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THE PLUNGER!

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



WALLY WANTS TO WHACK GUSSY!

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A MAGNIFICENT NEW, LONG, COMPLETE SCHOOL STORY OF TOM MERRY & CO. AT ST JIM'S.

THE PLUNGER!

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1.

Trouble in Study No. 6.

"FIFTEEN to one against!"
Jack Blake stopped dead in the doorway of Study No. 6. He was astonished.

Blake had come up to the study for his noble chum, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. He heard that remark as he reached the door.

Arthur Augustus, the ornament of the Fourth Form, was alone in the study. He was evidently talking to himself.

The swell of St. Jim's was quite unaware that Jack Blake had arrived in the open doorway, and was standing there glaring at him. He was buried deep in thought. There was a deep wrinkle in his noble brow, and his eyes were glued upon a newspaper in his hand.

And clearly and distinctly there came to Blake's astonished ears the remark, repeated slowly and thoughtfully:

"Fifteen to one against, bai Jove!"

"My only hat!" murmured Blake.

"Fifteen to one; and the chap says that the horse is a winnah. I wondah how he knows. These horsy johnnies know a lot of things, I suppose."

Arthur Augustus was still talking to himself, or to the newspaper. Blake fairly gasped.

He would not have been surprised to see Crooke or Racke reading over a racing list in the newspaper, and pondering over the odds.

But D'Arcy of the Fourth—the great Arthur Augustus, whose scorn and contempt for the "horsy" set knew no bounds!

Blake was almost dazed.

"Fifteen to one against Jolly Woger," went on the swell of the School House. "Bai Jove! If a fellow laid ten pounds on Jolly Woger he would bag a hundred and fifty pounds in a lump! That is weally a vewy large sum of money."

"Gussy!" shrieked Blake.

Arthur Augustus started violently and jumped up.

For the moment his stately manners lost the repose which stamps the caste of Vere de Vere.

Hurriedly he thrust the pink paper under his jacket, and stood facing his chum with a crimson flush in his cheeks.

He was evidently taken utterly aback. Jack Blake gave him an accusing glare. He was astonished, and he was shocked. He really felt a slight doubt as to whether the Hon. Arthur Augustus was quite in his right mind just then.

"Gussy!" gasped Blake.

"Ya-a-as, deah boy?"

"What have you got there?"

"Where?"

"That paper!" howled Blake.

"Oh! Ah! Ahem!"

That was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's reply, and it could not be called lucid or explanatory.

"That's one of Racke's sporting papers!" exclaimed Blake.

"Oh!"

"What are you doing with it?"

"Ah!"

"What do you know about Jolly Roger and fifteen to one against?" demanded Blake witheringly.

"Ahem!"

"Are you potty?" roared Blake, his astonishment mingled with anger now. "Are you fairly off your silly crummet?"

"Weally, Blake—"

"What do you mean, then?"

"M-m-mean?"

"What have you got that paper for?"

"P-p-paper?"

"Are you going to back a horse fifteen to one against?" demanded Blake, with angry sarcasm.

"B-b-back a horse!" stammered Arthur Augustus.

"You fellows coming?" shouted Herries from the passage.

"Get a move on," came Digby's voice. "We're not going to stay the whole afternoon on the staircase, if you don't mind."

Blake stepped out of the study.

"Come here, you chaps," he called out to Herries and Digby.

"Oh, rats! You come here. We're waiting."

"Come here, I tell you!"

"Look here, are we going down to Rylcombe, or are we not going down to Rylcombe?" demanded Herries warmly.

"Bother Rylcombe! Come here."

Herries snorted, and Digby grunted; but they came along the passage from the staircase. The serious expression on Jack Blake's face rather startled them as they joined him.

"Anything up?" asked Digby.

"Yes. Come into the study."

"But what the thump—" began Herries.

"Come in, I tell you. We don't want all the School House to hear," said Blake gruffly. "There's that sneaking worm Trimble in the passage yonder!"

Herries and Digby, in great astonishment, came into the study, and Jack Blake closed the door carefully. Arthur Augustus was putting on his elegant and spotless gloves.

"I am weady, deah boys," he remarked mildly. "What are you shuttin' the door for, Blake?"

"We're going to have this out," growled Blake.

"Have what out?" demanded Herries. "Gussy's making a silly fool of himself!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Not much making wanted," commented Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"The frabjous ass," said Blake, in measured tones. "has got a sporting paper there!"

"What?"

"He was babbling about Jolly Roger—a racehorse, I suppose—and fifteen to one against, when I came into the room."

"Great Scott!"

"Now he's got to explain," said Blake. "We don't allow any sportsmen of Racke's kind in this study."

"If you mean to infer, Blake, that I

bear the wemotest wesemblance to Wacke of the Shell—" began Arthur Augustus hotly.

"That's one of Racke's sporting papers?"

"Yaas," said D'Arcy hesitatingly.

"What were you doing with it?"

"Weadin' it."

"And what the dickens were you readin' a sporting paper for?" demanded Herries, staring at the swell of St. Jim's in astonishment.

No reply.

"Will you explain?" demanded Blake.

"There is nothin' to explain, deah boy."

"He can't be idiot enough to be taking up Racke's games, and making fool bets on races!" said Digby, in wonder.

"I believe he's idiot enough for anything," said Blake wrathfully. "Just the kind of silly idiot to be led into something shady by some cad!"

"I wefuse to be called a sillay idiot, Blake."

"Tell us what you've got that paper for, Gussy," said Digby. "You can tell your own pals, can't you?"

Arthur Augustus shook his head.

"I am sowwy, Dig, that I cannot confide the mattah to you."

"Why not?" snorted Herries.

"Because I cannot vewy well wely upon the discretion of you youngstabs."

That reply was evidently intended to satisfy the three chums that further questioning was futile. As a matter of fact, it had a most exasperating effect on Blake & Co.

"You frabjous ass!" ejaculated Blake.

"You frumchious chump!" said Digby.

"You burbling dummy!" said Herries.

"Weally, deah boys, your mannahs are wathah lackin' in polish," said Arthur Augustus calmly. "I wepeat that I am weady to walk down to Wylcombe. Are you fellows comin'?"

"Not till this matter's settled!" answered Blake. "You can look on us as your keepers, Gussy!"

"You uttah ass!" shouted Arthur Augustus indignantly. "I uttably wefuse to wegard you as my keepahs!"

"What are you doing with Racke's racing paper?"

"Wats!"

"Wha-a-t?"

"I wepeat, 'wats!' Now let us go down to Wylcombe."

Jack Blake drew a deep breath.

"I don't know what this means," he said. "It looks to me as if Racke of the Shell is trying to get Gussy into his shady games, and Gussy is imbecile enough to let him. This study isn't going to be disgraced, I know that! Give me that paper, Gussy, and I'll take it back to Racke, with the compliments of Study No. 6."

"I am sowwy I cannot give you the papah, Blake."

"And why not?"

"I wequiah it."

"Then you're betting on horses!" yelled Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Are you making bets on horse-

“Are you going to be a sneaking, shady, gambling cad like Racke?”

“I regard that question as an insult, Dig! Undah the cires, I must wese to discuss the maffah furthah. Now,” added Arthur Augustus, in a stately manner, “if you fellows are weady, we will start for Wylcombe.”

“We’re not quite ready yet!” said Blake grimly. “Give me that paper!”

“Wubbish!”

“Then I’ll jolly well take it!” Arthur Augustus backed away.

“I twust, Blake, that you will not compel me to give you a feahful thwashin’!” he exclaimed warningly.

“I trust not!” grinned Blake. “Lend a hand, you fellows!”

“You bet!”

Blake and Herries and Digby closed in upon the swell of the Fourth at once. They were Gussy’s chums, and as his chums they had a natural right to handle him for his own good. The bare idea of Gussy, in his simplicity of mind, being led into Racke’s shady pursuits was exasperating to them; and they were nearly as much exasperated with Gussy as with the cad of the Shell.

Arthur Augustus put up his hands as they collared him; he was wrathful, too. But in a twinkling he was bumping on the carpet.

“Yawwoh!” he roared.

The pink paper slid from under his jacket and fell on the carpet. Jack Blake caught it up.

“Welease me!” shrieked Arthur Augustus. “Bai Jove, I will thwash you all wound! Get off my waistcoat, Dig, you wottah! Weturn that papah at once, Blake!”

“Sit on him!” said Blake. “I’m going to see Racke!”

“Welease me—”

Blake strode out of the study with the pink paper crumpled in his hand. Arthur Augustus made a desperate attempt to rise, and Herries and Dig sat on him without ceremony. The Honourable Arthur Augustus had no chance of intervening in Blake’s interview with Racke of the Shell.

CHAPTER 2.

Rough on Racke.

“H ALT!” Blake was striding along the Shell passage with heavy steps and a frowning brow when Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther came out of their study.

The Terrible Three playfully lined up across the passage and brought him to a halt.

Blake glared at them. He was in no humour for playfulness just then.

“Let me pass, you asses!” he snapped.

“My dear man, you look excited!” said Monty Lowther soothingly. “Let not your angry passions rise, my good little boy!”

“Fathead!” roared Blake.

But Monty Lowther persisted in being soothing. Perhaps he knew that it was the most exasperating thing he could do.

“Shush!” he murmured, with a gentle wave of the hand.

“Calm yourself, dear boy!” grinned Manners.

“Mustn’t get excited!” murmured Tom Merry. “Can’t have obstreperous fags barging about the Shell passage! Shush!”

“You silly chumps, I’ve come here to thrash one of your Shell beauties!” roared Blake wrathfully.

“Shush!” murmured Lowther reprovingly. “Let Huns delight to bark and bite, it is their nature to—”

“Will you—”

“Let Turks and Bulgars growl and fight, it is their nature, too,” continued Monty Lowther calmly.

“You—you—”

“But Fourth Form fags should never let their angry passions rise,” added the humorist of the Shell. “Their little fists were never meant to black a fellow’s eyes!”

“I want to see Racke!” said Blake, restraining an impulse to rush on the Terrible Three. “The low cad’s been up to his tricks again, and I’m going to smash him!”

“Phew! What’s the trouble?” asked Tom Merry.

Blake held up the racing paper.

“Look at that!”

“My dear child!” said Lowther, in a shocked tone. “In war-time, too! I’m surprised at you, Blake!”

“You silly idiot! I found Gussy mooning over this, and it’s Racke’s. I’m going to take it back to him, and talk to him. Now, let me pass, or I’ll buff you!”

“The Terrible Three, reduced to seriousness at last, broke up their defensive line.

“We’ll come with you,” said Tom Merry.

THE BUTTERFLY.

Perhaps you don’t know Cheerful Charlie. If that is so, let us say that you ought not to lose any time in making the acquaintance of this sprightly young fellow. He is a fine soldier, a manly lad; but he is also a ventriloquist, and he bubbles over with fun from morning till night.

The pranks he gets up to by making use of his remarkable gift appear every week exclusively in



There are many other features in this bright little journal which will make you laugh and lighten your load of care in these anxious times. You all know the eminent comedian, T. E. Dunville. A page of pictures, showing him in some side-splitting adventure, appears also in the “Butterfly,” and “Butterfly Bill” has made his mark as one of the funniest of front-page characters in any comic paper. Then there are many other screamingly funny pictures; and the reading-matter, too, is excellent.

Altogether, if you are in want of a paper which is packed with the best of features in fun and reading-matter, you should place an order with your newsagent to save for you a copy of the “Butterfly,” published every Tuesday, price 1½d.

Blake strode on to Racke’s study, and the chums of the Shell followed him. Blake kicked open the study door with a crash.

There was an angry exclamation within.

“Aubrey Racke and Gerald Crooke, the black sheep of the Shell, were both there, smoking cigarettes and talking “gee-gees.” They jumped up as Jack Blake burst in, with flashing eyes and a brow of thunder.

Racke stared at him angrily. Crooke was gasping and choking; his cigarette had slipped into his mouth as he jumped up in alarm.

“You silly fool!” roared Racke. “What do you mean by bursting in like a wild Hun? Get out of my study!”

Blake thrust the racing paper under his nose.

“Is that yours?” he bellowed.

“Eh? Yes. That’s mine!”

“I’ve brought it back.”

“Is D’Arcy done with it?” sneered Racke.

Blake panted with wrath.

“You sneaking, racing, gambling,

blackguardly worm!” he shouted. “I’ve brought it back, and now I’m going to tell you what I think of you for lending it to a chap in my study!”

“Hands off, you fool!” yelled Racke as Blake rushed at him.

Blake had said that he was going to tell Racke what he thought of him; but he was evidently depending on actions in the place of words. Perhaps his meaning was plain enough.

His fists crashed into Racke’s face, and he received without heeding the savage blows that Aubrey Racke struck in return.

Racke was a good deal bigger and older than Blake; but he did not seem to have much chance against the sturdy Fourth-Former. Slacking and smoking did not conduce to fitness.

He went backwards round the study, defending himself desperately, but not very successfully.

Crooke, having ejected his cigarette, stood looking on blankly. He did not offer to interfere.

He might have lent his chum a hand but for the presence of the Terrible Three in the doorway. But Tom Merry & Co. were there to see fair play.

Crash!

Racke stumbled over a chair, and went to the floor.

Blake almost pranced round him as he lay gasping, brandishing his fists, still unsatisfied.

“Get up!” he roared.

“Yow-ow!”

“Let him alone!” muttered Crooke.

“Get out, you bully!”

Smack!

The back of Blake’s hand caught George Gerald Crooke across the face, and Crooke spun away. That was Blake’s reply to Crooke.

The uproar in the study had drawn several fellows along the passage to see what the row was about. Talbot of the Shell looked in.

“What’s the row?” he asked.

“Only a chap killing Racke!” answered Monty Lowther serenely. “It’s all right! He’s not dead yet!”

“Get up and be finished, Racke!” suggested Manners.

“Yow-ow-ow!”

“You sneaking funk,” roared Blake, “you’re not liked yet! Get up, or I’ll use my boots on you!”

“Here, draw it mild,” said Grundy of the Shell from the passage. “None of that, Blake! I don’t allow it.”

“Mind your own business, you fool!”

“Wha-a-at?”

“Keep off the grass, Grundy,” said Tom Merry. “You’re not wanted here.”

“Will you get up, Racke?”

“No,” panted Racke. “I won’t! Get out of my study, you cad! I’ll go to Mr. Railton about this. Ow!”

“Take your racing papers with you when you go,” chuckled Monty Lowther. “Our beloved Housemaster will be interested in them.”

Blake drew back his boot. He was in deadly earnest, and Aubrey Racke jumped up. He preferred Blake’s fists to his boots.

“Go it, ye cripples!” grinned Kangaroo of the Shell from over Tom Merry’s shoulder at the door. “Crooke, old scout, as a sportin’ chap, will you give ten to one on Blake?”

“Ha, ha, ha!”

Tramp, tramp, tramp! Crash!

Aubrey Racke was putting up a good fight now; he had no choice. But he was driven round the study under a shower of hard hitting. Blake’s face was set and savage, and he had no mercy. Racke’s dingy blackguardism was nothing to him so long as Aubrey

kept it to himself, but when he extended it to Study No. 6 it was time for drastic measures. And there was no doubt that Blake's measures were drastic enough.

Racke went down again, at last, and lay gasping and palpitating. This time it was genuine; he couldn't go on.

There was a scuffle in the passage as Arthur Augustus D'Arcy forced his way through the crowd of juniors there and burst into the study.

"Blake, you sillay ass, let Wacke alone!" he shouted.

"I'll let him alone now," said Blake grimly.

"You uttah ass, you are labahin' undah a missapprehension," gasped Arthur Augustus. "Wacke lent me that papah at my own wequest."

"What?"

"I came heah of my own accord to bowwow that papah of Wacke!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "He is not to blame in any way. He simply allowed me to take the papah at my wequest."

Blake blinked at him.

"You—you—you," he gasped—"you mean to tell me that you're going in for this kind of thing of your own accord, without being led into it?"

"I do not mean to tell you anythin', Blake. I wegard you as buttin' into a mattah that doesn't concern you."

"Oh!" gasped Blake.

Aubrey Racke, groaning, scrambled to his feet. Gussy's explanation had come too late to save him from a terrific licking. Perhaps Blake had been a little hasty. But he was not sorry. What was a fellow doing with racing papers in a St. Jim's study, anyway? Racke deserved all that he had received.

"You silly fool," hissed Racke, "get out of my study! Ow! Hang you, get out!"

"I am sowwy, Wacke, that that sillay duffah has given you a feahful thwashin' for nothin'."

"Oh, get out!" snarled Racke ungratefully.

"Weally, Wacke—"

"Get out, you fool!"

Arthur Augustus' noble eye gleamed for a moment, but he answered calmly:

"Undah the cires, Wacke, I will excuse that extremely opprobrious expwession, as you are wathah excited. I will wetiah."

And he did.

He was followed by wondering stares from all the juniors there. The amazing incident was the talk of the School House in a quarter of an hour. By that time every junior in the House knew that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the once spotless and lofty swell of the Fourth, was taking up "Racke's games," and starting in life as a "merry blade" and a "gay dog" and a "goer." The astonishment was great, and the news was welcome to Trimble and Mellish and Scrope, and other fellows of the shady set. But to other fellows the news was very far from welcome, and there were a great many juniors in the School House who were shocked and concerned and anxious about Gussy.

CHAPTER 3.

Baggy's Latest.

BAGGY TRIMBLE of the Fourth came into the Common-room that evening with a very important expression upon his fat face.

He had a sheet of paper in his hand, which he proceeded to tack up on the wall; a proceeding that was watched with curiosity by a good many eyes.

There was a buzz of talk in the Common-room; and, as a matter of fact, the talk mostly ran upon the latest and **THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 544.**

most astonishing development in Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

The circumstance that Arthur Augustus was following in Racke's footsteps was, as many fellows remarked, flabbergasting.

The swell of St. Jim's had never concealed his contempt for Aubrey Racke and his shady ways, and had never hesitated about expressing it.

He had been heard to make strong remarks upon the iniquity of carrying on racing in war-time, too.

And yet here he was, on his own confession, imitating the sportive Aubrey.

For what could he want with a racing paper save to imitate Racke in his pursuits? He had not even denied it.

Blake's assumption that Racke had been trying to lead the wealthy Gussy into his own ways was natural enough, but it had been a mistake. It appeared that D'Arcy had actually asked Racke for the loan of his pink paper without any previous overtures from Racke.

Indeed, Gussy, as his friends had always known him, would have been a dangerous person to make overtures to in such matters as gambling and betting on races.

What was the matter with him?

After such a show-up the juniors did not expect to see D'Arcy in the Common-room that evening. But he came in quietly and sedately, looking a little more reserved and lofty than usual.

His chums were not with him. In the Common-room it was observed that Blake and Herries and Digby did not approach their chum. There was a rift in the lute—not surprising, as matters stood.

Tom Merry looked very curiously at Gussy as he came in. Gussy, apparently not noticing the defection of his chums, was reading quietly in an armchair. Certainly he did not look like a fellow with a guilty conscience.

But the entrance of Baggy Trimble, and his curious proceedings, drew the general attention off the swell of St. Jim's.

Even Arthur Augustus glanced up from his book as the fat junior fastened up the paper on the wall of the Common-room.

Baggy stepped back and smirked as he found nearly all the eyes in the room turned upon him.

"Look at that!" he said.

The juniors looked. The paper was daubed with large capital letters—daubed with a brush in Baggy's far from artistic hand. And it ran:

"NOTICE!

Roll up!

THE COTTAGE HOSPITAL AT RYLCOMBE IS A HUNDRED POUNDS SHORT!

£100! £100! £100!

Contributions to the Fund will be received by B. Trimble, Esquire, IVth Form, to enny amount. Resats given in each case.

ROLL UP AND CONTRIBEW! (Sined) BAGGY TRIMBLE."

Baggy Trimble blinked at the School House juniors to ascertain the effect of that announcement upon them.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus.

"You silly ass!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"You spoofing fraud!" hooted Grundy.

"Rats!"

"Take it down!"

"Look here, you fellows," said Trimble warmly, "you've seen the appeals in the local paper. The Cottage Hospital is a hundred quid short. They take in wounded Tommies there. It's up to St. Jim's to lend a hand."

"There's a collecting-box downstairs," said Tom Merry. "I think nearly everybody has shoved something in."

"I haven't noticed Trimble near it," grinned Lowther.

Trimble coughed.

"I'm getting up a fund of my own," he said. "I hope to raise at least twenty pounds to put into the—"

"Tuckshop?" asked Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"No, you ass; the Cottage Hospital!" hooted Trimble. "I think all the fellows ought to do their bit. I suppose you can trust me?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I shall give you a receipt for every contribution, of course. Now, how much are you fellows going to stand?" asked Trimble encouragingly.

"Bai Jove! You checky ass!"

"You had better put in something handsome, D'Arcy. Better than putting it on horses, I should think!"

"That's one for Trimble," grinned Mellish.

Arthur Augustus flushed, but he made no rejoinder to that remark.

"What about you, Grundy?"

Grundy snorted.

"I should want to know where the money was going!" he said.

"It's going to the Cottage Hospital, of course. Can't you read?"

"You're not starting a tuckshop fund for the sole benefit of Baggy Trimble?" asked Dick Julian.

"If you think I'm capable of that, Julian—"

"I do, rather!" grinned Julian.

"As a matter of fact, Julian, you ought to contribute something decent," said Trimble. "Your uncle, old Moses, is rolling in money, and you've got lots. Now, shell out, old chap, and show these fellows that a Jew can part with money."

Dick Julian laughed.

"I don't think you'll get either Jew or Gentile to trust you with cash, Baggy," he remarked.

"I say, Tom Merry—"

"Oh, cheese it!" said the captain of the Shell gruffly. "Take that rubbish down off the wall, and dry up."

"Chuck it!" said Blake. "Don't we know you, you fat spoofer?"

Baggy Trimble glared at the juniors in great wrath. He had evidently taken a great deal of trouble over that daubed notice, though he had not gone to the length of consulting a dictionary for the spelling.

Apparently he had expected it to produce a great effect upon the School House fellows.

There were always subscriptions from St. Jim's for the local Cottage Hospital, and there had been a good deal of discussion lately on the deficit in the accounts. Several fellows had remarked that it was a chance for a millionaire, who could easily spare a hundred pounds.

Indeed, some fellows had suggested to Aubrey Racke to write to his father, the celebrated war profiteer, and give him a tip to send a cheque along—a suggestion which only made Aubrey sniff.

Baggy, having noted the general interest taken in the subject, had plainly seen a chance to do a little war profiteering himself, or thought so, at all events. He was disappointed.

The expression on Baggy's podgy face was of contempt and disgust and disappointment all rolled in one.

"You—you mean to say that you won't trust me with the funds?" he exclaimed at last, in great indignation.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a roar of laughter at the idea.

"You duffer!" yelled Wilkins. "Do you think anybody would trust you with an empty sardine-tin?"

"I'd rather trust a Hun myself," said Gamm.

"I suppose you fellows are joking," said Baggy. "Of course, I shall give you a receipt, and every shilling will be handed over to the Cottage Hospital."

"What about the half-crowns?" grinned Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The half-crowns, too, you ass! Are you going to stand half-a-crown, Lowther?"

"After the war," answered Lowther cheerfully. "I shall be getting three half-crowns a week then for nothing, and I'll let you have one."

Trimble snorted. He did not want to wait for a "whack" in Monty Lowther's old-age pension.

"Well, I think this is pretty mean," he said. "What about you, Roylance? As a Colonial chap, you're called upon to set an example to the Old Country."

"I'll set the example of looking after my tin," answered the New Zealand junior, laughing.

"What about you, Clive? South Africa leads, you know," said Trimble encouragingly.

"In this case South Africa follows New Zealand," chuckled Sidney Clive.

"I say, Levison—"

"Bats!"

"Cardew, old chap—"

"Go an' eat coke!"

"Well, of all the mean rotters!" exclaimed Trimble, in disgust. "Here's a Cottage Hospital in need of funds—out in the accounts to the tune of a hundred quid—and not a fellow here will stand a bob towards it! I'm really shocked! Why, they mayn't be able to take in the wounded Tommies if they don't get the accounts squared up. Come now, if—"

"I'm coming!" said Grundy.

He strode towards the fat Fourth-Former.

"Good!" said Trimble. "You're a Briton, Grundy. You— Yaroooh! Wharrer you at? Yoooop!"

George Alfred Grundy did not explain what he was "at," but Trimble really did not need telling. Grundy grasped him by the collar and shook him, and Trimble howled and gasped spasmodically. The great Grundy had apparently thought the matter out, and decided to take a hand, and, as usual, he took a heavy hand.

CHAPTER 4.

Only Two Contributions.

"**H**ELP! Yoop! Yow-ow! Woop!" Thus Baggy Trimble. But there was no help for Trimble. This particularly barefaced attempt to exploit a worthy institution for the sake of "raising the wind" quite deprived Baggy of any sympathy.

Grundy shook him till even Grundy's powerful arm ached. Trimble's weight told, which was fortunate for Trimble. He looked like a quivering jelly when Grundy ceased to shake him at last.

"Groo-hoo-hoo-woooch!" mumbled Trimble feebly.

"You fat villain!" said Grundy, still grasping him. "You want us to shell out for the Cottage Hospital, and pocket the funds. I know you. You've played that kind of trick before."

"Groooch!"

"Who's authorised you to collect money?"

"Woop!"

"Don't you know it's against the law to collect money without being properly authorised?"

"Groooch!"

"Now, you're asking us to shell out," continued Grundy, whose proceedings



Any contributions? Not likely!
(See Chapter 3.)

were watched with much interest by the fellows in the Common-room. "How much were you going to shell out yourself?"

"Gerrogh!"

"Now, then, speak up before I start again."

"Ten pounds!" gasped Trimble.

"What! You mean tenpence, I suppose?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ten pounds," spluttered Baggy. "I say ten pounds, and I mean ten pounds."

"Got it about you?" grinned Cardew.

"I'm expecting a cheque from Trimble Hall—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, bai Jove!" ejaculated D'Arcy. "Weally Twimble, you know—"

"You spoofing Hun!" growled Grundy.

"Never mind the cheque from Trimble Hall—if there is such a place. How much cash are you going to put in?"

"I—I—I—"

"So you weren't going to contribute yourself?" roared Grundy.

"Yes!" gasped the terrified Baggy.

"I—I was going to put in half-a-crown. I haven't got any more, owing to lending my money to a New House fellow."

"You were going to contribute half-a-crown to the Cottage Hospital?"

"Yow! Yes."

"Good!" said Grundy. "If you do, I will."

Trimble brightened.

"Right you are! Leggo my collar! I'll give you a receipt—"

"Grundy, you ass!" exclaimed Wilkins.

"Do you think your half-crown will ever get as far as Rylcombe if you give it to Trimble?"

"I'm not going to give it to Trimble," replied Grundy calmly. "I'm going to put it in the box downstairs along with Trimble's."

"Oh, I—I see!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors,

much entertained by the expression on

Baggy Trimble's face as Grundy marched him towards the door.

Trimble wriggled in the Shell fellow's powerful grasp. He might as well have struggled in the coils of a boa-constrictor.

"What are you wriggling about?" demanded Grundy. "This is the way to the collecting-box."

"I—I—I—"

"Oh, get a move on!"

"I—I'm going to do it to-morrow!" roared Trimble. "I—I'd rather leave it till the cheque comes."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You won't leave it a minute!" answered Grundy. "You're coming to the box now, and if you make a fuss I'll take that precious paper of yours to Mr. Railton, and see what he thinks about your starting a fund to spend in the tuck-shop."

"I—I— Look here, you know—"

Oh, dear!"

Trimble disappeared from the Common-room, marched along by the neck. A crowd of fellows rushed after them.

Baggy's scheme of spoiling the Egyptians had not been a success, and having to make a contribution to the institution, the name of which he had nefariously used, was a just punishment.

Half-crowns were few and far between with Baggy Trimble, in spite of his descriptions of the splendours and glories of Trimble Hall.

But Baggy's last half-crown had to go; Grundy was determined on that. It was making the punishment fit the crime.

Trimble's expression was almost agonised as he was brought up to the collecting-box.

"There you are!" said Grundy.

"I—I say, Grundy—"

"There goes my half-crown!" said Grundy, dropping in the coin with his free hand. "Now shove in yours! Sharp's the word!"

"But, I—I say—"

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"I give you half a minute before I bang your napper on the box!" said Grundy. "Time me, will you, Wilkins?"

"Certainly!" grinned Wilkins, taking out his watch.

"Oh, dear! I—I say——"

"Go it, Baggy! Ha, ha!"

"Twenty seconds!" said Wilkins.

"Look here, Grundy——"

"Twenty-five——"

Clunk!

Baggy Trimble, with an expression of a victim suffering under a peculiarly hard-hearted dentist, dropped his half-crown into the box.

Grundy released him.

"Good man!" he said. "That shows you mean what you say, Trimble!"

"Oh, dear!"

"When you've somebody holding you by the neck!" grinned Grundy. "Next time you try to raise a subscription for anything, you can rely on me to help you like this!"

"Ow!"

Trimble rolled away disconsolately.

The juniors returned, chuckling, to the Common-room, where Grundy detached Trimble's notice from the wall and shoved it into the fire. Trimble's dodges for raising the wind were oftener failures than successes; but this one had been the most ghastly failure of Baggy's experience.

The unfortunate spoofer looked decidedly glum that evening. He was thinking of his half-crown; and, like Rachel of old, he mourned, and would not be comforted—not that anybody wanted to comfort him.

When Arthur Augustus D'Arcy left the Common-room, alone, Baggy Trimble rolled after him into the passage. He caught the swell of St. Jim's by the sleeve.

"I say, Gussy——"

"Pway, do not address me as Gussy, Twimble! I object to it!"

"Look here, you know, will you lend me half-a-crown?" asked Trimble. "I've been swindled out of half-a-crown!"

"Wats!"

"I'll settle up when I get back a pound I lent to Figgins of the New House."

"I wufuse to cwidet that Figgins would bowwow money of you, Twimble!"

"I—I mean Redfern——"

"Wubbish!"

"Look here, D'Arcy," said Trimble, adopting a threatening tone, much to the wrath and astonishment of Arthur Augustus. "you had better let me have that half-crown, I tell you!"

"I wufuse to do anything of the sort, Twimble!"

"Better than betting it on a horse!" sneered Trimble.

"Weally, you young wascal——"

"I know what your friends think about your goings-on," said Baggy. "They're shocked, and I'm shocked—disgusted, in fact! I really don't know whether I ought to mention it to the Housemaster."

"Bai Jove!"

"Can you lend me half-a-crown?" grinned Trimble.

Arthur Augustus drew a deep breath.

"You howwid little beast!" he said, in measured tones. "I wufuse to have anythin' whatever to do with you! You make me feel quite sick, Twimble!"

"You'd like me to tell Kildare, perhaps, that you're going in for horse-racing?" jeered Trimble.

"What's that?"

Kildare of the Sixth was coming along the corridor as Trimble made that remark. The captain of St. Jim's halted, and stared at the two juniors.

Arthur Augustus reddened.

"What do you mean by that, Trimble?" demanded Kildare. "How

dare you accuse D'Arcy of anything of the kind, you young rascal?"

"Ask him if it isn't true, then!" growled Trimble.

Kildare looked at D'Arcy.

"I don't think I need ask you, D'Arcy. I am sure you have never done anything of the sort!" he said.

"I have certainly nevah done anythin' of the sort so fah, Kildare!" answered Arthur Augustus, with dignity.

Kildare smiled.

"So far?" he repeated. "I recommend you never to do anything of the sort, D'Arcy. Trimble, you had better take care what you say, or you will find yourself in trouble!"

He walked on, and D'Arcy, with a glance of utter contempt at Trimble, went on his way. Baggy Trimble snorted. The unscrupulous young rascal had been quite prepared to "squeeze" the noble Gussy for a loan, under the threat of revealing his supposed delinquency; but evidently that was no use.

For some time afterwards Baggy was seen haunting the hall near the hospital-box, wherein reposed his half-crown—no longer his. The thought even crossed his fat mind of recovering his half-crown by burglarious methods. Fortunately for Baggy, he stopped short of that extreme.

CHAPTER 5.

ASTOUNDING!

DICK JULIAN tapped Arthur Augustus on the sleeve as the Fourth Form came out after lessons the next morning.

Gussy gave him a benignant smile. He rather liked Julian, and they had always been on good terms. Just now Gussy was not on the best of terms with his old chums. The incident of Jolly Roger and the racing paper worried Blake & Co., and made them a little "edge-wise."

Gussy, in fact, was presenting a great problem to his old friends now.

It was simply incredible that the great Gussy could descend into the petty, dingy blackguardism of Racke & Co. And yet, apparently, he was doing it.

Julian, who liked the noble Gussy immensely, was concerned about him. A good many of the fellows were.

"Do you mind if I speak to you, Gussy?" asked Julian, rather hesitatingly. "As a friend, I mean?"

"I twust you will always speak to me as a fwiend, deah boy!" answered the Honourable Arthur Augustus graciously.

"You won't think it cheek?"

"Certainly not!"

"Well, look here, D'Arcy," said Julian bluntly, "there's been no end of talk about your borrowing that rotten racing paper from Racke. Of course, every fellow who knows you knows that you're incapable of shady things; but you're laying yourself open to misunderstanding."

"Weally, Julian, I wish the fellows would not wowwy about things that do not mattah to them!"

"But it does matter to them, D'Arcy!"

"I fail to see how, deah boy!"

"Perhaps you don't know that a lot of fellows look up to you, and that your example has a good deal of influence?" said Julian, with a smile.

"Bai Jove! It had nevah occurred to me, Julian; but that is certainly vewy wight and pwopah!" answered Arthur Augustus innocently.

"Well, then, if you get mixed up in shady things, you can see it may do harm to others as well as yourself!"

"Yaas, I see the point, Julian! But I twust you do not mean to imply that I am capable of doin' anythin' shady?" said D'Arcy severely.

"I know you're not! But what the thump did you want with a racing paper?" demanded Julian. "What did you mean by babbling about Jolly Roger and the odds?"

No reply.

"Crooke says that Jolly Roger is a racehorse, entered for the Traffield Race on Saturday," went on Julian. "He's a rank outsider, Crooke says, though some sporting tipster fancies him as a winner. You don't care anything about Jolly Roger, or any such silly, shady rot, D'Arcy? I've heard you say it's disgraceful for racing to be kept on in wartime."

"That is my opinion, Julian!"

"Well, then, can't you say out plain what you are up to? Your own pals are worried about it. Why can't you say out plain that you're not intending for a minute to back a silly horse for a silly race?"

"I—I could not vewy well make that statement, Julian," answered Arthur Augustus, after a long pause.

Dick Julian jumped.

"You don't mean to say that you are thinking of it?" he exclaimed incredulously.

"I weward it as best to say nothin' on the subject at all, Julian."

Julian stared at him.

There was only one possible conclusion to be drawn from Arthur Augustus' words. It was no wonder that Julian was astounded.

"Oh," he said at last, "in—in that case I'm sorry I spoke! I thought it was all a misunderstanding."

"He, he, he!"

That cachinnation proceeded from Baggy Trimble. Dick Julian spun round on him angrily. He had not observed the eavesdropping Baggy lurking close at hand.

"You've been listening, you fat rotter!" he exclaimed.

"I suppose I can walk in the quad if I like?" retorted Trimble. "I say, are you really going to back Jolly Roger, Gussy?"

"I wufuse to speak to you, Twimble!"

"Better not let Railton hear of it!" chuckled Trimble. "Fancy getting sacked from the school, Gussy!"

"You wottah!"

Dick Julian made a stride towards Baggy, who promptly retreated, still chuckling. It was not till he was at a safe distance that he called out defiantly "Sheeny!" and then he was careful not to call loud enough for Julian to hear. Baggy was a prudent youth in some ways.

Julian had a troubled look.

"If you don't mind my asking you, D'Arcy," he said, "is this your own idea, or—is any fellow putting you up to it?"

"Weally, Julian, I am not the kind of fellow to be led by the nose by anybody?" answered Arthur Augustus, with dignity.

"Ahem! Then it is your own idea?"

"Entially."

"Racke didn't suggest it?"

"I certainly should not listen to any suggestion frowm a shady, gamblin' boundah like Wacke!"

"But—but if you bet on races, aren't you becoming a gambling boulder yourself?" demanded Julian.

"Nothin' of the sort. I feah that I cannot explain fully, Julian. A young-stah like you would hardly undahstand that——"

"Oh!"

"You see, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus, in quite a fatherly manner, "a gweat deal depends on a chap's motive. Suppose a chap did a thing that is gene-

wally wegarded, quite wightly, as shady, but suppose it was for patwiotic weasons—

"Patriotic reasons!" murmured Julian, quite dazedly.

"Yaas."

"There's an old text, D'Arcy, that a fellow should not do evil that good may come of it," said Julian.

"Quite wight, as a wule, Julian. Unless a chap had plenty of weal tact and judgment it would be wisky to depart from the ordinawy wules. But this is not an ordinawy case. You see, sometimes it can't be helped. F'instance, war is a howwid, beastly thing, and vewy evil, but it is the only way of dealin' with wascally Pwussians. There are other cases."

"But—but—" Julian stammered. "D'Arcy, old man, it can't be right for any reason whatever to get mixed up in betting and gambling."

"I quite agree with you. I wegard this as is painful and unpleasant duty for a good object."

"Oh, my hat!"

"I twust, Julian, that I have quite satisfied you, as I am suah you were speakin' in a friently spiwit."

"You've jolly well mystified me," said Julian. "I'm blessed if I can understand you; but it's your own bizney, I suppose. Will you come over to Wayland with me this afternoon, D'Arcy? I'm going to my uncle's, and he would be glad to see you again."

"I should vewy much like to see Mr. Moses again, deah boy, but I am sowwy I am booked for this afternoon. Anothah time, if you will be so kind as to wepeat your invitation."

"Right you are!" said Julian.

And he left D'Arcy feeling that it was useless to pursue the subject further. Julian said nothing of D'Arcy's astounding confession, but Trimble did; and the looks that were cast at Arthur Augustus at the dinner-table that day were many and expressive.

After dinner Blake and Herries and Digby joined him. The swell of St. Jim's met them with a somewhat severe look.

But Blake & Co. did not mind that. They were anxious about their chum, and had wisely decided not to take offence when apparently D'Arcy was in need of his friends to keep him from getting into trouble. As Blake had sagely remarked, they could quarrel with Gussy any other time when he didn't need them to look after him.

"Come on, old scout!" said Jack Blake, with forced good-humour. "Tom Merry's making up a war-party this afternoon."

"Figgins & Co. are having a boat out," said Herries. "We're going to raid them, and leave the New House bounders stranded."

"Everybody's got to join up," said Digby.

"Bai Jove! I am sowwy I can't come, deah boys!"

"Nothing on this afternoon?" asked Blake.

"Yaas, as it happens."

"Well, if it's anything good we'll come with you instead of going on the war-path. Anything to oblige. What's on?"

"Ahem!"

"Going to see Cousin Ethel?" asked Dig.

"Nunno!"

"Don't say it's your tailor!" grunted Herries.

"It is not my tailah, Hewwies!"

"Well, what is it?" demanded Blake bluntly. "You're going to tell us, I suppose, if you're coming with you?"

"Ahem! The—the fact is, Blake, I am bound to be alone this aftahnoon,"

said Arthur Augustus, turning very red.

"I am sowwy—"

Blake reddened, too.

"You don't want us?" he snapped.

"Pway do not put it like that, Blake," said D'Arcy gently. "I happen to have a wathah pwivate engagement, that is all."

Blake breathed hard.

"Look here, D'Arcy, I've already heard that you've asked Racke where Banks, the bookie, can be found. Are you going to visit him this afternoon?"

Blake expected—and sincerely hoped for—an indignant reply. He would have been more pleased than otherwise if Arthur Augustus had punched his nose for making such a suggestion.

But Arthur Augustus did not even speak. He only stood silent, with his face growing more and more crimson.

The three chums blinked at him, fairly stupefied.

"You—you—then you are going to see that swindling blackguard?" fairly stuttered Blake.

Arthur Augustus raised his head loftily.

"It is wathah bad form to ask a fellow questions, Blake. I am sowwy to have to point this out to you."

"Are you going to see Banks?" shrieked Blake.

"I wefuse to weply."

"Well, he won't want us if he's going to the Green Man," snapped Herries. "Give our regards to your pal there, Gussy, and tell him we hope he'll soon be in prison. Br-r-r!"

Herries walked away. Blake and Dig stood angry and astonished and undecided, and Arthur Augustus walked off and left them standing.

"Well, my hat!" said Blake.

"My only aunt!" murmured Dig.

"He's potty, Dig!"

"Potty as the Kaiser!" agreed Dig.

"Going to see Banks!" said Blake dazedly. "Going to the Green Man—a low pub! Why, it would be a flogging if he were caught there!"

"Or the sack!"

"He's mad!"

"Mad as a hatter!"

"And he's not going!" said Blake, setting his teeth. "I don't know what's gone wrong with his brain, but he's not going to make a shady fool of himself. He's going to be stopped."

"Good!" said Dig.

"Let's go and tell Tom Merry we can't come with his gang, and then we'll get Gussy up to the study and keep him there."

"Jolly good wheeze!"

And Blake and Dig went into the School House to look for Tom Merry. Unfortunately for their friendly plans, Arthur Augustus was walking out of the gates of St. Jim's while they were looking for Tom Merry.

CHAPTER 6.

Taking the Plunge.

"**B**AI JOVE! I weally don't like goin' in!"

Arthur Augustus had stopped at some little distance from that delectable resort, the Green Man at Rylcombe.

He was hesitating.

He had learned a good deal from Aubrey Racke of the Shell. Perhaps by way of avenging the licking he had received from Blake, Racke was eager to do all he could in helping to bring Gussy up in the way he should not go.

Racke had been astonished, but pleased. Arthur Augustus was a most desirable recruit for the shady set.

D'Arcy certainly seemed to be quite unaware that there was anything shady

in his proceedings. But he was the only fellow who was unaware of it.

Perhaps Gussy was acting on the rule that to the pure all things are pure. Racke's opinion was that Lord Eastwood's son wanted to go the pace, and Racke was keen to help him on that honourable path.

He had willingly placed all his knowledge at D'Arcy's disposal, and Aubrey Racke knew a great deal about book-makers, and the odds, and the dates and places of racing, and winners, and outsiders, and so forth, though not so much as he thought he knew, perhaps.

He knew enough, at any rate, to make the downward step easy for the guileless Gussy.

He told him where to find Mr. Joseph Banks, and at what time. Assured him that Mr. Banks would be only too happy to oblige him, and even sent a note privately to Mr. Banks apprising him that a very valuable pigeon was about to flutter into the net. That latter circumstance, needless to say, Aubrey did not mention to the swell of St. Jim's.

But now that he had arrived at the delectable spot where Mr. Banks, for the present, had pitched his tent, a very natural hesitation came over Arthur Augustus.

He knew the penalty attached to frequenting such a place as the Green Man, but he was not thinking of the danger. He was feeling a natural repugnance to setting his foot in such a place.

And the thought of Mr. Banks inspired him with repulsion. He had seen the fat, loudly-dressed man hanging about Rylcombe, and had not liked his looks. And, in spite of his present strange proceedings, Gussy's antipathy to gambling and gamblers was as strong as ever.

As he stood hesitating in the lane, within sight of the public-house, a lad came through the hedge, grinned at him, and touched a ragged cap.

"Foller me, sir!" he said.

Arthur Augustus brought his eyeglass to bear on the youth in surprise.

"Bai Jove! Why should I follow you, deah boy?" he asked.

"Mr. Banks sent me, sir."

"Bai Jove!"

"He seed you from the winder," explained the youth. "You foller me, and I'll take you in at the back, quiet-like."

"Bai Jove! Mr. Banks must have known that I was comin' to see him!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus. "He must be a thought-wedah. Pewwaps Wacke has given him a hint, howevah. I—I—"

He still hesitated.

"This way, sir," said the boy, staring at him.

"Ya-a-as; but I weally do not care to entah any place in a suwweptious mannah. Howevah, I suppose I had bettah be wathah careful. Pway lead the way, my lad!"

The lad grinned, and led the way.

Keeping under the trees, Arthur Augustus followed him, and was let into the garden of the public-house by a side gate.

"Come into the 'ouse, or wait 'ere, sir?" asked the lad.

"If Mr. Banks would be so vewy kind as to come out—"

"I'll tell him, sir."

The boy vanished through the rough, tangled thickets in the inn garden. Arthur Augustus waited under the trees, somewhat relieved in his mind. He was very glad to avoid entering the public-house itself.

"Weally," murmured Arthur Augustus, "I do not like to see that youngstah bein' brought up in these suwwoundin's. His pawents are weally

very much to blame. It cannot be for his good to associate with such persons as Mr. Banks and Mr. Joliffe."

And Arthur Augustus shook his head. He had only a few minutes to wait for Mr. Banks. That gentleman's fat, red face came in sight through the trees very soon.

Mr. Banks was geniality itself.

He could scarcely believe in his good luck at netting such a pigeon as the son of Lord Eastwood. Mr. Banks' business had suffered from the war, and what he picked up from foolish and reckless young fellows who thought they knew a thing or two was a valuable consideration to him. But the Hon. Arthur Augustus was a richer prize than he had ever thought of bagging. Properly handled, he considered, the unfortunate Gussy might be a regular income to him.

"Very glad to see you, sir," said Mr. Banks effusively. "So kind of you, sir, to give me a look in. This is an honour, Master D'Arcy. Anythin' I can do for you, sir? Quite at your service."

"You are vewy kind, Mr. Banks," said Arthur Augustus, somewhat embarrassed.

"Not at all, sir. Young gentlemen like a flutter every now and then. Bless your 'eart, sir, I've been a boy myself!" beamed Mr. Banks. "I thought you'd rather drop in quietly, sir."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Another time you'll know your way better, sir," said Mr. Banks jocularly.

"Bai Jove! I shall not be comin' any more."

"I hope you will, sir. Very welcome at any time. Perhaps you'd be so kind as to step into my little snugery—very quiet and private-like?" suggested Mr. Banks.

"If agreeable to you, Mr. Banks, I would wathah twansact the business heah."

"Just as you wish, sir."

The bookmaker leaned against a tree, and lighted a fat cigar. He offered his case to Arthur Augustus, who repressed a shudder and shook his head.

"To come to business, Mr. Banks, I undahstand that you take bets on waces an' things?"

"That's my business, Master D'Arcy. Only too happy to oblige you."

Mr. Banks did not add that the Green Man was "not a place within the meaning of the Act." Arthur Augustus was evidently under the impression that a betting-man could make bets anywhere he pleased.

"I don't know very much about such things," confessed Arthur Augustus; "but Wacke says you will take bets."

"We live and learn, sir," answered Mr. Banks, who really did not need telling that D'Arcy did not know much about such things.

"Pewwaps you know all about the Twaffield Races next Satahday, Mr. Banks?"

"I shall be there, sir," answered Mr. Banks. "Anything I can put on for you?"

"Have you heard of a horse named Jolly Woger?"

"You bet!"

"I undahstand that odds of fifteen to one are offahed against that horse, Mr. Banks?"

"That's the figure."

"Then if I lay a soweweign on the cweature, I am paid fifteen pounds if he wins the wace?"

"Exactly—if he does," said Mr. Banks, without stating his opinion as to the huge dimensions of the "if."

"Then if I want to win a hundwed pounds—"

"Eh?"

"A hundwed pounds—"

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"You—you want to—to win a hundred pounds?"

"Yaas."

"Oh!" murmured Mr. Banks, eyeing Arthur Augustus. "N-n-no reason why you shouldn't, sir, if you have the luck."

"I am wathah lucky sometimes," said Arthur Augustus innocently. "Last Chwistmas I won a gweat many nuts at a wound game."

"Nuts!" murmured Mr. Banks, almost overcome. "Oh, yes, yes; I—I see. Nuts!"

"Yaas."

"I 'ope you 'ave the luck when there's somethin' better than nuts on the game, Master D'Arcy," smiled the fat gentleman.

"What? I twust, sir, that you do not



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suppose that I have evah played cards for money!" exclaimed D'Arcy.

"Wha-a-at?"

"Howevah," went on Arthur Augustus hastily, "to come to the point. If I want to win a hundwed pounds, I shall have to put, say, seven pounds on the horse?"

"As near as a toucher, sir," replied Mr. Banks. "About that. A little less; but—but make it seven."

"Will you take the bet, Mr. Banks?"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"What did you say?"

"I—I said, certainly, Master D'Arcy. Only too happy to oblige a really sportin' young gent."

"One moment, howevah. A chap in a papah says he thinks that Jolly Woger will win the thwee o'clock wace."

"Does he?"

"Yaas. A chap who signs himself Tippy Tipster, in a papah called 'Wacin' Tips'."

"I—I dessay he knows what he's talkin' about," murmured Mr. Banks.

"Yaas. I suppose a chap who wites for wacin' papahs knows all about horses and things?"

"Oh, yes!" smiled Mr. Banks. "A tipster has to give some horse, and if he doesn't have any fancy, he may toss up a penny to see which name he shall recommend as the winner, and sometimes it comes off. But, of course, nothin' of that kind with Tippy Tipster of 'Racing Tips.' He's a knowin' card, he is—all there, with the wool on, and no mistake. I—I dessay he's got the information from the stable—straight from the 'orse's mouth, sir."

"Yaas. The chap wites in such a positive way that I felt quite convinced he knows all about it," said Arthur Augustus. "What is your opinion, Mr. Banks?"

"Mum-mum-my opinion?"

"Yaas. As a pprofessional man in that kind of business, I suppose you know all about it?"

"Ye-e-es, certainly!"

"Then pewwaps you will tell me your opinion of Jolly Woger's chances."

Mr. Banks did not reply for a moment or two. He had to recover his breath first.

CHAPTER 7.

Wrathful Pais.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY waited.

Mr. Banks was simply blinking at him.

Whether Gussy was a sublimely innocent youth, or whether he was a particularly "downy" bird, Joseph Banks could not make up his mind.

Certainly, so much innocence of the world had never come in Mr. Banks' way before. Innocence of any kind did not flourish in such surroundings as Joseph Banks was accustomed to.

That D'Arcy should suppose he would lay fifteen to one in "quids" against a horse, if he thought that horse likely to win, was really a "corker."

Apparently Arthur Augustus thought it was a bookmaker's business to make bets, irrespective of any question of profit or loss.

What the bookmakers and the whole racing fraternity lived on, in that case, was evidently a question D'Arcy had not yet considered.

"Well, sir," said Arthur Augustus, surprised at the fat gentleman's silence, "I twust you do not object to givin' me your opinion?"

"Sus-sus-certainly not!" stuttered Mr. Banks.

"Pewwaps you have seen the horse?"

"Oh yes! I—I've seen him!"

"Is he a good horse?"

"Topping!" gasped Mr. Banks.

"Likely to win the wace, you considah?"

"Oh, my eye!" murmured Mr. Banks weakly. Aloud, he went on: "Quite likely, sir, I should say! Of course, you can never tell. There's chances for and chances agin. But if I was a young gent lookin' for a flutter, I—I should certainly put my money on Jolly Roger!"

"Vewy good!" said Arthur Augustus.

"But isn't it wathah queeah, Mr. Banks, that if Jolly Woger is pwactically certain of winnin', the bookmakahs offah such vewy heavy long odds against him?"

"Oh, they—they're a sportin' lot!" said Mr. Banks, gasping. "Never was such a thorough-goin' lot of sportsmen as the bookies, sir. Look at me, f'instance! I think Jolly Roger's a good 'orse—a toppin' good 'orse—but I'm willin' to take your money, and chance it!"

That statement was quite true; Mr. Banks was not only willing—he was eager—to take the schoolboy's money! As for

the "chance," the less said about that the better.

"That is weally vewy sportin' of you, Mr. Banks!" said Arthur Augustus, feeling his opinion of the fat gentleman rising.

"Oh, business, sir, business!" answered Mr. Banks. "Happy to oblige, sir! You lay your bet, and if Jolly Roger wins there's a hundred of the best for you on Saturday afternoon!"

Arthur Augustus paused a little.

Innocent as he was, Arthur Augustus could not fail to be aware that Mr. Banks did not look as if he could produce a hundred pounds on demand. He looked, indeed, as if a demand for a hundred shillings would strain his finances.

Perhaps Mr. Banks guessed his thought—Gussy's face was very expressive—for he went on quickly:

"You see, sir, a bookie has a lot of irons in the fire. If I lose money on Jolly Roger I win money on another horse; I may drop a 'undred quids on one gee, and bag double as much on another. What a man loses on the swings he gets back on the roundabouts, you see!"

"I see," assented Arthur Augustus. "That makes it quite clear! I think I will make that bet, Mr. Banks. Of course, I am not goin' to keep the money I win!"

"Not k-k-keep it!"

"Oh, no! I should wegard that as gamblin'!"

"Oh!" gasped Mr. Banks.

"You see, I wequiah a hundwed pounds for a vewy particulah purpose," explained Arthur Augustus. "Undah the cirs, I wegard the end as justifyin' the means. I admit that that is wathah a dangevous wule to follow; but, bein' a fellow of some tact and judgment, I can wely upon my own discwetion."

"Pip-pip-precisely!" stuttered Mr. Banks, wondering whether he was dreaming.

"Then I will hand you seven pounds, Mr. Banks, and call on Saturday for the winnin's."

"That's right, Master D'Arcy!"

"Unfortunately, I do not happen to have the money—"

"Eh?"

"Pewwaps you could awvwange it like this, howevah. You make the bet, and when Jolly Woger has won, you hand me ninety-three pounds instead of a hundwed. That will come to the same thing, won't it?"

Mr. Banks looked at the Honourable Arthur Augustus.

His suspicion was strengthening that that elegant young gentleman was, after all, a "downy bird," and was bent on pulling his leg.

But he was not sure, and so he answered with great politeness:

"I'm afraid that wouldn't do, Master D'Arcy. You see, it's one of the rules, unless the actual money is staked the bet doesn't hold good."

"Oh, that is wathah unfortunate. Then it will be strictly necessary for me to hand you seven pounds?"

"Business can't be done without, sir!"

"Vewy well." Arthur Augustus took out his pocket-book. "I have three pounds at pwsent, Mr. Banks. I will send on the othah four. Will that do?"

"Any time up to the actual hour of the race, sir."

"Vewy good! Pway take these three notes—"

Mr. Banks almost grabbed them.

"I will sent the west to-morrow at the latest, Mr. Banks. That will be all right?"

"Right as rain, Master D'Arcy!" said Mr. Banks heartily, convinced at last that the schoolboy was not a downy bird,



Gussy says "No!"
(See Chapter II.)

but the most unsuspecting pigeon he had ever plucked. "That bet's made, sir!"

"Thank you vewy much, Mr. Banks! I am weally vewy much obliged to you! Good-afternoon!"

"Good-afternoon, sir!"

Arthur Augustus left the inn garden, glad to get out of it. Mr. Joseph Banks stood staring after him, and then at three currency notes in his hand almost dazedly.

"My heye!" murmured Mr. Banks. "My heye! Strike me pink! Strike me green and yaller! My heye!"

And the fat gentleman toddled off to the Green Man at once and stood himself a drink, which he felt that he deserved for keeping his face straight during that talk with the amateur sportsman.

Arthur Augustus came out into the lane again, and sauntered away towards St. Jim's, feeling satisfied in his mind.

There was a sudden shout as he came round the bend in the lane.

"Here he is!"

The next moment Arthur Augustus was surrounded by Blake & Co. and the Terrible Three. Tom Merry & Co., in the kindness of their hearts, had given up the raid on the New House fellows that afternoon in order to look after Gussy—rather too late, as it happened.

"Yaas, here I am, deah boys," said D'Arcy calmly. "Anythin' wanted?"

"Yes; you're wanted!" said Tom Merry. "We've been hunting for you!"

"I weally do not see why you should hunt for me, Tom Mewwy!"

"Have you been to the Green Man?" hooted Blake.

No answer.

"Have you seen Banks?" yelled Manners.

"I wefuse to weply."

"Then you've been!" said Blake. aghast. "I—I suppose you haven't really been idiot enough, and blackguard enough, to make bets with that beast?"

"I wefuse to weply to a fellow who

uses such extwemely oppwobwious expwessions wegardin' me!"

"Have you made any bets with him?" demanded Lowther.

"Wats!"

"He's potty!" said Tom Merry, in wonder. "He must be loose in the crumpet. If he was sane he couldn't act the goat like Racke!"

"If you compare me with Wacke, Tom Mewwy—"

"If you play shady tricks like Racke you must expect to be thought of as a Racke's thought of!" answered Tom.

The mattah is quite diffewent, you ass!"

"Oh, rats!"

"The fact is, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus, looking round placidly at his exasperated friends—"the fact is, you fellows are judgin' in a mattah you don't weally undahstand at all. I am twyin' to be patient with you; but, weally, you are vewy provokin'. Howevah, I am glad I have met you, as I want to bowwow some money!"

"Money!"

"Yaas. I wequiah four pounds."

"What's become of the remittance you had yesterday?" asked Dig.

"That was not suffish for my purpose, Dig. I wequiah four pounds. I will weturn it to you on Satahday."

"Do you want the money for making bets with?" asked Tom Merry, in blank wonder.

"It would be more judicious not to ask questions, Tom Mewwy, as I cannot weply to them."

"Well, you won't borrow any money from us to make bets," said Blake grimly—"not a ha'penny, you frabjous ass!"

"I withdwaw my wequest," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity.

"You'll also undertake not to make any bets, or to see that scoundrel Banks again, or you'll get bumped!" roared Blake.

"Wats!"

"Will you promise?"

"Certainly not."

"You mean to take up this blackguardly rot, then, and get yourself known as a sneaking, gambling, disgraceful blackguard like Racke?" demanded Blake.

"Wubbish!"

"He must be potty," said Monty.

Lowther.

"Either that or he's pulling our leg," said Blake. "In either case, he wants a lesson, and he's going to have one. Bump him!"

Arthur Augustus jumped back.

"Weally, you fellows— You uttah asses, leggo! Oh, my hat!"

Tom Merry & Co. were exasperated, which was not surprising under the circumstances. They collared Arthur Augustus without ceremony, and swung him off his feet, struggling.

"Now, will you promise to keep clear of that shady rotter and all his rot?" shouted Blake.

"Wats!"

Bump!

"Yawoooooh!"

Bump, bump, bump!

Then Tom Merry & Co., in great wrath and indignation, walked away, leaving Arthur Augustus sitting in the road, dusty and dishevelled and furious. The way of the amateur sportsman was hard, when he happened to have such devoted friends as Tom Merry & Co.

CHAPTER 8.

Misunderstood.

TOM MERRY & CO. were puzzled and worried.

The next day they were still thinking over the problem.

What to think of it beat them hollow, as Blake remarked. It wasn't merely that the great Gussy had slid into shady ways; that was bad enough. But he seemed so perfectly satisfied with himself all the time—so evidently regarded himself as being, like Cæsar's wife, above reproach.

Although he had obviously entered into a betting transaction with a bookmaker—and a very particularly disreputable bookmaker—he seemed to be quite unaware that he had fallen to the level of Racke and Crooke and Clampe.

The slightest hint that he resembled Aubrey Racke in the remotest degree was sufficient to raise his wrath.

It was really a puzzle.

Racke & Co. themselves were astonished and perplexed. They were quite prepared to take the new recruit to their hearts, and acknowledge him as one of themselves—in fact, to make much of him, and stand him no end of cigarettes in the study, and beam upon him at banker and nap.

But Arthur Augustus had apparently set himself a limit, which was not very reasonable, but was very fixed and firm.

When Racke offered him a smoke, he gave Racke a crushing look, turned on his heel, and walked away without speaking.

When Clampe asked him to his study in the New House for a quiet game, he told Clampe what he thought of him and his quiet games; and what he thought was not at all complimentary.

Leslie Clampe was left quite speechless. Clampe couldn't see why a fellow who betted on horses couldn't play nap for half-crowns; and, really, there was some excuse for Clampe there. He couldn't see any difference between the two.

Apparently Arthur Augustus could. Gussy refused a pressing invitation into Racke's study in the evening with

something less than his customary politeness.

He even gave Mellish of the Fourth a fatherly lecture when he found that weedy youth poring over a racing paper. This sublime cheek, as Mellish regarded it, took Percy's breath quite away.

Tom Merry & Co. observed all this, and it made them wonder more and more. Really it looked as if D'Arcy considered that a thing was right if he did it, his lofty touch turning black into white.

He was somewhat cold to his old chums.

They were wrathful; but D'Arcy's expression was more of sorrow than of anger, like that of a fellow cruelly misunderstood.

But what was there to misunderstand? Blake asked his chums, in hopeless wrath and amazement. The facts were the facts, weren't they?

Herries and Dig agreed that the facts were the facts, and that the facts spoke for themselves.

Yet it was clear that Gussy looked upon himself as being misunderstood and misjudged, and he was very lofty about it indeed.

Blake confessed that it beat him, and he gave it up.

Dick Julian had some thinking to do about the matter, as well as Gussy's more immediate friends. For it was to Julian that Gussy had recourse for the four pounds he still required.

He requested that loan in a cheerful manner, without the slightest sign of a guilty conscience.

Julian had plenty of money, being well supplied by his uncle, Mr. Moses, of Wayland. He would willingly have lent D'Arcy anything. But he hesitated now.

"Till Sataday," added Arthur Augustus. "I shall return the sum on Sataday, deah boy, aftah three o'clock."

Julian paused.

He had only too clear an idea what the money was wanted for; but he could not refuse Arthur Augustus, and he felt he could not ask questions. It was really an honour to be borrowed of by Gussy. There were very few fellows upon whom the swell of St. Jim's would have conferred that distinction. Aubrey Racke would have lent him fivers without demur, and would have rejoiced to get on such intimate terms with Lord Eastwood's son. But nothing would have induced the great Gussy to touch the ill-gotten wealth of the war-profiteer's son and heir.

Dick Julian handed over four currency notes, after that brief pause. Arthur Augustus gracefully acknowledged the loan, and went up to Study No. 6 for an envelope. He had finished enclosing the notes when Dick looked in.

"Excuse me, Gussy—" began Julian.

"Yaas, deah boy. Twot in."

"I don't want to interfere, of course; but—but if you're sending that cash to somebody we're not allowed to know—"

"Bai Jove!"

"I'm not going to give you advice about that, D'Arcy," said Julian hastily. "But if that letter's to Mr. Banks, don't drop it in the school letter-box. It might be spotted there, and get you into trouble."

Arthur Augustus started.

"Bai Jove! I nevah thought of that!" he ejaculated.

It was as good as an admission that the letter was to Mr. Banks, and Dick Julian's handsome face clouded.

"I will walk down to the post-box in the lane," said Arthur Augustus, after a moment's thought. "Thank you very much, Julian!"

"D'Arcy, old chap," said Julian, "must you send the letter? Wouldn't it be better to—to—"

"You do not undahstand, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus, with his fatherly smile. "It is all wight."

"But—but—"

"You can wely on a fellow of tact and judgment to look aftah himself," said Arthur Augustus reassuringly. "I wepeat that it is all wight."

"You can't touch pitch without being defiled, D'Arcy."

"There are exceptional cases, deah boy. This is one of them."

Julian felt that it was hopeless. But, though he could not save Gussy from the false step itself, he wanted to save him from possible ill consequences if he could.

"Excuse me once more, D'Arcy; but have you put a note in that letter along with the currency notes—anything in your own hand?"

"Yaas, natuwallly."

"Don't do it, then. That man Banks is an awful rascal. He will keep anything he can get in your hand, to hold over you another time."

D'Arcy jumped.

"Gweat Scott! I am suah the man would not be such a wascal, Julian."

"I think he would."

"But there is nothin' w'ong in my note—only a statement that I am enclosin' four pounds, as awwanged," said D'Arcy innocent.

"What would the Head think of it if he saw it, D'Arcy?"

"H'm!"

"Take the letter out," urged Julian.

"Put in the currency notes, and put on a sheet of paper, in capital letters, not your own hand—"

"That would be showin' distwust that would be vewy insultin' to Mr. Banks, Julian," said Arthur Augustus, shaking his head.

"But it would be safe. If you must do this, don't put yourself under that man's thumb as well."

"I could not possibly have dealin' with a man whom I w'egarded with so much distwust," said Arthur Augustus.

"I am vewy much obliged to you, Julian, but you are weally wathah uneasy about nothin'. That man Banks is not such a bad sort, in his way—quite sportin', in fact, in his shady way. I do not approve of him or his business—"

"You—you don't?"

"Certainly not. I w'egard bettin' on horses as low and immowal."

"Oh!" gasped Julian.

"But he is all wight in his way; quite sportin', accordin' to his lights. This lettah will be all wight. Don't you wowwy, deah boy."

And with a reassuring smile Arthur Augustus walked out of the study, letter in hand, leaving Julian dumbfounded.

CHAPTER 9.

Wally Takes a Hand.

"HALLO! What do you fags want?"

Tom Merry asked that question the following evening.

The Terrible Three were on the landing when Wally & Co. of the Third made their appearance.

D'Arcy minor was followed by Levison minor, Hobbs, and Joe Frayne. The fags were all grinning.

"We're going to see my major," said Wally loftily. "We've got to talk to him, haven't we, you chaps?"

"Yes, rather!" grinned Hobbs.

"You bet!" said Joe Frayne, with a chuckle.

"You Shell bounders can come if you like," said Wally condescendingly. "It may do you good to hear us, if you've

got any hankering after the downward path and the road to ruin and the rest of it."

"Oh!" said Tom.

The fags marched on to Study No. 6, and the chums of the Shell, after exchanging a glance, followed them.

They could guess that the rumour of D'Arcy's delinquency had reached the Third Form. Wally of the Third had come to talk to his major about it.

D'Arcy minor pitched open the door of Study No. 6, where Blake & Co. were at tea—a rather moody tea. D'Arcy major was looking very cold and lofty and misjudged, and his chums were troubled and glum. They stared at the quartette of fags in the doorway.

"Buzz off!" said Jack Blake gruffly.

"Bow-wow!" answered Wally independently. "We've come here to talk to Gussy."

"Go ahead, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Stand up!" rapped out Wally.

"What?"

"Stand up and look me in the face!" said D'Arcy minor severely.

Arthur Augustus rose to his feet in astonishment.

"Weally, you young ass—" he began.

"Now, you've got to answer for yourself," said Wally, in quite a magisterial manner. "I've brought my friends to hear you. There's a rumour about you, Gussy, and the rumour is that you've taken up Racke's game—"

"Oh, wats!"

"Yes or no?" demanded Reggie Manners.

"Wun away, do!"

"Mind, we're here on business," said Wally. "The Third Form are shocked. I'm shocked. Joe's shocked—ain't you, Joe?"

"I ham!" answered Frayne emphatically.

"You're shocked, young Levison?"

"Shocked and pained!" said Levison minor solemnly.

"What about you, Hobbs?"

"I'm disgusted!" said Hobbs.

"You see the effect you've produced on us, Gussy. How do you think it looks for me to have a major who dabbles in racing and betting, like Racke, or Cutts of the Fifth?" said Wally indignantly. "I punched Piggott's head when he told me. I thought he was Hunning. It turns out to be true. I'm ashamed of you. How you can look me in the face beats me!"

"Hollow!" said Reggie.

The Terrible Three in the doorway grinned at the expression on Gussy's aristocratic face. Blake & Co. grinned, too. They thought Gussy deserved it, and they were glad he was getting it.

"You cheekay young wascals!" gasped Arthur Augustus at last. "How dare you treat me with this feahful impertinence!"

"Oh, come off!" said Wally. "I'm ashamed of you. You've got to chuck it—see? Repent!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Reform!" said Levison minor.

"Turn over a new leaf!" said Reggie Manners.

"You—you—you—" stuttered Arthur Augustus.

"What would the pater say if he knew the example you were setting me?" demanded Wally. "What would old Conway say if he came home on leave and found you leading a riotous life?"

"Bai Jove! I—I—"

"How would you like me to drop in at the Green Man and chum with Banks?" continued Wally.

"You young wascal! If you go anywhah neah the Gween Man I will give you a feahful thwashin'!"

"What's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander," said Reggie Manners. "Why shouldn't Wally go if you do?"

"Yes, answer that, you ass!" snapped Jack Blake.

"It's a fair question," said Tom Merry, with a nod.

"You fellows uttally fail to compwehend," answered Arthur Augustus. "You are simply misjudgin' a chap, like thoughtless youngstahs. I have been turnin' it ovah in my mind whethah I can sufficiently wely upon your discewtion to take you into my confidence—"

"Fathead!" was Herries' remark.

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Ass!" said Dig.

"Weally, Dig—"

"Silence!" rapped out Wally. "We can't stay here till calling-over hearing you fellows jaw. Gussy, you're called upon to repent and reform, and if you don't do it of your own accord we'll jolly well repent and reform you. Savvy?"

"You are an impertinent young ass, Wally!"

"He's got to promise to give it up," said Hobbs.

"That's it."

"Pway wetiah froom this studay, you cheekay fags!" said Arthur Augustus, sitting down with great dignity.

"Not finished yet," answered Wally. "If you won't give us your promise to reform we're going to whack you."

"What?" yelled Arthur Augustus.

"Whack you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's why I've brought my pals," explained Wally; "otherwise I should have kept this disgrace to the family strictly private. We're going to give you a jolly good hiding, Gussy. Frayne's got a stump."

Arthur Augustus' noble eye almost bulged through his eyeglass as Levison minor produced a stump, which he had hitherto been concealing behind him, visible only to the Shell fellows in the doorway.

Tom Merry & Co. burst into a roar. Blake and Herries and Digby shrieked. Gussy's expression at that moment was worth a guinea a box, or more.

"You fellows won't interfere?" demanded Wally. "If you do I'll call up a lot of the Third. I've got to perform this painful duty as Gussy's brother; in fact, as his keeper."

"My dear man, go ahead!" grinned Blake. "We'll keep the ring. Give him one each for us."

"Hear, hear!" said the Terrible Three heartily.

Arthur Augustus jumped up again as the fags hovered near him. Amazing as it was, Wally & Co. were plainly in earnest. The erring youth was to be brought back to the straight and narrow path by means of a cricket-stump—a method which Wally considered would be effective.

"You—you uttah young wuffian!" stuttered Arthur Augustus, in wrath and indignation. "I—I—I—"

"Are you going to reform, then?" demanded Wally.

"You feahful young ass, there is nothin' to weform! I have not been doin' anythin' w'ong, you young duffah!"

"Isn't betting on races wrong?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Haven't you been doing it?"

"Yaas, but—"

"Isn't it wrong if you do it, as well as if anybody else does it?" bawled Jack Blake.

"Circumstances altah cases, Blake. I wufuse to admit that I have done anythin' w'ong in the slightest degwee. As a chap with an example to set to the

House, I should natuwallly be vewy careful not to do anythin' w'ong."

"Oh, my hat!"

"I am vewy much annoyed and exasperated," continued Arthur Augustus warmly, "at havin' all this talk about my pwceedin's. I wegard it as impertinent. Fellows have been speakin' to me just as if I were goin' out blaggin' like Wacko."

"Well, what have you been doing?" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"I have been performin' a patwiotic duty."

"Mum-mum-my only sainted aunt! Is it a patriotic duty to bet on horses in war-time like a racecourse loafer?"

"Undah certain exceptional circumstances, yaas!"

Wally blinked at his major.

"My only Aunt Jane!" he said. "What's wanted here is a strait-jacket, I think! You fellows needn't think it runs in the family. Gussy's the only lunatic we've got!"

"Dwy up, Wally, you cheekay young ass!" Arthur Augustus jammed his eyeglass a little tighter into his eye, and surveyed the juniors with growing indignation. "Now that my minah has heard the weckless and iwresponsible chattah on this subject, I suppose I am bound to explain. Howevah, I shall wequiah you fellows to keep it dark, as it is a delicate mattah."

"Dark as the Kaiser's conscience!" said Monty Lowther. "Go ahead with the tragic tale!"

"Shut the door, then! There is that sneak Twimble in the passage."

Tom Merry closed the door.

"Ain't we going to stump him?" inquired Hobbs, in a disappointed tone.

"Shut up, young Hobbs!" said Wally authoritatively. "Now, then, Gussy, we'll hear what you've got to say!"

"I am not taking any notice of your wickulous thweet, Wally, which I wegard with uttah disdain!"

"Get on with the washing!" said Manners.

Arthur Augustus coughed. All the juniors in the study waited with great interest to hear Arthur Augustus' explanation of his remarkable conduct.

CHAPTER 10.

The Only Way.

"PWAY, undastand that I am not excusin' myself," began Arthur Augustus. "I am simply explainin' the mattah, because my minah has heard the sillay chattah of sillay duffahs, and has formed a w'ong opinion."

"That's understood!" said Tom Merry, with a smile. "Get on!"

"The Cottage Hospital—"

"What?"

"The Cottage Hospital at Wylcombe—"

"Who's talking about the Cottage Hospital at Rylcombe?" shouted Blake.

"I am, deah boy!"

"Then don't! Tell us what you were playing the giddy ox for!"

"I wufuse to admit for one moment, Blake, that I have been playing the giddy ox!"

"I think he'd better have the stump!" remarked Dig.

"Pway don't be an ass, Dig! The Cottage Hospital at Wylcombe—"

"There he goes again!"

"If you keep on intewwuptin' me, Dig—"

"Has the Cottage Hospital got anything to do with your going to Banks?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Wandering!" said Manners sympathetically.

thetically. "Poor old Gussy! Is it worry that's turned his napper?"

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"Go on!" rapped out Blake.

"It is wathah difficult to pwoceed when I am bein' intewwupted by silly kids, Blake. Howeverah, to wesume. The Cottage Hospital at Wylcombe is a hundred pounds out in its accounts. It is a vewy deservin' institution, and it takes in wounded Tommies—"

"We know all that,"

"Are you going to start a subscription, like Trimble?" snorted Herries.

"I am not, Hewwies, because it would be impos to waise the wequiahed amount by passin' the hat wound in the school. I wathah think some wich man ought to come forward; but wich men seem to have ovahlooked the mattah, somehow. If the Cottage Hospital does not get the money, they will have to close down some of the beds, which would be a gweat shame. Havin' thought the mattah out vewy carefully, I decided that it was up to me to waise the money."

"Up to you!" stuttered Blake.

"Yaas."

"How the thunder are you going to raise a hundred pounds, you frabjous jabberwock?"

"I wefuse to be called a fwabjous jabbahwock, Blake. I am goin' to waise the money to-morrow aftahnoon—Satahday; and I have already taken my measures. Now," said Arthur Augustus crushingly, "pewwaps you compwehended why I have stetched a point, and condescended to touch such a wotten thing as horse-wacin' for once. It was for patriotic weasons!"

The juniors gasped.

"You—you—you're going to raise a hundred pounds for the Cottage Hospital by a bet on a horse?" stammered Herries dazedly.

"Yaas."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"I wegard the end as justifyin' the means," explained Arthur Augustus. "I weally could not allow two or three beds in the hospital to be closed down, when they are wequiahed for the chaps who have been keepin' the Germans off. I felt that I was bound to do it, though I had natuwallly a gweat wepugnance to touchin' such a vewy rotten thing as wacin'! It was the only way."

"The—the only way!" babbled Blake, staring dumbfounded at his noble chum.

"Yaas. Undah the circs, I wegard my pwoceedin' as excusable. I have laid that bet with a cleah conscience, not intendin' to touch any of the pwoceeds myself, but to hand ovah the whole sum at once to the hospital."

"Oh, erikey!"

"You—you—you think you will win a hundred pounds on a horserace?" stuttered Tom Merry.

"Yaas. You see, I have laid seven pounds at fifteen to one against, so when Jolly Woger wins I bag a hundwed pounds, which is just the amount wequiahed," explained Arthur Augustus.

"Seven pounds!" yelled Lowther.

"Yaas."

"Do you think you'll ever see it again?"

"Of course! When I win, the stake is weturned along with the winnin's."

"Oh, great Julius Cæsar!"

"Mad as a hatter!" murmured Reggie.

"Now that I have explained," resumed Arthur Augustus, with crushing dignity, "pewwaps you will admit that you have misjudged me, like a set of unpwelectin' youngstahs, and I twust you will have the gwace to apologise."

D'Arcy's chums did not apologise.

They blinked.

He had taken their breath away.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 544.

Jack Blake found his voice at last.

"You've actually handed seven quids to that bookie, Banks, expecting a hundred pounds on Saturday?" he said faintly.

"Yaas. Mr. Banks explained that the bet would not bindin' unless the stakes were actually handed ovah."

"And—and you think the horse will win?" asked Lowther.

"Oh, yaas!"

"With fifteen to one against him?" gasped Tom Merry. "Why, he must be the rankest of rank outsiders to start at a price like that!"

"Outsidahs sometimes womp home, deah boy!" answered Arthur Augustus, with an air of superior wisdom. "Jolly Woger is goin' to womp home!"

"How do you know? What do you know about racin'?"

"Vewy little, I am glad to say! But a tipster chap in Wacke's papah says quite plainly that he is suah Jolly Woger will win."

"So—so that's why you borrowed Racke's paper?"

"Yaas. Havin' weflected on the mattah I wealised that the only way of waisin' the money was by a stwroke of this sort, so I made up my mind to it, and went into the thing thowoughly. I wegard it as justifiable, considahin' the purpose."

"It might, or might not be," said Tom. "We'll believe that you meant well, you unutterable ass! But do you think you'll win, or that, if you do win, Banks will hand you the money?"

"Oh, yaas!"

"The fellow hasn't a tenth part of a hundred quid!" yelled Digby.

"What he loses on one wace, Dig, he makes on anothah. The woundabouts make up for the swings, you know. Mr. Banks told me so."

"And—and you rely on a fool tipster in a racing paper—"

"Not entially. I obtained pwofessional advice!" said Arthur Augustus loftily.

"How—where?"

"I asked Mr. Banks. As a bookmakah, it stands to weason he knows. He thought vewy stwongly that the wacin' tips man knew what he was talkin' about."

"And—and you think Banks would lay fifteen to one against Jolly Roger if he thought the horse would win?"

"He is bound to, deah boy! That is his business. He is a bookmakah, you know!"

"Oh, great pip!"

Tom Merry & Co. fairly gasped. They were not angry with the noble Gussy any more. His motives were top-hole, though his methods were more questionable than he seemed to realise. If he deserved punishment, it was pretty certain that he would get it when he went to collect his hundred pounds.

"And, now I have explained, I am waitin' for an apology!" said Arthur Augustus, in his loftiest manner.

Still the apology was not offered. Wally & Co. were doubled up with merriment, much to Gussy's surprise.

"Poor old Gussy!" sobbed Wally.

"We might have known that he was only potty!"

"We might!" gasped Reggie.

"Weally, Wally—"

"We'll let him off the stumping!" said Wally. "I'm sure he'll reform when that race is run. Come away, chaps. This study isn't big enough to laugh in!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Almost weeping, Wally & Co. staggered out of the study.

"I fail to see any cause for mewwiment!" said Arthur Augustus stiffly.

"Oh, dear!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Gussy, old man, you'll be the death of me yet! Fifteen to one against; expert

advice from the bookie who's after your cash! Oh, my hat! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Terrible Three departed, almost sobbing. The matter was serious, in a way; but the sublime innocence with which Gussy was treading among the pitfalls was too much for them.

"The only way!" murmured Lowther. "The only way—and what a way! I—I think the Cottage Hospital will be seen through now—what?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, left alone with his study-mates, eyed them stiffly. Blake and Herries and Digby were rocking in their chairs.

"When you have finished," said D'Arcy crushingly, "pewwaps you will be kind enough to take me into the joke."

"Ha, ha, ha, ha!"

"You're the joke!" yelled Blake. "Oh, you frabjous chump! Oh, you burbling duffer!"

"Wats!"

With that reply, Arthur Augustus strode from the study, and closed the door after him with more vigour than was absolutely necessary. Blake & Co. wiped their eyes. It was impossible to be angry with the ineffable Gussy; and as they thought of the morrow, and of Gussy's prospect of handling the expected hundred pounds, they yelled again.

CHAPTER 11.

"Also Ran."

THE next day it was evident that the rift in the lute had been mended—Arthur Augustus was no longer on cold terms with his chums. His explanation, extraordinary as it was, had at last relieved their minds; there was no danger of Gussy following in the footsteps of the festive Racke. It was, as he had said, with great repugnance that he had made up his mind to "back a winner," and thus net the hundred pounds required for the Cottage Hospital. Perhaps he was mistaken in thinking that he could touch pitch without being defiled—but, at all events, it was pretty certain that he would never offend again. If he needed a lesson, undoubtedly he was going to get one.

That afternoon, when Arthur Augustus sallied forth to call on Mr. Banks for his winnings, his chums joined him. Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass inquiringly on Blake & Co. and the Terrible Three.

"Oh, we're coming!" said Tom Merry. "We're going to see fair play, you know. Besides, you'll want help to carry home the quids!"

"I twust that you will be discweet, deah boys! It was weally my intention to keep the whole mattah secwet, as the hospital people might not like to take money won on a wace. Bettah to say nothin' about that, I think," said Arthur Augustus sagely.

The juniors nearly exploded.

"I don't think the hospital people will be worried about that," said Blake, with a gurgle.

"You fellows had better go back. I cannot approve of your visitin' such a place as the Gween Man!" said D'Arcy decidedly.

"No need," said Tom. "Let's go over to Wayland instead, and get the evening paper at the station. The result of the race will be in that."

"Bai Jove! That's a good idea! I dare say Mr. Banks will not be back ffrom the waces yet, anyway."

And the party walked over by the fields and the wood to Wayland town.

The utter disbelief of Tom Merry & Co. in the "win" was not to be con-

cealed; but Arthur Augustus only smiled serenely. They would see what they would see when they got the evening paper.

Arthur Augustus' confidence was really sublime. Having brought his mighty brain to bear upon the subject, he evidently regarded himself as being fully qualified for the difficult task of spotting winners. In fact, only principle held him back from making a fortune by means of his newly-discovered gift.

But he did not dally with that temptation. He had touched pitch, as it were, once, for a generous and patriotic object. He would never touch it again. His contempt for gambling and gamblers was as strong as ever.

The juniors arrived in Wayland, and Blake went to the station for the paper, and rejoined his chums in a quiet spot. They did not care to be seen in public conning over a racing list.

"Here you are!" said Blake.

Arthur Augustus took the paper, and opened it sedately. His companions watched him with great interest.

"Yaas, heah it is!" said Arthur Augustus. "'This Aftahnoon's Wacin'.' Wathah a howwid thing to be in a papah now, deah boy, in war-time. I weally considah that it ought to be stopped!"

"What's the result?" howled Blake.

"I am lookin' for it. 'Twaffield—three o'clock.' That's the wace! Bai Jove! There are thwee names pwinted in capital lettahs—"

"That's right!" said Tom. "First, second, and third, of course!"

"Yaas; but it is vewy odd!" said Arthur Augustus, with a puzzled look. "The thwee names are Sunny Jim, Diamond, and King John."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you fellows laughin' at?" "Ass!" howled Blake. "Can't you see? Sunny Jim's the winner, and Diamond came in second, and King John third."

"Wats! It is vewy odd that Jolly Woger is not mentioned."

"Let's have a look!" grinned Monty Lowther. "Oh, here he is!"

"Where, Lowthah?" "In small type, underneath. Look at it!" Lowther read it out: "'Also ran—Tupper, Mark Tapley, Cherub, and Jolly Roger.'"

"Also ran!" gurgled Blake.

"Also ran!" said Monty Lowther, weeping. "Oh, dear! He's also run away with Gussy's seven quid!"

Arthur Augustus stared at the paper. He adjusted his eyeglass, and stared again. The horrid truth seemed to be slowly borne in upon his mind.

"Also wan!" he murmured. "I—I suppose that means that Jolly Woger has not won the wace?"

"Ha, ha! Of course it is!"

"That is vewy wemarkable, Mr. Banks thought—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I am weally vewy much surprised at Mr. Banks' ignorance of his own business! Bai Jove, I shall not get the hundwed pounds now!"

"Just thought of that?" gasped Tom Merry. "Never mind! Banks will get your seven quid, and that's all he was worried about."

"But—but I shall not be able to set mattahs wight for the Cottage Hospital now!" said Arthur Augustus, in dismay.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, wats! I do not see anythin' funny in this!"

But Tom Merry & Co. evidently did, for they chuckled, on and off, all the way home to St. Jim's. Arthur Augustus walked very silently and thoughtfully. At the gate of St. Jim's they met Dick Julian.

"Julian, deah boy"—Arthur Augustus coloured—"may I wequest you to allow your loan to stand ovah for a few days? I—I am not able to settle up to-day."

Julian smiled.

"All serene, D'Arcy! Any time, you know! Don't bother. By the way, you chaps will be pleased to hear that the Cottage Hospital is out of its difficulties!"

"Bai Jove!"

"A man in Wayland has sent a cheque for a hundred pounds," said Julian, smiling. "I may as well tell you it's my uncle, as the name will be in the list."

"Bravo!"

"Bai Jove! That is vewy kind and generous of Mr. Moses!" said Arthur Augustus. "I am vewy glad indeed to heah it, as I have failed to waise the hundwed pounds aftah all!"

"Eh?" ejaculated Julian.

"Gussy was going to raise the quids by backing a winner!" chorled Blake. "That was the history of the mystery."

"Oh, my hat!"

Julian tried not to laugh, but he could not help it, and he roared.

Arthur Augustus did not smile. He jammed in his eyeglass, and looked seriously at his chums.

"On wefection, deah boys, I am beginnin' to doubt wethah the end does justify the means," he said slowly. "I wathah think it is bettah to wemembah that a chap should not do evil that good may come of it. The good may not come, and the evil remains. I have committed an ewwah!"

"Go hon!" murmured Blake.

"And I twust," said Arthur Augustus solemnly—"I twust, deah boys, that this will be a lesson to you!"

And he walked in at the gate. Tom Merry & Co. did not reply. They couldn't! Arthur Augustus had left them speechless!

THE END.

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



CADET NOTES.



THE Army Council has recently issued an instruction to officers commanding Cadet Units, and to all concerned, that lads who are members of the Boy Scout Association and other organisations whose units are not administered under the Cadet Regulations, are not to be enrolled as Cadets unless the consent of the local governing body of such organisation has been obtained for their enrolment. We understand that this has been rendered necessary by the fact that in some places there has been a considerable number of boys seeking transfer from Cadet Units or Boy Scout Troops without any satisfactory reason. It should be noted that in future this is not to be done without the authority of those responsible for the management of the unit concerned.

Almost every week we record in these notes the formation of a new Cadet Corps or the establishment of local committees for the purpose of starting such corps in various towns and cities. At the present moment efforts are being made to form Cadet companies in a large number of places, including, beside those already referred to, Minehead, in Somerset; Irlam, near Manchester, Southwick, in Sussex; Disley, in Cheshire; and many other places. Our readers who are not already members of Cadet Corps, and would like to join the Movement, should apply for particulars of the nearest corps to the Central Association of Volunteer Regiments, Judges' Quadrangle, Royal Courts of Justice, Strand, London, W.C.2, who will send them all the available information by return of post, and, in the event of there being no Cadet Corps in the neighbourhood required, will tell them how to take the necessary steps to get one started.

The Bristol Cadet Association, which has been formed recently for the purpose of pro-

viding healthy recreation and wholesome spare-time occupation for the boys of the city, has just published an appeal for funds and members. The object of the association is to organise the great mass of the 15,000 boys in Bristol who are at present unattached to any boys' organisation, and the promoters hope to enrol at least 5,000 of them in the newly-established Cadet Movement. Of course, it is realised that this will involve a very heavy expenditure, and that at least £2 per boy will be required for uniform and expenses, and an appeal for £10,000 for the purpose has been issued, towards which an excellent list of subscriptions has already been secured. An inspection and review of the Cadet Corps and Boys' Organisations of the city has been arranged, and various other forms of activity are in contemplation for the purpose of increasing the strength and the resources of the association.

General Maxwell visited Nottingham on a recent Saturday afternoon and inspected the local battalion of the Boys' Brigade. The lads, under the command of Captain R. H. Wayne, assembled at the Trent Bridge Cricket Ground, where, after giving the General Salute, they went through various parade movements in a smart and soldierlike manner. The battalion band attended, and played a selection of music, and subsequently the prizes were distributed to the most successful Cadets by the Duchess of Portland. It is worthy of record that the number of lads on parade was very large and satisfactory, including 877 boys, 36 officers, and 12 staff-sergeants; and General Maxwell congratulated the lads heartily upon the smartness displayed and the large numbers in which they had turned out.

The No. 9 (Uxbridge) Company of the 2nd Territorial Cadet Battalion Middlesex Regi-

ment recently had a very special assembly on a Sunday morning, when Colonel Phillips inspected them, and addressed a brief speech to the N.C.O.'s and Cadets. The winners of the three medals in the Whit-Monday sports—Cadets Templeman and Chilvers—were presented with their prizes, and Lieutenant Graves presented a handsome silver cup as the prize for the best shot in the company. Captain Bolam accepted the cup, and called for three cheers for Lieutenant Graves, who is leaving the company and joining the Regular Forces. The company is an excellent one, and is making good progress, and readers residing in that part of Middlesex ought to join and support it.

About 200 members of the South-West London Cadet Battalion were paraded in Battersea Park recently, under the command of Major Hammon, who was assisted by Captain and Adjutant J. Leach, V.C. The parade included representative units from all the companies of the battalion, which extends from Wandsworth to St. Pancras. A special matinee in aid of the funds of the battalion was also held at the Southfields Lyceum Cinema a week or so ago, and the ordinary attractions of the house were enhanced by contributions from a concert-party associated with the R.A.F. Station at Roehampton. The matinee was a great success, and should prove a means of increasing the resources of the battalion.

Colonel Sir William Watts, F.C.B., inspected the 1st Cadet Battalion of the London Scottish at their headquarters in Buckingham Gate on a recent Saturday afternoon. The St. Paul's School Cadet Corps has also had the honour of an inspection by Brigadier-General Lord Seymour, who was much impressed with the turn-out and the appearance of the members of the corps.

THE TWINS FROM TASMANIA.

FOR NEW READERS.

The twins are Philip Derwent, of Highcliffe, and his sister Philippa, of Cliff House. They have a cockatoo, named Cocky, which has been until recently with Flip (Philip) at Highcliffe, but is now at Cliff House. Flip has made an enemy of Gadsby, who is plotting against him with Vavasour. His best chums, Merton and Tunstall, are away from the school for a time, owing to a serious accident to one of Merton's eyes in a fight with Ponsonby. In their absence Flip gets too friendly with Pon and the rest of the nuts, and, without any real taste for it at the outset, takes to gambling. He goes with the nuts to a gambling den at Courtfield, quarrels with Pon, and is knocked senseless just as the warning "Police!" is heard. Flip comes to himself in a cellar, bound hand and foot. He is let out, however. He makes up his mind that the only thing for him to do is to run away, as returning to Highcliffe means certain expulsion. Then he meets Peter Hazeldene, who has run away from Greyfriars. Goggs of Franklingham comes to Highcliffe. Flip and Hazel go to London, and are robbed by roughs. They meet an officer friend of Flip's. Hazel runs off and Flip follows. Johnny Goggs meets the pretty post-girl, and a general argument ensues between Chiker, Goggs, the nuts, the Caterpillar, and Miss Gittins. Tunstall returns. Flip and Hazel meet a Mr. Low, who gives them a lift.

Off the Road.

"WAKE up!" Mr. Low woke up with great reluctance and some slowness. But when he understood that they had reached the village at which the furniture was to be delivered he woke up very thoroughly. There was no trace of the beer about him now.

"You lads care to stay a bit an' give me a 'and with it?" he asked.

Hazel, who had also had to be aroused, looked doubtful. But Flip said at once:

"Oh, rather! We owe you that for the lift you've given us."

"Not you, old pal! Wot with you findin' that note wot Ben Jinks was so silly as to drop, an' drivin' the 'osses all this way—an' you can drive, that's a fact! They ain't turned a 'air—wot with one thing an' another an' the nex' thing, I reckon it's me that owes you a bit. But if we're straight now, I shall be down again after you've 'elped me, an' I'm allowed to shell out a trifle for 'elp. A bob apiece an' your beer, say. Is that fair?"

"We don't want beer!" Hazel said, not too pleasantly.

"That's a good thing! All the more for them that does—an' there ain't too much of it about these days," replied Mr. Low affably.

"Isn't there? I should have thought there was!" Flip said, with a cheery grin. It was not easy to feel too severe about the folly of this decent, good-natured fellow with the three wound-stripes on his arm.

"Ah, that was wot you might call a bit of all right, runnin' into Ben Jinks jest after he'd got a barrel in from his brother, which is a brewer. It ain't a thing that's always 'appenin'; an' I've a long spell in the trenches to make up for yet. Is it a do?"

"Oh, we'll 'elp; and we'll take the bob each!" answered Flip. "But the beer's off."

"Rather a severe way of lookin' at things, old pal. But never mind that. With-out the beer it will be eightpence."

Hazel did not feel inclined for work; but he could not refuse, and before long Flip's energy woke some response in him. The man worked like one possessed, sparing himself nothing. He approved of Flip's methods, and did not grumble at Hazel's.

There was a fair amount of furniture to get out of the van and into the house, and a couple of hours had passed before the job was put through. Then Mr. Low handed each of the runaways a shilling and a sixpence, and mentioned the fact that he had a thirst which it was urgently necessary he should "quench."

He wanted them to come with him to the Horseshoes, where, he said, beer that was beer could be had; but they refused.

They shook hands with him, and parted.

"Good chap that!" said Flip.

"Do you think so? Silly, boozy beggar, I call him! I didn't care much about taking the money. I'm not a furniture-remover!" answered Hazel.

"Not? I am when I can get a job at it," said Flip cheerily. "Till we drop into better jobs, I mean, of course. We need the cash."

"Yes; I forgot that," Hazel replied, half sulkily. "As for getting a better job, I can't see myself doing it. You may. But I can't work like you can, so it's no use pretending."

"Oh, you'll improve!" said Flip. He fancied that Hazel's deficiency was rather in will to work than in ability; and probably he was not far wrong.

They bought some food, and ate it under a hedge by the side of the road. Then they started off again.

"Where are we making for?" Hazel asked.

"Nowhere in particular that I know of.

We're in Sussex now. Do you know anything about the munition-works round this way?"

"The only thing I know of at all about this district is that St. Jim's lies somewhere ahead of us in a pretty straight line."

"St. Jim's?"

"School we always play at footer and cricket. Your fellows don't meet them regularly, though they have met them now and then."

"You know anyone there?"

"Oh, a bit! Not to know them really well. And the chaps I do know wouldn't give us away if they recognised me, I fancy."

"Good! What's the nearest town?"

"To St. Jim's? Wayland. Not sure that it's the nearest from here."

"Any munition-works there?" Flip inquired further.

"I don't know. Yes; I rather fancy I've heard of some."

"Let's make for Wayland, then. It's the only certainty in that way; and I guess it will do as well as anywhere else."

The two tramped on. By-and-bye they came into the downland region. It was a fine, bright winter's afternoon, the sun brilliant, but with little warmth in it, and everything promised another frost for the night.

Presently they came to a fork of the road. One branch led straight on, the other went up over the shoulder of the hill which loomed above them.

"Which?" said Flip.

"As far as I can make out by the signpost, the road to the left ought to be the nearest way to Wayland," Hazel answered. "I don't really know. I was never here before. And I don't see how we can get there to-night, even after that lift. It's a longish way from London."

"Let's take that road, then," Flip said.

They took it. Before they had gone a mile both were inclined to wish that they hadn't. For it soon became plain that this was no high-road. They met no one at all. The surface was rutted and bad, and the road kept on rising. Obviously, if it led to Wayland, it did so over the downs that rose between, which might be all right for anyone who knew them, but was hardly so for strangers to them. And the sun was dropping fast. Soon it would be dark.

Still, neither voiced a doubt. Flip's optimism made him expect that before long they must strike a better road. Hazel's sulky temper and his weariness made him loth to admit that he had been wrong; and he hated the idea of turning back, as they must do if such an admission were made.

The sun hung like a great ball of red fire just above the crests of the western hill when their road suddenly ceased to be a road. It had been gradually getting worse all the time. Now it became better in a sense—much easier going, at least. For it was now a mere grassy track, winding along the side of a rounded hill.

Flip stopped.

"I'm not saying this isn't right for Wayland, Hazel," he said; "but it will be dark soon, and I'm a bit doubtful whether we can stick to the track when we can't see it. It isn't any different to your feet from the grass, and we may wander off it at any moment."

"Well, I don't see that it will matter much if we do!" growled Hazel. "This isn't dangerous."

Flip looked round him. Certainly the mostly gentle downland slopes seemed to present no danger. There were no precipices to trap the unwary walker. But as far ahead as he could see in the red sunset light there was nothing but the rolling downs and the grassy

track—no house, no barn, no living soul, no hard road.

"We might get lost," he said doubtfully.

"Do you want to turn back?" snapped Hazel.

"Well, it might be safest."

"I didn't know you cared all that about what is safest."

"Come to that, I don't know that I do. But we've got to sleep somewhere, and neither barns nor haystacks seem very plentiful up here. Plenty of gorse-bushes. We could sleep in the lee of one of them at a pinch. But it wouldn't be very warm."

"I suppose you mean that I'm too soft to stand it?"

"I didn't mean that at all, old chap. But we've got no Tommy with us."

"Oh, if you want to turn back!" Hazel snapped.

"I don't if you don't."

"Well, how many blessed times do you want me to say that I don't?"

"You haven't exactly said so yet, though I could twig it all serene. Let's go on. We're only wasting time standing here, at best."

They went on, each against his better judgment. Flip would not put pressure on Hazel to turn back, and Hazel was too sulky to admit that he knew they ought to turn.

He felt rather ashamed of himself all the time. It was not in him to meet the chances of the road with Flip's unfailing cheerfulness; but he might have done better than he was doing if he had only been capable of a sustained effort. He did try, but he did not keep on trying as he ought to have done, and he knew it. Peter Hazeldene would always be the same. There was good stuff in him, but he lacked staying power. The lessons he was learning now would fade from his mind if ever he got back again to the old routine that he had so often found dull, and now longed for.

Not even to himself—much less to Flip—would he admit that he did long for it. But it was so. It would be hard to face the reproachful looks of his friends, the gibes and sneers of others, the anger of the Head and of Mr. Quelch; but he could have faced them all now to be back at Greyfriars instead of tramping along this unknown path that led he knew not where, footsore, hungry, and with the prospect of lying in the open under the frosty stars.

He felt almost resentful with Flip for his cheeriness and his patience. Flip seemed able to put Highcliffe right behind him—to think of nothing but the needs of the hour. Of course, Highcliffe did not mean as much to him as Greyfriars did to Hazeldene—so Hazel thought. It did come into his mind that the fact that Flip had two to think of counted for something; but he dismissed that quickly. If he had known for how much Flip's promise to Marjorie counted—how much Flip wished that Hazel would make up his wayward mind to go back to Greyfriars and face the music—he would have felt more resentful than ever.

Only a few streaks in the western sky remained now of the blazing, red sunset. Dusk was coming on. The two still went forward without talking; but even Flip was walking wearily now, and the eyes of both searched the gathering gloom on either side and ahead for the sight of a house, or even a barn.

No such welcome sight came to put fresh spirit into them. Houses are few and far apart on the chalk downs; the difficulty of the water supply accounts for that, though neither Flip nor Hazel knew of that reason. As for barns, they may be found here and there; but they only occur where there is some attempt at cultivating the soil, and all was grass and gorse clumps here.

The dusk thickened. Hazel trailed along wearily.

Flip stopped again.

"We're off that path," he said. "We shouldn't keep running into these blessed bushes if we had stuck to it."

"Tell me something I don't know!" growled Hazel, dropping to the hard, frozen ground with a sigh of utter fatigue.

"Get up, old chap! No good giving it best."

"Who's giving it best? I suppose I may rest for a moment without being accused of funk?"

"Not much good resting, as things are. And I didn't even think you funk'd anything."

"Buck up, Hazel, and don't grouse! That isn't going to help."

Hazel lifted himself with an effort.

"What are we going to do?" he asked dejectedly.

"Find that path again to start with," replied Flip. "After that we can make up our minds whether we go on or back—if we know which is which when we strike it."

"We shan't know!" groaned Hazel. "It's an awful way back, and it may be twice as far ahead before we get anywhere."

"Or half as far. That's just as likely."

"Well, half as far is more than I shall ever do."

They started to search for the path. But the daylight had quite gone now; and, though the stars were bright, they gave but little help. There was no moon. The tall gorse-bushes loomed up like dark figures, and over the short ones they stumbled continually. Hazel's temper was not improved by the resultant prickles, and his conversation did not tend to make matters cheerier.

"Can't you steer by the stars or something?" he asked, after a time. "I thought you Australian chaps were so jolly clever at that sort of thing!"

The sneer nettled Flip.

"I might if I knew what you knew!" he answered warmly. "You had some notion where the place we were making for is; I hadn't. But even if I had I don't see how I could start steering by the stars now, after we've wandered about in this fashion."

"Oh, don't get shirty, Flip! That would be the giddy limit. It's bad enough for one of us to be grouching continually. If you start it I shall creak up completely."

"I'm not going to start it, though it is about my turn to grouse, I fancy."

"Well, I'm going on. We must get somewhere if we go on. You can do as you like," said Hazel.

He started. After a moment's very natural hesitation Flip followed. There was very little sense in this sudden breakaway, but all he could do was to follow the dim figure in the gloom.

Suddenly there sounded a shriek of fear, and the figure ahead was visible no more.

"Hazel! What's happened?" shouted Flip.

No answer came. With wildly-beating heart Flip ran forward, and pulled himself up in the very nick of time on the edge of a steep downfall.

Hazel had gone over. There could be no doubt about that!

The Justice of Mr. Mobbs.

"IT was Tunstall, sir," answered Gadsby, scowling.

Even the nuts did not give away people as openly as this in a general way. But a master's direct question made fair excuse; and Gaddy felt bitterly resentful with Tunstall.

After all, too, it was not a difficult thing for Mr. Mobbs to guess who had thrashed Gaddy, since Tunstall was still operating upon Vavasour when he had come in.

"Really, Tunstall! You have only just returned to the school!"

"That's why, sir!" snapped Tunstall, who had no fear of the snobbish little master of the Fourth.

"I quite fail to understand you."

"If I had come back sooner I should have done it before! I don't know that I have finished with them yet, for that matter. They are low rotters, and I've a dashed good mind to split on them."

"It is of no use to employ such language to me, Tunstall!" said Mr. Mobbs angrily.

"I know it's of no use sayin' anythin' to you, replied Tunstall, shrugging his shoulders. "Perhaps it might be of some use if I went to the Head, though!"

"Oh, I say!" gasped the bruised and panting Vavasour.

And the face of Reginald Gadsby changed from red to a sickly white, and from white to a scabious green. Tunstall was very furious.

They did not know how much he knew; but they were horribly afraid. Ponsoby also felt anything but comfortable. But he was hardly as deep in the mire as those two; and he did not show his funk quite as plainly.

"I will not allow you to talk to me in that impudent manner, Tunstall!" snapped Mr. Mobbs.

Tunstall turned his back. He could not speak civilly to the Form-master. Mr. Mobbs had not been responsible for Flip's trouble, or for Merton's, but he had always toadied to Pon & Co., and just now Tunstall was sick to the soul with Pon & Co.

The master turned with an acid face upon the others. They were all fellows whom he disliked, though it was but seldom he allowed himself to show his dislike of the highly-connected De Courcy.

"Courtenay, you are captain of the Form! You should have—"

"I am captain of the Form, sir, but I saw no reason for interfering in this matter. I consider Gadsby and Vavasour only got what they have deserved!"

"That is not a point upon which you are competent to judge!"

"Excuse me, sir, but I can scarcely exercise any authority I may have as Form captain without judging, to some extent, such things!"

Frank Courtenay spoke like a man rather than a boy of fifteen or so. Constant association with the Caterpillar, no doubt, partly accounted for this. But Frank's tone in speaking to Mr. Mobbs was usually the same. He knew the master for his enemy. That had been shown long ago. He took care not to put himself in the wrong with him; but he had a way of keeping him at arm's-length.

If Mr. Mobbs had done as he would have liked to do, Courtenay would never have got through the day without a taste of the cane. As it was, Mr. Mobbs never caned Courtenay.

No change there! No change to be got out of the Caterpillar, who still lounged against the wall, hands in trousers-pockets, upon his face an expression of mild interest, totally without fear of what Mr. Mobbs or anyone else might say or do.

Courtenay and De Courcy carried too many guns for the Form-master. Tunstall he did not care to tackle again. But there remained Goggs, Smithson, Yates, and Benson. Mr. Mobbs did not feel timid in their cases.

"Goggs," he said sourly, "whenever there is trouble, you seem to be in the midst of it!"

Johnny Goggs gave him a look of pained surprise.

"Really, sir," he said gently, "I think you do me an injustice. I assure you that such is not in the least my character. I was present at this—er—execution, so to call it, it is true, but merely as a spectator. No, that is not strictly correct. I did take a hand, in a very small and modest way."

"You will now take five hundred lines,"

Goggs!" rasped Mr. Mobbs.

"Very good, sir!"

Smithson & Co. thought the moment a good one for a retreat. But they counted without Mr. Mobbs. He called them back.

"As you have been here for the feast, you may stay for the reckoning!" he said.

"Sarcastic little beast!" muttered Yates.

"It was a feast, though," replied Benson.

"He's right there, anyway!"

"What are you saying?" snapped Mr. Mobbs.

Naturally, neither Benson nor Yates answered that.

"You have no right out of your studies at this hour. You will also take five hundred lines each!"

It was an absurdly heavy penalty for a very slight offence, and it made the trio look blackly at the master. But to protest would be useless. They knew that.

They waited. It seemed to the simple minds of Smithson & Co. that the Caterpillar and Tunstall were equal partners in guilt with them. Frank Courtenay's position as skipper of the Form might clear him; but neither Tunstall nor De Courcy had any more right to be out of his study than Smithson & Co. had to be out of theirs.

But they hardly expected to hear what they waited for. And they did not hear it.

Tunstall had turned again. He met the look of Mr. Mobbs with a glare of open defiance. The master opened his mouth to speak, gaped like a codfish, and shut it again. Then he wheeled and went, without another glance at the Caterpillar.

"Funked it!" growled Smithson. And Smithson was right. Mr. Mobbs had funk'd it.

"That's his notion of justice!" said Benson bitterly, when the three were back in No. 7.

"Not likely! He never had such a thing!" replied Yates, no less bitterly.

"He's an absolutely putrid little cad, and it's about time we scored off him!" Smithson said, looking fierce.

"Goggs is in it, too. Let's see if he will take a hand," suggested Benson.

"Goggs? What good is that meek-and-mild ass?" growled Smithson. "I'm not saying I don't like the fellow, mind you. I like him all right. But he couldn't say 'Bo!' to a goose."

"Rats! He was looking after Pon and Vav while Tun dealt with Gaddy," said Yates. There aren't any flies on Goggs, if you ask me. His silly face is just a mask."

"If it was mine, then, I'd jolly well take it off! Any face would be better than a mask like that!" Smithson grunted.

"You don't like it because the chap calls you Nobby, and the other fellows grin; that's what's the matter with you, Smithy, old top," Benson replied. "He did us all down that day. We asked for it, and we got it. He can call me what he jolly well likes; I shan't kick. Goggs is all right!"

"I believe he did tumble those rotters over," said Smithson reflectively. "Vav's nothing at all; but Pon isn't so easy to deal with. I dare say you chaps are right, after all. I'll squirt into the passage, and if Mobby ain't lurking about we might go in and have a yarn with Goggs. I can't think of anything to get home on Mobby with; and if he can, so much the better."

Smithson took a look into the passage, and saw no sign of the enemy. The three passed out.

Plots.

"WHAT do you fellows want?" asked Tunstall, by no means agreeably.

No. 6 and No. 7 of the Fourth Form studies at Highcliffe had never exactly been on visiting terms. In the days when Tunstall and Merton had ranked as followers of Pon they had not been upon good terms at all. But matters had improved during Flip Derwent's time. Nevertheless, Tunstall was surprised to see Smithson & Co., and not too ready to extend a welcome to them.

He had not spoken a word to Goggs since their return together to the study. Goggs, seeing that he was in no mood to talk, had taken out his books and begun upon his prep. He was disposed to like Tunstall, but he did not mean to force himself upon him.

"We came to speak to Goggs," said Smithson. "But if you object—"

"Oh, I don't object! Talk away!"

And Tunstall turned his back, as though marking his determination to bear no part in the conversation.

"Goggs, that chap Mobby is an utter beast!" blurted out Smithson.

"All kinds of a beast!" added Yates.

"I should like to see him skinned alive!" said Benson hotly.

"Five hundred for being out of our studies! Why, fifty would have been plenty!"

"And the little funk daren't say a giddy word to Tunstall because he looked grim!"

"Or to the Caterpillar! He's afraid of the Caterpillar every time!"

An utter, rotten, cringing, snobbish, repulsive beast!" said Smithson.

"Have you just made the discovery?" asked Goggs quietly. "I should have given you all credit for a little more discernment than that, do you know?"

"Oh, of course, we've known it for ages! But we didn't know you knew. You do now, though."

"I have not just discovered it," said Goggs.

"Are you game to help us get even with him?" asked Yates, point-blank.

Goggs bit the end of his pen.

"What is your plan for getting even with him?" he inquired.

The three looked at one another. Then Benson spoke.

"Fact of the matter is, we haven't a plan," he said. "We thought perhaps you might think out one."

"That is rather surprising. I was under the impression that you all had rather a poor opinion of my capabilities."

"Well, we haven't," said Smithson. "We think you're a giddy fraud!"

"That," said Goggs mildly, "is worse rather than better. It is a reflection upon—"

"Oh, come off it! We think there's a jolly lot more in you than you let on about."

"Possibly," replied Goggs, and then he waited.

Again the three looked at one another. This was not exactly encouraging.

"Can you think of anything?" asked Smithson desperately.

"I assure you that I never have any difficulty in finding subjects for thought, if that is what you mean. If your query is directed to the ascertainment of whether I have anything to think with, so to speak, I may say, without undue boasting, that I believe my brains—"

"Oh, do come off it!" pleaded Smithson. "You can talk a donkey's hind-leg off—we all know that."

"Through the occurrence of such casualties in the Fourth?" returned Goggs.

"Rats! Can you think of anything to annoy Mobby? That's the question."

"Many things."

"But—"

"You take the word out of my mouth, Benson. I was about to add—but I do not quite see—"

"Didn't he give you five hundred lines?" snapped Smithson.

"That is true."

"Did you deserve them?"

"What an exceedingly unnecessary question! You know my modest and retiring disposition. Can you imagine my ever doing anything that would deserve the infliction of—"

"Yes, I can, ass! I should think you must have driven half the masters at Frankingham mad."

"I assure you that I really have no reason to believe that I drove even one of them into insanity. We had no Mr. Mobbs at Frankingham, Smithson."

"Are you going to do those lines?" asked Yates.

"I am. I suppose you will also do yours?"

"We can't get out of it. Mobby's only too glad of an excuse to cane us," answered Benson dismally.

"But we want to make him sit up for being such a rotten, tyrannical, unjust beast!" said Smithson savagely.

"Leave that to me," Goggs replied, with a far-away look in the blue eyes behind the big spectacles.

"Eh? What are you going to do, then?"

"That I prefer not to disclose at present. I must ask you to excuse me from that."

"Smithson & Co. did not look satisfied. But they saw that argument would be futile."

"Right-ho!" said Smithson. "Don't keep it hanging about too long, that's all. Let the worm have it in the neck within twenty-four hours, anyway."

"And we'll help you any way you want," added Yates.

"And if there's a row, we stand in it with you," chimed in Benson.

"Then they departed."

Tunstall faced round.

"You seem to have made an impression on these chaps, Goggs," he said.

"Do you think so?" asked Goggs blandly.

"You know you have, you solemn old fellow! What are you going to do to Mobbs?"

"I have not yet made up my mind. I

think that I must first consider what is to be done in the matter of Vavasour."

"What's Vav got to do with it, by Jupiter?" asked Tunstall, astonished.

Goggs smiled.

"Not much with the matter of vengeance upon the amiable Mobbs," he said. "But much with the matter of Derwent."

"I've given him his dose for that," said Tunstall grimly.

"Vavasour is a funk," remarked Goggs.

"Biggest funk I know!"

"Gadsby, though no hero, is not such a funk."

"No. I should say Gaddy's pretty average for that gang. None of them really has too much luck. I don't think most fellows have who think so much about their own skins, an' care so precious little for anyone but themselves."

"Gadsby was the chief criminal; but Vavasour could be more easily played upon than Gadsby," said Goggs thoughtfully.

"Played upon? How do you mean?" asked Tunstall.

"I am not quite sure that I know exactly what I do mean. I have not yet worked out a plan for clearing Derwent—or, at least, showing that he was not alone in his escapade, and that his absence during the night after it was not his own fault."

"You're not talkin' entirely in riddles, for I know somethin' of the yarn," said Tunstall. "But there are lots of things you have got on to that I don't know, it seems. Let's hear it."

Goggs told it all, though briefly. He had told it before; and he had a way of getting everything that mattered in without waste of words. Tunstall wasted none in asking questions.

When Goggs had finished he drew a deep, long breath.

"I'm fed up with this show, Goggs!" he said bitterly. "I don't know that I can stick it any longer if Flippy doesn't come back—not even with old Merton. Neither of us is enough for the other without Flippy—we've found that out. It's a loathsome hole, take it all round!"

"Oh, not so bad as that!" said Goggs. "I agree with you that Ponsonby and his friends are beyond the pale of decency."

"They were our pals—Merton's and mine—yes, an' Flip's too, though he was never really one of them. We belonged to the gang."

"But Courtenay and De Courcy and many others."

"They were never our chums—an' we're not going to ask them to take us up now, by Jupiter!"

Tunstall's tone was very bitter. His rage had died down into a fit of black depression. In the absence of both Merton and Flip Derwent he felt lonely and lost at Highcliffe.

Goggs was something; but Goggs could not replace his chums.

"The problem is how to get Derwent back," Goggs said.

"I should say it was—and a pretty hefty problem, too!" replied Tunstall.

"It is by Vavasour that I propose to approach it. We cannot tell what we know, that is certain. Can we make Vavasour, who was one of the criminals, though not the chief criminal, disclose it?"

"I don't see how," answered Tunstall. "It wouldn't be off the rails if we could an' did. I think. The way those rotters skipped out an' left poor old Flippy in the soup up to his neck was beyond the dashed limit."

"I think I can devise a plan for frightening Vavasour with considerable thoroughness," Goggs said.

"Easy enough to put Vav in a funk—he's often in 'em. Quite another thing to make him confess—an' I suppose that's what you're really drivin' at. What's your dodge?"

"Haunting Vavasour!" replied Goggs, in a sepulchral whisper.

"What?"

"Making him believe that Derwent's ghost is appearing to him."

"By Jupiter, that's a wheeze! But it can't be did, you know. It would be rather off to play the ghost game—shrouds an' phosphorescent light an' all that."

"I have no intention of trying anything so crude. Vavasour would be haunted by a voice—that is all."

"A voice? Whose voice?"

"Derwent's."

"But how? I know Flippy's voice jolly well; but I couldn't speak in it."

"I say, Tunstall!"

Those words seemed to come from outside the door. Tunstall sat up with the eager light of hope in his face. He waited for the door to open, it was as though he was too completely taken by surprise for the moment to get up and open it.

But the door remained shut.

"That was Flip!" said Tunstall. "It can't have been you, Goggs! It came from outside the door, I'm dead certain. An' besides, you've only met Flip once, you say; you couldn't possibly—"

"It was I, Tunstall. True, I do not know Derwent very well; but his voice is very like his sister's. There is the natural difference of tone; but still they are much alike."

"You know Flap better than Flip?"

"Yes," replied Goggs simply.

Tunstall threw him a curious glance. It dawned suddenly upon Tunstall that it was more for the sister's sake than the brother's that Goggs was so keen to help Flap Derwent.

"Well, it was no affair of Tunstall's. He liked Flap no end; but he did not feel jealous—it was not that kind of liking, quite. An hour earlier he might have felt that it would be absurd for anyone to feel jealousy in the case of a fellow with a face like Goggs's. He did not feel so now. He had forgotten to think of Goggs's face as funny."

"Well, you can take in Vav," he said. "You can do that. What will come of it I can't see. But he won't enjoy it, so it's worth doin'."

(To be continued.)

The Editor's Chat.

For Next Wednesday:

"LACY'S LOSS!"

By Martin Clifford.

Most of you will remember Lacy of the Grammar School, who had been at Wodehouse with Cardew. It is some time since we have heard of him; but he is still at Rylcombe, and next week he reappears as a rather prominent figure in an exceptionally good story. Lacy, visiting some of the St. Jim's blades, loses a tiepin, and accuses George Alfred Grundy of having stolen it. Grundy had not done anything of the sort, of course. But where the pin had gone, and what came of its disappearance, and of the wheeze that Cardew worked off, you must wait till next week to read.

This story is illustrated by your old friend, Mr. R. J. Macdonald—I should say, Lieutenant R. J. Macdonald, R.N.V.R., to be strictly accurate.

THE PAPER DIFFICULTY.

I hope all of you have paid heed to the warning given a week or two ago as to the necessity of ordering your papers in advance. Only so can you make sure of getting them. But this does not mean that there is any need to choke off possible new readers. I have not asked you lately to tell your friends about the stories, but I don't want you to

stop doing this. We are not anxious to have circulations dropping; there are other ways of economising paper, and the best of them all is that which we shall be obliged by force of circumstances to adopt now—printing only so many copies as we are sure will be wanted. But a new reader has no more to do than to give his order to a newsagent, and he has made himself safe for one of those copies, just as the rest of you have. See?

LIST OF TOM MERRY STORIES IN THE "GEM"—(continued).

- 292.—"Fatty Wynn's Hunger-Strike."
- 293.—"The Ragtime Schoolboys."
- 294.—"Gussy's Guest."
- 295.—"At the Eleventh Hour."
- 296.—"Tom Merry Minor."
- 297.—"A Disgrace to His House."
- 298.—"Straight as a Die."
- 299.—"By Whose Hand?"
- 300.—"The Drudge's Chance."
- 301.—"£100 Reward!"
- 302.—"The Mystery of the Painted Room."
- 303.—"The Schooboy Raiders."
- 304.—"The Cockney Schoolboy."
- 305.—"Parted Chums."
- 306.—"The Ghost Hunters."
- 307.—"Caught Napping!"
- 308.—"Not Wanted!"
- 309.—"D'Arcy's Delusion."
- 310.—"Hard Pressed!"
- 311.—"Earning His Living."
- 312.—"Making Things Hum."
- 313.—"Rallying Round Figgins."
- 314.—"D'Arcy's Mysterious Present."
- 315.—"Led Astray!"
- 316.—"A Birthday Celebration."
- 317.—"The New Captain."
- 318.—"Captain Tom Merry."
- 319.—"The Housemaster's Peril."
- 320.—"Under His Thumb."
- 321.—"Desperate Measures."
- 322.—"Trouble for Tom!"
- 323.—"A Dangerous Double."
- 324.—"A Change of Identity."
- 325.—"Brought to Book!"
- 326.—"The Shanghai Schoolboys."
- 327.—"Tried and True."
- 328.—"D'Arcy the Ventriloquist."
- 329.—"The Secret of the Island."
- 330.—"The Royal Patrol."

Yours Editor