the Head, or you're a gone coon."

"Oh, rot!" said Racke uneasily. And he followed Crooke into the house.

Blake and Herries and Digby came up the steps.

"So you've come back," said Blake, eyeing Levison rather grimly. "Where's Gussy?"

"Haven't the least idea!"

"He didn't come back with you?"

"No."

"Was he with you when Railton found you boozing and smoking and gambling?" asked Tom Merry.

Blake jumped.

"Found what?" he yelled.

"That's what he found," said Monty Lowther, with a chuckle. "Young war-profits was spending the guilty gold—in the usual war-profit way."

"The rotten hound!" growled Blake. "I suspected something of that kind. But I know Gussy wouldn't have a hand in it!"

"He'd gone for a stroll when Railton came on us," said Levison. "Racke told old Railton a thumping whopper—told him the other member of the party didn't belong to St. Jim's, so D'Arcy's clear."

Blake drew a deep breath.

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NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

"TOO CLEVER BY HALF!"

"Jolly narrow escape for Gussy!" he said. "If he'd been found with them, he'd have been set down as a rotten black-guard like the rest. I fancy this will cure him of consorting with war-profit bounders!"

"Perhaps he's not clear of it yet," sneered Levison. Blake clenched his fists.

"Do you mean that you're going to sneak, you toad?"

"Not at all; it wouldn't do me any good. I'd put it all on Gussy if I could—but I can't!" said Levison coolly. "But if Crooke is sacked, he will jaw it all out at the top of his voice. He won't be sacked alone!"

"Gussy's done nothing wrong," said Blake fiercely.

"He will have to prove that, if it comes out that he was one of the party," said Levison, shrugging his shoulders. And he strolled into the house, leaving the chums of the School House dismayed and uneasy.

"My hat!" said Digby. "This is a go! It serves the dummy right for having anything to do with that black-guard Racke!"

"The beast has been fairly running him down, ever since he came," grunted Herries. "I've told Gussy a dozen times to have nothing to do with him."

"Same here!" growled Blake. "Gussy is such an obstinate mule. But those cads will keep it dark, surely?"

"Gussy will be able to say that he didn't join in their black-guardism," said Tom. "The Head will believe him."

Blake groaned.

"Gussy's such an ass. Most likely he'd think it the game to stand by them, if it all came out. He would be afraid of looking like a good little Georgie, if he said he wasn't a bad boy like the rest, and all that. It's just like him to own up, and face the music with them."

"Don't let him, then!"

"I won't, if I can stop him!" said Blake doubtfully.

It was in a worried frame of mind that Tom Merry & Co. waited for Arthur Augustus to come in. Tea was over in Study No. 6, and the six juniors were in that famous apartment, discussing the matter, when Arthur Augustus's footstep was heard in the passage.

Six grim faces were turned upon the swell of St. Jim's as he entered. Arthur Augustus looked very tired, and a little cross, and considerably indignant.

"Oh, here you are!" grunted Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus, shaking into the armchair. "Fwightfully fagged, deah boy. I have been tweated with gwoss diswepsect."

"Met Railton?" asked Blake anxiously.

"Wailton? No!"

"Oh, good!"

"I left the partay for a time," explained Arthur Augustus.

"I had my weasons for leavin' them. When I came back, they were gone. Actually gone off in the cah, you know. Wasn't it wotten? It took me quite a long time to realise that they had played me such a wotten twick. I had to walk four miles to a beastly station, and take a beastly slow twain, and I have weally had a vewy fatiguing journey. I am fwightfully tired and fwightfully hungwy!"

"Serve you right!" said Blake heartlessly.

"Weally, Blake—"

The door opened, and Trimble of the Fourth looked in, with a look of excitement on his fat face.

"Gussy here?" he exclaimed. "I thought I saw him come in!"

"I weally wish you would not address me as Gussy, Twimble!"

"There's going to be a jolly row," chuckled Trimble.

"Jolly glad I didn't come with you, after all. He, he, he!"

"Weally, Twimble—"

"Get out, you fat duffer!" growled Blake.

"I say, Railton's come in, and he's been with the Head. Crooke and Levison and Racke have been sent for—"

"Shut up!"

"Look here, you know, they've been sent for, and—yaroooh!" roared Trimble of the Fourth, as Blake seized him, and hurled him bodily into the passage.

The door of Study No. 6 slammed after him.

"Bai Jove! What was Twimble talkin' about, deah boys?"

"Oh, gassing as usual!" said Blake gruffly.

"Have Cwooke and Wacke and Levison got into a wov?"

"Shouldn't wonder. Are you hungry?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Then we'll get tea for you," said Blake. "You stick in that chair, and don't move. You can cut down to the tuck-shop, Dig!"

"Right-ho!" said Digby.

"Bai Jove, you are weally vewy kind, Blake."

"I believe in kindness to animals," said Blake.

"Weally, you ass—"

"Shove the cloth on, Herries!"

"I will go and speak to Wacke while you are gettin' tea."

"Never mind Racke now!"

"But I want to tell him how I wegard his conduct in desertin' me, deah boy, and to tell him that I wefuse to speak to him again."

"You can tell him that after tea," said Tom Merry. "Don't deprive us of your company, Gussy, after deserting us at cricket."

"Bai Jove! If you put it like that, Tom Mewwy—"

"I do put it like that," said the captain of the Shell solemnly.

"Then I will leave Wacke till aftah tea, deah boy!"

Arthur Augustus settled down very cheerfully to be looked after and waited on. Never had his friends been so attentive. And it did not occur to the easy-going mind of Arthur Augustus that there was any ulterior motive for their excessive attentiveness. But by the time tea was over, the interview of the delinquents in the Head's study was also over, and Arthur Augustus was quite ignorant that it had taken place. Whether Arthur Augustus would have insisted upon joining Racke & Co. to face the Head, his chums could not feel sure. But they were quite sure that they did not mean to give him a chance.

CHAPTER 10.

The Way of the Transgressor!

OUTSIDE Study No. 6 there was a good deal of excitement in the School House.

Tom Merry & Co. were keeping Arthur Augustus too busy for him to become aware of it; and Trimble's effort to impart information had been nipped in the bud.

But the rest of the School House was in a buzz.

The story of the afternoon's excursion was known far and wide. The heir of the ill-gotten millions had been spending his money in the way most war-profits are apt, and he had been caught in the act. Racke senior could spend war-profits in vulgar extravagance and profusion, as much as he liked—he could paint the West End red to any extent. But Racke junior was not quite so free to do as he liked. Racke junior was being called to strict account.

All the school knew that Racke and his companions had been found gambling and smoking and mopping up champagne—caught in the very act by Mr. Railton himself. The general opinion was that Racke's stay at St. Jim's would come to a sudden and inglorious end. Racke was cool, almost jaunty, as he obeyed the summons to the Head's study; Levison and Cooke were white and worried. In the passage, quite a crowd of fellows gathered to see them when they came out.

But they did not come out soon. A murmur of voices could be heard from the study, and Trimble ventured along to the keyhole, and he came back with the report that the Head was "slanging" the three wretched blades a "treat." After that, a dread sound was heard from the study—the heavy swishing of a birch.

"Floggin' 'em, by gum!" said Gore of the Shell.

"Well, they asked for it," remarked Kangaroo. "I wonder if they're going to be sacked, too."

"What a surprise for old War-profits, if young War-profits came home sacked!" chuckled Mellish.

There was a sound of yelling from the study.

"That's Crooke," said Kernish. "Crooke never could stand a licking."

"War-profits hasn't yelled," remarked Glyn.

"There goes Levison."

Levison's voice could be heard, raised in anguish. But Racke had not been heard to yell. Croesus minor was evidently tough.

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"Perhaps the Head's laying it on lightly, on account of the millions," said Trimble sagely.

"Rot!" said Kangaroo.

"Here they come!"

The study door opened, and three juniors limped out. They were twisting with pain as they walked. Crooke was fairly doubled up; the flabby slacker of the Shell was in no condition to bear punishment. Levison was pale, but there was a sardonic smile on his hard face. Racke was looking furious.

"Sacked?" asked a dozen voices, as they came squirming down the passage.

"Sorry to disappoint you," said Levison politely. "We're not sacked. The Head thought a flogging would meet the case. We agreed."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!" mumbled Crooke.

"I'll write to my father about this!" snarled Racke.

"The governors will hear about it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My dear chap, the governors don't care tuppence for your war-profits," said Clifton Dane. "They're more likely to think the Head ought to have sacked you."

Racke scowled, and went on his way. Levison went to his study to console himself with a cigarette. He was hurt; but he was congratulating himself on having escaped cheaply.

The Head had taken the view that Racke was the worst of the party, and that the others had been, to some extent, under his influence. The fact that Racke was a new boy worked in his favour, or certainly he would have been expelled. As it was, all three had been flogged, and Racke had received a warning that, if he was discovered in the same habits, he had no mercy to expect next time.

The Head had a natural reluctance to send the boy home before he had been at the school a week; and he could make allowances for the bad training Racke had evidently received at home. Also, he hoped that the severe lesson might make all the difference to him. He made the lesson severe enough. The heir to millions was quite pale as he entered his study, and found Crooke groaning in the armchair. Crooke looked up at him with a sullen, savage brow.

"Precious ending to an outing!" he snarled. "You needn't ask me on another—if you're fool enough to have another."

Racke set his lips.

"There'll be a good many others; but I shall be more careful next time," he said. "It was a rotten chance that Railton should have dropped on us as he did!"

"Something's always happening when a fellow thinks he's quite safe!" growled Crooke. "You can leave me out next time. I don't see keeping it dark about D'Arcy, either. He was with us."

"He didn't do anything to be punished for."

"Well, no; but he ought to have faced the music with us," said Crooke, rather unreasonably. "The Head wouldn't have believed that he was a whitewashed angel, if D'Arcy had told him so. I don't suppose he'd have told him so, either."

"Oh, rot!" said Racke.

There was nothing said in the study for some time, only a chorus of groans and mumbles. When Racke left the study at last, Crooke was still squirming in the armchair, and groaning. The black sheep of the Shell had had a lesson that was likely to last him some time.

Racke went down the passage when he had recovered, and tapped at the door of Study No. 6, and looked in.

Arthur Augustus was alone there. It was more than an hour since the flogging, and Blake & Co. had gone out after tea. Arthur Augustus, who was tired after his long journey that afternoon, remained in the study armchair, resting. He was thinking of seeking out Racke of the Shell, when the door opened, and the fellow he was thinking of looked in.

Arthur Augustus rose to his feet, and jammed his eye-glass into his eye. With that aid to a crushing glance, he surveyed Racke.

His look started at Racke's face, and travelled down to his feet. Then it travelled up again to his face.

The process was what Arthur Augustus described as "lookin' the wottah up and down." It was intended to wither Racke on the spot.

Racke, however, did not wither in the least. He seemed surprised.

"Anything wrong?" he asked.

"Weally, Wacke—"

"I thought you'd have got in by this time," said Racke. "I'd have come before, only I've been feeling rather bad. The Head laid it on pretty thick."

"I am sowwy you are in twouble with the Head, Wacke,

but aftah your wotten conduct in desertin' me this aftahnoon, I wefuse to speak to you again!"

Racke chuckled.

"You don't know what's happened, then?"

"I do not care a wap what has happened. I know you buzzed off and left me stwanded twenty miles from the school, and I had a feahfully exhaustin' journey home."

"Jolly lucky for you I did. Haven't the chaps told you what's happened?" said Racke, puzzled. "Railton spotted us, and we've been reported and flogged."

"Bai Jove!"

"Railton sent us home at once. If we'd told him you were in the party, you'd have been flogged, too," explained Racke. "I only hoped you wouldn't fall in with Railton after we were gone."

"Gweat Scott!"

Arthur Augustus sank limply into the armchair, and blinked at Racke.

CHAPTER 11.

Not to be Dropped.

YOU—you were caught out by Wailton, Wacke?" gasped the swell of St. Jim's, at last. "Smokin', gamblin', and dwinkin'!"

"Yes."

"I wondah you haven't been sacked!"

"The Head went easy with me because I'm a new chap; haven't had time yet to get into the high and moral ways of the giddy school," said Racke, with a sneering laugh. "My pater would have made a row if I'd been sacked, I know that."

"The Head would not care for your patah, Wacke."

"My pater could buy up the school, and the Board of Governors, too, if he liked," said Racke arrogantly. "Money talks, you know. Anyway, I'm let off with a licking. I can stand a lickin'—I'm not soft. Crooke is fairly knocked out!"

"I must remark that it serves you all wight, Wacke! As you had no choice about leavin' me stwanded, I ovahlook that mattah; I see that it was a misunderstanding," said Arthur Augustus. "But it is wathah remarkable that the Head has not sent for me, as I was a membah of the party."

"The Head doesn't know."

"Oh!" said D'Arcy.

"Crooke and Levison said nothing—it wouldn't have helped them. I told Railton there was no other St. Jim's chap in the party."

"You—you did? But that wasn't true!"

Racke shrugged his shoulders.

"You have actually told Mr. Wailton a falsehood to seween me!" exclaimed the swell of St. Jim's, in great distress.

"I suppose you don't want a floggin', do you?"

"It would not be a question of a floggin' for me," said D'Arcy, with great dignity. "I have done nothin' w'ong!"

"The Head would have believed you were tarred with the same brush, as you were a member of the party."

"I twust that the Head would have accepted by assuwanse on that point," said Arthur Augustus. "As a mattah of fact, I feel bound to explain to the Head that I was a membah of the party. If I had known about this, I should have come with you to see the Head."

"Lucky for you you didn't!"

"Bai Jove! I undahstand now why those boundahs were keepin' me in this study!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "Howevah, I shall go to Mr. Wailton, and tell him that I was a membah of the party. Othahwise, I am placed in the position of deceivin' him."

"You can't," said Racke quietly. "He wouldn't believe that you came with us without joinin' in the little game—even if you could tell him that you were a good little Georgie who was shocked at the naughty goings-on of your bad little companions!" And Racke grinned.

D'Arcy winced.

"I could not tell Mr. Wailton that. I—I should not say anythin' about that. But I feel bound to let him know that I was in the party, as the party has been hauled ovah the coals."

"No need! You're safe out of it now—I've seen to that. I stuffed Railton up; you don't want to tell him so, I suppose."

"Bai Jove! It's a wotten posish," said D'Arcy. "Do you seriously mean to tell me, Wacke, that you told Mr. Wailton a falsehood?"

Racke looked curiously at the swell of the School House. In the estimable home circle of Racke and Hacke, a falsehood was not considered a very deadly sin.

Probably Racke senior had as many falsehoods as fivers to his credit. Such surroundings and such training had naturally made Racke cynical and unscrupulous. But he was no

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fool; and he could see that Arthur Augustus was in earnest, and was seriously distressed.

Among any of his earlier associations, the heir of millions would have regarded such a distress as palpable humour. But he was keen enough to see that D'Arcy's scruples of honour, though new to his experience, were genuine enough. He was surprised, that was all. But D'Arcy's sentiments woke no echo in his breast. They helped to lower his opinion of Arthur Augustus's intelligence. A fine sense of honour did not consort with bloated war-profits.

"It's howwid!" continued Arthur Augustus, moving restlessly about the study. "I undahstand that you did it to sowen me, Wacke, supposin' that I should have been misjudged and flogged. I suppose I ought to feel vewy much obliged to you. But I wish you had not done it. It is howwid!"

"I stuffed Railton up, to keep you out of it," said Racke. "I took you into the affair, and I couldn't see you suffer if it could be avoided."

"Yaas, I know your motive was good." It did not even occur to D'Arcy's simple mind to suspect that Racke's motive was bad. "I suppose it was frienship on your part; but I wish you had not done it. I cannot mention the mattah to Mr. Wailton now without givin' you away, Wacke, and, of course, I cannot do that. And—and—it is wotten!"

To Racke's mind it was a trifle light as air. But he did not say so. He was quite willing to humour what he considered a weird peculiarity in the son of Lord Eastwood.

"Well, it can't be helped now," he said. "I—ahem!—I wouldn't have told a lie to save myself."

"I am suah you wouldn't deah boy! I should despise any fellow who would."

Racke suppressed a grin.

"So would I," he said; "but it was a question of saving you, you see—"

"I am suah you misundahstood the mattah, Wacke. I was in no danger. Mr. Wailton knows me well enough to twust me."

"Well, I thought you were," said Racke, "I did it to save you. Of course, it's rather on my conscience. But—but it was frienship, you know—I felt bound to see you clear of the trouble."

"I am weally vewy much obliged to you, Wacke! I quite undahstand how utterly wotten you must be feelin' about it at the pwesent moment," said Arthur Augustus sympathetically.

Racke was not conscious in the least of feeling at all rotten about it; falsehoods came too easily to him for that. But he nodded gravely.

"Pway nevah do anythin' of the kind again, Wacke. It is weally howwid!"

"Never," said Racke. "I—I must try to forget about it—I will worry me for a long time, to think I have been guilty of deceit."

"Yaas, I suppose it will. I am weally vewy sowwy," said D'Arcy unsuspiciously.

There was a pause.

"The—the fact is, Wacke," said Arthur Augustus, at last, "I am sowwy I came out this aftahnoon. As our tastes are so dissimilah, deah boy, we are not likely to pull togethah in any way. I don't want to pveach to you, but ewerythin' that went on this aftahnoon was what I wegard as wotten. I think you will agwee with me that we had bettah not have much to say to one anothah aftah this."

Racke's eyes glittered.

He was perfectly well aware that Arthur Augustus did not want his frienship or his acquaintance. That had made no difference to him. He was determined to know Lord Eastwood's son and to pal with him. He had come to St. Jim's, as much as for anything else, to make acquaintances among rich and titled people. But Arthur Augustus was not to get rid of him so easily. Racke had already learned that the swell of St. Jim's was easily imposed upon.

"You mean you want to throw me over because I got you out of the scrape in a way you don't approve of?" he said.

Arthur Augustus coloured.

"Not at all, Wacke. You can't call it thwovin' you ovah, as we are not weally friends. And it is not because you lied to Wailton. It was howwid, but I know you acted against your conscience for my sake, and I am gwateful. But I can't have anythin' to do with a chap who smokes and gambles and dwinks."

"What's the harm in having a good time?"

"I do not wegard it as a good time; but I don't want to pveach to a fellah oldah than myself. But—I can't have anythin' to do with it."

"If that's all, I'll chuck it over," said Racke. "I don't much care for that kind of thing, really. It was more to please Crooke than anythin' else. It's not to my taste. But—but you're the only chap I've taken to, D'Arcy, since I've been here, and—and—"

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"Weally, Wacke, if you are sewious about givin' up that blackguardism, of course—"

"Honest Injun," said Racke.

"Then we can be friends, if you like."

Arthur Augustus felt that he could say no less; after that tremendous sacrifice Racke had made for him, in telling a lie on his behalf. He was not likely to suspect that Croesus minor took to lying like a Prussian, or like a duck to water. And perhaps he was a little flattered at the idea of exercising a good influence over Racke, and bringing him back to the path of decency.

"Done!" said Racke.

When Racke returned to his own study, he found Crooke still groaning in the armchair. He lighted a cigarette, with a smile. If Arthur Augustus could have seen him just then, he would have known exactly how much Racke's "honest Injun" was worth. But Arthur Augustus did not see him.

CHAPTER 12.

Lowther's Little Wheeze!

"CONFOUND the fellow!"

Thus Jack Blake of the Fourth, in Tom Merry's study a few days later.

Blake was frowning, and the Terrible Three were sympathetic.

"I'm not going to stand it," said Blake. "Can't you suggest what a fellow could do? That beast Racke has fairly fastened himself on Gussy. Gussy doesn't like him any more than we do; but he thinks Racke has a claim on him, and they're pals. And sooner or later Gussy will be landed in some of his rotten scrapes."

"Most likely," said Tom Merry, "Racke is an out and out cad. Why doesn't Gussy give him a wide berth?"

Blake snorted.

"The ass! Racke has made out that he got Gussy out of a scrape with Railton, by lying to him. Gussy thinks that lie must have given Racke an awful twist, and takes it as a proof of devoted frienship. Of course, the cad calculated on that—and he'd lie as soon as he'd breathe, or bloot on war-profits."

The Terrible Three grinned. It really seemed that the unspeakable Racke was succeeding in establishing himself as Gussy's pal. And most of the House knew the kind of fellow Racke was, by this time. He was a bigger blackguard than Crooke of the Shell, which was saying a good deal.

More than once, already, he had broken bounds at night, leaving the Shell dormitory to seek some low haunt in ityl-combe. But he was exceedingly cautious about it, and was likely to keep up that method of "spending-it-now" for some time, till he was found out and sacked.

Crooke and Levison and Mellish were his chief companions in his escapades, with Piggott of the Third, and Clampe of the New House. He had also formed an acquaintance with Cutts, the black sheep of the Fifth, and his set. Cutts & Co. despised the war-profit-merchant from the depths of their hearts; but all was grist that came to their mill.

That the unsuspecting Gussy should form such a frienship was naturally a worry to his chums. But that was not all. Sooner or later the swell of St. Jim's was likely enough to get implicated in some of Racke's questionable adventures. He had had one very narrow escape already.

"It's no good arguing with the ass," said Blake. "He believes that Racke has given up blackguardism. He's actually accused me of running the fellow down—because I told him what all the House knows."

"Silly ass!" commented Manners.

"Well, he is an ass," admitted Blake. "But I'm not going to see him taken in and done for by that war-profit beast. I've promised Racke a thick car if I ever find him in my study; but that only puts Gussy's back up. He don't even know that Racke is buttering him because he's the son of a giddy nobleman, and rich. Racke intends to go to Eastwood House in the vac. He's pulling Gussy's leg for that. And suppose the brute gets bowled out, and Gussy gets landed along with him?"

"Likely enough," said Monty Lowther.

"Well, what's a fellow going to do?" demanded Blake. "Herries proposes giving 'em a hiding each whenever they speak to one another."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'd do it quick enough, only that would make Gussy give our study the go-by, and leave him in Racke's hands. The silly ass thinks he doesn't need looking after."

"Lots of silly asses are like that," remarked Tom Merry. "The more they need looking after, the more they think they don't need it."

"Suppose—" began Monty Lowther.

"Oh, none of your blessed funny jokes!" growled Blake, catching the humorous gleam in Lowther's eye.

"I've got an idea," said Lowther indignantly.

"Well, you can go ahead," said Blake, more graciously. "If it's a way of choking off Croesus minor, I'll be glad to hear it."

"Suppose Lord Eastwood were ruined—losses through the war, or something like that—"

"Eh!"

"And Gussy had to leave St. Jim's, fairly on his uppers," pursued Lowther. "That would be a test of friendship. All Gussy's true pals would rally round him—us, for example. I can see myself folding him to my manly chest, and weeping over him."

"Oh, don't be a funny ass!"

"But Racke's sort of friendship wouldn't stand such a strain," said Lowther sagely. "You can bet your Sunday socks on that!"

"What about it, fathead? I suppose Lord Eastwood isn't going to get ruined just to carry out a wheeze, is he?"

"Not likely. But there's no law against spoofing a cad to show him up in his true colours."

Blake looked reflective.

"By Jove, it might work! Racke don't like Gussy, really; I'm sure of that. He has to keep up a lot of humbug with him, and keep dark a lot of things he would like to brag of. I know Gussy's nobby ideas make him simply wriggle sometimes. If he thought there was nothing to be got out of Gussy, he would be glad enough to round on him, and tell him what he really thinks of him. I'm jolly certain of that."

"Well, there's your chance," said Lowther. "Put it to Gussy that if Racke stands that test, you'll take him to your manly chest and make much of him. If he doesn't, Gussy is to chuck him up."

"I'll jolly well try it!" said Blake. "Come along and help me jaw to Gussy."

"Any old thing!"

Blake hurried to Study No. 6, followed by the Terrible Three. D'Arcy and Herries and Dig were in the study, and there was a sound of voices raised in argument.

"I refuse to listen to a word against Wacke, Hewwies! It is not his fault that his patah makes wotten war-profits!"

"It's his fault that he's a low blackguard!" hooted Herries.

"I refuse to believe anythin' of the kind about Wacke. He has given me his word that he nevah does anythin' of the sort."

"A lot his word's worth," grunted Dig.

"Wats!"

Arthur Augustus looked round as Tom Merry & Co. came into the study. He was looking a little excited.

"Hallo! Naughty kids quarrelling?" said Tom Merry chidingly.

"Wats! These chaps are wunnin' down my fwiend Wacke, and I'm not goin' to stand it. Wacke is all wight. He sent a vevy expensive cah last Monday to take the wounded soldiahs out. He can't help it if he is wollin' in money. And when a chap wants to be fwiendly with me, I'm goin' to be fwiendly with him, if he's all wight."

"A beastly toad bloating on war-profits!" snorted Herries.

"Some day he'll be up before the Head again, and you'll be up along with him, and you'll get sacked together."

"Wubbish!"

"That will be nice for this study," growled Digby.

"Wats!"

Monty Lowther closed one eye at Herries and Digby.

"Gentlemen," he began impressively, "let dogs delight to bark and bite—"

"Oh, cheese it!"

"I've got a wheeze!"

"Go and bury it!"

"I refuse to listen to a wheeze wegardin' my fwiend Wacke."

Lowther looked pained.

"Oh, Gussy, after I've taken the trouble to think out a plan for proving that Croesus minor is true blue, and silencing all these doubting Thomases!"

"Why, you ass," began Herries, "he isn't true blue! He's only sticking to Gussy because the silly ass has a silly handle to his silly name!"

"I wegard that as a libel. Hewwies! Lowthah, deah boy, if you have weally an ideah for convincin' these asses that Wacke is all wight, I shall be vevy pleased to hear it."

"More likely to prove that he's all wrong," said Digby.

"Shush!" said Lowther severely. "Gussy, you do me proud. Now, here's the wheeze. Racke is actuated—good word!—by feelings of sincere friendship towards you, and your pals won't believe it."

"Yaas, exactly!"

"Now, suppose Racke learned that your pater was ruined, and that you had to leave St. Jim's on your uppers, then he

would stick to you like glue, and prove that he was a friend in need. Then these bounders would have to shut up. For the sake of proving Racke's good qualities, you are entitled to apply the test. And afterwards," said Lowther severely, "I hope you fellows will think as highly of Racke as—as I do!"

Arthur Augustus frowned thoughtfully.

"For the sake of convincin' these duffahs, I wathah think it is a good ideah," he admitted. "I would not adopt a wheeze for showin' up a fellah in a bad light. But to show him up in a good light is all wight. And when Wacke's weally good qualities come out, I twust you fellows will have the gwace to ask his pardon for havin' thought so wottenly of him!"

"So we will—when his good qualities come out," grunted Herries. "Not before."

CHAPTER 13.

Weighed and Found Wanting!

"HEARD about Gussy?"

"Eh! What about D'Arcy?" asked Racke, looking at Trimble. The Peeping Tom of the School House was bursting with news.

"I heard Blake and Digby talking about it—quite by chance, of course," said Trimble. "They looked awfully cut up. I'm sorry for Gussy."

"What's the matter with him?" exclaimed Talbot of the Shell.

"Ruined!" said Trimble impressively.

"Rot!"

"He's heard from his father—Lord Eastwood, you know. Blake was simply groaning over it," said Trimble. "Ruined, you know. Losses in the war. Shares in something that went smash. Lord Conway's got to leave the Army, it seems, and Gussy will have to leave St. Jim's. He's going to the Head about it this evening. Eastwood House is going to be sold, though Blake says the mortgagees will have most of it."

"Good heavens!" said Talbot. "Poor old Gussy!"

"More of Trimble's rot," said Gore.

"I tell you, I heard 'em talking it over!" yelled Trimble. "You can ask Blake. Here's Herries—ask Herries."

Herries came into the common-room, with a glum face. He was surrounded at once by eager juniors.

"Is it true, Herries?"

"Is poor old Gussy done for? Has he got to leave?"

"Oh, don't talk to me about it!" said Herries gruffly. "I don't see how you fellows know. It's too rotten!"

"Then it's true?"

"Poor old Gussy!"

"Is Racke here?" said Herries. "Gussy wants to speak to Racke; blessed if I would! But I said I'd tell him."

"Good chance for Racke to chip in with his war-profits," grinned Gore. "Ask your pater to lend Gussy a million pounds or so, Racke!"

"I'll bet you it's something of the sort D'Arcy wants to see him for," said Crooke shrewdly. "I wondered why he was chumming with Racke so much. Of course, he knew this was coming, and he thought a millionaire would come in useful."

"Clear as daylight!" said Mellish, with a snigger. "Awfully deep of Gussy, too. Racke could see him through this if he liked."

"Well, are you coming, Racke?" asked Herries.

"Oh, I'll come!" said Racke carelessly.

Herries tramped out of the common-room, as gloomy as a funeral. Racke lounged carelessly to the door.

His visions of a vacation at Eastwood House—of mixing with lords and earls and countesses—had faded from his gaze like a beautiful dream. The earl's son he had cultivated so assiduously was a beggar; his home was to be sold up; he would have to leave school; his title would not count for much, under circumstances of poverty and perhaps disgrace.

There was a bitter sneer on Racke's lips.

Mellish's suggestion had come into his mind, before Mellish had made it. Why had D'Arcy sent for him now—him, when he had a crowd of older friends? Because he was rich—because he hoped that the war-profits, which he had affected to despise, might be drawn upon to support a sinking household—because he had hopes that, through Racke of the Shell, Mr. Racke's wealth might be tapped. It was all as clear as daylight—to Racke.

He had lied and shuffled and concealed and denied to gain D'Arcy's friendship—for this! In order to plant upon himself an importunate beggar!

His lip curled bitterly at the thought. He would soon show that poverty-stricken aristocrat, that beggarly Honour—*(The conclusion of this story will be found in vol. 2, page iiv, of cover.)*

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

NEXT
WEDNESDAY!

"TOO CLEVER BY HALF!"

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. Phenning, and a party of natives, of whom Phwaa 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 reach Patagonia, and eventually fall into the hands of a race of giants. Here they are captive for some time, and pass safely through many weird and exciting adventures. Eventually, on a very dark night, they succeed in making their escape, but at the city gates the alarm is given, and Sing Loo is seriously wounded.

They get clear, however, and proceed upon their journey with the greatest possible speed, finally throwing off their pursuers. When they have settled down for the night, many miles from the giants' city, Reggie, Jimmy, and Larry go off in search of water. They ramble into a dense wood, where they discover a huge tuft of reddish-brown hair, which they believe to have been torn from a giant sloth. They also come upon an empty biscuit-tin, which is clear proof to them that a rival party is on the same quest as themselves. In their excitement they forget the time, and the tropical darkness descends upon them almost without warning. They are utterly unable to locate their position, and decide to climb a tree for safety until morning.

(Now read on.)

The Giant Sloth.

All the boys were good climbers, and one after the other they clambered up and up till they were secure, high up the leafy bowers, which overtopped all the trees in the immediate vicinity.

Each made himself secure on his perch, and then the young explorers proceeded to look about them.

Every now and again the moon was obscured by drifting clouds; but when it shone in the full glory of its radiance, what a view met the eyes of the lads!

Far away they could see trees, valleys, swamps, and marshes, flanked by low-lying hills, which seemed to fade away into illimitable distance.

The primeval forests, those age-worn hills and swamps—which, as far as they knew, had never been seen by whites before—struck awe and wonder into the hearts of the young heroes.

Vainly did Jimmy scan the view, in the hopes of seeing a faint glow in the sky or through the trees, which might indicate the position of the Whittaker camp-fire.

But no such friendly gleam rewarded his keen eyes. He told his chums of his failure to discover signs of a fire.

"Of course you'll see no signs of one," said Reggie, in a superior way. "That torrential rain 'ud put out any fire!"

Jimmy looked very desolate at thus being ticked off.

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"Never mind, old sport," put in Reggie. "We can't each of us think of everything, but—Hallo!" He suddenly broke off. "Isn't there something moving over there?"

He pointed with his hand towards a little valley that lay less than a quarter of a mile to their right. As he spoke, the valley was brilliantly lit by the moon. But whether what he fancied he saw moving was a live thing, or whether it was a dark cloud of vapour that wreathed from the marshes, Reggie was not quite sure.

Eagerly, with vigilant eyes, the three boys gazed at the spot. But it was difficult to see anything tangible.

The shroudy vapour floated over the reeds and marshes which abounded in the spot where the lads gazed.

It was not easy to distinguish one cloud from another; yet something immense and altogether intangible seemed to be crouching midst the drifting mists. The vague, shadowy outline of some gigantic thing might or might not have been lurking in those sombre wisps of dark, unwholesome clouds that slowly wreathed about and enfolded, as now they floated upwards, now wrapped round that dim shape which never seemed to move.

"There is something there," whispered Reggie.

In a silence that might almost have been felt, the boys strained their eyes and ears to catch the faintest movement or sound.

Then, with an appalling suddenness that nearly caused the three lads to lose their hold because of fright, there broke upon their startled ears the most piercing bellowings and screams, now shrill, now hoarse, as if some mighty animal might be in its death agony.

These horrid, fearful sounds came from the direction of the valley in which the boys had seen that mighty formless thing.

The very air seemed to vibrate with the frightful trumpetings and cries.

Wondering what they were going to see, or what was going to happen, the three boys clung desperately to their respective branches.

Then they felt a slight breeze come quivering up through the leaves, making the branches and foliage quiver and tremble like a reed that is stirred by the wind.

And now the valley was in a state of chaos and weird sounds; chaos because the breeze, almost stagnant as it was in the vale, was battling with the clouds and vapour, making them shift and swirl about, dividing them, and scattering them.

Suddenly the vapours clinging round that huge, dim shape lifted.

Well might an exclamation of amazed incredulity escape the boys.

They saw the dark outline of some huge monster, bigger than an elephant, but of quite different shape, loom blunderingly out of the rolling mists. Its mighty bulk, its length of neck, and, in comparison with the size of its body, its smallish head, were utterly unlike anything the boys had ever seen.

That was the thing which was screaming and bellowing.

TUCK HAMPERS ARE GIVEN AWAY TO READERS OF THE "BOYS' FRIEND," 1^D.

But they only caught a fleeting glimpse of its vast proportions as, with its mighty front paws beating the air in frantic impotence, and its long neck stretched out, it was trying to extricate itself from the mesh into which it was slowly being drawn.

Then the heavy mists coiled round it again.

"It's the giant sloth," whispered Reggie, in an awed voice.

"By gosh!" murmured Jimmy. "You're right. It's exactly like the doctor has drawn for and described to us."

"We must get a pot at it!" gasped Larry, white with excitement.

"When the mists clear again," whispered Reggie, half fearful lest his hushed voice might be carried to the mighty brute and so frighten it.

"Aim for its head and just below the neck," suggested Jimmy.

The boys waited breathlessly for the vapours to rise again. Intermittently, the awful screams and trumpetings reached their ears. They knew the monster must be nearing its death-throes, and that it was slowly but surely being sucked down into the mud and slime of the marshes.

But presently the vaporous wreaths swirled upwards, and again the boys saw the giant sloth still beating the air with its front, pawlike legs, while its enormous hindquarters were gradually disappearing.

"Is it any good trying to stalk it?" whispered Reggie, in a tense whisper.

"Better try and hit it first," said Jimmy.

"When I give the word!" muttered Reggie.

The three boys levelled their rifles from their respective branches.

"Fire!" shouted Reggie.

The loud report from the rifles went echoing, echoing over the vast primeval forest and silent marshes.

Before the smoke cleared the boys heard the belching shrieks, terrifying in their intensity, grow louder and shriller.

"Hit, by Jove!" whispered Larry.

The huge, prehistoric beast seemed to make one supreme struggle for life and liberty, trumpeting, writhing, and twisting to free itself from the terrible ooze. But more rapidly now it was getting drawn deep down into the slime.

The boys' rifles spoke again. But whether they hit or not the marksmen never knew, for when the smoke had rolled away there was nothing to be seen save the creature's neck and head, swaying about in its death-agony.

Fascinated, the three boys watched its final convulsions.

Foot by foot, the neck and head gradually disappeared till nothing remained of what, a short time before, had been a priceless specimen of a hitherto supposed extinct monster.

"By gosh!" murmured Reggie, with a stifled exclamation of disgust and surprise, for he realised the wonderful privilege it had been to see such an extraordinary sight. "Gone! We shall never get it! Sucked down under the mud, goodness knows how many feet deep! Oh, heavens!" he exclaimed, almost crying with chagrin and bitter disappointment. "To think that it escaped us like that! We may never get such another chance again. It may be the last one alive."

"I think there'll be others," put in the optimistic Jimmy. "We simply couldn't have stalked the brute. We should never have got near enough to it in time, and we might have got in the slime, too, and been sucked down."

"What a story to tell the doctor and Mr. Whittaker!" put in Larry.

"Suppose they don't believe us?" suggested Jimmy, with almost a scared expression on his face.

"They'll have to believe us," said Reggie emphatically.

"Why, you fathead, we can all describe it minutely, and I'm certain I can draw it from memory, after a fashion."

"Well," said Larry, with a grin, "if you can't draw it, spell it."

Just as he spoke, quick and sharp came the report of a distant rifle.

It startled the boys as nothing else could have done.

"My golly!" gasped Reggie. "The report came from the other side of the marshes, I'll swear. Surely the doctor and the governor can't be over there!"

He looked at his two friends very significantly.

"The rival party," murmured Jimmy, "or I'm a Dutchman!"

"That's it," put in Larry.

"If they get the giant sloth first, if there's another one alive," broke in Reggie, "I don't think we can ever look anyone in the face again."

"All's fair in love, sport, and war," quoted Larry. "We'll just have to make the greatest effort we can. At dawn we'll sprint back to the camp."

"Let's descend the tree at once," said Reggie.

So saying, he looked down from the height at which he was perched. The moon was suddenly obscured by clouds.

The forest was once more plunged into stygian darkness.

Then, peering down into the utter gloom below him, Reggie gave vent to a muttered ejaculation.

He could just see two tiny yellow points of light beneath the tree. And they seemed to be coming slowly up to him. Then there came a low, savage snarl.

"Look out, you two!" shouted Reggie. "Panthers!"

Toothy Jim's Narrow Escape.

All this time Mr. Whittaker, the doctor, and Toothy Jim had been in a state of great anxiety about the boys. Sing Loo, who, although still in considerable pain and a slight fever, had somewhat recovered from the first effects of his wounded hand, bravely begged Mr. Whittaker to let him try and trace the boys, but neither Mr. Whittaker nor the doctor would, of course, hear of it.

After the boys had been gone about an hour, Toothy Jim had set out in search of them, but just after night had swooped down, he had returned from a fruitless journey, with the dread news that he had been unable to find the slightest trace of the boys. This was easily accountable.

As the lads had made their way through the unknown forest, naturally not a trace had been left of their path, and, although they had never been more than two miles from the camp, it was just as easy to elude a search as if they had been two hundred miles away.

Directly darkness had swooped down, the expeditionary leader had lit a huge fire, hoping the boys might see the glare from a tree which Mr. Whittaker thought it very likely they would climb to survey the district. But, as it unfortunately happened, just at that time the young explorers were busy with the panther, and then had come the hurricane and the frightful rain, which had speedily put out the fire.

Mr. Whittaker, together, with the doctor and Toothy Jim, took turn and turn about at a night vigil. They had heard the reports of firearms on several occasions. It struck fear into their brave hearts, for it made them wonder what dangers the boys were combating. What those perils were the reader already knows.

So the long hours of the tropical night passed in an agony of suspense for Mr. Whittaker and the doctor.

At the first faint paling of the dawn, both men, weary with their long vigil and gnawing anxiety, heaved a sigh of relief, and immediately sent Toothy Jim on another search.

The first thing they did was to send Toothy Jim in the direction which they had seen the boys take on the previous evening, and then Mr. Whittaker took another direction, leaving the doctor in charge of the animals and Sing Loo. The Chinaman was making rapid progress, but Dr. Phennig would not permit him to do any work.

After what seemed to the medical man an interminable wait (the sun had been up some hours), he heard a glad shout of welcome, and, turning round, saw Toothy Jim, the expedition-leader, and the boys coming towards him.

Staggering under the weight of a big panther slung on a stout branch was Toothy Jim, Reggie, and Jimmy, while Larry walked with Mr. Whittaker.

The doctor ran at them, half-frantic with delight.

"You little rotters!" he cried, trying to look severe, but beaming all over his kindly face, and shaking hands with each of them like an animated pump-handle. "What do you mean by playing truant like this—eh?"

"I've heard the whole story," said Mr. Whittaker. "And I'm sure when you've listened to it, like me, you'll feel that you'd have given years of your life, to say nothing of money, to have seen what these youngsters have seen."

"Ah!" smiled the doctor. "Luck's always been with the young and the brave. You've got a fine panther there, Reggie!"

"Jolly near did for all of us!" grinned Reggie. "It was coming up the tree—our observation post—just as we were climbing down. I shot it right through the head. It wasn't six feet away from me. Golly, though, it was touch-and-go! I said my prayers and then fired!"

"Well, nothing matters now that you've all turned up again, safe and well. Let's get back to breakfast."

When Sing Loo saw his young charges, in spite of his slight fever and the pain he was still suffering, he made one leap from the ground, and ran towards the boys. Short of having his legs shot away, nothing would have stopped him.

His bland, Oriental face was wreathed in smiles, and he capered about like a monkey on an organ.

"Sing Loo velly glad to see you," he said. "Sing Loo, he

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no velly muchee goodee at plesent, plenty too muchee restee, and Massa Whittaker no allowee this Chinaman to searchee for you. Sing Loo, he lide llama to-day, and makee you muchee laughee!"

The boys shook their faithful friend and servant warmly by his uninjured hand, being alternately gay and serious as they bantered the Chinaman on his eccentricities, and consoled with him on his wound.

They then all had breakfast, during which the boys told the doctor of their wonderful night, and their sight of the gigantic beast being sucked down into the mud. Reggie wound up by making a somewhat crude but fairly accurate drawing of the animal as they had seen it when caught in the marshes, and the joint opinion of the doctor and Mr. Whittaker was that undoubtedly the lads had seen the giant sloth alive, the reddish-brown hair, produced from Reggie's pocket making further proof.

There was much discussion, too, about the empty biscuit-tin, which gave a certain clue that a European expedition-party had been in the neighbourhood.

"Did any of you at the camp here fire rifles last night, or penetrate to the marshes that lie over there?" asked Reggie, after they had talked some time.

"None of us went anywhere near the marshes," answered Mr. Whittaker. "In fact, we did not know that any existed near here. We could see no such things from our point of vantage. And no one fired a rifle."

"Then," put in Reggie eagerly, "it must have been the rival party whom we heard firing shortly before dawn this morning."

"Why," replied Mr. Whittaker, "I heard the sound of rifles myself, and thought it must be you lads defending yourselves against wild beasts or something."

"We fired at the giant sloth several times," admitted Jimmy. "And we were jolly well surprised when we heard the report of firearms coming from the marshes. It proves there must be a rival party."

"I think you're right, Jimmy," said Mr. Whittaker. "It's hard luck, but we're up against it this time. But we mustn't despair. If there's another giant sloth to be bagged, we'll get it. Should we stumble across the rival party, we must just make the best of things, and take it all like sportsmen. In one way, should we meet them, it'll be rather a good thing because our depleted stores, servants, and mules make me wonder how we shall fare in the near future. If we meet our rival friends, they may be able to equip us. The very best thing we can do is to push on with all speed, and see if we can't trace them. And who knows but that, in the meantime, we might run up against Mr. Sloth, and capture him alive."

"Capture him alive!" echoed Reggie and Jimmy, in open-mouthed astonishment.

"Why not?" inquired Mr. Whittaker. "Full-grown elephants are taken alive in pits and snares, and if we caught a giant sloth he would be, perhaps, a bit bigger than the largest known African species of bull-elephant."

"Lummy!" muttered Larry. "If we only had a film-operator among us! What a 'movie' such a thing would make!"

"Well," suggested the doctor, "how do we know that the rival party, whom we suppose we are up against, are not out for a big film company, to film their expedition, capture the giant sloth, and so produce the most wonderful 'movie' that I venture to say will ever have been seen?"

"What a stunning idea!" put in Jimmy.

"It's up to us to try and outwit them, anyway," put in Mr. Whittaker, "and the sooner we get a move on us the better. Let's strike camp at once!"

They were very soon all busy except Sing Loo, who looked very woe-begone because he felt he was in the way, and could do nothing.

"Never mind Sing Loo," said Reggie, with a grin. "If you can't move about and make yourself useful, you can look pleasant, as the photographer says."

"Or, failing that," suggested Larry, "you can try and think how you'll hypnotise the giant sloth, and send him to sleep by looking into his kind, gentle eyes."

"Fancy old Sing Loo trying to ride the giant sloth—attempting to break him in!" grinned Larry.

Sing Loo did not understand this form of humour.

"Oh, no, no, no!" he cried. "This Chinaman he no lidee giant slothee. That big beaste he pitchee Sing Loo lightee offee and sittee on him. Then this Chinaman become lumpee flat."

The boys were immensely tickled at Sing Loo's fright and terrible earnestness. It was evident that he quite took Larry's proposition seriously. But then Mr. Whittaker interposed, as there was no time for levity. Everyone worked

hard to collect the mules and baggage, and in an hour's time the adventurous cavalcade was moving on once more.

Mr. Whittaker had determined to make for the valley in which the boys had seen the giant sloth. It lay some three miles away by the route which they were compelled to take. It was hard going. The dense scrub and undergrowth had to be loped away by Toothy Jim, the doctor, and the boys, and very slow progress was made.

It took the party nearly eight hours to get to the foot of the valley. And it was here that Toothy Jim, the faithful and cunning Patagonian, nearly met with disaster.

He was chosen to go ahead in order to test the state of the marshy ground. Try where they might round the fringe of the marshes, they could find no firm ground over which the expedition could cross, save here and there patches of dried mud which seemed to offer some sort of a foothold.

It was while Toothy Jim was testing such a patch that he ventured out too far. Suddenly, without a moment's warning, they saw him disappear up to his knees in the slimy mush, which began just in front of him without the slightest evidence of its treacherous nature.

"Keep still!" shouted Mr. Whittaker, in his strange mixture of Patagonian patois and a kind of pidgin English. "Keep still!" For the native showed every sign of losing his head.

Reggie and Jimmy rushed forward to help their friend who had risked his life when rescuing them from the river.

"Come back—come back!" shouted the doctor. "Back, you boys, or you'll be sucked down too!"

Both lads came to a halt.

And now poor Toothy Jim was struggling violently, sinking deeper, ever deeper into the treacherous ooze.

Reggie tried to stretch out his rifle to Toothy Jim, but it missed his reach by about half an inch.

"If you'd only keep still and not plunge about!" roared Mr. Whittaker to Toothy Jim, in half Patagonian and half English.

Suddenly Jimmy was seized with an inspiration.

He levelled his rifle at Toothy Jim's head, and, imitating Mr. Whittaker's patois, said:

"If you don't keep still, I'll fire!"

That sobered the native, and he ceased his struggles.

By this time he was up to his waist. Mr. Whittaker cried out "Bravo!" to Jimmy, and rushed to the mules on the brink of the marshes for a rope. In a trice a stout piece of cord was flung out to the boys, who in turn threw it out to Toothy Jim. He caught it, tied it round his waist, and then the boys pulled all together. At last, panting and gasping, Toothy Jim, with the horrid-smelling slime of ages clinging to his dusky-brown limbs, lay on firm ground.

He had suffered nothing more than a bad fright, and couldn't understand the great white boy—Jimmy—wanting to shoot him. It was difficult to make him understand that this prompt action of Jimmy's had probably saved his life, and that Jimmy would never really have shot him at all. But at last some faint understanding of the method came to his dull native brain, and he prostrated himself before Jimmy to show his lasting reverence and gratitude.

He was soon himself again, and the little party moved on: but they had to skirt the marshes by making a wide detour, which added an extra four miles to their journey.

The Rival Party.

On the other side of the swamp was a dense forest. By climbing a high tree Reggie was unable to see the end of it. Apparently this mighty primeval wood stretched away into almost endless infinity.

But what the party did find, after they had penetrated through the trees and undergrowth for a little way, made them cry out in astonishment. They came across traces of an encampment. There were the ashes from a wood fire; pieces of wood lay about. There were several small boxes of discarded tins bearing the name of a famous London firm which supplied expeditions with airtight cases. There were also many traces of the spoor of mules and horses and goats, and a few empty cartridges were picked up.

"The rival expedition!" gasped Mr. Whittaker. "And, by Jove," he added, stirring up the embers of the fire with his hand, "they're hot! The expedition can't have left here long."

"Why," said Reggie, "they must surely have been here last night! That would account for the guns. But we saw no glow from the fire."

"Put out by the rain," commented Jimmy.

"Exactly," murmured Mr. Whittaker. "Well, boys, we're up against 'em now. It's a case of who's there first."

"I bet we'll be!" exclaimed Larry.

(Continued on page iii of cover.)

INTO THE UNKNOWN!

(Continued from page 20.)

"That's the right spirit!" said the doctor. "And, by Jove, we will be there first, Whittaker!" he cried to his chief. "I bet you a hundred-pound note we capture the giant sloth first!"

"I won't bet against you," returned Mr. Whittaker, "but I'll give you every bone in its body if we do capture one, to play about with and send to the various museums all over the world."

"Pickle it in a jar if we don't take it alive!" laughed Larry.

After discussing the situation for a while, Mr. Whittaker agreed that it would be interesting to investigate that part of the marsh into which the boys fancied they saw the giant sloth disappear in the mud. But it was a hopeless quest. In the first place, the whole district looked so different in broad daylight that it was impossible to identify or locate the spot. After an hour or so they gave it up, and determined to push on.

They followed the trail of the rival party. It could easily be distinguished by the brambles and undergrowth that had been hacked away, and the traces of animals, such as mules and goats and horses, that they found.

But what made the party more wildly excited than anything else was the imprints of some huge, claw-like foot-marks which they came across in the jungle. High branches had been torn off from the trees, and here and there, clinging to the undergrowth and higher-growing brambles, were thick clumps of reddish-brown hair—the same as Reggie had found on the previous day.

Presently Toothy Jim, who, as usual, was ahead, came running back to Mr. Whittaker. His face expressed disappointment.

"White men," he said, in his weird lingo, "over there!" And he pointed ahead through the thick trees.

They had come upon the rival party.

Motioning the rest to follow him, Mr. Whittaker advanced to the spot indicated by Toothy Jim. Suddenly he came to a gap, through which he peered into a small clearing. And there lay the whole of the rival expedition before his eyes—mules, llamas, baggage, natives; but what was best of all, the sight of two sturdy white men.

Mr. Whittaker crept through the clearing, followed by the others, gave a shout of welcome, and ran forward.

A surprised answering shout, full of joyful reciprocation, came from the Britisher, and both advanced at a run.

"By Jove!" they exclaimed, wringing Mr. Whittaker's hand. "Who'd have thought of meeting you?"

Then everyone laughed, and after the preliminaries of introductions all round had taken place, the rival parties, who knew nothing of each other, began to exchange experiences and tell each other what they had undergone.

"So you're the Whittaker we've heard about, who's out to capture the giant sloth?" said the elder of the two strangers.

"You may have heard my name mentioned," returned the leader, with modesty.

"Heard of it!" echoed Frank Horrold, the elder of the two, who was trying to out-rival Mr. Whittaker's party. "I should think that no explorer is unfamiliar with your name!"

"And I've heard of you, too, Mr. Horrold," said Mr. Whittaker. "You've done big things in Brazil and South America. But, Great Scott, man, we little thought we were up against a rival party till last night, when Reggie, here—he patted the boy on the shoulder—"discovered one of your discarded biscuit-tins. I thought it possible we might have someone up against us, as I had heard rumours of a possible rivalry just before we started, but I little thought it would be the famous Brazilian explorer. Well, of course, you know we're out to bag the giant sloth—alive, if we can."

"So are we," replied the two men quietly.

For a moment the two expedition leaders looked at one another. If there was a pang of disappointment felt by each, neither showed it. Each leader accepted the situation like the thorough sportsman he was.

"We're out to bag the brute alive, too," went on Horrold.

"My friend, here," he continued, "represents a big London film company, and he's going to get a 'movie' of it if he can."

"I guess I'll make a gigantic effort to bag that daisy of a sloth," was the reply, "and as sure as my name's Gilead P. Cates, I reckon I've got a fly sportsman up against me! But I guess, Mr. Whittaker, I'd like to shake your hand again!"

The two men gripped cordially, and then Toothy Jim appeared, and very soon both parties were inspecting one another's equipment and stores.

(Another splendid long instalment of this grand serial story next Wednesday. Order your copy of the GEM LIBRARY early.)

MONEYBAGS MINOR.

(Continued from page 17.)

able, that he was not going to sponge on Aubrey Racke! That was the charitable thought with which Racke made his way to Study No. 6.

Blake and Dig were outside the study, looking like funeral mutes. They nodded to Racke silently, and Blake opened the door.

Racke, with the same sneering smile on his lips, passed in. Arthur Augustus rose to meet him, looking very grave.

"Have you heard, dear boy?" he asked quietly.

"Oh, I've heard!"

"It is very kind of you to come to me undah the circumstances. I am afraid it will not be every chap who will offah me his friendship now!"

"I'm afraid not," said Racke, with a grin. He took a case from his pocket, and lighted a cigarette, enjoying the expression that came over D'Arcy's face. "You're in rather a bad box, D'Arcy. What have you asked me here for?"

"I undahstood that you had given up smokin', Wacke?"

"Your mistake!"

"I am afraid that I cannot be friendly with a smokin' boundah, Wacke!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you laughin' at, Wacke?"

"Your confounded cheek!" said Racke deliberately. "Do you think anybody will bother about your friendship now? If you could get the friendship of a chap like me, rolling in money, you'd be jolly lucky! I've been pretty well fed-up with your airs and graces for the past fortnight! If you think I'm goin' to stand the same kind of thing from a beggar, you're mistaken!"

"A—a beggar?"

"That's what you are, isn't it?" Racke laughed scoffingly. "Do you think I don't know why you've sent for me? War-profits come in useful when a chap's down on his luck—what! But don't you make any mistake! The war-profits won't come your way! So you're leaving St. Jim's? I give you my best wishes! I'm certainly not going to give you anything else! I believe you knew this was comin', and you had an eye on the cash all the time. Well, you've made out that I'm not good enough for you!"

"I nevah said so, Wacke."

"You thought it and I could see it plain enough! Well, now it's my turn! You're not good enough for me, and you can go and eat coke!"

And Racke swung away to the door.

The door was pushed wider open, and Blake and Herries and Digby and the Terrible Three came in. Racke gave them a sneering look.

"Don't handle him, dear boys," said Arthur Augustus quietly. "I have had a vewy painful shock!"

"You'll probably get some more of the same kind when the truth gets out!" sneered Racke. "You'll begin to see why fellows put up with your swank! They won't put up with any more of it; you can take that from me!"

"This wotten weeze has worked out the w'ong way," said Arthur Augustus. "Blake, I beg your pardon. You were wight about that disgustin' wottah, and I was w'ong. I have had a vewy painful surprise. I did not think there was such a wascal in the world outside Pwussia! Pway do not handle him!"

The juniors allowed Racke to pass.

That evening, when Arthur Augustus appeared in the Common-room, a sympathetic crowd learned that there was nothing whatever in Trimble's startling news. Racke heard it with feelings better imagined than described.

The juniors heard the whole story from Lowther, and yelled over it. Trimble's inquisitiveness and tattling had been made use of to "spoof" Racke in a way he could not suspect, and the bloated profitmonger had shown himself up in his true colours.

It did not make the St. Jim's fellows think much worse of Racke than they did already. That was scarcely possible. They agreed that young War-profits was a worthy son of old War-profits. And when Racke made a hopeless attempt to set himself right with the Honourable Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the conversation was very brief, and Racke retired from it with a swollen nose. Whereat Study No. 6 rejoiced. For Moneybags Minor wasn't worth a pinch of salt!

THE END.

(Another splendid complete story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. J. m's next Wednesday.)

A Cash Prize for Every Contributor to this Page.



CHEST SO!

"Daddy, was Robinson Crusoe an acrobat?" asked a small boy one day.

"I don't know, my lad," replied his father. "Why?"

"Well, it says here," answered his son, "that after he had done his day's work he sat down on his chest!"—Sent in by E. Wright, Wigan.

THE BITER BIT.

As my wife and I, at the window one day,
Stood watching a man and a monkey,
A cart came by with a broth of a boy,
Who was driving a stout little donkey.

To my wife I then spoke, by way of a joke:

"There's a relation of yours in that carriage";

To which she replied, as the donkey she spied:

"Ah, yes; a relation by marriage!"

—Sent in by R. Brewster, Hull.

PAT AGAIN.

Pat, who had an appointment with Mike, was surprised, on arriving at the arranged meeting-place, to find Mike there first.

"Sure, Mike," he said genially, "it's meself that's surprised at ye. I'm glad to see ye first at last, because, begorra, ye were always behind before, but I see ye've taken to being early of late!"—Sent in by Mrs. J. Pound, Essex.

JUST PRIDE.

Sandy Macpherson was engaged upon building a small cottage, and, after the manner of bricklayers, he worked from the inside. He was making good progress when dinner-time arrived; also his small son with the mid-day meal. With honest pride in his eye, Sandy looked over the wall and said:

"Hoo d'ye think I'm getting on, Jackie?"

"Famous, father," replied the boy; "but how d'ye get out? You've forgotten the door!"

One glance round showed Sandy that his son was right.

"Man, Jackie," said he, "you've got a grand head on ye. Ye'll be an architect, as sure as ye father's a builder!"

—Sent in by H. McCumskay, Edinburgh.

REMARKABLE!

Jones, who was staying at a hotel for a few days, was about to put on his boots one morning, when he discovered that the pair which had been placed outside his door were odd.

Addressing the servant, he said: "Look here, Boots, you've given me only one of my own boots, and one of somebody else's!"

"Well, now, that's a funny thing," replied the man.

"Would you believe it? That's the second time that's happened this morning!"

—Sent in by A. Aspinall, Liverpool.

FOREWARNED.

"Mamma, what would you do if that big vase in the parlour should get broken?" said Tommy.

"I should thrash whoever did it," said Mrs. Banks, gazing seriously at her little son.

"Well, then, you'd better begin to get your muscle up," said Tommy gleefully, "because father's broken it!"—Sent in by R. Milburn, Liscard.

BUY, BUY, BUY!

Late on Saturday night a butcher was making desperate efforts to sell out his stock before closing-time. Standing before his shop door, he was yelling at the top of his voice:

"Now then, ladies and gentlemen, fine Canterbury lamb! Wherever you go you can't get better!"

"No," remarked a man outside. "I had some last week, and I'm not better yet!"—Sent in by J. Wesley, Derby.

CATCHING.

Great was the excitement in the village when word came that Mike had won the V.C. The vicar at once hurried off to tell the good tidings to Mike's aged grandmother, and congratulate her.

"Got the V.C., has he?" said the good old lady. "Well, I hope he won't be as bad with it as he was with the measles. Our Mike was always like that. If there was anything going about, he was sure to catch it!"—Sent in by Miss Fawcett, Cleckheaton.

WATCHFUL.

"Mother," inquired Dolly, "are sailors very small?"

"No, my dear. Why?" replied the mother.

"Because I read the other day that a sailor was punished for going to sleep in his watch," answered the little girl.—Sent in by C. Rourke, Ashton-under-Lyne.

KEEP OFF THE GRASS!

He bought a complete golfing outfit, and spent several hours dressing himself for the part. Then he hid himself to the links, and engaged a caddy to carry his expensive set of clubs. But he couldn't play golf. He endeavoured vainly to hit the ball, but could only succeed in raising huge pieces of turf, which the caddy sternly told him had to be replaced. After the twelfth attempt he made a last desperate slash, with still more disastrous results.

Holding up a large square of turf, he looked appealingly at the caddy, and said:

"What shall I do with this?"

"I dunno, sir," replied the caddy, in disgust; "unless you take it home and practise on it!"—Sent in by M. A. Mail, Shetland.

VERY DOGGIE!

Young Man: "I want one of those dogs about so high, and about so long. A sort of greyhound, you know; but it isn't quite, because its tail is shorter, and its head bigger, and the legs aren't so long, and the body's thinner. Do you keep that sort?"

Dealer: "No, sir, I don't; I drown 'em!"—Sent in by H. Faraday, Salford.

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