

D'ARCY'S DEAL!

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



A RARE MIX-UP!

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

D'ARCY'S DEAL!

By
**Martin
Clifford.**

CHAPTER 1.

A Pony for Sale!

"O H, come along Gussy, you chump!"

It was Jack Blake, of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, who spoke those words, and they were addressed to the Hon. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Gussy stood irresolute, one hand in pocket. His fingers touched a purse, and within that purse reposed three ten-pound notes and three fivers.

"E's a real nobby one, that's what 'e is! Come to your whistle, like any dorg, 'e will. Eat outer your 'aud, 'e will. Playful as a blessed lamb, an' 'armless as a new-born baby. Is it a deal, young gent?"

The animal thus belauded was a really handsome and well-shaped pony.

The person who spoke of the pony in such enthusiastic terms was neither handsome nor well-shaped.

Blake and Herries and Digby, all thought that he looked a wrong 'un. Gussy, whose judgments were usually more charitable than those of his chums, really did not think much about it.

It was the pony, not the seller, that claimed Gussy's interest.

The swell of the Fourth had money to burn.

An old friend of the family, dying lately, had left him £50 as a slight token of esteem.

The legacy was very like the proverbial taking of coals to Newcastle, for the Eastwood estates were large, and though Gussy, was not the heir, there was little reason to suppose that he would ever be short of cash.

As a rule, he had far more pocket-money than most fellows at St. Jim's.

Of late, supplies had been less lavish than he had been used to. The upper classes had had to dip their hands into their pockets pretty deeply to help pay for the war, and Lord Eastwood had made it quite clear to his sons at school that they must share in the necessary economy.

But he had raised no objection to Arthur Augustus' having this legacy paid over to him at once. To Lord Eastwood, doubtless, it did not seem a big sum, though most of Gussy's chums would have looked upon it as wealth beyond the dreams of avarice.

Money lasted out better in war-time. Gussy had discovered. Not only did the food restrictions hinder one from spending much in grub, but the doctrine of "noblesse oblige" worked yet farther and yet more effectively in the same direction.

Greedy fellows, like Trimble of the Fourth, outsiders, like Racko of the Shell and Cutts of the Fifth and Knox of the Sixth, might dodge the food regulations.

But it was beneath the dignity of a D'Arcy even to think of doing such a thing.

So it was that in a whole week Gussy had got rid of no more than five pounds out of the fifty

And now he was subjected to a very severe temptation.

He had been a rider from childhood, and he knew something about horseflesh, and he saw that this pony was really a bargain at the price asked for it.

Blake saw that, too. It did not make Gussy suspicious, but it did stir some suspicion in the shrewd Yorkshire mind of Jack Blake.

"Oh, don't be an ass, Gustavus!" he said now. "I'll admit he's a ripping pony. I wouldn't mind having him myself, come to that. If it were possible, that is. But it ain't, and you jolly well know it ain't!"

"You can't keep a pony here," said Herries. "There would be no end of a row if you were copped trying it on."

"Oh, wing off, both of you! I refuse to be chawatevised as an ass, Blake. An' I wolly do not perceive the absolute impossibility of keepin' a pony here, Hewies."

"Well, there ain't room in No. 6 for it, anyway," said Digby.

"No, Dig! With three donkeys already in the studay—"

"And you can't keep it in your desk, you know."

"You may not be awash of the difference between a black pony and a white war, Digby, but I assure you that I am in no dangab of confusin' the matchab of the animals," replied Arthur Augustus, with sarcasm that ought to have been quite crushing.

But somehow it failed to crush Digby.

"It is an idiotic notion," Blake said. "As if there weren't plenty of horses for you to ride in the stables at Eastwood House!"

"Yaas, deah boy; but I have nothin' to wide heah, you see."

The man who held the black pony's bridle was growing impatient, and showed it plainly.

Blake fancied he might have his own reasons for being in a hurry. But it was hardly possible to tell Gussy that with the fellow listening.

"Nah, then, young gent! Are you a-goin' to be talked over by them three kids, as don't know hossflesh from bull-beef, or are you a-going to trust to your own ripe judgement an' experience? You knows a hoss from a calfphant, if they don't. An' it ain't no concern of theirs. If you've a mind for the pony, an' the dibs to pay for the pony, what right 'ave they to talk you outer buyin' the pony—hay? Tain't fair to me, nor yet tain't fair to you!"

"I have the money, my man," said Gussy, with dignity. "But if I buy the pony it will be on my own considered judgment, an' not in the vewy least because you wish me to buy him."

"That's all right, me lord! On'y, seein' as you've took sich a fancy to him, it seems a pity as you shouldn't make a deal with me. Tain't as I want to part with him, neither. 'E's sich a rare knowin' little hoss, that I feel like as if he was my own brother to me."

"They ain't much alike to look at," remarked Digby to Blake. "The pony looks all right."

"He must be a rare bag of tricks if he knows enough to be an own brother to that merchant!" growled Blake, surveying the would-be seller with pronounced disfavour.

The pony really was a beauty—black, without a white hair on him. Just now he looked rather less glossy than he should have done; but a little grooming would put that right.

The man who had him in charge, and professed ownership of him, was an individual with a dark, low, cunning face. Most of his teeth were more broken stumps, and only two of the whole ones left met one another.

Between these two teeth he held a straw, and he talked in a curious, whistling way through the others without disturbing the straw.

But he was used to horses, it was evident, and the pony was on terms of friendship with him.

"A'most like a brother to me," he said. "Look ere!"

He took a lump of sugar out of his pocket, and let it rest in the palm of his right hand.

"No right to feed sugar to ponies in war-time," said Herries aside.

"It don't matter a lot. No one would want sugar that had been in that merchant's pocket," answered Blake.

"Not even Baggy," Digby said, grinning.

The fellow approached his hand to the pony's nose. The velvet nostrils quivered, and the pony gave a little whinny of pleasure, but did not take the lump.

"Nice bit o' sugar, ain't it, Bonny Lad?"

Bonny Lad whinnied again.

"Like that there bit o' sugar, wouldn't you now, Bonny Lad?"

Bonny Lad said "Yes" as plainly as a "Well, it's yours!"

The sugar disappeared at once.

"He knows what you say," said Blake, interested, in spite of his resolve to hold aloof.

"Ah, I should think 'e do! But what do you know about hosses? Now, you'd understand, young gu'nor, as it took me a bit o' time to teach 'im them nice manners?"

It was to D'Arcy he appealed. The swell of the Fourth wondered that this fellow should be capable of teaching nice manners to an animal, when his own lack of them was so plentiful and plain. But the man was right.

"I should wathah think it did!" agreed Arthur Augustus, fondling Bonny Lad's nose.

"E's fair took to you, young gu'nor."

"I wolly believe you are wight."

"Oh, come along, Gustavus!" growled Blake.

The pony whinnied.

"Do kin on!" Blake said. "Another five minutes, and you'll be a goner. You'll be parted from your cof, and saddled with a pony that you won't know what to do with."

"You seem to be getting fidgettily

mixed, Blake! It would be the pony that would be saddled, not me."

"Well, there's no law against saddling asses," said Digby.

"I wish there was a law that they should be muzzled, Digby, an' then pewpaws we should not hear so much frightful wot!"

"We shouldn't," agreed Blake. "Buy a muzzle instead of a pony, Gustavus. We'll fix it for you!"

"And it will come cheaper," added Herries.

"And no one will mind," said Digby. "In fact, everybody will be pleased," Blake said.

Arthur Augustus turned his back upon them in scorn.

"Try 'im with a lump," suggested the man.

D'Arcy took the lump offered rather gingerly. It did not seem to him at all likely that it had improved by its sojourn in the fellow's pocket.

But Bonny Lad seized it at once, without any formality of spoken permission.

"Ah, that's accuse 'e don't properly know you yet! Will you git on 'is back an' ride 'im a 'undred yards or so down the road, an' don't on no account what-somever let 'im come back when I whistles?"

It was a challenge to Gussy's horse-manship, and he could not resist rising to the bait.

He mounted. His chums made no protest. They were curious to see what would happen. And perhaps they had a hope that the pony might do something which would choke Gussy off the mad notion of buying him.

"I feel dreadfully disreputable in twosahs!" said the swell of the Fourth.

He meant, of course, that he ought to have been wearing riding breeches.

"Chump! You'd look a heap more disreputable without them!" said Herries.

Arthur Augustus darted a withering glance at him, then clicked to Bonny Lad, and gave the reins a little shake.

The pony cantered off.

When he had gone about a hundred yards a shrill whistle rang out.

He stopped dead.

Blake might not have been thrown by that sudden stoppage; but either Digby or Herries would have been, and they admitted it candidly. But then they had long known that Gussy was a horse-man, and they made no pretensions to rivaling him there.

"Got on, Bonny Lad!" said D'Arcy encouragingly.

Bonny Lad was as one who hears not, neither regards.

"Now, then, boy! Gee-up! Don't be widdle!"

Apparently Bonny Lad did not mind being "widdle," but had the strongest of objections to going-up.

The whistle sounded once more, and, for all that D'Arcy could do, the pony wheeled round and galloped back.

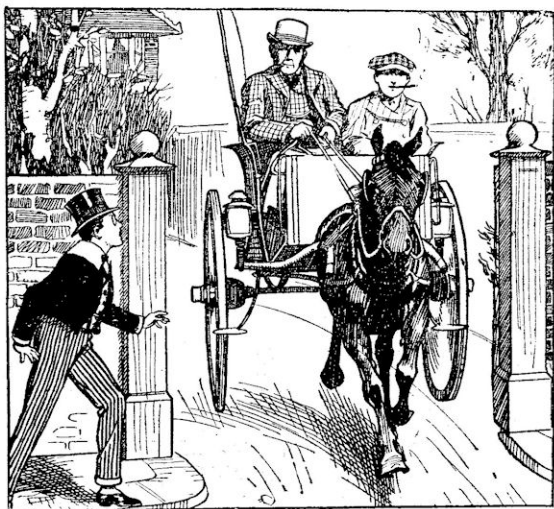
Gussy's topper blew off. His trousers rucked up. He felt the absurdity of his position keenly. He who had mastered a real buck-jumper before now, to be treated thus by a mere pony!

But Bonny Lad had his way with him.

"Wodger think o' that, hay, young guv'nor?" asked the horse-dealer.

He said he was a horse-dealer, and he looked like a gipsy, and gipsies often do deal in horses. But, as Blake knew, it is advisable to look pretty closely into the question of ownership when buying from this type of horse-dealer!

The merchant with the scattered set of teeth gave a chuckle as he fondled Bonny Lad's nose. The pony sidled up to him and whinnied. D'Arcy jumped off and adjusted his tie.



Arthur Augustus is Amazed!
(See Chapter 7.)

CHAPTER 2.

A Pony Bought!

"W EALLY, I hardly know what to say!" said Arthur Augustus. "He is your pony, of course—"

"Question!" murmured Blake into the ear of Herries.

"An' he is doin' quite wight to come to your call. But if he belonged to me, I should natuwallly wish him to obey my call!"

"So 'e would, love yer! You're a-thinkin' as it might be a bit okkard if I was to whistle of 'im back arter the dibs 'ad passed? Got yer there, young guv'nor!"

"Indeed, no!" said D'Arcy. "Of course, as a honest man—"

"That's me—a honest man, I am!"

"Non est when the police inquire for him, he means," said Blake.

But, of course, the honest man was not allowed to hear that.

"Ask anybody who knows Simon Gloop if 'e ain't 'onest, an' call 'im a liar if 'e says contrariwise!"

"Besides," said Herries.

"I moves on ter-morrer, an' it's like to be a year or more afore these parts see me again!"

That, if true, certainly seemed a better guarantee than the honesty he proclaimed.

"Weally, deah boys, I scawce know what to do!" said Gussy.

"Then don't do it, chump! Kim on!"

"But dove, though, I am quite in love with this wippin' pony!"

"Oh, get a move on you, fathead!" said Digby, catching him by the arm.

"Welease me, Digby! I must beg of you to be less wude-an' vuff! He is so cute, you know, Blake, an' he cawties me so well!"

"We're going," was Blake's reply.

"Wight-ho! There is weally no necessity for you to stay if you do not wish to!"

But still they stayed. They were reluctant to leave Arthur Augustus alone to the blandishments of Mr. Gloop.

"I'll larn you the whistle, young guv'nor!" said the wily Simon.

He whistled again. Bonny Lad pricked his ears in surprise. He was not used to hearing the whistle when close at hand.

"It's all right, old boy! Now you try it, young guv'nor!"

D'Arcy's first attempt made no impression upon the ears of Bonny Lad; but at the second they went up again, and Gussy felt, with a glow of satisfaction, that he had got it.

Every minute was making it more difficult for him to go away without the pony.

"You've got it, young guv'nor! Lumme if you ain't a reel hoss-master! Now git alonger the road a bit, an' then whistle 'im!"

The four moved off together. Blake seized the chance to get in a word of warning.

"That's a wrong 'un!" he said. "I don't believe the pony's his to sell, Gustavus!"

"Weally, Blake, it is wathah too bad of you to take away the chawctah of a honest man in that way, I considah! His face is not an attractive one, I want you, but to me it has the look of wugged honesty!"

"Rugged rats!" snorted Herries.

Gussy whistled. Bonny Lad started for him at once.

"I suppose you didn't see that rugged rotter give him a prod in the ribs, Gustavus?" said Blake.

"Wot, Blake!" snapped Arthur Augustus. "He simplay could not have moved for that! I have forgotten more about horses than you evah knew, let me tell you! He came because he knew the call, didn't you, me beauty?"

Gussy cussed the pony, and Bonny Lad seemed to like it.

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"He's a goner now!" groaned Blake. "That's done the giddy trick! My hat, what a mad notion it is, even for our tame lunatic!"

"And won't there just be a jolly row about it?" replied Digby.

But they knew that further argument would only make Gussy angry. Not that they minded making him angry; but it was certain that the angrier he got the more obstinate he would become. The deal was struck.

Mr. Simon Gloop became the wealthier by twenty pounds, and Arthur Augustus became the owner of Bonny Lad. Saddle and bridle were thrown in as discount. They did not represent any considerable sum, for they were old and worn.

The deal had taken place about half a mile out of Rylecombe, on the Westwood Road.

Mr. Gloop, having pocketed the notes, announced himself as due to Westwood within a space of time defined by him as "arf a jilly," and moved off at a good round pace.

Jack Blake's suspicions were not allayed by his haste.

"My hat, Gustavus, of all the cross idiots I ever knew—"

"If you do not withdraw that expression—"

"Rats! You are! Dig knows it, and so does Herries!"

"Oh, rather!" said Digby, with conviction.

"The outside edge in lunatics!" Herries said.

"Suppose that pony's been stolen?"

"I woally fail to see, Blake, why I should suppose anything so utterly widic!"

"Wouldn't mind betting Gloop never came by it on the straight!" Digby said.

"But the cweatchah knows him, an' he has taught it twicks that must have taken quite a long time!"

Well, there's something in that, Gustavus," Blake admitted.

"But not much," said Digby.

"Nothing at all!" snapped Herries. "Where do you come in, you chump, when the owner waites along, claims it, and proves his claim?"

"Gloop's got your giddy tin, and Gloop's done a bunk," added Dig.

And there you'd be left like Lord Chin's grandmother, or whoever it was, lamenting!" Blake finished up.

"As a match of fact, it was Lord Ullin himself who lamented, I believe, Blake; an' I entially fail to see the application of the quotation to my case!" answered D'Arcy frigidly.

Now that Arthur Augustus had bought an' paid for the pony, he began to see some of the very real difficulties in his way.

But his chums were raising difficulties that he refused to take into account. He was not going to imagine Simon Gloop dishonest just because Blake and Herries and Digby did not like the man's face.

"Well, you'll see it later on," Blake said.

"Do you suppose, then, that ewery horse-dealer steals his goods?"

"I suppose that sort does, whenever he gets a chance."

"Jolly sure of it!" Dig said.

Arthur Augustus gazed after the retreating figure of Mr. Gloop. But that figure was already a mere dirty speck on the Westwood road. Now that the man had gone, Gussy no longer felt so sure of his rugged honesty.

He did not regard the chance of a claimant for Bonny Lad turning up as anything but a remote one.

But even as a remote chance it was distinctly unpleasant in prospect.

There would most certainly be trouble.

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at St. Jim's if anything of the sort happened.

And there might well be trouble without. The school authorities assuredly would not view with favour an attempt on the part of any boy, junior or senior, to keep a horse in the neighbourhood.

But one could board out a dog; and, of course, one could put a pony out at livery.

Arthur Augustus had remembered that all along. He did not forget it now. Somehow the fact comforted him rather less than it had done earlier.

"Your best dodge," said Blake, "is to take him straight to the station."

"Wubbish! They are not in the very least likely to find quawtals for him at the station, Blake! Try to be sensible."

"I wasn't talking about quarters, ass! I meant a horse-box, ass!" To send him home, idiot! Of course, it's war-time, chump, and a horse-box may not be available for weeks and weeks, fathead!

But it's worth trying, anyway."

"I refuse to be addressed in that grossly abusive mannah, Blake—"

"Oh, come off it, you prize madman! We couldn't stop you flinging your cash away, but—"

"We ought to have done, though," said Herries. "We could have held the chump down, and gone through his giddy pockets."

"Such asses never ought to be allowed more than half-a-crown at a time. It would be much better for them if their kind uncles took care of it," agreed Digby.

"Pway deist! Blake, I don't want the pony at home. I want him heah."

"Right-ho!" said Blake, becoming resigned on a sudden. "You've done it now, and I suppose you'll drag us into the giddy mess with you. But that's nothing new; and I don't say we are any the less dragged into one or two. Come off your giddy ear, Gustavus, and we'll think what's best to be did. He certainly is a tip-top pony, and well worth the price—if it had only really bought him!"

CHAPTER 3.

Herries as Horseman!

"I MUST find someone in Rylecombe to put him up," said Gussy.

"They'll charge an axie whack for it," replied Dig doubtfully.

"Good gwacious, don't you suppose I know vewy well how much it costs to keep a horse, Digby?"

Arthur Augustus spoke in all honesty. He had had to do with horses practically all his life; and he thought there was very little about them he did not know.

But when he got down to details he discovered that this particular bit of knowledge was just one of those he had not got. He tried hard to think.

It would not be less than twenty pounds a year, he was sure. It would be less than a hundred, of course. The figure must come somewhere in that eighty pounds. But knowing that did not help very much.

"But what good's he going to be to you?" persisted Herries. "If you ride him about you'll have a master or a perfect dropping down on you like a thousand of bricks before you can say 'Jack Robinson!'"

"I should not say 'Jack Robinson,'" Herries—

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"I should not say 'Jack Robinson,'" Herries—

to think of it, they're bound to leave a few things out of the rules!"

"A pony's altogether a different thing from—"

"A waggon-load of monkeys—quite right, Gustavus! And you're altogether a different thing from a sensible chap. But the deed's done now, and it's not much use telling you how many kinds of silly asses you happen to be. Kim on!"

"Where to?" demanded Digby. "We can't take the gee-gee to the school, you know, Blake."

"I do know. I've been trying to make that clear, even to the intelligence—if any—of Gussy. We've got to find a six-roomed suite and a silver dinner-set for this four-legged merchant, I suppose, and pay a hundred or two on account. That will take us pretty well up to call-ovver, I shouldn't wonder."

Arthur Augustus sniffed. It was a relief to him that Blake should accept the situation; but he had small relish for his chum's pleasantries.

So he turned the conversation.

"Like a wide, Hewies?" he asked.

Herries hesitated—and was lost.

"I don't mind if I do, Gustavus," he replied.

"Jump up, then!"

Herries did not exactly jump up. His experience in this line had been small. But he mounted somehow.

The pony behaved himself in the most exemplary fashion. He paced along easily, and Herries quite began to fancy himself as a horseman.

Blake and Dig gave Herries a glance every now and then. Both wanted a turn. But Herries paid no heed to these silent hints.

"He woally walks wemarkably well," said Arthur Augustus.

"When I buy a pony it will be for something a bit livelier than walking," said Blake meaningly.

"Cats'-meat?" inquired Herries amiably.

"We could get you could get a cheaper one that way," said Digby. "I should prefer it myself. Twenty guid is a sinful whack to blue on a pony."

"The calling of a cats'-meat vendah is one to which I should considah you eminently suited, Digby!"

"I say, Gustavus, it won't hurt if I canter him a bit, will it?" asked Herries, now feeling quite at home in the saddle.

"Not at all, dear boy—prowided, that is, that you can maintain your equilibrium."

"Telk!" clicked Herries. "Gee-up, Bonny Lad!"

Bonny Lad broke into a trot, and from that into a canter.

Now a canter is by no means the easiest of paces for an unskilled rider. And Herries was certainly not a skilled one.

He did his best to like it. D'Arcy had looked as if he liked it when the pony cantered. And that in spite of the manner in which his trousers had rucked up, which must have been very disconcerting to the swell of St. Jim's.

But Herries thought there really was too much bump-bump-bump about a canter.

He was not afraid of falling off. He was not quite sure, indeed, that he would not prefer it. For if this went on much longer there would not be an inch of whole skin left on that portion of his anatomy to which the bump-bump-bump caused constant friction. The insides of his thighs were beginning to feel very painful.

He smiled with relief the sight of the first houses of the village.

Now he could get off without climbing down—in the metaphorical sense. In the literal sense, climbing down was what he wanted to do.

He pulled on the reins, and called "Whoa!"

Bonny Lad paid no heed—unless the increase of pace he made was to be considered an answer.

He was galloping now.

"Whoa, there!" cried a familiar voice ahead.

It was the voice of Tom Merry, captain of the Shell.

"Why, it's old Herries!" said Manners.

"Being run away with by a wild gee!" chorled Lowther.

"Whoa!" yelled Tom.

"Starboard, your port hellum!" shouted Lowther.

"Lemme be, you idiots!" roared Herries.

The Terrible Three were grinning. They thought the affair a joke.

But Herries considered that it had got beyond that.

He saw a dozen or so pigs ahead, and he scented trouble.

A flock of sheep would not have been so bad.

The sheep is not reckoned a specially brainy animal. Yet it is very seldom a sheep gets run over.

A flock will split to right and left, leaving a free passage.

But the sure thing about a drove of pigs is that each member of it will insist upon going his own obstinate way. And the way of a pig generally leads it into the wrong way!

Herries thrice his pride to the winds. He had no wish to take a header into live pork.

"Stop the brute!" he yelled.

Tom made a grab at the bridle. But Bonny Lad swerved, and Herries had a narrow squeak of being flung off sideways.

But Lowther grabbed on the other side, and Bonny Lad swerved again, and Herries was shaken back into position.

Then Manners made his shot. And Manners, having ditched, held on.

He claimed afterwards that he had stopped the pony. Perhaps he did.

But the yarn the rest told was that Bonny Lad stopped of his own accord at the precise instant when a small black pig ran between the legs of Manners, flooring him.

"Ow-ow!" howled Manners.

"Ow-ow!" roared Herries.

Whatever doubt there may have been in the case of Manners, there was no possible doubt in that of Herries.

No one who is getting off of his own free will gets off the way Herries did.

He shot clean over the pony's head, and landed all along the back of an old sow. The sow, with a very impolite grunt, checked him off.

One pig sniffed at his right ear, plainly considering its merits as an edible. Another scuttled over him.

Lowther came up to help him to his feet. Tom gave Manners a friendly hand.

"Hurt, old chap?" asked Tom.

"Oh, no!" replied Manners crossly.

"Is it likely?" The road was as soft as a feather-bed, of course! They knew it was coming, and got it ready for me—I don't think!"

"My hat! It would have been a bit more to the purpose if you'd known the pig was coming and got ready for him!"

"Have I got eyes in the back of my head, chump? If you'd really tried to stop that rotten pony—"

"I did try!"

"Oh, yes! Rather as if you didn't want to, though! I don't call that—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake. "How did you expect to stop him, Manners?"

"Well, you can't stop a pig!"

"Oh, dry up, Blake! Your rotten cackling—"

"Don't get ratty, old scout! Pity you

hadn't your camera with you. Great Scott! You would have liked a snapshot of yourself at the moment when piggy bolted through you!"

"Weally, Blake, though it is impos-

not to laugh, I considah—"

"Ring off, you funny idiots!"

"That ain't the usual way of getting off, Herries!" remarked Lowther blandly.

"I suppose it ain't for you to say what way I shall get off, is it, fathead?"

"Well, no! But—"

"If it hadn't been for that ass Manners—"

"Manners only tried to stop the fiery steed. He didn't ask you to do acrobatic tricks over its head."

"You Shell bounders are enough to make a saint wild! I only wish you'd been on the brute's back instead of me!"

"I share that wish!" said Lowther.

"Oh, I dare say you think—"

"I don't think, Herries! I know! Playing with pigs in the street is not quite my line. Too undignified. Still, as you are in a junior form—"

"Junior Form be jolly well hanged!"

"Quite a good notion, Herries! Some of them deserve it!"

Herries and Lowther seemed on the verge of quarrelling. But Blake staved off any danger of that.

"I say, you chaps, do you know who's gee that is?" he asked.

"How should we?" said Tom Merry.

"He's a nice pony. But I don't think I ever saw him before."

"He is the property of our Gustavus, hence ours. Our tame ass has been and gone and bought a—"

"Wild pony!" put in Lowther, eyeing Herries.

"But he wasn't ass enough to ride him!" said Tom, with twinkling eyes.

"He left that to Herries."

"Who gave the entertainment which—"

"Oh, wats, Lowthah! Wats, Tom Mewwy! Do you suppose I should have fought him without twyin' his paces first?"

"Going to have a stable partitioned off in No. 6, Gussy? Or are you going to ask Railton to let you have the use of Nobody's Study? I saw young Frayne with a rabbit-hutch yesterday; but if you got this chap inside I don't think you'd ever get him out again."

"Oh, wing off, Lowthah! I naturally recognise the fact that I must not expect to keep him at St. Jim's. Quarrels must be found for him heah in Wylcombe."

CHAPTER 4.

A Matter of Board and Lodging.

"AND where do you think of boarding him?" asked Tom.

"I think an inquiry at the post-office might lead to some result."

"Letter-box ain't big enough," said Lowther. "Is it, Dig?"

"Shouldn't be. I only know the size of the slot—not quite as big as your mouth. But, of course, there must be a way in behind."

"Bai Jove! What weally extraordinary asses you fellahs are! Does it not strike your cwasely idiotic minds that at the post-office they are likely to know of anyone who may take him in? There is no regular lively stable heah; and, of course, a pub is out of the question."

"Heah goes, anyway!"

And Arthur Augustus made a bolt for the shop in which post-office affairs at Rylcombe were transacted.

Digby was holding Bonny Lad.

"What mah, twy his paces, Dig!" said Lowther.

"No fear! He's in my charge, and I won't risk having him damaged!"

"Right-ho! Hope you'll get your twopenny, my lad!"

"What twopenny, chump?"

"Standard fee for your job. It ain't exactly the line that leads to getting rich quick. But I think it should be somewhere near your mark. It don't need brains, point number one. It—"

"Oh, shurrup! When you try to be funny you're too painful!"

D'Arcy emerged from the post-office.

"They know of no one whatever except at the pubs, an' that won't do at any twice," he said, looking worried.

"What's to be done, deah boys?"

"That's right! Sack it on to us!" growled Blake.

"Do you think you could smuggle him in in your pocket, Gussy?" asked Lowther.

"It's your funeral, Gustavus!" Tom Merry remarked.

A small crowd had collected. Out of the crowd a voice now spoke.

"D'ye want someone to look arter the little wot?"

"Well, not precisely that," replied Arthur Augustus. "It is not a gweem I need so much as a stable."

The owner of the voice stepped forward.

He was an undersized youth of seventeen or so, with something of the monkey about his face, and, as to the rest of him, distinctly horsey. He had a straw between his lips, and a very artful look in his beady eyes.

"I'm the man for your money, I reckon!" he said.

That was not exactly what Gussy wanted. In his experience the man for his money had never been hard to find. As a rule, he had not even to be looked for.

"Can you tell me where I can high a stable?" asked the owner of St. Jim's.

"Bill Binko's all right! 'E knows all about 'osses. Bin a stableboy 'iself, 'e 'as," said another voice from the crowd.

"That's me! I'm Bill Binko!" said the man for Gussy's money, without as much as a blush of pleasure at this unsolicited testimonial.

The second voice omitted to add that Mr. William Binko, after a year or so in a bit of a running-stable, had been kicked out without a character. But, as the character he had taken with him could hardly have been his own—it had described him, among other things, as honest and hard-working—there was no particular reason why he should bring one away; and it certainly would not have paid him to bring away anything he was likely to get there!

But it is possible that the owner of the second voice did not know of this. Mr. William Binko was quite slim enough to know what to tell, and what to veil in reticence.

"Where is the stable?" inquired Arthur Augustus.

"I say, Gussy, I don't think that merchant's the right sort," said Tom Merry, aside.

"Oh, wing off! I must do something, an' you chaps are so howlously suspicious about everybody!"

"We don't mind you doing something, though I rather fancy you've done enough for one day in buying the blessed pony! But we don't like to see you done."

"Weally, do I look like a person who is so vewy easily done, Tom Mewwy?"

"I regret to say, Gustavus, that you do!"

"You come alonger me, an' I'll show you the stable," said Mr. William Binko encouragingly.

Jack Blake took a glance at his watch.

"They must not be late for call-over."

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and there was really very little time left. Not time enough to go hunting round for quarters for Bonny Lad.

"We shall have to let the lunatic have his way," Tommy said. "If the place don't suit he can shift the goat to-morrow."

Gussy had already made up his mind, in apparent ignorance of the necessity of satisfying his chums. He and Blinky and Dig and Bonny Lad were moving off.

The rest followed. The crowd seemed inclined to follow, also. But Blinky waved them back.

"Taint none of your business," he said loftily. "Jest you stay there, an' don't you come nosin' round where you ain't wanted!"

"Lumme, Bill, you don't suppose we're a-goin' to let on to the young swell as you're a-doin' of, imdown, do you?" demanded the voice which had given the unsolicited testimonial.

That sounded rather ominous. But Gussy's chums were more or less resigned. It seemed to them inevitable that in such a deal Gussy would be done down to a greater or less extent.

All they could do was to break the shock of the fall, so to speak—in other words, to see that he was swindled as little as might be.

They took counsel together.

"How much a week can you keep a pony on?" asked Manners.

"About five bob, I should think," suggested Herries.

"Rate! Why don't you say five quid?" said Loutlier.

"But that ain't right. I know people who keep ponies, and I'm jolly sure they can't afford all that!"

Somewhere between five bob and five quid would be about the figure," Tom said sagely.

"Hut, what Blinky asks," Jack Blake suggested.

"I bet that will leave him a good profit, too," Manners said.

"Well, he expects to get a profit. He isn't doing it for his health, I suppose! But he's a shark, if ever I saw one!"

Meanwhile Gussy was pursuing his inquiries.

"Who does the stable belong to, Blinky?" he said.

"An'—lastways, me an' my brother Bert."

"He doesn't do that. He's a man—woddier think?"

"Does not do what, Blinky?"

"Pray, you ei—I mean, yuv'nor!"

"I intended to ask what is his trade or profession?"

"Oh, Well, he calls hisself a commission-agent."

That was as near the bulseye as Mr. William Blinky was at all likely to get, being, indeed, an inner. For Mr. Bert Blinky was a bookmaker of sorts, and many bookmakers do call themselves commission agents.

The Blinky Brothers were recent comers to Rykebone, but already they were on terms of the friendliest with such local notabilities as the landlord of the Green Man, Lodgey, his hanger-on, and Mr. Weeks.

If Gussy had known this—but, of course, Gussy didn't!

And there really was no danger of contact with the Green Man gang for him. When Messrs. Blinky "got on to anything" they wanted it for themselves. They did not call in Jolliffe & Co. to help them in plucking a pigeon.

"Do you make a practise of takin' in horses at livevry?" asked Arthur Augustus.

"We ain't long 'ore, so we ain't made THE GEM LIBRARY—No. 497.

a start yet. But that's our proper game. I want something to do with me time, you know."

In the one situation Mr. William Blinky had held—by the skin of his teeth while he held it—his desire for something to do had never been at all marked. Moreover, all the games of Blinky Brothers were improper games.

The head-lad at the training-stables had said that Blinky junior might turn out all right if he gave up lying and eating, and being dirty, and turning sick at the sight of a job of work. But no one had ever been found to express even so modest a hope concerning Blinky senior; and as that gentleman had been able to prove himself over military age, it hardly seemed probable that a turning-point in his career was still in the future.

To short, Messrs. Herbert & William Blinky, though sons of different mothers, were such complete wrong 'uns that one could not avoid the inference that their joint father must have been a very complete wrong 'un indeed.

"An' about how much will it cost to keep him at your place?"

"Well, I shall 'ave to go inter that with Bert afore I say for certain."

"He's only a pony, you know, an', naturally he does not eat as much as a horse."

"Ere, don't you go believin' no such silly foolishness as that!" said Mr. William Blinky, in some alarm. "I've 'ad above a bit of experience, an' I should say as a pony eats 'arf as much again as most 'orses. Like a robin, you seen a robin eat? Well, then."

Gussy looked a trifle taken aback. But he brightened up again as he reflected that he did not know how much a horse ate; and the problem, after all, was only the value of x—representing a horse's appetite—plus $\frac{1}{2}$ —representing the addition to be made for a pony, or a robin—

as was the case. Anyway, he had a fair amount of cash left. And it all depended upon the value of x, which he did not know, so where was the use of worrying?

"Is your brotther interestwed in horses, Blinky?" he asked.

"You might say as he ain't interested in nothink else."

"Then I feel suah you will both tweek Bonny Lad well."

"Is that his moniker? Where'd you get 'im?"

"I have just bought him from a man named Gloop—Simeon—no, Simon Gloop. Do you happen to know him?"

"Not from Adam," replied Mr. William Blinky. And he spat, which did not improve Gussy's opinion of him.

That opinion would have been lower still if the swell of the Fourth had known that Blinky Brothers had been offered Bonny Lad at a price well under what he had paid, but, knowing Mr. Gloop too well, had twigged that there was a hole somewhere in the proposed bargain.

"This is where we 'ang out," said Blinky, a minute or two later.

CHAPTER 5.

The Bargain Strike.

IT was a small house standing alone not far from the railway-station. The garden in front was a wilderness, and the yard behind a desert.

But the stable was all right, and clean, and that might have been expected. And the stable was all right, and clean, and that might have been expected.

"Ulo, Bert!" sang out Mr. William Blinky.

No answer came. But Tom Merry saw, through a back window, a red-faced man, with a heavy jaw, establishing contact with a quart pot, and it was easy guessing that this was the elder Blinky.

William, that of the plunger into the house. Tom saw him rush into the room

in which the heavy-jawed man and the quart pot were.

The two spoke together in rather a mysterious way for a few moments. Both grinned. The elder drew the back of his hand across his mouth, and arose. His broad back being turned, the younger took up the quart pot, but put it down again with a grimace.

Tom thought that it must indeed be true that hope springs eternal in the human breast, when the cunning-faced William entertained the idea that the heavy-jawed Herbert would be in the least likely to leave anything worth drinking in a pot of any denomination.

"Look here, Gussy," said Tom, "I don't want to butt in; but I do really think it would be as well if you stood down and let me—or Blake, if you prefer it—see this through. You're a dashed sight too easy-going, and I'm sure these men wants are sharks."

"Oh, weally, Tom Mewwy, don't be wicid! What do you know about horses, anyway?"

"Not much. Lots about asses, though. But don't tell us it was our giddy fault!"

Mr. William now appeared again, and introduced Mr. Herbert.

"This is me brotther," he said. "This 'ere's the young toff what's bought the pony, Bert."

"With a push of 'is interesting young friends—eh?" growled Mr. Herbert, in a deep and rumbling voice, that seemed to come from the lower depths of his chest.

It might almost have been imagined that like a resented the presence of D'Arcy's friends from a notion that they might be rather in the way of his dealing with D'Arcy as he wished to do.

But he was in haste to dispel any such idea, if it should have entered their heads—as it had.

"An' very glad to see you all, grats," he rumbled. "I'm Bert Blinky, I am; an' what I don't know about a 'orse, an' his knowledge. Nice pony, that, Yours, sir?"

"Yass," replied Arthur Augustus. "I gave twenty for him. Is he pretty good value, Mr. Blinky?"

The elder Blinky took careful stock of Bonny Lad—quite as if he had never seen him before.

He patted his quarters, felt his chest, passed his hands down his legs, looked at his teeth, and, in short, did all the things which the knowing in horse-flesh do when appraising a horse.

"Oh, 'e's worth that, an' another five or ten top of it—mebbe a tenner," he said.

"You're a judge, sir, that's what you are! I telly the bloke as tried to best you in anythink concernin' 'orses!"

Gussy beamed, and his chums felt more suspicious than ever.

"Now, about a puttin' of 'im up," went on Mr. Herbert. "If I could afford to do it free, gratis, for nothink—"

"Oh, weally, Mr. Blinky, I shouldn't dream of askin' you to do that, you know!"

"But I can't, not noways. This life's a denyin' of onself in the matter of generosity an' all them things continual. I feel it, because I've got a 'art of me own."

"Yass, Mr. Blinky, but—"

"We gotter 'ave in well, of course, on words, for to stint a first-class pony like that there, would you?"

"No, Mr. Blinky. But out—"

"Say no more, sir! Leave that little matter to yours truly!"

"But I mevelly wished to say—"

"Least said, sir—You knows the old hadage!"

"But couldn't be allowed—"

"Mr. Blinky has expressly indicated

his views as to the necessity of silence, Gussy," said Lowther blandly.

The elder Blinko looked upon Lowther without affection.

"I suppose as that's what you call a joke," he rumbled.

"I see no reason for classifying it," Monty answered.

"Ugh! You an' your jokes!"

"Oh, I see! 'Allowed'—'aloud'—'silence'—'not aloud.' Weally, it isn't half bad for you, Lowther! Mr. Blinko sees now, I am sure. But we must not give the pony oats, Mr. Blinko, because the Food Controllah

"Im! What's 'e know about 'orses? No more'n these 'ere. But that ain't no odds, sir. If you says 'no oats,' then 'no oats' it's gotter be, an' it ain't my fault if it costs you a bit more."

Gussy's chums did not see why it should cost more. Gussy himself evidently had not been prepared to hear that.

"The way to put everythink up," explained Mr. Blinko glibly. "I gotter pay pretty nigh the price of a mansion for that there stable, an' as for the garden—well, there!"

"But D'Arcy's got no use for the garden," said Blake, wondering how it was that Mr. William Blinko's ardent desire to do something with his time had not led to any spade and hoe work in that wilderness.

"Don't you shove your jore in!" rapped out Mr. William.

"Go easy, my lad, or you'll get hurt!" snapped Blake.

"You 'ut me? Lemme, I'd like to see you do it!"

"Oh, weally, Blake! You shouldn't

"I'm not going to put up with this fellow's cheek, Gussy."

"Bill, be ave!"

Mr. Bert Blinko winked as he said that. Blake did not see the wink, but Tom Merry did. And if taking Gussy by the arm and Bonny Lad by the bridle and walking them both out would have been of any use that Tom could perceive, he would have done it.

But Gussy could not have been got home thus, and it was quite out of the question to take Bonny Lad there.

"We're wathah in a hawwy, Mr. Blinko, you know," said Arthur Augustus mildly.

"Well, would two pun a week 'urt you?"

"My hat! That sounds steep!" gasped Herries.

Gussy felt sure that it was too much. He did not want to hurt the feelings of Blinko Brothers. But two pounds a week—over a hundred pounds a year—it was altogether too high!

"I—weally, I couldn't dream of payin' so much as that," he said, with what he imagined to be immense firmness.

"Everything in, sir! First-class stable, best of grub, an' no little brother to take 'im out an' exercise of 'im."

But it was plain that, in spite of his eloquence about all these advantages, Mr. Blinko was preparing to lower his terms.

No doubt he saw other chances of transferring D'Arcy's cash to his own pockets, besides the method of direct rooking.

"See 'ere, 'eggin' ain't in my line," he said, with a sudden burst of generosity. "An' I don't reely look to make a profit out of a young gent like you. Call it thirty bob, an' it's a do!"

That underbidding was the right word for the proposed price; but Gussy failed to see it. He stood pondering the matter.

"It will be rump-steak at that figure,

of course!" said Lowther. "We don't insist on a feather-bod for him; but we do think he should have his drop of something hot last thing at night, and his cup of tea first thing in the morning."

"Ah, you young gents, without no cares to worry you, you will 'ave your little jokes!" said Mr. Blinko affably. But he looked at Lowther as though he would like to eat him.

"I dunno as we could do it at a figure like that, not with no sort of justice to ourselves, Bert," objected Blinko junior.

"Ang justice to ourselves! It's the young gent as I'm thinkin' about. You're a grasper, young Bill!"

"All right! On'y don't you go a-sayin' later as I let you inter a bad bargain!"

This aside had its intended effect upon Gussy. He did not want to show himself greedy at the expense of Blinko Brothers.

"Weally, I scarcely know what to say," he remarked weakly. "Will you do it for twenty-eight?"

Tom and Blake saw winks interchanged between the two Blinkos.

But the senior member of the firm did not jump at the offer.

He stroked a very stubbly chin as he said:

"You're a bit 'ard on us, sir. You'll grow up one as takes care not to get 'old of the wrong end of the stick in a deal. I can see that. What's the verdict, young Bill?"

"We shall lose a bob or two a week, but we may as well take it. I want something to do with me time."

It struck Lowther that Mr. William Blinko, instead of grooming Bonny Lad at an alleged loss, might have devoted some of his spare time to grooming himself—at a profit, very real, if hardly to be expressed in cash terms. A strenuous quarter-hour at the pump would have done "young Bill" good.

"There you are, sir! Bill agrees, an' yours truly is allus willin' to strain a point for a real gent. Fust week's money in advance, of course!"

Gussy paid up—a pound note, and a ten shilling one borrowed from Lowther till he could get change. Blinko Brothers had not even the two shillings change needed to put the amount right. But, as Mr. William said, it could come off the next week's payment.

They departed in a hurry after that. To get back in time for call-out meant spiviking all the way. Arthur Augustus did not mind, for running and argument do not go well together.

And the swell of the Fourth had had more than enough argument. It was almost as though his chums, one and all, refused to credit him with brains enough to carry through the simplest deal!

"Nice young mug," said Blinko senior to Blinko junior, when they had gone. "An' far 'ummin' with the dibs, so it seems."

"E won't 'um much when we done with 'im, Bert," replied Blinko junior. "I should like to punch all their blessed 'eads—a gang of cocked-up kids!"

"Vilence don't pay, Bill. Git inter your enemy's pocket—that's the dodge for us! I fancy now as I can see a way to make that nice little 'oss a bit useful to us afore long, now as they're lettin' us 'ave some racin' 'ow an' agin."

CHAPTER 6.

Stubborn as a Mule.

"HALLO, Gustavus, where did you get those things?"

It was a couple of days later, and in No. 6 Arthur Augustus was opening a parcel.

"Bai Jove, Blake! Of all the ignowant duffahs! Those things, as you call them, are widin'—bweeches, let me inform you."

"Ha, ha, ha! I took you suppose I took them for a kimono, or a Zulu loincloth, or an up-to-date bathing-costume? What are you going to do with them?"

"Weally, Blake, your attempts to be funny are quite distewissin'! I am goin' to wear them, naturally. What else did you evah heah of a chap's doin' with widin'—bweeches?"

"I've heard of shipwrecked sailors eatin' their boots. But they wouldn't have ridin'-breeches, of course. We don't know what we may come to if the war goes merrily on for another ninety-nine years or so, but—"

"You are positively widic, Blake! Didn't I say I was goin' to wear them?"

"What for, chump?"

"To be heard of, of course."

"See here, you fathead, the thing can't be did: You'll have to send that giddy pony home. Those sharks are charging you a ruinous price. And 'tain't only that. There's going to be the biggest kind of a row—"

"The wock will be my afalah, I pwe-sume, Blake," said Arthur Augustus, with marked stiffness.

"But you need not go and give yourself away by sportin' those things, need you, idiot?"

"If you do not wing off, Blake, I shall be wolutenarily compelled to administrate to you a fearful thwashin'!" A gentleman who is goin' widin'—

"Who's got ridin'?" asked Herries, coming in with Digby at this moment.

"I am, of course."

"Hallo! The boulder's got ridin'-breeches!" said Dig.

"You are not so ewassy ignowant as Blake, Digby. I sent home for these."

"Did you tell them you'd bought a pony?" inquired Herries pointedly.

"I did not. Sushly, it is not their bizness."

"Better get a new supposer, then!" said Blake. "I never heard that any of us could do as we liked."

"How's Bonny Lad getting on?" said Digby.

"I am just goin' down to see, Dig. Will you come?"

"Don't mind if I do. There ain't much on."

"Are you comin', Hewwies?"

"I'd better, I guess. You need someone to look after you."

"Blake?"

"No, Gustavus, I'm going to the nets. So ought Herries, and Dig, too. We need practice. And if you ask me, you're carrying this bizness too far. You're looking for trouble, and you're jolly well going to find it before you're much older!"

"That is quite enough, Blake! I have not asked for your opinion—"

"But you're going to get it, all the same. You were an ass to buy the pony. You were a bigger ass to put him in charge of those rotters of Blinkos, though I'll admit there wasn't a fat lot of choice about it. But this ridin'-breeches dodge is the limit! It's advertising for the chopper to come down."

"Talbot says half what you're going to pay would be plenty," remarked Herries. "The pony mustn't be given oats, and grub, and all that sort of thing ain't so dear as all that."

"Do you suppose that Talbot knows more about horses than I do, Hewwies?" demanded Gussy hotly.

"No. But he don't talk through his hat. If Talbot says a thing's so, I wouldn't mind bettin' it is so."

Arthur Augustus passed his hand very thoughtfully down the back of his smooth and glossy head.

"I shall have to talk to those Blinky people," he said. "If they are really chargin' me too much there must be a reconsideration of terms."

"If!" said Blake scornfully.

"Catch 'em!" said Herries. "They see you're a straight little ass, Gustavus, and that's just where they've got you."

D'Arcy let the insult pass unnoticed. His thoughtfulness was visibly increasing.

"If they refuse to meet me I must find another stable for Bonny Lad, that's all," he said.

"You won't get him out of their merry clutches as easily as all that," Blake replied. "Don't you think the rotters know jolly well you're doing it on the strict q.t.?" Well, then, blackmail—as sure as eggs are eggs!

"I should utterly refuse to be blackmailed, Blake! But, really, you take a dreadfully black view of things. An' I must say that it isn't like you to go back on a friend when you believe him in trouble!"

"My hat, no!" said Blake at once. "But you do rile a chap, with your silly cocksureness about knowing better than anyone else. I'm coming. But there's only one way out for you—unless you'll sell the pony. And that is to send him home."

"I sha'n't sell him, Blake! An' I most assuredly shall not send him home!"

"You can't keep him here!"

"That remains to be proved."

"And when it's proved that you can't, where are you?"

"I shall not ask you to share the trouble, Blake!"

"Oh, you ass! I'm bound to. But I'm thinking about you as much as about myself."

More, really. Gussy's chums, though they might, and doubtless would, be mixed up in the row, would not suffer to the same extent as Gussy himself.

But the swell of the Fourth stalked down to Rylecombe with his heart burning hotly within him; and there was very little conversation on the way.

Arthur Augustus carried a parcel under his arm. Since the war had taught him things, he had no such pronounced objection to carrying parcels as had formerly been his. And, of course, this particular parcel contained the breeches, which made a difference.

"What are you going to wear with them?" asked Herries, breaking a long silence.

"Eh? Oh, hai Jove, deah boy! Bai Jove! It's—"

"An Eton jacket and riding-breeches certainly would!"

"But they would not, Blake! The thing is absolutely imposs. It gives me a cold shuddah even to think of it! Gwooh!"

They passed into the yard behind the habitation of the Blinks.

No one was there. The stable was empty. The doors of the house, front and back, were made fast.

"Here's a blessed silly waste of time!" growled Blake.

There is no necessity whatever for you to waste time on my account," replied Arthur Augustus frigidly. "In the circus, the very best thing for you to do is to twot back. We can do without you, I am suah."

That did not please Blake. It also failed to please Herries and Digby, who did not want it taken for granted that they were on Gussy's side as against Blake. And Gussy had said "we" as if such was the case.

"May as well all go back, I think," said Digby.

"Gussy's being had all round the ring," said Herries. "These boundaries THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 497.

are making him pay through the nose for the pony's keep; and when he wants the pony it's not at home! A mug's game, I call that!"

"I did not ask you for your opinion, an' I do not value it in the very least, Hewies!" snapped D'Arcy.

"Right-ho! I'm off back, for one."

"So am I," said Blake.

"I say, you chaps, don't go!" pleaded Digby.

"If those rotters really have been using the pony if about it!" snorted Blake.

"They have, and they are! What right has Gustavus to him when they want him? Old ass Gustavus hasn't any rights, come to that! All he's got to do is to pay up and keep smiling!"

Now D'Arcy's face fairly flamed with anger.

"Wing off, Blake!" he exclaimed furiously.

"If you can't listen to a word or two of common-sense from a chum—"

"Wing off! You are not my keepah!"

"I'm not, thanks be! Haven't gone into the asylum bizney yet! Kim on, you chaps!"

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Blake and Herries turned to go. Digby caught Arthur Augustus by the arm.

"Come along, old fellow! This ain't a scrap of good, you know!"

"I utterly decline to come! Blake has made use of the most insulting and opprobrious expressions—"

"But he didn't mean anything!"

"That's another, Dig!" called Blake from the gate. "I meant every word! Are you coming?"

"No. I dunno, though. Yes, I think I'll come. Oh, come on, Gustavus, old ass!"

"Pway go with your friends, Digby! I no lough regard them as friends of mine!" replied Arthur Augustus, with freezing dignity.

Digby went. He did not feel satisfied with himself, or with Blake and Herries—least of all with Gussy. He did not like going, but he went.

"What shall we tell Latham when you don't turn up for classes, D'Arcy?" inquired Herries.

Gussy turned his back upon Herries.

"Come on, Gussy!" shouted Digby.

"I absolutely refuse!"

"He's as stubborn as a giddy mule!" said Blake. "You can't do a thing with him, except leave the idiot to it! And that's what I'm going to do!"

"I am not in the very least stubborn," said D'Arcy, with dignity, "and I must insist that you address me with propah—Hullo!" Gussy was speaking to the air.

CHAPTER 7.

Finding Trouble.

LEFT alone, Arthur Augustus was far from feeling happy.

"They do not look at this biznay in the pwopah light," he murmured. "One wow is really no worse than another wow. Why should Blake kick because I want a pony to ride? There's no harm in that!"

There was no harm in it, of course, in its place. But Gussy had an uneasy suspicion that the attitude of the school authorities in objecting to fellows' taking horseback exercise as and when they chose was not wholly unreasonable. A thing might be all right at home, but it was different at school.

The minutes dragged on wearily, and Arthur Augustus surveyed the untidy yard with growing distaste.

He began to entertain a much poorer opinion of Blinky Brothers; and, with all his willingness to look on the best side of those he met, his first opinion of Blinky Brothers had not been a really high one.

So pessimistic grew his mood that he even began to doubt the rugged honesty of Mr. Simon Gloop!

"They are wottahs!" he said to himself. "I shall have to address them in the strictest an' severest mannah! They must be made to understand that Bonny Lad is not their horse!"

The sound of wheels smote upon his ears.

Then Bonny Lad appeared at the gate. He was harnessed to a rakish, high dog-cart, which made him look smaller than he was. It was certainly too big, and, of course, that was not good for him.

Mr. Bert Blinky, with a face redder than ever, but no cleaner, drove. By his side sat Mr. Bill Blinky. Mr. Bert smoked a fat cigar, and Mr. Bill a long, thin cigar, and both looked slightly elevated.

"Ah, here you be, sir! An' how do you find yourself, sir? Pretty bebbish, I hope!" shouted Mr. Bert, waving airily a very dingy hand.

Gussy summoned up all the severity at his command.

He must be really severe, he saw that. These fellows must be put in their places.

"How d'ye do, Mr. Blinky?" he made answer, in his coldest and haughtiest tones.

The brothers got down. Mr. Bert did not appear to have noted the coldness and hauteur. As for Mr. Bill, he scarcely seemed to have noted D'Arcy's presence.

"Thought you were never goin' to give us a look-in, we did," said Mr. Bert. "Ad the little 'orse out for a bit of exercise this mornin', not expectin' of you. 'Ope you ain't 'ad to wait long!"

"Not so very long. But, really, Mr. Blinky, I must protest against the idea of divin' Bonny Lad in that cart! Indeed, I do not desiah him to be driven at all. I intend to keep him for widin'!"

"Does 'im good to 'ave a turn betwixt the shafts," said Mr. Bert airily, while Mr. Bill, grunted something which sounded unpleasantly.

"I am the best judge of that, Mr. Blinky! The question which really matters is what I wish!"

"Ah, I reckon you'd better settle things up with young Bill! 'E runs the lively stable department. I got my own affairs to look after. So I'll toddle in, an' leave you an' 'im to it!"

Mr. Herries Blinky toddled in. There was a distinct roll in his style of walking, and no doubt "toddling" was his picturesque way of referring to that.

Mr. William Blinky proceeded to un-harness Bonny Lad.

Some of the cigar-smoke went the

wrong way, and he growled and spat and swore.

For a minute or two D'Arcy bore with the covert impertinence of the fellow; but soon the noble blood of the D'Arcys began to boil and seethe within his veins.

"Now, then!" he said sharply. "What explanation have you to offer?"

"Go an' 'ang yourself!" was the reply of Mr. William Blinko.

Arthur Augustus could hardly believe the evidence of his noble ears.

"Bai dove, you fellow, I shall be compelled to give you a fearful thrashing" if you do not take care!" he panted.

"An' where should I be while you were a-do'in' of that?"

"At the end of it, I think it is very p'ob you would be on the ground, Blinko!"

"What, crawlin' round to see if there was any bits of you left? Not me, kid! You ain't worth that trouble!"

"Take that pony into the stable at once, an' when you return I shall have the pleasur of battenin' your ugly face!"

"Right y'are!" snarled the stable-boy. "You come along 'ere lookin' for trouble, like a silly sheep's 'ead, an' you're a-goin' to find it!"

He took Bonny Lad into the stable. When he returned D'Arcy had his coat and waistcoat off in readiness for the fray.

Mr. William Blinko did not seem quite so keen when he saw that.

"See 'ere, ain't you a-labourin' under a bit of a debosion, as they say in the Sunday papers? You count as you can come 'ere an' turn up your peacock snout, an' order better men than yourself about, an' then make a rough 'ouse when they don't take it lyin' down. But that's where you're makin' a mistook."

"I do not wish to discuss the match with you, Blinko. The pony is mine, all right."

"Is he? That's the bloomin' question, that is!"

"Beyond all doubt he is! I bought him, and paid for him!"

"Ah! Let's 'ave a look at the receipt!"

"I have no receipt. There was no need for any receipt. An' it strikes me, Blinko, that you are a funk, an' would much wathah talk than fight!"

That taunt brought up the stable-boy's fists; but when D'Arcy moved towards him he lowered them again.

"Old 'ard!" he said. "Bought the pony off Gloop, didn't you?"

"Yas! What of it?"

"Ow d'y'e 'pose Gloop got 'old of him? Think Gloop bought 'im? Not bloomin' likely! You're a receiver of stolen goods, that's what you are, my pup!"

The heart of Arthur Augustus sank. That was what his chums had suggested—that Gloop's honesty was by no means to be depended upon.

But he had acted honestly. The price he had paid would show that, if proof became necessary. He could give Bonny Lad up, and lose his money, if the worst came to the worst.

There was one thing he would not and could not stand, though—the leering impudence of this half-drunk, monkey-faced young swindler!

"You are a feath' hah, Blinko!" he flashed out.

And he tapped Mr. William Blinko upon the nose, as though with design to make it flatter, which was quite unnecessary, as it was already a most pronounced snub.

"Art a mo'!" said Mr. William, backing. "I ain't sayin' if you knew the pony was boned. I don't really 'pose as you did. Still, the fact is the fact—you can't deny that. An' there's somethin'

else as may make you put down them fists of yourn middlin' quick. We've got the whip 'and of you, me an' Bert 'ave!"

Arthur Augustus could guess what would follow that. Of this, too, his chums had warned him.

"An' how have you the whip hand of me, pway?" he asked.

"Oh, you don't know nothink, of course! Oh no! 'Sposin' as me an' Bert was to toddle along an' intervoo your 'cadmaster? 'Ow would that go, cocky? That's the bloomin' ace of trumps in our 'ands—eh?"

"You an' your sweep of a bwothah may toddle along to blazes for all I

"Come on again, an' you'll get this in your silly sheep's face!" he howled.

And, of course, Gussy came on again.

"Silly sheep's face" was not the kind of compliment to hold him back.

Blinko found himself pressed up against a rain-water butt. The staves gave with all his weight, and he grew desperate.

Gussy dodged the broom, and hit again. "Yow-aw-yow!" roared Blinko, as the staves crashed in and a cascade of water descended upon him.

With all his force he brought the heavy broom down upon his opponent's head.

Gussy stumbled, and as Blinko went down, with the broken butt on top of him, he struck again.



Arthur Augustus Acts Promptly.
(See Chapter 9.)

caah!" cried D'Arcy. "What I desiah to know is, are you goin' to take your thrashin' lyin' down, or will you fight?"

At that Mr. William lifted his voice and called upon Mr. Herbert for succour.

But, like the gods of the Philistines, Mr. Herbert heard not, neither regarded.

Thus was Mr. William compelled to battle at last.

He could box a bit—probably as well as Gussy. But he had not the heart of a fighter.

Arthur Augustus, whatever the defects of his head, had the heart of a lion. He never flunked anything.

Three blows Mr. William Blinko managed to guard, hitting out not at all in return.

The fourth got home nicely on his right optic, and again he wailed for Bert.

Again the call went unanswered, and the fist of Arthur Augustus smote the nose of Blinko.

Then, in desperation, the stable-boy hit out, and Gussy took a nasty jab on the jaw.

He tossed his head, and piled in more hotly.

Nose, cheek, left ear, nose again!

Blinko was getting more than he had any use for. He landed one on Gussy's chin, and Gussy staggered. The stable-boy snatched up a broom, and held it in front of him.

The swell of the Fourth crashed to the ground, and his temple struck an out-cropping stone.

He lay there, white, inert, senseless. And his enemy gazed at him with eyes of fear.

Blinko got on his hands and knees, and gingerly touched the junior's face. Then he let out an appalling howl.

"Bert, Bert! Come 'ere, for any sake! I do b'lieve as I've killed the pup!" he yelled.

His brother rushed out.

"You rotten young fool!" he rumbled.

"This is what comes alonger trustin' things to you!"

CHAPTER 8.

Arthur Augustus, Prisoner!

"WELL, I never asked you to, did I?" snarled the younger rascal. "Why didn't you put it over the pup yourself? 'E'd 'ave known as 'e couldn't fight you. But 'e put up 'is silly fists to me, an' 'e landed me two or three nasty ones afore I give 'im the knock-out!"

"Tell you what, young Bill, if you 'ave knocked 'im out for good an' all, you've got to stand the racket! I wasn't nowhere near, an' didn't know nothink about it, fust an' last—that I sticks to!"

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Put that broom down, you ijjut! S'pose anybody was to blow in an' see that in your 'and'!"

The broom was promptly dropped. "I say, Bert, 'e ain't kicked the bucket, 'as 'e! Not really? 'Ave a squint at 'is face, close to, Bert! I don't like to look!"

"I'll have a dekke! But I tell you straight that if this is a manlaughter case it is your'n. I ain't in it!"

"I yelled to you three times, Bert!"

"Ah! So you say! I never 'eard the other twice."

Mr. Herbert stooped over D'Arcy, felt his heart, and then lifted his head.

"You jesht'd get the jim-jams with fump, Bili!" he said sneeringly. "The pump ain't a goner!"

"Shall I pour a pail of water over 'im?"

"No, you silly ijjut! 'E won't be best pleased if you muck up 'is elobber. An' we gatter look out as 'e don't go an' let on about this job. 'Eip me to cart 'im in, when 'e comes to, 'im an' us gatter 'ave an understandin'. An' 'e ain't goin' 'ill we git it!"

"I don't like touchin' of 'im, Bert!"

"D'ye want the cops a-touchin' of you? You wasn't so afraid of touchin' 'im when you'd got that gallus broom in your 'and. Catch 'old of 'is legs, d'ye?"

The frightened youth obeyed, and the two carried the unconscious youth into the house.

"Best look 'im in, an' let 'im take 'is time 'comin', round," said Mr. Herbert Blinks. "B'rank's such a bloomin' price now that I can't see wastin' it on 'im!"

"S'pose 'e don't come round?" inquired the trembling Bili.

"Then you'll go to quod a bit sooner than 'e'd reckoned on, that's all. You was 'anded straight for 'it, anyways!"

"Well, I ain't never got there yet, an' that's more than you can say!"

D'Arcy stirred, and emitted a doleful groan.

"That was enough for Blinks junior. 'Let's get 'enter this, Bert!' he said. 'I don't want 'im to see me first thing when he comes to.'"

"If you wait 'ill 'e comes to, 'is senses 'ill 'ave to wait a longish time," answered Mr. Herbert. "For 'e ain't got any wotkin talkin' about. A bigger young fool nor 'im I never clapped eyes on!"

Vaguely, like one in a dream, D'Arcy heard these words. But their effect was immediate.

At once he tried to sit up. And at once Messrs. Blinks Brothers dropped back into unconsciousness, and fully half an hour passed before he recovered his senses.

As first he did not know where he was, and could not remember at all what had happened to him.

The room in which he lay, on an old and tattered horsehair couch, was horribly close and stuffy. The dirty window had not been opened for ages, if he could judge by the smell.

Cigar-ends and ashes littered the floor. On the table were volumes of "Ruff's Guide to the Turf" and dogs'-card betting-books. There were also some soda-water syphons, full and empty, whisky-bottles, all empty, cases which had held bottled beer, and some shabby trunks.

"Where am I?" murmured Arthur Augustus. He put his hand to his throbbing forehead. "Weally, I twist that I don't lost me memory! Ah, now I know! Oh, yes; I fought with that wotkin Blinks in the yald, an' he hit me on the nappah with a broom!"

Gussy tried the door. It was locked.

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Then he tried the window. The catch moved very stiffly. He had great difficulty in forcing it back.

More he could not do. Neither upper nor lower shawl would stir the least fraction of an inch. They could not have been more absolutely immovable if they had been screwed up.

"This woom is weally howbilly stuffy!" he said to himself. "I would have preferred the stable. But there has been fresh air outside, an' I weally do not see why I should be stifled!"

He took up a volume of "Ruff," and broke two pages with it. The glass tinkled on the flags beneath. But the sound of its falling did not bring anyone to him.

Messrs. Blinks Brothers, busy in exercising the Food Controller's allowance in the front room, did not hear.

Gussy realized that he was thirsty. He found a glass. It was a dirty glass, but he cleaned it with the contents of a syphon of soda-water, and then poured himself out a drink from another.

The stuff was lukewarm and unpleasant to the taste, but he felt the better after it.

He decided not to shout. A glance at his watch showed him that dinner at St. Jim's would be over by now.

He would be in trouble for missing it, anyway, and he did not care to lower himself by making terms with Blinks Brothers. He was quite sure what he thought of those gentlemen now.

What would his chums be thinking?

They would be certain to miss him, and they would come along when dinner was over, he felt sure. It was true that they had left him in dudgeon, but that would not count.

Half an hour passed. He had searched the room vainly for something which might have helped him to force either "Ruff" or "The Turf" out of a volume of "Ruff," but had not found it at all interesting.

"Bai Jorel!—Wacke is evah so keen on that sillay wot," he said to himself. "I wonder why? Must be the way the boundin' is made, I pvesume."

And even as he thought of Racke of the Shell, the worst backguard at St. Jim's, he heard the voice of Racke outside.

Arthur Augustus did not like Racke, of course. But, much as he disliked Racke, his feelings were as nothing to the malice towards him which Racke cherished.

Had Racke been in such a plight as his, and he outside, he would not have hesitated as to the course to be taken.

He would have helped. At any cost he would have done his best to get Racke out. And, in the innocent generosity of his heart, he did not doubt that Racke would do the same for him.

After all, they were both St. Jim's, and that counted, surely!

"Wacke!" he called.

"Wacke! that isn't the great Gussy's voice!"

It was not Racke who spoke. It was Crooke. But that did not surprise D'Arcy. Where Racke was, there Crooke was sure to be, or somewhere within call.

"Well, what about it?" asked Racke coolly.

"Where is the silly idiot?"

"I am here. But I decline to be called by opprobrious names, Crooke, an'—"

"Stay there!" snapped Crooke.

His face appeared at the window. "Oh, come away!" said Racke. "We don't want to interfere. The fat-headed idiot has been gettin' into some silly row with those bouders of Blinks, I suppose. Might have expected it! What's he want keepin' a pony, an' trustin' it to such sharks as they are?"

It was evident that Racke knew all

about Bonny Lad. Gussy did not like that. Moreover, from the appearance of the two gay dogs in the Blinks backyard, he felt little doubt that they had added the striding pair of brothers to the select circle of their acquaintance.

But all that mattered little, when weighed against the obvious necessity of getting free.

"What's the row, D'Arcy?" asked Crooke.

Arthur Augustus subdued his pride to the point of bespeaking Crooke civility, though he strongly objected to the Shell fellow's leering tone and grin.

"I have had an encounter with the youngah Blinks, Crooke," he said mildly. "I vevget to state that he did not fight fairly. I was wendashed unconsciously—perfectly senseless for this time being!"

"You needn't say for the time being. You never are anything but perfectly senseless, you know," interrupted Crooke.

"That is vewy wude, Crooke, an' most untwise! I shall have pwevoked any vewease I shall have pleashah!"

"In trying to punch my nose, I suppose? Jolly grateful, wouldn't it be? But I haven't said that I'm going to 'procure your vewease' yet, you chump!"

"Sudly that goes without sayin'? If you were heah, an' I—"

"Very likely," said Racke, showing his face beside Crooke's. "You're that sort of ass. I don't happen to be, an' neither does Crooke. We don't care a dash how you got there, how long you stay there, or whether you ever get out! So put that in your pipe and smoke it, you swankin', preachin', prancin' combination of Puritan an' tailor's dummy!"

Gussy almost gasped. The bitter spite in Racke's words took him aback. He could not have felt like this towards Racke or anyone else; and even if he had felt thus, common decency would have prevented his talking thus.

Crooke gave the finishing touch by sticking out his tongue.

Arthur Augustus seized a volume of "Ruff" and hurled it at the two evil, grinning faces.

Again glass crashed and tinkled on the flags.

"Yarough!" howled Crooke. "You've cut my face, you dangerous lunatic!"

Racke was cut, too. But he did not howl.

"You shall pay for this, D'Arcy!" he said venomously, his countenance livid with rage.

CHAPTER 9.

The Impudence of Blinks Brothers.

"I AM sorry," said Arthur Augustus, feeling that he had gone too far, though wrath still burned hotly within him. "But it was weally entially your own fault. You are two disgustin' ends, without a scwap of honohal or feelin'! Go away out of my sight, or I do not know what I may be tempted to do!"

"You needn't expect we shall do anything to get you out after this, you rotter!" said Crooke, with weak viciousness.

"I simply would not accept vewease at your hands!"

"You aren't likely to be tempted that way!" snarled Racke. "I rather think I shall offer those Blinks a pur or two to keep you locked up until tomorrow. You may have time to get cool before then."

And with that Racke turned on his heel and passed out of the range of D'Arcy's vision. Crooke, with a handkerchief to his cut face, followed.

Whether they went to Blinks Brothers Arthur Augustus could not tell. His

rather thought not, for ten minutes passed, and all the sound that came to his ears was something that might have been rather an unmelodious trumpet or might have been a mighty snore. It was, in fact, a snore, and the producer of it was Mr. Bert Binko.

Racke and Crooke had had business with him. But they had decided that the present was not the best possible time for its transaction. It seemed better to them to clear out and leave the swanking ass to it," as Crooke put the case, in his chaste and elegant language.

Gussy was getting badly fed up. Unusual rancour grew in him as he reflected upon the eddish conduct of the two Shell fellows. This was really beyond the limit!

To bang or kick at the door seemed to him beneath his dignity. And dignity must be maintained at any cost—almost!

So after thinking for a while, he did what he had done before. But, then, it had been done in the heat of passion. Now he did it deliberately and with purpose.

He flung a volume of "Ruff" through the window.

Once more glass tinkled. Next moment the face of Mr. Bill Binko appeared, much more plainly visible than it would have been an hour before. So many pairs of eyes were now looking that the dirt with which the window was encrusted mattered little.

"You'll have to pay for this, you pup!" snarled Mr. William. "Breakin' of our windows! Nice game, ain't it!"

Mr. William failed to observe that D'Arcy, before drawing nearer to him, had taken up a full syphon of soda-water.

"Dear me!" he yelled.

"I heah somethin' that sounds like a soxy ill-conditioned bull-calf bellowin'," replied the swell of the Fourth. "But I should no doab beah you bettah if you put your face nerrah an' spoke inst'ead of shoutin'!"

No very fit a person as Mr. William Binko should not have been taken off his guard.

But he was. He put his face nearer. "You can 'ear all right," he said. "P'raps you reckon as we can't do nothink; but we got the whip—Yow-ow! Grorry!"

Arthur Augustus had taken good aim, and pressed the lever of the syphon. "Ow! Ow-yow! You've an' drowned me!"

"Sogwody that," replied D'Arcy. "It may have cleaned your face a little. I weally think it has, an' I congwatulate you, Binko, for you badly needed it. I am afraid you are wathin in the habit of bein' in a huwry, an' omittin' allegations."

Mr. William Binko, drying his face with an exceedingly dingy handkerchief, gave signs of increased respect for the captive.

"See 'ere, Mr. Darsey—"

"Ah, that's bettah! I can talk to you if you succeed in that swain. You are a wuffian, an' a funk, an' you are no honest, I feah; but even a wuffian an' a funk an' a disonest person may be civil to his bettahs!"

"Well, come to that, I'm sorry as I knocked you over," whined the stable-boy, who was feeling a trifle alarmed. Bert was sure that they had the whip-lash over D'Arcy, but somehow D'Arcy did not appear to realise the fact.

"If you had knocked me down in a pawpaw an' mealy mannah, I should feel no wesement whatevah. But to use a broom—"

"I never wanted to go for to fight you at all. You knows that. You forced

it onto me, an' brought it all on your own 'ead!"

"I may have forced you to fight; but it was you who brought the broom down upon my head," replied Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "It was a disgraceful action; but I appeneeth that you have been badly brought up—daggwed up, in fact. So powpaws you know no bettah. Now I insist upon immediate release, an' affah I am wealed I will considah the mattoh of your punishment."

"I can't go lettin' of you out. It was me brother Bert as locked you in, an' you'll expect to 'ave a say in it afore you'll get go!"

"You must go to your brovthah at once!"

"B's asleep. That's 'im snorin'!"

"Weally? I wathah thought you must keep pigs. You will have to wake him up, Binko. The noise is howid, an' I am in a huwry."

"You're ridin' of the 'igh 'orse a bit, you know!"

"Yaas, but Jove! An' I intend to continue widin' it! It is evident to me that the only way to deal with persons like you an' your brovthah is to twample on them! You are like the Huns—you cannot undalstah anything but force!"

It occurred to Mr. William Binko that it was rather early for the captive to talk of trampling on him and his brother. They still had the pull over him.

But the young rascal was pretty thoroughly alarmed, and he went.

A couple of minutes later Mr. Herbert, red-faced to an even greater extent than before, and frowsily sleepy, appeared at the window. Mr. William kept in the background, but in hearing, no doubt.

"Well, sir!" said Mr. Herbert, his words more civil than his tone.

"What explanation have you to offah of this outrageous conduct?" demanded Gussy.

"Oh, come off it! I'm sorry as it should 'ave appened as it 'as; but there you are! You fair goaded young Bill inter it. Set on 'im like a tiger, all unawares, as I make out, an' 'e took up the broom in self-defence. You young brainers, what learns all the tricks of the ring in your school gymnasiums an' sich, you ain't to be allowed to come over a pore lad like that there, for nothink at all, you know!"

Mr. Herbert shook his head solemnly, and D'Arcy gasped.

So this was the tale they had concocted! And they would stick to it, and he had no witnesses!

He began to perceive that victory over Binko Brothers was not to be won as easily as he had deemed.

"That is uttaly untrue!" he said, his choler almost choking him. "I demand to be released at once, an' you will release me, or—"

"Ho, will I?" rumbled Mr. Herbert, with a very nasty inflection.

"Yaas!" snapped the undaunted Arthur Augustus. "I will make no terms with you. Every moment you keep me a pisonah heah—"

"Come nah! Come nah! 'Taint no sort of use losin' of your little temper an' shoutin' a man's 'ead off! Five quid your notion of about the right figure?"

"What? I nevah in my life heard such unpawalled impudence! Do you think that any monay you can offah me—"

"Ho, ho, ho! If that ain't the best joke as ever I 'eard! Offer you money? Not bloomin' well likely! It's you what's got to pay the five quid, cocky!"

"Affah that, there is nothin' more to be said!" answered Gussy, with a

gesture of dismissal. "You had bettah go, or I will fling a syphon at you!"

"So 'e will, Bert! 'E don't care what 'e does when 'is mad's up!" squeaked Mr. William, from somewhere in the rear.

"Then we'll see if a few 'ours more 'ere will get it down!" rumbled Mr. Herbert.

CHAPTER 10.

Chums to the Rescue.

"HE, he, he!" Baggie Trumble of the Fourth, who stood cackling in the Close as Blake, Herries, and Digby came up.

Dinner was a thing of the past, and still D'Arcy was absent. His absence had been noted, of course; but no questions had been asked of his chums.

"What's that 'einous cackination about?" asked Blake.

"He, he, he! Oh, what a lark! Wouldn't you chaps just like to know where your pal D'Arcy is, that's all!"

Blake seized the fat junior by the scruff of his neck.

"Now, you rotten prize porker, if you've got anything to say—"

"I haven't! Yaroooh! I don't know—Oneop! Stoppit, Blake!"

I never heard Racke and Crooke telling Scrope about D'Arcy! I—Ow-yow! Wharrer doing?"

"Bump the fat cad!" snapped Herries.

"That's the only thing to do!" agreed Digby.

"We'll make him tell us first. Now, then, you blasted animal!"

"No, old scout. We'll bump him first and let him tell us afterwards," said Herries. "I've noticed that bumping sometimes shakes Baggy up so that he tells the truth—or thereabouts—without knowin' it!"

"Yow! Don't! I won't be bumped! I—I'll tell you!" howled Baggy.

"You'll be bumped first, and you'll tell us afterwards!" said Blake firmly.

"If you bump me, I won't—Yooop! Stoppit, you beasts!"

The beasts did stop it—when they had finished, and Baggy had been well and truly bumped. Then, almost in tears, he told his tale.

"Taint my fault. I couldn't help it happenin', nor yet hearin' about it!"

"About what, you—you animated bladder of inferior lard?"

"Get on, or we'll bump you again!"

"Yooop! Don't Herries—oh, don't! Lemme be!"

"I'm jolly well not going to let you be unles—"

"Don't give me a chance. It's like this, I heard Racke and Crooke tellin' Scrope of course, I wasn't listenin'. I should scorn such an action; but they're such rotters that it really don't matter, and— Yarooohem! I'm tellin' you, ain't I? I heard them say that D'Arcy was locked up by somebody named Binkos, and he'd asked them to let him out, and they wouldn't. Sers, him right—I mean, serve them right, the rotten cads—I mean—"

"Oh, I don't know what I do mean! Yooop!"

"Well, you mean that, Baggy, anyway," said Digby, grinning.

And Baggy certainly did.

"Kim on!" said Blake.

As the three were going out of gates they ran against Levison, Clive, and Cardew.

"You fellows look so deadly determined that a chap can't help surmisin' that there's something up," said Cardew, in his laziest way.

"There is," said Blake.

"Brief an' to the point! Can we be of any assistance?"

"If you like. Yes. Jolly glad to have you, come to that. There's hardly enough for the job."

"May we know what the job is?" inquired Levison, with a touch of his old sarcasm.

"Where's D'Arcy?" asked Clive.

"We'll tell you what the job is as we go along," replied Blake. "But if you want it in one word, it's Gustavus!"

"Hallo! What's become of Gussy?" Tom Merry made inquiry, coming up with Lowther and Manners.

"He's locked up, and we're going to fetch him out of it!" Digby answered, with a grin.

"This, Tommy, is a bizney for older heads than theirs," said Lowther solemnly.

And the Terrible Three ranged up. But that was not all. Figgins hailed them from behind, and he and Kerr dashed up, with Fatty Wynnf panting after them.

Figgins & Co., of the New House, were rivals; but they were friends, too, and they would not be left out of it.

So the whole dozen of them made haste to Rylcombe, and reached the abode of Blinky Brothers just about the time when Arthur Augustus began to believe himself forgotten by the world, even by his own familiar friends.

Then outside sounded a voice—the voice of Jack Blake:

"Are you there, Gustavus?"

"Yaas, Blake, I am heah! But I am locked in."

"An' we're locked out," replied Blake. "Not that that makes any odds. We'll have you out of that in about half a twink!"

"I am vewy glad to heah it, for I feahed you had forgotten me entially, an' I am tiahed of this. It is a howwid dog-kennel!"

"Yes, you pup, an' you're agoin' to stay in the kennel!" roared the elder Blinky, appearing in the wilderness of a garden at that moment.

"Jest you clear off, you boys! I ain't goin' to 'ave you round my place!"

"Rats!" said Tom. "Here, Blake, I'll give you a bunk-up! Keep that merchant off, some of you!"

"There must be quite a crowd of them!" murmured Gussy. "Bai Jove, I vewally think my turn is comin' now!"

Blake swarmed up on to Tom's shoulders.

"Ere, you stop that!" rumbled Mr. Bert Blinky.

The only sign that they gave of hearing him, was that Clive, Digby, Manners, and Figgins faced round in line across the gate, ready to stop him if he dared to attack.

He did not appear to care for any measure so drastic as that.

"You get over that bloomin' gate, an' I'll have the law on every jack one of you!" he shouted, puffing out his red cheeks.

"Keep your hair on, my good man," said Lowther. "It isn't really decorative; but you're not the sort that would look nice bald."

"Only one of us will get over the gate," drawled Cardew. "Personally, I shouldn't think of doin' anything" so fatiguing. Blake will open it to us as soon as it is over."

"It's trespass, that's what it is, an' I ain't agoin' to—'Ere, you Bill, run round an' get the 'ose!"

Like a scared rabbit, Mr. William Blinky, who had just shown his engaging face, scuttled back through the house. Blake was now on top of the gate.

"There no 'ose heah, I'm suah!" yelled Arthur Augustus. "They nevah

clean anythin'—not even their own faces!"

But Gussy was wrong. There was a hose, and it chanced to be ready fixed. The younger Blinky got to it just as Blake pulled the gate open.

"Put that down, or—"

Blake's yell was cut short. Swish!

Desperation had once more lent courage to Mr. William Blinky. The stream from the hose took Blake full in the face.

"Yow!" howled Blake, and dashed at him, spluttering.

And behind Blake came Tom Merry and Manners and Kerr, Lowther and Clive and Levison, Figgins and Herries and Digby. In the rear puffed Fatty Wynnf, and sauntered Ralph Reckness Cardew.

The brief display of courage on the part of Mr. William Blinky was at an end. He dropped the hose-pipe, and fled, yelling, to the back door of the house.

"Tain't no good, Bert!" he howled. "There's a 'ole busted army of 'em!"

But just as he reached the door he found himself collared. Kerr seized him, and neatly twisted him over so that he lay on the flagstones.

"Now then! Play on the rotter, you chaps!" shouted Kerr.

Blake had snatched up the hose-pipe. He directed it full upon the writhing Blinky before he had time to squirm up.

"Nice an' refreshin' on a hot day—what?" chuckled Cardew.

"Pile in, Blake!" yelled Digby.

A big and dirty hand caught Cardew by the collar. Cardew's elbow smote Mr. Herbert Blinky hard in the region of the lower waistcoat.

"Yoop! You young dog—"

Cardew jabbed again, and Mr. Blinky let go, with an oath.

"I couldn't stand that, even if your hand was clean, you know," said Cardew. "An' it isn't. I shall have to change my collar now."

"Ow-yow! Oh dear! You're a-drownin' of— Yarooogh!" came from the younger rascal.

"Take that!" roared the elder one, striking furiously at Cardew.

But Levison caught him by the arm, and Figgins promptly tripped him up. He came down with a crash, and Fatty Wynnf took a seat upon him.

"Look out, Fatty!" yelled Blake.

Fatty gave one glance, then sprang up as if made of indiarubber. The younger Blinky had gained refuge, and it was now the turn of the elder one to be swamped.

He struggled to hands and knees; but the stream took him in the face, blinding him for the moment, and he collapsed again.

"Is that how you like it done, Blinky!" chortled Dig.

"The beast will be a trifle cleaner after this, anyway," said Cardew.

CHAPTER 11.

A Mysterious Disappearance.

KERR bolted into the house after the younger Blinky. Someone was banging at a door, in the key hole of which was a key. Kerr stretched out an arm, and grabbed Mr. William Blinky's coat-collar.

Mr. Blinky kicked, but found it did not pay. The Scottish junior lifted a foot, and instead of taking Mr. Blinky's heel on his shin, allowed the calf of Blinky to meet the toe of his boot.

"Ow! Criquey, that 'urts!" howled the stableboy.

"Oh, no!" replied Kerr cheerily. "I assure you it didn't hurt a bit!"

He turned the key in the lock, and the

flushed face of Arthur Augustus was revealed as the door opened.

"Come out, Gussy," said Kerr. "I'm going to chuck this thing in there."

"Wight-ho, Kerr! Vewy pleased to see you, dearh boy!" replied Arthur Augustus.

"Dare say you are," said Kerr, with a grin. "You seem to have tumbled among the Philistines. Here goes!"

And he bundled Mr. William Blinky, neck and crop, into the room which had been Gussy's prison.

Then he and D'Arcy passed out together.

"Hooray! Here's Gustavus, still alive and kicking!" cried Digby.

"Bai Jove, Dig; half the wealth of the world would not have induced me to be found dead in the same place as those wottahs!" said Gussy.

"It's a trifle disappointin', though," remarked Cardew. "You ought to see that yourself, D'Arcy. If only you had been cut up into little pieces, an'—"

"Gwooh! Wewally, Cardew you are wathah a howwid beast!"

"Look out!" shouted Tom Merry.

The elder Blinky had got to his feet. He was in the reddest of rages, and he went for them like a mad bull.

Cardew dodged him. Fatty Wynnf went over with a howl. Lowther, Herries, and Clive were hurled aside.

But Cardew sprang at his back, and clutched him round the neck, and from the front Tom and Manners, Levison and Figgins attacked, and beneath the combined assault he went under again.

And once more Fatty took a seat upon his prostrate form. And Fatty sat as hard as he could, for he was annoyed.

"Yoop! Take this young elephant off me!" roared Mr. Herbert.

"What shall we do with the rotter, Tommy?" asked Blake.

"I've put the other specimen into Gussy's dungeon," said Kerr. "What's the matter with shoving this one in there, too?"

"Good egg!" said Tom heartily.

"Oh, no! A bad egg, Merry—a very bad egg indeed!" objected Cardew, looking down at Mr. Herbert Blinky, and shaking his head sadly.

"Get up, Fatty!" ordered Manners.

"Oh, not likely! Why should I get up? I've only just sat down, and I want a rest!"

"Carry them both in!" suggested Figgins.

And as many hands as could grabbed at the prostrate Blinky. He squirmed and wriggled, and plunged and swore; but it was all to no avail.

They lifted him and Fatty too, and the Welsh junior threw a leg across, so that he sat straddlewise upon Mr. Blinky's waistcoat.

"Gee-up!" cried Fatty.

The brothers started off at a trot for the door. It was a staggering trot, and if both Blinky and Fatty had been dropped and hurt—and certainly Blinky would have been hurt if dropped—no one could have been surprised.

But they were not dropped. Kerr unlocked the inner door, and Mr. William Blinky made a bolt for the open. But Levison grabbed him, and shot him back, and next moment his brother and Fatty were deposited on top of him.

"Ow! Yoop! Gwooh! I'm squashed flat!" he belched.

Fatty got up.

"I'm afraid you're not a nice man, Mr. Blinky," he said. "I shan't take a ride on your turn—waistcoat, I mean—again!"

Levison had gone to the grate.

"Cardew," he said, "come and help me get some soot down, there's a decent chap!"

"No, tha-a-nks!" drawled Cardew. "I

regret to say that, in spite of all that you and Clive and the rest of the Reform Society have done to improve my morals, I'm not so decent as that. I've a depraved taste for keepin' reasonably clean, dear boy."

"I will, Levison!" said Dig.
"My hat! It's a regular sot mine!" Levison said.

"Whar'er goin' to do wi' that sot?" gasped Mr. Herbert Blake.

"Oh, don't be in such a hurry! You'll know in a minute," answered Blake.
"Here's some beer to mix it in," said Levison, grinning. "Good job Gussy didn't drink it all!"

"I do not drink beer at all, Lowthab! Weally—"

"Shut it! Stop! I'll ave the lor—gurry!"

"Git off, Bert, you brute! You're a—quashin'—groooh! Yah—ow—yow! Yarroogh! Sop!"

"That's enough, I think," said Tom.

It was more than enough for Blinks Brothers. They had no use for beer applied externally, and mixed with snot.

"Now we'll lock 'em up and leave them to it!" said Blake.

"Ain't there anything else we can do to them first?" asked Fatty Wynn, looking round.

"I don't be bloodthirsty, Wynn," said Cardew reprovingly.

"Oh, you are an ass!"

"Possibly. But I should like to remark that if your opinion is based on any supposed reluctance on my part to the doin' anythin' whatever to these two objects—"

"Don't stand spouting there all day, old chap," said Levison. "Come along!"

"On comin' all serene! Good-bye, Violet!" Cardew said, waving a hand to the furious Mr. Herbert.

"No objection to leaving them locked up, I suppose?" said Kerr.

"On the contrary—a most decided ob-

jection to doing anything else," replied Lowther.

"Someone's sure to hear them if they yell loud enough!" Manners said.

"But not very soon, I hope," remarked Cardew.

"There's one thing certain, Gustavus—you've got to find another boarding-house for that gee of yours," said Blake.

"Yaas, deah boy! But there isn't much time now, an' I weally don't know what to do. Classes—"

"Classes, yes?" said Digby. "It's a halfer, isn't it?"

"Weally, Dig, if it were not that I feel so grateful to everybody who helped in this wessue, I should feel it incumbent upon me to administrah to you a fearful thwashin'! But I had quite forgotten the fact that it was halfah! There will be time to look woud—"

"Not if you waste all the afternoon in jaw, there won't!" said Blake impatiently.

"There's no pony here!" announced Herries, who had just looked into the stable.

They rushed to look. There were only two stalls in the stable, and both were empty!

Arthur Augustus gazed round him wildly.

He looked up at the roof, peered into the manger, opened a food-box and looked inside.

"Try the drains, Gussy!" suggested Monty Lowther.

"But he must be here somewhere! I saw the Blinks bwing him in. They had driven him out in a dog-cart. Is the dog-cart gone, Herries?"

"No, you chump! But what's the use of the dog cart to you?"

"Bai Joe! This is a deep mystery!"

"Not much mystery about it!" said Levison. "Those sharks have taken him off and hidden him somewhere. They think they've got you in a cleft stick,

Gussy, and I'm not so jolly sure they're not right!"

"We can make them tell," said Tom, firmly.

"We can try," returned Cardew.

"And try they did. But it was no go!"

Blinks Brothers had covered the window with the table, and had piled the couch and chairs close up to the door. The prison had become a fort, and if the fort was not quite impregnable it was not easily to be taken.

"As for parley, the only notion of that which Blinks Brothers seemed to have was abuse. Terms they would not discuss."

"We got the whip—and now, an' we mean to keep it!" yelled the younger scoundrel.

In the yard the St. Jim's janitors held counsel together.

"There seemed nothing to be gained by attempting more just then. Arthur Augustus was, naturally, very loth to withdraw. But even he could not suggest anything likely to be effective that could be done at once."

"They can't eat the blessed pony, ass!" said Blake impatiently.

"No, they can't eat him, Blake—the wvay suggestion is wide! But what will they do with him?"

That only the future could reveal. For the time being Arthur Augustus and his chums had to get what comfort they could out of the fact that Blinks Brothers had been put through it. And Gussy was not the happier for the frank opinions expressed as to the utter idiocy of D'Arcy's deal!

THE END.

(Don't miss next Wednesday's Great Story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's—"BONNY LAD'S RACE!" by Martin Clifford.)

The Editor's Chat.

For Next Wednesday:

"BONNY LAD'S RACE!"

By Martin Clifford.

This week you have read how Arthur Augustus D'Arcy bought a pony, and of the trouble arising from that deal. In the next story is told how Blinks Brothers schemed to use the pony for their own swindling plans, how Rake and Crooke came into the affair, how D'Arcy and his chums put their heads together to outwit the rascals, how Kerr played detective, and Cardew rode a race—and many other things!

AN UNUSUAL SORT OF PAPER.

A Canadian reader—J. Friedman, of 54, Chateaubain Avenue, Montreal—sends me a copy of a little paper he is publishing quarterly. It is of an unusual type, and the chief feature of its contents is a list of names and addresses.

I suppose this does not sound very interesting. But I think there will be no lack of interest to the readers for whom the little paper is meant.

For it is the official organ of the Gem Postcard Exchange, which was founded by my correspondent in January, 1914. The club was called after this paper because it owed its origin to the facilities offered by our Correspondence Exchange. And the names and addresses of those members with the chief feature of its contents is a list of names and addresses.

Looking down it, I see addresses in Great Britain, Canada, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, the U.S.A., Holland, the Straits Settlements, the West Indies, Denmark, Japan, India, France, Brazil, the Federated Malay States, Switzerland, Korea, Panama, and Ceylon. This is something in the way of an achievement. Certainly our friend Friedman must have worked hard to bring his project up to this list of success. After the war he should be able to do even

bigger things, for now there must be great difficulties in the way of the Exchange.

The big batch of members in Holland would appear to be due to the activities of the vice-president, W. G. R. Zahn, of Amsterdam.

Anyone interested should write to the address given in the first paragraph, enclosing a stamp.

NOTICES.

Back Numbers Wanted.

By Richard Nelson, Shepperton, Victoria, Australia.—GEM Christmas Number, 1915, and other back numbers wanted for 468.

By S. K., c/o H.M., 50, Church Road, Manor Park, E.—Any number "Boys' Friend" 3d. Library. State price.

By Alex. Stevenson, 15, Partickhill Road, Glasgow.—GEM, Nos. 417-419; "Magnet," 398, 444, 446.

By F. F. Fiddick, 6, Rushby Mead, Letchworth, Herts.—GEM, Nos. 395-399; "Magnet," 250-260. Double price offered.

By John Hodgson, 5, Oakworth Rd., Keighley, Yorks.—"Boys' Friend," 3d. "School Cherry Search of His Father." "School Boys Never Shall Be Slaves." "Wun Lung's Secret." "Tom Merry Minor." "Figg's Fig-Pudding." "The Bully's Chance." "Figg's Folly." "The Bully's Triumph." "Savvy Talbot." "Loyal to the Last." "Bunter the Blabber."

By P. W. Warwick, 34, Wessels Street, Brampton, Johannesburg, S. Africa.—GEM and "Magnet," January 1st to August 31st, 1916.

By M. Berger, 22, Midland Road, St. Philip's, Bristol.—Nos. of GEM containing Talbot stories up to "King's Pardon."

By Theo. Hook, 3, Tottenham Road, N. 13.—"Nelson Lee Library," Nos. 11, 40, 61, 67, 69, 71, 79, and 85.

By Wm. Robinson, 87, Vivian St., Welling-

ton, New Zealand.—"Rivals and Chums," GEM and "Magnet," Nos. 420, 421, 422.

By Jimmy Williams, Milton House, Ruff Lane, Ormsby, E. C. London.—"Tom Merry for England." "Kildare for Ireland." "A Son of Scotland." "A Hero of Wales."

By F. Bodman, 85, Mansfield Road, Nottingham.—GEM, Nos. 1-391, 393-406, 408-410, 412-414, 416-420, 422-426, 428, 429, 432, 434, 435, 438, 439, "Magnet," Nos. 1-377, 379, 380, 382-387, 389-400, 401-404, 406-414, 416, 422. Please write before sending.

Cricket.

A Thornton Heath junior team—14 want matches within six miles of Croydon.—F. A. Goodwin, 6, Ecclesbourne Road, Thornton Heath, Surrey.

Football—Matches Wanted by

RAYN—10—4 mile radius Bethnal Green.—D. B. Howard, 21, Norah Street, Bethnal Green, E. 2.

CLIPTONVILLE—16-17—5 mile radius.—W. Marshall, 31, Stanley Street, Deptford, S.E. 8.

ALMON—17—E. C. Allen, 32, Battersea Park Road, S.W. 11.

Pymmes United F.C. (16) want home and away matches; all dates 5-mile radius.—A. Parsons, 8, Chedington Road, Silver Street, Edmonton, N. 18.

Invicta F.C. (15-16); dates open.—R. Sumpter, 47, Whitfield Street, Tottenham Court Road, W. 1.

Up to Editor

Extracts from "Tom Merry's Weekly."

JOHNNY GOGGS AT ST. JIM'S. By Clifton Dane.

(Continued from last week's number.)

IX.

THE five were before his prisoners. "I fear they may take cold," said Goggs. "They must be a trifle wet."

"More than a trifle, I should say," replied Reddy. "But they'll have exercise—going for each other, you know. And it's a warm afternoon. I don't think they will take much harm. Needn't worry."

Goggs had slipped on Reddy's hannels, and was now pulling on his cricket-boots, which he had retrieved.

"I am not exactly worrying, Redfern," he answered mildly. "It is true that Racke and Crooke also got rather drenched last night. I had to act on the spur of the moment, and I could not think of anything really effective without water in it. I might have locked them up in Mr.—er—Ratty's study; but that was awaiting his coming. They would have got out of the window."

"But what's it all about?" asked Owen, coming up with Lawrence, after putting away the hose.

"Yes, what was the merry game, to start with, Reddy?" inquired Lawrence.

"Oh, I don't know," said Reddy. "Ask him."

"We have not been introduced," Goggs said primly.

Redfern grinned, and made Owen and Lawrence known to him. Then, on the way to the cricket-field, Goggs told the story in brief.

The three New House fellows simply bubbled over with admiration.

"Grimbs! Don't I wish you'd catch Frankingham and come here—into our house, and let us go to keep up our end with the School House crowd!" said Lawrence.

"I thank you. But nothing would induce me to desert Frankingham," replied Goggs.

"Ah, with that they arrived at the pavilion, and Goggs was spotted.

"You've missed your innings, you boundary!" said Owen. "Your side's crowd has managed to save the follow-on. Now you'll have to go out and field."

"I must apologise to Kildare, of course, Dane. But I have not time to explain to you just now," Goggs replied.

But Redfern and Lawrence and Owen did the explaining. The fact that they all did it at once made it just a little hard to follow. But one thing was clear—that Racke and Crooke were still prisoners in the New House.

Some of us thought that it was worth while to cut along and have a squint at them. We didn't mean to make any unkind remarks, you know, only to look.

Merry had a notion of declaring early, as we were so many runs ahead, and he sent in Gussy and Wilkins first. Kangaroo and Blake and Lowther came along with me.

Lawrence & Co. also trotted back. They naturally felt a personal interest in the prisoners—in fact, Reddy seemed inclined to play the showman.

The five were still there. Mellish's face appeared at the window as we arrived. Mellish looked very sickly indeed.

"Oh, say, you fellows, it's time for you to let us out!" he whined. "Those New House cads—"

"Do you want me to fetch the hose again?" rapped out Owen.

"What's the good of expecting anything from that crowd?" said Scrope dismally.

"Why don't you shin down the rain-pipe?" asked Kangaroo scornfully. "Goggs did. But the whole gang of you haven't a tenth part of Goggs' pluck among you!"

"Oh, haven't we? I'll jolly well show you," yelled Racke, who is, on the whole, the least funky of the crew.

He threw a leg over the ledge.

"Hurrah!" sang out Blake. "The great defending act, as shown by Professor Racke, the world's greatest gymnast!"

"Yell out when you're falling, Racke, and I'll open my arms for you," said Lowther.

Racke flinched perceptibly. "There really is nothing much in the descent for a gymnast. But Racke is nothing of that sort."

"Give way to Crooke!" suggested Blake.

"Perhaps he—" Racke swung himself out, with an oath. "I am not sure that he repented of the oath, but there wasn't any doubt at all of his repenting the action."

"Oh—oh!" he howled, letting go of the pipe before he was half-way down, and falling.

"You stupid ass!" yelled Lowther, as he broke Racke's fall, with results not entirely pleasant to himself.

"Why, you offered to do it, Monty!" said Blake. "Here, I'll give you a hand up!"

"I didn't mean it, idiot!" snapped Lowther. "Still, I'm not sorry. It wouldn't be fair to the hangman that Racke's neck should be broken this way."

Racke scowled as he limped away.

"Here, Racke! I say, Racke, aren't you coming to let us out?" yelled Clampe.

"I'm dashed if I am!" howled back Racke furiously. "Get out of the way I did!"

"I'm jolly well hanged if they shall, though," said Lowther, moving further away.

At this moment the one and only Arthur Augustus dashed up, quite out of breath.

"Hurry up, dear boys," he cried. "There are five wickets down, and if you don't bustle the linn's will be ovah before you get there, though, there must have been a awful slump!" said Kangaroo, as we dashed out.

"It's—Goggs!" gasped Gussy. "G'wosh!"

"Yes, keep up with you!"

We found out when we got to the pavilion that Gussy had been doing a bit of running before he started to fetch us, and it was no wonder.

Blake and Wilkins had made quite a good start. Nearly 20 had been scored before they were parted.

It occurred just after Goggs was put on, and no doubt Goggs would have been put on earlier had Kildare not been feeling a bit annoyed with him.

Goggs had lowered Wilkins' middle stump with a blow from leg. Then Talbot had hit a ball slap into Grundy's hands—and, to the amazement of all who saw, Grundy had held it!

Lowther was down to go in next, but in his absence Tom Merry had gone to the wickets. Hardly was he there when Goggs, in the slips, made a catch that would have done credit to a juggler, and Gussy was out.

Lowther was the next victim. He played to get the ball away to leg, and stared in wild astonishment when it came across in quite the wrong direction, and flicked off his hands.

Then Guss was beaten, and up and up. Herries was Tom Merry's partner when Gussy, having torn off his pads, ran to fetch us.

Tom succeeded just as we reached the pavilion, and six were down for 62.

"Cut along in, Dane!" said Tom. "You don't mind about pads or gloves, I know. See you can't knock that beggar Goggs off his legs in this position is getting alarming."

I did my best. I ran in to a slow, and smote it a mighty smite. It soared over the pavilion. Our fellows cheered, and Goggs and the next ball, which looked exactly like the one I had hit, was yards faster, and it didn't go over the pavilion.

My middle stump flew over the head of Racke, and the next ball, which looked exactly like the one I had hit, was yards faster, and it didn't go over the pavilion.

We had Noble and Blake still to come—to of our best. But Blake hit his first ball hard back to Goggs, about a foot off the ground, and the next ball, which looked like a broken chap's leg if it had caught him on the shinbone, that drive.

But it wasn't Goggs' shinbone that it hit. It was his left hand, and it didn't go any farther.

"My hat! That was a catch in a thousand!" said Kildare.

Kangaroo roared as practically our last hope, though, mind you, neither Herries nor Lowther is a duffer.

Herries played up well and pluckily. But I saw that Noble was doing all the new to keep Herries from the end facing Goggs.

And Kangaroo himself was tied up by the googlies. He pushed them away for singles at the end of overs, and sometimes got them for two in between, but he did not make a solitary boundary in twenty minutes' stay, and that is not like Kangaroo.

They had added 25 before Herries found himself meeting Goggs, and failing to establish contact between bat and ball, with a rattle in the timber-yard as a consequence.

Nine for 99! With our biggles lead on the first innings, it looked safe enough now, bar something out of the ordinary.

But somehow no one seemed to think it safe. That fellow Goggs—he was an unknown quantity as a batsman; and if he could bat half as well as he bowled, anything might happen.

Something happened to Monty Lowther's leg stump with only two runs added, and we were on our feet.

Kildare came in with his hand on the shoulder of Goggs, and I could guess that he was apologising to the Frankingham junior for not putting him on to bowl earlier.

Goggs had taken 8 for 15, and the one wicket Fatty had secured he had had a hand in, with the catch in the slips that dismissed Gussy.

They wanted 176 to win—an easy task. But Kildare was scared cantes against better bowling than ours. And Baker is a sound and generally reliable bat. And there were Fizzy and Kerr and one or two more.

And we were all of us worried. We all had a feeling that if we were to be flicked, it would be through him. It would, anyway, even if he failed with the bat, for it was only his bowing that had given them a chance.

What we were afraid of was that he wouldn't fail, however.

The innings began in a very humdrum fashion.

Levison and Talbot were well on the spot. Kildare played more carefully than usual, and Baker stonewalled.

Half an hour brought only 25 runs. But then Kildare scored three boundaries in one over from Levison.

Kangaroo was put on, and, with only one run added, the skipper played too far forward to a ball from him that came across, and was smartly stumped by Tom.

To our utter amazement Grundy issued from the New House next.

"My hat! Old Grundy's going it some!" remarked Kangaroo.

"He'll get sent back. It's like his giddy check!" Lowther answered.

"It's the limit," added Blake.

"No! I fancy it's all right," Wilkins said. "Grundy told me he should ask to be sent in sooner. He says those two catches prove what sort of a cricketer he really is. And they were jolly good, you know—unless they were flukes."

"Which is as sure as the rising of the sun to-morrow!" answered Levison.

"Oh, I don't know!" said Talbot. "Let a fellow have credit for what he does."

Grundy was taking credit for it—enough and to spare! Kildare sent him back. He swanked up to the vacant wicket, took guard, faced the bowler, and then, just as Kangaroo started his run, put up a hand to stop him.

And if the brazen image didn't walk down the pitch and say to Baker, in tones audible to nearly all the field:

"Go on playing the steady game, Baker! Leave your timing to me; I'll attend to that department!"

Baker is a very good-tempered chap. He must be. He only grinned at that.

Kangaroo grinned, too. He sent down a rare fast one. And if he did not expect to

see old Grundy's stumps fly, he was the only chap among us who didn't.

But I am pretty sure he did.

Grundy didn't, of course.

And for once Grundy was right!

It is my belief that he shut his eyes as he swiped. But the leather went off the edge of the bat, and the grab made at it by Talbot in the slips, and sped boundary-wards.

Grundy did not keep his eyes shut.

"No need to run, Baker," he shouted, in his lordliest style. "It's an easy four!"

Then he leaned upon his bat, his great old face positively radiant. He felt quite sure of that long-deferred century now.

X.

BUT he did not make it. Miracles don't happen every day.

Grundy did not make his century. And yet I am not at all certain that it would be an exaggeration to say that he was worth one to his side.

Goggs came in after Baker had been bowled by Talbot, which happened before any more runs were scored. And if anything—short of that century—could have made Grundy happier than he was, it was being bowled with Goggs.

He talked to Goggs like a Dutch uncle at the end of that over. He told Goggs how much depended upon them; and chiefly, of course upon him—George Alfred Grundy!

"You say what happened to Baker, Goggs," he said gravely. "I told the fellow that he need only keep up his wicket, and I'd do the rest. But I'm blessed if he had sense enough to profit by the advice! A sixth Form chap, too! I'm surprised at him!"

"So am I," replied Goggs wearily. "He not fear, Grundy. In my small way I will do my best to aid you to win the game—i.e., indeed, that be possible."

"Possibly! It's blessed well certain if you'll only stick in!" answered Grundy, with a short.

Grundy didn't tell you how many times Grundy ought to have been out. It was not so much that we missed catches. We were jolly keen, and that didn't happen. But it was the question to set the heart for old Grundy. He didn't make a stroke that was in the book!

He would share for a cut, and somehow the ball would go off his bat to go. He would run out to drive, and the leather would go humming between the slips.

But Grundy was quite satisfied. And there he stood, as though he had somehow kept his bat in the way of the straight ones. We had never seen him do that before.

Now, Goggs—well, we all reckoned that Goggs was going to get a place in after any county side! There was nothing showy about him. He did not seem to be exerting himself even when he hit fours, and he hit fours pretty often.

He was all done up by perfect timing.

He had taken his glasses off, and without them he looked no longer meek and mild and rather shy.

Grundy had got to twenty. It was a big enough slice of a blessed miracle for any of us.

Then something happened. Grundy hit a ball straight to a man, called widdly, and bolted down the pitch.

It was not his call. The wicket chiefly in danger was his partner's.

Perhaps Goggs ought to have yelled "No!" But he was very quick on his feet, and he saw that Grundy would have no chance to get back.

Catch!

Grundy had barged right into Goggs, and Goggs went down.

It was Levison who had helped the ball. He is jolly handy. He saw Grundy after staring stupidly at Goggs for a second, turn to rush back, and he promptly clucked the leather to the bowler instead of to the wicket-keeper. They had not crossed, and Levison knew that getting out Goggs was far more important than disposing of Grundy.

We all reckoned that each ball might be Grundy's last.

But Grundy must have seen, too, for he swung round again, gave a clumsy jump which cleared Goggs, and sacrificed himself to save his partner!

And he did it knowingly, too. We should have doubted that but for what he said.

"I'm not sorry!" he puffed. "Bit too close a thing. I forgot that Goggs ain't so fast as I am. But he's a jolly fine bat, and I reckoned it was up to me!"

The balls had been lifted before Talbot realised that was happening. We could not blame him, and most certainly we could not blame Levison. But the wrong man was out!

Faces grew long as first Monteth and then Figgie gave Goggs useful support, and the score mounted. But Figgie got his leg in the way of a straight one from Levison, and one out of the box from Kangaroo put paid to Kerr's account, and six wickets were down, with over fifty still wanted for victory.

Goggs stayed on. He never gave anything like a chance. But for some time he had but a small share of the bowling, and his score hung about seventy for quite ten minutes.

During that time three more wickets fell, and only two runs were added.

Railton whipped in, with fifty-one still needed. It seemed all over bar the shouting, for Railton's left hand is pretty useless still.

He put both hands to the bat—hands this time. It seemed ages since we had last seen him try to make any effective use of his left fin.

There was no strength in it, but to grip with both hands enabled him to play a straight bat.

We could all see his game. He meant to leave the run-getting to Goggs. Railton is as good a sportsman as anyone living, and no slouch of a cricketer, though he does not play much nowadays.

"Bravo, sir!" yelled Kidare, as our House-master played back six straight and fast balls from Kangaroo.

"Oh, well hit, Goggs!" he sang out a few seconds later.

Three fours and a two Goggs took off Levison's over.

Then Railton got one away to leg—a single only—and Goggs hit Kangaroo for ten off the remaining five balls.

It was a double chance for us side to feel happy. Only 20 were wanted now, and we didn't want them.

Tom and Talbot went on, and the scoring slackened for a while. But Railton stooped, and Goggs waited his chance to hit safely—as cool as ever, though now he was close on his century, and that is a time when many a really good bats falls a victim to nerves.

He was 97 when Levison was given another trial with the ball. He tapped one gently past shorter, and was 98. Then Levison sent one so close to Railton's off stump that another coat of paint would have done the trick.

Off the next ball Cive had the shadow of a chance. There was no shame in his failure. Most chaps would not have tried, and he nearly did it; but he looked sick.

They ran on, and Goggs fired Levison again. The ball came down fast, with a nasty little nip from the off—just the sort of ball that a fellow does not like at any time, and more particularly when his score stands at close on 100.

Goggs played it as coolly and calmly as if he were at the nets. The next was a trifle short. He ran in, not at all full in the middle of his bat, and he lifted it over the batter's head, over long-field's head, over the ropes—six!

Everyone roared. It is only the truth to say that there wasn't a chap in the field who did not want Goggs to get that century.

But we felt that he had done enough for honour now, and might well ease up.

Kidare, naturally, felt otherwise. I don't suppose that at the start he had minded much about the result. It was not like a school, or even a House match. But it had turned out such a struggle that he was as keen as mustard on winning by this time.

He came out with a lemon squash for Goggs, and struck him in the hip.

"But I'm not giving you orders," he said. "Strikes me you know as well what to do as I or anyone else can tell you!"

He had seen at a glance that getting his century had not excited Goggs, or made him think nothing else mattered.

They only wanted nine now. We concentrated on Railton, swarmed round him like bees, while Talbot did all he knew to get him to put up a catch.

Railton smiled grimly, and kept them down with amazing steadiness.

Then Levison had another go at Goggs. Levison is a cool customer, as you all know, but he was not as cool as Goggs then.

The ball whizzed past Tom at cover, and sped to the boundary—six!

Just as well it was Tom. If it had been anyone else, he might have thought it should have been stopped. But I don't think the best ever living could have got to it.

Five more runs.

We half expected to see Goggs hit another six, and finish off the game. But Goggs was risking nothing. He played four balls, and took a single off the last of the over.

Now only four remained to get; but it was not much the third ball of the over that Goggs scored, and then the stroke only realised two. They might have run three, perhaps; but Railton was slim—he wouldn't have it.

Two more balls were tapped gently back, Talbot was on his mettle. If only he could get past that straight bat, scoring as wide as a barn-door now, his side would win by a single, and great kudos would accrue to Talbot.

But it was no go! The last ball was on the leg stump, Goggs half-turned, taking the risk of covering his wicket, and glided it away to the third man's fashion.

Four—and Kidare's team had won by a wicket!

"I never saw a better innings in my life!" said Railton.

Goggs looked.

"I think you, sir," he said. "If I may venture to say so, yours was also a good innings!"

So it was, though Railton had only scored three off the 33 added during the partnership. And it's nothing but the fact to say that, though, of course, we would rather have won, we were all so glad that Railton had helped so manfully to beat us.

As for Goggs, it seemed as though the fellows did not know how to make enough of him. Figgins & Co. and Redfern & Co. were in a sort of conspiracy to claim him as being much more New than School House, in view of what had happened while he was marked "absent" on the score-sheet; but we would not have that.

Racke & Co. Oh, they never had another chance! If they had tried on anything, they would have come jolly near getting lynched! And that's the yarn of Johnny Goggs at St. Jim's.

THE END.

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## THE HOLIDAYS!

By a Fellow who Means to Use Them Well.

Oh, for the holidays!  
Just one long, restful day—  
Lying full-length by the upturning sea,  
To doze till the rocks fly home to sea,  
That's the hacker's notion, don't you see?  
And it's no sort of use for you and me—  
Not our kind of holidays!

Oh, for the holidays!  
The good, hard-working, jolly days!  
Tying up sheaves in rough straw bands,  
Or pitching till blisters come out on one's hands,  
Or leading geese where the big rich stands,  
Or any old thing that the farmer commands—  
That's our sort of holidays!

*Eat less  
Bread*

# Queries by Queer Querists.

REPLIES BY MONTY LOWTHER.

Where, and what, is the Hindenburg Line? The Hindenburg Line is an imaginary line "somewhere" in France. Owing to the large numbers of soldiers who are continually marching over it, it is being gradually worn away. To remedy this it has been, and is being, moved further back each day.

Can you describe a German victory? Yes. Here are three versions: 1. At a cost of 3,000 lives, 300 yards of trenches are captured, and held for 30 minutes. After which, for purely "military reasons," of course, they are evacuated.

2. The British deliver an attack, their objective being six miles of trenches. They only occupy five miles of trenches, which means, of course, that they were frustrated; and if they were frustrated they were beaten; and if they were beaten, then the Germans must have won; and if the Germans won, they must have had a victory. What's the plainer?

3. Six destroyers leave the Kiel Canal and enter the "German Ocean." They sight three British destroyers, and, not wishing to annihilate them, retire majestically. Owing to a "misunderstanding," two of them are sunk and two more damaged. The two remaining reach the Kiel Canal again, where they announce that they encountered strong enemy squadrons, and forced them to run; which is quite correct, for if the British ships had not "run" they would never have sunk the two German boats, and if the British ships had been foiled, then the German ships would have been sunk. So what's the plainer? The British ships had to run, and their plans were foiled; and if that isn't a German victory—then they never had one!

What were the German seamen asked when they returned from the Jutland Battle? Did Jellicoe Beat-ty?

What are the Germans proficient in? Among other things: "Arms upward stretch," "knees bend."

Is it correct that Germany is getting "fed up"? Certainly not! If you can't get "fed up" of once a week, then how do you expect a German to get "fed up" on half that quantity?

Is it correct that some of the Germans have fallen on hard times? It is! And some of them have fallen on something considerably harder than "times," too! I refer to the airman.

Can you tell me when the war will end? *Atrocious!* But here goes. Think of a date, double it, and three to it, divide it by four, multiply it by ten, add the number of hairs in a cow's tail, deduct the number of lies told by Trimble in a week, and—*you may have the date, though perhaps not in the correct order of the figures.*

What would happen if Germany should win? With sorrow I say it—the Allies would lose.

What do the German airmen do who are in a Zeppelin when it is brought down? *Really do not know.* But if they were not too sure to soar, I expect they would feel like taking a rise out of the country.

Is it true that British soldiers are forced to drink rum before a big push commences? A "rum" query. Not knowing, can't say. Don't want to tread on anyone's toes, but I should think quite some of them would not need forcing.

Is it correct that the British soldier has more grit than any other soldier in the world? It is! And, what's more, the dust is now so plentiful that each and every person has more than his "allowance" of grit. To use their own words, some of the "hows" are full of it!

# Answers to Correspondents.

From "Tem Merry's Weekly."

"Anxious."—Invest your money in War Savings Certificates by all means. In five years' time they give you a pound for your pound. But this is not all. If you put your certificate in your pocket, you double it, and when you take it out you find it in creases.

"Patriot."—No, we cannot undertake to be the war we cannot say, but there is no doubt that its capital is Dublin.

A. A. D.A.—No; at present the Collar Consul has issued no order limiting the height of collars. This may come; indeed, collars may disappear altogether. But do not be alarmed. When you turn eighteen you will be collared by the recruiting-officer.

"Patriot."—No, we cannot undertake to be the war we cannot say, but there is no doubt that its capital is Dublin.

"Constant Reader" says that he has never found a baker willing to supply 14lb. of bread at once. He wants the address of the chap who asked for bread and they gave him a starch rule.

"Inquirer."—It is true that since the outbreak of war the Germans have been unable to obtain champagne. The British troops, however, are giving them real pain.

"Patriot."—The initials stand for Docoid Smart Officer.

"New House."—We are glad to hear that Higgins won the mile and Kerr the half-mile. But who did Fatty Wynn?

"Haricot."—It is true there is a shortage, but we are bidden to help even our enemies, so we cannot blame Haig for giving the Germans bread.

"Pacifist."—Yes, the Germans have announced that they are willing to go to the Hague for a Peace Conference. But it is not necessary for them to go to the Hague. Haig is coming to them.

"Tanks."—Yes, it is quite easy to get a Tank to the front. All you need is an engineer and an engine there!

"Weary Willie" says he was keen about the war at the start, but now he is fed up. We can only conclude that "Weary Willie" has been exceeding the food allowance. The rules were specially designed to prevent people getting fed up.

X. Y. Z.—We do not know whether Hindenburg is a "shy man," as the German papers say, but certainly he appears to be of a retiring disposition.

"Puzzled" asks: "Why did the blunder?" We think it was because the hedgerows.

"Pro-German."—You think that the Hun is in the right, and that we ought to make peace at once and apologise handsomely; and you are willing to call at our office and explain your views at length if we will fix a date. Certainly! But the date is about the middle of September. We shall have our new football boots by then.

A Classical Student points out that at one time, during the decadence of the Roman Empire the number of officials who lived upon the public equalled that of the public itself, and that this was one of the prime causes of the fall of Rome. He says that the British Empire is going the same way. He need not be alarmed. At present not more than one man in every three is an official. Moreover, the number is to be reduced by several millions at the end of the war.

G. Figgins.—"Equality of sacrifice" is the order of the day. If doz liceones are taken away from the front, the poet will be deprived of their licence at the same time.

B.—The most perfect system does not always work out successfully every time. The Food Regulations were decreed to prevent waste. Yet, since they came into force, Fatty Wynn has a wait for the first time in his life.

R. R. C.—This is a free country—um, yes! There are "Dora" and a few other trifies to consider; but, speaking generally—um, yes!—one may say that this is a free country. Nevertheless, we cannot see our way to publishing a public auction. The poet will be as free as we are, you see—more so, in some ways. And the particular master you want us to hold up to despiery is particularly free with the cane. "Nuff said!"

# MAKERS OF WAR.

By HUGH MERRUS.

(Author of "Bosh!" "Go and Eat Coke!" "Oh, Where Did You Get That Face?" etc.)

[The writer of this screed is anonymous, but that chump Monty has been grinning and chucking over it ever since he saw the proof; and I strongly suspect him.—T.M.]

I.

HERR GOBBLEBERTON and Herr Gutzergallion were shown into a partially-furnished room, and seated themselves upon simulation mahogany chairs.

"Vah!" inquired Mr. Quid-Beforall, the well-known, naturalised British contractor. "Vat you vant in England, and vis me, meiner freunden?"

Herr Gobblerberton rubbed his empty stomach, and Herr Gutzergallion licked his dry lips.

"Der grub and der trinken. Ve haf gum from Chermany about heem both. Make ein var, and ve haf them both."

Mr. Quid-Beforall glanced reflectively at the simulation gold-framed picture on the simulation oak-panelled wall.

"Ya, das ist ve good!" he commented approvingly. "Ein var would enable you to put up ze prices of your pork in Chermany, and you would make money. It would also make der British Government demant steel and iron, and I would make money."

"Ya, ya!"

"Den let me see. Englant, France, Russia, and Belgium on der vud side. On der older Chermany side, I haf been."

He rattled a simulation silver gong, and the footman appeared.

"Fritz," ordered Mr. Quid-Beforall, "vat is to be declared? See to it!"

II.

TWO years later Mr. Quid-Beforall yawned, and glanced at his genuine gold watch. Herr Gobblerberton and Herr Gutzergallion were ushered into the consummately-furnished apartment, and seated themselves upon genuine mahogany chairs.

"Ve call opout dat var," said Herr Gobblerberton.

"Ach, ya! Is it still in progress?"

"It is," and ve vant heem to cease," declared Herr Gutzergallion. "Der Cherman Government haf made a maximum selling-price, and ve make less profit dan before der var."

"Zo? Vun moment."

Mr. Quid-Beforall referred to some ledgers and other books. He gave an exclamation which was half "Ehops-bein!"

"Of course, it was duly naturalised."

"Der Government!" he roared. "Der British Government have begun to knock off six per cent discount! Vy, I make nozing on der var now! I lose! It must stop as vance!"

He struck the genuine silver gong, and the footman appeared, bearing a genuine silver salver.

"Fritz, stop dis var!"

"Ach! I cannot, mein herr!"

"Sie kenne nicht? Und vy?"

"Zo? Vun moment. I will not allow it."

"Workingmen? Who are dose?" Are dey—

Ach! I know! Dose queer creatures vat live in tenements—hein? Vat go in and out of our doors—Ehops-bein!"

"Dose are dey, mein herr. Dey vill not stand it. In Russia dey haf revolted. In Englant dey mean to fight and vin. Und here is ein brief—a letter for you, mein herr."

Mr. Quid-Beforall slit the envelope hurriedly, and fell back with a cry.

"Called up!" he groaned. "I must go right vs dose workmen. Der peesins he must go cheap, and I vas run! Dunner und blitzen! How hard is Fate on ein righteous man!"

Then Gobblerberton and Herr Gutzergallion slowly wended their way towards the internment camp. Blowing up a few munition-factories on route.